

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

SOMMCD 266-2

CD 1 and tracks 1 to 6 of CD 2 recorded 14-16 September 2016 and 24 June 2017 at Turner Sims Concert Hall, Southampton. Producer: Siva Oke. Engineer: Paul Arden-Taylor. **TURNER SIMS** Southampton
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Music for Solo Piano (CD1)

Music for Piano and Orchestra (CD2)*

Peter Donohoe *piano*

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra *

David Atherton *conductor**

CD1	1 - 3	Three Movements from <i>Petrushka</i>	16:50
	4 - 7	Four Etudes, Op. 7	8:19
	8 - 11	Piano Sonata in F-sharp minor	29:15
	12 - 14	Piano Sonata (1924)	10:18

Total duration: 64:43

CD2	1 - 4	Serenade in A	11:43
	5	<i>Piano-Rag-Music</i>	3:34
	6	<i>Tango</i>	3:13
	7 - 9	Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*	19:18
	10 - 14	Movements for Piano and Orchestra*	9:30
	15 - 17	<i>Capriccio</i> for Piano and Orchestra*	16:35

Total duration: 64:04

Design: Andrew Giles

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IGOR STRAVINSKY

Music for

Piano Solo and Piano and Orchestra



PETER DONOHOE *piano*

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

DAVID ATHERTON

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Three Movements from *Petrushka* (16:50)

- 1. **Danse Russe:** Allegro giusto 2:26
- 2. **Chez Pétrouchka:** Stringendo – Allegro – Furioso – Adagietto – Andantino – Allegro 5:12
- 3. **La semaine grasse:** Con Moto – Allegretto – Tempo giusto – Agitato 9:11

Four Etudes, Op. 7 (8:19)

- 1. Con moto (C minor) 1:33
- 2. Allegro brillante (D major) 3:07
- 3. Andantino (E minor) 1:43
- 4. Vivo (F-sharp major) 1:55

Sonata in F-sharp minor (29:15)

- 1. Allegro 10:45
- 2. Vivo 5:07
- 3. Andante 7:13
- 4. Allegro – Andante – Allegro 6:09

Sonata (1924) (10:18)

- 1. ♩ = 112 2:58
- 2. Adagietto 4:44
- 3.. ♩ = 112 2:35

CD 1

Peter Donohoe
piano

Total Duration: 64:43

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Serenade in A (11:43)

- 1. Hymne 3:25
- 2. Romanze 2:55
- 3. Rondoletto 2:33
- 4. Cadenza finale 2:49
- 5. **Piano-Rag-Music** 3:34
- 6. **Tango** 3:13

Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* [19:18]

- 1. Largo – Allegro – Maestoso 7:23
- 2. Larghissimo 7:01
- 3. Allegro – Agitato – Lento – Stringendo 4:53

Movements for Piano and Orchestra* (9:30)

- 1. ♩ = 110 2:47
- 2. ♩ = 52 1:25
- 3. ♩ = 72 1:09
- 4. ♩ = 80 1:59
- 5. ♩ = 104 2:08

Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* (16:35)

- 1. Presto 6:34
- 2. Andante rapsodico 4:37
- 3. Allegro capriccioso ma sempre giusto 5:23

CD 2

Peter Donohoe
piano

Hong Kong
Philharmonic
Orchestra*

David Atherton
*conductor**

Total Duration: 64:04

IGOR STRAVINSKY Music for Piano Solo and Piano and Orchestra

There was little in Stravinsky's music before the trio of ballets that propelled him to fame and notoriety to suggest he was a revolutionary in waiting. Not even the success of *L'oiseau de feu* ('The Firebird') in 1910 or *Petrushka* the following year prepared audiences for the seismic shock of *Le Sacre du printemps* ('The Rite of Spring'), the premiere of which, in Paris in 1913, provoked a near riot to create one of nascent modernity's defining moments.

The furore that greeted that fateful evening seemed to fix, as if in aspic, the conjoined but conflicting images of Stravinsky that stubbornly persist nearly half a century after his death in 1971 at the age of 89. Janus-like, he was, for some, a radical innovator sweeping aside the pastel-hued politeness of impressionism to usher in a new music

for a new age. Others reviled him as the creator of a cacophonous noise that smacked – and rudely so – of vulgar disregard for the past.

