VINSKY

CHAN **241-8**

CHANDOS 2 FOR 1

STRAVINSKY

Symphony No. 1
Symphony in C
Symphony in Three Movements
Symphonies of Wind Instruments
The Fairy's Kiss
Ode

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

COMPACT DISC ONE

		Symphony No. 1 in E flat, Op. 1	**33:23**
1	I	Allegro moderato	10:15
2	II	Scherzo: Allegretto	5:42
3	III	Largo	9:47
4	IV	Finale: Allegro molto	7:25
		Symphony in C	**29:03**
5	I	Moderato alla breve	10:04
6	II	Larghetto concertante –	6:22
7	III	Allegretto	5:03
8	IV	Adagio – Tempo giusto, alla breve	7:27
		Ode (Elegiacal Chant in three parts)	**9:57**
9	I	Eulogy	3:31
10	II	Eclogue	3:13
11	III	Epitaph	3:06
			TT 72:45

COMPACT DISC TWO

		Symphony in Three Movements	**22:07**
1	I	[Untitled]	9:49
2	II	Andante: Interlude –	6:11
3	III	L'istesso tempo	6:03

Raymond O'Connell piano solo

Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Sir Alexander Gibson

4	**Symphonies of Wind Instruments**	**8:56**

Nash Ensemble
Sir Simon Rattle

	The Fairy's Kiss (Le baiser de la fée)	**45:20**
5	Scene 1: Prologue: A storm –	8:12
6	Scene 2: A village fête –	11:19
7	Scene 3: By the mill –	6:36
8	Pas de deux: I Entrée –	2:02
9	II Adagio –	3:58
10	III Variation –	1:19
11	IV Coda –	2:18
12	Scene –	5:12
13	Scene 4: Epilogue: Land of Eternal Dwelling	4:21
		TT 76:44

Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Neeme Järvi

Igor Stravinsky: Symphonies/Ode/The Fairy's Kiss

Symphony No. 1 in E flat, Op. 1

The first decade of the twentieth century, that pre-revolutionary period, was all-important in Stravinsky's life. In the early 1900s we see Stravinsky, in his early twenties, feeling his way as composer with derivative piano pieces; in 1910 he stakes his claim to international recognition with *The Firebird*. His progress towards this spectacular flowering was a gradual one, and his *gradus ad Parnassum* begins with this Symphony, Op. 1. It marks the end of his apprenticeship.

The influences are clear, Glazunov, Tchaikovsky, and above all his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov. Yet when all such allowances have been made, there remain traces that are recognizably Stravinsky's own; for instance after the unexceptional and very ordinary sonata form of the first movement, the scherzo effects a switch to the world of the ballet; again in spite of the somewhat pedantic rondo-finale, one can detect a certain flexing of the young composer's technical muscles. He revised the scoring during the summer of 1907 after the premiere in April of that year, and it was performed in its revised form thereafter. Stravinsky was not quite so dismissive and critical of his first Symphony as he was of some of his other early works; he himself conducted and recorded it.

Symphony in C

The Symphony was commissioned in 1938 by Mrs Robert Woods Bliss, who the year before had also commissioned the 'Dumbarton Oaks' Concerto. The work that Stravinsky was invited to write was destined (ultimately, though not at first) for the Chicago Symphony, who under their German-born director Frederick Stock were due to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary season in 1940/41. This challenging task came at a particularly difficult moment in the composer's life, when not only his first wife Catherine, but both his daughters Ludmilla and Milena, and finally himself, were afflicted with tuberculosis. He goes so far as to state in *Themes and Conclusions* that he accepted the commission under pressure of medical debts, and that when in November 1938 his elder daughter Ludmilla died, he survived the weeks that followed only by working on the Symphony – 'which is *not* to say that the music exploits my grief'.

Far from it. During these months he wrote the brilliant, rhythmically incisive first movement, which was finished on 17 April, 1939. Meanwhile, however, he had suffered another bereavement, with the death of his wife Catherine on 2 March. Thereupon for the next five months he himself became an out-patient at the same sanitarium (at Sancellemox, near Geneva). Finally in this most tragic year, he lost his mother on 7 June. It was against this background of personal loss that the pastoral second movement of the Symphony was begun on 27 March, and finished on 19 July.

