

signum
CLASSICS

BBC
RADIO



90 – 93FM

Petrushka

Igor Stravinsky

Baba-Yaga
The Enchanted Lake
Kikimora

Anatoly Liadov

BBC National Orchestra of Wales
Thierry Fischer, conductor

PETRUSHKA

1.	Petrushka: Scene 1	Stravinsky	[10.06]
2.	Petrushka: Scene 2	Stravinsky	[4.13]
3.	Petrushka: Scene 3	Stravinsky	[7.08]
4.	Petrushka: Scene 4	Stravinsky	[14.08]
5.	Baba-yaga	Liadov	[3.47]
6.	The Enchanted Lake	Liadov	[10.01]
7.	Kikimora	Liadov	[8.52]
	Total Timings		[58.15]

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

Thierry Fischer conductor

Lesley Hatfield leader

TALES OF LOVE AND DEATH

In 1910, before he had quite completed his first ballet *The Firebird*, Stravinsky had his now famous dream about “a solemn pagan rite”, the inspiration for his most revolutionary work, *The Rite of Spring*. Before embarking on composing that ballet for the Ballets Russes, though, and recognising that it would be “a long and difficult task”, Stravinsky decided he “wanted to refresh myself” with a lighter orchestral piece; so he started work on a *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra. In an interview published in *Les nouvelles littéraires*, Stravinsky claimed that in his “initial conception, I saw a man in evening dress, wearing his hair long: the musician or the poet of Romantic tradition. He sat himself at the piano and spun contrary ideas at the keyboard, while the orchestra burst out with vehement protests, with sonic fisticuffs”. However, Stravinsky soon found a more vivid image – of “the droll, ugly, sentimental, shifting personage who was always in an explosion of revolt”. This was the popular Russian puppet character, *Petrushka*.

Stravinsky played his *Konzertstück*-in-progress – now titled “*Petrushka’s shout*” – to the director of the Ballets Russes, Serge Diaghilev. The impresario was so delighted by the music’s caustic style that he immediately proposed that this, too, should be

turned into a ballet (years later the impresario gave a similar response when he first heard the young Prokofiev’s Second Piano Concerto). And for Diaghilev, the obvious man to collaborate with Stravinsky on developing this puppet-inspired work was Alexander Benois.

Benois had not only been a prime instigator behind Stravinsky’s *Firebird* ballet, but had also adored the result, most particularly Stravinsky’s music. However he had just fallen out with Diaghilev over a mis-credit printed in the programme books for the 1910 season, in which the scenario of the ballet to Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Sheherazade* (the Ballet Russes’ other big hit, together with *Firebird*, of that year) was attributed to Léon Bakst rather than Benois. Retiring to Lugano in high dudgeon, Benois wrote to Diaghilev that he would have nothing more to do with his ballet company. But Diaghilev now enticed Benois back, not only using the lure of collaborating with Stravinsky but also playing on Benois’ enthusiasm and expertise on the St Petersburg Shrovetide carnival, where puppet shows such as *Petrushka* were typically staged. Benois’ childhood experience of these carnivals became crucial to the final ‘feel’ of the ballet, since Stravinsky himself was too young to have witnessed such a carnival – except in dramatised form when he watched his baritone

father, Fyodor Stravinsky, perform in Serov's opera *The Power of the Fiend*.

It was Benois who began the transformation of Petrushka from rebellious mischief-maker (closely related, in fact, to the English Punch) to the tragic clown of the ballet. He did this by drawing on the Commedia dell'Arte tradition of the Harlequinades in which Pierrot (a distant relation of Petrushka) is involved in a love-triangle with Columbine and Harlequin – such as Benois would again have seen staged in fairs during his childhood. Benois's scenario involves three life-sized puppets, seemingly brought to life: Columbine is here presented as a pretty but stiff-limbed Ballerina, whose affections both Petrushka and the gaudily dressed Blackamoor (into which Harlequin was transformed) vie for. With such a scenario, and given Petrushka's violent temperament, Benois had originally envisaged that Petrushka would finally kill the Blackamoor in a fit of jealous rage. Stravinsky, however, insisted that it should be the Blackamoor who kills Petrushka, so turning the hero into a hapless victim and so perhaps a more resonant figure. Choreographed by Mikhail Fokine (as had been *The Firebird*), the ballet was a phenomenal success from its first performance at Paris's Théâtre du Chatelet on 13 June 1911, and is still regularly hailed as one of the greatest

