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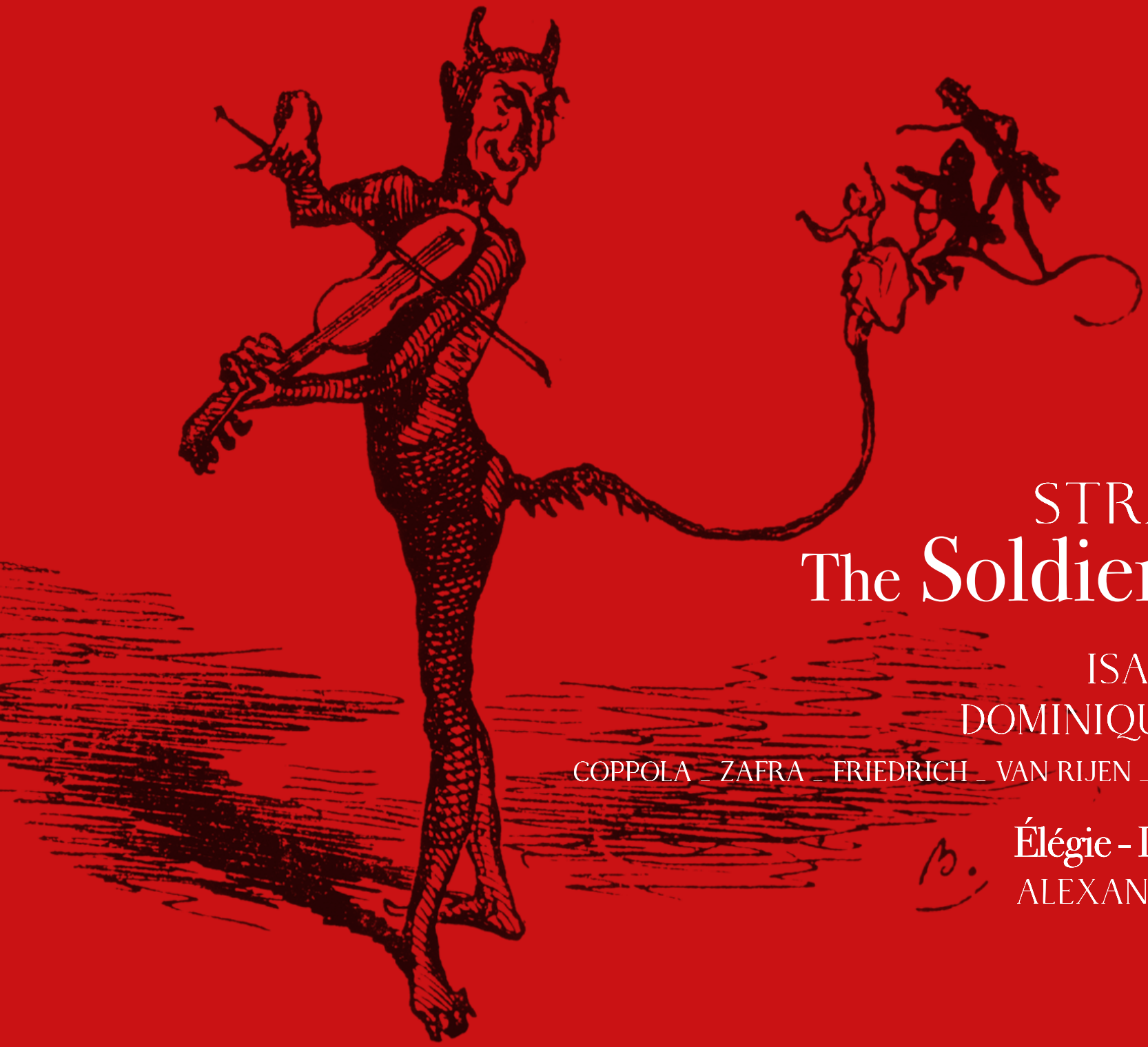


