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REVISITING, REFLECTING, REVISIONING

April 18-20, 2013

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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Society of Dance History Scholars
Special Topics Conference
Proceedings

Sacre Celebration:
Revisiting, Reflecting, Revisioning

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The 2013 Society of Dance History Scholars special conference, “Sacre Celebration: Revisiting, Reflecting, Revisioning” was held April 18-20, 2013, at York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Each presenter at the conference was invited to contribute to the Proceedings. Those who chose to contribute did so by submitting PDF files, which are assembled here. There was minimal editorial intervention — little more than the addition of page numbers and headers. Authors undertook to adhere to a standard format for fonts, margins, titles, figures or illustrations, order of sections, and so on, but there may be minor differences in format from one paper to another.

Presenters’ affiliations and biographical information are available in the conference program book, which was compiled in April, 2013, and is available as a PDF on the Proceedings page of the website, at the following URL: http://sacre.info.yorku.ca/proceedings-2/

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Contents

Stravinsky and the End of Musical Time: Messiaen's Analysis of *The Rite* and Its Impact on Twentieth-Century Music

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Abstract

Through The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky ushered in the end of musical time, as we know it. The work's expansion and contraction of rhythmic cells, irregular accents, rhythmic ostinatos, layering of rhythmic patterns, and asymmetrical groupings contributed to rhythm being an equal partner with harmony in the structuring of music. Struck by the originality of its rhythmic practices, Messiaen analyzed* The Rite *in 1930. This interest in* The Rite *was to have a profound impact on the history of music. Through his work as both a composer and teacher, Messiaen became an important disseminator of Stravinsky's rhythmic ideas in the twentieth century. Messiaen's analysis of* The Rite of Spring *was his most brilliant work as a teacher, as attested to by numerous former students. Volume II of the* Treatise on Rhythm, Color, and Ornithology (1949–92) *contains an outline of this detailed oral analysis. Although he often analyzed* The Rite *measure-by-measure in class, in the* Treatise on Rhythm *Messiaen provided only the highlights of one interpretation. In this essay, I will examine Messiaen's analysis of* The Rite of Spring *as laid out in the* Treatise on Rhythm*, outlining its contents before delving into the "Introduction" to Part I, the "Augurs of Spring," and the "Sacrificial Dance." To conclude my paper, I will consider the analysis's influence on Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, two of Messiaen's most illustrious pupils.*

Introduction

When comparing *The Rite of Spring* (1913) with *The Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911), Robert P. Morgan commented on how Stravinsky set a new tone in the later ballet by infusing it with an "aggressive, propulsive quality" not characteristic of its predecessors.[1] Indeed, for Morgan, in *The Rite*, Stravinsky not only "extended, and intensified, techniques already nurtured in the earlier ballets" but also made his "points with brutal force." Although the dissonant and chromatic nature of *The Rite*'s pitch language certainly played a role in contributing to the work's harsh aesthetic, as Morgan maintains, its innovative rhyhmic practices must take even more credit for the brutal, mechanistic sound world associated with the ballet.

Although it is uncertain when Olivier Messiaen first heard *The Rite of Spring*, according to him, he saw Roger Désormière (1898–1963) conduct the work at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, when he was seventeen years old (probably in 1926).[2] Messiaen admired the performance for its rhythmic precision. In 1930, he analyzed *The Rite*, taking stock of its rhythmic techniques. Nine years later, Messiaen wrote an article entitled "Le rythme chez Igor Strawinsky" about the Russian composer's rhythmic practices in an issue of *La Revue musicale*.[3] Important parts of his later teaching about *The Rite* are present in this

article, including a reference to *rhythmic characters*, although not mentioned by name. After World War II, Messiaen taught *The Rite* to his students both at the Paris Conservatory and at an unofficial analysis class conducted at Guy Bernard-Delapierre's home from 1943–47. Ultimately, what Messiaen conveyed to his pupils about *The Rite* was Stravinsky's manipulation of rhythmic cells, particularly their progressive augmentation and diminution, and superimposition of different rhythmic layers.

Messiaen's analysis of *The Rite of Spring*, especially his interpretation of the "Glorification of the Chosen One" and the "Sacrificial Dance" from which he developed his ideas about rhythmic characters, was his most brilliant work as a teacher, as attested to by his numerous former students. Volume II of the composer's posthumous *Treatise on Rhythm, Color, and Ornithology (1949–92)* contains one outline of a detailed oral analysis done in class.[4] In an interview with Peter Hill, Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen admitted that she had three different versions of her husband's analysis of *The Rite* at her disposal when preparing the *Treatise on Rhythm* for publication.[5] What she apparently chose was the same analysis that Brian Schober experienced at the Paris Conservatory when he studied with Messiaen there from 1973–76.[6]

In this essay, I will examine Messiaen's interpretation of *The Rite* as found in the second volume of the *Treatise on Rhythm*. I will show how his analyses of Stravinsky's music not only shaped his approach to rhythm but also furthered the Russian composer's legacy through their influence on composers who reached maturity after 1945, particularly Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen.

Overview of *The Rite of Spring*

Figure 1 lays out the contents of Messiaen's analysis of *The Rite* in the *Treatise on Rhythm*. Before beginning his discussion of the work, Messiaen lays out its essential points, which describe the nature of rhythmic characters and from whence they derive. Next, Messiaen provides an extract from an interview Stravinsky granted to Ricciotto Canudo of the Parisian arts journal *Montjoie!* during the composition of *The Rite*. It was published on the morning of the premiere on 29 May 1913 under the title, "Ce que j'ai voulu exprimer dans *Le Sacre du Printemps*." Angry at an interview that stressed aesthetics with which he took issue, which for him might prevent a listener from understanding the music, Stravinsky insisted that his ideas had been distorted. I will not go into the details of the "Montjoie affair" here; rather, I will point out that Stravinsky, according to Pieter C. van den Toorn, either "forgot or sought deliberately to revise the circumstances of *The Rite's* conception," given his formalist attitudes.[7]

But much of *The Rite* was composed with images of particular rituals in mind, which spurred Messiaen's imagination as he developed his analysis. Accordingly, Messiaen brought forth a twofold vision of the work as one centering on the music's construction, but within an aesthetic backdrop of conflicting primeval forces that involve the emergence of life within a hostile environment. It was spurred by Stravinsky's well-known dream of a ritual sacrifice in which a young, vibrant girl dances herself to death in front of a group of motionless, old men. This dream became the famous "Sacrificial Dance," which for Messiaen, centered on the conflict between dynamic and static principles, which is the essence of *The Rite* and from which rhythmic characters derive.

1. "The Analysis of *The Rite of Spring* by Stravinsky and Rhythmic Characters" (pp. 93–94)

2. Interview of Stravinsky about *The Rite of Spring* in *Montjoie!*, May 29, 1913 (pp. 95–96)

3. Analysis of Part 1: Adoration of the Earth (pp. 97–106)
   Introduction (pp. 97–99)
   Augurs of Spring (pp. 99–104)
   Dance of the Earth (pp. 104–6)

4. Analysis of Part 2: The Sacrifice (106–47))
   Introduction (pp. 106–11)
   Glorification of the Chosen One (pp. 111–12)
   What is a Rhythmic Character? (pp. 112–13)
   Glorification of the Chosen One (pp. 113–17)
   Evocation of the Ancestors (pp. 117–24)
   Sacrificial Dance (pp. 124–47)

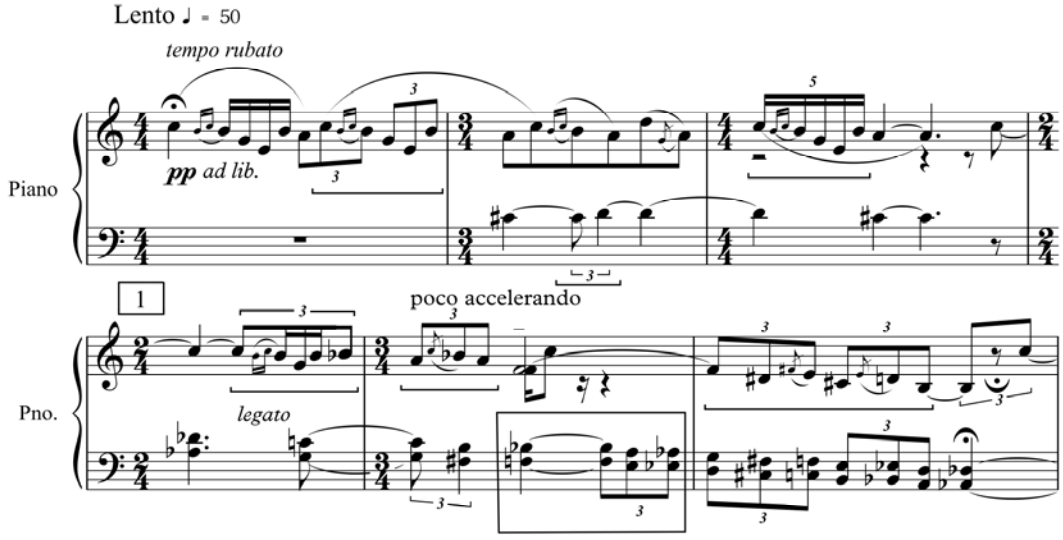
Figure 1: The Contents of Messiaen's Analysis of *The Rite of Spring*
(from Chapter 3 of the *Treatise on Rhythm*, 2:91–147)

Following the *Montjoie* interview of Stravinsky is Messiaen's analysis of *The Rite*. He proceeds through the work chronologically, viewing the music as evoking ancient times before the dawn of humankind, citing various French authors to reinforce his arguments. Indeed, during his discussion of the "Evocation of the Ancestors," he likens the gestures of the music to the movement of lumbering giants in the Book of Genesis or in other ancient traditions, or, for that matter, to prehistoric dinosaurs. In this context he even comments on Walt Disney's maligned depiction of dinosaurs and the battle between the tyrannosaurus rex and stegosaurus in the film *Fantasia* in relation to the "Glorification of the Chosen One" and "Evocation of the Ancestors." Citing Raymond Cogniat's book *Danses d'Indochine*, which argues that dance is motivated by combat and love, as exemplified through dances of war and seduction, Messiaen believed that the basic instincts of self-preservation and procreation common to dance are expressed not only in *The Rite* but throughout the world.[8] Thus, Messiaen believed that the battle between the two dinosaurs accompanied by Stravinsky's music in *Fantasia* was not as far-fetched as one would believe.

In his analysis, Messiaen focuses on "The Augurs of Spring" because of its purely rhythmic theme, and, due to his overall emphasis on rhythmic characters, the "Glorification of the Chosen One" and "Sacrificial Dance" (see Figure 1). In fact, as I have mentioned, for Messiaen, the "Sacrificial Dance" is the essence of *The Rite*. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that he devotes numerous pages to this dance in his analysis, with many centering on his interpretation of the music's rhythmic structure.

Introduction to Part I

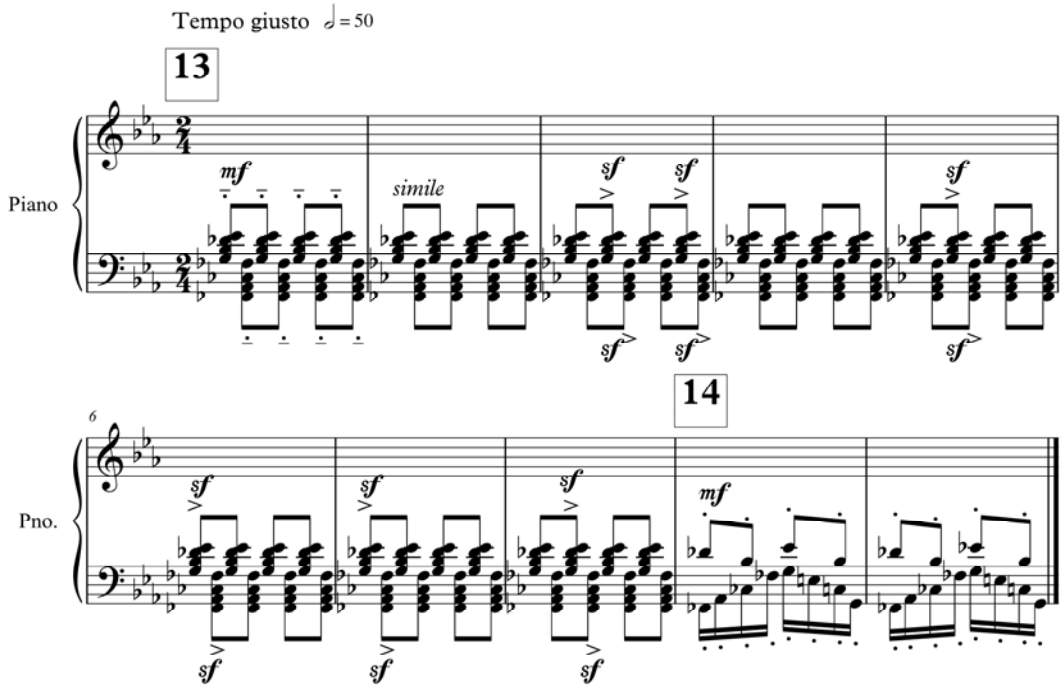
I would like to turn now to the Introduction to Part 1 of *The Rite of Spring* (see Example 1). Messiaen regards the opening as depicting a prehistoric earth right after the cooling of the sea and its shores. For him, it is uninhabited, reflecting the solemnity that precedes the appearance of life. As the music proceeds, we move through various prehistoric eras, finally settling on the mammalian one at the second measure after Rehearsal 3, which Messiaen likens to a "reveil des oiseaux." There are no rhythmic themes, superposed rhythmic pedals, or rhythmic characters; instead, the music is characterized by a supple global rhythm, generated by what Messiaen calls *irrational values*. Technically, irrational values are triplets, quintuplets, or septuplets that cannot be evenly divided. What Messiaen is actually referring to are *irrational rhythms*, where binary-divided durations are transformed through the use of irrational values, resulting in an overall sense of temporal fluidity. Although the bassoon melody contains irrational rhythms that produce a sense of acceleration, Messiaen draws attention to the second eighth of the triplet found in the horn part in measure 2, along with the triplet rhythm of the bassoon part at Rehearsal 1. According to him, such rhythms, introduced by Debussy, were exploited by Varèse, Jolivet, Boulez, and a whole host of post-War composers in their music.



Example 1: Introduction to Part 1, *The Rite of Spring*, R0–R1:3
(Selected irrational rhythms denoted by brackets and the box)

The Augurs of Spring

Let us turn now to the celebrated opening of the *Augurs of Spring* (see Example 2). According to Messiaen, this music contains a *purely rhythmic theme*, a carving out of space possessing thematic force. In this passage, three rhythmic orders are present, which are concepts derived from the rhythmic theories of plainchant theorist Dom André Mocquereau (1848–1930). They are: (1) a *quantitative order* (dealing with long and short

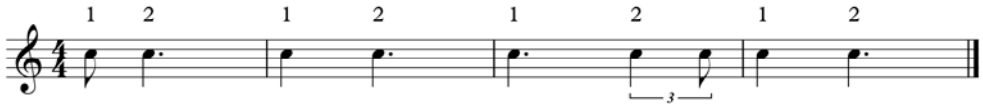


Example 2: The Augurs of Spring, *The Rite of Spring*, R13–R14:2

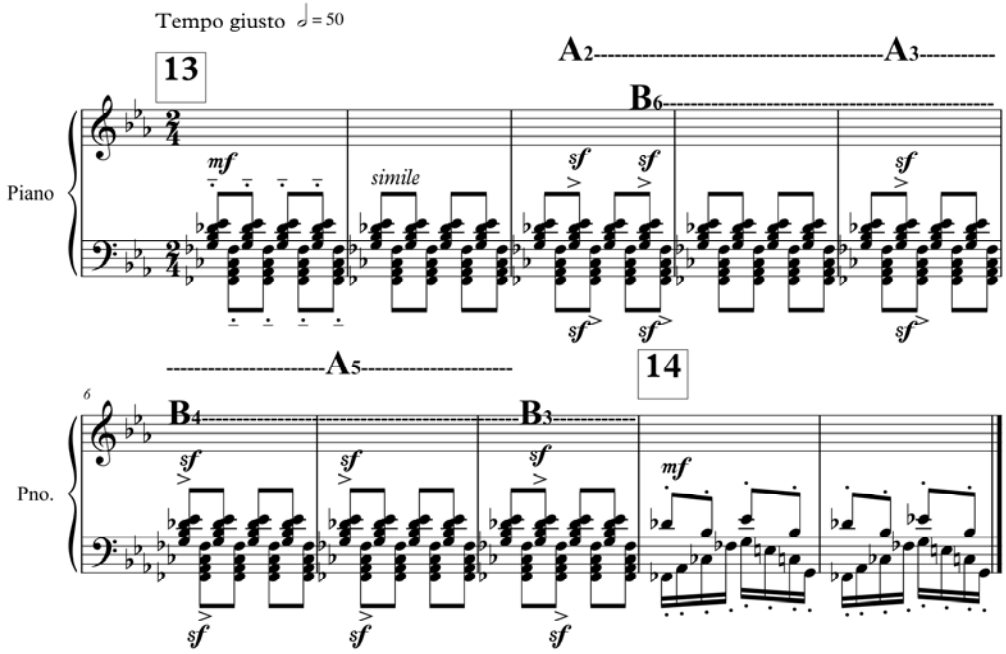
durations), (2) a *dynamic order* (dealing with intensities and densities), and (3) a *phonetic order* (dealing with timbres and attacks).

Messiaen regards the famous polytonal motto chord in this music as derived from the polytonal "Golaud" chord found in the Prelude to Debussy's opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*.[9] For Messiaen, while Debussy's "Golaud" chord is expressive and warm, Stravinsky's motto chord is ugly, heavy, and dirty, and repeated with the utmost indifference.

Using the concept of a quantitative order, Messiaen explains the structure of the rhythmic theme by relating its durational components to the *deçi-tâla Simhavikrîdita* (translated as the "Bond of the Lion," No. 27 from Çarngadeva's list of 120 *deçi-tâlas* [see Example 3]). This *deçi-tâla* is divided into two rhythmic cells, one that progressively augments and diminishes by a basic value while the other stays the same. Consequently, Messiaen interprets the rhythmic theme at Rehearsal 13 as consisting of two alternating cells A and B that increase and decrease, respectively (see Example 4). In short, what we have here is a rudimentary example of rhythmic characters. We will encounter this procedure again, although greatly augmented, when I discuss the "Sacrificial Dance."



Example 3: *Simhavikrîdita* ("Bond of the Lion")



Example 4: The Augurs of Spring. Bipartite rhythmic theme,
with two alternating cells in which one increases while the other decreases

Although Messiaen acknowledges that eight measures of 2/4 enclose the rhythmic theme, the first two measures are not included in his analysis; instead, the theme begins with the second eighth note of the third measure of Rehearsal 13, a beginning reinforced by chords sounded by eight horns along with string accents. For its part, the 2/4 time signature represents a fictitious meter that is designed for ease of performance. What is more, the silences that follow attacks should be included when determining the theme's durational profile. Accordingly, as seen in Example 4, A increases from 2 to 3 to 5 eighth notes, whereas B decreases from 6 to 4 to 3 eighth notes. If you superpose the two lines, B is the retrograde of A, with both B and A skipping a duration in their sequences (see Figure 2).

Duration A:	2	3	5	Duration A:	2	3	(4)	5
Duration B:	6	4	3	Duration B:	6	(5)	4	3

Figure 2: Superposition of Cells A and B, with B being the retrograde of A
(skipped durations are in parentheses)

In his analysis, Messiaen then turns his attention to the dynamic and phonetic orders linked with the theme. The dynamic order describes the theme's density—the thick massive attacks of the eight horns—and intensity—the *ff*s of the horns and accented notes of the strings. For its part, the phonetic order describes the theme's timbral and articulative aspects. The timbre of the horns is large, scraped, and torn. In addition, there are dry attacks followed by silences.

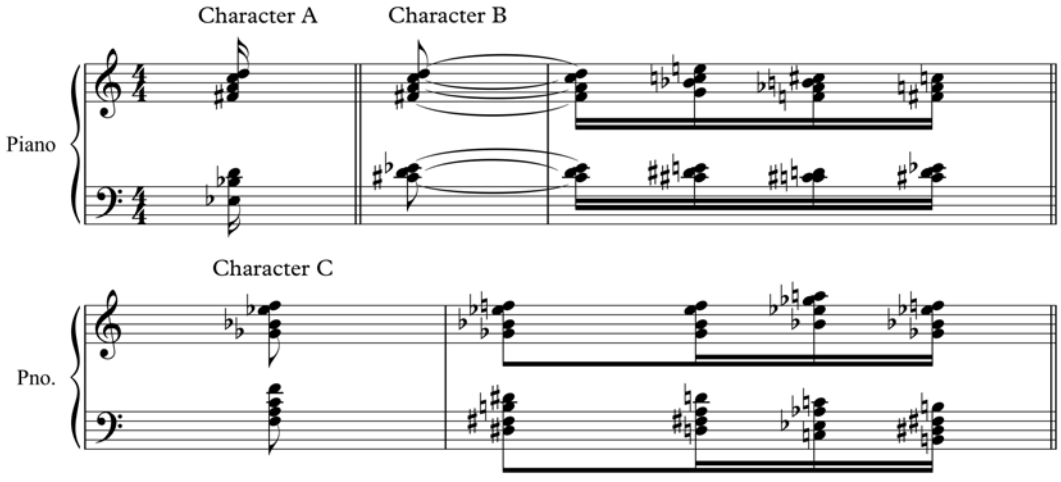
Although the shaping of the rhythmic theme in terms of rhythmic characters is the main point of Messiaen's interpretative foray, the invocation of rhythmic orders is more consequential when it comes to the impact of his analysis. These orders exemplify Messiaen's compositional penchant for treating musical parameters separately, which will spur younger composers to do the same, especially in relation to integral serialism.

Sacrificial Dance

I shall conclude my examination of Messiaen's analysis of *The Rite of Spring* by looking at the refrain of the "Sacrificial Dance."[10] In the second chapter of the *Technique of My Musical Language*, Messiaen stated that Stravinsky, consciously or unconsciously, made use of the Hindu rhythm *Simhavikrîdita* in his music (see Example 3).[11] According to Messiaen, Stravinsky transformed the first cell into separate variable cells in the "Sacrificial Dance," while the other cell remained fixed. Furthermore, he considered Stravinsky's manipulation of both the variable and stationary cells in the dance as comparable to that of living entities and hence referred to them as *rhythmic characters*.

From the "Sacrificial Dance," Messiaen developed his own compositional device of rhythmic characters that he used in his music. In its pristine form, three different rhythmic types create motion through repetition and juxtaposition: one rhythm expands by a fixed note value with each repetition, another contracts with each repetition, and the third remains constant.

Let us look now at Example 5. Three characters are used in the opening refrain of the "Sacrificial Dance." Character A is associated with the polytonal Golaud chord. Both it and Character C are mobile and varied irregularly, while Character B is stationary. Messiaen associated Characters A and C with the Chosen One, and Character B with the Old Men. In his view, the characters are locked in a perpetual struggle with one another by means of their changing durations.



Example 5: Sacrificial Dance, R142:1, 4–5; R144:1–2

As illustrated in Figure 3, Messiaen came up with a rhythmic scheme for the entire refrain (R142:1-R148:3). Each letter indicates a different character while each number their total duration based on a sixteenth note. The barlines have nothing to do with Stravinsky's barlines; their function is simply to enclose each rhythmic character.

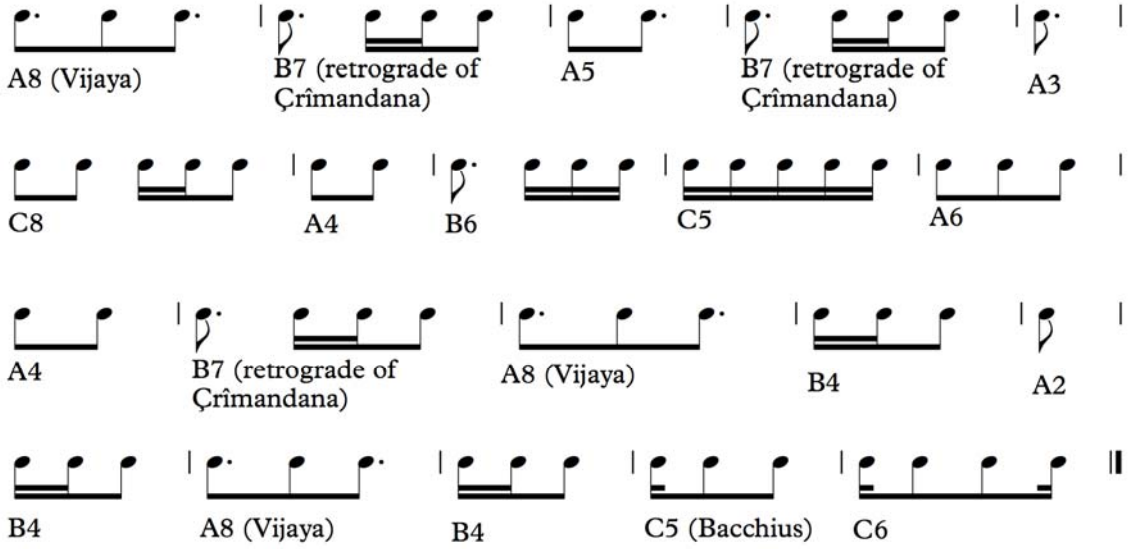


Figure 3: Rhythmic Scheme of the Refrain from the Sacrificial Dance (R142:1–R148:3), taken from the *Treatise on Rhythm*, 2:130

In his analysis of the entire "Sacrificial Dance," Messiaen provided page-after-page of rhythmic schemes. He went to great lengths to convey the dynamic and static principles at work in this music via his ideas about rhythmic characters. Indeed, even for those students who questioned his interpretative choices, he provided alternative readings, although in a disparaging manner.

By drawing attention to Stravinsky's rhythmic practices through his teaching, Messiaen contributed to the dissemination of a rhythmic approach that departed radically from traditional Western practices. Stravinsky used rhythmic cells in an additive manner, combining them in various ways to produce larger, irregular rhythmic periods. As Stravinsky's work became better known, post-War composers increasingly employed rhythmic cellular organization in their works. Thus, through his analysis of *The Rite of Spring*, let alone his work as a composer, Messiaen was at the forefront of contemporary rhythmic thought.

Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen

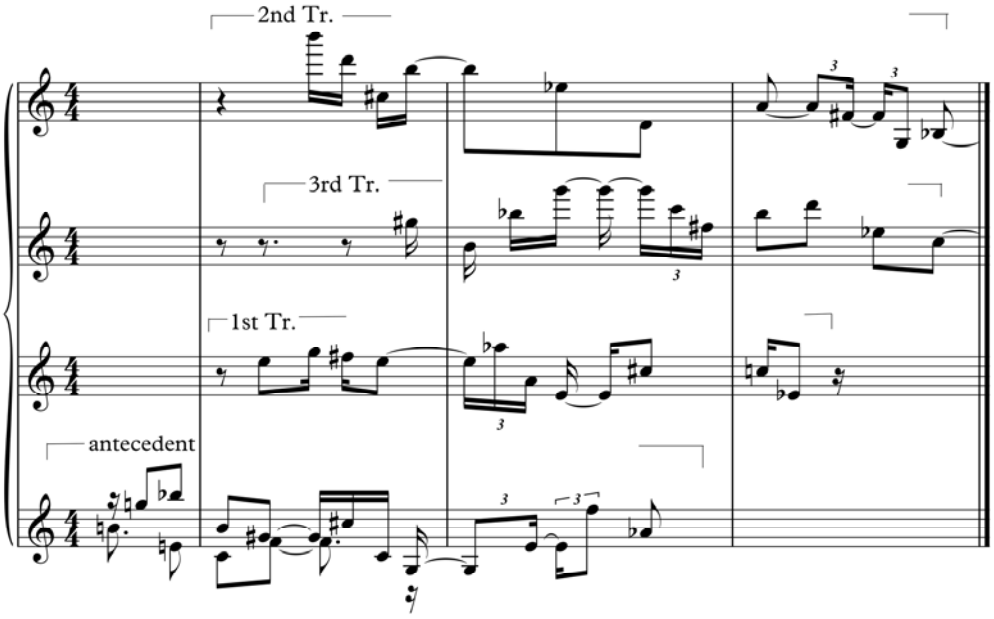
I shall now briefly consider Messiaen's influence on two composers who reached maturity after World War II—Boulez and Stockhausen, who were two of his most illustrious pupils. First, Boulez.

Pierre Boulez

In his conversations with Claude Samuel, Messiaen claimed that in relation to the younger generation of composers, he influenced Boulez the most with respect to rhythm, claiming that his former student was his musical heir.[12] In various published sources, Boulez has acknowledged the importance of Messiaen's innovations in the field of rhythm, especially respecting the separation of rhythm from pitch. Although not interested in rhythmic characters, Boulez focused on cellular manipulation in more detail than Messiaen in his later analysis of the rhythmic organization of *The Rite of Spring* in "Stravinsky Remains."[13] Unfortunately, Boulez did not acknowledge the significant debt he owed to his teacher in that analysis.

Let us now consider a youthful example of Boulez's use of rhythm in his own music. In a 1948 essay entitled "Proposals" published in *Polyphonie*, Boulez took issue with René Leibowitz's criticism of Messiaen that one could not separate rhythm from polyphony.[14] To refute Leibowitz's assertion, he took Messiaen's teachings on rhythm as the starting point for this article. Boulez concluded that rhythm must be integrated with polyphony in either a dependent or independent way. One could do that by using rhythmic canons, which could be either dependent or independent of contrapuntal ones. Here Boulez shows his debt to Messiaen, who introduced him to rhythmic canonic technique at the Paris Conservatory.

A fascinating illustration of Boulez's ideas comes from a lost *Symphony* cited in the article (see Example 6). As Boulez states, "the canon turns rational values into irrational [ones], . . . and even values into odd . . . ." [And odd values into even, I might add.] Boulez continues, "The imitations are based on the following melodic sequence: two minor thirds a semitone apart, then two fifths a semitone apart, and then again two minor



Example 6: Rhythmic Canon in Boulez's Symphony (lost on a journey in 1954)

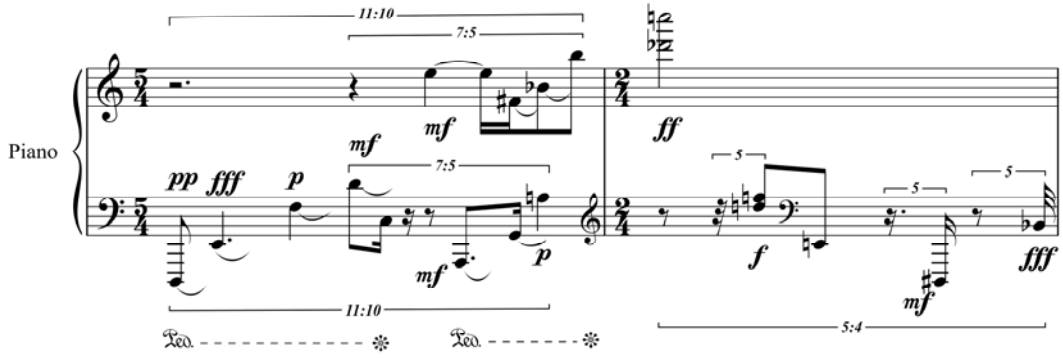
thirds a semitone apart . . . .” Temporal entrances are asymmetrical, with the first transformation entering six sixteenth notes after the antecedent, the second, two sixteenth notes later, and the third, three sixteenth notes later.

According to Messiaen, Boulez surpassed everyone in the field of rhythm. Indeed, rhythm is a consequential element of Boulez’s later compositions from the 1980s and 1990s, as witnessed by, yet again, rhythmic canons in *Mémoriale (… explosante-fixe … Originel* [1985]*)* and *Anthèmes* (1991–92).

Karlheinz Stockhausen

If there ever was a musical heir to Messiaen in the field of rhythm, surely it was Stockhausen. A pivotal turning point in Stockhausen’s musical career occurred when he heard a recording of Messiaen’s *Mode de valeurs et d’intensités* (1949–50) at Darmstadt in the summer of 1951. That encounter, along with a familiarity with Messiaen’s “Les Yeux dans les Roues” from the *Livre d’orgue* (1951–52), produced his *Kreuzspiel* of 1951, a tour de force of permutational serialism couched in a sound world less acerbic than Boulez’s *Structures 1a* (1952). In 1952, Stockhausen was a member of Messiaen’s class at the Paris Conservatory, at which time he studied various topics, including rhythmic aspects of Gregorian chant and classical Indian music, as well as the music of Debussy, Stravinsky, Webern, and Messiaen.

Although the scope of this essay does not permit me to discuss all of the musical innovations related to rhythm that Stockhausen devised, let us consider two brief examples. As shown in Example 7, in his *Klavierstücke* I (1952–53)—and in pieces II–IV, Stockhausen pushed irrational rhythms to extreme limits, further than anything encountered in Stravinsky or Messiaen. In an interview with organist Clyde Holloway, Boulez even criticized him for this due to the lack of sufficient reference points for performance.[15]



Example 8: Irrational Rhythms, Stockhausen, *Klavierstücke* I, p. 1, mm. 1–2

In *Zeitmasse* (1956), Stockhausen incorporated a technique that resembles rhythmic characters. Five performers create polytemporality by one playing as fast as possible, one playing as slow as possible, one beginning fast but gradually ritarding, one beginning

slowly but gradually quickening, and one remaining constant in a rationally controlled length of time.[16]

Conclusion

Despite its more positive aspects, we may still be disappointed with Messiaen's interpretation of *The Rite of Spring*. We can criticize him for a lack of a systematic methodology, along with a seeming indifference to Stravinsky's artistic intentions. In fact, Stravinsky admitted that he did not recognize himself in Messiaen's analysis of *The Rite*. But in this piece, Messiaen, and the countless musician inspired by his teaching and compositional practice, found sustenance in it. *The Rite* was a springboard for a new conception of rhythm in the twentieth century, in step with post-War music and the end of musical time, as we know it.

Notes

1. Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (NewYork: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 97.
2. Olivier Messiaen, ["Hommage à Roger Désormière."] *Les Lettres françaises* 1001 (8 October – 6 November 1963): 11.
3. Olivier Messiaen, "Le rythme chez Igor Strawinsky," *La Revue musicale* 191 (May 1939): 91–92.
4. Olivier Messiaen, *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie (1949–1992)*, 7 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1994–2002), 2: 91–147.
5. Peter Hill, "Interview with Yvonne Loriod-Messiaen," in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. Peter Hill (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1995), 284.
6. E-mail communication (11 July 2013) from Brian Schober.
7. Pieter C. van den Toorn, *Stravinsky and* The Rite of Spring: *The Beginnings of a Musical Language* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 17.
8. Raymond Cogniat, *Danses d'Indochine* (Paris: Éditions des Chroniques du jour, 1932).
9. The "Golaud" chord can be found on the second beat of measure 12 in the Prelude, and consists of two SLIDE-related triads, (Bb, –) and (A, +).
10. The following discussion is derived from Vincent Benitez, "A Creative Legacy: Messiaen as Teacher of Analysis," *College Music Symposium* 40 (2000): 129–33.
11. Olivier Messiaen, *Technique de mon langage musical*: *Texte avec exemples musicaux* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 2000), 7.
12. Claude Samuel, *Musique et couleur: Nouveaux entretiens avec Claude Samuel* (Paris: Belfond, 1986); trans. as *Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel* by E. Thomas Glasow (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 182.
13. Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, collected and presented by Paule Thévenin, translated from the French by Stephen Walsh, with an introduction by Robert Piencikowski (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 55–110.
14. Ibid., 47–54.

15. Clyde Holloway, "The Organ Works of Olivier Messiaen and Their Importance in His Total *Oeuvre*," DSM document, Union Theological Seminary, 1974, 220.
16. See Larry Wayne Peterson, "Messiaen and Rhythm: Theory and Practice," PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973, 199.

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Interdisciplinarity in the Liberal Arts: A model for creative collaborative teaching

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Abstract

My presentation provides practical ideas on teaching collaboratively across disciplines. Collaborative teaching can take many forms. A guest lecturer might visit a colleague's classroom to cover a single specialized topic, or a semester-long course might be co-taught by two or more faculty from different disciplines, etc. I will discuss my experience in creating such a class as a jumping-off point for discussion.

