L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT AND LES NOCES:

A HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL, AND THEATRICAL COMPARISON STUDY OF TWO CHAMBER MUSIC COMPOSITIONS BY IGOR STRAVINSKY

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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CHAPTER I--HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I have always had a horror of listening to music with my eyes shut, with nothing for them to do. The sight of the gesture and movements of the various parts of the body producing the music is fundamentally necessary if it is to be grasped in all its fullness.¹

Igor Stravinsky made this remark to explain his unusual concept of placing instrumentalists on stage, along with the actors and dancers, in his composition L'Histoire du soldat. However, Stravinsky could have said the same about another of his works, Les Noces, which also positions the instrumentalists on stage. These works were both composed during World War I when Stravinsky emigrated to Switzerland. Although similar in some respects to each other and other works of Stravinsky’s during this period, each composition breaks new ground and is representative of the continuing progression of Stravinsky’s musical development. Les Noces is the last major work written during Stravinsky’s “Russian” period, while L’Histoire du soldat bridges the gap between the “Russian” period and Stravinsky’s first neoclassical work.

One important similarity between the two works is the spectacle mentioned above of having all of the involved participants on one stage. This is an idea that Stravinsky discusses both in his Autobiography, (from which the opening
quotation is taken) and later in *Poetics of Music*, the written record of a series of lectures Stravinsky gave at Harvard University in 1941. He states that it is "not enough to hear the music...it must also be seen."²

Before going further, it is necessary to remember that Stravinsky is not as reliable as one might wish in his memories of past events. There are many contradictory remarks throughout his various writings. Music historian William Austin remarks on this, stating "Historians must be skeptical of all he said, remembering that he wished he could erase it all."³ (Further examples of this will be discussed later in this paper.)

**Les Noces**

Stravinsky first considered the idea for the composition of *Les Noces* in 1912, while he was still actively working on the composition, *Le Sacre du printemps*. It was not until 1914 that Stravinsky, according to his own records, began actual written work on *Les Noces*. Various sources are in conflict regarding the exact beginning date. In most later references, Stravinsky insists that he had conceived the idea for *Les Noces* in 1912, but was delayed by other projects.

Stravinsky wrote the majority of the composition of *Les Noces* in Clarens, Switzerland. Before beginning serious composition of *Les Noces*, Stravinsky determined that he needed to visit Russia to collect materials for the libretto. The atmosphere across central Europe was tense, and
Stravinsky was fortunate to arrive in Switzerland shortly before the outbreak of the war. He returned to Switzerland with a copy of Kirievsky's collection of Russian Popular Poems, Sakharov's Collection, and Dal's Dictionary of Russian Phrases. He was able to remain in Switzerland as he was exempt from Russian military service. Destined to remain in Western Europe and America, he was never to see Russia again as he had known it.

Stravinsky described the compositional process of Les Noces in great detail in his Autobiography. He began his work in Clarens in a house that he sublet from his friend, Ernest Ansermet, who would later become the first conductor for both Les Noces and L'Histoire du soldat. Shortly thereafter, he was forced to move to Chateau d'Oux because of his wife's ill health. Here, he first attempted to continue his work in a lumber room which opened onto a chicken run. This room contained a new, though out-of-tune, upright piano. Freezing temperatures forced the composer to work in his overcoat and gloves. After two days, he was able to locate a room in a home belonging to people who were not at home during the day. Stravinsky installed a piano and completed the first two scenes by the time Diaghilev arrived for a visit in 1915.

Stravinsky played Les Noces for Diaghilev who was deeply moved by the music. The impresario stated that this composition was "the most beautiful and purely Russian creation" of the Russian ballet. For his part, Stravinsky was so touched by Diaghilev's reaction that he dedicated the
work to his friend.

The composer's work on *Les Noces* was interrupted many times from its conception in 1912 to its first production in 1923. The first interruption occurred after completion of the first two scenes, when Stravinsky began work on *Reynard* in 1915. This was followed by a period of severe illness in the winter of 1916.

Two tragedies in 1916 delayed work on *Les Noces* even further. The first was the death of Stravinsky's beloved childhood nurse, Bertha, who had been like a mother to Stravinsky, and the second was the death of his brother. As a result, the composer ceased to work and began again only in the spring of 1917. On April 4, 1917, he finished the libretto and the short score in Morges, Switzerland. Upon completion of the short score, further work on *Les Noces* was once again abandoned for other compositions, including *L'Histoire du soldat*.

The final orchestration was not finished until April 6, 1923 in Monaco. Stravinsky attempted to use many different instrumental combinations before completing the orchestration. His first idea was to use a "monster" orchestra requiring 150 players, similar to the one used for *Le Sacre du printemps*. This idea was too impractical for many reasons. His second attempt was another orchestral version dividing all of the instruments into separate groups, such as wind and percussion, which were to function as "blocks." His third and most unorthodox idea was an ensemble consisting of a mechanical piano, percussion, harmonium, and
two Hungarian cimbaloms. Stravinsky completed the first two scenes using this instrumentation before he rejected it because of the complications created by using a mechanical piano: "What defeated me was the problem of synchronization in pitch as well as tempo ... it (the mechanical piano) was so grossly, irremediably, and intolerably out of tune."  

Finally, in 1923, Stravinsky decided to accompany the vocal parts with an orchestra of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments. In his book, *Retrospectives and Conclusions*, Stravinsky wrote of his interest in percussion instruments:

...before the *Histoire du Soldat* and this Svedeba (Les Noces) version, in which percussion is a continuing and internally consistent element, the 'drums' had never really been given their heads. The character of the music itself is percussive...To bang a gong, bash a cymbal, clout a wood block (or critic) has always given me the keenest satisfaction..."

The percussion instruments he chose were four pianos, xylophone, timpani, 2 crotales and a bell, two side drums (with and without snare), two drums (with and without snare), tambourine, bass drum, cymbals, and triangle. These accompanied a full SATB chorus and four soloists: soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass. Stravinsky was now satisfied with the orchestration:

Such a sound combination in *Les Noces* was the necessary outcome of the music itself, and it was in nowise [sic] suggested by a desire to imitate the sounds of popular fêtes of this kind, which I had, indeed, neither seen nor heard."
Diaghilev gave the first production of Les Noces in 1923. It is remarkable that Les Noces is considered by many historians to be a work of great unity, when the actual compositional process spanned approximately ten years of dramatic changes in Stravinsky's compositional style.

C.F. Ramuz, Stravinsky's close friend and collaborator, described the spectacle of the composer at work during this time. Stravinsky would be pounding away at the piano or on many percussion instruments so that the noise that ensued:

...could be heard in the little square outside, where two or three women were usually to be found sitting...they would raise their heads for a moment in bewilderment and then with an indulgent 'C'est le monsieur russe!' resume their knitting."

Stravinsky was drawn to the folklore of Russia as he was unable to return to Russia. The Kirievsky Collection served as the primary source for Les Noces and for several smaller works including "Chansons Plaisantes," "Berceuses du Chat," and four unaccompanied choruses for women's voices. The collection was especially useful for Les Noces as it contained a large group of wedding songs. Stravinsky has noted that when Kirievsky was compiling his collection of folk verses that he asked Pushkin to send him any verses that Pushkin had. Pushkin complied and included some of his own verses, asking if Kirievsky could tell the difference between them. Kirievsky could not, so all of the verses were included in Kirievsky's Collection. Thus, Stravinsky writes, Pushkin may have contributed to the libretto of Les Noces.'
Stravinsky stated that *Les Noces* was not meant to be a "liturgical ballet," which was apparently how it was conceived by Diaghilev. According to Stravinsky, Diaghilev envisioned a "Russian church spectacle in a Paris theater" with "wonderful icons and costumes." Stravinsky speaks of his own conception of *Les Noces* in his *Autobiography*:

According to my idea, the spectacle should have been a divertissement, and that is what I wanted to call it. It was not my intention to reproduce the ritual of peasant weddings, and I paid little heed to ethnographical considerations. My idea was to compose a sort of scenic ceremony, using as I liked those ritualistic elements so abundantly provided by village customs which had been established for centuries in the celebration of Russian marriages. I took my inspiration from these customs, but reserved to myself the right to use them with absolute freedom.

Stravinsky entrusted the French translation of the libretto to C. F. Ramuz, with whom he spent many long afternoons literally rendering the Russian text word for word into French. In his autobiography, Stravinsky speaks of the affinity between Ramuz and himself:

I initiated him into the peculiarities and subtle shades of the Russian language and the difficulties presented by its tonic accent. I was astonished at his insight, his intuitive ability, and his gift for transferring the spirit and poesy of the Russian folk poems to a language so remote and different as French.

The libretto of *Les Noces* is divided into two parts. Part one comprises three scenes; part two, which follows without pause, comprises only one scene. Part one involves "substantial elements of ritualistic lamentations" and part two contains the "slightly tipsy fun of the guests at the
wedding feast, followed by the bedding of the bride and groom."

In the beginning of part one, Nastasia, the bride, sings lamentations while she and her bridesmaids plait her hair with ribbons. (According to Russian custom, the plaited hair symbolizes marriage. Only single women wore their hair loose.) Fetis, the bridegroom, and his friends are combing his hair while he invokes the Mother of God, Apostles, and Angels for blessings. During this section, scene two, Fetis also asks for the blessings of his parents. Scene three involves Nastasia asking her parents' blessing while preparing to take her departure from their house. The mothers of Fetis and Nastasia lament the loss of their children, bringing part one to a conclusion.

Part two begins with a table of wedding guests eating, drinking, and singing. Many conversations take place, although few are heard in their entirety as the guests continue to eat and drink merrily throughout. A drunken guest interrupts several times mumbling an "unintelligible story about a gold ring and a ruby that someone has lost." Nastasia is presented to Fetis and a married couple is chosen to warm the bridal bed. All the guests toast the bride and groom, who are then escorted to the bridal chamber where they are left alone while the parents sit outside on a bench facing the guests. Stravinsky strings together various scraps and tags of popular verse, as well as arranging occasional overlaps in the dialogue in a kind of verbal counterpoint."
The libretto involves specific characters: Nastasia, Fetiš, their parents, the marriage-broker, the best man, bridesmaids, and several individuals who are friends. However, Stravinsky does not identify any particular role with one voice, which was also his practice in Reynard and many of his other works.

