

IGOR STRAVINSKY AS COMPOSER FOR THE BALLET

What Americans May Expect When the Diaghilew Company Presents the Iconoclastic Russian's "Petrouchka" This Season—Psychological Significance and Profound Symbolism in Tale of a Puppet-Show—The Music Much More Than Merely Grotesque and Humorous—As Original as Anything Its Composer Has Published But More Readily Comprehensible Than Many Others of His Works—Piano Used in Orchestra with Remarkable Effect

By C. STANLEY WISE



Warslaw Nijinsky in the Ballet, "Petrouchka," by Stravinsky

Clarens, Switzerland, Nov. 15, 1915.



Thamar Karsavina, Leading Female Dancer in "Petrouchka" with Adolf Bolm



Mr. Stravinsky with His Wife and Family (all except the Baby)



Latest Portrait of Igor Stravinsky



Stravinsky on the shore of Lake Geneva

LIKE many other great men, Stravinsky is insignificant in appearance, and very simple in tastes and habits.

He eats and drinks sparingly, and is seldom really happy away from his wife and family. Although he takes little exercise, he sometimes goes for a bicycle ride, but usually does so only when he can thereby reach his destination sooner or more conveniently.

A true son of the wide plains of the East, he has a liking for broad spaces, and was never thoroughly comfortable in hotel or villa at Clarens-Montreux, where the mountains rise almost from the water's edge.

He feels himself much more at home in his Morges villa, since there his large garden extends nearly to the shore of the lake of Geneva, just where it is widest and where the views toward both of its extremities are unbroken.

He seems to care little for and seldom speaks of the grandeur of the mountains, among which he has spent a considerable portion of the last five or six years of his life, but when on a clear day Mont Blanc is visible from the terrace of his house, he always draws attention to the grace and beauty of outline of its snowy dome.

He possesses indeed an extremely keen appreciation of curves and symmetry of line, whether among the branches of trees or in portions of buildings, and colors, especially when vivid and yet harmonious in contrast, afford him great delight.

Rapid Rise Into Fame

Stravinsky's rise into fame has been singularly rapid, and that this is so is perhaps partly due to Mr. de Diaghilew's unerring instinct for choosing the right man, for the founder of the Russian Ballet company seems to have observed the signs of genius in Stravinsky at a time when they had not yet found outward expression to any great extent, and encouraged him to try his hand at an important ballet, the delightfully picturesque fairy tale, "L'Oiseau de Feu," being the result.

Stravinsky's racial instincts as well as

his early training and life at Petrograd made it possible for him to master at once the technique of the ballet as few composers of his years could have done, and his deep appreciation and comprehension of the subtleties and significance of line and plastic movement undoubtedly fitted him in a peculiar manner to act as the musical pioneer of the great artistic movement that had just begun. But it is nevertheless astounding that a work so novel in every respect as was his first ballet should have had such instant and abiding success.

For "The Fire-Bird" did break entirely new ground, however simple it may appear when compared with his later compositions. In harmony and in rhythm, as well as in the almost too scrupulous avoidance of all redundancy, we notice the true Stravinsky.

Story of "Petrouchka"

Stravinsky's originality finds yet more marked expression in his second ballet, "Petrouchka," which in some ways seems less difficult of comprehension at a first hearing. The music strikes a superficial listener as being less complicated, and since the piece is described by the composer as "Burlesque Scenes in Four Tableaux" the many hearers who do not care to trouble themselves with diving below the surface are content to accept ballet and music as wholly humorous, even though they may deem the humor to be ponderous rather than playful.

Keener critics, however (even on its first production), saw that beneath the rough fun of the Russian fair, and the quaint miming of the puppets, there lay a depth of psychological significance that endowed the work with qualities far other than can be discovered in any of the many tales of half-human dolls that had preceded it.

The story of Stravinsky's second ballet is now well and widely known: *Petrouchka* is one of three animated dolls on exhibition at a fair before the crowds of which he performs, under the hands of an old showman, together with his two companions, called simply "The Dancer" and "The Moor."

All three of these puppets have been partially endowed with human qualities by the magician-showman. *Petrouchka* in particular is deeply sensitive to his position in the hands of his rather brutal master, and proves himself to be capable of almost human refinement in his love for the *Dancer*. The latter prefers the coarse and dull but more gorgeous-looking *Moor*, but *Petrouchka* will not give up hope that he may win her at last, and so his rival murders him—cutting him down with his sabre in the midst of the merry-making crowd outside the booth.

The people are horrified at this tragedy, but the showman tranquilizes them by the simple expedient of showing them that the supposed corpse is only a doll stuffed with sawdust. As the crowd disperses, however, the showman is confronted in the failing light with the ghost of *Petrouchka* mocking and threatening him.

Profound Symbolism

This is a very different sort of plot from that of any former work the interest of which depends upon the doings of puppets or dolls, different not so much in the real tragedy of its contrasts between the fantastic love story of the marionettes and the boisterous gaiety of the people at a Russian fair, for in kind, though not in quality, we have often seen that before—in "Pagliacci" and elsewhere. It is the deep and suggestive symbolism that underlies the simple tale that differentiates it from all others of

its kind, and it is surely amazing that any critic should have been able to write of Stravinsky's music, after hearing it, as merely grotesque and humorous. Undoubtedly it is extremely grotesque in places, and it is also pervaded with quaint humor, not all of which is as apparent to the superficial observer as is that part of it that is characteristic of the bear-leader, or the musical duel of the rival hurdy-gurdies; but the score, even during its most boisterous or imitative moments, possesses an underlying seriousness and pathos that are really wonderful.

The orchestration is as remarkable and original as anything that the composer has thus far published, less incomprehensible than that of the "Sacre du Printemps" and perhaps more consistently equal than in the opera-ballet, "The Nightingale." The pianoforte is employed with marvelous effect, and it is fortunate that for the American performances so fine a pianist, with such an intimate knowledge of the score as Marcel Hansotta possesses, will be available. The part for that instrument is very difficult, and it is so laid out that a player insufficiently equipped for his work might easily spoil some of the most effective scenes.

The dances and scenes were arranged by Fokine, and are under rehearsal by Adolf Bolm, who adds to his other remarkable qualities that of a wonderful memory, which enables him to recall all the varied movements and groupings in the many ballets staged during former seasons.