

1 NYP 18-31, Stravinsky's Philharmonic

2 (THEME MUSIC & OPENING BILLBOARD)

3 AB: ...and **THIS week:**

4 (MUSIC: UP and UNDER)

5 AB: ...we have an all-Stravinsky broadcast prepared  
6 for you. This is Alec Baldwin. I hope that  
7 you'll enjoy this music with me. We have a  
8 performance of *Perséphone* from 1957 that  
9 features the composer leading the orchestra.  
10 We'll also hear a relatively recent recording  
11 of his famous *Rite of Spring* as conducted by  
12 former Music Director Alan Gilbert. We begin  
13 right now with just the second orchestral work  
14 that Stravinsky ever composed: The *Scherzo*  
15 *fantastique*, Op. 3. It was inspired by Maurice  
16 Maeterlinck's 1901 essay "The Life of Bees."

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22 AB: In July 1907, Stravinsky wrote to Nikolai  
23 Rimsky-Korsakov that he planned a "fantastic  
24 scherzo", to be called "Bees." He began work on  
25 it right away and finished it in March, 1908.  
26 Rimsky-Korsakov saw the score and liked it, but  
27 he died in 1908, before he could hear it  
28 performed. Stravinsky dedicated the piece to  
29 Alexander Siloti, who conducted the first  
30 performance on February 6, 1909 in St  
31 Petersburg. We're going to hear it as  
32 performed in November, 1975. This is the  
33 *Scherzo fantastique* by Igor Stravinsky. Pierre  
34 Boulez conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

35 (MUSIC)

36 AB: That was the *Scherzo fantastique* by Igor  
37 Stravinsky. The New York Philharmonic was  
38 conducted by Pierre Boulez.

39 When that work was given its premiere in 1909,  
40 another of Stravinsky's pieces, "Fireworks,"  
41 was also on the program. Serge Diaghilev was  
42 in the audience that evening and was very  
43 impressed by the young composer--so much so that  
44 he commissioned Stravinsky to write his first  
45 ballet. Perhaps you've heard of it; it's  
46 called *The Firebird*.

47 AB: We skip ahead a few decades for the next work  
48 on our program: Perséphone from 1934. Dubbed a  
49 "melodrama," this work has parts for speakers,  
50 solo singers, chorus, dancers, and orchestra.

51 The action is taken from the world of classical  
52 mythology where Persephone martyrs herself to  
53 become Queen of the Underworld for six months  
54 of the year. She does so out of compassion for  
55 the hapless spirits trapped there for eternity.

56 Her presence brings joy to those she's near, so  
57 the result of her split life between Hades and  
58 Earth is the change of seasons.

59 Stravinsky's good friend and fellow composer  
60 Elliott Carter referred to this work as the  
61 "more humanistic Rite of Spring." Indeed, both  
62 are fertility myths. But unlike the "chosen  
63 one" of the Rite of Spring, Persephone chooses  
64 her fate of her own free will. Some see this as  
65 an allegory for the life of Christ; others see  
66 it as symbolic of a socially committed artist  
67 moving between the realms of aesthetic delight  
68 and human misery. Stravinsky's music, which is  
69 full of religious awe and compassionate wisdom,  
70 seems to mirror both interpretations.

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72 AB: Reception was mixed at the premiere, which the  
73 composer led in Paris on April 30, 1934.  
74 Stravinsky would go on to conduct the score in  
75 Buenos Aires that same year and continued to  
76 directly oversee performances of it for many  
77 years to come.

78 In 1957, Stravinsky led the New York  
79 Philharmonic in two performances of Persephone  
80 at Carnegie Hall. A few days later, he  
81 presided over a recording session featuring  
82 those same artists at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
83 Studios...and that's the recording we'll hear  
84 now. Perséphone by Igor Stravinsky. Vera  
85 Zorina is the narrator, Richard Robinson is the  
86 tenor and we'll also hear the Westminster Choir  
87 of which John Finley Williamson was director.  
88 The composer conducts...The New York  
89 Philharmonic.

90 (MUSIC)

91 AB: Recorded at the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Studios in New York  
92 City, that was Perséphone by Igor Stravinsky.  
93 As soloists, we heard Vera Zorina as the  
94 narrator with tenor Richard Robinson. The  
95 Westminster Choir and the New York Philharmonic  
96 were conducted by the composer.

