

Igor Stravinsky

Monumentum • Mass Symphonie de Psaumes

J.S. Bach / Stravinsky
Choral-Variationen

Collegium Vocale Gent
Royal Flemish Philharmonic
Philippe Herreweghe

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Monumentum (1960)

Pro Gesualdo di Venosa ad CD Annum

Recomposed for instruments by Igor Stravinsky

1	Asciugate i begli occhi	2. 22
2	Ma tu, cagion di quella	1. 49
3	Beltà poi che t'assenti	2. 23

Mass (1948)

For mixed chorus and double wind quintet

4	Kyrie	2. 22
5	Gloria	3. 18
6	Credo	3. 43
7	Sanctus	3. 05
8	Agnus Dei	2. 28

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) / **Igor Stravinsky**

Choral-Variationen (1956)

Über das Weihnachtslied "Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her"

(Choral Variations on the German Christmas carol "Von Himmel hoch")

9	Choral	0. 35
10	Variation I	<i>In canone all'Ottava</i> 1. 13
11	Variation II	<i>Alto modo in canone alla Quinta</i> 1. 06
12	Variation III	<i>In canone alla Settima</i> 2. 08
13	Variation IV	<i>In canone all'Ottava per augmentationem</i> 2. 07
14	Variation V	<i>L'altra sorte del canone al rovescio:</i> 2. 31
<i>1. alla Sesta, 2. alla Terza, 3. alla Seconda, 4. alla Nona</i>		

Symphonie de Psalms (1930)

(Symphony of Psalms)

15	I. Exaudi orationem meam, Domine (<i>Psalms 39, verses 13 and 14</i>)	2. 55
16	II. Expectans expectavi Dominum (<i>Psalms 40, verses 2, 3 and 4</i>)	5. 44
17	III. Alleluia. Laudate Dominum (<i>Psalms 150, complete</i>)	10. 26

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www.pentatonemusic.com

Collegium Vocale Gent
Chorus master Christoph Siebert

Mass & Choralvariationen

Soprano	Annelies Brants, Kate Hawnt, Roswitha Schmelzl, Mette Rooseboom, Nathalie Siebert*, Dominique Verkinderen
Alto	Gudrun Köllner, Lieve Mertens, Cécile Pilorger*, Bettina Ranch, Mieke Wouters, Anne-Kristin Zschunke
Tenor	Stephan Gähler*, Vincent Lesage, Dan Martin, Alexander Moritz, Tom Phillips*, Albert Riera
Bass	Stefan Drexelmeier, Matthias Lutze*, Sebastian Myrus, Kai-Rouven Seeger, René Steur, Frits Vanhulle * soloists Mass

Symphonie de Psalms

Soprano	Annelies Brants, Griet De Geyter, Sylvie De Pauw, Silvia Frigato, Beate Gartner, Kate Hawnt, Mette Rooseboom, Roswitha Schmelzl, Nathalie Siebert, Nel Van Hee, Dominique Verkinderen, Kathrin Volkmann
Alto	Ursula Ebner, Dominika Hirschler, Gudrun Köllner, Lieve Mertens, Cécile Pilorger, Bettina Ranch, Beate Westerkamp, Mieke Wouters, Tiina Zahn, Anne-Kristin Zschunke
Tenor	Wolfgang Frisch, Stephan Gähler, Vincent Lesage, Dan Martin, Alexander Moritz, Tom Phillips, Albert Riera, Florian Schmitt, Klaus Steppberger, Yves Van Handenhove, René Veen
Bass	Martijn de Graaf Bierbrauwer, Stefan Drexelmeier, Joachim Höchbauer, Thomas Lackinger, Matthias Lutze, Sebastian Myrus, Christian Palm, Peter Pöppel, Kai-Rouven Seeger, Alois Späth, René Steur, Frits Vanhulle

Jan Michiels & Inge Spinetti, Piano (in Symphonie de Psalms)

Royal Flemish Philharmonic
conducted by
Philippe Herreweghe

Recorded live at deSingel, Antwerp, Belgium January 30th & 31st, 2009
Producer: Job Maarse
Balance Engineer: Jean-Marie Geijssen
Recording Engineer: Roger de Schot
Editing: Roger de Schot

Total playing time: 50.47

An unavoidable desire to create

"What is important for the lucid ordering of the work – for its crystallisation – is that all the Dionysian elements which set the imagination of the artist in motion and make the life-sap rise must be properly subjugated before they intoxicate us, and must finally be made to submit to the law: Apollo demands it."

