

State TheatreNJ.org
Keynotes

Kirov Orchestra

Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director and Conductor

The State Theatre welcomes you to the performance of the Kirov Orchestra. Their program celebrates Russia's most iconic and iconoclastic composer, Igor Stravinsky, with the magnificent ballet scores for *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*.

These *Keynotes* provide information and activities that will help you understand and enjoy the performance. We hope this guide will help inspire you to continue exploring the world of classical music.

CONTENTS

Welcome/Acknowledgements	2
About the Orchestra	3
Meet the Conductor	4
Decoding the Program Page	5
<i>The Firebird</i>	6
<i>The Rite of Spring</i>	7
Meet the Composer	8
Are You Ready?	9



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The Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre (also known as the Kirov Orchestra) enjoys a long and distinguished history as one of the oldest musical institutions in Russia. Founded in the 18th century during the reign of Peter the Great, it was known before the revolution as the Russian Imperial Opera Orchestra. By 1917 the orchestra's name had changed to the Royal Imperial Theatre Orchestra, and was regarded as St. Petersburg's leading symphony orchestra. Its repertoire—operatic and orchestral—has traditionally included the music of both Russian and European composers.

Housed in St. Petersburg's famed Mariinsky Theatre (named after Maria, the wife of Tsar Alexander II) since 1860, the orchestra entered its "golden age" during the second half of the 19th century under the music direction of Eduard Napravnik (1839-1916). Napravnik single-handedly ruled the Imperial Theatre for more than half a century; under his leadership, the Mariinsky Orchestra was recognized as one of the finest in Europe. He also trained a generation of outstanding conductors, developing what came to be known as "the Russian school of conducting."

Tchaikovsky was closely associated with the Mariinsky Theatre, not only conducting the orchestra but also premiering his *Fifth Symphony* there, as well as the fantasy overture *Hamlet* and the *Sixth Symphony*. Rachmaninoff conducted the orchestra on numerous occasions, including premieres of his *Spring Cantata* and the symphonic poem *The Bells*. The orchestra also premiered the music of the young Igor Stravinsky, including his *Scherzo Fantastique* and the suite from *The Firebird* ballet.

Renamed the Kirov Opera during the Soviet era, the orchestra maintained its high artistic standards under the leadership of Evgeni Mravinsky and Yuri Temirkanov. In 1988, Valery Gergiev was elected artistic director of the opera company and in 1996 the Russian government appointed him Artistic and General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre. Soon after the city of Leningrad was renamed St. Petersburg, the Kirov Theatre reverted to its original title of the Mariinsky Theatre, home to the Kirov Opera, the Kirov Ballet, and the Kirov Orchestra. Under the baton of Valery Gergiev, the orchestra has recorded exclusively for Phillips Classics since 1989.



In 1998, the orchestra made its debut tour of China, an historic first, with a performance in the Great Hall in Beijing, broadcast to 50 million people, in the presence of President Jiang Zemin. It was the first time in 40 years that a Russian orchestra had played in China. Besides extensive touring with the opera and the ballet companies, the Kirov Orchestra has performed throughout the world on its own, earning a reputation as what a journalist referred to as "the world's first global orchestra."



The Mariinsky Theatre

Kirov Facts

- There are 99 musicians in the orchestra.
- Among the composers who conducted their own works with the orchestra are Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Berlioz, Wagner, and Schoenberg.
- The orchestra performed the world premieres of many classics of Russian opera and ballet, including: Glinka's *Life of the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*; Borodin's *Prince Igor*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*; Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* and *Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*; and Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Sleeping Beauty*.
- In 1999, on the initiative of Valery Gergiev, the orchestra created the Mariinsky Theatre Young Philharmonic Orchestra to develop a new generation of classical musicians.

