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**The Effect of Stravinsky's Ballets on the Role of the
Conductor**

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November 2013

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

The Effect of Stravinsky's Ballets on the role of the Conductor

Summary

This thesis explores Stravinsky's effect on the role of the conductor, employing a combination of score analysis, performance analysis, aesthetics and historicism. Stravinsky is widely regarded as one of the most influential composers of the Twentieth Century, and this now 'mythic' influence is perceived by many to have transformed the conductor's work. I investigate how true this assumption is, and whether *The Rite of Spring* in particular is responsible for any developments. The compound methodology allows for the study of rhythm, structure, harmony, instrumentation, hermeneutics and staging. My seven case studies (*The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Les Noces*, *Apollo*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, and *Agon*) are all ballets, which also places spotlight on a commonly neglected genre in music. This allows for the consideration of choreography - an additional influencing factor that is bypassed in most musicological and conducting literature. Moreover, the study of Stravinsky's ballets, as they span the composer's entire career, can serve as a useful lens through which to view the composer's repertoire as a whole. Therefore the findings of the thesis can be indicative of Stravinsky's broader influence on the conductor. The conclusions drawn were that although it is impossible to refute Stravinsky's overall impact on the conductor's work (particularly in relation to his contemporaries), there are numerous overrated areas of impact. Furthermore, *The Rite of Spring* is not solely responsible for these changes. In fact, it overshadows the challenges present throughout Stravinsky's repertoire, which manifest themselves in the innovative choreography, instrumentation, rhythm and anti-interpretative devices.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Introduction

In the *Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Bowen 2003), Martyn Brabbins stated that with *The Rite of Spring*, ‘Stravinsky, single-handedly transformed the role and function of the conductor’ (262). This citation triggered my investigation into Stravinsky’s true effect on the conductor’s work, assessing not only the developments imposed by *The Rite of Spring*, but also those necessitated by other works in Stravinsky’s ballet repertoire.

According to Brabbins, *The Rite* catapulted the skill and technique required of conductors (and orchestral players) into a new realm of possibilities, meaning that later composers could explore orchestral technique far more widely. ‘Without *Le Sacre*, it is difficult to imagine the complex scores of Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio, Birtwistle, Carter, Takemitsu, Ferneyhough, or Dillon ever emerging’ (262). However, these sentiments differ from the overall trend in present day musicology – which has been more inclined towards dismantling Stravinsky’s mythic impact on twentieth-century music and building a more realistic historical picture.¹

Musicology can now offer many analytical approaches to Stravinsky’s music, whether it is the structuralist analysis of Pierre Boulez (1966) and Van den Toorn (1983), Taruskin’s historical deconstruction (1995b, 2003, 2005) or the more interdisciplinary choreo-musical analysis of Jordan (1993, 2000, 2007). However, it remains a challenge to find literature that views Stravinsky’s influence from the conductor’s perspective. Benjamin Grosbayne observed in 1940 that ‘orchestral conducting, of all branches in the realm of musical interpretation, calls for the most profundity, versatility and musicianship. It is puzzling, therefore, why so little has been done to list and to codify the literature about it’ (73). This is ironic, considering the amount of public interest the post attracts,² and the bridging

¹ The work of Taruskin is of particular relevance here (1995b, 2003, 2005), and his investigation of the musical influences will be critiqued from a conductor’s perspective.

² See Lebrecht, N. *The Maestro Myth; Great Conductors in Pursuit of Power* (1997) for a more sociological study of the conductor’s position in society.

position that conductors occupy between composer and performers. A great deal of musicological research, beyond what is found in conducting manuals, is potentially of great relevance and interest to the conductor. However, it is not assimilated and presented with the conductor in mind.

The Rite (the myth of which is reinforced by Brabbins' quotation in the opening paragraph) also overshadows other ballets, including those within Stravinsky's own repertoire.

Although this over-attention to *The Rite* is well documented in musicology in terms of musical content,³ these ideas are more rarely placed in their practical performance context. The other ballets by Stravinsky studied in this thesis (*The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *Les Noces*,⁴ *Apollo*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Agon*) frequently stretch the conductor in ways that *The Rite* does not. For example, *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, explore what I term 'balletic recitative' further; *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* is a more complex work aesthetically and choreographically; and *Agon* uses a complex combination of aesthetic misalliances, novel orchestration, rhythmic irregularity and choreographic counterpoint. However, their impact on the conductor is harder to quantify and requires a more sophisticated research approach in order to uncover the composer's effect on the conductor's work. Moreover, in musicological literature, ballets are seldom addressed as multidisciplinary works - they are instead treated as concert works divorced from their balletic concerns. Without this awareness a realistic understanding of Stravinsky's impact still eludes us.

In this thesis I set out to apply a musicological model that encompasses the many sides of the conductor's role in ballet. I shall use a selection of Stravinsky's ballets as a focus and in turn assess the effect of the composer's work on the conductor. This model could also be applied to the work of Debussy, Tchaikovsky and other ballet composers. Furthermore, it could be adapted to the study of opera conducting, symphonic conducting and so on. I hope that by incorporating score and performance analysis, together with historicism and hermeneutics, I will be successful in painting a more holistic picture of Stravinsky's impact

³ See in particular in Taruskin, R. 'Aristocratic Maximalism' *The Oxford History of Western Music* Volume 4 (2005:131-190).

⁴ Although not the case with the other ballets in the thesis, the French title is the most commonly used in the case of *Les Noces*, and will therefore be used throughout.

on the role of the conductor, and be able to highlight the works by Stravinsky that *The Rite* has overshadowed. Although I will not systematically compare Stravinsky's works to those of his contemporaries, there will be select points at which I will highlight works by other composers that Stravinsky's repertoire has sidelined. A practical grounding of the 'Stravinsky Myth' debate in relation to ballet conducting, and the ways in which the conductor has adapted to cope with these perceived changes, will not only enhance understanding of the conductor, but also of Stravinsky's ballets as interdisciplinary works.

The thesis is divided into three sections. The first introduces the methodology and outlines useful background information. The second studies a selection of ballets covering all three compositional phases of Stravinsky's music; the early 'Russian', the Neo-classical, and the later Serialist works. The final section is a concluding chapter and bibliography.

Methodology

Overview

A study of the conductor's work, and a composer's influence on this, demands a specific blend of current musicological discourses. This thesis is post-structuralist, in that it rejects analysis in any abstract, isolated sense, but it moves structuralism forward into practical insight, placing it in the realm of performance and directorial understanding. The conductor's education is broad, and literature exploring the role should acknowledge this. For that reason, the solution I suggest is a combination of score analysis, performance analysis, historical musicology, and aesthetics. This marriage of, at times, seemingly disparate corners of musicology, forms an approach with a more practical bias, and builds a more balanced picture than by simply using one discourse in isolation. As Bowen argues,

The study of music in performance is not simply another new, alternative approach; rather it offers a common ground where analysis, cultural studies, hermeneutics, and performance practice meet (2001:451).

The score, being central to the conductor's work, is a crucial research source. Berry (1989) argued the importance of analysis in relation to performance. 'A performers awareness of music's structure is a valuable, indeed requisite, basis for doing – and not doing – particular

things in realization of particular pieces' (7). Structural and rhythmic analysis is most consistently relevant to the conductor (although harmonic analysis is also critiqued at specific points). The score also highlights other issues of relevance such as orchestration, and stylistic contradictions, further justifying its consistent use throughout the thesis. Although score analysis rarely gives definitive answers in isolation (and is often considered out-dated in modern musicology) it remains the centre of the conductor's work. It enables him⁵ to evaluate any ambiguity of form and structure, giving a sense of direction through the music.

It is also essential to exploit the full range of primary sources now available to us. Footage of conductors is now a far more abundant resource, with increased availability of audio-visual resources such as concert recordings, ballet footage⁶ and rehearsals that all provide evidence of Stravinsky's effect on the conductor. Performance analysis, in this case, the observation of conducting technique,⁷ is crucial in adding a visual component in the study of a role dependent on visual communication. Another research method I have included under the heading of 'performance analysis' is conductor interviews. Interviews I have carried out have helped test the theories that score analysis has provided, as well as unearthing new ideas to investigate. Interviews (recorded and transcribed) with conductors by other authors, comments in biographies and autobiographies, and advice written in conducting manuals provide the perspectives of those with professional experience. Therefore they are used whenever available and relevant to broaden our understanding of the conductor's work.

The aesthetic of a work and its interpretation have a large influence on the conductor's role and its position in musical culture. Stravinsky's music and aesthetic preferences challenge the nature of the conductor's interaction with the orchestra and audience as well as his

⁵ For consistency I will refer to the conductor as male throughout. This is, of course, not to suggest that a woman could not be carrying out the work described, but as all of the conductors studied in the thesis are men, it was the most logical approach. The issue of gender discrimination is clearly still relevant in twenty-first century conducting. However, as this thesis is focussed on the conductor's work and role within musical performance, I will not be delving into these issues.

⁶ I suggest that if this model was applied to the field of opera conducting then a study of the prose could replace the study of the choreography. Similarly in concerto conducting one could place more detailed focus on the technical demands placed on the soloist.

⁷ i.e. Left and right hand technique, cueing, and choreographic considerations.

interaction with the musical score. Therefore, the application of hermeneutics also provides illuminating results, highlighting more localised areas of ambiguity within the music that have very practical implications on the conductor's work. Finally, the use of historicism helps us place Stravinsky's effect on the conductor in its historical context. By comparing the challenges of Stravinsky's music with that of his contemporaries and preceding composers, it is possible to take a more realistic view of the composer's supposedly 'radical' impact on the profession. This assists in highlighting any oversights that result from the more isolated analytical methods, and uncovers the challenges that other composers have placed on the conductor.

This marriage of musicological approaches enables us to approach the conductor in a more three dimensional way, reflecting the nature of the conductor's work rather than viewing the role from one, limiting standpoint. Although seemingly broad, very specific aspects of each discourse are utilised to ensure the research remains relevant to the conductor's work throughout. The combination of discourses also leaves less room for the oversight of important practical issues, ensuring that the research is equally accessible to musicologists and conductors. The methodology is a malleable one, which is informed by the musical works in question as well as vice versa. This echoes the sentiment of dance academic Jordan, who wrote of her own methodology,

The method has continued to develop, but developing it and applying it has always been a two-way process. In other words, while use of the method can be revealing about a work, application of it can also lead to its own refinement (Jordan 2000:xi).

Stylistic Periods

As Stravinsky's music was subjected to such transformation over his career, it serves as an ideal case study in the development of the conductor's role within the ballet genre. In this thesis I will work chronologically and refer to three phases in Stravinsky's ballet repertoire: the early 'Russian' works, the Neo-classical, and Serial. Of course there are transitory works (for example, *Les Noces*, which is often labelled 'Turanic') that exhibit characteristics of more than one era, and rudimentary categorisation can be problematic. However, it is effective in this instance as there are generally quite marked differences

between these periods in the demands the scores placed on the conductor (and the nature of the choreography they accompany). This helps us expose the over-rated *and* overlooked aspects of Stravinsky's impact. Moreover, Charles Joseph observed that the study of Stravinsky's ballets offered a microcosm of the composer's career as a whole. The findings of this thesis can therefore be indicative of Stravinsky's broader influence on the conductor.

From the *Firebird's* neonationalist mimicry of Rimsky, through the purifying neoclassical clarity of *Apollo*, to the serially constructed *Agon*, Igor Stravinsky's dance works serve as a barometer. Collectively, they track a fifty-two year period from beginning to end. To some extent these ballets provide a looking glass into Stravinsky's musical evolution in the same way as other comprehensive musical monuments such as Beethoven's quartets (Joseph 2011:247).

The Russian phase of Stravinsky's music, containing Stravinsky's most well known ballets (i.e. *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, and *Les Noces*), was an era in which the composer's rhythmic innovations and experimental orchestration developed the demands placed on the conductor. Therefore rhythmic analysis is crucial in this section, alongside historical criticism to ascertain exactly *how* Stravinsky's music was new for the conductor and if in fact his ballets were the first to be placing such demands. Analysis of conductor footage can also assist here in demonstrating how and if conductors are able to adhere to Stravinsky's exacting demands. Visual footage of the choreography is also observed to assess whether his expectations were realistic after extra-musical factors are considered. Similar historical comparisons can be made regarding Stravinsky's use of the orchestra as well as focus on specific instruments. I have also outlined how Fokine in particular had a great influence on the construction of Stravinsky's earliest scores, and thus their influence on the orchestra and their conductor.

The Neo-Classical ballets studied in the thesis were both choreographed by George Balanchine. When compared to the earlier ballets, Balanchine's work requires the conductor's increased consideration of the choreography. Performance analysis, in the form of conductor interviews and observation of ballet footage, enables us to assimilate the changes the choreographer made to the conductor's involvement with the ballet performance. However, in the case of *Apollo* and *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, the score itself also contains many fascinating aesthetic dichotomies that affect the conductor in a

practical sense. This is where hermeneutic analysis is illuminating, and will be combined with structural and rhythmic analysis in order to illustrate the challenges that selected passages presented to the conductor. Moreover, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* was choreographed to the composer's Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra. This highlights further issues raised in the adaptation of a concert work for the stage.⁸

In many respects, Stravinsky's final Serial ballet, *Agon*, combines the challenges of both the Russian and Neo-classical works. The composer re-introduces a complex and varied rhythmic language, combined with unorthodox instrumentation. Yet simultaneously Balanchine continues to move forward the conductor's involvement with, and awareness of the choreography. The aesthetic juxtapositions seen in Stravinsky's earlier neo-classical ballets are also revisited. Therefore in this case all four methodologies are crucial in evaluating the nature of multi-tasking involved, and to place *Agon* in its historical context in relation to the conductor's work.

Conducting Ballet – Choreographic Considerations

In fact, conducting for ballet is a highly specialised skill, and any good dancer will tell you how much difference a sympathetic conductor who watches the stage can make to the realisation of their interpretation. It is no good grimly grinding on at the tempo the conductor feels the composer wanted; the choreography and the needs of the individual dancer must play their part (Drummond 1997:57).

This thesis addresses a specialism within the field of conducting that warrants its own introduction. It is rare, in musicology, for ballets to be addressed as interdisciplinary works, so it is therefore unsurprising that ballet conducting is a topic seldom acknowledged. Even conducting literature itself holds very few references to choreography, with the discussion of Stravinsky's irregular rhythms presented without reference to any additional choreographic demands.⁹ *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Bowen 2003) never

⁸ Balanchine set choreography to the piece twice. Once, in 1941 (ten years after the concerto was written) and secondly, in 1972 after Stravinsky's death. The 1941 ballet was entitled *Balustrade*, and the later *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, in honour of his memory. The later choreography will be used here, as *Balustrade*'s choreography is now lost.

⁹ Examples include 'Techniques of Rhythm' in Grosbayne, B. *Techniques of Modern Orchestral Conducting* (1973:104-138), Rudolf, M. *The Grammar of Conducting* (1950:255-265), and Green, E.A.H. *The Modern*

once refers to ballet conducting or the consideration of choreography, even though its close relative, opera, has its own chapter. The only acknowledgement I have discovered in both conducting and musicological literature is in Prausnitz's *Score and Podium* (1983:490-1). Prausnitz acknowledges the skills required and notes the need for 'the ability to recall a very narrow range of tempos suitable for a particular section of the choreography... (... one of the reasons why the discipline of working for ballet is excellent training for young conductors)' (490). This apparent neglect of the specialism is possibly a reflection of the more traditional perception that ballet music possessed less artistic merit than opera (ballet originally being an offshoot of the genre), which is also restricted by the demands of the choreography.

The early twentieth century saw a continuation of this rising profile of ballet music, and it was Diaghilev in particular who instigated the collaboration of eminent choreographers, musicians and artists. The Ballet Russes, boasting influential names such as Nijinsky, Fokine, Chanel and Picasso, was a fortuitous springboard for Stravinsky as a young composer. In later years, he also forged a long and productive collaborate relationship with fellow Russian George Balanchine, a choreographer of towering reputation in twentieth-century dance. Stravinsky therefore acquired a comprehensive understanding of the craft of ballet composition, and the increased level of choreo-musical interdependence (particularly in his later ballets) stretched the conductor in ways that many of the Romantic ballets did not.¹⁰ However, Stravinsky's own (published) thoughts and views on conducting (1972:223-233) make no reference to this influence of choreography on the conductor's work. The composer was mostly concerned in communicating his disdain for the plethora of dogmatic maestros circulating at the time, rather than acknowledging the conductor's choreographic considerations.

As previously acknowledged, the discipline of conducting opera usually overshadows that of ballet. However, there are parallels that can be drawn between the two conducting

Conductor (1969:110-111). All examples deal with the rhythmic complexities without placing them in their theatrical context.

¹⁰ One should be mindful, however, that there are relatively few Stravinsky-Balanchine ballets that were co-created from the outset. These were *Jeu de Cartes* (choreography now lost), *Orpheus*, *Agon*, *The Flood* and *Ballet of the Elephants*.

disciplines that assist our understanding of the dynamic between conductor, musicians and performers on stage. One might assume that the conducting of symphonic works, with the conductor in full view on the podium, would prove more demanding than opera where he is hidden in the orchestra pit with the singers taking centre stage. However conductor Charles Mackerras explained otherwise. ‘The actual training of an opera conductor is, in a way, much more stringent than that of a symphony conductor’ (2003:65). This is particularly true in comparison with the Classical Symphonies of composers such as Mozart or Beethoven – as these were written before the evolution of the conductor into a role taken by a separate musician, leading from the podium rather than with the violin or from the keyboard.¹¹

A good orchestra, fully trained, will be able to play most symphonic works of the classical period without any conductor at all...However, an opera cannot even *begin* to be performed without a proper conductor directing the whole proceedings (Mackerras 2003:65).

The conductor in opera must relay information from the stage to the orchestra pit and vice versa, and be sensitive to the moments in which he must take charge and those where he must relinquish control. ‘One moment you are giving a strict beat and making all these soloists, with their different personalities, follow you. The next minute you are following them, sensitive to when they need to take a breath’ (Mackerras 2003:66). This flexibility and complexity is equally relevant in ballet conducting, especially seeing as the lead dancers can often be rotated more regularly than in opera. Paul Murphy,¹² Principal Conductor of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, believes that dancers usually prefer to be led by the orchestra more than singers, as long as a comfortable tempo is maintained. In many respects, this means that the constraints ballet places on the conductor align more closely with Stravinsky’s preferences for metronomic ‘execution’. In fact, Balanchine believed that it was still possible to create an *impression* of flexibility without disrupting a strict musical delivery. ‘A good instrumentalist, or a resourceful dancer, can give the feeling of rubato in Stravinsky’s music without blurring the beat’ (Stravinsky & Craft 1960:37). In this way the

¹¹ More often, when a ‘star’ conductor is associated with these symphonies it is to give a performance or recording more credibility, making it commercially more viable.

¹² Interviewed 30th June 2009.

ballet genre was perhaps more suited to Stravinsky's aesthetic preferences than opera, which the composer termed the 'field of the elastic beat' (Stravinsky 1972:226).¹³

Conducting for ballet is a job that many cannot abide, and it did not suit Solti. 'I was terribly upset ... when I discovered that I would have to push and pull the tempi about in a most unmusical way in order to accommodate the dancers' movements' (1997:38). Performance tempo, the most frequently contentious issue in ballet performance, is viewed quite differently from the dancer's perspective, and these differences need to be acknowledged by the conductor. Dance critic Edwin Denby found the musician's common request for a performance more faithful to the score too pedantic, and suggested that one should be aware of how uninspiring a 'metronomic' performance can be.

Many musicians are bothered by noticing that dancers 'can't keep time'. I often notice how dancers who are keeping time become dull and unrhythmic. Keeping time at all costs destroys the instinctive variability of emphasis; it destroys the sense of breathing in dancing, the buoyancy and the rhythmic shape of a dance phrase (Denby 1939:62).

With choreography to consider, the conductor must often adopt a more subservient role in order to ensure a successful, and more cohesive performance.¹⁴ Many practical factors can affect the performance tempo in ballet. For instance the larger the stage, the larger the dancers' steps become, thus slowing the music down. The type of floor also has an effect: a harder floor may result in the dancers taking smaller jumps to avoid injury, thus demanding a faster tempo. The nature of the choreography often requires flexibility on the conductor's part: moves such as lifts, splits and back bends often need space (i.e. rubato or tempo adjustment) as the time taken for these will vary between performers. This is particularly relevant in pas de deux where the choreography is usually more challenging and often

¹³ It is beneficial to note that the reliability of Robert Craft's work and recollections has been questioned a great deal in recent years. Walsh is among those to suggest that Craft has frequently distorted the truth and there has been animosity between the two men. See for example Christensen, R. 'The Arts Column: in glorious discord over Stravinsky' *The Telegraph* 26th March 2008. Found at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/3672097/The-Arts-Column-in-glorious-discord-over-Stravinsky.html> (accessed 5th April 2014).

¹⁴ However, it should be noted that some choreographers are more inclined to believe that musical interpretation should not be altered to suit dance, especially if they are trained musicians themselves.

created to complement the unique strengths of the dancers.¹⁵ The speed of jumps in particular can be dependent on the height of the dancer, as well as how high they are able to jump. All of these factors complicate the conductor's relationship with the score, and must therefore be considered in the study of the performance of Stravinsky's ballet music.

What is also crucial to the success of the choreo-musical synchronisation is that the conductor often takes his cues from the dancers, not vice versa. Interesting examples can be seen in Stravinsky's *Agon*, a ballet with a very high level of choreo-musical interdependency. At the start of the Saraband-Step, the male soloist jumps straight upward and kicks his right leg out to the front. Here the conductor has to work closely with the soloist. The dancer's jump itself is usually cued, but mid jump the conductor also gives the musicians an upbeat so the dancer's landing and orchestra are synchronised for the first beat of bar 1. This type of cue is also seen in Act 3 of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, where a cue is taken mid jump at the start of the 'Bluebird's Variation'. Similarly, in *Spectre de la Rose*, the male lead jumps from offstage and the conductor must ensure that his landing coincides with the start of the music. Balanchine and Stravinsky are therefore posing a similar challenge but advancing the demand by combining it with a more complex, contemporary score. Another example can be seen in *Agon*'s Pas de Deux. At bar 451, the cellos play a glissando sliding down from the A harmonic above middle C, punctuated by the double basses playing the pizzicato G# in the following crotchet beat. This musical gesture is not led by the conductor, but rather the female dancer. After she steps over her partner, lying on the floor, he stands up. She then steps to the left and lets her left arm rise into second position (the arm stretched out to the side). At the start of this arm movement, the cello glissando begins. The conductor is therefore the agent, rather than the leader in this instance. He must take this cue from the dancer so that she and the cellist are synchronised.

The relationship between solo dancer and conductor is an intricate one. Without the need to consider other dancers, the conductor is the soloist's main collaborator in his/her performance. It is common for solo passages to require more of the conductor's attention,

¹⁵ This is seen in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. Balanchine developed the 1972 choreography around the strengths of the original soloists Karin von Aroldingen, Kay Mazzo, Jean-Pierre Bonnefous and Peter Martins.

because it is for these (as well as pas de deux) that the choreographer will often reserve the most challenging choreography.¹⁶ This is where the dancer is at greater liberty to exhibit his/her strengths, and where the conductor can build a more intimate relationship with the choreography. Barry Wordsworth enjoyed a reciprocal relationship with dancer Brenda Last.

She didn't always dance bang on every note... she would linger and then catch me up. We used to play terrific games with one another, because after a time we got to trust each other. In the middle of a performance she would suddenly rush for four bars and then wait for me, or I would do the same back to her (cited Jordan 2000:96).

However, Lydia Sokolova, the 'Chosen Virgin' in Massine's *Rite* (and praised highly by Stravinsky (1990:92)), preferred a more inelastic relationship. Unlike Stravinsky, she felt that the composer and conductor needed to relinquish their own ideas of how the score should be performed.

Composers don't make good conductors, for dancing. I don't think they make good conductors even for opera, because they understand their music as they want it understood. Where dancers are concerned, there's no flexibility. You have got to stick to your routine, you can't give way one way or another. For instance, Ansermet and Eugene Goossens were the two conductors that I had no fear of whatsoever in *Le Sacre du Printemps*. I knew that they knew that I understood what they were doing, and once they had given me the upbeat and they would know my rhythms, they would keep their orchestra to their rhythm and we would meet on the two beats of the music twice during the whole of the dance and I never missed it. I relied entirely on those conductors (cited Drummond 1997:159).

Although in line with Stravinsky's own preference for an anti-interpretative, metronomic delivery of his music, Sokolova's sentiments stem from a more practical need for unity between theatrical elements. And in order to truly cater for the needs of the dancers, the conductor must have a more comprehensive and 'physical' understanding of rhythm, time and tempo. Ernest Ansermet, interviewed by Drummond, was asked why he thought he was a popular conductor with the dancers with whom he worked. He suggested that it was his strong sense of physical rhythm that they appreciated.

¹⁶ This is particularly relevant in *The Rite of Spring*'s 'Sacrificial Dance' and *Agon*.

It is perhaps for one quality that I have from birth, that is my musical feeling of time as cadential time, not metric time. Of course the cadence is divided by metre, in three or two, and so on, but the cadence is a unity, and it is because musical time is cadential time, that it is the time of movement. Not of the steps but the dynamic, that is the difference... [talking of young interpreters] ... they consider that musical time is metric. They are metrically absolutely exact, but there is no impression of movement of dynamic and this cadential feeling I developed immensely in conducting the Russian Ballet (Ansermet cited Drummond 1997:217).¹⁷

This idea of 'cadential' time also contradicts Stravinsky's notion of the opposing concepts of chronological and psychological time (Stravinsky 1960:30-31).¹⁸ 'If you take the value of one beat, you can vary it very easily, but not the cadence, as the cadence is the movement' (Drummond 1997:218). Therefore, the rigidity that Lydia Sokolova had appreciated in Ansermet's conducting was not Stravinsky's ideal of metronomic accuracy, but of a strict *physical* time. This is an illuminating concept when applied to Fink's analysis of tempo variations in a collection of *Rite of Spring* recordings (1999:356). With the 'Sacrificial Dance' elected as the case study, Fink's analysis showed that both ballet conductors Ansermet and Goossens (the conductors for whom Lydia Sokolova expressed her respect) were among the best at retaining and returning to the requested metre (quaver=126) in the dance's refrain. Their ability to 'bounce back' to the original tempo could suggest some kind of 'physical' perception or memory of the musical pulse.

The various perceptions of time are a subject that appears frequently in dance literature, under a variety of labels. Isadora Duncan spoke of 'terrestrial and human rhythm' in the music of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner and expressed the desire to return to 'the natural cadences of human movements' that she felt had been lost (cited Jordan 2000:17). Jordan refers to 'breath rhythm', particularly in relation to *Agon*'s Pas de Deux. This is 'the kind of rhythm which avoids or plays against a motoric beat' (2000:78). These complicate Stravinsky's more rudimentary notions of time in music, and highlight how the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of theatre works complicate the conductor's work. The result is the development of a unique specialism that is rarely addressed as being

¹⁷ Ansermet also spoke of needing to memorise the choreography well enough to anticipate the dancer's movements. He referred in particular to the point in *Spectre de la Rose* where Nijinsky would jump from offstage and he would have to anticipate his entry well enough to synchronise his landing with the first beat of the music (cited Drummond 1997:217-18).

¹⁸ There are, of course, numerous concepts of time in music. See Kramer *The Time of Music* (1988).

so – the additional factor of the choreography must be considered alongside parameters such as rhythm, harmony, structure, aesthetic etc. The more comprehensive discussion of the compound methodology that now follows illustrates how it is possible to acknowledge this multi-faceted work and thus create a more rounded study of the subject.

Chapter 2. Methodology

1. HISTORICAL MUSICOLOGY

Musicological Literature, Biographies and Correspondence

In order to consistently place research findings in their historical context from the outset, it is necessary to initially review and glean information from a variety of sources. It was beneficial, at first, to address the information presented in biographies and other musicological texts. The Stravinsky literature often presented quite fundamental information surrounding each work, and it is useful to compare what is accepted as ‘fact’ across multiple sources. For example, it is evident from reading multiple texts about *The Rite of Spring* that the ballet had a most memorable premiere; however, the magnitude of the ‘riot’ varies greatly between sources and recollections. The date, conductor and location of *Les Noces*’ premiere are without question, but the nature of the exact staging is still unknown.¹⁹ A review of the historical literature, although not always directly relevant to the conductor’s work, helps to establish the general perception of the work and pinpoint particular truths or untruths about Stravinsky’s music.

It is unwise, however, to delve solely into the large and authoritative body of Stravinsky literature. Conductor’s biographies are equally insightful, with experiences and opinions written from a performance perspective. Although varying in musical depth (often in greater detail if an autobiography), and unlikely to include musical examples, they immediately convey a general sentiment about a work that can inform research into the often more detached score analysis and aesthetic issues. For example, Sir Thomas Beecham was openly scornful of *Apollo*.

¹⁹ See Walsh (2002:634) for an overview of the various contradictory recollections of the staging for *Les Noces*’ premiere.

‘The later stuff’ he [Thomas Beecham] said, ‘no longer bears Stravinsky’s image. He has lost his image and cannot find it. You may search among the later works in vain... When you hear recent Stravinsky it is hard to know what you are hearing. Some years ago I gave his *Apollo* music at Leeds. Poh!’ – here he shrugged and waved a hand resignedly. ‘There was nothing in the music, nothing’ (Beecham cited Reid 1961:194-5).

Beecham’s sentiments immediately communicate a reaction against the huge change of direction in Stravinsky’s music. The pre-occupation with Stravinsky’s ‘image’ implies that he felt uneasy with the work’s aesthetic, rather than the difficulty of the musical material. This is reflected in the score analysis findings of both neo-classical ballets studied (*Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Apollo*) - in comparison to *The Rite* they are musically more straight forward, but stylistically and aesthetically complex. Many of the Stravinsky biographies also delve into analysis, which can be studied and reserved for more rigorous critique from a performance angle. *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (2003) is an example of a book that combines various musicological approaches, and provides leads for the researcher to follow. *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (2003) also proved useful in gaining a more rounded view of the profession. This then assists in placing the more detailed research in a historical perspective, essential to reliably question Stravinsky’s true effect on the role of the conductor.

Taruskin’s more pragmatic approach in assessing the composer’s influences and impact can be applied to the conductor’s work. For example, Taruskin demonstrated, using historicism and score analysis, that *The Rite*’s ‘revolutionary’ irregular rhythms were already evident in Russian folk music (2005:183) - Stravinsky was merely transferring this concept to his orchestral writing. For example, the ‘Sacrificial Dance’ is famed for being comprised of rhythmic ‘cells’,²⁰ some remaining unchanged on each appearance, with others more malleable in length and regularity. The resulting score is one with constant time signature changes, using minute subdivisions (3/16, 5/16 etc.). However, Taruskin strips Stravinsky of this ‘originality’ by uncovering a folk song from Rimsky-Korsakov’s anthology, entitled ‘The Bells are ringing in Yevlashev Village’ (Fig. 1). The time signature, in many sections, alters in every bar (2005:183), thus exposing the Russian folk inspiration behind

²⁰ Also discussed at length by Boulez (1991:55-110).

Stravinsky's supposed 'radical' innovation. This demonstration is compelling, yet the same methodology applied to the role of the conductor produces a different outcome. For him, the extent to which Stravinsky employs these complex, irregular 'Russian' rhythms *was* unprecedented, and it demanded a new approach to aspects of conducting technique. Stravinsky's 'mythic' influence therefore becomes more complex when applied to individual 'cogs' in the machine.

Fig. 1 *Zvon kolokol v yevlasheve sele* (Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *100 Folk Songs* [1877], no 72) – (cited Taruskin 2005:183)



In certain aspects, my approach echoes that taken by Cross in *The Stravinsky Legacy* (1998). The author separates the parameters in Stravinsky's music and demonstrates how Stravinsky's ideas are adopted and developed by his successors. For example, Cross discusses *The Rite*'s rhythmic language (94-104) and demonstrates its influence with examples of music by Carter, Varese, Ligeti, Messiaen and Birtwistle. Rather than deconstructing Stravinsky's music in search of his influences, Cross reverses Taruskin's stance: he is highlighting the ways in which Stravinsky's legacy is felt in later music. This could, of course, be seen to be compounding his 'mythic' modernist legacy, but is nonetheless looking out into the wider field and aiming to contextualise Stravinsky's repertoire. Rather than analyse the composer's impact on others sharing his profession, my focus on the conductor will echo Cross's sentiments at certain points: the composer's radical effect on conducting is at times very difficult to dispute. However, I aim to balance these claims with admission of Stravinsky's overinflated impact, which is particularly relevant in relation to *The Rite of Spring*.

Fortunately much of Stravinsky's correspondence with conductors (and his opinions of them) is published and easily accessible. The *Selected Correspondence* books (1968) contain letters to Ernest Ansermet and Pierre Monteux that contain (albeit limited) discussions about specific issues in scores, rehearsals and productions. There are instances when Stravinsky's comments are valuable. For example, Stravinsky wrote to Ansermet 'I don't know what to do with *Les Noces*. It is absolutely ridiculous to put on this *divertissement* (for it is *not* a ballet)' (Stravinsky 1982:144). This shows that for the composer *Les Noces* exhibits a substantial aesthetic development, and that from conception it had a questionable identity. This gives us some insight into the pressures Stravinsky placed on the conductors of this piece. However, as much of the detail in this type of literature is brief and more of a personal nature, it is (on the whole) more illuminating of Stravinsky's relationship with the conductors themselves and their individual careers rather than of their relationship to his music. This thesis is not aiming to observe the conductors in relation to Stravinsky, but the relationship of Stravinsky to the conductor's *work*.

Conductors and the Stravinsky Myth

Amongst conductors, Stravinsky's mythic impact remains to be challenged to the same level as that seen in musicology. This means that studying the views of conductors in isolation could give an overly subjective slant that lacked academic rigour. This is especially so in relation to *The Rite of Spring*. For example, Michael Tilson-Thomas (Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra) in his American documentary series *Keeping Score* (2006) includes *The Rite of Spring* as one of the pivotal moments in musical history. (It features alongside documentaries dedicated to Beethoven's *Eroica*, Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphony, and Copland and the American Sound). Tilson-Thomas makes his sentiments explicit from his opening commentary.

These are some of the most revolutionary notes in the whole history of music: the climax of the 'Sacrificial Dance' from *The Rite of Spring*. Igor Stravinsky wrote *The Rite of Spring* in 1913. It redefined what music could be, much as Beethoven's *Eroica* had done a century before (2006).

Pierre Boulez, although openly scornful towards Stravinsky's neo-classicism,²¹ is uncharacteristically enthusiastic in his analysis of *The Rite* (1966:55-110). According to Boulez many parts of the score are 'exceptional' (64), 'remarkable' (84) and the ballet's 'Introduction' is an 'architectural phenomenon' (103). Although he acknowledges that *The Rite*'s pioneering ideas are primarily rhythmic (as opposed to harmonic), he equates their importance to the twelve-tone system emerging in Vienna at the same point in history.

These horizontal and vertical coagulations, being easily manageable as material, permit a much sharper experiment in rhythm: the opposite moreover, of what happened in Vienna, where technique was undergoing a radical transformation within a scarcely more than traditional rhythmic organisation (1991:57).

Although intellectually rigorous, and open in acknowledging *The Rite*'s mixed reception, there is little sign of the more Taruskinian investigation into Stravinsky's true influences and/or possible misconceptions. Taruskin's approach - highlighting how 'the myth of *The Rite* is at once a myth of iconoclasm and a myth of virgin birth; a myth of disruption and a myth of advancement; a myth of artistic synergy and a myth of musical autonomy' (1995b:5) - is perhaps more closely reflected in Leonard Bernstein's final Charles Eliot Norton lecture (1976), in which he is more reserved about elevating Stravinsky's 'revolutionary' status. Bernstein devoted most of this lecture to Stravinsky's music, and as a staunch advocate of the composer, effervesces his way through an analysis of sections of *The Rite*. He claimed it holds 'the best dissonances anyone ever thought up, and the best asymmetries and polytonalities and polyrhythms and whatever else you care to name' (1976:357). However, this vim is also accompanied by an intellectual objectivity to the composer's music.

This *Rite of Spring* is a tonal piece, an old fashioned tonal piece. People forget that too easily, in their zeal to acclaim it as revolutionary, the turning point, as crucial as

²¹ Boulez openly attacked Stravinsky's move into neo-classicism, seeing it as the anti-thesis of Serialism (the language of preference for much of Boulez's own music). 'He saw the then neo-classic Stravinsky, a product of the Franco-Russian milieu, as his arch enemy, in his quest for a language derived from Schoenberg' (Peyser 1977:33). Leonard Bernstein had more of an issue with Serialism; it was fighting the undeniable 'innateness' of tonality. But as for Stravinsky's approach to tonality, it was something that could 'breathe life into what looked like a moribund situation. Adorno would say: a-ha, artificial respiration. Merely a temporary expedient. So what? What's so bad about a 'temporary' rescue operation that lasted a good half a century?' (Bernstein 1976:331).

Schoenberg's twelve-tone system. But it's not; it's only one of your everyday volcanic masterpieces (1976:357).

Conductors that worked alongside Stravinsky more commonly displayed more mixed sentiments towards his music. For example, Ernest Ansermet, in interview, was happy to address the fact that because of Stravinsky's ballets 'it was necessary to invent, for this kind of new rhythm, a new conducting technique' (quoted Drummond 1997:215). However, he was also keen to express disapproval when Stravinsky's rhythmic ideas or notation were unnecessarily complex. Speaking of the polyrhythms in *Agon*'s Bransle Gay (where fluctuating metres are superimposed over a 3/8 castanet rhythm),

The simultaneous employment of two cadential structures in this number is due to deliberate calculation on Stravinsky's part, whereas the faculty of auditory perception is divorced from calculation... here we touch on the defeat of "intellectual" activity, which consists in manufacturing structures that are *unnecessary* add nothing to the musical substance of the work (Ansermet cited White 1979:495).²²

Throughout the thesis, the sentiments and observations of conductors (found in literature as well as interviews) will be combined with score and performance analysis in order to evaluate them more reliably. They provide invaluable evidence, being derived from practical experience rather than more detached academic analysis. However, they cannot be used in isolation, as their answers to research questions are usually subjective, and can greatly contradict one another. As seen above, they can also adopt the more generalised 'mythic' perception of Stravinsky's music that lacks academic rigour. Therefore the observations and opinions of conductors enhance the research most effectively when combined with other research methods.

Comparison with other Composers

As stated in the Introduction, I will not systemically compare Stravinsky's work with that of his contemporaries and predecessors, as this would be too ambitious for this size of

²² Ansermet also made explicit his disapproval of the composer's shift to serialism. He argued 'One who *decides* to write atonally, is violating a kind of natural order. Such a person mistakenly assigns priority to the external rather than the internal' (1951:384).

research project. Nonetheless, as I have limited my case studies to ballets, it is more straightforward to inject a historical perspective where relevant. For example, some comparison and reference with other French and Russian ballet composers is useful in the early chapters covering the ‘Russian’ ballets. A knowledge of ballets by composers such as Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Debussy, Delibes and Ravel was useful when evaluating Stravinsky’s earlier innovations in the genre. For example, in the development of what I term ‘balletic recitative’ (see p.61-67), which is employed in both *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, I compare Stravinsky’s method of ‘storytelling’ with those of his predecessors. Rather than an in depth comparison, it is an observation that Stravinsky’s approach differs from Tchaikovsky’s more ‘dance after dance’ formula, or the seamless, organic structure of ballets such as *Jeux* by Debussy, or *Daphnis et Chloe* by Ravel. Conversely, there are also points where I demonstrate that Stravinsky has less competition than anticipated. I found this to be the case when searching for works that *Agon* may have overshadowed (see p.169). The innovative and intellectual collaboration between Balanchine and Stravinsky, alongside the fact that investment in new ballet composers was more rare in the 1950s than in Diaghilev’s era, led me to conclude that *Agon*, for the conductor, had little competition.

Pointers towards specific works and composers to compare to Stravinsky’s repertoire came from a variety of sources. Conducting books occasionally point out preceding examples that Stravinsky had overshadowed. This was the case with Rimsky-Korsakov’s use of 11/4 (Grosbayne 1973:70), and Debussy’s use of polyrhythms in *La Mer*. Interviews with conductors also highlighted composers I had previously overlooked - after speaking to Philip Ellis²³ of the Birmingham Royal Ballet I realised I had overlooked the work of Delibes. Historical study of the Ballets Russes was also invaluable in seeing how *Jeux* has been overshadowed by *The Rite of Spring*’s riotous premiere - as Debussy’s work was scheduled only two weeks before Stravinsky’s work, it has since been neglected. The inclusions of these comparisons helped set Stravinsky’s ballets in their wider context, as well as evaluating their impact in relation to *The Rite*.

²³ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

2. SCORE ANALYSIS

Structural Analysis

Post-structuralist musicology has generated a growing mistrust of the printed score. Scores may frequently be presumed to be the composer's wishes in print, but in actuality are susceptible to a great deal of influencing factors.²⁴ Alterations are frequently made to scores in the publishing process, and if a work is reprinted on numerous occasions, it starts to evolve. Over time the piece of music bears less resemblance to the original work. This phenomenon is especially relevant to Stravinsky, who is well known for the multiple revisions of many of his scores (often for copyright reasons). *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring* and *Apollo* in particular were all subject to this kind of reworking. The composer would also make alterations to printed scores during rehearsals. Joseph suggests that this was not Stravinsky editing his work, but correcting a plethora of mistakes made by his publisher. 'Tempo markings were altered. He corrected notes, time signatures, even misprinted clefs, again confirming how appallingly unreliable many of the published versions of his music remain' (Joseph 2001:223). One must therefore be mindful of these factors when studying the surrounding literature and performances of his ballets.

Yet one must also appreciate that in the academic study of Dance, where there is all too often an absence of a score, it is sorely missed. 'Scores offer another kind of looking sideways: structural issues relate to the broader issues of context in remarkable ways' (Jordan 2000:x). Although there has been much speculation surrounding the nature of *The Rite of Spring*'s original musical performance, the continued presence of a musical score has ensured that this debate is mainly concerned with the smaller musical details, style and standard of performance. Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, when researching the original *Rite* for the Joffrey Ballet recreation in 1987, had no such luxury. Without a surviving dance score, their excavation of Nijinsky's original choreography took years of

²⁴ See Boorman, S. 'The Musical Text' in Cook and Everist (ed) *Rethinking Music* (2001). Furthermore, poststructuralist musicology is also equally wary of the composer's intentions. In contrast, musicologists such as Susan McClary, explore the relationship of iconic works such as Beethoven's 9th Symphony with issues such as gender (2002:128-30).

research. It may be the case that much structural analysis can be detached and out-dated, and that the printed score gives a false impression of the composer's wishes in print. But the score remains the centre of the conductor's work, and is a readily available source that would be illogical to side-step.

The physical presence of the score (or of its parts) is a constant reminder – for both performers and audience – of the control of the complete musical persona. In this respect the visible score is not unlike the figure of the conductor (Cone 1974:64).

Musicology's overall veering away from structural analysis was not actually what Kerman suggested in 1980. 'I do not think we need to get out of analysis... only out from under' (1994:30). Analysis *is* of relevance, as long as the findings are contextualised. Structural analysis is fundamental to the conductor's work, uncovering landmarks that will inform the performance and give the orchestra direction through the music.

Structural analysis is the basis of musicianship. Analysis opens the door to the composer's ideas of form... and allows you to stretch the sound fabric of text, harmony, melody and rhythm, over this structure. Honouring the composer's structural design will keep your music making honest by getting inside the piece and allowing to sound, which guarded against the temptation to 'interpret' (George 2003:46).

Wallace Berry also highlighted the importance of analysis in informing performance. 'A performer's awareness of music's structure is a valuable, indeed requisite, basis for doing - and not doing – particular things in realizations of particular pieces' (1989:7). Yet he highlights that there is a fundamental difference between the analysis of performers and the analysis of academics. Music theorists, Berry argues, pay more attention to 'deep under-surface lines of continuity' (7) than the more superficial detail concerning instrumentalists – as if awareness of one would overshadow attention to the other. Rink, reviewing Berry's ideas, notes 'whereas analysts concentrate on musical structure, performers attend primarily to musical "shape"' (1990:323). This may be true for performers, but for the conductor both types of analysis are crucial. He must have an awareness of performance problems and technical challenges for the instrumentalists, as well as communicating the piece's form and structure. Understanding a conductor's own process of analysis is more complex as it needs to continually shift direction, from the composer's score to the performers and vice

versa. Cook also notes this bias, observing that ‘the direction is always *from* analysis *to* performance’ (1999:239); as if academia can somehow hold authority over the musicians’ musical choices. ‘Theory, it seems, is not committed to understanding performers in the way it is to understanding composers’ (241). When reviewing musicological literature from the conductor’s perspective, it is therefore essential to maintain a balance between the needs to understand the composer and the performers.