A gap followed the completion of the second movement. Following the outbreak of war in September, Stravinsky sailed for America on the twenty-fifth of that month. He travelled not as an immigrant, but to fulfil concert engagements all over the United States, and to give the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard, starting on 18 October. (These were later published as *Poetics of Music*.) Then in January 1940, he was joined in New York by Vera de Bosset, who after arranging a divorce from her husband Serge Sudeikin (a Russian painter and designer), became Stravinsky's second wife on 9 March.

Meanwhile, in spite of all these disruptions, Stravinsky had a deadline for the Symphony; the premiere was due on 7 November in Chicago, and he himself would conduct. So the third movement was completed on 28 April, and the finale on 17 August – by which time the newlyweds were in California, after extensive travels through Mexico and Arizona.

The Symphony in C thus bridges two worlds – half written in Europe, half in America a year later – and as one would expect, change and tension are apparent everywhere; but not at the expense of the consistency of the four movements, which use the same material throughout. As if to underline this continuity, Stravinsky marks *attacca* between the second and third movements. And the underlying motif of the whole work, the three notes B–C–G, sums up the twin aspects of Stravinsky's musical thinking hitherto; namely the semitone, which lends itself to chromaticism, and the open fourth, which lends itself to more explicit tonality. This 'Symphony in C motif', so called because it occurs in this Symphony in a more developed form, and as more of an inherent and primary factor than is the case elsewhere, also colours a number of other works at this time, notably the 'Dumbarton Oaks' Concerto, and the Concerto in D for strings. It was a central thematic pattern (for the word 'laudate') in the *Symphony of Psalms* (1930).

In this Symphony, two main materials are used to exploit the 'motif'; first the rhythm that Stravinsky derives from it, which occurs at the opening of the work; next an ascending scale implied in it. This is heard near the

opening, and again in the fugato theme of the finale.

Ten years earlier, when he wrote the *Symphony of Psalms*, Stravinsky had sought to avoid the constraints and conventions of symphonic forms, as bequeathed by the nineteenth century. Now he no longer feels such hesitancy. The first movement of the Symphony in C is strict in its observance of classical principles of construction. The repeat of the main theme is exact. The slow movement is a regular ABA structure, and in spite of the decoration, the pulse remains regular. The solo theme is again given to the oboe, recalling the first movement. But if the first two movements are orthodox in structure and tonality, the other two complement them. Metrical complexities appear in the third movement, which is a scherzando, if not a scherzo; a loosely stitched-together suite of dances, predominantly in triple rhythm, though this fact is anything but obvious, and the pulse-unit making up the triplets constantly varies between semiquaver, quaver and crotchet. The bustling bassoon solo came to him, he says, 'with the neon glitter of the Californian boulevards from a speeding automobile'.

The fugato theme of the finale is a massive one, combining the keys of C and G. The reprise of this is shorter, varied, and tonally about as remote as it could be, based on D flat, the flattened supertonic. Stravinsky maintains this key-centre unchanged as long as he dares, while the tension builds and increases progressively. The release, when it comes, provides the structural climax of the entire work, a harmonic ellipses, with just the alteration of B flat to B natural. This wholly Stravinskian modulation leads straight to a recall of the opening bars of the first movement, and thereafter to the customary coda apotheosis.

Stravinsky's codas properly form a study in themselves. In the case of the Symphony in C, Stravinsky is here taking a retrospective glance at a whole world from which he had receded. As this coda is based on the same motif as the *Symphony of Psalms*, it can hardly fail to remind us of that work. Did not the composer inscribe both these works 'A la Gloire de Dieu', thus associating them together in his mind? But of all his codas, this to the Symphony in C has a more intense poignancy than others (such as, for instance, that to *Apollo*, or indeed the *Symphony of Psalms*), because it has a personal as well as a musical meaning. Sustained and chordal, it uses the simultaneous key-centres of C and G, like the finale theme itself.

Looking back on this work later (1965), when the serial style of his third phase had led him into fresh tonal discoveries, Stravinsky considered that 'the key centres may be over-emphasized'. That was one way in which the works of his second phase differed from those of his third.

