

STRAVINSKY

Three Greek Ballets

Apollo • Agon • Orpheus

London Symphony Orchestra • Orchestra of St Luke's
Robert Craft



Igor
STRAVINSKY
 (1882-1971)
Three Greek Ballets

Apollo: Ballet in Two Scenes 28:18

1 Prologue: The Birth of Apollo	4:04
2 Apollo's Variation	3:01
3 Pas d'action: Apollo and the Muses	4:20
4 Variation of Calliope	1:22
5 Variation of Polymnia	1:17
6 Variation of Terpsichore	1:31
7 Variation of Apollo	2:06
8 Pas de deux: Apollo and Terpsichore	4:06
9 Coda: Apollo and the Muses	3:24
10 Apotheosis: Apollo and the Muses	3:06

Agon (1957) 20:56

I	
11 Pas de quatre	1:38
12 Double Pas de quatre	1:24
13 Triple Pas de quatre	1:03
II	
14 Prelude	0:44
15 First Pas de trois: Saraband-Step	1:11
16 Gaillarde	1:12
17 Coda	1:20
III	
18 Interlude	0:45
19 Second Pas de trois: Bransle Simple	0:54
20 Bransle Gay	0:46
21 Bransle Double (Bransle de Poitou)	1:22

IV

22 Interlude	0:44
23 Pas de deux	3:41
Più mosso	
L'istesso tempo	
Refrain	
24 Coda	1:30
Doppio lento	
Quasi stretto	
Coda	
25 Four Duos	0:30
26 Four Trios	2:11

Orpheus 28:31

Scene I

27 Lento sostenuto	2:26
28 Air de Danse	3:16
29 Dance of the Angel of Death	2:03
30 Interlude	1:30

Scene II

31 Dance of the Furies	3:01
32 Air de Danse	2:18
33 Interlude	0:20
34 Air de Danse	0:40
35 Pas d'action	1:50
36 Pas de Deux	5:07
37 Interlude	1:01
38 Pas d'action	2:22

Scene III

39 Apotheosis	2:37
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Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Three Greek Ballets: Apollo • Agon • Orpheus

Apollo: *Ballet in Two Scenes*

In classical dancing I see the triumph of studied conception over vagueness, of the rule over the arbitrary, of order over the haphazard.... I see in it the perfect expression of the Apollonian principle. (Stravinsky)

If Apollo's mother was Leto, then certainly his father was Fyodor. (Balanchine, in a birthday telegram to Igor Fyodorovitch Stravinsky, 18th June, 1945)

Stravinsky chose the subject. The French original of the following text, adapted from the *Homeric Hymn to the Delian Apollo*, is pasted at the head of the first page of his sketchbook:

Ilithiya arrives at Delos. Leto was with child and, feeling the moment of birth at hand, threw her arms about a palm tree and knelt on the soft grass. The earth smiled beneath her and the child sprang forth to the light.... Two goddesses, Leto's handmaidens, washed the child with pure, limpid water. For swaddling clothes they gave him a white veil of fine linen tissue, binding it with a golden girdle. Themis brought nectar and ambrosia.

Apollo was the son of Zeus, the god, and of Leto, a mortal. Leto was in labour for nine days and nights before Eileithyia ('Eleuthis', on a tablet found at Knossos), the deity of childbirth, came to her. Themis was the goddess of Justice.

Apollo, the sun-god and god of music, is associated with the Oriental sacred number seven, which corresponds to the diatonic mode that the composer seems to have had in mind from the beginning. *Apollo* is Stravinsky's homage to the Greek concept of the unity of music, dance, painting, and poetry, but by way of

seventeenth-century French Classicism — Racine, Arbeau, Poussin, Lully.

It is also probable that Stravinsky viewed the subject as an allegory of his own religion: Apollo, as man-god, with a human nativity and divine ascension. Arlene Croce observes that, like Apollo, 'The Christ child was wrapped in swaddling clothes', and Stravinsky may have been struck by such other parallels as the 'threes' of the Muses, the Magi, and triadic harmony, as well as by the imagery of the darkness before Apollo's entrance and the light that accompanies it.