The course I co-taught with a member of the music faculty, The Union of Music and Dance, illustrates one model of interdisciplinary teaching. This class sought to integrate the study of music and dance by focusing on work that included historic collaborations between composers and choreographers, such as Igor Stravinsky & Vaslav Nijinsky in Sacre du Printemps, among others. Many choreographers have challenged themselves to confront this seminal score, so we included other versions of Sacre, including those by Pina Bausch, Maurice Béjart and Angelin Preljocaj.

My colleague and I found that interdisciplinary teaching brings to light deeper, broader, and more thoughtful connections. Allowing our students to see professors in dialogue—teaching each other something about their respective fields—successfully modeled the creative collaborations we sought to bring to life. I hope to share what I learned with conference participants and to learn from them as well. I am convinced that co-teaching across department lines can broaden a student's sense of the world, revealing how deeply inter-related most fields of study really are and thus contextualizing their learning in a more holistic and comprehensive way.

Why Teach Collaboratively?

Interdisciplinary teaching can bring to light both deep and broad connections between fields of study. Students are allowed to see their professors in dialogue as each scholar/artist teaches the other something about his or her field. This broadens a student's sense of the world, revealing how deeply inter-related most fields of study really are and some of the ways in which professional scholars and/or artists think and make connections. Such dialogue can also serve to contextualize a given subject allowing students to see it in a more holistic and comprehensive way. Faculty working together model creative learning & teaching simultaneously

A Prototype

What follows is the text my colleague and I submitted for creation of a new course titled *The Union of Music and Dance*. We applied for and received funds to develop this collaboratively taught "Special Topics" course:

Music and dance are inexorably linked. At times music composition and choreography happened ***simultaneously***, as was the case with Aaron Copland and Martha Graham's *Appalachian Spring*. An exploration of Copland's piece would not be complete without also understanding Graham's choreography, and vice versa. At other times the dance came ***after*** the music had been composed,

as when Nijinsky choreographed a ballet to Debussy's *Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*, which had originally been written to precede a reading of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "The Afternoon of a Faun." The identity of Debussy's work has become so bound up with the ballet that to study the music without the dance is meaningful but not artistically satisfying. Similarly, although there are many aspects of Nijinsky's choreography to consider, an understanding of this ballet is not complete without an understanding of Debussy's music.

Our Research

Our background work included attending live performances of the works to be taught in our course. These performances served as the basis for how I, a professor of dance, taught a musician about dance history and choreographic devices. My colleague, a professor of music, taught me about music history and compositional approaches. We went on to create a "Music/Dance Rubric" for each work to systematize our approach to teaching and discussing the work. Our "Music/Dance Rubric" provided a framework of questions to guide us. Various questions included, such as: was the music composed for this dance? Does the music exist outside of the context of this dance? How does this choreographer fit into the trajectory of dance history? The rubric helped focus our discussions.

We learned much about designing and teaching such a class-- finding ways to best leverage our expertise and interests to provide an educational experience that was more than simply two views of the same work.

Sample Topics

What follows are two examples of subject matter that, when taught from an interdisciplinary point of view, provides an especially rich and full learning opportunity:

My colleague and I developed a section based on Mark Morris's 1988 dance *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato.* Morris' choreographic inspirations in creating *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* were three-fold: The poems written by John Milton in 1631, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"; the 1740 score by George Frideric Handel, in which Handel added the third section "Il Moderato"; and the 1816 watercolors poet William Blake painted to serve as illustrations for an edition of the Milton poems. This topic provided a rich reservoir for interdisciplinary teaching. We were able to lecture on the music, the dance, the paintings, and include guest lectures from an English department faculty member whose specialty is John Milton, as well as discussing ideas of Postmodernism.

Another sample topic, one that mirrors the interdisciplinary nature of the Ballets Russes itself, is discussion of the 1913 Ballet Russes production of *Sacre du Printemps*/*Rite of Spring.* The teaching of *Sacre du Printemps* could easily constitute a single-topic semester long course. When teaching about the original

1913 production, the only way to truly do it justice is to devote equal parts to the choreography and background of Vaslav Nijinsky, the impact made by Igor Stravinsky's ground-breaking music score, the libretto and designs by Nikolais Roerich and the system of Eurhythmics and contributions by Marie Rambert in deciphering Stravinsky's challenging musical score. Guest lectures by colleagues in music history, Russian art, Eurhythmics made this a very rich learning and teaching experience.

Since there are countless choreographies to *Sacre du Printemps*, one can also choose to teach other versions of *Sacre du Printemps* from a similar interdisciplinary lens in order to more fully contextualize the factors that helped create each version. For example, when teaching Pina Bausch's 1975 *Rite of Spring*, lectures on the history of Tanztheater, German expressionism, Weimar Germany, and guest lectures from specialists in gender studies can all paint a fuller picture of the context in which Pina Baush created her seminal work.

Final section: Discussion and conclusions

The power of a college or university is that it brings together scholars in various disciplines, people with widely divergent viewpoints to create a collective "mind" that is more than the sum of its parts. Interdisciplinary teaching leverages this strength more effectively than keeping each department discreet from every other.

Interdisciplinary teaching can bring together various groups of students who might otherwise spend little time together and might never consider taking a course outside their own majors even though they share common interests and passions.

The research and teaching of this class enabled my colleague and me to acquire extensive knowledge of the other's field—gaining a deeper understanding of the works to be studied in the course. We created a truly memorable experience for our students and achieved or exceeded our goals for the course.

We discovered the seemingly limitless possibilities of artistic and interdisciplinary collaboration. Students learned to think critically about a collaborative/interdisciplinary work.

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Re-Visioning the Rite: An Exploration of the Expressive Possibilities of Irish Dance

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Abstract

This paper addresses the creation of an Irish dance interpretation of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring". The work represents a major requirement of an Arts Practice PhD that the practitioner/researcher is undertaking. His company's work (Ériu Dance Company) is a reaction to the commercial show and competition culture genres and draws on the more exploratory model of contemporary dance and physical theatre.

The choreographic process is multi-layered and includes but is not limited to the following tiers: the generation of novel movement approaches and vocabulary through a personal improvisational method which draws from the choreographer's habitus; developing a company signature; authoring motifs as well as move exhaustive sequences; and transmission.

The transmission, workshop and performance stages provide rich insights, and it is in this area that the research flourishes. Nurturing a positive, collective engagement with the ensemble is key. Company work begins as the interior depths of the Irish dance performer are probed, questioning where the impulse of the movement is located and allowing for alternative channels to open, seeing how the expression breathes in other areas and in other ways. Deep emotional structures are encouraged to surface in evocative movement patterns. There is an emphasis on a more visceral, brutish aesthetic, harnessing the individual gestural signatures of the dancers and encouraging higher level emotions to surface. Themes which appear in the work include: mob mentality; alpha-; beta-; vulnerability; victimism; homoeroticism; and persecution.

The opportunities and challenges presented by the making of Irish dance work that challenges the boundaries of the traditional aesthetic are discussed with reference to how the physicality of the dance manifests itself, the reaction of the dancers and its acceptance in the wider Irish/General dance community.

Introduction

This paper addresses the creation and performance of an Irish step dance interpretation of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The work represents a major requirement of a structured Arts Practice PhD that the practitioner/researcher completed in September 2013, the first of its kind in the Republic of Ireland.

The thesis (de Gallaí 2013) explores potential expressive possibilities in dance choreography and performance with Irish step dance as its point of departure. The core data for this exploration derives from two newly choreographed ensemble works, *Noċtú* and *Rite of Spring*.

This paper begins by introducing Irish step dance and the typical performance opportunities the dancers tend to engage in, namely competition culture and commercial spectacle shows. Arts Practice PhD research is then introduced presenting the debate around this approach to scholarship, and making a case for its suitability for this particular investigation.

The company (*Ériu Dance Company*) is subsequently introduced, the factors that influenced the casting of *Rite of Spring* discussed, and a short paragraph provided to describe the performance event.

This is followed by a discussion about the choreographic process, the significance and importance of the music, and finally the challenges associated with setting this boundary-pushing work on the company of dancers.

The choreographic work is then unpacked highlighting how the physicality of the dance idiom altered with its new emphasis on new emotions layers, the essence of this new work, which tend not to be central to Irish step dance presentations. Creative choices in terms of central themes and design are also presented.

The opportunities and challenges associated with navigating a new performance context for this traditional art form are then discussed, as the work confronts this new performance platform it now inhabits.

The paper concludes with the voices of some of the dancers. The process and performance of this work had a transformative effect on many involved and there thoughts on this resound in this section.

Irish Dance Performance Contexts

Although many Irish step dancers may dance for their own enjoyment, and there exists many social, cultural and political opportunities where Irish step dance can and will be performed, my own focus is on those contexts I mostly experienced myself. These contexts are consistent with the experience of many of my dancing friends and colleagues who spent some time as professional Irish step dancers.

Most dancers are introduced to Irish dance through extra-curricular classes. In my own case *An Coimisiún* is the umbrella organization, whose objectives are to preserve and promote Irish dancing with a secondary aim to promote the Irish language. One of their main activities is to run *feiseanna* (singular *feis*), or competitions. These days, many of the more accomplished dancers aspire to joining the professional touring companies, but returning to a vocational engagement with the dance form through teaching, adjudicating and examining is often a common goal (see de Gallaí 2013 for more detail on this).

Arts Practice PhDs

There has been a healthy and spirited debate around the area of practice-based research (practice as research/arts-practice research/practice-led research) since the early 1990s, driven initially by the discipline of Art and Design and subsequently in Performance scholarship. Some academies are reluctant to recognise the "doctorateness" (Ó Conchubhair 2005) of this relatively recent form of research, but reluctance on the part of universities to engage with change has always been common and has occurred regularly

over the last few centuries. Many "knowledges" once at the margins of academic legitimacy are now well established within the institution and the struggles for acceptance long forgotten (Wilson 2005). Even the notion of many PhD programmes in Irish Universities being "structured" and "taught" is oxymoronic if considered in PhD terms.

According to many of the handbooks and manuals issued by various colleges and institutions, governments and publishing houses (Delamont, Atkinson and Parry 1997; Dinham and Scott 2001; Phillips and Pugh 1987), criterion in relation to the "doctorateness" (*philosophiæ doctor*, meaning "teacher of philosophy") of a research PhD include:

> Purposive – identification of issue or problem worthy and capable of investigation
> Inquisitive – seeking to acquire new knowledge
> Informed – conducted from an awareness of previous related research
> Methodical – planned and carried out in a disciplined manner
> Communicable – generating and reporting results which are testable and accessible by others. (Ó Briain 2005)

Artists often work in the cognitive idiom as much as they do in the expressive. Many research methods akin to those of the academic institution (exploring ideas, gathering preparatory information, sourcing music scores, referencing historical information) are utilized throughout the artistic process. It could be argued that the above-mentioned criterion applies equally to the arts practitioner as much as it does to the traditional PhD student, but seeking acceptance for new scholarly approaches and PhD-worthiness, as mentioned above, is not without its challenges and obstacles.

The tension begins as the artist passes through the doors of the university. The academic tradition, having become detached from the concept of bodily activity, reintroduces it with trepidation, the formal demands of the university at variance with the artist's approach to art making as research. Candlin (2000) draws attention to the anxiety which is also experienced within higher education authorities when expressions such as "the need to clarify the use of new doctoral titles and to protect the significance of the PhD/DPhil" are published. (*Survey of Awards in Eleven Universities*, HEQC, 1997, p.5). Candlin explains that statements such as these imply that validating practice-based PhD could undermine or threaten the more "obviously valid doctorates". Doubt over "the capacity of images to function as research" could be read into the report *Practice-Based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design* (UKCGE) (Candlin 2000, pp. 1-2).

My PhD Approach

According to Frayling et al.

> [T]he practice-based doctorate advances knowledge partly by means of practice. An original/creative piece of work is included in the submission for examination. It is distinct in that significant aspects of the claim for doctoral characteristics of originality, mastery and contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original creative work. (Frayling et al., 1997)

It goes on to say that a "substantial contextualization" of the creative contribution accompanies the artefact(s) which is a "critical appraisal" that clarifies the originality and location of the work in addition to furnishing grounds with which to assess the presentation.

The particular structured Arts Practice PhD programme that I have just completed has as part of its requirements, two major performance presentations as well as a 40,000-word text. My second performance presentation was a new choreographic interpretation of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*.

Ériu Dance Company

For the purposes of creating the performance requirements of the PhD Arts Practice, I created *Ériu Dance Company* in 2010, initially for the first performance presentation *Noċtú* (première 10th Sept 2010), and subsequently for *Rite of Spring* (première 10th Aug 2012). I expected that many of the dancers that I auditioned, trained and worked closely with in my capacity as Dance Director of *Riverdance*, who happened to be without work in the summer of 2010, would join the company but this was not the case. The making of the production *Noċtú* (see de Gallaí 2013a & 2013b) was to be shot for a six part series and broadcast on RTÉ[1], and due to there being a sense that it might be a reality television show format, only one full-time professional dancer, who normally worked for *Riverdance*, attended the auditions. (The television series had in fact a fly-on-the-wall format with no public intervention in terms of voting dancers off the show). Those who did attend the auditions and who I chose for the company were very young, many of them having only turned 18, and almost all had not yet finished college.

When it came to casting for *Rite of Spring*, the bulk of the company was made up of the original dancers (those who had performed in *Noċtú*) with a few new dancers who I either approached, or who approached me requesting to be included. Due to the heavy nature of the subject matter as well as my desires in terms of choreographic process, I did not include all the interested original company members as I did not feel would suit this particular production. Although *Noċtú* had been a departure from all our understandings of what an Irish dance show is 'claimed' to be, *Rite of Spring* was certainly going to push those boundaries even further in terms of dance vocabulary, process and context.

Rite of Spring Première

To date *Rite of Spring* has only had one performance, albeit one which was attended by a 14,000 strong outdoor audience. It was premièred at the opening of the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*[2] Fringe Festival on August 10th 2012, and to date has not been repeated. At the time of completion of this paper, *Rite of Spring* had been shortlisted for the coveted Allianz Business to Arts[3] award.

Apart from a mention in the Irish Times:

> … *Rite of Spring*, by *Ériu Dance Company* … staged in the grounds of Cavan Cathedral left thousands spellbound. (Irish Times, 11th August 2012)

… and a review (as well as some correspondence) by a dance critic and historian (Ballet) Anna Mackey, *Rite of Spring* was not properly evaluated by a published arts critic.

The Process

Creating the Choreography

> *When I dance in an unengaged way in the studio, I like not to scrutinize my movements. I don't want to think with my mind about what to do next or judge what I have just done. When I manage to disengage, it is as if the music wafts through the air like the wavy lines common in childish comics, visible and representing the undulations of sonic or musical motifs, with the ability to act to physically lift me to create movement, almost like a marionette, without my intentional or cognitive input. When the moment is right, the dance makes itself - I'm just the vessel. (Author's Journal, 14th December 2009)*

In the Outline of *A Theory of Practice* (1977) Bourdieu defined habitus as:

> … systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules (Bourdieu 1977, p.72)

17 years of competition culture, 9 years in the commercial *Riverdance* world and a soupçon of other dance disciplines, such as modern, classical, jazz, Latin and various folk dance styles make up the complement of dance knowledge in my habitus.

Now that I am older I am less attached to the strict canons (well placed and crossed feet; erect posture; etc.) of the Irish step dance tradition and do not wish to be impeded by them. According to the Irish step dance stylistic code, these are the canons that make a good Irish dancer (see de Gallaí 2007; Foley 1988; Hall 1996). But my own new revisions to me are satisfying aesthetically, and I include them in my work.

Cameron-Dalman states that in western culture the image of the dancer is

> ... of agelessness, of continually having a brilliant technique and youthful agility. Therefore, after about the age of thirty-five, the dancer has to confront not only the natural thresholds of age but also the social pressures of our culture, in particular the pressures within the dance culture. (Cameron-Dalman 1996, p.33)

Schwaiger's discussions with aging dancers reveals that with the reduction of physical capacity comes a new and important set of qualities which are valued more highly than technical ability and virtuosity, such as

> ... a more integrated physical-emotional-spiritual approach to dancing ... and an ability to focus on performance and audience ... (Schwaiger 2005a, p.111)

This becomes more prominent with age, resulting in emotional maturity and increased self-confidence. This consequence of aging has also influenced my choreography and I wished this to be a point of departure in the *Rite of Spring*, rather than the Irish step dance

community's emphasis on virtuosity, which tends to be where the meaning of the form is focused in younger dancers.

I have many dance genres colonizing my body, all with varying degrees of proficiency, not to mention the myriad life experiences which heavily influence how I move and how I critically engage with poetic movement.

> *If I approach my dance in a reflexive manner my point of departure must be to allow the 'truth' to surface – refusing to edit too soon – preventing the willful ego, so politically motivated, to interfere with what may emerge. At least I can argue that it is real – not cleverly thought through – monitoring the world around me to satisfy the 'O'ther, but being genuinely innovative – giving mankind a sneaky look at the world through my lens – sharpening their focus and revealing the innate art in everything around in terms of my perception.*
>
> *I want to create my dance out of the Subject – at the pre-reflective self-conscious state, reflecting and making critical aesthetic choices at a later stage.*
>
> *(Author's autoethnography 14th December 2009)*

To access the fountain of my creativity, I believe that it is important to allow the work to surface in an unaffected, unblemished fashion. Improvisation has proven to be a useful studio technique as I have found that it acts to access a portal to the honest self – so although all of what we know has been presented to us throughout our lives and experienced by us with our bodies, it is our integration of all of this, coupled with our genetics that makes us unique. Accessing this in an un-censored, un-sanitized fashion and creating a piece of work informed by those elements is therefore in my opinion distinctive and innovative (for a more detailed discussion see de Gallaí 2011).

The material that I consider to be interesting seems to emanate from my habitus – a surfacing of deep structures – habits, schema, dispositions, sensibilities – the culmination of all my physical, genetic, emotional histories, that have mingled, mixed and fused. These ideas surface in the shape of gestures, rhythms, physical interpretations of music, and blend with my aesthetic thrust to make up my final set of choreographic choices (see de Gallaí 2010 for more on this). Wulff states that

> To the many uses of the concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1977) belongs the insight that the practice of dancing reveals dispositions, i.e. perceptions and actions that are being inscribed in a dancer's body. (Wulff 2007)
>
> *As an improviser I want to unleash the unknown – allow my body/bones to let the traditional aesthetic evolve … to be "taken by surprise" (Foster 2003, p.4) … to be "A body with a mind of its own" (Zaporah 2003, p.21)*
> *Music communicates directly with the body – to stimulate the nerves and the muscles to move how they please …*
> *To leave my conscious mind outside the room*
> *With my mental attention elsewhere – my body does its own thing*

> *An exploration of real life surfaces – issues are grappled with – meaningful content created "… unearthing the subterranean geographies of the self … turning over the wet rock to reveal its mossy underside" (Gere 2003, p.xiv) 'Impulsing' the forgotten, ignored, unknown and letting float that to the surface – disengaging the mind – letting the body think for itself – allowing it to tell its story, disconnecting the inner critic determined to edit/censor and interfere with the entire self's desire to tell its own story …*
> *(Excerpts from Author's Journal, 14th December 2009)*

Although I may not be aware of the precise detail of my movements in my studio setup, I certainly have a sense of ownership, a kinaesthetic sense that I am responsible for the movements. I have an experiential sense of agency, or a pre-reflective sense that the movements are my own, or in other words, that I am the author of the movements (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008 pp. 160-161). Even though I feel as I reflect in autoethnographic journaling that I am "lost in the movements", my experience is that I am in control of my action.

My job as choreographic actor is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the performance of making work and bringing it to completion. The score can be created and recorded in many different and diverse ways – from notation to video records – but none will be as pure as the ideal of carrying the work inscribed and encoded on my body, the real task then being its communication to the performer, the deep intrinsic meaning of the gestures and moves. This choreography is a tacit activity for me – it would have been unleashed from my corporeal knowledge. Transmitting this is the challenge. In fact, it is not so much the transmission rather than the ignition of the intention of the work within the actors themselves.

Ryszard Cieslak, in his explanation of his understanding of the 'score' to Richard Schnecher in 1970, illuminated the significance of the score for me and how the actor brings it to life –

> The score is like the glass inside which a candle is burning. The glass is solid, it is there, you can depend on it. It contains and guides the flame. But it is not the flame. The flame is my inner process each night. The flame is what illuminates the score, what the spectator see through the score (Schechner 2003, p. 47).

Or as Grotowski suggests that the score is the "two banks of a river" and the "water flowing between those banks" being the performer's process (Schechner 2003, p. 47). In many practices "… skills are shared, that is, they are the same in different individuals, nexuses of activity are rooted in, though not for most theorists exclusively in, shared understandings" (Schatzki 2001, p.9). It is in the reaching of this apex that I as author see as the ultimate challenge.

The Music

My point of departure in the studio is music and is central to my process. I feel that the work flourishes when I am in a position to work with scores that appeal to me, which is certainly the case with *Rite of Spring*.

A phenomenological and psychological initiation to the work of Stravinsky, in the best of circumstances, was the catalyst that provided me with a love of this music. My first dalliance with Stravinsky was studying *The Firebird Suite* in secondary school. I did not like the piece at all to begin with, but as our music teacher brought us on a journey of discovery, her passion being infectious coupled with my teenage urge to please her, my engagement with this more raw, atonal, and challenging work altered significantly in a short amount of time. This visceral connection with Stravinsky's *Firebird* led me to *Rite of Spring* and a compulsion to create one – my own – whatever that would be (this is discussed in more detail with references to Lacanian psychoanalysis and phenomenology in de Gallaí 2013).

The Transmission Process

> *If the dance we engage in is a tradition which may have been invented and capable of being reinvented (Hobsbawm 1983), success in terms of the tradition holders' engagement with this reinvention of the tradition is a function of their positive phenomenological engagement of said reinvention (excerpt de Gallaí 2013)*

Finding dancers who believe in the work and who trust the creator is the major hurdle when it comes to new work. Traditions can be steeped in history, and rules difficult to negotiate. This is not just the case for the choreographer. Often the Irish step dancers cannot be seen to turn their backs on the organisation that 'created' them. So although there is a tradition of innovation in Irish step dance, not everyone is permitted to innovate and not all innovation is accepted.

Understanding the challenges associated with interfering with the Irish dance aesthetic, but needing to create a landscape where an Irish step dance *Rite of Spring* could be produced and performed, I felt that a strategic project was required so that the Irish dance community, dancers and audience, could tolerate a bolder work – an initial new work that would pave the way was required. I felt that the project *Noċtú* was the right approach to start the questioning of what it was people thought of as suitable Irish dance work. *Noċtú* as a project was not be too avant garde whilst still challenging the perception of what Irish step dance could achieve.

During the making of *Noċtú*, I was eager to have a company of individuals who were wholeheartedly on the choreographic journey with me, rather than a group of 'gigging' dancers[4], just learning material to perform as part of a paying job. To that end, I actively involved them in scripting aspects of the show. This was to, in some way, display a nurturing, positive, collective engagement with the ensemble. I began by looking at each of them personally, asking them to talk openly about their emotional engagement with the practice of Irish step dancing, and the challenges they had

experienced. The research and rehearsal period was intimate and we became close very quickly. As a consequence getting the dancers to open up was not difficult.

Subsequently I put the dancers in groups and got them to script and act out 'situations' that seemed to matter to them. The outcomes tended to be experiences that were consistent with all our lives. I gathered that the significance of these scripted events was such that these experiences had remained with them and were in some small way responsible for who they had become. This I observed was cathartic for the company to reveal.

The consequence of this is that I created a company of dancers whose notion of professional Irish dance was suddenly different from many other peers in the business. Process and injecting one's own identity and individuality was now more a part of who they were as dancers, but it also created a level of trust in the creator/choreographer – believing that, although the work was at odds to their understanding of the aesthetic, they believed in me, and in it, and 'lived' it on stage. The fact that the choreographic project *Noċtú* secured a television series also had much to do with creating an environment where I could be experimental. It seems to me that the national broadcaster's endorsement situated the project, in no insignificant way, as worthy of interest. It not only covered its costs, ensuring that the production values were more professional, but it added caché to the project. Happenings such as these, which the actual aspiration of the work may have had little to do with securing the deal, position that work so that it is perceived and something valuable and worthy of engagement. This stroke of luck highlights how random factors have as much to do with artistic work persisting as does

'the work' itself (see a discussion on chance as a dimension of work-making in de Gallaí 2013a)

The Work / Company Signature

When it came to producing *Rite of Spring*, many of the difficulties associated with creating Irish step dance work that did not reflect the accepted norm, had been engaged with by the company, and both me as director and choreographer, and the dancers went about its creation and presentation with a confidence which did not exist to the same degree for *Noċtú*.

With this newfound signature of using Irish step dance as a vehicle to express emotion, *Rite of Spring* was a project which allowed for this like no other work to my mind. I had longed to choreographically negotiate Stravinsky's epic composition and imagined it as my opus magnum.

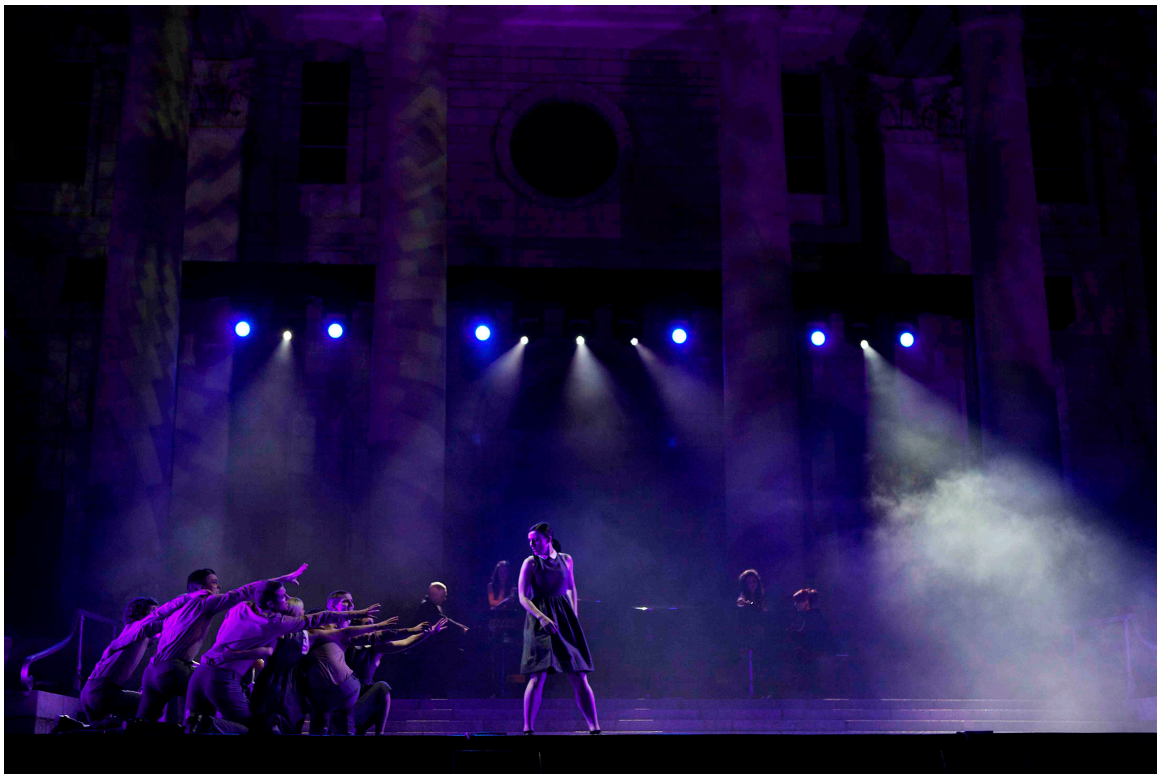
In terms of *Rite of Spring* I challenge the notion of posture and verticality in Irish dance – the most visual and globally recognized trademarks of the genre. My own dancing style altered by virtue of its corporeal history, life-experiences and age and I wished to generate a movement system that reflected this. As a result new gestures were added to a dance form, which traditionally almost exclusively utilizes the lower half of the body only. But it is the expressiveness in the movement that is the piece's primary corporeal focus. The dance remained very much in keeping with the evolving company style, and it was emotion, often concealed, strongly experienced and rarely overtly expressed, that was the source of the choreographic signature. Using various techniques from the modern, post-modern and contemporary dance world, the Irish dancer was reconstructed allowing them in some way to understand and embody my work.

I also saw Stravinsky's seminal work as a vehicle to explore the practice of coercion and domination, and how we all can be victims and perpetrators of this. The tone of *Rite of Spring* is dark, sinister and foreboding. This I achieved not only by the music, but various creative approaches such as lighting, costuming, and theatrical devices such as having the dancers engage with activities they are unaccustomed to practicing. The choices in terms of costume design were to be read as homogenous – a uniform with a sense of being foist upon the community. There were deliberate overtones of the 'Children of the Corn'[5].

The piece's ultimate objective was to explore ritualistic behaviour within contemporary group dynamics. Those themes appearing in the work included: mob mentality; alpha-; beta-; vulnerability; victimism; homoeroticism; and persecution. Thematically, this area resonated with me and I would later, through the PhD research, realise its autobiographical significance.

I deliberately did not approach the choreography faithfully following the musical titles or ensuring that my narrative arc be in line with the established practice. The choreographic choices and structure were purely a reaction to the music without reference to the specific movements. My only concern was to ensure that Nick (company dancer and principal) be the final 'odd-man-out' ... 'The Chosen One' before the 'Sacrificial Dance' section. Throughout the piece I randomly chose dancers to take the alpha role, leaving much to chance, picking whoever was, in my opinion, well positioned at the time. That is not to say I had no strategy or plan. Each section had a clear resonance for me and I let the music tell me when a new alpha would take charge, or when an alpha lost his/her power.

> Similar to de Gallaí's ability to get inside the music with steps, he uses broader choreographic devices and patterns to show us the multiple facets of the drama unfolding. Dancers step in and out of line, changing places like children picking teams in school. This theme of chance is later developed in a ballroom dance scene: as the couples swirl around, the odd man (and woman) out is desperately trying to cut in, showing the "musical chairs" randomness and desperation felt by the virgins. (Anna Mackey 2012, Ballet Teacher and Historian, Review of *Rite of Spring*)



Rite of Spring is a non-propositional piece of contemporary Irish dance work. The dance does not necessarily represent a thing or a narrative – only arrays of activities. In the case of the 'Rite' community, activities are those things that one undertakes because all do – the central concern being to endeavour to never initiate or change an activity – *Ná bris nós, na déan nós*[6] – the very culture that this choreographer wants to reject. These nexuses of shared understanding are expected to be absolute, unvarying – a change of direction, a new way of looking at the activity is to be avoided. What the work highlights is that sometimes someone actually causes there to be a new understanding. Their alpha-ness causes a disturbance. There is dismay and confusion, but as quickly as it happens, the older established practice is forgotten. When individuals change an activity sometimes it was with a sense of defiance other times taking themselves by surprise.

In this production of the Rite we are continuously faced with some faceless and invisible authority. This represents my reading of the 'O'ther. It is as if there is something bigger and greater pressing down on the community and forcing them to fear

… to conform ... but this actually comes from within. With this perpetual rebirth of the Alpha in its many guises (it can be anyone; it might be the same person twice; for a very short moment it was two members sharing the role together), we realise that we ourselves are creating it.

The community represented in the 'Rite' work as a whole and only do what the others do, rarely questioning who causes the newer practice to initiate, forgetting immediately the old. There is often blind faith in the individual who shifts, demonstrating our lack of direction and certainty. As Barnes puts it –

> Practices are often cited in order to explain things, including notably their own enactment. It may be said, for example, that something is done because it is traditionally done, or routinely done, or done because it is part of the practice of the collective. The problem of why human beings should enact the practice is thereby completely glossed over. It is as if the cavalry has to charge, twice a week perhaps, simply because it can charge, as if there is something automatic and compelling about the enactment of practices which makes it unnecessary to consider what moves or inspires the human beings involved (Barnes 2001, p.21).

Challenges associated with Contemporary Irish Dance Choreography

The company work was widely reviewed in terms of the production *Noċtú*, predominately in New York. The company signature, I discovered, did not fit the commercial world being more suitable for the more niche contemporary dance platform. Being a traditional indigenous dance form creates challenges in this arena also in terms of understanding and acceptance. *Noċtú*, which has been performed over fifty times, was criticized greatly by a couple of New York reviewers who laid out their allegiances (or lack of them) from the opening paragraphs of their evaluation. My own perception was that they felt that step dancing had no place in the contemporary dance world. The remainder of the critics were overwhelmingly positive, most of whom review general Broadway and Off-Broadway theatrical presentations, and this community nominated *Noċtú* for two Drama Desk Awards, 'Outstanding Choreography' and 'Unique Theatrical Event'.

Rite of Spring was created with more confidence with the help of an excellent company. It was mature and bold, and as choreographer I was able to aim for more due to journey we all had been on. For the purposes of comparison it would be interesting to see how the reviews would read if *Rite of Spring* played in New York, but to date no opportunity has presented itself.

On analysis, the nature of the critiques the company received in New York highlighted for me the tacit anticipation associated with perception, and how it contrives to create perspectives with little opportunity to be challenged and therefore altered. The contemporary dance critics who viewed and wrote about the work, like all of us, cannot see this artefact in its completeness, not to the same degree as that of the Irish dancer performing the work. This insight exists on a spectrum with, in my opinion, those closest to the work – the choreographer and the performers embodying the work – having its worth and intention in sharp view. Those furthest from the work – the dance critic for example, with no significant point of departure in terms of the dance genre, where it has

come from and where it is going – having a much more blurred view. Residing in this section of the spectrum, claiming to understand this community of tradition holders is risky. Even a member of the community itself would tread carefully when suggesting what might be the expectations of, or appetite for, new work within this group. Some positive remarks, although I was delighted to read them, would have been claims an Irish dance tradition-holder would be reluctant to make. Much of the negative evaluation was not at all consistent with my choreographic or thematic intention.

All of our views are incomplete – and the fragments that reveal themselves to us we integrate to create a more exhaustive view of the object. We will have varying degrees of "perspectival incompleteness", and can only base our opinion on the amount of completeness that is presented to each of us with our individual histories.

> The phenomenologist would say that perceptual experience is embedded in contexts that are pragmatic, social and cultural and that much of the semantic work (the formation of perceptual content) is facilitated by the objects, arrangements, and events that I encounter. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008 p.7)

Those with the ear of the New York arts public, for example, might feel strongly about their ability and unique position to critique work, but their knowledge will have limitations, particularly if the work they encounter stems from a tradition they may experience infrequently.

Surely any approach to work-making is fair game in the contemporary arts world and it is how the work impacts, and perhaps persists, is what matters? How the piece lingers as various individuals with different histories intend upon it is what gives it life and vitality, or not. The view which Husserl coined "natural attitude", that objects are out there waiting to be discovered, is fundamental and deep-rooted not only in our daily pre-theoretical life, but even in those with a foot in the positive sciences, or indeed those mandated to commentate on the world, forgetting that it cannot be claimed that that world they encounter is the same for all. It is

> … a tacit belief in the existence of a mind-, experience-, and theory-independent reality. Reality is assumed to be out there, waiting to be discovered and investigated. (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008 p.22)

This understanding that it is what it is, rather than it is what we intend upon it.

Impact on the dancers

One of the most compelling aspects of the dance project was its impact on those who took part in the production. Jack's (company dancer) experience in *Rite of Spring* intrigued me as he wrote about how the lines between the work and real live began to blur for him. Again, this was satisfying for me to hear. I understood as creator that this work might be received as controversial and there was more at stake for me in comparison to the other contributors, but what I was experiencing was so monumental, I wondered if it resonated with the others.