Berry explains how analysis can also open ‘infinite possibilities of misrepresenting, and of interpretative intrusion’ (1989:10). Stravinsky’s aversion to interpretative intervention (see p.42-47) is expressed in his scores as well as his writing (1960, 1972, 1990). The *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* chapter uses structural analysis to explore how the composer generates confusion to limit a conductor’s personal input into the performance. He sets up layers of structural and formal ambiguity to give the conductor limited freedom when performing and interpreting the work. For example, although Hyde (2003:110) and Rogers (1995:478) both argue that the opening movement ‘Toccata’ it is written in three distinct sections, this is not obvious to the listener as the returning theme (that appears the first time in bar 3 with the trumpets playing in thirds) reappears more than three times. The first ‘section’ is also sectionalised within itself. Joseph, whilst acknowledging that the ‘remnants of the more traditional sonata form typical of a concerto’s first movement are evident’ (2002:327), suggests the existence of *sixteen* sections.²⁵ A general outline of exposition-development-recapitulation can easily be traced, but the development or central section contains multiple themes, two of which are revisited before the first theme returns. Analysis of the score’s form and structure therefore uncovers a sizable amount of resistance (on the composer’s part) to a conductor’s imposition of any level of interpretation. Stravinsky’s employs this formal ambiguity in order to disguise or eliminate any potential landmark moments in the movement.

²⁵ He also aligns these with the choreographic sections. See Chapter 7 (p.139-142) for a more in depth critique.

Rhythmic Analysis

It is the rhythmic innovations in Stravinsky's music that are the most famous, and although they are particularly relevant in the study of his Russian works, they continue to appear in various guises throughout his repertoire. In this thesis there will be a critique of rhythmic analysis found in musicological literature in relation to the conductor's work, as well as a comparison of these ideas with the technical advice given in conducting books. This comparison, combined with the study of conductor footage enables a more rigorous discussion of the assumption that Stravinsky's (and in particular *The Rite*'s) impact on the conductor was radical and unprecedented. The work of Van den Toorn (1983, 1988) is particularly applicable here. In Stravinsky's work he identifies two rhythmic devices, Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 and 2, which are utilised in a great number of Stravinsky's works. Rhythmic-metric type 1 is the horizontal, consistent changing of time signatures in vertically homophonic music. 'The fragments, lines, or parts, fixed registrally and instrumentally in repetition, share the same irregular rhythmic metric periods' (1983:138). This rhythmic construction is particularly prominent in *The Rite*'s 'Sacrificial Dance'. Rhythmic-metric Type 2 is the vertical imposition of two conflicting metres (i.e. polyrhythms). 'Above' and/or 'below' this stable 'pedal'...other reiterating fragments are superimposed, in the sense that they repeat according to 'separate' or independent rhythmic-metric periods, time spans or cycles' (139). The most famous example in this case is *The Rite*'s 'Procession of the Sage'.²⁶ With both dances, the suggestions made in conducting books can be compared with the action taken by those seen in conductor footage in order to assess Stravinsky's practical influence.

Although conducting books can often favour the inclusion of the most well known examples over those that were the first to pose certain obstacles, they can also highlight works that Stravinsky's repertoire has overshadowed. An example here is the infamous 11/4 bar leading into *The Rite*'s 'Glorification of the Chosen One'. This is repeatedly used

²⁶ The Rhythmic-Metric types also co-exist, for example in *The Rite of Spring*'s Mystic Circles of the Young Girls.

as an example of a bar with eleven beats, and various solutions are suggested.²⁷ Although this example is clearly used because of its notoriety, Grosbayne (1973:70) and Malko (1950:87) quote a passage in 11/4 from Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*. In fact, this earlier example demands greater attention to phrasing and melodic shape, meaning that the choice of beating pattern is of far greater significance than in *The Rite* extract. Grosbayne suggests the bar is divided into five 'pulses'. 'Accents and stresses may be suggested by bringing the baton and left hand forward when necessary' (1973:70). With this work pre-dating Stravinsky's, I was provided with evidence that conducting eleven beats was not Stravinsky's innovation – it is found in his teacher's music.

The rhythmic analysis of conductors themselves will also be employed.

Conductor/composers Leonard Bernstein (1976)²⁸ and Pierre Boulez (1991) have both presented their analyses of Stravinsky's music in an academic context. Their rhythmic analyses of *The Rite of Spring* will also be critiqued in relation to the conductor's practical work. Bernstein's discussion of polyrhythms in *The Rite of Spring*'s 'Procession of the Sage' (1976:351-7) can be studied alongside Van den Toorn's analysis and suggestions of beating patterns found in conducting books. Boulez's rhythmic analysis in *Stocktakings of an Apprenticeship* (1990:55-110) provides concepts that can be critiqued from the conductor's perspective (particularly in relation to *The Rite*'s Introduction) through the observation of conductor footage.

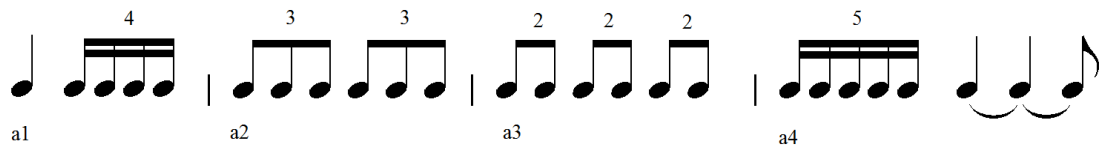
However, although both Bernstein and Boulez have a practical insight into the processes involved in both composition and conducting, the analysis they provide is not necessarily a direct reflection of the conductor's work. For example, Boulez refers to the notion of rhythmic 'cells' in *The Rite of Spring*'s 'Introduction' (1990:60-64). He labels four cells that are present in the opening three bars (see fig.1) (61) and suggests that there is a distorted symmetry at play between the note groupings. He observes that 'no value or subdivision in any one cell is repeated in any other' (62): the music is constantly changing.

²⁷ See for example Green, E. (1969:56), Prausnitz, F. (1983:210-11) and Grosbayne (1973:71). See Fink (1999:319) for a discussion of the various techniques used by different conductors and possible reasons for their choices.

²⁸ Leonard Bernstein's ballet conducting was highly praised by dance critic Edwin Denby (1944:235-6). He wrote 'the dancers, even when they came on tired, responded to Mr. Bernstein like hepcats to Harry James' (235).

There is a tension between the second and third units, as they are the exact opposite of each other. The fourth unit is a retrograde of the first, but with a quintuplet replacing four semiquavers. Stravinsky, Boulez suggests, creates an inbuilt acceleration (61), variations of which appear throughout the Introduction with similar effect.

Fig. 1. Boulez's suggestion of rhythmic structure at the opening of the 'Introduction' (1991:61).



Yet the greater the depth of understanding a conductor acquires of the supposed underlying rhythmic structures, the more it contradicts what he must communicate to the orchestra. Although the notation is more conventional than that of the 'Sacrificial Dance' (i.e. it uses regular time signatures) the music appears more spontaneous in nature, and it is far less repetitive. This highly organised disorganisation is a paradox, and the disguised sense of pulse presents a more subtle, but equally perplexing challenge. Stravinsky disorients the listener by blurring any possible perception of rhythmic symmetry or order. This is achieved by the regular use of fermatas, appoggiaturas and acciaccaturas – constantly blurring the main rhythmic line. This is compounded further by the *tempo rubato* and *poco accelerando* instructions in the score. The difficulty in locating the crotchet beat makes this quasi-improvisatory music more challenging to oversee and control.

The rhythmic units or 'cells' that a conductor must consider initially are, of course, the bars, thus highlighting the sizable difference between the analysis performed by Boulez for academic purposes and that he would undertake as a conductor. Even Bar 1, with two fermatas, tempo rubato, and a rhythmic mixture of a crotchet, semiquavers, and triplets (with appoggiaturas), presents an ambiguous rhythm for the conductor that could be perceived (or notated) in a multitude of ways. In fact, many conductors choose not to beat this first bar at all (Peter Stark 2009),²⁹ waiting instead until the horn's entry in bar 2. Bar 4

²⁹ However, it is very difficult to analyse most conductor's actions at this point, because camera focus is usually on the bassoonist. Volkov (visible on the BBC Proms Maestro Cam 2009) does not start conducting until bar 2.

also presents numerous obstacles. The solo bassoon's note is tied over from the previous bar, but the conductor must keep a clear sense of the pulse in order to give an accurate cue to the A and bass clarinets. Rhythmic precision is needed to ensure the continued synchronisation of musical lines - the tempo rubato is combined with a triplet 'within a triplet', the second semiquaver of which must coincide with the quaver played by the clarinets. In this instance, the combination of both performance analysis with score analysis allowed for the more rounded critique of Boulez's ideas in relation to the conductor's work.

With 'time-beating' being one of the most rudimentary, but essential aspects of the conductor's work, rhythmic analysis has proved to be one of the most essential strands of this compound methodology. It is in rhythm where the most pioneering, but also many overrated areas of impact are found. Combining the critique of these musicological approaches with performance analysis, interviews and conducting book instruction ensures that the impact of Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations can be more reliably evaluated.

Harmonic Analysis

Although less intrinsic to the thesis than the rhythmic analysis of the scores, harmonic analysis is also employed and critiqued at points where Stravinsky's musical language is perceived to have been advancing and influential. Again, a more practical assessment, combining this harmonic analysis with musicological findings and information gleaned from conductor interviews, assists in evaluating how much of an effect these advancements had on the conductor's work. For example, this approach is applied in the study Stravinsky's varying employment of serialism in *Agon*. Straus argues that Stravinsky used many compositional methods in this last phase of his work (2003:156). He suggests that *Agon* uses four different techniques, the first being Diatonicism, used as a contrast to the serial. The second and third are Diatonic and Non-diatonic Serialism, in which the serial motives or themes are rooted in tonality or atonality. The fourth is twelve note Serialism (based on twelve note rows) (156). This highlights that not only does the composer alter the harmonic language, he continues to present contradictions by playing with the tonal or atonal sense of the music. This is heard, for example, in the Saraband-Step, where the music appears to be rooted in Bb major, but all twelve notes of the chromatic scale make an

appearance. In contrast, the *Pas de Deux* sounds highly chromatic and of a serial nature, but at points only seven note rows are used (therefore appearing more diatonic theoretically).

However, exploring historical musicology, a more ambivalent sentiment towards the use of serialist compositional technique emerges. Although it may be the analyst's primary interest, a thorough knowledge of the serialist methods used in not only *Agon* but any piece of serialist music are rarely the primary concern for the conductor. As Webern stated, 'audiences and even performers did not need to know the technical processes by which twelve-tone music is constructed' (Wintle 1982:75). Taruskin also argues that the preoccupation with these processes can detract from the broader message contained within a work (2003:274).³⁰ There were similar findings when interviewing conductors. Although both Murphy and Ellis of the Birmingham Royal Ballet expressed an interest in *Agon*'s varying uses of serialism, they did not find it necessary in informing their own conducting. The score is so crammed with irregular rhythms, aesthetic misalliances, unorthodox orchestration and a complex choreo-musical relationship, that a conductor will fully explore this parameter within the piece.

Stravinsky's harmony does not give his music impetus and direction in the same way as many of his Romantic predecessors. For these reasons, I will not delve in great depth into harmonic analysis in every chapter. Instead, I have restricted this to the ballets where Stravinsky has employed a new harmonic language in his music (i.e. bitonality, serialism). This is where there is a weight of musicological attention placed on the subject, and therefore a potentially greater influence on the conductor. Here the combined methodological approach assists in building more of a truthful picture of Stravinsky's influence. It also aids in highlighting the entrenched separation between academic analysis and the more pragmatic analysis undertaken by performers.

³⁰ Taruskin discusses Babbitt's influential analysis of *Cantata* (275-278) and questions its impact on subsequent literature considering its 'extreme tortuousness'.

3. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Visual Footage

The marriage of the rhythmic, structural, stylistic and harmonic analysis (discussed above) with performance evidence is an essential ingredient of the methodology. Visual footage of both ballet and concert performances is employed throughout. Although it can be an inconsistent resource (footage of Stravinsky's early works is more abundant than the later ballets), I ensured that ballet footage was available for all of the case studies selected. Ballet footage (as it usually remains focused on the dancers) was essential in acquiring an understanding of the choreo-musical relationship and its demands on the conductor. For example, it is impossible to appreciate the technical difficulty of *Agon* for the conductor without studying a ballet performance of the work. The conductor's involvement at numerous moments such as when the cello glissando follows the female dancer's arm movement in the Pas de Deux at bar 451; or in the Saraband-Step when a cue needs to be taken from the dancer mid-jump, can be more easily understood when seeing the action unfolding on stage.

Footage of concert performances has also been crucial for conductor observation. Although focus on the conductor can be limited at times, it serves as a resource for observing cueing, specific beating patterns and overall communication of the piece's form or theatricality. The BBC Proms 2009-2011 also offered the 'Maestrocam' option, which enabled the viewing of an entire performance with the conductor in view and additional commentary. The Maestrocam was useful on a number of occasions. Footage of Ilan Volkov conducting *The Rite of Spring* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra,³¹ was helpful in assessing the various beating patterns used at specific points in the piece (e.g. The Sacrificial Dance, the 11/4 bar and Procession of the Sage). It also demonstrated the density of cues used by the conductor in the 'Introduction' to Part I, which could be compared to similar footage of Valery Gergiev (see below). Useful comparisons could be drawn between ballet and

³¹ Broadcast on 13th August 2009 on BBC Four (commentary by Peter Stark).

concert performance when observing David Robertson conducting *Agon*³² - one can more easily examine the conductor's observation of the piece's theatricality, and his cueing and communication with the orchestra.

Table 2 – Cueing between R4-5³³ in the Introduction of *The Rite of Spring*

Bar	Instrument	Gergiev	Volkov
1	Horns		
1	2 nd A Clarinet		Left hand
1	Violas	Look	Right hand/look
1	2 nd Violins		
1	Oboe	left hand	
1	D Clarinet	Look	Look?
2	Bass Clarinet		Left hand
3	1 st A Clarinet	Look?	Left hand?
3	Horns 6,7,8		
End of 5	Horn 1	Both hands	look
End of 5	Flutes	Both hands	look

? - unclear from footage

I will not assess in isolation each conductor's adherence to a specific score. Fink (1999) has already assessed the ability of conductors to observe Stravinsky's precise metre changes in the 'Sacrificial Dance', and Cook analysed in detail the Stravinsky's own recordings in relation to his performance aesthetics (2003:176-191). Both studies highlighted their unrealistic expectations, while simultaneously acknowledging Stravinsky's influence on how music is now performed. Cook observes that Stravinsky's numerous recordings demonstrate inconsistencies, making it difficult to label any of these as definitive interpretations. 'Recordings can be no less definitive of the musical work than scores' (2003:176). Neither source, in isolation, gives authoritative answers, and Cook also noted that the alterations in the various recordings reflected the technological advances taking place in the record industry (176). Cook compared various recordings of the 'Princess' Round Dance' from *The Firebird* (185-6) and also *The Rite of Spring* (186-9) but does this to highlight inconsistencies rather than evaluating the changes made by Stravinsky's music to the conductor's work.

³² Broadcast on 28th August 2009 on BBC Four (commentary by Jason Lai).

³³ Throughout the thesis rehearsal figures shall be referred to as R (followed by the number).

Recordings of Stravinsky's ballet music, while useful at specific points where little DVD footage is available, will not be the main analytical focus. As recordings are made without the need to consider choreography, and do not provide any visual footage of the conductor, any analysis must be treated with an element of caution. There are too many variable factors (e.g. date, length of recording time, conductor, orchestra etc.) to be able to approach them with complete objectivity. It is usually impossible to ascertain whether decisions made about the nature of the recording are down to the conductor or as a result of any number of other influencing factors. There is, in short, no 'control'.³⁴ Admittedly similar pitfalls apply to the observation of conducting footage in concert performance. However, the gains of directly observing the conductor at work outweigh these, as long as they are observed whilst being mindful of the differences between concert and theatre performance.

CHARM and Gesture Analysis

I decided against the use of Sonic Visualiser software to analyse tempo fluctuations in performance. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, sufficient data can be acquired using a metronome in a relatively short time, the amount of time CHARM analysis would consume would be disproportionate to the relevance of the data to the research. Secondly, the level of accuracy that Sonic Visualiser provides is excessive, and one can spend a large amount of time analysing tiny nuances that arise either from a specific performance or, alternatively, the inaccuracy of the tapping entered into the program in the first instance. This, ironically, actually makes the use of a metronome, and adjusting it to synchronise with the performance studied, a more fool-proof method of measuring tempo. This is because it relies on one's ear detecting the metronomic accuracy, rather than analysing one's own (usually delayed) response to the music. This is especially relevant in analysing the performance tempos of orchestras performing *The Rite of Spring*'s 'Sacrificial Dance': it would have been virtually impossible to accurately respond to these performances. The use of Sonic Visualiser is therefore more suited to research devoted to the analysis of issues

³⁴ For example, although both Bernstein and Boulez conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, a recording of *The Rite of Spring* with Bernstein conducting the NYPO is not readily available. The same problem occurs with visual footage; a DVD of Boulez conducting *The Rite* in a live performance is easily purchased, but the footage available of Bernstein is of him taking rehearsals with students.

such as tempo in the performances of specific works, rather than a study of a composer's more overall effect on the work of the conductor.³⁵

I also eliminated the use of computer technology to examine conducting gestures. This is an expanding area of research, where conductor gestures are analysed electronically³⁶ by, for example, the radio baton system.³⁷ Where this research is limited is in the fact that conducting is not, strictly speaking, a gestural language, as during rehearsals (the most crucial part of a conductor's work) speech is also involved. In performance, the grammar of conducting is merely a reminder of the verbal communication used by the conductors in the build up to the final performance, or to aspects of the score, and will vary according to his familiarity with the performers. Johannsen and Nakra do acknowledge this in their quotation of Australian conductor Simone Young. 'Three quarters of being a conductor is what goes on in your head.... that's much more interesting, because a conductor's mind has to work on lots and lots of different levels' (cited 2010:265). It is primarily Stravinsky's impact on the mental involvement Young addresses that will be considered. Detailed analysis of the gestures themselves takes the focus away from the music, and fails to acknowledge the huge communicative difference between two people making the exact same gesture.

Empirical Evidence - Conductor Interviews

The interviews I carried out with conductors were among the most useful of research methods used. I targeted conductors with experience of conducting ballet, and the length and number of interviews was dependant on the conductor's availability. Vladimir Jurowski of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Murphy and Ellis of the Birmingham Royal Ballet,

³⁵ Cook used a more rudimentary version of this software to evaluate the perception of Furtwangler as a conductor that indulged in over-romantic performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1995). As evidence he uses Furtwangler's own thoughts on conducting and related these to the similar sentiments of Schenker. He focuses specifically on the modifications of tempo in two of Furtwangler's recordings, concluding that although Furtwangler did stray from the metronomic tempos, he was consistent in the way he deviated from them (i.e. both recordings showed very similar trends). Cook adopts a similar approach to the assessment of Stravinsky's conducting practice (2003).

³⁶ For an overview see Johannsen and Marrin Nakra 'Conductors' Gestures and Their Mapping Sound Synthesis' in *Musical Gestures; Sound, Movement, and Meaning* (2010)

³⁷ See Boulanger, R. and Mathews, M.V. 'The 1997 Mathews radio baton and improvisation modes' (1997:395-398).

and Wordsworth of the Royal Ballet, all informed me of their sentiments regarding the main performance issues concerning each of the Stravinsky ballets studied. I am particularly indebted to Murphy, who over a number of phone interviews took me through every one of my case studies (sometimes page by page!) and gave information on the choreographic considerations, cues, and general performance issues. Talking to him in the early stages of my research led me to quickly restructure my work according to the practical demands placed on the conductor, and allowed me to align them with musicological perspectives. Ellis, interviewed in March 2011, gave very useful insights that helped me to critique musicological arguments (particularly those of Taruskin) from a conductor's perspective. He also introduced me to specific ballets and composers that I had previously overlooked. Jurowski, interviewed much later in the research process (July 2013) helped greatly in consolidating as well as challenging the conclusions I had already reached. One interview was also carried out with an orchestral musician, Robert Haydon Clark, who was first violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra (interviewed October 2013). This gave an invaluable and contrasting perspective on the effect of Stravinsky's music. Interviews were therefore a highly fruitful research method that allowed me to quickly evaluate my own ideas and assumptions.

However, time speaking to conductors is usually limited, and it is easy to bypass important research issues whilst giving the conductor space to speak of his experiences. Although this flexibility can highlight valuable areas of research previously unexplored, it is also essential to set out clear research questions beforehand (I would often email these to the conductor in advance) so that time was not wasted and I was not pestering the conductor afterwards for more information. I would have ideally spent a lot more time with these conductors, observing rehearsals and performances etc., but this was unrealistic in the circumstances. I also found that to rely solely on these interviews could bypass the historical shift in the conductor's role over the last hundred years. A more comprehensive picture is built when combining these findings with advice in conducting books and transcribed interviews with conductors from different generations.

Conducting Manuals

Conducting books proved to be a valuable resource, offering a unique addition to the research gleaned from musicological literature. In a sense, they provide a bridge between the comparatively ‘detached’ analytical, aesthetic and historical Stravinsky literature, and the performance analysis undertaken of audio-visual footage, or in interviews and observation. There is, however, an inconsistency in applying the findings from these texts, arising from the attention to Stravinsky’s early repertoire over his later works. *The Rite of Spring* usually steals the limelight, and is widely presented as though it has had the greatest impact on basic conducting technique. For example, Grosbayne (1973), Rudolf (1950) and Green (1969) all refer to Stravinsky’s music on numerous occasions, particularly in their chapters on irregular rhythms and polyrhythms, with recommendations for not only baton technique, but also bar sub-division, cueing, and accents within these irregular bars. In this instance, one can make interesting comparisons between the recommendations given in relation to specific passages. The polyrhythmic section of ‘Procession of the Sage’, where 4/4 is superimposed over 6/4, is dealt with in a selection of books and numerous solutions are suggested. These suggestions are then compared to footage of conductors at work and the overall impact on conducting more reliably assessed. Often the Stravinsky Myth is being upheld i.e. presenting Stravinsky examples purely because they are the most famous rather than the most innovative or demanding. However, this disadvantage was outweighed by the valuable insights provided that are based on practical, first hand experience. This was an essential ingredient in producing research with a practical slant.

Despite the over-attention to Stravinsky’s early repertoire these books can also provide valuable information with regard to preceding pieces that *The Rite* has overshadowed. For example, Grosbayne refers to the compositional technique used in ‘Procession of the Sage’ as ‘our old friend four against six’ (136) - he highlights that it is a device previously employed in Debussy’s *La Mer*. Prausnitz goes one step further in *Score and Podium* (1983:450-1) when analysing specific case studies by the composers Schoenberg, Bartok, Ives, Debussy, Stravinsky and Varese. Prausnitz forms a table (see below) offering a comparison between their innovations and demands from the conductor’s perspective, and

therefore placing each piece more in its historical context. As the case studies are also explored in greater detail than a superficial explanation of the appropriate conducting technique, the table assists in challenging the reader's assumptions. The comparison is limited (and therefore impossible to replicate in the context of this thesis) in that only one work is chosen to represent each composer's output.³⁸ But nonetheless, Prausnitz effectively demonstrates how Stravinsky was not alone in stretching the conductor in twentieth-century music. Many of these innovations (whether they came before or after Stravinsky) do not necessarily provoke any changes in conducting technique, but instead a shift in the conductor's relationship with the score. Yet it is Stravinsky's more tangible and memorable changes (i.e. ones that are visible to the audience – and perhaps the most simple to explain) that take centre stage.

Table 3 A Comparative Table of challenges in the music of selected composers (Prausnitz 1983:450-1).

	Schoenberg	Bartok	Ives	Debussy	Stravinsky	Varese
I Absence of traditional harmonic functions	✓			✓		✓
II Pitch-oriented structures (non-functional)	✓				✓	✓
III Continuously evolving materials		✓		✓		✓
IV No significant structural correspondences	✓					✓
V Polyrhythms, isorhythms, simultaneous speeds			✓	✓	✓	✓
VI Emphasis on smallest components of thematic materials		✓		✓	✓	✓
VII						

³⁸ Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, Ives' *The Unanswered Question*, Debussy's *Jeux*, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Varese's *Déserts*.

Indeterminacy other than any above		✓		✓	✓	✓
VIII Spatial Separation of Sound Sources			✓			✓

Dance Literature

Reference to dance literature was invaluable in allocating challenging areas of choreography and key moments in choreo-musical synchronisation. At points these could be directly connected to the conductor's work, as well as providing a wider insight into the ballets as inter-disciplinary works. I will not attempt a comprehensive study of the relationship between choreography and music in Stravinsky's ballets, as dance academics are more adept at analysing choreography in this depth.³⁹ The work of Jordan is the most notable here, who put forward a methodology for the study of choreo-musical interdependence.⁴⁰ Instead, in this thesis there will be a focus on the effect of this interdependence as *one* of the factors influencing the conductor's work.

Throughout the thesis, to ensure consistency, I will refer to just one choreographic setting of each ballet. Where possible this is the original choreography, as this represents the work most accurately in its historical context. This applies to *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *Les Noces*,⁴¹ and *Agon*. The Joffrey recreation of Nijinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is used in Chapter 4, as this is the setting bearing the closest resemblance to what the conductor would have dealt with at the premiere in 1913. Although there are now over two hundred settings of *The Rite*, to study a number of these would result in this ballet dominating the thesis, which was an

³⁹ I decided that for me to gain a familiarity with Benesh and Labanotation would not greatly enhance an understanding of the relationship between the score and the choreography from the conductor's perspective. Ballet conductors, in any case, are not required to be familiar with dance notation, (even though a good memory for the choreography is highly beneficial). Moreover, very few dancers use notation, learning instead from practical instruction.

⁴⁰ See in particular Jordan, S. *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in Twentieth Century Ballet* (2000) and Jordan, S. *Stravinsky Dances: Re-Visions across a Century* (2007).

⁴¹ It is notable that there are now two 'versions' of Nijinska's *Les Noces* – one associated with the Royal Ballet and one with the Kirov ballet. The former is based on Nijinska's 1966 revival with the company and is the setting used in the thesis. The latter is by Howard Sayette, who in 1981 learnt the work from Irina Nijinska.

imbalance I was keen to avoid. Balanchine's *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* is used in Chapter 7 as the choreography for *Balustrade* (the original 1941 setting – also by Balanchine) is now lost. Similarly in the case of *Apollo*, Balanchine's 1928 choreography is used as the setting by Bolm (premiered earlier in the same year) is now forgotten.

Joseph, as well as exploring the collaborative relationship of Stravinsky and Balanchine, also analyses the choreo-musical connections in their work (2002). For example, he highlights a specific point in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* (R59 in Aria I) at which adhering to Stravinsky's precise tempo specifications can become impractical for the ballet conductor, who must consider the technical demands placed on the dancers as well as the violinist. Here there are three instrumental lines: the solo violinist, the first violins and the cellos (see fig. 3). In these six bars the metre remains in 4/4 throughout but the soloist plays harmonics that Joseph divides into four groups (2002:340). These groups of crotchets, containing either three or nine harmonics each (i.e. multiples of three) are divided by crotchet rests. This leads to an 'aural clash between duple and triple metres' (340). The violins and cellos play on the 'weak' quaver beats, adding further rhythmic ambiguity.

These features in the music are reflected in the choreography. The female dancer at this point adopts a 'crab' posture, and repeatedly turns sideways out of this to face down on all fours before turning back to the 'crab' posture again (known as 'crab walks'). This is a move that requires great agility (Balanchine created it especially for the original soloist Karin von Aroldingen) and demands a sympathetic approach from the conductor. Her movements are grouped in fours and align rhythmically to the violins and cellos. The male soloist 'dances in classical turns in keeping with the overall strong beats of each measure of music' (Joseph 2002:341). Again his movements can be grouped into fours, even though the notes in the harmonic motif are (as Joseph suggests) grouped in threes. It is therefore vital for the conductor to adhere to the requirements of the dancers here, rather than Stravinsky's precise metronome markings, so that the musical layers are kept tight enough to keep the musical pulse perceptible.

Fig. 3 R59 in Aria I

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Violin, Violin I, and Violoncello. The Violin part is in the upper staff, marked 'tutti'. The Violin I part is in the middle staff, marked 'sim.'. The Violoncello part is in the lower staff, marked 'poco sf'. The score shows measures 4 through 8, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Stravinsky as Conductor

Although the study of Stravinsky's conducting practice is not a central theme of the thesis, there will be reference to Stravinsky's own recordings. Analysis of these recordings, in relation to others, is included in the *Les Noces*, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Agon* chapters. Stravinsky's wish was that by conducting and recording his own work (mostly with the Columbia Gramophone Company over a number of years) he was able to express his intentions 'with real exactitude' (1990:150).⁴²

The most interesting (though of course, not necessarily the prettiest or most rousing) conductors are composers, for the reason that they are the only ones who can have a really new insight into the music itself' (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:56).

⁴² However, he lamented that 'very few conductors avail themselves of them' (Stravinsky 1990:150).

However, Stravinsky's ability as a conductor has been doubted on many occasions. According to Boulez, Stravinsky was a 'terribly lousy conductor' (Peyser 1977:172) - a rift arose between the two composers after a disastrous performance of *Threni* that Stravinsky conducted in Paris. Bernstein, advising a singer in the semi-staged production of *Oedipus Rex*⁴³ said, 'Stravinsky was a great composer, one of the greatest... but he was a *terrible conductor*. You're galloping through this as if it were a waltz, the way it is on his record, but we should attend to what Stravinsky wrote, not what he recorded' (Burton 1994:416).

...by 1924 there were several conductors – Ansermet, Monteux, Stokowski, Goossens, Vladimir Golschmann, among others – with a perfectly adequate grasp of his music and much better baton technique than he had or would ever acquire... the irony is that it was often these conductors who prepared the ground for Stravinsky himself (Walsh 2002:385).

Therefore although Stravinsky's recordings serve as useful comparisons they will not be treated as 'definitive' interpretations. Moreover, Cook has already investigated the relationship between Stravinsky's aesthetic ideas and conducting practice (2003). He observed that 'the discrepancies between Stravinsky's scores, recordings and pronouncements about performance are notorious, and it is easy to make fun of them' (189).⁴⁴ Stravinsky more rarely admits to these shortcomings. There are however, some occasional admissions to imperfection. 'A composer is not as easily satisfied with recordings of his works as a performer is satisfied for him, in his name, and this is true even when the composer and the performer are the same person' (Stravinsky & Craft 1979:121). *The Rite of Spring* chapter also cites an admittance Stravinsky openly made to conductor Georg Solti. In his autobiography, Solti recalls Stravinsky's confession that he re-barred the 'Sacrificial Dance' as it was too difficult for him to conduct (Solti 1997:120-1). It is in these admissions, alongside Stravinsky's own inconsistencies, that it is possible to locate other challenging features in Stravinsky's music.

⁴³ With the Harvard Glee Club, a performance recorded for his Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard.

⁴⁴ Similarly Nancy Phelan notes that Stravinsky's tempos were 'always slower than his metronome marks' (1987:330) differing from the usual trend of composers preferring faster tempi to the conductors or performers. Taruskin also observes Stravinsky's hypocritical practice, highlighting the inconsistencies between Stravinsky's performance tempos and those requested in the score (1995a:53).

4. AESTHETICS

The Identity of Stravinsky's Ballets

Most of Stravinsky's ballets are now seen to have dual identities, in that they are performed as both theatre and concert works (*The Firebird* and *Pulcinella*, of course, are the exceptions – usually being performed as suites in the concert hall). However, in reality, Stravinsky's ballets have a more complex identity – not just as both concert and theatre works, but also as architectonic or anecdotic pieces. Anecdotal works, defined simply as theatrical or narrative pieces and architectonic ones as those composed employing abstract musical structures is problematic. A work can easily be both. This is particularly true of *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, which as an adapted concert work, possesses its own form, structure and stylistic ambiguities that are divorced from any narrative imposed by Balanchine's original *Balustrade* choreography, or indeed the structure of the plotless *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. Stravinsky's contradictory remarks about his own music compound the confusion. For example, in an interview in 1920, the composer stated that he conceived *The Rite* as 'une oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique' (Georges-Michel cited Taruskin 2003:261), implying that the work had been conceived and written with no narrative in mind. Yet in his autobiography he wrote that he had a 'fleeting vision' of a pagan sacrificial scene that 'left a deep impression on me' (1990:31), implying an intention to compose a theatrical work.

Conversely, it appears that there are also occasions where conductors do not feel the need to distinguish between these various modes of performance. Wordsworth, for example, said that he conducts *Les Noces* in exactly the same way in the theatre as he would in the concert hall as there is 'no conflict with the choreography'. Gergiev adopts a similar practice – the tempos in both the concert and theatre performances he conducts are almost identical. Concerning *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*, Ansermet seemed to make no distinction between the two types of performance. When asked 'is there a fundamental

difference in conducting a work like *Petrushka* or *The Rite of Spring* in the theatre or concert hall?’ he answered,

I know that there are people who believe it should be so, but for me, no. When I used to conduct *The Rite of Spring* or *Petrushka* for Diaghilev, it was exactly the same as if I had to conduct those works for the concert hall, or for a gramophone recording (cited Drummond 1997:217).

To maintain consistency throughout the thesis I will approach each case study as a musical work with a choreographic element for the conductor to consider. However, I will include the analysis of concert footage where appropriate and beneficial to observe and record conducting technique.

Stravinsky’s Aesthetic Pronouncements

Stravinsky famously outlined his own aesthetic pronouncements and performance preferences in his six lectures entitled *The Poetics of Music* (1960).⁴⁵ These were ghost written (by Alexis Roland-Manuel and Pierre Souvtchinsky) and partly an exercise in self-promotion. However, his polemics were also an understandable defence against the attacks of the influential aesthetician Adorno,⁴⁶ whose sympathies lay with the second Viennese School over Neo-classicism. The composer spoke of two conceptual states of music: ‘potential’ and ‘actual’ - ‘having been fixed on paper or retained in the memory music exists already prior to its actual performance’ (125). The use of the word ‘potential’ implies that Stravinsky cherished an almost pure, unadulterated existence of his work before it is polluted by those to whom he hands it over. His explanation of the distinction between the ‘executant’ and the ‘interpreter’ of music define very clearly his desire for the closest possible adherence to this ‘potential’ state (127-132). An ‘executor’ of music plays exactly what is on the page. Any more intervention becomes ‘interpretation’ and therefore ‘betrayal’ of the composers’ intentions⁴⁷ - an effort by Stravinsky to modify the over-Romantic performance tendencies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁴⁵ Charles Eliot Norton lectures given at Harvard 1939-40.

⁴⁶ Summarised in Max Paddison’s ‘Stravinsky as Devil: Adorno’s Three Critiques’ (2003).

⁴⁷ Also discussed in Stravinsky. I *An Autobiography* (1990:34).

These sentiments applied as much to conductors as they did to performers,⁴⁸ and Stravinsky lamented at a culture that cultivated a ‘plethora of conductors, who almost to a man aspire to set up a dictatorship over music’ (Stravinsky 1960:132).⁴⁹ Fink shares this view, implying that some of Stravinsky’s fears were well founded. ‘It is conductors who truly do Stravinsky’s white washing’ (1999:302). In the case of *Apollon*, there is also a rather extreme example of intervention. Hans Kindler, conductor of *Apollon Musagetes*’s⁵⁰ American premiere in Washington, actually took it upon himself to make adjustments to Stravinsky’s score.

Hans Kindler, conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra, found Stravinsky’s piano reduction ‘very ugly’. He also derogated the string writing as un-idiomatic. Kindler was so bewildered by the score’s abrasive dissonances, Charles Rosen remarks, that he considered them ‘mistakes of the copyist, and replaced them with blander harmonies’ when he conducted the premiere (Joseph 2002:81).

Stravinsky’s resentment that they built careers on Romantic (and romanticising) music was also a reaction against this more Wagnerian ethos prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵¹ At this time, little attention was paid to earlier or more contemporary music, and the autocratic maestros, with their ‘ego disease’ (Stravinsky 1972:223), constituted a very different scene to that found in Russia at the time. Here there was a comparative lack of a conducting tradition. ‘The priority remained the promotion of new or recent music, with the conductor as the humble servant of a living tradition’ (Nice 2003:195). There was also a Communist, conductor-less orchestra,⁵² in which all players had equal input into the performances. It was not until later in the twentieth Century that Russian conductors rose to the fame more akin to the German tradition. Therefore

⁴⁸ See ‘On Conductors and Conducting’ Stravinsky, Igor *Themes and Conclusions* (1972:223-233) Stravinsky expresses his sentiments on many of the conductors with whom he worked.

⁴⁹ Lebrecht has acknowledged and explored the ‘legends’ of many of the great conductors from a sociological perspective. ‘The “great conductor” is a mythological hero...artificially created for a non-musical purpose and sustained by commercial necessity’ (1997:1).

⁵⁰ *Apollon Musagetes* was the original title.

⁵¹ In the Nineteenth Century, there were two prevalent models of conducting in Central Europe. The Mendelssohn school - a more clinical, objective approach, ‘preserved by the Leipzig Conservatory’ (Bowen and Holden 2003:114), and the more subjective Wagnerian school - ‘where the execution of the “external” musical details was dependent upon finding the true “internal” meaning of the work’ (114). The Wagnerian School was dominant in Europe until the beginning of the twentieth century, and was the trend against which Stravinsky reacted.

⁵² Known as Parsimfans. Abbreviation for Pervyi Symphonicheskiy Ansambl bez dirizhor (First Symphonic Ensemble without Conductor). Founded in 1922 (see Nice 2003:196-7).

Stravinsky's very public disdain can also be seen as attempt to counteract the conductors' over inflated profile.⁵³

However, to study the influence of Stravinsky's aesthetic pronouncements in isolation is a problematic task, and they must be treated with caution for several reasons. Firstly, the consideration of Stravinsky's preferences often excludes countless other more practical demands. It is ironic, considering his purist performance ideals, that he was so drawn to extra-musical elements such the theatre, choreography and words. And all of these require a conductor's attention to secure a successful performance. Secondly, his ideas are wrought with contradictions – he renounced many of the views held in *Poetics of Music* later in life. The formalist opinion of 1939-40 'the phenomenon of music is nothing other than a phenomenon of speculation' (1960:28) was replaced with comments such as 'I am losing patience with music that does not sing or dance... and that makes no other gesture I can understand except to reflect mechanical processes that quickly set me adrift (1972:134). Stravinsky's ideas (as well as being ghost-written) are also, essentially, borrowed. What Stravinsky conveniently omitted is that the idea of 'execution' versus 'interpretation' is reminiscent (if not a replication) of the 'Apollonian' versus 'Dionysian' debate that began in Beethoven's era, when the role of the conductor was still in its fledgling days. Until this point, the keyboard player, soloist or principal violinist had led the orchestra. But the changing nature of the scores in the struggle between Classicism and Romanticism gave rise to the conductor as 'soloist' and thus this aesthetic antagonism.

Stravinsky's sentiments have already been developed and critiqued by other musicologists. Abbate substantiates Stravinsky's ideas in more practical terms. She writes 'music is written for the composer, but made and given phenomenal reality by performers' (1991:x). Therefore, the composer's music builds numerous layers of 'voices' as it passes through publishers, conductors and performers, that alter its nature and create a narrative that is far

⁵³ The existence of the 'maestro mentality' is a fairly recent development in the history of conducting. The shift of the power to the conductor from the composer was the result of a greater need for increased direction as the scores of the romantic era became more and more complex. 'With the deaths of Wagner and Brahms, the public's admiration and loyalty shifted from the composer to the virtuoso conductor' (Bowen and Holden 2003:114). Once a composer dies, the public's attention will usually shift from the composer to the conductor in concert performance. Much earlier music would often only be performed whilst the composer was still alive (conducted by the composer himself). The recording of music and the migration of music from everyday socio-cultural practice to concert hall 'worship' changed the previous tradition.

more complex than the storyline or structure within a piece. ‘Are the events of music simply *there*, or do we occasionally sense within them the voices of commentators that enunciate them?’ (xii). Taruskin also addresses the notion of ‘executor’ versus ‘interpreter’, and suggests ‘if the performer did not have the urge to participate in the music and, yes, to contribute to it, why then he wouldn’t have become a performer in the first place’ (1995a:52). More recently, Van den Toorn and McGinness have drawn on the music psychology research in evaluating the validity of Stravinsky’s performance preferences. They comment that ‘singing or playing totally without expression is exceedingly difficult, and performers asked to sing or play in this fashion in psychological experiments have invariably been observed to give way to the familiar departures’ (2012:257).

It is therefore also very difficult to find a true ‘Stravinskian’ conductor. If one observes even the most ardent Stravinsky specialists, the composer’s aesthetics are being muddled from all angles. From Stravinsky’s standpoint, Monteux was an ideal candidate in many respects, and for a long time Walsh suggests that Monteux’s recording was ‘the only model on which all conductors base their performances’ (2002:488). He was understated in manner, reportedly using a very minimal and concise technique. However, ‘if he wanted to emphasise a great, quick crescendo, he simply raised his baton about six inches and said, quietly, “And here”... the whole roof would blow off!’ (Ripley 2003:81). All these attributes suited Stravinsky’s hatred of a conductor’s hyperbolic performance. Stravinsky stated that ‘Monteux, almost alone among conductors, never cheapened *Le Sacre* or looked for his own glory in it, and has continued to play it all his life with the greatest fidelity’ (Stravinsky & Craft 1962:144). However, as Fink observes, Monteux regularly took the liberty of altering performance tempos. ‘He routinely disregarded Stravinsky’s tempo indications and metronome marks, going so far as to cross them out and write new ones directly onto his autograph’ (Fink 1999:304).

A similar principle can be applied to the later generation of conductors. Boulez, a man for whom ‘precision plays top priority’ (Peyser 1977:193), could be portrayed as Stravinsky’s ideal executor. His expressionless manner and attention to detail align him very closely with the composer’s anti-interpretation aesthetics. However, although an advocate of his

early works,⁵⁴ Boulez was openly disapproving of Stravinsky's neo-classical music. When Stravinsky died, he bluntly wrote in a commemorative article, 'it is not enough to deface the Mona Lisa because that does not kill the Mona Lisa. All art of the past must be destroyed' (Boulez cited Peyser 1977:19-20). This differed hugely from Bernstein, who conducted a memorial concert, and narrated a tribute film celebrating his life and works (Burton 1994:412).⁵⁵ But again the contradictions appear, as this loyalty was not reflected in Bernstein's performance style. Peyser observes that his more theatrical style 'was concerned mostly with sweep thrust, he allowed the instruments a great deal of leeway' (Peyser 1977:193). Stravinsky himself observed that 'Mr Bernstein will act out a life of Napoleon in 'his' *Eroica*...if you unable to listen to the music, you can watch the corybantics, and if you *are* able, you had better not go to the concert (1972:224).⁵⁶ Yet in the same chapter he states 'But how dull New York would be without Leonard Bernstein. A few days after... meeting I went to his performance of the *Symphony of Psalms*. WOW!' (author's capitals 231).

Although a reputable conductor and advocate of Stravinsky's music, Russian conductor Gergiev does not employ the composer's pragmatic, clinical approach. Instead he continues to adopt a very intuitive method. 'They couldn't believe I didn't count, that I simply felt the music – even in a Stravinsky-Balanchine ballet. This is one of the big differences between dancing in the East and in the West' (Ardoin 2001:91). Moreover, he also re-orchestrates scores if he sees it appropriate. Commenting on his rehearsals of Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite* with the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, Gergiev said

I did today one important change with orchestration. It was my decision. Not because I do not respect Prokofiev - I felt it would work better this way. So.... it's my responsibility (1997).

⁵⁴ See Boulez *Stocktakings of an Apprenticeship* (1966:55-110)

⁵⁵ See Bernstein's fifth lecture 'The Twentieth Century Crisis' of *The Unanswered Question* for his more understated opinion of Schoenberg's music (1973).

⁵⁶ Bernstein also used evocative interpretations in rehearsal to communicate with his musicians. While rehearsing a student orchestra, he opens the rehearsal with the statement 'Now *The Rite of Spring* is all about erm...sex!'.⁵⁶ At R123 (in the 'Evocation') he says 'this is like a Russian Choir. There are words in my head in Russian. I don't know what they are but...' Hohlfield, H. H. and Burton, H. (1988) *The Rite of Spring in Rehearsal* [VHS].

Bernstein openly expressed his reservations about Stravinsky's aesthetics, and said that they did nothing to defend his case. 'With that intellect of his, one of the sharpest and most agile of our time, Stravinsky kept painting himself into a corner of aesthetic purism' (Bernstein 1976:389). His ideas were ideals, and in many respects unrealistic in relation to the 'real world' concerns of the conductor and musicians in the orchestra. However, an understanding of these preferences is crucial to the thesis, as it is the way in which these sentiments are put into practice in Stravinsky's music that warrants further investigation.

Hermeneutics

The above observations outline how there is no great correlation between Stravinsky's performance preferences and the approaches of the conductors of his music. However, where Stravinsky's aesthetics *do* make a tangible impact are through his scores. Although his ideas are contradictory, in that they do not consider the extra-musical factors that his theatrical works inevitably involve, the composer nonetheless finds numerous ways of keeping the conductor occupied. This therefore reduces his interpretative powers. The composer's use of rhythmic and technical complexity, sparse or exposed orchestration, complex choreo-musical interdependency, formal/structural ambiguity and stylistic misalliances all demonstrate Stravinsky's persistence in reducing the conductor's intervention and thus alteration (or pollution) of the music.

Intriguingly, he made a conscious attempt to build his distrust of performers into his music by making it, in effect, interpretation proof. This meant more than simply transcribing rubato passages into strict rhythmic notation, so that a literal performance would produce a flexible effect, though Stravinsky did, on occasion, do this (Cook 2003:178).

