RICHARD TARUSKIN

STRAVINSKY AND THE RUSSIAN TRADITIONS

A Biography of the Works Through Mavra

VOLUME II

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(THE LOSS OF RUSSIA, I)

THE BACK IS TURNED

In naming Fokine as choreographer of "The Great Sacrifice" in 1910, Roerich made it a point that "we three"—Fokine, Stravinsky, and himself—"are all equally ablaze with this scene and have decided to work together."[1] So much a part of the game plan was Fokine that when he and Diaghilev quarreled over money at the end of the 1910 Paris season, Stravinsky became alarmed at the fate of his project. He wrote Roerich from La Baule on 12 July 1910:

> Now matters have so conjoined that Diaghilev and Fokine seem to have broken formally. I want to keep out of it altogether. Diaghilev was tactless enough to say that the question of Fokine's [contracted] participation in "The Great Sacrifice" can be resolved very simply—just pay him off and that's that. But meanwhile Diaghilev hasn't even had the notion to inquire whether you and I will want to work with anyone else. He thinks that if he cannot work it out with Fokine then he (Diaghilev) will work with [Alexander Alexeyevich] Gorsky [1871–1924, long-time ballet master of the Bolshoy Theater, Moscow], of whom I had never even heard before. For all I know Gorsky's a genius, but I don't think Diaghilev could be that indifferent to the prospect of losing Fokine.[2]

When the dispute failed to get settled, Stravinsky decided, astonishingly enough, that he would remain loyal to Fokine rather than Diaghilev. He wrote to Benois in November: "Has Diaghilev made up yet with Fokine?—That is, have they come to terms? This is a very important question, for if yes, then 'The Great

1. "Balet khudozhnika N. K. Rerikha," *Peterburgskaya gazeta,* no. 235 (28 August 1910); quoted in Krasovskaya, *Russkiy baletniy teatr* 1:429.
2. Vershinina (ed.), "Pis'ma Stravinskogo Rerikhu," 58–59.

Sacrifice' will be Diaghilev's, but if no, then it will go to Telyakovsky [the intendant of the Imperial Theaters in St. Petersburg], which is altogether not so good!"[3]

That is indeed something to imagine—*The Rite* at the Mariyinsky Theater, stronghold of *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*! That Stravinsky could have contemplated the idea, even as a reluctant second choice, shows to what extent he still thought of himself as a Russian composer writing for a Russian audience. Even after *The Firebird* he was still very much "within the walls" of his musical upbringing.

Petrushka changed all that. The incredible lionizing Stravinsky experienced in Paris changed his attitude toward Russia, toward Fokine, and most of all, toward his own place in the scheme of things. By the middle of 1911 he was fed up with his hitherto hero-worshipped collaborator. "If you only knew what incredible efforts and unpleasantness the production of *Petrushka* cost Benois and me because of that bull-headed, despotic, and obtuse Fokine!" he wrote to Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov shortly after the première.[4] By the next March he was writing his mother, of all people, a veritable dissertation contra Fokine. The way he peppered his prose even here with pompous Gallicisms, by no means all of them contributing any special nuance of meaning, shows more vividly than the content itself the way his environment had begun to influence him. When it came to matters esthetic, Stravinsky had begun thinking in French. "I consider Fokine *finished* as an artist," he railed. "It's all just *habileté* [skill], from which there's no salvation!" Fokine could only "arrange," not "create," whereas

> arranging things that were not meant for the stage was never our *but* [aim]—it was just something forced on us by necessity. The choreographic literature was too poor—so we[!], who had dreams of a renaissance of "movement" as a plastic art, had to content ourselves at first with remakes—*Sylphides* (Chopin), *Carnaval* (Schumann), *Cléopâtre* (everyone), *Shéhérazade* (N. Rimsky-Korsakov), etc., etc. I look upon this era of remakes as a necessary evil, a stage at which it would be unthinkable to remain. One must (or rather, one wishes to) create new forms, something that evil, grasping, if gifted Fokine has never dreamed of.[5]

Stravinsky's "we" is priceless. Who was he parroting—Diaghilev (already promoting Nijinsky as choreographic "creator") or (more likely) Benois? Still, in March 1912 he was still calling Fokine his collaborator, however reluctantly: "The only unpleasant thing" about the upcoming production of *The Rite,* he wrote to his mother, "is that it will have to be done by Fokine."[6] A letter to Benois, written

3. Letter of 3 November 1910; in IStrSM:449.
4. Letter of July 1911; in IStrSM:462.
5. Letter of 17 March 1912; in IStrSM:467–68.
6. Ibid., 467.

nine days later, reveals that the chief reason *The Rite* had to be postponed until the 1913 season was that Fokine was too busy with *Daphnis and Chloë*.[7]

