

## Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Robert Craft formed the Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble to perform and record the seminal works of the last century, in particular the music of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Webern. Since the late 1980s Fred Sherry has engaged musicians who, in addition to being virtuosos, have a deep commitment to this music. The close working relationship between the players and Robert Craft has produced finely tuned and deeply felt performances which are heightened by Craft's own stamp of authenticity. These recordings have been hailed by critics and fellow musicians alike.

### 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*; *An Improbable Life: Memoirs*; *Memories and Commentaries*; *Down a Path of Wonder: Memoirs of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Other Cultural Figures* (2006); and *The Stravinsky I Knew* (2011). He lives in Florida and New York.



# STRAVINSKY

## Duo Concertant

### Sonata for Two Pianos

### Requiem Canticles

### Abraham and Isaac

### Élégie • Bluebird

### Jennifer Frautschi, Violin

### Jeremy Denk, Piano

### Philharmonia Orchestra

### Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

### Robert Craft



THE ROBERT CRAFT COLLECTION  
THE MUSIC OF IGOR STRAVINSKY, Vol. 11  
Robert Craft, Conductor

**Duo Concertant for Violin and Piano (1932)**

- 1 Cantilène
- 2 Eclogue I
- 3 Eclogue II
- 4 Gigue
- 5 Dithyramb

Jennifer Frautschi, Violin • Jeremy Denk, Piano

Recorded at the Concert Hall, SUNY, Purchase, NY, on 21st May, 2008

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer and editor: Tim Martyn

**Sonata for Two Pianos (1943-44)**

- 6 Moderato
- 7 Theme with Variations: Largo
- 8 Allegretto

Ralph van Raat, Piano I • Maarten van Veen, Piano II

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on 19th September, 2005

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch • Editor: Raphaël Mouterde

**Requiem Canticles (1965-66)**

- 9 Prelude
- 10 Exaudi†
- 11 Dies Irae†
- 12 Tuba Mirum\*\* †
- 13 Interlude
- 14 Rex Tremendae†
- 15 Lacrimosa\* †
- 16 Libera Me†
- 17 Postlude

Sally Burgess, Contralto\* • Roderick Williams, Bass\*\*

Simon Joly Chorale† • Philharmonia Orchestra • Robert Craft

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on 18th and 19th September, 2005

Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch • Editor: Raphaël Mouterde

**Simon Joly Chorale**



Simon Joly. Photo: Gerald Place

Handpicked by Simon Joly from the finest professional singers in London, the Simon Joly Chorale is one of three select choral groups formed by him for the specific purpose needed by each event. Simon Joly has used each group to provide the choral element in many of Robert Craft's recordings, from the chamber forces of Schoenberg's *Die glückliche Hand*, through Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, to the huge chorus for Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*. He has also trained choruses for several other eminent musicians who have included Pierre Boulez, for his recordings of Webern's Cantatas and a *cappella* music of Schoenberg (with the BBC Singers), Leonard Bernstein's prize-winning recording of *Candide* and several recordings and concerts for Claudio Abbado with the London Symphony Chorus.

16:31

3:09

2:25

3:07

4:33

3:16

10:54

4:24

4:40

1:49

**Philharmonia Orchestra**



Photo: Richard Haughton

Established in 1945, the Philharmonia Orchestra boasts relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, notably its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen. Conductors associated with the Orchestra have included Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Muti and Giuseppe Sinopoli, with currently titled conductors Christoph von Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life), Kurt

Sanderling (Conductor Emeritus) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate).

15:16

1:17

1:50

1:04

1:16

2:56

1:24

2:08

1:17

2:06

## Roderick Williams



Photo: Keith Saunders

Roderick Williams encompasses a wide repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music. He has sung world premières of operas by, among others, David Sawer, Sally Beamish, Michael van der Aa and Alexander Knaifel and has worked with orchestras throughout Europe. His many festival appearances include the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Cheltenham and Aldeburgh, and his recital appearances have taken him to London's Wigmore Hall and many European festivals. He has an extensive discography and his recordings of English song with Iain Burnside have received particular acclaim.

## David Wilson-Johnson



Photo: Romain D'Ansembourg

David Wilson-Johnson has sung many rôles at Covent Garden and in Amsterdam, Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, Turin, Paris, Rome and Salzburg over 35 years. His most notable stage rôles have included those of King Priam in Tippett's opera, Merlin in the opera by Albéniz, *The Nose* by Shostakovich and *Saint François d'Assise* by Messiaen. Recordings include *Winterreise* with David Owen Norris and over 200 CDs of music of all periods and styles. His concerts and recitals continue with return visits to orchestras throughout Europe, America and the Far East. He now teaches at Cambridge, and at Ferrandou, the summer school he founded 25 years ago in SW France.

