LOS ANGELES CHAMBER SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

JANUARY 15th, 1952

PROGRAM NOTES

The **"OCTUOR"** for a quartet of woodwinds (flute, clarinet, 2 bassoons), and a quartet of brass (2 trumpets, 2 trombones) was composed in 1922-23 and premiered under my direction October 18, 1923, — a concert that marked the beginning of my activities as conductor.

Composition, structure, form, here all are in the line of the 18th century masters. Sonority has not been my first concern, and indeed, must be considered only as a result. The introduction is comparable — has an importance in the whole scheme — to the introductions in late Haydn symphonies. The allegro is in sonata-allegro form in the key of E flat. The 2nd movement is a theme with variations, a form which has occupied me in almost every work, from "PULCINELLA" to the "CONCERTO FOR TWO PIANOS", "JEU DE CARTES", "DANSES CONCERTANTES". In the "OCTUOR", however, it is not the theme but the first variation itself which recurs after each variation. The final variation is a fugato, with, as subject, the intervals of the theme inverted. A measured flute cadenza modulates to the finale in C major, a kind of rondo with coda.

"THE SOLDIER'S TALE" ("L' HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT"). — "Moral fable", Auden's classification of our "RAKE'S PROGRESS" might designate "THE SOLDIER'S TALE" equally well. The characterization of innocence, temptation, virtuosity-and-evil, etc. . . ., are similar in both works; but, whereas "THE SOLDIER'S TALE", as a type of medieval morality play, leaves the Devil triumphant, in "THE RAKE'S PROGRESS" he is compromised by a manifestation of Grace.

"THE SOLDIER'S TALE" was composed in 1917-18, in close collaboration with its librettist C. F. Ramuz. The staged work requires narration, acting, dancing, and lasts a little more than an hour. The concert music extracted from the play includes all musical numbers and is about half as long as the play.

The music is divided into little set-pieces, established forms, marches, various dances, a chorale, a little concerto, etc., all complete in themselves. The choice of instruments — violin-bass, clarinet-bassoon, trumpet-trombone, — afforded me the complete range in strings, woodwinds, and brass, and was ideal for the voicing of my harmony which is conceived contrapuntally. To these six instruments I have added a group of percussion instruments. Even without exact pitch these were also chosen for purposes of range. But, in addition to their dynamic quality, it was their uniquely "percussive" punctuation of my score which interested me most. Moreover, the percussion is not to be considered merely as an accompaniment; it has an independent role which at the end emerges in a solo-concertante.

The **"CONCERTO IN E FLAT"** for 15 instruments, called **"DUMBARTON OAKS CONCERTO"** after the Washington, D. C. estate of Robert Wood Bliss who commissioned it, was composed in 1937-8 and first performed at Dumbarton Oaks, May 8, 1938.

It is a kind of Concerto Grosso but differs from the Brandenburg Concertos, for instance, in that the ritornello idea is supplanted by sonata-type movements in definite ABA structure. The first movement develops material stated in its first bars, and includes a fugue, with the first 4 notes of the flute in the first bar, as subject. A formal coda leads without pause to the 2nd movement, which is a kind of serenade, an allegretto in the classical relationship of B flat. The middle section in G minor leads to a recapitulation which adds a flute obbligato as variation. The 2nd movement coda, slightly modified from the first, leads without pause to the finale. A theme is then stated in bits, worked contrapuntally in imitation, and, after a march in C minor as middle section, is presented entirely in the recapitulation.

"DANSES CONCERTANTES" was composed in 1941-42 and performed for the first time in February 1942, in Los Angeles, under my direction. Though it has served admirably as a ballet, it was not conceived as a stage work and is without plot. The use of Choreographic terms — Pas de Deux, Pas d'Action — merely emphasizes close structural relationship between dancing and music.

It must be remarked that the orchestra of "DANSES CONCERTANTES" like that of "DUMBARTON OAKS CONCERTO" before it, is without 2nd violins. Thus the string body forms a quartet and not the usual quintet. As the basses and cellos but rarely double, the bass exists as a distinct voice in a role seldom accorded it.

Igor Stravinsky
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