In the end, what Stravinsky had dreaded came as a stroke of good fortune. *Daphnis,* which opened on 8 June 1912, was Fokine's last ballet for Diaghilev. The choreographer did go back to Telyakovsky for a while, but without *The Rite*. Paris was now irrevocably Stravinsky's base; neither the Russian stage nor the prospect of writing for Russian audiences attracted him. When Chaliapin tried to interest Stravinsky in a collaboration with Gorky on an opera about Vasiliy Buslayev, a Novgorod epic hero like Sadko, he got nowhere.[8]

But then, the Gorky project had involved an opera. The first sign of Stravinsky's overt estrangement from the milieu in which he had been reared involved the charged issue of opera versus ballet, on which Rimsky-Korsakov, as we have seen, entertained somewhat dogmatic and intransigent views. Unsurprisingly, the Rimsky-Korsakov clan viewed Stravinsky's new peer group with suspicion. Things came to something of a head—the first of many—when Stravinsky returned to Russia after the triumph of *Petrushka* and received a stern letter from Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov, acting as a sort of family spokesman. The letter itself has not survived, but its contents may be easily deduced from Stravinsky's response, a massive rebuttal amounting to a veritable essay. In the most explicit terms, Stravinsky cast his lot with the Diaghilev venture and with its esthetic outlook—and, by implication, against that of the Rimsky-Korsakov heirs, to say nothing of his own father's legacy. Having named Benois as his mentor, he proceeded to give what amounted to a pithy précis of the latter's 1908 "Colloquy on Ballet." More ominously, he dared take a critical view of his former teacher's attitudes.

This letter was Igor Stravinsky's declaration of independence. Although couched in terms of endearment (its very length and vehemence testifying to Stravinsky's wish to persuade rather than alienate his antagonists), it was a gauntlet. The inevitable breach was under way.

Lengthy though it is, the letter demands citation practically in full, not only for the reason just given but also because it was Stravinsky's only extended *profession de foi* from the period of his early maturity. Indeed, it is the only major esthetic pronouncement Stravinsky ever made that was written neither through an intermediary nor as part of a public relations effort. The early part of the letter makes ref-

7. Letter of 26 March 1912; in Vershinina (ed.), "Pis'ma Stravinskogo Rerikhu," 63.

8. See Chaliapin's letter to Gorky from Milan, 25 March 1912: "I've been racking my brains about a composer for you! Glazunov will hardly bestir himself to write. Rachmaninoff, it seems to me, hasn't the temperament for it—he wouldn't take to Buslayev. There is a certain young composer—the son of the former artist Stravinsky. This young man has already written a thing or two, including, among other things, a ballet entitled *Petrushka*. This ballet was given with enormous success in Paris last year. I'm thinking of putting him in touch with you—first, of course, I'll put out a feeler and try to find out how well equipped this young man might be to take on something like Buslayev. The young fellow is now in Monte Carlo. I'll drop him a line and ask him, if he can, to come see me in Milan" (Grosheva [ed.], *Shalyapin* 1:393).

erence to two specific Diaghilev "crimes" that had aroused the Rimsky-Korsakovs' indignation: the 1909 *Cléopâtre*—in which Arensky's score had been replaced by a "salade russe" (as Nouvel sneeringly put it)[9] that included some music from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada*—and the Bakst-Fokine *Shéhérazade* of 1910, which, by adapting Rimsky-Korsakov's score (minus the third movement) to a new and unforeseen scenario, had raised fundamental questions of artistic, and even legal, propriety.[10] Stravinsky answered these charges very much as a spokesman for the offending party.

Ustilug, 8/21 July 1911

Dear Volodya,

Forgive me in advance for the incoherence of this letter. I am very agitated by yours, which I was very happy to receive, but whose contents saddened me as much or more. It's not a matter of your attacks on Diaghilev—to that we're all accustomed, and it's no longer as sensitive a matter as it used to be. It's a much more serious matter that you raise—the thing we all serve together with Diaghilev, namely, the Ballet. But before I get to this, I cannot let the matter of Diaghilev go by altogether. I have said already more than once that there are deeds of Diaghilev's of which I cannot approve, like, for instance, the musical mishmash that goes by the name of *Cléopâtre*. I say this to everyone and I've said it to him more than once. But I should make it clear that it is the mixture of various authors' styles that I don't like. It's a failure from the musical standpoint. I would even rather have Arensky's worthless and stupid music all by itself. I have no objection in principle, as long as the music is good (and has integrity) and the choreographic realization shows talent. It does not offend my artistic sensibilities, which (I would like to suppose) are not in a state of decay. As regards an individual instance (like *Sheherazade*), where the subject of the choreographic composition does not correspond to the subject (if I may put it so) with which Nikolai Andreyevich prefaced the symphony, the situation is not really any different. The main thing here is not the subject, but the divine spectacle, which transports you utterly into the atmosphere of *Sheherazade*'s stupendous music. The only thing I regret is that not all four movements have been staged. This I told Diaghilev at the time, and it still disturbs me. Nor am I at all in agreement with Diaghilev in his overly blithe attitude toward cuts, just as I am not in agreement with [Eduard]