## Richard O'Neill



Photo: GREDIA

Richard O'Neill is one of the very few viola players to receive the Avery Fisher Career Grant as well as a GRAMMY® Award Nomination. His concerto appearances include collaboration with the London, Los Angeles, Seoul and Euro-Asian Philharmonics, the KBS and Korean Symphony Orchestras, the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, and Alte Musik Köln. He has made recital débuts at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Kennedy Center, Wigmore Hall, Salle Cortot and Seoul Arts Center. Richard O'Neill has made five solo albums, selling over 100,000 copies, for Universal/Deutsche Grammophon. He is an Artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and resident violist of Camerata Pacifica, and has collaborated with the Emerson and Juilliard String Quartets among others. Serving as a Special Representative for UNICEF and the first violist to be awarded the prestigious Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School, he was presented with a special Proclamation from the New York City Council honoring his achievement and contribution to the Arts. He teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles.

## 18 Abraham and Isaac: A Sacred Ballad for Baritone and Chamber Orchestra (1962-63) 13:45

David Wilson-Johnson, Baritone  
Philharmonia Orchestra • Robert Craft

Recorded at Abbey Road Studio No. 1, London, on 1st and 2nd October, 2007  
Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer: Mike Hatch • Editor: Raphaël Mouterde

## 19 Élégie for Solo Viola (1944)

Richard O'Neill, Viola

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, NY, on 19th November, 2005  
Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer and editor: Tim Martyn

## Tchaikovsky / Stravinsky: Bluebird Pas de Deux (arranged in 1941)

20 Adagio

21 Variation I: Tempo di Valse

22 Variation II: Andantino

23 Coda – Con moto

5:52

2:19

0:53

0:49

1:51

Twentieth Century Classics Ensemble

Flute: Tara O'Connor • Oboe: Stephen Taylor • Clarinets: Alan Kay, Stephen Zielinski  
Bassoon: Frank Morelli • Horn: William Purvis • Trumpets: Louis Hanzlik, John Sheppard  
Trombones: Michael Boschen, David Taylor • Timpani: Alex Lipowski • Piano: Sean Chen  
Violins: Lily Francis, Aaron Boyd, Anna Lim, Laura Frautschi, Cal Wiersma  
Violas: Beth Guterman, David Fulmer, Mark Holloway, Lisa Steltenpohl  
Cellos: Fred Sherry, Raman Ramakrishnan, Hamilton Berry  
Double basses: Timothy Cobb, Gregg August

Robert Craft

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, NY, on 28th October, 2008  
Producer: Philip Traugott • Engineer and editor: Tim Martyn

## Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): Duo Concertant • Sonata for Two Pianos

Requiem Canticles • Abraham and Isaac • Élégie • Bluebird Pas de Deux

### Duo Concertant

*Duo Concertant* was written between 27th December, 1931 and 15th July, 1932. Stravinsky spoke freely about his composing philosophy to interviewers during his concert tours, characterizing the first *Eclogue* to a reporter in Oslo as a *Kazatchok*, a Russian dance, and revealing that after working on the first trio of the *Gigue* he had “jumped up from the piano and danced and sung the “*Glücklich ist*” refrain from Johann Strauss’s *Fledermaus*. The première was in Berlin on 28th October, 1932.

The first recording of *Duo Concertant* took place in Paris on the 6th and 7th of April 1933, played by the composer and Samuel Dushkin. Stravinsky told an interviewer in Budapest that “I have completed what could be called a sonata for piano and violin inspired by Virgil’s *Georgics*”. It is athematic in the first movement, which introduces the instruments separately and fragmentally, before bringing them together, a reminder that Stravinsky construes “concertant” as meaning “competition”. Throughout the 1920s he maintained that the sound of strings struck in a piano did not suit the sound of a multiple group of strings bowed, but he had reconciled himself to mating the two in a solo combination. The *Cantilène* exhibits their distinctive characteristics, the piano producing tremolos on five successive single pitches while the violin plays nine phrases of sixteenth-notes (semiquavers). In truth, the title *Cantilène* seems contradictory to the style of the music which is song-like only for moments in the violin part but otherwise athematic.