A certain level of friction between composers and conductors is common. Cook highlights that Schoenberg and Ravel also expressed similar complaints concerning conductors overriding their expressed wishes and intentions (2003:178). Where Stravinsky is more unique, however, is in his attempt to aesthetically justify the composer's reservations, placing him in a supposedly superior position with regard to suitable performance practice. In effect, he exploited his fame and used it to 'sell' his performance preferences. This behaviour differs greatly from that of Debussy, who was more accommodating and adopted

a relatively lenient attitude towards his colleagues. This is shown, firstly, by his admission of his own shortcomings as a conductor; ‘When I have to conduct I am ill before, during and after!’ (cited Timbrell 2003:270). Additionally, when the Poulet Quartet asked Debussy if their performance was in accordance with his original intentions, he answered ‘Not in the least. But on second thought... don’t change anything; it would spoil the coherence, and the sincerity of your playing would lose its eloquence and its original colour’ (cited Timbrell 2003:273).

Comparing many of Stravinsky’s scores to most previous ballets immediately highlights a vast increase in the amount of dynamic instruction and accurate tempo requirements. In other scores (e.g. *Les Noces*) there are virtually none. Both extremes demonstrate a preference for a more de-personalised performance than was commonplace at the time.⁵⁷ Although Mahler also made exacting demands writing hundreds of directions into his symphonic scores, Stravinsky appears to have shifted this approach into the ballet genre. These requests must be considered alongside other factors such as the choreographic demands placed on the dancers, technical demands on the instrumentalists and the acoustic of the performance space. This is especially true in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, where the tempos in the Arias must be adapted to suit the individual soloists (both Arias accompany a pas de deux). Here the challenging movements for the dancers (choreographed by Balanchine especially for the original soloists), coupled with the demands on the violinist and orchestra, alter the conductor’s interpretative relationship with the score.

Stravinsky’s perpetual revisions (most notably of *The Rite*), although also motivated by copyright issues, further demonstrate the desire to control the performance of his music. On one level, this incorporation of increased (and updated) ‘guidance’ ensures a more successful performance and a higher level of composer-performer communication. But on another level, the composer is unrealistic in his denial of influences from the outside world. Taruskin notes Stravinsky’s own admission of this.

⁵⁷ His interest in pianolas and gramophone recordings also reflected this preference for a more de-personalised ‘execution’. See Rex Lawson ‘Stravinsky and the Pianola’ in Jann Pasler (ed) *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician, and Modernist* (1986).

‘If the speeds of everything in the world and in ourselves have changed... our tempo feelings cannot remain unaffected... The metronome marks one wrote forty years ago were contemporary forty years ago. Time is not alone in affecting tempo-circumstances do too, and every performance is a different equation of them’ (Stravinsky cited Taruskin 1995a:361).

Therefore a study of conductors’ loyalty to Stravinsky’s aesthetic preferences would only conclude what has already been deduced by Cook, Taruskin and others; that although they are an understandable reaction against nineteenth-century vitalism, they are very often unrealistic in relation to the work of conductors. This is particularly so in ballet, with so many extra-musical factors contributing to the nature of the performance. However, identification of the manifestation of these pronouncements in his music gives us an understanding of Stravinsky’s aesthetic influence, thus enabling a more practice-based assessment of his impact on the profession.

A hermeneutic approach to Stravinsky’s ballets is the most applicable of aesthetic approaches to conducting. McKay suggests that the ‘real interpretative interest in Stravinsky’s music theatre might lie in *hermeneutic*, more than *physical* voicing strategies’ (2007:16). This sentiment can be applied to *Agon*, which contains stylistic juxtapositions that have a surprisingly practical impact on the conductor’s work. It is an abstract, contemporary ballet that adopts sixteenth and seventeenth-century dance forms. A number of the dances are named after those of the period, i.e. Galliarde, Bransle, and the Saraband, yet much of the score has a very abstract, contemporary nature, and the varying use of serialism is a stark contradiction.⁵⁸

The Saraband, for example, is a dance that originated in Latin-America in the late sixteenth century. At this point it was a fast and lively dance alternating between the metres of 3/4 and 6/8. In the seventeenth century, it spread to Italy, and then France – where it evolved into a more slow and stately dance (Latham 2004:158). This kind of Saraband is reflected in *Agon*, and the soloist’s ‘bow’ at the end of the ‘Saraband-Step’ is evocative of this style. In many respects the main musical characteristics are retained: the dance is written in binary form and its triple time is inherent throughout, often with an emphasis on the second

⁵⁸ Balanchine’s choreography follows a similar philosophy, it is contemporary but with references to these Renaissance dances.

beat of the bar. The opening solo violin chord [Bb-F-A] accent on the second beat in 3/4 time embodies the characteristic Saraband rhythm. Yet Stravinsky is obviously not attempting to emulate the Saraband style in most other respects. The instrumentation (solo violin, xylophone, trombones and cellos) is not evocative of any early music and the musical language is unmistakably twentieth-century. The music is highly discordant and uncomfortable listening, yet the heavy use of trombones gives the dance a circus-like, humorous feel. The xylophone tremolos and trills in the violin part add an eccentric element that suggests that although the music is intellectual, it is not taking itself too seriously. Alternatively, the *Pas de Deux* demonstrates a contrasting set of stylistic paradoxes. A dance that usually portrays romance and intimacy, is coupled with music at *Agon*'s most serial and abstract point. The choice of instruments at the start of the dance is typical of a pas de deux, as the strings are used exclusively until the start of the male dancer's solo. However, this is combined with almost Webernesque music, which gives the impression of strands or threads of sound accompanying the action on stage.

These misalliances complicate any possible 'interpretation', and the conductors interviewed and studied showed a varying interest in exposing any paradoxes or theatricality within the music. Ellis believes that the more 'metronomic' the approach (i.e. without imposing extra phrasing or interpretation) the more successful *Agon*'s performance will be - 'the music will look after itself'. For him, there was no need to consider the aesthetic, serialist or dramatic issues and considered the piece more as a 'moving framework' whose only leniency was to adapt to the action on stage. Yet Murphy⁵⁹ (who believes *Agon* is the hardest of the Stravinsky ballets to conduct) contests it is important for the conductor to expose these theatrical aspects of the music. He suggests that it is necessary to highlight the phrasing and shape of the music in order to enable the dancers to relate to the music and make sense of the score. Therefore it is often hermeneutic analysis, combined with performance analysis that reveals the true impact of Stravinsky's aesthetic pronouncements.

⁵⁹ Interviewed 2nd October 2009.

Stylistic Analysis

Stylistic analysis is of particular relevance in the neo-classical chapters, although it is also relevant in *Agon*. Hyde formed four models that can reflect this varied use of pre-existing material in both *Apollo* and *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. The first is ‘eclectic imitation’ – which arises when ‘unspecified group of earlier composers and styles all jostle with each other indifferently’ (2003:102). This applies to *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* in particular. The second type is ‘reverential’, whereby existing material is reworked and modernised by means of ‘modern ornaments and orchestral effects, adding devices such as diatonic dissonances, extended ostinatos, brilliant orchestration, altered phrase lengths and so on’ (109). Stravinsky adopts this type of imitation in *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy’s Kiss*. The former is a reworking of music by Pergolesi et al. The latter re-composes sections of Tchaikovsky’s piano music, with these quotations ‘often strung together by lengthy passages wholly of Stravinsky’s making’ (109).

The third type is ‘heuristic’, in which Classical or Baroque forms are employed by the composer, in order to ‘position himself within a specific culture and tradition thereby opening a transitive dialogue with the past’ (114-5). Hyde shows how this is especially relevant to the Symphony in C (115-122), but in this thesis it is particularly relevant in the study of *Apollo*, which employs the Alexandrine Principle found in seventeenth-century French Literature. The final type is Dialectical Imitation. This is when a work and the model Stravinsky has drawn are engaged in a more aggressive dialogue, as if each is fighting its case or position (122-3). ‘Dialectic imitation is often historically and culturally aware, acknowledging anachronism but exposing in its model a defect, irresolution or naivety. At the same time, dialectic imitation invites and risks reciprocal treatment’ (122). *The Rake’s Progress* is Hyde’s main case study here.

Of course, a work can display any number of these imitative techniques. Hyde does not suggest that a work is restricted to using one type of imitation, and instead presents these models as the ‘four principal strategies Stravinsky employed in his neo-classical works’ (98). For example, the Symphony in C is used as a case study in the application of heuristic imitation, yet the influence of the Classical musical *style* (e.g. Beethoven, Mozart) can also

be heard, showing evidence of eclectic imitation. But more interestingly, it emerged that there are discrepancies in the imitation used by Stravinsky and those perceived by conductors. Stravinsky himself noted several quotations that had been suggested by others as being present in *Apollo*. For example, *The Boys from Syracuse* (an impossibility - it is a 1938 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical), Delibes, Tchaikovsky, Debussy's *Clair de la Lune* at the start of the Pas de Deux, and the 'miserere' of Verdi's *Il trovatore* (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:33-34). Diaghilev heard the influences of Glinka and sixteenth century Italian Music (White 1979:342).⁶⁰ Conductors in interview have yet more suggestions. Murphy⁶¹ heard traces of *Giselle* in the Apotheose, and Ellis elaborated further.

If anything it is closest to Schnittke. It is a tapestry of a whole range of styles. At points it is unbelievably purist neo-classical music, at others unbelievably tacky neo-classical music, at others 1940's film music, no two bits are the same. Like Prokofiev the banal string writing only gives greater reinforcement to the powerful sections (such as the Apotheose). I make sure I make the characterisation of these contrasting styles really strong (although I don't verbalise this to the orchestra!).

In *Apollo* Stravinsky *does* admit drawing inspiration from seventeenth-century French music. The dance music of Lully, for example, is resembled in the clean string melodies and minimal orchestration. However, it is not the musical style to which he refers but the themes and forms popular in the era.

Apollo is a tribute to the French Seventeenth-Century. I thought that Frenchmen might have taken the hint for this, if not my musical Alexandrines, at least from the décors, the chariot, the three horses, and the sun disc (the Coda) were the emblem of le roi soleil (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:34).

Therefore, it appears that, although 'heuristic imitation' (2003:114-5) is apparent throughout in the application of eighteenth century literary models, performers still presume the presence of 'eclectic imitation' (102) and take it upon themselves to tease out these traces of other styles and composers in performance. This analysis is therefore instrumental in assessing the conductors' level of interpretation of the neo-classical works in particular, and creates a practice-based connection with Stravinsky's aesthetic preferences.

⁶⁰ White himself disagrees with this assertion (342).

⁶¹ Interviewed 16th June 2010.

Conclusion

With a compound methodology including hermeneutics, score analysis, performance analysis and historicism, is possible to form a multi-faceted study of Stravinsky's effect on the conductor's work. It acknowledges the complexity of the role, and adapts the various musicological discourses to the subject of conducting, rather than viewing it through one specific (and therefore restrictive) filter. Bowen shares these sentiments and suggests that although different methodologies will be more successful than others 'it can only be good to have the widest possible range from which to choose' (2001:451).

In addition to offering a new, unexplored subdiscipline, the study of music *as* and *in* performance provides a context within which both the different branches of the 'new' musicology and the old and the new musicology can come together and talk about *music* once again (Bowen 1999:424).

Each chapter will vary in its weighting on each discourse. For example, *The Rite of Spring* chapter includes more rhythmic and performance analysis than the chapter on *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, which is more weighted towards choreo-musical analysis and hermeneutics. This more malleable approach allows the methodology to reflect the main challenges of each case study, and therefore be applicable to the ballets in each stage in Stravinsky's career. My hope is that the research will provide an insight into the worlds of both conducting and ballet, and how the two fields interact. Also, that it may lead towards a mutually informative relationship between musicology and conducting practice.

Chapter 3. *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*

Introduction

Although the impact of Stravinsky's earliest ballets is now overshadowed by what was to follow, both *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* presented unique challenges and developments to the conductor at the time of their premieres. However, the musicological attention they have attracted usually covers aspects of the music that did not make greatest practical impact in performance. This, combined with *The Rite of Spring*'s bombastic entrance, has skewed our perception of Stravinsky's early influence. In the rhythmic arena, Stravinsky is already making his mark, and the recitative sections accompanying the choreographed mime on stage altered and developed the dynamic between the music and choreography. The orchestration is also inventive and virtuosic (*Petrushka*, for Ellis,¹ Conductor at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, is the hardest of the Stravinsky ballets to conduct). It is therefore essential to start this investigation into Stravinsky's effect on the conductor from a point pre-*The Rite of Spring*. From a practical and theatrical perspective, Stravinsky is already making waves for those holding the baton.

Stravinsky's Early Rhythmic Innovations

The Firebird

Although *The Rite of Spring* is the most famous ballet in Stravinsky's repertoire for posing irregular rhythmic challenges to the conductor, it was not the first to do so. In sections of his first ballet Stravinsky is already testing the conductor's memory and rhythmic awareness. These rhythms also proved challenging for the dancers - Joseph writes that Karsavina, the original *Firebird* (2011:35) and the dancers in dress rehearsal (37) struggled with the music. These issues are particularly pertinent in 'Dance of the Firebird', that Stravinsky regarded as 'the most successful piece of the score... undoubtedly' (Stravinsky & Craft 1962:133). In the first eight bars (see Ex. 1) Stravinsky immediately disorients

¹ Conductor at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, interviewed 9th March 2011.

the listener - the demi-semiquavers in the D clarinet, sounding rather like an introductory trill leading into the start of the main melody, actually commence on the first beat of the opening bar. The pizzicato C# in the cello part (that provides the bass line) falls on the second quaver beat of the 6/8 bar. Both features are repeated at the beginning of the second four bar phrase, and Stravinsky compounds the disorientation by writing the second half of each of these four bar phrases in 3/4. The 'iridescent sheen' as White describes it (1984:187), created by Stravinsky's use of chromatic figuration, clouds the perception of rhythmic pulse, especially in its passing between four different woodwind instruments. Their frequently offbeat entries add to the rhythmic ambiguity, a technique that Stravinsky developed later in *The Rite of Spring* as well as in his final ballet *Agon* (in particular the Pas de Deux). All of these factors underline the need for the conductor's clear beat and a secure understanding of the score.

Ex. 1 Dance of the Firebird (Bars 1-8 – piano reduction)

Dance of the Firebird

Allegro rapace $\text{♩} = 60$

[14] Allegro rapace $\text{♩} = 60$

p *poco cresc.*

mf *poco cresc.*

p *poco cresc.*

Petrushka

It is in *Petrushka* where Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations gain more momentum. The use of consistently altering, irregular time signatures (or Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction)² is already developed in areas, and therefore presents new rhythmic obstacles to the conductor prior to *The Rite*'s 1913 premiere. Although Taruskin draws attention to the second tableau's continuous alterations in tempo - 'the music moves fitfully, impetuously in 110 bars of music there are sixteen changes of tempo' (2005:162), the

² See Methodology p.25 for an explanation of Van den Toorn's two rhythmic-metric types.

conductors interviewed, Ellis and Murphy,³ said their attention was more drawn to the rhythmic language in the first and fourth tableaux.

Irregular Time Signatures

Although much of the first tableau uses a relatively conventional rhythmic language, there is a recurring section that utilises Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction. At R7 in the 1911 score (R13 in the 1947 revision) there is an eight bar extract with time signatures ranging from 2/8 through to 5/8 (see Ex. 2a). Variations on this section return six times in the first tableau. It is not commonly featured in musicological literature, but is covered by both Rudolf (1950:284) and Grosbayne (1973:114-15) in their conducting guides.⁴ Interestingly, the section appears in many guises in the different revisions made by the composer. In the 1947 revision, there are the same thirty-one quavers but the bars either side of the three 5/8 bars have been altered (see Ex. 2b). In the piano reduction of the work, the time signatures have been altered again. The same thirty-one quavers are now notated in a mixture of 7/8 and 5/8 bars (see Ex. 2c). Another example is at R17 in the original score, where the repeated section returns. Although, again, the later orchestral score and piano reduction utilise the same amount of quavers, they are notated differently. This passage is the one of the reasons why Ellis finds *Petrushka* such a challenge.⁵

There are many tricky corners which look very similar but are subtly different ... Stravinsky also tries rhythmical tricks out that he very rarely repeated ... Notably the 5s and 7s that he rescored between 1911 and 1947 and the notorious passage of 5s near the end that orchestras always heave a sigh of relief when they reach the 2/4 bar safely.⁶

³ Interviewed 30th June 2009.

⁴ Grosbayne's writing on 'Rapidly Changing Rhythms' (1973:113-117) is a section that uses examples of Stravinsky's music exclusively. The variety of time signatures, he writes, 'all seem to point to some sort of record' (113). 'Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite, *Petrouchka*, and *Le Sacre du Printemps* should be the student's constant companion since they constitute in themselves an unparalleled set of exercises in fluid pulsation, unique in the history of music' (115). Note here the conspicuous absence of *Les Noces*, a topic discussed in Chapter 4 p.97-8.

⁵ Robert Haydon Clark, Violinist for London Symphony Orchestra 1974– 1999 (interviewed 8th October 2013), felt that *Petrushka*, in many respects, presented more challenges to the conductor than *The Rite of Spring*. He felt this was due to the difficult transitions between tableaux and the awkward tempo changes.

⁶ Email to author 19th October 2012.

Ex. 2a) R7 in Tableau 1 (1911 *Petrushka* score)

Ex 2b) The 1947 revision

Ex. 2c) Stravinsky's Piano Reduction



Quoting this section in its original form, Rudolf refers to the 5/8 bars and recommends that they be conducted with a single ‘1-beat’ (1950:284). However, this is not the technique used by conductor Zubin Mehta.⁷ Using the revised score (apparent by his beating patterns – which correspond exactly with the revision’s time signature changes), he beats a 1-beat for the two 3/8 bars. He uses conventional time beating patterns for the 3/4 and 2/4 bars but an up and downbeat for the 5/8 bars. This formula is consistently and clearly adhered to every time the section returns. The irregular rhythmic language (along with the frequent absence of a discernable melody) demands a more exhaustive knowledge of the score in comparison to earlier, more melodious Romantic ballets by, for example, Tchaikovsky or Delibes. It also serves as a precursor to the Metric-Type 1 construction using minute subdivisions seen in *The Rite of Spring*’s ‘Sacrificial Dance’. Grosbayne stresses the need to memorise this music before beginning to master the beating patterns.

It should be stressed that the only safe way to acquire assurance and conviction in this branch of conducting technique is to know the music so well that the hand, already trained to execute varying patterns with facility, automatically translates the successive time signatures into the appropriate designs. Trying to memorize the time signatures first, and by this means, to adapt the patterns, results almost inevitably in stilted performance. One must know the work really well before starting to beat it (116).

Established contemporary conductors can still be seen to rely more heavily on the score when performing Stravinsky than they would with the work of many other ballet composers. This observation applies to Valery Gergiev, who scrutinises the score far more closely in the performance of Stravinsky’s Piano Concerto than in the performances of Prokofiev’s *Scythian Suite*, and Debussy’s *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* in the same

⁷ Conducting the Berlin Philharmonic in 1995. Large, B (2002) *Zubin Mehta, European Concert 1995*: Sarah Chang, Berliner Philharmoniker, Palazzo Vecchio Florence TDK Recording media Europe, S.A.

concert.⁸ This is an issue addressed in the work of Andriessen and Schonberger (1989:39-45), who dedicate a chapter in *The Apollonian Clockwork on Stravinsky* to the issue of memorising Stravinsky's music.⁹

Whoever plays Stravinsky can hardly do so without the score. In general, sightreading a piece is easier when one has already heard it a few times. One then only partly reads the music: the memory fills in the rest. Doing this with Stravinsky will generally lead to disaster ... Much (especially twentieth-century) music places higher demands on the memory's capabilities than Stravinsky's music does. But what is most difficult to remember is what is 'almost easy to remember' (1989:40).¹⁰

Therefore although Stravinsky's music is 'memorable' in its distinctive style and fragments of recognisable melodies, it is hard to recall accurately. The seemingly conventional, tonal motifs that are 'almost repeated' lull the conductor into a false sense of security. Every time the extract above is repeated, it is altered slightly. In the 1947 version these alterations are applied to the orchestration, chord voicing, the time signatures or specific lengths of individual bars.¹¹ It is therefore not a straightforward returning section (a feature exploited further in *The Rite of Spring*), and Stravinsky is making the conductor work harder to memorise subtle changes.

Superimposed metres

Another one of *Petrushka*'s most novel developments is the superimposition of one time signature on top of another (used again by Stravinsky in *Apollo*, see p. 125-6). At the beginning of the 1911 score at R3 +2, the piccolo and oboe parts play in 7/8, while the music for the rest of the orchestra remains in 3/4. Max Rudolf, quoting four bars, starting at R4 -1, advises,

⁸ Conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra in 1997. Van den Berg (1997) *Valery Gergiev, in Rehearsal and Performance* [DVD] Art Haus Musik.

⁹ Entitled 'Ordeals of the Memory' (p.39-45).

¹⁰ For Jurowski (interviewed 3rd July 2013) this particularly applies to the neoclassical ballets *Pulcinella* and *Fairy's Kiss*. This is because it is easy to confuse the original material (by Pergolesi et al and Tchaikovsky respectively) with Stravinsky's reworked version.

¹¹ Kramer has studied the form of *Petrushka* (1988:290-2), and argues that the first tableau is divided into three sections, and exhibits an early large scale attempt by Stravinsky at formal symmetry.

The 8/8 and 7/8 against 3/4 cannot both be included in the beat. Use 3-beat, but with weakened second and third beats, which facilitates the synchronizing of the odd rhythms with the beat. Apply a similar technique to bars 3 and 4 (1950:263).

Ex. 3 *Petrushka*'s superimposed time signatures (R4 +4).



However the overall impact of this particular section on the conductor's work has proved to be negligible. This is because the most commonly used version of *Petrushka* is the 1947 revision, in which this superimposition is abandoned. The absence of this superimposition in itself suggests that the composer had realised it was unnecessarily complex.¹² Nevertheless, it provided for the conductor a taster of the music to come, and for the conductor was among the first in many exercises in rhythmic detangling.

Balletic Recitative

'The Capture of the Firebird'

Although *The Firebird* employs the same 'Ruslanesque' opposition¹³ seen in the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, it drew out of Stravinsky a different method of storytelling. For the conductor, it broke new ground in its style of narrative by 'evolving a curiously naïve but effective type of dumb recitative to fit the numerous passages of mime' (White 1984:184). For these passages I shall use the term 'balletic recitative', in reference to passages of a similar nature found in opera and musical theatre. In the incidental music following 'The

¹² Conductors frequently lament the excessive detail in the notation of parts of Stravinsky's music (this is discussed in more detail in the following chapter p.80-4 in relation to *The Rite*).

¹³ i.e. chromaticism used to represent the fantasy world, and more diatonic music representing the realistic. For example, see Taruskin 1996:602.

Dance of the Firebird' (starting a bar before R21), there are five bars of music accompanying the entrance of Ivan Tsarevitch and the initial capture of the Firebird. Ex. 4 demonstrates how the choreography corresponds with Stravinsky's score. Although a spontaneous impression is given by the music, it is accurately scored, continuing in 6/8. Another example occurs between R27 and 29 (Ex. 5), with the short spurts of music accompanying the Firebird's diminishing struggle to escape. Again this is scored within a regular rhythmic framework (it is in 2/4 concluding with three 3/4 bars). As the simple choreographed mime also demands minimal consideration on the conductor's part, this gives him more control of the pace of the action. Conductor Murphy said he rarely looked up to the stage during performances of *The Firebird* – a practice not suitable for the later Stravinsky/Balanchine ballets where the choreography demands more flexibility and consideration on the conductor's part.

Ex. 4 R21 and corresponding choreography.¹⁴

A

B C D E F G H

A Firebird stands

B Firebird turns

C, D Firebirds steps forward on the crotchet beats¹⁵

¹⁴ These observations are taken from footage of two performances: Caiozzi, D. (2009) *Stravinsky and the Ballet Russes* [DVD] Mariinsky Theatre Bel Air Classiques (conducted by Gergiev); and MacGibbon, R. (2001) *The Firebird and Les Noces* [DVD] BBC Classical Music Production, Opus Arte (conducted by John Carewe).

- E, F Firebird takes smaller steps forward
 G Ivan takes hold of her
 H Firebird looks behind her

Ex. 5 R27-29.

A B C D E F

G H I J

a) switch hands

- A Firebird crosses arms in front of her whilst Ivan keeps hold
 B, C Firebird flutters arms above head (loosely in time with music)
 D Firebird crosses arms again
 E, F, G Flutters arms as before (loosely in time with music)
 H Firebird crosses arms in a lower position¹⁶
 I, J Firebird jerks weakly showing diminishing efforts to escape

This formula differs from the ‘dance after dance’ approach used in Tchaikovsky’s three full-length ballets, or the more continuous, seamless music commonly found in the ballet music of Debussy (e.g. *Jeux*) and Ravel (e.g. *Daphnis and Chloe*). Jordan suggests that in Stravinsky ‘there was a new, exotic sound world, descriptive landscapes in music from

¹⁵ To the side in the Mariinsky performance, to the back of the stage in the Royal Ballet performance.

¹⁶ Firebird is on one knee in the Royal Ballet Performance.

which ‘dances’ would emerge and merge back again’ (2000:32). Ellis disagreed with this assertion in interview, believing that balletic recitative is already present in Delibes’ *Coppelia*, and Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* - Stravinsky is merely building on this. Taruskin (2005:132) has also highlighted the use of a similar approach in the *ballet d’action* of the Eighteenth Century.¹⁷ However, Stravinsky’s balletic narrative music was written to sound more spontaneous and reflective of the action on stage. Many parts of *The Firebird*’s score run more like a film soundtrack, more literally following the physical movements of the dancers (known informally as ‘mickey-mousing’ as it was echoed in the music of later Disney cartoons). This ‘literalness’, Taruskin writes, was ‘perceived to be the ballet’s greatest merit in 1910’ (1996:586).

From a stylistic point of view, moreover, the recitatives contain practically the only music of interest in the score, surely the only music that gives any inkling of the Stravinsky to come (588).

Ironically, this was an approach Stravinsky did not favour, and was the reason that he was not initially drawn to *The Firebird* story. ‘It demanded descriptive music of a kind I did not want to write’ (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:128). For example, he did not look favourably upon the dialogue between Kastchei and Ivan Tsarevitch: it was ‘as literal as opera’ (128n). In fact, the driving force behind *The Firebird*’s balletic recitative was the choreographer, Michel Fokine, the man with whom Diaghilev appointed Stravinsky to collaborate. From the outset, Fokine already had very specific ideas about *The Firebird*’s scenes, storyline and characters, and as he had received musical training, was equipped in advising Stravinsky of his wishes. ‘At my request he broke up his national themes into short phrases corresponding to the separate moments of a scene, separate gestures and poses’ (Fokine cited Taruskin 2005:152). This explains the composer’s abandonment of the method in later ballets, and indeed why the *Firebird* Suite was comprised of the main dances without the adjoining music.¹⁸ However, with the continued use of melodic fragments in Stravinsky’s

¹⁷ The equivalent of recitative was ‘pantomime’ or gestural mimicry, in which elements of plot were ‘acted out’ in a very stylized way to the accompaniment of loosely structured ‘mimetic’ music (2005:132).

¹⁸ Jordan observes it was ‘created partly because he wanted to copyright his music and receive royalties for the first time in the U.S.A., partly because the illustrative recitative music in the old score was anathema to his mature aesthetic approach’ (2007:134).

later music, the demands they made on the conductor can be attributed as much to Fokine as to Stravinsky himself.

Chez Petrouchka

Firebird is assembled out of excerptible dances and meandering passages for mime, with the motto used discreetly to yoke things together. *Petrushka*'s mimes and dances interrupt each other and reflect each other, with the motto always attached to the central conflict (Austin 1987:11).

Fokine was also the co-creator of Stravinsky's second ballet, although the composer and choreographer worked less closely on this occasion. In *Petrushka*'s second tableau (entitled *Chez Petrouchka*) Stravinsky continues to employ the balletic recitative, but now utilises a more sophisticated approach to the drama. He employed an unusual concoction of recitative, and 'arias' – moments of more conventional balletic music. These appear in bursts, almost as if extracts of other pieces, to temporarily draw the audience into *Petrushka*'s world. The drama is also contradicted by Stravinsky's music. The puppet's plight is not obviously reflected in the score, and the composer writes in a primarily passion-less style, as if to invite the audience to observe the scenario rather than empathise with the character. For example, at R108, the music that accompanies *Petrushka* as he sees the ballerina is almost frivolous and shallow, and does not communicate any sensual longing or desperation. The conductor is not only 'directing' what is, in essence, a complete 'soundtrack' to the action on stage (rather than short spurts of recitative between dances as seen in *The Firebird*), but also dealing with drama that is being objectively communicated. Stravinsky, to quote Bernstein, remains at 'a respectful distance' (1976:337). This objectivity that Stravinsky imposes takes away the conductor's right to dramatise any key moments: the contradictory music communicates its own message.

Even in the most emotional moments – such as *Petrushka*'s sadness [plays R102] – even here that sense of objectivity is maintained. You see, the more mechanically and pitilessly Stravinsky presents it, the more moving it is to us (Bernstein 1976:337).¹⁹

¹⁹ Bernstein embraced the character of *Petrushka* in his conducting of the work. 'Lenny, before our eyes, became the hapless puppet. His hands went limp and his head lulled to one side, as he mimed the spirit of the work' (Kraus cited Secrest 1995:190).

As the choreography in this second tableau is primarily mime (i.e. technically less challenging), it is possible (as with the *Firebird* examples) for the dancers to follow the music as delivered. The conductor does not need to cue or consider the dancers to the same extent as in the first and fourth tableaux, and therefore continues to adopt an altered level of power in terms of the intricacies of dramatic action on stage. Murphy states that although the mime in the second tableau is intricate, the conductor is still in control. ‘The second and third parts [tableaux] need to be tight, but the music still leads. The choreography is not that demanding. The colour of the score, and the costumes, make *Petrushka* more of a theatrical challenge.’ Jordan also addresses the comparative complexity of the score, and thus the increased importance of the music in relation to the dance.

Hearing *Petrushka* in concert – he had never seen the ballet – was enough to convince the Moscow music critic Nikolai Kashkin that the centre of gravity had moved away from the dance to the music (Jordan 2007:107).

Chez Petrouchka’s opening at R93 – 96 (see Ex. 6 below) demonstrates how this modernist music accompanies the choreographed mime. This section starts with Petrushka being thrown into his room by his master, and then follows him in his solitude. The audience sees the character’s despair at his cruel master, and unrequited love for the ballerina.

Ex.6. R93-96. The opening of *Chez Petrouchka* and the corresponding choreography.²⁰

A – Petrushka falls to the ground	G – holds neck on right side
B – Turns head to the left	H – holds neck on left side
C – Turns head to the right	I – reaches up
D – puts head down	J – falls to the ground
E – holds right hip	
F – holds left hip	

²⁰ This analysis refers to the 1991 Paris Opera-Ballet Performance, conducted by Michel Tabachnik. Performances of this section vary more greatly than the more structured first and fourth tableaux. See, for example, Baryshnikov’s performance - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGUmPDvmGfg> (accessed 5th March 2011). This performance is not commercially available.

Molto stringendo. $\text{♩} = 100$

48

A B C

ff *p* *mp*

Molto stringendo. $\text{♩} = 100$

ff *mp* *m.d.* *f*

D 8

Molto meno. $\text{♩} = 50$

E F G

mf *p*

Molto meno. $\text{♩} = 50$

p *lamentoso.*

H I J

lamentoso assai *p*

mf

$\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{2}{4}$

Petrushka's Harmony

Petrushka provides us with the most well known example of Stravinsky's use of bitonality. As Taruskin explains, 'the novel treatment of harmony and tonality ... made the second tableau of *Petrushka* for a while the ne plus ultra – the last word - in modernism' (Taruskin 2005:163).²¹ This innovative approach to harmony is illustrated most famously by the *Petrushka* chord at R100, where the F# major triad in first inversion is clearly superimposed over the C major triad – (see fig. 1). Another example is found at R144 in the third tableau, where the moors motif in G# minor (previously heard at R125 in D minor) is superimposed over the ballerina's motif in B major in the Waltz.

Fig. 1 The 'Petrushka' Chord at R100



One could conclude that the harmony had an effect on the work of Pierre Monteux, after dealing with an embarrassing protest from the Vienna Philharmonic. Although he grew to feel 'a certain fascination for the score, which presented great difficulties to the orchestra'²²... [I]... decided to do my best and to see to it that the musicians knew every facet of its complicated harmonies' (Monteux 1965:78-9), the Vienna Philharmonic did not share his sentiments.²³ However, although this 'controversy' demonstrates that the composer's ballets were causing a stir pre-*The Rite*, one must also consider the relatively intolerant attitude towards Russian Music in Central Europe at the time. Thus the protest could have

²¹ See also Bernstein (1976 :338-9). For Bernstein's wider discussion of bitonality in Stravinsky's music (338-347).

²² It appears that Monteux became rather possessive of *Petrushka*. 'I have always felt this work of Stravinsky's to be my own, and I have had a sort of jealousy, if you will, when others have conducted it. I still conduct in its original form, and I must say I was chagrined and furious when Stravinsky rearranged it a few years ago for smaller orchestra. I have never conducted this version of *Petrouchka*, and, needless to say, I never will. It seems anaemic to me, in comparison with my *Petrouchka*' (Monteux 1965:83).

²³ The whole orchestra rebelled at playing such "dirty music". Then to cap the climax, the string section struck! ... At the first performance, violins, violas, 'celli and basses played so pianissimo I could hardly hear them, and to add to the confusion, the brass and woodwinds played fortissimo (Monteux 1965:84). Monteux dealt with the rebellion by signalling to the strings that they were still too loud, and for the brass to play even louder.

easily been expressing disapproval of the music's *style* rather than its harmony in particular. Moreover, Taruskin has also exposed the pre-existing influences behind *Petrushka*'s innovative harmonic language. He exposes traces of Rimsky-Korsakov and Steinberg in Stravinsky's use of octatonicism, and argues that the use of bi-tonality was not unprecedented.²⁴

Ravel had anticipated it in both *Jeux d'eau* and *Rapsodie Espagnole*... Richard Strauss had anticipated it in *Elektra*..., and even Maximilian Steinberg, a less famous pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, had used it in a memorial prelude for orchestra in honour of their teacher.... There is even a fleeting occurrence of the *Petrushka*-chord near the beginning of *Firebird* (2005:164).

The harmony was also considered to be a more minor issue by the conductors interviewed. For Ellis, *Petrushka*'s difficulties did not lie in the harmony of the Second Tableau, but in the rhythms of the first and last.²⁵ This sentiment is also shared in relation to the use of serialism in *Agon* (see Chapter 8 p.155-6) - although the conductors showed an interest in understanding the harmonic language, they did not feel it was instrumental to a successful performance. This highlights the disconnection of the musicological academy from the more pragmatic analysis undertaken by conductors and performance. In Stravinsky's music, a conductor's understanding of the composer's (albeit progressive) harmonic language is less instrumental to a successful performance than the rhythmic language. Therefore Stravinsky's (albeit inventive) use of harmony in *Petrushka* cannot be argued to have any profound impact on the conductor's work or role within ballet.

Stravinsky Stretches the Rimskian Orchestration

Although *The Firebird* is now often seen as a relatively immature work (displaying obvious 'Rimskian' influences)²⁶ there is nonetheless a clear development in the orchestration that altered the expectations placed on the premiere's conductor (Gabriel Pierné) and orchestra. Ernest Ansermet expressed the need for a first rate orchestra. 'This ballet is extremely difficult to play for the orchestra. The writing of Stravinsky is very difficult, very subtle'

²⁴ It is also addressed by Van den Toorn (1983: 84-6).

²⁵ Here the shifts between these extracts of 'recitative' and 'aria' are written in a less rhythmically free, but equally complex way, placing more pressure on the conductor to deliver an accurate performance.

²⁶ See, for example, Taruskin (2005:152-159).

(cited Chesterman 1976:80). Moreover, this opinion is still shared by present day conductors. Ellis believes ‘every instrument in the orchestra is pushed to its limits. It is incredibly daring.’ In reference to Taruskin’s historical deconstruction of Stravinsky’s influence, Ellis stated, ‘you could maybe find an example of everything in Rimsky-Korsakov, but Stravinsky is outdoing him at every level’. Murphy²⁷ considers the score virtuosic even today, and it not only must be played accurately but also emanate a theatrical, Russian atmosphere. This shift is not attributed solely to the advancement of instrumental technique in specific areas (this more explicit move forward is discussed in the following chapter dedicated to *The Rite of Spring*). The instrumentalists are also stretched because of irregular rhythms, asymmetrical phrasing and their relationship to other members of the orchestra. And as Ellis suggests below, Stravinsky appears to be writing *for* the instruments, rather than adapting music conceived at the piano.

As for taking Rimsky-Korsakov to the next level - you could cite any instrument and make a clear argument for his masterly development of the rep for that instrument. The easiest is the percussion where Rimsky-Korsakov was already a clear leader - giving extensive soloistic passages to the percussion. Here the percussion is a decorative and atmospheric addition to the wonderful scoring elsewhere or a rhythmic feature in its own right. In *Firebird* Stravinsky takes this to a new level. The xylophone writing alone is entirely new - as if composed for the instrument with the harmony suggested by its own timbre. This is not a piano passage orchestrated but a passage conceived for the instrument for purely artistic and expressive reasons.²⁸

Petrushka

A similar principle can be applied to *Petrushka*, as although the ballet draws heavily on Russian Folk Music (i.e. unoriginal material) Stravinsky’s orchestration is, again, distinctive. In particular the second tableau, *Chez Petrouchka*, presents an unusual orchestral dynamic. Stravinsky originally intended the material to be included in a concert work,²⁹ described by the composer as a ‘combat between piano and orchestra’ (cited Taruskin 2005:159). However, upon hearing this orchestral music, Diaghilev persuaded Stravinsky to transfer it to the theatre. The conductor’s role was now to mediate between a

²⁷ Principal Conductor of the Birmingham Royal Ballet, interviewed 16th June 2010.

²⁸ Ellis, email to author, 19th October 2012.

²⁹ See White (1979:194-195) for a synopsis of the composition process.

soloist, orchestra, and the action on stage. As is the case with much of Stravinsky's music for soloists, the piano is not employed as a solo instrument in the traditional sense, but in this instance facilitates the shifts between the various tonal centres.³⁰ It features most highly in the chromatic sections, and accompanies Petrushka's frenzy at R99 (that builds into the famous bi-chordal passage at R100), the bridge passage in Petrushka's 'lament' between R102 and R103, the ballerina's entrance, and Petrushka's torment between R113 and R116 (just before the re-introduction of the 'Petrushka chord' section). Stravinsky also specified unusual performance preferences, 'at the rehearsals I.S. tells the pianist to open the lid all the way, to use the left pedal only, to play *forte* and *secco*' (Stravinsky & Craft 1968:310). Stravinsky is now using the piano in a more percussive way, a far cry from the Romantic, nineteenth-century piano music, in which the right pedal sustains the thick harmonies and lyrical melodies.

It also differs to the role of solo instrumentalists in most previous ballets. Even Tchaikovsky's flamboyant *seuqenzas* (for example the violin solo at the beginning of the 'Russian Dance' in Act 3 of *Swan Lake*) were usually utilised as an introduction to a comparatively conventional dance. Instead, the piano 'seuqenzas' in *Chez Petrouchka* are recurring, and more spontaneous in their style and relationship with the choreographed mime on stage. Stravinsky's early orchestration therefore altered the nature of rehearsal for the conductor, in that he was presented with more demanding music as well as an altered orchestral dynamic. Ellis also highlights the altered use of percussion.

In Petrushka the special arrangement for cymbals attached to bass drum in the Moors dance is an outdated technique reinvented to create a distinct sound world. Whereas Rimsky-Korsakov would have been using the percussion for decoration, Stravinsky is using the percussion as the starting point to build a texture and atmosphere which is unique, revolutionary and wholly evocative of the exotic.³¹

³⁰ This principal is also explored in Chapter 6 in relation to *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* chapter (p.129-133). The violinist does not take centre stage in the same way as he or she would in most other Romantic concertos, and there is no cadenza. 'I did not compose a cadenza, not because I did not care about exploiting the violin virtuosity, but because the violin in combination was my real interest' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:47).

³¹ Ellis, email to author, 19th October 2012.

Conclusion

Although now overshadowed by *The Rite of Spring*, at the time of their premieres both *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* instigated developments in specific aspects of the conductor's role. In *The Firebird*, Stravinsky's orchestration advanced that of his teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, by stretching the instrumentalists technically and rhythmically. Both transcribed interviews of conductors and those carried out by the researcher revealed that the score was, and still is, seen as challenging and virtuosic. In *Petrushka*, the second tableau written for piano and orchestra provides an unusual conductor-soloist-orchestra dynamic, as the section must prioritise the drama over the pianist's expressive desires (this tension is explored further in the *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* chapter).

The dynamic between conductor, orchestra and action on stage is also altered by the development of the 'balletic recitative'. Although this recitative was, in certain respects, reminiscent of passages found in the earlier ballets of Tchaikovsky or Delibes, score and performance analysis highlighted that the music more delicately reflects the action on stage, particularly in *Petrushka*. In *The Firebird*, the section in which the bird is captured, and struggles to escape, exhibits a more literal reflection of the dancer's actions in the music. Although the music sounds rather spontaneous, it is accurately scored, and interviews with ballet conductors have highlighted the slightly altered dynamic this instigated between the conductor and dancers. In both ballets they could follow what was in effect, quite a prescriptive score that dictated the pace of the drama within these narrative scenes (this differs from Stravinsky's later ballets, that saw an abandonment of this recitative style and a greater need to consider the choreography).

However, there are also ways in which *Petrushka*'s influence is exaggerated. The famous use of bitonality and octatonicism, shown by Taruskin (2005:164) to have Russian precedents, also appears to have had little impact on the conductor's interaction with the music. Although Pierre Monteux dealt with difficulties with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, interviews carried out with conductors confirmed that an understanding of the harmonic language was not instrumental to a successful performance. The challenges lay more in the rhythmic language of the first and last tableaux. In this case, score analysis

highlights that in both ballets Stravinsky is already exploring the use of irregular rhythms (maximised further in *The Rite of Spring*). Stravinsky's use of consistently altering time signatures, disruption of the rhythmic pulse and superimposed metres are already making an impact on the conductor's work, demanding longer hours of solitary study and a more exhaustive knowledge of the score. Stravinsky's reworking of the section at R7 (R13 in the revision), as well as the superimposed metres at R3 (in the original score), also reveals that even the composer himself struggled with the most effective articulation of his rhythmic ideas. This issue is even more pertinent in Stravinsky's following, most famous ballet.

Chapter 4. *The Rite of Spring*

All of the conductors of or about our generation, Furtwangler, Klemperer, Kleiber, and others, did not have lessons in conducting. But we had models. For instance, the young conductors who were devoted to opera worked in an opera house as an assistant conductor, as an accompanist of the choir, as a soloist, and then they were formed. This kind of quite practical formation was possible because at that time all the music was in three or four and the technique of conducting three bars or four bars is very easy; in one hour you know everything...

But came Stravinsky, and instead of having bars in three or four he had these irregular bars, unequal cadences – five-sixteenths, three-sixteenths, two-sixteenths – and a constant change of bars. Then the technique was more complicated and more subtle...

I was the first to introduce these Stravinsky rhythms in Paris, in London, in Berlin – where I conducted the first German performance of *The Rite of Spring* in 1922- and I had to invent this new technique. And as it was rather difficult then the young conductors began asking for lessons, and this method of teaching conducting in lessons directed the attention of the conductor on the technique, not on the music! (Ansermet cited Chesterman 1976:76-7).

Introduction

With Fokine out of the picture, the nature of Stravinsky's ballet scores altered considerably. For example, the 'balletic recitative' – an innovation of Fokine rather than Stravinsky, was not to be used again in the composer's ballet music. Instead, what was to follow would be the explosive collaboration with dancer/choreographer Nijinsky that would come to be seen as one of the most seminal musical events of the twentieth century. Although, the 'myth' of *The Rite's* radical musical impact is now well-trodden territory in musicological terms,¹ assessment of its practical impact on the conductor exposes it in a rather different light. Martyn Brabbins' assertion that 'Stravinsky, single-handedly transformed the role and function of the conductor' (2003:262) is a justified claim in many respects. But closer examination using the compound methodology (particularly score and performance analysis) enables us to view the ballet's influence in alternative ways. *The Rite's* riot and its

¹ See for example, Taruskin, R. *A Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Rite of Spring, the Tradition of the New, and 'The Music Itself'* (1995b:1-26); 'Aristocratic Maximalism' in *The Oxford History of Western Music* Volume 4 (2005:131-190); and 'Stravinsky and Us' in Cross, J. (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (2003:260-284).

mythic legacy have done a great deal to obscure Stravinsky's actual impact on the conductor's work.

The Instrumentation - Stravinsky's Largest Orchestra

Although little musicological focus is placed upon *The Rite*'s orchestration, it is one of the ballet's most striking features, and one that had a tangible impact on the conductor's work. The composer continues with the extravagant instrumentation of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* but now incorporates over one hundred instrumentalists (a size more akin to the modern day symphony orchestra). It was the largest orchestra Stravinsky would ever write for, and although orchestras of a similar size can be found in the wider orchestral repertoire (e.g. Mahler's symphonies) it was novel within the ballet genre. *Swan Lake*, for example, can be performed with approximately thirty players, so *The Rite* presented the ballet conductor with a far greater number of musicians to oversee. Furthermore, Stravinsky stretches the conductor's knowledge of the orchestra by adding many unusual and rarely used instruments. In addition to the typical flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons in the wind section, *The Rite* draws on the piccolo, alto flute, cor anglais, clarinets in D, Eb and A, bass clarinet and contrabassoon. The brass section is expanded with eight horns, five trumpets (one in D, four in C), three trombones and bass tuba. The large percussion section, with bass drum, tam-tam, triangle, guiro, antique cymbals in Ab and Bb as well as timpani requires three percussionists in performance.

