

Histoire du Soldat players

Conductor – Igor Markevitch

Bassoon – Henri Helaerts

Clarinet – Ulysse Delecluse

Contrabass – Joachim Gut

Cornet – Maurice André

Percussion – Charles Peschier

Trombone – Roland Schnorkh

Violin – Manoug Parikian

Voice Actor [La Princesse] – Anne Tonietti

Voice Actor [Le Diable] – Peter Ustinov

Voice Actor [Le Récitant] – Jean Cocteau

Voice Actor [Le Soldat] – Jean-Marie Fertey

Text (Spoken in French) By – C. F. Ramuz



STRAVINSKY HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT

conductor
IGOR MARKEVITCH

La Princesse
Anne Tonietti
Le Diable
Peter Ustinov
Le Récitant
Jean Cocteau
Le Soldat
Jean-Marie Fertey



L'Histoire du Soldat is neither a ballet nor a musical drama; rather, it is a little of both. It has a libretto, written in French by C.F. Ramuz, and mixes dialogue with music, dance, and drama. Stravinsky scored the work for a strange chamber ensemble, consisting of one clarinet, one bassoon, one cornet, one trombone, one violin, one double-bass, two side drums (strange because there are no instrumental doublings, and the percussion is particularly sparse). The work was designed by Stravinsky and Ramuz to be both inexpensive to perform and performable in virtually any kind of theatre. The result was what has been called a work of "pocket theatre,"² with a story not so much set to music as accompanied by it (as Eric White notes, Stravinsky's music was specifically intended to be independent from the text, so it could be performed as a concert suite). The main characters in the work are the Narrator, the Soldier, the Princess, and the Devil, and the action unfolds over six scenes. The plot is fairly simple, a Faustian tale in which the Soldier trades his fiddle to the Devil for a magic book which can provide wealth. He later becomes disillusioned, loses his wealth, and meets the Devil again in a card game. He gets the devil drunk, regains his fiddle, and uses it to cure the local King's daughter, who has been ill. He then fends off the Devil with his fiddle playing, and marries the Princess. The Soldier lives happily until he decides to leave his new town and visit his old home. Once he leaves the safety of his new town, he is captured by the Devil, and must

accompany him to Hell. The music in the first half of the work is largely incidental; it is the music of the final two scenes, particularly that of scene five, which is the most interesting. Scene five contains the Princess's three dances: a Tango, Waltz, and Ragtime. Waltzes had appeared earlier in Stravinsky's works (notably in *Petruska*), but this was the first appearance in any of Stravinsky's music of such contemporary music as tangos or ragtime music. Stravinsky insisted that *L'Histoire du Soldat* was strongly influenced by jazz, thereby claiming a place for himself in the history of music as one of the first art music composers to use jazz in a significant way; however, recent scholarship suggests that Stravinsky probably didn't know any true jazz, and indeed the date of the work, 1918, predates the age of jazz in Europe by a number of years. Stravinsky also used Lutheran chorale melodies and a quasi-gypsy tune in the work. *L'Histoire du Soldat* features the violin throughout (making an obvious connection to the fiddle in the story), and contains some of Stravinsky's most clever orchestration; as is usual with Stravinsky, orchestral color is at the fore of this work, with each individual instrument used soloistically. The texture of the piece is generally contrapuntal, with ostinati and complex rhythms, and the tonality is localized; there is no overall harmonic scheme, but rather tonally stable sections mixed with bitonal clashes.

STRAVINSKY

HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT

conductor
IGOR MARKEVITCH

Part I (Includes Soldier's March, Music For Scene
1, Reprise Of Soldier's March, Music For Scene
2, Music For The End Of Scene 2, Reprise, Music For Scene 3) 27:00
Part II (Includes Soldier's March, Royal March, Little Concert,
Three Dances, Devil's Dance, Little Chorale, Devil's Couplets,
Grand Chorale, Triumphal March Of The Devil) 26:52
Total Time: 53:52

Transferred from a 4-track tape
Recorded by Philips
Recording at Théâtre de Vevey (Suisse) in October 1962

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