Impossible to claim, therefore, that Igor Stravinsky is a composer of unrestrained excesses! Stravinsky referred in his revelations on composing, *Poetics of Music*, to the classical correlation between Dionysos and Apollo, excess and control, *emo* and *ratio*. By doing so, Stravinsky endowed his neoclassical writing with a certain philosophical permanence. It goes without saying that this ancient correlation, in which Dionysian drive evaporates into Apollonian control, should be tested out in the finales of Stravinsky's 'mythological' compositions. Stravinsky, in fact, always created a remarkably Apollonian musical catharsis in these works. That is how the 'operatorium' *Oedipus rex* ends, with the literally blinding sense of guilt felt by Oedipus whose slowly fading heartbeat drives him to just within the city boundaries of Thebes. The ballet *Apollo* ends with the ephemeral deification of Apollo; the melodrama of *Perséphone* continues to contemplate the renewal of life in the closing bars; while the ballet *Orpheus* closes, full of significance, with the ascension of Orpheus' lyre into heaven. However, even if one leaves aside these 'mythologically' coloured compositions, Stravinsky was always anxious to produce a final, Apollonian cleansing. Anyone who has experienced, live, the horrifyingly still finale of his ballet *The Fairy's Kiss*, will know how impassive Apollonian Stravinsky can be.

'Impassive' is also the adjective sometimes used to describe Stravinsky's religious music, so it will be no surprise to learn that this part of his oeuvre is less well known than his early, arrhythmic, chest-beating ballet compositions. In an attempt to move away from romantic expression, Stravinsky shifted towards a musical language that was simple in idea, pure in form and straightforward in composition, as well as being deliberately unsophisticated. Let us, once again, hear the master himself: "Music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to *express* anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature,... If music appears to express something, this is only an illusion and not a reality." And further: "The essential aim of music is to promote a communion, a union of man with his fellow-men and with the Supreme Being."

Stravinsky's style-conscious objectivity and apparent reserve appear to have been extremely handy when it came to writing religious music. It is as if the composer tried to give Apollo a religious aura in this part of his oeuvre. There is indeed a hint of the same Apollonian control with which

Stravinsky wrapped his attractive mythologies, but he rephrased his religious compositions to produce uncompromising austerity. His gradually increasing occupation with religious themes was even reflected at the end of his life in his interest in serial (referring to 'rows') composition techniques.

Stravinsky's religious discretion should never be confused with cerebral hermetism; perhaps this is best illustrated in his most famous 'religious' work, the *Symphony of Psalms*. The first movement of this composition is based on Psalm 39 which focuses on a dying person's supplication: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger, as all my fathers were. Look away from me, that I may rejoice again before I depart and am no more." The second movement responds to this plea with the following verses from Psalm 40: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." The 'new song' mentioned here can be heard in the third and last movement of the *Symphony of Psalms* in which the whole song of praise in Psalm 150 resounds.

This spiritual journey is reflected in the music. Stravinsky opens his *Symphony of Psalms* with fidgety rhythms and nervous wails which fit in perfectly with the religious desperation of the text being sung. The second movement is a perfect representation of Stravinsky's Apollonian dictum: in the same way as God places man – in his downcast state – back on safe ground, Stravinsky forces the orchestra and choir into the most rigid of all musical forms, the fugue – in this case a double fugue. In the closing movement, where the 'new song' resounds, Stravinsky alternates jubilant happiness with devote introspection, and concludes with an unworldly awe (a surprisingly subdued rendering on the word 'dominum'). Thus, we do not need a great deal of imagination to follow the story of spiritual upheaval in the *Symphony of Psalms*; it conveys us via rigid control and supremacy (the fugue) towards apology, apotheosis and contemplation.

Stravinsky wrote very little music for liturgical settings. There are three short choral works for the Orthodox liturgy, an anthem written on a text by TS Eliot, and just one composition for the *Mass*. Stravinsky's *Mass* was not written to commission, but composed on his own initiative. Although it shares a proclamation of belief with the *Symphony of Psalms*, it lacks musical theatricality. Stravinsky scored his *Mass* for only four-part choir plus 10 wind players, with a surprising lack of musical rhetoric. Both these facts indicate that he wanted to focus on the essence of the *Mass* text. In addition, the archaic scoring (Stravinsky

preferred choirboys to women's voices) and the fact that he chose the Latin version of the text, emphasise his desire for compositional purity. During the process of composing, he listened to Mozart's *Masses*; these he criticised as "rococo-operatic sweets-of-sin", so there is no point in searching for neoclassicism in his *Mass*. If Stravinsky did have a model in mind, then it was the art of composing a *Mass* as demonstrated by polyphonic composers such as Guillaume de Machaut. Almost the whole repertory of Renaissance *Mass* technique is manifested here: Gregorian paraphrase, syllabic chants, homophonic choir passages alternating with polyphonic interweaving, and antiphonal question-and-answer games, and the occasional decoration on words such as 'Gloria' or 'Sanctus'.

