

REVENGE IS A DISH BEST SERVED ON A BROKEN PLATE:

THE ENFANT TERRIBLE

IN IGOR STRAVINSKY AND ARNOLD SCHOENBERG

By

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A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School - New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Music Theory and Composition

written under the direction of

Dr. Richard Chrisman

and approved by

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New Brunswick, NJ

May, 2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Does an artist create in a vacuum or is there more at stake in a work's production than art for art's sake? A great deal has been written about *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky and the atonal works of Arnold Schoenberg, much of which has depicted their works as autonomous objects – objects that embodied an inevitable step in a natural evolution of Western art music. This essay reconsiders these works not as the product of Hegelian evolution, but as social acts of symbolic violence against cultural establishments in Saint Petersburg and Vienna by two remarkably similar personalities. Following an overview of their social and professional development, this essay considers primary sources on Stravinsky and Schoenberg in light of recent psychological research on identity. The system of sign and myth outlined by semiologist Roland Barthes is then brought to bear on Stravinsky's *Rite* and Schoenberg's *Erwartung* to further analyze conservative versus radical reception of these works. The essay

concludes with a discussion of the concepts of cultural capital, symbolic violence and collective misrecognition proposed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as they relate to theoretical and historical writing on Stravinsky and Schoenberg later in the twentieth-century.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*The author would like to thank all of the members of his dissertation committee,*

*Professor Charles Fussell,*

*Professor Richard Chrisman,*

*Professor Gerald Chenoweth*

*and Professor Richard Burke.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Revenge is a dish best served cold.

— French Proverb

You know that in all tombs there is always a false door? Well, people are like that too. They create a false door – to deceive. If they are conscious of weakness, of inefficiency, they make an imposing door of self-assertion, of bluster, of overwhelming authority – and, after a time, they get to believe in it themselves. They think, and everybody thinks, that they are like that. But behind that door...is a bare rock. And so when reality comes and touches them with the feather of truth – their true self reasserts itself.<sup>1</sup>

— Hori in *Death Comes as the End*

In *The ABC Murders*, the detective Hercule Poirot makes a statement that best defines his character and the mysteries he solves in over thirty Agatha Christie novels: “Crime is terribly revealing. Try and vary your methods as you will, your tastes, your habits, your attitude of mind, but your soul is revealed by your actions.”<sup>2</sup> This essay deals with a crime story of sorts as well, or rather the twin crimes committed early in the twentieth century by the composers Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. Though the crimes in question were not physical in nature, the position this essay considers is whether Stravinsky and Schoenberg nonetheless got away with murder in the figurative sense – what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes as *symbolic violence* and *collective misrecognition*.<sup>3</sup> Like the perfect murder, though motivated by passion in the

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<sup>1</sup> Agatha Christie, *Death Comes as the End* (London: Dodd & Mead, 1944), 105.

<sup>2</sup> Agatha Christie, *The ABC Murders* (London: Dodd & Mead, 1936), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 81.

moment, these composers and their accomplices took great pains to cover their tracks after the deed was done.

A great deal has been written about *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky and the atonal works of Arnold Schoenberg, much of which depicts these composers as single-handedly bringing about the birth of modernism and the demise of traditional tonality by either recognizing or simply embodying an inevitable step in the natural evolution of Western art music, a position often propagated by the composers themselves and their immediate circles.<sup>4</sup> This amounts to much more than the occasional turn of phrase used in passing, as we will see at the conclusion through a survey of the heated debate between Pieter C. van den Toorn and Richard Taruskin over the concept of “the music itself.”<sup>5</sup> A closer look at statements made by Stravinsky, Schoenberg and their supporters situated within the context of the notorious rejection by the musical establishment, the broader public and the critical press, does not suggest such Hegelian, absolute idealism of evolution, nor the spontaneous appearance of a

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Craft called the *Rite*, “the prize bull that inseminated the whole modern movement.” See Robert Craft, “‘The Rite of Spring’: Genesis of a Masterpiece,” in Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring: Sketches 1911-1913* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1969), xv. The cultural historian Modris Eksteins said that to have, “been in the audience that evening [of the *Rite*’s premier] was to have participated in the very creation of modern art.” See Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1989), 15. Paul Griffiths said that Arnold Schoenberg took the first step into atonality because, “the historical imperative was inescapable.” See Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 25-26. Robert Morgan announced that the, “collapse of traditional tonality,” took place in, “1907, the year Arnold Schoenberg made a final break with the traditional tonal system.” See Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth Century Music* (New York: Norton, 1991), 1. The Norton textbook *A History of Western Music* stated that, “The whole course of Romantic music, especially in Germany, tended toward atonality.” See Donald Jay Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton, 1960), 647. Anton von Webern claimed that, “major and minor” had “no longer existed,” since the beginning of the twentieth century. See Anton Webern *The Path to the New Music* trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser Co., 1963), 36. See also Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 358-361.

<sup>5</sup> See Pieter C. van den Toorn, “Will Stravinsky Survive Postmodernism?,” *Music Theory Spectrum* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring, 2000): 104-121.

new art form without roots in the past – two contradictory positions that together characterize a large body of academic writing published in the post-war era.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 1 Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*



Like the word “merdre”<sup>7</sup> that opened Alfred Jarry’s play *Ubu Roi* in 1896 at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre, or the moustache Marcel Duchamp drew on the Mona Lisa in his *LHOOQ*<sup>8</sup> of 1919 (Fig. 1), Stravinsky and Schoenberg, though educated just outside of the musical establishments of St. Petersburg and Vienna nevertheless had ample awareness about which compositional choices could lead to broad critical acceptance and which would provoke a scandal similar to

<sup>6</sup> Richard Taruskin, “A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, The Tradition of the New, and ‘The Music Itself,’” *Modernism/Modernity* 2/1 (1995): 1-26. See also, Richard Taruskin, “Revising Revision,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46 (1993): 114-138.

<sup>7</sup> The word “shit” was strictly taboo in the public domain of the French theatre, even with the added “r.” See RoseLee Goldberg *Performance Art* (New York: World of Art, 2001), 11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Not to mention the reaction elicited by that title when the letters are spoken aloud in French: “Elle a chaud au cul,” literally translates as, “She has a hot ass.”

that of Jarry's play or Duchamp's readymades. In the absence of an argument for historical inevitability on the one hand or spontaneous creation out of nothingness on the other, the question has to be asked: what else could have motivated these composers to knowingly create works that audiences and the musical establishments of the period would react so violently against? And perhaps most significant of all – what reason could possibly motivate historians or theorists writing after the fact to deny evidence of such acts of provocation?

This essay reconsiders the major works of Schoenberg and Stravinsky during the period 1908-1913 as acts of symbolic violence against authoritarian cultural establishments by two remarkably similar personalities, both of whom may very well have been motivated out of an extreme sense of rejection, resentment and need for legitimacy via approbation from social networks formed by similar personalities with similar objectives.

An analysis of this nature necessitates stepping outside of the field of music for perspective to look at behavior on the level of the individual. Following an overview of primary sources on their social and professional development, this essay considers Stravinsky and Schoenberg in light of recent psychological research on identity. A system of sign and myth outlined by semiologist Roland Barthes is then brought to bear on their work to further analyze conservative versus radical reception in terms of their read meanings.<sup>9</sup> To understand how such acts of symbolic violence are ultimately depicted in the history books as a cultural success and in what ways they are translatable into tangible value, the essay concludes with an application of the concept of cultural capital proposed

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<sup>9</sup> Roland Barthes *Mythologies*, trans. Jonathan Cape (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 109-159.

by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In addition to shedding light on these career-making moments in the lives of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, the concept of collective misrecognition described by Bourdieu in the field of cultural production is used to discuss the tendency of some theorists and historians to reify historical evolution on the one hand while focusing all attention on “the music itself” on the other rather than the producer of the work, (the composer), or more significantly, the producer of the artist, (legitimizing agents within the composer’s social network). From this perspective, such grand narratives<sup>10</sup> are not separate from but are actually an integral part of the symbolic violence that usurped the older cultural establishment of the time and put Schoenberg, Stravinsky and their followers in its place. Or, as Bourdieu puts it himself, “If it is ‘impossible to understand magic without the magic group,’ this is because the magician’s power...is a legitimate abuse of power, collectively misrecognized and so recognized.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The term “grand narrative” or “metanarrative” was coined by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his critique of Hegel’s dialectic, among other grand, large-scale theories and philosophies of knowledge, such as the progress of history or the faith in science’s ability to explain everything. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu, 81.

## I. THE BEST OF INTENTIONS<sup>12</sup>

Schoenberg's works from just before World War I are often associated with the expressionist movement that appeared in Northern Europe at approximately the same time. More recent scholarship has reoriented the definition of expressionism as a foundational approach to creation based on unconscious, emotional impulse rather than as a stylistic category limited to Austrian artists at the turn of the century.<sup>13</sup> From this position, not only Schoenberg's works of this period, but also Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* could be read as expressionist. After its premier Stravinsky claimed, "I was guided by no system whatever in *Le Sacre du Printemps*. I had only my ear to help me: I heard and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which *Le Sacre* passed."<sup>14</sup> This statement echoes similar remarks by Anton Webern, who felt as if his expressionist works had been dictated through him, and Alexander Scriabin, who also used the term "vessel" to describe the experience.<sup>15</sup> Arnold Schoenberg wrote to Ferruccio Busoni in 1909, "My only intention is: to have no intention! To place nothing inhibiting in the stream of my unconscious

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<sup>12</sup> In defense of analysis of musical scores without reference to composers or their broader cultural context, theorists such as Allen Forte often refer to the "Intentional Fallacy" published in 1946 by William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley as though it were an irrefutable axiom of literary theory. In fact there is no consensus on this point in the field. The concept will be addressed in the conclusion to this essay. For a discussion of this issue with regards to Forte, including an extensive bibliography of articles refuting the claim made by Wimsatt and Beardsley, see Ethan Haimo, "Atonality, Analysis, and the Intentional Fallacy," *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Autumn, 1996): 167-199.

<sup>13</sup> John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth Century Music* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1-3.

<sup>14</sup> Igor Stravinsky, "À propos *Le Sacre du Printemps*," *Saturday Review*, 29 (1959): 29, quoted in Crawford & Crawford, 173.

<sup>15</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 307.

sensations. Not to allow anything to infiltrate which may be invoked either by intelligence or consciousness.”<sup>16</sup> By their own accounts, these composers claimed to eschew conscious decision making, favoring unconscious impulse. Note also this early assertion of their works as autonomous entities from themselves.

Igor Stravinsky was 31 when he made his first large-scale break into post-tonality<sup>17</sup> with *The Rite of Spring* (1913). In that year he was the star composer of the most prominent ballet company in Europe, the Ballets Russes, following his major successes with *The Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911). Arnold Schoenberg was 35 when he completed his first post-tonal works – Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*, Op. 15, Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16 and *Erwartung*, Op. 17, in 1909.<sup>18</sup> His career to that date had been marked by violent rejection. Looking back in 1937, he wrote:

At the time of the first performance [*Verklärte Nacht*] (1901), sounded so rough that people said: ‘It sounds as if an orchestra playing Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde* had become confused and mixed up.’ And so the first performance of my *Verklärte Nacht* ended in a riot and in actual fights. And not only did some persons in the audience utter their opinions with their fists, but critics also used their fists instead of their pens. So one wrote: ‘This sextet seemed to me like a calf with six feet, such as one sees often at a fair.’<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Schoenberg, letter to Busoni, 24 August 1909. In Antony Beaumont, trans. and ed., *Ferruccio Busoni: Selected Letters* (London and Boston: Faber, 1987), 396, quoted in Crawford & Crawford, *Expressionism*, 66.

<sup>17</sup> Allen Forte refers to the *Rite* as “atonal” in *The Structure of Atonal Music*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), ix. Because the term is problematic and tends to be exclusively used with regards to the Second Viennese School, for the purposes of this essay I will use “post-tonal” throughout to refer in general to harmony that does not define or imply a key center overall. More specifically, I will use the term for harmony in which tertian triads are either negated (for example, with addition of ic 1) or simply avoided (in favor of other vertical sonorities such as pitch class (016)).

<sup>18</sup> Walter Frisch, *Schoenberg and His World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 33–36.

Stravinsky's *Firebird* and Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* were both tonal works, with roots in the nineteenth-century repertoire. The *Firebird* had been a carbon copy of the St. Petersburg *kutchka*<sup>20</sup>, and as Schoenberg points out in the quote above, the influence of Richard Wagner in *Verklärte Nacht* was evident to audience and critic alike.<sup>21</sup> At the moment they chose to write the post-tonal works that would induce the most notorious outrage of their professional lives, Stravinsky was flying at the top of his career and Schoenberg was hitting the bottom. If Stravinsky found overnight success composing predominantly tonal *kutchkist* ballets, why did he depart from the tried and true manner of *Firebird* and *Petrushka* with the extreme dissonance of *The Rite of Spring*? And if Schoenberg had faced overwhelming rejection for the complexity of *Verklärte Nacht*, why did he not back off and compose in a more conservative, Brahmsian fashion as he had done years earlier? Why did both composers push forward into certain scandal via post-tonality? After all, a great deal was at stake. Stravinsky was not acting as an independent artist – he had Sergei Diaghilev, the director of the Ballets Russes to answer to. The future survival of the company and the financial good will of its patrons depended upon the success of its productions. Having quit his bank job years earlier, Schoenberg struggled to earn enough money to support his wife and children through low-wage conducting, arranging and publishing contracts through 1909.<sup>22</sup> Based on his

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<sup>20</sup> Stravinsky, Igor and Robert Craft. *Expositions and Developments*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), 128-129. The *Kutchka* or "Mighty Handful" referred to the five Russian nationalist composers of the previous generation to Stravinsky: Mily Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

<sup>21</sup> Julie Brown, "Schoenberg's Early Wagnerisms: Atonality and the Redemption of Ahasuerus," *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 6 (1994): 58.

<sup>22</sup> Frisch, 2.

pressing financial concerns, he could not afford to take risks, as this was how he insisted on making his living. Were these composers totally unaware of the reaction that fully post-tonal works would have on their audiences? Or did they realize in advance what that response would be? And if so, what motivated them to present works to the public that they knew, full well, would provoke a scandal?

## II. UPSTARTS

Every composer with a name in the history books was once a beginner. To understand how Schoenberg and Stravinsky arrived at post-tonality, and how similar their apparently different lives were, it is first necessary to consider the formative years that led up to their break with common practice harmony.

One of the myths that survives to this day is that Stravinsky and Schoenberg were polar opposites. In fact, there is a striking similarity between their personalities and early development. Late in life, Stravinsky admitted that the stated dichotomies between himself and Schoenberg had been nothing more than a “parlor game” and listed “common belief in Divine Authority...[and] the success obstacle of the first pieces, *Verklärte Nacht* and *The Firebird*” as their most significant points in common, adding that “both [were] deeply superstitious.”<sup>23</sup> More significant – Schoenberg and Stravinsky had both maintained a negative regard toward their family backgrounds.

Stravinsky described his childhood as lonely and unhappy. His father had been cold with an uncontrollable temper. His mother tormented him from an early age and later in life was outspoken about her distaste for his music.<sup>24</sup>

Pechisky was an unhappy home for me. My parents openly showed their favoritism for my elder brother, Roman. I starved for affection but none of the adults around me noticed my condition...<sup>25</sup>

The real answer to your questions about my childhood is that it was a period of waiting for the moment when I could send everyone and everything connected with it to hell.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 108.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Oliver, *Igor Stravinsky* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Stravinsky, *Expositions*, 38

Schoenberg's son-in-law, Felix Greissle, reported that Schoenberg had been unusually self-conscious about his upbringing:

Schoenberg...until his very last day was conscious that he had come from lower-circumstances and been equipped with no manners; he had no breeding. His father walked around the streets and bought rags: finally he was called a 'Handelsmann' or businessman. Schoenberg was unfortunately always very anxious to hide his lowly past, to a point where he began to hate people who came from the same circumstances. He rejected his own background.<sup>27</sup>

Insecurities over the humble Slovakian origins of his parents and their cultural practices, coupled with his desire for assimilation into the Austrian mainstream very likely played a major role in Schoenberg's conversion to Protestantism in 1898.<sup>28</sup> During this period, Schoenberg felt anxious to distance himself from Judaism. Greissle spoke of his father-in-law's Protestant phase as:

...the time when he had anti-Semitic traits in reverse. At the time I married his daughter he was very proud that his son-in-law was not Jewish. It was an absolute achievement that he had a non-Jewish son-in-law. It was my biggest asset that I was not Jewish.<sup>29</sup>

If there is any doubt about the problematic internalization of anti-Semitic culture that was widespread in Vienna before World War I, consider Schoenberg's own statement about this period in his development:

When we young Austrian-Jewish artists grew up, our self-esteem suffered very much from the pressure of certain circumstances. It was the time when Richard Wagner's work started its victorious career, and the success of his music and poems was followed by an infiltration of his *Weltanschauung*, of his philosophy. You were no true Wagnerian if you did not believe in his philosophy, in the ideas of *Erlösung durch Liebe*, salvation by love; you were not a true Wagnerian if you did not believe in *Deutschtum*, in Teutonism; and you could not be a true Wagnerian without being a follower of his anti-Semitic essay, *Das Judentum in der Musik*, 'Judaism in Music.'