9. See Grigoriev, *Diaghilev Ballet*, 8.

10. A typescript draft for *Memories and Commentaries*, reproduced in P&D (pl. 1 facing p. 144), included the following sentence: ". . . but while [Mme Rimsky-Korsakov] attacked [Diaghilev's] production of *Sheherazade* she was delighted at the same time to receive very handsome royalties from it." The sentence was deleted in all editions of the published book. Rimsky-Korsakov's widow was only being loyal to her husband's views. A letter from the composer to his friend the Moscow hôtelier S. P. Belanovsky (8 January 1908) records his indignant reasons for avoiding the performances of Isadora Duncan: "Presumably she is very graceful, a splendid mime, Botticelli neck, etc.; but what repels me in her is that she foists her art upon . . . musical compositions which are dear to my heart and do not at all need her company, and whose authors had not counted upon it. How chagrined I should be if I learned that Miss Duncan dances and mimically explains, for instance, my *Sheherazade, Antar,* or Easter Overture! . . . When [miming] foists itself unbidden upon music, it only harms the latter by diverting attention from it" (Appendix to *My Musical Life*, 446). All in all, not so far from what a later Stravinsky might have said!

Nápravník and [Albert] Coates [the Mariyinsky conductors], who this year made a stupendous cut in the scene of the Tatar invasion in *Kitezh,* and had another cut in mind, which you all, it seems, stood firm against. However, these worthies have never been subjected to such insulting epithets as Diaghilev, who when all is said and done is doing something incomparably higher than they in artistic value—to this I can attest with complete impartiality[!]. Don't think I am just an infatuated yes-man—on the contrary, not a day goes by that I do not say something, argue, disagree, criticize. But that's one thing, and recognition of the significance of what is being created is another.

And now we come in earnest to the thing you are casting doubt upon. I mean the Ballet. Although you say that you are no enemy of ballet, later you claim that it is a "low form" of scenic art. At this everything became clear to me: from this phrase it is clear to me that you simply ***do not like*** ballet, and have no interest in it, that you do not attach any great significance to it. I will only say to you that it is just the opposite with me. I love ballet and am more interested in it than in anything else. And this is not just an idle enthusiasm, but a serious and profound enjoyment of scenic spectacle—of the art of animated form [***zhivaya plastika***]. And I am simply bewildered that you, who so loved the plastic arts, who took such an interest in painting and sculpture (that is, if you have not yet cooled toward them, too), pay so little attention to choreography—the third plastic art—and consider ballet to be a lower form than opera. If a Michelangelo were alive today, I thought, looking at his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, the only thing his genius would recognize and accept would be the choreography that is being reborn today. Everything else that takes place on the stage he would doubtless call a miserable farce. For the only form of scenic art that sets itself, as its cornerstone, the ***tasks of beauty,*** and ***nothing else,*** is ballet. And the only goal Michelangelo pursued was visible beauty.

I admit I did not expect to hear such a thing from you. It saddens me terribly. It saddens me when people with whom I have been such close friends, as with you, feel completely the opposite from me. It is true that I, who am working in the choreographic sphere, have sensed the significance and the necessity of what I am doing (I am not talking only about music but about the entire work as a whole, since I am also the author of *Petrushka*'s libretto and did this work with the same love as your father, working on his operas), while you, on the one hand, see nothing but banal and even simply awful operatic productions and ugly ballets (though this year the divine *Carnaval* was presented [at the Mariyinsky]) and, on the other, out of your prejudice against Diaghilev, have not budged from your position, and, not recognizing any significance in choreography (for you have said that ballet is lower than opera, while for me all art is equal—there are not higher and lower arts, there are different forms of art—if you place one below another, it only proves that the plastic arts are less dear to you than another form of art—or else simply a thing you can do without), you dream only of artistic productions of existing operas, not giving any thought to the fact that opera is a spectacle, and a spectacle, at that, with an obligation to be artistic, and, consequently, as such, ought to have its own self-sufficient value—just as captivating gestures and movements in dance—which for some reason you place lower than recitative—are valuable, when they are created by the fantasy of a ballet master's talent, just as music, divorced from spectacle [is valuable]. These are not mere applied arts—it is a union of arts, the one strengthening and supplementing the other.

