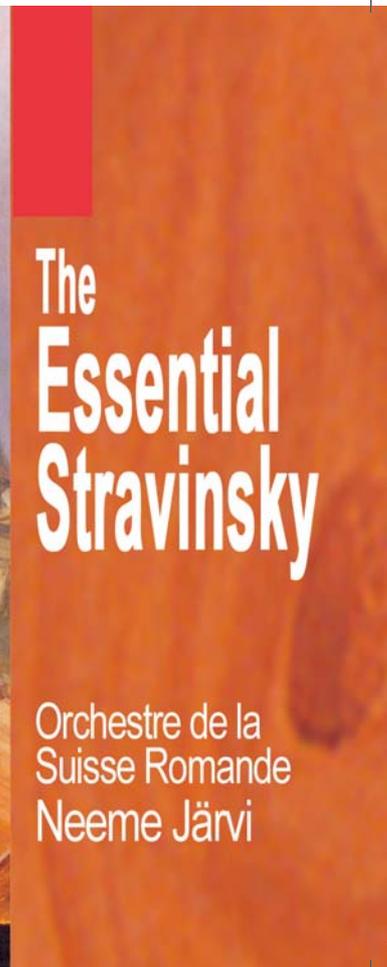
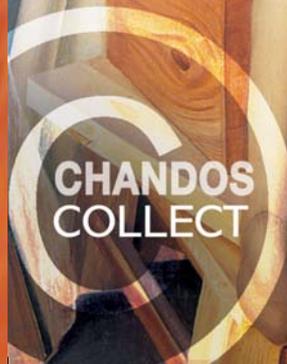
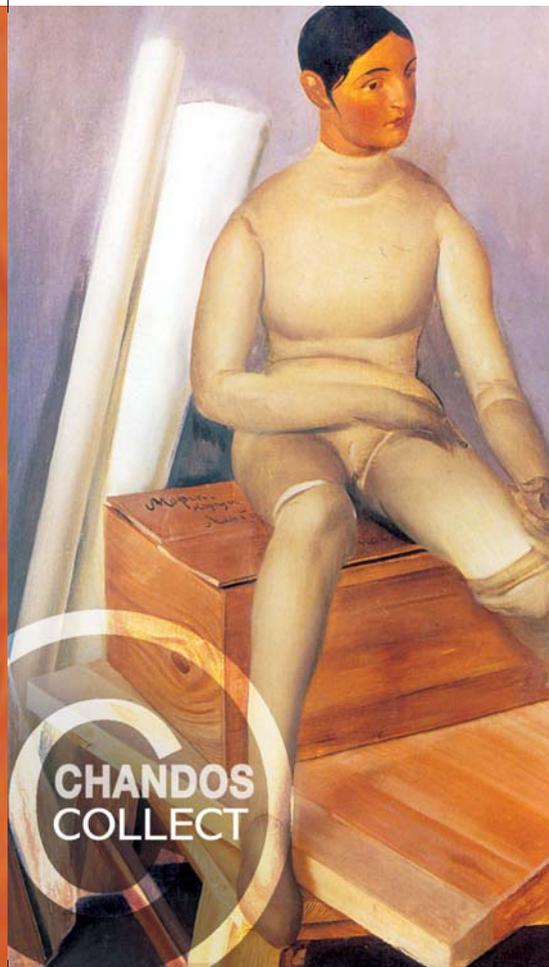




CHAN 6654(5)



The Essential Stravinsky

Orchestre de la
Suisse Romande
Neeme Järvi

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

COMPACT DISC ONE

TT 76:46

Symphony in E flat, Op. 1 (1905–07)

34:12

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 1 | I Allegro moderato | 9:42 |
| 2 | II Scherzo. Allegretto | 6:03 |
| 3 | III Largo | 9:42 |
| 4 | IV Finale. Allegro molto | 7:38 |

Violin Concerto (1931)

21:54

- | | | |
|---|--------------|------|
| 5 | I Toccata | 5:28 |
| 6 | II Aria I | 4:58 |
| 7 | III Aria II | 5:27 |
| 8 | IV Capriccio | 5:50 |

Lydia Mordkovitch violin

Symphony of Psalms (1930)

21:52

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|
| 9 | I Exaudi orationem meam, Domine | 3:02 |
| 10 | II Expectans expectavi Dominum | 7:02 |
| 11 | III Alleluja, laudate Dominum | 11:15 |

Chœur de Chambre Romand
Chœur Pro Arte de Lausanne
Société chorale du Brassus
André Charlet chorus master

COMPACT DISC TWO

TT 79:14

Le Chant du Rossignol (1917)

20:56

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Presto – | 2:20 |
| 2 | Marche chinoise | 3:32 |
| 3 | Le Chant du Rossignol – | 3:36 |
| 4 | Le Jeu du Rossignol mécanique | 11:28 |
- Stephen Jeandheur trumpet solo

Symphony in Three Movements (1942–45)*

21:19

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------|
| 5 | I ♩ = 160 | 9:09 |
| 6 | II Andante – Più mosso – Tempo I | 6:08 |
| 7 | III Con moto | 5:58 |

Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra (1949)*

16:56

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 8 | I Presto | 6:40 |
| 9 | II Andante rapsodico | 5:05 |
| 10 | III Allegro capriccioso ma sempre giusto | 5:11 |

Geoffrey Tozer piano

Concerto for Piano and Wind

Instruments (1950)

19:31

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 11 | I Largo – Allegro – Più mosso – Maestoso
(Largo del principio) | 7:14 |
| 12 | II Largo – Più mosso – Doppia valore – Tempo primo | 7:21 |
| 13 | III Allegro – Agitato – Lento – Strigendo | 4:50 |

Boris Berman piano

	COMPACT DISC THREE	TT 66:36
	Petrushka (1911)	33:03
	Tableau I: The Shrovetide Fair	9:31
1	The Crowds	5:03
2	The Mountebank's Booth	1:44
3	Russian Dance	2:44
4	Tableau II: Petrushka's Room	4:08
	Tableau III	6:52
5	The Moor's Room	2:56
6	Dance of the Ballerina	0:48
7	Waltz	3:08
	Tableau IV	12:32
8	The Shrovetide Fair (evening)	1:02
9	Wet Nurses' Dance	2:17
10	Peasant and Bear	1:19
11	Dance of the Gipsy Girls	1:04
12	Dance of the Coachmen and Ostlers	1:51
13	The Masqueraders	1:25
14	Death of Petrushka	3:34
	Ursula Rüttiman piano • Lô Angelloz flute Dennis Ferry cornet • Pierre Pilloud tuba	
	Apollon Musagète (1947)*	29:34
	Tableau I	5:09
15	Birth of Apollo	

