

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

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ERNEST ANSERMET

Conducting

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Like the other two masterworks of Igor Stravinsky's early career, *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*, *Petrushka* was written and produced in close collaboration with Serge Diaghilev, producer-director of the Ballet Russes. Stravinsky has written of how he wished to refresh himself after the enormously successful *Firebird* by composing a *Konzertstück* (concert piece) for piano and orchestra. Piano vs. orchestra turned out to be a more accurate description, as Stravinsky eventually conceived of the piano representing a puppet endowed with life and contending with trumpet blasts and other violence from the orchestra. He titled it *Petrushka* after, in his words, "the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries." When Diaghilev paid a visit to Stravinsky in the summer of 1910, he immediately perceived the dramatic possibilities of the work, and they agreed on a full-length ballet exploring *Petrushka's* adventures, tragedy and death at the Shrovetide Fair of St. Petersburg. Alexandre Benois, an associate of Diaghilev's and a devotee of Russian puppet theater from his youth, was employed to assist in realizing the scenario. In May 1911, the score was completed and dedicated to Benois, who was also listed as co-author of the scenario.

After a good deal of music in Scene I dedicated to showing the various patrons of the fair (Benois insisted that these be treated as real people, both in the score and in the choreography), *Petrushka* makes his entrance, eventually loosing the strings that had tied him to his master, the Show-

man. Scene II shows *Petrushka's* ill-fated attempts to woo the Ballerina, a fellow puppet. In Scene III, the Ballerina falls in love with another fellow puppet, the Blackamoor, much to *Petrushka's* dismay. The fair at large returns in Scene IV, setting the stage for *Petrushka's* death by the hands of the Blackamoor. Though the Showman assures the crowd that *Petrushka* is not really alive, *Petrushka's* ghost comes back to mock everyone who was fooled.

Stravinsky's score for *Petrushka* is brilliant, charming and absorbing, one of the most magical scores in all the classical literature. Stravinsky borrowed folk tunes to illustrate the crowd scenes, used bitonal chords to signify *Petrushka's* dual existence as puppet and living being, wrote his own seductive melodies, and stitched it all together seamlessly with a genius for dramatization and flair for orchestration that could only come from Stravinsky. The opening of the fourth scene, to take just one example, is astonishing: swirling strings that seem to musically depict light, wind melodies soaring over the strings, and finally a full melody, exuberant and blissful, blossoming on the strings. *Petrushka* is filled with such moments. In 1947, Stravinsky revised the score with an eye towards concert performance, paring down the instrumentation, changing metronome markings and making other small revisions. Either version is more than adequate to get to know this marvelous work.

STRAVINSKY PETRUSHKA

ERNEST ANSERMET Conducting
L'ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE

1st Tableau: The Shrovetide Fair 9:49

2nd Tableau: In Petrushka's Room 4:17

3rd Tableau: In The Moor's Room 7:22

4th Tableau: The Shrovetide Fair (Evening) 13:17

Total Time 35:00

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded by Decca Producer: James Walker Engineer: Roy Wallace

Recorded 23 October - 9 November 1957 in Victoria Hall, Geneva



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