Stravinsky's religious feelings fired him to write orchestral works such as the *Symphony of Psalms* as well as strictly liturgical compositions such as the *Mass*. Between these two extremes, the eccentric Russian explored a wide range of related or intermediate, and religiously charged, forms. As would be expected of a devote neoclassicist, Stravinsky was not above creating a tasteful arrangement or paraphrase, his orchestration of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Choral-Variationen über das Weihnachtslied 'Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her'* being the most famous example. Stravinsky did not just place the original choral variations in a completely new setting, he added even more counterpoint lines to Bach's already chock-full vocal interplay. It was a daring move because, by supplementing this almost too familiar composition (described by Milton Babbitt as "the cornerstone of canonic writing"), Stravinsky created an extravagantly layered network. Remarkably, the composer did not merely add a few modern touches at random; he also inserted 'interfering' little motifs and melodies totally according to Baroque rules.

Monumentum pro Gesualdo Venosa ad CD Annum is another of Stravinsky's 'recompositions'. The rather prosaic title says it all; it is a work written in memory of the 400th birthday of Carlo Gesualdo. It was easy to see that, sooner or later during his foray into neoclassicism, Stravinsky would stumble upon this illustrious Renaissance composer. The crunching melody lines and the intense expression that make Gesualdo's eccentric Renaissance music so unique must have sounded very familiar to him. However, instead of paraphrasing this music, Stravinsky showed his respect for his older colleague by re-composing three of his madrigals, although 'recomposition' is perhaps an exaggeration. In fact, Stravinsky only tackled the original score in the case of the first madrigal (*Asciugate i begli occhi*). The other two madrigals (*Ma tu, cagion di quella and Belta poi che t'assenti*) he patched up orchestrally without really adding anything new. In the first madrigal, however, Stravinsky did his best to interpolate himself in the original material. The first 24 bars follow the Gesualdo madrigal obediently, but after that Stravinsky

starts to meditate a little over what went before and then switches to a free adaptation of the rest of Gesualdo's material. Stravinsky replaces the original, rather monotonous, setting with a scintillating vocal interplay, but ends by "re-instating" Gesualdo's harmonies.

Although Stravinsky's *Monumentum* is not religiously inspired as such, it nevertheless reflects something of his increasing interest in exerting control over the interweaving of melody lines. This interest ultimately drove him to the boundaries of serialism, and even beyond. By studying twelve-tone techniques, baroque counterpoint rules and Renaissance interplay of voices, Stravinsky tried constantly to get a better grip on reality (on what might be called the Dionysian chaos) as he got older. He was made for this task: "Since I myself was created, I cannot help having the desire to create". Should we link Stravinsky's growing fascination for control to his religious attitude? For the time being, that has to remain an open question. One thing you can be certain of: this was the expression of his lifelong attempt to achieve Apollonian control.

Royal Flemish Philharmonic

Stylistically adaptable symphony orchestra, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic has the artistic flexibility to be able to interpret a range of styles in a historically responsible manner. The chief conductor, Jaap van Zweden, is responsible for the large-orchestra repertoire. His wide orchestral experience, which includes a period as Leader of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, has helped to shape the unique character of the Philharmonic. To achieve this, he works closely with the principal conductor Philippe Herreweghe who, because of his background, focuses on romantic and pre-romantic repertoire. This orchestra's principal guest conductor is Martyn Brabbins.

The Royal Flemish Philharmonic has its own concert series in the large concert halls. This gives the orchestra a unique position in Flanders. The orchestra performs regularly in the Queen Elisabeth Hall and deSingel in Antwerp, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, De Bijloke and the Concertgebouw in Bruges. In addition to giving their regular concert series, the orchestra firmly believes in developing educational and social projects to guide children, youngsters and people from all sorts of social backgrounds through the world of symphonic sounds.

