

WHISTLEBLAST'S PETRUSHKA, PETER AND THE WOLF AND MORE!



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PETER AND THE WOLF

By Sergei Prokofiev

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) was a composer and pianist whose career spanned tumultuous periods in both Soviet and world history. Born in Sontsovka, Ukraine, Prokofiev exhibited remarkable musical talent from an early age. He attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where he studied composition and piano, gaining recognition for his extraordinary abilities. Prokofiev's music is often characterized by its distinctive blend of neoclassical elements, modern dissonance, and Russian folk influences. His innovative and sometimes provocative compositions, such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Alexander Nevsky* established him as a leading figure in 20th-century classical music.



Prokofiev's life unfolded against the backdrop of significant historical events. He witnessed the Russian Revolution in 1917 and eventually left his homeland in 1918, spending nearly two decades in the United States and Europe. During this period, he composed some of his most renowned works, including *Peter and the Wolf* and *Symphony No. 5*. Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union in 1936, and while initially celebrated, he later faced challenges during the Stalinist era when his music was criticized as formalist and unacceptable. Despite the hardships, Prokofiev continued to compose prolifically, leaving a legacy that includes ballets, operas, symphonies, and concertos that showcase his innovative approach to composition and his enduring impact on the world of classical music.

PETER AND THE WOLF

By Sergei Prokofiev

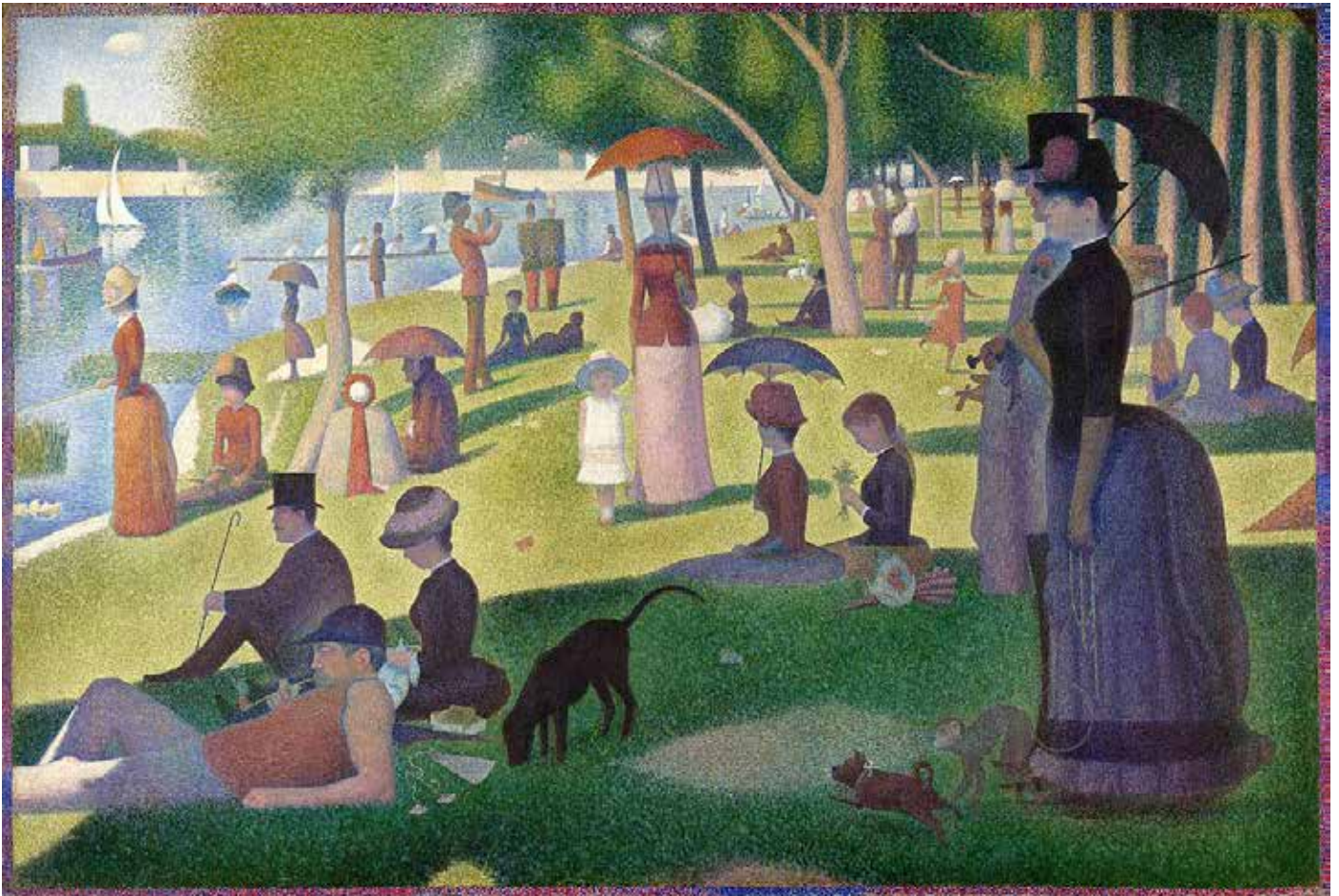
Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* seamlessly combines music and storytelling to introduce young people to the world of classical music. The piece, composed in 1936, was originally conceived as a musical symphony for young people to be performed by an orchestra. Prokofiev, who was deeply interested in conveying narratives through music, crafted a piece that assigns specific instruments to different characters, allowing young audiences to easily distinguish between them.

