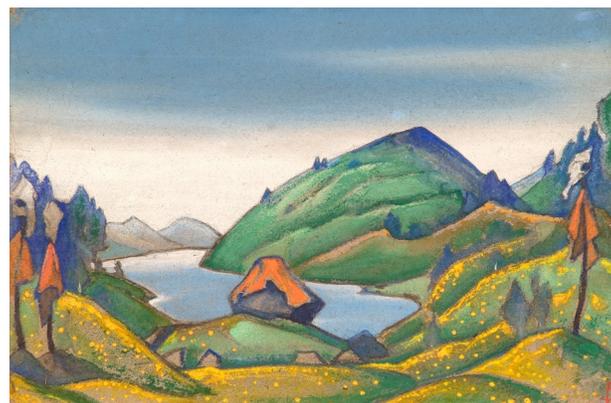


TEDDY
ABRAMS+



LOUISVILLE
ORCHESTRA



THE RITE OF SPRING

Friday, May 11, 2018 at 11 am

Teddy Abrams, conductor

R. Strauss

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

Stravinsky

Le Sacre du printemps (“The Rite of Spring”)

THE RITE OF SPRING

The two pieces that comprise this program are enormous works within the orchestral canon. Based on Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All or None*, Strauss' *Also sprach* explores mankind's relationship with faith and God (Nietzsche's work famously stating "God is dead") while *The Rite of Spring* explored ancient human beings' relationship with the Earth.

The sixth of Strauss' tone poems, *Also sprach Zarathustra* continued to expand the genre of the tone poem as well as expand the size of the orchestra. Eighteen years after *Also sprach's* premiere, Stravinsky would turn the musical world on its head with *The Rite of Spring*. This collaboration with Ballets Russes caused a riot on its opening night and ushered in the era of modern music.

Both pieces would go on to inspire filmmakers; *Also sprach* for Stanley Kubrick's *2001* and *The Rite of Spring* for the Disney animators of *Fantasia*.

The Composers

Richard Strauss (1864—1949)



Richard Strauss was born in Munich, Germany in June 1864. His father, Franz Strauss, was the most highly ranked French horn player in Germany. Franz was hand-picked by Richard Wagner for several of the world premiere orchestras of Wagner's works. Franz had a well-publicized volcanic relationship with conductor Hans von Bülow and Wagner, making clear of his dislike of Wagner's horn composition and von Bülow's dictator-like behavior. For their part, Wagner and von Bülow were not pleased by Franz's apparent disregard but they could not replace him. And Richard's musical education was based on his father's prejudices.

Young Strauss began his career with the composition and performance of several fairly conservative symphonic pieces and some piano recitals in Berlin. His *Suite for Winds in B Flat* won the approval of von Bülow and eventually Strauss found himself conducting the work performed by the Munich Symphony Orchestra. Strauss became von Bülow's assistant and became known equally as a conductor and a composer. In 1885, Strauss became the principal conductor for the Munich Symphony upon von Bülow's resignation.

Strauss met Alexander Ritter, an accomplished violinist and husband to Wagner's niece. Ritter and Strauss began their friendship discussing Wagner's influence on harmonic structure, orchestration and the artistic vocabulary of the later 19th century. Strauss transferred these conversations into his musical composition and changed the face of the musical landscape. His first tone poem, *Don Juan* received mixed reviews from audience goers but he continued to write tone poems including *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Quixote*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Ein Heldenleben*, *Sinfonia Domestica* and *Eine Alpensinfonia*. Like Wagner, Strauss' music had its own symbolism and relationship to literature, as well as a gargantuan orchestra. Strauss' peers also had mixed feelings about him. Saint-Saëns felt he was "pushing works of art beyond the realm of art" while Debussy praised his "tremendous versatility of orchestration and frenzied energy."

Strauss turned his attention to opera composing two rather unknown

works, *Guntram* (a la Wagner) and *Feuersnot*, both received terrible critical reviews. In 1905, Strauss composed *Salome* (based on the Oscar Wilde play) and created the most scandalous stage production of his time. While many opera houses refused to produce *Salome*, the scandal of the opera created several new productions which kept curious patrons returning night after night. His next opera, *Elektra*, continued the atmosphere of protest and scandal initiated by *Salome*. An even more dissonant work than *Salome*, *Elektra* demanded voices of Wagnerian proportion and the musical community was outraged. They believed that Strauss initiated the end of the operatic tradition as well as the demise of the human voice as an artistic instrument. From 1911 to 1933, Strauss changed from his Wagnerian style to a more Mozart-like quality beginning with *Der Rosenkavalier* followed by *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Die Agyptische Helena*, and *Arabella*.