No less puzzlingly, Stravinsky referred to the first movement as a *perpetuum mobile*, whereas the term more aptly describes the first *Eclogue* and the *Gigue*. The second half of the first *Eclogue* recalls the *Histoire du Soldat* in its changing metres, staccato style, and double-stopping in the violin part. The second *Eclogue*, the slow movement of the suite, brings the two

instruments together playing the same dotted rhythms and eighth-notes (quavers) with a lovely melodic interplay. Here Stravinsky renounces his precepts about competition and combat.

The inherent monotony of *Gigue* rhythm is relieved by the smoothest two-way metrical modulation in all Stravinsky’s music, moving from 6/16 and 12/16 metre to 2/8 and 2/4 metre, the first change also being distinguished by the doubling of the violin melody with harmonic thirds. In the latter part of the piece the piano becomes the leading melodic instrument, the traditional piano accompaniment figure being assigned to the violin in a high register.

*Dithyramb*, the eloquent peak of the *Duo Concertant*, takes its place in the succession of Stravinsky’s apotheoses (*Apollo*, *Le Baiser de la Fée*, and later, *Orpheus*).

### Sonata for Two Pianos

The *Sonata for Two Pianos* was not commissioned and did not at first assume a sonata form. On 12th August, 1942, Stravinsky began to orchestrate a part of the first movement of whatever he was writing, which suggests that he may have been considering a proposal to compose a film score. He resumed work on the sketch on 9th September and added more instruments, including trombone. The third movement was composed next, but his final intentions are still unclear. The second movement, which he did not begin until more than a year later (October 1943) — he was interrupted to write *Scherzo à la Russe* and the *Ode* for Serge Koussevitzky’s wife — resolves all doubts since it has the title *Theme with Variations*, and could only be the middle movement of a sonata. This composition occupied him for five months and required a full sheaf of sketches. Readers familiar with the score will be surprised to learn that the original of the *fugato* Variation is in F major (not G major, as published).

## Ralph van Raat



Photo: Marco Boggese

Pianist and musicologist Ralph van Raat studied the piano with Ton Hartsuiker and Willem Brons at the Conservatory of Amsterdam and Musicology at the University of Amsterdam. He also studied with Claude Helffer (Paris), Liisa Pohjola (Helsinki), Ursula Oppens at Chicago’s Northwestern University and Pierre-Laurent Aimard at the Musikhochschule in Cologne. Van Raat has won a number of important awards and appears as a recitalist and as a soloist with orchestras in Europe, the Middle-East, Asia and in the United States. He has been a Steinway Artist since 2003.

## Maarten van Veen



Photo: Lex Draaijer

Pianist and conductor Maarten van Veen studied at the conservatories of Utrecht, Prague and Amsterdam and with Alwin Bär, Kyoko Hashimoto, Ton Hartsuiker and György Sebök, and at the Mozart Academy with Oleg Maisenberg, Ivan Klánský and David Golub. A prize-winner at the Orleans Twentieth Century Piano Music Competition in 1996, he and his brother Jeroen van Veen also won First Prize in the Murray Dranoff Two Piano Competition (U.S.A, 1995). He is also artistic director of the HortusFestival, that gives new insight into historical performance. His recent study with Philippe Herreweghe contributes to his broad interest in music. [www.maartenvanveen.com](http://www.maartenvanveen.com)

## Sally Burgess



Photo: Bill Knight

Sally Burgess has sung Carmen at the English National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Opéra National de Paris, Bastille, the Bavarian State Opera, Munich, the Bregenz Festival and in Zurich, Berlin, New Zealand and Portland. Her Azucena was heard with English Opera North, and her Amneris there was also performed for Scottish Opera and in Strasbourg, Nancy, Lausanne and Wiesbaden. With a series of other outstanding operatic successes throughout Europe and at the Metropolitan Opera, she has enjoyed equal success on the concert platform where she has performed with all the leading British orchestras. She performs regularly with her own jazz trio led by her husband Neal Thornton and has presented her own woman show *Sally Burgess’ Women* at the Lyric Hammersmith and *Sophisticated Ladies* at the Purcell Room. She made her directorial début in London in Mark Glentworth’s new opera *Ula*, closely followed by a new production of *Così fan tutte* for English Chamber Opera, her directorial debut for a complete opera. In August of 2010 she directed the world premiere of *Sonya’s Story* in collaboration with composer Neal Thornton and designer Charles Phu to tremendous critical acclaim.