There were very few printed instructions about the staging of Les Noces. The score carries a few notations which mostly involve directions to the actors. Stravinsky decided to place the orchestra on stage with the singers to achieve his idea of a divertissement. In his Autobiography, Stravinsky writes about his ideas very specifically:

I wanted all of my instrumental apparatus to be visible side by side with the actors and dancers, making it, so to speak, a participant in the whole theatrical action. For this reason, I wished to place the orchestra on the stage itself, letting the actors move on the space remaining free. The fact that the actors on the stage would wear uniform Russian-style costumes while the musicians would be in evening dress not only did not embarrass me, but, on the contrary, was perfectly in keeping with my idea of a divertissement of the masquerade type.16

The first production, by Diaghilev and the Ballet Russe, took place in Paris, June of 1923. Bronislava Nijinska was the choreographer for Les Noces. Her work is described by Eric White in Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works as "beautifully austere." Stravinsky praised the choreography specifically in his interviews with Robert Craft taken from Memories and Commentaries although he expressed dissatisfaction with Diaghilev's staging in his
Autobiography: "I must say that the stage production of Les Noces, though obviously one of talent, did not correspond with my original plan. I had pictured to myself something quite different." Later, however, in Expositions and Developments (also with Robert Craft), Stravinsky praises the staging, as well as the choreography, saying:

The first staging of The Wedding was in general compatible with my conception of the ritualistic and non-personal. As I have said elsewhere, the choreography was expressed in blocks and masses; individual personalities did not, could not, emerge. The curtain was not used, and the dancers did not leave the stage even during the lamentations of the two mothers, a wailing ritual which presupposes an empty set; the empty set and all other changes of scene, from the bride's to the groom's to the church, are created solely by the music. But though the bride and groom are always present, the guests are able to talk about them as if they are not there--a stylization not unlike Kabuki theater."

Diaghilev wished to have only the four pianos on stage for aesthetic reasons. Thus, in the first performance, the pianos were separated from the percussion ensemble, chorus, and solo singers who were in the pit. This was evidently the reason for the disagreement between Stravinsky and Diaghilev. Stravinsky states:

Inspired by the same reasons as in L'Histoire du soldat, I wanted all my instrumental apparatus to be visible side by side with the actors and dancers... but Diaghilev had no sympathy with my wishes. And when, to convince him, I pointed out how successful the plan had been in L'Histoire, I only stimulated his furious resistance because he could not bear L'Histoire."

Natalia Goncharova provided the original decor and
Ernest Ansermet conducted the production. The first performance, which was preceded by a private performance at the home of Princess Edmond de Polignac, took place at the Theatre de la Gaite Lyrique.

Serge Lifar, who was a member of the corps de ballet during the first performance, writes about the dance rehearsals of *Les Noces* in his book *Serge Diaghilev*:

Every rehearsal of *The Wedding* was attended by the composer, Igor Stravinsky, but not by any means as a simple spectator, for nothing could exceed his eager interest. To begin, he would only indicate roughly what was meant, but soon he was angrily gesticulating, and then, thoroughly aroused, would take off his coat, sit down to the piano, and, reproducing all the symphonic sonority of the work, begin singing in a kind of ecstatic, but terrible voice, which carried so much conviction that no one could have thought it comical. Often, he would go on this way till he was completely exhausted. But still, a new life would have been fused into the rehearsal, and the whole company would start dancing for all it was worth. Practice ended, he would put on his coat, raise the collar, and walk off to the bar, a weak and puny little man. And it seemed strange that this all-but-common-place looking mortal (though his individual and striking features distinguished him from all others) had a moment before, been a composer of genius. 21

*L'histoire du soldat*

As previously noted, one of the interruptions of the composition of *Les Noces* was the composition of another work, *L'Histoire du soldat*, written in one year beginning in 1917. At this time, Stravinsky, Ramuz, and Ansermet were all experiencing financial difficulty due to the war. The
Communist Revolution had finally triumphed in Russia and Stravinsky was unable to receive resources from his estate there. There were few performances of his music, once again due to the complications of the war and the limited availability of funds with which to produce musical performances. As Ramuz made most of his living from the profits of his book sales in France, he was without dependable income as well.

Out of financial necessity, these men conceived the idea of creating a small traveling theater. Stravinsky and Ramuz had become close friends during the intense work of translating Les Noces from Russian to French and they were anxious to work together on a new project. They also wished to collaborate with some of the other artists in their circle, including the painter, Rene Auberjonois, as well as with Ansermet. Their initial idea was to create a work that was inexpensive to produce and easily transportable, which would enable them to tour small towns. (This strategy was also used by Schoenberg with his production of "Pierrot Lunnaire" in 1912 which toured over forty German towns.)

The initial search for a financial backer was unsuccessful until they were finally able to persuade M. Werner Reinhart to provide some of the funds needed. When they were unable to find any other backers, Reinhart generously agreed to finance the entire venture.

For the libretto, Stravinsky turned to his book of Russian folk tales by Afanasiev. Ramuz was intrigued by it and suggested that the libretto be written to be read as a
story rather than dramatized as a play. Stravinsky decided to have the Narrator take part in some of the action which was presented largely in tableau form. Stravinsky writes of choosing the story for the libretto:

For the purpose of our theater we were particularly drawn to the cycle of legends dealing with the adventures of the soldier who deserted and the Devil who inexorably comes to carry off his soul. This cycle was based on folk stories of a cruel period of enforced recruitment under Nicholas I..."22

The two men decided that the work should have a moral that was common to the literature of different nationalities to give it international appeal. Although the original folk tale is in Russian, the libretto was written so that the story could take place in any country. Stravinsky writes: "It was this essentially human aspect of the tragic story of the soldier destined to become the prey of the Devil that attracted Ramuz and myself."23

The lack of funds created many potential problems. However, the artists involved seemed to enjoy the challenge of solving them. Stravinsky described his own difficulty by stating "I knew only too well that so far as the music was concerned I should have to be content with a very restricted orchestra."24 He rejected the idea of using a piano for two reasons: he felt using a piano would make the work sound too much like an arrangement and give evidence of a certain lack of financial means. Using the piano as a solo instrument would require paying strict attention to the "pianism" of his score, exploiting and exhausting all of its possibilities.
He writes:

So there was nothing for it but to decide on a group of instruments, a selection which would include the representative types, in treble and bass, of the instrumental families. He chose the violin, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, and the percussion manipulated by only one musician which included two side drums of different size without snare, bass drum, cymbals, tambourine, and triangle. This combination allowed the audience to see these instrumentalists each contributing his own part to the ensemble.

From the beginning, Stravinsky planned to have the orchestra on stage with the Narrator and the dancers. He describes his ideas this way:

It (the orchestra) was to be on one side of the stage, and a small dais for the reader on the other. This arrangement established the connection between the three elements of the piece which by their close cooperation were to form a unity: in the center, the stage and the actors; on one side of them, the music; and, on the other, the reader. Our idea was that the three elements should sometimes take turns as soloists and sometimes combine as an ensemble."

The plot begins with a soldier returning home. He meets the Devil disguised as a butterfly catcher, who trades a magic book for the Soldier's fiddle (which represents the Soldier's soul). The Soldier then accepts the Devil's invitation to spend three days with him. Upon his return home, the Soldier learns to his despair that three years have passed. He resolves to make a fortune with the help of the magic book. Later, successful but disillusioned by his
wealth, he is visited by the Devil again, this time disguised as an old woman. (Stravinsky states in *Expositions* that he originally intended for the old woman to be a procuress displaying her gallery for hire.) She sells him back his fiddle but the Soldier is unable to get a sound out of it. He throws the book and the fiddle away.

In a different town, the Soldier learns that the King will give his daughter's hand in marriage to the man who succeeds in curing her from her illness. On the way to try his luck, the Soldier again meets the Devil now disguised as a virtuoso violinist. The Soldier tricks him into becoming intoxicated, and recovers his fiddle in a game of cards. The Soldier plays the fiddle for the Princess and she rises to dance a tango, waltz, and ragtime. The Devil appears undisguised, but the Soldier overcomes him with his fiddle. The Soldier and the Princess are married.

They decide to visit the Soldier's home village. However, when they cross the frontier, the Soldier is once more in the Devil's power. The Devil takes the fiddle and leads the Soldier away in a trance.

The staging was kept simple and inexpensive. Rene Auberjonois, who did the scenery and costumes for the first performance, impressed Stravinsky:

"(I) had not expected that he would give proof of such subtle imagination and such complete mastery as he did in the scenery and costumes and the whole artistry of his setting."

When the men began rehearsals for the first performance, they were fortunate to be able to hire Georges and Ludmilla
Pitoeff to assist in the staging of the production. Georges directed and Ludmilla danced the role of the Princess. The other performers were students from Lausanne University. Gabriel Rossel played the Soldier, Jean Villard played the role of the Devil, and Elie Gagnebin was the Reader.

Stravinsky was actively involved in the choreography. According to Stravinsky, he and Madame Pitoeff "evolved together" the dances for the Princess.2 Originally, the Devil was intended to be a role for one person who spoke and danced. However, according to Ramuz, Villard "found the part of the Devil quite tricky to play"; he apparently had difficulty dancing in mixed meter.2 Evidently, Stravinsky announced his intention to dance the role himself as Ramuz encouraged him in a letter: "You'll do so with rhythmic vitality and save the day."10 In the end, Georges Pitoeff stepped in and Villard performed only the spoken portion of the Devil's role.