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<sup>26</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Memories and Commentaries* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 26.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, 56.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* See also Crawford & Crawford, 67, and Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise* (New York: Picador, 2007), 65.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, 56.

You have to understand the effect of such statements on young artists. An artist cannot create without being convinced of his creative capacity – at least an artist of higher art needs confidence in the necessity and originality of his doings.

A surprising matter of fact – the influence of these theories on pure Aryan people was not very great. I personally found myself far more appreciated by Aryans than by Jews.

And now here is the point where you can recognize the terrible influence of racial theories – not on Aryans, but on Jews. The latter, deprived of their racial self-confidence, doubted a Jew's creative capacity more than the Aryans did. They were at best cautious and believed only when supported by Aryans, as, for instance, in the cases of Einstein and Kreisler. But generally they preferred to believe in Aryans and even in mediocre ones, so that, unfortunately, this lack of self-confidence led often to disdain of Jewish doings. 'He is only a Jew' (only!!), 'he cannot be of any importance.' And they turned toward non-Jewish celebrities.<sup>30</sup>

As the assimilated Jewish community made up the main bulk of Schoenberg's audience and critics in Vienna, it was in relation to this establishment that he was in fact struggling during the pre-war years.<sup>31</sup> As will be revealed in the discussion of *Erwartung*, this was due not only to his strong desire to extricate himself from his Central-European Jewish family and working-class origins, but to reconcile his ethnicity under the contradictory influence of Wagner, whose extreme anti-Semitic philosophy had had a deep impact on Schoenberg's sense of identity.

Although Stravinsky's father had been the principal bass at the Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg and his mother a gifted pianist, they seem to have not recognized any talent in their son and refused to allow him to study at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Stravinsky was instead forced to enroll in eight terms

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<sup>30</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 502-504.

<sup>31</sup> Leon Botstein, "Schoenberg and the Audience: Modernism, Music, and Politics in the Twentieth Century," in *Schoenberg and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 39-41.

of law at the University. His only musical training came from the standard piano and music theory lessons that were typical in all households of the landowning class in Russia during that period.<sup>32</sup> It is important to understand that this was equivalent to soccer practice or dance lessons for middle-class children in contemporary American society. So when Stravinsky instigated a meeting in his twenties with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov through his friendship with Rimsky-Korsakov's youngest son Vladimir for advice on a career in composition, it should be of no surprise that he was regarded as an amateur, an outsider to the musical establishment and possibly an upstart. Rimsky-Korsakov was by that time the leading composer in Russia, having taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory for over thirty years after forming the center of the Russian nationalist school of composers known as the *kutchka*.

Stravinsky was deeply disappointed at Rimsky-Korsakov's lack of enthusiasm over the piano pieces he had brought along, as well as his advice to *not* enter the conservatory.<sup>33</sup> Instead, Rimsky-Korsakov suggested Stravinsky continue private studies in harmony and piano with his current teachers, as before, inviting him to come to the Rimsky-Korsakov household from time to time to look at scores. Historians have often glossed over this first meeting by projecting Stravinsky's later success onto Rimsky-Korsakov's regard for the young, would-be composer. What is more likely is that Rimsky-Korsakov was acting in accordance with the proper manners of his class, and out of

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<sup>32</sup> Oliver, 15

<sup>33</sup> Eric Walter White and Jeremy Noble, "Igor Stravinsky," in *The New Grove Modern Masters: Bartók, Stravinsky, Hindemith*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 107.

consideration for a friend of his own son. Rimsky-Korsakov had given private lessons to wealthy dabblers in music outside of the conservatory for decades. At this juncture, he merely invited Stravinsky to drop by now and then, and said that he would be willing to look at his music. Following the death of Stravinsky's father shortly after this meeting in 1902 Stravinsky visited Rimsky-Korsakov with increasing regularity for a period of six years. However, his eventual studies followed the standard practice Rimsky-Korsakov put all of his private students through – orchestrating excerpts from Rimsky-Korsakov's own pieces, not lessons in composition. Furthermore, these studies were conducted while Stravinsky continued full-time in law at the University.<sup>34</sup> Over time, Rimsky-Korsakov did express some level of promise in Stravinsky, but never to the same degree as his prized composition students at the conservatory – most notably Max Steinberg, a name virtually forgotten today.<sup>35</sup>

Schoenberg gained some basic training in music through studies with his childhood friend Oskar Adler, a self-taught musician, in secondary school. During this early period, Schoenberg taught himself cello and began playing chamber music with friends, through which he developed an early appreciation for Brahms. As with Stravinsky, Schoenberg's father died at an early age, forcing

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<sup>34</sup> White & Noble, 107-108.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 163-166.

him to leave school without taking a diploma in order to support his mother and family as a bank clerk.<sup>36</sup>

While still working full-time, Schoenberg joined an amateur orchestra in Vienna, then conducted by Alexander von Zemlinsky. Like Stravinsky with Rimsky-Korsakov, in his early twenties Schoenberg began tentative, part-time lessons in composition and instrumentation under Zemlinsky.<sup>37</sup> Zemlinsky had passed through the Vienna Conservatory and was known to have connections to Gustav Mahler, who would become a transitional role model for Schoenberg after their meeting in 1904.<sup>38</sup> It was through Zemlinsky that Schoenberg was reoriented from the influence of Brahms to an obsessive reverence for Wagner. Schoenberg claimed that by the time he was twenty-five he had heard each of Wagner's operas as many as thirty times,<sup>39</sup> and in an essay originally published in the *Berlin Konzert-Taschenbuch* (1912) he wrote, "I personally love Wagner so much that I include even his descendants, his most distant heirs, in this love."<sup>40</sup> Schoenberg composed the highly Wagnerian *Verklärte Nacht* near the end of his studies with Zemlinsky in 1899.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Joan Allen Smith, *Schoenberg and His Circle: A Viennese Portrait* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 19.

<sup>37</sup> Frisch, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> Frisch, 3. Schoenberg identified strongly with Mahler's public rejection as a composer. In 1912 Schoenberg's memorial to Mahler stated that, "The others reacted to the saint as the wholly evil have always reacted to complete goodness and greatness: they martyred him. They carried things so far that the great man doubted his own work." Doubt and martyrdom were as much a part of Schoenberg's self-concept as they were with regards to Mahler during this period. See also, *Style & Idea*, 447-448.

<sup>39</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 155.

<sup>40</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 491-496.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, 19.

Zemlinsky's recollection of his first meeting with Schoenberg in the amateur orchestra, though affectionate, betrays a level of condescension regarding class and musical background:

At the single cello desk sat a young man, fervently ill-treating his instrument – not that the instrument deserved any better; it had been bought with three painfully saved-up Gulden at Vienna's so-called *Tandelmarkt*. At this time Schoenberg was still a junior bank clerk, but he was not overzealous in his profession, preferring music paper to the paper-money at the bank.<sup>42</sup>

So far, there is a significant parallel. Both Stravinsky and Schoenberg had expressed an early interest in music. Due to restrictive family circumstances – Schoenberg's poverty and early death of his father, the authoritarian dismissal of Stravinsky's ability by his musical parents – they were forced to take career paths they resented. Stravinsky's full-time studies in law and Schoenberg's full-time employment at the bank prevented each from dedicating substantial time to composition, impeding their development and isolating them from the established musical networks in St. Petersburg and Vienna. Through Stravinsky's chance friendship at University with Rimsky-Korsakov's son, and Schoenberg's access to Zemlinsky through participation in a community orchestra, they seized upon the chance to circumvent these obstacles. Unfortunately, the availability, commitment and support of these apparent mentors turned out to be more limited than either composer had hoped, leading to still more hurdles and frustration.

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<sup>42</sup> Willi Reich, *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, trans. Leo Black (London: Longman Group, 1971), 4-5, quoted in Smith, 19.

On one occasion, Stravinsky approached Alexander Glazunov with an arrangement, admitting that Glazunov had been almost as much of an “idol” to him as Rimsky-Korsakov himself,

...until I transcribed one of his string quartets for piano and impulsively took the score to his house to show it to him. He received me ungraciously, perfunctorily flipping through my manuscript and pronouncing my work unmusical. I went away thoroughly discouraged.<sup>43</sup>

In the Rimsky-Korsakov circle, the star student had been Rimsky's son-in-law, Max Steinberg, not Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky appears to have resented this side-line status. Steinberg had been the only person Stravinsky had ever heard Rimsky-Korsakov praise as “talented,” emphasizing that Rimsky-Korsakov had never given such compliments to Stravinsky himself. Stravinsky described Steinberg as, “one of these ephemeral, prize-winning, front-page types, in whose eyes conceit forever burns, like an electric light in daytime.”<sup>44</sup> Steinberg had been the favorite student of both Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov at the conservatory. At informal readings of pieces by Stravinsky and Steinberg, Stravinsky's work was regularly criticized. Steinberg's music was lauded and often played a second time. Stravinsky's first symphony was given an unrehearsed reading in the cramped rehearsal room of the Court Orchestra to a handful of spectators. Steinberg's symphony was premiered six weeks later at a major Belyayev concert that included Glazunov's *Dramatic Overture*, which Glazunov had dedicated to Steinberg. On Steinberg's graduation from the

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<sup>43</sup> Stravinsky, *Dialogues*, 131

<sup>44</sup> Stravinsky, *Expositions*, 45

conservatory, he was immediately appointed Glazunov's successor as professor of orchestration.<sup>45</sup>

Over time Stravinsky cultivated a jealousy that took a vengeful twist when the tables turned in 1910 and Stravinsky found himself in the Paris limelight of the Ballets Russes. Stravinsky managed to string Steinberg along from 1912 to 1914 with promises of meetings with Diaghilev for a potential commission that never materialized until Steinberg finally got wise and stopped running errands for Stravinsky in St. Petersburg.<sup>46</sup>

The most revealing comparison between Steinberg and Stravinsky comes from Rimsky-Korsakov's widow Nadezhda in 1910, following the success of *The Firebird*, in a letter to her daughter Sonya:

About Max [Steinberg]...Papa [Rimsky], as well as Glazunov, always regarded him as outstandingly talented. Max was undoubtedly more gifted musically than Igor. He has perfect pitch, which Igor hasn't, and he has astonishing sensitivity to beautiful harmony and fine voice-leading, which again Igor hasn't. Max is more versatile, has wide interests and knows a lot...Igor strives for novelty at all costs, Max for beauty. The latter is to me more sympathetic, and in this Papa too valued him more than Igor...as for Igor...his music does not make a strong impression, on me at least. I don't know a single one of his pieces about which I would say "Oh, how splendid!" I explain this by the fact that it doesn't have genuine musical beauty; his harmony is coarse and not graceful enough; melody, as you'd expect nowadays, is lacking and there is a very noticeable intention to show off and startle with novelty. But at the same time his novelty is not actually all that new...He takes a lot of trouble to demonstrate that with him everything is logical and right, and as for its being beautiful – for him this is the last question, as long as it's new. I don't know what will come of this later on, but at present I don't at all like the direction he's taking.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 387-389.

<sup>46</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence. Vol. 1*, ed. Robert Craft (New York: Knopf, 1984), 43-45.

<sup>47</sup> Viktor Varunts, ed., *I. F. Stravinsky: Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materiali k biographi, vol. I* (Moscow: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1977), 221, Nadezhda Rimsky-Korsakov's Letter of 8/21 May 1910, quoted in Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: A Creative Spring* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 100.

Whatever Rimsky's actual regard for Stravinsky in these early years, it should be clear from Nadezhda, an accomplished composer and pianist in her own right,<sup>48</sup> that even after Stravinsky had made himself a regular fixture, he was nonetheless regarded by the other members of the circle as an outsider who was too rough around the edges for full inclusion. Following Stravinsky's sudden and unexpected success via the *Firebird* commission, it would soon become apparent that Stravinsky had been aware of his second-class status from the beginning, and that it had had a profound effect on him. His resentment of the *kutchka* style was very much bound up in the "descriptive music" he attacks below:

*The Firebird* did not attract me as a subject. Like all story ballets it demanded descriptive music of a kind I did not want to write. I had not yet proved myself as a composer, and I had not earned the right to criticize the aesthetics of my collaborators, but I did criticize them, and arrogantly... Above all, I could not abide the assumption that my music would be imitation Rimsky-Korsakov, especially as by that time I was in such revolt against poor Rimsky. However, if I say I was less than eager to fulfill the commission, I know that, in truth, my reservations about the subject were also an advance defense for my not being sure I could. But Diaghilev...came to call on me one day, with Fokine, Nijinsky, Bakst, and Benois. When the five of them had proclaimed their belief in my *talent*, I began to believe, too, and accepted. I was flattered, of course, at the promise of a performance of my music in Paris. These ardours were somewhat cooled at the first full rehearsal. The words 'For Russian Export' seemed to have been stamped everywhere, both on the stage and on the music. The mimic scenes were especially crude in this sense, but I could say nothing about them, as they were what Fokine liked best.<sup>49</sup>

Two things are significant in this statement. First, it is clear Stravinsky did not like the fact that he had been hired to imitate the *kutchka* style of Rimsky-Korsakov, "For Russian Export." In St. Petersburg, disparaging talk had already begun about the Ballets Russes as a group of aesthetes pandering to a Parisian

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<sup>48</sup> Mark Humphreys, et al. "Rimsky-Korsakov." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52074pg2> (accessed April 10, 2012). Nadezhda acted as Rimsky's proofreader, was active at rehearsals and likely influenced the composition of his first three operas.

<sup>49</sup> Stravinsky, *Expositions*, 128-129.

audience with clichés of “exotic” Russia.<sup>50</sup> Stravinsky also knew that he had not been the first, or even third choice for the *Firebird* commission. Nikolai Tcherepnin had originally been considered, but had lost favor with the company after poor reception of *Le Pavillon d’Armide*. Anatol Lyadov had backed out at the last minute, leaving Diaghilev desperate in the face of a looming deadline. Even then, he considered Glazunov and others for the job before finally turning to Stravinsky as the last available composer familiar enough with the *kutchka* style to work on the project.<sup>51</sup> In practice, Stravinsky composed the *Firebird* under strict supervision and direction from Fokine and Diaghilev. As Stravinsky openly admitted later, very little of the *Firebird* had been original,<sup>52</sup> much of it having been lifted from Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin and Glazunov.<sup>53</sup>

The second important revelation is Stravinsky’s emphasis that the Ballet Russes circle had proclaimed their belief in his *talent*. This statement follows closely on the heels of his display of bitterness, in the same set of interviews, over the lack of support from Rimsky-Korsakov. The irony is that in the Ballets Russes Stravinsky had finally found the support group he had so desperately longed for, but only on the condition of composing in the very style he associated with the people he resented most – his parents and the Rimsky-Korsakov circle.

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<sup>50</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 439.

<sup>51</sup> Walsh, 135-136. Again, many historians overlook this piece of information in their construction of a grand narrative about Stravinsky’s career. For example, Jeremy Nobel and Eric Walter White wrote that, “After hearing a concert performance of [*Fireworks* and *Scherzo Fantastique*] Dyaghilev realized that Stravinsky was almost certainly the composer he needed to complete his advisory group. For his 1910 season he invited him to write the music for...the *Firebird*.” Nobel and White also leave out the less than flattering circumstances under which Stravinsky’s first symphony received an unrehearsed reading. See White & Nobel, 109-11.

<sup>52</sup> Stravinsky, *Expositions*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Walsh, 136.