But most interesting is that for many sections in the ballet, this hundred-strong orchestra has been turned 'upside-down'. Rather than the strings providing the main body of the music, the orchestra has become 'top heavy' - the woodwind and brass sections now take centre stage in many sections, and this is particularly evident in the ballet's opening. This new sound world challenged the conductor's understanding of orchestral balance, and alters the dynamic within the orchestra. Robert Haydon Clark, first violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra from 1973-1999,² stated that the Introduction was seen as particularly challenging for the woodwind players. The first section of the Introduction to Part I is dominated by the bassoons, horns and clarinets. The strings (violins and violas) are not

² Interviewed 8th October 2013.

introduced until R4, with very minimal pizzicato gestures. Sustained chords in the cellos arrive at R10. This modest employment is a reflection of Stravinsky's belief that strings were 'too symbolic and representative of the human voice', whilst the woodwind and brass instruments were 'more precise and less endowed with facile expression' (Stravinsky cited Van den Toorn and McGinness 2012:266).

Stravinsky also stretches the conductor's knowledge of instrumental technique. The uncomfortable bassoon solo at the ballet's opening, played in the instrument's high register, was an instant sign that Stravinsky was raising the bar in terms of performance expectations. This opening melody, starting an octave above middle C and falling no lower than the E a sixth below, would more typically be allocated to a clarinet or oboe. Ellis³ stated that 'the bassoon had never before been used in this way'. The sound was so unique that the composer Saint-Saens, present at the 1913 premiere, was rumoured to have said 'If that is a bassoon I am a baboon!' (*Keeping Score* 2006). Stravinsky deliberately assigned the bassoon to the role to create a sense of struggle. Conductor Michael Tilson-Thomas suggests that the bassoon's melody, played in this uncomfortable register, and using regular grace notes and ornamentation, was mimicking the breaks in a folk singer's voice (*Keeping Score* 2006).⁴ Alternatively, Hill suggests the possibility of imitating dudki pipes, as these also featured in Roerich's 1911 painting *The Forefathers* (2000:5).⁵ In addition to the novel use of the bassoon, there is a greater exploitation of the percussion section. In fact, percussion entries in the 'Sacrificial Dance' are one of the only places where Monteux writes reminders for himself in the score (Fink 1999:316).⁶ In *The Rite* the timpani and bass drum play a crucial role, particularly in the performance of the 'Sacrificial Dance', and the notation of these parts is complex. For example, from R174 the timpani part is spread over

³ Ellis – interviewed 9th March 2011.

⁴ In more recent decades, the improved standard of orchestral players has ensured that this rugged, precarious opening can be performed with comparative ease. However, in playing the solo with great virtuosity, there is a loss of the earthy, 'ethnic' struggle that is more complimentary to the ballet's subject matter. Stravinsky criticised Boulez's 1963 recording: 'The bassoon is "saxophone-like and vibrato-shiny"' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:82). See Fink (1999) for an in depth analysis and discussion of these evolving performance issues.

⁵ Hill notes that Roerich's painting was produced around the time he and Stravinsky started collaborating (5).

⁶ Fink writes that the markings Monteux made on his *Rite* score were 'quite discreet. It seems that unlike many modern conductors, who use complex systems of score marking to ease (or substitute for) analysing and internalising a tricky score, Monteux knew the *Rite* so well that he needed only the most fleeting aides memoires during actual performance. Most of the markings highlight complex metric changes' (Fink 1999:316).

three staves. The bass drum solo in ‘Dance of the Earth’ is now commonly used as an audition piece, as Stravinsky was exploring the potential of the instrument far more than in most previous orchestral music (*Keeping score* 2006).

Stravinsky as Rhythmic Pioneer?

I know of no more difficult example from the time-beating point of view, in the whole musical literature. The continued change of bars, their variety (bars in 16ths, 8ths, quarters), the complexity of grouping (for instance, five beat bars with different groupings), the complicated harmony and complication of timbres of the music, the extreme complexity of the nature of the rhythm itself, the fast tempo, the unexpected and original changes of tempo, the rhythmical “intermissions” (for instance, the quintuplets of the trombone and trumpets against the duples of the whole orchestra at fig. 151) – all this makes this fragment one of the most curious, interesting and difficult in all musical literature from the point of view of technical problems for the conductor (Malko – commenting on the ‘Sacrificial Dance’ 1950:92).

It is in the rhythmic language where one finds the most pioneering but also the most over-rated areas of the composer’s impact. Unlike musicological literature, conducting books more unquestioningly elevate the rhythmic innovations within Stravinsky’s music to iconic status (see above).⁷ With pulse, metre and time-beating being the most fundamental components of the conductor’s work, these innovations have made a greater impact than the more harmonic advances seen in *Petrushka* or works of the serialist composers.⁸ In chapters covering irregular or compound rhythm, Stravinsky usually steals the limelight, with *The Rite of Spring* as a seemingly mandatory inclusion. The composer/conductors Boulez (1966:55-110) and Bernstein (1976:351-357) have also both placed particular emphasis on rhythm in their academic analysis of *The Rite*. Boulez (writing in 1952) contests ‘while one can perpetuate nothing of the tonal method of *The Rite*... the rhythmic technique, by contrast, still remains practically unexplored’ (1966:107). However, Taruskin’s deconstruction of *The Rite*’s perceived colossal impact on rhythmic language exposes roots

⁷ For a conducting book with a more objective assessment of Stravinsky’s influence alongside other twentieth-century composers, I recommend Prausnitz, F. *Score and Podium: A Complete Guide to Conducting* (1983:450-1) in particular compares key works by Debussy, Bartok, Ives, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Varese in a concise table (see Chapter 2 p.35-7).

⁸ In Chapter 7 (p.151-2), the use of serialism in Stravinsky’s final ballet, *Agon*, will be explored. In this work Stravinsky uses a concoction of musical languages, ranging from diatonicism through to twelve-note serialism. Evidence collected from interviews and primary/secondary texts suggests that the impact is minimal.

in the rhythms of Russian folk music. This differs to his investigation into the influences behind *The Firebird*, which he deduces are primarily from Rimsky-Korsakov (2005:154). The ever-changing time signatures in the ‘Sacrificial Dance’, for example, are rooted in Russian Folk Songs such as ‘Zvon kolokol v yevlasheve sele’ (see fig. 1), found in Rimsky-Korsakov’s 1877 collection of 100 Folk Songs (2005:183). Here the metre is constantly altering between 5/8 to 4/8, 3/8 etc., a clear source of inspiration for Stravinsky’s ‘Sacrificial Dance’.

Fig. 1 *Zvon kolokol v yevlasheve sele* (Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *100 Folk Songs* [1877], no 72)



The Rite, for all its novelty and its inscrutability and the dazzling virtuosity of its orchestral presentation, is not a complex score. Elaborate analytical procedure can make it look far more complicated than it is, even if that complexity is only there to be whittled down in turn to an orderly structural scheme (Taruskin 1995b:14).

However, these folk rhythms were new in the realms of both conducting and ballet. For these reasons, ballet conductor Ellis⁹ believes that this argument is ‘easy to negate’. The orchestra required seventeen rehearsals in total, an unusually long rehearsal period (Monteux 1965:91), and Pierre Monteux had to deal with much confusion and inquiry from the players.¹⁰ The ‘orderly structural scheme’, as Taruskin labels it above, may simplify *The Rite* in terms of its composition, but it does not reflect the composer’s impact on the

⁹ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

¹⁰ ‘Everyone was very confused by the complicated rhythms, atrocious dissonances and strange sounds to which our ears were not accustomed. Musicians started to stop Monteux, asking if the parts were correctly printed, wanting to know, for example, if ‘my B natural is correct as my neighbour is playing B flat’. This went on for a certain time until Monteux said angrily. ‘Do not stop me asking if you have a mistake. If you have one, I will let you know. Monteux was gifted with an extraordinarily accurate ear, besides being a fantastic reader’ (Henri Girard cited Walsh 2002:203).

conductor's role. It is in the 'Sacrificial Dance', at the end of the ballet, where this impact is the hardest to deny.

'Sacrificial Dance'

This dance, the most infamous of the ballet, accompanies the dramatic climax, and contains the most rhythmically dense music in terms of time signatures changes and minute subdivisions. Ansermet's reference at the start of the chapter, to the constantly altering time signatures in sixteenths, is clearly directed towards the 'Sacrificial Dance'. He believed that these rhythmic complexities were new to ballet and the wider orchestral repertoire. However, the overall impact of the 'Sacrificial Dance' is not solely on the conductor's rhythmic *technique*, but most importantly his ability to internalise a complex rhythmic language.

One might suspect that Boulez's notion of the 'variable length cell' could be related to the conductor's internalisation of the 'Sacrificial Dance'. However, Boulez's academic analysis and that he would undertake as a conductor are very different. In *Stocktakings of an Apprenticeship* Boulez argues that the dance's returning 'refrains' (being composed loosely in rondo form) are essentially assembled out of variations of three separate rhythmic cells.¹¹ A is the repeated chord motif and B is the accent followed by the termination. C, balances A+B, and ends in a change of chord (see Ex 1). The lengths of A, B and C are variable (hence the term 'variable length cell'), and Boulez marks sections, for example, A5 or A7 to determine the length (in semiquavers) of each cell (1960:95). A and C vary irregularly, whereas B has only two fixed values (B7 and B4) (96).¹² Although this theory can be utilised in gaining a deeper understanding of the dance's composition, it does not unlock a method of rapid learning. The rhythmic 'cells' are not reflected by the placement of bar lines: in fact they contradict one another. Therefore the conductor must continue to prioritise the communication of *bars*, rather than any underlying rhythmic concepts.

¹¹ Boulez describes the first 'verse' as consisting of two rhythmic patterns, one articulated horizontally (i.e. the motif first played in the strings, horns and bassoons) and the other vertically. The second 'verse', described by Boulez as 'polyrhythmic horizontal superimposition' (94) is dominated far more by the brass and the timpani.

¹² Michael Tilson-Thomas demonstrates this on the piano in the *Keeping Score* documentary (2006).

Clark stated that the LSO needed to rely on the conductor far more in *The Rite of Spring* than in most of the earlier orchestral repertoire. ‘If an experiment were to be carried out with the orchestra playing the “Sacrificial Dance” without the conductor, it would be an absolute mess’. The dance demands clear, straightforward communication, and conductors must keep their beating very simple throughout. Those observed in footage use only very clearly articulated down and upbeats to signal the position in the bar to the orchestra. Rattle,¹³ Tilson-Thomas¹⁴ and Volkov¹⁵ tend to just use downbeats for the opening bars in sixteenths, and reserve the upbeat for the 2/8 bar (this is also the case in the returning ‘refrains’). Boulez¹⁶ and Haitink¹⁷ use upbeats more frequently (Myung-Whun Chung¹⁸ includes them more than any other observed) but each adheres to a similarly limited technique throughout. Clark expressed that this simple beating is essential, as the musicians must have their ‘heads down’ and if they refer to the conductor it is to merely confirm the place in the bar rather than to gain any musical inspiration.

¹³ Conducting the Berlin Philharmonic 2009 - Kasten, H. (2009) *Stravinsky, Le Sacre du Printemps; Rachmaninov, Piano Concerto No. 3; Tchaikovsky, The Nutcracker; Berliner Philharmoniker, Simon Rattle* [DVD] Medici Arts.

¹⁴ Conducting the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra 2006 - Kennard, D. and Saffa, J. *Keeping Score, revolutions in music; Stravinsky's Rite of Spring* [DVD]

¹⁵ Conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 2009 - BBC Proms’ ‘Maestro-Cam’ 13th August 2009 on BBC Four (commentary Peter Stark)

¹⁶ Conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1997 - *Pierre Boulez: Conductor* (2008) [DVD] Classic Archive, Medici Arts.

¹⁷ Conducting the Berlin Philharmonic 1993 - Large, B (2002) *Bernard Haitink, European Concert 1993; Frank Peter Zimmerman, Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Albert Hall London* TDK Recording Media Europe S.A.

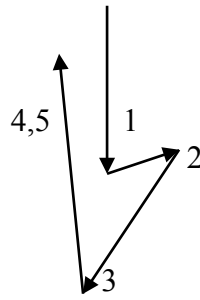
¹⁸ Conducting the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France 2011, BBC Proms (broadcast on BBC 2 on 19th July 2011).

Ex. 1 Piano reduction of the opening bars of the Sacrificial Dance (R142-144). Letters mark the rhythmic cells Boulez describes (see p.79).

The musical score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'A' and 'B' above the staves. The second system is labeled 'C' above the staves. The music is in 3/16 time and features complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The first system ends with a double bar line. The second system continues the complex rhythmic patterns. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'sempre sf' and 'ff'.

Boulez makes an exception at R190 although it has not become common practice. He uses a novel way of beating the bar's subdivision, ensuring the even continuation of the semi-quaver beat. At this point, there is an alternation between 5/16 and 2/8 (i.e. 4/16) for six bars. To ensure that this constant alternation is visible in his technique (and because there is a subtle difference of just one sixteenth), Boulez beats both quaver beats of the 2/8 bar. He divides the following 5/16 bar into a 3+2 pattern. The first semiquaver beat is a downbeat, the second is horizontal and the third goes down diagonally. He then uses a simple upbeat on the fourth and fifth semiquaver beats (see fig. 2 below). There is, however, insufficient evidence to suggest that this has influenced other conductors. Volkov at times uses a similar gesture whilst conducting this section but it is not concise enough to prove Boulez's influence.

Figure 2. Boulez's 5/16 beating pattern at R190.



According to Max Rudolf, the beating patterns must also be adjusted from bar to bar, according to the cues as well as the rhythmic groupings. At R151, he suggests the following.

For the quintuplet in bar [one after 151] use one beat, in bars [4 and 5] use two beat with a weakened two. For the entrance of the first violins [bar 4] it is advisable to indicate a sharp two with the left hand, a gesture which does not interfere with the brass figure. Be sure that the 1-beat is strictly in time (1950:262).

However, the footage studied showed no deviance from the strict rhythmic delivery employed throughout the dance (possibly because this would be distracting for the orchestra). With time-beating the priority, Stravinsky is minimising not only the conductor's interpretation but also the conductor's visual communication with the orchestra.

The previous chapter discussed the demands Stravinsky's irregular rhythms place on the conductor's memory (p.55-58). 'The Sacrificial Dance' moves these challenges forward significantly, demanding more solitary study and rehearsal. The conducting of this horizontal, consistent changing of time signatures in Stravinsky's vertically homophonic music (or Rhythmic-Metric Type 1),¹⁹ is more complex than the vertical superimposition of conflicting metres covered below in the 'Procession of the Sage' (labelled Rhythmic-Metric Type 2).²⁰ To clearly conduct the consistently altering time signatures they must be

¹⁹ 'The fragments, lines, or parts, fixed registrally and instrumentally in repetition, share the same irregular rhythmic metric periods' (1983:138). See Methodology (p.25) for further discussion.

²⁰ Rhythmic-metric type 2 is the vertical imposition of two conflicting metres (i.e. polyrhythms) seen in 'Procession of the Sage'. "Above" and/or "below" this stable 'pedal'...other reiterating fragments are superimposed, in the sense that they repeat according to 'separate' or independent rhythmic-metric periods,

so thoroughly memorised as to be part of the conductor's muscle memory. This section therefore obliterates the romanticised notion of a conductor overseeing the organic unity of a work, as the more immediate need to memorise and master the articulation of irregular rhythms dominates. The dance's impractical notation does not make this task any easier.

Issues surrounding *The Rite's* Notation

Conductor Georg Solti asked Stravinsky 'why he had changed the orchestration and simplified the rhythms in the score of *The Rite of Spring* thirty years after the original version was published. "I made the changes because I couldn't conduct the original version – it was too difficult for me" he said' (Solti 1997:120-1).²¹ Many conductors still resent Stravinsky's overcomplicated approach to notation, and its subsequent influence on twentieth-century composition. Brabbins addressed the unnecessary fuss of small note values, and complains that it rarely adds any substance to a score's performance.

Many composers still use overly small values as the basic unit of pulse: using 2/16 or 5/16 for instance, so that the conductor's beat must correspond to a sixteenth. This adds unnecessary lines and confusion. Why write a triplet with three lines... when one will do ... This forces the players to spend valuable rehearsal time assimilating the notation instead of the music (2003:267).

Benjamin Grosbayne is in agreement and states that they 'easily could and should have been written in larger units' (1973:117).²² His recommendation is that at R149²³ the conductor can combine bars to make the music more manageable. He suggests a combination of bars 1 and 2 (thus creating a bar of five rather than three plus two), bars 3 and 4 (creating a bar of four instead of two plus two) and so on throughout the section

time spans or cycles' (139). Hill also divides the *The Rite* rhythmically into two rhythmic categories. The first is 'where the metre is in perpetual flux' and the second 'where the pulse is rigidly unvarying' (2000:52).

²¹ See Louis Cyr 'Writing *The Rite* Right' in Pasler, J. (ed) *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician and Modernist* (1986), for an overview of Stravinsky's revisions of *The Rite*. These were carried out for copyright reasons as well as practical ones.

²² 'Another minor but appreciable source of irritation in Stravinsky's music is his habit of frequently having a 2/16 followed by a 2/8 instead of a 4/16. In many places in the score of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, the composer uses bar lines at almost every conceivable opportunity and proceeds virtually to contradict himself by connecting larger units with tails. He has, moreover, contradicted his own microscopic time signatures in certain performances which he himself conducted' (Grosbayne 1973:117).

²³ According to Peter Stark (Professor at the Royal College of Music) this section is nicknamed 'Domino City' (2009), as if one player loses his/her place and plays during a rest, it is common for the other instrumentalists to lose confidence and follow suit.

(117-118). However, performance analysis shows no evidence that conductors have put this suggestion into practice. Tilson-Thomas, Boulez and Volkov can be seen rigidly adhere to the time signatures in the score.²⁴

The most extreme transformation is by composer/conductor Slonimsky. Koussevitsky²⁵ struggled greatly in memorising the rhythms of the ‘Sacrificial Dance’, and used an almost completely re-barred version that was also used later by Bernstein (see Ex.2). Yet although this may simplify the dance and accelerate the conductor’s internalisation of the score, this alteration of rhythmic perception changes the perceived nature of the performance. On viewing Slonimsky’s revision, Murphy commented: ‘fascinating but ultimately dull... the whole point of this section is that it should sound uncomfortable and edgy, not safe and boring!’²⁶ This echoes the opposing views seen in musicology, as Meyer uses a similar practice in his demonstration of superimposed rhythms in *A Soldier’s Tale*. Meyer re-barred an extract of *Marche du Soldat* in order to demonstrate that despite the irregular rhythm of the melody, the bass-line is written, quite simply, in 2/4 (1970:119-121). Van den Toorn was critical of this interference and suggests that Meyer’s ‘instinct is evidently to hold on to a prevailing regularity for as long as possible, often with the consequence that the effect of disruption is all the more acutely felt’ (1988:166). To embrace the irregular rhythm and notation of much of Stravinsky’s work shows an acceptance that Stravinsky wrote in this way ‘not as pure philosophy but as a reaction to the special articulative demands of the music’ (169).

²⁴ Rattle’s beating is less obvious.

²⁵ Stravinsky made scathing comments about Koussevitsky. ‘Koussevitsky has no piano in his house (!). Do not be astonished at this, since this contrabassist never needs to play the piano having become the American star purely through his conductor’s baton. His genius frees him from the necessity of studying at the piano the scores he designs to conduct. For this inferior function, someone is always ready to play the music until this star has his ass full of it’ (cited Lebrecht 1997:136).

²⁶ Email to author 3rd February 2011.

Ex. 2 Slonimsky's re-barring of the opening bars of the Sacrificial Dance (piano reduction).²⁷



Friction between conductors and composers is not unique to Stravinsky (as covered in the Methodology p.45-46) and the composer's response to *The Rite*'s notation issues was very simple. 'We write fast tempo music or slow tempo music in large or small note values depending on the music. That is my only explanation' (Stravinsky and Craft 1959:22). However, Stravinsky's influence on the conductor is complicated when one considers the impression conductors made on *him*. Fink deduces that Monteux left his legacy on *The Rite* by making score annotations. 'Where there are compound uneven meters in fast tempos he usually writes out the division of the bar he will beat' (1999:316). In the 1920's score, almost all of the changes are a response to the divisions that Monteux made in 1913 (319), proving the conductor's huge influence on Stravinsky's subsequent revisions. (The Sacrificial Dance originally contained many more bars of 5/16, which could have left the conductor confused as to what beating pattern to use). In the 1929 revision of the score,

he arrived at the barring familiar to most of us by splitting almost all of the measures with five or seven sixteenth notes into shorter bars of three or two, and by rewriting all four-sixteenth measures as bars of 2/8. This had the immediate advantage of simplifying the counting – almost everything was either a two or a

²⁷ Taken from the full annotated score by Slonimsky, courtesy of Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. HTC-LC M1520.S9 V4 1921 F

three – and more crucially, allowing the composer to control the way conductors would actually beat (and thus accentuate) the bars of five (Fink 1999:318).²⁸

It appears that Monteux was not the only conductor to have influenced Stravinsky's revisions. Ansermet claims that he also suggested changes after the premiere.

Monteux conducted this concert version [after the premiere in 1913] and then I proposed to Stravinsky to revise the final dance, because he had written the final dance in bars like five-sixteenths and if it is not clearly indicated the conductor doesn't know what to do. So I suggested to Stravinsky to make a new reduction by dividing these bars into their exact components. I still have the sketch. I sent it to Stravinsky. He approved and the new print was made (Ansermet cited Chesterman 1976:84).

Regardless of the exact origin of the revisions, it is evident that the effect of the 'Sacrificial Dance' on the conductor's work must also be attributed to the conductors with whom he collaborated. This highlights the two-way process between composers and conductors that musicological literature rarely addresses, and therefore another factor in the multitude of influences that contribute to a complete theatrical work.

Introduction to Part I

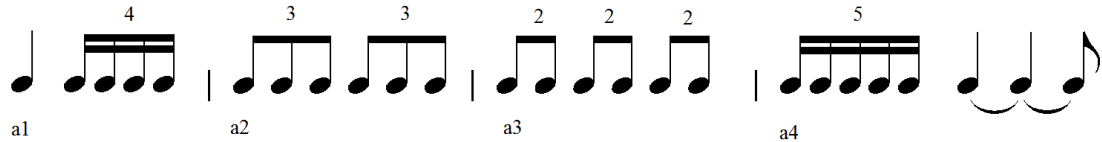
Although the bassoon's famous opening has earned the Introduction its 'well deserved reputation' (Boulez 1966:61) there is less discussion of the more practical rhythmic and structural challenges that it presents to the conductor and orchestra. Although Boulez discusses selected extracts of the Introduction in great detail,²⁹ his analysis of the ballet's opening (60-64) is characteristically structuralist, and as with his study of 'The Sacrificial Dance' does not bear great resemblance to a conductor's more practical analysis. Referring again to the notion of rhythmic 'cells', Boulez labels four that are present in the opening three bars (see fig.3) and suggests that there is a distorted symmetry at play between the note groupings (61). There is a tension between the second and third units, as they are the exact opposite of each other. The fourth unit is a retrograde of the first, but with a quintuplet replacing four semiquavers. Stravinsky, Boulez suggests, creates an inbuilt acceleration (61), variations of which appear throughout the Introduction with similar

²⁸ This differs from the previous method of subdividing bars with dotted lines, as in the *Firebird* score.

²⁹ Boulez rejects the opportunity to delve too deeply into analysis of the 'Introduction' – 'I should have to quote the whole musical text, and in orchestral score, so great is its complexity' (1991:103).

effect. Boulez also observes that ‘no value or subdivision in any one cell is repeated in any other’ (62): the music is constantly changing.

Fig. 3. Boulez’s suggestion of rhythmic structure at the opening of the ‘Introduction’ (1966:61).



However, in this instance, the depth of rhythmic analysis contradicts what the conductor must communicate to the orchestra. Of course, the rhythmic units or ‘cells’ that a conductor must initially consider are the bars. Although the Introduction’s notation is more conventional than the ‘Sacrificial Dance’ (i.e. it uses regular time signatures rather than minute subdivisions) there is still the use of constantly altering time signatures (Metric-Type 1 construction). The music is far less repetitive and more seemingly spontaneous in nature, with melodic and rhythmic motifs often running independently of one another. With most entries being offbeat, and the regular use of fermatas, the conductor must stay grounded in the pulse whilst it is simultaneously being disguised. This presents a more subtle, but equally perplexing rhythmic challenge.

...even with Stravinsky this kind of experiment is exceptional, ... such refinement in periodic symmetry and asymmetry, and such constant variation of rhythm through the use of irrational values, are almost never again found in his work (Boulez 1966:64).

Stravinsky disorientates the listener in his disruption of the beat, blurring any possible perception of rhythmic symmetry or order. This is achieved by the regular use of fermatas; the repeated employment of appoggiaturas and acciaccaturas – constantly blurring the main rhythmic line; and the *tempo rubato* and *poco accelerando* instructions in the score (see Ex. 3). The difficulty in locating the crotchet beat creates a quasi-improvisatory effect that the conductor must carefully oversee and control in order to keep the seemingly independent lines synchronised. As a result, it is also a challenge for the conductor to ascertain any comprehension of form and structure. Stravinsky very successfully disguises the skeleton

of the piece, and the listener identifies with the return of fragments of motifs rather any clear sense of form or direction.

Even Bar 1, with two fermatas, a tempo rubato direction, and a rhythmic mixture of a crotchet, semiquavers, and triplets (with appoggiaturas), presents an ambiguous rhythm for the conductor that could be perceived (or notated) in a multitude of ways. In actuality, many conductors choose not to beat this first bar (Peter Stark 2009),³⁰ waiting instead for the horn's entry in bar 2. Bar 4 also presents numerous obstacles. The solo bassoon's note is tied over from the previous bar, but the conductor must keep a clear sense of the pulse in order to give an accurate cue to the A and Bass Clarinets. Rhythmic precision is therefore crucial in ensuring the continued synchronisation of musical lines - the tempo rubato is combined with a triplet 'within a triplet', the second semiquaver of which must coincide with the quaver played by the clarinets.

Ex. 3 The solo bassoon's opening bars.

The image displays a musical score for the solo bassoon's opening bars, consisting of two staves. The first staff begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the tempo is marked 'Lento' with a quarter note equal to 50, followed by 'tempo rubato'. The music features a series of eighth notes with appoggiaturas, some grouped in triplets. A fermata is placed over the first note. The second staff starts with a 3/4 time signature, then changes to 2/4, and finally back to 4/4. It includes markings for 'poco accelerando' and 'a tempo'. The music continues with eighth notes and triplets, ending with a fermata. Various rhythmic groupings like triplets and quintuplets are indicated with brackets and numbers.

This level of more practical score analysis is required by the conductor throughout the 'Introduction', and the rhythmic complexity in many respects surpasses that of the 'Sacrificial Dance'. However, the free, pulseless quality is in some ways reminiscent of the previous music of Debussy. Boulez also makes this observation in relation to 'tight imbrications of long and very short values' (103), and Stravinsky's layering of rhythms could be seen as a development of the rhythmic innovations seen in *Prélude à l'après midi*

³⁰ It was problematic to test this assumption with performance analysis as footage of concert performances at *The Rite's* opening is usually focused on the bassoonist.

d'un faune. Prausnitz acknowledges the effect of these on the conductor. 'Since the flute of Debussy's *Faun*, music has begun to breathe differently' (1983:450), implying a shift in musical perception prior to *The Rite*. But Stravinsky's 'pulselessness' in *The Rite*'s 'Introduction' is coupled with a musical density that complicates the conductor's work further.

This rhythmic complexity and musical density makes an impact on the most rudimentary aspects of the conductor's work. This is seen in the number of potential cues circled in Ex.4. The absence of a clear audible beat, with the introduction of many instruments over a short extract (between R4 and 5, there are eleven entries in the space of five bars) challenges the conductor's sense of rhythm as well as his communication with the orchestra. The table below shows the action taken by Gergiev³¹ and Volkov in ensuring the accurate entries of instrumentalists. An extract such as this highlights the necessity to be completely familiar with the score, and to maintain strict control in these seemingly improvisatory sections. It is likely that Monteux would have had to oversee the Introduction even more carefully, considering our relative familiarity with *The Rite*, and the higher technical standard of contemporary orchestral musicians.

Table 1 – Cueing in the Introduction

Bar	Instrument	Gergiev	Volkov
1	Horns		
1	2 nd A Clarinet		Left hand
1	Violas	look	Right hand/look
1	2 nd Violins		
1	Oboe	left hand	
1	D Clarinet	look	Look?
2	Bass Clarinet		Left hand
3	1 st A Clarinet	Look?	Left hand?
3	Horns 6,7,8		
End of 5	Horn 1	Both hands	look
End of 5	Flutes	Both hands	look

? - unclear from footage

³¹ Conducting the Mariinsky Ballet's 2008 Production of *The Rite of Spring*. See Caiozzi, D. (2009) *Stravinsky and the Ballet Russes* [DVD] Mariinsky Theatre Bel Air Classiques

Ex. Cues R4 – 5.

2

Ob. 2

C. ing.

Cl. picc. in Re

Cl. in La 1

Cl. in La 2

Cl. bas. in Sib 2

Fag. 2

Cor. in Fa 2

VI. II

Vle.

Fl. gr. 2

Fl. alto

Ob. 1

Cl. picc. in Re

Cl. in La 1

Cl. in La 2

Cl. bas. in Sib 1

Cl. bas. in Sib 2

Cor. in Fa 1

Cor. in Fa 3

VI. II

Vle.

mf stacc.

Solo

espress.

mp

pizz.

mf

sim.

un peu en dehors

5

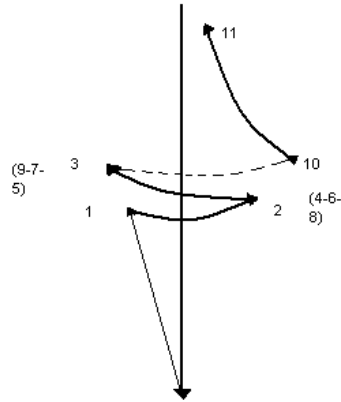
Conducting the 11/4 bar

There are instances, however, where Stravinsky's influence is exaggerated, and this is often seen in conducting literature. *The Rite*'s infamous 11/4 bar leading into 'The Glorification of the Chosen One' is a case in point. It is mentioned tirelessly in conducting books,³² but in this instance Stravinsky was not breaking new ground. A bar in 11/4, as it is not adhering to any traditional time-beating pattern, forces a conductor to devise a bespoke beating pattern that is a suitable fit to the music it contains. Fink took an interest in the beating patterns adopted by Monteux and Stravinsky. 'Both felt the need to split this undifferentiated string of quarter-note beat into familiar triple and duple patterns' (1999:317-8). Fink gleaned from annotated scores that Monteux employed a 3+4+4 beating pattern whilst Stravinsky used 4+4+3 (319). But he admitted that he could find 'no deeper significance' (318n) in either conductor's choice.³³ Visual footage of Volkov shows yet another option. He beats five down beats followed by two groups of '3/4', providing the upbeat that leads into the next dance. Conducting books make numerous suggestions – from the Grosbayne example in fig.4 (below) to Prausnitz's recommendation of 2+2+2+2+3 (1983:210-11). Green makes less of the issue, and observes 'when the ELEVEN is comprised of eleven equally-accented beats, a simple counting of eleven beats is sometimes used' (1969:56 – author's capitals). From the footage of Myung-Whun Chung it is evident this is his preferred method – he merely conducts eleven downbeats. Clark stated that players actually preferred to mark divisions of the bar in their own scores to facilitate the counting at the same time as keeping an eye on the conductor for the beats.

³² For example Green *The Modern Conductor* (1969:56), Grosbayne *Techniques of Modern Orchestral Conducting* (1973:71), Prausnitz *Score and Podium* (1983:210-11).

³³ Fink does suggest that Monteux's beating pattern is closer to Millicent Hodson's choreography than Stravinsky's (1999:318), but admits this is a tenuous link considering Hodson's methods of reconstruction. For a more detailed summary of these methods see for example Jordan (2007:422-3).

Fig. 4 Benjamin Grosbayne's suggestion for beating the 11/4 bar (1973:70).



As the music in this 11/4 bar is so straightforward, the ramifications of choosing any one beating pattern over another are negligible. The bar consists of eleven accented crotchet beats, so beating ten accented down beats followed by a final upbeat leading into ‘Glorification of the Chosen One’ is sufficient.³⁴ Bernstein, filmed rehearsing *The Rite* with an orchestra of young musicians during the Schelswig-Holstein Festival, made it obvious that he felt the conductor was not crucial at all in the performance of the 11/4 bar. Whilst rehearsing the section Bernstein said:

The eleven beats had no communality. I shouldn’t have to beat that bar at all. I mean, once you’ve ‘yahd!’ the downbeat you just play it. In fact, I’m not going to beat it at all. Alright? Let’s make a little arrangement. (*The Rite of Spring in Rehearsal*).

Moreover, the composer’s teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, pre-dates Stravinsky writing in 11/4 in the final chorus of *The Snow Maiden*. In this example the choice of beating pattern is of far greater importance. The conductor must also address the issues of phrasing and melodic shape, and to do so Grosbayne suggests the bar is divided into five ‘pulses’. ‘Accents and stresses may be suggested by bringing the baton and left hand forward when necessary’

³⁴ See Hill *Stravinsky – The Rite of Spring* (2000:132-4) for a discussion on the varying approaches of conductors to this section in recording.

(1973:70).³⁵ *The Rite*'s 11/4 bar has therefore gained its notoriety due to the work it is found in rather than the difficulties that it poses.

Polyrhythms in 'Procession of the Sage'

Another example of debatable influence is seen in 'The Procession of the Sage'. It contains *The Rite*'s most famous polyrhythmic section (R70-71), used as a case study by Bernstein in *The Unanswered Question* lectures (1976:351-7). Bernstein's enthusiastic analysis of the extract highlights Stravinsky's use of Rhythmic-Metric Type 2 construction, i.e. the vertical imposition of two conflicting metres that repeat according to 'separate' or independent rhythmic-metric periods, time spans or cycles' (Van den Toorn 1983:139). Although the metre stays in 6/4 throughout, there is an alternative metre (4/4) superimposed over it. The majority of the pitched instruments are playing in groups of four and eight, superimposed over these 6/4 bars. Among the most audible are the tubas that play a memorable 'scary fanfare' motif (355). The percussion (as well as the bassoons) operate within the bars, but accenting different quaver beats (the guero is also playing in quadruplets). However, just as Stravinsky would wish, the conductor's work in this instance is simply reduced to a clear articulation of the beat.³⁶ The discrepancy is in which way to beat it.

The observation of audio-visual footage highlights a number of options. Tilson-Thomas divides each 6/4 bar in half, beating down for the first three crotchets of each bar and up for the second three crotchets. A similar approach is adopted by Rattle, who beats down for each half of the bar. Volkov, Chung and Haitink conduct the whole section in 6, as written in the score. Boulez uses the most complex solution, conducting 6/4 with his right hand, while using gestures that support the 4/4 rhythm with his left hand. Grosbayne suggests yet another option.

I recommend that the usual four-beat be given *as* six, adapted to look like a straight line to the watchers, as much as possible. This procedure gives the players the illusion they are seeing a kind of two to the bar. In such involved passages the aim should be to give the simplest pattern possible in the fewest number of strokes,

³⁵ Nicolai Malko also uses the *Snow Maiden* example in *The Conductor and his Baton* (1950:87).

³⁶ 'The clearer the 'rhythmic polyphony' the greater the excitement (Hill 2000:130). See Hill's Chapter 8 'The *Rite* recorded' for a discussion of recording trends.

pairing as many motions in the same direction as possible, in order to give the players every aid in using their time and space sense. The players having the duple pulse will interpret the four strokes easily enough to suit their parts, while the players having six pulses will play half the measure to the down and half to the up stroke, i.e. three pulses to each sub-division. Once the players know this routine, it may be quite feasible to try beating slow four as six. The time signature may be thought of as 12/8 rather than the written 6/4. A helpful device also, is to run a dotted line down the two pages, cutting each measure in half. The players will then feel they are merely playing four against six twice in the same measure (1973:136-7).

Stravinsky was not the first to use ‘our old friend, four against six’ (Grosbayne 1973:136). Similar exploration of polyrhythms precedes Stravinsky in Debussy’s *La Mer* at R8,³⁷ which demands the same rhythmic precision and careful choice of beating pattern.³⁸ Debussy even employs polyrhythms in his ballet *Jeux*.³⁹ For example at R16, within the 3/8 metre, half the violas, and the cellos and double basses play two dotted quavers to the bar, the rest of the strings play four dotted semiquavers. Running alongside this in the brass and bassoons is material conforming to the usual 3/8; the rhythmic melody in the horns is echoed in the bassoons, and the trumpet playing six semiquavers to the bar. However, the oboes and clarinets are playing semiquaver triplets within each quaver beat, and the flutes and cor anglais are playing in quintuplets. The main difference between *Jeux* and *The Rite* that has earned the latter’s greater fame is that Stravinsky is taking these ideas to the extreme. Texturally the music is far more complex, demanding a greater ability to oversee polyrhythmic music on a large scale. But it demands no more from the conductor in technical terms.⁴⁰

³⁷ Van den Toorn and McGinness have also highlighted the ‘antecedents in the music of Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov’ (2012:235-244), particularly in relation to repeat structures.

³⁸ For three bars, the violins, flutes, oboes, cor anglais, clarinet, reinforce the six quaver beats in the bar. The bassoons and double basses play three crotchets to place different emphasis within the bar. However, the cellos and harps play eight equal (dotted semi-quaver) notes against this.

³⁹ *Jeux* was premiered at the Ballet Russes exactly two weeks before *The Rite*. Nijinsky’s unpopular choreography placed a ‘kind of “curse” on... one of Debussy’s most remarkable works’ (Boulez 1966:274). ‘It uses only a single basic tempo to control the evolution of the thematic ideas, which makes its performance very difficult’ (274).

⁴⁰ Less attention is paid to the opening ‘Mystic Circles of the Young Girls’ (R91) that employs both Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 and 2 simultaneously. The music’s changing time signatures supports the main melody in the strings, but the cellos play a consistent 2/4 ostinato beneath them.

Sacrificial Dance with Choreography

The conductor interviews also highlighted that overall *The Rite of Spring*'s choreography does not demand a great deal of consideration on the conductor's part. This is because (as seen in Hodson and Archer's research and recreation)⁴¹ Nijinsky made the choreography rhythmically complex rather than technically challenging. Pierre Monteux wrote 'no indications of choreography beyond the bare acknowledgement of the raising and lowering of the curtain for the two tableaux' (Fink 1999:316). However, for the conductors interviewed there is an exception in Nijinsky's punishing 'Sacrificial Dance', which adds yet another challenge for the conductor to this already complex culminating section. The chosen virgin, 'dancing herself to death', must be closely watched by the conductor.⁴² The dance's one hundred and twenty three jumps take their toll on the dancer, and the conductor must therefore be sensitive to the performer's potentially waning stamina. Deborah Bull, commenting on her own performance in the role said that 'the final drop was real' (Bull & Jennings 2004:83). These demands can therefore alter the performance tempo, a practice not in-keeping with Stravinsky's usual preferences. 'Tempo is the principal item. A piece of mine can survive almost anything but the wrong tempo' (Stravinsky and Craft 1959:119).⁴³

Table 2 (below) displays a selection of performance tempos of the Sacrificial Dance's returning 'refrain'. Comparing the live ballet performances (the first two columns) with the live concert performances,⁴⁴ it is apparent that although most conductors showed an aptitude for returning to the original tempo, the most accurate is Gergiev in the Mariinsky

⁴¹ Of course, one must be mindful of the questionable accuracy of the choreography in recent *Rite* recreations. The extensive research of Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer enabled the recreation of choreography that had previously been lost, but there was an admitted level of guesswork contributing to the completed Joffrey Ballet production of 1987. See Jordan 2007:422-3 for Hodson's methods of reconstruction.

⁴² Murphy in interview 30th June 2009.

⁴³ This is ironic considering Fink's analysis of the tempo variations in a selection of recorded performances of the 'Danse Sacrale', demonstrating that Stravinsky's recordings were regularly the furthest from his specifications. (Fink 1999:356).

⁴⁴ Unlike similar data collected by Fink (1999) I have limited my observations (in this chapter) to live performances as studio recordings can be recorded over numerous sessions and therefore do not reflect always the conductor's work in the context of this thesis. I have also restricted my analysis to one section of the Sacrificial Dance because it is this part that accompanies the most demanding choreography, and would therefore be the most likely to be adapted to the dancer in ballet performance.

theatre's ballet performance. The Joffrey Ballet performance⁴⁵ and Michael Tilson-Thomas come a close second. Haitink's tempos exhibit the most variation, an acceleration that could only be passable in concert performance. This reinforces the figures in Fink's analysis: the conductors with experience of ballet conducting seemed, overall, to exhibit the greatest ability to return to the same opening tempos. The ballet performances were both performed slower than the score suggests (crotchet =126), an unsurprising trend considering the amount of jumps in the solo choreography. The concert performances varied more, but not with the same variation seen in Fink's table (1999:356) – he highlights how the Bernstein recording of the 'Sacrificial Dance', for example, often accelerated to over 140. These results demonstrate the necessary sensitivity that conductors of ballet must apply in this dance in comparison to those conducting concert performances.

Table 2. Performance tempos in the 'Sacrificial Dance'.

Rehearsal Number	Gergiev	Joffrey Ballet	Rattle	Haitink	Volkov	Tilson-Tomas	Boulez
142	c 122	116-118	119	130-7 (speeding up)	132-3	128-129	118-119
167	c 122	115	c 122	130-2	134-5	127-8	119-120
180	122	c 115	c 122	132	134-5	c 129	119
186	122	116-118	123	130-5 (speeding up)	133-7	128-130	121-124

The need for the conductor's consideration of multiple jumps in this dance was not, in itself, new to ballet. A previous example can be found in Act III of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. This consists of many divertissements in which the dancers can exhibit their technique, and therefore the conductor must adapt to the needs of the soloists. In the Bluebird's dance there are multiple jumps, and the height and therefore speed of these jumps will vary between dancers. However, the development for the conductor in the 'Sacrificial Dance' is that the choreography becomes merely an additional factor alongside the consistent rhythmic complexity (see Ex.2).

⁴⁵ The premiere of the Joffrey reconstruction was to an arrangement of *The Rite* for small orchestra.

Ansermet and Eugene Goossens were the two conductors that I had no fear of whatsoever in *Le Sacre du Printemps*. I knew that they knew that I understood what they were doing, and once they had given me the upbeat and they would know my rhythms, they would keep their orchestra to their rhythm and we would meet on the two beats of the music twice during the whole of the dance and I never missed it. I relied entirely on those conductors (Sokolova cited Drummond 1997:159).⁴⁶

Conclusion

It is clear from the evidence gathered that *The Rite of Spring*'s revolutionary image is altered when examined from the conductor's standpoint. In certain respects its 'mythic' reputation is justified, and this is the case regarding the ballet's instrumentation. Simple score analysis shows us that not only is the orchestra particularly large (for ballet especially), but also that the balance of the orchestra has shifted towards the woodwind and brass sections. Moreover, the technical prowess of individual instrumentalists is also tested – most famously with the opening bassoon solo played in its high register, and in the inventive use of the percussion section.

Although Taruskin (2005:183) has demonstrated that the innovative, irregular rhythms of sections such as the 'Sacrificial Dance' had roots in Russian folk music, for the conductor their originality is harder to deny. Although already seen in isolated sections of *Petrushka*, the constantly shifting time signatures, written in minute subdivisions, did place unprecedented rhythmic demands on the conductor. They triggered an adjustment in the way a conductor must articulate rhythm, affecting factors such as beating patterns (often in relation to offbeat accents that must be communicated). But most importantly it challenged the conductor's knowledge of the score, demanding longer sessions of solitary study in order to internalise the rhythmic changes and complexity. The 'Sacrificial Dance' was re-barred by conductors (most notably Slonimsky) as well as Stravinsky himself on several occasions, proving that its notation was also problematic. These difficulties are somewhat compounded by the choreographic demands, which are at their peak at this point. The

⁴⁶ It is possible that Sokolova could also be referring to Massine's 1920 choreography in this citation. She was the Chosen One in this version, but also performed Nijinsky's original 1913 choreography.

soloist on stage is ‘dancing herself to death’, and the conductor must be mindful of the stamina needed for the gruelling choreography as well as the needs of the musicians.

The ‘Introduction to Part I’, revered by Boulez (1966:60-4, 103-5), also places greater demands on the conductor. Although the piece uses more conventional time signatures throughout, they are still constantly altering. The pulse is also clouded, but to a far greater extent than that seen in ‘The Dance of the Firebird’ in the previous chapter. In this instance, Stravinsky employs the regular use of fermatas, appoggiaturas and acciaccaturas, which constantly blur the main rhythmic line. This impression of rhythmic freedom is exacerbated further by the use of *tempo rubato* and *poco accelerando* instructions in the score, making accurate time-beating and cueing more crucial and more challenging. The desired effect is one of organised disorganisation, a rhythmic challenge differing from those previously posed by, for example, Rimsky-Korsakov or Debussy.