Villard, who was only twenty at the time, gives an account of those rehearsals in an article called "Souvenirs du Diable":

Stravinsky and Ramuz were in charge of daily rehearsals—the former always in a frenzy of enthusiasm, inventiveness, joy, indignation, headache; leaping on the piano as if it were a dangerous foe that had to be subdued by a bout of fistcuffs, then bounding on to the stage, swallowing glasses of kirsch whose after-effects had to be combated with the aid of aspirin: the latter, calm, attentive, friendly, rather bashful when giving advice, seeing things from our point of view, trying (like us) to find the right answers, showing an indomitable patience, and following with malicious enjoyment the genial capers of his collaborator. In the
presence of these two artists with their complementary temperaments, we felt ourselves imbued with vital intensity and could think of nothing but our work.32

The first production, after numerable delays, was given on September 28, 1918 at the Theatre Municipal de Lausanne. Stravinsky stated that no other performance was as satisfactory to him as this first one.32 He had words of praise for all of his collaborators, but he was particularly lavish in his praise to Ansermet, who conducted the first performance:

An executioner's talent lies in his faculty for seeing what is actually in the score, and certainly not in a determination to find there what he would like to find. This is Ansermet's greatest and most precious quality, and it particularly revealed itself while we were studying the score of Soldat. From that moment dates an intellectual understanding between us which time has only increased and strengthened.33

He goes on later to add:

For an orchestra of only seven musicians, all playing as soloists, there could be no question of fooling the public by the dynamic effects with which we were all familiar and which are all too easy; it was necessary not only to reach a meticulous perfection and precision of execution but to sustain it without ever faltering for a moment, because, with so small a number of instruments, it would have been impossible to conceal what an adroit conductor could have made to pass unnoticed in a large orchestra.34

Evidently, Ansermet was successful in this endeavor. He later conducted many other of Stravinsky's works, including Les Noces.

Unfortunately, the other performances scheduled were
canceled due to an epidemic of Spanish Influenza. All theaters were required by law to remain closed to prevent the spread of this deadly disease. All of the collaborators, including Stravinsky, eventually suffered from the disease. L'Histoire was never staged with the Russian Ballet because Diaghilev refused. According to Stravinsky, Diaghilev was violently jealous of any work that "his" artists did in which he did not have a part.

The manuscript score was given to Werner Reinhart for his part in the financial aspects of L'Histoire. Stravinsky later made a transcription of the work for violin, clarinet, and piano, and gave it to Reinhart, an amateur clarinetist. It seems a little odd, in light of his original aversion to the piano in the score, that Stravinsky would choose to do a reduction of this work. He probably wished to honor Reinhart for all of his financial help with the project. Eric Walter White calls this arrangement "an error in musical taste."

His main objection is the timbral obstruction of the original instrumentation with its unique blend of highs and lows and of the registers in which they are placed and combined." Audiences today are more likely to hear the music performed in the version extracted to create a suite than to see and hear L'Histoire du Soldat fully staged.
Endnotes


5Craft and Stravinsky, *Retrospectives and Conclusions*, p. 120.

6Ibid, pg. 121.


10Stravinsky, *Autobiography*, p. 61

11Ibid.

12Ibid.


17White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works*, p. 221.


19Craft and Stravinsky, *Expositions and Developments*, p. 133.


23Ibid.

24Ibid.


26Ibid, p. 73.

27Ibid, p. 74.

28Ibid.


30Ibid.

31Ibid, p. 236.


33Ibid.

34Ibid.

35White, Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works, p. 237.
CHAPTER II--THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF LES NOCES

A man has one birthplace, one fatherland, one country—he can have only one country—and the place of his birth is the most important factor in his life. I regret that circumstances separated me from my fatherland.¹

Studying the theoretical aspects of Stravinsky's work, particularly those from his earlier years, is often made more difficult by the fact that Stravinsky has little to say on the subject and what he does say is often contradictory. Many times his current opinions colored his views of the past. In his autobiography and his interviews with Robert Craft, Stravinsky writes of the circumstances surrounding his compositions, the people he was associated with, or his current opinions. Attempts to elicit comments from Stravinsky concerning his theories and approaches during the actual time of composition were usually unsuccessful because he lost interest in a project once he finished it. His musical theories and ideas underwent constant change, and these changes were reflected in his compositions.

No single work of Stravinsky's represents this trait better than Les Noces. Over the ten year span it was composed, Les Noces was revised at least four times. According to Robert Craft, Les Noces underwent the "most extensive metamorphosis" of all of Stravinsky's works.² Each new interruption of Les Noces, all of which were discussed in
the first chapter, "left him greatly changed." Craft adds that Stravinsky’s ideas were particularly changed after the composition of *L'Histoire du soldat* and that "...the preoccupation with percussion and small ensemble in that work drastically (reduced) the sizable orchestral cloak with which Stravinsky had first envisioned his material."

When composing, Stravinsky's normal preference was to progress without delay. Pieter C. Van den Toorn wrote:

> Once assured of a 'find,' a melodic or rhythmic idea of some sort, his instinct was to persevere from start to finish, without interruptions, particularly in the composition. As he later explained, the future seemed never to furnish the certainty of the present; ideas were best encouraged when new and fresh.‘

Therefore, the prolonged delay of orchestration for his composition *Les Noces* was highly unusual and would seem to explain the numerous changes Stravinsky made in the work. As his ideas concerning composition changed over time, Stravinsky would return to the score of *Les Noces* influenced by those changes. Stephen Walsh calls *Les Noces* something of a hybrid, inhabiting many genres at once.

In spite of the long delays in orchestrating *Les Noces*, it is still included as part of the first of three stylistic periods which are often used to classify Stravinsky's work. When *Les Noces* is studied in the context of compositional order, not the order of publication, it may be seen as a natural continuation of the ideas generated from *The Rite of Spring*. Roman Vlad goes as far as calling *Les Noces* the "second part" of the Rite of Spring.‘ Theodore Stravinsky
explains further:

The Rite of Spring and The Wedding belong to the same aesthetic, though The Wedding achieves, perhaps, a greater formal perfection (such was Ravel's opinion). The most striking difference between the two is that The Wedding is stripped of all ornament. This was partly due to the fact that Stravinsky found the final instrumental form of the work only six years later, in 1923, after the most decisive turn in his evolution.

Only a few moments in Les Noces evoke comparable moods to the Rite and their orchestration is vastly different. Stravinsky no longer used the immense orchestral resources that had been standard in his earlier works such as The Rite of Spring, Scherzo fantastique, The Firebird, Petrouchka, Zvezdoliki, and The Nightingale, though he originally thought of Les Noces in these dimensions. According to Stravinsky, his earlier works were "products of the Russian orchestral school in which I had been fostered."

Les Noces is one of his more modest chamber group orchestrations, using what he called a "solo-instrumental" style." Other examples of this style include Renard, and Four Russian Peasant Songs.

William Austin explains that Stravinsky's development after The Rite of Spring could be followed with sympathy by anyone who had penetrated very deeply into the earlier works. However, Austin adds that "...listeners who were ecstatic about superficial aspects of the Rite were to be disappointed." Stravinsky's early fame after the composition of Petrouchka and The Rite of Spring caused listeners to be prejudiced against his later compositions. Expecting to hear
large orchestral sweep, they were puzzled by his smaller ensembles and the stripped down purity of his composition.

Another contributing factor to the musical differences between Les Noces and Le Sacre du Printemps, as well as many of Stravinsky's previous works, is the prominent use of the SATB chorus. Only the final twenty-one bars of Les Noces are purely instrumental. The pitched instruments generally follow the vocal lines. The singing continues without interruption through all four scenes. Stravinsky achieves this continuity by having the various melodies overlap and interrupt each other. He refers to this style as a "contrapuntal chorus" and discusses this concept in an interview with N. Roerig:

In Les Noces, for instance, I use a contrapuntal chorus, something of which nobody has an idea here. But in Russia every chorus sings this music, and it is a very common practice because these kinds of choruses have been sung in the church ever since. My music of this kind is a mixture between wind and string instruments, a mixture in which the human voices serve as wind instruments, for that is what they are in the end."

Perhaps this concept of human voices as wind instruments explains his reluctance to identify a character in the drama with a particular vocal soloist, although there are other reasons for this practice which will be discussed later.

It is interesting to note that this interview aroused the ire of Schoenberg, whose comments written along the side of the newspaper interview were carefully preserved. Concerning the chorus, Schoenberg remarks "A counterpoint chorus: what the little Modernsky imagines to be
counterpoint."¹¹ Roerig suggests that Schoenberg may have felt that Stravinsky's counterpoint resembled that of Handel, and that this contrapuntal style was not as expansive as the greater contrapuntal concentration required for serial constructions.¹²

Margarita Mazo's remarks concerning the 19th century Russian composer's use of counterpoint indicate what Stravinsky probably meant when he referred to a "contrapuntal chorus." Like other Russian composers, Stravinsky used counterpoint as a device to introduce new themes. These were added to preexisting themes which eventually transformed into independent themes, losing their original status as "companions." Mazo writes that this concept was the alternative to Western types of musical development.¹³

Schoenberg also expressed doubt concerning the validity of the translation of the article with this comment which illuminates once again the difficulty of discovering Stravinsky's true ideas:

What is given here as utterances by Stravinsky one does not have to take too seriously because one can't. He himself is not so serious about it, otherwise he would put more weight on being quoted exactly as to what he meant to say. Most of it is nonsense which I did not expect of him, and it is difficult to distinguish what I do expect from him.¹⁴

In spite of the animosity between Stravinsky and Schoenberg, Schoenberg obviously felt that he would recognize the truth from Stravinsky if he saw it.

Stravinsky's concept of the chorus serving as orchestral instruments in *Les Noces* is further supported by the use of
large ranges and by the subordination of the text to rhythm and melody. Later choral works by Stravinsky have much narrower vocal ranges than Les Noces; even his serial works remain in the middle vocal registers.

Stravinsky articulates his attitude about text in his Autobiography:

The text thus becomes purely phonetic material for the composer. He can dissect it at will and concentrate all of his attention on its primary constituent element— that is to say, on the syllable.15

Stravinsky makes prosody subordinate to rhythm in the primary choral parts of Les Noces, according to Gilbert Amy.16 Amy also points out that whether Stravinsky is writing in Latin, Russian, or French, he proceeds in exactly the same way once he has a rhythmic or melodic idea. He subjugates the words to his music.17 After choosing the initial subject matter and text, Stravinsky randomly chose verses which would be useful musically.

