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# Stravinsky as Art and Entertainment: Performances of his music in the United States, 1910 - 1916

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Stravinsky as Art and Entertainment:  
Performances of his music in the United States, 1910 – 1916

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MA, University of Connecticut, 2013

A Thesis

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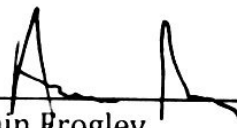
Master of Arts Thesis

Stravinsky as Art and Entertainment:  
Performances of his music in the United States, 1910 - 1916


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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 2  |
| The Reception of Stravinsky's Music in the US, 1910 – 1916       |    |
| Recitals in New York and Boston                                  | 6  |
| Neighborhood Playhouse Production of <i>Petrushka</i> , 1916     | 27 |
| Stravinsky's Music in Parody: <i>The Century Girl</i>            | 33 |
| Ballets Russes Tour of 1916                                      | 44 |
| The Reception of Modernism in the U.S. and Britain in the 1910s: |    |
| Stravinsky and Schoenberg  | 53 |
| Conclusions  | 61 |
| Bibliography   | 65 |

## Introduction

In an article entitled “Failed Impressions: Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in America, 1916,” Hanna Järvinen discusses why the Ballets Russes struggled to create a successful tour in the United States and highlights in particular the many ways in which the company failed to live up to the expectations of its audience.<sup>1</sup> Reading this article, I found myself wondering whether the factors that contributed to the failure of the Ballets Russes’s American tour affected the audiences’ perception of Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) as a composer. If it is generally accepted that the Ballets Russes propelled the young Stravinsky to success,<sup>2</sup> how are we to reconcile this individual success with the dance troupe’s failure?

In fact, it seems that some of the factors that led to the failure of the Ballets Russes tour may actually have helped the young composer make his mark, in spite of negative effects on the audience’s perceptions of the ballet company. Furthermore, as I will show in this thesis, it also appears that Stravinsky’s music was introduced to American audiences both at an earlier date and to a broader range of listeners than has hitherto been recognized. In addition to performances with the Ballets Russes, Stravinsky’s music was also presented in orchestral concerts, small-scale recitals, and in vaudeville and community theatre productions — even if at times as a target of satire — and therefore it had its own, wider connotations in the world of American music.

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<sup>1</sup> Hanna Järvinen, “Failed Impressions: Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in America, 1916,” *Dance Research Journal*, (42/2: Winter 2010), 78-92.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Taruskin, “Stravinsky and Us,” in *The Danger of Music: and other Utopian Essays*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 420-446.

Stravinsky was certainly a part of the Ballets Russes, but also early on developed his own profile in American culture, which enabled the young composer eventually to turn his back on the ballet troupe and his homeland to garner acceptance in the West.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, in the period ca. 1910-1920, Stravinsky was heavily invested in ballet as an art form,<sup>4</sup> to the extent that it dominated his compositional output for a number of crucial, formative years in his career, and it is difficult to separate the reception of Stravinsky's music in the United States from the reception of the ballet productions as a whole. Indeed, as I will discuss below, critics and musicologists alike have had difficulty separating Stravinsky's music in general from programmatic ideas of movement and character, whether or not these were intended by the composer.

Stravinsky's music was introduced into the United States in a variety of ways throughout the 1910s: in newspapers, through early concert performances of both absolute and program music, and through performances of his ballets by the Ballets Russes and by American ensembles. The first performance of his music in the United States that can be documented would appear to be that given in December 1910, when the New York-based Russian Symphony Orchestra performed *Fireworks* at Carnegie Hall.<sup>5</sup> But even before this concert, reviews of overseas performances of Stravinsky's works appeared in American newspapers, at least one of which included positive

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Taruskin explains that Stravinsky used the popularity of Russian music in general and the Ballets Russes in particular to garner acceptance in the West, but then later disassociated himself from his Russian origins following the revolution of 1917; he then focused largely on absolute music and modernism, following the German romantic tradition. See Taruskin, "Stravinsky and Us," 422.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: a Biography of the Works Through Mavra*, vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 973- 974

<sup>5</sup> "The Russian Symphony," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1910, and Henry C. Lahee, *Annals of Music in America*, (Boston: Marshall Jones Company).

remarks about the music. The first such review, of the premiere of *The Firebird* in Paris, appeared in *The New York Daily Tribune* in the summer of 1910.<sup>6</sup> The article, signed with the initials “C.I.B.,” holds Stravinsky up as a “favorite pupil” of Rimsky-Korsakov, and describes the music as “daring, dramatic, and realistic,” as well as “essentially modern.” While newspaper reports of the riots in Paris following the premiere of *The Rite of Spring* may have contributed to the relative failure of the Ballets Russes’s 1916 American tour, as Hanna Järvinen suggests,<sup>7</sup> they surely also generated interest in Stravinsky’s apparently shocking music before the ballet was premiered in the United States.<sup>8</sup> As Carol Oja has documented, in 1915 Igor Stravinsky’s music was not well known in the United States.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the decade, however, his name had become much more familiar to American audiences, with the composer acting as a leading representative of European musical modernism and contributing to a new interest in Russian music in the United States.

In addition to the performances mentioned above, a number of dance scholars, notably Suzanne Carbonneau Levy and Steven Gary Marks, have documented early

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<sup>6</sup> “The Firebird: Great Success of Russian Artists in Paris Production,” *New York Daily Tribune*, July 7, 1910. See also: “News of the Music World.” *The New York Times*. November 27, 1910; and: “Musical News and Notes,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 1910; and: “Music and Musicians: Shifting Stravinsky into the Concert Hall,” *The Boston Transcript*, May 1, 1914.

<sup>7</sup> Hanna Järvinen, “Failed Impressions: Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in America, 1916,” in *Dance Research Journal*, (42/2: Winter 2010), 78.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, “The Consecration of Spring,” *The New York Times*, June 8, 1913; and “New Ballet Puzzles; Critics say “Printemps” Music is More Revolutionary than Strauss’s,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46.



American Stravinsky performances in other venues.<sup>10</sup> For example, Levy discusses a performance at the Palace, which was the leading New York vaudeville theater. Levy is one of several scholars who claim that Stravinsky was not first heard by the “elite” of the United States, but rather by audiences attending touring dance productions intended for a broader audience than ballet aficionados, in which excerpts of dances were often taken out of their original contexts, or in smaller scale community and youth theatre productions, which hired their own choreographers to either imitate the choreography utilized by the Ballets Russes or to create their own choreography for the music, with only the assistance of a libretto.

In this study, I will examine the different ways in which Stravinsky’s music became known to the American public between 1910 and 1917. I will also look at how working with the Ballets Russes affected Stravinsky’s compositional output and his reception, and how this relationship affected the reception of modernist traits in general in his music. I will present detailed information about early performances of Stravinsky’s music in the United States, including a production of *Petrushka* mounted by the Neighborhood Players in New York City in April, 1916, performances of the composer’s works and those of other Russians by touring ballet companies, and a Stravinsky parody that formed part of Ziegfeld’s vaudeville comedy review “A Century Girl,” for which Victor Herbert provided the music. A comparison of the reviews of these productions will give insight into the perception and reception of Stravinsky’s

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<sup>10</sup> Suzane Carbonneau Levy, “Russomania, 1910 – 1911,” *The Russians are coming: Russian dancers in the United States, 1910 – 1933*, PhD Dissertation NYU 1990, (Ann Arbor, UMI: 1991) and Steven Gary Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-semitism, Ballet to Bolshevism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003.

early works, and to how performances by the Ballets Russes and other performance troupes shaped the career of a man who would arguably become the most important composer of the twentieth century.

### **Stravinsky's Music in the United States and its Reception by American Critics, 1910 - 1916**

In addition to the performances that formed part of the Ballets Russes' two tours of the country in 1916-1917, in the years between 1910 and 1916 there were twelve separate performances or productions<sup>11</sup> of Stravinsky's music in the United States. Although the Ballets Russes was clearly the most prominent and prolific producer of Stravinsky's works during this time, American audiences were introduced to the young composer's works via intimate solo and chamber recitals, as well as through orchestra concerts and even parody performances. Table 1 lists performances of Stravinsky's music in Boston and New York City between December 1910 and December 1916:

| <b>Performer</b>  | <b>Work</b>                            | <b>Publisher</b>             |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1 Russian Symphony Orchestra                                    | <i>Fireworks</i>                       | Jurg. 1909                   |
| 2 Maggie Teyte  | <i>Rosyanka (Khlitovskaya)</i>         | Jurg. 1907-8                 |
| 3 New York Philharmonic   | <i>Fireworks</i>                       | Jurg. 1909                   |
| 4 Boston Symphony Orchestra                                     | <i>Fireworks</i>                       | Jurg. 1909                   |
| 5 George Copland  | <i>Berceuse (from Firebird)</i>        | unpub.                       |
| 6 Flonzaley Quartet   | <i>Three Pieces for String Quartet</i> | Russe de Mus. 1922           |
| 7 George Copland  | <i>Berceuse (from Firebird)</i>        | unpub.                       |
| 8 Ballets Russes  | <i>Firebird, Petrushka</i>             | Jurg. 1912, Rus. d Mus. 1912 |
| 9 Russian Symphonic Society<br>(formerly Russian Symph. Orch.)  | <i>Symphony #1 in E-flat</i>           | Jurg. 1914                   |
| 10 Ballets Russes   | <i>Firebird, Petrushka</i>             | Jurg. 1912, Rus. d Mus. 1912 |
| 11 Ballets Russes   | <i>Firebird, Petrushka</i>             | Jurg. 1912, Rus. d Mus. 1912 |
| 12 Hariette Cady  | <i>Etude (from Op. 7)</i>              | Jurg. 1910                   |
| 13 Festival Dancers and Neighborhood<br>Playhouse Theater Group | <i>Petrushka</i>                       | Rus. d Mus. 1912             |
| 14 Vaudeville Players, Max Hoffman (cond.)                      | <i>The Century Girl</i>                | unpub.                       |
| 15 New York Symphony  | <i>Firebird (Suite)</i>                | Jurg. 1912                   |

| <b>Concert Date</b>       | <b>Review Date</b> | <b>Published In</b>       |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>1</b> 1-Dec-1910       | 2-Dec-1910         | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>2</b> 24-Nov-1913      | 25-Nov-1913        | <i>The Sun</i>            |
| <b>3</b> 29-Oct-1914      | 30-Oct-1914        | The New York Times        |
| <b>4</b> 11-Dec-1914      | 12-Dec-1914        | <i>Boston Daily Globe</i> |
| <b>5</b> 9-Nov-1915       | 10-Nov-1915        | <i>Boston Daily Globe</i> |
| <b>6</b> 30-Nov-1915      | (1 & 5)-Dec-1915   | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>7</b> 6-Dec-1915       | 7-Dec-1915         | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>8</b> (17-29)-Jan-1916 | see MacDonald      |                           |
| <b>9</b> Jan - Mar-1916   | 19-Dec-1915        | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>10</b> Jan - Mar-1916  | see MacDonald      |                           |
| <b>11</b> (3-29)-Apr-1916 | see MacDonald      |                           |
| <b>12</b> 16-Apr-1916     | 17-Apr-1916        | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>13</b> Apr - Jun-1916  | 16-Apr-1916        | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>14</b> 6-Nov-1916      | 7-Nov-1916         | <i>The New York Times</i> |
| <b>15</b> 31-Dec-1916     | 1-Jan-1917         | <i>The New York Times</i> |

- Venue**
- 1** Carnegie Hall, NY
  - 2** Aeolian Hall, NY
  - 3** Aeolian Hall, NY
  - 4** Symphony Hall, Boston
  - 5** Jordan Hall, Boston
  - 6** Aeolian Hall, NY
  - 7** Aeolian Hall, NY
  - 8** Century Theatre, NY
  - 9** Aeolian and Carnegie Halls, NY
  - 10** Boston, MA; Albany, NY; Detroit, MI; Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI; St. Paul, MN; Minneapolis, MN; Kansas City, KS; St. Louis, MO; Indianapolis, IN; Cincinnati, OH; Cleveland, OH; Pittsburgh, PA; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia, PA; Atlantic City, NJ
  - 11** Met. Opera House, NY
  - 12** Princess Theatre, NY
  - 13** Neighborhood Playhouse Theatre, NY
  - 14** Century Theatre, NY
  - 15** Carnegie Hall, NY

*Table 1: Performances of Stravinsky's Music in New York and Boston 1910-1916*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Publication information from Stephen Walsh, "Stravinsky, Igor," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 10, 2013,

Most of these performances were reviewed, and it is worth remembering that discussions of Stravinsky's music by American critics also preceded these concerts. The earliest review of an American performance of a Stravinsky work in the *New York Times* discussed the performance of *Fireworks* on December 1, 1910 in Carnegie Hall. The article, which begins with a lengthy review of the performance by Canadian violinist Katharine Parlow, whose American debut was more significant to the anonymous music critic than was Stravinsky's, lists the music performed, including a "novelty," namely *Fireworks*, which is described as a "fantasy." Initially the review appears to be positive, as the critic describes the piece as "ingenious." The critic compares Stravinsky to Strauss (presumably Richard and not Johann) in speculating that the former had spent time listening carefully to the latter's music. The critic explains that Stravinsky's work is titled accurately and conveys a strong impression of fireworks. In the last sentence, however, the review takes a turn to the negative, when the critic remarks, "it prompted the reflection that fireworks, like children, are made to be seen and not heard."<sup>13</sup>

The dismissive review is comparable to later arguments that were made in favor of Stravinsky's music accompanying *The Rite of Spring*: that the music is only as ugly as it needed to be to convey the dancers' obscene gestures accurately. In the first review, a critic suggests that Stravinsky ought to pick more pleasing subjects to portray, while in subsequent critiques, Stravinsky's music will be justified by the requirements of a dramatic scenario. The *Fireworks* performance by the Russian Symphony Orchestra was

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Much information about the tour by the Ballets Russes is taken from Nesta MacDonald's *Diaghilev observed by critics in England and the United States, 1911 - 1929*. London: Dance Books, Ltd. 1975.