STRAVINSKY
The Soldier's Tale

ISABELLE FAUST
DOMINIQUE HORWITZ

COPPOLA _ ZAFRA _ FRIEDRICH _ VAN RIJEN _ DE BOEVÉ _ CURFS

Élégie - Duo Concertant
ALEXANDER MELNIKOV

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

1	**Élégie** for solo violin (1944)	5’15

Duo concertant* for violin and piano (1932)

2	I. Cantilène	2’56
3	II. Églogue I	2’22
4	III. Églogue II	3’22
5	IV. Gigue	4’27
6	V. Dithyrambe	3’23

The Soldier’s Tale (Histoire du soldat)
to be read, played and danced, in two parts
Words by CHARLES FERDINAND RAMUZ (1918)
English version by Michael Flanders and Kitty Black

Part I

7	Marching Song	1’45
8	*Phew… This isn’t a bad sort of spot*	1’10
9	Music to Scene 1. Airs by a stream	2’33
10	*The Devil appears*	4’59
11	Marching Song (reprise)	1’36
12	*Hurray! Here we are!*	2’43
13	Music to Scene 2: Pastorale	2’57
14	*Ah, you dirty cheat! It’s you!*	3’19
15	Music to Scene 3. Airs by a stream (reprise)	0’45
16	*Good to touch, good to feel*	3’06

Part II

17	Marching Song (reprise)	1’40
18	*Now he comes to another land*	2’21
19	Royal March	3’08
20	*It went off just as we thought it would*	3’00
21	Little Concert	2’54
22	Three Dances : 1. Tango	2’26
23	2. Waltz	2’08
24	3. Ragtime	2’26
25	Dance of the Devil	1’15
26	Little Chorale	0’41
27	Devil’s Song	0’34
28	Great Chorale	3’51
29	*Suppose, suppose we went there*	1’31
30	Devil’s Triumphal March	2’14

Isabelle Faust, *violin*

Alexander Melnikov*, *piano Steinway*

Dominique Horwitz, *narrator* (the Narrator, the Soldier, the Devil)
Lorenzo Coppola, *clarinets*
Javier Zafra, *bassoon*
Reinhold Friedrich, *cornets*
Jörgen van Rijen, *trombone*
Wies de Boevé, *double bass*
Raymond Curfs, *percussion*