## Tchaikovsky / Stravinsky: Bluebird Pas de Deux

In January 1941 Lucia Chase, the founding Director of Ballet Theater, commissioned Stravinsky to arrange the four very brief pieces comprising the *Bluebird* ballet, excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* re-scored for a chamber orchestra. This was Stravinsky's first commission as a refugee in the U.S. and he greatly enjoyed his work, which he achieved in a few days. All that can be said about the arrangement is that it provides a study in Stravinsky's improvement over Tchaikovsky's orchestration. Stravinsky began not by reducing the orchestra, but by adding an instrument – a

piano – which provided at least two new ideas as well as a welcome element of articulation and sonority.

For only two examples, Stravinsky scrapped the original flute duet that begins the *Second Variation* and replaced it with a duet for flute and clarinet, thus creating a dialogue and enlivening the musical style. In the fourth piece, Tchaikovsky attaches appoggiaturas to each note of the woodwind parts while Stravinsky restricts the figure to flute and piano alone, which removes the thickness and clumsiness in exchange for elegance and clarity.

**Robert Craft**

## Jennifer Frautschi



Photo: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Avery Fisher career grant recipient violinist Jennifer Frautschi has created a sensation in recent seasons with appearances as soloist with Pierre Boulez and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Christoph Eschenbach and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival, and at Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival. Selected by Carnegie Hall for its Distinctive Debuts series, she made her New York recital debut in 2004. As part of the European Concert Hall Organization's Rising Stars series, Ms. Frautschi also made debuts that year at ten of Europe's most celebrated concert venues including London's Wigmore Hall, the Salzburg Mozarteum, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and La Cité de la Musique in Paris. She has recorded several discs for Naxos, including a GRAMMY®-nominated recording of Schoenberg's *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra* (8.557520), and the Stravinsky *Violin Concerto* with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London (8.557508), both conducted by the legendary Robert Craft. She performs on a 1722 Antonio Stradivarius violin known as the "ex-Cadiz," on generous loan to her from a private American foundation.

## Jeremy Denk



Photo: Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

Pianist Jeremy Denk has appeared as soloist with many of the world's finest orchestras including (among others) the Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony. He appears in recital throughout North America and Europe, with regular appearances in New York (Carnegie Hall), Washington (Kennedy Center), and Philadelphia (Kimmel Center). He has established a reputation for adventurous, unusual programming, ranging from Bach to Ligeti, Beethoven to Ives. His recent recording of Ives' *Piano Sonatas* was on the top ten CDs of the year for *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Washington Post*. He maintains relationships with a number of living composers. His widely-read blog, *Think Denk*, has won considerable critical attention.

Stravinsky scholars will be tempted to conclude that Nadia Boulanger, who was near him during most of the composition, had persuaded him that the long lines of the music were more suited to the two-piano combination than to any instrumental ensemble, though, of course, he was quite capable of making this decision himself. After publication, Stravinsky was proud to learn that Dimitri Mitropoulos and Ernst Krenek had performed the piece publicly in Minneapolis. The opus became popular and entered the repertory of duo-piano teams everywhere, including Gold and Fizzdale, and Babin and Vronsky. The piece provided a happy continuation of Stravinsky's development of a breezy, lighthearted American style, following the *Circus Polka*, *Norwegian Moods* and *Dances Concertantes*.

Ironically, the American piano *Duo* consists largely of elaborations on Russian themes. The *Theme with Variations* movement is based on No. 46 in a book called *Russian Ballads and Folksongs* that Stravinsky found in a used bookstore in Hollywood in the spring of 1942. But apart from melody, the extreme simplicity of line and harmony shows a change in mood and style that is absent from Stravinsky's earlier European creations. For only one distinction, the lines are longer, the rhythms and metres more simple, and the harmony more transparent. Stravinsky, then in his late fifties, was at last free from his double life and his need to provide for a large congregation of relatives, and to enjoy the climate and other benefits (perhaps there were some in the early 1940s) of Southern California.

## Requiem Canticles

Shortly after the première of the *Requiem Canticles* at Princeton, Stravinsky answered an inquiry concerning the origins of the piece: "I began with intervallic designs that I expanded into musical shapes which suggested musical forms and structures. The twofold series was also discovered early on while I was completing the first musical trope, as was the instrumental basis, the idea of the triangulate frame of a string Prelude, wind-instrument Interlude, and percussion Postlude. The

overall design of the piece is symmetrical, six vocal movements divided at mid-point by an instrumental dirge."