<sup>13</sup> "Russian Symphony Concert: Successful Appearance of a New Violinist, Miss Katharine Parlow," *The New York Times*, December 2, 1910.

preceded by a concert announcement that also drew attention to the visual aspects of the work, but maintained a more positive view of the work than the review would. The advertisement invites listeners to hear the new piece, described as “a bit of descriptive writing on fireworks,” and mentions its premiere the previous winter in St. Petersburg. While the review contains no description of melodic or harmonic elements, it does describe the piece as “elaborately orchestrated,” to the extent that it requires “unusual percussion instruments.”<sup>14</sup> The concert program was also previewed in *The New York Tribune*, but in that instance without any accompanying description.<sup>15</sup>

In 1913 Stravinsky’s music was included in a performance by the celebrated soprano Maggie Teyte in New York’s Aeolian Hall.<sup>16</sup> According to an announcement before the concert, Teyte was to sing, “La Rosée Sainte.”<sup>17</sup> The performance was reviewed in *The Sun* on 25 November 1913, with the critic focusing on Teyte’s apparent intonation issues, mentioning Stravinsky only to say, “she toys gently with Moussorgsky and Stravinsky, and turning aside from beaten paths discloses the more intimate side of the genius of Zandonai, whose ‘Coachita’ we have heard, and even encourages local talent by singing music of Kurt Schindler.”<sup>18</sup> Although we have little evidence of Stravinsky performances during this period, Teyte’s decision to perform Stravinsky apparently follows “the beaten path,” as her other song choices do not. This implies a

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<sup>14</sup> “News of the Music World,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> “Music Notes,” *The New York Tribune*, November 27, 1910.

<sup>16</sup> “Programme of Modern Songs,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, November 23, 1913, and “What is Doing in the World of Music,” *The Sun (New York)*, November 16, 1913.

<sup>17</sup> “Many events of interest planned for the music lover,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1913.

<sup>18</sup> “Maggie Teyte’s Recital: Songs Great and Small Sung by Pocket Prima Donna,” *The Sun (New York)*, November 25, 1913, page 7.

more widespread familiarity with Stravinsky's music than is suggested by the tally of documented performances. A review in *The New York Times*, however, asserts that Teyte's performance consisted primarily of works new to the United States:

Eight [of the songs programmed] were confidently set down as performed for the first time in America. Perhaps they were: but there was much that was insignificant in them, much that owed its interest to trivial details of phrase or accompaniment or some trick of declamation or descriptive effect."<sup>19</sup>

It is unclear whether the work(s) by Stravinsky are part of the set of new music derided by the critic. The dichotomy between Stravinsky's works being described as unusual and common suggests that Stravinsky's works were perhaps known in some circles but not in others.

The New York Philharmonic's presentation of *Fireworks* on 29 October 1914 was reviewed by *The New York Times* in an article titled "The Philharmonic Society" that appeared on the next day. The article begins by noting that the audience for the concert was quite large, stating, "The Philharmonic Society has in recent years had few larger audiences at any of its evening concerts than that present last night at the opening of its seventy-third season."<sup>20</sup> Although it is not likely that Stravinsky's work drew the large crowd, it is important to note that on this occasion his music was heard by a significant number of patrons of the New York Philharmonic at a high-profile event in the city's musical and social season.

After discussing the administrative issues of the orchestra as well as Stravinsky's physical arrangements of "his men" in the orchestra and the resulting "greater

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<sup>19</sup> "Miss Teyte's Recital: A Programme of Modern Songs by Composers of Various Nations," *The New York Times*, November 25, 1913.

<sup>20</sup> "The Philharmonic Society," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1914.



mellowness and homogeneity,” the unnamed critic introduces Stravinsky’s work. He or she confirms that this performance of *Fireworks* is the first appearance of a composition by Stravinsky on a program performed by the New York Philharmonic. Stravinsky is described as “one of the young Russian composers who is attracting most attention in Europe,” though the critic mentions that the attention given to him has been disrupted by “irregularities” on the continent, a reference, presumably, to the events of World War One. The critic notes that the impact of Stravinsky’s operas and ballets has overshadowed the “national school of Russian composers” who had previously dominated Europe’s interest in Russian music; this implies that Stravinsky is not a nationalist composer, though that may not have been the intention.

The reviewer continues with a reference to the 1910 performance and discussion of *Fireworks* mentioned above, including the “observation that fireworks, like children, should be seen and not heard.” Because neither article is signed, it is possible that the same critic wrote both reviews. Nevertheless, this 1914 response to *Fireworks* is written with a more negative and sardonic tone than the previous one. The reviewer finds the piece shallow and uninteresting, insisting that the “title explains its whole purpose, which lies no deeper than the surface.” The author concedes, as in the 1910 review, that the piece does convey the imagery suggested by its title, even “cleverly” and “amusingly,” but ultimately the endeavor is deemed a waste, as it “seems hardly worthwhile to employ the apparatus of a great orchestra to that end.” Although the review is largely dismissive, Stravinsky is thus acknowledged as a successful composer of program music. Although his works may not be worth repeating, his compositional ability is not questioned. The review ends with the observation that the piece is not

typical of Stravinsky's style; *Fireworks* is "early Stravinsky,' in his 'first manner,' and by no means represents the sort of thing he has done later in 'Le Rosignol' and 'Petronschka,' [sic] which is still to be revealed to this public." It is unclear whether or not the critic had attended performances of Stravinsky's recent music in Europe – there is no record of the works mentioned having been given in the United States by this date - - or whether the critic necessarily admires Stravinsky's more recent works, though there does seem to be an implication that he has moved onto subject matter more suited to his gifts .

Following closely on the heels of the New York Philharmonic's performance of *Fireworks* came the work's premiere with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, reviewed in the *Boston Daily Globe* on December 12, 1914, the day after the concert was given. The critic assumes that the piece was composed for the marriage of Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter to one "M. Steinberg" and uses this as a pretext for making derisive remarks on the images produced by the piece. As with previous reviews, the critic indicates that the subject is not suitable for a musical work. Unlike the other reviews, in which at least the representation of the subject matter is deemed successful, in this review the critic suggests that the fireworks sound as though they are being thrown at the newlyweds, an indication that Stravinsky has perhaps failed to create a celebratory atmosphere. However, the critic adds that the piece may be a "sly joke" on Stravinsky's part at the expense of his teacher's daughter or "the nature of her husband." While the reviewer seems amused by the jokes in Stravinsky's music, he does not seem to respect the work greatly, adding, "The piece should also become known to campaign managers who

believe in the good old political methods of torchlight parades and red fire.” He continues:

Thematically, there is little to be taken seriously. There are musical figures caught and developed, now spinning as pin wheels, now in flight as blazing arrows, which are not without significance to the imaginative. But can this music be said to have true brilliance?

While largely dismissive, the article does express an enjoyment of portions of the harmony and orchestration created by Stravinsky. However, the reviewer largely credits the Boston Symphony’s calm presentation of the work, in comparison to the New York Philharmonic’s more exuberant performance, with the moments of beauty. “It is true Mr. Stransky [the conductor] permitted more powder to be consumed than did Dr. Muck,” the critic explains, with the result that the work, “exhibited some harmonic and orchestral coloring and reflected credit on Mr. Stravinsky.”

Interestingly, the reviewer explains that a fireworks expert, “Mr. Brock, the London manufacturer of fireworks,” was “called in to a private performance for expert and serious judgment.” Mr. Brock is said to have “found the number graphic and pictorial.” The critic is incensed by this alleged event, and asks, “Had the symphonic poem of the dirigible balloon appeared, would Count Zeppelin have decided whether or not it was too far above the people’s heads?” Having largely forgotten the redeeming moments of the concert, the critic finishes his assessment of Stravinsky’s work, “Mr. Stravinsky’s fireworks long since burnt themselves out. They made a pretty blaze with new prismatic colors and inspire a desire to hear later music from his ballets.”

George Copeland’s piano recital at Jordan Hall on November 9, 1915, reviewed the next day in the *Boston Daily Globe*, played “a Berceuse by Stravinsky,” likely an

arrangement of the Berceuse from *The Firebird*, though it is unclear whether this was an arrangement by Stravinsky or a transcription by the pianist, in addition to Erik Satie's *Gymnopedie No. 3*, and Granados's *Deux Valses Poétiques*, in his program of "new and curious music, as is his custom."<sup>21</sup> Copeland is described as a pianist who has been established for some time, and the large audience in attendance appeared to be "entertained" by the performance. The critic enjoys Copeland's musical interpretations, and believes he is the right person to introduce new music to an audience, as he "was in the vein [...] with a genre of piano playing which is unique and unapproached."

The critic touches on all three of the new piano pieces, giving them largely positive reviews. Satie's "trifle with its scientific name and persistent rhythmic idea" led the author to wish to know more of Satie's work. The Stravinsky piece is pronounced unique, a "cradle song built on an enduring motive in the left hand, making much of a dominant pedal point. It maintains a line of thought, and although a miniature, has definite individuality." Granados's piece is described as "amiable and diverting," with "contrasted moods of triumphant gayety and of plaint."

Lest we believe that Copeland's critic is an unequivocal supporter of new music, he has relatively harsh things to say about a new Schoenberg piece featured in another recital discussed in the review, given the day before in the same hall by Heinrich Gebhard. Gebhard performed "the second of Schoenberg's three pieces for piano."

There may be an excellent reason for writing such a piece as Schoenberg's, and there is no fixed definition of that to which it should conform to be music. The piano is certainly not the instrument for what such a brain would seem to hear. With a new scale of triple or quarter steps the thirst for poignant dissonance may be quenched without the nervous distress

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<sup>21</sup> "Two Pianists Play," *Boston Daily Globe*, November 10, 1915.

which most persons must feel at this. There is obviously a plan of development. What it signifies emotionally must be left to those who even find repose in hostile sound vibration.

The reviewer does not show the same appreciation for Schoenberg that he shows for other contemporary composers. Bartók's "Bear Dance," another piece on the program, meets a better fate, and is described as "ingeniously clumsy and clownish," and even funny, as it "provoked laughter" from the audience.

George Copeland's recital in Aeolian Hall, which presented presumably the same program as in Boston one month earlier, was reviewed in *The New York Times* on 7 December 1915, the day after it had been performed.<sup>22</sup> The review mentions that, in addition to twentieth-century compositions, Copeland performed unfamiliar works from earlier eras, including "pieces by Scarlatti that are not frayed by frequent repetition; an unfamiliar waltz, and a 'nocturne' by Chopin [without a statement of key or opus number] that it would be interesting to know more about." The reviewer of this second concert had little to say about the new pieces, only that Copeland played "two preludes by Rachmaninoff, pleasing and of a different character to those often played," and that Satie's "Gymnopédie No. III" was "a singularly unimportant contribution from a much-heralded revolutionary." Unlike many of his peers, this particular critic seemed interested in hearing more innovative twentieth-century music — if only because it might have offered more scope for commentary. Regarding Stravinsky's "Berceuse," the critic merely states that it "will contribute little to the revolution of musical art on which he is engaged."