It should be said at this point that the majority of Stravinsky's great successes from this period were primarily dramatic works presented in conjunction with other art forms, most often dance. It is considerably easier to sustain the interest of an audience when there are also things happening visually on a stage. Karsavina and Fokine had remarkable technique as dancers, and the members of the company were all trained at the Imperial School. The artists Leon Bakst, Alexandre Benois and Nicolay Roerich had all established reputations through the *World of Art* circle formed by Diaghilev earlier in his career. Their sets and costumes were lavishly ornate and vivid in of themselves, so that even without the music, the audience was bombarded with a multitude of visual and gestural effects that communicated the setting, characters and plot of an exotic Russian fairy tale.<sup>54</sup>

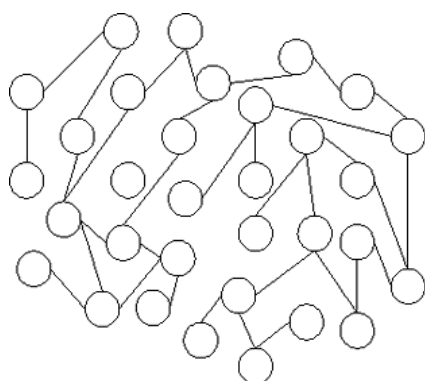
In short, even without Stravinsky's score, the bases had been largely been covered. Through the Ballets Russes commission, Stravinsky stumbled onto a formula that would serve him well throughout his long career – the chances of a work's success increase exponentially when combined with other art forms. And as will become clear shortly in Schoenberg as well – there is safety in numbers when banding together with artists across genres in a hostile cultural environment – a veritable case study in “scale-free networks” described by recent work in social network theory, which manifests the linked concepts of *network growth* and *preferential attachment*. The former simply refers to the continuous growth of the network with the addition of each new member of the network. The latter refers to a property in which all new members attach themselves

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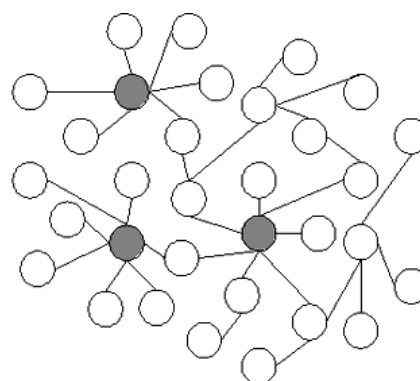
<sup>54</sup> Eksteins, 21-24.

*preferentially* to individuals who are *already* well connected. The model is used to explain how social and economic disparities might govern competitive systems (such as the art market). These scale-free “inhomogeneities are an inevitable consequence of self-organization” based on a bias toward the more visible (richer) members of the network, regardless of the nature or origin of that visibility (see Fig. 2). Or in plain English: those who are already well connected only become more so – *the rich get richer*.<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 2 Random and Scale-Free Networks**



**(a) Random network**



**(b) Scale-free network**

In random networks (a), no single node has more links than any other (and as a result, is no more significant than any other), while in scale-free networks (b), the highest-degree nodes, or “hubs,” serve prominent roles in the network due to their multiple links, and hence more economic and/or cultural capital flows to and from them.

<sup>55</sup>Albert-László Barabási and Réka Albert, “Emergence of Scaling in Random Networks,” *Science*, Vol. 286 No. 5439 (1999): 509-512.

Rimsky-Korsakov in St. Petersburg to his death in 1908 and Diaghilev in Paris from 1910 onwards can both be thought of as hubs to which Stravinsky attempted to link himself. Once successfully associated with Diaghilev, Stravinsky later displayed a knack for connecting to other culturally rich hubs, such as that of Jean Cocteau, while gradually reaping the benefits of building a network around himself that included the composer-critic Florent Schmitt. As will be seen below, Schmitt was one of the loudest supporters of the *Rite* on opening night. Already noted above was Stravinsky's sly use of his former rival, Max Steinberg, once the insider to the Rimsky-Korsakov hub but very much outside of the Ballets Russes network by 1910.

Two misconceptions persist to the present day regarding Stravinsky and the Ballets Russes – that Stravinsky's main artistic language at this juncture was based on Debussy rather than Rimsky-Korsakov, and that the Ballets Russes was a Russian company, neither of which are accurate.<sup>56</sup> The Ballets Russes was created in Paris and resided exclusively in Western Europe. Sergei Diaghilev, having been denied access to promotion within the Imperial Theatres of Russia in St. Petersburg because of his sexual preference and flamboyant appearance,<sup>57</sup> invested his considerable inheritance in a series of entrepreneurial endeavors, each more successful than the last – a touring exhibit of Russian portraits, the formation of the *World of Art* journal and art circle, an exhibit at the Salon d'Automne in Paris that led to an alliance with the wealthy and influential Comtesse Greffulhe (married into the Belgian Greffulhe family of bankers and a

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<sup>56</sup> Robert Fink, "On Igor Stravinsky," *Modernism/Modernity* 4/3 (1997): 147-154.

<sup>57</sup> Sjeng Scheijen, *Diaghilev: A Life*, trans. Jane Hedley Prole & S. J. Leinbach (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 140-152.

major cultural hub in her own right), who in turn financed a concert series of *kutchkist* operas at L'Opera, and finally the formation of the Ballets Russes. Diaghilev had hit upon a profitable concept early in his career – feeding the frenetic demand for Russian exoticisms that had exploded onto the French salon market following the Franco-Russian treaty in 1893.<sup>58</sup> In effect, Diaghilev had engaged in what Bourdieu would refer to as trading in economic capital for cultural capital, only to turn a profit later on with a return of economic capital via the Comtesse and other patrons.<sup>59</sup> “I am firstly a great charlatan,”<sup>60</sup> he infamously stated in 1895, and his underlying concern remained the public promotion of the Ballets Russes to his death in 1929.

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<sup>58</sup> Eksteins, 21-24.

<sup>59</sup> Bourdieu, 98-101.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Eksteins, 21.

### III. THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND

The Ballets Russes network consisted of a community of expatriates in Paris, all of whom for one reason or another had not fit in back in Russia. Bakst, Benois and Roerich had come along from Diaghilev's *World of Art* circle, with Vaslav Nijinsky and Stravinsky later brought into the fold. In this sense, there was a bond of alienation that unified them on some levels and divided them on others. The internal division was over the degree of assimilation into the new environment. For members like Diaghilev, for whom lifestyle was of primary importance, the means of survival within the culture of Paris was less of a concern. But the *World of Art* circle had from its inception been split between the Westernized cosmopolitanism of Benois and the Slavic primitivism of Roerich.

Early productions such as the *Firebird* had largely been a Benois conception – an export of the sensuous *kutchka* style that Diaghilev had already capitalized on in the French market. Roerich had been spurned by Benois for his interest in ancient Slavic culture, his neo-nationalist revival of Russian peasant art and his involvement with the arts and crafts colony at Talashkino – the center of the Eurasian movement.<sup>61</sup> During Stravinsky's early years with the company he passed through a kind of aesthetic jet lag, first falling under the influence of Benois, who was closer to his reflexes in Rimsky-Korsakov's technique, then gradually moving towards Roerich as his success with the *Firebird* and *Petrushka* gave him the confidence to act on his resentment towards the circle that now openly lashed out at him in the press in St. Petersburg.

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<sup>61</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 160.

Rimsky-Korsakov's son Andrey trashed "*Petrushka-ka*" as "raw Russian homebrew larded with French perfume."<sup>62</sup> Stravinsky's appropriation of Russian folk melodies, set to a "modernist" pandiatonic harmony, was regarded as kitsch by his former acquaintances. At the same time, these folk references went largely over the heads of the Parisian audience as the individual melodies were unfamiliar to them. The reaction was akin to that to the *Firebird* – more a vague delight at the pleasant "exoticisms" of Russia – a kind of armchair-travel within the comfort of the Paris ballet. Having missed the point on both his modernist intentions and his growing neo-nationalist valuation of Slavic folk material via Roerich, Stravinsky grew disdainful of his new public. It is at this point that a new spirit, in the form of the *Rite of Spring* scenario, swept Stravinsky into a radically different direction.

The scandals that plagued Schoenberg's works soon after Zemlinsky's tutelage in 1900 only increased his bitter sense of separation from the Viennese public and critical press. Even his works in the late-Romantic style had been met with bewilderment and disparagement:

But see: an artist treated in this way becomes not only suspicious, but even rebellious. Seeing that even parts of undoubted beauty could not protect him, knowing that those parts which were found ugly could not be wrong because he would not have written them if he himself had not liked them, and remembering the judgment of some very understanding friends and experts in musical knowledge who have paid tribute to his work, he becomes aware that he himself is not to blame.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 764.

<sup>63</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 38-39.

When Schoenberg showed the score of his First String Quartet to Mahler in 1905, Mahler told Schoenberg, “I have conducted the most difficult scores of Wagner; I have written complicated music myself in scores of up to thirty staves and more; yet here is a score of not more than four staves, and I am unable to read them.”<sup>64</sup> Following a rehearsal of Schoenberg’s First Chamber Symphony, Mahler asked the orchestra to play a C-major triad, thanked them and promptly left.<sup>65</sup> Is the friend mentioned in the following passage Zemlinsky himself who turns on Schoenberg over the subject of his *Guerrelieder*, composed between 1901 and 1911? At this point Schoenberg would have considered him a close friend – he had married Zemlinsky’s sister, Mathilde, in 1901.

But then this happens: after having composed an extensive work, he visits a dear friend, his closest one and one whose judgement and musical knowledge seem to him perfectly indisputable. The friend looks over the whole score and his judgement is: ‘This work shows a complete lack of inspiration; there is no melody, no expression; it seems to me dry, and the way you write for the voices is mere declamation, but no kind of song.’ He was speaking of my *Guerrelieder*... Today it seems perhaps unbelievable that my friend did not recognize the melodies in songs like these...

But knowing I had written melodies and feeling that they were not poor, I had the choice either of being discouraged or of doubting my friend’s authority. I decided not to be discouraged.<sup>66</sup>

More to the point – Schoenberg had decided to reject the legitimacy of his friend’s authority. Schoenberg remained steadfast in part because these scandals also won him a high level of notoriety that over time brought him to the attention of other artists who had also been marginalized.

[The] First String Quartet played an important role in the history of my life. On the one hand, the scandals provoked by it were so widely reported the world over

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<sup>64</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Ross, 51.

<sup>66</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 38-39. Note that Schoenberg often spoke of himself in third person in these essays.

that I was known at once to a considerable part of the public. Of course, I was primarily regarded as the Satan of modernistic music; but, on the other hand, many of the progressive musicians became interested in my music and wanted to know more about it. It became a custom in similar cases to say: 'He has made a *succès de scandale* – a success out of failure.'<sup>67</sup>

The painter Oskar Kokoschka described the network of mutual support that included Schoenberg, Karl Kraus and Adolph Loos as one bound together by a common sense of alienation from the Viennese establishment:

It was probably because we were all on the edge of society. We didn't belong to society. So we were like a disease, you know. So of course that makes a bond. We stuck together. Karl Kraus was a frightening figure. They were frightened by his edition the *Fackel*. He was a cruel man. [This same difference] was why Loos never could build...he never got an offer really to build something important.<sup>68</sup>

Kraus, a failed actor turned journalist, attacked the decadence and corruption of political and social life through his self-funded magazine, *Die Fackel*, revealed through what he saw as a superfluous degradation of the German language by the trivial, sensational articles of the Viennese press. The press fought back in turn with multiple lawsuits and a code of silence regarding his name and magazine.<sup>69</sup> Kokoschka, a trained artisan and self-taught painter struggling to make a living by decorating postcards and fans, revolted against the emphasis on ornamentation that characterized *Jugendstil*, the German offshoot of *art nouveau*. Writing on *Jugendstil*, the historian Carl E. Schorske stated that, "aestheticism, which elsewhere in Europe took the form of a protest against bourgeois civilization, became in Austria an expression of *that civilization*, an affirmation of an attitude toward life in which neither ethical nor social ideals

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<sup>67</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 42.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, 33.

<sup>69</sup> Smith, 22.

played a predominant part.”<sup>70</sup> Art in Vienna increasingly had become an escape for that “bourgeois civilization” as they had lost political power since the 1890s to extreme movements such as the Social Democrats on the left, and Pan-Germanism and Christian Socialism on the right.<sup>71</sup>

Loos, an out-of-work architect, rebelled against that same ornamental tendency in architecture.<sup>72</sup> In 1908, Loos published the essay, “Ornament and Crime,” declaring that “ornament is no longer a natural product of our civilization, it accordingly represents backwardness or degeneration...Lack of ornament is a sign of spiritual strength.”<sup>73</sup>

When Schoenberg published his *Harmonielehre* in 1911, in the inscription he sent to Kraus he wrote that he had, “learned more from [Kraus] than one may learn from anyone if one still wishes to remain independent...”<sup>74</sup> However, Kraus only identified with Schoenberg’s outsider status, not his music. In 1908 he wrote to Schoenberg that he had no close connection to his art, only to the fighting faith that Schoenberg had shown in his own art.<sup>75</sup> Schoenberg, like Stravinsky, was working hard to form links with the cultural hubs of his own city.

The connection between a stated aesthetic position and social identity in Vienna, and the public performance as setting for social struggle, are revealed in the following interview with Marcel Dick, permanent violist with the *Wiener Streichquartett*. Dick was an active member of Viennese musical life before

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<sup>70</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 299.

<sup>71</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 67.

<sup>72</sup> Smith, 25-37.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Ludwig Munz & Gustav Kunstler, *Adolph Loos* (London, 1966), 228, in Alan Lessem, “Schoenberg and the Crisis of Expressionism,” *Music & Letters* 55 (1974): 430.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 41.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, 67.

World War I. Note also Dick's comments on the intersection of support groups for Kraus and Schoenberg, and his enthusiasm for the fights that broke out at premiers of Schoenberg's work:

We, the younger ones, were all Karl Kraus adherents – enthusiasts. Schoenberg, and Karl Kraus met – kept personal contacts of sorts, but they preferred to admire each other from a distance, which they did. There was a performance...and next to Mahler was sitting a very remarkable person, by the name of Polnauer. And Mahler was very disturbed by the shouting invectives of a person behind him in the audience...so Mahler turned around and said, "You are not supposed to hiss when I applaud." To which he answered back quite brazenly, "I hiss also at your unprintable symphonies!" Whereupon, Polnauer let it fly – he gave it to him – whereupon the attacked person brought out a knife and sliced Polnauer's face open, and he carried the scar with great pride to the end of his days...Well,...*Pierrot lunaire* was a most provocative piece, and you could not get through a *Pierrot lunaire* performance...without violent disturbances in Vienna. Music was everybody's business.<sup>76</sup>

Salka Viertel, the sister of Schoenberg's student Edward Steuermann, said that many attended the concerts with the express purpose of causing a scandal. After the performances,

[n]obody went home. We went to a café and continued to argue. It was so distinct who was booing...It was a distinct divide between the bourgeois and conservative and the young people who wanted something new.<sup>77</sup>

The importance of Adolf Loos to Kokoschka, Schoenberg and other young radicals in Vienna was primarily financial. He funded many of the first performances of Schoenberg's works, and was one of the only people to support Kokoschka by promoting his work and commissioning him to paint his portrait. But there was a strong element of codependency in this relationship. Kokoschka's statements about the "genius" of Loos are most often made in conjunction with Loos's stated recognition of "genius" in Kokoschka, plus the admission of Kokoschka's lack of moral or financial support from anyone else at

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<sup>76</sup> Smith, 70-71.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, 72-73.

the time.<sup>78</sup> Like Kraus, Loos appears to have channeled his support and assets into others only because of their similarity to himself, for the sake of a more general rebellion. Again, economic capital is exchanged for cultural capital.

Rudolf Kolisch, first violinist of the Kolisch Quartet, admitted that although Loos regularly attended Schoenberg's concerts, he was not really interested in the music:

I don't even believe that he had a particular, special organ for music. I think he experienced it only as a more abstract phenomenon and felt the importance, and felt what was akin to his work in *his* field...<sup>79</sup>

More significant – not only did Loos lack a special “organ” for music, he was hard of hearing.<sup>80</sup>

Absolute loyalty grew to be of utmost importance to Schoenberg. Lona Truding, an early student of Schoenberg's said,

I often wondered if Schoenberg in his ultimate judgment of other composers was not influenced by their attitudes towards him and his music. That was something which I at times suspected...I should not allow myself that vanity should conquer truth. But is it vanity or is it only a lifeline in a man's extremely stormy life of misunderstanding and misinterpretation as Schoenberg has had it? I mustn't forget that. And that, of course, cut very deeply in his life.<sup>81</sup>

Nowhere is this more clearly exemplified than in Schoenberg's change of heart with regards to Richard Strauss. In 1912, Schoenberg would admit to a, “servile devotion” to the older composer, who he referred to as the, “honored master.”<sup>82</sup> But by 1914 Schoenberg got wind of comments made to Alma Mahler by Strauss that he would, “...do better to shovel snow instead of scribbling on music-paper...” and that, “the only person who can help poor Schönberg now is a psychiatrist...”