achievements not only of the Ballets Russes but of all ballet repertoire.

The action takes place in Admiralty Square, St Petersburg, in 1830 during the festive Maslenitsa (Butter Week) which precedes Lent. Stravinsky brilliantly portrays the lively, milling crowds and the music coming from a roundabout and various rival attractions at the fair. After the initial hubbub, the music snaps into focus as a party of peasants stamp to the accompaniment of a concertina; a second, calmer interlude follows as a street dancer performs accompanied by a hurdy-gurdy (Stravinsky uses conventional orchestral instruments to vividly imitate these street instruments). More crowd activity, then suddenly an interruption by a rumble of drums heralding the appearance of the showman. To eerie music, including an interlude while he plays his flute to enchant his audience, the showman unveils his three puppets and brings them to life for a dance.

Scene 2 (using the music of Stravinsky's original *Konzertstück*) is set in Petrushka's cell, the forlorn puppet seeking to escape his prison. A brief appearance by the Ballerina only goads him further in his efforts, and he eventually tears a hole in the wall.

Scene 3 is in the luxuriously appointed room of the gaudily dressed but simple-minded Blackamoor. Eventually a trumpet fanfare heralds the stiff-limbed entrance of the Ballerina. She dances to the Moor's delight, and eventually he draws her onto his lap; at this point the jealous Petrushka enters, only to be chased out again by the Moor.

Scene 4 is the Admiralty Square, later that evening but still filled with a lively crowd. The music drops in volume as a group of nursemaids dance among themselves (solo oboe introducing the well-known Russian folk song 'Along the Road to Piter', ie St Petersburg). Just as this is reaching towards a climax, a sudden shriek by the orchestra heralds the appearance of a lumbering performing bear. A gypsy dance follows, then a lively dance by the coachmen. Scurrying music with grotesque downward glissandi introduces a group of revellers in masks (an incident Stravinsky introduced to the scenario, remembering a similar scene from Serov's opera). Suddenly a commotion in the puppet booth becomes apparent, and Petrushka bursts out with the Blackamoor in pursuit; before agitated onlookers, Petrushka is struck down by the Blackamoor's scimitar. The police are summoned, but the showman demonstrates that Petrushka is a mere puppet, shaking some sawdust out of his head to prove

it. The crowd disperse, and the showman begins to drag the lifeless puppet away. Then suddenly, to the piercing sound of a muted trumpet (a deliberate imitation of the kazoo-like sound of the authentic Petrushka), the ghost of our hero appears to taunt the showman and also – possibly – the ballet's audience.

Anatoly Liadov was the composer Diaghilev famously failed to get to write *The Firebird* before turning to Stravinsky. Despite this, Diaghilev eventually staged a ballet (choreographed by Leonide Massine who by 1915 had replaced the over-demanding Fokine) based, in its final form, on no less than four works by Liadov, three of them included in this recording. Its starting point was Liadov's *Kikimora*, a tone poem – composed in the same year as Stravinsky's *Firebird* – describing the malicious female demon ("her head no larger than a thimble and her body no wider than a strand of straw", according to Liadov's programme note) who traditionally haunts every Russian household, disturbing children with whistling and screeching at night, and causing death to all who see her spinning her flax. First staged during the First World War in San Sebastian, Spain in 1916, the ballet proved so successful that it was soon extended with further episodes based on Liadov's *Enchanted Lake* of 1910 (made into a dance

of the Swan-Princess) and his portrait of the Russian witch *Baba-Yaga* (1904), the three episodes linked with numbers from his *Eight Russian Folk Songs*. In its final form the ballet, now titled *Contes Russes*, was first staged at the Coliseum Theatre in London, 1919.