The story begins with Peter, a young boy living with his grandfather in a Russian village. One day, Peter opens the garden gate, disregarding his grandfather's warnings about the dangers lurking beyond. As Peter ventures into the meadow, he encounters a bird, symbolized by the flute, a duck represented by the oboe, a cat embodied by the clarinet, and a big, fierce wolf portrayed by the French horns. Each character is assigned a distinctive musical theme, making it an engaging and educational experience for listeners to recognize the instruments associated with each creature.

The plot takes a dramatic turn when Peter, undeterred by the threat of the wolf, decides to capture him with the help of his friends. The tension builds in the music as they set their trap, and finally, with the triumphant sound of the strings and brass, Peter manages to capture the wolf and hands him over to the hunters. The piece concludes with a joyous procession as Peter and his friends proudly march back home, demonstrating the power of courage and teamwork. *Peter and the Wolf* remains a timeless masterpiece, celebrated for its ability to captivate audiences of all ages and ignite a lifelong love for classical music.

PETER AND THE WOLF

WhistleBlast's chosen international artworks - as a reaction to listening to the music - and providing a strong link with music listening to visual art.



A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE

Author: Georges Seurat

Date: 1884

Medium: Oil on canvas

Credit line: Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection

PETER AND THE WOLF

WhistleBlast's chosen international artworks - as a reaction to listening to the music - and providing a strong link with music listening to visual art.



NOWHERE

Author: Gregory Orekhov

Date: 2022

Medium: Installation: red carpet on forest

Credit line: Gregory Orekhov



PETER AND THE WOLF

WhistleBlast's chosen international artworks - as a reaction to listening to the music - and providing a strong link with music listening to visual art.