Valery Gergiev was born in Moscow in 1953 and grew up in Ossetia, a culturally diverse mountainous region of what is now southwestern Russia. Gergiev showed talent when he was young, and entered a music school in Vladikavkaz, Ossetia. (The school was eventually renamed the Valery Gergiev Music Academy.) Gergiev received a degree in conducting from the Leningrad Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory. At age 23, he won the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin and, while still a conservatory student, was invited to join the Kirov Theatre.



Gergiev was appointed Artistic Director of the Mariinsky/Kirov Opera in 1988, at the age of 35. The conductor built the company into one of the best in the world, dramatically expanding its repertoire and undertaking a number of groundbreaking partnerships with such companies as the Metropolitan Opera, the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Teatro Carlo Felice, the San Francisco Opera, La Scala, the New Israel Opera, and the Théâtre du Châtelet. In 1996 Gergiev was made Artistic and General Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, with complete control over the orchestra, opera, and ballet.

Valery Gergiev is sought after by virtually all of the world's leading orchestras and opera companies, including the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, L'Orchestre National de France, and the orchestras of San Francisco, Boston, Toronto, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Houston, Minnesota, and Montreal. In addition to his post with the Mariinsky Theatre, he serves as principal guest conductor at New York's Metropolitan Opera, and principal conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic and London Symphony.

"Gergiev carries a disproportionate share of the music world on his shoulders. He is something of a national hero in Russia for having kept alive the Mariinsky Theatre after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under his leadership, the Mariinsky has become one of the most celebrated—and recorded—opera companies in the world."

—*The New Yorker*

Gergiev in His Own Words

"My greatest achievement at the Mariinsky has been leadership, building confidence in people that it's worthwhile to stay in their own country, keeping it together and giving it confidence. The role has not always been easy, not always been nice in the way I had to deal with people. But I had to give them confidence, not just in the Kirov but in the country.

"I would prefer to go to Siberia rather than America or Europe—my place is here in my country rather than abroad. I'm thrilled to work with leading western institutions but these luxury engagements with the best orchestras and great opera houses take me away from my family."



The program book (or playbill) contains helpful information about the performance. It lists the pieces the orchestra will play in the order they will play them. It tells you the name of each piece, the name of the composer, and the **MOVEMENT** headings. If you're not familiar with a piece, the program will help you keep track of what's going on and know when the piece is finished. The program page for the Kirov Symphony Orchestra looks like this:

A **MOVEMENT** is a separate section within a musical piece, like chapters in a book. The movement headings are usually taken from the tempo instructions that the composer has written at the beginning of the section. In these two Stravinsky works, the sections names describe the scenes in the ballets for which the music was originally written.

There is usually (but not always) a brief pause between movements, during which the audience should remain silent. Concert etiquette dictates that the audience hold their applause until the entire piece is finished.

Many theaters and orchestras are not-for-profit organizations; acknowledging donors and sponsors is an important part of staying in business.

Thu, November 29, 2007 at 8pm

Kirov Orchestra

of the Mariinsky Theatre
VALERY GERGIEV, *music director and conductor*

ALL-STRAVINSKY PROGRAM

composer → VALERY GERGIEV

title of piece → L'Oiseau de feu ("The Firebird") (1910)

Introduction
The Enchanted Garden Of Kaschei
Apparition Of The Firebird, Followed By Ivan Tsarevitch
Dance Of The Firebird
Capture Of The Firebird By Ivan Tsarevitch
Plea Of The Firebird; Apparition Of The Thirteen Enchanted Princesses
Play Of The Princesses With The Golden Apples (Scherzo)
Sudden Apparition Of Ivan Tsarevitch
Chorovod (Round) Of The Princesses
Sunrise; Ivan Tsarevitch Penetrates The Palace Of Kaschei
Magical Chimes; Apparition Of The Monsters; Guards Of Kashchei And Capture Of Ivan Tsarevitch
Dance Of The Suite Of Kashchei Enchanted By The Firebird
Infernal Dance Of All The Subjects Of Kashchei
Disappearance Of The Palace And Of The Magic Spells Of Kashchei;
Animation Of The Petrified Knights; All Rejoice