© Daniel Jaffé

BIOGRAPHIES

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES

Leader - Lesley Hatfield

BBC National Orchestra of Wales occupies a special role as both a national and broadcasting orchestra, acclaimed not only for the quality of its performances but also for its importance within its own community.

The Orchestra has won considerable critical and audience acclaim over recent years, under its formidable conducting team of Principal Conductor Thierry Fischer, Principal Guest Conductor Jac van

Steen and Conductor Laureate Tadaaki Otaka. September 2008 saw the arrival of Associate Guest Conductor François-Xavier Roth, to add a further dimension to the team. In July 2009 Simon Holt took up the role of Composer-in-Association, a post previously held by Michael Berkeley, consolidating the ensemble's commitment to performing contemporary music.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales is Orchestra-in-Residence at St David's Hall, Cardiff, and also presents a concert series at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea. As well as international touring, it is in demand at major UK festivals and performs every

year at the BBC Proms and biennially at the prestigious BBC Cardiff Singer of the World.

At the beginning of 2009 the Orchestra moved to its new state-of-the-art recording and rehearsal base, BBC Hoddinott Hall at Wales Millennium Centre. The Orchestra enjoys close working relationships with radio and television programme-makers, and recorded the soundtracks to BBC Wales's *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* series.

THIERRY FISCHER PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Swiss conductor Thierry Fischer was announced in September 2009 as the new Music Director of the Utah Symphony Orchestra, with immediate effect. He has already assumed his planning responsibilities and will gradually increase his conducting commitments until 2011/12 onwards when he will conduct a minimum of 12 weeks a season.



© Chris Stock

He remains Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic. From 2001-2006 he was Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Ulster Orchestra.

Fischer studied flute with Aurèle Nicolet and began his musical career as Principal Flute in Hamburg and at the Zurich Opera, where he studied scores with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and was profoundly influenced by him. His conducting career began in his 30's when he replaced an ailing colleague, subsequently directing his first few concerts with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe where he was Principal Flute under Claudio Abbado, who encouraged and inspired him in his newfound talent for conducting. Spending his apprentice years in Holland, Thierry Fischer has since appeared with many leading orchestras in the UK and Europe.

Fischer took up his title with BBC National Orchestra of Wales in 2006, and his inaugural concert featured Florent Schmitt's Psalm 47, subsequently recorded for Hyperion as the first in a series of French discs, and Messiaen's Turangalila, which was recorded live for the cover disc of the BBC Music Magazine. Together they have toured the USA, Spain and Prague, and their first disc of Stravinsky ballets was released in August 2009 for Signum Records. Fischer and his BBC orchestra

appear every year at the BBC Proms in London, and have together mounted major celebrations of the music of Dutilleux and Messiaen.

Fischer has been Chief Conductor with the Nagoya Philharmonic since April 2008, fulfilling with panache his brief to refresh the artistic programming and quality of performances. He made his Tokyo debut in May 2010 when he will take the Nagoya Philharmonic to Suntory Hall.

During his tenure in Belfast with the Ulster Orchestra, Fischer toured with the orchestra to Prague and New York and appeared several times at the BBC Proms, conducted cycles of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann and Honegger, and began his relationship with Hyperion with a series of recordings of the works of Jean Francaix. His wider discography also includes recordings for, among others, ASV, Chandos, and a Frank Martin disc on Deutsche Grammophon with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe which was nominated for a Gramophone Award.