Ode

Sergei Koussevitzky commissioned two works from Stravinsky, the *Symphony of Psalms* and the Ode. He was conductor of the Boston Symphony from 1924 to 1949 and frequently invited Stravinsky to appear as guest conductor of the orchestra. His Stravinsky premieres included the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1921) and the Piano Concerto (1924). He commissioned the Ode in April, 1943, in commemoration of his wife Natalie, who had died two years previously. Stravinsky already had a short piece recently finished (intended as music for the hunting scene in the Orson Welles film *Jane Eyre*, which proved an abortive project); so he took this piece, and surrounded it on either side with slow, expressive music to make an orchestral triptych. The liveliness of the middle movement was excused by the composer as

> a *concert champêtre* suggesting an outdoor 'musical', an idea cherished by Natalie Koussevitzky and brilliantly realized in Tanglewood by her husband.

This refers to the country venue near Stockbridge, Massachusetts, which Koussevitzky had made the summer home of the Boston Symphony since 1936. The audience sat in the open, on the grass, in an expansive estate overlooking the Berkshires and the Stockbridge Bowl. The summer concerts are now an annual festival.

The restrained dignity of this *in memoriam* piece is achieved through the solemn chromaticism of the opening; the expressive content is concentrated in the final *Epitaph*, with much use of characteristic bitonality, and Stravinskian modulations. The highly expressive modulation already mentioned in the Symphony in C is reproduced exactly in the *Epitaph* of the Ode.

In spite of Koussevitzky's great services to Stravinsky as publisher and patron, his abilities as a conductor were frequently the cause of much criticism. The premiere of the Ode, on 8 October, 1943, was a near disaster. In the *Epitaph* not only was the trumpet solo wrongly transposed, but the parts were wrongly copied at the end, with the result that 'a simple triadic piece concluded in a cacophony'.

Symphony in Three Movements

The Symphony in Three Movements took over three years to write. Sketches were begun in early April, 1942, and the first movement was completed by June, and scored by October. Other tasks then intervened. As Stravinsky was now living in Hollywood he had several contacts with film makers, some of which led to his writing music with a view to a film. One

such project occurred in 1942, when a proposed film about the Nazi invasion of Norway led to his *Four Norwegian Moods*. More relevant to the Symphony was Franz Werfel's invitation to Stravinsky to contribute music to his film *Song of Bernadette*. It eventually transpired that the terms of the contract offered to the ever-watchful composer were 'too much in the producer's favour'; so this particular film proposal proved abortive. But Stravinsky used the music he had written up to then (for the 'Apparition of the Virgin' scene) as the middle movement of the Symphony. This was sketched out in a matter of four weeks (15 February–17 March, 1943).

Thereafter a two-year gap separates the third movement from the first two. It was not completed until 7 August, 1945 – the day after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, thus ending the Second World War. The premiere of the Symphony was given on 24 January 1946, with the composer conducting the New York Philharmonic.

Whether or not the Symphony in Three Movements is a war symphony, there is no doubt that world events made a deep impression on Stravinsky. But it is not programmatic. He puts it this way:

> Composers combine notes. That is all. How and in what form the things of this world are impressed upon their music is not for them to say.
>
> (Stravinsky and Craft: *Dialogues and a Diary*)

The Symphony in Three Movements is more ambitious, and employs a slightly larger orchestra than the Symphony in C, a third clarinet, double bassoon, bass drum, as well as piano and harp. Certain similar features link the two symphonies: the theme starting with a semitone, the use of scale passages, similar rhythmic patterns, the use of solo strings in the slow movement like a concerto grosso (an idea that was to be developed in a later work, the *Variations*). But otherwise the later Symphony is made of sterner stuff, and represents a further evolutionary stage. When Stravinsky played through parts of the first movement to the Polish composer Alexandre Tansman in 1942, he saw it as a concerto for orchestra, with a concertante part for the piano. Structurally it is a succession of small *concertini* groups, in chamber music style, like the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. The instruments divide at the development, starting with the horns, and the climax consists of all the groups coming together, whereupon they separate again. A similar principle of construction may be seen later in *Movements*.

At the recapitulation Stravinsky reverses the order of themes. This procedure, unlike the Symphony in C, recalls the Piano Sonata. The first theme, when it is eventually reached, marks the point of arrival of the entire movement. Some of the scoring recalls *Le sacre*, which Stravinsky was revising at this time. Harmonically, tonally and instrumentally the first and third movements are harsh, astringent; the slow movement is gentle, with the brass reduced to quiet horns only, the piano giving way to the harp, and chords made up of semitone clashes giving way to chords of whole tones.