	Tableau II	24:25
16	Apollo's Variation	2:48
17	Pas d'action	4:17
18	Calliope's Variation. Allegretto	1:37
19	Polyhymna's Variation. Allegro	1:16
20	Terpsichore's Variation. Allegretto	1:35
21	Apollo's Variation. Lento	2:04
22	Pas de deux	4:06
23	Coda. Vivo – Tempo sostenuto – Agitato	3:17
24	Apothéose. Largo e tranquillo	3:10
25	Circus Polka (1944)	3:41
	COMPACT DISC FOUR	TT 74:35
	The Rite of Spring (1911–13, revised 1947)*	32:42
	Part I – Adoration of the Earth	
1	Introduction –	3:13
2	The Augurs of Spring – Dances of the Young Girls –	3:46
3	Ritual of Abduction –	1:20
4	Spring Rounds –	3:31
5	Ritual of the River Tribes –	1:51
6	Procession of the Sage –	0:43
7	The Sage –	0:23
8	Dance of the Earth	1:16
	Part II – The Sacrifice	
9	Introduction –	3:57
10	Mystic Circles of the Young Girls –	3:11

11	Glorification of the Chosen One –	1:26
12	Evocation of the Ancestors –	0:49
13	Ritual Action of the Ancestors –	3:06
14	Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One) Raynal Malsam bassoon solo	4:09
	Canticum Sacrum (1955)*	16:40
15	Dedicatio	0:40
16	I Euntes in mundum	1:59
17	II Surge, aquilo	2:25
	III Ad Tres Virtutes Hortationes	
18	Caritas –	2:12
19	Spes –	1:47
20	Fides	2:46
21	IV Brevis Motus Cantilenae	2:41
22	V Illi autem profecti	1:58
	Requiem Canticles (1966)*	14:01
23	Prelude	1:06
24	Exaudi	1:34
25	Dies irae –	0:58
26	Tuba mirum	1:07
27	Interlude	2:31
28	Rex tremendae	1:17
29	Lacrimosa	1:55
30	Libera me	0:58
31	Postlude	2:18

Chorale Variations (1955)* **10:40**
**on the Christmas Carol ‘Vom Himmel hoch,
da komm’ ich her’ (J. S. Bach)**

32	Chorale	0:48
33	Variation I In canone all'Ottava	1:13
34	Variation II Alio modo in canone alla Quinta	1:14
35	Variation III In canone alla Settima	1:51
36	Variation IV In canone all'Ottava per augmentationem	2:30
37	Variation V L'altra sorte del canone al rovescio	3:04

Irène Friedli alto
Frieder Lang tenor
Michel Brodard bass
Chœur Pro Arte de Lausanne
Chœur de Chambre Romand
André Charlet choir master

COMPACT DISC FIVE **TT 79:32**

Symphony in C (1940) **28:21**

1	I Moderato alla breve – Tempo agitato senza troppo accelerare – Tempo I	9:47
2	II Larghetto concertante – Doppio movimento – Doppio valore	6:35
3	III Allegretto	4:53
4	IV Largo – Tempo giusto, alla breve	6:59

Oedipus Rex (1927)

Opera – Oratorio in two acts after Sophocles 50:58

Prologue

5	<i>Speaker:</i> Spectateurs...	1:08
	Act I	22:44
6	<i>Chorus:</i> Caedit nos pestis	3:33
7	<i>Oedipus:</i> Liberi, vos liberabo	3:01
8	<i>Speaker:</i> Voici Créon...	0:28
9	<i>Creon:</i> Respondit deus	3:16
10	<i>Oedipus:</i> Non reperias	3:15
11	<i>Speaker:</i> Oedipe interroge...	0:48
12	<i>Chorus:</i> Delie exspectamus	1:49
13	<i>Tiresias:</i> Dicere non possum	2:55
14	<i>Oedipus:</i> Invidia fortunam odit	3:39

Act II

26:58

15	<i>Chorus:</i> Gloria!	1:11
16	<i>Speaker:</i> La dispute des princes...	1:15
17	<i>Jocasta:</i> Nonne erubescite reges	5:15
18	<i>Jocasta, Oedipus, Chorus:</i> Laius in trivio	2:26
19	<i>Jocasta, Oedipus:</i> Oracula...	1:56
20	<i>Speaker:</i> Le témoin du meurtre...	0:50
21	<i>Messenger, Chorus:</i> Adest omniscius	2:16
22	<i>Shepherd:</i> Oportebat tacere	1:24
23	<i>Oedipus:</i> Nonne monstrum rescituri	1:17
24	<i>Shepherd, Messenger, Chorus:</i> In monte reppertus est	1:13
25	<i>Oedipus:</i> Natus sum	0:47
26	<i>Speaker:</i> Et maintenant...	1:48
27	<i>Messenger, Chorus:</i> Divum Jocastae caput mortuum	5:21

Jocasta.....Gabriele Schnaut soprano
Oedipus..... Peter Svensson tenor
Shepherd.....Ruben Amoretti tenor
Creon.....Franz Grundheber baritone
Tiresias.....Günther Von Kannen bass
Messenger...Rudolf Rosen bass
Speaker.....Jean Piat
Chœur de Chambre Romand
Chœur Pro Arte de Lausanne
Société chorale du Brassus
André Charlet chorus master

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande
Robert Zimansky/Jean Piguet* leaders
Neeme Järvi

The Essential Stravinsky

Symphony in E flat

By the time the twenty-three-year-old Stravinsky came to write his first major orchestral work, the well-made symphony was the order of the day in Russia. The path opened up by the experiments of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* and Rachmaninov's First Symphony turned out to be a dead end, while the late-romantic epic mode favoured by Rachmaninov in his return to symphonic form, and by Glière in his *Ilya Muromets* Symphony, lay in the future. It was Glazunov, decking out attractive thematic ideas with masterly counterpoint and within careful proportions, who reigned supreme in 1905. He was the chief influence on Stravinsky's E flat major Symphony, or so the composer wrote in his autobiography, and yet there is rather more within this curious hybrid than was ever dreamt of in the Glazunov philosophy. Not in terms of orchestration, which is often remarkably crude considering that Stravinsky took each part of the work as he composed it to his teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, for approval, and even made several 'improvements' to the score in later years, but rather in the different modes of expression represented by each movement.