"Scherzo" means "joke"; a quick, playful section

movements

a chance to stretch your legs, get a drink, visit the rest-room, or read the program notes → —Intermission—

Le Sacre du printemps ("The Rite Of Spring") (1913)
Adoration Of The Earth—Introduction
Adoration Of The Earth—The Augurs Of Spring; Dances Of The Young Girls
Adoration Of The Earth—Ritual Of Abduction
Adoration Of The Earth—Spring Rounds
Adoration Of The Earth—Ritual Of The Rival Tribes
Adoration Of The Earth—Procession Of The Sage
Adoration Of The Earth—The Sage
Adoration Of The Earth—Dance Of The Earth
The Sacrifice—Introduction
The Sacrifice—Mystic Circles Of The Young Girls
The Sacrifice—Glorification Of The Chosen One
The Sacrifice—Evocation Of The Ancestors
The Sacrifice—Ritual Action Of The Ancestors
The Sacrifice—Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)


PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE




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With his score for the 1910 ballet *The Firebird*, Igor Stravinsky became an overnight sensation in the music world. The then-unknown Russian composer received the commission from impresario Serge Diaghilev's Ballet Russe only after four other composers had turned down the job. With choreography by Michel Fokine, sets and costumes designed by Léon Bakst, and conductor Gabriel Pierné leading the orchestra, *The Firebird* premiered at the Paris Opera on June 25, 1910. It was a huge success from the very first performance.

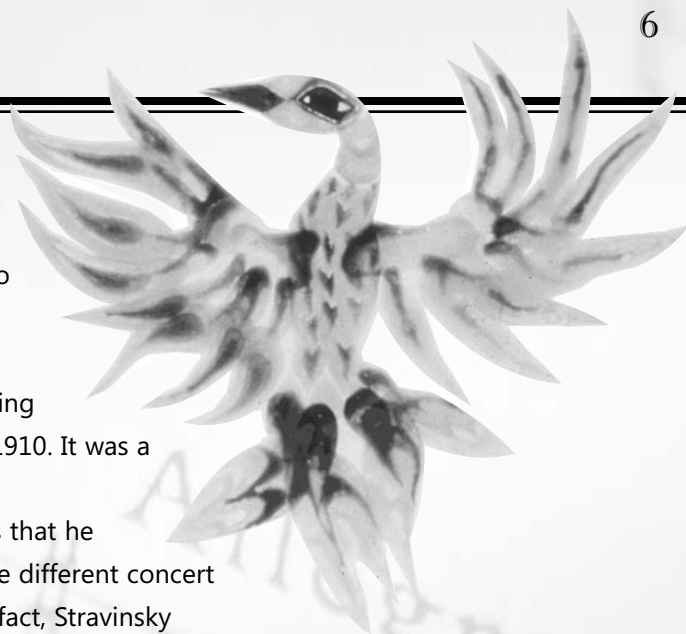
The Firebird remained one of Stravinsky's favorite pieces; he claims that he himself conducted it more than one thousand times! He created three different concert versions of the score—the *Firebird* suites of 1910, 1919, and 1945. In fact, Stravinsky reworked all of his early works for the Ballet Russe in the 1940s, in part to renew his copyright.

The plot of *The Firebird* combines two characters from Russian folklore: the evil sorcerer, Kaschei the Immortal, and the magical Firebird. One day, while wandering in the enchanted garden of Kaschei, Prince Ivan (the Tsarevitch) spies "a fabulous bird with plumage of fire, plucking golden fruit from a silver tree." He captures the Firebird, but takes pity on the creature and sets her free. In gratitude, the Firebird gives him one of her magical feathers.

