

SEATTLE **SYMPHONY** LUDOVIC MORLOT

STRAVINSKY
PETRUSHKA

DEBUSSY
LA BOÎTE À JOUJOUX

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Petrushka

1	<i>The Shrovetide Fair</i>	10:19
2	<i>Petrushka</i>	4:32
3	<i>The Blackamoor</i>	6:56
4	<i>The Shrovetide Fair and the Death of Petrushka</i>	14:08

Kimberly Russ, piano

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

La boîte à jujoux (“The Toy Box”)

5	<i>Prelude. The Toy-box Asleep</i>	2:20
6	<i>The Toy Shop</i>	10:53
7	<i>The Field of Battle</i>	9:38
8	<i>The Sheepfold for Sale</i>	6:29
9	<i>After Making a Fortune</i>	1:49
10	<i>Epilogue</i>	1:20

TOTAL TIME 68:33

SEATTLESYMPHONY.ORG

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MADE IN USA

SEATTLE SYMPHONY

The Seattle Symphony is one of America's leading symphony orchestras and is internationally acclaimed for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Symphony is heard from September through July by more than 500,000 people through live performances and radio broadcasts. It performs in one of the finest modern concert halls in the world — the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall — in downtown Seattle. Its extensive education and community engagement programs reach over 65,000 children and adults each year. The Seattle Symphony has a deep commitment to new music, commissioning many works by living composers each season. The orchestra has made nearly 150 recordings and has received two Grammy Awards, 21 Grammy nominations, two Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades. In 2014 the Symphony launched its in-house recording label, Seattle Symphony Media.





LUDOVIC MORLOT, CONDUCTOR

As the Seattle Symphony's Music Director, Ludovic Morlot has been received with extraordinary enthusiasm by musicians and audiences alike, who have praised him for his deeply musical interpretations, his innovative programming and his focus on community collaboration. From 2012 to 2014 Morlot was also Chief Conductor of La Monnaie, one of Europe's most prestigious opera houses.

In the U.S., Ludovic Morlot has conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and Pittsburgh Symphony. Additionally, he has conducted the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Staatskapelle, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Trained as a violinist, Morlot studied conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in London and then at the Royal College of Music as recipient of the Norman del Mar Conducting Fellowship. Morlot was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 2014 in recognition of his significant contributions to music. He is Chair of Orchestral Conducting Studies at the University of Washington School of Music.



SEATTLE SYMPHONY

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Stefan Farkas

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Recording

PETRUSHKA

During the second decade of the 20th century, Paris emerged as a singularly important city for music in general, and more particularly as the birthplace of the remarkable new style of musical invention we have come to call modernism. This last was pioneered by French composers (Debussy, Ravel and Satie chief among them), as well as by emigres recently arrived in the city. Of the latter, the most important was a Russian, Igor Stravinsky, who first came from Saint Petersburg in 1909 and soon would make Paris the center of his creative activity.

Not the least of the modernist innovations that reshaped music in France at this time was the elevation of the ballet score as the vehicle for the most ambitious compositional thinking. The other major orchestral genres, the symphony and concerto, seemed to many of the composers working in Paris at this time, too freighted with tradition, especially that of Austro-German classicism. Ballet music offered greater freedom to explore new melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas, and for new formulations of instrumental color.

As a result, most of the important music written in Paris during this time took the form of ballet scores. This recording presents two of these.

Petrushka is the second of the three great ballets Stravinsky composed between 1910 and 1913 for Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*, a company of Russian dancers and theater artists that had taken up residence in Paris. The composer had completed the first of these works, *The Firebird*, and was about to begin *The Rite of Spring* in the fall of 1910 when a different idea emerged quite unexpectedly. In his autobiography, Stravinsky related:

Before tackling *The Rite of Spring*, which would be a long and difficult task, I wanted to refresh myself by composing an orchestral piece in which the piano would play a most important part. ... I had in my mind a distinct picture of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggios. The orchestra in turn retaliates with menacing trumpet blasts. The outcome is a terrific noise which reaches its climax and ends in the sorrowful and querulous collapse of the poor puppet. Soon afterwards Diaghilev came to visit me. ... He was much astonished when, instead of the sketches of *The Rite*, I played him the piece I had just composed and which later became the second scene of *Petrushka*. He was so much pleased with it that he would not leave it alone and began persuading me to develop the theme of the puppet's sufferings and make it into a whole ballet.

Work on *The Rite of Spring* was suspended while Stravinsky rushed to complete the new composition. Diaghilev meanwhile assembled a remarkable group of artists to collaborate on the production. When *Petrushka* premiered in June of 1911, Vaslav Nijinsky danced the title role, the choreography was by Michel Fokine and Pierre Monteux conducted.

The music vividly relates the ballet's story, which is set in Saint Petersburg during the 1830s. As the work begins, the pre-Lent Carnival is in progress and crowds of people stroll in the square. Stravinsky quotes a number of Russian folk songs to suggest the popular ambiance of the scene, and a hurdy-gurdy plays an antique tune. Suddenly there appears a Showman, a sinister figure who pulls back a curtain to reveal three puppets: a Ballerina, a Moor and Petrushka, a clown. He charms them to life with his

flute, and they begin to perform a lively Russian dance. As their movements become increasingly animated, they astonish the onlookers by stepping down from the stage and dancing unaided among the crowd.