The composer is the author of the scenario. On 4th January, 1928, he informed his Paris publisher that the music was ready to be copied but not the scenario, which, 'as I envision it, requires mature reflection'. The manuscript score of the first scene includes Stravinsky's curtain, lighting, exit and entrance cues, as well as some indications for the coordination of music and stage action.

The music for the *Prologue*, the *Birth of Apollo*, *Apollo's First Variation*, and the *Pas d'action* was composed in Nice between mid-July and mid-September 1927. On 28th September Stravinsky played his piano arrangement of these pieces for Dyagilev, who described the occasion in a letter to Serge Lifar two days later:

I spent the whole day with him, and at five saw him off at the station. It was an eminently satisfactory meeting.... After lunch he played the first half of the new ballet for me. It is, of course, an amazing work, extraordinarily calm and with greater clarity than anything he has done: filigree counterpoint around transparent, clear-cut themes, all in a major key, music not of this world, but from somewhere above...

The full score was completed on 20th January, 1928, and on 22nd January he played it for Dyagilev and George Balanchine. The movements are as follows:

1 Prologue: The Birth of Apollo

2 Apollo's Variation

3 Pas d'action: Apollo and the Muses

4 Variation of Calliope

5 Variation of Polymnia

6 Variation of Terpsichore

7 Variation of Apollo

8 Pas de deux: Apollo and Terpsichore

9 Coda: Apollo and the Muses

10 Apotheosis: Apollo and the Muses

The ending of *Apollo* is tragic. Robert Garis insightfully remarks: 'When Apollo and the Muses leave, they leave us behind in our mortality. This most poignant movement in the ballet is the only one in a minor key'.

Agon (1957)

Stravinsky began the composition of his final ballet, *Agon*, in December 1953, but interrupted it to write *In Memoriam: Dylan Thomas, Canticum Sacrum*, and the *Vom Himmel hoch* variations. He returned to the ballet in January 1957 and completed it on 27th April, just two months before his 75th birthday, on which occasion it was performed in concert at Royce Hall, UCLA, Los Angeles, and recorded the next day.

Agon is a plotless ballet consisting of sixteen separate dance movements. Apart from the music of the first and last pieces, which is the same, and of the *Prelude* and two *Interludes*, all three the same, the instrumentation differs in every dance, and the full orchestra is not employed in any of them. The order of the dances is as follows:

- I
- 11 Pas de quatre (orchestra, without bassoons and percussion)
 - 12 Double Pas de quatre (flutes, 1 oboe, clarinets, 1 bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, strings)
 - 13 Triple Pas de quatre (3 flutes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, strings)

II

- 14 Prelude (3 flutes, 2 bassoons, 4 trumpets, harp, timpani, violas, 3 cellos, 3 basses)

- 15 First Pas de trois: Saraband-Step (violin solo, xylophone, 2 trombonens, cellos) (Rolf Schulte, violin solo)

- 16 Gaillarde (3 flutes, mandolin, harp, piano, timpani, viola, 3 cellos, 2 basses)

- 17 Coda (3 flutes, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, harp, piano, mandolin, 1 violin, 1 cello, 1 bass) (Rolf Schulte, violin solo)

III

- 18 Interlude (same as Prelude)

- 19 Second Pas de trois: Bransle Simple (3 flutes, 3 clarinets, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, harp, piano, strings)

- 20 Bransle Gay (castanet, 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, harp, strings)

- 21 Bransle Double (Bransle de Poitou) The music employs two meters simultaneously, 3/2 in the upper part (violins) and 8/4 in the lower part (brass). (2 flutes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 1 trumpet, 1 trombone, piano, strings)

IV

- 22 Interlude (same as Prelude)

- 23 Pas de deux (strings) (Rolf Schulte, violin solo)

Più mosso (3 horns, piano, flute)

L'istesso tempo (3 flutes, strings)

Refrain (flute, 4 horns, piano)

- 24 Coda (trumpet, trombone, harp, piano, timpani, violins, violas, cellos)

Doppio lento (mandolin, harp, timpani, violin, cello)

Quasi stretto (4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani, piano, strings)

Coda (same as Pas de quatre, no 1 above)

- 25 Four Duos (violas, cellos, basses, 2 trombones)

- 26 Four Trios (strings, basses, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones)

Orpheus

The movements of *Orpheus* follow each other without pause and in some cases overlap. Since the tempo, or pulsation, remains constant in numbers 2, 3, and 4, the action therein must be divined through the music's changes of character.