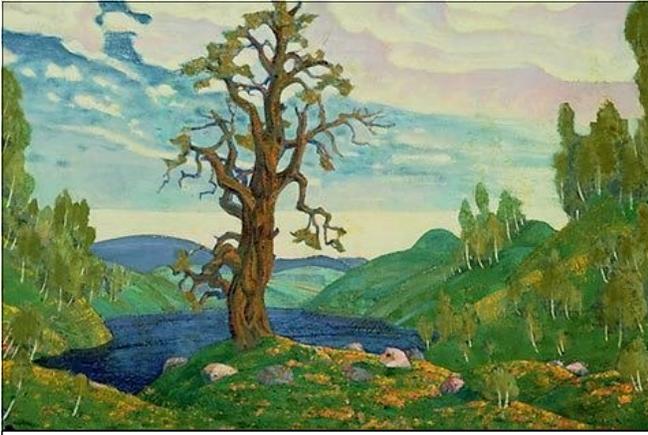
When the Nazis came into power, they named Richard Strauss the “Reichsmusikkammer” to acknowledge him as the most important composer in Germany. Strauss was not interested in politics and continued composing, often offending the authorities. Eventually, he and his family lived under house arrest until they moved to Switzerland to wait out the end of World War II. In 1948, at the age of 84, Strauss composed his final work *Vier letzte Lieder* or *Four Last Songs*. By the time he died in 1949, Richard Strauss was quite wealthy, and lived out his remaining years in relative quiet as a happily married man and was widely acknowledged as a remarkable composer and conductor.

Igor Stravinsky (1810—1856)



Igor Stravinsky (1882 – 1971) was born in June of 1882 in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father Fyodor was a bass singer at the Kiev Opera House so young Stravinsky started studying music at a young age. And though both parents appreciated music, they wanted their son to study law. In 1901, Stravinsky studied at the University of Saint Petersburg but attended few classes. During the summer of 1902, Stravinsky stayed with renowned composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and would end up studying privately with the master. Stravinsky eventually graduated in 1906 (studies were interrupted due to Bloody Sunday in 1905) but after that, he concentrated on music. He married his cousin Katya in January 1906 and had children in 1907 and 1908. In 1909, Stravinsky’s compositions were heard by producer Sergei Diaghilev who commissioned Stravinsky for some orchestrations (what would become *Les Sylphides*) and a full ballet, *The Firebird*. This partnership would produce some of Stravinsky’s best known works including *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913).

Collaboration can spark true genius – take as an example the partnership between composer Igor Stravinsky and impresario Sergei Diaghilev. Perhaps it was inevitable that the paths of these two men would intersect. Both attended university in St. Petersburg, and studied with famed Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1909, Diaghilev formed the ballet company that would become the Ballets Russes. That same year, Diaghilev attended a concert in Saint Petersburg that featured two works by Stravinsky; *Feu d’artifice* (*Fireworks*) and *Scherzo fantastique*. Diaghilev was impressed and asked Stravinsky to orchestrate select works by Chopin for his company followed by the commission to create a full length ballet, *L’oiseu de feu* (*The Firebird*). In addition to Stravinsky, Diaghilev recruited choreographer Michel Fokine, designer Léon Bakst and dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. The team worked to prepare *The Firebird* for the June 25, 1910 premiere as part of the new Ballets Russes season in Paris. The result was a smashing success that thrust the 28-year-old composer and the rest of the creative team into the Paris limelight. This success was followed in 1911 with *Petrushka* and the notorious 1913 *The Rite of Spring*.



One of Nicholas Roerich's designs for
The Rite of Spring (1913)

The opening of *The Rite of Spring* program was *Les Sylphides*, an early collaboration of Sergei Diaghilev with Stravinsky featuring choreographed and orchestrated versions of Chopin pieces; a very traditional ballet with traditional music. Then came Act I of *The Rite of Spring* with the now famous bassoon solo but at the time, it was unrecognizable as the bassoon was playing in a register that was well above the normal range. This was followed by loud, pulsating dissonant chords with the dancers emphasizing the irregular rhythms. And as the choreography became more uncomfortable to watch, the audience became more restless – lots of booing, hissing and catcalls. The “pro” Stravinsky faction and the “anti” Stravinsky faction essentially got into a full scale brawl to the point that Paris police had to be called in – and that’s before

the intermission! The police stayed around to keep things under control for the second act. Nijinsky and Stravinsky were horrified; however Diaghilev (the producer) was delighted. *The Rite of Spring* went on to become one of the most performed and recorded classical pieces and was a pivotal step in the evolution of 20th century music.