Scene II takes place in Petrushka's cell, whose gloom contrasts starkly with the festive atmosphere in the square. Petrushka is in love with the Ballerina, but his comical appearance and awkward efforts at courtship repulse her. Stravinsky's original inspiration is evident in the prominent role of the piano. The scene then shifts to the Moor's cell, where the Ballerina has found a more attractive partner. Their dalliance is interrupted by Petrushka, who mocks their waltz until the furious Moor chases him out.

The final scene returns to the square. It is evening, and the Carnival festivities are at their height. People dance in groups, there is a performing bear, and masqueraders run through the crowd. Suddenly Petrushka rushes from between the curtains of the Showman's little theater. He is pursued by the Moor, who seizes the hapless clown and cuts him down with his sword. The Showman appears and assures the horrified assembly that the lifeless body on the snow before them is only that of a wooden puppet. Finally the crowd disperses, leaving the Showman alone to carry off the corpse of the slain Petrushka. But as he does, he is terrified to hear the clown's ghost laughing, in Petrushka's signature melodic motif, from the roof of the theater.

The richness and originality of Stravinsky's music remain admirable, and at times astonishing. Original melodies, Russian folk songs and a popular French ditty all find their way into the score. Shimmering orchestral textures seem to foretell the American minimalist school of recent decades. At times the composer superimposes melodies of radically different shape and character. The instrumentation is beyond masterful. Stravinsky did not extract a suite from the full score of *Petrushka*, as he had with *The*

Firebird. Instead the complete ballet music doubles as a concert work, one of the most popular in the composer's catalogue.

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LA BOÎTE À JOUJOUX

In 1913, André Helle, an artist who specialized in writing and illustrating children's books, approached Claude Debussy with the idea of turning one of his stories, *La boîte à joujoux* ("The Toy Box"), into a ballet. Debussy was taken with this notion, and in the summer of that year began writing music for such a piece, proceeding, he told his publisher, by "extracting secrets from [his daughter's] old dolls." Notwithstanding whatever help those toys may have rendered, composition of the work proved difficult, and in late September the score still was not finished. "The soul of the doll is more mysterious than [one] imagines," Debussy wrote, "and does not easily put up with the claptrap that so many humans tolerate." Finally, by the end of October, a piano draft of the work was finished.

Various difficulties, not least being the outbreak of World War I, prevented the mounting of a ballet production, and Debussy worked at orchestrating his piano score only intermittently during the next three years. By the second half of 1917 he was too ill to continue, and he died in March of the following year, the ballet's instrumentation still not finished. Its completion fell to Debussy's friend, the composer and conductor André Caplet, who accomplished the task with such skill that it is impossible to distinguish his contribution from Debussy's. *La boîte à joujoux* was first performed as a ballet in December 1919, in Paris. Although it has received few choreographic presentations, the score makes a fine concert piece, Debussy's allusive harmonies and iridescent orchestration working their usual magic.

The music for *La boîte à joujoux* vividly suggests the ballet's scenario, which unfolds in four scenes or tableaux. The first takes place in a toy shop. It is night, as the atmospheric music that opens the work suggests. Gradually, the toys awake and come

to life. Among them are a Punchinello (a clown very much like the English Punch), a Doll and a Soldier, the latter signified by a bugle motif heard frequently throughout the piece. There follows a series of dances, including one for the Soldier to a syncopated, almost ragtime melody borrowed from Debussy's piano piece *Le Petit Negre*. The Doll flirts with the Soldier, but she belongs to Punchinello. Something of a bully, the clown kicks the Soldier and chases him away. Day breaks, and the dolls return to their places.

The second scene takes us out of doors. On a broad field, Punchinello sits passing the time with his Doll. Suddenly, a company of soldiers marches up. Punchinello runs off but quickly returns with some comrades, who engage the soldiers in battle. During the fray, the little Soldier is wounded. Afterwards, the Doll nurses him, and they fall in love.

A minor-key version of a French folksong sets the third scene in a rural area. The Doll and Soldier come upon an abandoned sheep farm. Nearby, a shepherdess plays on a panpipe (a rhapsodic solo for English horn). Acquiring some sheep and geese, the couple settles down on the farmstead. As the scene changes yet again, a bit of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" tells us that the Doll and Soldier have joined their lives.

Twenty years have passed. The Doll and Soldier, having grown old, are surrounded by a brood of children. Punchinello has mended his ways and become a rural constable. They all live peacefully. An epilogue now returns us to the setting and music of the opening scene, the dolls appearing in the Toy Shop window just as before. Perhaps their adventure has been only a dream.

The Seattle Symphony is grateful to Joan Watjen for her generous support of SEATTLE **SYMPHONY MEDIA** CDs in memory of her husband Craig.

Recorded in the S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, Washington. Stravinsky's *Petrushka* was recorded live in concert on June 19 & 21, 2014. Debussy's *La boîte à jujoux* was recorded on September 25 & October 2, 2015 and February 5, 2016.

Petrushka – © 1947, Boosey and Hawkes.

Producer: Dmitriy Lipay
Engineers: Dmitriy Lipay & Alexander Lipay
Executive Producer: Simon Woods
Art direction and design: Jessica Forsythe

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