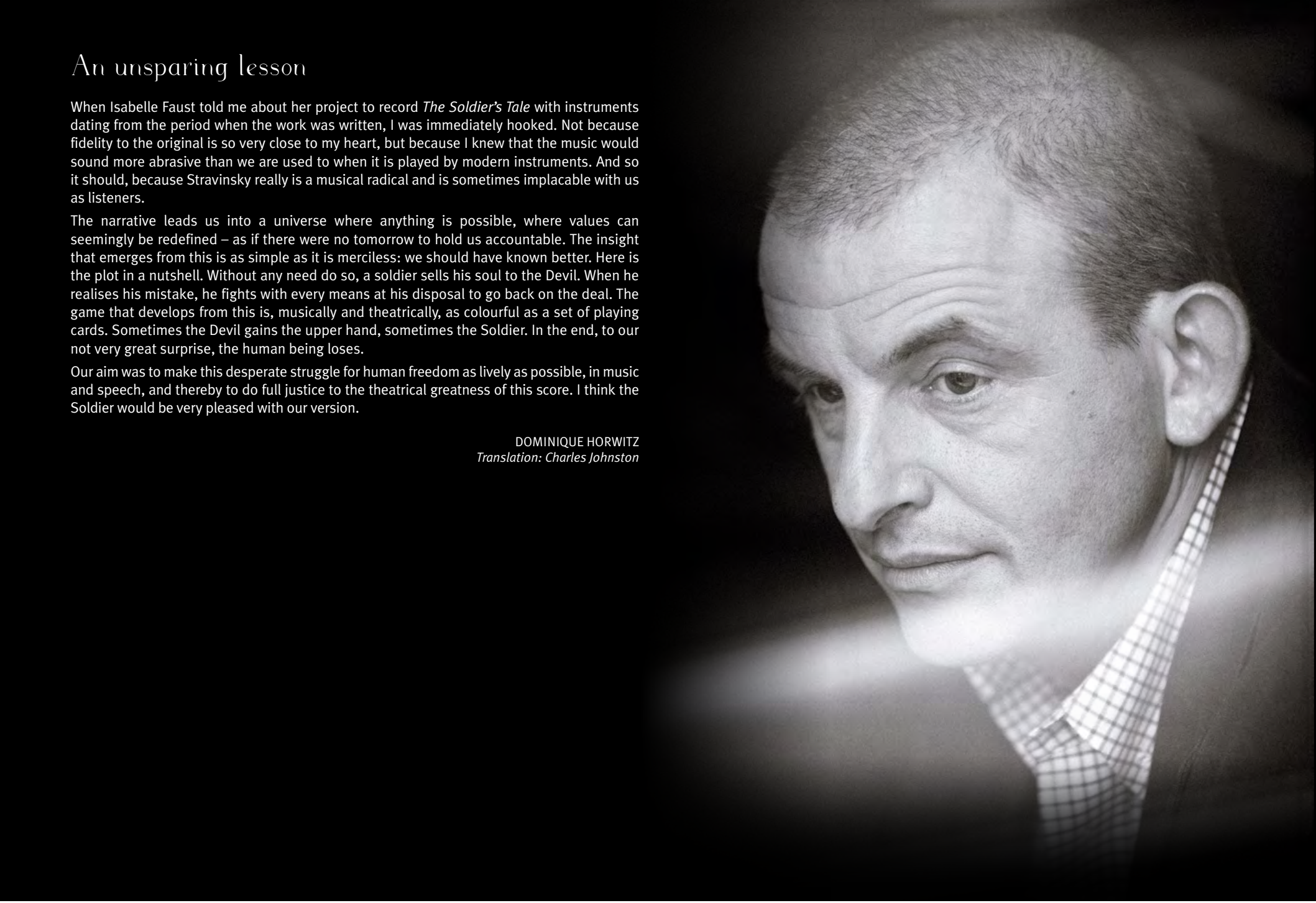
An unsparing lesson

When Isabelle Faust told me about her project to record *The Soldier's Tale* with instruments dating from the period when the work was written, I was immediately hooked. Not because fidelity to the original is so very close to my heart, but because I knew that the music would sound more abrasive than we are used to when it is played by modern instruments. And so it should, because Stravinsky really is a musical radical and is sometimes implacable with us as listeners.

The narrative leads us into a universe where anything is possible, where values can seemingly be redefined – as if there were no tomorrow to hold us accountable. The insight that emerges from this is as simple as it is merciless: we should have known better. Here is the plot in a nutshell. Without any need do so, a soldier sells his soul to the Devil. When he realises his mistake, he fights with every means at his disposal to go back on the deal. The game that develops from this is, musically and theatrically, as colourful as a set of playing cards. Sometimes the Devil gains the upper hand, sometimes the Soldier. In the end, to our not very great surprise, the human being loses.

Our aim was to make this desperate struggle for human freedom as lively as possible, in music and speech, and thereby to do full justice to the theatrical greatness of this score. I think the Soldier would be very pleased with our version.