With the start of World War I, Stravinsky and family stayed in Switzerland but they struggled financially. Stravinsky found it difficult to collect his royalties from his compositions for Ballet Russes (a problem he blamed on Diaghilev) but he found other sponsors like Ernest Ansermet who sponsored [L’Histoire du soldat](#) (Stravinsky would not return to his homeland until 1962). During much of the 1920s, the Stravinsky family (Igor, his wife Katya and their children) lived in various parts of France. It was during this time that Igor met dancer Vera de Bosset and they began an affair. Until Katya’s death in 1939, Igor split his time between his family and Vera. The 1930s brought illness (tuberculosis) to the Stravinsky family as well as death (eldest daughter Ludmila and wife Katya as well as Stravinsky’s mother). Stravinsky struggled with tuberculosis for five months but recovered enough to travel to the United States in 1939 to participate in the Norton lectures at Harvard University. Vera followed in 1940 and they were married in Bedford, Massachusetts. They eventually settled in West Hollywood and Stravinsky became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1945. Due to World War II, there were a number of European creative émigrés in LA at the time including Otto Klemperer and Aldous Huxley. According to Huxley’s wife Laura, Aldous and Stravinsky started a Saturday lunch tradition for west coast luminaries like Orson Welles, George Cukor and Christopher Isherwood. Much of the 1930s and 1940s saw Stravinsky experiment with neo-Classicism in his compositions. Neo-classicism didn’t mean a return to the Classical period in music exemplified by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven but a return to the ancient Greek aesthetics of order, balance, clarity, economy, and emotional restraint. This also meant Greek mythology as subject matter and for Stravinsky; this period included the ballet [Apollon Musagète](#) (1927-28); the melodrama [Perséphone](#) (1933-34); and the ballet [Orpheus](#) (1947), a collaboration with George Balanchine. Stravinsky’s final work in this style was the opera [The Rake’s Progress](#) (1951) based on eight paintings and engravings of William Hogarth.

In the 1950s, Stravinsky explored serial technique (pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg) with multiple works including [Cantata](#) (1952) and [Canticum Sacrum](#) (1955). In 1962, Stravinsky was invited to Leningrad for a series of concerts and had the opportunity to meet Soviet composers Dmitri Shostakovich and Aram Khachaturian. In 1969, Stravinsky moved into the Essex House in New York City. He died of heart failure in 1971. Stravinsky was an extraordinary musical innovator and his work changed the face of 20th century music and beyond.

The Works

Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30

“First movement: Sunrise. Man feels the power of God. Andante religioso. But man still longs. He plunges into passion (second movement) and finds no peace. He turns toward science, and tries in vain to solve life’s problems in a fugue (third movement). The agreeable dance tunes sound and he becomes an individual. His soul soars upward while the world sinks far below him.”

These are the short program notes Strauss approved for the premiere of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in Frankfurt, Germany on November 27, 1896. Almost double the length of his previous tone poems, *Also sprach Zarathustra* was inspired by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s 1883 novel *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book For All and None*. According to Strauss "I did not intend to write philosophical music or to portray Nietzsche's great work in musical terms" but instead was meant to suggest "the evolution of the human race from its origins, through its various phases of development (religious and scientific), right up to Nietzsche's idea of the superhuman [Übermensch]." In another letter, Strauss commented that Nietzsche’s work was “the starting point, providing a form for the expression and the purely musical development of emotion.”



The most familiar section is the opening movement “[Sunrise](#)” that begins almost inaudibly on a sustained double low C on the double basses, contrabassoon and organ.

The dawn motif is heard in the brass starting with the perfect fifth (C to G) and then the octave C before the rest of the orchestra joins in on the minor third (E-flat). This “movement” is only 22 bars before segueing into the “[Von den Hinterweltlern](#)” or “Of Those in Backwaters.” Each of the nine sections is named after a title in Nietzsche’s novel and with the exception of three distinct pauses, played without interruption. In the third section “[Von der großen Sehnsucht](#)” or “Of the Great Longing,” you hear echoes of earlier Strauss tone poems and along with the fourth section “[Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften](#)” or “Of Joys and Passions” becomes more chromatic in nature. The fifth section “[Das Grablied](#)” or “Song of the Grave” continues the characteristics of the prior section

before segueing into the sixth section “[Von der Wissenschaft](#)” or “Of Science and Learning.” This segment opens with a repeat of the Sunrise or Zarathustra theme before launching



into a chromatic fugue. The seventh segment “[Der Genesende](#)” or “The Convalescent” explores various iterations of the Sunrise theme chromatically and dramatically.



