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PIERRE MONTEUX

PARIS CONSERVATOIRE ORCHESTRA

STRAVINSKY

THE
RITE OF SPRING



Color reproduction from 'Henri Rousseau—Le Douanier', courtesy Skira Inc., N.Y.

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Stravinsky
THE RITE OF SPRING
(Le Sacre du Printemps)

Pierre Monteux *conducting*
 The Paris Conservatoire Orchestra
 (Recorded in France)

EARLY YEARS by Pierre Monteux

My first meeting with Stravinsky took place in 1911 when I was guest conductor of the Diaghileff Ballet Russe. Stravinsky, outstanding among the new composers of the modern school, had just achieved his first success with *L'Oiseau de Feu*. We met when I conducted the world première of his second ballet, *Petrouchka*. *Petrouchka* was an immense success. In the field of ballet many still consider it Stravinsky's masterpiece.

One day in 1912, after I had become the regular conductor for the Ballet Russe, Diaghileff summoned me to a tiny rehearsal room in a theatre of Monte Carlo where the Ballet was at that time appearing. We were to hear Stravinsky run through the score of his new work, *Le Sacre du Printemps*.

With only Diaghileff and myself as audience, Stravinsky sat down to play a piano reduction of the entire score. Before he got very far I was convinced he was raving mad. Heard this way, without the color of the orchestra which is one of its greatest distinctions, the crudity of the rhythms was emphasized, its stark primitiveness underlined. The very walls resounded as Stravinsky pounded away, occasionally stamping his feet and jumping up and down to accentuate the force of the music. Not that it needed such emphasis.

I was more astounded by Stravinsky's performance than shocked by the score itself. My only comment at the end was that such music would surely cause a scandal. However, the same instinct that had prompted me to recognize his genius made me realize that in this ballet he was far, far in advance of his time and that while the public might not accept it, musicians would delight in the new, weird though logical expression of dissonance.

Le Sacre du Printemps was presented in 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, and cause a scandal it certainly did. The audience remained quiet for the first two minutes. Then came boos and catcalls from the gallery, soon after from the lower floors. Neighbors began to hit each other over the head with fists, canes or whatever came to hand. Soon this anger was concentrated against the dancers, and then, more particularly, against the orchestra, the direct perpetrator of the musical crime. Everything available was tossed in our direction, but we continued to play on. The end of the performance was greeted by the arrival of gendarmes. Stravinsky had disappeared through a window backstage, to wander disconsolately along the streets of Paris.

A year later at the Casino de Paris I was conducting the Concerts Monteux, a series in which I introduced works by new composers. Here the music played was definitely the music of tomorrow. I suggested to Stravinsky that he arrange

a concert version of the *Sacre*, and anxious himself to prove a few points, he readily agreed. The presentation was an instant success.

Time has caught up with Stravinsky. Now he is recognized as one of the great of the world. He has advanced musical expression tremendously and almost every contemporary composer owes him an acknowledged debt.

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The Rite of Spring deals with the worship of the forces of Nature by primitive man; the work is evocative of prehistoric religious rituals, in which Spring and its fertility are venerated, leading to the sacrifice of the Chosen One. The ballet suite is divided into two parts. The First Part, subtitled *The Fertility of the Earth*, consists of the following episodes which succeed one another without pause: 1) Introduction; 2) Dance of the Youths and Maidens; 3) Dance of Abduction; 4) Spring Rounds; 5) Games of the Rival Towns; 6) Entrance of the Celebrant; 7) Kiss to the Earth; 8) Dance to the Earth. The Second Part, subtitled *The Sacrifice*, consists of these episodes: 1) Introduction (The Pagan Night); 2) Mystic Circle of the Adolescents; 3) Dance to the Glorified One; 4) Evocation of Ancestors; 5) Ritual Performance of the Ancestors; 6) Sacrificial Dance.

About the Cover: Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), nicknamed "Le Douanier" (The Customs Official), is one of the best known of the French primitives or untaught painters. His *Charmeuse de Serpents* (Snake Charmer) has the exotic jungle background typical of many of his paintings.

This recording was made from an original dual track stereo master tape embodying RCA Victor's "New Orthophonic" High Fidelity recording technique. Condenser microphones were placed at optimum positions to insure uniform coverage of the orchestra.

The music as originally recorded was then produced as a dual track stereo disc by transferring, under controlled conditions, to insure correct stereophonic balance, maximum spatial effect and ideal frequency range and dynamic contrast.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is a **TRUE STEREOPHONIC RECORD** specifically designed to be played only on phonographs equipped for stereophonic reproduction. This record will also give outstanding monaural performance on many conventional high fidelity phonographs by a replacement of the cartridge. See your local dealer or serviceman.