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<sup>78</sup> Smith, 26-27.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, 35.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, 25.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, 69.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Ross, 52.

leading Schoenberg to describe Strauss as an envious “competitor” who he had “inwardly rejected.”<sup>83</sup>

Schoenberg’s primary sense of support came from his students.

During these thirteen years [1900 – 1913]... I had had to fight for every new work; I had been offended in the most outrageous manner by criticism; I had lost friends and I had completely lost any belief in the judgement of friends. And I stood alone against a world of enemies.

Alone, with one exception: that small group of faithful friends, my pupils, among them my dear friend Anton von Webern, the spiritual leader of the group, a very Hotspur in his principles, a real fighter, a friend whose faithfulness can never be surpassed... It was a fact which has always made me proud, and for many years beyond these thirteen they were my only moral support in the struggle for my work.

When, for example, my First String Quartet was played at a festival of music in Dresden in 1906, the performance provoked the same tremendous scandal that it had at its first performance a few months before in Vienna. Ten of my pupils had made the trip to Dresden to attend the performance.<sup>84</sup>

At this point it should be clear that during the decade before they took the plunge into post-tonality, Stravinsky and Schoenberg had made a significant effort to internalize the codes, as they understood them, of the musical establishments of St. Petersburg and Vienna. Stravinsky had mastered the *kutchka* via Rimsky-Korsakov. Schoenberg had composed in the style of Brahms, and then Wagner, via Zemlinsky. Both had attempted to gain entry and acceptance in late adolescence, but rightly or wrongly, because of their outsider backgrounds, the arbiters of taste had judged them unrefined, inappropriate. Though more extreme in Schoenberg’s case, the rejection felt by both was enough to mark them with a deep sense of resentment toward the parallel worlds they had aspired to join. Through this process of disillusionment they had

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<sup>83</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 51.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, 42.

encountered and formed networks with other artists like themselves who had also been excluded. It is within this context that Stravinsky and Schoenberg struggled to undo the hold that the rejecting establishments had exerted over them.

IV. ENFANTS TERRIBLES<sup>85</sup>

Now to return to the question asked at the opening – were Stravinsky and Schoenberg oblivious to the reaction that fully post-tonal works would have on their audiences? After years of rejection over his increased use of polyphonic complexity and chromaticism, it is difficult to imagine that Schoenberg could have been unaware of the effect his leap into post-tonality would have on the same Viennese critics and public that had rioted at the premier of *Verklärte Nacht*. Regarding his first post-tonal works, Schoenberg wrote,

How could I win friends with this kind of music? In fact, I could not, and I did not expect to win friends. And I may tell you frankly that...I was equally afraid to have them submitted to the public. And I even hesitated to show them to people other than my closest friends.<sup>86</sup>

As for Stravinsky, however, the successes of *Firebird* and *Petrushka*, both predominantly consonant works, could not be seen as foreshadowing the dissonance of the *Rite* or the riot that took place at its premier. But this does not mean that Stravinsky was oblivious to the effect of post-tonality on an audience. He was well aware of Schoenberg's scandals years before he began work on the *Rite*, as were many other artists in Europe by 1912, which by that point included the most violent riots that had broken out at his performances. As Schoenberg pointed out himself – he had made a *succès de scandale*. According to his own accounts, Stravinsky knew about Arnold Schoenberg at least as early as 1907,<sup>87</sup> and the critic Michel Calvocoressi remembered Stravinsky studying

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<sup>85</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines “enfant terrible” as a person who behaves in an unconventional or controversial way. From the French, literally “terrible child.”

<sup>86</sup> Schoenberg, *Style & Idea*, 50.

<sup>87</sup> Stravinsky, *Dialogues*, 104.

Schoenberg's Piano Pieces, Op. 11 in 1911 with great enthusiasm.<sup>88</sup> In 1912, while touring with the Ballets Russes in Berlin, Diaghilev arranged a meeting between Stravinsky and Schoenberg, in part because Diaghilev was considering commissioning Schoenberg to write a piece for the company. In that same week, Stravinsky attended a performance of *Pierrot Lunaire*.<sup>89</sup> Days later, Stravinsky told the Daily Mail in London that, "Arnold Schoenberg is one of the greatest creative spirits of our era."<sup>90</sup> If nothing else, this indicates that both Stravinsky and the man he was working for considered Schoenberg's approach to composition to be of great value, which by that time had become notoriously post-tonal. They certainly would also have been aware of the riots it had been causing.

It should be said that after the *Rite's* premier a number of critics did link Schoenberg's "modernism" to the *Rite*, which, depending on the politics of the critic, amounted to praise for its radicalism or harsh rejection of its "decadence." Claude Debussy himself remarked that in those days, "Stravinsky strayed dangerously close to Arnold Schoenberg."<sup>91</sup>

Based on early reactions in rehearsal by the members of the orchestra and the conductor of the Ballets Russes, Pierre Monteux, it would have been obvious to Stravinsky and Diaghilev how the work would be received by the general public. Monteux went so far as to say it out loud after hearing it performed in a tiny rehearsal room at the Théâtre du Casino:

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<sup>88</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 172.

<sup>89</sup> Walsh, 188-189.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Walsh, 190.

<sup>91</sup> Stravinsky, *Expositions*, 68.

Stravinsky sat down to play a piano reduction of the entire score. Before he got very far I was convinced he was raving mad. My only comment at the end was that such music would surely cause a scandal.<sup>92</sup>

Nijinsky, choreographer of the *Rite*, had written to Stravinsky months before the performance and said, “Now I know what *Le Sacre du printemps* will be when everything is as we both want it: new...and utterly different – for the ordinary viewer a jolting and emotional experience.”<sup>93</sup>

So it appears that not only Schoenberg, but Stravinsky and the key players in the Ballets Russes had a fairly good idea of how the “ordinary” members of the public would react to their new works. There is also evidence suggesting that the riot at the *Rite*’s premiere had been partly orchestrated by Diaghilev himself. He had intentionally oversold the first night and strategically placed a group of fifty passionate supporters of the company in an area between two sections occupied by the known conservatives in the audience.<sup>94</sup> Jean Cocteau remarked that this agitated fan club, all holding complimentary tickets, would, “applaud novelty at random simply to show their contempt for the people in the boxes.”<sup>95</sup> Even before the curtain went up, there was jeering and whistling on both sides. Before the night was finished, the composer-critic Florent Schmitt had yelled out, “Shut up, you bitches of the 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement!” and called the ambassador of the Austro-Hungarian Empire an “old bastard.” The Comtesse de Pourtalès had exclaimed, “I am sixty years old and this is the first time anyone

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<sup>92</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959), 48.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Eksteins, 10-11.

<sup>94</sup> Eksteins, 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Jean Cocteau, *Oeuvres complètes*, 11 vols (Geneva, 1946-1951), IX:43-49, quoted in Eksteins, 11.

has dared to make fun of me!”<sup>96</sup> Just as in the accounts of fighting at Schoenberg’s premiers, those in attendance at the *Rite* had sized each other up according to class and political disposition by attire and seating position, if not by outright recognition, long before the music started, leading Cocteau to famously state that the audience had played, “the role that was written for it.”<sup>97</sup>

According to Stravinsky,

[a]fter the “performance” we were excited, angry, disgusted and...happy. Diaghilev’s only comment was “Exactly what I wanted.” He certainly looked contented. No one could have been quicker to understand the good thing that had happened in that respect. Quite probably he had already thought about the possibility of such a scandal when I first played him the score, months before...

Note the simultaneous expressions of excitement, anger, disgust and subsequent contentment at the outrage the performance had caused. Clearly Stravinsky felt that the riot constituted a success in his mind. In Diaghilev, ever the shrewd promoter, this sense of achievement most likely had been with regards to the publicity it would generate for the company. Already in 1912, Nijinsky’s sexually provocative dancing to Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* had irked conservatives on the right and delighted aesthetes on the left.<sup>98</sup> In fact, Nijinsky’s choreography had been a continuation of what began with Fokine in pushing the envelope towards a negation of traditional ballet practice. Within the context of what the Parisian audience took to be an authentic “Russian” style, Fokine’s non-standard stomps and gestures were accepted at face value in the *Firebird* and *Petrushka*. But Nijinsky’s choreography to a French composer’s score that dealt with a symbolist conception of Greek myth

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<sup>96</sup> Eksteins, 12-16.

<sup>97</sup> Cocteau, quoted in Eksteins, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Eksteins, 27-28.

split the audience on issues of sexual impropriety. In the *Rite*, Nijinsky took the negation of traditional choreographic practice to an extreme – reversing first position by turning feet and knees inward, eliminating leaps, hunching shoulders forward and favoring group dances in lieu of solo showcases typical of traditional ballet (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 *The Rite of Spring*, Publicity Photo ca. 1913



Scandal as success may explain Diaghilev's inquiry into a possible Schoenberg commission. However, Diaghilev appears to have been uncertain, if not reluctant, about the use of post-tonality. Diaghilev was an aesthete, not a radical. Pushing the envelope with sexual innuendo was something Diaghilev had been doing all his life, but the violence of the *Rite's* post-tonality seems to

have disturbed him. After an early demonstration of the *Rite* by Stravinsky at the piano, Diaghilev nervously asked, “Will it last a very long time this way?”<sup>99</sup> If Diaghilev had indeed orchestrated the scandal, this may have been out of a sense of damage control rather than animosity towards the audience. As we shall see, how “long” it would last “that way” would have a major impact on the *Rite*’s reception.

Rehearsals in the final months before opening night were strained – the musicians thought the score ridiculous and laughed out loud – and Stravinsky, who presided over all of the rehearsals of his earlier works, made excuses for staying away.<sup>100</sup> So it would seem that everyone involved not only had a clear sense of how the audience would react – there was also a growing anxiety that they were gambling for higher stakes than in the past.

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<sup>99</sup> “Stravinsky in His Own Words,” in *Igor Stravinsky: The Recorded Legacy* (CBS/Sony Classical), quoted in Walsh, 184.

<sup>100</sup> Peter Hill, *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 29.

## V. ACTING OUT

This leads to a possible answer to the second major question – what motivated Schoenberg and Stravinsky to take such radical steps into post-tonality, if they knew in advance the considerable offense that such dissonant works would cause?

If the above sources were not enough to indicate the extent of Stravinsky's sense of rejection and growing antipathy towards the St. Petersburg musical establishment by 1912, then his own confession to Robert Craft should suffice. Near the end of his life, Stravinsky told Craft that he wrote the *Rite* to send everyone in his Russian past who had failed to recognize his genius "to hell."<sup>101</sup> The growing hostilities of the Rimsky-Korsakovs and critical attacks in the St. Petersburg press had been bitterly painful to him, in spite of his international successes with the *Firebird* and *Petrushka*. This had set a resentful tone for the *Rite's* inception.<sup>102</sup> All publicity and postwar writing to the contrary, Stravinsky was at heart remarkably low on self-esteem. His interviews with Robert Craft are filled with non-sequiturs regarding his height in relation to that of other famous composers,<sup>103</sup> his anecdotes are often constructed in order to slight a former rival – as in the Max Steinberg example – and he harbored numerous jealousies of

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Craft, *Present Perspectives* (New York: Knopf, 1984), 227, quoted in Crawford & Crawford, 305.

<sup>102</sup> Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 24-25, quoted in Crawford and Crawford, 305.

<sup>103</sup> Stravinsky said, "Schoenberg was short in stature. I am five feet three inches...but Schoenberg was shorter than I am." He thought Berg's manner condescending, adding that, "short men often feel they have been condescended to by tall men." Stravinsky, *Dialogues*, 105. Of Ravel, Stravinsky said, "He looked rather pathetic in his uniform; so small, he was two or three inches smaller than I am." Stravinsky, *Conversations*, 67.

contemporaries and younger composers who he feared might pose a threat to his legitimacy, even late in life.<sup>104</sup>

Likewise, Schoenberg's letters are full of references to himself as the "whipping boy" of Vienna where, "everyone who is accounted indispensable today will be welcome to lash out at whatever bit of me he thinks most vulnerable." In application for a teaching appointment to the President of the Academy of Music and Fine Arts in 1910, Schoenberg complained that, "the public...keeps on forgetting, despite everything, *who* I am and what abilities I have, and this although I have proved it a hundred times." Most telling of all is Schoenberg's threat about the consequences of denying him a position: "It has been found often enough how dangerous it is to make martyrs."<sup>105</sup> In an interview with Paul Wilhelm of the *Neues Wiener Journal* in 1909, Wilhelm noted how Schoenberg spoke, "about the Viennese critics in particular with sharp disapproval, from which one can sense the extent of his bitterness, but also his deep inner isolation."<sup>106</sup> When asked in the same interview about the possibility of influence on his work, Schoenberg admitted that,

"[the] musical environment doubtlessly exerts certain influences. First I became a Wagnerian – then the subsequent development came rather quickly. Today all artistic evolutions take place in very rapid succession. I could analyze my development very precisely, though not theoretically, but retrospectively. It is an

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<sup>104</sup> Immediately after the death of Schoenberg in 1951, Stravinsky was characterized in the press as a reactionary and Schoenberg as revolutionary. At a performance Stravinsky attended in Paris, the audience cheered Berg's *Wozzeck* and booed his *Oedipus Rex*. Stravinsky later wept in front of Craft and his wife, saying that he was afraid he could no longer write, and then begged Craft to teach him the serial method that he had viciously attacked while Schoenberg was alive. Robert Craft, "Assisting Stravinsky: On A Misunderstood Collaboration," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 250 (1982): 64-74.

<sup>105</sup> Schoenberg, *Letters*, 27-28, 49, 53.

<sup>106</sup> Paul Wilhelm, "With Schönberg," *Neues Wiener Journal*, January 10, 1909, accessed March 15, 2012, [http://www.schoenberg.at/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=484&Itemid=713&lang=en](http://www.schoenberg.at/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=484&Itemid=713&lang=en).

interesting observation that the thing that had initiated a development mostly brings about its opposite; that as soon as one has digested it, it is also the first thing that we find repellent, so that development always means a reaction against the thing that caused it....<sup>107</sup>

What may have been so problematic for Stravinsky and Schoenberg was a condition that the literary critic Harold Bloom called the “anxiety of influence.”<sup>108</sup> Whether conscious, unconscious or some combination of the two, according to Bloom all artists come to a moment where they are forced to reconcile the influences of their teachers and early role models as they struggle to assert an autonomous identity for themselves in adulthood. Early in their development, Schoenberg and Stravinsky formed a deep emotional identification with composers who had been held up as ideal models within their respective cultures. With this identification came an internalization of a specific aesthetic and set of compositional practices that were closely associated with identifiable social groups. For Schoenberg, the initial foundation had been the chamber music of Brahms, followed by the operatic writing of Wagner, with mentoring from Zemlinsky and living role models in Strauss and Mahler. For Stravinsky, this early internalized aesthetic had come from Rimsky-Korsakov. Once internalized, it was not so easy for these composers to toss them aside, no matter how bitter their disposition towards those associated with it had become.

The legitimacy of the *kutchka* was still very much a part of Stravinsky’s identity in 1912. This meant that in order to extricate himself from it, he would need a more powerful model that could trump it. Stravinsky’s wild card turned

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Taruskin, “Revising Revision,” 114-118.

out to be Nicolai Roerich. Recall that Roerich had been at the extreme right of the *World of Art* circle, espousing a primitive neo-nationalism that advocated a mystical connection with the spirit of ancient Slavic culture. In effect, Roerich's philosophy was a Russian spin on expressionism. Some ethnographical research might be helpful, he contended, but the main thrust was that artists like him had a direct line to the past that allowed them to tap into an unconscious folk memory.<sup>109</sup> Although it is unclear whether Roerich or Stravinsky originally came up with the idea for the *Rite*, the main point is that their collaboration via the Ballets Russes appealed to Stravinsky's need to break from his recent past. Roerich helped Stravinsky reconceive of his former teacher as having stripped Russian folk melodies of their Slavic legitimacy by subjecting them to traditional, Western European practices, thus betraying their origin. By this logic, the solution was for Stravinsky to draw on Slavic folk melodies as his basic content, but to eschew the European compositional practices that he had learned from Rimsky-Korsakov. Lawrence Morton and Richard Taruskin have demonstrated the likelihood that Stravinsky adopted numerous melodies from the Juskiewicz anthology of Lithuanian folk songs, passed on to him by Roerich.<sup>110</sup> Following Roerich's approach, in lieu of traditional European techniques, Stravinsky had only to trust his own intuition, because, being of Russian birth, he had an inborn connection to ancient Slavic culture which would guide his impulses. When considering what a boost the Ballets Russes acclaim had been for his ego, and his extreme reluctance to continue in the *kutchkist* manner, Roerich's

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<sup>109</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 161.