If not specifically a war symphony, it was written during the war. The mood is tragic, indignant, and this is reflected in the semitonal harmony of the first and third movements. The comparative harmonic repose of the middle movement is gradually dissolved by an interlude consisting of a succession of chords, gradually re-introducing the semitone clashes, and thus preparing for the fury of the finale.

The events that activated Stravinsky's musical imagination were specific. Thus he tells us that

> the first movement was inspired by a war film... of scorched-earth tactics in China. The middle part of the movement – the music for clarinet, piano and strings, which mounts in intensity and volume until the explosion of the three chords – was conceived as a series of instrumental conversations to accompany a cinematographic scene showing the Chinese people scratching and digging in their fields.

The third movement comes the nearest to having a 'war plot' (Stravinsky and Craft: *Dialogues and a Diary*). The beginning of the movement was suggested by newsreels of goose-stepping German soldiers: the square march-beat, the brass-band instrumentation, the grotesque *crescendo* in the tuba. The march music is predominant until the fugue, which is the stasis and turning point. The immobility at the beginning of the fugue is comic; so to Stravinsky was the overturned arrogance of the Germans when their machine failed. The exposition of the fugue, and the end of the Symphony, were associated in his mind with the rise of the Allies. The conclusion of the work is tragic in its intensity; the final shattering chord, though grounded on D flat and not the expected C, is built from material already heard at the opening. The D flat itself springs from the Phrygian D flat of the second bar. The Symphony is all of a piece.

Symphonies of Wind Instruments

The *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* originated in a short 'fragment' written for a 1920 Debussy memorial album as a supplement to *La Revue Musicale*, this 'chorale' becoming the concluding passage of the composition. Describing the work as an 'austere ritual', Stravinsky produced wind-writing quite unlike any other of the time, drawing on Russian folk music and the

characteristic sounds of its instruments. In its scoring for wind instruments only, the work reflects his opposition at the time to the expressive Romantic string tradition. He continued his exploration of wind sonorities with the Wind Octet (1922–3), the Concerto for piano and wind (1923–4) and *Mavra* (1921–2), finally returning to strings exclusively with *Apollon musagète* in 1927–8.

The work is made up of a number of short refrains and episodes, each refrain usually containing two elements: a strident motif for the clarinets and flutes, and chorale-like chords for the whole ensemble.

The first performance was given by Koussevitzky, at the Queen's Hall, London in June 1921. The programme included works by Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin; the cool and arresting wind-writing found little favour with the audience in the midst of such colourful fare.

The Fairy's Kiss

The Fairy's Kiss is Stravinsky's greatest homage to Tchaikovsky, having been composed mostly on the basis of original piano pieces and songs by the older composer, while the story for the ballet was chosen by Stravinsky from the collection of Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales to be an allegory of Tchaikovsky's destiny as an artist. Stravinsky's admiration for Tchaikovsky went back to his childhood, partly from being taken to see productions of the ballets at the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, and also because his father, Fyodor Stravinsky, was a principal bass in the opera company there and appeared in several Tchaikovsky operas.

When Sergey Diaghilev staged his lavish production of *The Sleeping Beauty* at London's Alhambra Theatre in 1921, which became the basis of the ballet's reputation in the West (although it nearly bankrupted him), Stravinsky declared at the time that the music was 'the most convincing example of Tchaikovsky's great creative power', and himself orchestrated two dances which were then only available in piano score. Seven years later the Russian-born Ida Rubinstein, who had left Diaghilev's company in Paris to form her own, invited Stravinsky to compose a new ballet for her.

'The idea was that I should compose something inspired by the music of Tchaikovsky', Stravinsky recalled in his autobiography, and he welcomed 'an opportunity of paying my heartfelt homage to Tchaikovsky's wonderful talent'. He also wrote elsewhere:

> My only precept in selecting the music was that none of the pieces should have been orchestrated by Tchaikovsky, i.e. my selection would have to come from piano music and songs... At this date I only vaguely remember which music is Tchaikovsky's and which mine.
>
> (*Expositions and Developments*; Faber and Faber, 1962)

The choice of subject was also left to him, and he settled on Hans Christian Andersen's story of *The Ice Maiden* 'because it suggested an allegory with Tchaikovsky himself. The Fairy's kiss on the heel of the child is also the Muse marking Tchaikovsky at his birth', and leaving its imprint on all his creative work. For theatre purposes he devised a simple scenario:

