

Programme Notes

Petrushka (Revised Version from 1947)

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Part I : Introduction: The Shrovetide Fair — Russian Dance

Part II : Petrushka's Room

Part III : The Moor's Room — Dance of the Ballerina — Waltz: The Ballerina and the Moor

Part IV : The Shrovetide Fair (Evening) — Dance of the Nursemaids —

Dance of the Coachmen and Grooms — The Masqueraders —

The Fight: The Moor and Petrushka — Death of Petrushka — Apparition of Petrushka

Stravinsky rose to international fame in Paris by collaborating with impresario Serge Diaghilev's ballet company Ballets Russes. *Petrushka* is the second of the three ballets commissioned by Diaghilev and Stravinsky wrote the music during the winter between 1910 and 1911. Two elements in this composition probably set benchmark for ballet music and made the work a classic in contemporary music. The first is the so-called 'Petrushka chord', C major and F-sharp major triads played together, a bitonality device to symbolise Petrushka is half puppet, half human. The second element can be heard in the stratification of rhythms and melodies at the beginning of Parts I and IV when the festive Shrovetide Fair is depicted. To match with the futuristic choreography, constructivist style and dance form, collage technique is also applied frequently in the music. The sonority recalls the world of sounds commonly found in other compositions by Gustav Mahler and Charles Ives.

Part I opens with rapidly changing rhythms to portray the hustle and bustle of the Shrovetide Fair. Drummers announce the entrance of the mighty Magician. His magic is first mysteriously depicted by bassoons and contrabassoon, followed by a long, improvisatory melody for flutes. Suddenly, the curtain rises as the Magician introduces to the audience his puppets Petrushka, the Ballerina and the Moor. In front of the astounded crowd, he conjures up a vibrant Russian dance with a flute and brings the puppets to life.

Part II opens with a resounding crash as Petrushka is kicked into his barren room. Though Petrushka is a puppet pulled by strings, he is infatuated with the beautiful Ballerina. His emotions are sensitively described in Stravinsky's music. The famous 'Petrushka chord' is first heard on clarinets, then violently scored for trumpets. Another elaborate passage of *arpeggios* for piano emerges as a hint for Stravinsky's original plan of the piece as a concert piece for piano and orchestra.

In Part III, the Magician places the Ballerina in the Moor's spacious and lavishly decorated room, quite a contrast to those of Petrushka. Attracted to the dashing Moor, the Ballerina plays a saucy tune on a toy trumpet and dances with him. In jealousy Petrushka breaks free from his room and attacks his rival, only to realise that he is too small and weak. A turbulent passage of music depicts how Petrushka flees for his life, with the Moor chasing after him.

Part IV returns to the Shrovetide Fair and opens with a chain of lively dances. A series of apparently unrelated characters come and go, bringing one tuneful folk melody after another. Petrushka suddenly returns on stage and is pursued by the Moor. With a stroke of his scimitar, the Moor slays Petrushka and runs away with the Ballerina. Petrushka dies in front of the horrified onlookers but the Magician assures the crowd that Petrushka is only a puppet. The eerie atmosphere created by the final pages of the score depicts his ghost appearing on the roof of the puppet theatre as night falls.

The ballet was premiered in Paris at the Théâtre du Châtelet in June 1911 under the baton of Pierre Monteux. The title role was played by the legendary Vaslav Nijinsky. Stravinsky subsequently revised some of the orchestration and notations of metric modulation in the 1947 version.



**Statement by Unsuk Chin,
composer of *Chorós Chordón***

Chorós Chordón has been dedicated to Sir Simon Rattle, who has conducted several works of mine in Berlin and elsewhere, including the première of *Le Silence des Sirènes* at the Lucerne Festival in 2014. The title is Greek and can be literally translated as 'Dance of the Strings', but it refers not only to the string section which plays a dominant role in the work but also to cosmic and physical phenomena as well as to diverse cosmological scenarios which have served as a starting point for the structure and unfolding of this work. However, it is not programme music and it does not have any esoteric connotations. Generally speaking, physical and biological processes have been a constant source of inspiration for my work, and a number of my works offer musical and poetic reflections on natural phenomena and on our physical relationship with the cosmos. This applies both for abstract works of music and for a more programmatic one such as *Le Chant des Enfants des Étoiles*, which refers to the same theme by setting poems of eleven international authors from William Blake to Fernando Pessoa and Octavio Paz.