The first is closest to Glazunov in post-*Meistersinger* vein (the Wagnerian spell had been decisively cast upon the Russians with the St Petersburg premiere of the *Ring* cycle in 1889), though Stravinsky's epic statement has nothing to do except parade in various orchestral colours, and nowhere to go in the development except proclaim itself ever more grandly. It is effectively offset by, and later combined with, a second theme initially given to the clarinet – Glazunov's and Rimsky's favourite candidate for counter-subjects. Only the coda, with a brief flash of jazzy syncopation before the final thrust, hints at things to come. The Scherzo has better invention ingeniously treated in homage to Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov: a familiar Russian patter-song shared between strings and woodwind, a dash of grotesquerie first insinuated by oboe and trumpet, and a trio folk-melody treated to good-humoured martial elaboration in the style of tsar's march from Rimsky's *Tale of Tsar Saltan*.

It is in the *Largo* that Stravinsky comes closest to deeper feelings, struggling to express a melancholy that is no mere imitation of the *Pathétique's* finale (though the sinking figure shortly after the first climax virtually

quotes Tchaikovsky's doom-laden descent into oblivion). Tchaikovsky would surely have used the first idea merely as an introduction, not a theme, and his mature orchestration is always much more accomplished, but there is a new note in Stravinsky's spare, desolate coda and one almost expects the horn-theme of the *Firebird* finale to break the darkness of *tremolo* strings right at the end. Lively celebration comes easily to Stravinsky in the concluding *Allegro molto*, which never outstays its welcome and leaps from one idea to another with a volatility that the composer would learn to harness for *Petrushka*. The sharp accents place Stravinsky in the company of Borodin rather than Glazunov, although it was the latter that Rimsky-Korsakov accused his pupil of imitating here. And what did Glazunov think of the Symphony after the first performance in April 1907? Apparently either 'very nice, very nice' or 'rather heavy instrumentation for such empty music' according to two reminiscences made by Stravinsky at different times; but then his memory always was capricious.

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Violin Concerto

'I was not a complete novice in handling the violin', Stravinsky wrote of the time spent in 1931 working on a newly-commissioned

concerto. 'Apart from my pieces for the string quartet and numerous passages in *Pulcinella*, I had had occasion, particularly in the *Histoire du Soldat*, to tackle the technique of the violin as a solo instrument.' Oddly enough, he did not specify the second number of his 1927 ballet *Apollon Musagète*, which begins with a solo cadenza and continues as a duet for two violins as a kind of tribute to Bach's Double Concerto. The Violin Concerto keeps Bach even more in mind – and spirit, too: it is typical of Stravinsky's magpie genius, and the intensity of his love for the composers whose style he adopts, that the most consistently Bachian movement, Aria II, should also be the one to sound the depths with its *cantabile* melodies exclusively reserved for the soloist. As with those other great tributes, Oedipus' Verdian aria 'Invidia fortunam' and Tom Rakewell's Mozart-style solos in *The Rake's Progress*, the 'heart' remains, as Stravinsky suggested, in inverted commas, but it moves us none the less.

For much of the Violin Concerto, though, the soloist duets with, or makes chamber music with, the other instruments in lighter, more conversational style – the cue here, a far cry from the famous violin concertos of the nineteenth-century repertoire, was surely the fourth of Hindemith's *Kammermusik* series. It was to Hindemith, an excellent violinist and viola-player, that Stravinsky turned to ask

whether it mattered that he himself had no first-hand experience of the instrument. 'Not only did he allay my doubts, but he went further and told me that it would be a very good thing, as it would make me avoid a routine technique, and would give rise to ideas which would not be suggested by the familiar movement of the fingers.' An excellent case in point is the wide-spanning chord which opens each movement and breaks across *Aria II* like an unexpected cry of anguish. When Stravinsky showed it to Samuel Dushkin, adopted son of the Concerto's wealthy American patron, Blair Fairchild, and the work's first performer, the violinist declared the stretch of an eleventh within the chord unplayable; but when Dushkin returned home, he found the stretch possible, told Stravinsky so and thus preserved what the composer called the work's 'passport'. An earlier specimen of Stravinsky's idiosyncratic writing for the violin, the confident strut of the doomed hero in *The Soldier's Tale*, makes an unexpected return towards the end of the *Capriccio*, to be joined by an even more unexpected visitor – *The Rite of Spring's* Chosen One – before the bright final runs confirm that it was only a last-minute joke after all, adding an extra perspective to the Bach stylisations.

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Symphony of Psalms

A wound apparently healed by prayer marked the beginning of Stravinsky's Christian orthodoxy, or so he wrote in his autobiography: in September 1925, pain from an abscess on his right forefinger abated in the nick of time for a piano recital shortly after a visit to a 'miraculous' icon in Nice (Stravinsky's inverted commas). The work that followed was *Oedipus Rex*, and it was not until five years later that he composed a hymn of thanksgiving, the *Symphony of Psalms* – his first work to be dedicated 'to the glory to God' (as well as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, whose fiftieth anniversary commission gave him free rein for subject matter and the forces used).