There are others who disagree with Amy’s conclusions. Eric Walter White has suggested that the irregular patterns of the verbal meters of the Russian language may dictate the musical meter. White states that this idiom "...is a development of the vocal style of writing Stravinsky had already established in the third number of Saucers, and some of the Pribaoutki, Cat's Cradle Songs, and Tales for Children."18 Victor Beliaev's remarks on the same subject will be discussed in detail later.19

The Russian character of Les Noces is a point about
which there has been much discussion. This subject is broached in almost all of the articles which examine Les Noces in depth. Possibly, Stravinsky wished to "separate" himself from Russia as he was obviously embarrassed by the politics of Bolshevist Russia, even though he himself was in exile. In his Autobiography, Stravinsky remarks upon his "humiliation" after the peace of Brest-Livstock. Both he and Diaghilev, together with other Russian patriots in foreign countries, found themselves facing the scorn of the native residents who were angered by Russian politics. Once a zealous Russian who, in 1915, warned Prokofiev against "internationalism," Stravinsky's ideas soon changed for a variety of reasons. He began advocating a more "internationalist" style, influenced by his own situation, Diaghilev's advice, and certainly his own artistic motivations.20

When Robert Craft first met and talked with Stravinsky in 1948, he found that Stravinsky was "bored with folk music and its connections with his work". However, by 1962, Stravinsky was willing to consider questions about his "Russian" connections. On a visit to Russia, he remarked:

I have spoken Russian all my life, my way of expression is Russian. It may not be noticeable in my music at first glance, but it is inherent in my music and in its inner latent nature.21

Victor Beliaev considers Les Noces the culmination of the old Russian musical era and the beginning of a new one. Beliaev also writes:
In recent times it has been more and more often proclaimed in Russia that Stravinsky has left his native musical soil, has become 'Europeanized', and has abandoned Russian national principles in his creative work...His latest compositions, including Les Noces, categorically refute these unjust assertions; indeed, they confirm the statement that he must be regarded as one of the most 'Russian' composers who have ever existed."

For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to examine closely the writings of three historians, all of whom accept the "Russian" label for Les Noces. The first analysis is found in Victor Beliaev's book on the subject, published in 1928. The second was written by Pieter C. Van den Toorn whose analysis of Les Noces makes up an entire chapter for his book, The Music of Igor Stravinsky. These will be considered together with an article on Les Noces taken from the The Journal of the American Musicological Society, Spring 1990, written by Margarita Mazo.

Analysis by use of Folk Melodies

Even though Stravinsky no longer lived in Russia, he was still composing music which used both Russian subject matter and folk music, while other Russian composers still living and writing at home were adopting European forms and style. Beliaev finds that Stravinsky was more of a "Russian" composer than many of the composers who lived and worked in Russia.

Beliaev writes of the duality of Russia. The folk
legends of the past were being replaced by the realities of the present brought about by the revolution. Most of the Russian composers writing during this time (1928) chose to use the Russian folk legends for subject material while molding their compositions to fit a more cosmopolitan form. Beliaev writes that Stravinsky did not deeply penetrate into the Russian folk legends of the past, nor portray the realities of the current Russian existence, yet he approaches "closer than any Russian composer to the presentation of real Russian folk-life," and that he did so "...just when that life was already becoming a legend, irrevocable, and incapable of regeneration in its original living form."23 The audiences that heard Les Noces were of a new and different order, and thus perceived this composition as an anachronism.24 Perhaps this might explain why Les Noces was overlooked for many years.

Rather than attempting to develop a musical concept based on "European" forms and then treating folk songs within those forms, Stravinsky expanded the folk song itself. This, Beliaev writes, was the first example of expanded epic folk song in Russian art music.25

Stravinsky appears to have been influenced by music of the West-Russian regional style, including certain Pskov and Smolensk traditions.26 Mazo notes the following similarities between this music and Stravinsky's "Russian" compositions:

- a) relatively small range
- b) characteristic pitch collections
- c) formal structures consisting of reiterations (ordinarily with variation) of short asymmetric phrases
- d) syllabic rather than melismatic setting of text
e) importance of ritual (particularly seasonal and wedding) songs in the local repertoire
f) significance of melodic formulae (melodies that serve many texts)
g) shifting and playing freely with a syllable's accents in a line and in a verse
h) changing length of metric units
i) close range of female voices in chordal singing (usually low or middle register)
j) heterophony with sporadic clusters of seconds.

The Russian peasant wedding, a blend of Christian and heathen traditions, is expanded somewhat by the imagination of the Russian people who have created new traditions of their own.

Although many Russian composers used the Russian folk wedding for subject material, Stravinsky was "the first to take an interest of the wedding ritual in its entirety, as it was practiced in Russian villages. He was interested both in songs and in the integral context and atmosphere of the ritual." Mazo also writes:

It is... significant that among the many available publications of folksong lyrics, Stravinsky's main literary source for *Les Noces* is P. Kirievsky's collection, which contains not merely texts of folk songs, but also information on the circumstances surrounding musical performance in the village."

According to Beliaev, *Les Noces* is based on the use of three elements: lamentation, song, and comedy. The lamentations are traditional. Stravinsky remarks on this saying that the bride laments because traditionally she must weep even though she may actually be quite happy. The lamentations occur with the words "Tresse, tresse,..." and
"Tressez-a’ moi ma tresse comme il faut" in the first tableau (see Figure 1); "Hier soir, hier soir encore Fetis etoit dans sa maison" in the second (see Figure 2); and "Cher enfant que j’ai mis au monde" in the third (see Figure 3).

Figure 1--Les Noces measures 1-5

Figure 2--Rehearsal Number 35
Figure 3--Two measures before Rehearsal Number 82
In the first tableau, these lamentations are the material for two of the three parts. In the second tableau, the lamentation mixes with and contrasts with other musical episodes. The lamentation for the third tableau is thematically the same as the second tableau and serves as its coda as well as the finale for the first part. Beliaev remarks that "the structure of these is based on the stringing together, on a fixed harmonic background, of identical melodic phrases, persistently repeated by the wailers."³⁰

Laments are not present in the fourth tableau. Mazo writes that:

...laments, ritualistic wedding songs, and lyrical songs of the bride’s girlfriends, all related to her farewell to her girlhood, give way to drinking songs, dancing songs, and songs laudatory of the young couple and all the guests."³¹

(This is also the case with the real Russian wedding ritual.) Even the return of the opening tune is presented “not as lamenting, but as singing, without grace notes or glissandi.” Mazo writes that this opening phrase sounds like a lament because of the way in which it is intoned with short glissandi.³²

The melodic elements repeat and gradually transform, interweaving with the old elements. The use of comedy, which does not appear until the Fourth tableau, in distinguished by syncopation and the sudden addition of the chorus to solo voices. This gives the effect discussed earlier of “eavesdropping” on many conversations at once. It also,
remarks Beliaev, gives the impression of drunken interruption to the continuity, or "drunken insistence on some point." The appearance of the comic element in the fourth tableau also separates it from the first three tableaus. This fourth tableau contains the drama of Les Noces while the first three tableaus depict only static rituals.

Beliaev asserts that the entirety of Les Noces is derived from a single melodic germ found in bars 3-4. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4--Measures 1-4

This pattern consists of an ascending pattern of a third followed by a second. Six bars after number 2, the "germ" can be found (with the addition of an upper changing note), followed by the inverted form of a descending second preceding a third (see Figure 5). Of the entire middle of the first tableau, only the setting of "Seigneur Fetis Pamfilievitch" is not based on this fundamental motif.
Figure 5--Six bars after number 2

This fundamental motif appears in the second tableau, mainly in passages related to the first. Beliaev remarks on the episode "A qui les boucles, les belles blondes" found at 41 which he finds particularly interesting because:

...we find in it 1) a rearrangement of the notes of our fundamental motif (the motif marked A); 2) an inverted form of this motif which becomes a complete tetrachord by the insertion of a passing note (motif B); and 3) this motif in its fundamental form (motif C). (See Figure 6)

Figure 6--Rehearsal Number 41
In the third tableau, which is largely constructed of motifs of the first, there are numerous examples to support his point.

The fundamental motif is the component part of many new melodic structures in the fourth tableau. Examples are found two bars after 87 (see Figure 7); four bars after 90, the inverted form (see Figure 8); bar 92, as the principal subject (see Figure 9); and two bars after 94 (see Figure 10).

Figure 7--Rehearsal Number 87 plus 2

Figure 8--Rehearsal Number 90 plus 4
Figure 9--Rehearsal Number 92

Figure 10--Rehearsal Number 94 plus 2
Beliaev lists many more examples, some with added changing notes and some as inversions of the fundamental motif. It is also found in the instrumental writing in the close of the entire work, found seven and eight bars after 134.

Beliaev writes of the “character of the melos,” remarking on the use of the flattened seventh scale degree and the introduction of the tri-tone. He cites rehearsal number 55 as one example of use of the flattened seventh, but writes that the other examples are too numerous to record. In addition to these concepts, Beliaev remarks further on the melodic character by noting that the musical thoughts are often contained in one or two bars.

Counterpoint is the device used to introduce new themes. They are added contrapuntally to the preexisting themes after which they eventually transform into independent themes and lose their original status as “companions.” Mazo writes of this concept as the 19th century Russian composers’ alternative to Western types of musical development. They, like Stravinsky, utilized “repetitions and recurrences of musical blocks” combined with “rotation, juxtaposition, and accumulation of the blocks to structure the musical whole.”

The fourth tableau contains mostly new thematic material derived from previously introduced ideas. Examples are found at 87, 91, and 114. The fifth episode of the fourth tableau is a reprise of all themes derived from the fundamental motif.

Rhythm and “melos” are bound together in Les Noces. The
motivic transformation discussed earlier usually occurs in relation to rhythm or tempo. Using the text as the basis, Stravinsky uses rhythm in two ways in Les Noces: by making the text the priority or by compressing the text into uniform meter." The first method, writes Beliaev, is the cause of the numerous time signature changes. The second method causes "unnatural" declamation of the text. These methods are, in fact:

...natural to the declamation of Russian folk-music, which sometimes requires that the melody shall follow the text exactly, and sternly to order if it does not adjust itself to the rigid melodic framework, even going so far as to alter the accentuation of the words of the text."

Mazo is even more precise about the "Russian" precedent for this style of writing. Based on a letter written by Stravinsky to his mother in 1916, Mazo found that Stravinsky was interested in acquiring another volume of Evgenia Lineva's transcriptions of folk songs taken from phonographic field recordings made in Russian villages. Mazo writes:

Lineva's observations on rhythmical freedom in shifting a logical accent in song word-setting are very close to what has been considered by many scholars to be Stravinsky's approach to word-setting in Les Noces and other vocal compositions, the so-called phonemic approach in which the organizing factor is the word's prosody."