Scene I

27 *Lento sostenuto*. Orpheus, alone, grieves for his wife, Eurydice, who has died from a serpent bite.

28 Air de Danse. Orpheus. *Andante con moto*. The piece is in three parts. A short measured pause separates the first two, and a change of key marks the beginning of the second. The third part recapitulates the first.

29 Dance of the Angel of Death.

30 Interlude. Taking pity on Orpheus, the Angel leads him to his wife in Tartarus, the abode of the dead.

Scene II

31 Dance of the Furies (Erinyes). *Agitato*. The piece is in two parts. The second is marked by a change of key and slightly slower pulsation.

32 Air de Danse. Orpheus. *Grave*. Recitative (harp, solo string quintet) and Aria (oboes and harp).

33 Interlude. The Tortured Souls of Tartarus implore Orpheus to continue his song.

34 Air de Danse (recapitulation and conclusion). Orpheus grants their wish.

35 Pas d'action. *Andantino leggiadro*. Tantalus, ruler of Tartarus, frees Eurydice. The Furies surround Orpheus, blindfold him, join Eurydice's hand to his, and guide them toward the path to Earth.

36 Pas de Deux. Orpheus and Eurydice. *Andante sostenuto*.

37 Interlude. Orpheus alone. *Moderato assai*.

38 Pas d'action. *Vivace*. The Thracian women (Bacchantes) tear Orpheus to pieces.

Scene III

39 Apotheosis. Apollo appears and Orpheus's lyre is borne heavenward. *Lento sostenuto*.

The choice of subject was Balanchine's. He had produced Gluck's *Orfeo* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1936, and the story continued to attract him. He and Stravinsky worked out the scenario in the composer's home between 4th and 30th April, 8th and 24th June, 1946. In September 1947, after the completion of the score, composer and choreographer spent a further week together in Hollywood planning the staging. Isamu Noguchi was Lincoln Kirstein's inspired choice to create the costumes and decors, though the Orpheus dancer objected that the headgear designed for him, two round lateral bars across the face like a baseball-catcher's mask, impeded his view of the floor.

Stravinsky identified his and Balanchine's source as Book Ten of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but the discrepancies between the Latin poet's version of the myth and the ballet scenario are substantial. Ovid's Hades is a man, not a place, as the ballet scenario inconsistently has it, and his Pluto is a woman, Tantalus's mother by Zeus. Whereas an angel guides the Orpheus of the ballet from Earth to Tartarus, Ovid does not mention an intermediary.

The *Orpheus* music turns away from the explosive kind that distinguishes the 1945 Symphony, and mines a new vein of lyricism heretofore absent in Stravinsky's art. The ballet can be thought of as the Romantic sequel to the Classical *Apollo*; the music is personal and passionate as befits a human love story. Its dramatic affinities are with *Perséphone* (1934), in that both works are quests involving journeys to and from the Underworld, the one ending joyfully, the other tragically. Though *Perséphone* is the daughter of the goddess Demeter, and Orpheus the son of the god Apollo and the Muse Calliope, both protagonists are earthlings. The musical associations between the two works are found in their respective qualities of tenderness, and in their evocations of the bleakness of the Underworld. The harp is the most prominent instrument in both scores, and the principal instrumental

aria in both is plaintively sung by the oboe.

The exceptionality of *Orpheus* among Stravinsky's creations is in the contradictions between the nature of its musical emotion and his aesthetics and practice in the preceding twenty-five years. *Orpheus* is the only score after *Firebird* in which the term '*espressivo*' occurs frequently, in the music of the Furies ('*sempre p ma espressivo*') as well as in the Pas de deux, along with such indications as '*cantabile*'. The music is descriptive, pictorial, rich in musical symbols and in the matching of musical imagery with stage action. For one example, after Orpheus's death, when his lyre ascends to the firmament after his death, the harp plays two solo strophes in a *perpetuum mobile* rhythm that suggests the continuation of the music without the player.