> Scene 1: *Prologue*. During a storm, a mother is separated from her child, who is found and kissed by a Fairy, then taken away to be looked after by villagers.
>
> Scene 2: *A village fête*. Eighteen years later the Young Man is celebrating with his Fiancée. The Fairy disguised as a gypsy tells his fortune and promises him great happiness, then leads him back to his Fiancée and friends.
>
> Scene 3: *By the Mill*. The Young Man dances with his Fiancée, but after she leaves to put on her bridal dress, the Fairy appears instead in bridal guise. Exerting her supernatural power, she confuses the Young Man and persuades him to follow her.
>
> Scene 4: *Epilogue*. The Fairy bestows her fatal kiss on the Young Man, and encloses him forever in the Land of Eternal Dwelling.

There still remain some themes in the music which have never been identified as to which composer was responsible, but Stravinsky did list many of his borrowings, and others have since been traced. They are known to involve some twelve piano pieces and five songs, with passing references to other works by Tchaikovsky such as the String Quartet in D, Op. 11, some of the symphonies, and a few bars from operas such as *The Queen of Spades*. Another dozen or so melodic subjects were claimed by Stravinsky as his own, and a full check list of sources may be found in *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works* by Eric Walter White (Faber and Faber; revised edition, 1979).

It is important to realise that Stravinsky did more than adapt Tchaikovsky's themes, or even compose over them as he did the Pergolesi sources in his earlier ballet, *Pulcinella* (Paris, 1920). He assimilated them into the nature of his own musical personality so that they are re-shaped, extended, condensed, given new and different harmonic content and rhythmic character. The fabric is entirely Stravinsky's even if some of the threads were once Tchaikovsky's. A full symphony orchestra is called for, with four horns, three trumpets and triple woodwind, in addition to strings and basic percussion, but it is seldom used at full strength. rather it provides a source of

wonderfully varied and subtle instrumental colouring.

The ballet's four scenes begin with an introduction derived from the song, 'Lullaby in a Storm', Op. 54 No. 10 in Tchaikovsky's works. The two central scenes contrast cheerful country dances at the fête with a sequence of more formal balletic numbers in the mill scene, including a *Pas de deux* with variations (solo dances) and a coda. At the end of this scene, when the Young Man succumbs to the Fairy's blandishments, one of the few passages for full orchestra builds to a climax from the familiar theme of Tchaikovsky's song, 'None but the Lonely Heart', Op. 6 No. 6. The *Epilogue* brings back the Lullaby theme for a characteristically slow, chilling coda to the work as a whole.

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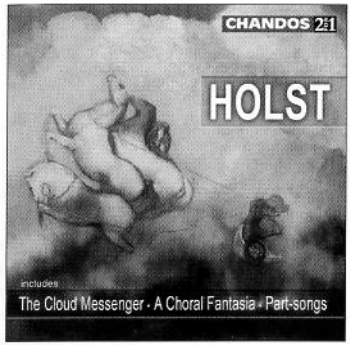

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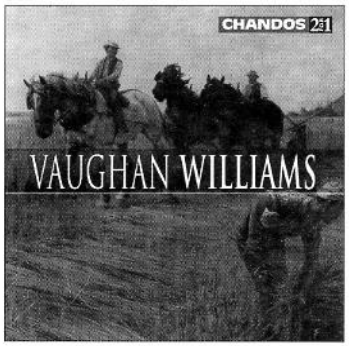

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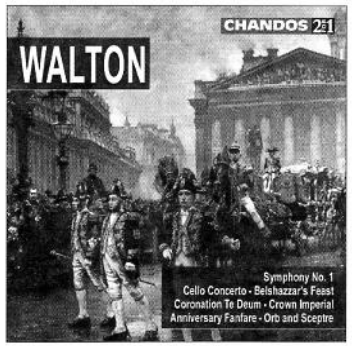

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Series consultant Terry Holmes
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Sound engineer Ralph Couzens (all works except *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*)
Assistant engineer Bill Todd (*The Fairy's Kiss*)
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CHANDOS DIGITAL 2-disc set **CHAN 241-8**

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

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9 - 11	**Ode**†‡	9:57
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1 - 3	**Symphony in Three Movements**†‡ **Raymond O'Connell** piano solo	22:07
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5 - 13	**The Fairy's Kiss (Le baiser de la fée)**†§	45:20
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Nash Ensemble*
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