FLOWERS 64 & FLOWERS 73

Author: Andy Warhol

Date: 1970

Series: Flowers Portfolio

Medium: Offset lithograph

PETER AND THE WOLF

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SILUETA

Author: Ana Mendieta

Date: 1973-1980

Series: Silueta series

Medium: Photography

PETER AND THE WOLF

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THE SCREAM

Author: Edvard Munch

Date: 1893

Medium: Tempera and pastel on board

Credit line: Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design

PETER AND THE WOLF

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BREGA DE CANS

Author: Miquel Barceló

Date: 1981

Medium: Mixed media on canvas

PETER AND THE WOLF

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THE KEYS OF THE FIELDS

Author: René Magritte

Date: 1936

Medium: Oil on canvas

Credit line: Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum

PETER AND THE WOLF

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NEW PLANET

Author: Konstantin Yuon

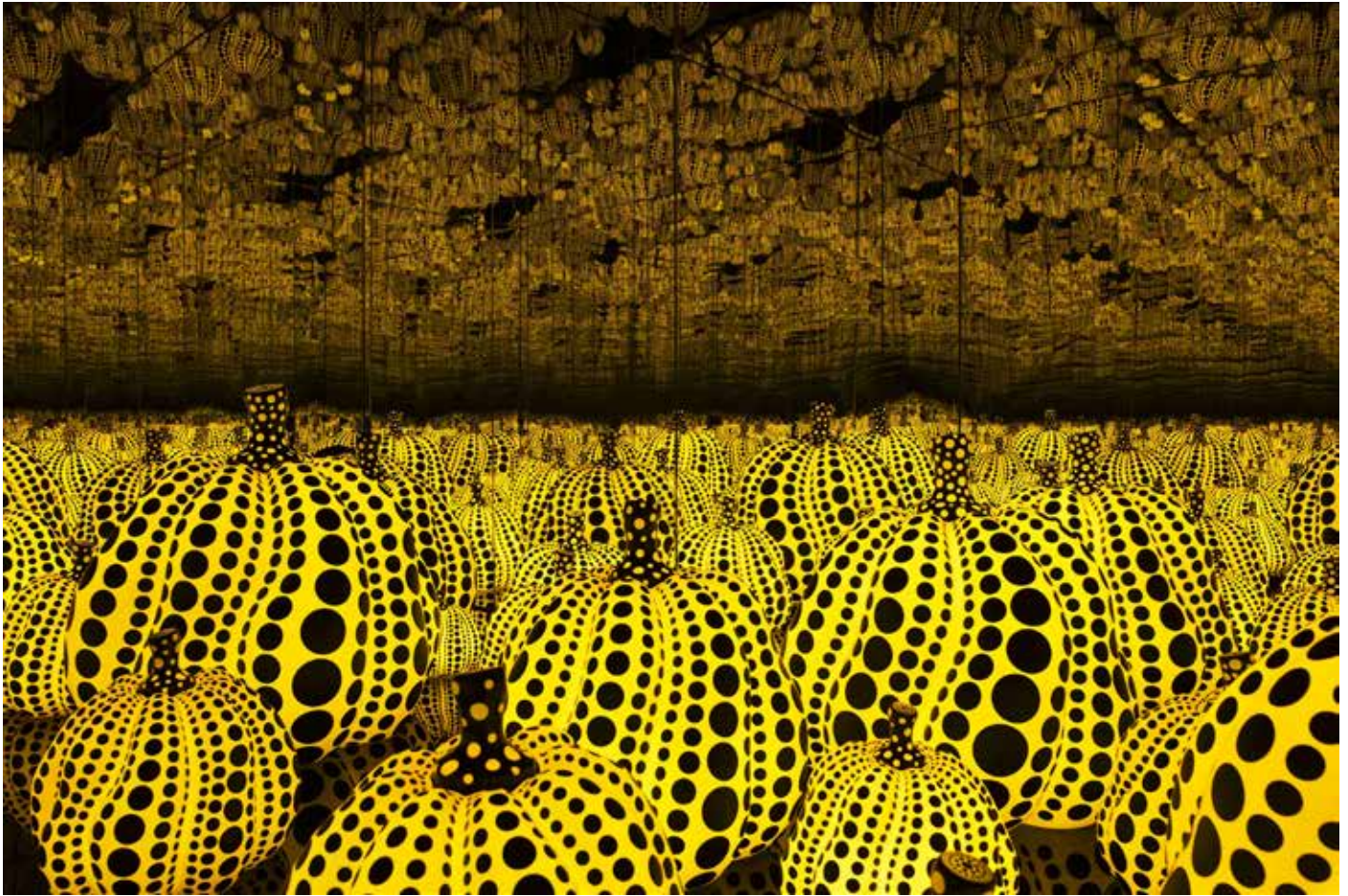
Date: 1921

Medium: Tempera on cardboard

Credit line: The State Tretyakov Gallery

PETER AND THE WOLF

WhistleBlast's chosen international artworks - as a reaction to listening to the music - and providing a strong link with music listening to visual art.