In fact, the *Symphony of Psalms* has more than an idiosyncratic setting of a Latin text in common with *Oedipus*, that earlier 'drama of purification' (he had started to compose the *Symphony* with a Slavonic text in mind, though the fiercely rhythmic aspect of the setting and the deliberate flexibility of stresses are remarkably akin to *Oedipus*). On a general level, in attempting to rescue the Psalms from the musical sentimentalists, Stravinsky saw in them 'poems of exultation, but also of anger and judgement, and even of curses' – much like the world of Greek tragedy he had already so well appreciated. In specific terms, he admitted that the figure of staccato repeated

notes introduced by bassoons and horns after the introduction to the third movement of the *Symphony of Psalms* – his compositional starting point – bears a close resemblance to Jocasta's 'Oracula, oracula', and the minor thirds in the trumpet and harp pattern shortly afterwards, also employed in the semiquaver flourishes at the beginning of the work, play an important part in much the same way as their counterparts in the ominous accompaniment to the Greek chorus' 'Oedipus, Oedipus, adest pestis'. The symbolising of the Holy Trinity by triple repetitions in the oratorio's 'Gloria' chorus here lies behind the structure of the entire work: the multiplication in the lengths of the three movements as well as the careful threefold placings of the *Allelujas* in Psalm 150. Finally, both works exploit the hieratic, 'breathing' quality of woodwind, with strings (here cellos and basses only) used sparingly for *cantabile* purposes; Stravinsky's intervening love-affair with string orchestra in *Apollon Musagète* and *The Fairy's Kiss* seems to have been easily set aside.

The composer's 1962 observations to Robert Craft shed an interesting, if spirit-of-the-moment, light on each of the three movements. The opening setting of two famous verses from Psalm 38 was, he said, 'composed in a state of religious and musical ebullience', even though the tone is

desperately plangent in the keening figure for first horn and solo cello, *Cantabile espressivo*, immediately taken up by choral altos. The second movement he described as 'an upside-down pyramid of fugues': beginning on treble-range woodwind (no easy task for scoring) with a subject derived from the all-important thirds, giving way to a second, choral fugue before the two are joined at base. Graphic description ensues for Psalm 150: the 'Laudates' of the slow introduction and the final apotheosis are 'a prayer to the Russian image of the infant Christ with orb and sceptre', with the central *Allegro* inspired by 'a vision of Elijah's chariot climbing the heavens' and the softly tolling hymn of praise to be thought of as 'issuing from the skies'. Such statements embarrass me', Stravinsky adds, oyster-like; but the images stick.

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Le Chant du Rossignol

There is no more colourful example of Stravinsky's transformation from impressionistically-inclined disciple of Rimsky-Korsakov to the Ballets Russes' audacious court composer than his forty-five minute opera *The Nightingale*. The first sketches, setting Hans Christian Andersen's moral fairytale to a Russian symbolist libretto by Stepan Mitusov, were approved by Rimsky shortly

before his death in June 1908, and Stravinsky completed the first act the following summer. Then came the commissions from Diaghilev – *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* – and it was not until 1913, when the Moscow Free Theatre encouraged Stravinsky to think again about *The Nightingale*, that he turned back to it and set another two acts to music with no concession to his former style. David Hockney, most recent in the work's line of distinguished designers, describes the change as 'from soft, undulating rhythms to harsh angles', and Stravinsky thought it perfectly reasonable that the gentle poetry suitable for the nightingale's domain – a forest by the sea, at night – in Act One should be supplanted by a completely different idiom for the baroque luxury of a Chinese Court, complete with bizarre rituals and mechanical entertainments.

Even so, when he came to distil a short 'symphonic poem', *Le Chant du Rossignol*, from the action in 1917 – eventually premiered, like the original back in 1914, by Diaghilev's company – he went for consistency and started with the palace uproar of Act Two (exactly like the *musique concrète* of the St Petersburg telephone remembered from childhood, he told Robert Craft). The orchestration is honed to perfection, and the action slightly re-ordered, but the nightingale's new music to ravish the

Chinese emperor is clearly recognisable in a cadenza for solo flute (taking the place of the opera's coloratura soprano), as are the stiff-jointed oboe pipings of the mechanical bird which puts the real nightingale to flight. The ensemble music – introduction and march – is the world of *The Rite* translated into Chinoiserie: pentatonic (five-note) tunes sometimes grindingly harmonised, muted brass, dizzying switches from high to low sonorities. At the first concert performance, conducted by Ansermet in Geneva's Victoria Hall, the Swiss audience took such quaint discord very seriously and – ignorant, as yet, of *The Rite of Spring* – spoiled for a fight, the pro-Stravinsky faction crying 'Vive Stravinsky, vive Dada'.

The orchestration thins out completely for the music of the third act. Its threatening introduction, with Death sitting vulture-like in imperial robes beside the Emperor's sickbed, is taken unaltered from the opera, but again Stravinsky carefully adapts for the returned nightingale's plaintive victory over its master's unwelcome visitor. The crisis and its outcome are framed by the only music Stravinsky carried over from his first act, the Fisherman's Song, its solo-trumpet presentation taking it away from Russian folksong and closer to Gershwin for a bluesy happy end.

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Symphony in Three Movements

The one obvious exception to the light-hearted tone of *Capriccio* is the rapid, rising scale for strings that appears four times in the first movement and seems to promise something more dramatic. Its more famous counterpart at the start of the *Symphony in Three Movements* fulfils that promise in what is, at least in the symphony's first movement, a darker, more tense concerto for orchestra with *concertante* piano often employed *Capriccio*-style. That was what Stravinsky planned for the first-movement material written in 1942, though the piano bowed out to harp in what became the second movement – sketches for his unlikely (and swiftly terminated) contribution to Franz Werfel's film *The Song of Bernadette*. The third movement, completed shortly before the New York premiere in January 1946, used both harp and piano, though hardly as a unifying feature; Stravinsky later wondered whether he ought not to have called the end product 'Three Symphonic Movements'.

What really unites the *Symphony in Three Movements* is the powering rhythmic intensity which holds the sectional structure together (the most insistent from Stravinsky since *The Rite of Spring* over thirty years earlier) and, behind it, his response to newsreel images of the Second World War which, in an unguarded moment, he specifically attached to certain

sections of this kaleidoscopic score. In the first movement, the timpani's 'rumba' ('associated in my imagination with the movements of war machines', he told Robert Craft) and the spiky shuffling of piano and strings yield to brighter, more lightly-scored sequences; but the 'war' element unequivocally gains the upper hand in the insistent, semi-quaver figures for clarinet, piano and strings which lead to *fortissimo*, full-orchestra explosions – 'instrumental conversations', according to Stravinsky, 'showing the Chinese people scratching and digging in their fields' before being overrun by scorched-earth tactics. In the light of that avowal, the writing for woodwind immediately afterwards is surely a requiem, although thanks to the movement's uniform tempo, tension never slackens.