As the Prince continues through the forest, he discovers 13 beautiful dancing princesses. The 13th princess, Princess Tsarevna, is especially beautiful, and Prince Ivan falls instantly in love with her. The princesses are all prisoners of the sorcerer Kaschei. As Kaschei's spell calls them back to his castle, they beg Ivan not to follow, warning that Kaschei's evil powers will turn him into stone.

The Prince ignores the warning and follows the princesses. As he enters the castle, he is captured by Kaschei's servants. The sorcerer appears and tries to turn the Prince into stone. During the struggle, the Prince remembers the Firebird's magic feather. As soon as he waves it, the Firebird appears and casts a spell on Kaschei and his servants, forcing them to dance until they collapse from exhaustion. The Firebird lulls them to all into a deep sleep, then destroys them, freeing the prisoners of the castle and the enchanted forest. The Prince and Princess Tsarevna are married in a great celebration.

Musically, the human characters in the ballet—Prince Ivan and the princesses—are often represented by tonal melodies, in some cases, by Russian folk tunes adapted by Stravinsky from a collection published by Rimsky-Korsakov. For the supernatural characters—the Firebird and Kaschei—Stravinsky created melodies based on odd, dissonant intervals. While *The Firebird* contains much that Stravinsky learned from Rimsky-Korsakov, its focus on driving rhythms, its use of unusual scales, and its sometimes crashing dissonances herald a newer, much more radical style.



"A good composer does not imitate; he steals."
—Igor Stravinsky

below: original costume design for *The Firebird* by Léon Bakst



The Rite of Spring

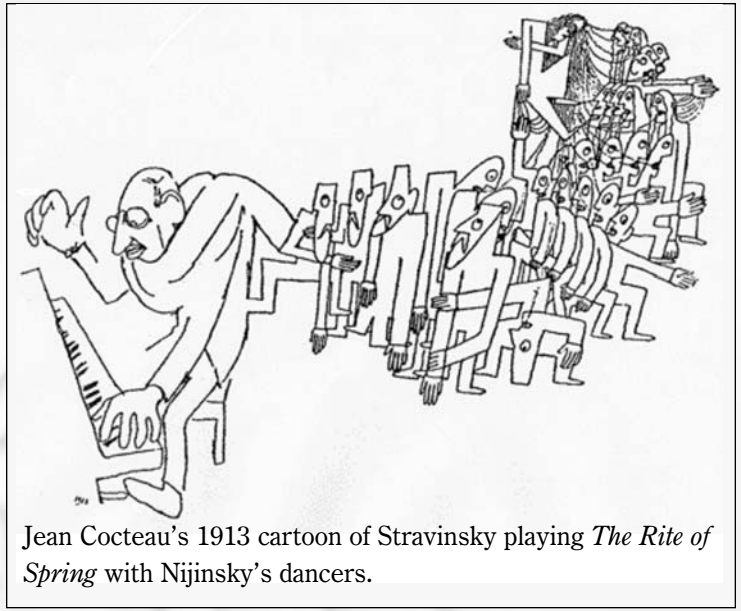
Composer Igor Stravinsky once said that what he loved most about Russia was “the violent Russian spring that seemed to begin in an hour and was like the whole earth cracking.” This, surely, was the driving emotion behind *The Rite of Spring*, widely considered a landmark of 20th-century artistic achievement.

Stravinsky said that the idea for the ballet came to him in a vision while he was finishing the last pages of *The Firebird* in 1910. “I saw in my imagination a solemn pagan rite. Sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of spring. I heard and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which *Le sacre* [*The Rite*] passed.”

The composer solicited the help of amateur archaeologist and folklorist Nikolai Roerich to transform the vision into a detailed two-part ballet scenario. As Roerich described it, “The first part transports us to the foot of a sacred hill, where Slavonic tribes are gathered together to celebrate the spring rites. There is an old witch who predicts the future; a marriage by capture; round dances. The wise elder is brought from the village to imprint his sacred kiss on the new-flowering earth. During this rite, the crowd is seized with mystic terror ... After this rush of terrestrial joy, the second scene sets a celestial mystery before us. Young virgins dance in circles on the sacred hill amid enchanted rocks; then they choose the victim they intend to honor. In a moment she will dance her last dance before the ancients clad in bear skins. Then the greybeards dedicate the victim to the god Yarilo.”