In addition to this work, the 1906 volume of Trudy Muzykat'no-ethnograficheskoi Komissi was definitely known to Stravinsky. It contains "transcriptions of songs, wedding and funeral laments, a detailed description of the wedding ritual, and unusual notations of street peddler's calls and
exclamations."

There is also evidence that Stravinsky was familiar with a collection published by Diutsh in 1894. The only Les Noces melody that Stravinsky formally acknowledged as being folk-derived was what he called a "worker’s melody" which he claimed was given to him by his friend Stephan Mitusov. This melody is found in the fourth tableau. (See Figure 11)

Figure 11—Rehearsal Number 110 plus 2

Mazo calls Stravinsky’s classification of this melody as a "worker’s melody" dubious as this category usually refers to folk songs of later origins. This melody is actually a song found in Istomin’s collection entitled “Ne veselaia da kampan’itsa,” leading one to suspect his familiarity with this collection. In addition, Istomin’s grouping of the wedding songs parallels Stravinsky’s original outline of the wedding episodes in a sketch published by Craft in 1972."

Stravinsky acknowledges familiarity with the collections of Tchaikovsky, Lyadov, and Rimsky-Korsakov. He writes:
"...while I did not actually turn to folk music as a source material, I was undoubtedly influenced by it."\textsuperscript{45}

Each theme in \textit{Les Noces} has its own rhythmic accent, and no matter how this is shifted from bar to bar, its rhythmic identity is unaltered, but the bar regularity is destroyed.\textsuperscript{46} The fundamental theme also contains a rhythmic "germ" with accent on the upper note.

Stravinsky's rhythmic intentions are "hostile to the barline" and "destroy the concept of the equi-metrical meters of Europe."\textsuperscript{47} Beliaev writes briefly on the syncopation found predominantly in the fourth tableau:

...(Stravinsky's syncopation) very often denotes a peculiar shifting of the rhythmical sense from what was the strong part of the beat to the weak part, thanks to which the latter becomes the strong part.\textsuperscript{48}

The Russian melodic turns of phrase, the use of non-European scales, and the "rejection" of the leading note all prompt Beliaev to label \textit{Les Noces} as "Russian."\textsuperscript{49} Mazo finds Stravinsky's primary sources for \textit{Les Noces} to be Russian based on the composer's statements and materials which he is known to have seen or had access to. In a very different approach, Pieter C. Van den Toorn focuses in his analysis on octatonicism and its interaction with diatonic elements. All of these approaches appear to be valid, though difficult to prove, considering the numerous conflicting statements that Stravinsky has made about his work.
Analysis of Pitch Organization and Rhythm

Before going further into the Van den Toorn analysis, it is necessary to describe an octatonic scale as one in which half steps alternate with whole steps in only two interval orderings: half step followed by whole step when ascending (which Van den Toorn calls Model A), and the reverse ordering with whole step followed by half step when descending (which Van den Toorn calls Model B). There are only three octatonic collections because transposing beyond the first three yields duplicates. In addition, an octatonic collection will duplicate itself on pitch numbers 3, 6, and 9.

The pitches of an octatonic scale are numbered according to their relation with the next tone, half step or whole step. For example, the ascending numbering is (0, 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9,) and the descending numbering is (0, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9). (See Figure 12)

Figure 12--Three octatonic scales
Van den Toorn gave these basic instructions in his essay taken from the book *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician and Modernist*. His own book assumes that the reader is already cognizant of this information.

It is important to consider the value of an analysis based on pitch organization, since Stravinsky never discussed pitch organization in relation to his own work. Early in his book, Van den Toorn writes:

That pitch relations accountable to the octatonic collection occur with remarkable consistency in the works of Stravinsky is a proposition no longer in need of any special act of confirmation.\(^9\)

However, the author admits that Stravinsky never broached the subject of pitch relations in his own work, even in the numerous interviews with Robert Craft. Van den Toorn also acknowledges Stravinsky's lack of interest toward analytic-theoretical reasoning, reiterating Stravinsky's remark: "I am not an intellectual and therefore problems of explanation are of no great interest to me." Then Van den Toorn adds:

...his commentary was not always of a non-technical nature, and, given the evidence, it seems inconceivable that he could somehow have been unaware of the collection as a cohesive frame of reference, or of its very considerable role in his music as a constructive or referential factor.\(^1\)

Included in his defense is a chart of musical examples from the different works that he examines in his book. Van den Toorn finds *Les Noces* to be comprised of blocks using the octatonic scale and larger blocks where there is juxtaposition of both octatonic and diatonic elements. All
of these blocks are usually analyzed according to content as octatonic, diatonic, or a combination of the two. The principal melodic fragment is a tetrachord:

![Tetrachord](image)

**Figure 13**—Tetrachord, principal melodic fragment of *Les Noces*

which can be further reduced to an "incomplete cell":

![Incomplete Cell](image)

**Figure 14**—Incomplete cell from *Les Noces*

This incomplete cell may be related to octatonic blocks and diatonic blocks of music, or it may serve as a connecting link between the two types of blocks.

It is the use of the octatonic scale, rather than any wide use of Russian folk melodies that qualify *Les Noces* as "Russian," according to Van den Toorn. He maintains that Stravinsky's source for this idea was Rimsky-Korsakov who
used the octatonic scale as a colorful harmonic device. Van
den Toorn writes extensively on this subject:

The collection also figures prominently in the music of Scriabin, and then later in that of Messiean (who codified it as the second of what he called 'modes of limited transposition'). Moreover, a triadic grouping or partitioning of the octatonic collection is characteristic of both Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky."

In his concluding remarks, Van den Toorn emphasizes the four main points of this chapter. The first is the idea of a "basic cell" and principal link between the diatonic elements and the octatonic elements, similar to Beliaev's "germ." His second point is that the pitch relations give distinct metric, rhythmic, instrumental, and dynamic character to blocks of material which replace the traditional tonal forms of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, similar to Mazo's ideas on Russian composition of the 19th century. The third point that he mentions concerns melodic construction. He notes that the melodic construction is limited in range and content, has a lack of exchange between parts or registers, contains ostinato-like repetition of fragments, and uses a basic cell. Finally, the author remarks on the rhythm, dividing it into two categories: irregular rhythm with rapidly changing meter, or steady meter against which the other fragments repeat.

The characteristics of Le Sacre du printemps, Petroushka, and other earlier works clearly established these pieces as "Russian." The "Russian" quality of Les Noces, however, was not as evident to the listeners of that time.
In light of this, Van den Toorn also defends what countless other writers have defended: that *Les Noces* is part of the “Russian” period.

A possible reason for the confusion over the placement of *Les Noces* as “Russian” is Stravinsky’s use of both octatonic and diatonic elements. The author also points out that the distribution of the material attributed to octatonic collections and the material attributed to diatonic collections is somewhat even. (In his earlier works, the octatonic elements outnumber the diatonic ones.) Generally, the melodic content is in fragments, limited both in range and content. From the beginning through number 1, the melody appears “ostinato-like” against a changing meter. The major melodic idea of the incomplete cell \((0,2,5)\) becomes octatonic at 1 with the addition of chromatic tones (B flat and F) from pianos II and IV, which results in a complete representation of octatonic collection I. It includes both a tri-tone interval (b flat in relation to the EDB cell) and a major seventh interval (f in relation to e).\(^5\)

An interesting rhythmic idea occurs when the octatonic pitch collection emerges. If one follows a steady 3/8 meter through the irregular meters, the two meters become aligned with the closing of the music at 1. Van den Toorn writes on this idea at length:

> This...(rhythmic idea) neatly allows E-D to resume its initial identity as an over-the-barline, upbeat-downbeat succession. (The E-D succession is repeated twice in these final measures, as if to confirm the resumption of its upbeat-downbeat identity.) And so there is here exhibited...a carefully patterned cycle of displacement: the D of the
D-E succession is introduced on the third beat, subsequently displaced to the second and first beats, and then, in the completion of the cycle, displaced yet another notch back to the original third beat.\textsuperscript{54}

The author adds that this intensifies the insulation of the opening block, investing it with a "sense of departure from and eventual return to 3/8 periodicity at the 'foreground' level."\textsuperscript{55}

The rhythmic displacement versus the rhythmic repetition is intricately involved with the melodic or fragmental repetition in \textit{Les Noces}. Here, the shifting meter "preserves the over-the-barline, upbeat-downbeat identity of the D-E succession."\textsuperscript{56} E always falls on the downbeat of the 3/8 and 2/8 measures.

The transition passage noted above (beginning to number 1) occurs four times in the first and third tableaux:

Rehearsal Number 10 (see Figure 15); Number 16-18 (see Figure 16); Number 20+3 (see Figure 17); and Number 67 (see Figure 18). All examples share the octatonic collection II as well as the connecting hexachord (F sharp, E, D sharp, C sharp, B, A). In addition to the shared (B, A, F sharp) link there is also a shared triad (B, D sharp, F sharp).\textsuperscript{57}
Figure 15--Rehearsal Number 10
нашу Тимофееву къ ним чашью въ дуть.

pour ses noces est amenée, nous est amenée.

...къ ним чашью въ дуть.
...nous est amenée.
In the third tableau, the diatonic material at 65 becomes octatonic at 68 (see Figures 19 and 20). From 68-70, the octatonic block contains pitches from collections I and II. The vocal tetrachords (E, C sharp, B flat, G) may be attributed to collection I, and the tremolos in Piano II, along with (B, A flat, F, D) in Pianos I and III, may be found in collection II. The (G sharp, F, B, D) bass ostinato in Piano IV serves as the connecting link for both collections. This block moves to a complete collection I at 70-72.

![Musical notation image]

Figure 19--Number 65
Figure 20—Numbers 68-70
Once again, the rhythm is an integral part of the melodic construction. Piano IV maintains a stable 2/4 metric design while Pianos I and III are independent of this four quarter-note beat "pedal."60

Not all theorists agree with the approach that Van den Toorn has taken. In an essay taken from Perspectives on Schoenberg and Stravinsky, Arthur Berger writes:

Surely it is illuminating to approach Stravinsky’s music from the angle of the octatonic scale and the basic cell. But Stravinsky, for all his genuine independence and original musical outlook, was born into a generation that had, in a matter of speaking, a ‘congenital’ orientation toward those concepts of ‘traditional’ harmony that are now being questioned.61

Beliaev writes of his discomfort with the use of the terms atonality, polytonality, lineality, and heterophony, stating that these terms are not self-explanatory. Van den Toorn’s more recent analysis accepts the modern view which recognizes the importance of the octatonic systems which Beliaev labels as “not European” or “Russian.”