Bernadette's vision, a *cantabile* flute melody offset by gracious strings and harp, brings a change of air, though there is disquiet in this *Andante*'s middle section, as well as sparingly eloquent writing for string quartet. The brass, silent except for horns throughout, goose-step into action near the start of the third movement – an image of military force as graphic as anything in the later symphonies of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. Stravinsky was unequivocal on the imagery of German arrogance, overturned and immobile in the fugue launched by trombone and piano, before the Allies fight against the 'rumba' figure

familiar from the first movement, and on to victory. The composer's disingenuous claim, 'in spite of what I have said, the symphony is not programmatic' is best interpreted by noting that the description does not account for some of the surprisingly good-humoured invention along the way: a symphony with war footage, then, but nothing as straightforward as a 'war symphony'.

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Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra

By 1929 Stravinsky the concert soloist had given no less than forty performances of his Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, so it was as a repertoire alternative that he composed the *Capriccio* ready for a Paris premiere that December, Ansermet conducting. Hallmarks of the intervening masterpieces played their part in freeing *Capriccio* from some of the restrictions laid upon the earlier Concerto. The re-introduction of strings as an expressive force, sparingly touched upon in *Oedipus* and blossoming for *Apollon Musagète*, brings a modified rapture in the shape of a solo quartet (styled *concertino* to distinguish it from the full, *ripieno* strings); and the Tchaikovsky touch so lovingly and exclusively applied to the 1928 ballet *The Fairy's Kiss* lends grace to the *cantabile* woodwind solos of *Capriccio*'s first movement, before being

taken apart to reveal its mechanisms in the comic-strip finale.

As far as Stravinsky was concerned, though, the true guiding genius behind *Capriccio* was Weber, 'prince of music', and specifically his piano sonatas. For the form, he had in mind Praetorius' definition of *capriccio* as 'a synonym of the *fantasia*, which was a free form made up of *fugato* instrumental passages. This form enabled me to develop my music by the juxtaposition of episodes of various kinds which follow one another and by their very nature give the piece that aspect of caprice from which it takes its name.' The piano's role is mostly chattering scales and arpeggios set against the singing lines of strings and wind (the brass play little part), though it takes momentary centre-stage for the *Andante rapsodico*'s Bach-style proclamations and cadenza (designed, Stravinsky said, to conjure the 'bordello-piano sonority' of the cimbalom in a Rumanian restaurant band). The prevailing mood is light and elusive throughout; little wonder that Berg, meeting Stravinsky in 1934, should have expressed a wish to be able to write 'such light-hearted music'.

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Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments

The Concerto came in useful as a touring piece for Stravinsky the concert soloist

between 1924, when he completed it, and 1929, when he gave himself a break with the *Capriccio*, though it was not written with that end in mind. In fact it did not begin life as a concerto at all, although Stravinsky started composing, as always, at the piano. 'Only gradually... did I understand that the musical material could be used to most advantage in the piano, whose neat, clear sonority and polyphonic resources suited the dryness and neatness which I was seeking in the structure of the music I had composed.' It seems more likely that Stravinsky had in mind from the first the striking combinations of wind and brass (here supported by timpani and double-basses) which follow a line of thought begun by the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* of 1920, dedicated to the memory of Debussy. The slow introduction, in which the piano plays no part (and little of much importance when it returns at the end of the first movement and just before the disorienting last *Stringendo* of the finale), conjures a similar tone of solemn commemoration. The 'symphonies' (literally 'soundings-together') at the start are no less careful – the deliberate heaviness of four horns lending dark colour to the Bach-style dotted rhythms, oboes answering with a touch of consolation. In the *Largo*, the piano adds ambiguity both with its deadpan intermediary role – expressively brightened by woodwind, solemnified again by

brass – and its two, more searching, cadenzas. To criticise the heaviness of Stravinsky's C major here is to miss the point, as well as what is genuinely moving, if not downright disturbing, about the movement.

The rest is crisp fun and games with rhythms, polyphony and classical form; the piano remains content, when out of the limelight (which is most of the time), to take the middle ground in keenly accented semiquaver runs. The Czerny exercises which Stravinsky diligently studied to please Serge Koussevitzky – the man who had suggested he should play his own solo role – and to bring his technique up to scratch for the first performance must have helped here. Indeed, technique was hardly the problem on the night; it was at the simplest point in the piano writing, the opening of the *Largo*, that Stravinsky had to whisper to Koussevitzky a terrified 'how does it start?' before the hushed reply restored equanimity.

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Petrushka

Stravinsky's third ballet for Diaghilev, *The Rite of Spring*, did not take as long as the original, operatic *Nightingale* on route from inspiration (in this case a vision of pagan ceremonials) to completion. But there was intervention here, too, in the shape of a diversion which turned

into a fully-fledged case. It was shortly after that sudden vision in the summer of 1910, a few months after the success of *The Firebird*, that Stravinsky sought refreshment in 'a sort of *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra':

I had in my mind a distinct picture of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. The orchestra in turn retaliates with menacing trumpet blasts. The outcome is a terrific noise which reaches its climax and ends in the sorrowful and querulous collapse of the poor puppet.

Shortly afterwards, Diaghilev visited Stravinsky in Clarnes, and his instinct for good theatrical vision led him to persuade Stravinsky to put *The Rite* on hold and to expand the newly-titled *Petrushka* into a one-act ballet.

So the *Konzertstück*, a crazy dialogue between piano and orchestra, became the ballet's heart-and-soul Second Tableau, a play within the surrounding pantomime of the St Petersburg Shrovetide Fair which Stravinsky and the creator of the scenario, designer Alexander Benois, remembered so well from childhood: *Petrushka*. Its self-consciously modern harmonic idiom – above all the famous bitonal fanfare introduced by clarinets which the composer labelled 'Petrushka's insult to the public' – would be in marked contrast to the string of dances required for the outdoor scenes; divertissements to offset

the struggle of the pathetic hero with the Moor for the love of the frivolous Ballerina. So, for the outdoor First and Fourth Tableaux, Stravinsky decked out in lurid and sometimes angular orchestration a number of Russian folk-tunes. Unfortunately the cheap little popular song first heard in barrel-organ effect near the start of the ballet was not the common property Stravinsky had believed; for unauthorised use of this ditty, 'Elle avait une jambe de bois', he was sued by the publisher and had, until the 1950s, to pay a percentage of the royalties.