ALL THE ETERNAL LOVE I HAVE FOR THE PUMPKINS

Author: Yayoi Kusama

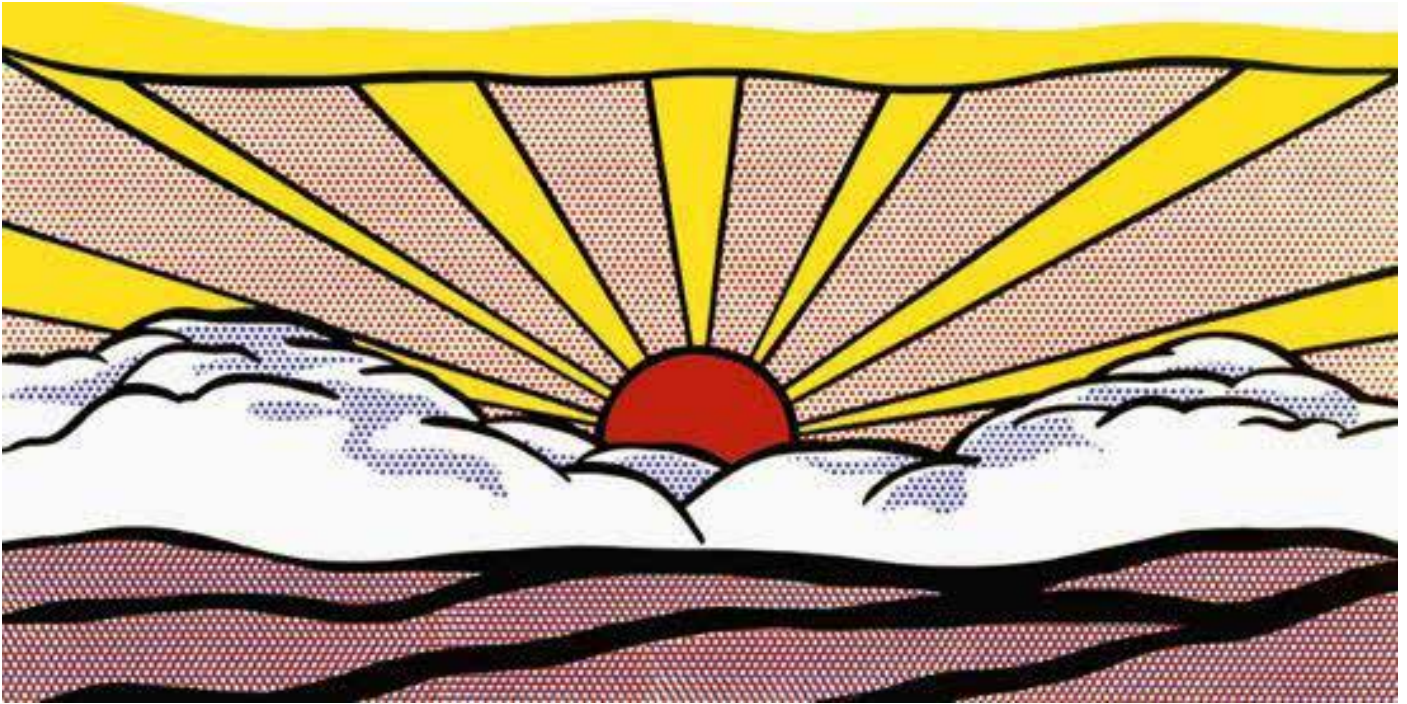
Date: 2016

Medium: Wood, mirror, plastic, acrylic, LED.

Credit line: Collection of the artist, Courtesy of Ota Fine Arts, Tokyo/ Singapore and Victoria Miro, London, © YAYOI KUSAMA

PETER AND THE WOLF

WhistleBlast's chosen international artworks - as a reaction to listening to the music - and providing a strong link with music listening to visual art.



SUNRISE

Author: Roy Lichtenstein

Date: 1965

Medium: Oil, Magna (acrylic) and graphite on canvas

Credit line: The Roy Lichtenstein Foundation

PETER AND THE WOLF

Score (first page)

PETER AND THE WOLF (2023 version)

Early one morning Peter opened the gate
and went out into the big green meadow

Sergei Prokofiev

Andantino ♩ = 92

Violin

Clarinet in Bb

Horn in F

Piano

5

Vln.