The eighth section “[Das Tanzlied](#)” or “The Dance Song” also begins with a quick reference of the Zarathustra theme

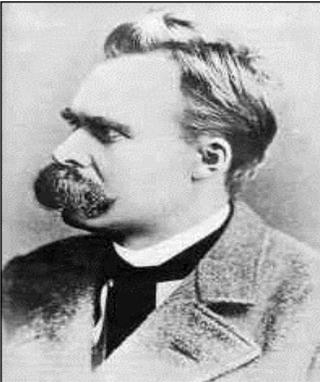
in the trumpets and violins before an extended violin solo line. This extended waltz is more light-hearted and perhaps speaks of the other “Strauss” (unrelated to Richard); Johann Strauss II known as the Waltz King. Throughout the piece, Strauss has flirted with juxtaposing the key of C (representing nature) and the key of B (representing man) but he final segment “[Nachtwandlerlied](#)” or “Song of the Night Wanderer.” Though next to each other, they are incompatible with the key of C having no sharps or flats and the key of B having 5 sharps. Rather than a bombastic ending, Strauss chooses to end the piece quietly and enigmatically with the



upper winds and upper strings playing a B Major chord while the cellos and double basses pluck a low C natural essentially ending the work unresolved.

The Inspiration

Friedrich Nietzsche



Nietzsche

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844 in Röcken bei Lützen, a small town south of Leipzig, Germany. His father, Karl Ludwig, was the town's Lutheran minister. When Fritz (Friedrich's nickname) was 4, his father died and six months later, his younger brother Joseph also died. The family moved to Naumburg an der Saale where Fritz and his sister were raised by his mother (Franziska), grandmother and aunts. As an adolescent, Fritz attended boarding school (Schulpforta) near Naumburg. During his summers in Naumburg, Fritz listened to Richard Wagner's music and read Friedrich Holderlin, Jean-Paul Richter and David Strauss. In 1864, Fritz began his studies at the University of Bonn in theology and philology (this study centers on the interpretation of classical and biblical texts). He studied with Otto Jahn and Friedrich Ritschl who had a profound impact on young Fritz. In 1865, Fritz followed Ritschl to Leipzig where he published essays on classical philosophers including Aristotle. Also in 1865, Nietzsche discovered the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer and read *The World as Will and Representation* (1818). In 1867, Nietzsche began his required military service and was assigned to the equestrian unit near his home town of Naumburg. He suffered a serious chest injury while riding and was placed on sick leave.

In 1868, Nietzsche met Wagner who shared his enthusiasm of Schopenhauer. Fritz greatly admired Wagner who eventually became a pseudo-father figure to Nietzsche. Ritschl recommended Nietzsche for a teaching position at the University of Basel in Switzerland where he began working in 1869. While in Basel, he attended lectures by historians Franz Overbeck and Jacob Burckhardt and continued his friendship with Wagner. In 1870, he served as a hospital attendant during the Franco-Prussian war where he contracted diphtheria, dysentery and a variety of other health problems that plagued him the rest of his life (he was never that healthy to begin with as he suffered from bad eyesight and migraines). In 1872, Nietzsche published his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* which was basically well received although it did have some critics.

Nietzsche continued to meet with Wagner (who now resided in Bayreuth). In 1876, Nietzsche proposed to Mathilde Trampedach (who turned him down) and completed *Unfashionable Observations* (1873-1876) that focused on his contemporary German culture. In 1878, he published *Human, All Too Human* which led to the end of his friendship with Wagner. In 1879, Nietzsche resigned from his teaching position due to his poor health and began living between his mother's house in Naumberg, Switzerland, Italy, France and Germany. This would be his most prolific period producing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche introduced the concept that God is dead, and the superman. The Nazis would distort this concept of the superman to justify their beliefs in a master race. In 1882, Nietzsche met and proposed to a young Russian woman, Lou Salome (she also turned him down). Salome's relationship with Nietzsche would be material for her future writings about him.

In 1888, Nietzsche published *The Case of Wagner*, *Twilight of Idols*, *The Antichrist*, *Ecce Homo* (How One Becomes What One Is) and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. In early 1889, Nietzsche suffered a severe breakdown and never truly recovered. There has been much speculation on why Nietzsche suffered the breakdown including disease, drugs, or mental illness. In 1890, he went home to Naumburg to live with his mother until her death in 1897. His sister Elizabeth and her husband were in the process of establishing an Aryan, anti-Semitic colony (New Germany) and took over the care of her brother. She rented a house in Weimar and moved Nietzsche and his works there. Nietzsche died there on August 25, 1900 at the age of 55 from complications of pneumonia and a stroke. He is buried in the family grave next to the church in Röcken bei Lützen.

The Rite of Spring

There are three classical pieces of music that changed the world of music; Wolfgang Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major* "Eroica," (1803-04), and Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). As mentioned in Stravinsky's bio, the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* is legendary as having spawned a full-scale brawl. Coupled with Stravinsky's unique score, Ballets Russes principal dancer Vaslav Nijinsky choreographed the ballet not in a beautiful, lyrical style but in a raw, driving fashion "primitivism" that complimented the music. The audience was unprepared for this new style plus there had already been talk of a possible riot before even one note had been played. Aware of this, Diaghilev told conductor Pierre Monteaux to keep going no matter what. At one point, the audience was so loud that the dancers could not hear the orchestra so Nijinsky was in the wings shouting the step numbers.



