

# Igor Stravinsky

## Le Sacre du Printemps

*The Rite of Spring*

### Petrushka (1947)

London Symphony Orchestra

Frühbeck de Burgos

*alto*





# Igor Stravinsky

## *Le Sacre du Printemps*

### *Part I: Adoration of the Earth*

1	Introduction	3:26
2	The Augurs of Spring & Dances of the Young Girls	3:19
3	Ritual of Abduction	1:22
4	Spring Rounds	3:15
5	Ritual of the Rival Tribes	1:52
6	Procession of the Sage	0:39
7	The Sage	0:19
8	Dance of the Earth	1:12

### *Part II: The Sacrifice*

9	Introduction	3:59
10	Mystic Circles of the Young Girls	2:44
11	Glorification of the Chosen One	1:40
12	Evocation of the Ancestors	0:43
13	Ritual Action of the Ancestors	3:27
14	Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)	4:31

### *Petrushka* (1947 edition)

15	I. The Shrove-Tide Fair	7:22
16	II. Danse Russe	2:46
17	III. Petrushka	4:47
18	IV. The Blackamoor	3:44
19	V. Valse	3:28
20	VI. The Shrove-Tide Fair	1:19
21	VII. Wet-Nurses' Dance	2:32
22	VIII. Peasant with Bear	1:30
23	IX. Gypsies and a Rake Vendor	1:11
24	X. Dance of the Coachmen	1:57
25	XI. Masqueraders	1:31
26	XII. The Scuffle	0:48
27	XIII. Death of Petrushka	0:47
28	XIV. Police and the Juggler	1:16
29	XV. Apparition of Petrushka's Double	0:51

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

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Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) composed *Petrushka* between October 1910 and April 1911 on the coat-tails of his successful ballet *L'Oiseau de feu* (The Firebird), written for the Ballets Russes under their great impresario Serge Diaghilev. One of the major reasons for *L'Oiseau*'s success had been the striking orchestration: Stravinsky had clearly advanced beyond Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and Glazunov, but his music remained nonetheless immediately pleasing to audiences, critics and musicians. Following *L'Oiseau de feu* Stravinsky had detailed plans for a new work concerning the sacrifice of a young girl in pagan Russia. It was this piece that Diaghilev expected to hear and to discuss at a meeting in the summer of 1910. However Stravinsky had also begun work on a concert piece for piano and orchestra and it was this music (that now forms the second tableau of *Petrushka* and the closing moments of the first) he played to Diaghilev.

Diaghilev was so impressed that he asked Stravinsky and the designer Alexandre Benois to conceive a scenario for a ballet in four scenes (tableaux) based on a Russian folk tale. When completed, it was choreographed by Mikhael Fokine of the Ballets Russes and premiered at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris in June 1911 with Vaclav Nijinsky in the title role. Tamara Karsavina danced the part of the Ballerina and Alexander Orlov played the Moor; the role of the Showman was taken by Enrico Cecchetti.

These first performances conducted by Pierre Monteux not only created a considerable stir amongst established musicians such as Debussy, but the sound world created by Stravinsky with its constant change of metre also began to influence a new generation of composers. Despite the headache caused to Fokine and his dancers by the frequent changes of metre, the first production was a great success. Its positive reception gave Stravinsky the confidence to push back the boundaries still further with his next ballet, but the public would not be so welcoming to *Le sacre du printemps*. *Petrushka* was first heard in concert on 1 March 1914 conducted again by Pierre Monteux and with Alfredo Casella at the piano.

In 1946/7 Stravinsky made revisions to *Petrushka*, embellishing the piano part and varying the scoring a little and it is this version that is heard in this recording. It has been said that the primary reason for revisiting one of his most successful and accessible works was in order for Stravinsky to benefit from copyrighting the piece once again, but it did furnish him with the opportunity to iron out a few inconsistencies which had escaped the publishers of the previous edition.