Most of the story unfolds between these *corps de ballet* fun and games. It begins with the manifestation of the mysterious Showman, stilling the crowds on bassoons and contrabassoon and summoning his puppets with a surprisingly winsome flute solo. *Petrushka's* desperate soliloquy and an interlude from the visiting Ballerina in Tableau Two are contrasted with a scene in the cell of the brutish Moor, whose murderous thoughts are momentarily soothed by the Ballerina (trumpet and side drum). A real *mésalliance* of a love duet follows, before *Petrushka* enters and is chased out by his scimitar-wielding rival. After the Shrovetide divertissement, the puppets emerge from the booth and scuffle in front of the crowd; the Moor, despite the Ballerina's entreaties, strikes *Petrushka* down. *Petrushka* laments his miserable fate in a few

expressive lines, dies, and is held up by the Showman as a creature of straw and wood. High up on the roof of the puppet theatre, *Petrushka's* ghost gives the lie on blasting trumpets (Stravinsky's idea, not Benois'), and in four quizzical pizzicato notes – which Diaghilev at first wanted altered in favour of a 'tonal ending' – the drama cuts off abruptly.

Petrushka was first performed by the Ballets Russes in Paris on 13 June 1911; Stravinsky later expressed delight at Fokine's choreography, Nijinsky's 'unsurpassed rendering' of the role of *Petrushka* and Pierre Monteux's score-faithful conducting. Although Stravinsky revised the score in 1946 for a slightly smaller orchestra (in an edition published the following year), it is the sumptuous original version we hear in this recording.

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Apollon Musagète

Stravinsky began work on *Apollon Musagète* shortly after the first performance of *Oedipus Rex* in May 1927. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge's generous commission for a new half-hour composition to be performed in Washington's Library of Congress gave him free rein in terms of subject and style – the perfect opportunity to take up another Greek-based idea which had long fascinated

him. Again, it was a case of what he would later refer to as 'manners' lending depth and perspective to a myth: for just as in *Oedipus*, Sophocles' tragedy had taken on hieratic, religious overtones through the medium of cast-iron Latin and Stravinsky's setting of it, so the subject of Apollo as master of the muses was here, as he put it in his autobiography, to be 'plastically interpreted by dancing of the so-called classical school'.

Two components of this classicism, the governing rhythm and the choice of string orchestra, came to be just as important as the myth, if not more so. 'The real subject... is versification', he told Robert Craft in the early 1960s, and indeed the iambic pattern governs all (verbally simplified, that's 'ta-tum, ta-tum', or – in musical terms simpler still – the dotted rhythm heard in the first bar and then throughout the ballet in various shapes and forms). Stravinsky was thinking especially of Louis XIV's classical entertainments when he evoked the Alexandrines of the sun king's favoured poets Racine and Boileau (quoted in the score at the head of Calliope's variation, which is actually subtitled *l'Alexandrine*). As for the exclusive use of strings, Stravinsky wanted to create a 'white ballet' with music that would match 'the beauty of line in classical dancing'; for that he had to write diatonically and without 'ensembles of wood and brass, the effects of which have really been too much

exploited of late'. Contrasts of volume replaced contrasts of instrumental colours, and at the first European performance in Paris, under Diaghilev's aegis, Georges Balanchine's choreography returned the classical compliment – a perfect ballet which shows no signs of being dislodged from the repertoire.

These facets suggest extreme austerity, but *Apollon* is just as much about singing melody as it is about rhythm and restricted colouring. In the Prologue, *Birth of Apollo*, the dotted figures soon resolve into a pure, strong theme just before curtain-up, and the god's entry into the world is followed by a swift dance for his goddess-nurses, its fleet patterns and *cantabile* lines briefly evoking the world of Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings* before solemnity returns and Apollo is left alone. His 'first essay in verse', a violin solo with Bachian adornment, leads to a sparely-accompanied duet for two violins before Stravinsky's three chosen muses appear on the scene. After a *Pas d'action* for all four principals, melody blossoming into sonorous polyphony, the three 'representatives of choreographic art' have a variation apiece. Stravinsky eloquently characterises them in his autobiography: 'Calliope, receiving the stylus and tablets from Apollo, personifies poetry and its rhythms' (hence *l'Alexandrine*); 'Polyhymnia, finger on lips, represents mime' (in nimble, flowing semiquavers); 'finally Terpsichore, combining in

herself both the rhythms of poetry and the eloquence of gesture, reveals dancing to the world' (again, song and rhythm are one). Apollo's variation is bathed in the brilliant light of richly divided string chords, in marked contrast to the muted but still rapturous hues of his *Pas de deux* with Terpsichore. A Coda playing ingeniously with the ballet's iambic preference yields to a solemn Apotheosis as Apollo leads the muses to Parnassus: the B minor farewell of the dotted rhythm against hushed tremolos bears out what Stravinsky so enigmatically wrote about the 'tragedy' of the final ascent.

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Circus Polka

Stravinsky forged some unexpected musical liaisons during his American years, and none stranger than that with Bessie, performing elephant with Barnum's Circus, who sent a telegram congratulating him on the first concert performance of *Circus Polka* in 1944. She had carried Vera Zorina, ballerina wife of his favourite choreographer, Georges Balanchine, in the original entertainment to the strains of a circus-band arrangement (not by Stravinsky).

The music itself is neither as cumbersome nor as arch as we might expect, its shifting surely defying pachydermal intelligence.

Stravinsky claimed that the quotation of Schubert's *Marche militaire* which crowns proceedings came naturally, 'which I say to circumvent the inevitable German professor inevitably calling my use of it a parody'.

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The Rite of Spring

The Rite of Spring (1911–13, revised 1947) is an allegory of spring, and at its heart lies an act of sacrifice, the price to be paid for a necessary renewal. For Stravinsky it was this central image that mattered – an image of eternal recurrence, of a cyclic order in things, of endlessly renewable repetition, always the same and always different. Hence the invocation of ancient pagan rituals, articulated (in Stravinsky's choreographic vision) through 'rhythmic mass movements of the greatest simplicity'. On this and other levels the work was an almost archetypal document of its times, finding a wider aesthetic context in the sophisticated neo-primitivism of Russian and Parisian art of the second decade. Paradoxically its mechanical pulses also echo the futurist aesthetic of the modern city, no less a theme for second-decade artists. Yet, faced with the startling originality of the music, such attempts to 'place' *The Rite* seem at best glib. Even today's easy familiarity scarcely dulls the explosive modernity of the

work. It erupted suddenly and shockingly from the 'dark embryo', like the 'violent Russian spring' that – as remembered by Stravinsky – 'seemed to begin in an hour and was like the whole earth cracking'.