<sup>110</sup> Hill, 35. See also Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 170-182.

Nietzschean “be yourself” philosophy must have been just what he needed. The only legitimizing agent that mattered could be found within himself. Hence, Stravinsky’s infamous statement that he, “was guided by no system whatever in *Le Sacre du Printemps*,” and was, “the vessel through which *Le Sacre* passed.”<sup>111</sup>

As far-fetched as such thinking might seem by today’s standards, remember that Stravinsky admitted to deep superstition. This was a period in Europe before bacteriology, radiology, telephones or modern medicine. Occultism, devil worship, mysticism, and all manner of shamanism were widespread at the time.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, the conception of racial supremacy usually associated with the Nazi regime was a belief system asserted throughout Europe as scientific fact around the turn of the century. Nationality and race were considered to be one and the same, and the countries of Europe quarreled over which was the most legitimate. In Russia, this took the form of Eurasian “Turanianism,” which in the period after the *Rite*’s premier Stravinsky spoke of as totally incompatible with and independent from European forms.<sup>113</sup>

In practice it appears that what Stravinsky may have come up with in composing the *Rite* was a set of musical and dramatic elements he believed were imbued with the power to negate the *kutchka* and the cultural tradition of Western Europe, or more immediately, the Rimsky-Korsakovs and the conservative French elite in attendance at the Paris ballet. What actually came out when he and Roerich developed the scenario was a violent assertion of a

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Crawford & Crawford, 173.

<sup>112</sup> Eugen Weber, *France: Fin de Siecle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 34-36.

<sup>113</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 1129.

primitive, Slavic group identity and their annihilation of the hero of European ballet – the solo ballerina – literally sacrificed to death for, “stepping out of line.”<sup>114</sup> Theodore Adorno described the sacrificial victim in the *Rite* as the absorption of the bourgeois ideal of individualism into the collective power of the tribe.<sup>115</sup> Most of the critics and the conservative section of the audience saw it as an aggressive onslaught of nihilism.<sup>116</sup>

The precedent to this simple, albeit disturbing plotline can be located in ongoing arguments Stravinsky had had during the *Rite*'s composition with Volodya Rimsky-Korsakov over the relative merits of opera versus ballet. The standard St. Petersburg intellectual prejudice at that time asserted that ballet had long been the, “purview of dirty old men watching little girls in tutus.”<sup>117</sup> Stravinsky had called for the sacrificial victim to be a pre-pubescent girl, surrounded by the most ancient men of the tribe. Sensing her exhaustion they, “glide towards her like rapacious monsters, so that she may not touch the ground in falling...”<sup>118</sup> In opposition to Volodya, Stravinsky had argued for a newly developed view of ballet, via Diaghilev, as a more legitimate form of *Gesamtkunstwerk* - a synthesis of the plastic arts in movement with music, that served, “the role of a fine, healthy barbaric state.”<sup>119</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov had composed fifteen operas, but only a few minor dance works. In this light, the *Rite*

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<sup>114</sup> Stravinsky, Letter to Nikolai Findeyzen, 2/15 December 1912, in Stravinsky, *Sketches*, Appendix, 32-33.

<sup>115</sup> Theodore Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 157-158.

<sup>116</sup> Eksteins, 52-54.

<sup>117</sup> Quoted in Walsh, 169.

<sup>118</sup> Letter to Findeyzen, in Stravinsky, *Sketches*, Appendix, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Romain Rolland, *Journal des années de guerre*, 24 September 1914, quoted in Crawford and Crawford, 160.

served a double function – to simultaneously eliminate the symbol of individualism cherished by the Western elite, and to counter the superiority of *kutchkist* opera with a radical new form of ballet.

In adhering to Roerich's expressionist philosophy of tapping into his unconscious memory of Slavic power, Stravinsky may have believed himself to be drawing on purely authentic sources, but in practice what one does when composing on intuition is manifest the reflexes already internalized over many years of creative development. In addition to the appropriation of folk melodies from the Juskiewicz anthology, a number of practices from his earlier compositions crop up in the *Rite*. Most often the *Rite* is praised for its new approach to rhythm, and the "force" of the piece is then attributed to this element. Unexpected changes in accent felt at the outset with the *Augurs of Spring* and brought to an extreme in the *Sacrificial Dance* signified the violent, "shocks and blows" described by Adorno,<sup>120</sup> and were one of the points of ridicule in the St. Petersburg press. As a young and frustrated piano student, Stravinsky's brothers had dubbed him "the piano tuner" for his obsessive compulsive habit of erratically starting a phrase over and over again. However, this free shifting of meter was already in place in the *Infernal Dance* of the *Firebird* and much of *Petrushka*. Likewise, the massive dynamic and orchestral scale of the *Rite* was also present in the earlier ballets, which came from a long history as a signifier of power in the Western repertoire.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Adorno, 150-153.

<sup>121</sup> Adorno, 160-161.

What is radically new in the *Rite* is that the driving pulse and large-scale orchestration are coupled with relentlessly unresolved harmonic dissonance. After the premier, a Russian critic exclaimed, “Imagine!...from beginning to end there is not a single pure triad!”<sup>122</sup> To realize the significance of this point, one has only to play the so-called “ur-chord”<sup>123</sup> in Ex. 1 of the *Augurs of Spring* in the *Rite* to the rhythms of the *Dance of the Coachmen and the Grooms* in *Petrushka*. What is most striking is the disruption caused by this highly dissonant chord in conjunction with the irregular accents of the earlier ballet. Likewise, setting the consonant, pandiatonic harmony of *Petrushka* to the rhythms of *Augurs* creates the opposite effect – now the ferocious pulse of *Augurs* takes on the pleasant trotting feel of the *Shrovetide Fair*.

EX. 1 Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*, “Augurs of Spring”

The image displays a musical score for Igor Stravinsky's "Augurs of Spring" from *The Rite of Spring*. The score is written for piano and features a complex, dissonant harmonic structure. The top staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score begins with a series of chords in the right hand, labeled "ur-chord". The left hand plays a series of chords, with the first chord labeled "meno, f". The score is divided into two sections by a double bar line. The first section contains the "ur-chord" and the "meno, f" chord. The second section contains the "ur-chord" and the "f" chord. The score is marked with various dynamics, including *mf*, *meno, f*, and *f*. The notation includes many accidentals and complex rhythmic patterns, reflecting the highly dissonant and driving nature of the music.

What this reveals is the extent to which emotional content is conveyed through harmony. But after more than 300 years of programmatic links between harmonic structures and emotional states this should come as no surprise, all of

<sup>122</sup> Vyacheslav Karatigin, “Sed’moy kontsert Kussevitskogo,” *Rech’*, 14 February 1914, quoted in Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 182.

<sup>123</sup> Hill, 44-45.

Stravinsky's anti-programmatic statements to the contrary after 1920. The "tragedy" of Gustav Mahler's 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony was read above all through its harmony, ending in an A-minor triad performed *ff*, while Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony in C-minor was heard as "triumphant" by way of an extended coda in C-major. Death has long been signified by the semitone – dying through chromatic descent in "Tu se morta" from Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, mounting in hysteria with each ascending semitone in the melody of the child depicted in Franz Schubert's *Erlkönig*.

This makes Stravinsky's formal treatment of harmony of critical importance in terms of its public reception. In *Firebird* and *Petrushka*, the ballets are predominantly consonant. All dissonance is framed and contained within this consonant harmony, and is dramatically linked to supernatural characters – the ogre of *Firebird*, the puppets in *Petrushka*. This clear harmonic divide between the reality of the non-threatening human world and the dangerous magic of the supernatural world had been the stock-in-trade of Rimsky-Korsakov – a system of signs he established in many of his operas, most notably *Kashchey the Deathless* – a veritable mining ground of material for Stravinsky. In a boy-meets-girl scenario, the human prince Ivan witnesses the *Game with the Golden Apples* played by thirteen princesses to a scherzo in G Major. Ivan dances a *Round Dance*, (and dutifully falls in love), with the eldest princess to an adagio set firmly in B Major (Ex. 2).

EX. 2 Igor Stravinsky, *Firebird*, “Khorovod (Round Dance) of the Princesses”

The musical score for Example 2 is in 4/4 time and D major. It consists of a vocal line (cant.) and a piano accompaniment (mf). The vocal line begins with a box containing the number 76. The piano accompaniment features chords. Below the piano part, there are three labels: B: I, ii<sup>2</sup>, and I, indicating harmonic analysis.

A sudden introduction of octatonic dissonance signifies a sinister twist in the plot – the appearance of Kashchey the ogre and his bewitched subjects. This peculiar strain of post-tonality was used by Rimsky-Korsakov to simultaneously signify and provoke superstitious fear. In Ex. 3, “Kashchey’s Awakening,” a series of alternating minor (ic 3) and major (ic 4) thirds ascends upwards, together forming the octatonic collection, (Eb, F, Gb, Ab, A, Cb, C, D), as spelled in Stravinsky’s score. One of the fascinating characteristics of this symmetrical scale that Rimsky-Korsakov explored in detail can be found in the various cycles of thirds that can be generated through it. Perhaps such schizophrenic alternation or simultaneity of major and minor quality is what made it such a favorable programmatic device in depicting the supernatural.

EX. 3 Igor Stravinsky, *Firebird*, “Kashchey’s Awakening”

**Moderato**  
189

pp < mf

ic 3 ic 4 ic 3 ic 4 ic 3 ic 4 ic 3

a) ic 4 ic 3 ic 4 ic 3

(Eb, F, Gb, Ab, A, Cb, C, D)

But the audience is soon relieved of this anxiety in *Firebird* when Ivan destroys the ogre, signified through a return to B Major tonality in the Second Tableau (Ex. 4) with the commencement of the marital ceremony in which Ivan weds the princess – a formulaic “happily-ever-after” scenario that was perfectly familiar to the aristocratic audience in attendance.

EX. 4 Igor Stravinsky, *The Firebird*, “Disappearance of Kashchey’s Palace and Magical Creations, Return to Life of the Petrified Knights, General Rejoicing”

**Lento maestoso**  $\text{♩} = 54$   
197

pp cantabile

B:  $I_4^6$  I IV  $(ii^7)$

Petrushka’s dissonant, octatonic troubles with the Moor and the Ballerina

are similarly contained within the larger pandiatonic reality of the *Shrovetide Fair* – a manic marketplace signified through multiple Russian folk melodies juxtaposed above a flurry of tremolos and ostinatos. In Ex. 5, “Chez Petrushka,” the bitonality of a root position C-major triad (C, E, G) in the top voice and a first inversion F#-major triad (A#, C#, F#) in the bottom provide six of the eight pitches in the octatonic collection, (C, C#, Eb, E, F#, G, A, A#), as spelled in the example below, as well as in the Third Tableau where major triads on Eb-major and A-major are juxtaposed together to complete the collection.

EX. 5 Igor Stravinsky, *Petrushka*, “Chez Petrushka” – The *Petrushka* Chord

The musical score for Ex. 5, "Chez Petrushka" from Igor Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, illustrates the "Petrushka Chord" through bitonality. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled "C-major" and the bottom staff is labeled "F#-major". The tempo is marked "Molto meno mosso" with a metronome marking of 50. The music features triplets and a dynamic change from *p* to *mf la*.

From a class perspective, the resultant myth of consonant humans surrounding dissonant puppets doubly distanced the aristocratic French audience to a secure vantage point – *these are only Russian peasants – and happy ones, at that*. See Ex. 6, *Dance of the Wet Nurses*, set in a stable F-major tonality. In spite of their expressions of human passion, to the French the main characters remained two-dimensional puppets, such that their anguish merely served an entertainment function.

EX. 6 Igor Stravinsky, *Petrushka*, “Dance of the Wet Nurses”

92

*f*

*mf*

*ff*

*f*

*(ff)*

F: I      V<sup>7</sup>      I<sup>6</sup>      I      V<sup>(9)</sup>

The overall myth constructed via *Petrushka* amounted to cultural tourism through an exotic conception of St. Petersburg – the barrier between stage and audience was secure. However, in continuation of the diatonic/octatonic division between human and supernatural, Stravinsky’s partitioning of the octatonic collection into two triads in the “Petrushka chord” can be read as signifying the “human” in the puppet, albeit bitonally schizophrenic. Add to this the signification of the tritone that separates the two triads – an interval already heavy-laden with supernatural associations dating back to the *Diabolus in Musica* of the Middle Ages.

In both of these examples, the cultural subtext at play was a lurking paranoia over a threatening “underworld” that at any moment could rise up against the audience – a representation very much in sync with the sense of dread that gripped the Paris elite around the turn of the century in the wake of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the shock from the working-class uprising during the Paris Commune.<sup>124</sup> This was a socially and politically stressful time to be in Paris. By contrast, in the *Rite* there was no containment or

<sup>124</sup> Weber, 105-115, 151-153.

release from anxiety. The Paris audience was confronted with stomping, marching, bolting, furious peasants, not make-believe puppets or heroic princes. The ballet opens and closes with dissonance. As Taruskin has pointed out, in the absence of traditional development, the only form could be one of furious accumulation.<sup>125</sup> Part I builds from a quiet introduction to a climax. Part II does the same.

There was little in the *Rite* that the audience could have identified as a traditional tune. The critic Yevsey Belousov stated that the ballet had, "...been written in such a way as to destroy all criteria of harmony and counterpoint..." and that, "there is not a single melody in it, but only vague and fuzzy embryos of tunes." Even harsher reviews came from Stravinsky's former friend, Rimsky's son Andrey, who accused him in the press of, "...a great delusion..." adding, "It occurred to me that Stravinsky's dizzying successes have created in him and around him a sort of inflated atmosphere...of artificially exalted artistic self-consciousness and a creative self-confidence that knows no restraint or doubt."<sup>126</sup>

In essence, what the audience perceived at the premier was a negation of every musical and choreographic sign from the Western European repertoire. Many at the time declared it the most discordant music ever written, with some accusing Stravinsky of arriving at the score by placing his left and right hands in two different keys a semitone apart and erratically pounding on the piano for

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<sup>125</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 957.

<sup>126</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 1013-1014.

effect.<sup>127</sup> The irony is that in spite of the many attempts by theorists such as Pieter van den Toorn to fit the *ur*-chord of the *Augurs of Spring* into a rationalized, octatonic context,<sup>128</sup> the reality is just that – a first inversion Eb-dominant-seventh chord juxtaposed above a root position Fb-major triad (Ex. 7). If Roerich's influence on Stravinsky is to be believed – and Stravinsky's remarks support this position – then he very likely arrived at the chord by ear, searching for the highest level of dissonance he could find, and then “developing” it in the non-European sense of the word according to impulsive shifts in rhythmic accent, as he had done in *Petrushka*. For a composer raised on common practice harmony who had already experimented with polychords separated by the tritone, what could be more jarring than two major triads a semitone apart? Writing at the time, Edward J. Dent went so far as to say, “...what is baffling is a form of speech which entirely ignores those principles of syntax which we have been brought up to regard as logical and inevitable...[Stravinsky] does not pretend to argue; he just makes noises at us. Some think them horrible, some find them fascinating...”<sup>129</sup> For the first 54 measures of the *Augurs*, the *ur*-chord is repeated 144 times without change to the voicing in steady eighth-notes. Even a repetition of a consonant C major triad for that span of time would have been maddening to an audience accustomed to Germanic development. The conservatives must have been crawling out of their skin.

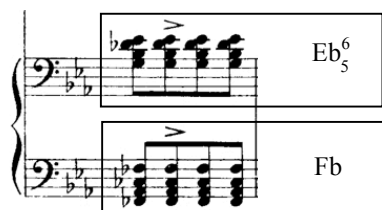
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<sup>127</sup> Eksteins, 50-53.

<sup>128</sup> Hill, 46.

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Hill, 44.