DOMINIQUE HORWITZ
Translation: Charles Johnston



The Devil's violin

During the last few years before the start of the First World War, Stravinsky and his family, after spending the summer in Russia, had been in the habit of residing in Switzerland for the autumn and winter. The outbreak of hostilities forced them to settle there from July 1914 until 1920. Through the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet, whose acquaintance Stravinsky had recently made, he met the Vaudois writer Charles Ferdinand Ramuz. The two men first worked in 1915-16 on a 'burlesque' story, *Renard*, whose libretto, fashioned by Stravinsky from Afanasyev's collection of folk tales, was adapted by Ramuz. In early 1918, it was once again Afanasyev's tales that inspired Stravinsky and Ramuz to write ***Histoire du soldat*** (*The Soldier's Tale*), notably one (no.154) that relates the adventures of a deserter from the army and the Devil who takes his soul in exchange for his violin, an eminently Faustian theme. The choice of subject was not unconnected to the news from Russia. After placing high hopes on the Russian Revolution of February 1917, Stravinsky was deeply affected by the turn of events in October which marked the advent of the Bolsheviks. Deprived of material resources, he did all he could to remedy the situation and conceived the idea of a travelling production with actors, dancers and a small ensemble of seven instruments, as it were a 'theatre of poverty', to quote Pierre Boulez's apt description. Ramuz transposed the setting to the Vaudois region, 'between Denges and Denezy', and later related:

> Each of us had sought only to remain what he was and to take advantage of his character without imposing too many constraints on it. Not being a man of the theatre, I had suggested to Stravinsky that I should write, rather than a play in the literal sense, a 'tale', explaining to him that theatre could be conceived in a much broader sense than was usually the case and lent itself perfectly, for example (and I still think so), to what one might call the narrative style. On Stravinsky's side, it had been agreed that he would conceive his music in such a way that it could be completely independent of the text and would constitute a 'suite', which would allow it to be performed in concert.

Stravinsky and Ramuz received financial support from the Swiss philanthropist Werner Reinhart to stage the work, which was to be performed in Lausanne on 28 September 1918 under the direction of Ernest Ansermet; this enabled them to commission costumes from René Auberjonois and bring in musicians from Geneva and Zurich. Georges Pitoëff devised the choreography and performed it with his wife Ludmilla, while the role of the Narrator was assigned to Jean Villard-Gilles. After an eclipse of several years, *Histoire du soldat* was given again in the spring of 1924 on the stage of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and subsequently in Germany, and began to enjoy increasing success.

The story may be summarised as follows. A Soldier (Joseph) walking towards his village is approached by the Devil disguised as an old man; the latter manages to barter the Soldier's violin for a magic book and takes him away for three days. In fact, these three days last three years; when he returns to his village, nobody recognises Joseph, who realises that he has been tricked. The Devil tells him he can make his fortune with the magic book. When he becomes rich, he wants to buy back his violin from the Devil, now disguised as an old woman, but is no longer able to play it; he tears up the magic book in a fury. Ruined, he goes to a village where the King's daughter is ill and whoever cures her will be granted her hand in marriage. He meets the Devil disguised as a virtuoso violinist and plays cards with him. Although he keeps losing, he plies the Devil with drink until he loses consciousness, and then recovers the violin. He goes to see the sick Princess and cures her by playing her a *Tango*, *Waltz* and *Ragtime*; the Devil appears but the Soldier overpowers him. Once they are married, the Soldier decides to visit his home village with the Princess and falls into the Devil's clutches once more. The Narrator and two characters (the Soldier and the Devil) share the text, the roles being interchangeable, so that the Narrator sometimes speaks the words of the Devil or the Soldier. Although the text is performed rhythmically in the *Marching Song* and *The Devil's Dance*, it is more generally spoken with the cadences of normal speech, with or without music.

The first musical sequences punctuate the successive scenes, but from the *Little Concert*, which precedes the healing of the Princess, they follow one another more closely. The instrumental forces (violin and double bass, clarinet and bassoon, cornet and trombone, and percussion consisting of bass drum, field drum (*tambour*), two side drums, tambourine, cymbals and triangle) are highly unusual. Although Stravinsky claimed much later to have been influenced by jazz, the instrumental scoring seems more reminiscent of the bands of klezmer musicians (violin, double bass, clarinet and percussion, sometimes with trumpet and/or trombone) that he heard in Russia when spending his summers in Ustilug, where there was a large Jewish community. He had also been fascinated by a group of Hungarian musicians performing in a cabaret in Geneva with Aladár Rácz at the cimbalom. Hence we find a trace of this Gypsy sonority in the predominant and dramatic role that the violin plays in *The Soldier's Tale*. The tessitura employed is concentrated in the low register: beneath its sometimes almost awkward surface imitating a 'squeaky fiddle', the part is fearsomely difficult with its many double stops, bariolages and open-string crossings. The wide compass of the clarinet, an instrument of which Stravinsky was especially fond, helps to enrich and reinforce the medium register of the ensemble.