Stravinsky, himself, was keenly aware that his music divided opinion, telling *The Observer* newspaper in 1961 that it was "best understood by children and animals". That throwaway, tongue-in-cheek comment both masks and alludes to the primary attraction of a body of work characterised by innocence and insight, and distinguished by a mercurial sleight of musical hand that disguises an acute technical facility in which heart-stopping poetic delicacy and pulse-quickenning primality are fused with compelling immediacy.

It was from *Petrushka*, a decade after the ballet's first staging, that Stravinsky

culled material for solo piano in 1921. Although written for, and dedicated to, Arthur Rubinstein, in the event the pianist performed the work only once, in Memphis, Tennessee, and then only several years later.

Wary of being seen to exploit the success of the ballet, Stravinsky insisted the **Three Movements from *Petrushka*** were not mere piano transcriptions of the orchestral score. Instead, he said, "My intention was to give virtuoso pianists a piece of a certain breadth that would permit them to enhance their modern repertoire and demonstrate a brilliant technique." Such are its demands that Stravinsky, although a more than competent pianist himself, never performed it in public because, he candidly confessed, "I lack the technique".

Petrushka had fused two great Russian traditions – folk music and puppetry – into a 'ballet burlesque' in which three

puppets (*Petrushka*, the Moor and the Ballerina) come to life and find themselves involved in a third, more timeless tradition: the *ménage à trois*. It prompted from Stravinsky one of his richest and most animated scores. So rich, in fact, that distilling it into a version for solo piano posed considerable challenges despite the employment of athletic technical devices demanding gymnastic flexibility and dexterity from the pianist.

Setting three of the ballet's four tableaux ('The Moor's Room' excluded), the first of the Three Movements, *Danse Russe*, depicts the moment at which the three puppets are conjured into delirious, dancing life; the second, *Chez Pétrouchka* ('Petrushka's Room'), finds the eponymous puppet alone and disorientated by his love for the Ballerina; the third, *La semaine grasse* ('The Shrovetide Fair') depicts the bustle and colour of a carnival populated by various characters, grotesque and

comical. In a marked departure from the ballet, Stravinsky spares Petrushka his murder at the hands of his jealous love rival, the Moor.

Linking each of the scenes in the ballet was the ingenious use of a drum-roll in F-sharp, a device omitted from the piano score. Recognising its value, Peter Donohoe here substitutes it with a new phrase on piano (also in F-sharp) that adroitly restores dramatic momentum and maintains the sense of continuity between each of the scenes.

Also missing from the piano version was a telling interlude in *La semaine grasse* featuring a peasant (depicted by high clarinet) coaxing his reluctant bear (cellos and basses) to perform, and the bear's clumsy mimicry of the peasant (tuba). Here, Donohoe alters bars 96-98 of the piano score to more directly reference the original ballet and inserts a piano version of the abandoned interlude before deftly

continuing onwards (from bar 99) with fresh borrowing from the orchestral score. The result restores to the narrative – and the music – a degree of cohesion incongruously absent from the original.

The often caustically imperious Stravinsky had little regard for the music of the increasingly idiosyncratic Alexander Scriabin. He did, however, grudgingly confess to being influenced by him “in one insignificant respect, the piano writing of my **[Four] Etudes, Op. 7**”. Composed in the early summer of 1908, their preoccupation with irregular, wilfully disrupted rhythms and heightened chromaticism point, in hindsight (and on a less grand scale), to the mutable mercuriality of *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du printemps* a few years hence.

Although born into a musical family – his father, Fyodor, was the leading bass of the St Petersburg Opera, his

uncle, Alexander Yelachich, fondly remembered by his nephew as “a passionate amateur musician” – Stravinsky had been steered resolutely away from music by his concerned parent towards a career in law. That was to change, with his uncle's encouragement, following an encounter with Rimsky-Korsakov, then the elder statesman of Russian music, in 1903.

Under Rimsky-Korsakov's tutelage, Stravinsky began the **Piano Sonata in F-sharp minor** in the summer of the same year while holidaying on his uncle's estates east of the Volga River, completing it in 1904. The piano had been central to Stravinsky's musical life since the age of nine. It transformed him into an autodidact (his early understanding of harmony and counterpoint gleaned from textbooks and scores) and it would become, quite literally, the instrument of all that he composed.

