

Experiencing Stravinsky: A Listener's Companion



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by Robin Maconie

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Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) was one of the most influential and important composers of the 20th century. His music is characterized by its rhythmic vitality, harmonic innovation, and exploration of new forms and textures. Stravinsky's works have had a profound impact on the development of modern music, and they continue to be performed and enjoyed by audiences around the world.

This listener's companion is designed to provide you with a deeper understanding and appreciation of Stravinsky's music. It includes information on his life and career, a discussion of his major works, and a guide to listening to his music. Whether you are a new listener or a seasoned aficionado, I hope that this companion will enhance your enjoyment of Stravinsky's extraordinary music.

Stravinsky's Life and Career

Igor Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum, Russia, on June 17, 1882. He began studying music at a young age, and he showed great talent as a composer and pianist. In 1902, he met the composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, who became his mentor and teacher. Stravinsky's early works were influenced by Rimsky-Korsakov's style, but he soon developed his own unique voice.

In 1910, Stravinsky's ballet *The Firebird* premiered in Paris, and it was a huge success. This was followed by two more ballets, *Petrushka* (1911) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), which further cemented Stravinsky's reputation as one of the most important composers of his time. Stravinsky's music was often controversial, and *The Rite of Spring* caused a riot at its premiere in Paris. However, Stravinsky's music continued to evolve and grow, and he remained one of the most influential composers of the 20th century.

In 1939, Stravinsky left Russia and settled in the United States. He continued to compose prolifically, and he produced a wide range of works, including operas, ballets, symphonies, concertos, and chamber music. Stravinsky died in New York City on April 6, 1971.

Stravinsky's Major Works

Stravinsky's output is vast and varied, and it includes some of the most important and influential works of the 20th century. Here is a brief overview of some of his major works:

- **The Firebird (1910):** A ballet based on a Russian folktale, *The Firebird* is one of Stravinsky's most popular and enduring works. The music is

colorful and evocative, and the ballet is full of dramatic and exciting moments.

- **Petrushka (1911)**: Another ballet, Petrushka is a tragicomic tale about a puppet who comes to life. The music is full of wit and character, and the ballet is a masterpiece of theatrical storytelling.
- **The Rite of Spring (1913)**: Perhaps Stravinsky's most famous work, The Rite of Spring is a ballet that depicts a pagan ritual sacrifice. The music is primitive and barbaric, and the ballet is a powerful and moving experience.
- **Symphony of Psalms (1930)**: A choral symphony, Symphony of Psalms is one of Stravinsky's most austere and spiritual works. The music is based on the Latin text of the Psalms, and it is a powerful and moving expression of faith.
- **Oedipus Rex (1927)**: An opera-oratorio, Oedipus Rex is based on the Greek myth of Oedipus. The music is dramatic and intense, and the opera is a powerful exploration of the human psyche.
- **Mavra (1922)**: A comic opera, Mavra is based on a story by Alexander Pushkin. The music is light and charming, and the opera is a delightful piece of musical theater.
- **Apollon Musagète (1928)**: A ballet, Apollon Musagète is a celebration of the Greek god Apollo. The music is elegant and refined, and the ballet is a beautiful and moving work of art.
- **Symphony in Three Movements (1945)**: A symphony in three movements, Symphony in Three Movements is one of Stravinsky's most popular orchestral works. The music is energetic and exciting, and the symphony is a powerful and moving experience.

- **Symphony in C (1940):** A symphony in four movements, Symphony in C is one of Stravinsky's most neoclassical works. The music is clear and concise, and the symphony is a beautiful and elegant work of art.
- **Violin Concerto (1931):** A concerto for violin and orchestra, Violin Concerto is one of Stravinsky's most popular and enduring works. The music is lyrical and expressive, and the concerto is a beautiful and moving work of art.
- **Ebony Concerto (1945):** A concerto for clarinet and orchestra, Ebony Concerto is one of Stravinsky's most popular and enduring works. The music is jazzy and exciting, and the concerto is a beautiful and moving work of art.
- **Canticum Sacrum (1955):** A choral work, Canticum Sacrum is one of Stravinsky's most spiritual works. The music is serene and contemplative, and the work is a beautiful and moving expression of faith.
- **Threni (1958):** A choral work, Threni is one of Stravinsky's most powerful and moving works. The music is based on the Latin text of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and it is a powerful and moving expression of grief and loss.

A Guide to Listening to Stravinsky's Music

Stravinsky's music is often complex and challenging, but it is also rewarding and beautiful. Here are a few tips for listening to Stravinsky's music:

- **Listen to the music multiple times.** Stravinsky's music is often complex and rewarding, and it takes multiple listenings to fully

appreciate its beauty and complexity.

- **Listen to the music in a variety of settings.** Stravinsky's music can be enjoyed in a variety of settings, including at home, in the concert hall, and on the radio.
- **Read about the music.** There is a wealth of information available about Stravinsky's music, including books, articles, and websites. Reading about the music can help you to understand its context and meaning.
- **Talk to other people about the music.** Talking to other people about Stravinsky's music can help you to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of it.

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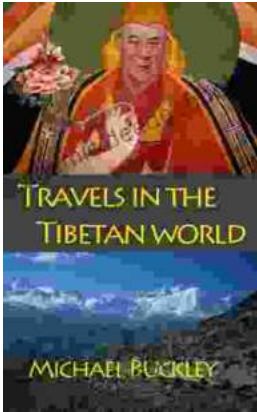
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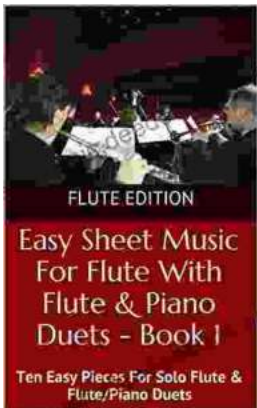
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