> I also found the work to have a great effect on me mentally and emotionally. It felt necessary to really get inside the piece and feel the emotions of my 'character' – not only did I use personal experience to try and create an emotional aspect to my performance, but I found that at times the piece itself (be it the relationships between dancers on stage, or the physical intensity of the dancing) made me feel things naturally, including fear, despair, determination, desperation, camaraderie, power and relief. The most notable thing was how effectively we managed to create a sense of being 'creeped out' and how this seemed to linger outside of the piece as well.. It's hard to articulate now, but at times it felt as though the lines between the work and reality were beginning to blur. For example, I remember noticing one day that when walking to the shop during our lunch break, we had all gone in a group but left one person behind (i.e. the 'chosen one') and I wondered to what extent we were subconsciously living out the ideas of the Rite for real. This became intensified during the last week or so leading up to the performance – I remember feeling somehow on edge and I don't think I was the only one who had a sense of dread, even though I was very excited about the performance. It just all seemed very real; at the time I don't think it would have felt outside the realms of possibility that on the night Nick would have literally danced himself to death. Reading this back now it sounds improbable, but I think the fact that I had moved to Dublin specifically for the project which made it somehow removed from 'real life', and that as a group we were spending almost all of our time together and so had quite intense relationships, affected the way everything felt. (Jack Anderson, written reflection, 7th Mar 2013)

Aislinn (company dancer) drew parallels with real life too

> The Rite of Spring struck many chords with me. The sacrificial theme was particularly meaningful and one that I felt we could all relate to in some way – while we've never been required to literally dance ourselves to death (not quite anyway!), we have all made significant sacrifices in our lives in order to become professional Irish dancers. This career path has also brought a degree of vulnerability, another major theme in the Rite of Spring. The fact that I could relate to these themes in one way or other made the piece very emotional and I felt much more connected to it than I have with any other production. I think this was true for all the dancers – as the music changed pace, and the loose narrative developed, so too did the energy on stage. By the end of the piece, the emotion on stage was palpable. While the pack gave off a sense of apathy towards the Chosen One, we could all feel Nick's despair during the Sacrificial Dance. That specific moment was a very moving experience – even in rehearsals – and one that we all regularly commented on throughout the rehearsal period and after the performance. (Aislinn Ryan, written reflection)

I put these experiences down to the atmosphere set up in the production of *Noċtú* which then carried through to *Rite of Spring*. This coupled with the fact that Ériu Dance Company sought to push the boundaries of the Irish step dance form in a landscape where there could have been no appetite for experimental work. The dancers knew they were chartering new ground and subsequently research found that the work had a profound and transformative affect on them. In the words of principal dancer, 'The Chosen One', Nick O'Connell

> … it put a stamp on my soul I think, but a beautiful stamp ... I wouldn't be without the stamp (Interview Nick O'Connell, 2nd Apr 2013)

Conclusion

In an exploration of the untapped expressive potential in Irish step dance, *Rite of Spring* was created and performed. The research was a major requirement of an Arts Practice PhD programme conducted from 2009 until 2013. To create a landscape where perhaps there could be such a bold use of traditional Irish step dance, an initial production, *Noċtú* was created, and performed widely including Belfast, Dublin, various towns and cities in Ireland, and cculminating in a 5-week residency in New York. *Noċtú* was widely reviewed and this data, coupled with other research, revealed that this new exploratory Irish dance work did not fit comfortably in either the commercial performance world (where many Irish dance productions exist), or the contemporary dance platforms. That said *Noċtú* was well-received by the general theatre public and critics.

Rite of Spring was subsequently created with a greater confidence on the part of the choreographer and dancers, performing to a large audience at the opening of the largest music festival in Europe, *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann,* which is dedicated to Irish traditional music. Choreographically this *Rite of Spring* questioned the Irish dance aesthetic in terms of the physicality of the dance, process, context, and from a thematic point of view. Verticality was tampered with as well as creating new vocabulary especially for the work. There was less emphasis on virtuosity, a turning of the gaze inward instead, locating the source and impulse of the emotion, opening up channels for this to surface on the body in novel ways. The work explored group dynamics in contemporary society, presenting practices as arrays of activities which are faithfully adhered to, until a significant 'O'ther, an Alpha, alters that practice.

The choreographic work and performance had a profound affect on both dancers and choreographer, altering their perception of how they understood the future of Irish step dance performance, but also how the saw the world around them.

Rite of Spring can be accessed and viewed from website: www.eriu.co

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Declan English for the wonderful photographs. You capture the essence of my work like none other.

Notes

[1] RTÉ – Raidió Teilifís Éireann, Ireland's national radio and television broadcaster
[2] *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* is a traditional Irish music festival and attracts up to 300,000 visitors to the host town each year, making it the largest music festival in Europe
[3] The Allianz Business to Arts Awards recognise businesses, artists and arts organisations that develop creative partnerships, bringing the arts and artists into mutually beneficial relationships across society. http://www.businesstoarts.ie/awards/
[4] Dancers who go from Irish dance show to Irish dance show purely for the work with no other objective such as artistic and personal development or up-skilling.
[5] Short story by Stephen King (1977) – Movie version released in 1984
[6] Old Irish saying – "Don't break a custom, don't create a custom"

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CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring, a stereoscopic digital dance film based on MoCap and particles technologies

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Abstract

Research-creation based on MoCap brought the authors to state their innovative concepts of "dance without body" (2006), "particle dancers and "dancers' kinetic signatures". The combination of these three paradigms is the seed of their ***CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: The Rite of Spring*** *10 minutes long digital film. Based on the piano version of Igor Stravinsky's music, dance itself is the subject of this film who metaphorically evokes perilous events caused and survived by Man and Earth in our modern era. As particles are the origin of the universe and life on Earth, and so the witnesses to the original parity between Man and his environment, this film is entirely made of particles whose use transcends and sublimates its intent.*

With its non-figurative interpreters, ***CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: The Rite of Spring*** *introduces a dance that is innovative in its aesthetic signature as well as in the technologic tools it comes from, taking Stravinsky's work into the 21st century. Team Époque-Poulin explains the process they elaborate to create this unusual work and show some excerpts of it. Actually in production, extracts of this dance film have been premiered in Montreal on May the 29th, 2013, to commemorate the centennial of the creation of the Stravinsky's /Nijinsky's/Roërich's masterpiece.*

Introduction[1]

From always, portraying human movement fascinated artists. Long time ago some of them made attempts to reach a bodily-abstraction emphasizing movement perception. Among successful works which could be quoted here, two appear mostly appropriated for introducing this paper because of their focus on movement instead of physical representation of the individual.

The first one is *Nu descendant un escalier* (1911-1918), series of a five paintings by the French visual artist Marcel Duchamp[2]. The second one is *Pas de deux* (1968, National Film Board of Canada production), a dance film by famous animation filmmaker Norman McLaren. In the ending part of this short movie, movements of the dancers Margaret Mercier and Vincent Warren[3] are broken up to trace their intermediate courses, hence, not particularizing the dancers as individuals. In our part, we are in the pursuit of emphasized movements in our-screen dances since 1979[4].

Toward the "dance without body" paradigm

From immemorial time, dance has never been dissociable from the human body which gives it existence and perception: without body there is no dance.

The body as the obligatory medium for dance is so "natural" that even fictitious cartoon characters in films – which almost always have at least one danced sequence – are represented by more or less realistic humankind bipeds. Man and animal are indeed characterized by their morphology and by their way of moving. Film and video were the first technologies which made possible to extend the necessary physical presence of the body to a less realistic image. Nevertheless, the motion capture (MoCap) one allows us to register dance movements as digital data without carrying the body for the first time in the dance history. This is to this art form the equivalent of what were the first audio recordings to voice and music: audio recordings allowed to listen to someone's voice without one's body presence; similarly, thanks to MoCap recording, we can look at someone's movements freed of one's body-presence.

Nevertheless, if MoCap makes possible to release the dance from the dancer's body, it undoubtedly does not allow to releasing the dancer himself. On the contrary, while extracting his "human signature" (Vasilescu, 2002), which is quite as specific and representative as his figure, it restores his presence not by his morphology but by his particular way of moving. Moreover, MoCap perfectly capture and preserve the dancer's kinetic dynamics. All these considerations brought us to submit the paradigms of "dance without body" (2004) and "dancer's motion signature" (2006). Thanks to these characteristics, making an on-screen *dance without body* stays surely dance, mainly when movement's images evoke human being.

From "dance without body" paradigm to a NoBody dance film project

A visual exploration produced during the winter of 2003 for the creation of the digital dances of *Tabula rasa: la suite*[5] brought us on the track of using particles for the creation of the dancing images of *NoBody dance*. Seeing living particles animated by their own weight, speed, direction and dynamic parameters spread in and around a digital character itself dancing appeared to us very interesting, and new too.

Moreover, since we are acquainted with the fact of that the Universe and all living matter are made of particles, it appears to us that their use to represent dance movements would thus evoke a celebration of the World. This relationship of particles with life so seemed to be perfectly suited for the basic concept of our digital choreographic project and immediately brought to our minds the theme of *The Rite of Spring*, famous dance music by Igor Stravinsky. Everything became clear and evident for us: the conceptual and artistic basic components of our *NoBody dance* would be Époque's work on *The Rite of Spring* (staged in 1988) and 3D animation of elementary particles.

From the project to the realization of a prototype…

In June 2005, having access to the Hexagram-UQAM optical MoCap system[6] and to grants from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Hexagram and the Dance Department of UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal), creating a digital "dance without body" for screen became achievable to LARTech[7] team. Under our direction, this team is constituted by dance students at UQAM's master and PhD programs and computer specialists in programming, 3D animation and modeling.

Our first step was learning how to operate the MoCap system and its software EVaRT. At the same time, Poulin was learning fluid software's to test if representing

digital data of a dancing body with particles was feasible. As soon as he got some of these data, he made experiments[8] which were successful and so confirmed the feasibility of our project. Meanwhile, we also had to learn how to clean the data and bring them into the chosen 3D animation and particles software's (Motion Builder, Maya[9]) to create digital actors and characters. Furthermore, we had to test how to generating and working with particles and to create digital bipeds specially done to hold or throw out these particles.

To produce the dancing images of a *dance without body* film requires a long and complex pipeline going from the MoCap steps to the conversion of the digital data under the form of particles, without being able to know and see the visual result until each of the stages are fully completed. Since such a creative process requires having to wait for and deal with technical responses, everybody mainly had to learn how patient one must be in this kind of creative work which implies quite a lot of software's and several dance and computer specialists.

Another unexpected problem occurred with the MoCap suits from Motion Analysis. As quite all optical MoCap systems suits, these are made of stretched material largely covered by female Velcro. The markers have to be attached to the right parts of the body with male Velcro to create marker sets related to the kind of movements having to be captured. Unwillingly, these suits caused huge problems during the MoCap of duos in which there were physical contacts between the dancers because it happened that some markers were going from the suit of a dancer onto the suit of the other one, making the marker sets ineffective. To properly capture these types of dance sequences, we so had to conceive and create a special suit[10] on which markers were solidly fixed.

Having to be technologically focused to reach sensitive and finely tuned movement data was facilitated by our being dancers and choreographers. Nevertheless, due to the optical MoCap in which many occlusions occur when some markers are not seen by the cameras, we finally had to modify parts of the choreography because most of its floor movements were impossible to register properly.

Since dynamic characteristics are very well registered by MoCap and bring the individual kinetic signature of each of the dancers, we also judged that it was even more interesting to ask them to be the more authentic possible in their dance instead of thinking to the beauty or the perfection of their shapes (3D animation software allow to afterward bring adjustment to the appearance but not easily to alive dynamics).

We finally spent quite two years to make a lot of tests to match properly particles to movements and to retain the best combinations. We used these to build the *NoBody dance prototype*, which is an eight minute 45 seconds long HD-BluRay work which is part of the exhibition "*Beyond Images"* an interactive touring exhibition[11] produced by the Sciences and Nature Museum of Sherbrooke that demystifies digital imaging and presents some of its applications.

Figure 1: *NoBody dance: the prototype*. Image and photo: Denis Poulin. Dancer: Charles St-Onge

Figure 2: *NoBody dance: the prototype*. Image and photo: Denis Poulin. Dancer: Caroline Gravel

…to *CODA*, the finale of NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring

CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring is in production since March 2010 thanks to a grant from Quebec's *Fonds de recherche Société et Culture (2010-13)*. When finished, it will show the last nine minutes of the eponymous work of Igor Stravinsky, making a first digital and stereoscopic dance version of this mythical 20th century music.

To fulfill this work, we had to work with several experienced partners coming from the 3D computer animation world. We will indicate there two of the main difficulties we met in producing this film:

The first difficulty

The first one was to find – and keep – producers.

Without considering the financial problems they met[12], the special approach we had to manage to create the corpus of our film represented a major obstacle. Indeed, the usual production process of an animated film goes through the writing of a scenario and the drawing of a story board which clearly defines the content of the film and indicates how it will be done. In the case of CODA, it was impossible to create such a document we didn't know what kind of images we will work with since particles needed first to be produced from MoCap data to give us an idea of what they will look like. Moreover, CODA is a dance film without any dialogue. So, the main tool we gave us to go through its progress was the recording of the time code of the music and the determination of its different sections as chosen by the choreographer[13].

Le Sacre du printemps
Version piano par M. Tilsit-Thomas

Time code	Titre	Durée	NB	Chor. ME (1 à 3)	État /MoCap
	1re partie Adoration de la Terre				
0000_0314	Introduction *0301: transition vers Augures*	03:14 *(13 sec)*		0	À créer/À faire
0314_0622	Augures printaniers: Danses des adolescentes	03:08	Phrases 13 à 21 (accents) Phrases 22 à 30 Phrases 31 à 36	0 3 0	À créer/à faire /À refaire À créer/À faire
0622_0702	Jeu du rapt	00:40	Phrases 37 à 47	0	À créer/À faire
0702_1104	Rondes printanières *0702: 1re ritournelle* *1023: coupure avant retour ritournelle* *1038: retour ritournelle*	04:02	Phrase 48 (ritournelle) Phrases 49 à 52 (chutes) Phrase 53 (grande marche soleil) Phrases 54-55 Phrase 56 (retour ritournelle)	2 0 ou 2 3 3	À revoir/à refaire À revoir/à refaire? OK /À faire
1104_1346	Cités rivales / sage *1323: Le sage (transition)*	02:42 *(23 sec)*	Phrases 57 à 70 Phrase 71	3 0	Pac man /à refaire / À créer/à faire
1346_1455	Danse de la Terre	01:09	1448: silence	3	OK
	2e partie : Le sacrifice				

Figure 3: First time code of the music in regard to the choreographic matter (2011-01-11)

This chronometer canvas done, it became possible to draw a table in which positioning dance indications at the accurate moment produced a first visual guide of the action that will occurs during the sequence. This was only useful for the preparation of the MoCap sessions because this kind of document was giving no idea of the real appearance dance will take under the form of particles. So, one can say that a story board for a film like *CODA* was not feasible, a fact that bothered our producers.

Acte·1:·¶ Scène·2¤	**0000_0334·*Introduction*¤**	**TC·intermédiaires°:**·0115_0157_0228_0301_0328¤
Nbre/danseurs¤	Debout°·1,·puis·3·puis·8;·au·sol:·50¤	**Energie°**:·calme,·lointain.·Transition°:·5X4·croches·rapides·à·0328¤
Propos¤	«°Avec·les·nébuleuses·et·les·atomes,·avec·tout·ce·qui·existe,·nous·sommes·engagés·dans·cette·vaste·expérience·d'organisation·de·la·matière.·Loin·d'être·étrangers·à·l'univers,·nous·nous·insérons·dans·une·aventure·qui·se·poursuit·sur·des·distances·de·milliards·d'années-lumière.·Hubert·Reeves,·*Hubert·Reeves,·L'espace·prend·la·forme·de·mon·regard*,·Collection·«°Points·Sciences°»¤	
Visuel¤	Le·rituel·chorégraphique·commence.·Un·spot·s'allume·sur·scène,·puis·2·autres,·révélant·les·particules·de·poussière·dans·l'air·qui·se·muent·peu·à·peu·en·mouvements·révélant·la·présence·de·8·danseurs-matière·debout.¶ Les·side-light·s'allument·et·montrent·les·contours·d'une·cinquantaine·de·danseurs·épars·couchés·à·plat·ventre·sur·le·plateau.¤	
Son¤	La·musique·commence·avec·l'apparition·de·la·lumière.¤	
Camera¤	¤	
Mise·en·scène¤	¤	

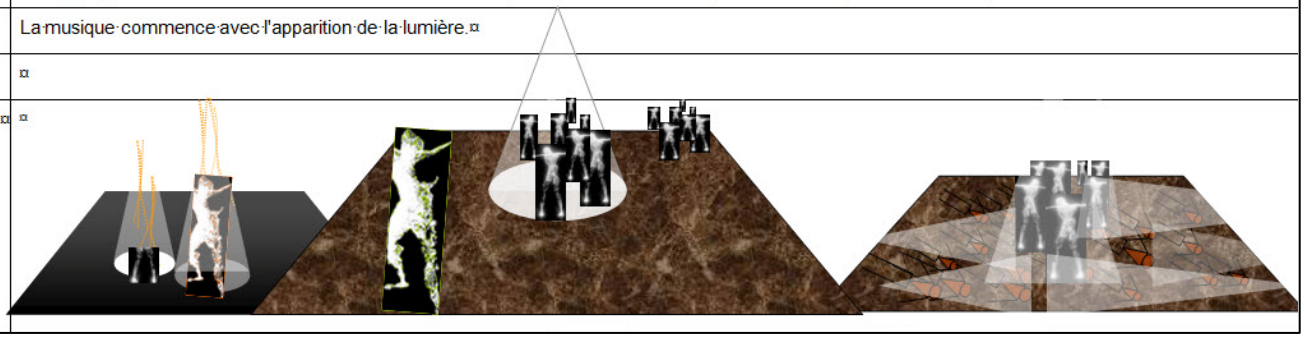

Figure 4: Half page 2 of the first table of *NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring* (2011-11-21)

As a guide for the MoCap sessions, we made then another table with more details about each component of the film: subject, choreographic cut-out, visual aspects, kind of particles to be created for dancers and for scenery, number of dancers, cameras movements...

NoBody danse/Le Sacre du printemps — **Découpage cinéchorégraphique version piano MTT**
©Denis POULIN/Martine ÉPOQUE, version 21 novembre 2012

Time code	Scène/	Durées/ Phrases	*Pulsion créatrice*/Action	Environnement/particules	Caméra/Traitement	*RéférenceLivret*/Contenu danse/N. Danseurs *Images motrices*
0000_0314	Scène 1 1.1	03:14 Phr. 1-12	*Poussières d'étoiles* Les marteaux frappent les cordes en attaquant les premières notes du *Sacre* et leur vibration donne naissance aux particules et à la scène qu'elles construisent, créant ainsi le territoire de la chorégraphie.	Scène et théâtre de particules. Naissance de la scène : particules frappent la surface d'une scène invisible et rebondissent sur les murs invisibles d'un parallélépipède rectangle	La caméra passe à travers le piano. Pianiste et doigts deviennent en particules Pan haut de la caméra autour de la scène puis plongée pour aller voir la scène de face.	*Introduction* Les particules forment comme une galaxie dans laquelle passent des danseurs flottant comme des comètes. Puis les particules retombent pour former la scène. ND : multitude. *MoCap : 3*
0215	1.2 →		Parmi les particules se dessinent des silhouettes de bipèdes.	Danseurs verts évoquent un paysage montagneux dénudé.	→	***Immobiles. Respirations profondes (souffle de la Terre.*** Corps rochers brulant sous le soleil.
0301	1.3	00 :13 →			Zoom out fait entrer un Vert (plan américain) dans l'écran en avant plan qui observe	Position 0. *MoCap : 1*
0314_0621	Scène 2	03:07	*Guerres/éruptions volcans*			*Augures printaniers*

Figure 5: Half page 1 of the table detailing descriptions of the components of the film

The second difficulty

The second difficulty was THE major one because it directly influenced the format of our film project.

The duration of the music of the *Rite of Spring* being ± 33 minutes, the film *NoBody dance*: *the Rite of Spring* would have been at least 35 to 36 minutes including title and credits. The structure we thought for this complete version was made of 10 parts, ending with a coda which will make a summary of its main events. But when we met two of the National Film Board of Canada producers, we were said that this length is not the best one for such an artistic film whose distribution will mainly be dance and film festivals. They strongly suggest us not to excess ± 10 minutes to be able to easily register it in such events.

At the same time, we knew that the musical rights for the whole Stravinsky's work would be 20,000.00 US dollars. This amount was a lot expensive for us. So, we decided create *CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring* on the nine last minutes of the music. As TwinMuse, the pianists' sisters[14] who will record the music for our film were playing them around 9 minutes and 5 seconds, we bought the rights for that duration[15].

After having adapted the time codes of the film to the tempi of the TwinMuse version of the music, we entered in the real production stage of the film. When all dance data were animated under the form of avatars, we entered into the realization of the layout of *CODA*. This operation was the *computer-choreographing* part of the production. It required the close collaboration of the choreographer, the technical director and the film director. It consisted in placing the dancers in the cybernetic space, synchronizing their venues and dance sequences one to the others and to the music.

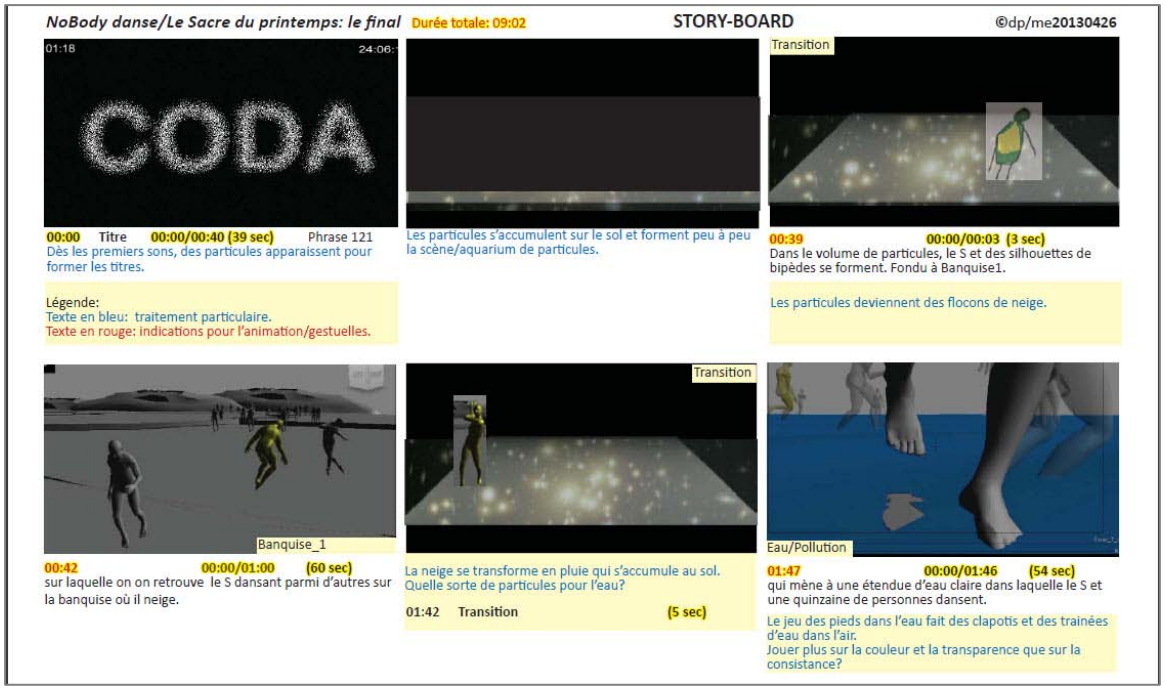

Figure 6: first page of CODA's story board.

This animated tool was (and still is) needed for the creation of the particles. It is only at that time that we were able to make a storyboard depicting the dance movements in their environment under the form of humanoid avatars and realistic surroundings and in close relationship with the time codes. From that point, all technical and artistic decisions and actions implied our whole production team: the particles maker, the animation and data cleaning responsible, the choreographer and the film director. So, to facilitate the everyday follow up between us, we opened a Google drive account through which we exchange all film material: data, ideas, information's, commentaries, notes, and others.

Even if *CODA* was unfinished, three minutes of it were presented as a work in progress by the web site *Espace Musique*[16] of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada during the week of May, 24th to 30th, 2013.to underline the centennial of the premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in Paris on the 29th of May, 1913,

In September 2013, we will finally start the postproduction stage of CODA to carry out the technical operations that will give it its highest quality and aesthetic power. Those are cameras movements, rendering, stereoscopy and sound in 7.1.

Discussion and conclusions

The process to produce an animated film like *CODA* is so not usual at all. But moreover, it questions deeply the place and responsibilities of each of the members of the creation team. Such a film does not entirely belong to its author because the way the different specialists are implied in such a creation is deeply.

In fact, such a production mixes up art and science in a so deep way that computer choreographing interrogates the relationship between the work and its creators. This hybridization of art and sciences in the digital media has favoured that creators became more and more involved in research, and that scientists became more and more involved in creation.

As technical specialists get directly involved in the realization of the images of *CODA*, the computer choreographer is not anymore the only author of the work, like it is for choreography on stage. As says Jean-Paul Fourmentraux:

> "Today, several factors contribute to the extension of the domain of the creation to other actors that those formally established as artists. [...]. Taken in an interdisciplinary movement which renews the modes of collective creation, actors whom we identified as technicians [...] can be otherwise brought to claim, at least to put on (to assume), an author's position[17]".

The making of *CODA, the finale of NoBody dance: the Rite of Spring* gave and still gives us the chance to fully live and appreciate this atypical process.

Acknoledgements

Igor Stravinsky for his marvelous music
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The Dance Department and UQAM for their administrative collaboration

Notes

1 *Warning*: as it was during our communication in Toronto, the English of our paper is very bad. Sorry...

2 "One of the most audacious paintings of the avant-gardes of the early 20th century. Duchamp's *'nus'* are half-cubist, half-futurist, even half-dada icons, in which the multiplication of points of view creates an outstanding sensation of movement. The interpretation of the human body as a moving machine is a purely futurist idea in which the development of chronophotography and the beginnings of cinematography played an important role". *Text by G. Fernández, www.theartwolf.com*

3 Dancers in the Montreal company Les Grands Ballets Canadiens

4 Our first work was *Beyond curtains,* also produced by the National Film Board of Canada, in which dancers from renowned Groupe Nouvelle Aire Michèle Febvre, Solange Paquette, Paul-André Fortier, were characterized by their way of moving instead of by their faces and bodies.

5 A multimedia choreography by Époque, digital dances by Poulin (May, 2003, Salle André-Mathieu, Laval, Québec.

6 A twenty infrared cameras system by the Motion Analysis Company.

7 Laboratoire de recherche-création en technochorégraphie, founded (1999) and directed by Martine Époque &Denis Poulin <www.lartech.uqam.ca>

8 At that time, particles animation was always made around or into an object. It is when he was looking at water made of particles poured into a glass in a fluids software tutorial that Denis got the idea of testing if this operation was possible with a moving body.

9 Since the last three years, we added Softimage and Unity.

10 Conceived and made by Denis Lavoie, director of the Carré Vert Company.

11 Host sites:

- Sherbrooke Museum of Nature and Science, QC - February 17 2008 to April 20 2008
- Cité des Télécoms, Pleumeur-Bodou, France - February 2 2009 to December 31 2010
- McAuliffe-Shepard Discovery Center, Concord, New Hampshire, USA - July 7 to September 5 2011
- THE MUSEUM, Kitchener, ON - September 15 2011 to January 22 2012

12 Canadian federal government made strong cut down on subsidies to many cultural agencies, among whom the National Film Board of Canada.
13 This indication was and still is the main tool in the production of *CODA*.
14 Hourshid and Mehrshid Afrakhteh, students in the UQAM's doctoral program in *Études et pratiques des arts*.
15 The cost was 7,145.00 USD. And finally, the recording time has been 9m 04sec!
16 http://www.espace.mu/espace-musique/animateurs/dompierrefrancois/5517
Also on LARTech's web site www.lartech.uqam.ca/gallery
17 Translation. The french original text is : "Aujourd'hui, plusieurs facteurs concourent à l'extension du domaine de la création à d'autres acteurs que ceux conventionnellement désignés comme artistes. […]. Pris dans un mouvement interdisciplinaire qui renouvelle les modes de création collective, des acteurs que l'on identifiait comme des techniciens […] peuvent être amenés sinon à revendiquer, du moins à endosser, une position d'auteur".

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Nadia Boulanger's Interpretation of *The Rite of Spring*: "A Work Apart"

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Abstract
Nadia Boulanger, one of the most authoritative advocates for Igor Stravinsky during his lifetime, was hesitant to emphasize The Rite of Spring *as significant in the greater context of his career. As with many of Stravinsky's works, Boulanger maintained a complex relationship with* The Rite of Spring*. Present for its premiere, it was she who helped Stravinsky reorchestrate the work's "Danse Sacrale" movement in 1943, and in September 1969, when Stravinsky published* The Rite's *sketchbooks, he sent Boulanger an advance, autographed copy as a birthday present. She spoke about* The Rite *during lecture tours and in her classes, but despite knowing it intimately, Boulanger felt uncertain about advocating for it as central to Stravinsky's oeuvre.*

Boulanger's earliest, unpublished analytical treatments of the work date from 1925 and 1934, and reveal her fascination with the piece's slippery relationship with tonality. Moreover, Boulanger reveled in the piece's rhythmic characteristics, not because they were novel, however, but because they expanded upon ancient Greek additive rhythmic processes. Indeed, for Boulanger The Rite *was never a strong exemplar of Stravinsky's forward trajectory, and as early as 1919 she felt it rather dated. One senses her subsequent reticence to freeze Stravinsky's modernist identity as directly connected to* The Rite *at the risk of ignoring his other compositions. Ultimately, the evidence shows Boulanger thought* The Rite *held "a place apart from the rest of his works," thus adding a new layer to the question of the controversial ballet's reception by Stravinsky's peers.*

Introduction

Famous French pedagogue, conductor, performer and composer Nadia Boulanger lived a life of unwavering devotion to the music of Igor Stravinsky, and yet her encyclopedic collection of archival materials seems strikingly anemic when it comes to *The Rite of Spring*. This is not to accuse Boulanger of ignorance. On the contrary, she numbered among the anxious Parisians present for its heated premiere on 29 May 1913, and thirty years later, in 1943, sat beside the composer in his Hollywood home as they together reorchestrated the ballet's "Danse Sacrale" movement. The autograph manuscript for this collaborative effort is one of the most valuable in Boulanger's collection and was one of the first she convinced Stravinsky to donate to the Biliothèque nationale de France in the 1950s.[1] I argue *The Rite of Spring* was a deeply personal work for Boulanger, but incongruously one that remained on the fringes of her pedagogy for the entirety of her career, primarily because Boulanger did not believe it idiosyncratic of Stravinsky's output.

Walking through the evidence of Boulanger's analytical and personal relationship to the *Rite of Spring* in reverse chronological order is perhaps the most effective way to witness Boulanger's relationship to work. Tracing the evidence in this way allows us to begin with her central thesis about the ballet, a position articulated in 1972 and which represents the sedimentation of fifty-nine years observing *The Rite's* reception. I proceed from this later material to a consideration of Boulanger's limited use of the work pedagogically, the evidence for which can only be found in archival documents from the 1930s. Finally, I turn to Boulanger's initial discussion of the *The Rite*, found in published lectures from talks she gave at the Rice Lecture Series in Houston, Texas in 1925. Tying these original reactions to her later comments reveals Boulanger's remarkably consistent and less-than-passionate desire to centralize *The Rite* as a part of Stravinsky's legacy. Indeed, while the evidence suggests the work was intensely personal for Boulanger, *The Rite of Spring* stood apart from Stravinsky's overall oeuvre, and while Boulanger remained emotionally connected to the ballet and what it represented as a historical artifact, she feared, and perhaps rightly so, that an emphasis on *The Rite of Spring* would unfairly eclipse later, more mature Stravinskian works, themselves far more worthy of study.

1972 "When the Curtain Opened, the Storm Broke": Boulanger's Personal Connection to *The Rite of Spring*

A year following the death of Igor Stravinsky, the British Broadcasting Corporation drew together a number of famous music personalities to speak about Stravinsky's legacy and work. For years, the Corporation had commissioned Boulanger to speak as the leading expert on Stravinsky's compositions, and it is unsurprising that their 1972 homage included lengthy soundbites from the 84-year-old Boulanger. By that point, few remained alive who had recourse to the anecdotal library, to say nothing of the analytical acumen, she did.[2]

It was not Boulanger who arrived at the subject of *The Rite of Spring* in that interview herself, but instead David Wilde, her interviewer, who asked Boulanger to relate her memories of the evening of the premiere. Boulanger obliged, in her by then quite broken and unpolished English, saying: "it was a scandal," [the] "reaction of the musicians, Debussy was more upset by *Le Sacre's* success a year later." She then explained "the dancers knew what they were doing, which often had nothing to do with the music...Dancers followed his counting...But when the curtain opened, the storm broke; never before had they been so angry."

This was the version of events as Boulanger had managed to retain them for fifty-nine years. In 1913 the work aroused anger in her fellow Parisian citizens such as had never been seen before. What's more, a year after the performance, the work's sustained success shocked composers as revered as Claude Debussy. It was with the benefit of hindsight that *The Rite's* inhuman content could be viewed as an eerie portent of the war France was then embroiled in and that would devastate its male population. *The Rite of Spring*, Boulanger related in 1972, was not so much scandalous for its choreography, which she insisted had little to do with the music. It was scandalous because of *when* it premiered and the hyper-charged environment in which it was first heard. But Boulanger stopped short of reinforcing *The Rite* as anything more than a moment in time, a catalyst

introduced during a volatile moment, and not so much a monumental musical work presented to the world.

The only other evidence from Boulanger's late period that speaks to her relationship with *The Rite of Spring* also reinforces her position as a witness to this historical moment, and less her fascination with the work's technical elements. In September 1969 Stravinsky published an edited version of the sketches for *The Rite of Spring*, produced by Boosey & Hawkes—in French and English—for which Robert Craft provided editorial commentary. Boulanger's copy of the publication came to her signed by the very unsteady hand of her by then old composer friend, wishing her many happy returns for her eighty-second birthday and presenting the score as a gift.[3]

Boulanger's copy of the French editorial comments is quite thoroughly annotated, at times because she was curious about the content, but more often than not because she surrendered to the compulsion to correct Craft's work. Particularly indicative of her feelings both toward Craft and toward the piece at hand is the marginalia found on page 23 of the French editorial booklet. Here, Craft discusses the rhythmic pulsation left out of revised editions published in 1921 and 1947, lamenting that the 1921 version is practically impossible to find. In the margin, Boulanger refutes this, perfunctorily scrawling in her own arthritic hand, "Mine was purchased in May 1922." It is unclear by the annotation if she is correcting Craft's dates or simply suggesting that all he need do was to ask and she had the score he so desired. In this simple phrase, Boulanger both chastises the young Craft, a person with whom by that point Boulanger had a rather complicated and somewhat fractious relationship, and also reinforces the reality that *she* had lived *The Rite's* reception, and from that she drew the authority to question later details concerning its publication history. *The Rite of Spring* had by then become a work toward which Boulanger felt personally and materially attached. If it was a part of the fabric of music history, her own experiences were woven along with it. Experiencing the work's premiere was only part of the equation for Boulanger. The act of witnessing the progression of its reception—whether that be at the hands of Debussy at the beginning of the First World War, or at the mercy of Robert Craft in the final year of the 1960s—lent her interpretation gravitas. The evidence suggests the work became a symbol for Boulanger of her indisputable authority, grounded in lived experience.

"Everlastingness of Elements of Music": Her Pedagogical Connection to the Work

Turning now to Boulanger's limited pedagogical treatment of *The Rite*, the evidence reveals her comments most often revolved around the work's final movement. It is tempting to assume this emanated from her editorial involvement with the ballet, except her pedagogy preceded her editorial work by more than a decade. Moreover, oddly enough Boulanger's efforts in reorchestrating the Danse Sacrale movement remain, to my knowledge, undocumented, with the exception of the resultant autograph score she would eventually possess. Of all the editorial projects they shared, Stravinsky and Boulanger's work on *The Rite* left behind the least evidence, not even documented in letters and never mentioned by Boulanger or Stravinsky after it took place. This reality is in and of itself odd, given the voluminous proof surrounding other editorial revisions the musicians completed together, including those for the *Symphonie de psaumes* (1931), *Perséphone*

(1933) the *Dumbarton Oaks Concerto* (1937-38), and even the *Symphony in C* (1941), pieces which also became staples of Boulanger's teaching.[4]

But as far as Boulanger's pedagogy was concerned, at first blush it would appear *The Rite* did not make the cut, and searching for pedagogical evidence on *The Rite* instead requires one dig deeply. Boulanger never treated the work during her famous Wednesday Afternoon Classes, even though she featured other pre-neoclassical compositions by Stravinsky in them, such as *Les Noces*. There is no extant preconcert talk for *The Rite*, and I have yet to find evidence Boulanger ever programmed it on a Fontainebleau concert or elsewhere, potentially excused given the breadth of performers necessary, not to mention the performance level required of them. She was involved in one concert where she conducted the first half and the second half, conducted by Roger Désormière, contained *The Rite*.[5]

Looking for pedagogical evidence in less obvious places, however, reveals when she spoke of the piece, Boulanger consistently imported *The Rite of Spring* to argue not for its iconoclastic properties, but instead because it proved the timelessness of good musical practices. Indeed, Boulanger's few mentions of *The Rite* allowed her to argue for it as a formidable example of music at its most unchanging, as opposed to at its most modern.