He was clearly unhappy with this fledgling work (he was just 21 when he began it) considering it “fortunately lost”, as he told Robert Craft as late as 1960, unaware that it was safe in the archives of the Leningrad State Public Library (now the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg). It remained unpublished until 1973, two years after his death.

If Rimsky-Korsakov's influence is to the fore in a four-movement work whose adherence to convention owes everything to his pupil's inexperience with large-scale forms, the thumbprints of others – notably Prokofiev, Scriabin, Rachmaninov and Glazunov – are also readily identifiable. Stravinsky regarded it as “an inept imitation of Beethoven”.

Imitative perhaps, but by no means inept. If the artifice is borrowed (and it is), the execution is lithe and liquid, the Sonata's outer movements weighted down by grave solemnity,

its core distinguished by a lively, agile and communicative *Vivo*-cum-*Scherzo* and an attractive *Andante* of charming delicacy.

The three-movement **Piano Sonata** of 1924 was an inevitable, if belated, development of the earlier work. Composed as Stravinsky's neo-classical period was getting into its stride, it inked in his credentials as a true innovator; one who knew when to look backwards as much as when to push forwards. It hymns the 18th century (Haydn and Bach especially) with all the unabashed conviction of the newly converted. Even so, it is by no means slavish to classicism, decorated as it is by splashes of baroque brilliance and infused with latent romanticism.

While its outer movements are unabashed in their echoing of baroque and classical idioms, the central section owes a more explicit debt to the darker, emerging romanticism of Beethoven, a

composer Stravinsky had once reviled but came to regard as one of the "greatest musical geniuses".

Composed the following year during Stravinsky's first tour of America, the miniature **Serenade in A** was prompted by the offer of a recording from the Iowa-based Brunswick label. Stravinsky duly proffered a work whose four movements could be accommodated by the three-minute capacity of each side of a 78rpm shellac disc. Although conceived "in imitation of the *Nachtmusik* ['Night music'] of the 18th century", there's something of Chopin in the crystalline glint of the opening 'Hymne'. The ensuing, *arioso*-like 'Romanze' tributes the imagined assembly of guests, the '*Rondoletto*' third movement an effusive evocation of period dance styles. With its Debussyian overtones, the chiming finale deftly pulls the focus away from the past and determinedly towards the present.

By contrast, 1919's **Piano-Rag-Music** – composed for Arthur Rubinstein but premiered by José Iturbi – illustrates Stravinsky's awareness of developments outside of his own musical sphere. Soon to move to a Paris in thrall to American jazz music, it anticipates his fascination with the genre's free-wheeling exploitation of the keyboard. Essentially, it's an exercise in de- and re-construction in miniature, Stravinsky teasing apart jazz's improvisatory building blocks to reassemble them – complete with irregular, dislocating metre – in something jazz-like but discernibly not jazz to exploit the idiom's vitality and vivacity.

Six months after his wife of 33 years, Katya, died of tuberculosis, Stravinsky emigrated to the United States. Within the year he would be re-married and contemplating encroaching poverty, the payment of European royalties obstructed by legal disputes and the outbreak of war. 1940's **Tango** was

originally conceived as a song (though never published as such) and intended to flatter his new hosts. It was also composed with the intention of making money, to which end he also produced two arrangements for chamber orchestra and another for violin and piano.

Curiously, perhaps, it looks towards Latin America rather than the perhaps too diverse, not yet fully defined, music of his adopted country. More explicable, tango's terse, statuesque formality and biting rhythmic vibrancy clearly exerted its own allure on a composer for whom rhythm was paramount. Tellingly, Stravinsky probes beneath the form's surface to dwell on its darker, dangerously combustible passions.

Sitting in Stravinsky's neo-classical period but rooted in the *concerto grosso* form favoured during the baroque, the **Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments** teems with wholly modern idioms. Suggested by

the conductor Serge Koussevitzky, composed in 1924 and cast in three contrasting movements, it stresses the new (not least in the unorthodox pairing of piano and winds, augmented by double basses and timpani) as much as the classical. "Strings and piano, a sound scraped and a sound struck, do not sound well together," Stravinsky asserted. "Piano and wind, sounds struck and blown, do".