Stravinsky pasted his sketches into a loose leaf notebook and added photographs of people who had died during the composition of the work. Thus an obit of Edgard Varèse that includes two photos, clipped from *The New York Times* on 8th November, 1965, appears on a page facing a sketch for two choral phrases of the *Exaudi*. No connection exists between the music and the deceased, nevertheless, the conjunction of this friend's death exposes an almost unbearably personal glimpse of Stravinsky's mind during the composition of the entire work. It is enough to say that the sketchbook preserves a diary of his musical thoughts. Thus the *Rex Tremendae* sketch reveals that the pitches chosen occurred to him a stage ahead of their final groupings. The *Tuba Mirum* sketch invites the reader to plot the composer's thinking from a larval stage to the final score. In one case, the page devoted to Alberto Giacometti, the pre-positioning of which obviously inspired Stravinsky to draw the slightly wavering lines of a cross over the photos of him, may have inspired the music as well, but that is only my speculation.

Another happening, this one from the theater world, left its mark on the composition. Stravinsky saw the New York stage production of Peter Weiss's play, *Marat/Sade* and was inspired by the incoherent talk of the crowd scene to the extent of using his chorus in a *parlando* to suggest a mumbled congregational prayer in the background of his penultimate movement, *Libera Me*. The foreground here is a rapid chant in measured quarter notes (crochets) sung by a solo vocal quartet of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. But on second thoughts, Stravinsky did not want this confusion of voices representing a church congregation, but desired instead to devise a measured spacing of the spoken chant by indicating boundaries in which to limit the speeds for each section of the spoken words.

The choice of chords mixing celesta, *campane* and vibraphone in the *Postlude* was the most daring concept in the entire opus since Stravinsky had never heard the

three instruments together, and since all of the notes have to be equally balanced in volume. The celesta, of course, is the highest in range and the *campane* part is confined to the middle of the treble clef. The distribution of the vibraphone pitches is the most precarious. Every chord contains at least one octave or unison. The two-note vibraphone chords are the widest in range, the two-note *campane* chords are the closest together, and the celesta, which plays chords of three to four notes, provides the richest colour. No chord is exactly repeated. Ingeniously, Stravinsky introduces the second chord of the second trope of this trio with an appoggiatura in all three instruments in preparation for the appoggiatura in the bass part of the piano in the final three chords of the piece. Here, the penultimate chord is sounded twice which functions as a preparation of the final “chord of death”, resolving the procession of harmonics.

## Abraham and Isaac

*The Sacred Ballad for Baritone and Chamber Orchestra* sets verses 1-19 of Chapter XXII of the *Book of Genesis*, in which God commands Abraham to take his son Isaac into the land of Moriah and sacrifice him. After the journey is enjoyed, Abraham experiences a vision of the place of sacrifice from afar. The wood for the burnt offering is gathered and Abraham binds Isaac to the altar. God recognizes Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son. The ram is caught and sacrificed instead of Isaac. Abraham retires to Beersheba.

Stravinsky worked from a Russian transliteration of the Hebrew text prepared by Isaiah Berlin, who also provided him with a guide to pronunciation and accentuation. Additional tutoring in pronunciation and word setting from the composer Hugo Weisgall, who was in Santa Fe when Stravinsky began work on the composition in the summer of 1962, should also be acknowledged; Stravinsky received Hugo Weisgall several times in the La Fonda Hotel, and a chart survives in his hand of vowels and consonants and their equivalent pronunciation in English. Stravinsky entered both the Latin-letter transcription of the Hebrew text

and the English translation in his manuscript, but the piece was designed to be sung in Hebrew only: the sounds of the words and the music are inseparable, the appoggiaturas, quasi-trills, melismas, and other stylistic embellishments unsuited to any other language.

Completed in Hollywood on 3rd March, 1963, the score, dedicated *To the People of Israel*, is now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Theodore Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, wrote to Stravinsky on 30th March, 1965, recalling a dinner in Hollywood a few weeks before with the Stravinskys and “our mutual friends Isaac Stern, Grisha Piatigorsky, and Bob Craft”, asking him to give the manuscript to the Israel Museum on grounds that as compared to the Los Angeles County Museum “our setting is better, overlooking as we do the beautiful Byzantine Russian Orthodox Monastery and the eternal hills of the Land of Abraham and Isaac”. But Kollek had been given the wrong address and his letter was returned to him. When he wrote again, on 16th May, Stravinsky was concert-touring and did not receive the letter until 15th July, on which day he replied: “The enclosed manuscript ... is my answer.... I hope it will be not long before we meet again. All best, my dear friend....”