The richest documentation of these observations comes from the lecture notes of Louise Talma, a student of Boulanger's during the 1920s and ever-after a disciple of the French pedagogue. Talma attended Boulanger's classes at the Conservatoire Américain, a summer music program housed in the Louise XIV wing of the Fontainebleau Palace, an idyllic location found just an hour's train ride to the south east of Paris. Numerous generations of American composers—among them Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Elliott Carter, and Philip Glass—treated the Conservatoire as a one-woman graduate program, studying there with Boulanger.[6]

Beginning in the 1930s, Talma returned to the palace no longer a student but instead with the intent to continue to hone her skills and buttress her belief in Boulanger's pedagogical approach. Her notes are stunningly close to actual transcriptions, particularly as the years wore on and Talma became capable of anticipating the points of her teacher-idol. Perched at the back of the classroom, Talma documented many of Boulanger's lectures in their entirely idiosyncratic English. It is within Talma's notebooks, currently housed at the LIbrary of Congress, that one finds Boulanger's references to *The Rite of Spring*.

Typically within the first week of Music History classes, Boulanger turned her attention to the concept of natural accentuation of rhythm as opposed to metre. It was then, alongside discussions of Gregorian Chant and Greek additive rhythms that Boulanger most commonly introduced her students to the rhythmic processes of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Take for example a lecture from 25 July 1932. On this balmy Monday afternoon, Boulanger commenced her lecture by telling her students: "One could write a book on why audiences are so unable to appreciate music they hear." She then proceeded to explain how to best improve this situation: "Rhythm must be a running wheel—must feel as though pushed...Rhythm based on multiplication of small values [can be found in] the Delphic Hymn and in the *Sacre du Printemps*."[7]

Two years later one finds the same idea in a different lecture, one presented at the École Normale de Musique where Boulanger taught during the fall and winter terms. The École normale was the brainchild of Alfred Cortot, beloved French pianist and head of

French propaganda during the First World War. Boulanger was hired to teach at the École normale as of its opening in 1919, and her classes were soon so popular they overflowed. In an effort to propagate her electric teaching practices beyond the confines of the classroom, Cortot brought in a stenographer in 1934 to document her lectures, texts which he intended to publish later in the periodical closely associated with the school: *Le Monde musical*. Cortot's promotional ambitions are history's gain, providing us with one of the clearest transcriptions of Boulanger's teaching techniques during the 1930s. It is here, on the first day of classes, 10 November 1934, that Boulanger explained to her students:

> in modern music, if you take the final movement of *Le Sacre du printemps* for example, you are going to find different lengths of measures. We add bar lines, to tell you, the groupings are such and such a length. But you must find a way to feel that the rhythmic intention is that of classical rhythmic practices, despite the inequality of the groupings. This arises from small values multiplied at different lengths instead of a unit of measure that is divided. Instead of saying "I am in 2/4" You say "I have a half note as my unit of measure." [8]

To reinforce her point, she then had the students sing an antiphon from their texts and thereafter abandoned a discussion of *The Rite*. For Boulanger, the music of the Ancient Greeks, or Gregorian chant, was the same as that of *The Rite of Spring*. Stravinsky was simply reinterpreting the past, rather than forging a new path out of something completely new.

The same could be said of her opinion of Stravinskian harmony found within the *Rite of Spring*. As early as 24 August 1931, Talma's notes again reference *Le Sacre* where Boulanger explained to her students that: "M7ths with trill figure[s] in center change everything and [they] sound very well. [This is] one of the only time[s] you can ignore voice leading 7ths properly."[9] Three years later, on 20 August 1934, she taught her pedagogy class that one of the few instances she could think of where unresolved sevenths worked properly was in the music of *Le Sacre* where: "[one finds] one compensating voice in the middle [that is] not dissonant with [the] top or...with [the] bottom where as two outside would be...[This is] parallelism employed for resonance." [10]

So *The Rite of Spring* was a harbinger of old techniques revisited, the past brought back to life by Stravinsky's unique take on old ideas. It was not a revolutionary work of overwhelming complexity, though Boulanger did concede in a talk at Vassar College in 1937 that *The Rite* was an example of the limits of virtuosity. Instead, Stravinsky's infamous ballet was an old idea brought back to life. And its was his use of the old that Boulanger reinforced with her students during the rare moments she addressed the work at all in the classroom.

Initial (and Final) Impressions

The only time Boulanger treated *The Rite of Spring* at any length, either as performer or as pedagogue, was in 29 January 1925. At 8:15 on this day, Boulanger commenced a lecture on the "Music of Igor Stravinsky" at the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Houston,

Texas.[11] It was the final of three talks she had been commissioned to give as part of her tour of the United States that winter. The stenographer's transcript from that evening reveals Boulanger struggled with how to convey the music of Stravinsky to her audience, but the revised text she later sent along for publication gives solid form to what she had likely hoped to emphasize about her favourite composer to the audience that evening. And it would seem, at the very start of her efforts to establish herself as a voice of authority, Stravinsky and *The Rite of Spring* suited her as excellent starting points.

In the published article, we see Boulanger commence her lecture with a dramatic description of the night *The Rite* premiered and a statement of how polarizing Stravinsky's music was in general:

> Seldom have the compositions of any composer provoked such hot debate, such violent hatreds and intense enthusiasms as has the work of Igor Stravinsky. The excitement and tumult which reigned at the first performance, in 1913, of the "Sacred Rites of Spring," an event which is usually referred to as "the battle of the *Sacre,*" were such as to make one think one was attending some crucial session of the Chamber of Deputies, some sort of political manifestation rather than a performance of Diaghilev's Russian Ballet. People shouted, whistled, screamed, stamped and even came to blows over their no uncertain opinions, for it was impossible, in the presence of such music, to remain neutral. The suspended or the lukewarm judgment would have been ridiculous in such an atmosphere. One either loved or hated the music and that was the end of the matter. Now, of course, the work is universally recognized as a masterpiece and its composer is everywhere acknowledged to be the foremost figure in contemporary music and—what is more amusing, in the light of his supposed anarchistic tendencies—*the chief representative of a return to classic traditions*.[12]

Boulanger cannot resist reminding those present that she had been there and witnessed the passions of those who rioted over the ballet's premiere. There is something to Boulanger's constant recourse to being a witness, never participating herself, or at least never stating where it was she fell along the spectrum of Stravinsky reception that evening.

The remaining published article contains a remarkably technical treatment of Stravinsky's use of tonality, rhythmic procedures, language, and negotiation of his Russian heritage. Boulanger quotes at length from other theorists, particularly Boris de Schloezer. As she unpacks each of her points, Boulanger draws upon musical examples from *The Rite*, especially in describing Stravinsky's contrapuntal virtuosity and his rhythmic advancements. Once again she contextualizes Stravinsky as a "classicist," qualifying her description by saying:

> For those who happen to know only the *Sacre,* it may seem strange indeed to speak of Stravinsky as a classicist, for the primitivism of *Sacre* or, if you prefer, its naturalism, is certainly not a "classical" tendency. But.... to borrow from M. de Schloezer...'It was necessary to return to nature and to forget man, or, at least, to reduce him to nothing more than an element of primitive nature, to treat him as a rock or a plant. The rudeness of *Le Sacre,* its disdain for everything which charms

> or pleases, its stinging brutalities—all that was necessary, for it was a question of killing sentiment, of destroying all subjective emotion and of making things act directly and by themselves.[13]

The necessity of *The Rite* as an historical moment is here emphasized not only by Boulanger but also by the quotes she chooses to import from other theorists. In her hands, the work again takes on specific historical meaning, wedging into a space inextricable from the context that made it possible. For Boulanger, the evolution of Stravinsky as a composer far exceeded this work, *The Rite* was a piece written for a specific point in time and could not transcend the circumstances of its premiere. Indeed, one of the most pointed comments made by Boulanger is also her final word on *The Rite* to appear in her article, and in many ways it seems to mark the moment when Boulanger began to abandon it to the annals of history. In closing her discussion, Boulanger states: "Stravinsky's Rites of Spring", is [his] only excursion into the realm of naturalistic art and occupies, for that reason, *a place apart from the rest of his works*" [emphasis mine].

In Boulanger's eyes, as early as 1925, *The Rite* was fettered by romantic notions of the natural world and depictions of the mundane. The work was an exception to Stravinsky's output, not central. This dismissal of *The Rite* predates Boulanger's status as a Master Teacher, instead suggesting that from the very earliest discussions of Stravinsky's works, Boulanger wished to separate a space for *The Rite* that did not allow it to overshadow Stravinsky's overall oeuvre, isolating it as an exceptional work, rather than the rule.

Conclusion

Of all Stravinsky's canonical works treated by Boulanger, the one given the least amount of emphasis was *The Rite of Spring*. The work casts but the faintest shadow upon her pedagogical practices, compared to the overwhelming presence of such works as the *Symphony of Psalms* or *Perséphone*. *The Rite* was not programmed on her concerts, and she never felt the compulsion to introduce audiences to it through a preconcert talk the way she did for *The Rake's Progress*, the *Septet*, or the *Symphony in C*. *The Rite of Spring* was also one of the few Stravinsky works Boulanger witnessed before she turned her focus to pedagogy. It was a work witnessed on the eve of the First World War, just prior to a period of immense change for Boulanger personally and for France as a whole. There was something about this early exposure to the work—the emotional impression it left in her mind and the context in which she familiarized herself with its details—that Boulanger seemed willing to abandon after the war and increasingly as the years wore on. It was not, in her view, a piece that lay well within the overall trajectory of Stravinsky's output. In fact, it was the blemish that disrupted the otherwise smooth progression of his compositional identity. Rather than focus on it, Boulanger easily relegated it to the margins of her own work, perhaps fearing as early as 1925 that it would take on an importance in Stravinsky reception that would otherwise eclipse more important texts, and so she labelled it as "a work apart," an uncharacteristic work, an exception. As the years wore on, Boulanger must have witnessed and remained aware of the gravity *The Rite* amassed, and must have grown increasingly suspicious of the emphasis it received.

Certainly by 1972 she appears to have jettisoned any desire to speak about the work on a theoretical basis, perhaps because she knew it had achieved the central and iconoclastic status she had for so many years avoided in her own teachings. Controlling *The Rite's* reception proved well beyond her powers, but perhaps this conference and others prove her fears were not so far off base after all.

Notes

[1] Igor Stravinsky, "Le Sacre du printemps, 'Danse Sacrale,' Autograph (Revised version), 1943, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (*F-Pn*) MS 17946. For pertinent correspondence see: Boulanger to Stravinsky, 30 November 1951, Stravinsky Sammlung, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel, Switzerland; and Stravinsky to Boulanger, 8 January 1952, *F-Pn*, N.L.a. 108 (224-226).

[2] British Library Sound Archives, "In Memoriam, Igor Stravinsky," 1972, Radio Broadcast, British Broadcasting Corporation.

[3] Robert Craft, ed. *Le Sacre du Printemps, Esquisses, 1911-1913*, Commentary. (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1969), *F-Pn*, Vma. 4011-4012, 23.

[4] For more on these previous collaborations see, Kimberly Francis, "A Dialogue Begins: Nadia Boulanger, Igor Stravinsky, and the *Symphonie de psaumes*, 1930-1932," *Women and Music* 14/1 (2010): 22-44; eadem. "Surviving Exile: Nadia Boulanger, Igor Stravinsky, and the *Symphony in C*," *The Musical Quarterly* 94 (2011): 234-270. Jeanice Brooks "New Links Between Them: Modernist Historiographies and the Concerts of Nadia Boulanger." Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900-2000. Edited by Carol Oja, Anne Schreffler, Felix Meyer, and Wolfgang Rathert. Basel: Paul Sacher Stiftung, in press; eadem, "Collecting Past and Present: Music History and Musical Performance at Dumbarton Oaks." In A Home of the Humanities: The Collecting and Patronage of Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss. Edited by James Carder and Robert Nelson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, in press.

[5] Nadia Boulanger, Programmes, 18 December 1934, *F-Pn*, Rés Vm Dos 195 (306).

[6] Kendra Preston Leonard, T*he Conservatoire Amércain: A History*. Toronto: Scarecrow Press, 2007.

[7] Talma Notebooks, 25 July 1932, Louise Talma Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LOC)

[8] "Dans la musique moderne, si vous prenez, la danse finale du *Sacre du Printemps*, par exemple, vous allez trouver différentes longueurs de mesures. On met des barres pour vous dire, le groupe est de telle longueur. Il faut que vous arriviez à sentir que, malgré l'inégalité des groupes le sentiment du rythme que le rythme de la classique. Cela part d'une petite unité qui se multiplie à des grandeurs différentes au lieu d'être une unité de mesure qui se divise. Au-lieu de dire: "je suis à 2/4" vous dites: "J'ai une blanche pour unité de temps." 'Notes pour *le Monde musical,*" 10 November 1934, *F-Pn*, Rés Vmc Ms 129 (2).

[9] Talma Notebooks, 24 August 1931, Louise Talma Papers, LOC.

[10] Talma Notebooks, 20 August 1934, Louise Talma Papers, LOC.

[11] Kimberly Francis, "'Everything Had to Change': Nadia Boulanger's Translation of Modern Music in the Rice Lecture Series, 1925." *Journal of the Society for American Music* (in print); and Robert Bailey, "Ima Hogg and an Experiement in Audience Education: The Rice Lectureship in Music (1923-33)," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 5/3 (2011): 395–42.

[12] *Lectures on Modern Music delivered under the Auspices of the Rice Institute Lectureship in Music*, January 29, 1925, The Rice Institute Pamphlet, vol. 13, no. 2, April 1926. Also available online: "Igor Stravinsky" (http://dspace.rice.edu/handle/1911/8735)

[13] Ibid.

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The Rite of Spring: Celebrating One of the Most Infamous Riots of the 20th-Century

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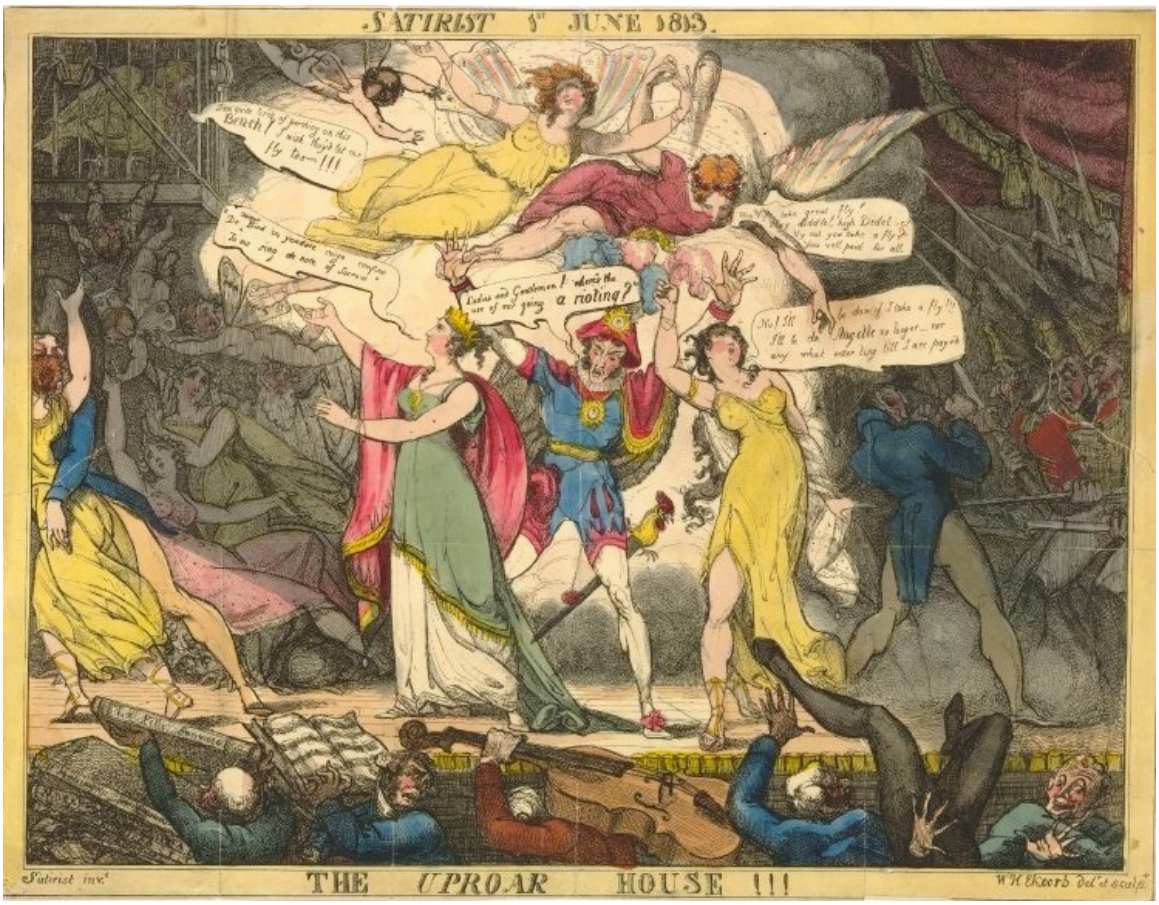
Abstract

The premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* on May 29, 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris was a momentous evening for the avant-garde art movement. The event itself — a spectacular combination of Stravinsky's irregular rhythms and unusual dissonances in the music, Nijinsky's strange choreography (i.e. toes pointed inward for the ballet dancers), as well as Roerich's loose, draping pagan costumes and colourful set designs — generated a notorious riot that reverberated through decades to come. Had the crowds prepared themselves to riot? What did public riots look like in the early twentieth century? What were some factors that may have ignited such public fury? What were some common audience expectations in the early twentieth-century when attending performances? What were prominent ways of expressing dissent and protest at such performances at the time? On the night of its premiere, the *Rite of Spring* followed a performance of *Les Sylphides,* a non-narrative *ballet blanc* (ballet in a romantic style featuring dancers in white tutus) with music by Frédéric Chopin: did the startling contrast between these two works heighten the unfulfilled expectations — and was it intentionally programmed to do so? By analyzing various newspaper articles and relevant sources, one can begin to piece together the mob mentality that fuelled the celebrated riot during one of the twentieth-century's most infamous modernist works.

Introduction

Nearly a hundred years before the *Rite*'s premiere in Paris, this picture (see next page) was printed in the *Satirist* on June 1st, 1813: it is an artist's rendering of a riot at the Opera-House in Haymarket, London, that took place one month earlier. The scandalous tale behind this event involved a bankrupted manager, William Taylor, who had neglected to pay opera singer Angelica Catalani. She refused to sing until her debt was paid. The company's attempt on May 1, 1813, to perform the opera by Vincenzo Pucitta, "La caccia di Enrico IV," without her caused a riot and repeated calls for the manager. The police were called in and unsuccessfully attempted to establish order. Choristers and musicians tried desperately to leave the pandemonium, and apparently, the orchestra narrowly escaped "carrying off large music-books, one open."[1] In the picture, Robert Coates, playing the part of Lothario in a feathered hat and jeweled star, storms into the scene exclaiming, "Ladies and Gentlemen! Where's the use of our going a rioting?"[2] Though this was not a riot where the public was displeased with the music — but rather with the lack of it or at least a performer — it's an early example of how theatrical politics served as a catalyst for protest and demonstration.



Brooke, William Henry. *The uproar house!!!* (*The Satirist*), hand-coloured and etching on paper, 1813, The British Museum, London, England.

The term 'riot' is often associated with an incident of social pandemonium due to two main scenarios: 1) a political protest against unjust acts or government policy; or 2) passionate fans at a sporting event. A riot at the theatre or classical music event is not an everyday occurrence and it is fascinating to examine the circumstances behind such scandals, especially the premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* on May 29, 1913, alongside Nijinsky's untraditional choreography.

Brief Background: Music, Dance, and the Press

With the exception of a few Russian-sounding folk tunes, Stravinsky's score was very different from the traditional classical canon. It lacked anticipated lyricism and resolved harmonies; furthermore, it was littered with unpredictable rhythms marked by irregular accents and constant meter changes. In addition to shocking music, the Parisian audience at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 29, 1913, witnessed some shocking anti-ballet choreography. Drawing on contemporary sources, historian Modris Eksteins describes the scene:

> Movement was reduced to heavy jumping, with both feet, and walking, in either a smooth or stomping fashion. As in all of Nijinsky's compositions, there was a basic position; this time it consisted of the feet turned inward with great exaggeration, knees bent, arms tucked in, head turned in profile as the body faced forward. In other words, the classical pose was contradicted entirely by what appeared to many as knock-kneed contortion. Nijinsky called his movements 'stylized gestures' to emphasize his departure from the flow and rhythm of classical dance, to stress the disconnections, the jaggedness, of existence.[3]

Interestingly enough, this description is rather similar to that of the Charleston, the dance form with African-American roots that became increasingly popular in the United States in the 1920's. The description given by critic Gilbert Seldes sounds very much like the summary given by Eksteins, with "the knock-knees, legs 'akimbo,' toes turned in until they meet, squattings, comic little leaps sidewise."[4] According to Seldes, when performed by a skilled dancer, these movements were "woven, into a rhythm of dance, into a pattern which was full of grace and significance, which was gay and orgiastic and wild."[5] Similarly, Nijinsky had choreographed a difficult routine, which involved difficult movements regarded as the antithesis of classical ballet.

The spectators witnessed a ballet that seemed raw and primitive, with dancers moving more with their hips than their feet, and dressed as pagan tribesmen with ugly masks painted on their faces. There were no tutus or elegant arabesques, as many would have expected, and the startling music combined with angular dance motions might well have prompted protest. Press documentation is well known, and is well summarized by the American critic Carl Van Vechten, who wrote after the event:

> Cat-calls and hisses succeeded the playing of the first few bars…and then ensued a battery of screams, countered by a foil of applause. We warred over art (some of us thought it was and some thought it wasn't) … Some forty of the [protesters] were forced out of the theater but that did not quell the disturbance. The lights in the auditorium were fully turned on but the noise continued and I remember Mlle. Piltz [the chosen maiden] executing her strange dance of religious hysteria on the stage dimmed by the blazing light in the auditorium, seemingly to the accompaniment of the disjointed ravings of a mob of angry men and women.[6]

To experience a modern dramatized version, one can refer to "Riot at the Rite," a 90-minute movie directed by Andy Wilson, from the BBC 2005 Drama Series.

Analysis: Some Thoughts Behind the *Rite*'s Premiere

Scholars have long speculated on the reasons for the hostile reaction, ranging from the shattering of everyone's expectations to the brutality of the harmony and rhythms.

But it is also interesting to turn to science to consider what might have been going on in the brain on a neurological level during the premiere of the *Rite*. Why is it that music makes us feel, and particularly, feel so *strongly*? An episode called "Musical Language" from the radio podcast, *Radiolab*, gives some insight on the matter.[7] When

sound of any sort enters the ear, it is converted into microscopic electrical signals that tap a particular pattern into the brain. Consonant sounds tend to have a regular, rhythmic wave pattern, signaling to the brain that this is a pleasant experience (i.e. a perfect fifth interval). By contrast, dissonant sounds will create an irregular pattern on a neuronic level, which the brain will interpret as unpleasant (i.e. a minor second interval). When the brain undergoes an experience that is continuously unpleasant, dopamine — a neurochemical associated with reward-motivated behavior — is released, and one feels a temporary happiness as a survival mechanism to cope. When there is too much dopamine present, the brain becomes confused and paranoid, which the *Radiolab* podcast notes is the sensation similar to that of schizophrenics.

Now apply this fascinating information on the brain's neuronic activity to the *Rite of Spring* premiere. Consider that the audience had never heard this sort of music before: the unpredictable accents in the rhythmic pattern and the unfamiliar, dissonant chords must have fired a plethora of irregular electrical patterns into the brain on a continuous level. Stravinsky's piece carries on with a driving, percussive ostinato pattern and unresolved harmonies, so there is no time for the brain to rest. Add to that the jagged dance movements from the ballet — and so, there is confusing *audio* and *visual* material — and one can only imagine how much excessive dopamine must have been released in the audiences' brains that evening, causing the eventual pandemonium.

But perhaps riots were just the order of the day, as Scott Spiegelberg, a professor of music theory at DePauw University, claims, "most music historians now agree that the riots were caused not by the music, but by the riot-happy Parisians."[8]

Other Classical Music Riots

And perhaps this was true. One of the earliest documented examples of classical music rioting in that city was the premiere of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in 1861 at the Salle Le Peletier, home of the Paris opera from 1821. At that time, it was customary in performance practice for the ballet to be placed in the middle of the opera, so that members of the aristocratic Jockey Club could arrive late from dinner, and still enjoy the ballet. Wagner, however, placed the ballet in Act I, which meant that by the time the Jockey Club members arrived, the ballet was over, which naturally displeased them. Though it occurred several decades earlier than the *Rite of Spring* riot, the *Tannhäuser* "riot" showed that Parisian audiences, or at least its wealthy members, were all too ready to express dissent.

Fast forward to May 29, 1912, where Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was presented for the first time with the Ballets Russes. Nijinsky, who was also dancing the title role of the faun himself, choreographed the ballet for the piece. The performance took place at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris precisely one year before the *Rite's* premiere. Inspired by Mallarmé's poem about a mystical faun who falls in love with a young wood nymph, this is a tale of unrequited love, as the faun is left to contend with himself in a passionate mix of euphoria and depression. Nijinsky was dressed in a skin-tight leotard, and moved with suggestive motions around the nymph's scarf. The highly sexualized dance scene broke all rules of traditional decorum in classical ballet. The Paris police had to be brought in by the second evening of the sold-out performance. There were mixed reactions. French composer Louis Vuillemain wrote, "For myself, I

admit never having enjoyed as much so a perfect union of mime and music, such complete joy to the eye and the ear."[9] Gaston Calmette, editor of *Le Figaro*, expressed otherwise on the front page of his paper:

> Anyone who mentions the words 'art' and 'imagination' in the same breath as this production must be laughing at us. This is neither a pretty pastoral nor a work of profound meaning. We are shown a lecherous faun, whose movements are filthy and bestial in their eroticism, and whose gestures are as crude as they are indecent. That is all. And the over explicit miming of this misshapen beast, loathsome when seen full on, but even more loathsome in profile, was greeted with the booing it deserved.[10]

Likewise, in other parts of Europe, there were strong reactions toward contemporary art music. In Vienna, a mere 2 months before the *Rite*'s premiere, the so-called *Skandalkonzert* on March 31, 1913 — hosted by the Vienna Concert Society and conducted by Schoenberg — erupted in rioting when audiences were subjected to the experimental expressionism of the Second Viennese School. The programme listed the premiere of Webern's "Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6"; Zemlinsky's "Four Orchestral Songs on poems by Maeterlinck"; Schoenberg's "Chamber Symphony No. 1, Op. 9"; a first performance of Berg's "Five Orchestral Songs on Postcard Texts of Peter Altenberg, Op. 4" and Mahler's first song from the *Kindertotenlieder*. Berg's piece, however, caused such an uproar that they never got to Mahler's music.[11] This is hardly surprising, considering much of the work of the Viennese artists was designed to provoke and shock, defying traditional harmony. Douglas Jarman describes this particular concert as one where "the performance of Berg's songs led to a riot, with fisticuffs in the hall, the police called in and the concert organizer arrested."[12] Like the *Rite*, it is considered "one of the great musical scandals of the 20th century."[13]

Riots, In General

Why do people riot? How do such rowdy incidents begin, and what factors might increase its likelihood? Dr. Ken Eisold sheds some insight on the matter:

> It usually takes an incident to get a riot started, such as an accident or the police attacking or killing an innocent bystander. But once it has begun, the raging mob has a life of its own. Deep-seated resentments, repetitive frustrations and long standing disappointments galvanize people into action. And the mob provides cover, an anonymity that makes it easier to overcome one's usual reticence or moral scruples. One is immersed, engulfed. And it can become an exuberant experience, a joyful release for long suppressed emotions. It can also become manic, driven, a means of restlessly seeking new outlets. Leadership emerges spontaneously and changes rapidly.[14]

In other words, it only takes one influential individual to start the fire: afterward, the general sense of anonymity amidst a crowd allows for the indulgence of any subconscious savage impulses. Tory Higgins, a professor of psychology at Columbia

University who studies motivation, comments on the power of peer pressure: "Crowd psychology shows that when you see other people acting in a certain way, you're more likely to do it. It intensifies whatever is normative in the group."[15]

From my own informal thoughts and readings on riots in general and the classical music world, I've discovered five important observations in the common sequence of events that I have deemed "the *ingredients* for a riot." (1) Firstly, there is a large gathering or crowd in a public space. (2) Secondly, there is a collective form of displeasure amongst the people: noteworthy examples include discontented fans on a losing sports team, controversial government policy, and a perplexed Parisian crowd subjected to a continuous wave of incomprehensible noise and drama on stage when they were really expecting "music" and "dance." (3) Thirdly, one or more dissenting persons loudly then expresses his/her views in a very conspicuous, vocal manner. Soon after, there is (4) a rapid build-up of frustration, and perhaps confusion, amongst a dissenting public as influenced by the crowd psychology, spiraling into anger as the issue is ignored — or inadequately addressed — by the opposition. Finally, when there appears no means to a peaceful resolution, (5) the angry and frustrated crowd is forced to release the build-up of negative energy: it continuously expresses its displeasure in a very vocal — and sometimes violent — manner, thus resulting in mobs and riots. That being said, the premiere of the *Rite of Spring* appeared to have all these *ingredients* in place: the fact that it resulted in a scandal and rioting hardly seems surprising.

Closing Thoughts

Whatever the reason for the riot, the premiere of the *Rite of Spring* reveals the critical role of the audience in the modern art experience. Previously, riots were often set off by social class issues whereas in the early 20th-century, the catalyst appeared to be the performance itself. The public response and riot at the *Rite* attests to the organic wholeness of contemporary art. The "show" does not merely consist of the musicians and dancers, but also the spectators present in the experience. In other words, the audience is part of the *living art*. In essence, no two performances are identical: each will be a unique experience that is coloured by the crowd that is present. The *Rite of Spring* was one of the key works to have started this new, organic trend in modern art. I close with Eksteins's comments: "To have been in the audience that evening was to have participated not simply at another exhibition but in the very *creation* of modern art."[16]

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

[1] The British Museum, "The uproar house!!!" *Satirist*, 1st June 1813. Viewed 4/3/2013. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1480617&partId=1.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2012), 68.
[4] Amy Koritz, *Culture Makers*, (University of Illinois Press: 2009), 68.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Carl van Vechten, *Music and Bad Manner*s (New York, 1916), 34, from Eksteins, 28.
[7] Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich, "Musical Language," *Radiolab*, Season 2 Episode 2, Podcast audio September 24, 2007, http://www.radiolab.org/2007/sep/24/.
[8] Scott Spiegelberg, "Riots in Paris," *Blog: Musical Perceptions*, Monday, May 24, 2004, http://musicalperceptions.blogspot.ca/2004/05/riots-in-paris.html.
[9] *Commoedia*, May 30, 1912, 2. *Troisième série des Ballets Russes,* quoted in Davinia Caddy's "The Ballets Russes and Beyond: Music and Dance in Belle-Époque Paris" (Cambridge University Press), 72-73.
[10] Gaston Calmette editorial, "Un Faux Pas," *Le Figaro,* May 30, 1912*, cited in* Buckle, *Nijinsky,* 242.
[11] Kathryn Bailey, "Webern, Anton," *Oxford Music Online*, Viewed 3/29/2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/29993?q=Skandalkonzert&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.
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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ken Eisold, "Understanding Why People Riot," *Hidden Motives from web blog Psychology Today* (Sussex Publishers), http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hidden-motives/201108/understanding-why-people-riot.
[15] "The Psychology Of A Rioter," *The Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/11/the-psychology-of-a-riot_n_924839.html.
[16] Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Books of The Times; Modernism: Rites of Spring, Rites of Destruction," *The New York Times*, (Published: March 13, 1989).

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The Origin of Russian Primitivism? Alexander Grechaninov's Arrangements of Asian Songs

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Abstract:
Igor Stravinsky's contribution to Primitivism in music has been widely acknowledged; however, the contributions of his Russian contemporaries to the musical representation of so-called "primitive" cultures of Russia's Asian ethnic minorities have received only scant attention in musicological circles. Several key stylistic traits of Stravinsky's Sacre du Printemps *(simplicity of thematic material combined with discordant harmony, ostinato-driven formulas, the prominence of rhythm) are found in the compositions of another Russian composer, Alexander Grechaninov. Using musical elements associated with Russia's ancient times in his arrangement of a Teptiar folksong Grechaninov presented Russian Asian "primitive" subjects as culturally connected to Russia's past.*

Drawing from the analysis of Grechaninov's arrangements of Asian songs, I argue that the goal behind Grechaninov's representation of Russia's Asian "primitive" subjects differed from that of representation of pagan Russia in Stravinsky's Sacre. *My comparison of Grechaninov's arrangements of Teptiar and Tatar folksongs shows how these songs exemplified hierarchies of values established in ethnographic literature and subsequently shaped the Russians' perceptions and responses to Asian subjects who inhabited the Russian empire. With these arrangements, Grechaninov sought to present a culturally appropriated and recontextualized depiction of Russia's Asian neighbours and to promote an image of Russia as a multiethnic yet unified state.*

Introduction

In a 1930 speech addressed to American composers in New York, Nikolai Roerich, Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* collaborator, noted the close connection between Stravinsky's oeuvre and Asian culture:

> At the beginning of World War I, Stravinsky found himself abroad.[1] I heard that my *Spring* sketches were destroyed in his Galician estate [...] Much is left behind, but the eternal remains. During these years, we observed that, as in Asia, the eternal rhythms of the *Rite of Spring* still resounded. We heard songs resounding in the holy mountains and deserts—songs that were created not for people, but for the Great Desert itself. [...] And we recalled Stravinsky, how he embedded in the orchestral *Spring* the Mighty rhythms of human aspirations. Then in Kashmir we witnessed a magnificent Celebration of Spring with fantastic dances with torches. And again we exclaimed aloud, recalling Stravinsky with rapture. [...] We cannot view *Spring* as something Russian or Slavic. It is much more ancient, it is panhuman.[2]

Even though this speech was written almost two decades after the first performance of the *Sacre du Printemps*, Roerich's bold comparison of Stravinsky's work with Asian rituals and art raises a number of questions: Why did Roerich relate the rhythms of the *Sacre* with Asian ritual dances? What was Roerich's knowledge of Russian-Asian cultural connections at the time of the *Sacre's* conception? Was Stravinsky aware of Roerich's interest in Asia and could his ideas influence the young composer?

In his study of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*, Richard Taruskin examines in great detail the relationship between the ballet and Russian folk traditions.[3] While he does address Scythianism in relation to Roerich, he does not elaborate on another interesting (yet no less important) topic that sheds crucial light on the work's creation —Nikolai Roerich's interest in Asia and its likely influence on the realization of the *Sacre.* In this paper I argue that scholars have hitherto underestimated the potential role of contemporaneous ethnographic sources on the subject of Russia's Asian Others in the formation of the ballet. Because Roerich believed in Russia's profound cultural and historical relation with Asia, I suggest that Roerich could provide the composer with some newly transcribed music from Russia's Asian peoples and published in ethnographic sources**.**

During the same period, besides Stravinsky, other Russian composers also worked on the presentation of the primitivism in music. A student of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov just few years before Stravinsky, Alexander Grechaninov arranged for piano and voice a number of Asian tunes, some of which bear striking similarity to the style Stravinsky deployed to dramatize his Russian pagan ritual. Although Grechaninov most likely lacked the ambition of the younger composer and the bulk of his oeuvre can be described as conservative, he used some modernist musical elements, such as a combination of simple thematic material with discordant harmony, in his presentation of Russia's "primitive" people —the Teptiars.[4] To provide a counterpoint to Stravinsky's primitivism, I analyze an arrangement of a Teptiar folksong that Grechaninov penned for an ethnographic concert organized by the Music-Ethnographic Committee (ca. 1911).[5] By using some musical elements associated with Russia's remote past, with this arrangement Grechaninov sought to connect ancient Russia with Russia's present Asian subjects promoting a popular at the time idea of Russia's historical and cultural legacy in Asia.