From this unique group in which the instruments 'dialogue with each other in the most unexpected way', as André Schaeffner put it, Stravinsky draws on every style: a folk character with the *Marching Song*, into which he introduces offbeat accents; the fashionable dances of the period (tango, waltz and ragtime) that the Princess performs, or the *pasodoble*, which he had discovered in June 1916 during his trip to Spain with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, in *The Royal March*; the 'learned style' in *The Great Chorale* and *The Little Chorale*; a style close to the works of Bartók in *The Little Concert*. Only the *Pastorale* is deeply Stravinskian in essence: in this section without percussion, he succeeds in creating an atmosphere of pure poetry and dream. Nevertheless, all Stravinsky's borrowings here are far from being simple pastiches. For example, he metamorphoses the *Tango* into a piece for violin accompanied by percussion and then clarinet, gradually distorting the highly characteristic rhythm of the dance. He uses a similar device in *Ragtime*: this starts as a genre piece and turns into something that has nothing in common with the dance itself, before the initial theme returns almost innocently. The *Waltz*, which is reminiscent of the one in *Petrouchka*, is also a fine example of parody: the shrill sound of the violin, the false or offbeat bass lines. In *The Great Chorale*, Stravinsky uses traditional Lutheran melodies that he sprinkles with strange harmonies. Finally, in the last sequence, the *Triumphal March of the Devil*, he ironically combines *The Little Concert*, thanks to which the Soldier regained his freedom, and the *Tango*, with which he won the Princess's heart. Thus, while creating a work with a deceptively popular and parodic appearance, Stravinsky succeeds, through the genius of his musical language, in producing music of extraordinary rhythmic and sonic richness. Frequently played as a concert suite, it was to influence a whole generation of musicians, from Arnold Schoenberg to Kurt Weill by way of Georges Auric and Francis Poulenc.

It was not until the early 1930s that Stravinsky considered composing a work for violin and piano. As he admitted in *Chroniques de ma vie*, 'the combined sound of piano and bowed strings' had little appeal for him. His encounter with the violinist Samuel Dushkin (1891-1976) was to inspire him to write for these forces and 'to extend the dissemination of [his] works by means of chamber concerts'. He claimed he had been stimulated to write the ***Duo concertant***, composed between 27 December 1931 and 15 July 1932, by reading a book on Petrarch (Payot: 1932) by his friend Charles-Albert Cingria. But in an interview given during a tour with Dushkin in 1933, he explained that he was also influenced by Virgil's *Georgics*. Whatever the truth may be, his intention was to conceive 'a lyrical composition, a work of musical versification' (*Chroniques de ma vie*). He continues: 'It was my enthusiasm for the bucolic poets of antiquity and the learned artistry of their technique that determined the spirit and form of my *Duo concertant*.' The paradoxically entitled *Cantilène* (for there is nothing truly songlike about this movement) opens with a series of arpeggios on the violin before giving way to a double-stopped texture of powerful intensity, while the piano, after tremolo passages reminiscent of cimbalom writing, unfolds an inexorable continuum of semiquavers. *Églogue I* begins with a bagpipe-like episode on the open strings, with the piano imitating the drone, and then moves into a staccato second part in double stops, highly rhythmic and featuring numerous changes of metre, the style of which recalls the *Ragtime* from *Histoire du soldat*. In *Églogue II*, which is written in the cantabile style of *Aria II* from the Violin Concerto and constitutes the suite's slow movement, the violin and piano lines double each other and intertwine in subtle and moving fashion. The imperturbable 6/16 rhythm of the *Gigue* is twice interrupted, first by a passage whose style evokes the *Pas de deux* of *Apollon musagète*, then by another in which a theme emerges on the piano accompanied by the violin. The *Duo* ends with the *Dithyrambe*, a movement of profound intensity with ornamentation at once ever-present yet extremely sober. Having asserted that 'Lyricism cannot exist without rules, and it is essential that they should be strict ones', Stravinsky succeeded brilliantly in demonstrating his ability to conjure such lyricism from the very rigour with which he conceived the successive movements of the *Duo concertant*.