Evident in the introductory *toccata* – described by Stravinsky as a "short, crisp dance" – is the influence of the French baroque's fondness for heavy drama although its main subject – introduced by the ever-dominant and percussive piano, and treated to a three-part invention – owes obvious debts to Bach and Scarlatti. The more lyrical middle movement is a "sonorous *largo*" that retains the piano's prominence as it introduces the theme – shot through with striking dissonances and subsequently taken up by the orchestra

– before claiming two grandstanding solo passages during its working out.

The "breathless *Allegro*" finale re-fashions the Concerto's opening *toccata* style with bravura virtuosity in a fugal treatment of a theme built on the concluding cadence of the previous movement. A momentary pause – solemn and stately – just as proceedings come to the boil, is answered by a return of the initial theme and a race towards the final emphatic chord.

Whether chameleon or magpie, Stravinsky's appetite for the new remained undiminished throughout his life, 1959's **Movements** a product of his later preoccupation with serialism. They were, he claimed, "the most 'advanced'" works he had composed, their meaning and effect best realised when viewed "as though through a crystal".

With the orchestra fractured into chamber-like sections, the piano serves

as both instigator of, and intermediary between, their various responses. The experience is of something atomised straining to achieve definition and form, each of the five, short movements confined within a contained timbral range in which often wild polyrhythmic combinations are loosely held together by the unifying pull of tempo relationships.

Designed as much as it was composed ("every aspect of the composition was guided by serial forms") it reveals Stravinsky, then aged 77, as a Prospero-like figure, one who was still as protean and pioneering as he had ever been in a career that changed the course of contemporary music.

Ever alert to the past, Stravinsky took the character of his *Capriccio* from a definition by Praetorius "meaning a fantasia – a free form made up of *fugato* instrumental passages". He also later admitted that Weber's sonatas "may

have exercised a spell over me" at the time of its writing in 1929.

As with the Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, **Capriccio** (described by Joseph Horowitz as being "as playful as the Concerto was earnest") was conceived as a vehicle for Stravinsky's own talents as a concert pianist. Its composition immediately followed that of his 'Tchaikovsky ballet', *Le baiser de la fée* ('The Fairy's Kiss'), and it shares that work's gracefully elasticated rhythms and refined melodic signature. Conspicuously, it carries itself throughout with a spryness that some would deny Stravinsky, the central rhapsodic movement glinting with baroque effervescence, the outer movements marked by dance-like formality and freedom, the finale especially sprightly and tinged with the energy and excitability of jazz.

Michael Quinn

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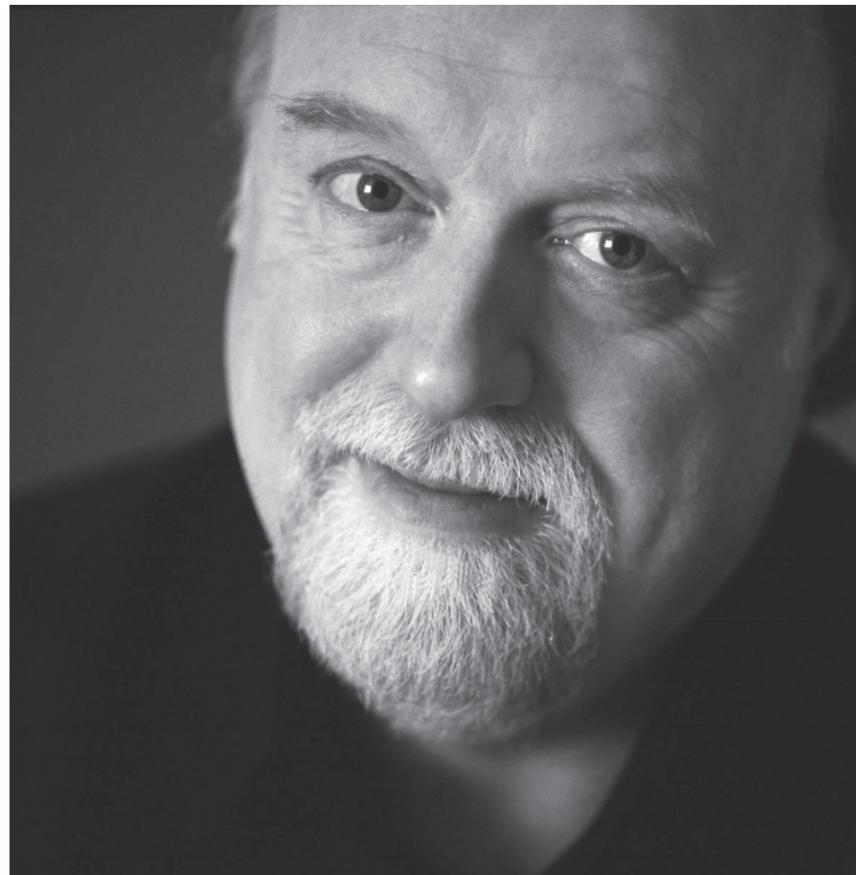
Peter Donohoe