I would understand someone who opposed all unions as such: drama and music—opera, choreography and music—ballet. What can you do, it seems the fellow likes his art pure: music as music, plastic art as plastic art. But you I cannot understand, my dear, for you love the plastic arts, or always have up to now. I can understand Nikolai Andreyevich, who admitted himself that he was not "sensitive" (so what can you do—if he doesn't feel it, he doesn't feel it) to the plastic arts; but I don't understand in that case why his work took the form of opera, and sometimes even ballet, where music is deliberately united with other arts. I think that this came about not out of a lack of understanding or love for other arts, as much as it did from an insufficient immersion in or acquaintance with them. Probably it's the same with you, who have voiced this terrible heresy about "lower forms" (don't be angry at me for my brusque tone—it's not as brusque as it seems). I think that if you would attend the ballet regularly (artistic ballet, of course), you would see that this "lower form" brings you incomparably more artistic joy than any operatic performance (even the operas with your favorite music), a joy I have been experiencing now for over a year and which I would so like to infect you all with and share with you. It is the joy of discovering a whole new continent. Its development will take lots of work—there's much in store!

Well, there you have what I think about ballet, being completely in agreement with Benois and finding nothing wrong with his enthusiasm for ballet. And you are wrong to try to tear me away from Benois's sphere of influence. He is a man of rare refinement, keen to the point of clairvoyance not only with respect to the plastic arts, but also to music. Of all the artists whom by now I have had occasion to see and to meet, he is the most sensitive to music, not to mention the fact that he knows and understands it no less well than an educated professional musician. If his opinions about music are not to your taste, that does not necessarily mean that he is not competent in that area. His assertion that Diaghilev is a singer and composer should be understood simply in terms of his involvement with singing and composition; for he has studied both seriously, though in neither did he show any great abilities.[11]

Stravinsky went on to dismiss the critics (excepting Alfred Bruneau) out of hand, to assure Vladimir of Diaghilev's respect for Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (citing the production in 1911 of the underwater scene from *Sadko*), and to make the complaints about Fokine we have already sampled. The letter ends affectionately, as Russian letters do, with a "kiss," and with the exhortation that Vladimir "believe in my sincere friendship." But the letter contains the seeds of the dissolution of that friendship. All at once the astonishing hostility toward *Petrushka* that came pouring out of Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov's review becomes comprehensible.

Stravinsky's letters to the Rimsky-Korsakov brothers and to Steinberg maintained a fraternal and confiding tone through the period of *The Rite* and even (in the case of Steinberg) a little beyond. Increasingly present between the lines, however, is an avuncular tone that must have rankled, and comments on the Russian

11. IStrSM:459–62. Addenda made by Stravinsky in the form of footnotes have been incorporated into the text.

scene that could only have inspired feelings of inferiority and betrayal. Here, for example, is how Stravinsky informed Andrey of his plan to spend the winter of 1911–12 (when he would compose *The Rite*) in Switzerland: "You know, my dear, it's better there not just for my family but for me as well. I have to build up my strength of spirit. At home I'd become a regular neurasthenic."[12] To a September letter from Andrey that was evidently similar to the one from Vladimir which he had answered at such length in July, Stravinsky would spare only a few blithe and patronizing lines in reply: "What could be better and more wonderful than the development of established artistic forms? Only one thing—the creation of new forms. Insofar as I can see, you are sticking to the former; but since I cannot see you now, I cannot swear that you are not coming round, or perhaps have even come round, to the latter, not in words or thought (of which nobody has enough) but in feeling (of which everyone possesses all he needs). Right or wrong? Surely right! Don't keep yourself from feeling!"[13]

By the time Stravinsky wrote to Steinberg with news of the *Rite* première, wishing his old walled-in rival "the same creative ebullience," the irony can hardly be mistaken, especially since more than a year earlier Stravinsky had written Calvocoressi that Steinberg was "plunged totally into academicism," that in his last few letters he "declares that he understands nothing in my most recent compositions," ending with the query, "Is there still a chance of saving him?"[14]

The earliest letters from Steinberg in the Stravinsky Archive date from October 1912, so Stravinsky's report to Calvocoressi cannot be directly verified. But the surviving letters amply confirm the esthetic rift that had opened up between them. Early in 1913, for example, Stravinsky wrote to his teacher's son-in-law:

> Have you been to *Elektra*? [Strauss's opera had premièred at the Mariyinsky in February 1913 (O.S.) under Coates, in a translation by Kuzmin.] I've gone twice [in London] and am completely enraptured. This is his best composition. Let them speak of Strauss's perpetual vulgarities—to this I will say only that, in the

12. Letter of 8 August 1911; in IStrSM:463.

13. Letter of 24 September 1911; in IStrSM:464. In this letter Stravinsky even "assigns" Andrey some reading in the form of several articles by the German dramaturg Georg Fuchs (1868–1949), a strong proponent of choreographic adaptations à la Duncan.

