



Igor STRAVINSKY

Symphonies d'instruments à vent

Igor Stravinsky (17 June 1882 – 6 April 1971) was born in Lomonosov (then Oranienbaum) and died in New York. He was one of the most important composers of the 20th century, and a leader in modernism in music. He was brought up in Russia. When the Russian Revolution started, he moved to Switzerland and then to Paris, and finally, when World War II started in 1939, he moved to the United States. Stravinsky wrote music in different styles. At first, he wrote music similar to his teacher Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. He loved his native Russian music. He wrote music which had very complicated chords and rhythms. It is lively music, and some of his best-known works of this kind were written for the Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev: *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Les noces*, *Pulcinella* and *Apollo musagète*. They were written from 1910 to 1928. Then he changed his style and wrote in what is called a "neo-classical" way. He based it on music from the Classical music period but changed it. His only full-length opera *The Rake's Progress* was written in this way. In his later years he wrote serial music. (*Early years*) Igor was the third of four children, all boys. As a child he spent the winter months in St Petersburg and the summers in the country where several of his relatives on his mother's side had large estates. Igor was not particularly good at school, but he often went to see the operas in which his father Fyodor was performing. Fyodor was an opera singer with a fine bass voice. He sang at the opera house in Kiev and later at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. Igor also went to ballets and even heard Tchaikovsky conduct in 1893, at the end of his life. For a time, Stravinsky studied law at the university of St Petersburg, but gave up in 1906. Then he married one of his cousins. They soon had a son and a daughter. Meanwhile, since his school days, Igor played the piano, and had lessons in harmony and counterpoint. He enjoyed improvising and he started to be interested in composing. He wrote some short piano pieces and showed them to the composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the father of a friend. Rimsky-Korsakov told him he ought to continue to have private music lessons instead of going to the conservatoire. Shortly after this, Stravinsky's father died. Igor went to stay with Rimsky-Korsakov. He met many musical people there, and Rimsky-Korsakov taught him how to write for the different instruments. In 1905, he began to take twice-weekly private lessons from Rimsky-Korsakov, whom he came to regard as a second father. These lessons continued until Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 1908.

Stravinsky's **Symphonies of Wind Instruments** (French title: *Symphonies d'instruments à vent*) is a concert work written in 1920, for an ensemble of woodwind and brass instruments. The piece is in one movement, lasting about 9 minutes. It is dedicated to the memory of Claude Debussy, who died in 1918, and was premiered in London on 10 June 1921, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. A piano reduction by Arthur Lourié was published in 1926, a full score appearing only after Stravinsky re-orchestrated the work in 1947. (*Instrumentation*) The *Symphonies* was originally scored for an ensemble of 24 wind instruments: 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), alto flute, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, "alto clarinet in F" (commonly known as a basset horn), 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, and tuba. The 1947 revision requires 23 players: 3 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 3 clarinets, 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, and tuba. (*Analysis*) In the title of this piece, Stravinsky used the word "symphonies" (note the plural form) not to label the work as an essay in the symphonic form, but rather in the word's older, broader connotation, from the Greek, of "sounding together". The music of the *Symphonies* draws on Russian folk elements, and is constructed of "contrasting episodes at three different yet related tempos". The chorale which concludes the piece was originally published in the magazine *La Revue musicale* in an edition entitled *Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, which included short pieces from several composers, including Maurice Ravel and Manuel de Falla, dedicated to Debussy's memory. It appeared as a piano score in the *Tombeau*.