The ***Élégie*** for unaccompanied viola or violin was composed in 1944 for Germain Prévost, in memory of Alphonse Onnou, founder of the Quatuor Pro Arte.[1] The piece, marked to be played with mute from beginning to end, begins with an introduction presenting a theme with accompaniment, which then leads into a texture that creates the illusion of a two-part fugue. At the climax, the subject of the fugue is answered by its inversion at a bar's distance. Stravinsky makes it clear in the score that the fingerings are not intended to facilitate performance, but only to underline the counterpoint.

DENIS HERLIN
Translation: Charles Johnston

1 Onnou was the quartet's first leader until his death in 1940, Prévost its violist throughout its existence (1913-47). (Translator's note)

Notes on the instruments

Isabelle Faust – Violin*
'Sleeping Beauty' violin by Antonio Stradivari, 1704

The gut strings give the sound of the 'Sleeping Beauty' Stradivari a physical aspect: the 'matter' is perceived more strongly, and the rough edges can be brought out more effectively. For Stravinsky, these strings have to be able to withstand a lot, and there is no lack of extraverted, pantomime-like playing. The popular, travelling circus aspect of this music becomes wonderfully audible with these instruments of the period, so rich in the most diverse colours, because they genuinely speak, sing, weep, dance.

Lorenzo Coppola – Clarinets*
Clarinets in B flat (1918) and A (1906) by Buffet, Paris

The clarinets I used for this recording are instruments made by the prestigious Buffet company in Paris: the Bb clarinet dates from the year 1918, the A clarinet from 1906. What a discovery for me! They resemble in every detail the French clarinets that are used today in most orchestras around the world, but they conceal secrets that are only revealed when they are played. They are very light, the mouthpieces are more closed than those of today, the reeds less strong, which results in a smaller, clearer, more singing sound.
The articulation, especially in the high register, is more spontaneous: you feel as if you can 'speak' with the instrument. I notice this especially in pieces like the *Pastorale* or the *Airs by the Stream*, when the clarinet tries to catch the butterflies . . .

Javier Zafra – Bassoon*
Bassoon by Buffet-Crampon, Paris, 1910

For this recording, it seemed quite obvious to me to choose a Buffet-Crampon bassoon, made in Paris in 1910. This historical model, which has almost disappeared from concert halls today, is made of rosewood, which gives it a particularly flexible, warm and vocal character, right up to the very top register. Its range and timbre are reminiscent of the French tenor voice. Stravinsky made magnificent use of its qualities, notably at the start of his famous ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* in 1913. Here listeners can appreciate its dramatic colours in the *Pastorale* and its saxophone-like volubility in the *Ragtime*.