The main difference between the two approaches is the importance placed on the use of Russian folk melodies. Beliaev cites this as one of the main reasons he considers Les Noces Russian, while Van den Toorn finds that the use of the octatonic scale takes precedence over any use of folk melodies. In light of Mazo’s recent publications, it seems unwise to disregard the importance of folk melodies in Stravinsky’s music. Stravinsky’s opinion on this subject remains elusive.
Endnotes


3Ibid.

4Ibid, pg.156.

5Roman Vlad, Stravinsky (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pg. 68.


7Ibid.

8Ibid.

9William Austin, Music in the 20th Century, pg. 262.


11Ibid, p. 324.

12Ibid, pg. 317.


14Ibid, p. 324.


17Ibid, pg.199.


19See page 18.


23Ibid, pg. 2.

24Ibid.

25Ibid, pg.4.


27Ibid, pg. 103.
Ibid, pg. 111.
29Ibid, pg. 106.
31Mazo, pg. 119.
32Ibid, pg. 127.
33Beliaev, pg. 7
34Ibid, pg. 9.
35Ibid, pg. 9
36Ibid, pg. 16.
37Mazo, pg. 110.
38Beliaev, pg. 19.
39Ibid, pg. 21.
40Ibid, pg. 21.
41Ibid, pg. 22.
42Mazo, pg. 105.
43Ibid, pg. 104.
44Ibid, pg. 108.
46Beliaev, pg. 32.
48Ibid, pg. 22.
49Ibid, pg. 75.
50Ibid, pg. 42.
51Ibid.
52Pieter C. Van den Toorn, Music, pg. 158.
53Ibid, pg. 160.
54Ibid, 162.
55Ibid.
56Ibid, pg. 163.
57Ibid, pg. 167.
58Ibid, pg. 168.
59Ibid, pg. 169.
60Ibid, 171.

CHAPTER III—THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF \textit{L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT}

I love whatever I am doing at a given moment and with each new work I feel that at last I have found the way and have begun to compose.

Stravinsky’s development and progress as a composer is interesting to follow. He has the ability to “compartmentalize” his compositions, following one set of ideas to completion while simultaneously writing a very different new work. This allowed him to work on many different and successful compositions during the ten year period in which he composed \textit{Les Noces}. Out of all of these works, \textit{L’Histoire du soldat} stands apart as it marks his final break from Russian musical themes and involves the initial use of other idioms, particularly those of France, Spain, and America. Theodore Stravinsky suggests that:

...the whole of Stravinsky’s output can be divided into two main periods, (Russian and neoclassical) whether before or after this crucial work. With a few satellites, showing the same preoccupations, \textit{The Soldier’s Tale} hinges the two periods.

\textit{L’Histoire du soldat} was performed before \textit{Les Noces}, but follows it in compositional order. Thus \textit{L’Histoire} falls between Stravinsky’s “Russian” period and his first neoclassical work and contains elements of both periods. Stephen Walsh’s impression is that Stravinsky “having used up
his Russian ideas in *Les Noces* and its satellite pieces...was ready for new idioms."

Like *Les Noces*, the plot of *L’Histoire* originated from Russia. However, both Ramuz and Stravinsky wanted to create an international story that could be set in any location. Boris de Schloezer writes about this subject in his essay taken from the book *Igor Stravinsky*:

The subject of *L’Histoire du soldat*, text by C. F. Ramuz, is still Russian, though the story belongs to an international cycle. Stravinsky’s music for it, however, offers no longer anything specifically Russian save a few dance rhythms and inflections. He imposes on himself, for the first time, certain fixed forms elaborated by European musical culture, and keeps strictly within their frame, thus for the *L’Histoire du soldat* he provides a short march, a little concerto, and the dances; a waltz and a tango keeping the conventional outline.4

This departure from using Russian musical themes may be considered symbolic because of Stravinsky’s circumstances. *L’Histoire du soldat* seems to reflect the predicament that Stravinsky and many of his fellow Russian artists were facing. The Soldier is kept from his home because certain destruction will come to him if he crosses the frontier to return there. Not only had the war separated Stravinsky from Russia, but the humiliating peace treaty the Russians had signed with Germany made future life in Russia uncertain. If Stravinsky could have gone home, he (like the Soldier) would have found it greatly changed by the new social and economic policies of Lenin. Walsh also writes:

If *The Wedding* was, in its universalization of a timeless act, the least contemporary of works, *The Soldier’s Tale* is
openly a parable of both the times in which it was written and of Stravinsky’s predicament as a prisoner of those times.  

The music Stravinsky composed for _L’Histoire_ reflects his uncertainty of the future as well as his new interest in other idioms. He introduces alien elements into the “Palace March” with its reflections of the Spanish “pasodoble”; the “Tango” and the “Waltz,” which were both popular dance forms in Western Europe; and the “Ragtime,” which includes elements of American jazz as he understood it.

The use of the Spanish “pasodoble” was inspired by an incident which Stravinsky describes in _Expositions and Developments_. In 1916, while standing in a Seville street with Diaghilev, Stravinsky listened to a “bull-fight” band composed of a cornet, trombone, and bassoon playing a pasodoble. A large brass band came down the street playing the overture to _Tannhauser_, which soon drowned out the bullfight band.

The tango was, at that time, popular in the dance halls of Western Europe. The American ragtime Stravinsky studied exclusively from written copies of sheet music. Since jazz music is largely improvised, the written sheet music did not really convey jazz in its truest form. However, Stravinsky parodied its rhythmic style to create a new sound in his music.

Other international musical themes are present as well. Stravinsky admitted that the “Soldier’s March” may have been influenced by the French song “Marietta.” Both of the “Chorales” are based closely on the Lutheran chorale, “A
Mighty Fortress is Our God" of the German Protestant Church. In addition, Stravinsky writes the one of the themes came to him in a dream. (See Figure 21)

Figure 21—"Dream" theme from L'Histoire

Although Stravinsky had written other pieces using some of these Western influences, their appearance in L'Histoire is significant because of the parallels between the Soldier and Stravinsky. Stephen Walsh writes:

...severed as he was from his cultural and spiritual roots...he (Stravinsky) too might well be reduced to fiddling foreign airs to preserve his soul.

Stravinsky's work was misinterpreted by the audiences of the time. Often, those who championed his earlier works such as Petrushka and Le Sacre du printemps failed to appreciate L'Histoire. Many of those people who understood his progress to L'Histoire were confused by the appearance of Les Noces and the Octet in the same year. Victor Borovsky remarks:

Without becoming trapped in a new dogma of his own devising, Stravinsky established one fashion after another, each championed by a devoted following. Yet he himself continued to progress unswervingly.
Edward T. Cone also comments on this issue:

For many years it was fashionable to accuse Stravinsky, like Picasso, of artistic inconstancy: of embracing a series of manners instead of achieving a personal style. Today it is becoming increasingly clear that Stravinsky, like Picasso, has been remarkably consistent in his stylistic development.\(^\text{9}\)

The primary stylistic difference that separates \textit{L’Histoire du soldat} and \textit{Les Noces} from Stravinsky’s previous works is the orchestration. In particular, \textit{L’Histoire} is an exercise in transparency and simplicity. By using such a small-scale orchestra, Stravinsky was severely limited and yet it was these limitations that allowed him to achieve a new and exciting direction in his work. While the economy imposed upon the Swiss collaborators made a small orchestra necessary, Stravinsky utilized smaller orchestras in several of his other works with great success. Theodore Stravinsky writes:

\begin{quote}
In the period of \textit{The Soldier’s Tale}, more so, perhaps, than at any other time of Stravinsky’s life, external circumstances take on an almost providential character, at least when seen from the point of view of today.\(^\text{11}\)
\end{quote}

Stravinsky’s fascination with the sounds created by a unique, small-scale orchestra in \textit{L’Histoire} resulted in his final orchestration of \textit{Les Noces}. Pieter C. Van den Toorn credits this to Stravinsky’s “discovery of American jazz”. He writes that it was jazz and “the experience of \textit{L’Histoire} (in which the effects of this ‘discovery’ are initially felt), that ultimately sealed the instrumental fate of \textit{Les Noces}”.\(^\text{12}\)
L'Histoire shares with Les Noces an economy of style. Depending mostly on solo-playing, L'Histoire features tiny motifs and simple textures. Les Noces and its satellites have melodic lines that are similar to the "rag" pieces Stravinsky composed during his fascination with jazz. Nearly all of these pieces oscillate, typically by step, around a focal note. We have already examined this in Les Noces during the bridal laments and the mothers' laments. L'Histoire contains both this "open" or modal type of melody (example: fiddle tune in "Music to Scene I"—see Figure 22), as well as a closed or chromatic type of melody (example: Rehearsal number 10 to "Soldier's March"—see Figure 23).
Figure 23--Number 10, "Soldier's March"

Another similarity between Les Noces and L'Histoire involves the interaction of the narrative and the action. In L'Histoire, the Narrator's interventions, along with the occasional passages where the characters speak the dialogue instead of the Narrator, recall the characters of Les Noces, who are not always represented by the same voices. Stravinsky was interested in the theater of artifice and ritual associated with Meyerhold, as opposed to more realistic types of theater, and this interest is apparent in
his other compositions of the period as well, including Renard and several stagings of The Nightingale. Stravinsky’s theater, beginning with L’Histoire embraces the antithesis of the Wagnerian ideal.\(^{19}\) There is little synthesis between the various components; they are deliberately kept separate from one another even while occupying the same stage.