97 AB: The relationship between Igor Stravinsky and  
98 the New York Philharmonic is both long-standing  
99 and deep. It began in early 1924, when the  
100 orchestra invited the composer to join them on  
101 tour.

102 AB: Stravinsky arrived in New York on January 4,  
103 1925 and gave his first concert in the United  
104 States four days later when he conducted the  
105 Philharmonic in a program of his own music--  
106 culminating with *Petrushka*.

107 [MUSIC BUTTON]

108 AB: Between 1925 and 1966, Stravinsky conducted the  
109 New York Philharmonic in thirty-three concerts--  
110 more than any other orchestra. Highlights of  
111 these appearances included: the first time the  
112 composer conducted the *Rite of Spring* in the  
113 United States, the American premieres of his  
114 *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and of the Octet  
115 for Winds in 1925. Two decades later, the  
116 Philharmonic would commission and give the  
117 world premiere of the *Symphony in Three*  
118 *Movements*. But for all his musical genius,  
119 conducting didn't come naturally to Stravinsky  
120 as conductor Robert Craft--his long-time  
121 assistant and biographer--explained:

122 (ACTUALITY: craft)

123 AB: Stravinsky eventually became more comfortable  
124 on the podium and he even made his American  
125 television debut with the Orchestra and Leonard  
126 Bernstein in 1961.

127 [VIDEO: YPC/Archival Footage]

128 AB: Stravinsky's last appearance with the New York  
129 Philharmonic was in 1966, where he conducted  
130 the Symphony of Psalms during the  
131 Philharmonic's first Stravinsky Festival at the  
132 age of eighty-four. Bert Bial, contrabassoon  
133 for the New York Philharmonic from 1957 to 1995  
134 remembers:

135 (ACTUALITY: bert)

136 AB: Stravinsky's music has represented an integral  
137 part of the New York Philharmonic's repertory  
138 for many decades...with over 1100 performances to  
139 date. Statistically speaking, that means that  
140 roughly 1 out of every 13 of the orchestra's  
141 more than 15,000 concerts...has featured at least  
142 one of his works.

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144 AB: In a moment, we'll conclude with one of  
145 Stravinsky's best-known scores, The Rite of  
146 Spring. I'm Alec Baldwin and you're listening  
147 to The New York Philharmonic This Week.

148 (ID)

149 AB: We conclude this week's broadcast with one of  
150 the most revolutionary and world-changing  
151 scores of the 20th century: Stravinsky's  
152 ballet, the Rite of Spring. Program annotator  
153 James M. Keller sets the scene for us:

154 (ACTUALITY)

155 AB: The Rite of Spring, which is in two parts,  
156 depicts a pagan rite in which a girl is  
157 ritualistically chosen as a sacrifice to the  
158 god of the sun. Part One is called "The  
159 Adoration of the Earth", and Part Two is called  
160 "The Sacrifice."

161 AB: Volumes have been written about the premiere of  
162 the Rite of Spring, which caused riots in  
163 Paris. While some have argued that it was the  
164 music that incensed such a violent public  
165 reaction, James M. Keller takes a different  
166 point of view:

167 (ACTUALITY JMK 02)

168 (APPLAUSE)

169 AB: And now we hear the Rite of Spring by Igor  
170 Stravinsky. Alan Gilbert conducts...The New  
171 York Philharmonic.

172 (MUSIC: Rite)

173 VO: We've just heard one of the great landmarks in  
174 musical history: Stravinsky's Rite of Spring.  
175 The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Alan  
176 Gilbert.

177 (INSERT CLOSERS/CREDITS)

178 PROMO for NYP 18-33

179 AB: We take a sojourn through the musical world of  
180 Jean Sibelius on our next New York Philharmonic  
181 broadcast. This is Alec Baldwin. Please join  
182 me for a program that will include Finlandia,  
183 the violin concerto and the Second Symphony...as  
184 well as a few lesser-known works. Leonard  
185 Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Lorin Maazel, and Sir  
186 Thomas Beechum will all conduct...the New York  
187 Philharmonic This Week.