Orpheus is also the most pantomimic, the least danced, of Stravinsky's ballets after *Firebird*, and the only one after *Petrushka* in which the scenic element — sets, costumes, curtains, lighting, props — is an integral part of the musico-choreographic performance. The billowings and shimmerings of the diaphanous white china-silk curtain lowered during the first and third

Interludes are part of the action, and when the prop becomes a shroud for the deceased Eurydice, it is a living force. For this alone, Isamu Noguchi's name should appear together with Stravinsky's and Balanchine's as one of the ballet's creators.

Stravinsky's first notation (20th October, 1946) was the three-note trumpet motive embedded in chords played by seven other winds. This marks the entry of Orpheus's mourning forest friends, fauns, dryads, satyrs, bringing gifts and expressing sympathy. The actual beginning of the score, the downward-scale harp-lyre figure accompanied by strings softly intoning a chorale, was composed next, followed by the minor-key but livelier *Air de danse*, a violin solo intermittently joined by flute, featuring the minor-second interval.

The use of Greek modes at the beginning (Phrygian) and end (Dorian) produces a haunting, archaizing effect. The concluding fugal melody for two horns accompanying the heavenward ascent of Orpheus's lyre signifies the eternal life of music.

Robert Craft

Orchestra of St Luke's

The Orchestra of St Luke's is America's foremost and most versatile chamber orchestra. Formed at the Caramoor International Music Festival in the summer of 1979, the orchestra evolved from the St Luke's Chamber Ensemble, which was established in 1974, with Ensemble members forming the orchestra's artistic core as principal players. The Ensemble and the Orchestra still co-exist today, and the collaborative chamber aesthetic that is the St Luke's hallmark has resulted in consistent critical acclaim, both for mastery of a diverse repertoire spanning the Baroque to the contemporary, and for vibrant music-making of the highest order. In addition to the four-concert series presented by Carnegie Hall in the Isaac Stern Auditorium, the Orchestra of St Luke's participates in such Carnegie Hall events as the Choral Workshop and Carnegie Family Concerts. The orchestra is engaged throughout the year in a number of artistic collaborations with other New York City cultural organizations, and serves each summer as the Orchestra-in-Residence at the Caramoor Festival. The orchestra has an extensive discography that includes three Grammy Award winning recordings.

London Symphony Orchestra

The London Symphony Orchestra is widely regarded as being among the top five orchestras in the world on the strength of its performances alone, but there is much more to its work than concerts in concert-halls. Its many activities include an energetic and ground-breaking education and community programme, a record company, exciting work in the field of information technology, and, over the years, a very distinguished list of recordings. The orchestra comprises over a hundred players and gives around ninety concerts a year in the Barbican, its London home. In addition to these performances, the orchestra goes on tour about a dozen times a year, giving concerts all over the world, making it one of the busiest orchestras in Europe, and the quality of its performances ensures that it ranks alongside the greatest orchestras in the world. The London Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1904 and was Britain's first self-governing orchestra. Since its earliest days it has attracted the best players, and this in turn attracted the best conductors. The first Principal Conductor was Hans Richter, and he was followed by the great composer Edward Elgar. Since then Principal Conductors have included such luminaries as Sir Thomas Beecham, Pierre Monteux and Claudio Abbado. The current incumbent is Sir Colin Davis, who has had a long association with the orchestra; he was first a guest conductor in the late 1950s, and was appointed Principal Conductor in 1995. The orchestra has been resident at the Barbican since 1982, playing in what is now arguably the finest symphony hall in London.

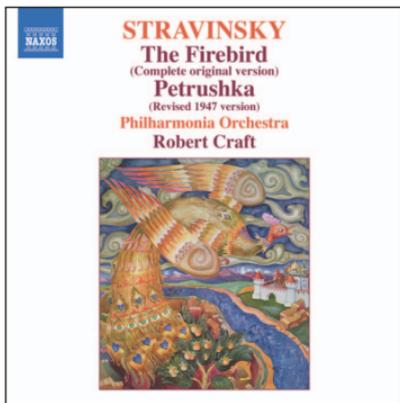
Robert Craft

Robert Craft, the noted conductor and widely respected writer and critic on music, literature, and culture, holds a unique place in world music of today. He is in the process of recording the complete works of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Webern for Naxos. He has twice won the Grand Prix du Disque as well as the Edison Prize for his landmark recordings of Schoenberg, Webern, and Varèse. He has also received a special award from the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters in recognition of his "creative work" in literature. In 2002 he was awarded the International Prix du Disque Lifetime Achievement Award, Cannes Music Festival.