The Royal Flemish Philharmonic regularly receives invitations to perform in all the major concert halls around the world: the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus in Vienna, the Festspielhaus in Salzburg, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Suntory Hall and the Bunka Kaikan Hall in Tokyo, the Philharmonie in Cologne and in Munich, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, the Palace of Arts in Budapest and the National Grand

Theatre in Peking. International concert tours in various European countries and in Japan have a firm place in the musical calendar.

Together with the publisher, Lannoo, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic has created a series of audio books for children. The orchestra can also regularly be heard in Klara radio programmes and seen on the digital television channel EURO1080. The press has acclaimed various of the orchestra's CDs; for example, the Beethoven symphonies that principal conductor Philippe Herreweghe recently recorded (PentaTone). Recent recordings also include Jaap van Zweden conducting the music of Shostakovich (*Naïve*) and Martyn Brabbins conducting the music of Mortelmans (*Hyperion*).

Collegium Vocale Gent

Collegium Vocale Gent was founded in 1970 on the initiative of Philippe Herreweghe. It was one of the first ensembles to use the then-new ideas about baroque practice in vocal music performances. Musicians such as Gustav Leonhardt, Ton Koopman and Nikolaus Harnoncourt immediately took an interest in the Flemish ensemble's fresh, new approach, which led to intensive collaboration. In the mid-1980s the ensemble acquired international fame and was invited to all the major concert halls and music festivals of Europe, Israel, the United States, Russian, South America, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia.

The repertoire of Collegium Vocale Gent is not limited to one particular stylistic period. The ensemble's greatest strength is that, for every project, it can put together the ideal combination of voices for performing Renaissance polyphony, Classical and Romantic oratorios or contemporary music. Baroque music, and in particular the works of J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel, is the mainstay of the ensemble's concert schedule.

The ensemble has built up an extensive discography of over 65 recordings under the direction of Philippe Herreweghe, both singing a cappella and accompanied by the baroque orchestra of Collegium Vocale Gent or the Orchestre des Champs Elysées, primarily with the Harmonia Mundi France and Virgin Classics labels. Recent CDs include the splendid *Psalmi Davidis Poenitentialis* by Orlandus Lassus, Heinrich Schütz' *Schwanengesang* and *Christus, der ist mein Leben* with cantatas of J.S. Bach.

Collegium Vocale Gent has worked with various baroque orchestras and ensembles such as the Freiburger Barockorchester and Ricercar Consort as well as with traditional symphony orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Vienna Philharmonic and the Royal Flemish Philharmonic. Besides Philippe Herreweghe the ensemble has been conducted by many leading conductors such as Sigiswald Kuijken, René Jacobs, Daniel Reuss, Philippe Pierlot, Paul Van Nevel, Bernard

Haitink, Ivan Fischer, Marcus Creed, James Wood and Peter Phillips.

Collegium Vocale Gent is sponsored by the Flemish Community, the Province of Eastern Flanders and the city of Ghent.

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Philippe Herreweghe

Philippe Herreweghe was born in Ghent. There he studied medicine and psychiatry at the university and piano at the Music Academy. He founded the Collegium Vocale Gent, La Chapelle Royale and, later, the Ensemble Vocal Européen, thus establishing himself as a specialist in renaissance and baroque music. Since 1991, he and the Orchestre des Champs-Elysées have applied themselves to playing romantic music on period instruments. From 1982 to 2001, he served as Artistic Director of the Festival of Les Académies Musicales de Saintes. At the start of the 2008-2009 season, he became the principal guest conductor of the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic. In his capacity as principal conductor of the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, Philippe Herreweghe has been focusing for the last ten years on interpreting the pre-romantic and romantic repertoire adequately and refreshingly.

He has also appeared as guest conductor with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Concerto Köln, the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and other illustrious orchestras and ensembles. Some of his most significant recordings include the vocal masterpieces of Bach (such as the *St Matthew* and *St John Passions*, the *Mass in B Minor* and the *Christmas Oratorio*), an anthology of the French 'Grand Motet', the requiem masses by Mozart, Fauré and Brahms, oratorios by Mendelssohn, and Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. He is working on recordings of the complete Beethoven symphonies with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic, in collaboration with the international label PentaTone.

The European musical press acknowledged Philippe Herreweghe's artistic vision by proclaiming him Musical Personality of the Year in 1990. In 1993, Philippe Herreweghe and the Collegium Vocale Gent were appointed Cultural Ambassadors in Flanders. A year later he was awarded the Order of the Officier des Arts et Lettres and in 1997, Philippe Herreweghe received an honorary doctorate from Louvain University. In 2003, he was made a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in France.