According to Stravinsky, he envisioned this work in spring of 1910: "I saw in my imagination a solemn pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring."

The Rite of Spring is divided into two large sections; *L'Adoration de la Terre* (Adoration of the Earth) and *Le Sacrifice* (The Sacrifice). From the opening night program notes:

FIRST ACT: "The Adoration of the Earth."

Spring. The Earth is covered with flowers. The Earth is covered with grass. A great joy reigns on the Earth. Mankind delivers itself up to the dance and seeks to know the future by following the rites. The eldest of the Sages himself takes part in the Glorification of Spring. He is led forward to unite himself with the abundant and superb Earth. Everyone stamps the Earth ecstatically.

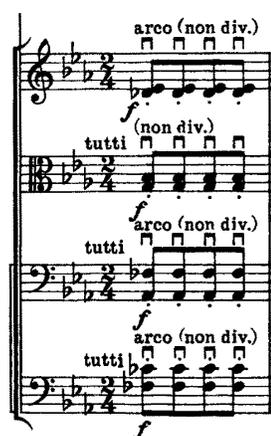
SECOND ACT: "The Sacrifice." After the day:

After midnight. On the hills are the consecrated stones. The adolescents play the mystic games and see the Great Way. They glorify, they proclaim Her who has been designated to be delivered to the God. The ancestors are invoked, venerated witnesses. And the wise Ancestors of Mankind contemplate the sacrifice. This is the way to sacrifice Iarilo the magnificent, the flamboyant.

Within these large section, the piece is further divided into smaller sections. The **introduction** is one of the most famous bassoon melodies in the orchestral repertory. Scored much higher than a typical bassoon register, the opening night audience didn't even know what instrument was playing the solo.



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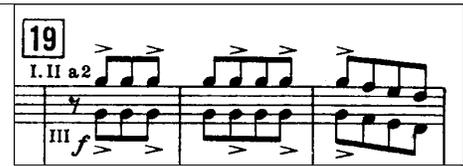
According to Stravinsky, "the opening bassoon melody in *Le Sacre du printemps* is the only folk melody in that work. It came from an anthology of Lithuanian folk music I found in Warsaw,... the anthology was a recent publication." The source was from a 1900 publication *Melodje ludowe litewskie* (Lithuanian Folk Melodies) collected by Lithuanian priest and folklorist Antanas Juška. This was one of several Lithuanian folk melodies that inspired Stravinsky (although he only admitted to the one).



After the introduction, the **Augurs of Spring** immediately launches into a pounding rhythm, essentially the heartbeat of this section, played in the strings and punctuated by the horns. An old woman appears and begins to divine the fu-

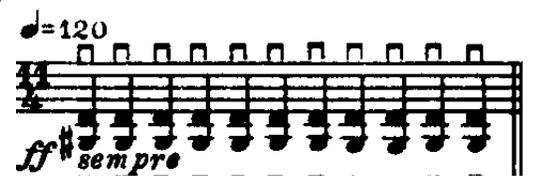
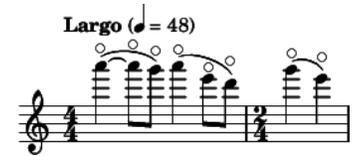
ture “Divination with Twigs.” Stravinsky noted her appearance with a syncopated hobbling motive in the bassoons.

Near the end of the **Ritual of Abduction**, Stravinsky changes time signatures for each measure (he does this frequently throughout the entire work).



Nijinsky was interested in the look of groups or clumps of dancers so much of the choreography in *The Rite of Spring* showcases this interest. After the Ritual, **Spring Rounds** and the **Ritual of the Two Rival Tribes**, the elders arrive with the sage who blesses the earth. All celebrate with the **Dance of the Earth**. This ends the first section.

The **Sacrifice** section has a brief introduction before **The Mystic Circle of Young Maidens**; a “game” that will determine who will be the sacrifice. If introduction music sounds familiar, it was the inspiration for John Williams’ *The Dune Sea of Tatooine* from *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope*. The maiden that falls out of the circle twice is chosen to be the sacrifice, this leads to the **Glorification of the Chosen One**. The orchestra introduces this section with a heavy down bows in the strings (a) in an 11/4 time signature before shifting to the more violent section in 5/8 (b).



The maidens invoke the ancestors before turning over the sacrifice to the village elders in the **Ritual Action of the Ancestors**. The tempo immediately slows to a Lento with a steady quarter note beat in the horns, strings and percussion. The alto flute has running 16th notes under the melody in the muted trumpets.