It is tempting to extend the central metaphor of renewal to the musical language itself. This comes down to very basic changes in musical syntax, already implicit in *Petrushka* (1910–11), but fully realised in *The Rite of Spring*. Put plainly, Stravinsky turned on its head the classical relationship between harmony and rhythm in this work. The classical phrase is shaped and directed above all by harmony, while rhythm maintains a background of regular periodicity (metre). In *The Rite*, rhythm is the shaping element (specifically rhythmic asymmetries), while harmony is the unchanging, 'static' element. This transformation of syntax is at its most blatant in 'Les augures printaniers' (The Augurs of Spring), where a single chord is subject to asymmetrical rhythmic patterning, but it is present throughout *The Rite*, even in the quietly intense introductions to both parts. Within the densely interwoven counterpoints of these introductions, motivic fragments derived from folk-music revolve around a handful of fixed pitches, defining 'fields' of activity which remain largely unchanged. There is no growth, no development in any traditional sense of the word.

And this is true of the work's larger formal process too. In *The Rite* Stravinsky rejected evolutionary procedures in favour of a juxtaposition and superimposition of sharply differentiated and strongly characterised materials in a manner which is often analogous to cinematic 'intercutting'. Repetition and return are at the heart of the process; at the tonal level, at the level of the individual phrase, where motivic fragments oscillate continuously, and even at the level of the elemental driving pulse. The primal energy of pulse, stripped of metric regularity, acquired a new status in *The Rite*, reaching its expressive high point in the ferocious barbarity of the culminating movements of both parts, the 'Danse de la terre' (Dance of the Earth) and 'Danse sacrée' (Sacrificial Dance). Quite simply, there had been nothing like this before.

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Canticum Sacrum/Von Himmel hoch

More than most composers, Stravinsky made 'style' part of the subject of his music, itself a material to be elaborated. It is perhaps in this sense that the term 'neo-classical' may best be used of his output – not to delineate a particular period, but to define a general aesthetic which would re-establish a distance between the personal voice and the inter-

personal materials on which it discourses. The near contemporaneity of *Canticum Sacrum* and the *Von Himmel hoch* Variations (both were composed in 1955) neatly illustrates the point. The two works are demonstrably of the same sound-world, with similar orchestration and detail parallels in the instrumental point of phrases; indeed Stravinsky clearly intended them to be programmed together. Yet where the former discourses on the styles of the Venetian renaissance and of Webern, the latter is a 'transcription' of Bach's canonic variations. *Von Himmel hoch* is of course much more than a transcription. Stravinsky adds as well as translates. And even where the notes remain the same, they take on new meaning without entirely losing touch with the old. The essential point is that stylistic difference between the two works – as always in Stravinsky – is a matter of surface, not substance.

Canticum Sacrum took its larger design from the architecture of St Mark's, Venice, for which it was composed, specifically through the disposition of its five movements in harmony with the five domes of the Basilica. Thus the central movement has the greatest weight and the others are grouped around it in related pairs. The relations are partly textual (thematic presentations of the central teachings of the Church, drawn from a variety of biblical sources), and partly musical. The

outer movements, for instance, are linked by their solid tonal foundation and 'massive' sonority, the second and fourth by their vocal solos. More tellingly, the three central movements are distinguished from the outer two by their use of a twelve-note technique which was just then in its infancy within Stravinsky's output. The detailed manipulations of that technique need not concern us, beyond noting that it is employed in such a way that tonal polarities are not just possible, but inevitable. The strong framework of interlocking fifths built on A and A flat in the second movement ('Surge, aquilo') is characteristic.

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Requiem Canticles

Later works by Stravinsky formalised this twelve-note tendency by devising an intricate and unique system of twelve, not only pitch polarities, but chord species, which establish clear points of contact with the harmonic language of his own earlier music. *Requiem Canticles*, completed and first performed in 1966, was the last and (for many) the greatest of these later works, and, fittingly, it was the work performed five years later at Stravinsky's own funeral in Venice. Its synthetic quality ('in the best sense', as Stravinsky himself once remarked) seems to embrace the whole of his

music. And this is clear from the frame of the work – a Prelude 'freezing' the rhythmic asymmetries of *The Rite*, and a Postlude translating the chorale of *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* into a soundscape of bells and pitched percussion. Within that frame Stravinsky presents a kind of précis of the Requiem Mass, and one whose commanding concision again allows echoes of earlier pieces to resonate – from the choral incantations of *Symphony of Psalms* to the aggressive, spiky piano textures of *Movements*. Underlying all is an harmonic idiom – strictly derived from the twelve-note system – whose doublings and tonal distortions neatly symbolise his distance from, and at the same time his dependence on, the sedimented materials of several centuries of harmonic tonality.

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Symphony in C

Commissioned, like the *Symphony of Psalms*, by an American orchestra on its fiftieth anniversary – in this case, the Chicago Symphony – and likewise dedicated 'to the glory of God', the Symphony in C sounds, on a casual first hearing, more like a standard offering to fit the celebratory bill – Stravinsky's first four-movement symphony since the E flat specimen written under Rimsky-Korsakov's guidance some three decades earlier. But there

are contradictions throughout. Stravinsky later defined the predominantly bright and breezy tone of the first two movements as a means of overcoming, rather than expressing, his personal sufferings in the late 1930s: the deaths of his daughter, his first wife and his mother through tuberculosis, the illness which also laid him low for five months in 1939.

There might also have been a discrepancy between the two halves of the work: the third and fourth movements were composed after Stravinsky's move to the USA, under the influence, he later wrote, of new sounds in American jazz and impressions down Los Angeles' neon boulevards. Yet the *Symphony in C*, for all Stravinsky's customary skill in synthesising the influences he loves, is no hybrid like the E flat apprentice predecessor. The seeds of unity are sown in the first two bars: a triplet figure that threatens to become Beethoven's Fifth *Symphony* 'Fate knocking at the door' – already quoted in the 1936 ballet *Jeu de cartes* – but resolves into a unison on three all-important notes (B, C, G) which appear throughout the *symphony*.