Cl.

Hn.

Pno.

MACK THE KNIFE

By Kurt Weill

Kurt Weill (1900–1950), a German composer and musical innovator, played a transformative role in the landscape of 20th-century music. Born in Dessau, Germany, Weill demonstrated an early aptitude for composition and studied at the Berliner Hochschule für Musik. His collaborative partnership with playwright Bertolt Brecht produced groundbreaking works such as *The Threepenny Opera*, which included the iconic *Mack the Knife*. Fleeing the rise of the Nazi regime, Weill emigrated to the United States in 1933. In America, he continued to make significant contributions to musical theatre, crafting works like *Lady in the Dark* and *Street Scene*. Weill's compositions defy easy classification, seamlessly blending elements of classical, popular, and avant-garde music. His career reflects a remarkable versatility, marked by a commitment to social and political commentary within the rich tapestry of musical expression.



MACK THE KNIFE

By Kurt Weill

Kurt Weill's *Mack the Knife* emerged during a period of intense political and cultural upheaval in Britain. The song, born from Weill's collaboration with lyricist Bertolt Brecht, is a key element of their groundbreaking work, *The Threepenny Opera* ("Die Dreigroschenoper"), which premiered in Berlin in 1928. This musical masterpiece encapsulates the vibrant yet precarious atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, a time marked by economic instability, social unrest, and the looming threat of political extremism.

In the midst of the Weimar Republic's artistic explosion, cabarets became lively hubs for intellectual and artistic exchanges, offering platforms for satirical commentary on the pressing issues of the day. Weill's *Mack the Knife* perfectly captures the spirit of this era. The song introduces the character Mackie Messer (Mack the Knife), a charismatic yet morally ambiguous figure, reflecting the moral decay and corruption of the time. Its popularity peaked in the late 1920s and early 1930s, just before the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazi regime. The contrast between the hedonistic atmosphere depicted in *Mack the Knife* and the impending political turmoil adds a layer of historical irony. As the Nazis denounced cultural expressions of the Weimar period, Weill and Brecht faced exile from Germany in 1933. The song stands as a powerful cultural artefact, echoing the tumultuous spirit of a pivotal time in German history.

The narrative unfolds in the gritty underbelly of London, portraying the charismatic yet ruthless character Macheath, also known as Mack the Knife. Macheath is a notorious criminal, a womanizer, and a charming antihero who navigates the city's criminal underworld. The song itself serves as a character introduction, highlighting Mack's exploits and his dangerous allure.

MACK THE KNIFE

Selected image



POSTER FOR LA TROUPE DE MADEMOISELLE EGLANTINE

Author: Henry de Toulouse-Lautrec

Date: 1896

MACK THE KNIFE

Lyrics

Oh the shark has pretty teeth dear
And he shows them pearly white
Just a jackknife has Macheath dear
And he keeps it out of sight

When the shark bites with his teeth dear
Scarlet billows start to spread
Fancy gloves though wears Macheath dear
So there's not a trace of red

On the side walk Sunday mornin'
Lies a body oozing life
Someone sneakin' round the corner
Is that someone Mack the Knife

From a tugboat by the river
A cement bag's droppin' down
The cement's just for the weight dear
Bet'ya Mackies back in town

Louie Miller disappeared dear
After drawing out his cash
And Macheath spends like a sailor
Did our boy do something rash

Suky Tawdry, Jenny Diver
Polly Peachum, Lucy Brown
Oh the line forms on the right dears
Now that Mackies back in town

Oh the shark has pretty teeth dear
And he shows them pearly white
Just a jackknife has Macheath dear
And he keeps it out of sight
Just a jackknife has Macheath dear
And he keeps it out of sight

PETRUSHKA

By Igor Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky, born Feodorovitch on June 17, 1882 (June 5, according to the old Russian calendar), in Orianenbaum (now Lomonosov), Russia, emerged as one of the 20th century's greatest composers with a career spanning over six decades. Raised in a cultured environment in St. Petersburg by his father, Fyodor Ignatievich Stravinsky, a bass at the Imperial Opera, and his mother, a skilled pianist, Stravinsky's early exposure to music paved the way for his later brilliance. Despite his parents' reluctance, he pursued his musical passion, taking private lessons with Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov after university, following the death of his father in 1902.