Fischer's hallmarks are a lightness of touch and transparency of texture, allowing room for vivid characterisation. He has a keen stylistic sense and brings a fresh approach to repertoire which extends from Bach, the classical repertoire and early

Romantics; the 2nd Viennese school, the great French composers of the early 20th century, a keen advocacy of his compatriots Frank Martin and Honegger, and a particular feel for the music of Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Shostakovich. His affinity also with the unique textures and radical utopianism of Messiaen is no accident, and he played a major role in the BBC's Messiaen celebrations in 2008. Fischer regularly programmes contemporary composers such as Simon Holt (Composer in Residence at the BBC National Orchestra of Wales), and is a regular guest of the London Sinfonietta.

In 2009 Fischer made debuts with the Czech Philharmonic and with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic – joining the latter in a performance of Frank Martin's rarely-performed opera The Tempest in the prestigious Matinee series in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. He also made debuts with several orchestras in the USA, including the New Jersey Symphony and in November 09 he conducted the Indianapolis Symphony for the first time.



© Chris Stock

Already well-established in Europe, Fischer has conducted orchestras such as the Philharmonia, Orchestre National de Lyon, Berlin Konzerthausorchester and the radio orchestras of Paris (Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France), Stockholm, Hanover, Lugano and Saarbruecken. In 2009 he appeared several times with the SWR Baden-Baden, in repertoire from Mahler to Britten and Holliger. In parallel to his symphonic career, Fischer's collaborative approach has fostered strong relationships with several prestigious chamber orchestras, notably the Scottish Chamber, Northern Sinfonia, Dutch Radio Chamber, and Ensemble Orchestral de Paris.

Petrushka

Date of recording Mon 2 – Tue 3 Feb 2009
Location of recording BBC Hoddinott Hall
Engineer Huw Thomas
Producer Tim Thorne
Editor Andrew Mellor

Liadov

Date of recording Tue 13 – Wed 14 Jan 2009
Location of recording BBC Hoddinott Hall
Engineer Huw Thomas
Producer Tim Thorne
Editor Andrew Mellor



BBC is a trademark of the British Broadcasting Corporation and is used under license. BBC © BBC 1996.

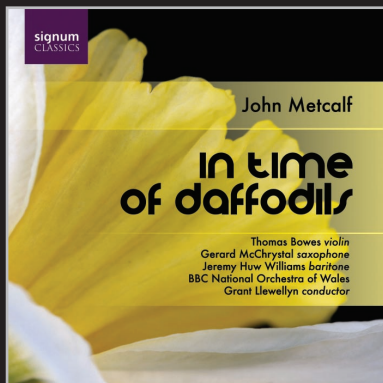
Cover Image - Shutterstock
Design and Artwork - Woven Design
www.wovendesign.co.uk

© 2010 The copyright in this recording is owned by Signum Records Ltd.
© 2010 The copyright in this CD booklet, notes and design is owned by Signum Records Ltd.

Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording of Signum Compact Discs constitutes an infringement of copyright and will render the infringer liable to an action by law. Licences for public performances or broadcasting may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission from Signum Records Ltd.

SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK.
+44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com
www.signumrecords.com

ALSO AVAILABLE ON SIGNUMCLASSICS

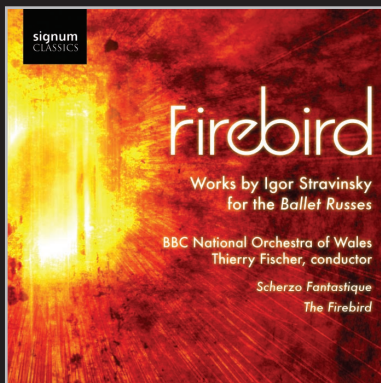


In Time of Daffodils
Works by John Metcalf

SIGCD103

"These performances will not easily be bettered. Everyone sings and plays with conviction and commitment; and the whole is warmly, yet naturally recorded - a real pleasure from first to last."

Musicweb.co.uk



Firebird

SIGCD165

"With the BBC NOW musicians playing as if these were their own lives on the line, the passion and commitment was total... it could hardly have been more alive and compelling."

The Guardian