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<sup>22</sup> "Mr. Copeland's Recital: A List of Unfamiliar Pieces for the Pianoforte Played," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1915.

New York heard more music by Stravinsky late in 1915, this time his latest work. The Flonzaley Quartet performed Stravinsky's Three Pieces for String Quartet on 30 November in Aeolian Hall. The performance was reviewed in *The New York Times* the following day, with a title of "The Newest Music." The author reports that this was the first concert of the Flonzaley Quartet this season, which implies that he attributes some significance to the ensemble's decision to include a Stravinsky work in the program. Stravinsky's music is described as "the very latest offering in twentieth century music."<sup>23</sup> At this point, American audiences were anticipating the arrival of the Ballets Russes troupe for its 1916 tour; Stravinsky is heralded as "the young Russian composer, some of whose ballets are to be heard later in the season at the Metropolitan Opera House," which was one of the New York venues for the Ballets Russes tour.

The critic explains that the Stravinsky string quartet was unpublished at the time, as the "three pieces are new, composed last Spring, and are still in manuscript." In fact, the work was so new that at the time of the concert, "there [was] no title and no suggestion of a 'program' upon the score." Given the newness of the piece and the audience's likely lack of experience with Stravinsky's music, composer and music critic Daniel Gregory Mason was called upon by the quartet to "enlighten the prospective listeners" by explaining "what the composer's intentions were." The reviewer continues by summarizing Mason's presentation:

It appears that [Stravinsky] had intentions. He thought of entitling the pieces "Grotesques." The first one — which is probably the shortest quartet extant, lasting in performance less than one minute — he intended to represent a gathering of peasants on the desert steppe, singing a folk

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<sup>23</sup> "The Newest Music: Igor Stravinsky's Pieces and Others Played by the Flonzaley Quartet," *The New York Times*, December 1, 1915.

song accompanied by instruments, some kind of a bagpipe and some kind of a drum. It may be hoped that there are really no such instruments. In the second he had in mind a cathedral with a priest intoning Gregorian plain chant, and the organ sounding. The last represents a Pierrot burdened with some private grief, but obliged to go through with his juggling tricks before the public.<sup>24</sup>

In the critic's view, Mason's descriptive language was very helpful to the audience and to the critic himself: the explanations made the piece comprehensible and gave listeners insight into what Stravinsky was trying to do, and indeed, without the description there would be no way to discuss the work "as music." The critic proceeds to compare Stravinsky to Schoenberg, and expresses a frustration with the modern sounds of the pieces:

We have been told that to understand them we must put aside all conceptions of music hitherto valid; any ideas not only of the development of themes, but of themes themselves; or the creation of even the most impossible harmonies by the independent leading of voices, and the conception of "passing notes" with which Schönberg does such violence to the ear, maintaining the doctrine of "relentless logic."

The critic sees Stravinsky as a pioneer in the field of harmony, who has let go of past techniques. However, Stravinsky is not producing true music at all, but rather, "he has used the four instruments solely as producers of noise to recount the three anecdotes he had in mind." The most positive comments concern the Flonzaley Quartet's performance, although in the context of scathing remarks about Stravinsky's work. The critic suggests the piece is unnecessarily difficult: "These noises offer various kinds of strange technical difficulties to produce, and the Flonzalay Quartet met them with a

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<sup>24</sup> Compared to the titles given the same pieces as part of *Quatre Études*, it appears that the critic confused the order of the movements, although it is possible that the confusion was on the part of Daniel Gregory Mason, or that the piece was performed in a different order from subsequent performances.

curiously successful bravura and gusto. They seemed to enjoy doing it.” The critic’s incredulity at the quartet’s enjoyment of the work is further evident in a conclusion:

But the result, whether it indicated the brief monotony of the steppe, the squalling of the peasants, the beating of their drum; the hideous droning of the priest and the tuneless organ; the moaning of the unhappy Pierrot, or the antics of his tricks, was purely noise, with no conceivable, and apparently no intended relation to music.

The audience, however, apparently enjoyed the work, and “applauded the one-minute piece [the first of the set] in obvious amusement.” In fact, they asked for an encore, and “in view of its admirable brevity got it repeated.” The critic believed the audience’s response to be an indication of approval for the quartet, not Stravinsky, continuing, “it is hardly to be supposed that the applause bestowed was in the least sincere, except such part of it as went to the four players for their brilliant surmounting of a totally profitless series of difficulties.” This review contrasts somewhat with the findings by Carol Oja that this “was not a sympathetically received performance.”<sup>25</sup> Although Oja quotes *Musical America’s* reports of a “large and eagerly expectant” audience, she focuses on the “un-Anglo-Saxon hissing” reported by Paul Rosenfeld. While assertions of positive and negative response are mixed, all critics agree that the audience was not indifferent to the music.

Prior to the Flonzaley Quartet’s performance, an article appeared in *The New York Times* that sought to illuminate the Stravinsky pieces for potential concert attendees.<sup>26</sup> The article contains an excerpt from an article by Ernest Ansermet, conductor of the orchestra for the Ballets Russes, who was acquainted personally with

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<sup>25</sup> Oja, 50.

<sup>26</sup> “Stravinsky’s First Quartet,” *The New York Times*, November 28, 1915



Stravinsky. The article explains that Ansermet's "attitude toward Stravinsky is that of a sympathizer and a persuaded exponent, and from that viewpoint his remarks have been written." Clearly, the editor of the news article felt it was necessary to point out that Ansermet was a supporter of Stravinsky's work, which suggests that the editor may not have been. Ansermet's article contains biographical information about Stravinsky, and notes his significant works and their performances in Paris, including *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *Scherzo Symphonique*. In discussing *Rite of Spring*, Ansermet explains that the ballet production "aroused widespread and bitter discussion, but when the work was given in concert form, it silenced all demonstrations." Ansermet offers a positive account of Stravinsky's compositional innovations. His remarks constitute the most detailed technical discussion of Stravinsky's music, and most notably of his harmonic language, to have appeared in an American publication up to this point.

With the "Sacre du Printemps" Stravinsky broke with the tonal system actually in use. He is more and more freeing himself from the trammels of system of any description, and at the same time becoming more severe as regards his style. His harmonies are based on the affinity of chords, and constructed along the lines of what might be termed chord polyphony. In the same manner his work shows a process of evolution as regards the element of tone color, disregarding established customs regulating the fusion of different tonal qualities, and seeking the true character and tone relationships of each individual timbre.

Ansermet then explains that while "string quartet" typically refers to a set form with specific requirements, Stravinsky has not attempted to create a traditional string quartet with his three pieces. Rather, the composer uses the genre as "an opportunity to work out the acoustic possibilities of a certain family of musical instruments." Interestingly, Ansermet asserts that the work is not programmatic, but rather "absolute music in the true sense, that is, innocent of any suspicion of a literary or philosophic program."

American audiences, however, were deemed unable to accept the music in this manner, hence the need for Daniel Gregory Mason to create a program for a piece that did not originally have one. Ansermet does feel compelled to add images, as he acknowledges that the movements have specific characters, i.e., “the first embodies the spirit of the dance, the third the spirit of religious melody, while the second has been developed in the region of the musically fantastic.” But these images are drawn from music itself and do not rely on extra-musical programmatic characterizations.<sup>27</sup>

Richard Aldrich, a music critic who frequently contributed to *The New York Times*, also reviewed the Flonzaley Quartet’s performance of Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces*. Aldrich describes Stravinsky’s piece as “perhaps the very latest thing in music,” because the work is less than a year old and not yet published. Aldrich also notes that the Ballets Russes will be performing *Firebird* and *Petrushka* at the Metropolitan Opera House within the year, and explains that audience members can expect to hear some of the new and interesting sounds of the quartet piece in the ballet productions as well. Aldrich

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<sup>27</sup> The assertion by Ansermet that the piece is not programmatic runs somewhat contrary to Ansermet’s comments five years later regarding the performance of “Three Pieces for String Quartet” by the London Philharmonic Quartet in 1919 as quoted by Richard Taruskin. Taruskin describes “Three Pieces for String Quartet” as “a bit of imitation folklore [...] as would be perfectly evident even without the program note by Ansermet [...] according to which it ‘represents a group of peasants singing and dancing against the monotonous setting of the steppes.’” Given Ansermet’s relationship with Stravinsky and the similarity to the program given by Daniel Gregory Mason, it seems likely that the program did in fact come from Stravinsky, even if it was not intended to be included with the piece. The characters of the movements were further emphasized in titles added by Stravinsky himself when he re-set *Three Pieces for String Quartet* for orchestra as part of the *Quatre études* of 1928. See Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: a Biography of the Works Through Mavra*, Vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1465; and: Noël Goodwin, “Ansermet, Ernest,” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/00983>.

expects that listeners will have noticed the differences between Stravinsky's music and that of Schönberg's, a comparison that will be discussed in greater detail below.

Aldrich describes Stravinsky as a "musical impressionist," presumably because of elements in Stravinsky's music that seem to transcribe literally sounds or characters, as in the case of *Fireworks*. Aldrich does not believe that Stravinsky has created his own harmonic system, and doubts that "he occupies himself in theorizing about 'passing notes'" or "the leading of parts." Although Aldrich concedes that Stravinsky himself has written no treatise or explanation of his music, he does feel that the composer is asking listeners to forget what they know about string quartet music. Stravinsky's music is described as formless and asymmetrical, and as "a succession of sounds simulating other sounds or suggesting briefly outside impressions." He notes that this is not in itself a radical innovation, and that many composers have participated in a sort of musical onomatopoeia in the past. However, Aldrich feels that earlier composers achieved this end via melodies and themes with suggestive characters, and by developing these ideas within the context of a clear harmony. Stravinsky, according to Aldrich, makes "no pretension to thematic quality or any possibility of thematic development; and with very little relation to harmony as hitherto produced." Aldrich concedes that portions of Stravinsky's music may be analyzed in traditional terms, but believes that the composer is not interested in this sort of analysis, but rather worked with an aim of creating grotesque sounds, with traditional harmonic combinations occurring only incidentally.

Aldrich mentions Daniel Gregory Mason's program announcement, and confirms that Stravinsky had no intention of creating a programmatic work, but rather designed the music to be listened to "abstractedly." Nevertheless, Aldrich feels "it would be

stretching terms somewhat to say that he wished them to be listened to ‘as music,’” and feels that Mason’s program was fortuitous, as it enabled the audience to find the pieces “amusing,” and to recognize the “expressive and descriptive quality” of the pieces. Yet despite their success on this occasion, Aldrich feels the pieces are unlikely to fare as well without Mr. Mason’s assistance, and wonders “how far music of this sort may be carried.” He concludes,

[Stravinsky’s] most important works hitherto have been the ballets that are to be seen here; and here his method finds its greatest justification. There is always something going on upon the stage to explain the music; or the music is a commentary and an elucidation of what goes on upon the stage. So far as this particular type of “futurist” music is concerned, it seems to be conditioned on an accompaniment of something else to explain it from beginning to end.

Pianist Harriette Cady performed at the Princess Theatre in New York on April 16, 1916, and was reviewed in *The New York Times* the following day.<sup>28</sup> Cady performed a number of works by Russian composers, although the critic remarks that she included Dvorsky, who “is not a Russian composer at all, but a distinguished Polish piano virtuoso.” Although even the critic explains that this “matter is not one of the greatest importance,” the critic insists that “Miss Cady erred in including his work in a Russian program.” Her performance included “a group of Russian folksongs arranged for piano by herself,” as well as compositions by Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Scriabin, Rachmaninov and Rubinstein. The critic does not give any detail about any of the pieces, but does suggest that the Scriabin and Stravinsky works were likely premiered at this concert. In the critic’s words, “Some preludes of Scriabin and an etude by Stravinsky that she played

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<sup>28</sup> “Sunday Night’s Recitals: Miss Cady, Miss Zentay, and Miss Hussar Win Approval,” *The New York Times*, April 17, 1916.

are unknown here and have probably not yet been given in public.” Although there are no detailed statements about the quality of the music, the critic does write, “There was considerable interesting music on the program.”