However, *The Rite*’s revolutionary status has over-inflated certain issues. The 11/4 bar leading into the ‘Glorification of the Chosen One’ is the most famous of bars with eleven beats (and the most frequently quoted in conducting books). However, it was predated by Stravinsky’s teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, in his opera *The Snow Maiden*. In *The Rite*’s example, the choice of beating pattern is actually a minor issue, as the bar simply contains eleven accented crotchet beats. Therefore the choice of beating pattern has little consequence. This is also true of the polyrhythmic section in ‘Procession of the Sage’, combining duple and triple time. Unlike the Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction of the ‘Sacrificial Dance’, this can be handled in a relatively straightforward manner, and performance analysis shows that it is usually beat in 6 or 2 (with the exception of Boulez’s method). Superimposing six beats against four is also seen in previous ballet music e.g. Debussy’s *Jeux* (they are also employed in *La Mer*).

As a result, these developments have prompted an aesthetic shift in the role of the conductor. Far greater attention is now paid to conducting technique and the citation from Ansermet at the beginning of this chapter argued that this distracts from the music. There is an irony in this considering Stravinsky’s own aesthetic pronouncements - favouring the execution of his scores over their interpretation. Although the complexity of *The Rite*

reduced the conductor's role in many instances to that of a time-beater, the increased focus on conducting technique has led to a fascination with the conductor's own unique 'gestures' – allowing those so inclined to revel in a different type of glory. Stravinsky's disapproval of this development was one of the factors that led to the further development of the composer's complex rhythmic language and unorthodox orchestration.

Chapter 5. Les Noces

Even today the score is quellingly complex, with its rhythmic and harmonic intergearings for chorus, solo singers, four grand pianos and an exceptional array of percussion. Forty years ago few musicians had yet got the hang of it aesthetically, which made it tougher still in the rehearsal room. ‘Very tricky, very clever,’ commented Sargent. ‘Igor has been thinking hard all the time’. To the end of his days, like Beecham, he considered *Firebird* Stravinsky’s best work. He was once heard to say, ‘When you come down to things like *Les Noces*...’ The unfinished sentence has its own eloquence (Reid 1968:129).

Introduction

Although it follows Stravinsky’s most famous work, *Les Noces* is perceived by many to be the *real* masterpiece among Stravinsky’s early works. De Schloezer said, ‘it’s his greatest achievement - one of the summits of post-Wagnerian art’ (cited Walsh 2002:367).

According to Stravinsky, Diaghilev wept when he heard it, ‘and said it was the most beautiful and the most purely Russian creation of our Ballet. I think he did love *Les Noces* more than any other work of mine’ (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:118). Jordan writes, ‘Nijinska’s *Noces* still looks like no other dance made before or since... as if it sprang out of nowhere, and perhaps was so strong that no offshoots from it seemed possible: it was untouchable’ (2007:327). And yet despite the extensive acclaim, there are notably fewer recordings and ballet productions of the work, and it frequently falls by the wayside in conducting books. As Austin stated, ‘Stravinsky’s most distinctive ballet, *Les Noces*, remains in theatres an esoteric freak not yet accepted by many audiences as fulfilling the development from *Firebird* to *Petrushka* to the *Rite*’ (1987:7). Stravinsky’s first three ballets form the triptych that steals the attention in chapters written on irregular or compound rhythm.¹ The quotation below from Grosbayne’s *Techniques of Modern Orchestral Conducting* serves as an example.

¹ An exception is found in Malko, N. *The Conductor and his Baton* (Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen 1950), 92, which quotes the ballet’s first tableau in order to demonstrate rapidly changing time signatures. This is, however, still used as a precursor to *The Rite*’s ‘Sacrificial Dance’.

Stravinsky's "Firebird" Suite, *Petrouchka*, and *Le Sacre du Printemps* should be the student's constant companion since they constitute in themselves an unparalleled set of exercises in fluid pulsation, unique in the history of music (1973:115).

There are, admittedly, pragmatic reasons for this neglect - a work involving four grand pianos is an expensive and impractical proposition. Moreover, with a relatively peaceful premiere, *Les Noces* could never hope to obtain the same level of notoriety as *The Rite of Spring*. But it is also a great challenge to conduct. There are numerous factors that, in combination, give the conductor very limited authority over the performance. The consistently complex rhythmic language and percussive orchestration make the score very exposing of any rhythmic discrepancies. Reid's opening citation highlights the continued challenges the piece presents - a sentiment shared by the conductors interviewed (and less so of *The Rite*). In comparison with *The Rite*, Jurowski termed *Les Noces* as more 'fragile'.² It surpasses its predecessor on many levels, and is so 'conductor-proof' (Stravinsky 1972:241) that the work cannot be personalised. As a result, the ballet's interesting aesthetic and choreographic complexities must be left to communicate themselves.

Orchestration and Rhythmic Language

The most immediate and consistent challenges that *Les Noces* presents to the conductor are the orchestration and rhythmic language. The highly unusual ensemble was comprised of a combination of instruments that Stravinsky took many years to finally arrive at, and he re-orchestrated the work several times. (Previous versions included a forty-piece orchestra; wind instruments and percussion; and an ensemble of pianolas, harmonium, cimbalom, and assorted drums and bells).³ Stravinsky considered his writing in *Les Noces* to be more considerate to the instrumentalists than his previous music. He claims that the composition was his most 'practical' (Stravinsky and Craft 1972:199) as he purchased or hired many of the percussion instruments he wrote for and spent as much time learning to play them as composing the work. Yet the final orchestration; four soloists, chorus, four pianos (or two playels) and percussion, present the conductor with a highly percussive, mechanised sound

² Interviewed at Glyndebourne Opera House 3rd July 2013.

³ See *Themes and Conclusions* (Stravinsky 1972:198-201) for Stravinsky's own recollection of the evolution of *Les Noces*.

that is very exposed and unforgiving of mistakes. It is certainly less forgiving than *The Rite*'s orchestra of a hundred plus players. Wordsworth, Conductor at the Royal Ballet,⁴ referred to the work as 'particularly percussive' (as of course, the pianos are also essentially percussion instruments), and this creates a very tense music that must be tight rhythmically. As Del Maar states, 'few things are harder than for even two pianists to strike a chord absolutely together unless they have developed that sixth sense by constantly working as a team' (1981:459). These difficulties are exacerbated further by the consistent employment of irregular rhythms.

The difficulties Stravinsky experienced conducting *Les Noces* are well known. Monteux observed Stravinsky conducting a revival of the work in 1924, and stated 'no-one came in on time, chorus or soloists'⁵ (Monteux 1965:132). Cross hales the rhythmic language as 'even more powerful than that of *The Rite*, and certainly more sustained' (2003:249-50) - the factor that would undoubtedly have been the main stumbling block for the composer. Although the minute subdivisions within *The Rite*'s 'Sacrificial Dance' have acquired the most pioneering reputation, there are many moments of repose in the ballet where the rhythm is more straight-forward (for example, parts of 'Danse des Adolescentes' and 'Ritual Action of the Ancestors'). But in *Les Noces*, as Wordsworth stated, 'the whole piece is uniformly difficult',⁶ leaving the conductor and performers little room for manoeuvre. Furthermore, the rhythm is the most essential ingredient in the unification of the dance and music. Wordsworth stated that the piece is especially difficult from a motor-rhythmic point of view, and if there are discrepancies in rhythm it is most problematic. 'If the music is not together it shows up, particularly in the pianos as it is a very percussive piece. You have to set a tempo and rigidly stick to it'. Murphy⁷ suggested that 'you can't be tense in your body'. The conductor needs to deliver seamless gestures, absorbed into the muscle memory. 'You need to be incredibly accurate and incredibly relaxed'.

⁴ Interviewed 11th May 2011.

⁵ Monteux goes on to smooth over his insult 'Stravinsky at that time was not the conductor he is today' (390) and jokes of the success of the concert despite Stravinsky's flawed performance. Monteux's performance, although more accurately performed after he rehearsed the chorus himself, was not as popular.

⁶ One must, admittedly, acknowledge the regularity of *The Rite of Spring*'s performances, leading to the piece being so well known that is possible for the conductors interviewed to have a skewed perspective.

⁷ Interviewed 12th November 2010.

Extracts containing challenging rhythms are consistently present throughout the ballet - from the first page there is an immediate dive into Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction. Although the time signatures are more conventional than in *The Rite*'s 'Sacrificial Dance' (i.e. not using the same minute subdivisions), there are numerous challenging shifts in metre (it alters six times in the first seven pages). Rhythmic-Metric Type 2 also appears, for example at R36 where the score is in 2/4 but the second and fourth pianos and percussion are playing a counter-rhythm in 3/4. The constant presence of these irregular rhythms leaves the conductor with little room for engagement with the score aside from time-beating. Footage of both John Carewe⁸ and Valery Gergiev⁹ shows them adopting a very precise, strict beat. Gergiev has his eyes on the score the majority of the time, with even cueing at a minimum. The conductor Hermann Scherchen, writing in 1933, places particular importance on this metronomic approach. 'Here the metronome plays a decisive part; time has to be carefully measured, and its divisions are accurately correlated' (28). He highlights the precise metrical relationships between sections of the ballet.

Throughout the work we have 240 as the smallest metric unit. The first tempo quaver=80 contains this unit as part of a triplet. The second tempo quaver=160 is twice as fast and its relation to that of the unit is that of 2 to 3. The third tempo dotted crotchet=80 contains this unit as the value of the quaver in the triplet. In the next tempo crotchet=120, which is the main tempo of the whole work, the unit corresponds exactly to the quaver. So that we have the following metric relationships

Crotchet=80 or 1:3
 Quaver=160 or 2:3
 Dotted crotchet or 1:3
 Crotchet = 120 or 1:2 (28).¹⁰

This echoes the sentiments of Kramer, who argues that *Les Noces* moves the structure of *Petrushka*'s first tableau forward by making 'disparate moments (those that are neither adjacent nor motivically similar) equal in length' (1988:292) giving the work an underlying

⁸ See MacGibbon, R. (2001) *The Firebird and Les Noces* [DVD] BBC Classical Music Production, Opus Arte.

⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjoFPrHlBDA> (accessed March 4th 2011)

¹⁰ White also addresses this rhythmic approach. 'The beat is constant; and the whole work is carefully geared to two metronomes rates of 80 or 120 to the minute' (1979:257). He does acknowledge in a footnote, however, that there are exceptions. There are 11 ½ bars marked *poco più mosso* (crotchet = 112) at R40 and 7 bars marked *poco meno mosso* at R103 (257).

sense of balance. Scherchen writes positively of this development to the conductor's role. He stresses, but celebrates, the need to conduct *Les Noces* simply, that the 'limitation [is] an enrichment' (27). However, conductors adhere to these rhythmic proportions in varying degrees. Although it is relatively straightforward to shift from the opening metre into the second at R1 (the quaver is simply twice as fast), Table 1 (below) shows that these exact rhythmic proportions of the music are not accurately conveyed in performance. This highlights not only how Stravinsky furthered the demands placed on the conductor and performers, but also how these demands were often rather unrealistic.

Table 1. Tempos in Tableau 1 of *Les Noces*.¹¹

Rehearsal Number and metronome marking	John Carewe Royal Ballet	Valery Gergiev Mariinsky Theatre	Valery Gergiev Youtube	Igor Stravinsky
Opening quaver=80	87-92	99-104	99-104	85
R1 quaver =160	172	220-225	220-225	175-180
R2 Dotted crotchet=80	65-72	80	80	68-70
R4 Quaver=80	87	95	100	86-90
R5 Quaver=160	170	225-8	235	176-180
R9 Crotchet=120	103-110	120-122	126	105

p. 105. Ex 1. R93-94

¹¹ A further observation is that when the same metres return in all four performances, they are resumed at a very similar tempo. I noted in the Methodology that in Fink's analysis of tempos in performance of *The Rite's* 'Danse Sacrale' (1999:356), it was noticeable that those who resumed the tempos with the greatest ease appeared to be those with the greatest experience of conducting ballet i.e. Monteux, Ansermet, Stokowski. It would therefore seem to be the case that Gergiev, Carewe and Stravinsky, were all familiar with conducting for ballet, and therefore have/had a greater sense of the physical or 'cadential' rhythm of each section. See the Introduction for a discussion of the perception of rhythm in ballet conducting (p.12-13). Ansermet used the term 'cadential rhythm' in relation to his understanding of the action on stage.

84 (93)

S. *f* Ле-та - ла гу - сы-ня, ле - та - ла! Ле-та
Qui est ar - ri - vé, ar - ri - vé? l'oi est

M. S. *f* Ле-та - ла гу - сы-ня, ле - та - ла! Ле-та
Qui est ar - ri - vé, ar - ri - vé? l'oi est

T. *f* Ле-та - ла гу - сы-ня, ле - та - ла! Ле-та
Qui est ar - ri - vé, ar - ri - vé? l'oi est

B. *f* Ле-та - ла гу - сы-ня, ле - та - ла! Ле-та
Qui est ar - ri - vé, ar - ri - vé? l'oi est

S. А я - го - да я - го - дѣ по-кло - ни - ла-ся Я - го - да я - го - дѣ
La rouge sur la bran-che s'est pen- ché-e vers la blanche la blanche vers la rou-ge s'est pen-

A. ле - та ла!
ar - ri vé?

T. *f* У-лю-лю-лю-лю-лю у-лю-лю, со-ба-ки! у-лю-лю, борзые-я, у-лю-лю
You you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you

B. *f* У-лю-лю-лю-лю-лю ле - та ла! у-лю-лю-лю-лю-лю
You you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you

I. *s*

II. *fff*

III. *très fort et détaché*

IV. *s*

Timp. *f*

Xyl. *f*

T. d. B. *très fort. ff* *meno f* *f*

[illegible]

Between R93 and R94 in the fourth tableau (see Ex.1), there is a clear demonstration of how the rhythmic language and orchestration complicates the conductor's work. This example is representative of the much of the fourth tableau. All soloists, chorus, pianos and percussionists are included, playing and singing contrasting musical material. In the six bars shown in in Ex. 1, the time signature changes in each one (highlighted in blue). Pianos I – III are playing polyrhythms: piano I and II appear to adhere to 4/4 in the first bar but then shifts to an implied 7/8 in the 3/4 bar. Piano III is playing an implied 2/4 rhythm, but with a changeable rhythm in the left hand that destabilises this. These juxtapositions contribute to a picture that is more complex than the '4 against 6' polyrhythms found in *The Rite's* 'Procession of the Sage'. There are several potential cues (highlighted in red): the soprano, mezzo soprano and tenor soloists all enter on the first beat of bar 1, the basses a semiquaver later, and there are percussion entries in bars 5 and 6. Most importantly, there are several points at which absolute synchronisation is crucial, and the percussive orchestration demands a great deal of precision. For example, the descending scale in bar 5, sung in staggered entry by the chorus and reinforced in each piano part, demands clear articulation from the conductor, especially as it leads to the first punctuating, *sff* 'Oy!' chord. Wordsworth's comment on the conspicuous discrepancies in rhythm is especially relevant here, as there are rests before and after this chord. Accurate delivery is also crucial as the chord in bar 6 is reinforced on stage by the dancers' jump in unison.¹²

The Text

Stravinsky's use of text shows another significant development away from his earlier, purely orchestral, ballets. The conductor now has singers as well as dancers to contend with, and the use of the Russian language in particular presents obstacles (unless of course performed by Russians themselves). At the Royal Ballet, coaches are usually enlisted to

¹² The choreography in this section reflects the musical material, and in the first four bars the independence of vocal lines is echoed in the men and women dancing separate choreography. The first and third lines on stage are female, the second and fourth male. This is an approach used by Nijinska throughout much of the Fourth Tableau – although each group dances in unison, using a limited range of movements, they are in contrast with one another. In bar 5, all dancers turn to the audience and clutch their head in their hands while taking small steps forward, before the jump in unison.

teach the singers the correct pronunciation of the text, a measure not required with other more familiar European languages (conductor Wordsworth has sat in on such sessions). Setting wedding songs from the anthology of Pyotr Kireyevsky to emulate the ‘chatter’ at weddings, Stravinsky drew on the characteristics of Russian folk verse. The singers’ technique is stretched and explored, particularly in the fourth tableau, employing Russian folkloristic embellishments, whooping, clapping, speaking and shouting. According to Christopher Butler, the setting of the text was his ‘most advanced’ (2003:21), and the composer explored what he himself termed his ‘rejoicing discovery’ (Taruskin 1987:168-9).¹³ This gave Stravinsky the freedom to ignore the natural semantic accents within the language, and impose a more ‘anti-expressive’ approach that simply drew upon the phonetic quality of each syllable rather than communicating any sense of drama.¹⁴ This leaves the conductor with no opportunity to tease out any dramatic phrasing or emphasise any emotive content. Instead the approach is very systematic. As Taruskin explained, there is an inequality in the amount of syllables in each hemistich (each one having one chief accent), and these accents are not entirely fixed to a specific position, but if they move do so in a logical fashion (1987:179-80). Below (fig. 1) we see how Taruskin offers a hypothetical setting of a line of the text in accordance with the natural accents within the language, contrasted with Stravinsky’s final setting that purposely overrode the natural accents within the Russian verse.¹⁵ This is therefore another technique in reducing the conductor’s interpretative powers.

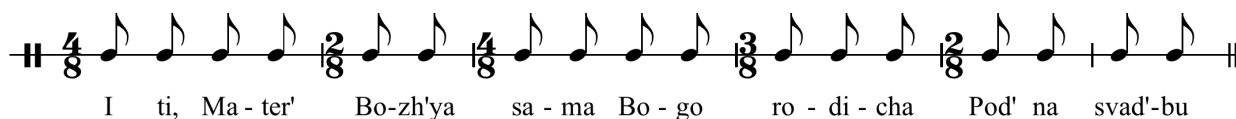
¹³ See Taruskin (1987) for a discussion of the criticism Stravinsky received for his ‘poor’ settings of other languages (English in particular), and if this applies to his settings of Russian texts. Taruskin suggests that any deviations from usual speech rhythms must, in the case of *Les Noces* and *Renard*, be viewed as intentional, and therefore leaves us unsure of Stravinsky’s intentions or mistakes in his settings of other languages.

¹⁴ A similar principle is applied to other vocal works, for example, the setting of English in *The Rake’s Progress* and Latin in *Oedipus Rex*.

¹⁵ The text also dictates the rhythm Stravinsky uses. In the fourth tableau, White observes that when the comical element in the text becomes important, the time signatures become more regular to allow for the application of syncopation. ‘So long as the syllables of the Russian text are set more or less evenly in accordance with Stravinsky’s preferred method, irregular musical metres prevail; but as soon as the comic element comes to the fore in the ‘Wedding Feast’, the need for syncopation arises, and this presupposes the existence of regular metres’ (White 1979:257).

Fig. 2 Taruskin's demonstrating Stravinsky's setting of language at R46 (1996:1361).

a) K125, lines 18-20, hypothetical scansion



b) *Les Noces*, R46 (rhythm)



Les Noces' Aesthetic

There is... almost no distinction between vocal, instrumental and the complete musical persona in *Les Noces*. It is an extreme form of depersonalisation that relegates all persons and personas to the status of constituent parts of the same multiple persona (McKay 2007).¹⁶

Stravinsky also uses the addition of words to facilitate an aesthetic shift. From conception, the ballet had a questionable identity. Stravinsky wrote to Ansermet 'I don't know what to do with *Les Noces*. It is absolutely ridiculous to put on this *divertissement* (for it is *not* a ballet)' (Stravinsky 1982:144). In the score the phrase 'Russian Choreographic Scenes' accompanies the title, showing us that from the outset Stravinsky was reluctant to pigeonhole the work. *Les Noces'* identity is muddled further by the stylistic contradictions enabled with this employment of text. The ballet couples a nuptial theme with austere orchestration and an unromantic libretto, displaying evidence of one of Stravinsky's first

¹⁶ Nicholas McKay, "'One for All and All for One': Voicing in Stravinsky's Music Theatre", *JMM: The Journal of Music and Meaning* 5, Summer 2007 [http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=5.5], sec.5.8.

shifts towards neo-classicism. But more sophisticated than this simple juxtaposition, is the fact the solo singers are not assigned individual ‘roles’. And as solo passages are not designated to correspond with the action on stage, this cultivates a strong sense of anonymity and lack of identification with the principal characters.

Individual roles do not exist in *Les Noces*, but only solo voices that impersonate now one type of character and now another. Thus the soprano in the first scene is not the bride, but merely a bride’s voice, the same is associated with the goose in the last scene. Similarly, the fiancé’s words are sung by a tenor in the grooming scene, but by a bass at the end; and the two unaccompanied bass voices in the sense, however much their music may suggest the actual reading of the marriage service, are not to be identified with two priests. Even the proper names in the text such as Palagai or Saveliushka belong to no one in particular. They were chosen for their sound, their syllables, and their Russian typicality (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:115).

Although several of the principal characters are labelled in the score,¹⁷ the soloists are not neatly assigned to the portrayal of each role. Instead they adopt multiple parts, appearing as anonymous voices (the anonymity compounded by their placement in the orchestra pit). For example, at R114, there is a section in the libretto where the chorus relays a conversation between the bride and bridegroom. However, these roles are not reflected in their allocation to the singers. Stravinsky fashions a different kind of ‘question and answer’ that in the first section is between the female singers of the chorus (singing the narration) and the soprano, mezzo-soprano and tenor soloists adopting the parts of both groom and bride. Both female singers and soloists then become the chorus (see below).

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
Hear the bridegroom saying ‘I would sleep now’

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
And the bride replying ‘Take me with you’

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
Hear the bridegroom saying ‘Is the bed narrow?’

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
And the bride replying ‘not too narrow’

¹⁷ For example, Nastasya (the bride), Fetis (the groom), the Druzhko (the best man), the mother and father and friends etc.

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
Hear the bridegroom saying ‘How cold are the blankets?’

Sopranos and Altos Soloists: Soprano/Mezzo-Soprano/Tenor
And the bride replying ‘they shall warm them’

Sopranos (divided)
‘Tis to thee Fetis we sing now this little song,
And to the little dove, the white one, to Nastasia, to our Timofeevna too

Sopranos (divided), Altos (divided), Soloists: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano
Dost hear us, hearest thou Fetis, dost hear us, Pamfilievitch

Sopranos (divided) and Altos (divided)
We are honouring you, we sing our song to you

In his unorthodox allocation of text to the singers, Stravinsky profoundly alters the way in which an intimate conversation between man and wife is conveyed. This, coupled with the complex nature of the score ensures that the conductor (and singers) cannot communicate any sense of dramatic phrasing or characterisation to the audience. Murphy held similar sentiments.

I agree that the music should speak for itself. In concert performance and doubly so with the dancers, rhythmic stability is paramount with this work. The singers, especially soloists, might well impart some vocal inflection to emphasize characterful moments in the text but there is little the conductor can do other than keep the rhythmic drive going and stay out of the way, whilst ensuring that the performance is precise but not dull.¹⁸

It is in *Les Noces*, more than any of the composer’s previous ballets to date, that one can isolate numerous devices that Stravinsky deliberately employs in order to reduce the conductor’s interpretative opportunities. Fink argues that it was the continual manipulation of *The Rite*’s tempos by numerous conductors that led Stravinsky to revise existing works, and compose new ones that were more immune to a conductor’s personalisation.

‘Monteux’s incorrect interpretation of the text was not a betrayal of the composer’s prescriptions but the catalyst for them’ (1999:323). In addition to the complex rhythmic

¹⁸ Murphy, email to author 4th March 2012.

language, exposed orchestration and challenging text, Scherchen comments on the distinct lack of dynamic instruction, and thus expressive potential of the score.

In his latest works there is neither a *crescendo* nor a *diminuendo*. All that is expressive motion in the build of melody (i.e. *accelerando*, *ritardando*, or *rubato* for expressive purposes) is excluded. All romantic expressive adjuncts being ignored, music has to rely on its own intrinsic power exclusively on its manifold, stimulating strictly set out course and its arrangement into terse patterns (Scherchen 1989:27).¹⁹

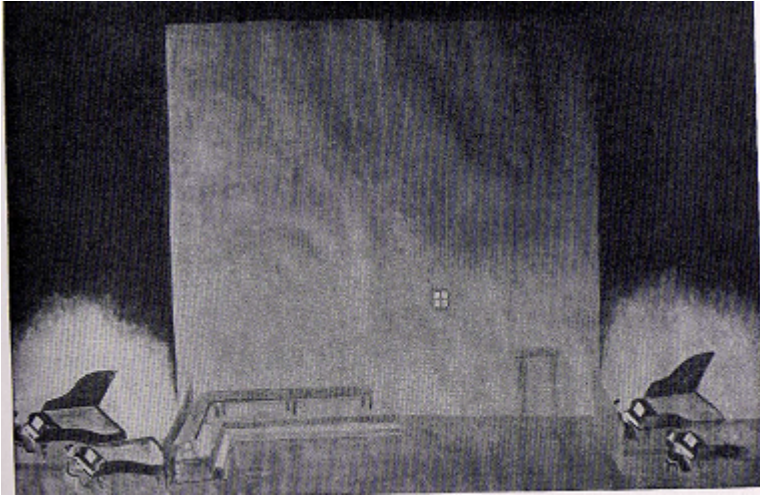
Aspects of Scherchen's observations are slightly exaggerated, in that although there is a distinct lack of dynamic instruction, there are occasional crescendos and diminuendos.²⁰ However, these have a minimal impact, and are usually assigned to specific instrumentalists or singers rather than applying to the whole orchestra. Moreover, not all conductors adhere to them. For example, the first diminuendo in tableau one seems to be ignored in Gergiev's concert and ballet performances. Carewe and Stravinsky observe the dynamic, but its effect is minimal. Therefore this lack of dynamic instruction is yet another tool employed in the depersonalisation of the conductor's performance.

¹⁹ Just as Scherchen notes *Les Noces*' absence of *crescendos*, *diminuendos* and any directions allowing adjustment of tempo (see above), Jordan notes Nijinska's similar approach to the choreography. 'Effects of build-up and reduction come not from energy crescendos and diminuendos in individual dance lines, but rather from adding or subtracting numbers of dancers between and occasionally during blocks, and shifting between unison and a complex texture of independent groups' (2007:347).

²⁰ In the first tableau there is a diminuendo or crescendo at R2 – 2, R10, R16-1, R17-1 and R18, R25-1. In tableau two and three there are none, instead starker contrasts between *ff* and *pp*.

Staging and Choreography

Fig. 1 Maquette by Gontcharova, photo four pianos on stage (Ramuz 1917:35).



Although there are discrepancies between the various recollections of the original staging of *Les Noces*,²¹ its novelty is less debatable, particularly within the ballet genre.

Stravinsky's initial desire was 'that the whole company of musicians and dancers should be together on the stage as equal participants'²² (Stravinsky and Craft 1962:117-8), but at the premiere only the pianos (or Pleyels)²³ were rumoured to have been placed on the stage (with conductor, singers and percussion down in the pit). This idea, presented by Diaghilev, again substantiates the argument that many of the innovations of Stravinsky's ballets must be attributed to those with whom the composer collaborated. Although the exact whereabouts of these pianos or pleyels seems to vary between recollections and performances, it is certain that the conductor was presented with the physical 'layering' of instrumentalists, some musicians in front of him, some above. This would have altered

²¹ Walsh (2002:634) summarizes these discrepancies. Walsh points out that Gontcharova's final designs included pairs of grand pianos, but in varying positions, and that Stravinsky recalls that the four pianos were in the corners of the stage. Jordan suggests the pianos were placed on the stage because the orchestra pit at the Théâtre de la Gaîté-Lyrique was too small to hold the four pianos with the orchestra (2007:335).

²² 'I must say that the stage production of *Les Noces*, though obviously one of talent, did not correspond with my original plan. I had pictured to myself something quite different. According to my idea, the spectacle should have been a *divertissement*, and that is what I wanted to call it... inspired by the same reasons as in *L'Histoire d'un Soldat*, I wanted all my instrumental apparatus to be visible side by side with the actors or dancers, making it, so to speak, a participant in the whole theatrical action. For this reason, I wished to place the orchestra on the stage itself, letting the actors move on the space remaining free' (Stravinsky 1990:106).

²³ A Pleyel (or 'double piano') is a large wooden sound box with a keyboard at each end. Although there is one soundboard there are two mechanisms inside.

fundamental conducting technique with regard to cueing and eye contact. Although not unlike opera in this respect, with the accompaniment on stage and singers in the pit *Les Noces* presented different issues in sound balance. Although this was an obstacle that Stravinsky's previous ballets had not presented, Taruskin has highlighted the possible influence of Benois's 1914 staging of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Le Coq d'Or* (1987:174) in which the singers were placed in the wings and the dancers only appeared on the stage. Nonetheless, the possible development of this concept (and its transferral to ballet) places the conductor in a more unusual theatrical set-up.

It appears that Ansermet (conductor of the premiere) successfully accommodated these extra theatrical considerations. Walsh believes that the unusual staging was not problematic.

Oddly enough, the one perverse, 'boulevardier' element, Diaghilev's idea of placing the four pianos (or to be exact, two double Pleyels, played by Georges Auric, Edouard Flament, Helene Leon and Marcelle Meyer) on the front sides of the stage in full view of the audience- and thus implicitly part of the set- seems not to have found disruptive. Perhaps it was felt to express the organic unity between the sung music and the scenic action (Walsh 2002:366).

Yet the fact that this feature of the original ballet has not been upheld in later revivals suggests that it posed obstacles. Wordsworth explained that in his experience at the Royal Ballet the whole orchestra is always in the pit, believing that the original staging would be 'visually distracting'. Although this would have been the original intention, influenced by the Russian theatre director Meyerhold's experiments in unconventional, non-representational staging,²⁴ it was not an innovation that could be easily upheld. Placing the pianos on stage creates more expense and inconvenience for the ballet company, and it was for these reasons that Wordsworth suggests *Les Noces* was not re-staged for thirty years.

Nijinska's 'choreographic concerto' (Nijinska 1937:618), as it is famously termed, allows the dance to form a contrapuntal relationship with the music, surpassing the rhythmic complexity of work by Fokine (*Firebird* and *Petrushka*) and her brother Nijinsky (*The Rite*

²⁴ See Braun, E. (ed.) *Meyerhold on Theatre* (1969) for a collection of Vsevolod Meyerhold's writing on theatre.

of *Spring*).²⁵ Stravinsky stated ‘her choreography for the original productions of *Renard* (1922) and *Noces* (1923) pleased me more than any other works of mine as interpreted by the Diaghilev troupe’²⁶ (Stravinsky & Craft 1960:51). In addition to the score’s own rhythmic complexities, the choreography also possesses its own independent metre. It is in the ballet’s fourth tableau where the choreographic counterpoint becomes its most complex (Stravinsky travelled to Paris to assist Nijinska in choreographing this section).

In her analysis of R87 to R115, Jaubert (1999) highlights the coexistence of actual metre (i.e. what is present in the score), perceived metre (how the listener hears and regroups the rhythms) and choreographic metre (the metre that the dancers appear to be following). Jordan (2007:351-373) also acknowledges this choreo-musical counterpoint, which appears in many guises. These ideas echo the earlier sentiments of conductor Leopold Stokowski, who stated,

The rhythm is irregular, subtle, asymmetric...Rhythm is the foundation and inner life of this work and divides itself into rhythm for the eye [motion of the figures on stage- grouping of these figures- the poetry of rhythmic motion (dance), the prose of rhythmic motion (pantomime) and rhythm for the ear (the music of the solo voices, chorus, group of four pianos, group of percussion instruments)]. It has been our aim to make a synchronisation of these two aspects of one rhythm (Stokowski 1929:16)

An example occurs two bars before R88. Although the ‘actual metre’ is 4/4, the ‘choreographic metre’ is 3/4. The ‘perceived metre’ is more subjective - the placement of the crotchets gives accents that could leave an impression of smaller bars, music shifting between 2/8 and 3/8.²⁷ However, the interviews with both Wordsworth and Murphy disclosed that the consideration of the perceived, actual *and* choreographic metres is, for the conductor, too complicated.²⁸ Although Murphy expressed the definite need for dance

²⁵ Nijinsky’s influence, however, is apparent throughout, with *Les Noces* exhibiting a similar folkloristic feel, with repetitive movements in unison and signature postures such as the inward turning feet, clenched fists and heads cocked to one side.

²⁶ Although this is possibly a comment made in her favour after falling out with many of the other Ballet Russes choreographers.

²⁷ Jaubert’s explanation differs slightly here as she appears to be using a different score. She writes that the ACTUAL metre is 2/8 and 3/8 at this point (209).

²⁸ Jordan also notes Jaubert musical bias, gleaned from the study of only one recording (2007:338).

studio observation,²⁹ both conductors stated that in performance the conductor does not need to pay great attention to the action on stage. There were, for example, no mention of cues or adaptations of tempo for ballet performance. Wordsworth suggests that this is thanks to Nijinska's skilful setting of the choreography (i.e. it fitted the score so effectively that the conductor does not need to make adaptations for the dancers). He stated that it is actually one of the few ballets where there is 'no conflict with the choreography – it can be performed in exactly the same way in concert'.³⁰ This assertion can be supported by the results in Table 1 earlier in the chapter, which includes both a live concert and theatre performance conducted by Gergiev. Although the conductor adheres to the score's specifications less closely than both John Carewe and Stravinsky himself, he maintains the same (or very similar) tempi in both performances.

Conclusion

Evaluating the numerous challenges *Les Noces* presents to the conductor, it becomes apparent that Stravinsky's effect on the conductor did not culminate at *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky continues to influence the conductor's work in ways not seen in his earlier ballets. Firstly, the ballet's unorthodox orchestration (soloists, chorus, four pianos and percussion) creates a highly exposed, mechanised sound that is more unforgiving of mistakes than the hundred-strong orchestra in *The Rite of Spring*. This difficulty is compounded further by the consistently complex rhythmic language – Wordsworth described the work as 'uniformly difficult'. Performance footage of reputable ballet conductors shows them conducting with great focus on the score, and delivery of a precise rhythmic beat in both ballet and concert performance. With even cueing at a minimum, this minimises the conductor's ability to contribute to the live performance.

²⁹ In rehearsal, *Les Noces* presents difficulties as the ballet's reduction for two pianos bears little resemblance to the full score. David Drew, a dancer in Bronislava Nijinska's revival of *Les Noces* at the Royal Ballet in 1966, commented on how difficult it was to envisage the finished result in rehearsal, and how different the piece felt when he finally danced with the full orchestra (2001). In comparison to earlier ballets (including Stravinsky's), the orchestra is easier to depict (albeit in a limited sense) on the piano, as most orchestral instruments will play one note at a given point. Voices, on the other hand, are impossible to emulate, especially those singing with a lack of discernible melody (see MacGibbon, R. (2001) *The Firebird and Les Noces* [DVD] BBC Classical Music Production, Opus Arte).

³⁰ It must be noted, however, that the presence of the choreographic counterpoint does require a metronomic delivery, and Wordsworth states that the conductor can only afford less consideration towards the dancers if this is the case.

The challenging Russian text presents another obstacle - as well as being written in a language that is less familiar to most singers, Stravinsky also overrides the natural semantic accents. This anti-expressive approach to the text is another anti-interpretative device that inhibits both the conductor and singers' dramatisation of the text. Moreover, Stravinsky does not assign roles to the singers. Instead, they are passed between solo singers and chorus, so that no singer can identify (or be identified) with a specific role or character. This is demonstrated at R114 where the narrator's part is sung by the female members of the chorus, but the parts of both bride and groom are sung by the same three soloists (Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano and Tenor). This profoundly alters the communication of the drama with the audience, and leaves the conductor powerless in the relaying of any narrative in the piece.

When viewing *Les Noces* in its historical context, it is clear that although there are numerous discrepancies in the exact nature of the original staging, placing the pianos on the stage with the remaining musicians down in the pit (with the conductor) was novel and distinctive within the ballet genre. This altered the balance of sound for the conductor and adjustments would have been made for the physical layering of instrumentalists. Conductor interviews revealed that although the ballet's complexity is compounded further by the independent choreographic metre, in reality the conductor is unlikely to incorporate an understanding of this choreo-musical counterpoint into his performance as the score is already presenting so many challenges. Moreover, Nijinska's skillful choreography (which compliments the score with minimal adaptation) ensures the need for only limited attention - Wordsworth stated in interview that it is possible for the work to be performed in exactly the same way in both theatre and concert performance. Tempo analysis of two live performances conducted by Gergiev (in both concert and theatre performance) support this statement. Just as Stravinsky had wished, the need to thoroughly internalise the score absorbs the majority of the conductor's focus. In *Les Noces*, Stravinsky is employing an increasing number of factors that ensure a vastly reduced interpretative freedom on the conductor's part. In critiquing various *The Rite of Spring* recordings, Stravinsky wrote 'can

anyone wonder why I later tried to write conductor-proof (even mechanical) music, as in *Les Noces*?' (Stravinsky and Craft 1972:241).³¹

³¹ Although Stravinsky did make an alteration suggested by conductor Pierre Boulez. 'M. Boulez talked me into deleting a measure from *Les Noces* (I was less than sober) that did not fit *his* formula for the passage; and did it, obligingly enough, for the television camera' (Stravinsky and Craft 1972:216).

Chapter 6. *Apollo*

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined how *Les Noces*' consistently irregular rhythmic language and percussive orchestration (among other factors) prevented the conductor's involvement with the work's aesthetic or choreographic factors. In *Apollo*, it proves to be the reverse situation, in that the work's aesthetic and choreographic complexities prove to be amongst the conductor's greatest obstacles. The ballet was termed by Stravinsky as the 'U-turn itself' (Stravinsky and Craft 1972:106), representing the shift away from his unmistakable Russian and folkloristic roots into neo-classicism. The ambitious orchestration and rhythmic complexities of *The Rite* and *Les Noces* gave way to a far more modest and introspective collection of works. In these Stravinsky utilised 'imitation' or in some cases the re-working of music of various styles and composers. Yet despite this apparent accessibility, with the use of more conventional orchestration, rhythm and harmony, Stravinsky continues to challenge the conductor (and restrict their interpretation) in alternative ways. For some, it was not a welcome development. For example, Sir Thomas Beecham, who openly praised Stravinsky's earlier works,¹ gave a disastrous performance of *Apollo*. At one point the lead violinist 'signalled the players to a full-close which Stravinsky never intended... Beecham tossed his baton to the desk with a calculated gesture of contempt' (Reid 1961:194).

'The later stuff' he [Thomas Beecham] said, 'no longer bears Stravinsky's image. He has lost his image and cannot find it. You may search among the later works in vain... When you hear recent Stravinsky it is hard to know what you are hearing. Some years ago I gave his *Apollo* music at Leeds. Poh!' – here he shrugged and waved a hand resignedly. 'There was nothing in the music, nothing' (Beecham cited Reid 1961:194-5).

It appears, from the quotation above, that the challenges for Beecham were aesthetic and stylistic. Stravinsky had 'lost his image'. In a profession where image is paramount, this places demands on the conductor that are less tangible and harder to define. Moreover, *Apollo* also marked the start of Stravinsky and Balanchine's long collaborative

¹ He was particularly fond of *Petrushka*, which he called the 'composer's masterpiece' (Reid 1961:145).

relationship,² which when compared with the composer's early ballets increased the need for choreographic awareness and collaboration with the dancers. The relationship between the conductor and Stravinsky's repertoire is still evolving.

The Neo-Classical Aesthetic - A new style for Ballet strings

Compare the *Rites* and the *Wedding*, where so many spirits of earth and of the waters still haunt him, to other masterpieces like *Apollo* or that *Capriccio* of which the brilliant poetry depends in its entirety on the made object (Carr 2002:96).

Stravinsky's abandonment of the full orchestra in *Apollo*, ensured an elimination of variety that was more appropriate to Balanchine's 'ballet blanc'.³ The minimal plot, following the story of the Greek God's birth and three of his visiting muses, signals a clear departure from the very 'Russian' subject matter that Stravinsky had used to date. Stravinsky's preference for anti-interpretative performance has now started to manifest itself in alternative ways. Now the 'made object', to which Carr refers (see above), was the principal focus. White suggests that 'the score is perhaps the best exemplar of Stravinsky's dictum about classicism in his *Poetics of Music*'⁴ (1979:344), as Stravinsky appears to be reigning in his dramatic and more primitive musical instincts, and striking a more successful balance between the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of his music.

For the conductor in ballet, a relatively young genre that blossomed in the nineteenth century (with romantic strings dominating its formative years), Stravinsky's application of these neo-classical principles introduced a particular purity of sound. His writing for string orchestra presented a very clean and restrained style for strings that both conductors interviewed (Ellis⁵ and Murphy⁶) consider unique to Stravinsky. Conveniently for the composer, this controlled, conservative string writing made it tasteless for the conductor to

² See Joseph (2002:354-356) for a full chronology of Stravinsky/Balanchine ballets. *Apollo* was choreographed twice: originally by Adolph Bolm for the Washington premiere in 1928, and by Balanchine for the Parisian. However, it is Balanchine's version that has survived, and will therefore be referred to in this chapter. For an in depth account of the American *Apollo* see Joseph, C. *Stravinsky Inside Out* (2001:35-630).

³ 'Ballet Blanc' is a term that refers back to nineteenth-century classical ballet, where the dancers wear white.

⁴ 'The clear integration of a work of art and its crystallisation demand that all the Dionysian elements, which stimulate a composer and set in motion the rising sap of his imagination, be adequately controlled before we succumb to their fever, and ultimately, subordinated to discipline: such is Apollo's command' (Stravinsky cited White 1979:344-5).

⁵ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

⁶ Interviewed 16th June 2010.

romanticise the music by adding rubato, or over-emphasising dynamic or tempo changes (Murphy agreed that to play it passionately would have been inappropriate to the ethos of the work). The (albeit debatable) balance that Stravinsky had struck between the intellectual and emotional, continued to restrict the conductor's 'artistic license'. Although it is a return, in a sense, to the approach appropriate to Mozart or Beethoven, Stravinsky adds to the classical aesthetic in the sheer range of stylistic influences and quotations used. It is not simply a reversion to the classical style, with merely superficial modern overtones, but an aesthetic with many guises, accompanying choreography. Carr's *Multiple Masks* (2002) is a fitting title that can be applied to the conductor's role, as he is now manoeuvring between many composers, forms, and styles. As Thomas Beecham stated, 'When you hear recent Stravinsky it is hard to know what you are hearing'.

Free of ethnicity, pre-existing tunes, or an explicit narrative, the composer deemed *Apollo* (the title he came to prefer) the least 'contaminated' of his compositions up to that point (Joseph 2002:73).

Despite Stravinsky's claims of purity it appears that both academics and conductors take it upon themselves to identify musical quotations and influences. In the case of *Apollo*, however, these influences are problematic to define and their identification is a subjective and inexact science. Stravinsky himself noted several quotations that had been suggested by others. For example, *The Boys from Syracuse* (an impossibility considering it is a 1938 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical), Delibes, Tchaikovsky, Debussy's *Clair de la Lune* at the start of the Pas de Deux, and the 'miserere' of Verdi's *Il trovatore* (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:33-34). The presence of Tchaikovsky is noted by Spies who highlights how the re-orchestration of two numbers from *Sleeping Beauty* 'was evidently the impetus leading to Baiser de la Fée and Apollo' (1987:119). Diaghilev heard the influences of Glinka and sixteenth-century Italian Music (White 1979:342).⁷ Conductors in interview had yet more suggestions: Murphy heard traces of *Giselle* in the Apotheose, and Ellis elaborated further.

If anything it is closest to Schnittke. It is a tapestry of a whole range of styles. At points it is unbelievably purist neo-classical music, at others unbelievably tacky neo-classical music, at others 1940's film music, no two bits are the same. Like

⁷ White himself disagrees with this assertion (342).

Prokofiev the banal string writing only gives greater reinforcement to the powerful sections (such as the Apotheose).

Highlighting these influences in rehearsals and performance seemed to be of particular interest to both Ellis and Jurowski.⁸ Ellis commented ‘I make sure I make the characterisation of these contrasting styles really strong (although I don’t verbalise this to the orchestra!)’. Jurowski simply felt it was necessary to draw attention to them so that the performers can relate to and more effectively communicate the music. However, the only music Stravinsky openly admits to drawing from is seventeenth-century French music (the dance music of Lully, for example, is resembled in the clean string melodies and minimal orchestration). But it is not the musical style Stravinsky refers to but the themes and forms popular in the era.

Apollo is a tribute to the French Seventeenth-Century. I thought that Frenchmen might have taken the hint for this, if not my musical Alexandrines, at least from the décors, the chariot, the three horses, and the sun disc (the Coda) were the emblem of le roi soleil (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:34).

The discrepancies between the models that Stravinsky employs and the influences that the conductors perceive enable us to view Hyde’s four models of neo-classical imitation in an alternative light.⁹ It appears that although ‘heuristic imitation’ (2003:114-5) is present throughout in the application of eighteenth-century literary models (see below for a discussion of Stravinsky’s use of the Alexandrine Principle), performers still presume the presence of ‘eclectic imitation’ (102) and take it upon themselves to tease out these traces of other styles and composers in performance. Stravinsky’s neo-classical aesthetic, ironically, seems to have given some conductors a freedom of ‘interpretation’.

⁸ Interviewed at Glyndebourne Opera House, 3rd July 2013.

