

IGOR STRAVINSKY

Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments

BORN: June 17, 1882, in Oranienbaum, Russia

DIED: April 6, 1971, in New York

WORK COMPOSED: 1923–24

WORLD PREMIERE: May 22, 1924, in Paris. The composer played the solo part, and Serge Koussevitzky conducted.

Both the rhythms and harmonies of the introduction that prefaces the first movement convey a somber tone and an association with the famous *Marche funèbre* in Chopin's Piano Sonata in B-flat minor. Stravinsky recalls this music later in this opening movement and again in the finale.

Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments embodies several tendencies that emerged in the composer's music during the 1920s. One is the development of a neo-classical style of modernism. The writing is lean, angular and contrapuntal in the outer movements, while the central *Largo* has about it a kind of Baroque formality. Another signature trait is one we have already encountered: a predilection for wind instruments. For Stravinsky, woodwinds and brass had a modern sound without the Romantic connotations of string sonority. Wind instruments dominate his *Symphony of Psalms* and *Septet*, and they serve exclusively, or nearly so, in *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, *Octet*, *Ebony Concerto*, *Mass* and the present concerto.

Stravinsky precedes the first *Allegro* with an introduction in slow tempo. The main body of the movement derives its character from the figuration of the piano part, which runs along in rapid and steady rhythms in the manner of a Bach toccata, though the asymmetrical accents here, and in the finale, are assertively modern.

Two cadenzas for the solo instrument punctuate the ensuing slow movement, the second being a variant of the first. The closing movement contains a wide range of figuration, much of it again recalling the style of Bach.

Scored for solo piano; 2 flutes and piccolo; 2 oboes and English horn; 2 clarinets; 2 bassoons (the 2nd bassoon doubling contrabassoon); 4 horns; 4 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani; double bass.

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