On January 1, 1917, the *Times* article “Notable Concerts End the Old Year”<sup>29</sup> reviewed a program by the New York Symphony Orchestra (then a separate entity from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra), in which the group performed Stravinsky’s *Firebird* as a concert piece. The critic is complimentary toward the orchestra, writing, “Conductor and players were in unusually good form; and the audience was correspondingly impressed.” However, the critic has concerns about Stravinsky’s music and expresses distaste at its disassociation from the ballet for which it was written:

It is hardly fair to play Stravinsky’s music as a concert piece. It is bold, fantastic, capricious, ingenious, picturesque, and pictorial, to illustrate the changing pictures of the ballet, which is well known here from the representations of the Russian company. Much of the fantasticality of this music becomes meaningless when it is taken away from the fantasticality of the action.

The critic does not believe that Stravinsky’s music is understandable or coherent as pure, absolute music without the dance that it was composed to accompany, but he does, begrudgingly, acknowledge that some moments in the music were worthwhile and that Stravinsky’s orchestrations were well-conceived: “The moderato movement, next to the last of the suite as played, probably says most as music; in all of them Stravinsky’s resources as an orchestral colorist, his ingenuities in covering his musical canvas, could be observed.”

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<sup>29</sup> “Notable Concerts End The Old Year: Gabrilowitsch Seen for the First Time Here as an Orchestra Leader: N. Y. Symphony Program: Spirited Playing of Damrosch Musicians Stirs Audience – Kreisler Packs Carnegie Hall,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1917.

These reviews, overall, establish a skeptical tone in the early American reception of Stravinsky's music. The critics are appreciative of Stravinsky's ability to convey in instrumental terms certain characters and ideas, but do not find much of the music to be enjoyable in and of itself. Characters and programmatic ideas are used to justify unusual sounds and gestures in Stravinsky's music, even in cases in which he does not include a program. The modernisms in his music are interpreted as crude representations of images rather than as innovative explorations of harmony and timbre. Some of the critics appear more open to the composer's new sounds and ideas than others, but overall they are unappreciative of his efforts. Nevertheless, Stravinsky appears to be more well-established and accepted as a composer than one might expect from the small number of performances of his works up to that point. The 1917 review of *The Firebird* conveys something that many of the critics suggest, particularly the reviewer of *Fireworks*: Stravinsky's music must be seen as well as heard.

Following the performance of *The Firebird*, reviews and announcements of Stravinsky's works increased dramatically in number, with as many appearing in 1917 as had appeared in all six years preceding. The New York Symphony concert was arguably the turning point at which Stravinsky's music became a standard feature in the modern repertoire. 1916 was, of course, the year that the Ballets Russes toured the United States, and the Neighborhood Playhouse also featured a long-running performance of *Petrushka* as well as Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.'s *The Century Girl*, which included a parody of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. It is to these performances and their reception that we will now turn.

## The Neighborhood Playhouse Production of *Petrushka*, 1916

Alice and Irene Lewisohn founded the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York in 1915. The small theater seats just over 400 people and was designed to provide an affordable introduction to the arts for its community. Seats were available for just fifty cents apiece.<sup>30</sup> In the 1917 publication, “The Little Theatre in the United States,” Constance D’Arcy Mackay describes the Neighborhood Playhouse as:

. . . with the exception of Mr. Ames’ Little Theatre, the best equipped theatre, large or small, of which this country can boast. It has provided superlative comforts for the actors in its wonderfully equipped dressing rooms. And it even betters Mr. Ames’ Little Theatre in its stage equipment in that it has the only “horizont” in this country, — that is, a concave wall of white plaster at the back of the stage that is flooded with varying lights and can thus give superb sky effects.<sup>31</sup>

An indication that the Neighborhood Players intended to perform *Petrushka* appeared in *The New York Times* of December 19, 1915.<sup>32</sup> A brief article appeared in the newspaper and announced the playhouse’s spring season, including “The Waldies,” and “The Subjection of Kesia,” both labeled as comedies, and several one-act dramas. The notice continues, “In March the Festival Group will present a Russian pantomime ballet, ‘Petrouchka,’ with music by Stravinsky. Frank Zimmerer will do the stage settings for this production.”<sup>33</sup> There is no indication of whether the ballet was to be accompanied by an orchestra or pianos — Stravinsky had arranged a two-piano version of *Petrushka* — nor does it give any details of the choreography or who will be dancing.

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<sup>30</sup> Constance D’Arcy Mackay, *The Little Theatre in the United States*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917), 54.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>32</sup> “At the Neighborhood,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1915.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

More information about these aspects of the production can be found in other sources, however. The Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts contains a box of scrapbook items from the Neighborhood Players Theatre, which includes memorabilia from the 1916 *Petrushka*. A playbill from the production indicates that performances were given on April 1 and 2, 1916, and that they were accompanied by Charles T. Griffes and Lily Hyland,<sup>34</sup> using the four-hand piano version of *Petrushka* arranged “by the composer.”<sup>35</sup> The playbill further explains that, “Louis H. Chalif has generously assisted in directing this production and in arranging the dances and pantomime.”<sup>36</sup> Also included on the playbill is the information that, “Owing to the great demand for seats, there will be two extra performances of ‘Petrouchka,’ preceded by Divertissements, on Saturday and Sunday evening.” The bulletin includes a summary of the production and credits Frank J. Zimmerer for the costumes and stage design. The article also notes that “Russian brasses and coppers” belonging to Elizabeth Frank were on display in the lobby during the production, which demonstrates that was

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<sup>34</sup> Lily Hyland was a composer of music for vaudeville productions, as well as a frequent performer on Broadway. Charles T. Griffes was at this time emerging as a leading figure in the younger generation of American composers of art music and was the director of music at the Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York. Although Anderson provides no information regarding this performance, she mentions Griffes’s association with Ballets Russes dancer Adolf Bolm, which raises the possibility that members of the Ballets Russes were aware of the Neighborhood Players’ production, although there does not appear to be any documentary evidence for a connection with Stravinsky or any other figures in the Ballets Russes circle. Donna K. Anderson. “Griffes, Charles T.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/11770> (accessed 6 April 2012).

<sup>35</sup> The four-hand piano version created for rehearsals has never been published. It is unclear how the Neighborhood Theater Group obtained the work.

<sup>36</sup> Playbill, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Special Collections, Billy Rose Theatre Division, Scrapbook from Neighborhood Playhouse Theater, 1919 – 1929.



an interest on the part of producers in displaying various examples of Russian art, as a means, no doubt, of underlining the connection of *Petrushka* with a broader interest in Russian folklore and culture. The playbill describes *Petrushka* as “by Igor Strawinsky and Alexandre Benois,” which suggests at least some level of fidelity to Diaghilev’s version of the ballet. It also includes “The Festival Dancers of the Henry Street Settlement” and “The Neighborhood Players,” both of which were considered student groups.

Included in the scrapbook box in the archive is a review from the *New-York Evening Post*<sup>37</sup>, dated April 16, 1916, which reads,

An interesting, picturesque, and in many particulars an admirable performance of the famous Russian pantomime ballet “Petrouchka” was given last night and Saturday night by the festival dancers of the Neighborhood Playhouse in their little theatre in Grand Street and will be repeated by them next Saturday and Sunday evenings.

The reviewer feels that Stravinsky’s music “suffered somewhat” because of its presentation as a four-hand piano piece, which suggests that the reviewer had attended a production of *Petrushka* with full orchestra, either in Paris, London, or during the Ballets Russes’s tour of the United States, which had just begun. The reviewer acknowledges the Ballets Russes’ tour and concedes that the local production cannot stand up to a comparison with the full-scale production, with its larger budget.

Nevertheless there were moments [...] where the thing was done with such color and spirit and such an effect of true carnival abandon that the imported Russians themselves were almost fairly matched.

In spite of its lower-budget production, the Neighborhood Playhouse production and its dancers are commended, “the more so because no attempt was made to copy or

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<sup>37</sup> Later the *New York Post*.

reproduce the work of Mr. Diaghileff's stars." The author compares the two productions, claiming that the "crowd effects of this pantomime" are the best part of both productions. The author concludes, "It is pointed out that the plan of playing "Petrouchka" was already well launched by the Neighborhood Players before the Russians came',<sup>38</sup>

Although the Ballets Russes and the Neighborhood Players performed their productions of *Petrushka* in New York at the same time, they were not necessarily competing for the same audience. The Ballets Russes' tour was predominately marketed at upper-class music patrons, while the Neighborhood Players' production was aimed at a more working-class, local market. Another article, which appeared two months before the announcement of the spring season of the Neighborhood Players, and which also contains a reference to the upcoming performance of *Petrushka*, quotes one of the Neighborhood Theatre's founders, Alice Lewisohn, as saying,

The festivals and dramatic work of the settlement... have grown out of the belief that every one should have a share in the world's treasures of imagination and poetry, and in return contribute something to the interpretation of human experiences. The young people of the neighborhood respond in a magical way to a stirring of their emotional inheritance. The immediate inspiration of the festivals was a desire to give expression to the poetic imagination of the neighborhood and to interpret ancient traditions that were once so full of meaning.<sup>39</sup>

It is apparent that the theater was designed not just to entertain the neighborhood, but to enlighten its young people and to introduce them to other cultures. This second

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<sup>38</sup> Untitled Article, *New York Post*, at this time known as the *New-York Evening Post*, April 16, 1916.

<sup>39</sup> Alice Lewisohn, quoted in "The Neighborhood's Year," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1915.

article mentions the upcoming performance of *Petrushka*, describing it as “a fantastic pantomime with music by Igor Stravinsky.”

In the *New York Tribune*, an article appeared on March 12, 1916, announcing the upcoming performance of *Petrushka* by the Neighborhood Players. It describes *Petrushka* as a “Russian pantomime ballet,” and adds that, “The scene of the ballet, which is a carnival fair on the outskirts of Petrograd, gives opportunity for interesting Russian settings and amusing costumes, which have been designed by Frank J. Zimmerer.”<sup>40</sup> On April 2, the *New York Times* printed, “‘Petrouchka’ Again,” a short article announcing the addition of the extra performances mentioned above; “Its popularity has been so great that two extra performances have been announced for next Saturday and Sunday nights.”<sup>41</sup> From this, we can glean that the performance was successful and well-liked by its audiences. Indeed, the *Times* reported that it was revived for one night the following summer as a benefit event for a relief fund for “the Cloak and Suit Makers’ Union.”<sup>42</sup>

Because of the modest scale of community theater organizations in the United States as well as their intended audience, there are relatively few surviving records that enable us to ascertain exactly how the Neighborhood Players’ production of *Petrushka* came into being and who directed it. It seems surprising that neither Stravinsky nor Diaghilev seem to have been aware of the production, given that the Ballets Russes was in the area enough to have potentially noticed a copycat production in the works. It does seem that the Neighborhood Theater was particularly well-equipped for its size,

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<sup>40</sup> “Neighborhood Players.” *New York Tribune*. March 12, 1916, page 5.

<sup>41</sup> “‘Petrouchka’ Again,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> “Benefit at Neighborhood Playhouse,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1916; the event was to take place a few days later.

and it likely featured some extremely talented local performers. However, in spite of its great popularity, it does not seem possible that the Neighborhood Theatre's *Petrushka* could be as polished as Diaghilev's production.

Although there are only a few written records from critics that allow us to ascertain with a degree of certainty how they were received, the repeated performances make it clear that this production was popular. Modern music, with its departures from conventional tonality and intense rhythms, may have been difficult for many listeners to accept. Yet because Stravinsky's music was heard in small bursts in this comfortable environment, it is possible that listeners were able to adapt to the new music slowly and in a context in which they were predisposed to appreciate unusual music. These performances might well have made a hidden but significant contribution to Stravinsky's positive early reception in the United States.

### **Stravinsky's Music in Parody: Victor Herbert's "Century Girl"**

In the United States, Russian ballet had become a form of entertainment available to the masses rather than a sophisticated form of art reserved only for the elite and the critics, and this contributed to Stravinsky's music gain in popularity in the United States. By 1912, there were follies acts that presented comedic versions of Russian ballet

performances or made fun of particular ballet stars.<sup>43</sup> Comedy shows featured dancers with parodied Russian names, in productions such as, “A Suggestion of La Spectre de la Rose.”<sup>44</sup> Dance scholars such as Steven Gary Marks and Susanne Carbonneau Levy have suggested that Stravinsky’s music had been performed in Vaudeville productions before it was heard in concert halls, as will be discussed in this section. While my own research does not corroborate their claims, it is clear that Vaudeville contributed to the reception of music by Stravinsky and other Russian composers in the 1910s.<sup>45</sup>

The Vaudeville producer Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., mounted a production of Victor Herbert’s and Irving Berlin’s, *The Century Girl*, in 1916 at the Palace Theatre in New York. It was a Burlesque show that contained a parody of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*,<sup>46</sup> which had not yet been performed in the United States.<sup>47</sup> The Vaudeville audience heard Stravinsky’s music, as they did in *The Century Girl*, with marked differences from the

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<sup>43</sup> Levy, 335.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 336.