Chorós Chordón

Unsus Chin (b. 1961)

(Commissioned by the Berliner Philharmoniker Foundation *Première*)

The process of the convergence and fusion of different areas of experience is a central theme in the works of Unsuk Chin. Born in Seoul in 1961, the composer was already familiar with the music of the western post-war avant-garde before she moved to Hamburg to study with György Ligeti in 1985. Though Chin has settled in Berlin for many years, she feels strongly connected with the non-European, especially the East Asian, music cultures. This connection is reflected in the agile and imaginative use of the percussion instruments for instance, the brightness and colour of sounds in general, and the precise balance between comprehensive construction and gestural freshness. Her intense interest in the possibilities of electronic music as well as in the fusion of instrumental and synthetic sounds has produced an instrumental art which, even by conventional means, creates the finest varnishes and almost imperceptible, smooth transformations of the orchestral texture. The composer remarks on her new work, 'Cosmological ideas and scenarios from the beginning to the possible end of the universe served as an inspiration for *Chorós Chordón*, but without concrete references and naturally without esoteric associations.' This piece of new work was initiated by Sir Simon Rattle and composed under the *Tapas* series of shorter pieces for the Berliner Philharmoniker.

Chorós Chordón means 'Dance of the Strings' in Greek. Judging from the parallel drawn between cosmological and musical processes by the composer, the title of her work apparently is not a mere reference to the sound strings of the stringed instruments but also the vibrating strings in the string theory of physics, in which they are regarded as the smallest fundamental building blocks of the universe. The idea that vibrating strings might be producing the diversity of the forces and particles of our world is undoubtedly fascinating from the musical point of view. The composer, however, prefers not to create an excessively close analogy because the string theory represents only a small part of physics after all. Indeed, the models of the making and dying of the world, of cyclical processes of growth and decay which guided her imagination are way much broader.

Chin wrote in her work commentary, 'the strings are constantly in demand and thus play a main role'. The continuous string section slowly descends from incorporeal noisy heights to more concrete registers, gaining melodic contours and pulling threads together. The background of this continuum consists of a layer of pointillist sounds produced by four percussionists—two of them rustle almost silently with silk paper, and the other two play the harp and the piano. These sparkling and whispering sounds build up their density and complexity, and are joined by woodwind and brass. In this fine interplay of energy impulses, the music appears more and more concrete. Rhythmic forces are eventually united in what the composer called a 'vehement dance'. The piece continues to describe the dissociation and dissolution of something newly emerging. This emergence appeared just a moment before is now brought to a meticulously executed 'death by cold' (in the composer's own words). Nevertheless, the **focus of the strings** on a single sound returns again as the final conclusion to open up further intervals as a new expansion and a second life cycle.

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 44

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Lento — Allegro moderato

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegro

Rachmaninov left his homeland Russia in 1917 with his family amid political turmoil and finally, in 1918, arrived in the United States. He performed with major orchestras and maestri there, including The Philadelphia Orchestra and Leopold Stokowski, with whom he also made historical recordings of his piano concertos. Composing became a luxury for Rachmaninov, something which provided an escape from his hectic performing schedules. The *Third Symphony* was composed in Switzerland between 1935-36, and premiered by The Philadelphia Orchestra and Stokowski in November 1936. The romantic and lyrical inspiration exuded in this piece marks a striking contrast with the kaleidoscopic collage found in Stravinsky's *Petrushka*.

The first movement starts with the shadowy chant-like motto theme quietly played by clarinets, horns and cellos as a brief introductory passage. Its essential role in unifying all three movements will be soon manifested. This motto theme will return in the impassioned and ebullient development section, and just before the end of the coda. The majestic glory of this movement is **reflected** in the *molto cantabile*, with the unforgettable second theme played by the soaring cellos **as a lyrical** song.

Accompanied by calm harp chords, the second movement begins with a solo horn and recalls the motto theme previously developed. This magical moment will be recalled vaguely in the recapitulation in trills on strings and woodwind *staccato*. In between these two *adagio* sections, a robust *scherzo* is incorporated into the movement, suggesting an important innovation in terms of formal structure among all Rachmaninov's symphonies: the slow movement and the *scherzo* are combined as one.

The finale is full **of vigour and** rhythmic crispness. After revealing the dynamic and lyrical themes, the frequently paraphrased plainchant *Dies Irae* ('Day of Wrath') appears to counterpoint the main themes. As the finale moves on to its climax, percussion and individual tone qualities of the solo instruments accentuate to weave *Dies Irae* into the main motto theme from the first movement.

Programme notes for *Petrushka* and *Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 44* provided by Dr Ip Kim-ho

Programme notes for *Chorós Chordón* provided by the orchestra, translated by Christine Chan