Like Les Noces, L’Histoire features percussion instruments. However, L’Histoire requires a virtuoso soloist to handle the demands of playing the many different instruments. L’Histoire also requires a virtuoso violin soloist, particularly for the dance movements which feature the violin. The violin plays a vital role in the dramatic action, as a violin is used to represent the soul of the Soldier. As the Devil leads the Soldier away, the percussion emerges as the dominant sound from the orchestra. The violin continues to play, as though struggling against the powerful force of the Devil. The Devil is triumphant and the percussionist finishes the final bars alone, increasing in volume and intensity to the conclusion. Roman Vlad remarks:

> It is as though Stravinsky had gradually stripped every ounce of flesh from his music, reducing it to the bare bones, leaving only rhythm. In Petrouchka, and particularly in the finale of The Rite of Spring, rhythm was already on the way to becoming the symbol of the power of evil. In the “Triumphal March of the Devil” this is fully realized.\(^{19}\)

This symbolic ending is evocative of the final moments in Les Noces which also end with percussion alone (bells and piano). However, the symbolism in Les Noces is that of the miracle and mystery of the continuation of life,
incomprehensible to humans. The singers are silent for the first time as the regular pealing of bells is all that is heard. The symbolism of *L’Histoire*, according to Roman Vlad is:

...yet another example of the eternal Faust theme—man sells his soul to gain wealth or esoteric knowledge. In this instance the theme is resolved in an utterly pessimistic way: man falls with no hope of reprieve, he is trapped and torn to pieces by the evil forces which gather about him."

Boris Asaf’yev remarks on the significance of the percussion in both *Les Noces* and *L’Histoire*:

...Stravinsky uses the percussion section not as a supplementary group, but as a unit organically rooted in the conception of the composition. Not only do the percussion instruments mark the rhythm—they form an organic fundament, a rhythm-texture."

As in so much of Stravinsky’s music, rhythm plays a significant part in *L’Histoire*, not only in the dramatic conclusion but throughout the entire work. Stravinsky uses what has become a characteristic device: a steady, unchanging, ostinato over which is projected various complexmetrical patterns. In the “Soldier’s March,” the double bass plays a continual ostinato and, under the other parts which continually change meter, maintains a steady 2/4 pattern.

(See Figure 24)
Figure 24—Bass ostinato, "Soldier's March"

"Music to Scene I" involves constantly changing meter over a steady ostinato double bass pattern. There is an improvisatory feel to the melody of the violin which depicts the Soldier sitting down to play his own violin. The other instruments are involved in a sort of dialogue except for the double bass, which maintains the ostinato except for a brief silence in the middle of this movement.

The "Royal March" makes use of Spanish rhythms and has an instability resulting from the continual relocations of the strong and weak beats. Instruments "pass" the ostinato patterns from one to another which change slightly with each new orchestration. This vertical displacement of the strong beat is a device Stravinsky uses in the "Little Concerto" as well as Les Noces.

L'Histoire du soldat is composed of short, self-contained movements, unified by the use of similar themes.
The "Opening" and "Royal March" theme recurs in the "Great Chorale." The brass themes from "Music to Scene I" recurs in the "Devil's Dance."

Pieter C. Van den Toorn has analyzed L'Histoire for octotonic pitch content. He finds L'Histoire to be a "highly eclectic endeavor" which "partakes of both 'Russian' and neoclassical peculiarity." Based on his analysis, he is of the opinion that the initial sections are "Russian" and that the later sections are neoclassical.

Van den Toorn finds that the opening "Soldier's March," "Music to Scene I," and "Music to Scene II," are diatonic and octotonic combinations which, he feels, form the basis of Stravinsky's Russian style. Beginning at number 1 in the "Soldier's March", Van den Toorn attributes most of the pitches to octatonic hexachords which can be combined to form major triads. Two measures after number 3, the hexachord is transposed up a step in the cornet part. From numbers 0-5, the lower hexachord presides while the clarinet hexachords are extensions. (See Figure 25)

Figure 25--Rehearsal Numbers 0-5, "Soldier's March"
Figure 25 continued

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure25}
\caption{Sheet music example}
\end{figure}
At number 5, the framework becomes fully diatonic. Van den Toorn writes:

The G-E/D ostinato is replaced by a reiterating D, while the G’s participation is curtailed, and the accentuation of F sharp in the bassoon fragment appears to expose a presiding (D F sharp A) triad at least through Number 7.29 (See Figure 26)
During the "Music to Scene I," the (E G C# B A G) hexachord is again transposed down to the next (0,7) fifth-related hexachord (A G F# E D C). This hexachord alternates freely with the (E D C# B A G) hexachord, which reappears one measure after number 5. This C/C# alternation triggers a minor-major third "play". (See Figure 27)

Figure 27—"Music to Scene I," introduction
"Music to Scene II" contains a drawn out continuation of the (0,2) whole-step relation taken from the earlier ostinato, found now in the bassoon. This movement begins with octotonic pitches found in Collection II as well as the (B A G# F# E D) diatonic hexachord. The octotonic contribution is clearly marked at measure 2 with the bassoon entrance on pitch number 6, F. Number 5 from this movement also contains pitches from octotonic Collection II. (See Figure 28)

Figure 28--"Music to Scene II," introduction
Though the opening movements are classified by Van den Toorn as "Russian," he also finds in them elements of European art music. The poignant "Music to Scene II" is the most plainly Russian movement of L'Histoire and seems to reflect Stravinsky's sadness to leave behind Russia as well as the despair of the Soldier over the loss of the violin. Van den Toorn writes:

But poignancy is followed, in turn, by a pompous "Royal March" composed of "snippets of Italian opera and "corny Spanish figurations"...followed by the burlesque of three contemporary dances...followed in turn by two stylized "snapshots" of a German Protestant chorale."

These neoclassical movements of L'Histoire are not analyzed by Van den Toorn. Boris Asaf'yev analyses these movements as well as the earlier ones in A Book About Stravinsky.

He focuses particular attention on the "Little Concerto," which contains motivic material from all of the preceding episodes. (This device was also used in Lea Noces.) The beginning of the "Little Concerto" is a version of the soldier's violin theme, combined with the rhythms of the "Royal March." After 53 measures of this, a new theme (see Figure 29) is introduced, joining the violin and clarinet materials from "Music to Scene I." This new material uses rhythms from the "Royal March."

Figure 29---Measure 53, "Royal March"
After 23 measures, new melodic material is introduced and then the movement concludes with the rhythms and intonations from the “Soldier’s March.” The final 15 measures form a coda.

The “Tango” contains part of the theme that Stravinsky claims to have dreamed about, in an improvisatory style similar to the Soldier’s violin theme. Both the percussion and the violin parts require virtuoso playing: the harmony is reduced to clarinet ostinato. After 32 bars, the theme for the dance of the princess is introduced which includes an eight measure bitonal passage. The “Tango” concludes with a compressed repetition of the principal theme, a second appearance of the dream motif, followed by a coda.

Asaf’yev writes that the “Waltz” is “a very clever imitation of the street ensembles of itinerant musicians...”25 The violin is still the dominating instrument, and it is now joined by the contrabass, bassoon, and cornet. The percussion does not play this movement. The “Waltz” moves immediately into the “Ragtime” which opens with a violin motive accompanied by percussion and contrabass. The violin theme is ornamented by a complex bassoon counterpoint. (See Figure 30)

![Figure 30---“Ragtime” bassoon counterpoint](image_url)
The "Devil's Dance" is fast-paced and forceful, involving the entire ensemble. It is heavily accented and derives a great deal of its energetic feel from the following excerpt found in Figure 31:

![Music notation](image)

Figure 31--"Devil's Dance," measure 3

This idea occurs in various forms throughout the entire movement which concludes with a loud glissando in the violin, and all other instruments playing triple-forte.

The "Little Chorale" is next, over which the Devil offers "ironic comments in a flat, metered, speaking voice", followed by the "Great Chorale." This chorale is a parody of the style of the Protestant chorales. Asaf'yev writes:

> The most amusing aspect of this grotesque is the attention that the cadences draw to themselves by virtue of their style: they seem to be saying that everything comes out well in the end, because they always succeed in bringing together into the most innocuous consonant chords, lines that have been moving toward the limits of individualized utterance. Seven such cadences, with fermatas, certainly signify peace and contentment. But the eighth is left hanging in the air by an unresolved 6/4 chord."

This dangling chord gives a hint of what is to come, for the
Soldier crosses the frontier and the Devil wins his soul. The part-writing is full of unusual clashes that close on a more common chord.

The "Triumphant March of the Devil" includes fragments from the "Royal March," "Bagtime," and the "dream motif," each interrupted by a "military-type fanfare, a similar procedure to Stravinsky's fourth tableau of Les Noces."\(^2\) When the opening motive appears for the fourth time, the entire first section is repeated, this time with no interruptions.\(^3\) Gradually, all instruments disappear leaving the violin to struggle alone with the percussion until it too drops out. The rhythm goes on but the Soldier is obliterated.

The second half of L'Histoire gives a preview of Stravinsky's next musical direction: neoclassicism. Les Noces is the culmination of his Russian period. However, other pieces written during this time still contain some elements of his Russian style of writing. These pieces, especially L'Histoire, present a confusing picture in which his new approach mingles unpredictably with remaining traces of Russianism until the two finally become indistinguishable.\(^3\) Ansermet, Stravinsky's chosen conductor of both works writes:

Stravinsky has told no one of the sacrifices which his musical evolution has demanded of him; he has had to let all sorts of musical habits go by the boards, to discard all sorts of loyalties to beloved forms, all sorts of easy roads which he might have taken. His evolution is not the result of a deliberate plan; rather it has been imposed upon him by the pitiless logic of his creative genius.\(^3\)
Endnotes

5. Walsh, p. 86.
8. Stephen Walsh, p. 87.
14. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
22. Ibid, p. 189.
24. Ibid.
27. Ibid, p. 182.
29. Ibid.
30. Walsh, p. 87.
CHAPTER IV--OVERVIEW OF STRAVINSKY’S THEATRICAL IMPACT

It is not enough to examine the musical materials of Les Noces and L’Histoire du soldat without also considering the works from a theatrical standpoint. Dance plays an important role in both works (and certainly in many of Stravinsky’s other compositions), as well as acting and miming. In each work, he was collaborating with several other artists. When all of Stravinsky’s works are considered, one realizes that Stravinsky has had a tremendous impact on the twentieth century musical theater.