Tyrannosaurus and Stegosaurus face off in the *Rite of Spring* sequence in Disney’s *Fantasia* (1940). The animated film introduced Stravinsky’s music to a whole new audience.



Jean Cocteau’s 1913 cartoon of Stravinsky playing *The Rite of Spring* with Nijinsky’s dancers.

The idea was well received by impresario Serge Diaghilev, who chose the Ballet Russe’s principal dancer, Vaslav Nijinsky, as choreographer. Though much of the score was finished by the time Nijinsky became involved, he and Stravinsky collaborated closely on the final version. In the end, virtually every note of the score was reflected in the choreography. Both the music and the dance represented a drastic departure from tradition: jagged, violent, deliberately awkward and primitive.

The Rite of Spring premiered on May 29, 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, conducted by Pierre Monteux. Eyewitnesses agree that the word “riot” is no exaggeration; the ballet was met with jeering and catcalls, many people walked out, supporters and opponents broke into fights, and the orchestra was for the most part drowned out by the racket from the audience. The dancers were trembling and almost in tears, while Nijinsky and Stravinsky were standing on chairs in the wings, yelling instructions at the dancers. The work was savaged by the critics in London later that summer: “It has no relation to music at all as most of us understand the word.” “Such stuff should be played on primeval instruments, or better, not played at all.” “A crowd of savages might have produced such noises.”

The Rite of Spring is now regarded as a great milestone in the history of music. It was years ahead of its time in many ways: the fragmentation of melody, use of complex rhythms, dense polyphonic orchestration, and innovative use of percussion instruments. These innovations generate a raw energy that still has the power to astonish listeners today.

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky (1882-1971) was arguably the most influential composer of 20th-century classical music. Considered a revolutionary—due in part to the riotous reception of his score for the ballet *The Rite of Spring*—Stravinsky's career was actually more about evolution than revolution. During his long professional life he experimented with widely different styles, and in each one his music bears the mark of his distinctive musical personality. The composer's wide-ranging output included symphonies, ballet scores, operas, concertos, choral music, chamber music, songs, music for jazz band, solo piano, and even player piano. He was also a noted pianist and gifted conductor.

Born in Oranienbaum, Russia and brought up in St. Petersburg, Stravinsky was drawn to music at an early age. Though his father Fyodor was himself a musician, Stravinsky was expected to pursue a more practical career. He set aside his musical studies and enrolled in law school. After the death of his father, Stravinsky shifted his studies back to music, becoming a special protégé of the celebrated Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

Stravinsky's music caught the attention of impresario Serge Diaghilev, who commissioned the essentially unknown composer to create the score for *The Firebird*, a new ballet

that was premiered in Paris in 1910 by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Two additional ballet commissions for Diaghilev then followed: *Petrushka* (1911), and *The Rite of Spring* (1913). In this short span of time, Stravinsky's music evolved from a Rimsky-Korsakov-flavored Russian style to a boldly experimental sound featuring complex polyrhythms and polytonalities (music written in several different keys at the same time).

Following the premiere of *The Firebird*, Stravinsky moved with his wife and children to Switzerland. He returned briefly to Russia in 1914, but it was to be his last visit there for nearly 50 years. In 1920 he settled in France. In the mid-30s, his wife and daughter died from tuberculosis; the composer himself was hospitalized with the disease.

It was in France in the 1920s that Stravinsky turned to his next style, neoclassicism—a modern reworking of 18th-century musical forms and philosophies that emphasized smaller ensembles, clearly-defined structures, classical themes, and emotional restraint. Among the works in the composer's neoclassical style are the ballet *Pulcinella* (1920), *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), and the opera *The Rake's Progress* (1951)—the last a modern adaptation of the classical style of Mozart's late comedies.

