

ENSEMBLE 360

Thursday 13 May 7.00pm
Live-streamed Performance
Crucible Studio, Sheffield

PETER SPARKS clarinet / AMY HARMAN bassoon

NAOMI ATHERTON horn / TIM HORTON piano

BENJAMIN NABARRO violin

RACHEL ROBERTS viola / GEMMA ROSEFIELD cello

STRAVINSKY

Suite italienne

Divertimento (after The Fairy's Kiss)

Septet

The Soldier's Tale (Suite)

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

Suite italienne for violin and piano

Introduzione / Serenata / Tarantella / Gavotta con
due variazioni / Scherzino / Minuetto e finale

This Suite is based on movements from Stravinsky's ballet *Pulcinella*, commissioned by the Russian impresario Diaghilev for his Ballets Russes company, based in Paris. Stravinsky had already written *The Firebird*, *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* for Diaghilev, and they had a good working relationship. In 1919, Diaghilev asked Stravinsky to arrange the music by some 18th century Italian composers he had recently found in libraries to accompany a new one-act ballet based on the 18th-century play, 'Quatre Polichinelles semblables' ('Four identical Pulcinellas'). Stravinsky went further than Diaghilev imagined, adapting the music to his own style by borrowing specific themes and textures on which he laid his own modern rhythms, cadences and harmonies. Diaghilev, on receiving the completed *Pulcinella*, was unhappy, 'offended on behalf of the 18th century', as he put it; however, it became a major part of the new trend of neoclassicism. Stravinsky wrote this arrangement of music from *Pulcinella* for violin and piano with Samuel Dushkin, a violinist with whom he gave concert tours in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Divertimento (after The Fairy's Kiss)

Sinfonia / Danses suisses / Scherzo / Pas de deux.
Adagio-Variation-Coda

In 1934, Stravinsky decided to arrange a four-movement concert suite from his 1928 ballet *The Fairy's Kiss*, calling it Divertimento, and again for

Samuel Dushkin. Based on Hans Christian Andersen's story 'The Ice Maiden', the music of the ballet is an affectionate homage to Tchaikovsky. Stravinsky took some of Tchaikovsky piano pieces and songs and reworked them in much the same way he had in *Pulcinella*. The music was selected by Stravinsky from the first three scenes of the ballet, to which he added a new ending for concert performance. This suite was initially arranged for orchestra, and the Stravinsky-Dushkin violin and piano version is a transcription of it – presenting, in effect, a miniature version of the ballet. Dushkin and Stravinsky gave the first performance of the violin and piano Divertimento in Strasbourg on 12 December 1934 and they performed it regularly on tours. But in spite of their advocacy, the Divertimento remained something of a rarity and other violinists were slow to take it up – in 1938 just two copies of the printed music were sold. Happily, it is now recognised as one of Stravinsky's most charming arrangements.

Septet

1st movement [untitled]

Passacaglia

Gigue

Stravinsky wrote his Septet – for clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello and piano – in 1952–3, dedicating it to the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, a mansion in Georgetown, Washington DC. In 1937, the owner of the house, Robert Woods Bliss, asked Stravinsky to compose a piece for his wedding anniversary and the result was *Dumbarton Oaks* for chamber orchestra. Fifteen years later he wrote the Septet, one of his most concisely-argued

chamber works, first performed at Dumbarton Oaks on 23 January 1954, conducted by the composer. The first movement begins with a bustling theme that recalls the start of the earlier piece. After a more hesitant second theme, Stravinsky launches into a fugue for all the instruments apart from the piano, which comes back in at the return of the opening idea. The slow movement is a Passacaglia, in which the main theme is shared between clarinet, cello, viola and bassoon. It is then treated to a series of variations that use some of Schoenberg's serial techniques of inversion (upside-down) and retrograde (back-to-front). The Gigue that follows is based on the Passacaglia theme and it's a movement that combines extremely complex counterpoint: a first fugue is played by the strings, then piano, when it is overlaid with another one for wind instruments on the same notes but with a completely different rhythm. Stravinsky then turns the tune upside down for the second half of the movement, producing an even more elaborate texture. But all this technical brilliance is worn lightly, since the music is driven along by lively dance rhythms.

The Soldier's Tale – Suite

Marche du Soldat / Le violon du Soldat / Petit concert / Tango-Valse-Rag / Danse du Diable

Composed in the small town of Morges, on the shore of Lake Geneva, *The Soldier's Tale* is one of Stravinsky's most original stage works, a piece to be 'read, played and danced' with a text by CF Ramuz. The story is a kind of modern Faust: the Soldier trades his fiddle with the Devil for a magic book and the promise of wealth. He makes his fortune, loses it, rescues an ailing Princess whom he marries but eventually falls back into the Devil's clutches. The first movement 'March' is the work's opening number, while 'The Soldier's Violin' comes from the scene where he first meets the Devil disguised as a butterfly collector. The 'Little Concert' follows the scene in which the Soldier gets the Devil drunk after a game of

cards. The Tango, Waltz and Rag are danced by the Princess after the Soldier has cured her. As they embrace, the Devil enters and the Soldier plays 'The Devil's Dance', finally dragging him off with the Princess's help. Even though the story is not going to end well, this Suite concludes with a moment of triumph for the hapless Soldier.

Stravinsky made this concert arrangement for violin, clarinet and piano in 1919, a year after the original stage work. It was a thank you gift for Werner Reinhart, who had paid for the first stage production. As well as being a generous patron, Reinhart was an excellent amateur clarinetist (the Three Pieces for solo clarinet were also dedicated to Reinhart). The Suite was first performed in Lausanne, on 8 November 1919.

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