Surrounded by the village elders, the sacrificial maiden must now dance herself to death to ensure the return of spring (“**Sacrificial Dance**”).



Tom Service from *The Guardian* “The paradox of the primitivism in *The Rite* is that it can be heard as both a horrifying vision of the pitilessness of nature – and as an expression of the inhumanity of the machine age. The fate of the “chosen one” in the Sacrificial Dance is particularly chilling. She is caught in an unstoppable rhythmic vortex from which there is only one way out: through the terrible dissonance that ends the piece, and the single chord that kills her. This is music that manages to sound both mechanistic and elemental, making *The Rite* as radical in 2013 as it was 100 years ago.”

Joffrey [documentary](#) on recreating the Nijinsky choreography as well as the fully reconstructed ballet

[CSO: Beyond the Score The Rite of Spring](#)

[Keeping Score: The Rite of Spring](#)

Disney’s interpretation for [Fantasia](#) (1940)

The Creators

The Rite of Spring was a concept developed by a group of remarkable men for the 1913 Ballets Russes season in Paris. While we've already spent time on Igor Stravinsky, it's important to know a bit about the co-creators of this work. Let's begin with Ballets Russes impresario **Sergei Diaghilev**. He was born in 1872 in Selishchi, Russia to a wealthy family. He studied law and music at university in St. Petersburg and his circle of friends included future collaborators artists Alexandre Benois and Léon Bakst. In 1899, Diaghilev became assistant to Prince Volkonsky who had the responsibility over all Imperial theaters. He was fired in 1901 over artistic differences of opinions but used his connections to continue his work in the arts world. In 1907, Diaghilev produced several Russian music concerts in Paris and the following year he mounted a production of Modest Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*. Diaghilev was asked to produce ballet as well so he formed Ballets Russes in 1909 with the best Russian dancers of their day including



Diaghilev



Diaghilev, Nijinsky
and Stravinsky

Anna Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky. Diaghilev hired Léon Bakst to be the artistic director and Alexandre Benois to create sets including 1911's *Petrushka*. From 1909 to 1912, the principal choreographer was Michel Fokine (who choreographed two of the three Stravinsky works for the Ballets Russes; *The Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911) but Fokine left in 1912 due to his volatile relationship with Diaghilev. In 1912, principal dancer Vaslav Nijinsky was given the opportunity to choreograph two of Claude Debussy's works; *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1912) and *Jeux* (1913). Nijinsky was also the choreographer for Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). Diaghilev and Nijinsky had a romantic relationship until Nijinsky married Romola de Pulszky in Buenos Aires during a company tour in September 1913; after that he was released from performing with the Ballets Russes. Future choreographers for Ballets Russes included Léonide Massine, Bronislava Nijinska (the younger sister of Vaslav) and a young George Balanchine. Diaghilev continued to produce ballets throughout Europe with varying degrees of success. He died of diabetes in Venice on August 19,

1929.



Nijinsky

Vaslav Nijinsky was born 1889 or 1890 in Kiev, Russia to Polish parents who were touring dancers. His parents separated in 1897 and his older brother Stanislav was admitted to an asylum in 1902. In 1900, Vaslav studied with three dancers from the Imperial Russian Ballet and was admitted to the school in 1901. All agreed that Nijinsky was an exceptional dancer but he did poorly in academic subjects (at least the subjects that didn't interest him). Throughout his tenure at the school, Nijinsky had highs and lows (the latter often due to behavior) but at age 14, he was given the opportunity for a role in the final ballet of the great choreographer Marius Petipa but war prevented the performance. Nijinsky graduated in 1907 with distinction in dancing, art and music. Nijinsky danced at the Mariinsky Theatre in the corps and the opportunity led him to introductions with Alexandre Benois and Michel Fokine. In 1908, Nijinsky met Diaghilev and joined Ballets Russes in 1909. His performances as a dancer captivated the French audiences and became legendary as did his erotic choreography of Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and primitivism

based choreography for Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. After he was released from Ballets Russes for getting married in 1913 (he and Romola would go on to have two daughters), Nijinsky struggled to find opportunities to dance. He briefly formed his own company but the venture was not a success. The outbreak of World War I also inhibited his ability to dance (he was under house arrest in Budapest as he was classified as an enemy Russian citizen) but Diaghilev was able to get him released and return to the Ballets Russes in 1916 while the company was on tour in New York. Nijinsky struggled on tour and by the end in 1917, he was confused and exhausted. By 1919, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and spent the next 30 years in asylums until his death in 1950 of kidney failure.