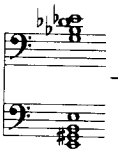
14. Letter of 11 April 1912; in SelCorrII:98. The earliest surviving attestation to incipient esthetic contention between Stravinsky and Steinberg is a page bearing an eleven-bar fragment from an early, harmonically somewhat more recondite version of the "Ronde des Princesses" from *Firebird* (now at the State Institute of Theater, Music, and Cinematography in St. Petersburg), copied out in Stravinsky's hand and originally presented to Steinberg with the following friendly yet ironic inscription: "Max! Take this as a souvenir of the ballet which you still look upon (or so it seems to me) as a series of curiosities and 'Kunststück's.' Yours, Igor Stravinsky, 5 XII 1909." The leaf is printed in facsimile and thoroughly described in Abram Klimovitsky, "Ob odnom neizvestnom avtografe I. Stravinskogo (k probleme tvorcheskogo formirovaniya kompozitora)," in the yearbook of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, *Pamyatniki kul'turï: Noviye otkrïtiya* for 1986 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1987), 227–36. The contention that his musical explorations and innovations were just a bag of "clever tricks" (*Kunststücke*) was the standard anti-Stravinskian line in Russia in the period of the composer's first fame, and what had evidently started out as affectionate joshing among friends eventually reached a very public and wounding pitch with the publication of Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov's all-out attacks.

> first place, if you penetrate more deeply into German art you'll see that they all suffer from this, and in the second place, time will succeed in smoothing over the lapses of taste that shock contemporaries and will reveal the work in its true light. Strauss's *Elektra* is a stupendous piece!!![15]

To which Steinberg replied (as Stravinsky must surely have expected) in terms dutifully paraphrased from what he remembered of Rimsky-Korsakov's kneejerk Straussophobia, adding for good measure his impressions of Schoenberg (whom he had met at the time of the *Pelléas* performance in December 1912):

> I heard *Elektra* at the dress rehearsal. I completely disagree with your opinion of it. I hate Strauss with all my heart. Your words, that banality is a general trait of German music, I regard as profoundly unjustified and insulting to German music, which for all its present insignificance (please don't curse me—Schoenberg is a very nice and talented man) has a transcendently brilliant past. I am completely at a loss to understand how *you* can be so enthusiastic—it must be hypnosis![16]

As for *The Rite* itself, of which Steinberg had heard the first tableau during Stravinsky's visit to St. Petersburg in September 1912, he admitted (in a postscript to his letter of 2 October):


—That's all I can recall from the first time.

Stravinsky's letter to Steinberg of 16/29 July 1913 contains another *Rite*-related postscript: "Just go on playing [it]—I'm sure you'll come to feel this piece with time. Creating it gave me many of my happiest hours. And you I consider to be a man of sensitivity. Just approach this piece with an open heart. I swear to God, it's not that hard."[17] This letter has been taken as evidence of Stravinsky's candor and continued open-hearted good will toward the companions of his youth.[18] On the contrary, taken in context it can only be regarded as a taunt. In any case, it was a fruitless plea. Steinberg's response did not come until February 1914, after the Russian première, in yet another postscript: "About *The Rite of Spring* I won't write, for about this we have to talk, and talk at length."[19]

15. Letter of 17 February/2 March 1913; in IStrSM:471.
16. Letter of 4 April 1913, in the Stravinsky Archive, paraphrased in part in SelCorrI:44n.
17. IStrSM:474.
18. See Simon Karlinsky, "A Pocket Full of Buttered Figs," *Times Literary Supplement,* 5 July 1985.
19. Postcard of 18 February 1914, in the Stravinsky Archive.

They never had the talk, for with this postcard the Stravinsky-Steinberg correspondence came to an end. The only remaining item from Steinberg in the archive is poignant, a note dashed off in Paris on 16 June 1925: "Igor Fyodorovich! It is extremely deplorable that you have not found time to see me. I want very much to hear and see the ballets 'Pulcinella' and 'Chant du Rossignol.' If you can be of assistance in this I would be very glad. I am not in a position to pay the present ticket prices. My address: 7, rue Leclerc, Paris XIV chez Mme St. Choupak (métro St. Jacques). Best wishes, M. Steinberg."[20]

With Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov correspondence had broken off earlier; their friendship did not survive Andrey's attack on *Petrushka*.[21] As in the case of Steinberg, there was a poignant echo. The Stravinsky Archive preserves a letter from Andrey dated 14 January 1914, in which he apologizes to his old friend for not having sent news earlier about his marriage, and adds the following: "Permit me to make a confession to you: for me, neither our artistic differences nor the distance that separates us have extinguished my feelings of friendship toward you. Perhaps this feeling is by now an illusion, but be assured that I would give much even now for a chance to talk quietly and amicably with you." Stravinsky's "Dear John" reply is a tour de force of diplomatic yet decisive rejection:

