

**Philharmonia
Records**

**Santtu conducts Stravinsky:
The Rite of Spring**



The Rite of Spring (1913)

Part 1: Adoration of the Earth

1. Introduction	03:39
2. Augurs of Spring	03:16
3. Ritual of Abduction	01:26
4. Spring Rounds	03:55
5. Ritual of the Rival Tribes	02:01
6. Procession of the Sage	00:43
7. The Sage	00:22
8. Dance of the Earth	00:21

Part 2: The Sacrifice

9. Introduction	03:57
10. Mystic Circles of the Young Girls	03:18
11. Glorification of the Chosen One	01:35
12. Evocation of the Ancestors	00:42
13. Ritual Action of the Ancestors	03:15
14. Sacrificial Dance	04:34

Total timings	34:06
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In 1909, a young Russian composer named Igor Stravinsky was recruited to orchestrate some music by Chopin for a ballet project. The project was called *Les Sylphides*, and the performances would take place in Paris under the auspices of a brand new dance company. This was the Ballets Russes, the first Russian ballet company to tour internationally, featuring leading dancers from the country's imperial theatres. Masterminded by the impresario (and failed composer) Sergei Diaghilev, the company enjoyed a wildly successful first season in Paris... but their programme lacked any original Russian works. And so it was that the 27-year-old Stravinsky was approached, on the back of his Chopin orchestrations, to compose a score to a story that Diaghilev and his

colleagues had determined would be their 1910 hit: The Firebird. Stravinsky fans will know that *The Firebird* and its successor, *Petrushka*, were the works that catapulted the composer to international fame overnight. With each passing year, Stravinsky's ambition – and, indeed, his power within the company – grew. In collaboration with the designer Nikolai Roerich, he dreamed up the 'vision' of an ancient pagan ritual, in which the arrival of spring is marked by a young maiden forced by tribal elders to dance herself to death as a virgin sacrifice.

The score took Stravinsky two years to finish, and the lead-up to the premiere was fraught with difficulties and complaints not only from the orchestra, who thought the score

unfeasibly difficult, but also the dancers. Choreographed by the young Vaslav Nijinsky, the piece required the company to ignore all their previous training that focused on fluid, beautiful lines, and instead move in awkward, shuffling steps that bent their bodies in unfamiliar ways.

It was this extraordinary combination that turned the Parisian premiere, on 29 May 1913, into a scandalous event and an episode recalled in so many memoirs that, if all the people who claimed to have been there actually were in attendance, the theatre would have been filled several times over! So what is it about this piece that made it so explosive? In fact, many of the techniques that Stravinsky used in constructing the score had also featured in *Petrushka*: complicated

rhythmic play, music that was written in several keys at once, and colourful new methods of orchestration that pushed instruments into unusual ranges and demanded virtuosic solos from many of the players. The major difference is that the *Petrushka* score folds all these techniques into a more familiar musical idiom – whereas the *Rite* is supposed to sound violent and unfamiliar.

There's the uncomfortably high, lonely solo for the bassoonist with which the piece begins, and the crunching chords of the 'Augurs of Spring', in which Stravinsky asks the strings to accent notes in different beats per bar, tripping up our sense of timing. More than this, much of the music is constructed of short blocks that are assigned to a group of instruments

(high winds, for instance, or horns, or low strings), and these are played in sequence without smooth transitions between them, or simply stuck on top of each other.

In the closing 'Sacrificial Dance', almost every bar of music has a different number of beats, brutally forcing the young girl onwards until she falls at last to the floor. The 'Rite' is complete: the earth has been paid its sacrifice.

Programme notes by Katy Hamilton

Katy Hamilton is a writer and broadcaster specialising in 19th-century German music. She is much in demand as a speaker, appearing at concerts and festivals across the UK and on BBC Radio 3.

First Violins

Benjamin Marquise
 Gilmore
 Eugene Lee
 Adrián Varela
 Victoria Irish
 Eleanor Wilkinson
 Eunsley Park
 Soong Choo
 Karin Tilch
 Jeff Moore
 Charlotte Reid
 Clare Hoffman
 Caroline Frenkel
 Minsi Yang
 Peter Fisher
 Cindy Foster
 Andrea Montalbano

Sudan Hedger
 Gideon Robinson
 Nuno Carapina
 Jan Regulski
 Marina Gillam
 Nicola Goldscheider
 Sali-Wyn Ryan
 Anna Brigham
 Susan Bowran
 Teresa Pople

Violas

Yukiko Ogura
 Sylvain Séailles
 Linda Kidwell
 Stephanie
 Edmundson
 Cheremie Hamilton-
 Miller
 Carol Hultmark
 Joseph Fisher
 Rebecca Carrington
 Louise Hawker

Sara Sheppard
 Lucia Ortiz Saucó
 Raquel Lopez Bolivar
Cellos
 Karen Stephenson
 Richard Birchall
 Anne Baker
 Deirdre Cooper
 Ella Rundle
 Yaroslava Trofymchu

Tessa Seymour
 Miwa Rosso
 Louise McMonagle
 Desmond Neysmith

Double Basses

Tim Gibbs
 Michael Fuller
 Simon Oliver
 Owen Nicolaou
 Mark O'Leary
 Samuel Rice

Joseph Cowie
 Siret Lust

Flutes

Samuel Coles
 June Scott
 Daniel Shao

Piccolos

Jenny Farley
 Daniel Shao

Alto Flute

Eilidh Gillespie

Oboes

Timothy Rundle
 Imogen Davies
 Tom Blomfield
 Ruth Contractor

Cor Anglais

Patrick Flanagan
 Ruth Contractor

Clarinets

Mark van de Wiel
 Jordan Black
 Katy Ayling

E-flat Clarinet

Jennifer McLaren

Bass Clarinets

Laurent Ben Slimane
 Katy Ayling

Bassoons

Tammy Thorn
 Shelly Organ
 Dominic Tyler
 Martin Field

Contrabassoons

Luke Whitehead
 Martin Field

Horns

Ben Hulme
 Kira Doherty

Jonathan Maloney
 Jonathan Bareham
 Oliver Johnson
 Alexander Wide
 Carsten Williams
 Daniel Curzon

Wagner Tubas

Alexander Wide
 Carsten Williams

Trumpets

Jason Evans
 Robin Totterdell
 Robert Farley
 Ruth Shaddock

D Trumpet

Christian Barraclough

Trombones

Dudley Bright
 Philip White

Bass Trombone

James Buckle

Bass Trumpet

Byron Fulcher

Tubas

Peter Smith
 Stuart Beard

Timpani

Antoine Siguré
 Emmanuel Joste

Percussion

Paul Stoneman
 Peter Fry
 Jeremy Cornes
 Tom Edwards
 Richard Cartlidge
 Owen Gunnell
 Kiyomi Kikuchi
 Oliver Lowe
 Harry Lovell-Jones

Martin Owens
 Tim Gunnell
 Laura Bradford

Piano

Alison Procter

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