Stravinsky's artistic journey flourished when Sergei Diaghilev discovered his compositions, leading to a fruitful collaboration with the Ballets Russes. His groundbreaking ballets, such as *Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), revolutionized the music scene and marked him as a luminary. *Petrushka*, with its vivid portrayal of a tragic puppet brought to life, showcased Stravinsky's innovative use of rhythmic and harmonic elements, solidifying his reputation as a pioneer. The tumultuous period of World War I forced Stravinsky into exile in Switzerland, where he continued his creative output, including collaborations with writer Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz and painter René Auberjonois. The death of Diaghilev in 1929 marked the end of an era, but Stravinsky's versatility continued with ventures into neoclassicism, exemplified by *Pulcinella* (1920). He later settled in the United States in 1940, producing innovative works and embracing jazz.

PETRUSHKA

By Igor Stravinsky

Amid personal losses and health challenges, Stravinsky's later years saw him delve into religious compositions and serialism. He returned to Europe in 1970 and passed away in New York on April 6, 1971. His legacy endures as a testament to his adaptability and extraordinary creativity, making Igor Stravinsky a towering figure in the history of classical music.



Nicholas Roerich, *The Rite of Spring*, 1945



Mikhail Larionov, *The Fox (Disguised as a Nun)*. Costume design for the ballet *Le Renard*, 1921

ABOUT PETRUSHKA

The meeting of Diaghilev and Stravinsky was inspired by a performance of the latter playing his piano version of *Fireworks* in 1909. Diaghilev commissioned him to write *The Firebird*, and although Stravinsky was 27 and unknown at this time, he still possessed the chutzpah to verbalize his reluctance to compose within constraints or to collaborate with set designer Alexandre Benois and choreographer Mikhail Fokine. *The Firebird*, of course, was a huge success. But it was their second collaboration – *Petrushka* – that brought the pair its first multimedia success and freed Stravinsky to put his own stamp on Parisian musical life. Unlike *The Firebird*, the idea for *Petrushka* was Stravinsky's own. It had haunted him during the final weeks of revisions for *Firebird*, and when the project was finished, he threw himself into the first sketches. Stravinsky wrote to his mother:

...my Petrushka is turning out each day completely new and there are new disagreeable traits in his character, but he delights me because he is absolutely devoid of hypocrisy

Petrushka is a descendant of the commedia dell'arte Pulcinella, a clown representing the trickster archetype. He is playful, quarrelsome, mercurial, anti-authoritarian, naughty, but of course indestructible, which is the reason for his appeal. Other characters evolved: the Moor, Petrushka's nemesis and eventual murderer; the Ballerina, a Ballets Russes version of the commedia dell'arte Columbine – pretty, flirtatious, shallow, irresistible; and the Magician, who reveals Petrushka's immortality.



Petrushka's chamber. Set design, 1910

ABOUT PETRUSHKA

NIJINSKY AS PETRUSHKA

The concert version of *Petrushka* comprises four tableaux – imagine scenes from a storybook come to life. The first tableau depicts the last days of Carnival, 1830, Admiralty Square, old St. Petersburg. The music opens with a bustling fair day: crowds and glittering attractions everywhere reflected in the constantly shifting rhythms and harmonies, and in orchestration that alternates and ultimately merges high winds and bell-like tones in piano with thrusting low strings, erupting into a fantastic, oddly accented full-orchestra fiesta. Two drummers appear outside a puppet theatre, and a drum roll (a connecting device that runs throughout the work) knocks the crowd into pregnant silence. The Magician appears to the mesmerizing twists and turns of the orchestra, featuring an undulating, almost lurching, flute solo, and the sinister spell is cast. *Petrushka* is introduced with the other major connective device of the work: the “*Petrushka* Chord,” a tone cluster made of the major triads of C and F-sharp that weaves the work together both harmonically and melodically. Here we also meet the Ballerina and the Moor, and the three together do a warped, angular, yet still quite folksy Russian dance.