⁹ Hyde (2003) formed four models that can reflect this varied use of pre-existing material in Stravinsky’s neo-classical music. The first is ‘eclectic imitation’ where an ‘unspecified group of earlier composers and styles all jostle with each other indifferently’ (2003:102). The second is type is ‘reverential’ where existing material is reworked and modernised. The third is ‘heuristic’, in which Classical or Baroque forms are employed by Stravinsky in order to ‘position himself within a specific culture and tradition thereby opening a transitive dialogue with the past’ (114-5). The final type is Dialectical Imitation. This is when a dialogue between a work and the model Stravinsky has drawn are engaged in a more aggressive dialogue, as if each is fighting its case or position (122-3). See p.51-2 for a more comprehensive explanation.

Apollo's Rhythmic Language

Although *Apollo* exhibits a move into the use of a seemingly more conventional rhythmic language than the earlier 'Russian' ballets, there are more subtle difficulties that can be equally problematic in performance. In musicological literature, the majority of *Apollo*'s rhythmic analysis places focus on the use of the Alexandrine Principle. This is a concept borrowed from French literature,¹⁰ whereby a rhyming couplet, consisting of twelve syllables, is divided into two halves of six. Its rhythm is iambic (i.e. long, short, long, short), which in *Apollo* translates into either a crotchet, quaver, crotchet, quaver combination in triple time,¹¹ or the more common dotted rhythm, which Stravinsky employs in most of the ballet's dances.¹² Stravinsky considered this classical principle as 'characteristic' (Stravinsky and Craft 1959:21) of the Eighteenth Century, therefore in keeping with his new neo-classical aesthetic. It is prominent from the outset of all of *Apollo*'s dances (except for the Pas d'action where it appears approximately half-way through the dance at R32).

The Variation de Calliope is the most commonly used case study demonstrating Stravinsky's use of the Alexandrine.¹³ The additional choreographic challenges (discussed later in the chapter) also make it one of the more challenging dances for the conductor, and therefore an appropriate choice for demonstrating the developments the ballet instigated. In this particular variation, Stravinsky openly acknowledges the influence of the French poet and critic Boileau, with the couplet below appearing in the score below the title.

*Que toujours dans vos vers le sens coupant les mots
Suspende l'hémistiche et marque les repos.*

¹⁰ The composer's familiarity with the writings of contemporary French poets and intellectuals – Apollinaire, Cocteau, Lourié and Valéry – is crucial to an understanding of the classical grammar of *Apollo*'s artistic message (Joseph 2002:98).

¹¹ See Variation de Calliope (written in 6/8), or Variation de Terpsichore (written in 3/8).

¹² Carr also points out the variations *Alexandrine Ternaire* or *Alexandrine Romantique*, where the twelve syllables are divided into four groups of three – she argues that this is utilised in 'Naissance d'Apollon' (2002:103).

¹³ See, for example Carr (2002:101-2), which includes a table demonstrating Stravinsky's use of the Alexandrine in the Variation de Calliope (p101-105 for a discussion which includes case studies from 'Naissance d'Apollon' and 'Variation d'Apollon'). See also Joseph (2002:98-109).

Bars 1-7 (see Ex. 1) fit the quotation syllabically, and the opening twelve-note melodic figure (consisting of two six-quaver phrases – bars 1-4) is rhythmically symmetrical.¹⁴ The alternation between crotchets and quavers (seen from bar 5) is reflected later on in the dance's 'B' section (the dance follows a simple ternary ABA format, which is again complimented by Balanchine's choreography). From R41 the cello plays an alternation between minims and crotchets. Stravinsky again acknowledges the 'borrowing' from literature, this time a Russian poet. 'The rhythm of the cello solo (at No.41 in the Calliope Variation) with the pizzicato accompaniment is a Russian Alexandrine suggested to me by a couplet from Pushkin' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:33).

Ex. 1 Bars 1-8 of the Variation de Calliope (short score).



Despite this academic fascination, performance analysis again highlights the lower priority this takes in performance. The conductors interviewed showed limited interest in Stravinsky's use of the Alexandrine Principle.¹⁵ Although it is a structural property that *could* be communicated by the conductor (particularly in concert performance, without the

¹⁴ The idea of rhythmic symmetry is explored in far greater depth in the later Symphony in C, composed between 1938-40. In the first movement, there is a temporal symmetry that is maintained throughout. There is an A, A', B, C, D, C, B, A', A structure, and the corresponding 'reflections' are (with only one exception) exactly the same length in bars. See Hyde (2003:115-20) for an analysis of this first movement and its use of various types of neo-classical imitation.

¹⁵ There is evidence, however, of a dancer observing the Alexandrine Principle. 'Baryshnikov's unusual attention to poetic metre was one of the features that made his interpretation of *Apollo* especially interesting. He articulated the patterns by pushing the balls of his feet into the floor, supplying what Croce describes as 'the percussive element that is absent in the score' (Jordan 2007:171). Jordan's observations demonstrate that it is possible to communicate the iambic principle through visual (or physical) means. Of course, Baryshnikov is assisted by Balanchine's sensitivity to Stravinsky's score (the choreographer himself being a proficient pianist and conductor).

choreography) Stravinsky's score is prescriptive enough. The structure is already made explicit by his phrase markings. His placement of accents, bowings and phrase marks already communicate the Alexandrine without the conductor's intervention. In fig. 1a) Stravinsky very clearly articulates the Alexandrine in the first four bars by separating each group of six quavers with three quaver rests. In fig. 1b), the two emphatic D minor chords act as bookends for the group of twelve notes between them. This articulation of the concept needs no interpretation on the conductor's part, and can communicate itself in performance.

Fig. 1a) Bars 1-6 (R39) - Violins

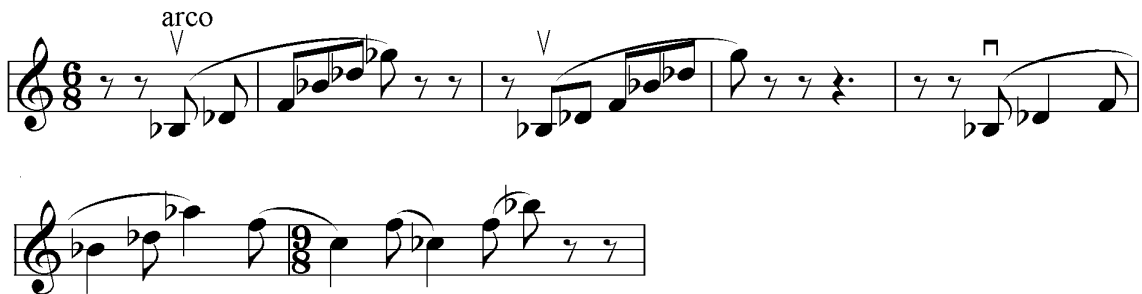


Fig. 1b) Bars 9-12 (R40) short score



Coda and Apotheose

Conductor interviews uncovered alternative instances where the rhythm, either in isolation or in combination with choreographic challenges, presented obstacles to the conductor that most academic literature overlooks. One of these is in the lively Coda, where Stravinsky revisits the superimposed time signatures first seen in *Petrushka*.¹⁶ However, in this instance, the superimposed metres pose more of a tangible, practical challenge (and unlike

¹⁶ In the original version of *Petrushka*, Stravinsky superimposes 7/8 over 3/4 (see p.60-1).

in *Petrushka* were not abandoned in later revisions). At R86, the music shifts from 3/4 to 6/8. However, the cellos and basses are scored in 2/4, creating the impression that the 6/8 melody is written in triplets. At this same point, the metre has also changed from 112 to 168 ‘which means that the fundamental unit (crotchet) is half as fast again as the crotchet of the introduction’¹⁷ (White 1979:344). Furthermore, at R87 the 6/8 metre is not consistent, for four bars it alternates with 2/4, temporarily in synchronisation with the cellos and basses. Murphy boldly labels this section as one of the most challenging extracts of music in the Stravinsky ballet repertoire. Not only is the rhythm ambiguous, the lively tempo makes acceleration a danger (avoiding this is essential for the dancers).¹⁸ These sentiments are echoed in White’s observation that this section of the Coda can be problematic in performance.

The occasional resolution of its 6/8 rhythm into 2/4 or 3/4, and the change of tempo towards the end, give it a theoretical terseness that is not always borne out by the actual performance, when the contrast between the metrical ground and the melodic line above does not seem to be sufficiently emphasised (White 1930:128).

The ballet’s culmination in the ‘Apotheose’ is also a challenging section as the rhythmic difficulty lies not in any complexity, but in the simplicity of a simple motif repeated at variable intervals. Stravinsky is, again, testing the conductor’s memory, but in a less explicit way than the earlier Russian ballets. The simple and memorable motif (see fig. 2) is repeated exactly except for the varying length of the final note B, which increases in length by a crotchet each time. Murphy stated that this passage, although straightforward to analyse from a musicological perspective, is more of an obstacle in performance, as the conductor and players must stay conscious of these alterations in order to stay synchronised. Again, this is a ‘pseudo-change’ in tempo¹⁹ that is choreographed by Stravinsky: by keeping the metre and tempo static, but lengthening the end of the phrase each time, he is creating a *ritardando* that the composer, rather than the conductor, controls. Thus Stravinsky continues to impose stringent interpretative restraints despite *Apollo*’s

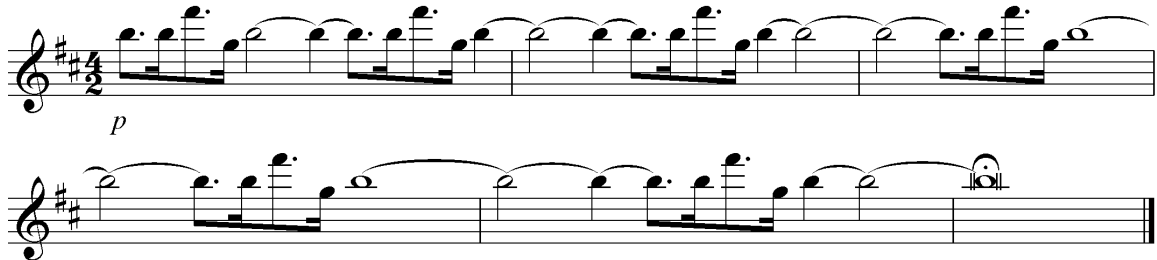
¹⁷ The original score had dotted crotchet = 160 ‘To be completely logical, the later dotted crotchet should = 168, but mathematical rigidity is never one of Stravinsky’s characteristics’ (White 1930:119 n2).

¹⁸ Jordan has observed that, contrary to the common trend, performances of *Apollo* increased in tempo over a number of years, and have subsequently decreased again recently (2000:100).

¹⁹ See also *Oedipus Rex* R193 + 4 to R195 + 4 (White 1930:113). ‘However the time signature may change in the opening chorus, the metrical norm is always the same n1 (e.g. The change at 11 from 6/8 to 2/4, quaver = semiquaver) (White 1930:120).

comparatively conventional notation. This is especially effective in a final passage that could otherwise be over-romanticised.

Fig. 2 The final six bars of the Apotheose (first violins).



Stravinsky and Balanchine – The Choreo-Musical Collaboration

There is a stupid idea about Stravinsky; that he is a cerebral composer whose music is too complex and calculated. Actually Stravinsky's music is jolly, springy, very danceable... when we worked together, we always had a good time (Balanchine, cited Volkov 1993:153/4).

As *Apollo* marked the beginning of Balanchine and Stravinsky's long and prolific collaborative relationship, it also marked a change in direction for the conductor. Balanchine felt a great affinity with Stravinsky's music and found that it lent itself to ballet (his repertoire also includes the later setting of choreography to many of Stravinsky's concert works).²⁰ Understanding the choreography and setting of *Apollo* was of great importance to the composer. 'Stravinsky inquired for specific details: the exact dimensions of the stage and those of the orchestra pit' (Jacobi cited Joseph 2002:80). And in return, Balanchine's choreography is incredibly sensitive to the score and its structure complemented Stravinsky's music. The intricate choreo-musical interdependency can be seen throughout Balanchine's work,²¹ and this reflection of the score in the action on stage demands of the conductor a more intimate knowledge of, and involvement with the choreography. This differs greatly from the working relationship of Tchaikovsky and Petipa (the most famous composer-choreographer partnership of the previous century). In this case, the Petipa's requirements were usually very prescriptive, with Tchaikovsky

²⁰ See the following chapter *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, which explores the dual identity that many of these concert works acquired.

²¹ Another example is the *Concerto Barocco*, premiered in 1941, that is set to Bach's Concerto in D minor for Two Violins. Visually, the choreography closely reflects the development of musical line and counterpoint.

(generally) adhering to these precise specifications.²² These choreographic considerations, combined with the aspects of the score already discussed, make *Apollo* a unique challenge.

The ‘Variation de Calliope’ is an example demonstrating the conductor’s need to be continually mindful of this choreo-musical interdependence. Murphy explained that in this case the conductor must use a combination of leading and following the soloist on stage. Enough space needs to be left for her to deliver the choreography – in this case if the music is pushed, the dancer lags behind. At the beginning of the variation, the conductor must give the solo dancer a bar in as a cue. The variation starts on the fifth quaver of a 6/8 bar (see Ex. 1 above) and the second six-quaver phrase starts on the second quaver beat of bar 2 (after a three quaver rest). This avoidance of the downbeat makes the synchronisation of music and dance more challenging and it is therefore crucial that there is an accurate delivery from the conductor. Balanchine’s choreography adheres rigidly to Stravinsky’s score in the opening: Calliope dances on each note of the first two phrases. At R40, the staccato chord in the cellos and double basses accompanies Calliope’s stabbing gesture into her stomach, again emphasising the necessity to synchronise. In the middle ‘B’ section, Calliope dances in synchronisation with the string accompaniment rather than the solo cello line. This not only demands clear articulation of the accompaniment to ensure co-ordination, but also leaves space for the cello line to be appreciated. This section is played at a slower tempo in ballet performance than specified in the score. As the dancer is running on pointe here, the tempo needs to be made comfortable for the soloist. Stravinsky specifies that a dotted crotchet = 92, but both the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the Balanchine Celebration Performance perform it at a slightly slower pace, even drawing back a little more at R41.

Apollo’s distinctive pas de deux also demands extra choreographic consideration in areas. As outlined in the Methodology chapter, it is common practice for a conductor to need to

²² He [Petipa] wrote out a detailed plan for the ballet, breaking it down section by section, describing the action, the quality of the music he wanted, the time signature, the length (in terms of bars) and even suggestions for orchestration. Tchaikovsky, for his part, responded with inventiveness to Petipa’s call for expressive effects and almost always complied with his instructions regarding metre, tempo or scoring (Garafola 2007:157). See Garafola’s chapter ‘Russian Ballet in the Age of Petipa’ for an overview of the choreographer’s work.

pay closer attention to the dancers in these instances, in order to provide space for lifts, demanding choreography and needs of the individual soloists. Aspects of the choreography that require particular attention include the turn at R64, lift at R65, the repeated ‘splits’ at R67, and Terpsichores ‘swimming lesson’ at R70.²³ All of the above examples require the conductor to collaborate with the dancers and determine his/her individual needs. Tempo must also be considered at R69 in the pizzicato section (Murphy stated that is it easy for the music to accelerate at this point) and the final chord cannot be held for longer than specified as the dancers’ position is difficult to hold. There are also moments when the cello line is reflected literally in the dancers’ gestures (see below). It is at these moments when the conductor must facilitate the synchronisation of dance and music.

Fig. 3 Synchronisation of cello and choreography (R67 – 1, and R68 – 1).

A B C D E



- A** Apollo extends forward left arm
- B** Terpsichore places right hand in Apollo’s left hand
- C** Apollo extends forward right arm
- D** Terpsichore places left hand in Apollo’s right arm
- E** Terpsichore turns

A B C



- A** Terpsichore lifts right foot to knee
- B** Terpsichore extends right leg to the left
- C** Terpsichore turns

²³ The latter is an ingenious moment in Balanchine’s choreography where Apollo kneels in front of Terpsichores while she is lifted and lays on the nape of Apollo’s neck, emulating the action of swimming.

During the Coda, there are many aspects of Balanchine's choreography that dictate that the tempo should be carefully controlled in performance. Although a lively dance, it is crucial that the orchestra does not increase in speed throughout the section, as the dancers would be unable to accommodate any acceleration. There are many jumps that must be considered. For example, at R82, Apollo enters and jumps five times in the space of five bars. The speed of these jumps will vary greatly between soloists and must be considered when allocating an appropriate tempo. At R85, two muses hold on to either arm and jump four times while simultaneously being rotated by Apollo. As in the 'Sacrificial Dance' in *The Rite of Spring*, the conductor must again be mindful of the speed of the dancers' jumps, or their ability to adhere to the specified tempo, and adjust the performance accordingly. The punctuating pizzicato chord at the end of the dance accompanies the female dancers' clap, followed by the muses offering their hands for Apollo to lay his head. Murphy explained that this is notoriously hard to synchronise.

These choreographic challenges are not necessarily unique to Stravinsky's ballets when evaluated in isolation. The conductors interviewed (Murphy and Ellis) both expressed the comparative difficulty of Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, where these issues are equally, if not more pertinent. There are numerous points in this ballet where choreographic considerations are of paramount importance, particularly in Act 3, which is comprised of many short dances in which individuals or duets can showcase their virtuosity. However in *Sleeping Beauty* the conductor is dealing with a more conventional rhythmic language and orchestration. Therefore it is the *combination* of the choreo-musical interdependency alongside the aesthetic ambiguities and rhythmic complexities that allow *Apollo* to contribute to the development in the conductor's role in ballet.

Conclusion

Although *Apollo* exhibits a seemingly more conventional score than Stravinsky's earlier ballets, conductor interviews (and viewing the ballet in its historical context) highlighted that it demands a unique stylistic approach that was new to ballet at the time. This clean, restrained writing for the strings altered the expectations placed on the instrumentalists, and thus the conductor. Aesthetically, this continued (in part) Stravinsky's reduction of the

conductor's interpretative role, as adding rubato and excessive dynamics would have produced a style inappropriate to the score and Greek subject matter. Although the majority of academic focus is on *Apollo*'s use of the Alexandrine Principle, conductors found alternative rhythmic passages more challenging in performance. Although often more straightforward to analyse, the exposed string writing often makes them less easy to perform successfully. These include the superimposed metres at R86, and at the end of the Apotheose, where the repeated motif is extended by a crotchet on each repeat (in effect a manufactured *ritardando*). These features demonstrate new attempts by the composer to eliminate the conductor's interpretative powers.

However, the mix of multiple musical influences, coupled with a more conventional score, does give the conductor a chance to engage with the 'voices' within the music. Interviews with conductors suggested that the presence of these musical references were seen as something that could be highlighted in performance – an opportunity for interpretation. This can, however, also suggest a misunderstanding of the composer's true influences, which Stravinsky stated were the themes and forms of seventeenth century French music (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:34) rather than the quotation of music of other styles or composers. This therefore enables us to view Hyde's four models of neo-classical imitation (2003) in a different light. Although 'heuristic imitation' is present throughout in the application of eighteenth-century literary models, conductors presume the presence of 'eclectic imitation' and take it upon themselves to tease out these traces of other styles and composers in performance.

Using score analysis and performance analysis of ballet footage of Balanchine's 1928 choreography, it is evident that Balanchine's choreography demands greater consideration by the conductor. This assertion is also supported by the conductor interviews, and demonstrated in the examples taken from the 'Variation de Calliope', 'Pas de Deux' and 'Coda'. There are many points in these dances where specific movements must be considered, (i.e. jumps, lifts etc). The combination of these obstacles with the other factors outlined above ensure that Stravinsky continues to challenge the conductor, but in alternative ways to his early Russian ballets.

Chapter 7. Stravinsky Violin Concerto

Introduction

The nature of the challenges for the conductor in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* resembles, in many respects, those of *Apollo*. Both scores, although more accessible rhythmically and harmonically than the earlier Russian ballets, also contain a multitude of stylistic references and imitation, typical of Stravinsky's neo-classical music. However, there are two crucial differences: the adaptation of a concert piece, and the addition of a soloist. Moreover, the score itself contradicts the traditional 'soloist - accompaniment' format, meaning that the solo violinist is not afforded the usual spotlight and interpretative privileges seen in the performance of Romantic concertos. There are a multitude of factors that affect the conductor's work, including the fact that the use of the concerto in a theatrical setting confuses the typical soloist-conductor-orchestra dynamic.

The Violin Concerto's Multiple Identities

Of the case studies in the thesis, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* presents the conductor with the most complex identity. Although Stravinsky's early Russian ballets gained dual identities as successful concert works (i.e. *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces*)¹ they were nonetheless intended as ballets from the outset. In the case of the Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra, the reverse is true. Balanchine set choreography to the concerto in 1941 (ten years after its premiere) to a recording conducted by Stravinsky (with violinist Samuel Dushkin and the Lamoureux Orchestra). The result was *Balustrade* - the first of his two ballets choreographed to the piece.² Joseph believes that Balanchine was attracted to works such as the Violin Concerto because instead of looking to the narrative for drama to inspire the choreography, the scores held an 'intrinsic textural counterpoint. And where there is counterpoint there is the potential for interplay, for conflict and conciliation, distinctiveness and dependency' (2002:312).

¹ *The Firebird*, of course, is included in this list, but as a ballet suite rather than the full length work.

² Stravinsky was able to watch a great deal of *Balustrade*'s original choreographic process and announced the ballet as 'one of the most satisfactory visualisations of any of my works' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:48).

Stravinsky never wrote *Balustrade*, he wrote Violin Concerto. The ballet should be announced as what it is. Then the musicians can come, the young people who love music and want to hear the composition- they'll know what they're getting. They don't have to look at the ballet if it bores them, they can just listen to the music. And that's fine with me, that's wonderful (Balanchine, cited Taper 1996:321).

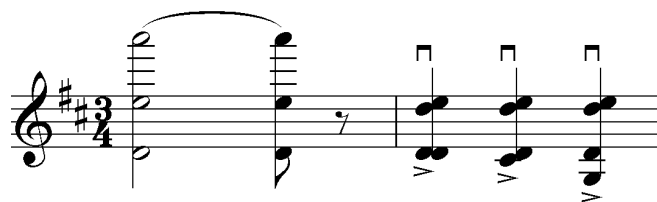
This was not the first time that a conductor would have to adapt a concert work for ballet - it was pre-dated even within the Stravinsky-Balanchine relationship by *Le Chant du Rossignol* (*The Nightingale*).³ Indeed, Balanchine set choreography to a number of Stravinsky's concert works – e.g. *Symphony in Three Movements*, *Symphony of Psalms*, and *Perséphone* (all New York City Ballet productions).⁴ But more unusually, Balanchine re-choreographed this ballet in 1972 after Stravinsky's death the previous year (the earlier choreography is now virtually forgotten). He changed the title to *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* in honour of the composer's memory (it is this later choreography that is used throughout the chapter). This juxtaposition of 1930's neoclassical and 1970's choreography offers one of many layers of ambiguity that complicate the work's identity.

A unique characteristic of *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* is the altered dynamic that the score instigates between the conductor, soloist and orchestra (before any consideration of the choreography). This is partly due to the unprecedented demands on the soloist. Stravinsky's extensive collaboration with virtuoso violinist Samuel Dushkin gave room for exploration into new possibilities in violin technique. For example, Dushkin initially thought that the chord with which Stravinsky intended to open each movement was impossible, much to the composer's disappointment (see Fig. 1). But, with experimentation he realised that in the high register the interval of the eleventh was possible (Walter-White 1984:369). Stravinsky's initial naivety was therefore an opportunity for Dushkin to stretch the possibilities of his own technique. This in turn stretches the conductor's own knowledge of the instrument, allowing him to accommodate for the new demands placed on the soloist.

³ This was a piece that manifested itself in many guises: as an opera, a symphonic poem and then a ballet (premiered in 1914). Balanchine worked on the 1925 revival. Stravinsky began work on the piece as early as 1908, but it was left unfinished due to the rising success of his ballet music. See the chapter *Le Chant de Rossignol* in (Joseph 2002:55-72).

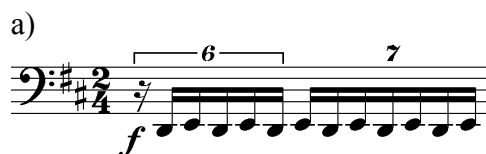
⁴ For a full list of the Stravinsky-Balanchine Ballets see C. Joseph *Stravinsky and Balanchine; a journey of invention* (2002:353-356).

Fig. 1 The 'passport' chord (Joseph 2002:328) opening each movement.



Additionally, the conductor is leading a piece that adopts a different format to the typical concerto. The most striking difference is the number of movements - four instead of three - giving the work connections to symphonic form (the reverse occurs in the *Symphony in Three Movements*). But more importantly, the violinist does not take centre stage in the same way as he or she would in most other Romantic concertos, and there is no cadenza. 'I did not compose a cadenza, not because I did not care about exploiting the violin virtuosity, but because the violin in combination was my real interest' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:47). This adjusts the conductor-soloist-orchestra dynamic, as the soloist in many respects can be treated as simply another member of the orchestra. Indeed, this was the approach adopted by Jurowski, in his recording with Patricia Kopatchinskaya and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.⁵ Jurowski actually felt that this feature made the concerto more straightforward to conduct. The violinist plays alongside many other solo lines - many instruments have their own 'signature' themes or motifs that mark them as having key roles as well as the violinist. There is not the clear soloist-accompaniment distinction present in most concertos. Fig. 2 below lists a small collection of instruments and repeated motifs they perform, giving them possible prominence to the listener.

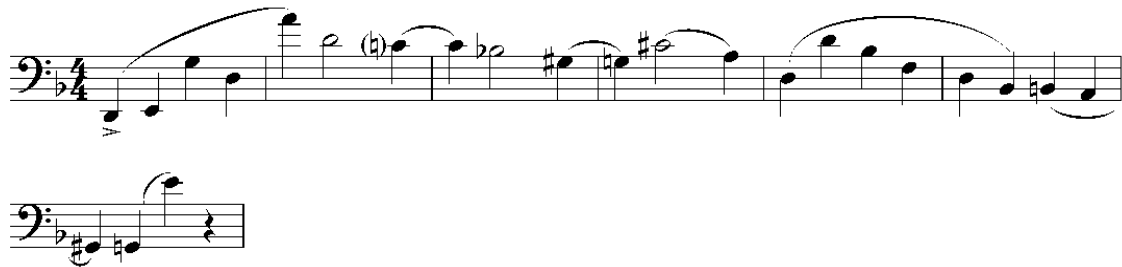
Fig 2. a) Bassoon motif at R3 + 4, b) Trumpet theme at R11, c) Cello theme in Aria I



b)



c)



Although other instrumentalists have key roles in the piece, the demands on the soloist are constant.⁶ The piece therefore acts as a violin concerto and a Concerto Grosso simultaneously. This lack of complete focus on the violinist was a conscious discouragement of egotistical soloists, and complimented Stravinsky's well-documented disdain for 'star conductors'.⁷ Balanchine held similar sentiments and would never flatter the arrogance of any famous soloists in his choreography. 'Balanchine's "no star" policy was well known... Balanchine may have felt that the charisma of star dancers might distract from the ballet's message' (Joseph 2002:123).⁸ *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* opens with one female and four male dancers static on stage. As the music starts (with the triple-stopped chords on the violin), the dancers remain motionless. The opening theme, starting in the trombones and then the oboes, is well underway before any dancing begins. Balanchine therefore introduces the violinist as the first 'performer' and throws a spotlight on the soloist in a way that is unusual in ballet. The conductor is thus presented with a combination of possible identities: violin concerto, abstract ballet, concerto grosso, and virtuosic yet modest music.

⁶ The dancers also perform in 'shifts' in Balanchine's choreography – the violin is not represented by an individual dancer.

⁷ See the chapter 'On Conductors and Conducting' Stravinsky, I. and Craft, R. *Themes and Conclusions* (1972:223-233).

⁸ This could be a factor in contributing the Violin Concerto's limited success as a concert work. It is not a 'show-off' work for the soloist.

Ellis⁹ stated that the role of the soloist is entirely different when performing the violin concerto as a ballet. The conductor cannot follow the violinist as the choreography is dictating the nature of the performance. ‘Ideally, it would be performed by a leader playing the solo part. It must be done the way that it was set by Balanchine, especially the last movement. It doesn’t feel comfortable and you have little control. The violinist is allowed no space with the incredibly awkward chord at the start of each movement’. Silverstein suggests that usually, ‘the soloist expects the conductor to embrace his or her interpretation without question... the orchestra expects the conductor to be familiar with the soloist’s interpretation’ (2003:40). With the consideration of choreography, these expectations are disrupted, and the soloist will no longer be briefing the conductor on his/her own interpretative wishes. The conductor must follow suit, sacrificing any personal interpretation in order to manage the adjusted dynamic between the soloist, orchestra and choreography.

Stravinsky’s ‘Eclectic Imitation’

In the previous chapter I referred to Hyde’s four methods of neo-classical imitation in relation to the conductor’s possible interpretation of *Apollo* (see p.122). The hermeneutic issues discussed are equally relevant to the conductor in this case, however with the additional issues surrounding the ballet’s identity outlined above, the hermeneutic issues become even more complex. The classification of Stravinsky’s use of imitation becomes more of a task in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, as the work is even more crammed with musical references to both classical and folk music. There is, however, an obvious employment of ‘eclectic imitation’ - ‘an unspecified group of earlier composers and styles all jostle with each other indifferently’ (Hyde 2003:102)¹⁰ - as the musical influences are numerous and undetermined. Unlike *Apollo*, which drew more on the literary models of the French eighteenth-century (e.g. the Alexandrine Principle), Stravinsky’s varied imitation was now more in line with that seen in Mahler’s music.¹¹ However, rather than exploring

⁹ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

¹⁰ The *Octet* is another example of such a composition.

¹¹ See Johnson, J. *Mahler’s Voices: Expression and Irony in Songs and Symphonies* (2009) for a comprehensive analytical and hermeneutic study of these allusions in Mahler’s music.

these influences with a sense of nostalgia (an approach also employed by Tchaikovsky in *Mozartiana*), Stravinsky maintains a more post-modern, detached and objective distance.

The conductor could (although subjectively) identify a plethora of influences, in particular Russian and Eastern European Classical and Folk music. But McKay (2007) observes that unlike the *authorial absence* (manifested in the objective distance Stravinsky adopted in his early works) of a voice ‘present’ in *The Rite*, Stravinsky’s music is now ‘double voiced’, or adopting a surrogate ‘other voice’. The concept of ‘double voicing’ is reflected in Jurowski’s approach to the piece. He stated that in many respects it is difficult to approach ‘Baroque’ music written by a man of Russian pedigree, so as a result he approached the piece with ‘double vision’.¹² The Concerto’s first movement, ‘Toccata’, holds many examples of this double voicing. The only influence Stravinsky openly refers to in relation to the Violin Concerto is that of Bach. The movement titles: ‘Toccata, Aria, Capriccio - may suggest Bach, and so, in a superficial way, might the musical substance’ (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:47). He also expresses an admiration for Bach’s Concerto for Two Violins, and the last movement features a duet between the main soloist and another solo violinist between R117 and R119. However, the work cannot be argued as being homage to Bach, as the stylistic ambiguities and influences are so numerous. Griffiths speculates that his influences include ‘the ornate stately world of a Bach slow movement... to the *Soldier’s Tale* manner in his frightening tang and dazzle elsewhere, and to Tchaikovsky and circus music in the brilliance and jollity of the accompaniment’ (1980:633). Anthony Gritten even points out the appearance of various musical gestures from Brahms’ Violin Concerto in the Aria II (2006:110). Jurowski referred to a ‘pseudo-Spanish’ section (R129-132) whilst recording the Capriccio,¹³ and unlike Ellis (who prefers not to verbalise his perceptions on Stravinsky’s influences to the orchestra), he actually felt they ‘needed’ to be communicated.

The Toccata’s opening immediately presents a huge melting pot of styles co-existing simultaneously. The opening chords for the violinist in bar two have a distinctively klezmer flavour - playing four strings at once does not elicit a clean articulation. The sound

¹² Interviewed at Glyndebourne Opera House, 3rd July 2013.

¹³ Observed at Air Studios, London 23rd May 2013.

produced is rougher, and far more akin to the guttural, earthy and ‘bitter sweet’ sound synonymous with Klezmer playing. Mark Slobin uses the phrase ‘laughter through tears’ to describe the impression of the ‘Jewish’ sound (2000:99).¹⁴ Two bars before R7 the heavy ornamentation of the descending scale in the 5/8 bar is also very indicative of the style, and the regular appearance of grace notes (for example in the first bar after R3, where the last quaver on D is preceded by a grace note an octave lower) and descending glissando (for example, one bar before R9) are far more evocative of Klezmer music than any other style of violin playing. (The violin, as well as the clarinet, is one of the solo instruments prevalent in Jewish music, thus in keeping with this stylistic observation).

But the violin’s initial klezmer ‘identity’ is not long lived (although it returns regularly). At R2, the chords in the violin are superimposed over the very Bachian theme played by the oboes, thus juxtaposing two contrasting styles of music. At R7, the solo violin introduces a comical, circus-like motif, characterised by its playful ascending sequence (typical of that heard in circus music when introducing an act or artist) that is repeated at R11 by the trumpet. Therefore, the initial introduction of the second theme is done so on an instrument atypical to one that the motif would traditionally ‘suit’. This reference is less explicit than in the opening and therefore continues to complicate the identity of the work.

Another example of multiple-voicings can be found between R20 and R24. At R20 there is a curious mismatch of material. At R20, the solo violin is playing diads of thirds: C-E; A-C; F-A etc. with octave displacement and repetition of the C in the lower register as a fixed pedal point, in constant semiquavers. This is essentially a very Baroque device (see, for example, Bach’s solo suites) but the octave displacement in a very high register modernizes the gesture. Simultaneously, the cellos, playing pizzicato, and the double basses, are playing a motif suggestive of a 6/8 time signature. The trombone’s theme, and the horn accompaniment, a variation on the typical ‘oom pah’ accompaniment of brass band music,

¹⁴ Samuel Dushkin was Jewish, and Stravinsky noted this positive influence on his sound. He wrote ‘a Jew, like the great majority of leading violinists, Dushkin possesses all those innate gifts which make representatives of that race the unquestionable masters of the violin’ (1990:166). This raises the issue of Stravinsky’s supposed anti-semitism. Charles Joseph, also quoting the above statement, highlights that praise of Dushkin was deleted from the German translation of his autobiography, to avoid upsetting any Nazi readers (2002:414). This suggests that Stravinsky’s supposed anti-semitism could have been amplified by others. See Evans ‘Some remarks on the Publication and Reception of Stravinsky’s *Erinnerungen*’ in *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung*, No. 9 März 1996 (Basel: Schwabe, 1996), 21 (cited in Joseph 2002:414).

reminds the listener of this circus style again. However, the addition of the woodwinds is uncharacteristic of the genre, and the dotted, legato line could suggest a more Russian/Ballet influence. At R22, the texture alters dramatically with only three musical lines. The presence of descending chromatic fragments in the solo violin's melody immediately suggests a Klezmer influence once again, and the presence of only two other parts is more typical of an Eastern European folk performance. However, the instrumentation is not - the presence of the bassoon and cellos is not immediately evocative of any European or Russian folk music.

Stravinsky therefore not only created vertical confusion (i.e. simultaneously using various styles, as well as allotting them to atypical instruments), but also horizontal mismatches (each instrument/musical line adopting various 'voices' throughout the piece). The conductor is therefore presented with multiple influences and references simultaneously, which makes any interpretation of the work and its influences a very complex task. The sectional form of the Toccata particularly lends itself to these constant transitions.

Ambiguity of Form and Structure in the 'Toccata'

The list of Stravinsky's hermeneutic ambiguities continues to build. The form and structure is also vague, most notably in the first and fourth movements. With form in Classical and Romantic music often providing the conductor with a definitive route through the music, the composer is now going to even greater lengths to eliminate this type of interpretative intervention. Even the choice of title for the first movement - 'Toccata' - is ambivalent. Toccatas, popular in the Baroque era, are of an indefinable nature (they usually display virtuoso instrumental technique). They commonly incorporate other forms (such as fugue or sonata) and are typically scholarly, contrapuntal works associated with Bach. This flexible nature gave Stravinsky great freedom when composing the movement, but far less to the conductor.

Musicologists have suggested more definable 'hidden' forms in the Toccata, but their conclusions are easily challenged. Hyde (2003:110) and Rogers both argue that the Toccata is written in three sections, 'the first beginning with the opening, the second at rehearsal no.

16, and the third at rehearsal no. 36' (Rogers 1995:478). However, the returning theme (that appears for the first time in bar 3 with the trumpets playing in thirds) reappears more than three times. The first 'section' is sectionalised within itself. At R7, the first theme is played by the flutes, but the violin enters with a new theme playing simultaneously. At R11 this second theme is then passed to the trumpets as the solo violin returns to the first theme. Joseph writes that 'while Stravinsky's Toccata is clearly sectionalized, remnants of the more traditional sonata form typical of a concerto's first movement are evident' (2002:327). A general outline of exposition-development-recapitulation can easily be traced, but the development or central section contains multiple themes, two of which are revisited before the first theme returns. Furthermore, the beginning of the development section is also ambivalent, with the return of theme A marking either the start of the development or the culmination of the exposition.

In ballet performance, the form becomes even more complex. Balanchine's choreography is a reflection and a response to the score, rather than being concerned with any dramatic narrative.¹⁵ Joseph compares the sections of the music and the choreography in the Toccata, to demonstrate how 'tightly conceived' (2002:327) they are, and how Stravinsky's composition is vividly reflected in the action on stage. However, he also highlights the differences between the sections of choreography and music, showing that although Balanchine wished to complement Stravinsky's score, the choreography had its own independent form (334-35). He suggests that the choreography is divided into eight sections. These are very clear to the spectator. Most of these divisions are clearly marked by the introduction of different sets of dancers, or the entrance of a soloist. The *sixteen* sections that he marks within the score are more easily argued. A table of these segments is below, with rehearsal numbers replacing the bar numbers that Joseph uses. I have added letters in representation of thematic material.

¹⁵ The ballet has no plot (unlike *Apollo* and *Balustrade*), an innovation that was preceded by *Chopiniana*, which is widely regarded as the first plotless ballet.

Table 1. Ambiguous Form in the Toccata

Section	Rehearsal Number	Theme
1	R1	A (exposition)
2	R7	B+A in flutes
3	R11	A+B in trumpet
4	R12	C
5	R16	A (development?)
6	R18	D (development?)
7	R20	E
8	R22	F
9	R25	D
10	R27	F
11	R33	G
12	R36	A (intro) (recapitulation)
13	R38	A
14	R42	A+B in flutes
15	R46	A+B in trumpet
16	R47	Coda

The table demonstrates that although the division of thematic material *can* be divided into the three groups that Hyde and Rogers suggest, this is not a definitive answer to the question of form in the Toccata. The first section, seeing a regular return of theme A (which again resurfaces in the final section of the movement), could also suggest rondo form to the conductor. Aside from the verse/refrain structure, the rondo is also associated with aristocratic, homophonic and decorative music, often associated with Mozart (and also of course, the *third* movement of a concerto rather than the first). Tracing musical ideas through the Toccata reveals suggestions of numerous forms, and therefore the conductor is left with little choice but to let the music speak for itself. Conductor Ellis said he did not gain any understanding of the form before performing the work, believing that Stravinsky's scores are so prescriptive they will take care of themselves. A similar sentiment was held by Jurowski, who when questioned about his approach to the form of the piece answered that he preferred to 'let it happen'. Therefore, the issue of 'multi-voicing', between Rondo, Toccata, and Sonata form, layered on top of the concerto/symphony/ballet dichotomy,

create a complex concoction of misalliances that keep the conductor's authority over the score limited.

Concert/Theatre Differences

Setting choreography to a Stravinsky concerto alters the dynamic for the conductor and soloist in particular, and it is in the Arias where the differences between concert and theatre performance are most prevalent. Murphy¹⁶ states that the conductor, orchestra and soloist can treat the Toccata and Capriccio in much the same way as a concert performance. This claim is supported in the table below, showing a basic comparison between a ballet, concert performance and a recording of the Capriccio (the final movement). The variations in tempo are minimal, and do not stray a great deal from the composer's tempo specifications. Note in particular the Balanchine performance, and how closely it adheres to Stravinsky's score.

Table 2. Performance Tempos in the Capriccio

Rehearsal No.	Balanchine DVD	Christian Ferras	Isaac Stern (conducted by Stravinsky)
R86 (quaver 120)	122	125-8	124-7
R119 (quaver 152)	Just under 152	166	152-155
R123 (quaver 200)	199, slowing to 195	214?	202-211

In the ballet performance of the Arias, it is primarily the tempos that are affected; the orchestra cannot play too quickly as the dancers need space for lifts and challenging choreography (Balanchine choreographed both Arias to suit the strengths of the original dancers). Therefore the freedom of the solo violinist is also restricted, with less opportunity to personalise the performance.

¹⁶ Interviewed on 28th August 2009.

Aria I

It has often been said that Aria I is about a struggle, a fundamental incompatibility merged with an irrational need for partnership. When the woman dances with the man, she cannot look at him (Jordan 2007:183).

For the conductor, Aria I is also a struggle between competing theatrical factors - the two arias are non-motoric and consequently far more inclined towards rubato and freedom of tempo. As they both accompany pas de deux, adhering to Stravinsky's precise and changeable tempo specifications can become impractical. As with *Apollo*, the ballet conductor must now consider the technical demands placed on the two dancers as well as the violinist.¹⁷ Stravinsky's opening tempo for Aria I is crotchet = 116. It is not, however, performed at this speed in ballet performance. Dancers usually prefer a far slower tempo (in the region of crotchet=96 at the Birmingham Royal Ballet), to allow space for the lifts and demanding choreography. Jordan observes that in the Labanotation score 'the tempo is down from 116 to 104 (as low as 92 in other versions)' (2007:183). However, an excessive decrease in tempo is also problematic as the piece will lose momentum more easily than in concert performance.

A point of particular choreographic importance is at R59. The three instrumental lines (solo violin, first violins and cellos – see Ex 2) play six bars in 4/4. However, Stravinsky imposes metrical displacement whereby the soloist, although playing on the crotchet beats, performs harmonics in groups of either three or nine harmonics (i.e. multiples of three), separated by crotchet rests. This leads to an 'aural clash between duple and triple metres' (Joseph 2002:340), that is compounded further in the first violins and cellos. They play on the 'weak' quaver beats, with accents that again reinforce the irregular groupings of crotchets. Balanchine's choreography reflects these musical features, as well as being tailored for the original female soloist Karin von Aroldingen. The female dancer at this point adopts a 'crab' posture, and repeatedly turns sideways out of this to face down on all fours, before

¹⁷ See (Joseph 2002:338-342) for details of Balanchine's collaboration with the soloists Karin von Aroldingen, Kay Mazzo, Jean-Pierre Bonnefous and Peter Martins. Balanchine choreographed both Arias to suit the individual dancers.

turning back to the ‘crab’ posture again (known as ‘crab walks’).¹⁸ This is a move that requires great agility and demands a sympathetic approach from the conductor. Here the needs of the dancer are of greater significance than those of the instrumentalists, and she requires a performance tempo that is sensitive to her physical capabilities. The movements align rhythmically to the violins and cellos, but are in groups of four – not aligning in this instance with the musical groupings. The male soloist’s movements are synchronised with the violin harmonics (i.e. the crotchet beats). Again his movements can be grouped into four, even though the harmonic motif in the soloist’s part suggests triple time. The choreography here is not only reflecting the metric displacement in the music but also *adding* to it. It is therefore vital for the conductor to adhere to the dancers’ requirements here, as well as keeping the musical layers tight enough to keep the musical pulse perceptible.

¹⁸ Jordan’s explanation is as follows. ‘Their push and pull come fully into focus during one of the strangest passages of all, when von Aroldingen exits from this difficult emotional entanglement by reverting to the inverted and grotesque. She bends over backwards into crab and, by turning over sideways, walks herself round in a semi-circle while Bonnefus looks on, tracing a line of steps that follows her trajectory’ (2007:183).

Ex. 2 R59 in Aria I

The musical score for Ex. 2 R59 in Aria I is presented in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin, Violin I, and Violoncello. The Violin part features a melodic line with a 'tutti' marking. The Violin I and Violoncello parts provide harmonic support with a 'sim.' (simile) marking. The second system continues the Violin I and Violoncello parts, with a 'poco sf' (poco sforzando) marking and a dynamic accent (>) over a note. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The table below demonstrates the tempo variations between the recording used for the Balanchine DVD, Christian Ferras's concert performance, and Isaac Stern's recording (conducted by Stravinsky). Stravinsky's own performance tempos are closest to the score, without the need to slow down to allow space for the choreography in theatre performance. Christian Ferras's performance is incredibly variable (even out of synchronisation at many points with the orchestra), making accurate measurement of his performance tempos almost impossible. Clearly this level of freedom would have no place accompanying Balanchine's choreography, and Ellis' sentiments ('ideally, it would be performed by a leader playing the solo part ... the violinist is allowed no space') are substantiated by observation of this performance. The little footage that appears of the conductor in this concert performance does show a very metronomic, expressionless technique (it is merely time beating and the

occasional cues¹⁹). However, Ferras at many points ignores the orchestra and conductor and they are left to catch up with him.