> Dear Andrey,
>
> We sincerely congratulate you and your wife and wish you great and long-lasting happiness in your life together. I write you this with all my heart, for I believe in the sincerity of your confession and would also not like to see our friendship become, as you say, an illusion. I am only afraid that this might happen in spite of us by virtue of the difference in our outlooks in the realm of art or by virtue of the ever more infrequent and remote contact between us. In any case, neither your venomous and thunderous writings about my works, nor your protests against my "anti-artistic" acts, ought, after your letter (whose sincerity I have no right to doubt) ever alter our good and amicable relations.
>
> I cannot write much, for right now I have something else on my mind—our daughter Milena was born not long ago. The delivery went satisfactorily, but afterwards, for the last twenty days and more, my wife's temperature has been slowly

20. Stravinsky's heartless reference to this episode (M&C:54/56) erroneously places it in the year 1924. His niece Tatyana Yuryevna Stravinskaya, who stayed with the composer's family in Nice from March 1925 to February 1926, corroborates the correct date in a letter she wrote home to her parents in Leningrad on 25 July 1925: "Uncle has asked me to write you the following. While he was in Paris, he was much annoyed by a relative of the Korsakovs'—Steinberg. Uncle does not like him. At first Uncle delicately avoided him, then had to resort to hints, but the latter, intentionally or not, failed to understand. Finally Uncle left Paris, but Steinberg would not leave him alone and kept writing letters. In the last of them he informed Uncle that he was going back to Piter [the old Russian nickname for St. Petersburg] and asked if he had anything to send his brother. Uncle doesn't want to have anything to do with him and asked me to warn you in case he comes to you and gives you his side of the story" (Stravinskaya, *O Stravinskom i yego blizkikh,* 63).

21. The last letter from Stravinsky to his old friend is dated 23 October/5 November 1912; see IStrSM:469.

but steadily rising. The doctors have diagnosed tuberculosis, aggravated by pleurisy. I am going through a hard time.

I embrace you. Be well, and do let us hear from you if only once in a while.

Yours, Igor Stravinsky[22]

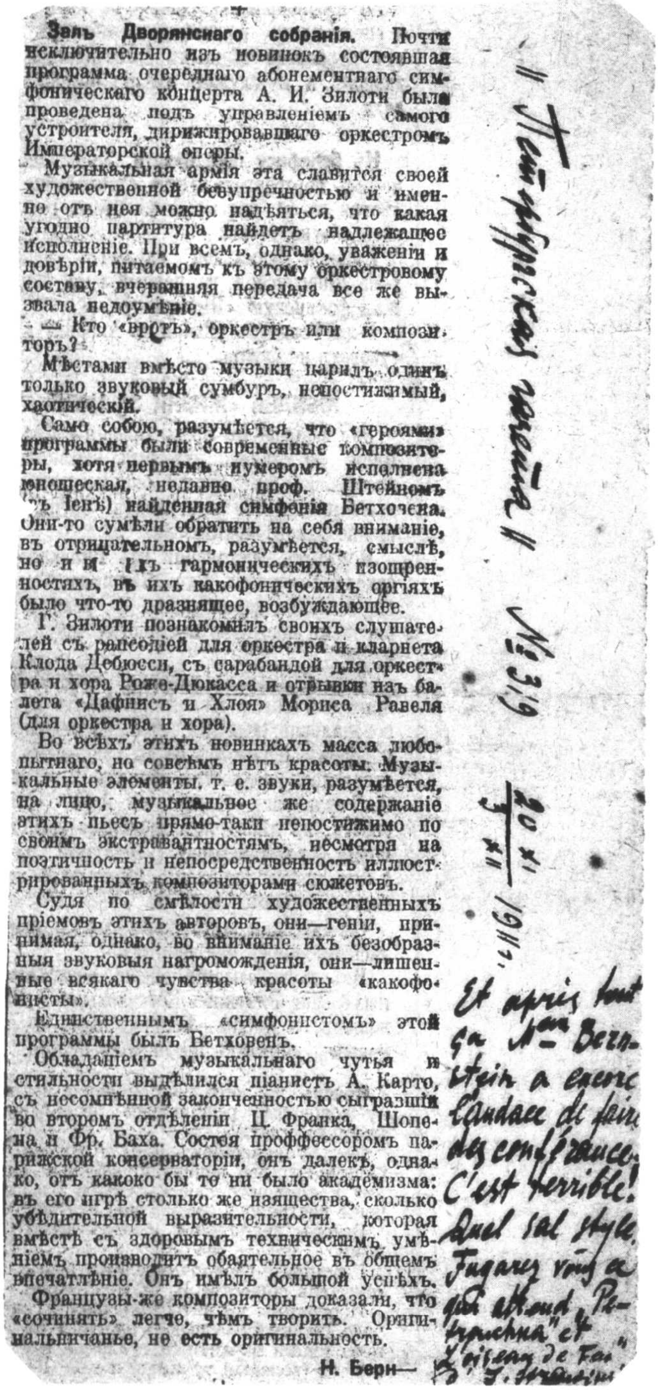
THE METEOR TAKES OFF

The context into which all these letters have to be placed for proper evaluation includes—besides our privileged knowledge, going back to Chapter 6, of Stravinsky's long-breeding envy and *Schadenfreude*—a number of public and self-aggrandizing attacks on musical Russia and its eminent representatives that appeared in interviews Stravinsky gave both at home and abroad. These could not have failed to color the way in which the pro forma cordiality of his letters impressed their recipients.

