

Montgomery Philharmonic 2018 - 2019 Our 13th Season : They Changed The World

Concert 1, Sunday, October 7, 2018: They are Immigrants

Stravinsky | **Milhaud** | **Vali** | **Amaya**

About Stravinsky –

Stravinsky began taking piano lessons when he was very young, and the turning point in his life was attending a concert of Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* ballet at age 8 at the Mariinsky Theater. He was enthusiastic about his piano, music theory, and composition study and, by age 15, he had mastered Mendelssohn’s *Piano Concerto in G minor*. Despite his enthusiasm, Stravinsky’s parents insisted that he study law at the University of Saint Petersburg. At age 19, Stravinsky was much less enthusiastic about the study of law and, in fact, skipped many of his classes, attending fewer than 50 classes in the 4 years he attended the university. During the summer of 1902, Stravinsky stayed with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who suggested that Stravinsky study privately rather than studying composition at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Because the University of Saint Petersburg had to close for 2 months and Stravinsky’s father died of cancer, this created circumstances that led Stravinsky to concentrate more on studying music, so he began taking private lessons twice a week from Rimsky-Korsakov.

Stravinsky’s first two orchestral compositions, *Scherzo Fantastique* and *Fireworks*, were premiered in 1909. Serge Diaghilev heard them and was so impressed that he commissioned Stravinsky to do some orchestrations and then compose a full-length ballet score, *The Firebird*. Stravinsky became an overnight sensation following the success of *The Firebird* and traveled to Paris.

Stravinsky lived in Ukraine; Russia; Lausanne, Clarens, and Morges Switzerland; Carantec, Paris, Anglet, Nice, and Voreppe, France; and New York City, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Los Angeles in the United States. He held both French and United States citizenship. All of his moves were related to two things—his composing career and relationships with the Russian émigré community. He lived in Los Angeles for the longest period of time and developed deep friendships within the Russian community, including Otto Klemperer – conductor, Thomas Mann – novelist, Franz Werfel – playwright and poet, George Balanchine – choreographer, Arthur Rubenstein – pianist, and Bernard Holland – music critic. This intellectual community introduced Stravinsky to several famous authors, including W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Dylan Thomas, and Aldous Huxley.

Stravinsky’s compositions can be divided into three style periods: a Russian period, a neoclassical period, and a serial period. The Russian period was at the beginning of his compositional career and reflects his study with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. These pieces also show that he was influenced by the music of Glazunov, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, Dvorak, and Debussy. Although this period contains the smallest output of his career, many of his most played pieces, such as *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring*, were from this period. Stravinsky explored themes for the ancient Classical world during his neo-classical period. He was interested in Greek mythology as well as music of composers of the Classical period. Well-known works from this period are *Apollon musagète*, *Perséphone*, *Orpheus*, and *Pulcinella*. Stravinsky became interested in serial composition techniques, such as 12 tone music, cells, and tone rows, starting in the 1950s. The well-known pieces that form his final style period—*Cantata* (1952), *The Songs from Shakespeare*, *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas*, *Agon*, and *Threni*—employ some or all of these techniques.

Stravinsky has been called “one of music’s truly epochal innovators.” The most important aspect of Stravinsky’s work, aside from his technical innovations (including rhythm and harmony), is the “changing face” of his compositional style while always “retaining a distinctive, essential identity.” Even in his serial period, he always created astonishing music.

- **Born:** June 17, 1882, Oranienbaum, Russia (a suburb of Saint Petersburg)
- **Died:** April 6, 1971, New York, New York
- **Full name:** Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky
- **Parents:** Father – Fyodor Stravinsky, a bass in the Kiev and Marinsky Theater Opera Houses; Mother – Anna nee Kholodovsky Stravinsky, one of four daughters of a high-ranking official of the Kiev Ministry of Estates.
- **Wife:** 1st wife – Katya, 2nd wife Vera, a painter
- **Children:** Daughters – Ludmilla and Marie Milène; Sons – Theodore and Sviatoslov Soulima
- **Compositions:** 8 works for opera/theater, 12 ballets, 24 orchestral works, 4 concerti, 14 works for choir, 22 songs and song cycles, 25 chamber works, 22 works for piano, 4 arrangements and transcriptions

Pulcinella Suite (1920) – Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)

Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella Suite* is derived directly from the *Pulcinella Ballet*, which he wrote for Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes. While Diaghilev was on tour with his Ballet Russes, he spent some time browsing through old music in Italian libraries with choreographer Léonide Massine. Massine suggested doing a ballet on the old Italian story of Pulcinella in the *commedia dell’arte* tradition and then selected a collection of pieces by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. Originally Manuel de Falla was suggested to orchestrate the music, but de Falla was not available, so Stravinsky received the commission.

Stravinsky composed the piece in about 7 months, because he received the commission at the last minute. Diaghilev expected nothing more than stylized orchestrations. The composer explained: Musical “effects” are usually obtained by the juxtaposition of nuances; a piano following a forte produces an “effect.” But that is the conventional, accepted thing. Where Stravinsky alters harmonies and other structural features, it is primarily through manipulating existing elements in the work rather than inserting new material. The most dramatic example occurs when Stravinsky orchestrates a trio sonata by Domenico Gallo in the last movement. Under the basic melody, Stravinsky has added insistent tonic chords in an ostinato, shifting in the penultimate bar to a strange dominant chord containing every note except E and B. The F of the chord resolves to an E in the final chord, providing a sense of resolution. The leading tone, B, however, is oddly absent throughout. This gives the ending of *Pulcinella* a subtly Russian tone, as though the eighteenth-century Italian music were played with a twentieth-century Russian accent,

The *Pulcinella Ballet* was a turning point in Stravinsky’s compositions. With this ballet, you hear Stravinsky in his “neo-classical style,” a style that would be a strong part of Stravinsky’s composing for more than two decades. Unlike many of Stravinsky’s earlier works, *Pulcinella* is sparsely scored for 33 instruments, the rhythms are simple, and he uses time signatures that would have been used during Pergolesi’s time.

In the *Pulcinella Suite*, he took out the vocal parts and omitted 12 of the movements. The suite was revised by the composer in 1949 and 1965.

There are eight movements in the *Pulcinella Suite*:

- I. Sinfonia
- II. Serenata
- III. Scherzino – Allegretto – Andantino
- IV. Tarantella
- V. Toccata
- VI. Gavotta (con due variazioni)
- VII. Vivo
- VIII. Minuetto – Finale

Instrumentation: piccolo, flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns in F, 1 trumpet in C, 1 trombone, (tenor-bass), concertino strings (1–violin 1, 1–violin 2, 1–viola, 1–cello, 1–double bass), ripieno strings (violin 1, violin 2, viola, cello, double bass)

Artifacts –

[Score to *Pulcinella Suite* used by Leonard Bernstein](#)

[Score to *The Firebird* used by Leonard Bernstein](#)

[Correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy on the occasion of a reception in Stravinsky’s 1962 honor at the White House.](#)



Stravinsky: L’Histoire Du Soldat Suite, Pulcinella Suite

Great Performances - Stravinsky: Petroushka, Pulcinella Suite

Stravinsky: Panorama - Firebird Suite, Pulcinella Suite, etc.

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Stravinsky

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