At the outbreak of World War II, Stravinsky emigrated to the U.S., settling in Beverly Hills, California and becoming a naturalized citizen in 1945. He gradually absorbed the culture of his adopted country, conducting concerts at the Hollywood Bowl and making unsuccessful attempts at writing music for film. An interest in popular music resulted in several short pieces, including *Ebony Concerto* (1946) for Woody Herman's jazz band. Another fruitful ballet partnership, this one with George Balanchine and the New York City Ballet, produced such works as *Orpheus* (1948) and *Agon* (1954–57).

In the 1950s Stravinsky abandoned neoclassicism for yet another style: serialism. Serial music is composed using mathematical systems to order the pitch, rhythm, volume, etc. of the music. In this technique, all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are given equal importance, doing away with the concept of a tonal center or key. Among Stravinsky's serial works are *Threni* (1958), *Elegy for J.F.K.* (1964), and *Requiem Canticles* (1966).

Stravinsky returned to Russia in 1962 for a series of concerts, but declined an invitation to remain. Toward the end of his life, he moved to New York, where he died at the age of 88. He is buried in Venice near the tomb of his long-time collaborator, Serge Diaghilev.



“My music is best understood by children and animals.”
—Igor Stravinsky

“...Stravinsky, a musical revolutionary whose own evolution never stopped. There is not a composer who lived during his time or is alive today who was not touched, and sometimes transformed, by his work.”

—Philip Glass, composer

To Clap, or Not to Clap...

People who've never attended an orchestra concert are sometimes apprehensive about applauding at the wrong time. If you're one of those people, here are some general rules to guide you:

- Just before the concert begins, the audience will applaud the arrival onstage of the concertmaster (the first violinist, who acts as the leader of the musicians).
- They'll applaud again when the conductor and soloist(s) enter.
- If they've liked the performance, the audience will applaud at the END of each piece of music on the program.
- Applauding between the movements or sections of a piece is generally frowned upon, even if there's a long pause. Many people believe that applauding between movements breaks the spell or momentum of the piece. If you're not sure when a piece is finished, check the program to see how many movements there are, or applaud only when the conductor turns to the audience and bows.
- When a piece has ended, the conductor (and soloist, if there is one) may leave the stage and then return for curtain calls, depending on the level of applause.

Some Additional Tips Regarding Concert Etiquette

- Though concertgoers are doing it more and more these days, it's generally considered impolite to leave the hall while the audience is still applauding. And if you leave too soon, you'll miss the encore, if the orchestra plays one!
- All it takes is one ringing cellphone, noisy latecomer, or loudly whispered conversation to spoil a concert for the entire audience. Be sure to arrive on time and turn off phones, pagers, beepers, and other electronic devices before the performance begins. Hold your comments and conversation until intermission.
- Even if you're not making or receiving calls, those little squares of light are a visual distraction to those sitting near you; please refrain from texting, checking messages, etc. during the concert.



Resources

WEBSITES:

www.mariinsky.ru/en/orchestra

The official website of the Kirov Orchestra, with orchestra history and tour schedule

www.valerygergiev.com

Valery Gergiev's website

www.classical.net

Learn more about classical composers and their works.

BOOKS:

Classical Music for Dummies, by David Pogue and Scott Speck. 1997

Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship, by Robert Craft. Vanderbilt University Press; revised expanded edition, 1996

Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring, by Peter Hill. Cambridge University Press, 2000

Valery Gergiev and the Kirov, by John Ardoin. Amadeus Press, 2001

MUSIC:

The Firebird, by Igor Stravinsky (complete 1910 score). Kirov Orchestra, Valery Gergiev, conductor. Philips, 1998

The Rite of Spring, by Igor Stravinsky. Kirov Orchestra, Valery Gergiev, conductor. Philips, 2001