

The Swiss conductor, Ernest Ansermet, came from a musical family; he successively studied the clarinet, violin and brass instruments, which he used in fanfares; later he wrote military marches for the Swiss army which he did not consider important. Besides Music, he studied Mathematics in Lausanne and graduated with a Diploma in 1903; until 1906 he taught at the Lausanne Grammar School, then he decided to continue his studies at the Sorbonne and, at the same time, to attend courses at the Paris Conservatory. After his return to Lausanne, he taught Mathematics for one more year before devoting himself entirely to music.



Ansermet was a particular advocate of the Swiss composers Arthur Honegger and Frank Martin. He conducted the first performances of the following works of A. Honegger: *Horace victorieux* (1921), *Chant de joie* (1923), *Rugby* (1928) and *Pacific 231* (1923), which was dedicated to him, and of the following works of Frank Martin: *Symphonie* (1938), *In terra pax* (1945), *Der Sturm* (1956), *Le mystère de la Nativité* (1959), *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1963) and *Les Quatre Éléments*, which were dedicated to him. Also important were the first performances of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and *Cantata misericordium* (1963).

STRAVINSKY



LE
SACRE
DU
PRINTEMPS

ERNEST ANSERMET
conducting
L'ORCHESTRE
DE LA
SUISSE ROMANDE



Mastered in DSD256

Some of those in attendance to see the Ballets Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-élysées on May 29, 1913, would already have been familiar with the young Russian composer Igor Stravinsky through his 1910 ballet *L'Oiseau de feu* (The Firebird). But if they expected his newest work to proceed in the same familiar and pleasing vein as his first, they were in for a surprise. From the moment the premiere performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (Rite of Spring) began on this night in 1913, it was clear that even an audience of sophisticated Parisians was totally unprepared for something so avant-garde.

From the first notes of the overture, sounded by a bassoon playing well outside its normal register, Stravinsky's haunting music set the audience on edge. It was the combination of that music with the jarring choreography of the great Vaslav Nijinsky, however, that caused the uproar that followed. "The curtain rose on a group of knock-kneed and long-braided Lolitas jumping up and down," Stravinsky later remarked of the brutal opening scene of *Le Sacre du printemps*, which depicts a virgin sacrifice in an ancient pagan Russia. Catcalls began to issue from the audience as they

took in the bizarre scene playing out before them. The noise became great enough that the orchestra could not be heard from the stage, causing Nijinsky to climb atop a chair in the wings shouting out instructions to his dancers onstage. While Stravinsky sat fuming as his music was drowned out by jeers, whistles and—if one witness is to be believed—members of the audience barking like dogs, Serge Diaghelev, impresario of the Ballets Russes, frantically switched the house lights on and off in a futile effort to restore order. It was, in other words a scene that bore a closer resemblance to the Marx Brothers' *A Night At The Opera* than it did to a typical night at the Ballets Russes.

In retrospect, Stravinsky's score can be seen as paving the way for 20th-century modern composition, and it sounds no more daring to today's listeners than the average dramatic film scores. Yet no present-day listener—and certainly no listener who first encountered it as part of the soundtrack to Disney's animated *Fantasia* (1940)—can possibly appreciate how shocking the dissonance, droning and asymmetrical rhythms of *Le Sacre du printemps* sounded to its premiere audience in 1913.

STRAVINSKY LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS

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The Adoration Of The Earth 16:08

Introduction; Harbingers Of Spring - Dances Of The Adolescents; Mock Abduction; Spring Rounds; Games Of The Rival Tribes; Procession Of The Sage; Dance Of The Earth

The Sacrifice 17:44

Introduction; Mystical Circles Of The Adolescents; Glorification Of The Victim; Evocation Of The Ancestors; Ritual Of The Ancestors; Sacred Dance - The Victim

Total Time 33:52

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded by Decca Producer: James Walker Engineer: Roy Wallace
15,20,21 Apr, 2&18 May 1957 at Victoria Hall, Geneva



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