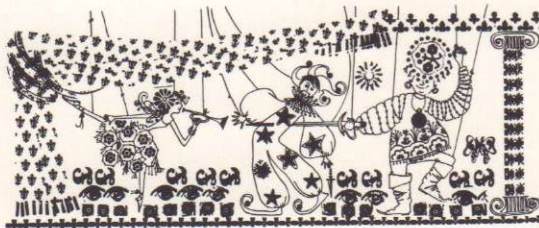


Stravinsky PETROUCHKA

PIERRE MONTEUX conducting the BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Produced by John Pfeiffer • Recording Engineer: John Crawford



Igor Stravinsky tells us in his autobiography that *Petrouchka* was originally conceived as a piece for piano and orchestra wherein the solo instrument would play the role of a puppet, "suddenly endowed with life, overpowering the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios." The accompanying ensemble would retaliate with menacing trumpet blasts, and the whole would reach its climax and end "in the sorrowful and querulous collapse of the poor puppet."

At this time, in the summer of 1910, Stravinsky was supposedly at work on *The Rite of Spring* for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. Diaghilev came to hear sketches of *The Rite*, heard parts of *Petrouchka* instead, and conceived the idea of turning them into a ballet. The scenario was worked out by composer and producer together. Stravinsky expanded the score to meet its requirements, and Diaghilev presented the work in Paris in June 1911. The choreography was by Michel Fokine, the décor was by Alexandre Benois, and the principal roles were danced by Tamara Karsavina, Vaslav Nijinsky and Alexander Orlov. Pierre Monteux conducted and achieved, according to the composer, "a very clean and finished execution" of the music wherein his intentions were carried out to the letter. This was the beginning of a collaboration between Stravinsky and Monteux which has lasted for nearly half a century. Throughout his memoirs Stravinsky praises the authority and penetration of Monteux's performances and credits him with having made the first "conquest of the public" with both *Petrouchka* and *The Rite of Spring*.

when he directed their first concert presentations in Paris in 1914. Six years later Monteux introduced this music to American concert audiences when he conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the suite from the ballet. Nearly forty years later he again programmed *Petrouchka* in Boston—this time the complete score—for performances and recording.

Petrouchka takes place during the Shrove-Tide Fair in Admiralty Square, St. Petersburg, about 1830. A Charlatan has a little booth in which he exhibits three puppets—the Ballerina, *Petrouchka*, and the Moor. *Petrouchka* "bitterly resents the Charlatan's cruelty, his own slavery . . . his ugliness and ridiculous appearance. He seeks consolation in the love of the Ballerina . . . but she is only frightened by his strange ways." The Moor "is stupid and evil, but his sumptuous clothes attract the Ballerina."

The score is one of the most specifically pictorial and descriptive in the entire literature. There are four scenes. The first opens with music suggesting the jostling and confusion of the carnival. A hurdy-hurdy player appears, with a dancer who accompanies herself on a triangle. Then two drummers step before the Charlatan's puppet theater, calling the crowd with rolls on their drums; the Charlatan takes his flute and pipes for attention. The curtain of the little theater goes up, and the three puppets do a stiff, angular Russian dance, to the great astonishment of the crowd. It is apparent, too, that both *Petrouchka* and the Moor love the Ballerina.

Scene II is called "Petrouchka's Room." It is actually a cell dominated by a frowning picture of the Charlatan. *Petrouchka* is kicked into his room and the door closes behind him. "Maledictions of *Petrouchka*. The Ballerina enters. The Ballerina leaves. *Petrouchka*'s despair." At the end of the scene *Petrouchka*, beating his fists against the picture of the Charlatan, knocks a hole in the wall and falls through it. This scene, with its "diabolical cascades of arpeggios" from the piano and its menacing blasts of the trumpets, clearly embodies the music of Stravinsky's first inspiration.

Scene III is "The Moor's Room." The Moor dances with a coconut to a wandering, quasi-Oriental melody of the clarinets. The Ballerina enters and dances daintily on tiptoe to the sound of her own trumpet-playing. The Ballerina and the Moor waltz. *Petrouchka* appears, furious with jealousy, and he and the Moor fight to music full of puppet curses and faticuffs.

The final scene, "The Fair Toward Evening," is the longest and most complex of the four. It begins with a diffused, generalized impression of the night sounds of a jam-packed carnival, but at length a rather graceful melody asserts itself for a "Dance of Yuremskaya." A peasant with a dancing bear crosses the scene; this incident seems actually to be visualized in the music, with its hoity toby and its high, squealing clarinets. A drunken merchant dances with gypsies and scatters bonkones among the crowd. There is a dance of scow-men and grooms to whom the nursemaids attach themselves. At the height of the festivities the scene is illuminated with red fire as maskers costumed as devils, goats and pigs make their appearance. Suddenly the tremendous, pounding rhythm is interrupted by a long, painful cry from a trumpet. *Petrouchka* runs from the puppet theater and is killed by the pursuing Moor. The Charlatan appears and the crowd disperses. The Charlatan is left alone with the body of his puppet. *Petrouchka*'s ghost menaces his erstwhile master from the roof of the little theater. "The frightened Charlatan lets the puppet body fall and disappears rapidly, glancing in fear over his shoulder" as the music comes to its quiet, enigmatic end.

ALFRED FRANKENSTEIN

Music and Art Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle

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