Table 3. Performance Tempos in Aria I

Rehearsal No.	Score	Balanchine DVD	Christian Ferras	Stravinsky (soloist-Isaac Stern)
R51	Crotchet = 116	90-94	90-99 (very variable)	109-115
R59	Crotchet = 116	91-3	92-94	112 (precise)
R62	Minim = 72	76-81 (slowing down)	79-81	78-80
R65		80 (slowing down)	92-100 (great deal of variation)	83 (speeding up)
R71		152	78	151
R71+3		94	98	100
R71+5		62	60	60
R72	Crotchet = 116	92	95-96	120
R75+4		Slows to 86	Slows to 88	Slows to 93
R76+2	Tempo 1	90-94	100	116

As one can observe from the table above, although R59 has particular tempo restrictions in ballet performance, an even, accurate delivery is required in concert performance (even if to a lesser extent), to clearly communicate the metric displacement. There is less difference between concert and ballet tempos at R62 as the new tempo (minim=72) suits the choreography.²⁰

The most intriguing section in relation to variation of tempo arrives at R65, where the soloists in both concert performance and recording play in a way entirely different from the

¹⁹ In the Toccata, there are cues seen for the first violins R28-1, and the cello melody at R29. In Aria I, there is a cue for Timpani at R71 – 3. In the Capriccio, the conductors signals to the strings at R110 +1, and woodwinds at R111+2.

²⁰ Murphy interviewed 28th August 2009.

ballet DVD performance. Isaac Stern, conducted by Stravinsky, speeds up noticeably, and Ferras varies to such an extent that he loses connection on occasion with the orchestra (this variation continues in the following section between R71 and R72). The tempo at this point in the Balanchine performance, however, slows down. A steady tempo is essential, as from R65 the choreography for the male dancer has many kicks and jumps that cannot be rushed. From R67, both male and female are dancing similar choreography, with a continuation of kicks and jumps, and at R68+1 the female's kicks draw a circle from the front to the back. This step requires sufficient space and is therefore more supported by the *ritardando*. Balanchine also uses the accents in the score as opportunities for choreographing jumps or more marked movements, and so an emphasis on these accents is used in the ballet performance. At R65, the accents are over emphasised to support the choreography that contains many kicks and some jumps. These more marked accents compliment a more 'physical' aspect to the music, which needs to be highlighted by the conductor more when the piece is performed as a ballet.²¹

Conclusion

There are certain similarities that can be drawn between *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and *Apollo*. These include the imitation of the music of other composers/genres, a more conventional rhythmic language than the early 'Russian' ballets, and an increased choreo-musical interdependency courtesy of Balanchine's choreography. However, from a hermeneutic perspective, *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* has a more complex identity, presenting a vast array of aesthetic contradictions that continue to limit the conductor's interpretative intervention. Firstly, the adaptation of a concert piece for ballet performance (re-choreographed in 1972 after Stravinsky's death) gives the conductor more parties between which to mediate, and less interpretative freedom to the violinist when compared with earlier Romantic concertos. This is compounded by Stravinsky's desire to explore the

²¹ This also applies in the *Capriccio* (fourth movement), where Balanchine uses accents within the music to aid the choreography. Two bars after R131 there is a 3/8 bar that in its last quaver beat contains a chord in the solo violin part that is resolved on the first beat on the next bar (in 2/8). There is a crescendo here, and that is also present in the horns, thus emphasising the downbeat. This 'accent' is strongly emphasised in the recording used for the televised 1972 performance as it accompanies a jump that the whole company dance in unison. However, it is not as pronounced in Stravinsky's own recording.

‘violin in combination’ (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:47), giving more attention to other instrumentalists than is typically seen in a violin concerto (in this sense more closely resembling a concerto grosso). The bassoon, trumpet and cello are among the instruments that have their own ‘signature’ phrases (see fig. 2) giving them possible prominence to the listener.

Score analysis highlighted the multitude of juxtaposed stylistic references, ranging from Bach (the only one to which Stravinsky refers) to Tchaikovsky, and Circus to Klezmer Music. The composer uses multiple styles simultaneously – for example, the opening juxtaposes the violin’s klezmer identity with a Bachian theme in the oboes. Moreover, themes in a certain style are assigned to atypical instruments – this is heard at R7, where a circus-like motif is first heard on the violin. It is not until R11 that the theme is repeated in the trumpet, an instrument more synonymous with the genre. Each instrument adopts various ‘voices’ throughout the piece, demonstrating that Stravinsky’s hermeneutic ambiguities are filtering down into every corner of the orchestra.

The indistinct form and structure (of the first and fourth movements in particular) leave the conductor with no definitive ‘route’ through the music. Although both Hyde (2003:110) and Rogers (1995:478) argue that the opening ‘Toccata’ is comprised of three fairly distinct sections, these are easily challenged by the additive nature of the structure, and the fact that the numerous repeats of themes (most notably A, D and F – see Table 1) in some ways is more reminiscent of a Rondo form. This is the ‘and then... and then...’ approach to musical structure that Andriessen and Schonberger observe as being so prevalent in Stravinsky’s music (1989:42). This leaves him (just as Stravinsky would have wished) quite powerless in terms of communicating any personalisation or interpretation of the work.

As is the case with *Apollo*, Balanchine’s choreography continues to demand an increased involvement with the action on stage. Conductor interviews and performance analysis illustrate how this affects the performance tempos and the articulation of accents in the music, which must be adjusted to suit and support the choreography. This is particularly pertinent in the performance of the two Arias, which accompany the pas de deux. As the choreography in these instances is very challenging, the conductor must place the needs of

the dancer in front of those of the players, and the soloist in particular is afforded less interpretative freedom with regard to rubato etc. Moments where the conductor must be mindful of the choreography include at R59, where the metric displacement is reflected in the choreography. The ‘crab walks’ (given to the female dancer) require great agility and cannot be rushed. In combining the hermeneutic complexities with a strong choreo-musical interdependency, the score paves the way for Stravinsky’s final ballet *Agon*.

Chapter 8. *Agon*

Introduction

The previous two chapters demonstrated how Stravinsky's Neo-Classical ballets, with the increased aesthetic, stylistic and choreographic complexities, altered the evolution of Stravinsky's relationship with the conductor. But Stravinsky's late conversion to serialism resulted in yet another change in the challenges he presented. Within the ballet genre, *Agon* (meaning 'competition' or 'contest') was unprecedented; it was the first serial composition.¹ However, this factor in isolation does not pose the greatest practical challenge. Stravinsky is now combining all of the innovative factors of his repertoire: the irregular rhythms, aesthetic misalliances, demanding choreography and unique, exposed orchestration. Jordan describes it as 'the most brilliant score of the period' (2007:56), and its difficulty is at such a level that conductors, musicians and dancers still shy away from it. 'Stravinsky's *Agon* was considered hard to play, hard to choreograph, and hard to dance. These are all reasons why *Agon* productions have been few' (244). Each dance requires a different approach in consideration of these 'competing' factors, and Stravinsky continues to present such complexity that the conductor is kept too occupied to personalise or interpret the music. In many respects, *Agon* (along with *Les Noces* in Stravinsky's early repertoire) epitomises the successful manifestation of his anti-interpretation performance preferences. The composer, in collaboration with Balanchine, is now employing more factors than any of his previous ballets to keep the conductor reduced to a mere time-beater of the orchestra.

***Agon's* Aesthetics – Mismatched Components**

Agon contains stylistic juxtapositions that have a surprisingly practical impact on the conductor's work. Unlike *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* in the previous chapter, *Agon* was intended as a ballet from the outset (it was written in collaboration with Balanchine).² It therefore does not possess the same ambiguous identity as a concert work adapted for theatre. However, the use of stylistic misalliances continues: *Agon* is an abstract, contemporary ballet and yet it adopts sixteenth and seventeenth-century dance forms (thus

¹ The most well-known serial composers (i.e. Webern, Schoenberg, Berg) did not compose ballets.

² See Chapter 10 'The Evolution of *Agon's* Musical Structure' in Joseph, C. *Stravinsky and Balanchine: A Journey of Invention* (2002:228-254) Joseph documents the collaboration between choreographer and composer and the nature of their working relationship.

employing heuristic imitation – a technique frequently evident in Stravinsky's neo-classical works). A number of the dances are named after those of the period, i.e. Galliarde, Bransle, and the Saraband - all of these were popular in Europe in the Renaissance era. Stravinsky creates 'flavours' of these styles in some of his instrumental choices: for example, the use of the mandolin, harp and strings with minimal flutes in the Galliarde sets the scene for a dance in a seventeenth century French court. Yet much of the score has a very abstract, contemporary feel, and the varying use of serialism is a stark contradiction.³ This could arguably be interpreted as 'dialectical imitation', and with *Agon* meaning 'contest' one can observe the combat between the early and contemporary music.

The Saraband, for example, is a dance that originated in Latin-America in the late sixteenth century. At this point it was a fast and lively dance alternating between the metres of 3/4 and 6/8. In the seventeenth century, it spread to Italy, and then France – where it evolved into a more slow and stately dance (Latham 2004:158). This kind of Saraband is reflected in *Agon*, and the soloist's 'bow' at the end of the 'Saraband-Step' is evocative of this style. In many respects the main musical characteristics are retained: the dance is written in binary form and its triple time is inherent throughout, often with an emphasis on the second beat of the bar. The opening solo violin chord [Bb-F-A] accent on the second beat in 3/4 time embodies the characteristic Saraband rhythm. Yet Stravinsky is obviously not attempting to emulate the Saraband style in most other respects. The instrumentation (solo violin, xylophone, trombones and cellos) is not evocative of any early music and the musical language is unmistakably twentieth-century. Stravinsky did not halt at these simple contradictions, even suggesting that 'traces of blues and boogie-woogie can be found in my most "serious" pieces, as, for example in the Bransle de Poitou and the Bransle Simple from *Agon*' (1968:54). This 'eclectic imitation' can be identified mainly through the use of the trumpets, which occasionally adopt a light-hearted feel with rhythmic syncopation, displaying the further employment of mismatched components; that of perceived 'high' and 'low', or 'classical' and 'folk' music. But this principle can also be applied to the Saraband-Step, as the music is highly discordant and uncomfortable listening, yet the heavy use of trombones gives the dance a circus-like, humorous feel. The xylophone tremolos and trills

³ Balanchine's choreography follows a similar philosophy, it is contemporary but with references to these Renaissance dances.

in the violin part add an eccentric element that suggests that although the music is intellectual, it is not taking itself too seriously. Again, this approach is complimented by Balanchine's choreography. As Denby explained,

it recalls court dance as much as a cubist still life recalls a pipe or guitar. The boy's timing looks like that of a New York Latin in a leather jacket. And the cool lift of his wrong-way-round steps and rhythms gives the nonsense so apt a turn people begin to giggle' (cited Joseph 2002:263).

An alternative example is the *Pas de Deux*, which demonstrates a contrasting set of stylistic paradoxes: a dance that usually portrays romance and intimacy is coupled with music at *Agon*'s most serial and abstract point. It is 'the most highly organised movement in the score' (White 1984:495), and this creates perhaps the most antagonistic juxtaposition in the ballet. The dance follows the typical format: the duo dance an *entrée* (or the interlude, as it is called in the score), an *adagio*, solos for both the male and female dancers (with an additional refrain for the male), and a *Coda* at the end which reunites them. The choice of instruments is also typical of the genre, as the strings are used exclusively until the start of the male dancer's solo. However, this is combined with almost Webernesque music,⁴ which gives the impression of strands or threads of sound accompanying the action on stage. These 'strands', although notated with the utmost accuracy, sound improvisatory and unnerving, not at all synonymous with a typical *pas de deux*. Instead, the dance communicates a number of moods: an eerie and uneasy opening develops into a more aggressive, brassy male variation that is quickly succeeded by a more gentle, almost mystical variation led by the woodwinds. The *Coda* is the most aggressive section, but again is short lived - followed by a more mellow *Doppio Lento* section featuring the mandolin. Balanchine compliments these musical juxtapositions by utilising more sexually provocative choreography than the more passive style to which the audience would have been more accustomed. 'The female was allowed, as no woman had been before, to participate in explicitly shaping the sexuality of the action'⁵ (Joseph 2002:259).

⁴ Claudio Spies, however, notes Tchaikovsky's influence in the female variation— 'the patterned rhythmicization of the unchanging string simultaneities simply spells 'ballet accompaniment' while acting as a backdrop for a set unfolding in the flutes' (1987:109-112).

⁵ There is a lack of submission in the female's choreography. There are strong lines and the positions leave less to the imagination than the more romantic *pas de deux*. There was also speculation that the pairing of a

These misalliances complicate any possible ‘interpretation’, and the conductors interviewed and studied showed a varying interest in exposing any paradoxes or theatricality within the music. Philip Ellis, Conductor at the Birmingham Royal Ballet,⁶ believes that with *Agon* the more ‘metronomic’ the approach (i.e. without imposing extra phrasing or interpretation) the more successful the performance will be – ‘the music will look after itself’. For him, there was no need to consider the aesthetic, serialist or dramatic issues and considered the piece more as a ‘moving framework’ whose only leniency was to adapt to the action on stage. Yet Murphy, Principal Conductor of the same ballet company,⁷ (who believes *Agon* is the hardest of the Stravinsky ballets to conduct) contests it is important for the conductor to expose these theatrical aspects of the score. He suggests that it is necessary to highlight the phrasing and shape of the music in order to enable the dancers to relate to the music and make sense of the score. In concert performance, David Robertson, conducting *Agon* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Proms in 2009, has a clear sense of drama throughout the piece, communicating for example the male/female dynamic by adjusting his body language. Jason Lai, the ‘Maestro-Cam’ commentator for the performance, noted that during the Pas de Deux’s solo section for the man and woman, Robertson makes a clear distinction in his baton technique. For the male solo and refrain his body language is more assertive than the gentle beats he uses during the female solo (Lai 2009). Yet this theatricality is coupled with a clear, accurate technique and thorough knowledge of the score.

Instrumentation – Ensembles within the Orchestra

Although Stravinsky’s stratification of material to discrete timbral blocks is seen in his earlier works (most notably in *The Rite*), this factor now becomes more acute as he uses far smaller ensembles and the instrumentalists are more exposed.⁸ In *Agon* Stravinsky is writing for a conventional orchestra, but the full ensemble never plays altogether. The

black male dancer (Arthur Mitchell) and a white female dancer (Diana Adams) in the Pas de Deux was a political statement (see Joseph 2002:257-8).

⁶ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

⁷ Interviewed 2nd October 2009.

⁸ This idea is exploited by later composers, for example Boulez in *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna*. In this piece Boulez not only completely reorganises the seating arrangements of the players, he also creates eight different groups of instrumentalists, who are not sitting adjacent to each other.

composer is always altering the combinations of instruments that he employs. Furthermore, these combinations are often highly unorthodox. For example, the Saraband-Step, (as outlined above) is composed for instruments with very different timbres and volumes, thus presenting issues in orchestral balance. This is compounded by their positioning - playing in very disparate parts of the orchestra (with no reinforcement from surrounding musicians) and at varying distances from the conductor.

It's quite tricky for a conductor in this instance as he's got to make sure all these instruments, who are sitting very far apart, play together... It's certainly not helped by the acoustics of the Royal Albert Hall. You do feel like you're playing on your own when you're on this stage. You really have to listen to what's going on around you (Lai 2009).

Ellis argues that Stravinsky has already considered these spatial considerations in terms of balance of sound, and scored the Saraband-Step accordingly. This is evidenced in the varying use of dynamics between parts. The violin part is marked *forte* throughout, and the xylophone *mezzoforte*. The trombones are scored more sensitively, with greater variation so as not to overpower the quieter instruments. However, Stravinsky himself noted the issue of balance. 'I am annoyed by the violin solo in my *Agon* recording. It seems to emanate from the bedroom, while the trombone accompaniment sounds as though it is in my lap' (Stravinsky & Craft 1968:122). A similar principle is applied to other dances. For example, the Bransle de Poitou is written for two trombones and the first and second violins; the Bransle Gay employs the first and second flutes, bassoons, harp and castanets; and the Coda uses two trombones, harp and solo cello. These tiny ensembles within the orchestra leave the instrumentalists more exposed and therefore synchronisation and balance is more crucial. Stravinsky takes the sparse, exposed orchestration seen in *Les Noces* and *Apollo* and adds the difficulty of widely spaced musicians to the conductor's list of obstacles.

Stravinsky's 'Patchwork' Harmonic Language

As *Agon* was written over a number of years (between 1953-57),⁹ and in a transitional era in Stravinsky's career, there is an inconsistency in the musical language used. Therefore the term 'serialist' is too simplistic to apply to the ballet.¹⁰ Joseph Straus, for example, observes that Stravinsky used many compositional methods in this last phase of his work (2003:156). He suggests that *Agon* uses four different techniques, the first being Diatonicism, used as a contrast to the serial.¹¹ This is used in, for example, the Galliarde and the Prelude and Interludes, which all use C as their tonal centre. The second and third are Diatonic and Non-diatonic Serialism, in which the serial motives or themes are rooted in tonality or atonality. The fourth is twelve note Serialism (based on twelve note rows) (156).¹² White writes that 'in *Agon* the serial adventure is expressed in instrumental and choreographic terms' (White 1984:138), suggesting perhaps that the use of twelve dancers was a reflection of Stravinsky's employment of twelve note serialism.¹³

It can be argued that there are further sub-sections within these categories. For example, Straus' categories do not fully account for the musical language used in the Saraband-Step. Immediately the music appears to be rooted in Bb major, the trombones and xylophone form the second inversion of the triad within the bar. This is combined with other traits typical to the Saraband, with the presence of open fourths (e.g. bars 1 and 2) and a homophonic texture. However, all twelve notes of the chromatic scale make an appearance. This demonstrates a blurring of Straus' categories in the apparent use of Diatonic music and Twelve note Serialism. The Pas de Deux reverses these contradictions. The music immediately sounds highly chromatic and of a serial nature. It opens with a twelve-note row, spanning the first three bars (411-413). The Coda, however, uses just eleven notes in the first three bars (there is no D). After this, for the next six bars, up to the Doppio lento

⁹ Interrupted by Stravinsky's commitments to composing *In Memoriam Dylan Thomas* and *Canticum Sacrum*.

¹⁰ *Threni* was Stravinsky's first completely do-decaponic work (composed 1957-58).

¹¹ Straus also observes this contrast between diatonicism and serialism in Stravinsky's Cantata and Septet (156)

¹² The fifth technique (used in *The Flood*, *Introitus*, and *Movements*, for example) is twelve- note Serialism based on rotational arrays (Straus 2003:163-168).

¹³ The musicologist Irene Alm contested this (1989). Highlighting the importance of considering the choreography in relation to the composition of *Agon*, Alm argues that much of the musical material was dictated by the choreographic ideas, as opposed to a more gradual move from diatonicism to serialism, or any other specifically musical statement (261-2).

section (bar 504), Stravinsky uses only a seven-note series - the same number as a diatonic scale. Yet the music still has the distinctly atonal feel that one would associate with twelve-note serialism.

Although it may be a musicologist's primary interest, a thorough knowledge of the serialist methods used in *Agon* did not prove to be a primary concern for the conductor. This has been noted before in musicology: in *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* Taruskin observes that the preoccupation with the processes applied in composing serial music can detract from the broader message contained within a work (2003:274).¹⁴ Interviews with conductors highlighted that in *Agon*'s case, there are so many other factors for the conductor to consider that any landmarks in the harmonic language are low on the list of priorities. Both Murphy¹⁵ and Ellis, when pressed about Stravinsky's varying employment of serialist techniques, showed an interest but explained that the score is so crammed with irregular rhythms, aesthetic misalliances, unorthodox orchestration and a complex choreo-musical relationship, that is impossible to explore this parameter within the piece. Moreover, this echoes the sentiments of many serial composers themselves. Schoenberg himself advised,

I can't utter too many warnings against overrating these analyses, since after all they only lead to what I have always been dead set against: seeing how it is *done*; whereas I have always helped people to see: what it *is*! (Schoenberg cited Taruskin 2003:274).

And as Webern also stated, 'audiences and even performers did not need to know the technical processes by which twelve-tone music is constructed' (Wintle 1982:75), thus extending this sentiment to the conductor's intellectual grasp of the work. One can therefore conclude that, as with bitonality in *Petrushka*, *Agon*'s harmonic language had little impact on the conductor's practical involvement with Stravinsky's ballet music. Stravinsky's harmony did not give drive or direction to the music in the same way as it did in much of the earlier music of the Romantic era.

¹⁴ Taruskin discusses Babbitt's influential analysis of *Cantata* (275-278) and questions its impact on subsequent literature considering its 'extreme tortuousness'.

¹⁵ Murphy, 2nd October 2009.

Agon's Rhythmic Language

Stravinsky applies a similar 'patchwork' approach to *Agon*'s rhythmic language. Although several dances are conventionally notated (i.e. the double pas de quatre, triple pas de quatre, Bransle Simple, Saraband-Step and Bransle de Poitou), the more complex and irregular rhythmic devices (that one would associate with the composer's earlier works) are also present. Consistently altering time signatures (i.e. Rhythmic Metric-Type 1 construction) are regularly used, and the minute subdivisions of *The Rite*'s 'Sacrificial Dance' are revisited in the Bransle Gay and Pas de Deux (6/16, 5/16, 7/16 etc.). The superimposition of two time signatures (Rhythmic-Metric Type 2) is also seen in the Bransle Gay, with the castanets playing 3/8 over the variable time signatures in the flutes, bassoons and harp.¹⁶ As before, these irregular rhythmic devices add time to the conductor's solitary study, a feature of Stravinsky's music with which many conductors take issue. For example, in reference to the Bransle Gay in particular, Ansermet expressed a similar disapproval of the notation to that voiced by numerous conductors in reference to *The Rite*'s 'Sacrificial Dance'.

The simultaneous employment of two cadential structures in this number is due to deliberate calculation on Stravinsky's part, whereas the faculty of auditory perception is divorced from calculation... here we touch on the defeat of "intellectual" activity, which consists in manufacturing structures that are *unnecessary* add nothing to the musical substance of the work (Ansermet cited White 1979:495).

Stravinsky attempted to put forward a slightly more profound perspective. 'I know that portions of *Agon* contain three times as much music for the same clock length as some other pieces of mine. Naturally, a new demand for greater in-depth listening changes time perspective' (Stravinsky and Craft 1959:25). Indeed, Stravinsky does present a score with a high density of notes, and a weight of theory behind the choice of each one. Consequently,

¹⁶ It is the Bransle Gay that sees the most variation in performance tempo in *Agon*. In the score, the metronome mark is quaver= 92, but it is taken more slowly in ballet performance (the Balanchine Celebration takes it at 76-78). This is because it is accompanying the female soloist (there are also two male dancers on stage but they are merely clapping along to the castanet rhythm). Although playful, her choreography demands precision that would be too difficult to observe at a faster pace. David Robertson takes it at a much faster pace (quaver=103-5) which is closer to Stravinsky's specifications, yet Stravinsky in contrast is far slower at 80-83! Both of these options would be completely impractical for ballet performance.

the conductor needs to take greater amounts of time mastering shorter extracts of music. These demands in themselves are not unique to *Agon*: they echo in many respects the demands found in Schoenberg and Webern's music. Both of these composers shared an interest in presenting short but very dense pieces of music that demanded total concentration from the listener (achieved by meticulous attention being paid to the music's form, and a conscious diversion from repetition and predictability). However, Stravinsky transferred this approach to ballet, resulting for the conductor in the coupling of this dense musical material with the additional parameter of choreography.

Prelude/Interludes

In addition to the re-employment of his earlier rhythmic devices, Stravinsky introduces fresh approaches to his rhythmic language. *Agon*'s Prelude/Interlude appears three times, introducing each Pas de Trois as well as the Pas de Deux. The Interludes are both repeats of the Prelude but with added instrumental lines. In the first interlude the instruments that appeared in the prelude play the same (diatonically based) music, but are joined by the viola, more solo cellos and double basses. The second Interlude uses added trumpets and tom-tom. However, they are all identical in terms of length, tempo (and tempo changes), and the changes in time signature (the dance combines 3/4 and 3/8). For the conductor these features can be memorised and repeated each time (although Murphy said the changes to 3/8 never felt comfortable), but the rhythmic structure *within* this comparatively straightforward structure is where the Prelude presents the most difficulties. Each part has its own independent rhythmic framework, expressed by the short repeated motifs that become continually shorter at varying rates as the piece progresses.

This can be seen in fig. 1 below. In the Prelude, the flute melody is prominent, playing a memorable ascending motif based on the C major scale. After two repetitions, the rest between repeats is far shorter, with the motif itself also reduced to four semiquavers. The timpani follow a similar principle, with a reduction in the number of semiquavers in its motif as well as a shortening gap between repetitions. However, this process does not occur at the same rate as in the flute part, and with this principle being applied across all of the instrumental lines it creates a complex musical texture for the conductor to oversee. In the

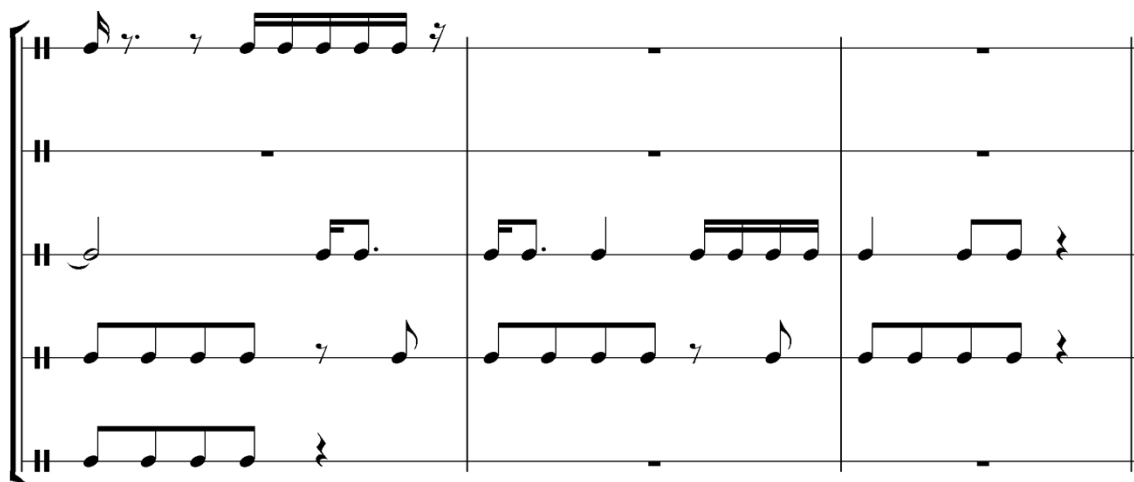
first Interlude, the addition of the cellos and double basses complicates matters further. The double bass follows the opposite rule: although it plays continuous quavers they are grouped by Stravinsky to show an expansion of its motif rather than a reduction. In the second interlude the music follows the same principle but is increasingly dense. For example additional flutes and strings play the same motifs as their predecessors but echo the already established parts. The conductor must therefore learn three pieces, which in many respects are identical but with crucial differences that must be communicated in performance. Again, Stravinsky is revisiting the demands of his early music.¹⁷ Music that is ‘almost’ repeated lulls the conductor into a false sense of security, and therefore in certain respects makes the music harder to memorise.

Fig. 1 Rhythmic analysis of bars 1-12 of Prelude/Interludes.¹⁸

The figure displays a rhythmic analysis of the first 12 bars of the Prelude/Interludes section. It consists of five staves, each representing a different instrument: Flute, Timpani, Trumpet in D, Cello (Interlude), and Double Bass (Interlude). The notation is organized into four measures, with bar lines clearly marked. The Flute staff shows a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The Timpani staff features a series of eighth notes. The Trumpet in D staff has a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing rests. The Cello (Interlude) and Double Bass (Interlude) staves show a continuous flow of eighth notes, with slurs indicating groups of notes that span across bar lines. The time signature for all staves is 3/4. The analysis highlights the rhythmic patterns and groupings used by Stravinsky in this section.

¹⁷ See in particular *Petrushka* (p. 54-61) and *The Rite of Spring* (p.77-94). ‘But what is most difficult to remember is what is ‘almost easy to remember’’ (Andriessen and Schonberger 1989:40).

¹⁸ I have inserted slurs in the cello and double bass parts where Stravinsky grouped quavers over the bar lines.



To complicate matters further, Balanchine adds his own choreographic counterpoint. Just as Nijinska imposed her own choreographic metre over Stravinsky's score in *Les Noces* (see p.114-116), Balanchine alters the perception of the rhythmic metre, creating a more definite sense of pulse over Stravinsky's apparent 'pulselessness'.

When the rhythmic pattern is ambiguous or unstressed, steps and gestures articulate pulse and meter, sometimes coinciding with the musical structure, sometimes not. In the prelude and two interludes, there is an initial rush of musical activity, the overlapping of parts removing any strong sense of meter. Using short repeating dance units, Balanchine creates his own clear pulse and independent meter (Jordan 1993:5).

Observation of the dance performance of the Prelude and first Interlude shows that while the score opens with a 3/4 bar, followed by a 3/8 bar before returning to 3/4 for two bars etc. (see fig. 1 above), the choreography completely overrides this, actually giving the audience a clearer sense of musical pulse to the audience than the music. Both dancers and musicians start simultaneously. However, the choreographic units are in groups of four, occasionally with short gaps in between to realign with the music. Other examples of independent choreographic metre are seen throughout the ballet. For example, in the Saraband-Step, Jordan notes that the male soloist's choreography in the second half forms groups of four over the music in triple time. She also suggests that the female soloist in the Bransle Gay 'establishes her own five-beat meter' over the shifting metre in the flutes, bassoons and harps, and the consistent 3/8 rhythm in the castanets (1993:8). Although, as in *Les Noces*, these independent choreographic metres cannot be incorporated into the conductor's beating patterns, or indeed any 'interpretation' of the work (the musical score presents enough complexity), they nonetheless underline the need for metronomic delivery, and the adoption of an appropriate metre.¹⁹

Observation of David Robertson conducting the Prelude and Interludes at the BBC Proms 2009 shows minimal, but significant changes in the way he guides the orchestra. The right hand beating patterns remain identical (with the exception of the final bar of the first interlude, in which he continues beating in three to accurately introduce the next dance). It is the change in cues that is the most noticeable alteration, particularly in the second interlude. The decipherable cues in the footage of both the prelude and first interlude are for the timpani in bar 1, cellos in bar 2 and the trumpet in bar 3. However, in the second prelude, the second trumpet is also cued in the second half of bar 1 as well as the second cellos in bar 6.

¹⁹ Another interesting choreographic device Balanchine uses is Canon. For example, in the Bransle Simple for two male dancers, the choreography mirrors the canon between the two trumpets – the second male dancer is two crotchet beats behind the first. In the Coda there is a more complex example between the three dancers (two female, one male) reflecting the canon between the flutes, mandolin and solo violin. See Chapter 11 'Choreography or Carpentry? Assembling a Visual Component to the Music of Agon' in Joseph (2002:255-276) and Jordan (1993:1-12).

Pas de Deux

The Pas de Deux presents a multitude of difficulties in relation to rhythm and tempo. Structurally, Stravinsky had a very concise vision for the tempos and durations of each individual section of the dance evidenced by the index card that Stravinsky attached to a summary sheet of the previous dance's durations (Joseph 2002:245-6).²⁰ Stravinsky's 'measurement' of each section in minutes and seconds was his preferred way of working, and Joseph observes that he employed the same method in writing the pas de deux of the earlier ballets *The Fairy's Kiss* (2011:142) and *Orpheus* (157). This is another feature of the Stravinsky/Balanchine collaborative process that differed somewhat to the Tchaikovsky/Petipa working relationship. In this latter partnership the choreographer would prescribe the amount of measures needed to accompany the action on stage, and Tchaikovsky would work within this template (Garafola 2007:157).

In order to assess the realism of Stravinsky's expectations, the table below looks at a selection of recordings/performances of the Pas de Deux, and shows how closely they follow Stravinsky's specifications. The recordings and performances displaying the most variation are those in the studio or concert hall. Stravinsky, considering his own exacting demands, strays at many points, especially between bars 452-462 (another example of the inconsistencies between his aesthetics and performance practise),²¹ although the biggest time difference is David Robertson's performance of bars 414-451. Obviously, in these examples the conductor had more freedom without the need to consider choreography. The orchestra accompanying the Balanchine Celebration of 2001 performance with Darcey Bussell and Lindsay Fischer adhere more rigidly to the original times set out by Stravinsky for the *Agon* premiere. This proves that although allocating time lengths to sections of the music is perhaps not the most practical way to articulate one's wishes, it was nonetheless realistic for the conductor in relation to the choreography it was accompanying.

²⁰ Balanchine wrote 'Stravinsky, as a collaborator, breaks down every task to essentials. He thinks first, and sometimes last, of time duration – how much is needed for the Introduction, the pas de deux, the coda. To have all the time in the world means nothing to him. "When I know how long a piece must take, then it excites me"' (1987:84).

²¹ See Cook, N. 'Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky' (2003:176-191). In this chapter Cook assesses the correlation between Stravinsky's aesthetics and his own conducting practise.

Table 1 – Timed sections of Pas de deux

Bars	411-413	414-451	452-462	463-494 (solos)	495-503 (Coda)	504-510
Stravinsky's note of timing	13s	2m40s	20s	40s	18s	28s
Stravinsky 1957	13s	2m42s	33s	47s	21s	33s
Balanchine Celebration 2001	14s	2m45s	23s	42s	21s	29s
David Robertson Proms 2009	16s	2m59s	27s	44s	21s	25s

Kramer claims that Stravinsky conceived the precise durations and proportions of *Agon* for more than choreographic reasons. He applies his concept of ‘moment time’ to *Agon* - that a piece of music can be built using independent musical ‘moments’, that are placed in a certain order but could be interchangeable. *Agon*’s individual ‘moments’ are discontinuous and therefore interchangeable not only due to the ballet’s lack of plot, but also its varying instrumentation, musical languages and styles. Kramer creates a table of moment groups, moments and sub-moments in *Agon* (1988:299-300), arguing that moment time is not only behind the overall structure of the ballet, but multi-layered, as it also prescribing the structure of each dance. This ‘allowed him to create structures that cohere despite vastly different durations and extreme discontinuities’ (302-3) is how the work is coherent, and unified despite its fragmentation’.²² However, as with *Agon*’s harmonic language, when conductors Murphy and Ellis in interview were pressed on Kramer’s desire to unearth the ballet’s underlying organizational unity, they stated that this bears little relation to *Agon*’s demands on the conductor. With the need to consider so many more immediate issues, it is impossible to celebrate a work’s fragmentation or expose (or interpret) a hidden ‘unity’.

The instrumentalists need a very clear concise beat from the conductor in order to accurately follow the score. Jason Lai also suggests in his *maestrocam* commentary that it is the first thing the orchestra would require, or look for in a conductor of this passage (2009). The apparent disappearance of the musical pulse is carefully constructed by the regular omission of any accentuated downbeats. An example is at bars 416-23. In almost

²² See earlier chapters on *Petrushka* (p. 60) and *Les Noces* (p.103-4), where Kramer’s discussion of form is included.

every bar the first semiquaver beat is a rest, or a note that is tied from the previous bar in at least one instrumental line. Although the first five bars continue in 4/8 (as does the previous two bars to this section), it is impossible for the listener to sense these bar divisions. The sixth bar of the section deviates to 5/8, compounding this confusion further.

Ex 1 Bars 416-423 of *Agon*'s Pas de Deux (solo violin, violas, cellos).

6

mf marc. espress

p sub.

3

5

poco ritard acce-

-lerando a tempo

5

3

legato p

8/16

8/16

8/16

8/16

8/16

8/16

4/8

4/8

4/8

David Robertson, conducting *Agon* at the Proms 2009, gives the orchestra the most guidance during the Pas de Deux's Coda. Although not always using his hand or baton to make connection with the instrumentalists (instead using glances or turns toward the musicians about to play), his cues are far more densely packed in these nine bars. Ex.2 shows the full score and highlights which entries he cues.

Ex.2 David Robertson's cues in the Coda of *Agon's* Pas de Deux.

72

Coda

(both dancers)

$\text{♩} = 112$
Vl. I, II a2 unis.

495 496 497

Tr. I in Do

Trb. I

senza sord.

Piano

a2 unis.

498 499 VI. I

Vi. I, II

Vi. I

meno *f*

Vi. I, II

Vi. I

Tr. I in Do

500 501

poco

Piano

stacc.

unis. a2

The image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a ballet. The staves are labeled: Vl. Solo, Vl. I. II, Vle., Vo., Mand., Arpa, and Timp. The score is in 3/4 time. The Arpa staff has a circled note at measure 502, and the Timp. staff has a circled note at measure 503. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (f, mf, p), articulation (pizz.), and performance instructions (secco, table). The page number 167 is visible at the top right.

The more one immerses oneself in the Pas de Deux and its associated literature, the more the rhythmic complexities increase. A musicological approach unearths a highly organised and detailed score that must be performed with great accuracy to ensure cohesion, particularly in ballet performance.²³ However, Jordan perceives a greater sense of rhythmic freedom.

The performance timing also seems more personal in the Adagio, as if the dancers provide their own continuity being in touch with the music but no longer disciplined by its pulse... lack of counts means that, though the dance still co-ordinates carefully with the music, there are new leeways for rhythmic detail and interpretation (2000:163).

The freedom that Jordan is sensing is emanating less from the prescriptive musical score than from the extent to which the conductor must connect with the action on stage. As seen in previous chapters, a Pas de Deux usually requires a certain level of adaptation on the conductor's part. Space must be created for the lifts and demanding choreography, and these adjustments will vary from dancer to dancer. But these issues are particularly pertinent in *Agon*, as it is in the Pas de Deux where the pinnacle of choreo-musical

²³ However, in the 2009 Proms concert performance Robertson allows a little more freedom. Throughout the Adagio, for example, the solo violin can take the lead at many points and be merely guided by the conductor.

interdependency is reached. For example, at bar 451, the cellos play a glissando sliding down from the A harmonic above middle C, punctuated by the double basses playing the pizzicato G# in the following crotchet beat. This musical gesture is led by the female dancer. After she steps over her partner, lying on the floor, he stands up. She then steps to the left and lets her left arm rise into second position. At the start of the arm movement, the glissando in the cello begins and the conductor takes the cue from the dancer. Jordan also notes several moments of connection between choreography and music – the most relevant to the conductor being at bar 424, where the ‘isolated gestures of the woman in *penché* with her leg around the man’s shoulder’ (1993:10) correspond with the pizzicato strings.

Agon contains many interesting cueing examples. Simple cues at the start of a dance include the beginning of the Double Pas de Quatre, when Murphy stated that he uses one or two beats to introduce the eight dancers. At the start of the Prelude, the dancers (facing the conductor) are cued as well as the musicians. There are, however, more complicated examples. At the opening of the ballet (Pas de Quatre), there is a ‘soundless whirl’ – ‘a downbeat that starts the action’ (Denby 1959:460). The effect is that the dancers cue the orchestra when in reality the dancers themselves are also cued. Murphy stated that the performers (facing backstage) turn around, and from that cue he beats 1,2,3 and the music starts. At the end of the Bransle Simple, the cue for the final chord is taken from the dancers as they arrive at their finishing pose.

There are also points where the conductor must cue the dancer and the instrumentalists in quick succession. The Saraband-Step’s opening is an example. At the opening the male soloist jumps straight up into the air initially with his legs together and then kicking out his right leg in front of him. Here the conductor has to work closely with the soloist. The dancer’s jump is cued (although this is optional)²⁴ and mid jump the musicians are given an upbeat so that the dancer’s landing and musicians are synchronised for the first beat of bar one. Other examples of taking cues from dancers mid-air include the beginning of *Spectre de la Rose* when the male lead jumps from offstage, his landing to be in synchronisation with the start of the music. The Bluebird’s dance in Act Three of *Sleeping Beauty* is also a

²⁴ Murphy explained that not all dancers of the Saraband-Step are comfortable with taking this kind of cue from the conductor.

case in point. Therefore, although it is impossible to argue that this cue in *Agon* is unprecedented, it is nonetheless accompanied by more challenging music, in terms of both rhythm and instrumentation.

Agon's Competition

As *The Rite of Spring* is widely viewed as Stravinsky's most influential work, one might assume that it would also be the work with the least competition in its era from the composer's contemporaries. However, it became apparent that *Agon* had fewer competitors in the ballet genre than the earlier 'revolutionary' Russian work. The numerous and contrasting challenges that *Agon* presents to the conductor mean that it is difficult to find a dance score of the period that rivals the Stravinsky-Balanchine collaboration in terms of complexity and innovation (the conductors at the Birmingham Royal Ballet also struggled to find examples of a comparable ballet). This is not, however, solely due to Stravinsky or Balanchine's superior musical or choreographic ability, or indeed their originality. It is actually due to a lack of investment in new unknown composers and choreographers at that time, an issue of less prominence in Stravinsky's early career (Diaghilev had a more creative and experimental attitude in comparison to many of his successors).²⁵ Stravinsky and Balanchine's established fame therefore gave them the freedom to experiment, a luxury the younger generation had less opportunity to enjoy. Dance critic Edwin Denby commented on the large ballet companies increasing disinterest in new commissions post-Diaghilev.

Such a lack of interest by the big companies in living musicians of some originality is very sad. They seem to have no curiosity about the intellectual life surrounding them. It is perfectly proper for a ballet company to choose old music of contemporary interest for some new ballets. But there is something quite fossilized about a company that cannot go out and buy itself a brand-new score or two every spring (1943:128).

This therefore highlights how Stravinsky's 'revolutionary' influence was not only often thanks to the choreographers with whom he collaborated (in particular Fokine²⁶ and

²⁵ Ballet was also associated with decadence, a feature that was more unpopular in this post-war era.

²⁶ See Chapter 2 (p. 61-67) for details of Fokine's influence on the *Firebird* and *Petrushka* score.

Balanchine), but in this later phase also due to favourable circumstances that excluded competition.

Conclusion

Whilst *Agon*'s musical language is unmistakably contemporary, the ballet adopts Renaissance dance forms. This is seen, for example in the Pas de Deux, which follows the typical format but the music is at its most abstract and serial point in the ballet. Conductors have varied practical approaches to these aesthetic contradictions. Philip Ellis preferred to adopt a clinical and metronomic approach, whereas his colleague Murphy (as well as Robertson in his Proms 2009 performance) aimed to expose any theatricality in the music in order to make the score more accessible to the dancers. The ballet's instrumentation also poses challenges. Although written for a full orchestra, they never play simultaneously. Stravinsky instead employs small ensembles for each dance. This presents issues of balance for the conductor, as not only does Stravinsky collate unorthodox groupings of instruments (with contrasting volumes and timbres), but they are also playing in disparate parts of the orchestra. Stravinsky even noted the issue of balance in his own recording of the work. Referring to the Saraband-Step (orchestrated for solo violin, trombones, xylophone, and cellos) he said, 'I am annoyed by the violin solo in my *Agon* recording. It seems to emanate from the bedroom, while the trombone accompaniment sounds as though it is in my lap' (Stravinsky & Craft 1968:122).

Although *Agon*'s harmonic language has attracted much academic attention, with its employment of languages ranging from diatonicism through to twelve-note serialism, there was no evidence to suggest this had a tangible influence on the conductor's work. Although the conductors interviewed showed an interest in the varying employment of serialist techniques, there are too many more immediate concerns. And as Webern stated, 'audiences and even performers did not need to know the technical processes by which twelve-tone music is constructed' (Wintle 1982:75). Instead, it is the varied rhythmic language that in many instances sees the return of the rhythmic devices used in his earlier Russian works. Metric Type 1 and 2 are both present, and in the Bransle Gay appear simultaneously. In the Prelude/Interludes, another rhythmic device is introduced, whereby

each instrumental line has its own motif that is repeated and gets continually shorter (but at varying rates) as the piece progresses. This makes *Agon* a very dense piece, and Stravinsky acknowledged this fact. 'I know that portions of *Agon* contain three times as much music for the same clock length as some other pieces of mine.' (Stravinsky and Craft 1959:25). As in *The Rite of Spring*'s Introduction, this makes an impact on the most rudimentary aspects of conducting, and the Coda in the Pas de Deux presents a great density of cues for the conductor. The complex choreographic demands compound these difficulties further.

What *Agon* achieves in terms of impact on the conductor's role is not always presenting unprecedented challenges when factors are assessed individually. Serial techniques had been initiated decades before by Schoenberg, and most of the rhythmic challenges do not surpass those of *The Rite* or *Les Noces* in complexity. The aesthetic ambiguities in many respects are an extension of those seen in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* and other neo-classical works. Many of the choreographic challenges, although numerous and in greater density than the previous ballets by Stravinsky, can mostly be traced to previous Balanchine works or to ballet settings of Tchaikovsky or Weber. However, the *combination* of these numerous 'competing factors' makes *Agon* the most challenging of the Stravinsky ballets in terms of multi-tasking. Balanchine thought *Agon* was 'the most perfect work' to emerge from his entire collaborative relationship with Stravinsky (Maynard 1972:49), and it is because of this (alongside decreased investment in the ballet genre overall) that led *Agon* to having so few rivals in its own era. The rhythm, choreography, aesthetic paradoxes, cues for dancers and musicians and unusual instrumentation combine in most of the dances, giving a great deal for the conductor to consider given the dances' short lengths. It is taken to such a level that it is, in many respects, impossible for the conductor- yet again - to be much more than a mere time-beater, or 'executor' of Stravinsky's music. It is as if he is combining the most demanding aspects of all of his previous ballets. One can apply Balanchine's thoughts to the role the conductor must adopt, when he described *Agon* as being 'more tight and precise than usual, as if it were controlled by an electronic brain' (cited White 1979:496).