Vaslav Nijinsky in costume as Petrushka

ABOUT PETRUSHKA

Tableau two: Clarinet, bassoon, horn, and muted trumpets evoke Petrushka alone in a gloomy cell. Piano arpeggios accompany the puppet's dreaming of freedom, which escalates to enraged cries in the trumpets and trombones. Solo flute re-enters with a flirty little tune, shifting the mood to portray the Ballerina, whom Petrushka loves. She will tease, but of course wants nothing to do with him.

Who the Ballerina really wants is the Moor, the bad boy who is the centre of the third tableau. A clumsy, banal tune played by solo winds and pizzicato strings, all sounding slightly out of sync with each other, accompanies their lovemaking. Petrushka crashes the party, and the Moor chases him into the crowd.

In the final tableau, after the music of the fair scene, the Moor pursues Petrushka and murders him. The Magician realizes that Petrushka is a puppet, and when Petrushka's ghost appears the Magician runs away scared; the recurring "*Petrushka* chord" gives the last laugh. Stravinsky later said he was "more proud of these last pages than of anything else in the score."

Petrushka opened on June 13, 1911, at the *Théâtre du Châtelet* in Paris to overwhelming success. Conducted by Pierre Monteux, then 36, the performance was praised as a feat of sophisticated, intellectual theatrical folklorism.

Back in St. Petersburg the work was criticized by Russian ears that heard only a patchwork of Russian pop tunes, rural folksong, and ambient noise loosely tethered with "modernist padding," as Prokofiev called it.

ABOUT PETRUSHKA

STRAVINSKY: TRANSCRIPTION OF THREE MOVEMENTS FROM PETRUSHKA FOR SOLO PIANO

Artur Rubinstein

Written for the great Polish pianist Artur Rubinstein, Igor Stravinsky's *Three Movements from Petrushka* is one of the most technically and musically challenging pieces in the pianist's repertoire. Originally written as *Three Movements from Petrushka* (possibly with the full-blown orchestral version in mind later to be reduced), much of the technical difficulty resides in Stravinsky's propensity for writing awkwardly constructed and irregular patterns, extreme leaps, sequences of chordal progressions with wide stretches, and percussive and detached effects.



In addition, unlike Chopin, considered one of the most lyrical and idiomatic composers for the piano, Stravinsky was not concerned with different lengths of fingers and were often embedded melodies within chordal passages. Stravinsky himself made contradictory statements about *Three Movements from Petrushka*. On the one hand, he defined *Petrushka* as “an essentially pianistic piece” and tried to make the best use of the “resources appropriate to piano.” On the other hand, in other places, he pointed out the limitations of piano as an artistic medium: “the piano reductions are absolutely incapable of conveying one’s thought conceived for an instrumental ensemble”. These conflicting statements about the pianistic quality of *Petrushka* suggest that Stravinsky himself was aware of the technical difficulties of his own music.

ABOUT PETRUSHKA

CONOR LINEHAN: ARRANGING PETRUSHKA FOR THE WHISTLEBLAST QUARTET

In arranging the *Three Movements for Petrushka*, I mainly worked from, the solo piano version, but also consulted the orchestral original if in doubt about who should play what! In the Quartet are Oonagh Keogh on violin, Mary Curran on French Horn, Kenneth Edge on clarinet and me, Conor Linehan, on piano.

It was great to be able to hear my colleagues play through the score in rehearsal and make any changes that would improve the music and/or make it more playable. This piece makes considerable demands on all four of us. One of the most challenging aspects is that of ensemble. In the orchestral version, a conductor will hold everything together and in the solo piano version, the pianist only needs to follow themselves. We have worked hard to pull all the complex strands and parts together.

One striking thing about this arrangement is that I think it brings out the folk music element of the piece more than either of the two other versions. The music has a rustic swing which is very enjoyable for us to play together. We hope that you will enjoy hearing it just as much.

PÚCA PUPPETS FILM FOR WHISTLEBLAST'S PETRUSHKA

WhistleBlast commissioned Púca Puppets to create an accompanying shadow puppet film for our performance. Here are some stills taken from the accompanying *Petrushka* film.



PÚCA PUPPETS FILM FOR WHISTLEBLAST'S PETRUSHKA