Stravinsky is an important figure in the dance world. Verna Arvey writes in her book Choreographic Music: Music for the Dance that Stravinsky was the only composer whose music accompanied the entire twenty-year span of life of the Ballet Russe.\(^1\) He later had a series of highly successful collaborations with George Balanchine. Balanchine, who rarely gave public statements, praised Stravinsky in a speech in 1972:

> Stravinsky is responsible for anything we are using in music...He made ‘musique dansant’ There have only been three who could do it: Delibes, Tchaikovsky, and Stravinsky. They made music for the body to dance to. They invented the floor for the dancer to walk on.\(^2\)

Arvey praises Stravinsky in this way:

> ...the greatest single factor in the recognition of modern ballet music as music
is Igor Stravinsky. This composer's greatest services to ballet music were the tearing down of existing rhythmic and harmonic forms, an insistence upon the right of ballet music to have an individuality of its own, and his vigorous demand for the respect due a composer.³

Stravinsky had very definite ideas about all theatrical aspects of each new work. While writing the music, he envisioned the choreography, scenery, and costumes, and he never hesitated to make his opinions known. In his Autobiography, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the Diaghilev production of Les Noces and gives a detailed account of his discussions with Diaghilev regarding the staging of this work. In the same book, he writes of his complete satisfaction with all aspects of the premiere of L'Histoire du soldat:

Nor was this from the point of music only. It was a great success as a whole, thanks to careful execution, setting, and perfect interpretation. The true note was struck then, but unfortunately I have never since seen a performance of the Soldat that has satisfied me to the same degree.⁴

Stravinsky helped to increase the involvement of the composer in theatrical productions. He established a new role for composers. Arvey writes:

No longer do they (composers) suffer in silence when a dancer is ignorant of the laws of music, and wait until the posthumous publication of their memoirs to vent their spleen on an unsuspecting world. They are far more apt to confront the dancer and teach him the rudiments of music on the spot!⁵

Stravinsky rarely attended rehearsals of productions using his music as a mere spectator or consultant. He was
actively involved and as Lifar wrote "nothing could exceed his eager interest." After rehearsing with Stravinsky for the first time, Lifar noted:

...he wiggled about, thumped the keys, panted, made up for missing chords by kicks on the pedal...or to keep up the tempo he would bring his elbows crashing down on the piano.'

Stravinsky was particularly adamant in matters regarding musical tempi. He would sing, gesture, and sometimes even dance himself to convey his ideas. He once declared that:

...it is undeniably clumsy to slow down the tempo in order to compose complicated steps which cannot be danced in the prescribed tempo. I have never known any choreographer who erred in that respect as much as Nijinsky.'

Stravinsky’s music made necessary the reinterpretation of many ideas about choreography. His music contained irregular rhythms and harmonies, sudden changes of accent, and often many short episodes which needed to be unified into a cohesive whole. Choreographers who created by “counting the beats” were an anathema to Stravinsky and these dancers would have a difficult time working with his music. It was for this reason that Nijinsky’s choreography for The Rite of Spring failed to satisfy him (although at the time of the premiere he claimed to be happy with it in order not to hurt Nijinsky’s feelings). While Nijinsky’s choreography has had an undeniable impact on modern ballet, it was not what Stravinsky had envisioned. According to Stravinsky, Nijinsky had no understanding of his music and created his dances using series of numbers and beats rather than any musical
references." This did not keep Stravinsky from admiring Nijinsky as a dancer. He found that Nijinsky's rendering of Petrouchka was unsurpassed.10

In contrast, Stravinsky greatly admired the choreographical skills of Nijinsky's sister, Bronislava Nijinska. She was the chosen choreographer for Les Noces and Stravinsky expressed his happiness with her dances expressed in "blocks and masses." The dances for L'Histoire du soldat were evidently created by George and Ludmilla Pitoeff and Stravinsky himself.11

Stravinsky maintained artistic control over all musical, and some non-musical, aspects of any production on which he worked. Victor Borovsky, co-author of Stravinsky on Stage, writes:

Stravinsky assumed complete responsibility for the musical text: there was no question of adapting or changing anything. That time-honored tradition of the theatre, "working with the author," was unheard of during the production of a new Stravinsky work, although conductor, choirmaster, choreographer, instrumentalist, singer, and dancer had every opportunity to display their skill."

Stravinsky wrote twenty works specifically for the stage, although he never had formal ties to a particular theatrical company other than the Ballet Russes and George Balanchine. Premieres of his stage works were given by many diverse groups.

By 1962, more than forty of his works not intended for the ballet had been choreographed and that number is certainly even larger now. Borovsky notes that Stravinsky's
concert works “attracted and continue to attract the attention of choreographers.” Stravinsky himself was occupied by the challenge of theatrical problems for much of his life, although the degree of his interest naturally fluctuated.

Stravinsky first met Diaghilev, creator and director of the Ballet Russes, when he came into contact with the Mir Iskusstva (The World of Art), a musical review published by Diaghilev. The goal of the artists associated with this publication was “the affirmation of culture in the artistic sense, and artistic synthesis as the higher aim of culture.” Diaghilev decided to bring together many of the greatest Russian dancers, choreographers, composers, and artists to create a touring musical theater performing new Russian works. The Ballet Russes was to bring the best of Russian culture to Western Europe and later the United States. Diaghilev gave Stravinsky his first important commissions and helped him to get his start. For his part, Stravinsky created musically innovative scores that helped inspire a renewal of musical theater.

Stravinsky also met Balanchine, director of the only other company he was associated with for any length of time, through Diaghilev. Balanchine attributes one of his most important discoveries about choreography to the study of Stravinsky’s score for *Apollo*. From this he found that “gestures have certain family relations which, as groups, impose their own laws.”

Debussy once wrote to his publisher that Stravinsky’s
music deserved recognition because it was "not the docile servant of dance." Perhaps it was Stravinsky's innovation in this area that paved the way for the concept of the complete independence of music and dance, brought about by the works of the choreographer Merce Cunningham and composer John Cage almost forty years later. In any case, Stravinsky was certainly at least partially responsible for many theatrical innovations, according to Borovsky who writes:

It is impossible to speak of Stravinsky and of the theatre he created in the past tense. The contemporary theatrical repertoire remains heavily indebted to him and perpetually returns to replenish its forces..."

Aside from dance, Stravinsky was involved in other theatrical areas as well. Borovsky finds that Stravinsky was probably influenced quite a bit by the director Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose theatrical views were beginning to take hold around the same time as the Ballet Russes were performing. Borovsky writes:

It may be supposed that in those years Stravinsky was well acquainted with Meyerhold's published pronouncements on stage practice. Even a superficial glance reveals the common ground in the art of Stravinsky and Meyerhold. Among the many similarities are the vital role played by the grotesque, the interest, in the traditional Italian Commedia dell'Arte, the play-acting and the use of different masks, the subordination of the actors to the complicated counterpoint of the music's rhythm and plasticity."

Stravinsky was also interested in the Meyerhold idea of the separation of performing roles which was first employed in the 1914 Ballet Russes production of Rimsky-Korsakov's The
Golden Cockerel. In this opera, the singers remained seated while the dancers conveyed the action of the drama. Borovsky writes that this experiment "had great significance for many of Stravinsky’s subsequent works, and considerably influenced the music theater of the 20th century."

Stravinsky chose Meyerhold to direct the 1918 performance of The Nightingale based on the affinity between their theatrical views. This production also separated the musical and stage elements. Konstantin Ruznitsky, in Meyerhold the Director, describes the performance this way:

In front of each performer stood a music stand bearing his music. As they moved from place to place, the characters carried their music stands with them, placed them where necessary; beginning their solos at a signal from the conductor, they looked at their music while singing, and, having finished their parts, sat (or stood) with vacant expressions on their faces.

This concept was already present in many of Stravinsky’s works, notably in Les Noces, begun in 1914, and L’Histoire du soldat, begun in 1917. L’Histoire uses a narrator to convey action along with a Devil who acts and dances, a silently dancing Princess, and a Soldier who mimes. (Later, however, the Devil and the Soldier were both given words to say.) As for Les Noces, Borovsky writes:

Stravinsky in various ways constantly exposes facets of the theatrical cornerstone of stylization and play-acting. Sometimes, the singers sit together with the orchestra while the stage is given over to mimes, sometimes total immobility is juxtaposed with living action—or it may happen that all these features are incorporated in a single work. In Les Noces the performers, the chorus, the
dancers, four piano and the percussion instruments are all on stage where they can be seen by the audience."

Through Diaghilev, Stravinsky encountered many artists and was exposed to many new and different theatrical ideas. He absorbed and "used as he saw fit" many of these ideas in his works in the same way that he used folk songs and traditions, neoclassical forms, popular songs, jazz, and eventually even serial techniques.

Stravinsky has had an undeniable influence on modern music and dance music in particular. His work encompasses almost every significant technique of the first half of the twentieth century. *Les Noces* and *L'histoire du soldat* contain many of the elements of Stravinsky's style during one of the major turning points of his career: his use of smaller ensembles, his innovative theatrical practices, his use of jazz, folk, and popular songs, his continued practice of rhythmic invention, and the beginnings of his interest in reviving traditional forms and styles. Stravinsky describes his frame of mind during this period in the final words of his autobiography:

> At the beginning of my career as a composer I was a good deal spoiled by the public. Even such things as were first received with hostility were soon afterwards acclaimed. But I have a distinct feeling that in the course of the last fifteen years my written work has estranged me from the great mass of my listeners. They expected something different from me. Liking the music of *The Firebird*, *Petroushka*, *The Rite of Spring*, and *The Wedding*, and being accustomed to the language of these works, they were astonished to hear me speaking in another idiom. They cannot and will not follow me in the progress of my musical thought...I can
only know what the truth is for me today. That is what I am called upon to serve, and I serve it in all lucidity."
Endnotes


7Arvey, pg. 239.


7Arvey, pg. 242.

7Serge Lifar, Serge Diaghilev (London: Putnam, 1940), pg. 255.

7Ibid, pg. 255.

7Arvey, pg. 416.

7Stravinsky, pg. 40.

7Stravinsky, pg. 34.

7Ibid, pg. 74.

7Victor Borovsky and Alexander Schouvaloff, Stravinsky on Stage (London: Stainer and Bell, 1982), pg. 13.

7Ibid, pg. 14.

7Ibid.

7Ibid, pg. 16.

7Ibid, pg. 30.

7Arvey, pg. 244.

7Borovsky and Schouvaloff, pg. 33.

7Ibid, pg. 17.

7Ibid, pg. 31.

7Ibid, pg. 31.

7Ibid, pg. 32.

7Ibid.

7Stravinsky, pp. 174-176.
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