**London Symphony Orchestra**  
**Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, conductor**

*Petrushka* is set during the 1830s in Admiralty Square, St Petersburg. The first tableau takes place outside a booth set up to entertain crowds enjoying themselves at the Shrovetide Fair. The booth belongs to the Showman (sometimes referred to as the Charlatan). Other attractions are on show including an organ grinder, whose wheezy tones are remarkably recreated by Stravinsky. However the crowd's interest is focussed upon the Showman's puppet theatre. As he strikes up a tune on his flute, three puppets are brought to life. These puppets (the clown Petrushka, a Moor and a Ballerina) dance among the awe-struck crowds.

The second tableau takes place in Petrushka's sparsely furnished room inside the puppet theatre. The Showman is a bully: Petrushka receives rough treatment and has to dwell under the mocking gaze of his master's portrait. Far from being mere unthinking dolls stuffed with sawdust, the puppets have genuine emotions and Petrushka feels humiliated by such brutal treatment. Only his admiration for the Ballerina prevents him from ending it all and when she enters his room, he declares his love. However she finds him repulsive and having ridiculed him she flounces out. Thoroughly incensed, Petrushka unsuccessfully seeks a means of escape and curses the Showman's picture on the wall.

The interior of the Moor's room is in complete contrast to Petrushka's simply decorated cell. Its exotic and lavish furnishings are far more to the Ballerina's taste and from the way that she is dancing with the Moor it is obvious that she finds him a more interesting proposition! Petrushka bursts in determined to challenge the Moor, who proves more than a match for him, and sends the clown packing.

The final tableau takes place outside the Showman's tent and finds the Shrovetide Fair in full swing. Various groups of fairground visitors, some of whom were noted in the first scene, are highlighted: a group of wet nurses, a dancing bear with its keeper, a rich merchant with two beautiful admirers, a group of coachmen with their grooms and some masked revellers. The festive atmosphere is abruptly curtailed as the Moor, brandishing his sharp scimitar, chases Petrushka across the stage. He corners the hapless clown and with one blow, kills him. The onlookers are appalled but the Showman convinces them that Petrushka is merely a stuffed puppet. However after the crowd has drifted away night draws in and Petrushka's ghost appears on the roof of the tent threatening the Showman who, scared witless, rushes off.

1912 brought two further landmark productions: Nijinsky danced and choreographed *L'après-midi dun faune* and played Daphnis in Fokine's *Daphnis et Chloé*. The following season tested Parisian taste for Russian

culture to the utmost. Nijinsky's version of Debussy's *Jeux* did not find favour whilst the other new production *Le sacre de printemps* (*Rite of Spring*) with appropriately primitive sets and costumes by Nicholas Roerich, has entered the annals of theatrical history and is regarded as the most notorious first night ever.

The ballet is set in ancient pagan Russia. Act One opens with a shamen-like 300 year old woman's adoration of the earth. Groups of dancers then pair up in a somewhat brutal episode interrupted by the arrival of three unnaturally tall women who with stork-like movements separate the groups. Rival tribes compete in wild dance but another interruption occurs with the arrival of the sage accompanied by tribal elders. After he too has kissed the earth the stage is filled with the entire company, who dancing ever more frenziedly surround the sage.

Act Two opens with the maidens deciding who will be chosen to be sacrificed. The sacrificial victim is then glorified and then prepared for her ordeal. They are joined by the ghostly arrival of tribal ancestors in bearskins who join the maidens in forming ever-tighter circles around the Chosen One. After this ritual the maidens take their leave of the Chosen One, leaving her to her fate. As the Ancestors process around the Chosen One she can be seen jumping ever higher, dancing herself to death. As the music ends, her lifeless body is lifted aloft by the Ancestors.