Chapter 9. Conclusion

This thesis has highlighted that despite the general musicological trend towards deconstructing rather than reinforcing the ‘myth’ of Stravinsky’s influence, in many respects it is impossible to deny Stravinsky’s sizable impact on the conductor’s role, particularly in ballet. However, with the evidence gathered (using the four methodological approaches of historicism, hermeneutics, score and performance analysis) it became apparent that *The Rite of Spring*’s impact is over-inflated in certain areas, overshadowing many of the innovations present in the rest of Stravinsky’s output. In examining case studies spanning the full breadth of Stravinsky’s ballet repertoire, several themes emerged as being central to the composer’s influence on the conductor, and this concluding chapter has been structured according to these themes.

Choreography

This research has highlighted not only the importance of choreographic awareness to the conductor in ballet, but also the changing nature of this choreo-musical interdependency in Stravinsky’s repertoire. Moreover, what is so often perceived as the ‘innovative’ musical content of Stravinsky’s ballet scores was actually dependent upon the choreographer with whom he collaborated. This builds on choreo-musical research already undertaken by Jordan (2000, 2007) and Joseph (2002) but presents the findings from the conductor’s perspective. One can trace the development in the ballet conductor’s involvement over Stravinsky’s repertoire. The *Firebird* and *Petrushka* chapter introduces the idea of ‘balletic recitative’. *The Firebird*’s ‘Capture of the Firebird by Prince Ivan’ and *Petrushka*’s Second Tableaux, both demonstrate how Stravinsky – but under Fokine’s instruction - was adopting the recitative style used in opera and transferring it to the ballet genre. The *Firebird* passages in particular use what is now commonly termed as ‘mickey-mousing’ or the literal reflection of the dancers’ movements in the music. This recitative forged a route away from the ballets of Tchaikovsky (that were mostly comprised of a long succession of individual dances) or Debussy and Ravel (that were more seamless, organic pieces). These changes, although not affecting conducting technique, altered the conductor’s *control* of the

pace of the action on stage. Murphy¹ stated that the conductor did not follow the dancers in these instances – as the music is accurately scored it is the conductor who leads. The passages studied in *Petrushka* highlighted the development of a more sophisticated approach to the recitative, incorporating miniature quasi-arias that alter the pace of the action as well as the communication of the drama. However the conductor still maintains control of the dramatic action as the choreographed mime is technically straightforward. Conductor Ellis² argued in interview that many previous ballets (e.g. Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* or Delibes *Coppelia*) *did* use a degree of balletic recitative. However, in both *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* Stravinsky has pushed the concept forward, incorporating more rhythmically complex music that sounds more spontaneous in nature (particularly when accompanying *Petrushka*'s choreographed mime).

Aside from this shift in control of pace, the conductor has little involvement with the choreography in the early ballets (for example, Murphy said that he rarely needed to look up from the score whilst conducting *The Firebird*). Surprisingly, a similar principle applies to Stravinsky's most controversial work, in that sense reinforcing Taruskin's claim that *The Rite of Spring*'s impact is 'a myth of the twentieth century' (1995b). It was the later (Balanchine) ballets that posed more obstacles in this arena (see below). Evidence suggests that Monteux made no notes of the choreography - Fink observes that the only notes of the action on stage were indications of the rising and lowering of the curtain (1999:316). However, the exception is in 'The Sacrificial Dance' where the conductor must also accommodate the individual needs of the dancer as well as conquering the constantly shifting time signatures (written in minute subdivisions). In Nijinsky's primitive but demanding choreography the soloist is given one hundred and twenty-three jumps, therefore the dance's tempos must be adapted accordingly in order to cater for any waning stamina.

A surprising discovery was that due to the complexity of *Les Noces*' score, the conductor is unable to consider the counterpoint present in Nijinska's choreography. The consistent

¹ Interviewed 30th June 2009.

² Interviewed 9th March 2011.

presence of rhythmic irregularity coupled with stark, exposed orchestration means that the conductor (beyond the selection of an appropriate tempo) must let the choreography speak for itself. Barry Wordsworth³ suggests that this is a credit to Nijinska's skilful work, (i.e. it perfectly complements Stravinsky's score) and as a result is one of the only ballets that can be performed in exactly the same way in both theatre and concert performance. The choreographic metre, studied in depth by both Jordan (2007:351-373) and Jaubert (1999), is therefore impossible to apply to the study of the conductor's work. It does highlight, however, the presence of multiple metres (i.e. perceived, choreographic and musical) that reinforce further the need for strict metronomic delivery and the conductor's exhaustive knowledge of the score.

Apollo, Stravinsky's first collaboration with Balanchine, exhibits a dramatic change in the relationship of the composer's music with dance. In this section my research builds on existing work by Carr (2002:95-128), Joseph (2002:94-155), and Jordan (2007:169-172) but selects and develops the areas that are relevant to the conductor's role. Viewing these findings from a performance perspective, with the information gathered from conductor interviews, it became apparent that although the level of rhythmic complexity seen in *The Rite* and *Les Noces* appears to be distant memory, the conductor must have an increased rhythmic awareness that is sympathetic towards the dancers. For example, in the opening (bars 1-4) of 'Variation de Calliope', the steps of Calliope (one of Apollo's muses) echoes the score note for note. It is therefore crucial that there is complete synchronisation here. When the cellos and double basses play the punctuating pizzicato chords, they accompany a stabbing gesture made by the dancer into her stomach. A similar awareness needs to be applied in the Pas de Deux where, for example, the solo cello line supports specific movements made by Apollo and Terpsichore. The pizzicato chord at the Coda's culmination (R95 +3) accompanies a clap made by all three muses – a move hard to synchronise and often inaccurate in performance. Unlike in *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, the conductor does not lead the action on stage. Instead he must adopt a more sophisticated two-way relationship that considers the needs of the dancers.

³ Interviewed 11th May 2011.

There are also many points where demanding choreography can affect the tempi in performance. For example, the pizzicato section in the ‘Variation de Calliope’ cannot be performed too quickly as the dancer is running on pointe. The pas de deux is characteristically demanding of the two soloists, with repeated movements in the ‘splits’ (at R67) and lifts for which individual dancers may require alterations in tempo. There are many jumps in the ‘Coda’, both by Apollo, and by two muses being turned simultaneously by the male, which need to be synchronised with the music. These choreographic considerations are not completely new (albeit within Balanchine’s innovative choreography) as they are seen in Romantic ballets of the previous century.⁴ However, they mark a development in the relationship of Stravinsky’s ballets with the conductor, and are also combined with a new aesthetic and style of string writing that make *Apollo* a unique, if not wholly unprecedented, challenge.

A similar awareness must be applied to the second neo-classical case study – *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. However, the conductor must also be mindful that he is dealing with the adaptation of a concert work that involves a soloist. The differences in conducting the Violin Concerto as a ballet are particularly highlighted in the Arias (second and third movements), where the violinist has very limited freedom accompanying the pas de deux. Balanchine continues to demand a greater involvement with the choreography on the conductor’s part, and observation of suitable tempos is critical for the solo dancers. Therefore many of Stravinsky’s tempo specifications are not adhered to in ballet performance, creating a gap between concert and theatre performance that does not exist in *Les Noces*. There are also points where the conductor needs to place greater emphasis on the accents within the music to support the choreography, for example at R70 in Aria I, and R130 in the Capriccio. The demands of adapting a concert work therefore build on the changes made by *Apollo* to the conductor’s involvement with the choreography.

In *Agon*, the conductor must now combine the consideration of Balanchine’s choreography with a more complex rhythmic language. To complicate matters further, Balanchine often

⁴ *Sleeping Beauty* is an example referred to frequently by both Murphy and Ellis in interview. Act 3 in particular involves a great deal of consideration as it is comprised of short ‘show off’ numbers in which dancers have specific requirements.

adds his own choreographic counterpoint, rather like Nijinska did years previously in *Les Noces* (this is particularly evident in the Prelude/Interludes – see p. 160-1). There are also many cues the conductor must take from the dancers as well as vice versa. The most interesting examples include at the opening of the Saraband-Step, when the conductor must take a cue from the male soloist mid-jump to ensure that both the orchestra and dancer are synchronised for the start of bar 1. The pas de deux also demands consideration of the choreography at various points, and again the conductor takes a cue from the female dancer arm movement for the cello glissando in bar 451. Performance analysis and historical comparison has highlighted that although Stravinsky's ballets can be proved to be developing the ballet conductor's understanding of choreography, the influence must be credited equally to those with whom he collaborated. Moreover, it is often the combination of these choreographic considerations with other demanding aspects of Stravinsky's music that create unique challenges for the conductor. Stravinsky's purist claims (particularly in relation to *The Rite*)⁵ divorce his scores from the highly interdisciplinary creative process from which they emerged.

Instrumentation

Examining and comparing the scores of the seven ballets selected demonstrated that Stravinsky exercised a consistently inventive approach to instrumentation - it was not isolated to the more famous earlier works such as *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces*. Each ballet presents an unconventional dynamic to the conductor that allows the orchestra to be viewed in a different light. Although *The Firebird* exhibits relatively conventional orchestration in light of the composer's later works, it was nonetheless considered a demanding and virtuosic work. Conductor Ansermet stated, 'this ballet is extremely difficult to play for the orchestra. The writing of Stravinsky is very difficult, very subtle' (cited Chesterman 1976:80). Moreover, this view is still held by conductors today - Ellis believes that even in this first ballet 'Stravinsky is outdoing Rimsky-Korsakov at every level'. This highlights that although musicological literature, for example the work of

⁵ For example, in an interview in 1920, the composer stated that he conceived *The Rite* as 'une oeuvre architectonique et non anecdotique' (Georges-Michel cited Taruskin 2003:261), implying that the work had been conceived and written with no narrative in mind.

Taruskin (2005:154), veers more towards exposing Rimskian influences in this ballet, conductor interviews highlight the innovative nature of Stravinsky's early orchestration. This observation, considered in its historical context, demonstrates how many innovative features in Stravinsky's orchestration are seen in ballets pre-*The Rite*.

Stravinsky's approach to orchestration evolves further in *Petrushka*. The second tableau in particular presents an unusual orchestral dynamic, in that much of the musical material was originally intended as a concert work, described by the composer as a 'combat between piano and orchestra' (cited Taruskin 2005:159). Therefore the conductor's role is now to mediate between a soloist, orchestra and the action on stage. As is the case with much of Stravinsky's solo writing, the piano is not employed as a solo instrument in the traditional sense, but in unorthodox combinations with the rest of the orchestra (also seen in the later *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*). Score analysis demonstrates that Stravinsky uses the piano to facilitate the shifts between various tonal centres, differing to the role of solo instruments in most previous ballets. For example, Tchaikovsky's treatment of solo instruments (particularly the violin) was always within the more conventional dance format, even if the piece opened with a sequenza (for example, the 'Russian Dance' in Act 3 of *Swan Lake*). Instead, the piano 'sequenzas' in *Chez Petrouchka* are recurring, and performance analysis shows that they are more flexible in their relationship with the choreographed mime on stage.

In *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky continues to employ the large orchestra and extravagant instrumentation of *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, but moves forward by experimenting more with orchestral balance. The hundred-strong orchestra (a huge orchestra for a ballet) is now 'top heavy', with the addition of the piccolo, alto flute, cor anglais, clarinets in D, Eb and A, bass clarinet in the woodwind section. The brass section is also expanded, with eight horns in F, trumpets in D and C, and bass tubas. In many sections of the ballet, these instruments take centre stage, rather than the strings providing the bulk of the music (a practice more common in previous ballet music).⁶ The uncomfortable bassoon solo at the ballet's opening, played in the instrument's high register, was also an indication that

⁶ This concept is discussed by Michael Tilson-Thomas in his *Keeping Score* documentary (2006), whereby a selection of orchestral players discuss the part they play in the piece.

Stravinsky was raising the expectations placed on the instrumentalists. Ellis⁷ believes that ‘the bassoon had never before been used in this way’, and this view is also held by Tilson-Thomas (2006). The bass drum solo in ‘Dance of the Earth’ is now commonly used as an audition piece - evidence demonstrating that Stravinsky was exploring the potential of percussion instruments more than previous music. These developments, in turn, stretched the conductor’s own working knowledge of the instruments in the orchestra.

In stark contrast, the whole notion of the ‘orchestra’ is completely abandoned in *Les Noces*, and the addition of solo singers and chorus also set it apart from Stravinsky’s previous ballets. The four solo vocalists, chorus, four pianos (or two pleyels) and large percussion section created a highly distinctive, but exposed sound for the conductor to oversee that is unforgiving of mistakes. Wordsworth refers to the work as ‘particularly percussive’ (as of course, the pianos are also essentially percussion instruments) and that the resulting tense, mechanised music must be very tight rhythmically. Therefore, the conductor, as well as considering the consistently complex rhythmic language, must maintain a uniformly accurate performance to compensate for this unique, naked orchestration. It was conductor interviews as well as the exploration of Stravinsky’s biographical literature that facilitated an understanding of the unusual composition process as well as the unique challenges the final orchestration presents to the conductor and musicians.

The idea of Stravinsky’s ‘U-turn’ is applicable, again, in the study of his neo-classical orchestration - it introduced a less romanticised style of string playing to the relatively youthful genre of ballet. Stravinsky’s continued rejection of the full orchestra in *Apollo* ensured an elimination of variety that was appropriate to the choreographer Balanchine’s ‘ballet blanc’. His writing for string orchestra presented a very pure, restrained style for strings that both conductors interviewed (Ellis and Murphy) consider unique to Stravinsky. Conveniently for the composer, this controlled, conservative string writing made it tasteless for the conductor to romanticise the music by adding rubato, or over-emphasising dynamic or tempo changes (Murphy agreed that to play it passionately would have been inappropriate to the ethos of the work). In certain respects, the orchestration is reminiscent

⁷ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

of *Les Noces* in that both ballets present a sparse, exposed score that leaves the conductor and players more vulnerable in any moments of uncertainty. This, again, underlines the need for accurate, metronomic delivery to ensure complete synchronisation.

Stravinsky Violin Concerto presents a more complex orchestral dynamic. In this chapter I build on the historical and biographical research of Joseph (2002:324-349), which explored both the work's composition and Balanchine's choreography. Combining this approach with score analysis and evaluating the effect of the collaborative influences facilitated evaluation of the work from the conductor's perspective. The ballet opening, with the violin's 'passport chord' before any dancing begins, throws a spotlight on the soloist in a way that is unusual in ballet. Stravinsky's close collaboration with violinist Samuel Dushkin throughout the work's composition also introduced novel approaches to the instrument - the composer's initial naivety regarding virtuoso violin technique encouraged Dushkin to stretch himself to accommodate Stravinsky's ambitious ideas. Although the violin is a consistent presence throughout the concerto, Stravinsky does not allow the violin to take centre stage in the same way as most preceding concertos. Many other instruments have their own 'signature' themes or motifs that mark them as having key roles as well as the violinist. There is not the clear 'soloist-accompaniment' distinction present in most concertos. 'I did not compose a cadenza, not because I did not care about exploiting the violin virtuosity, but because the violin in combination was my real interest' (Stravinsky and Craft 1968:47). This lack of 'spotlight' on the violinist is also a demonstration of Stravinsky's deliberate discouragement of egotistical soloists, complimenting his well-documented abhorrence of 'star conductors'.⁸ Balanchine's own sentiments complimented this lack of allocated spotlight and he would never flatter the arrogance of famous solo dancers in his choreography.

Although Stravinsky continues to use a more conventional orchestra in *Agon*, he never utilises the orchestra in its entirety, instead selecting small, unusual combinations of instruments. The Saraband-Step, for example, groups together a solo violin, xylophone, and two trombones (joined sporadically by the cellos). For the Coda (for one male and two female dancers) Stravinsky wrote for two trombones, mandolin, harp and solo cello. This

⁸ See the chapter 'On Conductors and Conducting' in *Themes and Conclusions* (1972:223-233).

method not only creates unusual musical textures, but also issues of balance in addressing the unorthodox selection of instrumentalists. For example, the instruments used in the Saraband-Step are from very disparate parts of the orchestra, and therefore playing at varying distances from the conductor. Moreover, they are instruments with very different timbres and volumes. Although Stravinsky's stratification of material to discrete timbral blocks is seen in his earlier works (most notably in *The Rite*) this factor is more acute here as he uses far smaller ensembles and the instrumentalists have less support from surrounding musicians.⁹ Performance analysis highlighted that there are differing views amongst conductors as to whether this aspect of the ballet poses obstacles. Ellis argues that Stravinsky has already considered these factors and scored the Saraband accordingly, but Jason Lai, speaking on the Proms maestro-cam noted,

It's quite tricky for a conductor in this instance as he's got to make sure all these instruments, who are sitting very far apart, play together... It's certainly not helped by the acoustics of the Royal Albert Hall. You do feel like you're playing on your own when you're on this stage. You really have to listen to what's going on around you (2009).

Using score analysis, historical comparison and performance analysis gleaned from conductor interviews and the BBC Proms maestrocam, it emerged during the research that Stravinsky's orchestration posed many new innovations that made an impression on the conductor's work. This equalled, in many respects, the more famous rhythmic and aesthetic influences. Moreover, *The Rite of Spring* cannot claim to be leading the revolution: all of the case studies demonstrate that Stravinsky adopted a consistently innovative approach. I would argue that *Les Noces* boasts the most unorthodox combination of instruments, followed by *Agon* with its varying unusual combinations within the conventional orchestra. Both approaches also create a very spacious, and exposed sound that starkly highlights any discrepancies in rhythm. The thesis shed more light on the practical impact of these developments on the conductor - most musicological literature side-steps these in favour of the more isolated analysis of rhythm, harmony, and musical structure.

⁹ This idea is exploited by later composers, for example Boulez in *Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna*, in which Boulez not only completely reorganises the seating arrangements of the players, but also creates eight different groups of instrumentalists, who are not sitting adjacent to each other.

Rhythm and Memory

The thesis has also contextualised rhythmic analysis found in musicological literature in the world of conducting. By assessing these ideas from the conductor's perspective, one can create more of a practical picture of Stravinsky's most famous area of innovation. In addition, conductor interviews also highlighted challenging areas that had not attracted the same level of musicological attention, and thus created a contrast to the existing literature. Stravinsky's complex rhythms are not restricted to *The Rite*, and their impact on the conductor dates from Stravinsky's earliest ballets, including *The Firebird*. For example, at the start of 'Dance of the Firebird', Stravinsky disorientates the listener using a number of rhythmic devices (not seen in earlier ballets) that are exploited further in his later works. Analysing the score, one can see that although the demi-semiquavers in the D clarinet sound introductory, they are in fact placed on the strong, first beat of the 6/8 bar. The cellos play their pizzicato bass note on the second quaver beat, and there are then numerous off-beat entries throughout the first section. Stravinsky adds further ambiguity by writing the second half of each of these four bar phrases in 3/4 rather than 6/8, shifting the rhythmic emphasis. Although Rimsky-Korsakov is a clear influence on the musical style in Stravinsky's first ballet, his teacher does not explore the same level of ambiguity that complicates the conductor's perception of the pulse.

Petrushka sees the development of Stravinsky's use of consistently altering time signatures, or Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction. The recurring passage at R13 (in the revised 1947 score) consists of continuous time signature changes that vary each time the passage returns. It is also altered further in later revisions and piano reductions. Performance analysis and interviews both highlighted that this section is challenging for the conductor and orchestra - the time signature changes must be memorised before other aspects of the score can be considered. Stravinsky's revisions of this section underline its difficulty, and suggest that he was struggling to find the most effective way of articulating these rhythmic ideas to ensure a successful performance. The varying repetition also lulls the conductor into a false sense of security. Although Stravinsky is returning to recognisable music, the subtle variations make the work difficult to memorise. This builds on the more anecdotal work of Andriessen and Schonberger, whose chapter entitled 'Ordeals of the Memory'

(1989:39-45) in *The Appolonian Clockwork on Stravinsky* highlights that ‘much (especially twentieth century) music places higher demands on the memory’s capabilities than Stravinsky’s music does. But what is most difficult to remember is what is ‘almost easy to remember’’ (40). Indeed, Stravinsky’s exploration of irregular rhythms has now been surpassed by numerous composers, such as Boulez, Fernyhough and Takemitsu. However, for them, Stravinsky’s music served as a springboard, and still for many the subtle, altering repetitions or re-workings of music in his repertoire present a greater challenge to the conductor. This was a sentiment held by both Ellis and Jurowski. Rhythmic and performance analysis has demonstrated more explicitly how these ‘ordeals’ manifest themselves and affect the conductor’s work.

The Rite of Spring holds a far greater density of challenging rhythmic sections, which in part explains its more pioneering reputation. However, the Introduction to Part I, that Boulez termed an ‘architectural phenomenon’ (1966:103), poses many rhythmic and structural developments that have attracted less attention in musicology than the more notorious ‘Sacrificial Dance’. Although this section uses conventional time signatures (unlike the ‘Sacrificial Dance’, written using minute subdivisions) they are nonetheless constantly altering. The rhythmic pulse is clouded, and to a greater extent than that seen in ‘The Dance of the Firebird’. In this instance, Stravinsky employs the regular use of fermatas, appoggiaturas and acciaccaturas. These constantly blur the crotchet beat and this spontaneous effect is exacerbated further by the use of *tempo rubato* and *poco accelerando* instructions in the score. All of the entries are offbeat, making accurate beating and cueing more complex and more crucial. This, in many respects, is reminiscent of the fluid approach to rhythm seen in earlier pieces by Debussy such as *Prélude à l’après midi d’un faune* and *La Mer*. However, Stravinsky carefully and accurately orchestrates this effect of rhythmic freedom, leaving less interpretative space for the conductor and musicians.

The ‘Sacrificial Dance’ is one instance where *The Rite*’s reputation proved to be difficult to deny, as it presents some of the most complex Rhythmic-Metric Type 1 construction in Stravinsky’s music. The composer is now not only continually altering the time signature, but also using minute subdivisions (e.g. 3/16), placing greater demands on the conductor’s intellectual grasp of the score. It also meant that the conductor would have to carefully

select the most effective beating pattern/technique, as cueing and accents must also be considered within the small, irregular bars. The accented chords at the dance's opening, for example, fall on the weak beat of the bar. The numerous attempts at re-barring the dance also assist in proving that the 'Sacrificial Dance' possessed unique practical demands. Stravinsky himself worked on numerous revisions (that Monteux and Ansermet influenced) and Slonimsky completely rewrote the dance for Koussevitsky's use (this version was also used by Bernstein). Grosbayne recommends the combination of the smaller bars into larger, more manageable ones (1973:117). Brabbins implies that *The Rite* has spurred the complication of twentieth century orchestral scores, but that this is often an unnecessary development. 'Why write a triplet with three lines... when one will do.... This forces the players to spend valuable rehearsal time assimilating the notation instead of the music' (2003:267). Therefore, although Taruskin has highlighted *The Rite*'s Russian folk influences (2005:183), irregular rhythms to this degree are not seen in previous orchestral music (historical comparison aided this conclusion). Therefore using score and performance analysis alongside historical comparison, it is impossible to refute *The Rite*'s influence on the conductor's work in this respect.

A surprising discovery was the lack of recognition *Les Noces* receives (particularly in conducting literature) for surpassing *The Rite* in its use of irregular rhythms. There are several pragmatic reasons why this is the case – the expense of the production, the more ambiguous identity, but perhaps most importantly there was no riot at the premiere. This ensured that *Les Noces* could never hope to obtain the same level of fame or notoriety. But the rhythmic language, although reminiscent of *The Rite of Spring*, now employs Metric-Type 1 construction more consistently. Cross hales the rhythmic language as 'even more powerful than that of *The Rite*, and certainly more sustained' (2003:249-50). There are even fewer moments of respite, and footage of the most reputable conductors (e.g. Gergiev)¹⁰ still shows great attention to the score in performance with even cueing at a minimum. These difficulties are exacerbated somewhat by the work's unorthodox and mechanical orchestration (see above). The extract studied from the fourth tableau, R93 - R94 (see

¹⁰ Gergiev conducting *Les Noces* in Concert Performance. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjoFPrHibDA>

p.105-7), demonstrates this combination of obstacles, resulting in the conductor being too occupied to concern himself with any personalisation or interpretation of the music.

In the *Apollo* chapter, performance analysis revealed that the greater rhythmic challenges in performance are presented by the rhythmic ‘illusions’ Stravinsky creates rather than by his employment of the Alexandrine Principle. An example is the Coda, where the minimal scoring for strings is also very exposing of any inaccuracies. R86 is particularly challenging, as the violins and violas are playing in 6/8 whilst the cellos and double basses in 2/4 (a similar superimposition is also seen in the earlier *Petrushka*). For these reasons, Murphy labels this section as one of the ‘hardest parts in Stravinsky’¹¹ and it must be performed without any acceleration in order to support the choreography. Another example is in the ballet’s culmination, the ‘Apotheose’, where Stravinsky incorporates a manufactured ritardando. The repeated motif’s last note is extended on each repetition by one crotchet. Although a simple concept to grasp, it is a trickier one in performance as it is easy to lose track of the length of these final notes. Therefore, the multi-faceted methodology assisted in highlighting the contrast between areas of the ballet that attract the most academic attention and the more practical demands placed on the conductor in performance.

Agon revisits many of the rhythmic devices used in Stravinsky’s early works, and combines a multitude of rhythmic languages. Rhythmic metric Types 1 and 2 are both present, as well as a combination of the two (seen in the Bransle Gay). In the Prelude and Interludes, score analysis highlighted how Stravinsky presents the conductor with another rhythmic device that creates a complex musical texture to oversee. The short independent motifs in each instrumental line are repeated and continually shortened, but at variable rates. Stravinsky also revisits the creation of seemingly pulseless, spontaneous music, seen previously in the Introduction to *The Rite of Spring*. This is most prevalent in the Pas de Deux and Coda, where the composer commonly avoids the reinforcement of the strong beats in the bar and uses offbeat entries and motifs that cloud the sense of pulse. Stravinsky also had a very concise vision for the tempos and durations of the individual sections of this dance.

¹¹ Interviewed 16th June 2011.

However, despite this meticulous scoring, the improvisatory effect is felt by the dancers. Jordan notes

The performance timing also seems more personal in the Adagio, as if the dancers provide their own continuity being in touch with the music but no longer disciplined by its pulse... lack of counts means that, though the dance still co-ordinates carefully with the music, there are new leeways for rhythmic detail and interpretation (2000:163).

Again, this is reminiscent of *The Rite of Spring*'s Introduction, where the improvisatory effect is highly organised. However, as is the case with *Les Noces*, the inventive employment of numerous rhythmic devices is overlooked in both conducting and musicological literature when compared with the attention placed on the earlier ballets.

Using score analysis from a conductor's perspective in conjunction with existing musicological literature, my research demonstrated that it is a challenge to deny Stravinsky's rhythmic impact on the conductor's work. Although over-rated in areas (see below), it is apparent that innovative rhythmic devices are incorporated into Stravinsky's ballets from the outset, and *The Rite of Spring* and *Les Noces* in particular demand a high and unprecedented level of familiarity with the score. However, as with Stravinsky's instrumentation, his rhythmic language remains a challenging feature across all of the case studies in the thesis, and the challenges present in the other ballets are less documented in both conducting and musicological literature.

Overrated Rhythmic Developments

In contrast, there are instances where Stravinsky's impact is over-inflated. Performance analysis in particular helped to inform these observations. For example, in the 1911 edition of *Petrushka*, Stravinsky superimposes two time signatures over one another. While the main body of the orchestra is playing in 3/4, the piccolo and oboe parts are notated in either 7/8 or 8/8 (a practice also seen in the later *Apollo* – see p.184). This is an over-complication on Stravinsky's part. In performance, this superimposition serves the same purpose as a septuplet in a 3/4 bar. Max Rudolf highlighted this example in *The Grammar of Conducting*, and advises the use of the 3-beat, but with weakened second and third beats

(1950:263). However, no performance footage found showed evidence of a conductor using this advice (the conductors always adhered to the dominant time signature). This is due to the widespread preference of the 1947 revision in which the superimposition is abandoned. This abandonment suggests admittance, on the composer's part, that the notation was over-complicated and unnecessary.

The 11/4 bar that precedes 'The Glorification of the Chosen One' in *The Rite of Spring* is another novelty. The bar is the most well known example of one with eleven beats, and is referred to in many conducting manuals.¹² However, it is not the first, preceded by Rimsky Korsakov in *The Snow Maiden*.¹³ Furthermore, the music in *The Rite*'s 11/4 bar is also very straightforward (containing eleven accented crotchet beats) - in contrast the *Snow Maiden*'s final chorus demands more considered phrasing and appropriate division of the eleven beats.¹⁴ Therefore the 11/4 beating patterns used in *The Rite* make little difference to the resulting performance and is purely a matter of personal preference. Fink makes a similar observation after examining the beating patterns adopted by Monteux and Stravinsky. Although he gleaned from annotated scores that Monteux employed a 3+4+4 beating pattern and Stravinsky used 4+4+3 (1999:319), he admitted that he could find 'no deeper significance' (318n) in either conductor's choice. This sentiment is shared by Bernstein who, while rehearsing the section with a student orchestra said,

The eleven beats had no communality. I shouldn't have to beat that bar at all. I mean, once you've 'yahd!' the downbeat you just play it. In fact, I'm not going to beat it at all. Alright? Let's make a little arrangement. (*The Rite of Spring in Rehearsal*).

The polyrhythmic section in 'The Procession of the Sage' (superimposing 4/4 over 6/4) is also relatively straightforward to conduct, despite being a mentioned in numerous conducting books.¹⁵ The use of polyrhythms, in particular four against six, is also found in Debussy's *La Mer*, it is merely on a larger scale in this instance. Therefore the conductor

¹² For example, Green (1969:56), Prausnitz (1983:210-11), Grosbayne (1973:71).

¹³ This is also noted in Malko (1950:87), and Benjamin Grosbayne (1973:70).

¹⁴ Grosbayne suggests that the bar is divided into five 'pulses'. 'Accents and stresses may be suggested by bringing the baton and left hand forward when necessary' (1973:70).

¹⁵ For example Green *The Modern Conductor* (1969:56), Grosbayne *Techniques of Modern Orchestral Conducting* (1973:71), Prausnitz *Score and Podium* (1983:210-11).

can simply arrive at his own preferred, straight forward beating pattern. Tilson-Thomas divides each 6/4 bar in half, beating down for the first three crotchets of each bar and up for the second three crotchets. A similar approach is adopted by Rattle, who beats down for each half of the bar. Volkov, Chung and Haitink conduct the whole section in 6, as written in the score. There are some who like to exhibit their multi-tasking skills however, and Boulez, conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1997, is seen to beat a clear 6/4 with his right hand, while making gestures that support 4/4 in his left hand. This, of course, is an option rather than a necessity, as if desired the whole section can be managed relatively simply.

There are also instances where the musicological literature discussing Stravinsky's innovative rhythmic ideas fixates on areas that performance analysis highlights have little practical relevance in performance. Surprisingly, this applies to conductor Boulez's analysis of *The Rite of Spring* (1966). In this study, Boulez reverses the structure of the 'Introduction to Part I' (60-4,103-5), yet his analysis, although informative to the conductor's understanding of the music's structure, does little to aid the conductor. This because his separation of the music into rhythmic 'cells' (particularly in the Introduction) does not correlate with Stravinsky's barring, and the conductor's priority must be the internalisation of these if he is to communicate the score simply and effectively to the orchestra. In *Apollo*, the use of the iambic Alexandrine rhythms throughout, although of interest to musicologists such as Joseph (2002:98-109) and Carr (2002:101-2), does not appear to pose great challenges to the conductor. In fact, Stravinsky ensures the successful communication of the Alexandrine in his score directions. The placement of accents, bowings and phrase marks already communicate the Alexandrine without the conductor's intervention. The conductors interviewed did not view this heuristic imitation as any pressing concern – an understanding of the choreo-musical relationship is more crucial to a successful ballet performance.¹⁶

A similar observation can be made with *Agon*, in that the musicological interest in Stravinsky's rhythmic language is often difficult to apply in performance. An example of

¹⁶ However, Jordan discovered an example where the dancer Baryshnikov considers the Alexandrine in his own performance (2007:171).

this can be found in the work of Kramer (1988) - the application of the ‘moment time’ concept- that a piece of music can be built using independent musical ‘moments’, that are placed in a certain order but could be interchangeable – proved to be impractical in relation to the conductor’s understanding. Not only is he already considering more immediate concerns, it is possible he may wish to celebrate a work’s fragmentation rather than expose a hidden ‘unity’. In practice, *Agon*’s rhythmic challenges stem from the sheer density of music, that result in the conductor taking longer amounts of time to internalize shorter extracts of music.

These examples help demonstrate that although Stravinsky made a sizable impression on the rhythmic aspect of the conductor’s role, many are attracted to Stravinsky’s gimmicks as well as the moments of true influence. This is particularly so in the case of *The Rite of Spring*, highlighting the misinformed shift of focus onto the conductor’s technique rather than his understanding of the orchestra and internalisation of the score. Ansermet also noted this development.

I was the first to introduce these Stravinsky rhythms in Paris, in London, in Berlin – where I conducted the first German performance of *The Rite of Spring* in 1922- and I had to invent this new technique. And as it was rather difficult then the young conductors began asking for lessons, and this method of teaching conducting in lessons directed the attention of the conductor on the technique, not on the music! (Ansermet cited Chesterman 1976:76-7).

The combination of all four methodologies assisted in evaluating the true impact of Stravinsky’s rhythmic innovations addressed in both musicological and conducting literature. Rhythmic analysis of the score could be applied to the study of conducting footage (which was available for concert performances of a number of the case studies) in order to assess how the conductors approached specific extracts. The use of historical comparison helped me ascertain that some examples frequently cited were not unprecedented, despite attracting the most attention. This is particularly so in conducting books, where it is more common to quote the most famous passages over the most challenging. Finally, viewing these observations from an aesthetic standpoint also illustrated how the treatment of these passages has led to a shift in the overall perception of the conductor’s work.

Discrepancies between Musicology and the Conductor's Perspective

There are other instances in which musicological literature places great emphasis on issues that have comparatively little relevance to the conductor or the performer's primary concerns. This highlights the entrenched separation of academic analysis and the more pragmatic performance analysis carried out by conductors, thus preventing a more rounded understanding of a composer's true influence on music making. An example here is *Petrushka*'s famous use of bitonality. It is the feature of the ballet that has attracted the most academic attention,¹⁷ but has had a more debatable influence on the conductor. Although Pierre Monteux had to deal with embarrassing protests from the orchestra conducting the work with the Vienna Philharmonic (Monteux 1965:78-9), it is a challenge to deduce that Stravinsky's early harmonic innovations would have demanded more from the conductor than those of, for example, Debussy or Rimsky Korsakov. This assertion is supported by Taruskin, who demonstrates that although 'the novel treatment of harmony and tonality ... made the second tableau of *Petrushka* for a while the ne plus ultra – the last word - in modernism' (2005:163), Stravinsky's use of bitonality was not unprecedented.

Ravel had anticipated it in both *Jeux d'eau* and *Rapsodie Espagnole*... Richard Strauss had anticipated it in *Elektra*..., and even Maximilian Steinberg, a less famous pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, had used it in a memorial prelude for orchestra in honour of their teacher...(2005:164).

A similar principle applies to *Agon*, famed for its varied harmonic language and employment of serialist techniques. According to Straus, Stravinsky employs a concoction of diatonicism, diatonic and non-diatonic serialism, and twelve-note serialism (2003:156).¹⁸ One might expect that an understanding of Stravinsky's patchwork harmonic language would have aided the conductor's performance. Yet although conductors Murphy and Ellis expressed interest in these issues, they did not feel obliged to understand them, especially as *Agon* poses numerous other more immediate concerns. Moreover, this sentiment was even expressed by the serialist composers themselves. For example, Webern said,

¹⁷ See for example Bernstein's sixth lecture in *The Unanswered Question* (1976:338-343) and Taruskin, R. 'Chez Pétrouchka: Harmony and Tonality "chez" Stravinsky' (1987:265-286).

¹⁸ See the previous chapter for a critique of these ideas in relation to the 'Saraband-Step' (p.155-6).

‘audiences and even performers did not need to know the technical processes by which twelve-tone music is constructed’ (Wintle 1982:75). The conductor’s primary concerns differ greatly from the academic attention that the work has attracted - the main challenge for the conductor is the level of multi-tasking required, i.e. juggling the complex rhythms, choreographic considerations and exposed orchestration.

Anti-Interpretation Aesthetic

Finally, there appears to be a consistent presence of ‘anti-interpretative’ devices in Stravinsky’s ballet scores, which adopt various guises. Although the composer’s aesthetic persuasions¹⁹ and exacting demands have been shown to be rather unsubstantial and unrealistic,²⁰ his scores have nonetheless been successful at reducing the tendency to over-romanticise – a common conducting practice at the turn of the twentieth century. Stravinsky’s ballets mainly use rhythmic complexity, highly specified performance requirements, stretches on instrumental technique, unorthodox orchestration or complex choreo-musical interdependency (all discussed above) to ensure that the conductor has minimal freedom in personalising the orchestra’s performance. The composer contradicts himself, however, by repeatedly writing for the collaborative arts, and therefore admitting (at least in action) an interest in extra-musical factors. ‘If his musical philosophy was so puristic, why was he so attracted by the theatre, so devoted to ballet, to the setting of words? All extra-musical elements’ (Bernstein 1976:390).

Although even the earliest ballets (*The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring*) reduce interpretative freedom at numerous points through the use of irregular rhythms, I would argue that the most noticeable aesthetic shift for the conductor comes in *Les Noces*. The relentless rhythmic complexity, exposed orchestration, and anti-expressive approach to the libretto (in which Stravinsky overrode the natural semantic accents in the Russian text) prevent any excessive interpretation on the conductor’s part. In fact, Stravinsky called the work ‘conductor-proof’ (Stravinsky and Craft 1972:241), and this demonstrates why it is so

¹⁹ See Stravinsky *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (1960). See also Stravinsky *An Autobiography* (1990) and *Themes and Conclusions* (1972:223-233).

²⁰ See Cook, N. ‘Stravinsky conducts Stravinsky’ (2003:176-191). Cook assesses Stravinsky’s conducting practise in relation to his purist performance aesthetic pronouncements.

difficult to consider the choreographic counterpoint and unorthodox allocation of prose to the singers. This practice continued in *Apollo* - although more conventionally scored and orchestrated, the purist, exposed string writing, increased consideration of the choreography, and more subtle rhythmic complexity leave the conductor with challenges that although less explicit, continue to restrict what Stravinsky would have considered excessive intervention.

Stravinsky Violin Concerto is the most complex of the case studies in terms of aesthetic contradictions, juxtaposed elements and stylistic ambiguity. Furthermore, as the surviving choreography is the later 1972 version (choreographed by Balanchine after Stravinsky's death) there is also a misalliance between the 1930's neoclassical score and the more contemporary choreography. The conductor must therefore lead a concert work in a theatrical setting – the only ballet in this thesis to be presenting this challenge (although Balanchine did set choreography to many of Stravinsky's concert works). He is conducting a concerto (in four movements) and a ballet; a solo violinist, orchestra and company of dancers; movements ambiguous in form (confused further by mismatched titles synonymous with other genres); and music resembling a multitude of styles. These numerous misalliances mean that the conductor is presented with a complex identity and no definitive route through the music.

The opening movement or 'Toccata' demonstrates the concerto's ambiguous identity. Although the violin plays throughout the movement (the demands on the soloist continue throughout the piece) there are also a number of featured instruments playing distinctive motifs that deprive the violinist of uninterrupted spotlight. Score analysis highlights that alongside these concerns is an ambiguity of form. Rogers (1995:478) and Hyde (2003:110) both argue that the Toccata is divided into three distinct sections, yet even these are unclear to the listener with the opening theme returning more than three times. Joseph (2002:334-335) suggests that the choreography is divided into eight sections (clearly defined by the exit and entrance of specific dancers) and the musical score into sixteen. In reality, there are numerous answers, and the conductor is left to treat the music as an evolving structure that must leave its own impression on the listener. In interview, conductors Ellis and Jurowski verified this observation. This contributes to the lack of any clear climax within the

movement, and in many respects leaves the conductor quite powerless in terms of communicating any level of interpretation.

It is in *Agon* where Stravinsky enlists the greatest number of parameters in the prevention of interpretation. Stylistically, the dances make references to those of the Renaissance (the Bransles, Galliarde and Saraband-Step all adopt features of the original dances) yet the musical languages employed are unmistakably contemporary. This is particularly pertinent in the Pas de Deux. Instead of being romantic in style, the choreography is accompanied by the most serial and abstract music of the ballet. Conductors deal with the aesthetic contradictions in varying ways. Ellis²¹ believes that the more ‘metronomic’ one’s approach to the score, the more effective the performance. Murphy,²² however, makes more of an effort to expose any theatricality in the music, so that the dancers can relate to, and make sense of the score. Performance analysis of David Robertson shows that he adopts a similar approach in his BBC Proms 2009 performance, making notable changes to his body language in the male and female solo variations.

Stravinsky also creates unusual ensembles within the orchestra (the full orchestra never plays simultaneously) that challenge the conductor with regard to balance of sound. The rhythmic language is often complex (in this sense, a return of sorts to his earlier ‘Russian’ works) alongside a high level of choreo-musical dependency - it was written in collaboration with Balanchine from the outset. The conductor must be constantly aware of the action on stage, and must cue the dancers and musicians as well as taking cues from them (for example, the conductor must take a cue mid-jump from the male soloist at the start of the Saraband-Step). The challenging factors of rhythm, choreography, aesthetic paradoxes, cues for dancers and musicians and unusual instrumentation combine in most of the dances, presenting many obstacles for the conductor considering the dances’ short lengths. It is taken to such a level that it is, in many respects, impossible for the conductor - yet again - to be much more than a mere time-beater, or ‘executor’ of his music.

²¹ Interviewed 9th March 2011.

²² Interviewed 2nd October 2009.

It is an irony that in spite of Stravinsky's disdain for the egotistical maestro, his music has demanded greater attention to conducting technique, and therefore in certain respects has increased focus on the conductor's performance. As Ansermet noted (see p.184), this can be a distraction from the conductor's understanding and internalisation of the score. Although the complexity of *The Rite* (alongside many other Stravinsky scores) reduced the conductor's role in many instances to that of a time-beater, the increased focus on *how* he is keeping time has led to a fascination with the conductor's own unique gestural language. This allows those so inclined to revel in a different type of glory. However, although Stravinsky's aesthetic preferences have, in many respects, been proved by Cook (2003) to be unrealistic and contradictory, his ballet scores exhibit an ever-evolving manifestation of his sentiments that have had an effect on the conductor's ability to interpret the composer's work. Although prey to a certain level of interference from choreographic considerations, staging, and the practicalities of musical performance, Stravinsky's anti-interpretation devices are a recurring theme and they are present throughout his ballet repertoire.

Future Research Recommendations

I suggest that the methodological model employed in this thesis could be applied to the study of many aspects of conducting. For example, opera, symphonic and concerto conducting could be treated similarly. Investigation into the conducting of other theatrical works by Stravinsky would be another logical progression from the ballets studied in this thesis – and would enable further research into a conductor's interaction with vocalists. Alternatively, the same methodology could be applied to the ballets of Tchaikovsky, Debussy or Prokofiev. The study of Debussy in particular would allow further investigation into the effect of early twentieth century rhythmic innovations on the conductor's work. This could provide scope for more detailed performance analysis, especially in relation to the composer's more malleable approach to rhythm and form. The methodology could also facilitate research into conducting more recent orchestral works, giving us a more contemporary understanding of the profession. This approach produces research that is more than a merely observational study of a conductor, or in contrast a more specialised 'How to Conduct Stravinsky' style document akin to most conducting literature. The

methodology uncovers the historical, musical and aesthetic reasons behind the development of the conductor's role and explores the reasons behind the conductors' choices in performance.

Not only would these recommendations place a practical slant on the musicological literature surrounding each genre or composer, it would also present a more thorough assessment of the music and its impact than most conducting literature offers. It also enables the exploitation of the vastly increased and diversified resources available in recent years, reflecting the development of how we can now experience ballet works. We can now more readily appreciate ballets as interdisciplinary works, yet much musicological literature does not reflect this fact. A multi-faceted way of studying and analysing ballet is the only way we can gain an understanding of the work that is a more literal reflection of the creative process.

Although pinpointing single, pivotal musical works is an accessible and popular way of defining our cultural history, in reality developments in the role of any artist (the conductor included) are often more gradual. This is demonstrated in this study of Stravinsky's ballet repertoire and its relationship to the conductor's work. Moreover, as Joseph stated 'these ballets provide a looking glass into Stravinsky's musical evolution' (2011:247), therefore many of the findings in this thesis can be related to other works in the composer's broader repertoire. For example, Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* employs structural symmetry in a way that is reminiscent of both the rhythmic symmetry seen in *Apollo*, and also the sectioned form seen in *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. One can therefore apply the principles and methodology outlined in the thesis in isolating any formal ambiguity or anti-interpretative devices. It is perhaps also the conductor's manufactured image, prevalent particularly in Stravinsky's era, which clouds the real development of the role in favour of the enigmatic 'genius'. Coupled with the composer's skill for self-promotion, numerous myths have evolved around both the Stravinsky and the conductor. It is only by exploring these myths from numerous angles can we gain a greater understanding of Stravinsky's true influence.

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