<sup>45</sup> It is possible that there were earlier performances of Stravinsky’s music in Vaudeville productions. However, this cannot be verified, in part because the NYPL for the Performing Arts gave up many of the special collections items that would be useful in this endeavor, including theater programs. In a March 2012 email correspondence, Suzanne Carbonneau (Levy) wrote, “I am heartsick about the NYPL. I know, for example, that they discarded an extensive set of theater programs that I used in my research. I tried to find another archive that would take them from the NYPL but was unsuccessful in finding a taker.”

<sup>46</sup> Program, “*The Century Girl*,” by Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin, available at the Library of Congress online archive, <http://myloc.gov/Exhibitions/musical-worlds-of-victor-herbert/exhibition-items/ExhibitObjects/Program-for-Century-Girl.aspx> (Accessed, January 18, 2013.)

<sup>47</sup> The Rite of Spring was premiered as an orchestral concert piece in the United States in 1922, under Leopold Stokowski with The Philadelphia Orchestra. However, in 1925 Henry Cowell recalled that he had performed The Rite of Spring on piano “eight years ago” (see Oja, 46), presumably in the United States. While no documented performances of the work exist before 1922, the 4-hand piano version was published in 1913, making it possible for Victor Herbert to have used the reduction as a basis for his work.

manner in which patrons of the New York Philharmonic would have heard it: in a different type of hall and with a different kind of orchestra, playing a remarkably reduced or otherwise re-arranged score. The audience also heard the music taken out of context from the original production and fragmented into bits and pieces in order to accommodate the shorter lengths of Vaudeville performances. Despite all the differences between the true ballet performances and the Vaudeville burlesque, what is important about *The Century Girl* is that its audiences did hear Stravinsky's music. As Levy notes,

It is worth noting that the Palace bills included Stravinsky accompaniment even before it had become generally accepted at bastions of art such as the Met. While Stravinsky's name had become firmly established by Diaghilev in connection with the Russian ballet, at the Palace and on the Keith-Orpheum circuit Stravinsky's music was being introduced to audiences who would otherwise probably never have heard it."<sup>48</sup>

*The Century Girl* included an act called "The Stone Age," featuring "The Ballet Loose." The work appears to have presented primitive, cave-dwelling people — almost certainly a reference to *Rite of Spring*. The satirical production was performed to music by Victor Herbert and featured "jazzed-up versions of Stravinsky, Borodin, and Rimsky-Korsokov."<sup>49</sup> Audience members who had seen Stravinsky's ballets in Europe, or who by now had witnessed the Ballets Russes' performances in the United States, would have been able to appreciate the inside jokes in some of the references, while the uninitiated might at least have recognized the parodies of the Russian style.

Victor Herbert composed the music for *The Century Girl* in collaboration with Irving Berlin. The piece had a review format, which "gave [Herbert] full opportunity to

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<sup>48</sup> Levy, 178-9.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 337.

display his talent for both orchestral scene painting and satirical humor.” It contained a mix of parody and original humor, and even a self-deprecating scene in which actors portrayed Berlin and Herbert themselves arguing whether new Broadway musicals are better than old ones. Neil Gould explains:

Act Two began with one of the funniest pieces Herbert ever wrote, a send-up of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* called *The Ballet Loose*, featuring “Leon Errolovith” and “Marie Dressleroff” and an ensemble of “cave ladies.” This was followed by a nursery scene for which Herbert provided a “Toy Soldiers’ Dance” duet á la *Babes in Toyland*. Then a super patriotic “When Uncle Sam Rules the Waves,” an undersea extravaganza with “chorus of mermaids, lobsters, turtles and anemones.”<sup>50</sup>

Especially in their jazzed up arrangement, it is likely that Stravinsky’s rhythmic ostinatos would have sounded interesting and exciting to the audience. Bold musical gestures, which seemed odd or avant-garde in a concert hall where the average audience member was expecting *Swan Lake*, would have seemed perfectly appropriate in the new context. The humorous follies provided a vehicle for the “average audience member” to become interested in Stravinsky’s music.

Numerous reviews touted the success of *The Century Girl*, but very few mention the music or the fact that Ballets Russes productions were being parodied. In describing the production’s “recipe” for success, one reviewer includes the advice,

You need no book. As it happens, the acoustics of the Century have been elaborately improved, but you would not have had to strain your ears to catch the dialogue for there is none worth mentioning. The method is simpler than that. You just send Elsie Janis and Doyle and Dizon out onto the stage and tell them to dance. Who wants to hear anything then? You send out Marle Dressler, Leon Errol, and Harry Kelly (who has deserted his dog) with instructions to play a stone age romance in burlesque of the Russian ballet, while the orchestra moans weird Stravinsky dissonances.

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<sup>50</sup> Neil Gould, *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

Or you plant the amiable Tinney at the footlights and tell him to do his worst. They need no book at the Century.<sup>51</sup>

Even before this production, Russian ballet was growing in popularity with audiences in the United States, and this occurred in part because of its presence in Vaudeville theater.<sup>52</sup> In fact, Russia was seen as a source for all things artistic, and actors and dancers from other countries even began adopting Russian names in order to promote themselves. Vaudeville was full of faux Russian performers. One figure was an English-born actress, who adopted the Russian name Olga Petrova and became famous for singing songs in a French style on the Vaudeville circuit. Her imitations were legendary, as were descriptions of her copper hair, which reviewers remarked was unusual for a Russian.<sup>53</sup>

Prior to *The Century Girl*, Russian music used by the Ballets Russes had already been making its way into Vaudeville. Gertrude Hoffman directed productions of *Les Sylphides*,<sup>54</sup> *Cléopâtre*, and *Schéhérazade* at the New York Winter Garden theatre in 1911. Hoffman was a performer notorious for presenting imitations and satires of Broadway stars and productions, with or without their permission. She was the highest paid

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<sup>51</sup> "'The Century Girl' A Huge Success: Dillingham-Ziegfeld Dynasty Is Happily Inaugurated at the Century Theatre. Spectacle and Vaudeville," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1916.

<sup>52</sup> Levy, 1– 2.

<sup>53</sup> Olga Petrova Scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>54</sup> *Les Sylphides* was a ballet choreographed for Diaghilev by Fokine to music of Chopin, orchestrated by several Russian composers, including Stravinsky. While it is not strictly Russian, it was included as part of the Russian canon by those who sought to imitate Diaghilev.



vaudeville performer in America, and in 1909 she used part of her extensive income to travel to Paris, where she attended performances by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.<sup>55</sup>

Hoffman was quite taken with the Russian ballet, and so she worked with her business manager, Morris Gest, to present "La Saison des Ballets Russes," in New York. Hoffman blatantly stole choreography, costume styles, and music without permission. She attempted to hire Fokine to teach his choreography to American dancers, but he refused, and so she employed Theodore Kosloff, a choreographer who had worked with Diaghilev, to learn Fokine's dances and teach them to her company. Levy quotes Hoffman as claiming that she "almost stole music off the rack, and the costumes, I was so mad about it."<sup>56</sup>

Hoffman proceeded to take "La Saison des Ballets Russes" on a tour of the United States and Canada, with stops in Vancouver, as well as New York and Chicago, among others. The group performed at times to enthusiastic and appreciative audiences, and at other times to half-full houses, where audiences had been scared away by reports of the scandalous nature of the dancing.<sup>57</sup> Much of the Russian choreography depicted sensual scenes that were considered inappropriate in early twentieth century America, and Hoffman emulated that choreography to the best of her ability. Although some of her audience may have seen these ballets performed in Europe, many of the attendees were seeing the "scandalous" Russian dancing for the first time.

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<sup>55</sup> Levy, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 103-4.

Gertrude Hoffman was married to Max Hoffman, who conducted the orchestra of seventy-five players for the production.<sup>58</sup> During the “Saison des Ballet Russes,” the Hoffmans and Gest presented three ballets: *Les Sylphides*, *Cléopâtre*, and *Schéhérazade*. None of these ballets include original music by Stravinsky. However, *Schéhérazade* is by his teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Stravinsky did orchestrate portions of the production of *Les Sylphides*, which was presented in Europe. It is unlikely that these productions brought any notoriety or attention to Stravinsky’s name, but they surely shaped how audiences heard and understood modern Russian music in general. Gertrude Hoffman’s attitude toward the Russian ballets — both her interest in the Ballets Russes’s productions and her wanton thievery of the company’s art — form an integral part of the context for the history of Stravinsky’s Vaudeville performances, as well as the Neighborhood Players’ production of *Petrushka*.

Hoffman’s “La Saison des Ballets Russes” caused quite a stir in the press. Modern, pantomimed dances in Paris had a notorious reputation, both in Europe and in the United States, and journalists used that to create a sensation around Hoffman’s production. One article from the New York Times in June of 1911 announced, “Secret Rehearsals Held,” and exposed details of exotic Russian dancers and dance elements:

The Russian ballets... are quite different from the familiar Russian dances that have been given here in recent years. They are to be the same pantomimic dances that have been given at the Chatelet Theatre and the Grand Opera House, in Paris, for the last two years. The Metropolitan Opera Company had intended making some of them, with the Imperial Russian Company, a feature of the season at the Metropolitan Opera

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<sup>58</sup> Levy, 103-104.

House next Winter. Miss Hoffman and her managers... are, in a way, stealing a march on the Metropolitan management.<sup>59</sup>

This article presents the new, modern form of dance as an exotic, exciting art form, noting that the dance is separate from “formal French and Italian schools of dancing,” suggesting this is a positive change, or at least an exciting one. The article also discusses Hoffman’s time studying with Russian dancers in Paris as well as details of the music and the dancers, indicating there are 100 artists, and an orchestra of seventy-five musicians, under the direction of Max Hoffman. The article concludes with a list of names and associations of some of the dancers, mainly those associated with Russia and Paris. It also includes information that the music for *Cleopatre* includes compositions by “A. Arensky, Glinka, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mousorgsky, and Glazounow.”

An article that appeared two days later took a more cautious approach to the upcoming production:

The experiment of offering New York theatergoers a solid evening of ballet – or mimodrama, to use a newer term – is to be made at the Winter Garden, where the regular season ended last Saturday night. On Wednesday evening Gertrude Hoffman will present there what she calls a “Saison des Ballet Russes,” a group of three ballet-dramas that have been done in Parts by the Imperial Russian dancers at the Chatelet Theatre and at the Grand Opera House.<sup>60</sup>

This report lacks the excitement of the previous one, and merely adds that the “three ballets are said to represent all of the principal phases of the art of the ‘Nouveau Ballet Russes.’” The article also notes that in Hoffman’s company, “There are no stars, and when it is necessary the principal dancers play the least important roles.”

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<sup>59</sup> “Russian Ballets for Winter Garden: Gertrude Hoffman to Introduce Pantomimic Dances That Have Been Given in Paris,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 1911.

<sup>60</sup> Untitled article, *The New York Times*, June 11, 1911.

Four days later, *The New York Times* published a review of Hoffman's performance. The tone of the review is positive, but the author prefers the traditional dancing in the performance to the innovative and exotic new dancing. Announcing, "A Mad Whirl of Color," the reviewer indicates that the audience seemed to enjoy the opening performance of Hoffman's "Saison," but the reviewer doubts whether the positive reception will continue much longer. After discussing *Cléopatra* in an objective manner that focused on the costumes and the visual aspects of the piece, the review turns to *Les Sylphides*, which

comes back to the more conventional ballet, with the filmy, wide skirts, and the toe dancing. In this the music was Chopin's [...] And for this the audience applauded again and again.