EX. 7 Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*, from “Augurs of Spring” – The *Ur* Chord



Melody, though technically present in three- and four-note cells derived from the Juskiewicz anthology, was subsumed in the form of ostinatos that emphasize the rhythm and the harmony. Tetrachords such as set class (0235) taken in isolation might have signified harmless peasants in the *Shrovetide Fair* if accompanied by pandiatonic tremolos using the same pitch material. But when juxtaposed together with melodies based on the same set class transposed a minor third or tritone away, or together with set class (0134) as in Ex. 8 below, they add up to the octatonic collection, signifying a new concept: a mob of peasants (Slavic folk melodies), in possession of frightening power (octatonicism), akin to that of the ogre in *Firebird*. In this example from *Ritual Action of the Ancestors*, the tetrachord (G#, A#, B, C#) is used for the melody in the top voices and also for the bottom descending sixteenth-note lines in the third system from the top. A second tetrachord, (D, E, F, G), is used for the top line of sixteenth-notes in the third system from the top. The trichord (C#, G, D) in the bottom system borrows pitch material from both tetrachords. Like Nijinsky's negation of first position, as a three-note "chord" that contains both the historically forbidden "devil in music" (tritone), the signifier of death and anxiety (the semitone), and a conspicuous *absence* of the intervals used to signify

“human” normalcy, at least from the Western European bourgeois point of view, (major and minor thirds), (016) could well be the winner of the most-common-practice-negating chord of the turn of the century. It recurs with such frequency throughout the *Rite* and in the expressionist works of Schoenberg at this time period that Taruskin refers to it as *the* “atonal chord.”<sup>130</sup>

EX. 8 Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*, “Ritual Action of the Ancestors”

Taruskin called the *Rite* an “anti-symphonic” work, which through its sheer monotonous repetition of dissonant chord structures had been, “forced into existence.”<sup>131</sup> In Rimsky-Korsakov, such dissonances could only have been justified through, “cunning preparation and resolution.”<sup>132</sup> More significantly, the “anti-symphonic” stance of the *Rite* could also be read as anti-Germanic – no common practice harmonic progression, no thematic development, no smooth

<sup>130</sup> Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 177-182, 331-334.

<sup>131</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 957.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

transitions.<sup>133</sup> Taruskin argues that the *Rite* was above all an art of radical simplification. Whether its conception was motivated out of a desire for the simplicity of a “higher truth” or merely the elimination of “refinement” in favor of the barbarian, the ballet asserted the position of Stravinsky’s new neo-primitive network that had been calling for the “great sacrifice of *kul’tura* (culture) on the altar of *stikhiya* (Scythianism).”<sup>134</sup>

Acting on impulse, Stravinsky may very well have reached for the dissonance of post-tonality as a weapon to strike back at St. Petersburg, albeit a post-tonality as he was able to conceive of it. *Ur-chord* aside, it is true that many areas of the *Rite* employ the octatonic organization of folk melodies.<sup>135</sup> His internalization of the concept of this particular type of post-tonality as possessing supernatural power – already long a part of Russian culture – would explain why he turned to it at this moment. He gave the *kutchka* a dose of its own medicine by erasing the line between the human/folkloric/diatonic and the supernatural/chromatic/octatonic association that had begun as far back as Glinka and been codified by Rimsky-Korsakov. By synthesizing the two, Stravinsky empowered the primitive aspect of Russian culture while freeing it of Western European formalism. On a personal level, for Stravinsky this signified beating the *kutchka* at their own game while simultaneously presenting himself

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 957. “Scythianism” took its name from the nomadic predecessors of the Slavs. The Scyths were considered by the Russians to be their mythical ancestors. See also, Taruskin, *Russian Traditions*, 856.

<sup>135</sup> Hill, 39-52. See also, Pieter van den Toorn, *Stravinsky and the Rite of Spring*, (Oxford, 1987).

as having cut the fat off of the Western influence, making him even *more* Russian than the *kutchka*, and therefore more legitimate.

While Stravinsky felt empowerment from his Parisian successes and the support group of the Ballets Russes, Schoenberg was lost in a negation of himself through personal and professional failure in a stifling and anti-Semitic Vienna. At the height of his professional alienation in 1908, his wife Mathilde left him for Richard Gerstl, the artist who had befriended Schoenberg in 1907 and encouraged him to paint. During this period, Schoenberg contemplated suicide and made out a will:

I see myself obliged...to write down my last will, as preparation for some voluntary actions which I intend at this time...I have wept, acted like a desperate man, have made decisions and rejected them, have had ideas of suicide and nearly carried them out, have dashed from one senselessness to another – in a word, I am completely torn to pieces.<sup>136</sup>

Mathilde eventually returned to Schoenberg and Gerstl in turn committed suicide by burning all of his paintings and hanging himself naked in front of a full-length mirror on the night of one of Schoenberg's concerts, to which Gerstl had understandably not been invited.<sup>137</sup> It was in the midst of these traumatic events that Schoenberg made the break into post-tonality with the completion of the Second String Quartet, Op 10, Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, *Das Buch Der*

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<sup>136</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "Testamentsentwurf" (unpublished), Schoenberg Archive, Arnold Schoenberg Institute, Los Angeles. Short excerpt in English translation in Jane Kallir, *Arnold Schoenberg's Vienna* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne/Rizzoli, 1984), 28, quoted in Crawford & Crawford, 69.

<sup>137</sup> Ross, 54.

*Hängenden Gärten*, Op. 15, Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 16, and *Erwartung*, Op. 17.<sup>138</sup>

It should not be necessary to cite the large number of psychological studies on suicide to appreciate the extent to which such an emotional state effects all other behavior – including compositional practice – at such a critical moment in a person's life. And yet, so much of the postwar literature on post-tonality only mentions Schoenberg's emotional crisis in passing, if at all, quickly moving on to claim that Schoenberg made the break for purely rational reasons,<sup>139</sup> the favored quote being, "It had to be somebody: the historical imperative was inescapable."<sup>140</sup> But if the historical imperative was "inescapable," then how did such major composers as Mahler and Strauss, who briefly touched on post-tonality and then returned to common practice, *escape*? Or are we to believe that this historical imperative also had a built-in selection process that singled out Schoenberg for fame while overlooking similarly-minded composers such as Josef Matthias Hauer and Nikolai Roslavets?<sup>141</sup>

One has only to look at the content of the libretti to *Die Glückliche Hand* or *Erwartung* to realize the full impact of Schoenberg's sense of public and personal rejection after 1908. Schoenberg wrote the libretto to *Die Glückliche Hand*

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<sup>138</sup> Frisch, 4.

<sup>139</sup> Often there is an attempt to see the serial method developing retroactively in Schoenberg's freely post-tonal works. In his study on *Erwartung*, Herbert H. Buchanan states that the possible presence of quoted material in the opera, "foreshadows the composer's subsequent concern for conscious unity...which led him to his twelve-tone method," and thus, "points to the future style..." See Herbert H. Buchanan, "A Key to Schoenberg's 'Erwartung' (Op. 17)," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1967), 434-449. For a detailed discussion and criticism of similar thinking in the work of Allen Forte, see Haimo, 167-199.

<sup>140</sup> Griffiths, 25-26.

<sup>141</sup> Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 680-686. See also William Thomson, *Schoenberg's Error* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 15-17.

himself in 1910. The “Man” represented in the drama is clearly a veiled representation of Schoenberg himself – a “great” artist surrounded by “jealous” artisans who threaten his success. The Woman who leaves him and the well-dressed gentleman with whom she has an affair are Mathilde and Gerstl. The drama is left unresolved over the Man’s success at creating the most beautiful object versus his emotional failure with the Woman and conflict with the other artisans.<sup>142</sup> Schoenberg’s relationship to his wife in 1910 was also unresolved – after her return she rarely spoke to anyone and appears to have been emotionally disturbed herself.<sup>143</sup> As has already been discussed at length, Schoenberg felt an extreme resentment for the critics and conservative audiences who had rejected his work – the “jealous artisans” who threatened the Man and his creation.<sup>144</sup> Schoenberg’s letters at this time, particularly those applying for teaching positions in Vienna, are full of complaints about, “dyed-in-the-wool academicians,” blocking his appointment out of envy, meanwhile asserting that he was already part of “history” and that all would soon be following his example.<sup>145</sup>

Schoenberg’s immediate identification with the libretto to *Erwartung*, written under his direction by Marie Pappenheim in 1909, is even more bound up with his emotional crisis.<sup>146</sup> The entire work is an obsessive fantasy on the longing, hysteria, and guilt experienced by a woman over her lover’s death. As Schoenberg contemplated suicide and the death of Gerstl, he must have also

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<sup>142</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 84-85.

<sup>143</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 69-07.

<sup>144</sup> Crawford & Crawford, 85.

<sup>145</sup> Schoenberg, *Letters*, 27-28.

<sup>146</sup> Buchanan, 437.

imagined the impact the event would have on his wife, as it was her behavior that had precipitated his crisis. That *Erwartung* centers around infidelity and implies the Woman was somehow responsible for the death of her lover has strong parallels with the resentment and guilt Schoenberg attributed to his wife for abandoning him and potentially driving him to suicide.<sup>147</sup> Without actually going through with the act, Schoenberg nonetheless represents this suicidal state of mind through the music of *Erwartung*. According to Adorno:

The monodrama *Erwartung* has as its heroine a woman looking for her lover at night. She is subjected to all the terrors of darkness and in the end comes upon his murdered corpse. The admission of hatred and desire, jealousy and forgiveness, and – beyond all this – the entire symbolism of the unconscious is wrung from her; it is only in the moment that the heroine becomes insane that the music recalls its right to utter consoling protest. Musical language is polarized according to its extremes: towards gestures of shock resembling bodily convulsions on the one hand, and on the other towards a crystalline standstill of a human being whom anxiety causes to freeze in her tracks. It is this polarization upon which the total world of form of the mature Schoenberg depends...The intensification of musical “communication,” the difference between theme and development, the constancy of harmonic flow, and the unbroken melodic line are destroyed by this polarization.<sup>148</sup>

In Adorno’s reading above, *Erwartung* expresses the opposite end of the dysfunctional spectrum of the *Rite*’s violent aggression – abandonment, depression, loss, dread, weakness. At this time Schoenberg wrote that he “had the feeling as if [he] had fallen into an ocean of boiling water...it burned not only [his] skin, it burned also internally.”<sup>149</sup> It would appear that Schoenberg’s radical shift to post-tonality was made for extreme emotional reasons, not rational invention. Not only had the form of *Erwartung* been entirely dictated by the text,

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<sup>147</sup> Bryan R. Simms, “Whose Idea was *Erwartung*?,” *Constructive Dissonance*, ed. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 100-101.

<sup>148</sup> Adorno, 42.

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Griffiths, 25.

Schoenberg's spontaneous emotional reactions to its content – content that related directly to his marital crisis – had determined every moment of music he had created for it. Writing to Busoni on *Erwartung* in 1909, he said,

It is *impossible* for a person to have only *one* sensation at a time. One has *thousands* simultaneously... [Music] should be an expression of feeling, as our feelings, which bring us in contact with our subconscious, really are, and no false child of feelings and "conscious logic."<sup>150</sup>

Leon Botstein and Julie Brown have both argued that Schoenberg's ongoing struggle leading up to his marital crisis and after had been primarily over his identity as a Jew immersed in the anti-Semitic culture of Vienna.<sup>151</sup> In early adulthood, his intense desire to join the German tradition by following in the footsteps of his idol Richard Wagner generated an acceleration of anxiety as he realized the contradictions that were inseparable from Wagner's racist philosophy of art.<sup>152</sup> As already revealed above by Schoenberg and his colleagues, during the pre-war period he went to great lengths to distance himself from the Jewish establishment in Vienna. It could not have been a coincidence that he converted to German Lutheranism, a form of Christianity that was significantly more anti-Semitic than the Catholicism of Austria, just a year after Mahler's own conversion in 1897.<sup>153</sup> There was more at work in this action than the attempt to overcome professional obstacles in order to gain a position. Schoenberg had been well aware of Wagner's philosophy of Jewish redemption, spelled out in *Judaism in Music*, that the only hope for Jews was to reject their heritage and convert to

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<sup>150</sup> Schoenberg, letter to Busoni, undated, but probably 13 or 18 August 1909, in Beaumont, 389, quoted in Crawford & Crawford, 80.

<sup>151</sup> Botstein, in Frisch, 19-47. See also, Brown, 51-80.

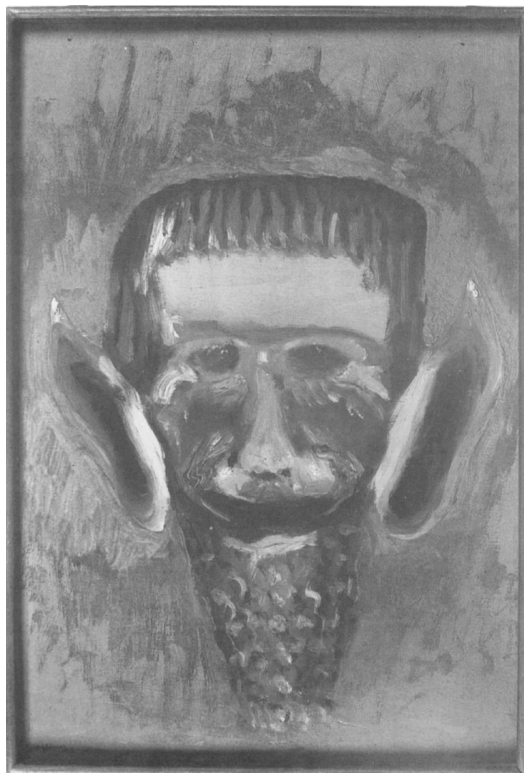
<sup>152</sup> Brown, 52.

<sup>153</sup> Lutheranism preached that Jews were the eternal enemies of Christ, owing to their inherited responsibility for the crucifixion, unless they converted to Christianity. See Brown, 57.

Christianity.<sup>154</sup> His conversion to Lutheranism coincided with his turn towards Wagnerism. He had also identified with Mahler's public rejection as a "martyr" who had lost his way. These two factors must have had a major effect on his thinking at this time – perhaps Mahler had not gone far enough down Wagner's path to redemption.

Schoenberg very likely saw Mahler's struggle with the assimilated Jewish critics in Vienna as synonymous with his own. His portraits of "critics" painted during these years of rejection reproduced visual stereotypes that typically mocked Jewishness – hooked nose, long hair and beard, large ears, blind eyes (Fig. 4).

**Figure 4** *The Critic I* – Arnold Schoenberg

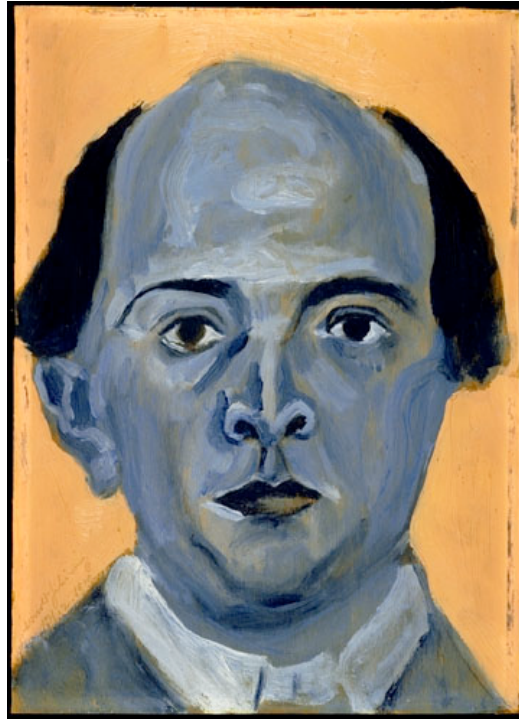



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<sup>154</sup> Brown, 58-60.

Schoenberg contrasted these images with numerous idealized portraits of himself – clean-shaven, small nose, wide-eyed – non-Jewish (Fig. 5).<sup>155</sup>

**Figure 5** *Blue Self Portrait* – Arnold Schoenberg



The majority of Schoenberg's harshest critics were in fact assimilated Jews – Hirschfeld, Karpath, Korngold and Kalbeck<sup>156</sup> – it was against this group that he also retaliated in print.<sup>157</sup>

With Wagnerian aspirations and the realities of a marginalized and repressed Jewish community in Vienna, Schoenberg found himself between a rock and a hard place. Like Stravinsky, he felt the urge to assert his individuality by practicing a set of aesthetic principles he had rightly identified as the ideal of

<sup>155</sup> Brown, 62-67.