Roerich,* Asianism*, and Stravinsky

Roerich's inclination towards Asian philosophy and culture is well known in Russia.[6] His interest in Asia was ignited when he was studying at the University in St. Petersburg a couple of decades before he began his collaboration with Stravinsky.[7] In his *Diary*, Roerich recalled: "The University remained a useful episode [in my life]. Mendeleev, Sovetov, [and] Orientalists Golstunskii and Pozdneev visited us. The foundation of [my] interest in the Orient was laid [then]."[8] Later, in the mid-1900s, when Roerich met Vladimir Stasov, the guru of the Russian nationalist composers known as the Mighty Handful, his interest in Asia intensified.

V. V. Stasov and N. K. Roerich in the Imperial Public Library. St. Petersburg, end of the 1890s.

Stasov was an ardent proponent of Russian-Asian cultural relations and identified the Eastern influence as one of four elements characterizing the musical style of the so-called "New Russian School."[9] According to some Russian biographers, Stasov stimulated Roerich's interest in ancient Russian artifacts, chronicles, legends, and folklore.[10] In his letters to Roerich, Stasov repeatedly stated that the ancient Oriental culture is "inseparable" from the ancient Russian.[11] Furthermore, Stasov encouraged Roerich to consult ancient Asian artifacts in order to add an "ethnographic spirit with historical character and details" to Russian ornamental patterns.[12]

Russians and Asians lived in close proximity for centuries, so, not surprisingly, Roerich, following Stasov, "discovered" Asia on his quest to learn more about Russia's past. In particular, Scythianism appealed to Roerich in the early stages of his career.[13] Roerich's ideas regarding the ancient Russian connection to the Scythes (Russia's eastern neighbours) were not new. In the mid-nineteenth century, Aleksei Khomiakov, the leader of a Slavophile movement, claimed the Russians were related to the Scythes. And through this relation, they were connected to the Aryan race. By the end of the nineteenth century, the theory of Russian-Aryan roots gained such popularity among the Russian intellectual elite that it even influenced members of the ruling family, including the Tsar himself.[14]

In addition to the histories of Scythianism and Aryanism, Russian readers were exposed to a large body of literature that discussed the relationship between Russia and Asia. Proponents of the idea of Russia's Asian roots called themselves *Vostochniki*, or *Asianists*. *Asianists* believed that Russia's future lay in the East and claimed that Russia had to expand into Asia to tighten what Prince Ukhtomsky called the "bonds between us and that which in reality was always ours."[15] Some Russian sources underlined even Russian-Asian ethnic/racial affiliation, documenting Russian families with Asian roots who entered Russian nobility and considerably influenced Russia's social and cultural life.[16] Musicians too fell under the spells of *Asianism* and *Aryanism*: a number of Russian music writers (including Petr Sokal'sky, Alexander Famintsyn, and Viacheslav Petr) believed that Asian musical elements (such as scales) constituted an essential part of Russian musical identity.[17] Other writers, such as Mikhail Petukhov, Alexander Famintsyn, and Alexander Maslov, claimed that some Russian musical instruments, such

as *balalaika*, could have been borrowed from Russia's Asian neighbours.[18] Such statements demonstrate an important shift in the attitude of Russian writers towards the idea of belonging to, or identifying with, Asian culture.[19]

It is important to note that Roerich also contributed to the choir celebrating Russian-Asian cultural connections. In his 1908 essay "Joy in Art" [Radost' iskusstvu] he claimed that the Asian influence on Russian art and way of life was profound and beneficial in many respects. According to Roerich, the Tatars, who inherited Indian, Tibetan, and Mongolian culture, "taught Russian princes persistence, endurance, and unification," and "brought riches of carpets, embroidery, and all sorts of decorations into common use."[20] Furthermore, in the same essay, Roerich noted a link between the Russian rituals of the past, such as the celebration of the coming spring, and the poetry welcoming spring created by the Yakuts, a Russian Asian ethnic minority living in Siberia.[21] Roerich's interest in Yakuts is not surprising. Since Yakuts (and other peoples living in the north) were Christianized only at the end of the eighteenth century and still practiced pagan rituals at the time Roerich wrote his essay,[22] Yakut culture was rife with material Roerich could appropriate in his vivid imagination of Russia's Eastern heritage.

Strikingly, some elements from the opening section of Stravinsky's *Sacre* resemble transcriptions of Yakut songs published by Music-Ethnographic Committee in 1911 in the second volume of *Trudy*.[23] Repetitions of short two-note formulas, trills, irregular rhythmic patterns characteristic for the transcriptions of four Yakut songs transcribed from phonograph by Alexander Maslov (1877-1914) are in the basis of Stravinky's Introduction of the *Sacre*. Although the composer might not have been familiar with this source, Roerich could have seen it before he met Stravinsky in the residence of Princess Tenisheva – Talashkino — in the summer of 1911,[24] and shared his thoughts about it before the scenario of the *Sacre* reached its final stage and Stravinsky started sketching the score. Furthermore, since Roerich was interested in finding Russian-Asian connections, he was most-likely familiar with ethnographic sources on Russia's Asian minorities who, despite Russian domination, preserved their ancient pagan rituals. Among few sources that mention music practices by peoples living in the remote areas in the north, besides Yakuts, there were studies of Teleut, Samoyed, and Giliak peoples.[25] Although only a few transcriptions of melodies/songs are present in these sources, almost all of them have similar features, when presented in European notation: limited range, trills, grace notes, multiple repetition of the same phrase that consists of two-three notes.[26]

It is difficult to assess to what extent Stravinsky shared Roerich's belief in Russia's relationship to Asia. However, it is even more difficult to imagine that Stravinsky could have completely denied popular discourses that claimed Russians and Asians had the same roots in antiquity.

Stravinsky was not the only composer preoccupied with an idea of the embodiment of primitivism in music. Alexander Grechaninov also worked on arrangements of Asian songs, some of which aimed to present Russia's "primitive" subjects. While Stravinsky's involvement in studies of Russian ethnographies on Asian groups is questionable, Grechaninov's interest and knowledge of contemporaneous ethnographic sources is indeed evident. To understand the pedigree of Grechaninov's primitivism, I will discuss a particular ethnographic source that inspired him and analyze his arrangements of Asian songs representing different ethnic groups, namely the Tatars and the Teptiars, that were

perceived as representatives of different levels of cultural development.[27] I argue that each arrangement evinces how these cultural hierarchies permeated even the musical fabric of the song.[28]

Russia's Asians

In nineteenth-century Russian ethnographic literature, each Asian group living in Russia was assigned its own cultural niche. Differences in mode of life and religious practice were believed to be a cultural yardstick. Peoples with developed agrarian cultures (such as Tatars and Sarts) were considered superior to peoples who lived as nomads (e.g., Kyrgyz and Giliaks). According to ethnographers, Christians and Muslims were more advanced as they believed in one God and lived according to certain regulations outlined in the Bible or the Koran. Groups who still practiced paganism, on the other hand, were considered to be at a lower level of cultural development. Furthermore, the state persecuted Russian practitioners of paganism, as they were seen as a threat to the state's unity; they disobeyed Russia's military and religious regulations and shook the very foundation of Russian nationalism (the triumvirate of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality).[29] At the same time, the state's policy towards non-Russian ethnic groups, such as the Teptiar, who still practiced paganism, was relatively tolerant.

Grechaninov culled all of the songs he arranged from an ethnographic report authored by Sergei Rybakov (*Music and Songs of Ural Muslims with an Essay on their Way of Life* [1897]). Rybakov's research covered the songs of three Asian peoples (Tatar, Bashkir, and Teptiar), the contexts of their performance, ethnographic details on their lifestyles, and their music practices, as well as the biographies of Asian musicians. In the general descriptions of different ethnic groups, Rybakov's ethnography replicated the cultural hierarchies established in the literature of contemporary writers and thinkers.

Tatar Song

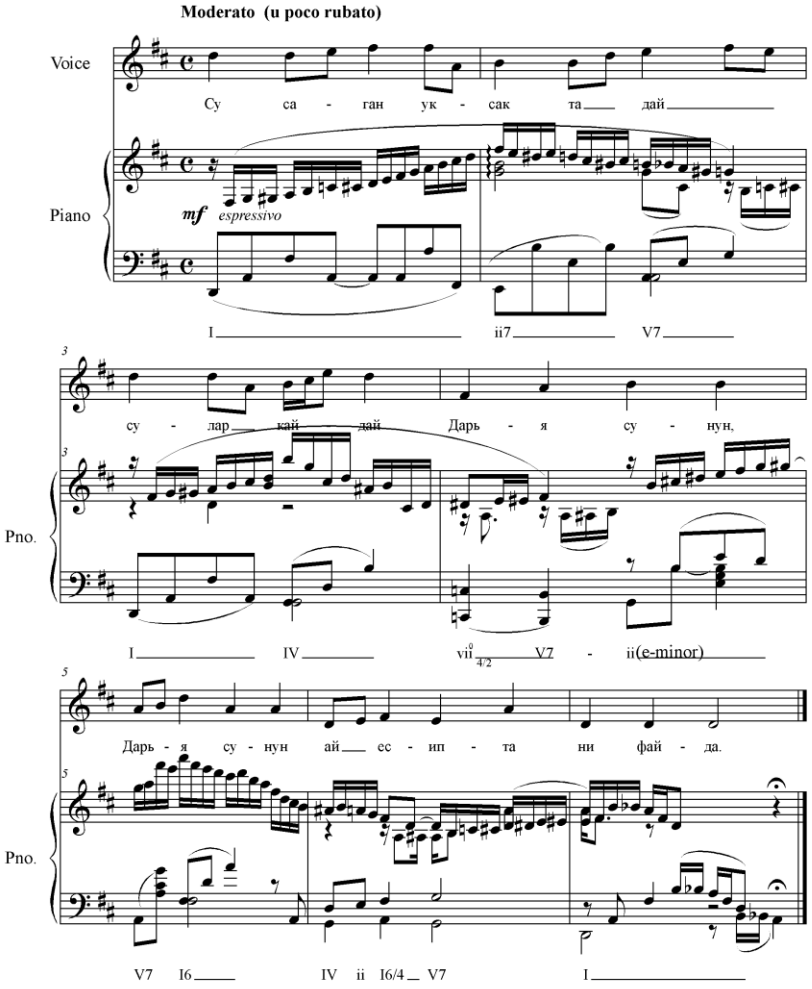
Of all the Asians, the Tatars were usually considered the most educated and culturally advanced people. Many ethnographers who lived among the Tatars stressed the cleanliness and neatness of a Tatar's house and garments.[30] In spite of their religiosity (most Tatars practiced Islam), the Tatars were regarded as an open-minded people who were able to survive and function properly within and outside the Russian economic system.[31]

According to Rybakov, the music of the Tatars had less interesting melodic lines than the music of other Russian Asian peoples, such as the Bashkirs. However, the Tatar melodies had an

> inherent character of *ancientness*: if one analyzes their scales, one discovers ancient Greek, or so-called Church, pentatonic, or so-called "Chinese" scale [...] Tatar melodies in general do not fit into a common European harmonization.[32]

Although Rybakov argued that Tatar songs did not fit European harmonizations, Grechaninov created simple harmonic realizations for his arrangements of two Tatar songs. One of the arrangements — "Su sagan"—, despite the presence of simple harmony and melody, is coloured with a chromatic accompaniment, which for a nineteenth-century European listener might have sounded rather sophisticated. Furthermore, the melodic line in the right hand is not only highly ornamented, but also forms a contrapuntal line to complement the vocal melody. What is more, this contrapuntal line eventually subdivides into two and then three lines forming a multi-layered texture near the end of the song (Ex. 1, mm. 6-7).

Ex. 1 Tatar Song "Su sagan," arranged by A. Grechaninov



With this arrangement, Grechaninov transformed a simple Tatar tune (which remained absolutely unchanged) into a sophisticated song with a contrapuntal line that conveyed a certain European refinement to say the least. It is particularly striking since no other Asian melodies arranged by Grechaninov are provided with chromatically sophisticated accompaniments.

Now let me present Grechaninov's arrangement of a Teptiar song and set it against the cultural context of the Teptiar peoples usually provided in ethnographic sources.

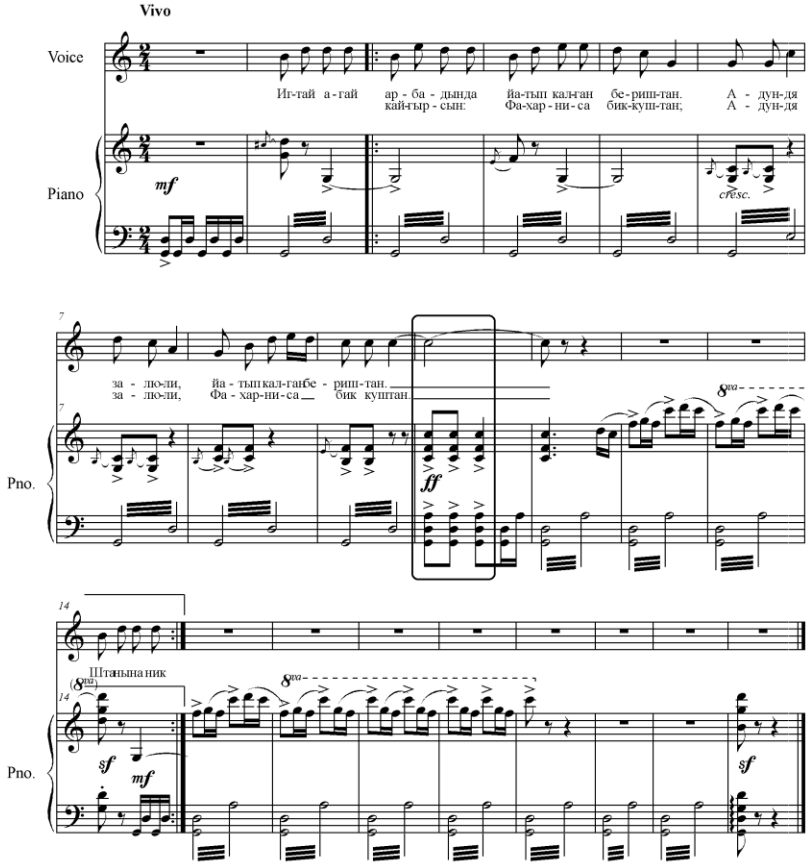
Teptiar song

Nineteenth-century descriptions of Teptiar people (including Rybakov's ethnography) are mostly unflattering: according to these sources, the Teptiar had no original culture and were situated at a lower economic and cultural level of development among the other Turkic peoples.[33] Their morality also came into question, since among Russians they had a reputation as horse stealers and predators living at another's expense.[34] A significant group of Teptiar people still practiced paganism: one major Russian ethnography called *Narody Rossii* [Peoples of Russia] published in 1880 described the Teptiars' ritual of abducting a bride as a mandatory practice for any man who wanted to get married.[35]

As for music, Rybakov claimed in his ethnography that the Teptiars never produced their own culture or music: everything that they practiced was borrowed from either the Bashkirs or the Russians.[36]

Grechaninov's arrangement of the Teptiar song "Iggai agai" provides a sharp contrast to the Tatar arrangement. The clumsy harmonic progression and endless repetitions could have sounded rather "primitive" to an early twentieth-century listener. The melodic line of the Teptiar song, as it appears in Rybakov's collection, has a simple and clear structure: the G-major opening is reinterpreted as the dominant to C major in measure 8, which then resolves to this tonic in the following measure with the repetition of C (Ex. 2).[37] Instead of using the two chords outlined in the melody for the piano accompaniment, Grechaninov continually sustains a *g-d* (*g-e*) drone. When the melody begins its resolution to C major, the same is expected in the harmony (because of the V_7 in m. 8), but the composer strikes with a chord on G *(g-d-a* played in the left hand and *c-f-c* in the right) that does not resemble any chords of "civilized" classical (or even Romantic) Western harmony.[38] Furthermore, despite the definitive melodic ending on C, a G-major tonic is played in the accompaniment at the very end of the first and second verses. The lack of resolution to C major (which is replaced by the unusual chord on G), the *g-d* drone, and the contradiction between the melody and harmony create the effect of an uneasy and clumsy harmonic progression that turns around G and does not "progress."

Ex. 2 Teptiar Song "Iggai aggai," arranged by A. Grechaninov



The chord located in measure 10 is not unusual in Russian music: the final movement of Alexander Borodin's Second Symphony opens with a very similar chord in B major. Rimsky-Korsakov called this chord "Borodinian epic parallel seconds" and referred to it as a characteristic element of the *Kuchka* style that distinguished Russian music from other Western European musical traditions.[39] It is noteworthy that César Cui mentioned this primitive sound quality in his discussion of Borodin's symphony.[40] Although he did not talk about this chord in particular, he described the symphony as being "permeated by traits of Russian nationalism, but the nationalism of remote times; *Rus'* is perceptible in this symphony, but primitive pagan *Rus.*"[41] Cui's last observation regarding the "pagan *Rus*" is of special interest: as I mentioned previously, some popular ethnographies presented Teptiars as people who still practiced paganism.[42] Paganism united Russians in the past and Teptiars in the present.[43] Thus, Grechaninov might have selected musical elements associated with Russia's remote past in order to create a cultural connection with Russian Asian subjects. The "barbaric" chords effectively place the Teptiar people at the primitive stage of development while aligning them with the Russian past.[44] The Russian-Asian relation does not stop here: another element in this song references Russian culture. Out of the seven Teptiar songs from Rybakov's collection, Grechaninov chose the one that was clearly influenced by Russian folksong. The text in the refrain, "A-du-dia za-liu-li," is reminiscent of the typical Russian folksong interjections "Ai-du-du" and "Ai-liu-li."

"Merging with a Higher Nation"

The Teptiars were not the only people presented as falling under the influence of Russian music. Grechaninov also infused his arrangements of Tatar and Bashkir songs with some elements associated with Russian music (e.g. "Glinka variations").[45] This attitude of inflicting Russian musical vocabulary into Asian tunes is symptomatic of Grechaninov's awareness of Russian influence on Asian culture. Again, Rybakov's ethnography on music and the songs of Ural Muslims might have been the source of Grechaninov's ideas. Several passages in Rybakov's book emphasized the fact that under the influence of "approaching" Russian culture, some Tatar or Asian songs lost their original texts, and entire refrains were replaced with broken Russian.[46] This tendency of "merging with the higher nation," according to Rybakov, was not only an "inevitable" but also a "desirable" fact, since it led to the "natural and gradual establishment of Russian culture" in the region inhabited with the empire's Asian subjects.[47]

Thus, it is evident that Grechaninov's arrangements of Asian songs were informed by Russian ethnographies, since the composer continued perpetuating cultural stereotypes established in nineteenth-century Russian literature by assigning more sophisticated musical writing for the Tatar who were considered culturally advanced and developing "primitive" musical idiom for the Teptiar who resided on the periphery of civilization. Therefore, the goal behind Grechaninov's representation of Russia's Asian "primitive" subjects differed from that of the pagan Russia Stravinsky depicted in *Sacre du Printemps*. Grechaninov's arrangements of Tatar and Teptiar songs simultaneously exoticized and domesticated the united, yet culturally distinct subjects of the Russian empire in a form that reflected the imagination of the dominant culture.

In conclusion, Russia's ambivalent geo-political and socio-cultural position, as a self-avowed intermediary between the East and the West, generated a certain degree of mental confusion in the Russians' vision of their own nationhood. Certainly this sense of ambivalence and dislocation played a pivotal role in the creation of Russia's own Oriental Other or, indeed, Russia's own past or present. The analysis of folksong collections and ethnographies on Russia's Oriental Others might help us not only to understand the conditions under which the music was composed, but also to shed light on the very formation and construction of a specifically Russian national musical identity.

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, translations from Russian are my own.

[2] Пришла война, Стравинский оказался за границей. Слышно было, что мои эскизы к "Весне" были уничтожены в его галицийском имении [...] Многое прошло, но вечное остается. В течение этих лет мы наблюдали, как в Азии еще звучат вечные ритмы "Весны Священной". Мы слышали, как в священных горах и пустынях звучали песни, сложенные не для людей, но для самой Великой Пустыни [...] И мы вспоминали Стравинского, как он влагал в симфонию "Весны" великие ритмы человеческих устремлений. Затем, в Кашмире

мы наблюдали величественный Праздник Весны с фантастическими танцами факелов. И опять мы восклицали, в восторге вспоминая Стравинского [...] Мы не можем принимать "Весну" только как русскую или как славянскую... Она гораздо более древняя, она общечеловечна." See Nicolas Roerich, "Vesna sviashchennaia," in *Derzhava sveta*, 161–63.

[3] See Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*.

[4] On the life and works of A. T. Grechaninov, see Alexandre Gretchaninoff, *My Life*; Iu. Aleksandrov, "K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia A.T. Grechaninova," *Sovetskaia muzyka* 10 (1964): 59–69; Iurii Paisov, *Alexander Grechaninov*.

[5] Grechaninov probably arranged the Teptiar song before 1911, since the introductory note written by the members of the Committee indicates that most of the arrangements published in the fourth volume of *Trudy* (1913) were ready for the publication and started being engraved in 1911. See N. Ianchuk, A. Kastal'skii, D. Arakchiev, "Ot muzykal'no-etnograficheskoi komissii," in *Trudy* 4: v.

[6] On the life and works of Nikolai Roerich, see V. Kniazeva, *N. Rerikh*; P. Belikov and V. Kniazeva, *Rerikh*. Roerich's name is often identified with Agni Yoga, a spiritual teaching heavily influenced by the Vedic tradition, particularly that of Raja Yoga. See N. Roerikh and H. Roerikh, *Agni Yoga*.

[7] Later, this interest developed into an ardent passion. In 1923 Roerich embarked on an incredibly challenging journey with his family across Central Asia and Manchuria. He eventually settled in India in 1928 and lived there until his death in 1947.

[8] "Университет остался полезным эпизодом. Дома у нас бывали Менделеев, Советов, восточники Голстунский и Позднеев. Закладывался интерес к Востоку." See N. Roerich, *Iz literaturnogo nasledиia*, 87. Konstantin Golstunskii (1831–1899) was a Russian specialist in Mongol and Kalmyk studies and the author of the first Russian-Mongol and Russian-Kalmyk dictionaries; Aleksei Pozdneev (1851–1920) was a Russian Orientologist who specialized in Mongol studies, and was one of the founders of the Institute of Oriental Studies. He also authored 122 works (including 17 monographs) on Mongol, Kalmyk people, and Buddhism in Mongolia.

[9] See Vladimir Stasov, "Nasha muzyka za posledniia 25 let."

[10] See V. Kniazeva, *N. Rerikh*, 6; P. Belikov and V. Kniazeva, *Rerikh*, 23–25. Stasov introduced Roerich to the members of Mighty Five as well as Leo Tolstoi. In 1898, Roerich became an assistant editor of Stasov's journal *Art and Artistic Manufacture.* Ibid., 40.

[11] See V. A. Rosov, ed., *N.K. Rerihk, Pis'ma k V.V. Stasovu. Pis'ma V.V. Stasova k N.K. Rerikhu*, 27–28.

[12] Ibid., 27.

[13] R. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 1: 888.

[14] Marlene Laruelle, *Mythe aryen et rêve impérial dans la Russie du XIX^e siècle*, 78-88.

[15] Kniaz Ukhtomskii, *Travels in the East*, quoted by Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Towards the Rising Sun*, 44.

[16] See E. P. Karnovich, *Rodovye prozvaniia i tituly v Rossii*, 231-50.

[17] See my article "'Connected by the Ties of Blood': Musical Scales in the Quest for the Russian/Asian Identity."

[18] See M. Petukhov, *Narodnye instrumenty Spb-oi conservatorii*, 7; A. Famintsyn, *Domra i skhodnye ei muzykal'nye instrumenty*, 8; A. Maslov, "Legenda o proiskhozhdenii balalaiki": 8–9.

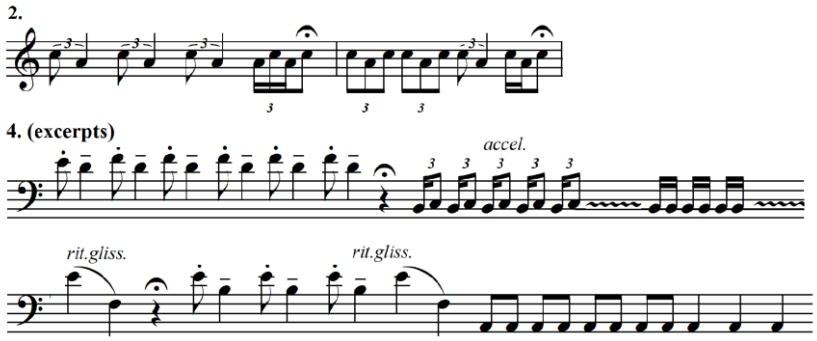
[19] In the late nineteenth century, many Russians of different social milieus, such as Doctor Vasilii Florinskii, Prince Ukhtomskii, historianVasilii Kliuchevskii, and writer Fedor Dostoevskii, were attracted to the idea that Russian culture had an Asian or Aryan provenance.

[20] See Rerikh, *Radost' iskusstvu*.

[21] See Ibid.

[22] On nineteenth-century ethnography on the Yakuts, see Seroshevskii, *Yakuty*; Middendorf, *Puteshestvie na sever i vostok* 2: 758-833; Troshchanskii, *Evoliutsiia chernoi very.*

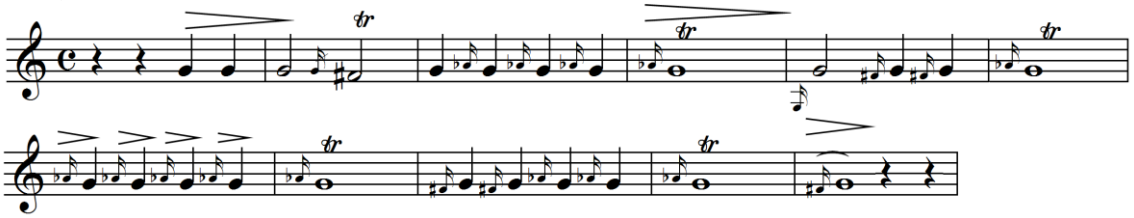
[23] See "Zaklinaniia 'Olongo' iakutskikh shamanov," in *Trudy* 2: 882. Here are two out of four Yakut melodies transcribed by Maslov. See Ibid.



[24] See Taruskin, *Stravisnky and the Russian Traditions*, 1:871-880.

[25] See Solovtsov, *Istoricheskoe obozrenie Sibiri*, 360; Middendorf, *Puteshestvie na sever*, 673, 808; Seroshevskii, *Yakuty*, 571; Schrenck, *The Peoples of the Amur Region*, 2: 680-81.

[26] See, for instance, Middendorf's transcription of a Yakut melody from his *Puteshestvie na sever*, 808:



Most probably Roerich was familiar with this source, since in his 1908 essay *Joy in Art* he cited Middendorf's translation of a Yakut spring song in a free manner.

[27] These arrangements were performed in ethnographic concerts in Moscow between 1906 and 1911 and published in 1913 in a huge volume issued by the so-called Music-Ethnographic Committee, an organization that functioned under the auspices of Moscow University. Ethnographic concerts presented arrangements of folk melodies of different peoples living in Russia. In some ways, the ethnographic concerts promulgated the idea of Russia as a multiethnic empire since they included folk songs/melodies from ethnic groups living in all regions of the vast empire.

[28] My choice of Grechaninov is not random. As Rimsky-Korsakov disciples, Stravinsky and Grechaninov could have met at their master's house and definitely were familiar with each other's works. See V. Yastrebtsev, *Reminiscences of Rimsky-Korsakov*, 375, 401.

[29] At the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church was still fighting some Russian sects that practiced pagan rituals. See T. S. Rozhdestvenskii and M. I. Uspendkii, "Pesni russkikh sektantov-mistikov."

[30] See Karl Fuks, *Kazanskie tatary*, 22–30; Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 8–9.

[31] Although some ethnographies mention Tatar slyness and reluctance to work hard in the fields, the reader usually gets the impression that the Tatars were economically and culturally advanced Asians. See Fuks' *Kazanskie tatary* and Rybakov's *Muzyka i pesni.*

[32] "Татарским мелодиям присущ характер *древности*: если всмотреться в состав звукорядов, то в последних можно открыть присутствие древнегреческих или так называемых церковных ладов, пятитонной, или так называемой китайской гаммы [...] Татарские мелодии вообще мало подходят под обшую европейскую организацию." See Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 67.

[33] Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 38–43; *Narody Rossii*, 2: 128–34.

[34] Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 42.

[35] See *Narody Rossii. Etnograficheskie ocherki*, 2: 133–134 .
[36] Rybakov points out that the Teptiar people borrowed the violin, balalaika, and accordion from the Russians. See Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 198. Although Rybakov's views on the Teptiar people were later criticized on the pages of the journal *Izvestiia Kazanskogo Obshchestva Arkheologii, Istorii i Etnografii*, his views on Teptiar music were perpetuated in Grechaninov's arrangement. For the critique of Rybakov's book, see G. N. Akhmarov, "Teptiari i ikh proiskhozhdenie," 230–364; especially 341.
[37] The original tune in Rybakov's collection is transcribed a perfect fifth down and starts on *e* instead of *b*. See Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 207.
[38] This chord resembles a dominant-eleventh chord with a suspension to the third (which is not resolved) or a dominant-thirteenth chord without a third.
[39] See V. V. Yastrebtsev, *Reminiscences of Rimsky-Korsakov*, entry for April 21, 1894, 74.
[40] Ts. Cui, "The Popular Russian Symphonic Concert," in *Russians on Russian Music, 1830–1880*, 276–79.
[41] Ibid., 276. Throughout his essay on Borodin's symphony Cui stresses the quality of sound that Borodin creates as "unconquerable, elemental power […] not clothed in the balanced, serene forms of western harmonization." Ibid., 276–77.
[42] See *Narody Rossii*, 2: 128–34.
[43] It should be noted that the words "paganism," "primitivism," or "backwardness" did not have pejorative connotations, since many Russians believed in the universal pattern of human development (from barbarian culture to civilization) and considered backwardness a temporal condition from which any people could be liberated.
[44] It could also be argued that the musical elements used by Grechaninov in the arrangement of this song—simplicity of thematic material combined with discordant harmony, repetition, and the prominence of rhythm—foreshadow elements used in the avant-garde movement. However, it would be erroneous to place Grechaninov among the avant-garde composers since he is primarily known for writing music in the best tradition of the Kuchka composers (between 1890 and 1896 he studied with Rimsky-Korsakov). Furthermore, Grechaninov expressed negativity toward modern art in his memoirs. See Iu. Aleksandrov, "K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia A.T. Grechaninova," *Sovetskaia muzyka* 10 (1964): 59–69.
[45] "Glinka variation" or a "changing-background variation" is a type of form based on the repetition of an *unchanging* melody played against varied harmonies and texture. In Russian/Soviet music this type of variation was linked to the "father" of Russian musical tradition, Mikhail Glinka, who used it in his opera *Ruslan and Liudmila* and symphonic fantasy *Kamarinskaia.* For more detailed information on the historiography of "Glinka variations," see Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism*, 114.
[46] Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 66 and 236. See also Rybakov's article "Russkie vliianiia," *Russian Musical Newspaper* 11 (1896): 1343–54.
[47] Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 43. Interestingly, in his description of Russian elements in Asian culture, Rybakov never used the term "Russification" [*russifikatsiia*], which would have a disciplinary connotation. I follow here the usage of the term as established by Hans Rogger (*Russia in the Age of Modernization and Revolution, 1881–1917*, 183). Instead, the milder terms "cultural rapprochement" or "merging" and "fusion" [*sliianie*] are used. He insisted on the peaceful and natural influence of the Russian "elemental power" [*stikhiia*] on Asian culture, and the importance of establishing mutual trust and a peaceful relationship between the Russians and *inorodtsy*. Rybakov, *Muzyka i pesni*, 43. Meanwhile, Rybakov suggests that Russians should not exercise a "forced influence [on *inorodtsy*] for its mercenary ends," as the "natural and gradual establishment of Russian culture" will eventually take place.

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The Russian Reception of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, 1913

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Abstract

Even a century after the premiere of Le Sacre du Printemps*, Russian contemporary sources offer a wealth of material on the Ballets Russes and particularly on Nijinsky's 1913 choreography that are extremely rarely read and never really analyzed in detail. This paper will give an overview of some of these sources, their main points of criticism about Diaghilev's enterprise, and their varied but generally positive discussion on Nijinsky's work that contests much that has been said of* Sacre *in dance history. By ignoring these sources, dance historians have canonized Diaghilev and his company in ways that prove true many of the concerns of these informed Russian authors. However, I will end the paper with some contrasts with how* Sacre *was discussed in contemporary French and English press to attest that the Russians were actually mistaken in their condemnation of their Western colleagues' interest in dancing or ability to discuss the art form.*

A Preamble

With a work that premiered a century ago, is there anything that has not yet been said? A single source that has not been used? If the work is by the Ballets Russes, the only answer is a resounding yes. Research on this canonized company is surprisingly weak on precisely the factor evident in the name of the troupe: Russia. Few dance researchers interested in this company read Russian or understand the sociopolitical or aesthetic concerns of Imperial Russia, which leads to odd statements and partial interpretations of works like *Sacre*.

Yet, I want to begin by assuring you that I have not, by any means, read through every Russian review: only about a dozen of the about 120 titles I have researched are in Russian - the vast majority are in French and English. In the following, all translations are mine and emphases in the original.

The Critics

The people who wrote of *Sacre* in Russia included representatives of very different aesthetic styles, cultural positions and political inclinations - and again, this understanding of critics as coming from somewhere and writing for a particular paper is too often forgotten in dance history, which, when dealing with the Ballets Russes, seems to do things backwards and go to the archive to find sources they already know are there instead of actually reading the papers. Many of these Russian critics agreed on nothing much in terms of art or politics, but they tended to agree on three things about *Sacre*: 1) it

was something new, 2) it was something Russian, and 3) the bloody foreigners did not understand it. The latter in particular is the reason the bloody foreigners should read them. They explain much about how and why *Sacre* was made and became what it became.

What makes this reception of *Sacre* remarkable, however, is that prior to Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* the year before, Russian critics had tended to be very critical of Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes. For most of them the Ballets Russes was *not* the revolutionary company it has been painted out to be – mostly by Diaghilev's collaborators. Prior to the 1911 season, most of the works in the repertory had already been shown in Russia. The decorative style or the use of concert music were similarly rehashing the Russian trend of the so-called "new ballet", which could be traced back to Gorsky's *Don Quixote* of 1900. That the fact that many of the vociferous defenders of this now decade-old trend were people who had, only a few years ago, furiously opposed this "new ballet" - Mikhail Fokine and Aleksandr Benois to name but two - made the enterprise an easy target for derision.[1]

Moreover, Diaghilev's marketing, his "huckster art"[2] were seen as unfit for Artists of the Imperial Theatres and detrimental to the reputation of ballet in Russia.[3] This brings in another level, that of the division of the "high" from the "low" in form and venue. In Russia, Diaghilev was dangerously "low" in ways unsuited to the "high" art of the star dancers, including Nijinsky, who had grown up in these "low" provincial touring companies. So it is kind of fitting that the reception of Nijinsky's choreographies would complicate such simple divisions - "old" versus "new", "high" versus "low", and also "dancer" versus "choreographer".

Critical Diffences

Russian reviews of dance are often if not longer than in the West, at least far more focused on dancing. It is remarkable how the staunchest defender of the "old ballet" in Russia, Andrei Levinson, *despite* his apparent dislike of Nijinsky's choreographic principles, appreciated the choreographic composition of *Sacre*. In his long and thoughtful review for the "thick paper" *Rech*, of which only an edited 1918 version has been translated into English, Levinson praises Maria Piltz's dance as the Chosen One as "very certain, brave, almost beautiful".[4] But let's return to Levinson a bit later.

In contrast, the usual Russian advocate of everything the Ballets Russes did, Valerian Svetlov, was unusually quiet about both the choreography and the music of *Sacre* in his review for the local gossip paper, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*.[5]

> The girl begins a dance that lasts for four minutes.
>
> The piece is unprecedented in the annals of choreography, and one remains astonished by the stamina and courage of the young Piltz, who kept to this choreographic torture, without giving up, only because it was required by the libretto and not actually.

Although he does not explicitly state it, Svetlov's text implies he was very uncomfortable with Nijinsky's choreography. In addition to emphasising Roerich's costumes over music or dance in the review, when he mentions the Chosen one, he describes the choreography as "torture", which moreover is, only necessary because of "the libretto and not actually".

