



Igor STRAVINSKY

Petrushka

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky (17 June 1882 – 6 April 1971) was a Russian composer, pianist and conductor, later of French (from 1934) and American (from 1945) citizenship. He is widely considered one of the most important and influential composers of the 20th century and a pivotal figure in modernist music. Stravinsky's compositional career was notable for its stylistic diversity. He first achieved international fame with three ballets commissioned by the impresario Sergei Diaghilev and first performed in Paris by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes: *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913). The last transformed the way in which subsequent composers thought about rhythmic structure and was largely responsible for Stravinsky's enduring reputation as a revolutionary who pushed the boundaries of musical design. His "Russian phase", which continued with works such as *Renard*, *L'Histoire du soldat*, and *Les noces*, was followed in the 1920s by a period in which he turned to neoclassicism. The works from this period tended to make use of traditional musical forms (concerto grosso, fugue, and symphony) and drew from earlier styles, especially those of the 18th century. In the 1950s, Stravinsky adopted serial procedures. His compositions of this period shared traits with examples of his earlier output: rhythmic energy, the construction of extended melodic ideas out of a few two- or three-note cells, and clarity of form and instrumentation. Stravinsky was born on 17 June 1882 in the town of Oranienbaum on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, 25 miles west of Saint Petersburg. His father, Fyodor Ignatievich Stravinsky (1843–1902), was an established bass opera singer in the Kiev Opera and the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg and his mother, Anna Kirillovna Stravinskaya (née Kholodovskaya; 1854–1939), a native of Kiev, was one of four daughters of a high-ranking official in the Kiev Ministry of Estates. Igor was the third of their four sons; his brothers were Roman, Yury, and Gury. The Stravinsky family was of Polish and Russian heritage, descended "from a long line of Polish grandees, senators and landowners". It is traceable to the 17th and 18th centuries to the bearers of the Sulima and Strawiński coat of arms. The original family surname was Sulima-Strawiński; the name "Stravinsky" originated from the word "Strava", one of the variants of the Streva River in Lithuania.

Petrushka is a ballet and orchestral concert work by Russian composer Igor Stravinsky. It was written for the 1911 Paris season of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes company; the original choreography was by Michel Fokine and stage designs and costumes by Alexandre Benois, who assisted Stravinsky with the libretto. The ballet premiered at the Théâtre du Châtelet on 13 June 1911 with Vaslav Nijinsky as *Petrushka*, Tamara Karsavina as the lead ballerina, Alexander Orlov as the Moor, and Enrico Cecchetti the charlatan. *Petrushka* tells the story of the loves and jealousies of three puppets. The three are brought to life by the Charlatan during the 1830 Shrovetide Fair (Maslenitsa) in Saint Petersburg, Russia. *Petrushka* loves the Ballerina, but she rejects him. She prefers the Moor. *Petrushka* is angry and hurt, and challenges the Moor. The Moor kills him with his scimitar. *Petrushka*'s ghost rises above the puppet theatre as night falls. He shakes his fist at the Charlatan, then collapses in a second death. *Petrushka* brings music, dance, and design together in a unified whole. It is one of the most popular of the Ballets Russes productions. It is usually performed today using the original designs and choreography. Grace Robert wrote in 1946, "Although more than thirty years have elapsed since *Petrushka* was first performed, its position as one of the greatest ballets remains unassailed. Its perfect fusion of music, choreography, and décor and its theme—the timeless tragedy of the human spirit—unite to make its appeal universal".

Petrushka is a puppet. He is a character known across Europe under different names: Punch in England, Polichinelle in France, Pulcinella in Italy, Kasperle in Germany, and *Petrushka* in Russia. Whatever his name, he is a trickster, a rebel, and a wife beater. He enforces moral justice with a slap stick, speaks in a high-pitched, squeaky voice, and argues with the devil. His plays were formulaic and subversive. They repeated key scenes from one play to another. The plays usually ended with a dog, a policeman, or the devil dragging him away. Empress Anna Ivanovna brought marionettes to Russia in the 18th century. These puppets were an amusement for the aristocracy. Rod puppets were an Asian import. They performed religious plays, mostly at Christmas. *Petrushka*, however, was a hand puppet. He was loved by the common people. He performed in street theatres and other open air venues in small portable booths or behind screens that could be easily assembled and just as easily disassembled. After the Russian Revolution, Soviet authorities forced *Petrushka* indoors. They wanted to be better able to monitor his subversiveness.