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953. He studied at Chetham's School of Music for seven years, graduated in music at Leeds University, and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, for his musicianship, stylistic versatility and commanding technique.

In recent seasons Donohoe has appeared with Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic and Concert Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, St Petersburg Philharmonia, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Belarusian State Symphony Orchestra, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. He has undertaken a UK tour with the Russian State Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as giving concerts in many South American and

European countries, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Russia and USA. Other engagements include performances of all three MacMillian piano concertos with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, a series of concerts for the *Ravel and Rachmaninov Festival* at Bridgewater Hall, and numerous performances with The Orchestra of the Swan.

Donohoe is also in high demand as a jury member for international competitions. He has recently served on the juries at the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow (2011 and 2015), Busoni International Competition in Bolzano, Italy (2012), the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels (2016), Georges Enescu Competition in Bucharest (2016), Hong Kong International Piano Competition (2016), and Ricardo Viñes International Competition in Lleida, Spain, along with many national competitions both within the UK and abroad.



photograph: Sussie Ahlburg

Recent discs include a new recording of Shostakovich's Piano Concertos and Sonatas with the Orchestra of the Swan, and a disc of Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues (both Signum Records), which was described as 'thoughtful and poignant' by *The Guardian*; a disc of Scriabin Piano Sonatas (SOMM Records) which was called 'magnificent' by *The Sunday Times*; a recording of Witold Maliszewski's Piano Concerto in B flat minor with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates (Dutton Vocalion); and three discs of Prokofiev piano sonatas for SOMM Records, the third of which was released at the end of April 2016. The first Prokofiev disc was described by *Gramophone* as 'devastatingly effective', declaring Donohoe to be 'in his element', and a review in *Classical Notes* identified Donohoe's 'remarkably sensitive approach to even the most virtuosic of repertoire'. His second Prokofiev disc was given 5 stars by *BBC Music Magazine*, and the third

disc was highly praised by *The Times*, *Birmingham Post* and Jessica Duchén. Other recordings include Cyril Scott's *Piano Concerto* with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Martin Yates (Dutton Vocalion) and Malcolm Arnold's *Fantasy on a Theme of John Field* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Martin Yates (also Dutton), for which *BBC Music Magazine* described him as an 'excellent soloist', and *Gramophone* stated that it 'compelled from start to finish'.

Donohoe has performed with all the major London orchestras, as well as orchestras from across the world: the Royal Concertgebouw, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Philharmonic, Swedish Radio, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Vienna Symphony and Czech Philharmonic Orchestras. He has also played with the Berliner Philharmoniker in Sir Simon Rattle's opening concerts as Music Director. He made his twenty-second appearance at the BBC Proms in 2012 and has appeared

at many other festivals including six consecutive visits to the Edinburgh Festival, La Roque d'Anthéron in France, and at the Ruhr and Schleswig Holstein Festivals in Germany. In the United States, his appearances have included the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit Symphony Orchestras. Peter Donohoe also performs numerous recitals internationally and continues working with his long standing duo partner Martin Roscoe, as well as more recent collaborations with artists such as Raphael Wallfisch, Elizabeth Watts and Noriko Ogawa.

Donohoe has worked with many of the world's greatest conductors: Christoph Eschenbach, Neeme Järvi, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Andrew Davis and Yevgeny Svetlanov. More recently he has appeared as soloist with the next generation of excellent conductors: Gustavo Dudamel, Robin Ticciati and Daniel Harding.

Peter Donohoe is an honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities, and was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the 2010 New Year's Honours List.



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