*Schéhérazade* is then described more negatively, although the performance of the orchestra was praised. The review concludes with comments on taste and propriety:

Much money and good taste have been bestowed upon the preparation of these ballets, but whether the taste that selected the Cleopatra and the Arabian Nights number was as good is a matter about which individuals will probably differ. Their stories are erotic and the scenes are played with much realism – as far as the dancing and pantomime can be realistic. The audience liked "Les Sylphides" probably as much for its delicacy as for its good performance.

Whether or not Russian music in general, and Rimsky-Korsakov in particular, was well-received in this performance is difficult to ascertain. In this case, the perceived hyper-sexuality of the gestures apparently dominated the audience's attention. This sort of description likely affected audiences' expectations of both music and dance, and likely carried over into their perceptions of later works, as well. When Stravinsky's works were performed by the Ballets Russes, audiences often found them to be less scandalous than expected. Of course, on the evidence of the reports, the performances were not as

shocking as they had been to the Parisians, possibly in part because the Parisians had not been first introduced to Gertrude Hoffman's versions.

Hoffman's performances were wracked by scandal when two of her dancers quit while on tour. The dancers claimed that Hoffman broke their contracts by inserting "a vaudeville review" into the program. Although a September 1911 *New York Times* article describes Hoffman as a star who should be able to attract an audience without any help from Russian dancers, it also explains that the tour had not been as successful as Hoffman expected.<sup>61</sup> A second article from the same day contains much of the same material, but makes an additional note that Alexis Kosloff has also left the dance company. It does not indicate whether Alexis is related to Theodore Kosloff.<sup>62</sup>

In 1912, Theodore Kosloff planned his own spin-off of Hoffman's "Saison." A *New York Times* article appearing in December 1912 describes the upcoming season and indicates that it "includes works by Rubinstein, Mousorsky, Rimski-Koroskow [sic], Borodin and Glinka," as well as "the light grand operas agreed upon between Mr. Kosloff and Morris Gest."<sup>63</sup> Kosloff's tour went on for several years. Steven Gary Marks says this of Kosloff:

Kosloff then formed his own troupe, the Imperial Russian Dancers, which lasted through 1917 on the Keith-Orpheum vaudeville circuit. In the summer of 1916 he broke Palace Theater box office records and performed Stravinsky for the first time in the United States, where plebeian audiences heard his music before the highbrows did!<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> "Russian Dancers Quit Miss Hoffman," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1911.

<sup>62</sup> "Russian Dancers Say Contract is Broken," *The New York Times*, September 20, 1911

<sup>63</sup> "Russian Opera for New York: Spring Season of Ballet Also Planned by Theodore Kosloff," *The New York Times*, December 12, 1912.

<sup>64</sup> Steven Gary Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World: From Art to Anti-semitism, Balletto Bolshevism*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 201-202.

Marks' description of "plebeian" audiences is simplistic at best, and as has been demonstrated, Stravinsky's music had already been performed both by the Ballets Russes as well as in concert halls by this time. Even if Kosloff performed Stravinsky's music earlier, which has not been substantiated, it is impossible that his performances would have been earlier than the earliest performances of Stravinsky's music in the United States. However, the success of the troupe and the purveyance of Stravinsky's music to a broader, appreciative audience cannot be denied.

Kosloff's first Russian Ballet season was overshadowed in the newspapers by accounts of the Ballets Russes in Paris. During his 1913 season, *The Rite of Spring* was premiered in Paris, and it appears that newspapers focused their reviews on accounts of the scandalous performance. Articles with headlines such as "Parisians Hiss New Ballet," used sensational language that certainly colored audiences' perception and interest in Russian Ballet. One such article is openly judgmental:

The piece was 'The Consecration of Spring,' and the stage represented humanity. On the right are strong young persons picking flowers, while a woman, 300 years old, dances frenziedly. On the left an old man studies the stars, while here and there sacrifices are made to the God of Light. The public could not swallow this. They promptly hissed the piece. A few days ago they might have applauded it. The Russians, who are not entirely acquainted with the manners and customs of the countries they visit, did not know that the French people protested readily enough when the last degree of stupidity was reached.<sup>65</sup>

Reports like this one flooded the American media after the premiere of the *Rite of Spring*, and began to alter American audiences' perceptions of Stravinsky's music.

Kosloff's ballet season was also overshadowed by rumors of the Ballet Russes' impending tour in the United States. Articles predicted dates for the tour, emphasized

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<sup>65</sup> "Parisians Hiss New Ballet," *The New York Times*, June 8, 1913.

the company's difficulty in gathering the financial resources to make the tour, and suggested what route the tour might take. These articles also downplayed the importance of previous Russian Ballet efforts in the United States. One such article explains,

Various glimpses of what the Imperial Russian Ballet can do, which New York has had through the visits of the various stars with small companies, fail to give the real idea of the effects produced by the company as a whole. It is not its bright particular stars so much as the ensemble.<sup>66</sup>

Russian ballet dancers with some association to Diaghilev, including Mikhail Mordkin and Anna Pavlova, had toured the United States as early as 1910. Initially, the dancers were presented as part of an American ballet company at the Metropolitan Opera, but eventually Russian dancers began to accept positions in Vaudeville acts and on Broadway. As Levy notes,

By 1917, Russian ballet was an integral component of the American theatrical scene and the average vaudeville-goer could take for granted a form that had its origins in the European courts. Average American audiences had been exposed to the conventions of ballet and the form had an accepted place in American popular performance.<sup>67</sup>

Ironically, the factors that made Russian ballet seem less exotic and less scandalous may have contributed to the lack of success of the Ballets Russes, while simultaneously normalizing Stravinsky's music. If Russian ballet could be a part of the "average" American's life and art experience, then perhaps Stravinsky's music could be, as well.

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<sup>66</sup> "Russian Ballet May Come," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1914.

<sup>67</sup> Levy, 3.

## The Reception of Stravinsky's Music during the Ballet Russes Tour of 1916

Before leaving for the United States, the Ballets Russes presented a benefit performance for the Red Cross at the Paris Opera House. This grand event was of great significance in the career of Igor Stravinsky, because it was the first time he conducted *Firebird* in a public performance. Diaghilev made the decision to present a trial performance for the Red Cross in Geneva, without all of the sets and props that would be available in Paris. Stravinsky was pleased with both performances.<sup>68</sup>

Stravinsky was asked by Diaghilev to accompany the ballet company on its tour. Diaghilev told Stravinsky that the New York Metropolitan Opera House wanted Stravinsky to participate, and that the American audience hoped to see Stravinsky conduct his own works.<sup>69</sup> Both Diaghilev and Stravinsky were afraid of sea travel, and in the end, Stravinsky elected to stay home because the Metropolitan Opera would not confirm that he would be able to conduct his own works.<sup>70</sup>

Even after Diaghilev had left, Stravinsky continued to pursue options to be a part of the American tour. Stravinsky was concerned for Diaghilev's safety, largely because of the war, and found himself dealing with "pecuniary difficulties."<sup>71</sup> Stravinsky even contacted Nijinsky and asked the star to refuse to perform unless the Opera House would hire Stravinsky to conduct his own works. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan did not invite Stravinsky; nevertheless, he was well aware of the tour's progress and stayed

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<sup>68</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Stravinsky: An Autobiography*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1956), 93.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 94.



in contact with Diaghilev throughout, ensuring Stravinsky's awareness of the reception his works were attracting in the United States throughout the Ballets Russes' time there.

In "Diaghilev Observed By Critics in England and the United States: 1911 – 1929," Nesta MacDonald chronicles the reception of the Ballets Russes. Although her collection of reviews primarily contains critiques of the dancing itself, many of the writings contain interesting revelations of critics' responses to the music. As she recounts, the Ballets Russes toured the United States in 1916, beginning in Boston on January 31, after a two-week engagement at the Century Theatre in New York City. After appearing in 16 cities in the United States, the Ballets Russes completed its tour with a three-week engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. The company performed fourteen ballets in this time, including *Petrushka*, *Firebird*, *Schéherézade*, *Cléopâtre*, *Les Sylphides*, and *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*. The ballet's orchestra was conducted by Ernest Ansermet throughout the tour.<sup>72</sup>

The Ballet Company itself was received positively, notably by the critic H.T. Parker. *Firebird* was the first ballet presented, and Parker approved that choice. Positive reviews by Parker were given for the ballets by other Russian composers that were performed with the notable exception of *Schéherézade*, which continued to cause some controversy because of its depiction of light-skinned slaves. Parker was quick to point out that the modified version performed in Boston was not as scandalous as the version previously presented in Paris. The ballet company's success in Boston was so great that its first matinee production was sold out – a first for the Opera House. Although the reviews were generally positive, some distinction was made between the

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<sup>72</sup> MacDonald, 136.

dancing and the acting, or pantomiming of certain dramatic elements. The critics generally preferred pure dancing.<sup>73</sup>

The critics for *The New York Times* who wrote on the performances in Boston largely focused on the dancing and other visual aspects of the ballets, but did occasionally comment on the music. One critic wrote positively about *Petrushka*,

The details of the music by which all this is expressed and illustrated are of infinite ingenuity and skill, and are richly amusing. The grotesque note is never lost, but the manner of its expression is ever changing. The music is charged to overflowing with illustrative and picturesque details. Stravinsky has learned some of them, doubtless, from Strauss; perhaps he has drawn largely from "Till Eulenspiegel" and other sources of supply, but he has contributed much of his own. His resources in laying on of orchestral color and descriptive effect are extravagantly employed.

The critic continues, noting that melody is not Stravinsky's most important element, although the critic notes an important use of melody in the representation of instruments depicted on stage. Continuing with an assertion of the difficulty of the music, the critic writes,

The performance of this extraordinary score will test any orchestra in the severest way; the test was remarkably well met last evening, so far as the general effect gave evidence. It needs a close observer to be certain of all the details. A solo pianoforte that is used as one of the orchestral instruments demands little less than a virtuoso to play some of the passages given it.<sup>74</sup>

After the performances in Boston, the Ballets Russes traveled to Albany, NY and to Detroit, MI, where they also received positive reviews. In Chicago, the next stop after Detroit, the company received its first negative response, when the *Chicago Daily*

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 151-152.

<sup>74</sup> "'Petrouchka' given by Russian Ballet: Igor Stravinsky's Extraordinary Work is Found Amusing and Exhilarating," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1916.

*Tribune* printed a picture purported to be a scene from *Schéherézade*, and advertised the ballet as “uncensored” by the police.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* also published a rather positive review of the dancing. Percy Hammond enthusiastically described the productions, comprising *Firebird*, *Carnaval*, and *Schéherézade* as “brim[ming] with color, music, form and motion,” and clearly articulated the supremacy of true ballet: “These conventional stories, pantomimed and danced, mean little in my life compared to dancing itself with an accompaniment of music and picture unhindered by the questionable art of the drama.”<sup>76</sup> Hammond’s review, like that of the other reviewers who preferred dance to pantomime, shows a slight preference for *Firebird* over *Petrushka*. Another review in the *Tribune* describes several works and praises Stravinsky:

The first ballet was *Firebird*, a pseudo-Maeterlinckian fairy tale in an enchanted forest of wonderful greens and with costumes of lovely pigment and texture, illustrated by the marvelous orchestral dissonances of Stravinsky... Then there was *Carnava*, accompanied by the genial music of Schumann. Finally there was a fragment from the sole and incomparable *Arabian Nights*... told in front of a miraculous Bakst background of sinister greens and the red of oriental degeneracy by comely odalisques, fat, grinning eunuchs, and stately wazirs in a voluptuous debauch of passion, vengeance and massacre. You may not have approved of it, but you were interested.<sup>77</sup>

Here, Stravinsky’s music is described as containing having “marvelous orchestral dissonances,” while Schumann is merely described as “genial,” and Rimsky-Korsakov is not recognized at all. . The negative aspects of the *Schéherazade* choreography have apparently overshadowed any interest in Rimsky-Korsakov’s music, while the

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<sup>75</sup> MacDonald, 153-4.

<sup>76</sup> Hammond, quoted by MacDonald, 156.

<sup>77</sup> MacDonald, 156.

excitement and color of *Firebird* appear to have paved way for Stravinsky's dissonant music to be described in a positive light.