However, Svetlov does end by stating that "All of this [second] act is full of some kind of Slavic mysticism and in Roerich's magnificent scenery [i.e. set design] one feels some kind of primal terror."[6] This Slavic mysticism crops up in numerous other reviews, pointing to a key reason for the positive Russian reception: *Sacre* was an inherently nationalist work to an extent unseen in the Ballets Russes repertory, and this nationalism oriented the work temporally towards the future - again, in complete contrast to how nationalism is usually presented as the antithesis of modernism and as a conservative tendency.

Nationalism

The references to kustarnost, to native forms of art like icons and lubki - Russian popular prints, which could be woodcuts or engravings - as well as to contemporary Russian arts in the reviews of *Sacre* all show how, despite being set in ancient Rus, this was the first Ballets Russes work that could be aligned with contemporary political and aesthetic changes in Russian art at a time when the Social Realism of the 1860s and the Symbolism of the 1890s were coming together in new forms of Russian Modernism and when numerous Russian nationalisms imagined futures for all Russians and for the Empire.

In the theatrical paper *Teatr i iskusstvo*, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the future People's Commissar of Enlightenment in the Soviet Union, appraised these qualities in the novelty:

> In order to find the key to the special features of primitive gestures or the herd's impulses, Nijinsky turned to embroideries, very old *lubki*[7] and in general to all kinds of primitive painting.[8]

Lunacharsky's political alignment with Russian socialism can serve to exemplify how *Sacre* could be interpreted in very different aesthetic and political traditions than any ballet before it and *as a ballet*, it could be interpreted in directly conflicting ways. Previously, ballet was only really relevant to the nation as imagined by the zapadniki - or Westernisers - many of whom were defenders of the "old ballet". *Sacre* evoked responses utilising the rhetoric of slavophiles and narodniki - or Populists - who sought for the Russian soul in the nation's history and the local traditions of the peasants and for whom ballet had been a fancy foreign import that could not engage in the political and social renewal of the nation and the state. With *Sacre*, which dealt with the coming of spring in pagan Russia, but which was also seen as a young and relatively inexperienced choreographer's work, this somehow seemed possible. There was a great deal of hope in the reviews, and a lot of emphasis on how *Sacre* was a modern, contemporary work, a great beginning - also for its young choreographer.

For example, Lunacharsky spent some time discussing how *Sacre* overhauled traditional notions of beauty:

> Only gradually the knowledge seeps even into opera and ballet that *the beautiful* is not entirely limited to *beauty*, much less to *the pretty*. Stravinsky and Nijinsky gave an artistic and *contemporary* work that has childish beauty, [a work] that in its refined guise cannot seem to us but to be ugly. They did not take the road of scientific accuracy, nor the road of balletic sugaring of the material.[9]

However, although it was clear to him that *Sacre* did not aim for archaeological accuracy or ethnographic authenticity, Lunacharsky did not actually consider the

possibility that Nijinsky would have taken to the primitive form *as* something beautiful *in itself*:

> This, however, means forgetting one thing. Primitive dance was depicted by equally primitive artists. In this case, the image has to be as different from the original as a child himself from his self-portrait. Thus, in this case, the painting style conditions [lit. shows through in] the dance style.[10]

In other words, he resorted to a claim similar to those made of Nijinsky's *Faune* in Western Europe - that Nijinsky had looked at sources from the Antiquity and simply imitated in dance the conventions of a two-dimensional picture,[11] although obviously as a choreographer he also had to have some actually *choreographic* reasons for playing with space like this.[12] Yet, despite his reservations, Lunacharsky nonetheless thought *Sacre* "was on the level of the very great spectacles."[13] That is, he thought it a masterpiece.

Like the Socialist, the former Director of the Imperial Theatres, Prince Sergei Volkonsky, thought primitivism, or archaism, as he called it:

> Archaism in movement [is] a dangerous element. Rarely is it believable on stage – it always looks like it has been made, searched for, intentional. But I should say that here, from the first moment it is *believable*, not once did it become 'intentional'. I should say that for the first time I believed in the naïveté on stage.[14]

Volkonsky thus praised *Sacre* for making him genuinely believe in itself as a work of art. A page later, he went on to explain what he found to be the most important quality of Nijinsky's choreography, the use of the chorus:

> The great pedagogic significance [of *Sacre*] is this strengthening of the choristic foundation in an art, which up to now has been the most 'solistic' of all**.** The forgetting of one's 'I' [is] the first imperative of art, and in this sense the new trend can only be welcome as an element of artistic health.[15]

Thanks to his interest in Dalcroze's eurhythmics, Volkonsky believed the "primitive" form – the choreographed repetition and mass movement, the de-individualization of the dancers and the emphasis on rhythm – could bring something new to dance as an art form. Particularly in comparison to Levinson, who disliked these "rhythmic gymnastics", this brings up another interesting division in the Russian dance discourse, the relationship of new forms of dance to the body culture of gymnastics, eurhythmics, sport, et cetera.

Similarly, E. Pann, writing for the theatre periodical *Maski*, found *Sacre* the most convincing work the Diaghilev company had ever produced.

> must show as a great event in the so-far short history of the Diaghilevian enterprise: it signifies its determined stepping onto the path of Rhythm. Both young renovators, one in the area of music, the other in the area of choreography, give great and convincing artistic effort.[16]

In a manner reminiscent of Volkonsky, Pann went on to discuss this rhythm and the new form of choreography that he had not seen as necessary in Nijinsky's *Jeux* but found fitting to *Sacre*.

In contrast, André Levinson, who preferred the "old ballet" qualities of *Jeux* to the primitivism of *Sacre*, wrote against this excess of rhythm:

> The sole aim he has invented for the movement [is] to realise the rhythm. Rhythm – here it is the only thing, a monstrous force harnessing the primitive soul.
>
> The dancers incorporate the relative length, volume, speeding up and slowing down of the tempo in schematic gymnastic movements, bending and straightening

> knees, rising and lowering their heels, stopping still, forcefully beating the accented notes.[17]

However, in his remarkable review, Levinson actually seems torn between his own preference for the graceful old ballet, its taste, elegance and refinement, and the lure of the new, alien formalism of Nijinsky:

> But rhythm [is] only naked form, only the measure of movement in time, devoid of content. Unwisely used, bringing it in sacrifices the plastic. And this is where, as the savages everywhere chaotically throw [themselves] around possessed by the spring and drunk from the godhead, the circulation turns into a boring exercise lesson in rhythmic gymnastics. When the shaman and the possessed began to "walk the notes" and "divide the *accelerando* or the syncope" there begins the psychological collapse of the entire attempt, its legality and [to] the comic bafflement of the spectator. Naïve *kustarnost*[18] repels the reception.
>
> The new rhythmic formalism should not crush the self-sufficient plastic; by itself it is empty and leaves little impression in itself.[19]

Notably, Levinson complains that rhythm "leaves no impression in itself" after having spent considerable time describing *how exactly* the dancers embody this rhythm. Despite or perhaps because of this ambivalence, Levinson praised *Sacre* for its bravery, its dazzling failure that, either despite or *because* of its downfall, was worth appreciation – it was only years later that he modified his opinion, writing that he had been "carried away"[20] by it all.

New Realism

Yet, perhaps the most important difference in the Russian reviews to those in French or English is that in the West, Nijinsky's works had been seen as "une phase nouvelle de la lutte de l'idéalisme contre le réalisme dans l'art scénique",[21] a new kind of anti-realist art. In part because of the importance of Realism to Russian arts and to questions of national identity, the reverse was true with Russian critics.

One of Nijinsky's greatest admirers was the poet Nikolai Minsky, who had begun his career as one of the first Russian symbolists in the beginning of the 1890s, writing to *Mir iskusstva*, for example. However, by 1912-1913, when he wrote of Nijinsky's choreographies, Minsky had embraced the new Russian formalism known as Acmeism - the loose group that included Osip Mandelstam and Anna Akhmatova, authors who eschewed the florid language and flights of fancy of the Symbolist generation.

In an effort to connect this new style to what was already called the 'Golden Age' of Russian art - the social realism of the peredvizhniki painters and music of the kuchkist composers, the works of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy - Minsky labelled it 'neo-realism', and for him, Nijinsky's choreographies were examples of this neo-realism in dance. Nijinsky's choreography was stylized everyday movement like Mandelstam's or Akhmatova's poetry was stylized everyday language.

> Although the starting point for his ballet [is] clearly the real, his goal [is] - thoroughly aesthetic. Through rhythm, he tears real movement from the everyday [movement] and makes it not only the object of art but artificial, almost automaton-figurative.[22]

Thus, in striking contrast to how Western critics tended to portray simplification and

stylisation in Nijinsky's choreographies as ugly, unsuited to dance as an art form, and, more specifically, as a foreign tendency,[23] the Russian critics could immediately make the connection between *Sacre* and their native forms of avant-garde art, similar in their use of local peasant artefacts and old forms.

In addition to Lunacharsky, quoted above, also Levinson noted the "icon-like gestures"[24] of the girls in the round dance of the second act and, as we have seen, being a good zapadnik, ended up accusing the dance of "naïve kustarnost". Similarly, Volkonsky tells us how a colleague called *Sacre* "icon painting in Cubist style".[25] Although here it must be noted that in an interview, published in *Peterburgskaia gazeta* the previous year, Nijinsky himself had said his work was no longer ballet and that he applied to choreography the theory of Cubist painters.[26] Thus, belief in authorial intention may have influenced the similarities in the critical reception in Russia.

Having said this, these similarities in the cultural references and in analyses offered of the novelty reflect a shared cultural context. Notably, in Russia, the qualities of stylization and simplification were seen as inherently national and as such, positive qualities in the choreography. Together with the nationalist overtones of a work set in pagan Russia - ideas of *rodina*, the motherland, and of the *narod*, or the people - this familiarity of the modernist qualities of *Sacre*, the work's apparent references to native forms and contemporary concerns in Russian art, explains also the critics' indignation at the manner in which the French audiences greeted the work and how it was received by major papers in the West.

Revanche, Revolution, Rejection

Nearly all of the Russian reviews attacked the French reaction, but precisely because of this reaction, Russian critics could also see *Sacre* as a *revanche* – an example of a Russian ballet that upset the French snobs rather than catering to them an unacceptable view of Russia as a nation (which was what Russian critics had attacked in Fokine's Orientalist works).[27] This was because - regardless of whether anyone had thought of this in advance - the theme of a re-birth, of spring ritual ensuring the return of the sun, could be understood as explicitly propagating the idea of a Renaissance of Russian culture.

Nijinsky's alleged revolution also seemed more sincere than Stravinsky's simply because it bore less obvious a resemblance to his known predecessors, and he never denied or renounced this connection or spoke ill or Russian audiences - unlike Stravinsky. Consequently, the reviews of his contribution were generally positive - with *Sacre*, the notable exceptions were Binshshtok in *Rampa i zhizn*, who thought the work was "musical and choreographic betrayal"[28] and deserved all the booing, and the critic of *Novoe Vremia*, who concentrated on depicting the French reaction and thought that Nijinsky would do well to heed his audience and "dance out his repentance" to regain public adoration.[29] However, unlike the above-quoted critics, neither of these authors had actually seen *Sacre*.

Conclusion

Of all the choreographies performed by the Ballets Russes, *Sacre* was the first one that

was seen as quintessentially Russian in Russia – and it was liked precisely for the aesthetic qualities that disturbed contemporary Western critics. In its references to Russian art that were not simple attempts at archaeological authenticity, *Sacre* implied that national colour was not just an exotic addition or piquant setting for entertaining dances. The work was sufficiently different from the Russia that had previously existed on ballet stages that a desired revolutionary force – whatever that would be for the critic in question – could be read into its stylised form. However, the same was true in reverse: for foreign audiences, *Sacre* was not as much a continuation of the established agenda of the Russian company as an escalation of barbarian excess that became a threat, even a danger to social order itself, a premonition of a coming war.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. ... and boy, did they seize that opportunity! See Järvinen 2008 for some examples.
2. "барышники искусства" *Obozrenie teatrov* 30.5./12.6.1909. Baryshniki was a term for people selling (black market) tickets to the performances of the Imperial Theatres at exorbitant prices.
3. again, more on Diaghilev's image in Russia in Järvinen 2008.
4. "очень увѣренно, мужественно, почти красиво" - Levinson in *Rech* 3./16.6.1913.
5. "Дѣвушка начинаеть танецъ, который длится четыре минуты.
   Вещь велыханная въ лѣтописяхъ хореграфіи, и остается удивляться выносливости и мужеству молоденькой Пильцъ, которая выдерживается эту хореграфическую пытку, обезсиливая лишь по требованію либретто, а не на самомъ дѣлѣ."Svetlov in *Peterburgskaia gazeta* 23.5./5.6.1913.
6. "Весь этотъ актъ полонъ какого-то славянскаго мистицизма и въ великолѣнной декораціи Рериха чувствуется какая-то стихшйная жуть." *Ibid.*
7. Lubochnaia kartina or lubok (pl. lubki) = traditional Russian popular print, usually woodcut or engraving.
8. "Для того же, чтобы обрѣсти ключъ къ особенностямъ примитивнаго жеста или стаднаго порыва - Нижинскій обратился къ вышивкамъ, очень старымъ лубкамъ и вообще разнаго рода примитивной живописи." Lunacharsky in *Teatr i iskusstvo* 9./22.6.1913.
9. "Постепенно лишь просачивается даже въ оперу и балетъ сознаніе, что *прекрасное* далеко не цѣликомъ сводится къ красивому, а тѣмъ болѣе къ *красивенькому*. Стравинскій и Нижинскій давши художественное и *современное* произведеніе, имѣющее своею цѣлью возсоздать еще младенческую красоту, которая въ необработанномъ видѣ не можеть не показаться намъ уродствомъ, не пошли ни по пути научной точности, ни по пути балетнаго обсахариванья матеріала." Lunacharsky in *Teatr i iskusstvo*

9./22.6.1913.

10. "При этомъ однако забывается одно обстоятельство. Примитивный танецъ изображался примитивнымъ же художникомъ. Въ этомъ случаѣ изображеніе должно было быть столь же непохожимъ на оригиналъ, какъ не похожъ на ребенка имъ самимъ сдѣланцый автопортретъ. Затемъ, танцевальный стиль пропускался въ этомъ случаѣ сквозь живописный стиль." *Ibid.*
11. see e.g. *Pall Mall Gazette* 18.2.1913; Johnson 1913, 186.
12. see e.g. Acocella 1987.
13. "сталъ (sic) въ уровень вообще хорошихъ спектаклей". Lunacharsky in *Teatr i iskusstvo* 9./22.6.1913.
14. "Архаичность въ движеніяхъ – опасный элементъ. Рѣдко ей вѣрится на сценѣл она всегда кажется чѣмъ-то дѣланымъ, исканымъ, нарочнымъ. Но я долженъ сказать, что здѣсь, съ перваго мгновенія вѣрилось, ни разу не было ‘нарочно’. Я долженъ сказать, что въ первый разъ я повѣрилъ наивности на сценѣ." Volkonsky in *Apollon* 6/1913. *Apollon* was an important culture periodical.
15. "Большое воспитательное значеніе имѣетъ это подтвержденіе хористическаго начала въ томъ искусствѣ, которое до сихъ поръ было самое ‘солистическое’ изъ всѣхъ. Забвеніе своего ‘я’ – первое условіе искусства, и въ этом смыслѣ новое направленіе нельзя не привѣтствовать, какъ элементъ художественнаго здоровья.” *Ibid.*
16. “можно разматривать какъ самое крупное событіе въ молодой пока исторіи Дягилевскаго предпріятія: она ознаменовала собою рѣшительное вступленіе на путь Ритма. Оба молодыхъ новатора; одинъ въ области музыки, другой въ области хореографіи, дали крупное и убѣдительное художественное усиліе.” Pann in *Maski* 7-8/1913-1914.
17. “Единственная цѣль придуманныхь имъ движеній - осуществленіе ритма. Ритмъ - такова здѣсь единственная, чудовищная сила, обуздавщая первобытную душу.
    Танчовщики воплощаютъ относительную длительность, силу звука, ускореніе и замедленіе темпа схематическоы гимнастикоы движеній, сгибаютъ и выпрямляютъ колѣни, поднимають и опускаютъ пятки, топчутся на мѣстѣ, съ силой отбивая акцентированныя ноты.” Levinson in *Rech* 3./16.6.1913.
18. i.e. something made in (or in the style of) a *kustar*, a peasant manufacture.
19. “Но ведь ритмъ - только голая форма, только мѣра движенія во времени, лишенная содержанія. Неблагоразумно было приносить ему въ жертву пластику. И вотъ, всюду, гдѣ хаотическія метанія одержимыхъ весной и опьяненныхъ божествомъ дикарей, обращались въ нудный показательный урокъ ритмическоы гимнастики, когда шаманы и бѣсноватые начинали “ходить ноты” и “дѣлать accelerando или синкопы”, - тамъ начинался психологическій провалъ всего замысла, самое законное и самое комическое недоумѣніе зрителя. Наивная кустарность пріема отталкивала.
    Новый ритмическій формализмъ не по праву подавляеть самодовлѣющую пластику; къ тому же онъ пустъ и мало впечатляеть самъ по себѣ.” Levinson in *Rech* 3./16.6.1913.
20. Levinson 1982, 54. This is a translation of Levinson's 1918 book. In addition to significantly rearranging the text and changing quite a few of his wordings, in 1918 Levinson also makes a specific reference to Dalcroze's system.
21. Vuillermoz in *S.I.M. Revue musicale* June 1913.
22. "Если исходная точка его балета чисто реальная, то цѣль его - насквозь эстетическая. Посредствомъ ритма онъ отрываетъ реальное движеніе отъ дѣйствительности и дѣлаеть его не только объектомъ искусства, но искусственнымъ, почти автомато-

образнымъ." Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913.

23. Exceptions include Mauss *L'Art Moderne* quoted in Bullard 1971, ii:72-76; and Marnold in *Mercure de France* 1.10.1913.
24. Levinson in *Rech* 3./16.6.1913. For some reason (perhaps stage lighting?), Levinson spoke of these girls as dressed in red.
25. "One of our critics in all amity favourably described it as "cubist icon-painting" where the archaic angularity of the movement unravels itself in front of us to the pipes of Slavonic Pan." "Одинъ изъ нашихъ критиковъ, изъ дружественно расположенныхъ, охарактеризовалъ именемъ 'иконописнаго кубизма' ту архаическую угловатость движеній, которая развертывается передъ нами подъ звуки 'славянскаго Пана'." Volkonsky in *Apollon* 6/1913.
26. Nijinsky in *Peterburgskaya gazeta* 15./28.4.1912 quoted in Zilberstein-Samkov 1982, i:448; similarly, Nijinsky in *Comœdia* 18.4.1912.
27. Creatively forgetting he had already complained of the Western tendency to speak of Russians as barbarians (in *Utro Rossii* 1./14.8.1910), Minsky began his *Sacre* review with a sneer: "Is it not curious that European critics acclaimed Diaghilev as a bold innovator and reformer of choreography all the time when he was staging old ballets with romantic plots and classical technique, adorned, quickened by Fokine's temperament, Bakst's taste, inspired by Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov. But as soon as Nijinsky, and Stravinsky in his wake, set themselves the task of radically transforming the technique and content of ballet, the public fled and the critics began to speak of northern barbarians." "Любопытно то, что европейская критика провозгласила Дягилева смѣлымъ новаторомъ и преобразователемъ хореографіи какъ разъ тогда, когда онъ ставилъ старые, романтическіе по содержанію и классическіе по техникѣ балеты, прикрашенные, пришпоренные темпераментомъ Фокина, вкусомъ Бакста, вдохновеніемъ Бородина и Римскаго-Корсакова. Но какъ только Нижинскій, а вслѣдъ за нимъ и Стравинскій задались цѣлью кореннымъ образомъ преобразовать технику и содержаніе балета, публика озвѣрѣла и критики заговорили о сѣверныхъ варварахъ." Minsky in *Utro Rossii* 30.5./12.6.1913.
28. "музыкальная и хореографическая чепуха". Binshshtok in *Rampa i zhizn* 9./22.6.1913. This was another major theatrical paper in Russia.
29. "Нижинскій долженъ оттанцовать свое покаяніе, чтобы вернуть прежнія симпатія парижанъ..." I.e. "Nijinsky should dance out his repentance, and perhaps the previous sympathies of the Parisians would return..." *Novoe Vremia* 28.5./10.6.1913.
30. Järvinen 2013.

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Violence and Light in the *Rite of Spring* of Marie Chouinard

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Abstract

Since the original 1913 version, there have been many different interpretations of Le Sacre du Printemps. Yet, all have commonality in bringing their dancers to the edge of an extreme physical, mental, and emotional effort. Movement in these choreographies is not an abstraction. Rather, it is an experience of life captured in physical challenges and emotional complexity that refers to the meaning of human existence, or Dasein, which translates literally from German as 'being there.' Martin Heidegger conceptualizes Dasein as both noun and verb: as a state of being and a process of becoming that occurs over history and time. It is interconnected with being, essence, existence, truth, and beauty. Consequently, this paper develops a line of thought around Dasein in Le Sacre du Printemps by exploring the following questions: How is Dasein performed in Marie Chouinard version? How is beauty conceptualized within violence and performed through the movement and the musical score? And, finally, what is the relation between truth and beauty in these two choreographies? This paper intertextualizes dance studies, philosophy, and critical theory.

Introduction

Light violently penetrates my eyes as I look at images; these moving images are the work of Marie Chouinard in her choreography, *Rite of Spring*. These images look otherworldly, like dreams transported into reality. The more I watch them, the more the light penetrates, the more these images become my own oneiric reality.

Darkness…Darkness surrounds a body, a body showered in a beam of light. This body, this dancer's body, with its knees bent, stands up strongly in parallel position, Yet its arms are bent like broken wings, pushing its head towards the light; like a bird hatching from an egg, a butterfly emerging from the cocoon, a plant sprouting out of the surface of the earth. The creature-dancer violently stomps and pushes itself from ground to sky; from dark to light, like a birth, it comes into the world, into presence, into Being.

A succession of images passes quickly in front of my eyes. I see dancers moving from darkness into light, evoking Plato's Cave in my mind. For me, the analogy between Plato's Cave and the work of Marie Chouinard is most apparent when considering how both works conceptualize the relation between shadows and light. In Plato's Cave, prisoners in darkness are facing a wall, only able to see shadows projected from a small fire situated behind them –shadows that are formless, that do not construct a reality. As a man escapes from the cave, he is blinded by the violence of light. For Plato, the exploration of shadows and light is an allegory of the light of intellectual contemplation. It is the ideal forms perceived in the world of incorporeal light that occupy the highest reality – and not the material world perceived by our five empirical senses.

To the philosopher, these forms represent ideas. However, Chouinard's choreography is not a mere allegory. Rather, it can be understood as Platonism against Platonism. In her *Rite of Spring*, the visceral physical experience of bodies is in opposition to the incorporeal light of Plato. Wherein there is a perversion of the idealism in Platonism, similar to the way Nietzsche overturns Platonism. Hence, I propose a reading of Chouinard's *Rite of Spring* as an unleashing of forces, as an anti-platonic philosophy, through the language of George Bataille in connection with Martin Heidegger.

The movement of Chouinard's choreography accentuates two planes: the vertical, and the horizontal. The staccato stomping of feet and crawling define the earth, while the frenetic jumping and reaching of heads and arms up accentuates the verticality towards the sky. So what is it precisely below the ground? Below the ground there is darkness where dancers -- as flowers -- emanate into the zone of light. The flower images created in the choreography echo George Bataille's idea from *Visions of Excess*, "Flowers themselves, lost in the immense movement from earth to sky, are reduced to an episodic role, by breaking the monotony, to the inevitable seductiveness produced by the general thrust from low to high." (13) What then is visible and invisible in this world of darkness and light? For Bataille, visible parts of the flower are nobly elevated while sticky roots wallow in the ground: the 'favorable impression' made by the flower is unavoidably tied to the "[…] impossible and fantastic vision of roots swarming under the surface of the soil, nauseating and naked like vermin. What is evil is necessarily represented […] by a movement from high to low." (13) Following this line of thought, Marie Chouinard's work of art, framed by opposing movements, from down to up, could be interpreted as the violent experience of coming into light, into knowledge, like spring coming from the darkness of winter, erupting into the equinox, where light reaches its maximum and unveils the truth.

There is an obvious metaphor in the relation between winter and spring: darkness and light. It is a metaphor of the place of emergence brought to present. It is the Being, which Martin Heidegger, defines as coming into the presence rather than the stable substantial presence. In Chouinard's work, Being is characterized as the space of oscillation between coming and not coming, between the visibility and the non visibility of dancers on the stage. Being is welcoming to lightness. Being, the coming into presence is depicted and experienced by the movement of dancers who turn around while they simultaneously move their head and pelvis in a circular pattern under a fulminating spotlight. Dancers are constantly moving in and out of illuminated areas of the stage; meaning, moving from the space of concealedness or invisibility into a space of unconcealedness, or visibility.

It is in this space of light that *aletheia* -- the name Heidegger gives to the unconcealedness of the truth -- presents itself. *Aletheia* emerges out of shadows. Consequently, using Heidegger's language in regard to *Rite of Spring*, the truth of an entity has set itself to work. The unity of the art work in relation to truth, parallels the idea of integrity, which Chouinard describes: "When a movement has integrity, then shape and spirit are in unison. When there is a relation between that and the backdrop, you could say, of life and of reality, when there is a relationship with what is beyond." (56) This truth in Chouinard's *Rite of Spring*, happens as an open space occurs. In other words, there is clarity, lighting, a cleansing that mirrors Chouinard's concept of integrity

with Heidegger's concept of *aletheia*. Heidegger develops the concept of *aletheia*, or the unconcealedness of the truth in "The Origin of the Work of Art," --where he states that art grants and guarantees to humans a passage to those beings that they are not, and access to the being that they themselves are." In Chouinard's *Rite*, this unconcealedness can be understood as happening where the ordinary becomes extraordinary -- the uncanny spring. This uncanny spring is highly eroticized -- almost as a bacchanal -- an orgy of nature which embraces spring as an open space of fertility. The choreography generates surreal images that suspend traditional notions of gender in a constant movement of ambiguity. As a spectator, I see a Minotaur or a Bacchus performed by men and women.

While spring traditionally revolves around earth and women, in Chouinard's piece there is gender equality in terms of the performance of the relation between fertility and earth. The movements are androgynous, and each can be performed by a man or a woman. However, since bodies on stage are almost naked, a close up reading reveals female qualities, such as breasts. Chouinard women are powerful and strong. They also move between darkness and light, from moon (traditionally viewed as feminine) to sun (masculine). But one can also read it as a movement between Hell and Heaven, as in the poem "The Possessed" by Charles Baudelaire.

> The Sun has draped black crepe on its fires,
> Moon of my life, wrap yourself like it
> In shadow; and sleep, and smoke, if you like,
> Be silent or dark, plunge in Boredom's Abyss;
>
> I love you like that! Yet today if you wish,
> Like a covered star coming from twilight,
> To strut in the space crammed by Madness,
> It's all good! Fine knife, unleashed from your case![1]

Baudelaire's Poetry, like Chouinard's choreography, reveals truth as a violent rupture in Bataille's sense.[2]

Nudity, already previously mentioned, is highly aestheticized by Chouinard. But nudity can be also conceptualized as the visible open space of light. Female and male dancers appear on stage with naked torsos, only covering their genitals with black minimalistic shorts. The choreographer uses nudity in most of her pieces as an allusion to the classical concept of beauty. But rather than just following the classical concept of beauty based on the proportions of the body, Chouinard develops her own concept for nudity and beauty;

> It is more in line with what Greeks were doing 3000 years ago. They were creating absolutely wonderful sculptures and most of the times presenting the body in the nude. […] One part of me wants to show the movement as much as possible but at the same time I am trying to complement the body or put an extension to the body so the costume becomes another manifestation of the piece itself. We're trying to bring the spirit of the piece over the body with a small a costume as we can (57)

For me, as an emancipated spectator, the beauty in the *Rite* of Marie Chouinard is a conceptual one, relating to the unconcealedness of the truth. In her choreography, she references a surrealist concept of beauty, where the unconscious, the psychic, the sexual, and the perceptual are bound together. A beauty which is defined as a convulsive beauty that according to Hal Foster, "Not only stresses the formless and evokes the unrepresentable, as with the sublime, but it also mixes delight and dread, attraction and repulsion: it too involves 'a momentary check to the vital forces', 'a negative pleasure'. (28)

The concept of the Spring as coming into light is a violent one. Spring is not conceptualized in Chouinard's choreography nor in this paper as an idyllic landscape. It is rather an outburst, an explosion of violence, an excess of movement in nature: flowers and leaves popping out from their buds; rivers and lakes overflowing from rain and melting snow; animals moving, migrating, and mating. Everything moves. There is an unchained process of movement, energy, and emotions. Therefore the truth of the spring is a violent one, and so is the truth in Chouinard's choreography. Movements become sharp and agitated; a continuous pelvic movement evokes sexuality, an eruption of nature. Moreover, in Chouinard's *Rite* there is no sacrifice per se -- there isn't, for instance, a virgin who dances herself to death. But, there is an excess of movement and a constant compulsive repetition of movement which evokes death. Birth is a violent movement; it is the rupture towards light and the predominant motive of spring. But, along with birth, death is omnipresent in spring as darkness surrounds the space of light. The question for the choreography is, when does this repetition of the movements serve binding life, and when diffusion of death, or when is the repetition driven by desire, and when by death? Since I frame this *Rite of Spring* by the dissident surrealism of Bataille, I draw upon Hal Foster's theory that, "It is precisely at these points of greatest difficulty -- where pleasure and death principles appear to serve one another, where sexual and destructive drives appear identical -- that surrealism is at once achieved and undone." (11) Right here, where sexual and destructive drives appear together is the point of intersection between Chouinard's piece and surrealism.

Death not only shows itself through the movement, but it also appears in the symbolism of the costumes. Spikes are a principal component of the dancers' costume. They are attached as extensions in their arms, as horns in their heads, and finally as a phallus in their pelvises. The spike signifies a violence full of contradictions, because it is the phallus which pushes, penetrates, gives life, but also cuts, and gives death. This ambiguity also appears in the use of mask by dancers. It is a bull mask. Looking at the dancers wearing the bull mask, Pablo Picasso's words come to mind: "It looks to be a picture that the viewer invents herself: it is a bull, but the viewer asks herself, what makes it so." (Levy 119) And what I see in Chouinard's piece is that female and male dancers become Minotaurs by wearing these masks; as Asterion equally shares its aggressive components in females and males. And, there is a moment in the choreography where dancers gather together forming a compact group. They move slowly but in opposition; up and down creating a wave where the bull's presence comes into visibility from the darkness or invisibility. At this precise moment, the mask becomes intensified; the mask evokes opposing concepts of war and love, death and desire, physically representing the conflict or confusion between principles of death and life, which renders the moment so tensely ambiguous.

The beauty in Chouinard's *Rite* is the truth of the spring, which in her work is framed in a quasi oneiric reality; a truth attached to the irrationality of dreams; a truth which is full of ambiguities and violence. The question then, is how does this violence, which emanates from the images of the choreography, relate to the truth. Here, I refer to French philosopher, Jean-Luc Nancy, who effectively connects the concept of Being to the violent aspect in the images. For Nancy, the image is a *monstrant*: "It is what takes the thing out of its simple presence and brings it to *praesentia*," (22) to being out-in-front-of-itself, turned toward the outside. The images in this choreography act like a *monstre*, emerging from its unity and force. The force itself lies in the unity that joins them together in order to bring them to light. The choreography tirelessly searches for this force, constantly renewing and reinventing its approach. Force is connected to forms to deform or transform them. And, as Nancy points out, "Image is always a dynamic or energetic metamorphosis; it begins before forms and goes beyond them." (22) By applying this idea to Chouinard's *Rite*, I see that the images of her choreography not only exceed the form, the aspect, the calm surface or representation, but that they draw upon the groundless; the groundless which is defined by excessive power; the excessive power generated by the energy of the movement. Therefore, Chouinard's choreography is a work of art which from the excess of power touches the real; in one word, it is groundless.

The choreography is about violence, where spring operates as an element of transgression; a transgression and a being that are carried away beyond the signs. In this beyond, violence and truth are mutually engaged in an act of self-exposure. Both, the core of this act and its realization take place in the images of Chouinard's choreography.
Violence, by its nature, is full of ambiguities but this is especially evident in Chouinard's piece, about the violence of the spring. Additionally, when one considers the spring in the context of community and nationhood, a question emerges: where does violence begin, and where does it end? Or better, what right justifies violence of nation? In posing these questions, I am going beyond the meaning that Chouinard assigns to the interpretation of the *Rite of Spring*. I am becoming an emancipated spectator, one who does not get seduced by images in a passive voyeuristic way; one who sees, feels and understands something, forming my own intellectual inquiry into violence, light, beauty and truth in Chouinard's piece. As Jacques Ranciere powerfully describes it and I translate:

> **"I"** the emancipated spectator, observe, select, compare, interpret. **"I"** link what **"I"** see to a host of other things that **"I"** have seen on other stages, in other venues. **"I"** participate in the performance by refashioning it in my own way –by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which **"I"** had read or dreamt, experienced or invented.[3] (13)

On the other hand, I must confess that I get seduced by Chouinard's *Rite*. I get fascinated by its violence, by the energy created from the movement, by the energy, a light, an aura that emanates from the choreography.

Nevertheless, the aura that this piece produces is a truth which is inextricably linked to my own intellectual inquiry. In this aspect even if Marie Chouinard does not

have a sacrificial virgin in her choreography I see a sacrifice without sacrifice. I see life and death intertwined through the acts of transgression and violence. Seeing, for me is knowing, and I see the rapture of spring as the metaphor for the rupture of an extreme violence like the revolution of a community and nation. I relate this in the choreography of Marie Chouinard to Bataille's interpretation of Heidegger's Being. "Being is not simple identity, but rather a rupture or disequilibrium, the sudden change of levels: being is a violent *difference*, precariousness and heterogeneity in relation to a given stable group." This means there is a rupture, an opening to let out the "excess of an unmaintanable, delusive unity, whether that unity is consciousness, the body, community or a nation." [4] (xxi)

At the end of the *Rite of Spring* by Marie Chouinard, dancers reach the light by standing up in a complete vertical position -- as human beings -- by extending their arms and heads towards the light. The extreme violence of the movement, the excess of energy, has exploded bringing verticality towards light. I pause and ask, does this represent the end of successions of catastrophes in the human history? Maybe, but perhaps the finale of the choreography could be understood and conceptualized as the end of violence, a revolution which changes the world, but also time.

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Notes

1. "The Possessed" by Charles Baudelaire. Trans. Brian Grosskurth
2. For Bataille's reading of Baudelaire, see *Literature and Evil*.
3. Text verbatim from *The Emancipated Spectator* of Jacques Ranciere, except I substitute (my) first person for (his) third person, whereby assuming the role of the emancipated spectator empowers my own reading and conceptualization of Marie Chouinard's *Rite*.
4. From Introduction to *Visions of Excess* by Alan Stoekl

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Encountering *Sacre* through Role-play and Microhistory

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Abstract

Finding ways into the vast literature on Le Sacre du printemps *poses challenges for specialists and novices alike. In the spring term of 2011, Selma Odom led a dance and modernism seminar, in which a group of graduate students delved into an examination of the original* Sacre *using the microhistories of its key stakeholders as an entry point. Everyone involved in the seminar—Selma included—was responsible for researching the involvement of two stakeholders in the Ballets Russes production and its reception, with the ultimate aim of participating in a historical role-play session at the end of the term. This interactive and collaborative assignment invited us to inhabit historical figures, taking on their personalities and viewpoints through a series of structured improvisatory vignettes that considered how the events surrounding* Sacre *might have unfolded. Within a decentred pedagogical framework, history came alive as we enacted a series of encounters, such as the initial meetings between Stravinsky and Roerich, and Nijinsky choreographing the role of the Chosen One on Nijinska. Throughout the process, as we pieced together historical accounts, critical responses, biographies, and (at times conflicting) autobiographies with musical and visual sources, the performativity of history was rendered visible. In this paper, Erin McCurdy, one of the students in the graduate seminar, and Selma Odom appraise role-play and microhistory as methods for research.*

Introduction

In spring 2011, Selma Odom led a seminar on dance and modernism at York University, in which an interdisciplinary group of graduate students, including Erin McCurdy, delved into an examination of the original production of *Le Sacre du printemps* in 1913 using microhistory and role-play. Everyone involved in the seminar was responsible for doing research with the ultimate aim of participating in a historical role-play session at the end of the course. Reflecting on this experience today, we appraise microhistory and role-play as experimental pedagogical approaches and strategies for research.