In the first movement, they give rise to the charming oboe theme and surface in the wealth of subsequent ideas; and yet, for all his conventional sonata-form proportions between development and straight recapitulation, Stravinsky does not adopt the Beethoven-and-after symphonic method of organic growth,

preferring to wheel round in circles – a grave fault only for those musicologists rigid in their ideas about what a symphonic movement has to do. Even so, the development builds to an agitated climax reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's music for Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty*, if only after the 'treated' fashion of Stravinsky's ballet 'after Tchaikovsky' *The Fairy's Kiss*. Stravinsky later noted that he had the score of Tchaikovsky's First *Symphony* on the desk before him as he worked, as well as scores by Haydn and Beethoven: if anything the Russian master's influence is strongest.

It persists for some of the woodwind writing of the second movement's outer sections, dovetailed with carefully expressive strings; horn and trumpet first appear in the darker middle sequence. If the *Symphony of Psalms* reflects intriguingly on the world of *Oedipus Rex*, then this *Larghetto concertante* makes an interesting prelude to *The Rake's Progress* (1951) – formal rustic idyll with snake in the grass – and the following *Allegretto*'s stylised American scene looks forward to Stravinsky's London in the opera. With the heavier sounds and dislocated rhythms of the fourth movement, however, Stravinsky is already preparing for the explosive violence of the *Symphony in Three Movements* – even the opening gesture of that work is here in embryo – although the gently purposeful resolution is another of those

choruses from above suggesting 'the glory of God' along the lines of the *Symphony of Psalms*, expressed in terms which could only belong here.

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Oedipus Rex

Stravinsky's puppet-heroes have limbs of wood but human hearts and souls, even if the composer was inclined, with characteristic caution, to use inverted commas when talking of 'heart'. *Oedipus* reveals his human credentials rather less readily than Petrushka and the last of a breed, weak-willed Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress*. If we look for personality in the frozen manners of the 1927 opera-oratorio, we are unlikely to find it in what Stravinsky cared to keep of Jean Cocteau's ruthlessly pared-down and Latinised text (and even in Cocteau's play *The Infernal Machine* *Oedipus* does not emerge as the powerful, inquisitive character Sophocles made of him). Sympathy and character are there in the music, but finding a way through to them from the starting-point of Stravinsky's interest in the subject – at least as he narrated it to Robert Craft in 1962 – needs some detective work.

Language and religious sensibilities came hand in hand as the first considerations. Reading through a copy of Jörgensen's *Life of St Francis of Assisi* in September 1925,

Stravinsky was struck by the saint's use of Provençal for solemn occasions rather than his everyday Italian. He too was looking for a special language in a project which he had decided should carry hieratical overtones (he told Craft that the first phase of his Christian orthodoxy also stemmed from this time, although it was some three years before he came round to writing the *Symphony of Psalms*). For his 'archetypal drama of purification', accordingly, he settled on Latin as 'a medium not dead, but turned to stone, and so monumentalised as to have become immune from all risk of vulgarisation'. He avoided the original Greek of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* 'because I had no notion of how to treat Greek musically (or Latin, Latinists will say, but there I did at least have my idea). What was left of Cocteau's text he turned over to the catholic priest Jean Daniélou for translation and proceeded (as he suggests) to set it as he pleased, deliberately avoiding consistency of linguistic stress – the very name 'Oedipus' is delivered in a number of different ways – but never underestimating the expressive potential of the text. At the first performance in Paris on 30 May 1927, a 'macabre present' for the twentieth birthday of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, Cocteau's role was minimised still further: he had clearly envisaged taking on the role of the Speaker – the one element of the finished work with which Stravinsky remained

dissatisfied – but Diaghilev awarded it to a younger, more handsome man. Cocteau eventually came into his own as narrator and designer in a production at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1952 conducted by Stravinsky, who praised Cocteau's mime sequences even though they were a contradiction of his own original hopes for staging – all on one level, with the chorus in rows and the principal singers 'living statues' able to move only their arms and heads.

All this was surely designed only to reinforce the emotional impact of the music. And emotional it is, even though critics in the 1920s claimed – some still do – that *Oedipus Rex* is nothing more than a parade of clever pastiches with Handel at the forefront and Meyerbeer not far beyond. One or two echoes should be self-evident: the Monteverdian melismas of Oedipus' first public speech, oratorio clichés for Creon's 'Respondit deus' and the Mussorgsky touch for the central 'Gloria' (because its threefold repetitions brought to mind the trinity as represented in Russian church ritual). Stravinsky suggested casually to Craft that the real guiding light was Verdi. He expanded no further, but Leonard Bernstein linked both the seminal four notes which set the work ablaze and Oedipus' cry 'Creon desires to be king' with *Aida* and specifically with Amneris, the arrogant princess brought low. It seems to me that Oedipus' solo, 'Invidia fortunam odit', the first revelation of his

heart and soul, is modelled very closely on the E flat major section of the tenor aria in Verdi's Requiem – same key, same voice, same sense of quiet assurance. If so it is, like all of Stravinsky's adaptations, a tribute sincerely meant.

There is also, in and around the set pieces, a tremendous unity to the work, and much of it comes from the interval of a minor third first heard in the tense *ostinato* figure for harp, piano and timpani which accompanies the chorus' 'Oedipus, adest pestis' near the start. Stravinsky added that critics should observe the effect of a persistent minor key – especially noticeable in the music of Oedipus and Jocasta around the central C major blaze of the 'Gloria' chorus – and the rhythms, because many of them respect Sophocles' choral metres and most of them are pointedly regular by comparison with their counterparts in previous Stravinsky scores. Certainly the simplicity is shocking in what Stravinsky called the 'mortuary tarantella' of the 'Mulier in vestibulo' chorus and, of course, profound in Oedipus's bleak moment of revelation, 'Lux facta est'. Stravinsky declared himself most interested in the person of the fate that governs the characters, but time and again in his hero's music he proves himself surprisingly susceptible to the fate of the person.

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