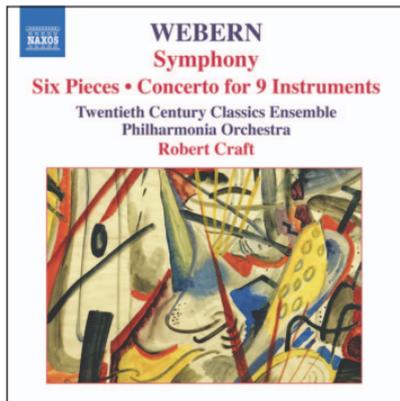
Robert Craft has conducted and recorded with most of the world's major orchestras in the United States, Europe, Russia, Japan, Korea, Mexico, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. He is the first American to have conducted Berg's *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, and his original Webern album enabled music lovers to become acquainted with this composer's then little-known music. He led the world premières of Stravinsky's later masterpieces: *In Memoriam: Dylan Thomas, Vom Himmel hoch, Agon, The Flood, Abraham and Isaac, Variations, Introitus, and Requiem Canticles*. Craft's historic association with Igor Stravinsky, as his constant companion, co-conductor, and musical confidant, over a period of more than twenty years, contributed to his understanding of the composer's intentions in the performance of his music. He remains the primary source for our perspectives on Stravinsky's life and work.

In addition to his special command of Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's music, Robert Craft is well known for his recordings of works by Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Schütz, Bach, and Mozart. He is also the author of more than two dozen books on music and the arts, including the highly acclaimed *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship; The Moment of Existence: Music, Literature and the Arts, 1990–1995; Places: A Travel Companion for Music and Art Lovers; And Improbable Life: Memoirs; Memories and Commentaries*; and the forthcoming "Down a Path of Wonder": *On Schoenberg, Webern, Stravinsky, Eliot, Auden, and Some Others* (2005). He lives in Florida and New York.

Also available in the Robert Craft Collection:



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Stravinsky's three 'Greek' ballets span thirty years of his creative career. *Apollo*, a 1947 revision of *Apollon musagète* (1928), is Stravinsky's homage to the Greek concept of the unity of music, dance, painting, and poetry. It was described by Dyagilev as 'an amazing work, extraordinarily calm and with greater clarity than anything he has done... music not of this world, but from somewhere above...'. Begun in 1953, when Stravinsky was turning towards serialism, the plotless *Agon* can be viewed as a contest (from the Greek *agon*) between traditional and modern compositional techniques. *Orpheus* (1948) mines a vein of lyricism hitherto absent in Stravinsky's art and is the only score after *Firebird* in which the term '*espressivo*' occurs frequently. The music is descriptive, pictorial, rich in musical symbols and in the matching of musical imagery with stage action.

Igor
STRAVINSKY
(1882-1971)
Three Greek Ballets

1-10	Apollo †	25:12
11-26	Agon *	20:56
	Orpheus †	28:31
27-30	Scene I	9:15
31-38	Scene II	16:39
39	Scene III	2:37

London Symphony Orchestra† • Orchestra of St Luke's* • Robert Craft

A full track listing can be found on page 2 of the booklet

Apollo: Recorded at Abbey Road Studio One, London, England, from 1st to 4th July, 1995

Producer: Michael Fine • Engineer: Simon Rhodes

Agon: Recorded at SUNY, Purchase, New York, in 1992

Producer and engineer: Gregory K. Squires • Editor: Richard Price

Orpheus: Recorded at Abbey Road Studio One, London, England, from 3rd to 5th and 8th January, 1995

Producer: Michael Fine • Engineer: Simon Rhodes

Mastered by Richard Price, Squires Productions Inc.

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These recordings were previously released on MusicMasters (**Agon**)
and Koch International Classics (**Apollo** and **Orpheus**)

Cover Picture: *The Lamentation of Orpheus* by Alexandre Seon (1855-1917)
(Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France / Peter Willi / www.bridgeman.co.uk)