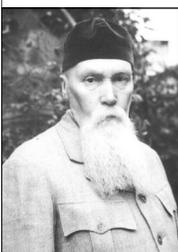


Nijinsky in *L'Après-midi d'un faune*

Pierre Monteux was born in Paris, France in 1875 to a shoe salesman and his wife. Monteux began studying violin at six and entered the Conservatoire de Paris at age nine. He continued his studies of the violin and added composition, harmony, theory and eventually viola. Monteux married at 18 and after graduating in 1896, found work as a violist in a variety of orchestras including the Concerts Colonne (he stayed with this orchestra as violist and assistant conductor until he began touring with Ballets Russes in 1911). After his brief mandatory service in the military, Monteux returned to Paris where he continued performing as a violist and had occasional conducting jobs as well. Monteux and his wife divorced in 1909 and he remarried the following year. In 1910, the Concerts Colonne orchestra was hired to play for the entire Ballets Russes season so Monteux played viola in the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Firebird*. Even though Diaghilev had hired Nikolai Tcherepnin to conduct the 1911 premiere of Stravinsky *Petrushka*, he was so impressed with Monteux's conducting of the rehearsals that Diaghilev insisted Monteux conduct the premiere. Monteux became the principal conductor for the Ballets Russes European tour in 1911-12 and conducted the ballet premieres of Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* in May 1912. For the 1913 season, Monteux conducted two premieres; Debussy's *Jeux* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. Initially Monteux was not a fan of *The Rite* score noting "I decided then and there that the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms were the only music for me, not the music of this crazy Russian. ... My one desire was to flee that room and find a quiet corner in which to rest my aching head. Then [Diaghilev] turned to me and with a smile said, "This is a masterpiece, Monteux, which will completely revolutionize music and make you famous, because you are going to conduct it." And, of course, I did." The following year, Monteux conducted *The Rite of Spring* as a concert piece and it was hailed a masterpiece. In his decades long conducting career, Monteux was principal conductor at various times with The Metropolitan Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Paris and the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra as well as numerous guest conducting opportunities around the world. Monteux also premiered numerous works with these orchestras. He died in 1964 from a series of strokes and cerebral thrombosis.



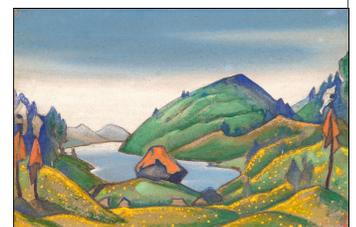
Monteux



Roerich

Nicholas Roerich was born in 1874 in St. Petersburg, Russia to a wealthy family. He studied at St. Petersburg University and Imperial Academy of the Arts simultaneously with his first degree in 1897 and his law degree the following year. After Roerich finished his university work, he met Helena (the niece of composer Modest Mussorgsky) and after his trip around Europe, they married. Roerich worked for the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts eventually becoming its director. As a member of the Imperial Society, Roerich was uninspired by their methodology and decided to overhaul it by creating a revolutionary system of training in the arts. Roerich felt that this training would engender harmony and mutual understanding. Synthesizing ideas and making connections between seemingly contradictory philosophies would become a hallmark of Roerich. He was also a member of Sergei Diaghilev's *World of Art*, a Russian magazine and artistic movement that included Alexandre Benois and Léon Bakst.

After a tour throughout Russia discovering its past through the styles and history of the architecture, Roerich set about painting the ancient monuments that he felt were an important part of Russia's history and needed to be preserved—he was particularly fond of the Stone Age and collected a large number of artifacts from that era. Roerich was always interested in the theatre and through his connection with Diaghilev had many opportunities to display his paintings at exhibitions as well as design costumes and sets for the Ballets Russes. This led to his collaboration with Stravinsky for *The Rite of Spring*. From the [Nicholas Roerich Museum](#): "At first entitled *The Great Sacrifice: a Tableau of Pagan Russia*, the motif for the ballet grew out of Roerich's absorption with antiquity and, as he wrote in a letter to Diaghilev, "the beautiful cosmogony of earth and sky." In the ballet Roerich sought to express the primitive rites of ancient man as he welcomed spring, the life-giver, and made sacrifice to Yarilo, the Sun God. It was a story unlike that of any ballet before it." After *The Rite of Spring*, Roerich taught and traveled the world including the United States and India. Roerich died in India on December 13, 1947.



Connecting the dots

How to use this concert experience in the classroom

English Language Arts

Also sprach Zarathustra

Within a few notes, you instantly recognize this piece. Are there similar examples in literature that from the first sentence or famous line, you know the book or the author?

Make a game out of opening or famous sentences from current reading to see if students can recognize the book or the author.

Utilize famous opening sentences from books that students may not have read and have the students create a short story (or poem) based on the opening line or another famous line. For example; *Moby Dick*, the opening line "Call me Ishmael" could be turned into a new story or poem project for students. Who is Ishmael? What is he doing? Why is he telling us to call him by his name? What's his backstory?