The instruments play alone only in the introduction and in the brief interludes that divide the narrative into six sections, each of them distinguished by a progressively slower tempo. The full orchestra is never employed together. With the intention of giving the words the highest possible relief, Stravinsky confined much of the accompaniment to a single line shared between and among different instruments. The second part of the narrative, beginning with the words “Abraham took two of his boys with him”, is scored for a single line of wind instruments, which, at the words “Whereof spoke to him God”, spreads to two parts. Here and elsewhere, the word of God related by the angel of God, is accompanied by strings only, at first by five tremolo chords in the upper register, a device that Stravinsky had associated with the voice of God in *The Flood*, his Biblical opus of the previous year. The next section, a canon between the voice and a bassoon alternating with solo violin, is again restricted to a single

instrumental line. The music associated with the departure of Abraham and Isaac with the two serving boys for the place of worship is a flute cadenza punctuated by five string chords. The next and longest interlude, representing Abraham’s journey alone with Isaac for the sacrificial infanticide, consists of a succession of chords of two-pitches in the bass-register, and melodic fragments played by alto flute.

At the start of the next section, the point in the narrative where Abraham collects the wood for the burnt offering, the vocal part is unaccompanied. It begins on C sharp, the referential pitch of the whole work. Octave-doubled in bassoon and bass clarinet and thrice repeated, the pitch becomes increasingly focal. To introduce Abraham’s statement, “God will provide the lamb”, which is scored for trumpet and tuba, the narration briefly employs *Sprechstimme* (half sung, half spoken). Father and son go together (two bassoons) to the place where God has bidden Abraham to build an altar. The next episode, the binding of Isaac to the altar, and of Abraham brandishing his knife, begins in the English horn on C sharp and ends with the same note in the bassoon. The subsequent episode, the angel crying out of Heaven, is accompanied by the novel combination of flute and tuba. Harsh, forte chords in the full strings punctuate God’s command, “Do not lay thy hand upon the boy”, as well as at the dramatic moment when God says that Abraham has not “withheld thy son, thy only one, from me”.

The capturing of the ram in a thicket inspired programme music. The friskiness of the animal is evoked by leaps and rapid notes in the bassoon, and by the least regular rhythms Stravinsky ever wrote (12 notes to be played in the time of 5, 11 notes in the time of 3, 5 notes in the time of 3, and 3 notes in the time of 5). The next episode, the naming of the place of Isaac’s non-sacrifice as the Mount of the Lord, is introduced by a slightly different form of the interlude before the ram-chasing. The music is a three-part canon for the voice, French horn, and tuba ending in the most passionate moment in the piece, a C sharp sustained in four octaves in the winds, followed by eight repeated C sharps in the

vocal part to the words “And they called the angel of the Lord to Abraham”, accompanied by tuba and horn in alternation and then together. Rapidly repeated notes of the clarinet on one pitch should be understood as Stravinsky’s musical image for the multiplication of the seed of Abraham. The short chords, played by all of the wind instruments together, with the words “Blessed is thy seed in all the nations of the earth”, are a further instance of the composer’s musical symbolism. The ending, “And dwelt Abraham in Beersheba”, the most moving section of the cantata, is introduced and accompanied by three solo strings, replaced in the final phrase by two clarinets. The first and the last note of this final verse is C sharp.

The story of Abraham and Isaac has inspired great visual art (Ghiberti’s panel), great music (Stravinsky’s), and great philosophical literature (Kierkegaard). Erich Auerbach’s comparison of it in *Mimesis* with Homer’s account of the recognition of Odysseus by his nurse Erycleia should also be mentioned. Stravinsky was in his eighties when he composed this deeply-felt, dramatically and musically original work. Its emotional power is conveyed at first hearing, but to understand and love its musical content requires repeated listening.

## Élégie

The *Élégie* for solo viola is one of Stravinsky’s most affecting short works. Its dedication to the memory of Alphonse Onnou, violinist and founder of the Pro Arte String Quartet, was at the request of the Quartet’s violist, Germain Prévost, a close and longtime friend of the composer. Unique in Stravinsky’s music, he marked the fingerings in the manuscript and published score with the comment that they were chosen to underline the counterpoint.

The prelude begins with a song and accompaniment figure. The principal part suggests a two-voice fugue, and at its climax, the subject, the Dux, is answered by its inversion, the Comes, at the distance of two silent beats in the second voice. Prévost played the piece for Béla Bartók in his New York home before the public première.