Our presentation begins with an overview of the seminar assignment followed by a discussion of the use of microhistory and role-play as methods. Then, drawing upon our own observations as well as reflections gathered from the other seminar participants, we describe our research leading up to the role-play day and the enactments themselves, concluding with some outcomes of this pedagogical experiment. Examples of photographs taken to document the process give a sense of how the seminar's work unfolded.

The Assignment

Selma Odom [SO]: The chance to focus on *Sacre* and its layers of historiography in a concentrated month excited me, and I was curious about how a workshop atmosphere might differ from a seminar spread over the usual twelve-week term. A report by the University of Melbourne Working Group on "intensive teaching formats" offers guidance which I shared with seminar members at the outset, particularly about diversifying teaching methods and choosing "fewer but deeper topics" in order to facilitate student-based, integrated learning.[1] The Working Group identifies role-plays and simulations among possible ways for participants to collaborate in the construction of knowledge. I was intrigued too by reading about how students and faculty in a seminar of the MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences functioned as the intellectual laboratory for what became *The Tragedy of Thomas Hobbes*, a play produced by members of the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2008.[2] The project's matrix of history, science, and performance sounded like a venture worth emulating.

Meanwhile, it took a concerted effort to attract qualified students to take the course on *Sacre*. I consulted all who were interested in advance about their backgrounds and research interests, in the end finding six students and two auditors from four universities who signed on. From these conversations, I realized the students would bring expertise and maturity to the seminar. They included a Dance MFA student in choreography and dramaturgy who is a former ballerina; three PhD students in music, one an established composer and two young concert pianists; a PhD student in Communication and Culture and another in Near and Middle Eastern studies, both of whom are dancer-choreographers; and auditors from programs in Dance Studies and Art History.

This group, I hoped, could enter the vastness of the Ballets Russes research literature as a team, rereading primary sources and reviewing the received wisdom of several disciplines. They could encounter the identities, ideas, and art of historical figures in context from their own vantage points. At our first meeting, I broached the idea of devising a set of enactments as the major assignment, worth half the course grade, in addition to other work which included a review article on an exhibition catalogue or documentary film and a proposal for a conference paper or future research.

Erin McCurdy [EM]: Knowing that the enactments would be an experimental project, Selma proposed the assignment to the group and then opened the floor to discussion. Moving forward with the historical role-play depended on everyone consenting to perform in the enactments and being willing to collaborate with the group. We first met Selma's proposal with skepticism. Having our largest assignment of the term culminate with improvised vignettes concerned us and we were uncertain about how to prepare. While everyone in the seminar had experience performing, a couple of the students had never tried their hand at acting before, which caused anxiety. There were worries that we might omit important information or blank on our research, as well as plain old-fashioned stage fright. In the end, through open discussion, we decided to dive in and take on these risks. Being such a small group spending an intensive period of time together, it quickly began to feel like a safe environment for taking chances. Moreover, Selma, who also took on researching two figures and participating in the role-play, promoted the sense that we were all in this together.

Methods

SO: Microhistory has been shaped by scholars such as the eminent Toronto-based Natalie Zemon Davis, known for her focus on the individual in social history. Perhaps you are familiar with the case of imposture in sixteenth-century France portrayed in *The Return of Martin Guerre,* the film based on her work.[3] Thomas Cohen, Renaissance historian at York University, explains the practice of microhistory in terms of scale and focus: as "passion for the brief and small," subtle reading of evidence ("we squeeze our sources hard, we read for nuance"), and intention "to assemble, as far as we are able, the entirety of past moments."[4] In imagining the seminar focused on *Sacre*, I wondered if we might be able to achieve Cohen's model of a "well-rounded picture of past moments" by exploring the interactions of key individuals within the distinct community of the Ballets Russes in the pre-World War I years.[5]

EM: Our microhistory research prepared us to then step inside history through our role-play scenarios. Our enactments invited us to inhabit historical figures, taking on their perspectives, postures, and even mannerisms as we participated in a series of structured improvisations that considered how the events surrounding *Sacre* might have unfolded.

While role-play is not a new way of engaging with history, it certainly has become quite popular as of late. Museum interpreters dressed in period costumes, living history performances, and hobbyists involved in live action role-play are just a few of the ways that reenactment, role-play, and simulation are flourishing. In her study of reenactment, Vanessa Agnew, a historian at the University of Michigan, examines role-play as a dynamic way of exploring our knowledge of the past. Located between work and play, reenactment furthers our historical understanding through its detailed preoccupation with the minutiae of daily life.[6] For Roger Kneebone, who devises surgery simulations at the Imperial College in London, low-cost immersive simulation offers the opportunity to rehearse the improvisatory aspects of a surgical operation at lower stakes than in a real emergency. Comparing the performance of an operating team to that of a jazz ensemble, Kneebone emphasizes the importance of role-play and simulation in translating knowledge into practice during the learning process.[7]

Although engaging in simulation or improvised role-play may have lower stakes, these activities still involve a level of risk-taking. Enactment creates a different dynamic between the student and the work. No longer at arm's length, readers become active participants. In addition, employing role-play in the classroom is a form of pedagogical risk-taking that encourages students to step outside their comfort zones.

Process and Preparation

SO: Inspired by seeing the Tarragon Theatre production of Wajdi Mouawad's *Forest*, in which eleven actors played forty-four roles, I suggested that each seminar member take on the preparation of one "major" and one or two "secondary" figures. Of the major figures responsible for the creation of *Sacre* we had enough people to have two Stravinskys, two Nijinskys, one Roerich, and one Diaghilev. The secondary figures selected were Nijinsky's sister and future choreographer Bronislava Nijinska, rehearsal director Serge Grigoriev, ballet master Enrico Cecchetti, conductor Pierre Monteux,

Dalcroze music education specialist Marie Rambert, theatre producer Gabriel Astruc, composer Claude Debussy, and critics Jacques Rivière, Carl Van Vechten, and Cyril Beaumont. The seminar members pursued their chosen figures, forging unique paths through the daunting, often contradictory literature on the Ballets Russes.

I provided an extensive bibliography divided into the broad categories of "insiders and witnesses" on the one hand and "histories, biographies, exhibitions and monographs" on the other, along with a general bibliography on dance and modernism. Meetings one-on-one with students helped us to plan more specific work on sources relevant to individual figures. As I hoped, the group became a research collective, a community researching a community, as people exchanged findings from individually-directed investigations. Taking their identities with them, students found that the tasks of reading and research were not neutral but rather positioned, situated, relational. We were always asking the question "What is at stake?" for our given major and secondary figures. How do insiders and witnesses deploy memory, and how do later historians use evidence to build interpretations? Working with the large array of sources, we began to think of possibilities for scenes, meetings, interviews, monologues, letters, reviews and so forth.

EM: Throughout our microhistory research, we all compiled lists of key events involved in the production and reception of *Sacre* that could eventually be used for our role-play scenarios. As a group, we agreed upon the premiere as the central event we would like to explore, and so we thought of encounters that had led up to the premiere as well as those following it. We decided to begin with the meeting of Roerich and Stravinsky at Talashkino. Next we made a sequence of scenes to do with Nijinsky. This was followed by Cecchetti meeting Rambert, Monteux meeting Stravinsky, and Debussy complaining about Nijinsky's *Jeux*. We then devised a scene based on historical accounts of the celebration that took place after the first performance.

When using role-play as a pedagogical method, it is useful to have a particular crisis, problem or issue in mind when conducting enactments. Together we decided that we were interested in exploring how the major figures might have resolved the issue of the music being drowned out by the disruption at the premiere. What changes could have been made to ensure that the conductor, the musicians, and the dancers heard the music during the subsequent performances? We agreed that this was an important practical issue that conceivably might have been addressed by the major figures involved in *Sacre* following the premiere.

We had more ideas than we could use, so we worked as a group to refine our list of scenarios and put them in order. In selecting what scenes to include, each student proposed the events that she felt were most important based on her microhistory research. To conclude, we devised scenes that dealt with aspects of the reception and aftermath of *Sacre*. These included Van Vechten conducting an interview with Stravinsky; the critics Rivière, Beaumont, and Van Vechten discussing *Sacre*; and Nijinsky reflecting on the work, years later. In some instances, we invented scenarios—such as the chance meeting between three critics—imagining what discussions might have taken place.

Once we had devised our scenarios, the individuals involved in each scene worked together to create short scripts outlining the context and focus of the scene. While our dialogues and actions were improvised, our scenarios were structured, providing us with a clear purpose for each scene. The structuring of our improvisations helped us feel secure in our research and yet open to the possibility of 'emergence' and discovery once

we all came together in our improvisations. As the role-play day approached, we gathered together costumes to aid in our transformation into our different figures. Historical photographs began to spring to life, as when one seminar participant stepped before the class with two pairs of eyeglasses poised on her nose, just as they appear in a well-known portrait of Stravinsky.

The Role-play Day

SO: We met in the McLean Performance Studio the morning of the role-play day to perform the prepared scenes, which we previously had decided to organize more or less in chronological order. Before we began, a seminar member arranged a display of her personal collection of hand-made costumes and soft leather footwear for Ukrainian traditional dance. The colorful embroideries swiftly pushed us into another reality, the theatre now evoking Princess Maria Tenisheva's art colony of Talashkino near Smolensk, where Nicholas Roerich and Igor Stravinsky met to work together during the summer of 1911.

Figure 1: A seminar participant sets the stage for our enactments.

Playing the scene's two major roles were the seminar's composer as the painter-ethnographer Roerich and one of the pianists as Stravinsky. Both were familiar with the photographs of this environment and its carved wooden figures, elaborate decorations, and distinctive textiles, as well as with the rich historical scholarship on the artists and their collaboration. The students hummed tunes and passed rhythmic patterns back and forth that they thought could be integrated into the score, discussing *Sacre* as "our baby." This sustained scene turned out to be serious yet funny, full of vivid detail from their joint investigations.

Figure 2: Nijinsky teaches Nijinska the Chosen One solo.

EM: In a following scene we were transported to a Ballets Russes rehearsal as two students reenacted Nijinsky teaching Nijinska the Chosen One solo. Nijinsky was portrayed by the student with the most extensive ballet experience in our group (shown in the foreground of Figure 2), while Nijinska was brought to life by an accomplished modern dancer. To construct the scene the pair rehearsed an excerpt from the Chosen One solo from Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of *Sacre*. By actually learning the choreography, teaching it, and counting the music, the pair brought to life how challenging the work truly was. This reenacted rehearsal led into an emotional scene that drew upon Nijinska's memoir in which she recalls telling Nijinsky of her pregnancy and informing him that she will be unable to dance as the Chosen One.

Figure 3: Stravinsky and Monteux meet to discuss the score.

EM: Another scene leading up to the premiere explores a meeting between Stravinsky and conductor Pierre Monteux. Interestingly, a pianist and an established musician-composer played these roles. During this scene, Monteux approaches

Stravinsky with recommendations for changes to the *Sacre* score. In particular, Monteux is concerned that some of the instruments are not audible. As Figure 3 suggests, this scene is a wonderful example of how the role-play exercise enabled us to explore some of the interpersonal dynamics surrounding the production of *Sacre*. This portrayal of Monteux helped us to consider the position of secondary figures who influenced the production but who have received less attention in the scholarly literature on *Sacre*.

Figure 4: The meeting regarding the problem of the sound.

SO: The largest scene we devised was an imaginary meeting called by Diaghilev on May 30, 1913, the day after the premiere, on how to resolve the problem that almost no one could hear the music. If audiences continued to riot, what should be done? Present in the heated discussion were five key players in addition to Diaghilev: Stravinsky, Nijinsky, Grigoriev, Monteux and Gabriel Astruc, the founder and impresario of the newly-opened Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. To be able to play Astruc, about whom I knew little, I had to immerse myself in his memoirs as well as architectural and social history. It was quite demanding to read everything and to rethink *Sacre* in terms of cost and risk before the deadline of the role-play day.

EM: A scene set during the aftermath of *Sacre* brought together three of the critics who reviewed the work: Rivière, Beaumont, and Van Vechten. This scene drew heavily upon the criticism of these three writers, yet the scenario itself was imagined. Instead of reenacting a documented event, we used role-play to discover what might have been discussed if these three critics had had the opportunity to compare their reviews of *Sacre*. We took some artistic license and devised a scenario that placed all three critics on a boat crossing the Channel exactly six years after the premiere. As Van Vechten (pictured in Figure 5), I prepared for the scene by reading his dance writings and music criticism as well as searching for mentions of him in other works such as Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. During the scene, through my discussions with Beaumont, we made the exciting discovery that both critics began their careers in dance criticism by reviewing Anna Pavlova.

Figure 5: A seminar participant portrays critic Van Vechten

Reflections

EM: After performing our role-play scenarios, we gathered as a group to reflect on our practice. With the day's events fresh in our minds, Selma posed four questions, to which we responded in writing. They were: What did you gain by doing the enactments together, today? How did you prepare? What were the disadvantages, or, what did you like the least? And, what aspects of this experience will be useful in the future?

Afterwards, we compiled everyone's written responses into a single document. Although our responses were personal, many patterns emerged across the group. In particular, everyone reported (in some way) that the microhistory and role-play approach to historiography promoted a deeper engagement with the past. Students felt a stronger connection to the historical figures than they had experienced using more conventional scholarly methods. We were able to "get inside" history.

One student wrote: "Speaking and 'acting out' information absorbed through readings, research and Selma Odom's lectures made for a more interesting and lasting memory of the historical facts and details around the premiere of The Rite of Spring." Another student reflected that the project "had the unanticipated effect of giving me some sense of the feelings and emotions involved in the lives of Nijinsky and Nijinska." She referred to the experience as "embodied history" or "three-dimensional history."

A recent article by Peter Felton in the new journal *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* outlines the "Principles of Good Practice" as a heuristic for assessing the scholarship of teaching and learning. According to Felton, good practice includes "inquiry into student learning" that is "grounded in context," "methodologically sound," "conducted in partnership with students," and "appropriately public."[8] These principles coincide with the ways our inquiry was conducted during the seminar and have shaped our reflections on this experience. Through this appraisal of the alternative approaches of microhistory and role-play we have aimed to speak to the transformative effect they can have on student learning and scholarly research.

Conclusion

EM: Using the approaches of microhistory and role-play provided me with a deep connection to historical material that I had never experienced before. Completing close readings of the texts surrounding a specific event with a keen eye for detail is something I have carried forward to my dissertation research on dance and museums. Our engagement with the vast literature surrounding *Sacre* brought to light the constructedness of historiography and disciplinary boundaries, which has influenced my own research approach which foregrounds interdisciplinarity.

SO: As a teacher I was gratified by the students' exceptional investment in the reading and in the choice-making required for effective role-play. They eagerly, almost voraciously, took responsibility for mastering the sources and scholarship on their figures, gaining clear awareness of activities and relationships through the multiple perspectives of insiders, witnesses, biographers, and historians. The imperative of putting knowledge on the line in performance produced a heightened level of engagement with the entire literature. One student reflected that, in staging a prepared improvisation, "ideas came out in an expressive way in the moment" and that "we got the chance to go on and find the most possible from our memories about what we had read." For me as a scholar, the seminar experience sparked new depths of rereading and informed "The Dalcroze Method, Marie Rambert, and *Le Sacre du printemps,*" my recent article on the other figure I played in the role-play day. Of all the seminars I led during a long career, I think I learned the most from this one.

Notes

1. "Intensive Teaching Formats: Report of the Working Group," University of Melbourne, http://fbe.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/634304/Final_Report_of_WP.pdf

2. Lynda Morgenroth, "Behind the Scenes: MIT Theater and the Royal Shakespeare Company," *Soundings* (Spring 2009), accessed 29 Aug. 2013 http://shass.mit.edu/magazine/spring_09/thomas_hobbes

3. Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). She reflects, "Writing for actors rather than readers raised new questions about the motivations of people in the sixteenth century…. Watching Gérard Depardieu feel his way into the role of the false Martin Guerre gave me new ways to think about the accomplishment of the real imposter, Arnaud du Tilh. I felt I had my own historical laboratory, generating not proofs, but historical possibilities" (Preface, viii).

4. Thomas Cohen, "The Larger Uses of Microhistory," *Microhistory Network*, accessed 29 Aug. 2013 http://www.microhistory.eu/the_larger_uses_of_microhistory.html

5. Cohen, "The Larger Uses of Microhistory." See also Carlo Ginsburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know about It," *Threads and Traces* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012) 193-214 and Giovanni Levi, "On Micro-History," *New Perspectives on Historical Writing,* ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) 93-113.

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7. Roger Kneebone, "The Art, Science, and Simulation of Performance," *International Symposium on Performance Science*, 2011, 93-102, accessed 29 Aug. 2013 http://www.legacyweb.rcm.ac.uk/cache/fl0026607.pdf
See also Roger L. Kneebone, "Practice, Rehearsal, and Performance: An Approach for Simulation-based Surgical and Procedure Training." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 302.12 (Sept. 2009): 1336-1338.

8. Peter Felton, "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL," *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 1.1 (2013): 121-125 at 121.

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Frank Martin's *La nique à Satan*: The Dalcroze Connection

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on the creative affinity between Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) and fellow Swiss composer Frank Martin (1890-1974). Early in his career, Martin forged close ties with Dalcroze's Eurhythmics method, and in 1926, he enrolled in Dalcroze's Geneva-based Institut Jaques-Dalcroze. He graduated with a Diplôme in 1928 and taught there as a professor of improvisation and rhythmic theory until 1937.

During Martin's tenure as professor of rhythmic theory and improvisation at Dalcroze's Institut, he composed the score for La nique à Satan. Martin conceived of a popular theatre piece that included singing, mime, dance and elaborate costumes. He involved numerous Institut teachers and students in the Geneva première on February 25, 1933. Martin also dedicated the vocal/piano edition of the score to Dalcroze.

This talk will explain how the songs in Martin's composition resemble some of the prominent aspects of Dalcroze's Eurhythmics method. The eurhythmic subjects of irregular beats, anacrusic rhythms, complementary rhythm and bodily gesture correspond with important aspects of Martin's score. The presentation also includes footage from a 1998 performance of La nique à Satan by the Swiss ensemble, Choeur d'Avully.

Introduction

It's a great pleasure to be a part of this group of papers that explores post-*Rite* artistic currents. My purpose today is to explore the connection between Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and fellow Swiss composer Frank Martin. I will discuss this connection in the context of Dalcroze's eurhythmics method and its affinity with Martin's theatrical piece, *La nique à Satan*.

Who is Dalcroze?

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze is a twentieth-century composer, pedagogue, pianist and essayist who is commonly associated with a method of education known in the English-speaking world as Eurhythmics. To Dalcroze historians and Swiss citizens, he is also fondly remembered for his significant contribution to the *festpiele* or *fête* tradition. Dalcroze was often commissioned to write the music and help create the story-line for these large-scale productions which celebrated various aspects of Swiss daily life.

According to Dalcroze biographer Irwin Spector, the *fête* probably grew out of the tradition of the 16th-century religious mystery play, and was later championed by the famous Swiss reformers Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Johann Heinrich

Pestalozzi (1746-1827). *Fêtes* were open-air, popular spectacles with large numbers of amateur participants who came together to celebrate Swiss culture through stories, song and dance.[1] Dalcroze was an important contributor to this tradition and composed the music for many *fêtes*, including, *Festival vaudois* (1903), *Fête de Juin* (1924) and *Fête de la Jeunesse* (1923). Dalcroze's *Fête de la Jeunesse* featured movement, dance, children's choirs, original songs and instrumental music. Many of the songs that Dalcroze composed for these spectacles became part of the folklore of the Suisse Romande.[2]

For Dalcroze, the tradition of Swiss popular festivals provided an important opportunity for him to advertise his educational method.[3] He also recognized their societal benefit to his fellow Swiss citizens:

> ... the study of the laws which govern collective gesture and movement, laws which form an integral part of any system of rhythmic exercises, deserves special consideration of all my compatriots who are gymnasts, singers or sportsmen. More than in any other country, in Switzerland popular spectacles involve the participation of numerous people, and the happy influence of these "Festspiele," [quotes his] to employ the German term, has long been recognized by our psychologists, pedagogues, and even theologians.[4]

Thus, Dalcroze's method and his ability to create large-scale *fêtes* directly connected with the Swiss public and no doubt helped pave the way for younger composers who wanted to contribute to the momentum of Swiss cultural nationalism.

In the early 1900s, with his attention increasingly focused on Eurhythmics, Dalcroze often connected his compositions to his pedagogical ideas. In 1903, Dalcroze presented his pageant, *Festival vaudois*, which chronicled much of the history of canton of Vaud in song, procession and dance. The production featured an amateur cast of thousands – including a 350-voice children's choir. Dalcroze reminisced, "it was while preparing the *Festival vaudois* that I had the chance to study in depth the question of the relationship of body movement and changes in space and time."[5] [6] Other Dalcroze compositions that complemented his Eurhythmics method included children's songs with movement activities, piano *études* and vocalises. In 1904, one year after the success of *Festival vaudois*, Dalcroze gave a talk at a conference of composers in Berne and argued that Swiss composers ought to create a national style of composition which would unite the richness of Swiss folk music with scenes and ceremonies from daily life.[7]

Eurhythmics

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze believed that the most important instrument to train was the human body. Dalcroze began to develop Eurhythmics in the mid-1890s after he became a professor of harmony and ear-training at the Geneva Conservatoire. Eurhythmics exercises consisted of bodily movements that trained the student to feel music's rhythmic and expressive parameters. His complete method included exercises in ear-training (i.e. *solfège*) and improvisation.[8]

Who is Frank Martin?

Along comes Frank Martin, twenty-five years younger than Dalcroze, and a Swiss composer who is often associated, alongside Arthur Honegger, with Swiss modernism. Martin is perhaps best-known for his large-scale choral and orchestral works and for his significant experimentation with Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone method. However, at an early stage in his career, he experimented with complex rhythmic procedures and had a close connection with Dalcroze.

Martin's Awareness of Dalcroze

Martin's knowledge of Dalcroze stems from his childhood. Because he spent his early years exclusively in Geneva, Martin might well have been familiar with Dalcroze's songs. Historian Jacques Tchamkerten asserts that Dalcroze's songs achieved popularity beginning with the 1893 publication of *Chansons romandes*, and in 1965 Martin reminisced about hearing Dalcroze's songs as a six year-old boy in Geneva in 1896:[9]

> In his [Dalcroze's] youth at the National Exhibition in Geneva in 1896, he was a singer and, with a few artist friends, he founded the Sapajou cabaret. I was too young then ... to go and hear it, but we hummed his songs ...[10] [11]

Martin's reference to the Geneva Exposition reveals the extent of Dalcroze's popularity – the event attracted two million visitors. To celebrate the exhibition, Dalcroze created *Poème alpestre*, which was a festival play or *Festspiele*. This successful event featured a large choir, orchestra and many songs for both adults and children. As an up-and-coming young composer, Martin would certainly have known Dalcroze through their mutual membership in the Association of Swiss Musicians, of which Dalcroze was a founding member and an extremely active and vocal advocate of new Swiss music.

Martin's close connection to Dalcroze

In 1923, Martin wrote a testimonial to Dalcroze's work in which he used the term *gymnastique rythmique*, and described the body as the seat of rhythm.[12] The description revealed his knowledge of and affinity with Dalcroze's ideas.

After attending the three-week summer Dalcroze course in August, 1926, Martin studied full-time at the *Institut Jaques-Dalcroze* until 1928. In June 1928, he graduated with the *Diplôme*, which is the highest level of Eurhythmics certification, and enables one to teach the method to future teachers. It is significant as well, that the atmosphere at the *Institut* during the 1920s was characterized by the frequent creation of theatrical pieces which featured aspects of the Eurhythmics curriculum. From 1928 to 1937, Martin served as professor of eurhythmics and improvisation at the *Institut* and wrote many essays and delivered lectures on the value of Eurhythmics for performers and composers. He achieved such prominence, that Dalcroze later invited him to be his successor when he no longer could direct the *Institut*.

La nique à Satan - introduction

Early in Martin's tenure as professor of rhythmic theory and improvisation at Dalcroze's *Institut*, he composed the score for the theatrical work, *La nique à Satan*.[13] As I hope to explain, *La nique à Satan* has much in common with not only Eurhythmics but also with Dalcroze's tradition of creating *fêtes*.

The narrative was written by Swiss educator/poet Albert Rudhardt (1894-1944), a Genevan schoolteacher and poet who asked Martin to compose the music. Rudhardt was commissioned by a local men's choir to create a story that would involve both children and adults.[14] He conceived of a popular theatre piece that included singing, mime, dance and elaborate costumes.

Perhaps because he felt the connection between this theatrical work and the Eurhythmics method, Martin involved numerous *Institut* teachers and students in the Geneva première on February 25, 1933. Martin also dedicated the vocal/piano edition of the score to Dalcroze himself:

> To Mr. E. Jaques-Dalcroze, my patron of Eurhythmics, patron also of song and popular spectacle, of which his genial invention enabled us to a make a better presentation of this work. With my admiration, respect and deep friendship. Frank Martin.[15] [16]

According to Alfred Berchtold, Dalcroze, in turn, was magnanimous in his praise of *La nique à Satan*. In his book, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son temps* (2000), Berchtold included Dalcroze's toast to Martin's work:

> United like a back and a shirt—Overlapping tonalities—Oriental modes combine seamlessly with the songs of our land. [17] [18]

Like Dalcroze's spectacle, *Notre petite vie à nous* (1928), *La nique à Satan* celebrated children. In an essay, Martin explained its purpose:

> Rudhardt's idea was to create a popular spectacle where children played a dominant role ... the children would be the heroes and the adults would be misled ... the entire production would be mimed with numerous songs ... songs for men, ladies, but above all, songs for children.[19]

The story is set in a 19th-century village. *The Beaux Esprits* (or snobs) and the *Bons Garçons* (workers) quarrel but live together in relative peacefulness. There is also an old sorcerer named La Bergougne and an idealist poet named Jean des Lunes. Jean des Lunes plays on a magic flute and is a great friend to the children (perhaps like a Peter Pan figure). One day the sorcerer comes to the village and pronounces that fire, storms, and thunder will plague the village. *Les Beaux Esprits* hold a council assembly, but are unable to decide what to do about La Bergougne's pronouncements. *Les Bons Garçons* decide to stay and laugh at *Les Beaux Esprits*, who after endless discussions, finally leave the

village. *Les Bons Garçons* are visited by evil messengers who convince them to follow the devil. However, the children and Jean de Lunes return to defeat the evil messengers and all groups return to the village to celebrate.[20] The production's satirical nature and general theme of the triumph of good over evil mark it as a populist work and it was well received by the public at its premiere in the Grand Théâtre de Genève on February 25, 1933.[21]

Here is a short video clip from the prologue. You will see interesting movements (from different planes) and gestures that have a connection to Dalcroze Eurhythmics work.

Martin's rhythmically inventive style underscores the story's lively and satirical elements. The opening song, *Chanson des Beaux Esprits* is a foxtrot with many rhythmic procedures that are important aspects of Dalcroze's method. Martin cited the foxtrot as a dance form with interesting rhythmic possibilities in his 1926 Eurhythmics lecture, "La mesure et le rythme."[22]

He begins the song with repeated quarter notes in the accompaniment which, like many Dalcroze exercises, establishes a metrical underpinning over which more interesting rhythmic procedures can unfold:[23]

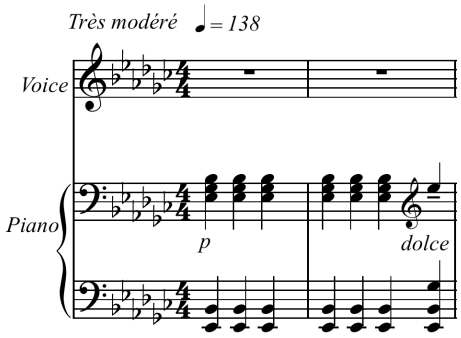

Figure 8.11: *Chanson des Beaux Esprits*, from *La nique à Satan*, mm. 1-2

When the *Beaux Esprits'* vocal line enters at m. 3, Martin writes anacrusic phrases that create a sense of forward motion. The syncopated, accompanying figures in the piano's right-hand part, (played by a sax in the orchestral score) imply a 3+2+3 eighth-note subdivision, which was a common pattern in Dalcroze's exercises on irregular beats in his 1916 Eurhythmics manual, *La Rythmique*:[24]

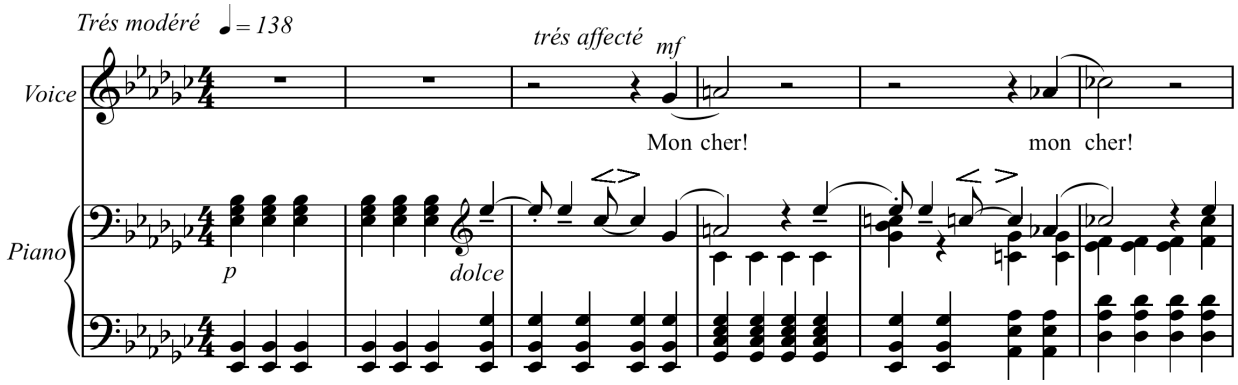

Figure 8.12: *Chanson des Beaux Esprits*, from *La nique à Satan*, mm. 2-6

I would like to draw your attention to Dalcroze's lesson plans taken from a 1926-27 volume of lessons which corresponds to the same year that Martin began taking classes under Dalcroze at the *Institut Jaques-Dalcroze*. There are three Eurhythmic subjects from Dalcroze's curriculum that Martin explores in his lesson plans:

1) *Anacrusis*: notice how many variations of one-beat *anacruses* there are in Martin's lesson plan. He uses the concept of *anacrusis* often in the songs of *La nique à Satan* – especially in *Chanson des Beaux Esprits*.
2) *Les syncopes*: even though Martin had some familiarity with American jazz, his kinesthetic knowledge would have been increased with an exercise such as this *syncope*, which has almost the same rhythm as what he wrote in *Chanson des Beaux Esprits*.
3) *Mesures alternées*: alternating measures (in English), which Dalcroze employed in order to enlarge the student's sense of what was metrically and rhythmically possible. Notice the changes from compound meter (dotted eighths) to simple meter (this feature is also related to the Dalcroze subject of *mesures inégales* or unequal measures).

Valse Des Beaux Esprits

When *Les Beaux Esprits* question whether they should stay in the village or flee, Martin creates a song with the eurhythmic concepts of *anacrusis* and complementary rhythm. He begins the song, *Valse des Beaux Esprits* with anacrusic rhythms in both the piano and vocal parts. The opening staccato quarter notes in the bass voice occur on the weak second and third beats of the 3/4-meter measure and are unresolved, because Martin writes quarter-note rests on the downbeats of these measures.[25] This structure highlights the indecision of the *Beaux Esprits*, who cannot decide whether or not to leave the village. The weak beat quarter notes in the bass voice also serve as a complementary rhythm to the piano's B-flat downbeat bass notes in the opening few measures. At measure 18, the anacrusic quality of the tenor voice entry provides forward motion and further emphasizes the indecisive quality:

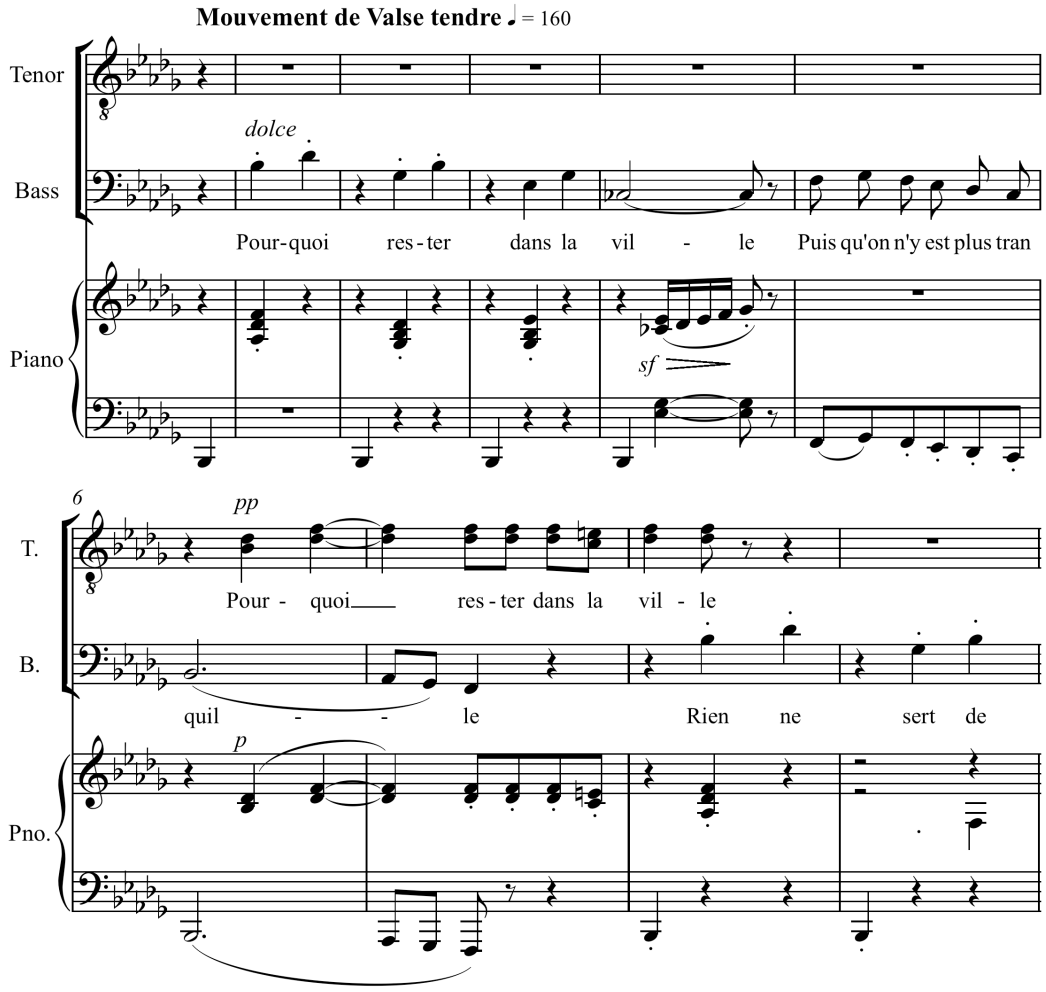

Figure 8.13: Tenor and bass parts and piano, *Chanson des Beaux Esprits*, from *La nique à Satan*, mm. 11-20

In his treatise, *Les games et les tonalities*, *le phrase et les nuances* (1907), Dalcroze highlights the *anacrusis* (or upbeat part of a phrase) as a subject worthy of focus. In the book, *Rhythm, Music and Education* (1921), he refers to the *anacrusis* as the "motor impulse" of music.