The negative reviews of *Schéherazade*, and additional attacks on *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* could have contributed to decreased attendance for the second performance in Chicago. Another reviewer, Karleton Hackett, criticized the audience for talking through the "wonders being performed by the orchestra,"<sup>78</sup> and Charles Collins accused the Chicago audience of having "a certain mid-Western naivete" in wanting more dance and less pantomime. But Collins concluded, "The enchanted music of Stravinsky, the gorgeous color schemes of Bakst, the inspired choreography of Fokine and the orchestral art of Ansermet are too impressive to permit me to worry."<sup>79</sup> According to Nesta MacDonald, the reviews in Chicago became more and more negative. One critic explained that it was too much to ask an American audience not to be bewildered by the Russian ballet, because of cultural differences.<sup>80</sup>

The Ballets Russes left Chicago and made its way to Milwaukee. Here, the ballet – and Stravinsky's music in particular – received rave reviews again. MacDonald cites Victor Nilsson describing, "all shocks as coming from the orchestra," meaning the originality of Stravinsky's music, "which had been likened for its brisk rhythm and nonchalant exuberance to American ragtime, but there is not in the Washington mint a dollar so bright as this music."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>80</sup> "The Russian Ballet," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 16, 1916.

<sup>81</sup> MacDonald, 161.

According to MacDonald, in Kansas City, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, the Ballets Russes struggled with negative preconceptions of its ballets but eventually won its audiences over. A Cincinnati critic praised the Russian orchestra for its performance of *Firebird*, but described *Schéherazade* as, “a shock to our austerity. We have lived among our grays, our blues, our blacks and our whites so long that our eyes wince at the Russian chromatic riot which is offered.”<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, after the matinee a “a second hearing [of *Firebird*] served to open new beauties both to the eye and ear.”

Following the Midwest portion of the tour, the Ballets Russes spent time in Washington D.C. and in Philadelphia, where it was also generally well received. The ballet company began its season at the Metropolitan Opera House on 3 April 1916. Although there had been many highly enthusiastic reviews throughout its tour, the Ballets Russes was well known to be controversial. Performances were included in subscriptions purchased by Metropolitan Opera subscribers who had expected to attend operas. There were controversies surrounding the arrival of Nijinsky, who created a stir upon his arrival by refusing to dance unless he received a salary comparable to stars of the Metropolitan Opera. When Nijinsky finally agreed to perform, a few papers responded with positive reviews. Nijinsky’s dancing helped particularly to positively change the reviews of *Petrushka*, with some critics going so far as to suggest that the dancing helped to make Stravinsky’s music intelligible:

By little touches in stage management the story was made easier to follow. Among those that come to mind quickly were those concerned in the first dance of the three puppets, where the showman’s manipulation of them was more clearly suggested, and in the entrance of the bear. The prominence the music gives the latter incident was formerly somewhat

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 164.

obscured by the crowding of the stage. Yesterday the bear was visible to the audience as soon as he appeared, and the sudden ponderous voice of the orchestra music was thus immediately explained.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of previous controversies and the problems caused by Diaghilev's behavior, the Ballets Russes was well-received when Nijinsky danced. Unfortunately, he did not always dance, and his absence as well as the frequent changes in the programs led to more negative reviews as the group continued to perform in New York. In July, the company left to tour Spain. Under the direction of Nijinsky, the Ballets Russes returned to the United States to tour fifty-two cities between October 1916 and February 1917.<sup>84</sup>

Richard Aldrich published an article in the *New York Times* on 23 January 1916, which negatively critiques the music presented by the Ballets Russes during its tour. Aldrich's article is a harsh critique against the use of non-ballet music in ballet performances, but he writes enthusiastically about Stravinsky's and other composers' ballet scores while not describing the music in any detail. The Russian Ballet

is most fortunate in its possession of certain pieces of ballet music. Igor Stravinsky's "Oiseau de Feu" and "Petrouchka," which are in its New York repertory; his "Sacre de Printemps," Maurice Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloe," certain original ballets by Rimsky-Korakoff and Tschaikowsky, other compositions by Russians, especially, not all to be done in New York, are invaluable and in different degrees fascinating contributions to this new adaptation of the art of ballet as the Russians practice it.<sup>85</sup>

Aldrich also criticizes Diaghilev's Russian Ballet for not concentrating on its readily available national musical repertory of ballet music:

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<sup>83</sup> MacDonald, 173.

<sup>84</sup> MacDonald, 173 – 182.

<sup>85</sup> Aldrich, "Music of the Russian Ballet," *New York Times*, January 23, 1916.

Consequently the list must be enlarged by laying violent hands on other music and forcing it into subservience to their purposes. Those most greatly offended include Schumann for *Carnaval*, Debussy's "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," and Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherazade."<sup>86</sup>

An important argument in Aldrich's article is that the pantomimed drama of the Ballet is at odds with the original plots and the lyrical musicality of the classic compositions. On January 30, a letter to the editor thanks Aldrich for his reviews: "It is time that some one remonstrated against these shameless perversions and desecrations of musical masterpieces, and you have done it with just the right mingling of restraint and candor."<sup>87</sup> Although the sentiment is less clear in Aldrich's article, it appears that the controversial dancing was considered to be particularly offensive when performed with pieces already considered to be a part of the standard classical repertoire. Stravinsky's music, however, was created for the controversial dancing, and so the two justified each other, at least to some extent.

A second, unattributed article in the Times praises a performance of Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, which is described as colorful and exciting, with "boisterous action," "verve," and "brilliancy." The music itself is described as "amusing," with "grotesque note[s]" and "illustrative and picturesque details." Stravinsky's music is declared again to be reminiscent of Strauss, but is also described as original. The author of this article believes that "melody is a secondary matter with [Stravinsky]," and suggests the music was difficult for the orchestra to play. In conclusion, the author finds that

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<sup>86</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov's music is, of course, Russian, but Aldrich is opposed to its use by the Russian Ballet because it was not intended for dance by Rimsky-Korsakov.

<sup>87</sup> M. "The Music of the Russian Ballet," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, January 30, 1916

The piece, with all its exaggerated grotesquerie and burlesque features in the music – music that would be wholly unintelligible, useless, and tedious apart from each single detail of the accompanying action – evidently made a deep impression upon the public – an impression of amusement and exhilaration.<sup>88</sup>

The same angular choreographic gestures that were offensive when paired with classical composers are used to justify the odd musical gestures of Stravinsky's modernistic music. The very same modern dance gestures that caused many ballet critics and audience members to criticize the Ballets Russes throughout its tour are seen in a fresh, new light with Stravinsky's music. The most positive reviews of Stravinsky's works are the ones that view the bold, new dancing and music as coming together to create a bold, new art.

### **The Reception of Modernism in the United States and Britain in the Early Twentieth Century: Stravinsky and Schoenberg**

In the opening of his book *Twentieth-Century Music*, Elliott Antokoletz describes the advent of modernism:

No changes of musical style or technique have ever produced such a sense of historical discontinuity as those that gave rise to our own era. This condition may be traced directly to the radical change in the basic premises of the musical language itself, a revolutionary transformation stemming most prominently from the works of Ives, Scriabin, Debussy, Bartók, Stravinsky, and members of the Vienna Schoenberg circle.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> "Petrouchka Given by Russian Ballet," *New York Times*, January 25, 1916

<sup>89</sup> Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992), viii.



American audiences were understandably resistant to modernism when they first encountered it. Atonality and harsh dissonance, especially when combined with metrical ambiguity, continue to challenge modern listeners even today. If audiences today prefer the comparatively consonant sounds of Beethoven and Brahms to those of Schoenberg and Webern, and even Stravinsky, then it is hardly surprising that the audiences first exposed to modernism exhibited similar preferences.

Fortunately for Stravinsky, the premieres of his early ballets in the United States took place at a time when several factors contributed to a relatively positive reception of modernism, a development that paralleled increasingly positive responses to modernism in the UK. In an article outlining early critical receptions of modernist music in Britain, Deborah Heckert clearly demonstrates how the passage of a few years and the intervention of intellectual critics transformed an initially hostile response to Schoenberg into something more positive, at least in some quarters. Early responses to Schoenberg's music were highly critical, using very dramatic language. Heckert explains:

Some [critics] applied quasi-expressionist vocabulary in an attempt to describe the pieces: extreme emotion and psychological disease reflect the contemporary interest in the psyche, as in 'hypochondrial melancholia' and 'disordered fancies of delirium'. At times the critics allude to nature, the primitive and the child, a potent mixture emerging in new interests in anthropology and non-Western art.<sup>90</sup>

Between 1912 and 1914, similar articles appeared both in Britain and in the United States that explained how to listen to Schoenberg's works and encouraged

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<sup>90</sup> Deborah Heckert, "Schoenberg, Roger Fry and the Emergence of a Critical Language for the Reception of Musical Modernism in Britain, 1912 - 1914," *British music and modernism, 1895 - 1960*, (Burlington, VT: 2010), 52.

audiences to give him another chance. Audiences were offered guidance on how to appreciate and evaluate this challenging music; important new composers were named and categorized into schools by nationality and compositional style."<sup>91</sup> According to Heckert, these articles were so effective in Britain that in two short years, receptions of Schoenberg's music altered dramatically. Instead of criticizing the strange and fantastical sounds of the music, reviewers began praising Schoenberg's attention to form and detail.<sup>92</sup>

Stravinsky would eventually benefit from similar approaches to modernist elements in his music. He had the added benefit – an advantage for the most part over Schoenberg during this period -- that his music was composed to accompany dramatic plots, costumes, and choreography that justified the unusual and difficult style. Although some of Schoenberg's music also benefited from its association with visual arts, as Heckert illuminates, Stravinsky's works were presented with a visual aspect often enough to make the connections more obvious and immediate.

A scathing review of Schoenberg in the October 1912 *Musical Times* describes the first of his *Five Orchestral Pieces*: "The first piece suggested to me that the composer was endeavoring to illustrate the various sounds heard at feeding-time at the Zoological Gardens."<sup>93</sup> Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, as will be seen shortly, was described as a brilliant rendition of peasant sounds at a fair. The main difference, of course, is that *Petrushka* was intended to invoke these ideas, while Schoenberg's pieces did not. If Schoenberg's

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>93</sup> Heckert, 52, quotes *The Referee*, as quoted in "Occasional Notes," *Musical Times*, October 1912.

music had also had a visual component, perhaps his audience would have been able to rationalize dissonances that they were unable to rationalize without the support of some kind of narrative or programmatic element.

Stravinsky's music was certainly viewed as modernistic. *The Rite of Spring* was described in British newspapers as

“very much in the modern “movement” of [Paris]. His music is impressionistic in character, very advanced in its idiom, free and varied in its rhythm, and elaborately scored [with] new and subtle harmonies.”<sup>94</sup>

Of *Petrushka*, one reviewer wrote, “Stravinsky's music is modern, and throughout, thoroughly original. The orchestration is as fascinating as it is masterly. It is hopeless to try to describe how the composer imitates the noise and excitement of the fair [...] No better music could be imagined.”<sup>95</sup> Although Stravinsky's music was deemed modern and “entirely inaccessible to judgment by old or ordinary standards,”<sup>96</sup> it was also relatable because of its direct relationship to certain sounds.

[*Petrushka*] has the eternal something, the ‘incommunicable thrill of things’, which belongs to all great art... It is extraordinary with what subtle suggestion Stravinsky and Benois have given us almost the feeling of a world tragedy... [W]ith their own designs in colour, line and music, on a fair-scene, they have given us the setting of *all time* and all countries, and made us realize the immense amount of the ridiculous which can surround the sublime.<sup>97</sup>

Stravinsky received less negative criticism than Schoenberg for similar dissonances, because of the context in which they appear. It is the noise necessary for

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<sup>94</sup> L.R., “Music and Musicians: ‘L’Oiseau de Feu,” *Sunday Times*, (June 23, 1912), 6, as cited by Gareth Thomas, “Modernism, Diaghilev, and the Ballets Russes in London, 1911-1929,” *British music and modernism, 1895 – 1960*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 69.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas, 70.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

setting the stage for *Petrushka* that allows modernism to be justified and accepted by the audiences hearing it for the first time. Similar sonorities were in many cases rejected and criticized when they appeared in Schoenberg's music. There are, of course, marked differences in how the two composers used dissonance, musically as well as dramatically. Stravinsky's early style shared elements of modernism with that of Schoenberg, but it was Stravinsky's music that was more easily justified because of the plot and visual accompaniments of the ballets.