An article on Stravinsky by Émile Vuillermoz, published in Paris early in 1912, was obviously an interview in disguise: it contained a number of inflammatory remarks that could only have originated with the composer. His resentment of the Belyayevets/Conservatory milieu boils over in Vuillermoz's account of the reception accorded the "*Funerary Chant* performed at the Belyayev Concerts, much to the despair of Rimsky's official pupils, jealous to see prolonged, as it were from beyond the grave, an artistic intimacy at which they had long taken umbrage." What did Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov or Maximilian Steinberg make of that? Or of this: "Already covertly opposed by certain of his compatriots, the young composer is overjoyed to have found in Paris the active support and enlightened dedication that alone are capable of encouraging him effectively on his audacious way."[23] Stravinsky took pains to present himself to all his French friends as one who suffered persecution at home. To Calvocoressi he sent a clipping (Fig. 13.1) from the *Peterburgskaya gazeta* (3 December 1911) in which Nikolai Bernstein tore mercilessly into a Siloti program that included the Russian première of a suite from *Daphnis et Chloë,* and added in the margin: "And after all this Mr. Bernstein still

22. Stravinsky Archive, "Copie de lettres," 25. The "anti-artistic acts" by now included Diaghilev's production of *Khovanshchina*, about which see the next chapter. The one remaining item from Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov in the archive is an invitation, sent from Leningrad on 15 June 1932, to contribute to a memorial volume for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's death (contributions were also solicited from such other émigrés and foreigners as Glazunov, Albert Coates, Osip Gabrilowitsch, Respighi, Chaliapin, and Monteux). The letter is written in French and opens with the salutation "Cher Maître," though it rather incongruously maintains the familiar second person singular. It ends, "Reçois, cher Maître, les cordiales et respectueuses salutations de ton fidèle ami et sincère admirateur."

23. ". . . *Chant funèbre* exécuté aux Concerts Bélaieff, au grand désespoir des élèves officiels de Rimsky, jaloux de voir se prolonger avec leur maître, au delà du tombeau, une intimité artistique dont ils prenaient depuis longtemps ombrage. . . . Déjà sournoisement combattu par certains de ses compatriotes, le jeune compositeur se félicite d'avoir trouvé à Paris les seules sympathies actives et les seuls enthousiasmes éclairés susceptibles de l'encourager efficacement dans son audacieuse carrière" (Vuillermoz, "Strawinsky," 18, 20).



Залъ Дворянскаго собранія. Почти исключительно изъ новинокъ состоявшая программа очереднаго абонементнаго симфоническаго концерта А. И. Зилоти была проведена подъ управленіемъ самого устроителя, дирижировавшаго оркестромъ Императорской оперы.

Музыкальная армія эта славится своей художественной безупречностью и именно отъ нея можно надѣяться, что какая угодно партитура найдетъ надлежащее исполненіе. При всемъ, однако, уваженіи и довѣріи, питаемомъ къ этому оркестровому составу, вчерашняя передача все же вызвала недоумѣніе.

— Кто «вретъ», оркестръ или композиторъ?

Мѣстами вмѣсто музыки царилъ одинъ только звуковый сумбуръ, непостижимый, хаотическій.

Само собою, разумѣется, что «героями» программы были современные композиторы, хотя первымъ нумеромъ исполнена юношеская, недавно проф. Штейномъ (въ Іенѣ) найденная симфонія Бетховена. Они-то сумѣли обратить на себя вниманіе, въ отрицательномъ, разумѣется, смыслѣ, но и въ ихъ гармоническихъ изощренностяхъ, въ ихъ какофоническихъ оргіяхъ было что-то дразнящее, возбуждающее.

Г. Зилоти познакомилъ своихъ слушателей съ рапсодіей для оркестра и кларнета Клода Дебюсси, съ сарабандой для оркестра и хора Рожэ-Дюкасса и отрывки изъ балета «Дафнисъ и Хлоя» Мориса Равеля (для оркестра и хора).

Во всѣхъ этихъ новинкахъ масса любопытнаго, но совсѣмъ нѣтъ красоты. Музыкальные элементы, т. е. звуки, разумѣется, на лицо, музыкальное же содержаніе этихъ пьесъ прямо-таки непостижимо по своимъ экстравантностямъ, несмотря на поэтичность и непосредственность иллюстрированныхъ композиторами сюжетовъ.

Судя по смѣлости художественныхъ пріемовъ этихъ авторовъ, они—геніи, принимая, однако, во вниманіе ихъ безобразныя звуковыя нагроможденія, они—лишенные всякаго чувства красоты «какофонисты».