The weather in Paris had been unusually muggy on 29 May 1913 and the audience had found the newly opened Théâtre des Champs-Élysées rather stuffy. Rather hot and bothered, they sat through revivals of *Prince Igor* and *Les Sylphides*. The opening notes of *Le sacre de printemps* caused a stir for in order to reproduce the sound of ancient hand-made instruments, Stravinsky contorted the sound of the traditional orchestra (just as Nijinsky contorted the body movements of the ballet dancers) making them play in unusual registers. As the curtain rose the shouting began; those such as the composer Florent Schmitt who were prepared to give the new work a fair hearing did verbal battle with those who could/would not understand what they were experiencing. Occasionally fisticuffs broke out. Stravinsky stormed out of his stalls seat and went backstage where he found Diaghilev turning on the house lights in an attempt to restore order out front; Nijinsky was standing precariously on a chair bellowing the beat to the poor dancers.

During the interval an attempt was made by the theatre manager to appeal to the audience's better nature but to no avail; the catcalls, laughter and shouting resumed during the second half with greater ferocity. The sight of the Maidens ('knock-kneed Lolitas' Stravinsky later called them),

their toes turned inwards, their necks crained sideways, their heads supported by cupped hands. 'Un docteur, un dentiste!' they cried. Nijinsky's flat-footed jumps had shocked in *Jeux*; here they were hooted at.

For the performers it was a traumatic experience. Pierre Monteux trained his orchestra to the best of his ability but was constantly beset by players who queried 'misprints' in the score. The dancers likewise had never experienced the like for everything Nijinsky required of them flew in the face of classical ballet. The choreographer's sister Bronislava had been intended to play The Chosen One until she revealed the fact that she was pregnant. Her replacement Maria Piltz danced as if transformed. According to Andrey Levinson 'She seemed to dream, her knees turned inward, the heels pointing out – inert. A sudden spasm shook her body out of its corpse-like rigor. At the fierce onward thrust of the rhythm she trembled in ecstatic, irregular jerks' (taken from Stephen Walsh's indispensable *Igor Stravinsky – A Creative Spring* Jonathan Cape 2000). Astonishingly Nijinsky was onstage within minutes of the final curtain dancing *Le spectre de la rose*!

*Le sacre* only survived a handful of performances in Paris and the shenanigans from the opening night contributed to the theatre owner becoming bankrupt. It has now a classic with well over 120 different versions staged. In 1987 the ballet historians Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer reconstructed the Nijinsky/Roerich premiere for the Joffrey Ballet. Their reconstruction, staged in many cities, was included in a critically-acclaimed dramatization of the notorious opening night *Riot at the Rite*, aired by the BBC in 2006. Although over ninety years have passed since Stravinsky's score was first heard, its primitive savagery still continues to shock and polarize audiences.

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## NOTES ON THE ARTIST

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**Rafael Frühbeck** (later changed to **Frühbeck de Burgos**) was born in 1933 in Burgos, Spain and studied violin, piano, and composition at the conservatories of Bilbao and Madrid. He graduated *summa cum laude* from the Hochschule für Musik in Munich in conducting and won the Richard Strauss Prize.

Frühbeck has served as music director of the Rundfunkorchester Berlin, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and chief conductor of the Bilbao Orchestra and the Vienna Symphony, as well as being principal guest conductor for numerous orchestras in Europe, the USA, and Japan. He made his American debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra. From 1980-83 he was principal conductor of Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra of Tokyo, of which he later became an honorary conductor.

In February 2011, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra appointed Frühbeck de Burgos as its principal conductor commencing with the 2012–2013 season. The initial contract was to last three years; however, on 4 June 2014, he not only resigned as chief conductor of the orchestra, with immediate effect, but announced his retirement from conducting altogether and that he had cancer. His final concert as a conductor had been in Washington, DC, on 14 March 2014, with the National Symphony Orchestra.

Frühbeck de Burgos died on 11 June 2014 in Pamplona, Spain. He was buried in his home town of Burgos.

Frühbeck recorded extensively on a number of labels. Especially noteworthy are his performances of Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, the Mozart *Requiem*, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, and the complete works of Manuel de Falla. The maestro is currently the chief conductor of the RAI National Symphony Orchestra, Turin, and music director of the Dresden Philharmonic. Frühbeck de Burgos's orchestration of Isaac Albéniz's *Suite española* is well known and has been recorded with him conducting the New Philharmonia Orchestra.



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