Aldrich, when evaluating Stravinsky's absolute music, heard Stravinsky's dissonances as the accidental result of image painting, rather than as the carefully considered harmonic process of Schoenberg. In his review of Stravinsky's 1914 *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, Aldrich compares Stravinsky and Schoenberg as "futuristic" composers. Aldrich justifies Schoenberg's modern style by explaining that Schoenberg has made a choice to compose in contradiction of past musical understanding. Aldrich believes that Schoenberg is a well-educated musician, who has chosen to reject the traditional harmonic system:

Schönberg is a "learned" musician, and his music is built up by processes derived from methods handed down to the present by the learned of the past, however widely the results may depart from those hitherto accepted... [The thematic material] is treated in a manner that Schönberg chooses to consider contrapuntal, though his "counterpoint" is not that of the books. There results what he chooses to consider "harmony," the outcome of a deliberate system.<sup>98</sup>

Aldrich sees Stravinsky, however, as a completely different sort of composer. He believes that Stravinsky has given little, if any, thought to his compositional process, and

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<sup>98</sup> Richard Aldrich, "Miss Hempel's Interpretation of Rosina – Rossini as Guide to Interpretation – Stravinsky and Schoenberg as 'Futurists,'" *New York Times*, December 5, 1915.

describes him as a purely “impressionistic” composer who, “When he wrote down the groans of the unhappy juggler in the opening of the third piece, for instance, he was probably thinking of groans, and not of harmony in any of its forms.”<sup>99</sup> Aldrich also asserts that although he believed that Stravinsky intended for the string quartet pieces to be performed as absolute music, the audience will only enjoy the music if a program is added.<sup>100</sup>

In conclusion, Aldrich suggests that Stravinsky’s absolute music could only be tolerated in short bursts, and notes that Stravinsky’s most important works have been ballets. The ballets justify the odd gestures in Stravinsky’s music, so Aldrich believes they will be more successful. As has been discussed in earlier sections, Aldrich believes that Stravinsky’s music “seems to be conditioned on an accompaniment of something else to explain it from beginning to end.”<sup>101</sup>

In contrast, the article appearing in *The Boston Transcript* in May of 1914 argues that Stravinsky’s music would be best performed as concert music without dance and its action and gestures. In response to the Paris premiere, the critic writes that *The Rite of Spring*

seemed at first hearing to be the most unmitigated conglomeration of deliberate ugliness that had ever been heard in a concert-hall. This effect was especially due to the dancing, which studiously avoided every sign of grace, gentleness, and ease. However, it was quite evident that Stravinsky had not written his ugliness out of lack of ability – the two delightful earlier ballets were witness to the fact. It seemed more than evident that a hearing of the music, without the disconcerting and quite shocking actions of the dancers on the stage, would reveal many musical beauties, and

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<sup>99</sup> Aldrich, “Miss Hempel’s...”

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, “Miss Hempel’s...”

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, “Miss Hempel’s...”

perhaps a sound though revolutionary musicianship that might permanently enrich art.

*The Boston Transcript* critic also quotes at length a French critic, Pierre Lalo, of *Le Temps*, in his analysis of *The Rite of Spring* after hearing it performed in a Paris concert, conducted by Pierre Monteaux:

“The music is neither ugly, nor barbarous, nor pretentious. One could have suspected as much last year, when at moments one succeeded in catching sounds of it by courageously abstracting one’s attention from the stage. It is hard to recognize this music today, when one hears it without pantomime and dance. It is not ugly.

Lalo adds that the dissonance and harshness contained in the music is surprising, but insists that listeners will grow accustomed to hearing the unusual sounds, and that they will soon be less jarring. Lalo clarifies that the audience member will continue to hear the dissonances, but will adapt and hear the sounds as part of an unusual, but acceptable harmony. He concludes,

in this harshness and in these audacities (and here is the essential point) there is nothing that comes from dull taste, or from vulgarity, nothing corrupted, common, dull or inept. There is in one word, nothing ugly. On the contrary, it reveals an innate sense of music, thanks to which all that Stravinsky writes is musical.<sup>102</sup>

Although this French perception of modernistic music accepted and encouraged others to accept all of Stravinsky’s music as absolute music was endorsed by *The Boston Transcript* critic, these ideas were not pervasive in the newspapers of New York. In later articles, Aldrich continued both to criticize and compliment Stravinsky largely on his success in illustrating visual elements in music, whether or not Stravinsky intended any such associations. In a November, 1920 review of the Flonzaley Quartet, whose program

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<sup>102</sup> Pierre Lalo, *Le Temps*, quoted in an unsigned article, “Music and Musicians: Shifting Stravinsky into the Concert Hall,” *The Boston Transcript*, May 1, 1914.

included both the Three Pieces and a new Stravinsky work, *Concertino*, written specially for them, Aldrich gives a harsh critique of Stravinsky's newest piece. He asserts that one of the main difficulties of being a famous string quartet is that if a composer Stravinsky composes a piece for the group, they are forced to perform the piece. He compares it negatively to their previous performance of Three Pieces:

The concertino lasts a good deal longer than a minute. It lacks, also, the pictorial suggestiveness of the three earlier pieces. It is not programmatic, but "pure music"; and Stravinsky, whose ballet of "Petrouchka" is one of the most fascinating products of the most modern school, has apparently little or nothing to sing when he is not illustrating in music something that goes on before his listeners' eyes; or when he undertakes "pure music."<sup>103</sup>

Aldrich describes the *Concertino* as a regression from *Petrouchka*, suggesting that Stravinsky is running out of new musical material and imagination. Aldrich criticizes Stravinsky for writing a one-movement work, for failing to create "combinations and contrasts of color," and reiterates the idea that Stravinsky seems to have nothing left to say. And he contends that the audience shared his opinion:

The Flonzaley players had evidently done their utmost for this unattractive godchild of theirs, and played it with zeal and devotion, and with more seriousness than the audience showed in listening. At the end there was applause, some if polite, and the players were several times called out. But when the applause seemed to become unduly persistent, whether from politeness or the enthusiasm of the most emancipated, there was not a little hissing, unusual in the tranquil atmosphere of chamber music.

This scathing assessment, with its sarcastic aside that the best feature of the 1914 string quartet movements was their brevity, is somewhat in contrast to a review that Aldrich had written earlier in the same year. There he cast the quartet movements in a more favorable light, comparing them to a set of Stravinsky's songs:

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<sup>103</sup> Richard Aldrich, "Music," *The New York Times*, November 24, 1920.

Four very short Russian songs, "Chansons Plaisantes," by Stravinsky, exemplified the fine flower of the composer's style. They are reminiscent of his three string quartets once played here, not only in their melodic and harmonic style, their attempts at pictorial representation, but also in their brevity. They were found pleasant or unpleasant in accordance with the listener's attitude toward that sort of thing. The scoring, for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bassoon and strings, gives the composer ample scope for instrumental pleasantries that sometimes escape the bounds of music.<sup>104</sup>

Aldrich himself seems to vacillate between finding Stravinsky's music pleasant and unpleasant, so one can only assume that his own attitude toward "that sort of thing," was rather malleable. What is clear, however, is that Aldrich prefers Stravinsky's music when it makes a clear attempt to convey pictures or dance gestures in accordance with some extra-musical plot or imagery; he has no use for Stravinsky's absolute music.

Echoes of this perspective on Stravinsky's music are still encountered today. Richard Taruskin describes some of Stravinsky's absolute music in terms of dance. In a discussion of the Symphony in E-flat, Taruskin remarks, "The Scherzo of the symphony, as in the [piano] sonata a piece of marked "balletic" quality, actually foreshadows some specific moments in Stravinsky's early dance scores."<sup>105</sup> Taruskin draws specific parallels between Stravinsky's symphony and the early ballets, particularly *L'oiseau de feu* and *Petrushka*. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that he sees the symphony as foreshadowing the ballets, rather than Stravinsky recycling music from the symphony in the ballets. Although it is unsurprising that a scherzo might convey a sense of dance, it is

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<sup>104</sup> Richard Aldrich, "The New York Symphony Society," *The New York Times*, February 13, 1920.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Taruskin, "Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: a Biography of the Works through Mavra, Volume I," (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 202.



perhaps surprising that musicologists continue to describe Stravinsky's absolute music in terms of balletic movement.

## Conclusions

Stravinsky himself was often less than satisfied with the reviews he received in the early twentieth century. In particular, because of responses to *The Rite of Spring*, he believed that his music was largely misunderstood, and felt that critics could not accurately explain what was going on in his music.<sup>106</sup> As a result, Stravinsky crafted his own explanations, and wrote an autobiography, at times re-writing his own reception history, and causing confusion for those researching reactions to his works. These revisions make it very difficult to understand what was going on in Stravinsky's mind and even cloud our understanding of the reception of his music.

Ballet music, which, as Stravinsky accurately explains in his autobiography, was not highly regarded in the early twentieth century, received a bit of a reprieve beginning in the 1920s. In France, *La revue musicale* began paying attention to dance, including the Ballets Russes and the Paris dance scene of that time.<sup>107</sup> As ballet music began to be taken more seriously and the initial shock of modern dance was beginning to wear off,

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<sup>106</sup> Valérie Dufour, "Stravinsky Stratège? Le compositeur face à l'exégèse de son œuvre en Europe (1926 – 34), *Music's Intellectual History*, (New York: Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale, 2009), 427.

<sup>107</sup> Marie-Noëlle Lavoie, "Dance in Henry Prunières's *La Revue Musicale* (1920 – 1940): Between the Early and the Modern," *Music's Intellectual History*, (New York: Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale, 2009), 769.

Stravinsky's music garnered more respect, and previous negative responses to it were muted.

As Nancy Goldner notes, Stravinsky experienced positive reception from his peers, other young composers of his day, such as Debussy, Ravel, and de Falla.<sup>108</sup> As their own compositions became more important, their opinions of Stravinsky carried more weight. Stravinsky himself contends,

The approbation, and even admiration, extended to me by the artistic and musical world in general, but more particularly by representatives of the younger generation, greatly strengthened me in regard to the plans which I had in mind for the future – I am thinking in particular of *Petrouchka*.<sup>109</sup>

Other musicologists have noted Stravinsky's profound influence on so many future composers; there is no need to go into demonstrations of this here. However, it is interesting to read that both Goldner and choreographer George Balanchine still felt Stravinsky's works were under-appreciated in the 1970s.<sup>110</sup>

It is a fallacy to believe that one can understand the aesthetic experiences of a past audience, or indeed of any other person. Critical reception can be documented, but more difficult to answer are questions dealing with issues of popularity, the differences between entertainment and art, and most elusive, why one piece of music is well-liked, when a similar one is not. These questions are not answered here; if anything, a study such as this raises more questions. The conclusions that may be drawn are subtle. The primary conclusion that I can make based on my research is that the visual aspects of dance affected the critical, and likely audience, reception of modernism both in

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<sup>108</sup> Nancy Goldner, *The Stravinsky Festival of the New York City Ballet*, (New York: The Eakins Press, 1973), 13-14.

<sup>109</sup> Stravinsky, 47.

<sup>110</sup> Goldner.

Stravinsky's program music and in his absolute music, that the dancing itself helped shape Stravinsky's compositional process, and that the performance of Stravinsky's ballet music in community theaters, small venues, and in Vaudeville in the United States made his music available to a slightly different audience than that which usually frequented the Met.

Much research has been done on the effects of visual images on music and vice versa.<sup>111</sup> It is clear that Western listeners are most accepting of dissonance when it furthers a plot or creates an atmosphere. It can be said, then, that Stravinsky had an advantage with the average American listener over composers who were not presented with visual components. In more recent times, Stravinsky's music has been featured in the Disney films, *Fantasia* and *Fantasia 2000*. Although it would be naïve to claim that Stravinsky owes all of his success to ballet and to Disney, it would be even more naïve to claim that these presentations did not contribute to his popularity.

And what is meant by popularity? This is another question that is difficult to answer. Perhaps we all have a sense of the difference between entertainment and art, between popular culture and academia; yet, the dividing lines are blurry. Having no wish to create a polemic about class and art in the United States, I will simply assert that Stravinsky is one of many composers who makes the dividing line difficult to see. And I am convinced that productions such as *Petrushka* at the Neighborhood Theatre and the

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<sup>111</sup> For example, see W. F. Thompson, Graham, P., & Russo, F. A. (2005). Seeing music performance: Visual influences on perception and experience. *Semiotica*, 156, 203-227, and Jordan Moore, "The Impact of Visual-Music Interaction on Music Perception: The Influence of Agreement and Disagreement," MA Thesis, Baylor University, 2010.

parody sketch created by Victor Herbert contributed to the possibility of Stravinsky's music being perceived as entertainment, as well as art.

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