Единственнымъ «симфонистомъ» этой программы былъ Бетховенъ.

Обладаніемъ музыкальнаго чутья и стильности выдѣлился піанистъ А. Карто, съ несомнѣнной законченностью сыгравшій во второмъ отдѣленіи Ц. Франка, Шопена и Фр. Баха. Состоя проффессоромъ парижской консерваторіи, онъ далекъ, однако, отъ какоко бы то ни было академизма: въ его игрѣ столько же изящества, сколько убѣдительной выразительности, которая вмѣстѣ съ здоровымъ техническимъ умѣніемъ производитъ обаятельное въ общемъ впечатлѣніе. Онъ имѣлъ большой успѣхъ.

Французы-же композиторы доказали, что «сочинять» легче, чѣмъ творить. Оригинальничанье, не есть оригинальность.

Н. Берн—

FIG. 13.1. Igor Stravinsky, note to Michel Calvocoressi on a review of a Siloti concert by Nikolai Bernshteyn, clipped from the *Peterburgskaya gazeta*. The program, mainly Russian premières, consisted of the "Jena" Symphony, then attributed to Beethoven; Debussy's Rhapsody for Clarinet and Orchestra; a sarabande by Roger-Ducasse; and excerpts from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloë*. (The second half featured Alfred Cortot in works by Franck, Chopin, and Friedemann Bach.) The verdict on the modern works: "To judge by the audacity of their artistic methods these authors are geniuses; if, however, their monstrous sonic overloading is taken into account, they are 'cacophonists' devoid of all sense of beauty."

has the nerve to give lectures! It's appalling! What foul style! Just imagine what awaits *Petrushka* and *The Firebird* by I. Stravinsky."[24]

Many of the remarks in Vuillermoz's article were mirrored practically word for word in an interview Stravinsky gave the London *Daily Mail* on 13 February 1913: "Russian musical life is at present stagnant. They cannot stand me there. 'Petrushka' was performed at St. Petersburg the same day as here, and I see the newspapers are now all comparing my work with the smashing of crockery. . . . I find my only kindred spirits in France. France possesses in Debussy, Ravel, and Florent Schmitt the foremost creative musicians of the day." It might be thought that this sally was inspired by Andrey Rimsky-Korsakov's attack on *Petrushka,* but practically the same sentiments can be found in a letter from Stravinsky to Schmitt, written at Ustilug the previous September. Its tone is a heady mixture of justifiable resentment and swaggering self-advertisement:

> You realize of course that I am worth *nothing at all* in my admirable country. Even M. Siloti, who began by promoting me, has ended up declaring that my music has not produced the wished-for success, and so he has recommended that I compose something more digestible.
>
> . . . Otherwise the critics annoyed by my success abroad have declared that I have no originality, that I am not at the head of the movement (that's a low blow) but just one of those lined up behind the snob theorizers, and all this after hearing the works before *Petrushka* (which hasn't even been played at a concert in Russia).[25]

Just over a week later, Stravinsky was in St. Petersburg en route to Clarens (it would be his last visit to his native city until 1962). During this brief stopover he gave what might well be regarded as the first "typical" Stravinsky interview: arch, startling, slippery as to facts but unerring as to effect. The anonymous reviewer, who signed himself "Teatral" ("Old Theater Hand"), had come to visit Stravinsky at his family apartment, 66 Kryukov Canal. The interview is notable for the frankness with which "Teatral" seized the bull by the horns on a number of sensitive points relating to Stravinsky's position in Russian musical life, and for the disingenuousness with which Stravinsky described *The Rite,* launching, as it were, the

24. "Et après tout ça M. Bernstein a encore l'audace de faire des conférence[s]. C'est terrible! Quel sal style. Figurez vous ce qui attend 'Pétrouchka' et 'L'oiseau de Feu' d'I. Strawinski" (Collection of the author). Stravinsky's French at this point was quite insecure, as was even his command of the Roman alphabet. In the hastily scribbled note Russian letters are inadvertently substituted for Roman.

25. "Vous savez bien que je n'ai *aucune valeur* dans mon admirable pays. Monsieur Ziloti même qui commençait par me protéger a fini par déclarer que ma musique n'avait pas le succès voulu, c'est pourquoi il m'a proposé de composer une musique plus digestible. . . . D'autre part, des critiques ennuyés par mon succès en étranger me déclarent sans originalité, que je ne suis pas dans la tête du mouvement (c'est malin) mais au contraire que je me promène dans la queue des théories snobistes, et tout cela après avoir entendu les oeuvres qui précèdent *Pétrouchka* (qui n'a pas été joué encore en Russie même au concert)." The letter is given both in facsimile (first page) and in printed form in Lesure (ed.), *Stravinsky: la carrière européenne,* 19.