<sup>156</sup> Botstein, in Frisch, 39.

<sup>157</sup> Smith, 67.

his cultural environment – Wagner. But the conservative, assimilated Jewish community was extremely anxious about making waves, for fear of retaliation. Between 1907 and 1913, the intellectual community had been split over issues of anti-Semitism and Zionism.<sup>158</sup> The division was like that of the *World of Art* circle over Russian identity – whether to assert autonomy or play along to prescribed stereotypes. Assimilationists argued in favor of giving the dominant culture in Vienna what it wanted to see. New immigrants to Vienna from Central Europe like Schoenberg’s parents and the wealthy, assimilated class saw Schoenberg as a threat, someone who was crossing a clearly-drawn line. Kraus, Loos, and Kokoschka had also threatened the frail sense of security that the assimilated class was clinging to, hence their rejection by this group as well. But as Schoenberg had not yet realized the damaging aspects of his internalization of Wagner, his crisis came as much from his own ideals as from the Jewish community. Unlike the Zionists, the identity he was ultimately trying to assert was Wagnerian. As Schoenberg himself realized by the 1930s, this was becoming synonymous with Aryanism.

In light of the pressures of the repressive social environment, the ideals of his new network, and his more immediate marital crisis, the elements that characterize *Erwartung* become clear. According to Carl Dahlhaus, on a technical level *Erwartung* manifests Wagner’s ideal of “endless melody” – through which all superfluous interludes and formulaic interruptions are eradicated to allow the essence of “every note, every rest,” to express the

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<sup>158</sup> Botstein, in Frisch, 40.

internal world of the artist.<sup>159</sup> On this point, Schoenberg was also in agreement with Loos, Kraus and Kokoschka. Each strived to weed out the ornamental, mechanical trivialities of architecture, language and painting, to get at an expression of the essential. Such trivialities were as closely associated with the corruption of the Viennese cultural establishment in Schoenberg's mind as the *kutchka* had been with the St. Petersburg circle for Stravinsky. For Schoenberg, common practice harmony was yet another formula that should not be given precedence over expression.<sup>160</sup> Like Stravinsky's approach to the *Rite*, by following unconscious intuition, Schoenberg wound up drawing off of practices he had already internalized. The result was what he later came to describe as "obligato recitative" – an apparent contradiction that Dahlhaus describes as a natural synthesis of his early grounding in Brahms and later conversion to Wagner. *Erwartung* can then be understood as a continuous *recitative accompagnato* in which the accompaniment is an extremely dense polyphony typical of chamber music, athematic in the manner of the recitative, and "endless melody" in terms of constant shifts in emotion that could above all be expressed by harmonic means.<sup>161</sup>

Though long thought to be entirely lacking in the underlying *Grundgestalt* or "basic shape" that formed an underlying organic unit of his earlier expressionist works such as *Vorgefühle* from *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 16,

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<sup>159</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 149-155.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Dahlhaus, 150.

theorists such as Herbert H. Buchanan, and also Adorno in passing,<sup>162</sup> have made the case for a closing quotation in *Erwartung* of Schoenberg's earlier song, *Am Wegrand*, op. 6 (1905) that could have provided thematic or structural material for the opera.<sup>163</sup>

Though not an exact quotation, essentially the ascending vocal line from *Am Wegrand* (Ex. 10), including rhythm, is transferred to the bass (bassoon & bass clarinet), of *Erwartung* (Ex. 9), while the countermelody that enters later in the song (Ex. 11), is used in the orchestra (clarinet), to accompany the voice in *Erwartung* (Ex. 9). Buchanan and others since his analysis in 1967 have noted a frequent use of set class (014) in *Erwartung* that might have been derived from the pitch material of the quotation from op. 6, for example taking the last three pitches of the vocal melody in Ex. 10, which set the text "vorüber" (D, C#, F). Schoenberg's altered setting of the original text from op. 6, "Tausend Menschen ziehn vorüber," in *Erwartung* (Ex. 9) consists almost entirely of interlocking (014) trichords: (Gb, F, D), (F, D, C#), (D, C#, Bb), (C#, Bb, A), (Bb, A, F#). The (014) trichord appears in numerous other places as well, for example in the running sixteenth-note line (flute) that fills in the middle between the bass and the countermelody (Ex. 9), and in the opening oboe melody in mm. 1-2.

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<sup>162</sup> Adorno, 46-48.

<sup>163</sup> Buchanan, 434-449. See also Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 335-337, and Kathryn Whitney, "Schoenberg's 'Single Second of Maximum Spiritual Excitement': Compression and Expansion in 'Erwartung', Op. 17," *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 155-214.

EX. 9 Arnold Schoenberg, *Erwartung*, mm. 411-412

(014)

fliegend  $\text{♩} = 50$

Br. am Steg

Tau - send Men - schen ziehn vor -

Kl.  $pp$

Fl.  $p$

Hr.  $p$

Fg. Bkl.

EX. 10 Arnold Schoenberg, *Am Wegrund*, mm. 3-4

(014)

Tau - - send Men - schen zie - hen vor - ü - - ber

$p$

EX. 11 Arnold Schoenberg, *Am Wegrund*, mm. 22-24

Sehn - - sucht er - füllt die Be - zir - ke des Le - bens,

(012)

Other possible quotations include Richard Strauss's *Salome*, in association with the word "küssen" at the moment that the Woman believes she is kissing her dead lover (mm. 263-264), and Kundry, the madwoman in Wagner's *Parsifal* to the text "Hilfe!" in *Erwartung* (mm. 190-195).<sup>164</sup>

To account for the considerable variety of melody through the work, there have also been attempts to hypothesize a hierarchy of trichords, with (012), (013) and (014) given priority.<sup>165</sup> Likewise, as a vertical sonority, (016), the "atonal chord" discussed in the *Rite*, appears in multiple places as well, for example in m. 1 on the downbeat and also on the second beat of m. 2, if seen as two (016) trichords sounding simultaneously.<sup>166</sup> However, there is still little consensus about an underlying logic that could account for the level of chromatic variety that is otherwise present in the work. As summed up by Pierre Boulez, "*Erwartung* lacks the sheer formal elaboration of [*Wozzeck*]: instead we find...invention in a perpetual state of becoming, and freed from all predetermined formal frameworks."<sup>167</sup> Dalhaus may indeed have the most accurate take on the opera, if one considers Schoenberg's reverence for Wagner's ideals, the expressionist attempt to access unconscious impulse, and the speed at which Schoenberg composed *Erwartung* – a mere two weeks.

Nevertheless, the above should be enough indication that Schoenberg was dealing very much in a language of references – or "signification," to borrow the term from semiology – and that by his own accounts of his mental state at the

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<sup>164</sup> Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 328-329.

<sup>165</sup> Whitney, 155-214. (012) could have been derived from the countermelody in Ex. 11, and (013) from the first three pitches of the vocal line in Ex. 10.

<sup>166</sup> Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 333.

<sup>167</sup> Quoted in Whitney, 205.

time, the expression he meant to convey was of extreme emotional dissonance of a highly personal nature. As discussed with regards to the *Rite*, Schoenberg reached for signifiers of anxiety and death – the semitone – anti-triadic structures such as the “atonal chord” (016), plus (012), (013) and (014) – and then very likely worked with them freely, according to impulse. (014) in particular could be taken as signifier with references to past practice, albeit of a schizophrenic nature similar to that of the *Petrushka* chord. Aside from containing the anxious semitone, (014) also allows for alternation between minor and major thirds, useful in signifying unstable shifts between the manic and the depressive states of the woman in *Erwartung*, and by extension, of Schoenberg himself in his moment of crisis. The use of the quotation from *Am Wegrund* could have been equally impulsive, arrived at in the moment. Schoenberg’s obsession with the past was evident in much of his writing. This song, dating from 1905, very likely had significance for him in terms of the deterioration of his marriage with Mathilde,<sup>168</sup> as well as to the musical establishment at the time, hence its placement at the start of the final climax of *Erwartung*. In which case the word “vorüber” (to pass), and even the complete phrase, “Tausend Menschen ziehn vorüber,” (thousands pass [me] by), takes on a poignant meaning.

Recall that in order to cast aside Rimsky-Korsakov as a model, Stravinsky required a stronger one to trump it. In Schoenberg, the ability to relinquish what

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<sup>168</sup> The Schoenbergs first became acquainted with Gerstl in 1906. A recent study of primary sources by Marion Lamberth at Lund University suggests that their marital crisis began with the birth of their second child in September 1906, which was probably associated with sexual renunciation that led to a distanced relationship between the two. The study also found a strong correlation between choice of song texts and events in Schoenberg’s personal life throughout this period. See Marion Lamberth, “Interaktion von Leben und Werk bei Schönberg - analysiert anhand seiner Ehekrise des Jahres 1908” (PhD diss. University of Lund, 2008).

he had come to regard as the frivolity of common practice tonality and ornament could only be attained through an internal faith in Wagner's "endless melody" in the vocal line, and the legitimacy of Brahmsian polyphony in the accompaniment. These two ideals of compositional practice provided the justification for his impulses.

Schoenberg's sense of alienation and abandonment in 1908 had led him to Pappenheim, a friend of the Zemlinskys, as a librettist. Pappenheim had been a medical student who had written expressionist texts on the physical and mental suffering of her patients, which were published by Kraus in *Die Fackel*.<sup>169</sup> She also would have had intimate knowledge of hysteria and the new technique of hypnosis through her cousin Bertha Pappenheim, known today by the psychiatric community as the infamous "Ann O." who was treated by Sigmund Freud's mentor, Josef Breuer.<sup>170</sup> Her scenario was everything that the *Rite* was not – a single woman, lost and alone in the forest, in a position of weakness and delusion, as opposed to the organized, collective tribe manifesting a position of goal-directed group power. And just as Stravinsky had conveyed violence and massive aggression by coupling post-tonal harmony with large-scale dynamics and orchestration, driving rhythmic pulse, and relentless repetition, Schoenberg expresses the despondent side of post-tonality by eschewing repetition and avoiding all sense of pulse. *Erwartung* is all melody tangled up in polyphony – the lone woman lost in the wood. The *Rite* eradicates it in pulsing homophony – the lone ballerina is annihilated by the tribe.

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<sup>169</sup> Bryan R. Simms, *The Atonal Music of Arnold Schoenberg: 1908-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>170</sup> Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 326-328.

## VI: IDENTITY POLITICS

If there is one thing that the past 30 years of research have made clear, it is the lengths to which people will go to maintain and defend high levels of self-esteem... the need for self-esteem [has been shown] to lie at the root of achievement-oriented behavior and self-handicapping, prosocial behavior and aggression, conformity and the pursuit of individuality, prejudice and suppression of prejudice, and interpersonal closeness and distancing.<sup>171</sup>

This statement by psychologists Tom Pyszczynski and Cathy Cox is taken from an overview of three decades of psychological research on the effect of self-esteem on behavior, concluding that “it is difficult to think of any complex human behavior” that is not linked to self-esteem striving.<sup>172</sup> From the primary sources covered so far, it would appear that self-esteem was a major motivator for Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. A study published by Sedikides, Gaetner, and Yoshiyasu in 2003 found that self-esteem is first sought by attempting to live up to the internalized standards of a specific culture.<sup>173</sup> In their early development, Stravinsky and Schoenberg both committed themselves to the ideals of St. Petersburg and Vienna and attempted to join the established musical environments they believed to be central to these cultures. Whether real or imagined, both composers expressed significant levels of rejection by these groups. Studies by Deci & Ryan (2000), Rank (1975), May (1953), and Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Goldenberg (2003) have found that an alternative to cultural conformity as a source of self-esteem is attained by meeting standards that are self-created:

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<sup>171</sup> Tom Pyszczynski and Cathy Cox, “Can We Really Do Without Self-Esteem? Comment on Crocker and Park,” *Psychological Bulletin* 130 (2004): 425.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Pyszczynski, 428.

Although, like any other standards of value, they are ultimately derived from the diverse array of cultural influences to which all people are exposed, self-determined standards are the result of extensive integrative processing rather than simply introjected or “swallowed whole” with little consideration of how they fit with other aspects of one’s system of meaning and value. To the extent that one is able to fully process the cultural influences and actively choose the values on which one’s self-esteem is based, one can be said to have played a major role in creating the contingencies on which one’s self-esteem is based.<sup>174</sup>

From a psychological perspective, *The Rite of Spring* and *Erwartung* could then be read as an attempt at such self-defining standards in the face of rejection by the broader cultures that Stravinsky and Schoenberg had initially looked to for self-esteem. That these works could constitute an attempt does not imply that they were necessarily successful at self-definition. Botstein has argued that it was not until Schoenberg had fully realized and rejected the racial contradictions he had internalized via Wagner – that were still so primary to his impulses during his expressionist stage – and shifted to a rational codification of post-tonality through the serial method in the 1920s, that he reached this moment of autonomy.<sup>175</sup> Stravinsky also turned his back on the expressionism of the *Rite* following his neo-nationalist Eurasian stage during the First World War, eventually dismissing it as “decadent” music. Likewise, Stravinsky’s self-definition would not be complete until his move to neoclassicism, with his rhetoric of the “musical object,” at last trumping both the programmatic ideals of the *kutchka* and Russian nationality itself through a rational appropriation of classical European material.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Botstein, in Frisch, 44-47.

<sup>176</sup> Igor Stravinsky, “Some Ideas About My Octuor,” *The Arts*, January 1924; reprinted in Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 528.

Above all, what may have changed most in both composers after this intense, expressionist break with the immediate past appears to have been their outward emotional disposition towards music in general. Perhaps to be truly free of the musical cultures of Vienna and St. Petersburg, Schoenberg and Stravinsky had to become *indifferent* to them. This transition, from passionate negation of nineteenth-century culture and all that it signified before the First World War, to dispassionate codification of this negation afterwards, typified the culture of rationalism that characterized the arts in the post-war era. Stravinsky in particular went to great lengths to assert that music was incapable of representing anything. Was this truly the case, or was Stravinsky enlarging on an earlier denial – a collective misrecognition – of the entire struggle over the attribution of aesthetic value he had only just engaged in with the previous establishment? Once Stravinsky *became* the new hub of the established network in Paris, faith in the art object as an *independent* object would be very much in his interest. Unfortunately for Schoenberg, he would never be able to trade in the substantial cultural capital he had generated for economic capital in his lifetime.

CONCLUSION:  
HAT TRICKS, MYTHOLOGIES  
& THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

As Marcel Mauss observed, the problem with magic is not so much to know what are the specific properties of the magician, or even of the magical operations and representations, but rather to discover the bases of the collective belief or, more precisely, the *collective misrecognition*, collectively produced and maintained, which is the source of the power the magician appropriates.<sup>177</sup>

— Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*

For those who love a good magic show, there is value to be had in watching a magician pull a rabbit out of a hat. What is the nature of that value? For a moment in time, the rules of physics that restrict our daily lives appear to have been suspended. The magician cheats reality. The audience is delighted. Is this actually what happened, or is the pleasure of this moment the result of a collective suspension of disbelief? Consider the awkward experience of watching an amateur magician stumble his way through a trick, explaining the mechanics of each step as he goes. He produces the rabbit, yes, but without magic. Here more than with the professional we realize the true value of the trick – by revealing his methods, the amateur spoils the moment by making it impossible for the audience to suspend disbelief, for it is this collective misrecognition of the truth that is the source of the magician's power. Like a dollar bill, which contains no intrinsic value in the paper and ink it is made out of, the power lies in the consensus of the group that it has worth. Any evidence that

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<sup>177</sup> Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 81.

might suggest that the object in question is nothing more than useless paper, merely a sleight of hand and not magic, is a threat to the network's belief system.

Composers are like magicians. Working in private, out of sight, they construct elaborate pieces of music that will eventually be passed off to audiences as independent objects that seem as though they have always existed in that form. All at once they are experienced, as if spontaneously generated, like rabbits from hats. When absolute consensus exists, the independence of the art object seems a part of the natural order of things – the audience's delight in it is believed to emanate from the music itself. On the other hand, it is at moments of disagreement about where value is located that the underlying power of the network that defines it is revealed, as the American tourist venturing out into the Chinese countryside discovers when trying to buy lunch with US currency, only to be told that they only accept the yuán.