In the song, *Marche du Cirque*, Martin creates rhythms with nonsense syllables. These onomatopoeic syllables imitate the sounds of musical instruments that one might hear in a circus band. In a 1998 production of *La nique à Satan*, the actors sang the song with gestures that imitated various musical instruments:[26]

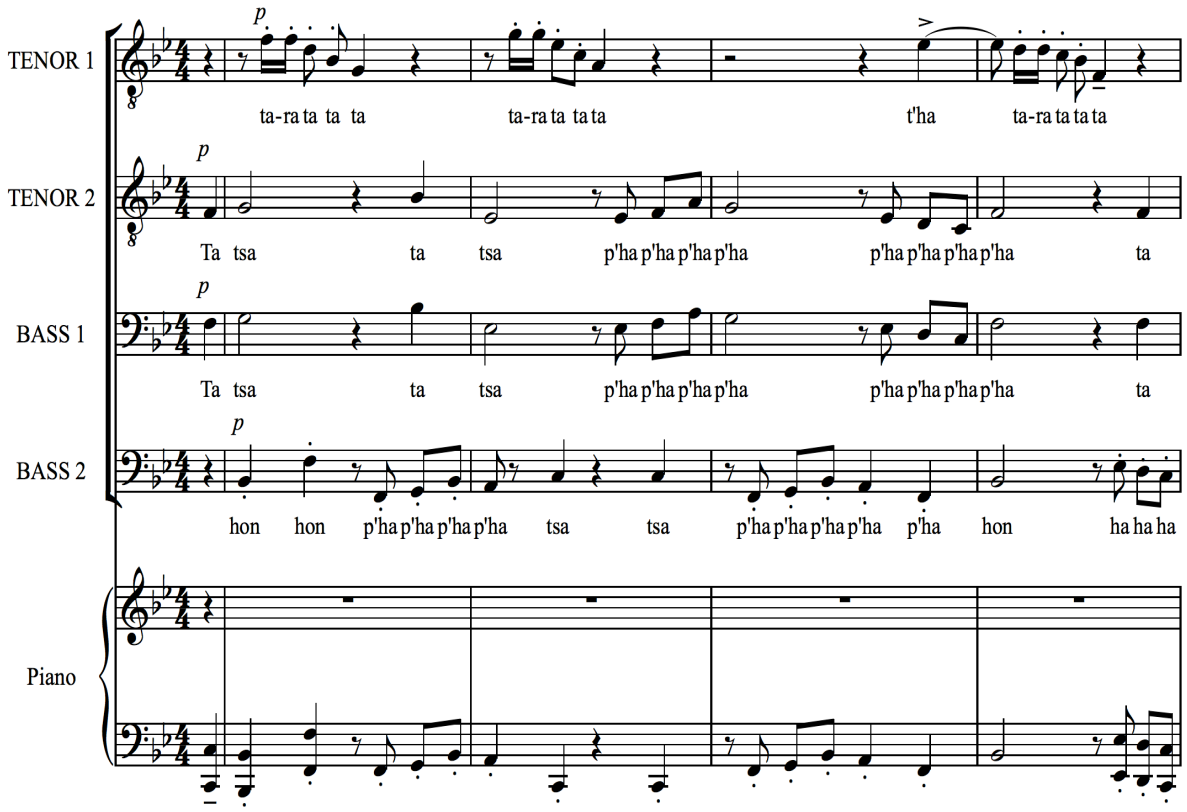

Figure 8.14: Tenors, basses, piano (reduction), *Marche du Cirque* from *La nique à Satan,* mm. 4-7

The anacrusic figures in Tenor 2 and Bass 1 are complemented by the Tenor 1 voice. The energy of the upbeat two sixteenth-note, two eighth-note and quarter-note phrases, complement the sustained phrases of Tenor 2 and Bass 1.

Likewise, in some of his activity-based songs for children, Dalcroze also created onomatopoeic syllables that imitated musical instruments or animals. In his 1939 children's book, *La jolie musique*, Dalcroze wrote the following exercise, recommending that "children while singing, imitate the gestures of the instrumentalists:[27]

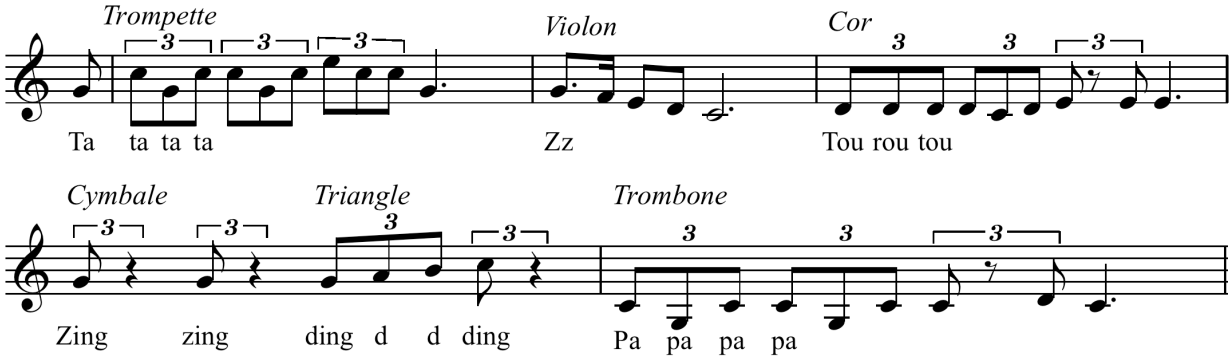

Figure 8.15: Dalcroze children's exercise from *La jolie musique* (1939)

The concept of complementary rhythm was also important in Dalcroze's training, because it helped students to experience contrapuntal texture in a practical manner. He would often divide students into groups whereby one group would intone long notes and the other group would improvise phrases to fill in or complement the first group's long note values. In more complex exercises, he would present several contrapuntal possibilities. Some of these rhythmic *contrepoints* would overlap the given theme. We see it at work in *Marche du Cirque*, with the instrumentalists vocally filling in the long notes of tenor 1 and bass 1.

In the preface to his catalogue of Dalcroze's vocal compositions, Jacques Tchamkerten suggests that Martin was influenced by Dalcroze's 1928 children's spectacle, *Notre petite vie à nous*:

> It is probable that Frank Martin had a memory of this work [*Notre petite vie à nous*], which is full of amazing findings, when he composed in 1931, *La nique à Satan*. [Notre vie] anticipated it with the clarity of its melodic contours, the boldness of its rhythms and by its sheer verve.[28] (2000, viii)

In *Notre petite vie*, we have a collection of songs for children. One of which contains irregular rhythms, *anacrusis* and complimentary rhythm and might be what Tchamkerten had in mind when he talked about how Martin was influenced by this work.

Listen to the following song, *Les braves compangards*. Notice the one-beat anacrusic start in the piano and voice. There is also complementary rhythm and syncopation between the right and left-hand of piano. It is also noteworthy that Martin employs changing meters, which were such a prominent feature in Dalcroze's Eurhythmics work. There are many other examples in *Notre petite vie*, but I do not have time to talk about them today.

Conclusions

1. Martin's *La nique à Satan* has an affinity with Dalcroze's eurhythmics method in the areas of *anacrusis*, complementary rhythm (or *contrepoint*), onomatopoeic *solfège*, syncopation, irregular beats, changing measures and movement and gestural stage work.

2. Martin, through his boyhood and adulthood exposure to Dalcroze's *fêtes* – including Dalcroze's children's work, *Notre petite vie* – was inspired to create *La nique à Satan* in this tradition.

3. Martin's immersion in Dalcroze Eurhythmics played a significant role in his search for a more rhythmically vital style of composition of which *La nique à Satan* is but one example.

[1] A detailed explanation of the Swiss *fête* or *Festspiele* tradition appears in Irwin Spector's *Rhythm and Life. The Work of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze* (New York: Pendragon, 1990), 56-61. Another source is Edouard Combe's chapter, "Le Festspiel" in the book, *La Suisse qui chante* (Lausanne: Éditions R. Freudweiler-Spiro, 1932), 197-227.
[2] Irwin Spector, *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze* (New York: Pendragon, 1990), 62, and Bernard Reichel, "Les chansons d'Émile Jaques-Dalcroze," in *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L'homme, le compositeur, le créateur de la rythmique* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1965), 51.
[3] Dalcroze's talent for self-promotion was described to me by Isabelle Hirt, archivist at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva. Jacques Tchamkerten, a renowned Dalcroze scholar, also shared this idea with me.
[4] Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *Rhythm, Music and Education*, Trans. Harold Rubenstein (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921a), 220.
[5] Alfred Berchtold, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son temps* (Lausanne : L'Age d'homme, 2000), 70.
[6] This quotation also appears in Selma Odom's dissertation, "Dalcroze Eurhythmics in England: History of an Innovation in Music and Movement Education," (University of Surrey, 1991), 54. As noted by Odom, the original quotation is from Dalcroze's article in the Tribune de Lausanne (June 17, 1928).
[7] Irwin Spector, *Rhythm and Life: The Work of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze*, 45-46.
[8] Dalcroze also wrote many treatises, including the multi-volume work, Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze: Pour le développement de l'instinct rythmique du sens auditif et du sentiment tonal (Neuchâtel: Sandoz, Jobin et Cie, 1906-1908).
[9] See Tchamkerten's introductory essay in the publication, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: catalogue thématique des chansons, rondes et mélodies (Geneva: Papillon, 2000), 32.
[10] Frank Martin, "Introduction," in *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L'homme, le compositeur, le créateur de la rythmique* (Neuchâtel : Éditions de la Baconnière, 1965a), 8.
[11] From Frank Martin's preface to Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: l'homme, le compositeur, le createur de la rythmique (Neuchâtel: de la Baconnière, 1965).
[12] This testimonial was also discussed in chapter 2 (see pages 50-51). Martin's testimonial originally appeared in a 1924 special edition of Dalcroze's journal, *Le Rythme*. It was reprinted in the publication *Écrits sur la rythmique et pour les rythmiciens, les pédagogues et les musiciens* (Geneva: Éditions Papillon, 1995), 5.
[13] The English translation is thumbing one's nose at the devil.
[14] The Swiss men's choir was La Lyre de Carouge, which still exists today.
[15] Société Frank Martin, *Frank Martin: L'univers d'un compositeur* (Boudry, Switzerland: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1984), 22.
[16] Martin's handwritten dedication to Dalcroze appeared on a single copy of the edition for voice and piano. The dedication was reproduced in *Frank Martin: l'univers d'un compositeur (*1984). The original edition with Martin's handwritten dedication is located at the Centre international de documentation at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva.
[17] Berchtold, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze et son temps*, 208.
[18] Berchtold does not give a source for Dalcroze's toast. As of September, 2011, I have been unable to locate it.
[19] Frank Martin and Maria Martin, *A propos de... commentaires de Frank Martin sur ses Œuvres* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1984), 18.

[20] I am indebted to Maria Martin for my synopsis of the work. My discussions with her in January, 2009, and her work, *Ma vie avec Frank Martin* (1990) aided my understanding of Martin's La nique à Satan.
[21] Parisian writer and psychologist André Berge wrote a glowing review of *La nique à Satan* in Les Nouvelles littéraires (18 April, 1933). As mentioned in chapter 3, he was a close friend of Frank Martin's.
[22] He delivered the lecture at Dalcroze's 1926 Congress on Rhythm.
[23] The original score for voices and wind instruments, piano and string bass is located at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland. I have notated excerpts from the vocal/piano reduction that was published by Éditions Henn in Geneva. See the bibliography for a more complete citation.
[24] See pages 37-38 in La Rythmique (1916).
[25] Although Dalcroze wrote many examples of anacrusic patterns in his method books, he did not make a detailed analysis of the different types of anacrusic structures. Mathis Lussy, Dalcroze's mentor, however, classified an anacrusis with an unresolved downbeat. He referred to this structure as an anacrusis décapité. For further information, see *L'anacrouse dans la musique moderne* (Paris: Heugel, 1903).
[26] See the videography section in the references for more information concerning the 1998 version of La nique à Satan.
[27] Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, *La jolie musique* (Le Locle, Switzerland: Huguenin, 1939a), 42.
[28] Jacques Tchamkerten, *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: Catalogue thématique des chansons, rondes et mélodies* (Geneva : Papillon, 2000), viii.

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Searching the Darkness: Molissa Fenley's *State of Darkness*

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Abstract

In her description of material contained in the database "Stravinsky the Global Dancer," (Jordan and Larraine Nicholas, 2003) Stephanie Jordan asserts that there has been "unrelenting global demand" by choreographers for Stravinsky's Le Sacre du Printemps, comprising a "formidable array of genres: the styles of American and European modern dance, physical theatre, Tanztheater and post-modern Butoh, as well as stylistic mixes incorporating ballet…contemporary as well as historical settings; and a range of ethnographic situations…" Jordan notes that there have been "over 80 uses of the score since 1990," fueled perhaps partly by the Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer reconstruction of Sacre for the Joffrey Ballet in 1987. The Joffrey Sacre inspired American choreographer Molissa Fenley to create what dance critic John Gruen called "a forty-minute miracle of endurance and exultation…a singular achievement within the canon of contemporary dance."

The purpose of my paper is to examine Molissa Fenley's piece, State of Darkness. Specifically, I will investigate the ways in which Fenley's version circumvents a stereotypically gendered reading of the Chosen One, discuss how critics and Fenley herself viewed State of Darkness as a turning point in her career, and look at how the movement vocabulary of the piece reflects Fenley's images, influences, and her understanding of "the open space of the world." Finally, I look carefully at the ways in which the soloists who have inherited Fenley's role (Boal, Foster, and Porretta) elicit uniquely different viewing experiences of the piece through their individually nuanced performances.

American choreographer Molissa Fenley saw the Millicent Hodson/Kenneth Archer reconstruction of *Le Sacre du Printemps* for the Joffrey Ballet at City Center in New York in 1988. Immediately captivated by "the music and the staging of primitivism, the beautiful costumes, the oddity of the steps, the turned in and stomping vocabulary," (Fenley email 4/11/13) she went to Tower Records and bought the Detroit Symphony Orchestra recording as conducted by Antal Dorati on the recommendation of the sales clerk. Fenley immersed herself in the score, listening to it daily as she engaged in her warm-up series, until she found herself "inserting physical responses to the music… [building] a vocabulary" that responded to the emotional strain of the music. The 1988 piece that Fenley created, *State of Darkness*, was hailed as a "forty-minute miracle of endurance and exultation…" (John Gruen, *Dance Magazine*, May 1991); a "minimalistic solo marathon," (Marcia Siegel, "Pomo Retro Rite" in *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 Spring 2008) and won a Bessie Award for choreography in 1988 and later a Bessie Award for performance when restaged on Peter Boal in 2000. In this paper I examine Fenley's piece, her choreographic influences, and explore questions raised by Fenley's

restaging of the work on other bodies, notably Peter Boal (1999) and Pacific Northwest Ballet's Jonathan Porretta (2007.)

Molissa Fenley was born Avril Molissa Fenley on November 15, 1954 in Las Vegas, Nevada, the youngest of three siblings. Her family moved to Ithaca, NY when she was nine months old, and then at age six to Ibadan, Nigeria where her father worked for USAID, the United States Agency for International Development. Fenley grew up in Nigeria and spent her last two years of high school in Spain before returning to the States in 1971 for college at Mills College in California. In an interview with Ann Murphy for the Oral History Project through the Dance Division of the New York Library for the Performing Arts, Fenley describes her background: "I consider myself sort of Nigerian in a way…I grew up in Ibadan, which is Yoruba…I just remember always feeling that I was surrounded by extreme physical beauty, not only of the land, but of the people. There was a sense that the human body was extremely strong, enduring, could withstand all sorts of punishment from disease to malnutrition…[I felt] an extraordinary sense of optimism in that the human body was the thing that carried around this soul" (Interview transcript, page 14). Fenley's time in Spain brought her an introduction to Flamenco dancing as well; her exposure to dance was both multi-faceted and multicultural, and highly atypical for most American women.

At Mills College Fenley studied Graham and Humphrey technique and Louis Horst's methods of composition. After graduation, Fenley moved to New York City, dancing with other choreographers (notably Carol Conway and Andrew deGroat) before forming her own company in 1977. Writing about Fenley in 1980, dance scholar Sally Banes stated "Molissa Fenley's choreography bewilders the eye, entices the ear, and challenges both the memory and the intellect. Incessant, everchanging motion, saturated with polymorphous arm gestures, performed to a driving, repetitive, percussive beat, the dances are complex series of tensions between constancy and mutability, structure and disorder, abstraction and imagery, exoticism and familiarity, social and theatrical forms" (Banes, *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism*, 259). Fenley described to Banes the evolution of her use of arm gestures: [After *Planets* (1978)] "I allowed the gestures to become more motional rather than stopped in space, gestural. I wanted to use the back as fully as I could, and to use the arms as more than simply extensions of the spine…" (261-262) Banes notes that in Fenley's work, "…the centrality of the arm movements to the motion of the rest of the body prevents one from seeing them as simply embellishments" (262). This holds true ten years later in Fenley's *State of Darkness*, where arm gestures are invocations, conjuring up images of ancestral spirits, animal essences, and emotional experiences.

A sense of ritual permeates Fenley's choreography. In an essay in *The Vision of Modern Dance*, edited by Jean Morrison Brown, Naomi Mindlin and Charles Woodford, Fenley states "The whole dance experience for me is extremely sacred and ritualistic, as well as all-consuming" (210). Her experiences in Nigeria left a lasting impression. In describing the dances she saw in Nigeria, Fenley told Ann Murphy "You would go for a while and the ceremony would be going on, and you would leave as the ceremony was continuing. My brother and I saw an enormous amount of dance…We learned very quickly that there was something extraordinarily beautiful about these rituals" (Oral History Project, page 20). Fenley also commented on the transformation that takes place, noting "Seeing so much Yoruba dance at an early age instilled this idea of dance taking

place over a long period of time, that there was something about the metabolic shift that was going to happen in the dancer doing something for so long, but also in the watcher, that there's this way of empathically involving oneself and witnessing something for so long that you and the dancer, in fact, go through these shifts of interest, non-interest, engagement, non-engagement, and what is at the end of that is that an hour has passed…and you've both been in the space at the same time, so how interesting that is, doer and watcher together." (Oral History Project, page 63). The sense of shared experience of watcher and doer, combined with the process of empathically witnessing movement permeates *State of Darkness*. We are mesmerized throughout, understanding those fluctuations in attention as part of a larger kinesthetic whole.

In Fenley's solo journey through her *State of Darkness*, we become witness to a series of transformations. Fenley described this process in conversation with Ann Murphy:

…this idea of Shamanic transformation had been set up very early on, particularly in *State of Darkness* in 1988, where I chose to choreograph as a solo the entire *Rite of Spring* and used the score as a thread of emotionality that takes a person through all sorts of transformations of visiting ancestral spirits and visiting animal spirits, visiting her own spirit, and again, going through extreme physical transformation and extreme physical expenditure.

But, *State of Darkness*, that physical expenditure had to do with just this extraordinary giving up of one's metabolic self to what was going to happen…(77)

In Ellen Bromberg's documentary film "The Re-Staging of *State of Darkness*," Fenley describes the origination of some of the movement motifs in the piece: "The imagery has a lot to do with going in and out of different animal forms, different spirit forms. There are moments that are extremely exotic; there are moments that are much more sort of pedestrian. The whole thing is like gathering in water and there's a whole 'farming' part to it… [another part] is a deer stopped in front of headlights…" In an email to me, Fenley explained that she worked intuitively from the score, rather than researching the original ballet's libretto. She wrote: "I could see from the CD that parts of the music were titled "The Bear Dance," or "The Ancestors," or "The Chosen One," etc., and so used those differentiations of characters to help in choreographing the vocabulary—there were dance phrases choreographed for being an ancestor, a spirit, an animal, a person…" (Fenley, email 4/11/13). In an unpublished essay by Richard Move, Fenley is quoted as saying "I knew that there was the possibility for one person to take on the varying states of the music. I experimented with changing who I was while dancing: sometimes in the spirit world, sometimes in the animal world, sometimes in the present plane, constantly shifting personas in the dance, exiting a sense of "self" and becoming something "other," and being transported" (*Rhythm Field: The Dance of Molissa Fenley*, Seagull Press, March 2014). This constant process of shape-shifting, and Fenley's remarkable ability to embody these transformations is one of the reasons *State of Darkness* is so compelling.

Fenley also felt the influence of *Sacre's* creators as she was choreographing. In John Gruen's May, 1991 *Dance Magazine* essay, Fenley noted:

I had some weird imaginings while I was working on the piece. At various times I was convinced that Nijinsky was in the studio the entire period—watching and giving

opinions about what he liked or didn't like. At other times I was convinced that Stravinsky was there, sort of giving a nod or a frown. So, in effect, there was nobody there physically, but there were people there spiritually that I thought about. I would say that the making of the ballet entailed the most visionary feelings I've ever had. I seemed literally to be possessed throughout the entire time I was creating it. (41)

In an email to me, Fenley elaborated on her experience: "Odd things would happen in the studio, it was in the winter and I like to work with no artificial light. And, in the shadows of the room, I would be sure that I was being visited by Nijinsky himself, who revealed that he had wished that he had choreographed the entire work as a solo, but hadn't been allowed to." When asked specifically about her sense of ancestral spirits informing the work, Fenley explained "In thinking about ancestral spirits, I'd have to simply say that I am always aware of nature and its continuation…It's a sense of our participation in the ongoing of time, where we are part of time passing; lives are lived and then gone and something else takes their place. So I can't say necessarily that there were particular moments in the work that I felt ancestral spirits so much as I'm aware of them all the time…" (Fenley email 4/11/13).

Critics note the animal imagery in addition to the human scale of the work. Renee E. D'Aoust wrote "It is impossible to describe Fenley's piece without reverting to animal descriptions. "State of Darkness" has different movement themes that could just as easily be thought of as different animals, yet the human is always present" ("Letter from Seattle, 7-12: Rites of Spring," *The Dance Insider*.) D'Aoust heralds the circling of the arms with bent elbows, as giving "the sensation of flight," comparing it to a later port de bras with "…the hands clutched into the body, the wings now broken." She describes Fenley's movement as analogous to "…bird bones, which are laced with air cavities, combining lightness and strength." Sharon McDaniel (*Palm Beach Post*) states that "Fenley hints at the original steps that the legendary Nijinsky designed for *Rite's* infamous 1913 ballet premiere," ("Fenley, Boal together make for a great night" January 7, 2001) without being specific. A close viewing of the piece evokes images of birds, deer, elands, gazelle and other creatures. Those familiar with the Joffrey revival may also superimpose memory images of storks, an eagle, and the pawing motion of the bearskin clad Ancestors.

Fenley notes that she was not guided by *Sacre's* narrative, although the references to the solo woman figure of the Chosen Maiden are unavoidable. Dance scholar Ann Daly writes "*State of Darkness* was not a narrative per se, but it did portray a woman—not unlike the Chosen One of the original *Sacre*—coming to grips with an unspeakable fate, her own or maybe her culture's" (*Critical Gestures: Writings on Dance and Culture* 112). In an email to me, Fenley explained that her intent was "to project the image of an ageless human being/animal, seen through a life's passage of young to old to spirit to back again" and that the effect she wanted was to show "this was a person undergoing the test—sometimes in the dance I felt like an old man, a young man, an old woman, a young deer, etc…" (Fenley email 4/11/13).

Central to Fenley's choreography and performance of *State of Darkness* is her choice of costume: simple black tights and a bare torso. Chosen to reveal the movements of the torso and abdominals, Fenley's "topless" costume received a lot of attention in the early press. Because her body was androgynous-looking (small breasted, clearly defined

abdominal, arm and back muscles) and her hair was short and spiky, Fenley presented a radically new vision of the Chosen Maiden. With an appearance that was neither traditionally feminine nor overtly masculine, Fenley's physique and strength, coupled with the visible demonstration of vulnerability provided a state of dissonance for the audience. In her comments to me, Fenley stated that she wanted "…the inner workings of the torso very visible, so that there was an empathic possibility for a watcher to share in the transmission of fear, excitement, exhaustion, exaltation—all clearly represented by the breath, the shuddering of torso and abdominals—[which would] not [be] seen easily when covered" (Fenley email 4/11/13). This physical vulnerability enhances the viewer's sensory and psychological empathy.

Ann Daly described the impact of Fenley's costume, declaring "In *State of Darkness*, Fenley wore only tights, leaving visible her breasts and rib cage, which registered her changing emotions through varying breath rhythms, from the initial quivering nervousness to, eventually, convulsions of terror and grief…Fenley's toplessness also showed off her impressive back…" (Daly 113) Allan Ulrich, in his piece "Some Rites to Remember" noted that the piece "….achieved a measure of notoriety when Fenley performed it topless," yet none of the later reviewers remarked on the costume choice when Fenley restaged it on Peter Boal (1999) or dancers from the Pacific Northwest Ballet in 2007.

In Bromberg's film, *The Re-Staging of State of Darkness*, Fenley and Boal discuss the female to male shift and its effect on the dance. Boal remarks: "Molissa has one approach to the dance as a woman, but I have always found Molissa on stage as a mix of femininity and masculinity; there's a very boyish quality to her…if you look at her back, at the muscles in her back—this is not a woman's back—this is a human's back." Fenley adds "There's so many moments in it that are encompassing a female energy; there's moments in it that are very male, and moments that are just animal magnetism. I danced it just wearing a pair of tights so you would see a male-female in one person." This male-female duality is further reinforced by the delicacy of many of the gestures and the stamina and endurance required to perform a 34 minute solo of contrasting dynamics: Fenley's performance combines these multiple components in truly breath-taking ways.

Dance critics and scholars have offered various interpretations of meaning for Fenley's *State of Darkness*, many of which reference the original ballet's libretto. Ann Daly writes "Instead of a community careening toward its unknown but inevitable fate, Fenley alone enacts the anguish of sacrifice and the promise of redemption" (112) adding that "*State of Darkness* was an incantation: a rather desperate act of faith in the future of humankind" (112). In reviewing two performers from the Pacific Northwest Ballet in *State of* Darkness, Dance Insider writer Renee E. D'Aoust says "Molissa Fenley doesn't concern herself with un-doing Nijinsky. Fenley places just one dancer onstage. Instead of an ensemble, we see a physically actualized dialogue of soloist and musical score…" and wonders briefly if "…this maiden might dance herself to death…" but decides "Fenley wouldn't succumb to such sentimental weakness. She insists that our individual lives matter. The dancer withstands the force of the ritual, withstands the forces of darkness in our culture…Choreographer and interpreter show that no matter life's curves, it is possible to breathe…" (July 2007). D'Aoust's optimism is reflected in comments Fenley made to Ann Daly about the impulse to create *State of Darkness*: "It's time now that we need a humanist point of view, because we're living in a 'state of darkness.' It's time we

have to be vulnerable and giving" (Daly 112). Daly and others point out that *State of Darkness* was created when the AIDS epidemic was at its height, and applaud its "overtly emotional," expression. They see in *State of Darkness* movements that "elegantly reveal[ing] a way to negotiate our earth-bound lives," (D'Aoust) and offer that, while abstract, "it allowed Boal to be emotionally expressive" (Caitlin Sims, *Dance Europe*, Oct/Nov 1999).

In writing about Fenley's work in 1980, Sally Banes foresaw this shift in American modern dance toward expression and virtuosity, stating "Molissa Fenley is one of a second generation of postmodern choreographers, who has reinstalled a new virtuosity in dance performance. Yet it is a nonillusionistic virtuosity that builds on the achievements of a previous generation, presenting dancers in a ritual of technical brilliance that seems to coax the spectator to join in. In the 1980s, art no longer frames real life; it turns toward something better…Fenley's dances turn matters of community, drive, and vivacity into energy" (267-268).

In 1999, Molissa Fenley began working with New York City Ballet dancer Peter Boal to set *State of Darkness* on him for a Lincoln Center Out of Doors performance. None of the problems that made the reconstruction of Nijinsky's original *Sacre du Printemps* were present: the choreographer herself was teaching the dance, there was ample video footage and documentation; the dance was in no way "lost." Yet, in viewing the performance footage of Boal and Pacific Northwest Ballet dancer Jonathan Porretta I was struck by how different the piece looked, and began wondering about how we determine authenticity, and what questions arise when we compare "original" pieces and their casts to restagings, reconstructions, and/or re-visionings.

One question revolves around what the essence of a composition is. Is the choreography the essence of the dance, its "text," so to speak? Do we define choreography by the steps, gestures, and movements of the dancer(s)? Or by the music, the libretto, the images conveyed? If the essence of the piece resides in the movement itself, is a restaging "after Petipa" sufficiently authentic, assuming the steps have been handed down from dancer to dancer, with the hope that the majority of the text survives its translation from body to body? What do we do with the fact that some choreographers are adamant about preserving the sanctity of the steps, timing, and body attitude, while others (notably Balanchine) preferred to rework the choreography to best suit the talents of the current dancer(s)? Since the advent of video-recording and systems of dance notation, the task of preserving a dance is easier than when individual bodies and memories were the primary source/method, but even video-recordings aren't perfect. What exactly are we re-staging?

In the context of a conference celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the *Rite of Spring* and the astonishing afterlife it has had "through its restless reinvention as a dance spectacle," (Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*, November 19, 2012) and the questions raised about the "…meticulous, though inevitably speculative reconstruction of the 1913 staging…" (Ross) and its authenticity, I watched the two re-stagings of Fenley's *State of Darkness* with curiosity. Is *State of Darkness*, as performed by Peter Boal a different piece, or merely a different interpretation? Can the same piece mean something different and/or affect audiences differently if the steps, music, costume and choreographic structure are identical? Does the performance change the composition? Is a Bach cello suite played by Yo Yo Ma a different piece than the same cello suite played by

Rostropovich? Does it matter if the work's original creator is involved in the re-staging? What is the essence of Molissa Fenley's *State of Darkness*, and how do different performances of it affect our perception of its essence?

When examining the performance footage of Molissa Fenley, Peter Boal, and Jonathan Porretta in *State of Darkness* I saw clear differences in their use of time, weight, space and flow effort (Laban categories of movement description) and in their use of breath support and torso shaping. While the steps and gestures remained the same (or very similar, given different body types, genders, and affinities), subtle changes in movement initiation, phrasing, and body connectivity created very different experiences of the movement. I would like to briefly note each dancer's general characteristics within the categories of time, weight, space and flow effort, highlighting how small changes in one aspect may communicate entirely different meanings to an audience. I would also like to focus on how these individual differences in performance are especially noticeable in the final moment of the piece, and argue that our interpretation of what the piece is about is heavily influenced by these differences.

Fenley's movement dynamics were often in what Laban labeled Passion Drive: attention to weight (strong to delicate), time (sudden to sustained), and flow (bound to free). What is less evident in Fenley's performance is attention to the space around her—the "what" she is doing is more important than the "where" of it. Fenley's versatility and breadth across all categories of movement dynamics is especially noteworthy. She embodied extremes in all effort matrices: from incredibly bound flow movements to unfettered free flow, in her manipulation of time to create unexpected rhythms and accents to foreshadow, reinforce, or echo the music in constantly surprising ways, and in her accessing of strength and lightness. While her portrayal of each element was captivating, the dynamic performance range across a thirty four minute piece is remarkable.

Peter Boal by comparison exemplifies what Laban deemed Vision Drive: attention to space, time, and flow but little commitment to weight. Irmgard Bartenieff describes the Weightless/Vision Drive as a state where "Time and Space reinforce each other to mental alertness, a consciousness of precision in time and place…Flow can take that awareness 'where it will' into the almost disembodied state of the Vision Drive" (*Body Movement: Coping with the Environment*, 62). Boal describes becoming "lost" in the movement (Bromberg documentary) and there's a sense that his effort is directed at overcoming gravity. Movements that in Fenley's performance were strongly weighted became more about shape and direction in space; accents were correct rhythmically but had less surprise and urgency than in Fenley's embodiment.

Boal's lines in space, elevation on leaps, and genuine commitment to the movement won him praise from the critics and a Bessie Award for performance. *Palm Beach Post* critic Sharon McDaniel raved about his "powerhouse performance," his "tremendous technique and stamina," and his ability to get into "the work's emotional current," noting that "Boal covered the stage with the same powerful grand jetes and turns that cause his appearances as principal dancer with the New York City Ballet to be sold out" (January 7, 2001). This is different from what I see when watching Fenley…

Jonathan Porretta captures some of the same strong weight qualities as Fenley: his movement is strongly grounded and his leg and arm gestures are forceful. Like Boal, he demonstrates clarity of forms in space, and he exudes more of a sense of free flow than

either Fenley or Boal. In movements such as attitude turns we see the shape of the position, and the impression is of implosive phrasing: movements that begin with quickness and strength which then release into lightness and/or indulgence. Porretta's performance has more of a Spell Drive quality to it—space and weight are emphasized, bolstered by flow's on-goingness. Time is less noticeable—the moments of sustainment draw our attention to the shape form or the inner experience of the dancer and his indulging in flow—so there's more a feeling of spellbound intensity.

Another lens for looking at movement is how the body parts create pathways in space, and how the body navigates these modes of shape change. Boal and Fenley differed sharply in the pathways of their gestures and in the sense of how movement impulses travel through their bodies: Fenley's gestures and movement initiations were often three-dimensional, carving and spiraling from her core through her body and out into space, while Boal's tended to utilize two-dimensional arcing actions from the global joints (shoulders and knees) or emphasize peripheral pathways (pointed toe leading the body, or fingers cutting through space). Porretta, like Boal, often established a position by arcing his leg or arm to the end point, and both favored peripheral pathways of limbs in contrast to Fenley's internal spiraling and transverse pathways. A Certified Laban Movement Analyst colleague of mine described Fenley's actions as "stirring the space between center of her body and the edge of her kinesphere," rather than simply revealing/tracing the edges of her kinesphere.

All three dancers are beautiful performers who command the stage as soloists. Each has his or her individual strengths and movement affinities, and each provides us with a different sense of the movement based on individual "Patterns of Total Body Connectivity," a phrase developed by Peggy Hackney. Hackney suggests looking at which main patterns of connection are organizing the dancer's movement: Breath, Core-Distal Connectivity, Head-Tail Connectivity, Upper-Lower Connectivity, Body-Half Connectivity, and Cross-Lateral Connectivity. (Hackney adds other points of organization, but for this paper these six are the most relevant.) From this lens, we see Fenley's performance as clearly embodying breath; her gestures radiate from her center, movement travels from her head to her tail with sinuous ease, there's a sense of conversation from her upper to lower body, often spiraling from deep in the pelvis to extend out through her fingers or head; many of her movements require that one side of the body remain stable while the other side is mobile, and finally, her Cross-Lateral connectivity is apparent in her three-dimensional movement and ability to spiral. We are drawn into the inner experience of this dancer and react kinesthetically to her movement.

Boal displays a strong sense of vertical alignment. He moves efficiently from his navel center, he is well balanced and controlled. There's a feeling that his breath is not supporting him as fully as it could—his sternum rarely yields or softens. His head-tail connection is apparent; core to distal patterning is less evident. There's less sense of three-dimensional shape flow support, the lengthening and shortening, widening and narrowing, and bulging and hollowing so present in Fenley's body. Boal's focus is often down and/or internal until the end. With Boal we are aware of the stamina and endurance required for this piece.

Porretta demonstrates a solid head-tail and upper-lower connectivity. His sternum and torso visibly yield and soften, and we experience his breath rising and sinking, widening and narrowing. Porretta has several ecstatic moments where he flings his head

back or dissolves into ooey-gooey shape flow—this quality of indulgence is pleasurable to watch, but his tendency to release into lightness and free flow can appear "precious" when his wrists flip or his gaze releases upwards. The internal spiraling that Fenley expresses so beautifully is less visible; in watching Porretta I am aware of how the frequent homolateral movement motifs in the choreography can appear wooden if not supported by internal spirals.

The difference in each dancer's approach to the movement creates a distinctly different impression at the end of the piece. After a moment of intense inner struggle, hands clenched in fists, arms pressing sideways against invisible bonds, the dancer steps forward into the light. Fenley describes the moment as "At the last crash of the music, where in the *Rite of Spring* scenario, the Chosen One is killed by the falling of the ax, this modern woman steps out into the light: intact, strong, and alive" (Fenley, email 4/11/13). Renee D'Aoust calls it "…a virtuosic step forward…" and Stephanie Jordan declares "At the end, as she moved from darkness into light, to stand, gazing boldly at the audience, the orchestra allowed her Chosen One to become superhuman. Her version was a celebration of human power and perhaps too of Nijinsky's individual achievement" (Jordan, "The Demons in a Database: Interrogating 'Stravinsky the Global Dancer'" *The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1 Summer, 2004 p. 69). Fenley's steady gaze, confident advancing, and visible rootedness support this interpretation, yet an examination of the same ending performed by Boal and Porretta carries a different sensation.

Boal steps forward and looks upward. His shoulders sag, his chin advances and his stance suggests he has given up, and is hoping for help from above. He is a survivor, but just barely. We feel his exhaustion and celebrate his tenacity. We sense the enormity of his struggle and find something inspiring in his endurance; the mood is not victorious. Porretta is less visibly exhausted than Boal; he advances his left body half forward and brings the right to match it. His manner is more pugnacious and muscular—he's a fighter who has gone all nine rounds and has won the bout. ..

Fenley, Boal, and Porretta dance the same steps, to the same music, wearing the same costume. Are all three dances Fenley's *State of Darkness*? Which version is the authentic one, or all they all the real piece in different ways? What is the essence of our dance "texts," and how do we preserve them for future generations?

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