Reinhold Friedrich – Cornets à pistons*
- Cornet à pistons in B flat/A by F. Besson, Paris, 1906
  on loan from Asuka Takeuchi, Tokyo
- Cornet à pistons in C, unknown maker, *c.*1915
  on loan from Alain de Rudder, Antwerp
- Mutes by Ratzek: www.ratzekmutes.de
  Hat in the *Pastorale*: on loan from Isabelle Faust
- Mouthpiece: unknown maker, *c.*1900

In the 1950s, Stravinsky instructed Adolph (Bud) Herseth, the legendary principal trumpet of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, to play the solo in the *Pastorale* with a bowler hat over the bell. Unfortunately, neither Bud Herseth nor his student, my own teacher Professor Edward H. Tarr, are with us nowadays and they can no longer pass on this story. On the present recording, I have taken this detail to heart for the *Pastorale* and hung a hat over the cornet.
The sound of my instruments, although they are over a hundred years old, is quite youthful and modern; the B flat cornet is full and rounded in sound, and the anonymous C cornet very soloistic and brilliant, as you can easily hear. The mouthpiece is huge, surprisingly large for the time.
I actually had to get used to these instruments first; after initial inhibitions, mainly because of the smell, we came closer together in the course of the production, which probably means I now smell like these hundred-year-old brass buckets, as we players colloquially term antique brass instruments.

Wies de Boevé – Double bass
Double bass by Martinus Mathias Fichtl, Vienna, *c.*1748

I just love how gut strings allow me such a vast range of articulation possibilities: from extreme crispness in the *Soldier´s March* to round and warm pizzicati to provide a cosy layer on which the soldier can comfortably sit to play his *Airs by the stream*.

Jörgen van Rijen – Trombone
Trombone by A. Courtois, Paris, before 1927

It is a rather strange story how this wonderful instrument somehow found its way to me. For *The Soldier's Tale* you need a tenor trombone with an extra fourth valve for some low notes. For that time, this was quite an unusual instrument, and it isn't easy to find one. A few months before the recording, I started to get a little nervous, because nobody could tell me where to locate such an instrument. I found an alternative from around 1935, but I was pretty sure that was not exactly the kind of instrument Stravinsky wrote for.
One day a gentleman called Rob Klemann contacted me out of the blue. He said he wanted to show me a trombone that he had inherited from his old uncle, who had played in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra (my own orchestra!) a long time ago, in the 1940s and 1950s. He came to the Concertgebouw to show it to me and when I opened the case I saw exactly the instrument I was looking for!
It is a silver tenor/bass trombone by the famous French brass instrument maker Antoine Courtois, a brand that still exists today (my regular, modern trombone is actually a Courtois!).
I don't know the exact date, but it must have been made between 1911 and 1927. There are engravings in the bell which state the years in which Antoine Courtois won prizes in international competitions for instrument makers. The last year that is engraved there is 1911. It is known that the next competition he won was in 1927, so all the instruments he made after that also have 1927 engraved in the bell.
When I told Mr Klemann that I was looking for a trombone of this precise type for the recording of Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, he was so surprised and inspired that he decided to give me this wonderful instrument! So I now play on the instrument of one of my predecessors in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, which came to me by surprise, but with perfect timing.

Raymond Curfs – Percussion

All the drums played on this recording were made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and were specially restored for this project by Geert-Jan Koops and Pascal Hoeke.
All the heads are made of natural calfskin or goatskin, and the snares of goat gut or calf gut. The bass drum, probably by Sonor of Weißenfels, is likely over one hundred years old, as are all the other drums and their authentic technical components, such as the snare mechanism.

**Translation: Charles Johnston*

ISABELLE FAUST – Selected discography

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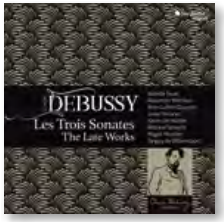

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harmonia mundi musique s.a.s.
Médiapôle Saint-Césaire, Impasse de Mourgues, 13200 Arles Ⓟ 2021
Recording: December 2019, April & July 2020, Teldex Studio Berlin, Berlin (Germany)
Recording producer: Martin Sauer, Teldex Studio Berlin
Recording engineer: Tobias Lehmann
Editing: Martin Sauer
Mastering: Julian Schwenkner

Illustration: *A devil playing the violin*, Woodcut after a drawing by Bertall,
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Photo Dominique Horwitz: © Ralf Brinkhoff
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Design: atelier harmonia mundi

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