Such is the case when an individual artist or group of artists assert an aesthetic that differs radically from that of another group in close proximity. Awareness of the difference in value elicits a crisis for both groups – each struggling to define its own terms of value. To keep the faith a history is constructed to explain why one must naturally win out over the other. The history of Western art music is full of such examples of crisis – Monteverdi's debate with Artusi over the *Seconda prattica*, Hanslick's advocacy of Brahms and attack on Wagner. In the twentieth century, the early scandals in the parallel careers of Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg have become legendary. In all of these cases there is more at stake than just the "music itself," there is what Bourdieu

described as “cultural capital” – the creation and possession of symbolic goods.<sup>178</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the art market, because none of these works can be valued in terms of empirical utility in the way that a light bulb or a pound of ground beef can. They only have value because of consensus, and therefore they are only ever a reflection of the relative societal power of the group forming that consensus. Hence, according to Bourdieu, cultural capital is always a signifier of class position.

Early in his career Bourdieu studied the Kabyle of Algeria and was struck by the great lengths the members of that society would go to achieve higher levels of “honor,” including sacrifices of economic capital for the sake of prestige.<sup>179</sup> Over the course of his life he went on to do extensive research on his own society – that of contemporary France – and as a result documented the same phenomenon at various levels of French culture, from working class aesthetics to that of elite intellectuals of the Paris academies, of the galleries of the art world, and of the publishing market. He caused a scandal not unlike that of *The Rite of Spring* with the publication of *Distinction*, a very large work which in great detail lists statistics of aesthetic preferences according to class status and reveals a strong link between such preferences and class stratification at a time in French history when the political left preferred to make claims of

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<sup>178</sup> Randal Johnson, ed., *The Field of Cultural Production*, “Editor’s Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 7-9.

<sup>179</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, trans. Richard Nice, *Algeria 1960: The disenchantment of the world; The sense of honour; The Kabyle house, or, the world reversed. Essays by Pierre Bourdieu*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

egalitarian access for all regardless of job title.<sup>180</sup> Bourdieu referred to the set of preferences, which manifests itself in terms of outward signals – style of dress, manner of speech, stated interests in recreational activities, educational background, etc. – as an individual's *habitus*. The signs themselves, which include works of art, are what he called *cultural capital*, because like economic capital, there is a drive by individuals to accumulate and save it as a kind of wealth. The environment in which individuals attempt to better their circumstances, which most often includes the desire for upward mobility, he called the *field*.<sup>181</sup> Ultimately, Bourdieu concluded that the individuals, (or groups), with the greatest influence, (and hence, *power*), in a society were those who actually define cultural capital itself – “taste makers,” so to speak, or in the language of social network theory today, (not to mention social media marketing), “hubs” such as Rimsky-Korsakov, Sergei Diaghilev, or the Comtesse Greffulhe. As already noted, at the point in history that these individuals were viewed as the arbiters of taste in their respective societies, they were not only “rich” in cultural capital, but economic capital as well. And yet, a curious aspect of this phenomenon that Bourdieu describes is the denial of this link – perhaps because the absolute virtues that are attributed to cultural capital would be undermined if they were revealed to be a function of the ethically conflicted realities of class stratification – unequal access to wealth. It would effectively spoil the magic trick if the magician revealed the rabbit cage hidden under the tablecloth of the table

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<sup>180</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>181</sup> For an accessible overview of Bourdieu's work, including the concepts of “habitus,” “field,” “cultural capital,” “symbolic violence,” and “collective misrecognition,” see Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (New York: Routledge Press, 1992).

that holds up the hat. From Bourdieu's perspective, it was no coincidence that Diaghilev, Stravinsky and the Comtesse Greffulhe were all members of the aristocracy, while Schoenberg was a working-class Jew. To ignore or deny these details of the history is what Bourdieu means by *collective misrecognition*.<sup>182</sup>

The French semiologist Roland Barthes referred to this tendency as the "overturning of culture into nature," or "the social...the ideological, the historical into the 'natural.' What is nothing but a product of class division...is presented as being a 'matter of course,'" or "common sense, right reason, the norm..."<sup>183</sup> When the monk Giovanni Maria Artusi criticized Claudio Monteverdi's unresolved dissonances in his madrigals, he invoked the very laws of the universe in defense of his position, not his own personal taste. When Schoenberg wrote to the Director of the Academy in Vienna to demand a position, he reified history by claiming that he, Arnold Schoenberg, was already "part of history," and therefore *already* one of the great composers of the German tradition and *would be* exponentially so in the future.<sup>184</sup> To say that Schoenberg was correct at the time that he made this statement would be to also reify history. He certainly was not the first unstable artist to make that claim, nor will he be the last – if he is in the history books today it is not because history as a "force of nature" singled him out

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid. See also Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 81.

<sup>183</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, Trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 165.

<sup>184</sup> Schoenberg, *Letters*, 26-30.

for fame. This is a magical thinking that selectively rewrites the history to make the present appear inevitable.<sup>185</sup>

This is most likely the nerve that Richard Taruskin hits in Pieter van den Toorn and Allen Forte when he takes issue with the “music itself” and the validity of the “intentional fallacy.”<sup>186</sup> In his review-essay on Taruskin’s *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, van den Toorn reveals much about his assumptions about music through his assessment of a statement by Adolf Hitler on Wagner’s Prelude to *Die Meistersinger*. Hitler may be “tainted,” writes van den Toorn, but he cannot, “taint the music,” the “music merely *inspires*” Hitler. Elsewhere van den Toorn vaguely describes the, “power of music,” its “physical” and “mental” connection to us, somehow reflecting, “what we are...deep, down, and under,” in “abstract ways.” And yet in the next paragraph, van den Toorn states that “hitting the bass drum...in the *Rite*,” need not be “savage” or “brutal.” All that counts is the, “musical train of thought,” of which the bass drum hit is, “a part.”<sup>187</sup> But contrary to van den Toorn’s underlying assumptions, a piece of music does not

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<sup>185</sup> For an excellent example of Schoenberg’s attempt to write himself into an inevitable evolution of Germanic music history, see Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*, 353-361. Schoenberg’s analysis of motivic cells in Cello Sonata no. 2, Op. 99 by Johannes Brahms is more of an attempt to project Schoenberg’s compositional approach onto Brahms than the other way around, effectively coercing the Brahms score into pointing “forward” to Schoenberg’s work.

<sup>186</sup> In a letter to the Editor of *Music Analysis*, Forte writes, “Let the weary reader take hope...The issue here is intentionalism, a very tired issue, indeed, certainly in the field of literary criticism. I submit that we can never know with any certainty ‘what the composer thought he was about’ and that to attempt to do so to validate an analysis is an empty pursuit.” After admitting to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century dichotomy of artist and creation, Forte states that, “the modern scientific” view demonstrates how, “man and his products...are part and parcel of nature,” thereby reinvoking that same 19<sup>th</sup>-century dichotomy under the guise of empirical science. See Allen Forte, “Letter to the Editor in Reply to Richard Taruskin from Allen Forte,” *Music Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 2/3 (Jul. - Oct., 1986), 321-337. For an overview and discussion of the intentional fallacy and Forte’s reference to it, see Haimo, 167-199, which includes an extensive bibliography of literary criticism that refutes the intentional fallacy. See also Richard Taruskin, “Letter to the Editor,” *Music Analysis* 5 (1986), 313-320. For the debate between Taruskin and van den Toorn over, “the music itself,” see van den Toorn, 104-121.

<sup>187</sup> van den Toorn, “Will Stravinsky Survive Postmodernism,” 118-119.

have “thoughts.” That train of thought was Wagner’s when he composed the Prelude and Stravinsky’s when he composed the *Rite*. And any “inspiration,” “interpretation,” or appropriation of that music was experienced by Hitler, van den Toorn or anyone else listening to it, and not carried out by “the music itself.” Van den Toorn’s very language throughout the essay assigns *music* an active role that in effect depicts *it* as the living, organic subject rather than assigning this status to the composer or the listener. As with Schoenberg and Stravinsky, this is a reification of an abstract concept. But from a semiological perspective van den Toorn is correct on one count – the bass drum hit can be assigned any meaning, or more accurately: the sound of a bass drum hit *could* have been assigned a very different meaning much earlier in the history of the repertoire than when Stravinsky used it as a programmatic device in the *Rite*. Taken as a sonic event in isolation it is what is referred to in linguistic theory as an “empty signifier.”<sup>188</sup> It has no more inherent meaning for human beings than the sound or appearance of the word “cat” in English, (cats do not look like the letters that make up its signifier, nor do they make sounds remotely similar to the word spoken aloud). From the standpoint of semiology, the signifier is “arbitrary.” But all human beings raised in English-speaking countries have experienced such a high frequency of correlation between the four-legged animal with whiskers and

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<sup>188</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 109-131. Barthes expanded the concept of “signifier” and “sign” originally proposed by Ferdinand Saussure in reference to language to include any system of images, sounds or other possible signs. The appropriation and recombination of preexisting signs in new contexts Barthes referred to as “myth.” Myths are essentially “metasigns” that enforce new meanings that appear to be justified by the already accepted meaning of the signs out of which they are constructed. The most infamous example of myth is that of the swastika. Originally this visual sign was an ancient Hindu symbol of eternity or more plainly, of good luck. Appropriated by the Nazi party in the 1930s and somewhat altered in appearance, it became a myth of Aryan power for that society, and all manner of evil in the postwar era since that time.

the sound “cat” that eventually it becomes a reflex to simply think of the four-legged animal any time the sound “cat” is heard or read on the page. This is what is meant by the “consensus” of meaning in all of the literature by Barthes and Bourdieu.

If a composition can first be presented as part of nature (not socialized as a reflex), it can then be presented as an independent, even organic, object – no strings attached. This independence is further emphasized by the position that the composer’s intentions cannot be determined with absolute certainty, or were socially “disinterested” regardless, and would not be relevant to discussion even if such intentions were obvious. Taruskin argues that this reasoning can be traced to Kant in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*) of 1790, in which artists must be “disinterested both in their motivation and in the mode of their contemplation, they must have the appearance of purposiveness (*Zweckmässigkeit*) without having an actual purpose (*Zweck*) or socially sanctioned function.”<sup>189</sup> From there, the audience and the entire societal context may also be disregarded. This appears to be the storyline put forward by composers such as Stravinsky as well – presenting himself as a “vessel” through which the *Rite* simply “passed,” later observing his octet, a “musical object,” as if from a distance.

And yet Stravinsky, even more than Schoenberg, revealed through his many shifts in aesthetic position over his lifetime – from *kutchka* to Russian primitivist to French neoclassicist to American serialist – both how relative and

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<sup>189</sup> Richard Taruskin, “Is There a Baby in the Bathwater? (Part I),” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 63. Jahrg., H. 3. (2006), 163-185.

how powerful the group consensus of the moment and geographical location could be. For Bourdieu, to think of history as a force of nature that drives artistic production is to put the cart in front of the horse:

It is not sufficient to say that the history of the *field* is the history of the struggle for the monopolistic power to impose the legitimate categories of perception and appreciation. The *struggle itself* creates the history of the field...It is the continuous creation of the battle between those who have made their names [*fait date*] and are struggling to stay in view and those who cannot make their own names without relegating to the past the established figures, whose interest lies in freezing the movement of time, fixing the present state of the field for ever...To 'make one's name' [*faire date*] means making one's *mark*, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one's *difference* from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; at the same time, it means *creating a new position* beyond the positions presently occupied, *ahead* of them, in the *avant-garde*.<sup>190</sup>

But as Bourdieu also points out, this struggle for distinction among producers of cultural capital need not always be quite so radical as was demonstrated in the early scandals of Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Such highly visible acts of symbolic violence in the field of cultural production account for a large scale changing of the guard in terms of a society's power structure. Less visible, but equally territorial moments are ongoing, as in Pierre Boulez's public declaration that "Schoenberg is Dead," Milton Babbitt's dismissal of Boulez's approach to integral serialism, or Elliott Carter's distinction from other American composers through an effective patent on "metric modulation." And like Stravinsky or Schoenberg early in the twentieth century, the works of each of these composers may never be fully understood without regard to the networks that asserted the value of their cultural capital – Darmstadt for Boulez,

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<sup>190</sup> Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 106.

*Perspectives of New Music* for Babbitt, and Charles Rosen, David Schiff and Stravinsky for Carter.<sup>191</sup>

Rather than conclude on the cynical perspective of what may appear to be nothing more than self-serving market competition, a final observation by Roland Barthes might help to save at least a little of art's former virtue. The statement Barthes made was at an inaugural lecture to the Collège de France in 1977, where he was about to assume the chair of literary semiology – a position that placed him at the veritable hub of cultural power in French society with regards to the field, in this case, producing “knowledge.”<sup>192</sup> In keeping with the language of the time, his distinction in the study of language, and most significantly, his patron Michel Foucault,<sup>193</sup> his lecture was appropriately on the subject of language and power:

...Power is present in the most delicate mechanisms of social exchange: not only in the State, in classes, groups, but even in fashion, public opinion, entertainment, sports, news, information, family and private relations, and even in the liberating impulses which attempt to counteract it...Power is the parasite of a trans-social organism, linked to the whole of man's history and not only to his political, historical history. This object in which power is inscribed, for all its human eternity, is language...<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18-20, 140, 277.

<sup>192</sup> Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1986), 239-240.

<sup>193</sup> Even more than Barthes and Bourdieu, Michel Foucault is probably the most influential writer today on the concept of power: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere...Power comes from below...There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations.” For Foucault, “all power is complicit.” Again, a state of consensus is at the root of it all. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979), 16-17. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 92-94.

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in Eco, 240. See also Roland Barthes, *The Barthes Reader*, “Inaugural Lecture,” ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982).

According to Barthes, the ability to speak (or to read and write), in of itself is not what establishes power, it is the way in which this ability becomes a rigid system of rules, eventually assumed to be absolute, that constitutes the power. It is at this point that Barthes makes his most provocative statement in the lecture: *language*, “is neither reactionary nor progressive, it is quite simply fascist; because fascism does not prevent speech, it compels speech.”<sup>195</sup> We are compelled to think and speak according to the restrictions of the established signs and syntax we have available to work with in the present. The question Barthes then puts forward is: *how does one escape from this fascist structure?* His answer: by “cheating” at the rules. This game of playing around with language is called “literature.” By extension, we can consider this the best possible role any artist can aspire to. By rearranging or altering the signs of the language, (creating new “myths” out of old signs), an artist reveals the power interests that put them “in order” in the first place, and at least for a moment, liberates them from that power. But every rearrangement of the signs only leads to new rules, a new power structure, necessitating new rounds of cheating, of still more *symbolic violence*. The process is never complete, as Bourdieu also warns us – it is ongoing.

As natural as tertian harmony might seem to audiences raised on common practice repertoire, when evaluated in terms of its own history of valuation – that of a hierarchy of intervallic ratios dating to well before the Pythagoreans – the logical contradictions of that value system in light of actual performance practice become clear. From the standpoint of consonant intervals, the fourth (a ratio of

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

4:3) should hold prominent positions of stability in a piece of music rather than a major (5:4) or minor third (6:5). But in the common practice period the opposite was the norm, and so to the aesthetics of the time it was the “natural” order of things – fourths treated as “dissonances” should necessarily resolve to “consonant” thirds. It would appear that here, as in so many other examples, is the arbitrary and empty signifier at work, rather than nature, in the language of culture. By extension, through consistent practice major and minor thirds and their associated diatonic scales came to be signifiers of joy and sorrow – programmatic devices to represent human states of emotion. Likewise, “dissonant” intervals such as the semitone and tritone came to signify death, anxiety and the supernatural, in part by virtue of what they were *not*, or what they “must” resolve *to* – the “consonant” tonic, *tertian* triad. To reverse these roles, or to simply eradicate the triad altogether and “emancipate” the dissonances, is on a musical level what Barthes means by “cheating” at the rules. To do so and get away with it, to reveal that approbation for a new compositional practice – (016) or (014) replacing the tonic triad’s position – could be merely a matter of democratic vote at a musical performance, reveals the power interests that passed off the common practice period as “natural” in the first place. Recall that at the *Rite*’s premiere the conservative Comtesse de Pourtalès did not quietly state that she “didn’t care for the music.” She exclaimed that it was “the first time anyone [had] *dared* to make fun” of her. Florent Schmitt did not calmly ask the conservatives in the boxes to lower their voices, he shouted “Shut up you bitches of the 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement!” – a neighborhood that signified old money in Paris at

the time even more than Park Avenue does now on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Offense was meant, and offense was taken. If Barthes and Bourdieu are correct about these rules of engagement – of symbolic violence – then this cultural game-change just before the First World War was most likely at the heart of the scandals that made names (*faite date*) for Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg as we think of them today.

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