Other famous opening sentences, partial sentences or famous lines that could be used:

Othello (1603) by William Shakespeare

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.
(Iago, Act 1 Scene 1)

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy:
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on.
(Iago, Act 3 Scene 3)

The Odyssey (c. 725 BCE) by Homer

"Of all creatures that breathe and move upon the earth, nothing is bred that is weaker than man."

The Hobbit, or There and Back Again (1937) by J.R.R. Tolkien

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."

Thus Spake Zarathustra (1883—85) by Friedrich Nietzsche

"When Zarathustra was alone, however, he said to his heart: "Could it be possible! This old saint in the forest hath not yet heard of it, that God is dead!" Prologue, part 2

"I teach you the superman. Man is something to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man?"

Zarathustra's Prologue, part 3

RL.9-10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

- identify a subject or key scene that is portrayed in two different artistic mediums (e.g., poetry, painting, drama).
- determine what is emphasized or absent in each medium. ▫ analyze the impact of a particular subject or key scene from another artistic medium.

Write the opening sentence story as first- and third-person narrations. Does your story change depending on the narration style?

Social Studies

High School—World Civilizations

Roerich based the story of *The Rite of Spring* on ancient Russian history and the myth of the Slavic pagan god Yarilo (aka Jarilo), the son of god of thunder, Perun. Is this pre-Christian religion a monotheistic or polytheistic system? Are there similarities between the Slavic gods and other pre-Christian religions? What does this religion tell you about the culture of the time?

Stravinsky wasn't the only Russian composer inspired by ancient Slavic religion; Modest Mussorgsky's tone poem [Night on Bald Mountain](#) (also known as *Night on Bare Mountain* or *St. John's Eve on Bald Mountain*) was based on a witches' Sabbath with Chernobog as the devil.

- I can describe how belief systems, knowledge, technology, and behavior patterns define cultures. (**HS-2.1.1, HS-4.2.1, HS-4.2.3, HS-4.2.4, HS-5.1.1, HS-5.1.2**)
- I can analyze historical perspectives of religions in terms of how they have affected and been affected by cultural issues and elements. (**HS-2.1.1, HS-4.2.1, HS-4.2.3, HS-4.2.4, HS-5.1.1, HS-5.1.2**)
- Define monotheism and polytheism. Have students give examples throughout history. (Individual or groups).

7th grade

How did ancient Russian history influence the story of *The Rite of Spring*? What was Russia like in the Paleolithic Era and the Stone Age? How did Russia's geography influence the hunter/gatherer society? What historical and/or cultural influences can you see in the original set design and costumes for *The Rite of Spring* (page 13 of this guide)?

COMPELLING QUESTIONS: What is prehistory? How can there be a time period that is before history? How do archeologist study prehistoric times? How do we know about those who came before us? How did early humans live? What is culture and what are examples of it?

I can explain the elements of culture in the Paleolithic Age (**07-2.1.1; 07-3.1.1; 07-3.4.2; 07-4.3.2; 07-5.1.1; 07-5.1.2; 07-5.3.1**).

I can explain how geographic factors promote and limit human activities such as hunting and gathering (**07-2.1.1; 07-2.3.1; 07-2.3.2; 07-3.1.1; 07-3.4.1; 07-3.4.2; 07-4.3.2; 07-4.4.2; 07-5.1.2; 07-5.3.2**).

SS-07-2.1.1 Students will explain how elements of culture (e.g., language, the arts, customs, beliefs, literature) defined specific groups in the early civilizations prior to 1500 A.D. and resulted in unique perspectives.

High School Arts and Humanities

Compare Stravinsky's three ballets for Ballets Russes: [The Firebird](#), [Petrouchka](#) and [The Rite of Spring](#). Are there elements that are similar? Different? How do you respond to each of them? Explain the context of the Moor in *Petrouchka* (there is a similar character in the original version of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*).

- MU:Re7.2.H.1a** Compare passages in musical selections and explain how the elements of music and context (social, cultural, or historical) inform the response.
- MU:Re8.1.H.1a** Explain and support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical selections, citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, context (personal, social, and cultural), and (when appropriate) the setting of the text, and outside sources.
- MU:Cn11.0.T.1a** Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

I can identify examples and explain the musical contributions of **Igor Stravinsky**, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and Duke Ellington.

I can identify examples and explain how the choreography (and dances) of **Michel Fokine**, Martha Graham, George Balanchine, Alvin Ailey, and Mikhail Baryshnikov are reflective of their times.

I can explain how various arts disciplines can be used together to communicate a singular thought, feeling, or idea.

Nicholas Roerich's set design for *The Rite of Spring*



Roerich's costume design and original pictures of premiere

