

3-9-2010

## Concert: Soldier Music: Jonathan Musgrave, conductor

Jonathan Musgrave

Suite-Histoire Du Soldat Ensemble

The Good Soldier Schweik Suite Ensemble

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# SOLDIER MUSIC



JONATHAN MUSGRAVE, CONDUCTOR

TUESDAY, MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2010

8:15 PM

PRESSER MUSIC HALL

# PROGRAM

Suite – Histoire du Soldat (The Soldier's Tale) (1918)

Igor Stravinsky  
(1882-1971)  
25'

- I. *Marche du Soldat*
- II. *Petits Airs au Bord du Ruisseau*
- III. *Pastorale*
- IV. *Marche Royale*
- V. *Petit Concert*
- VI. *Trois Danses (Tango – Valse – Ragtime)*
- VII. *Danse du Diable*
- VIII. *Grand Choral*
- IX. *Marche Triomphale du Diable*

PAUSE

The Good Soldier Schweik Suite, Opus 22 (1952)

Robert Kurka  
(1921-1957)  
20'

- I. *Overture*
- II. *Lament*
- III. *March*
- IV. *War Dance*
- V. *Pastorale*
- VI. *Finale*

# PROGRAM NOTES

## SUITE - HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT

The years 1914–1919 were difficult ones for Stravinsky. Exiled in Switzerland since the beginning of the war, he was cut off both from the money he received from both France and Russia. As a result, his works from the time period differ greatly from the works he composed in Paris from 1908 to 1913. For one, he wrote a good deal more music. In the five years from 1914 to 1919, he wrote nearly twice as many works as in the preceding five years. His works from this time also tend to be smaller than the massive ballet scores that made him famous. By 1918, Stravinsky had already composed two major works for smaller forces, including the opera-ballet *Renard* for a chamber orchestra of 15 players and 4 singers and the dance cantata *Les Noces* for an orchestra of percussion instruments and chorus. Economy in the performing forces made productions easier in the financially difficult wartime. Finally, his music from this period shows a tendency towards wind instruments, culminating several years later in the great wind works of his early neoclassic period: *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*, *Octet*, *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and *Symphony of Psalms*.

These years also saw the composition of one of Stravinsky's best-loved works, *Histoire du Soldat*. Based on several Russian wonder tales, Stravinsky worked with Swiss universalist writer C. F. Ramuz to craft a Faustian parable of a soldier who trades his fiddle to the devil. The work opens with the *Marche du Soldat* (The Soldier's March), which sets the martial character of the piece. Next, the Soldier enters, returning to his native village with a fortnight's leave. He sits down by a stream to rest and plays the *Petits Airs au Bord du Ruisseau* (Airs by a Stream). At the end of the movement, he is accosted by the Devil dressed as an old man with a butterfly net. The Devil obtains the Soldier's fiddle in exchange for a magic book and invites him to spend three days of his leave with him. On reaching his native village, the Soldier finds he has been away not three days but three years. Saddened, he sits and laments his fate (*Pastorale*). The Devil appears disguised as a cattle merchant and explains that with the help of the magic book the Soldier can make his fortune. Several years pass. By now, the Soldier is thoroughly disillusioned by his wealth. The Devil, disguised as an old clothes woman, calls on him and displays her wares, including a fiddle that he recognizes as his own. He wants to buy it back, but finding he can get no sound out of it, hurls it away and tears up the book in despair. More time passes. The Soldier, who has now lost his wealth, hears of a town where the King's daughter is ill and the King has promised her hand in marriage to whomever succeeds in curing her. The Soldier goes to the town (*Marche Royale* – The Royal March) but finds the Devil is already there, disguised as a virtuoso violinist. The Soldier challenges him to a game of cares, and goes on losing and plying him with wine, until the Devil falls unconscious, and he is able to recover his old fiddle. He celebrates by performing the *Petit Concert* (Little Concert). He goes to the invalid Princess and plays his fiddle. The Princess rises and dances the *Tango*, *Waltz*, and *Ragtime*, at the end of which she falls into the Soldier's arms. During their embrace, the Devil enters dressed as a devil (with forked tail and pointed ears) and the Soldier fiddles him into the contorted *Danse du Diable* (Devil's Dance). The Soldier and Princess celebrate their happiness in the *Grand Choral* (Great Chorale). Sometime after their marriage, the Soldier and Princess decide to visit his native village; but as soon as he crosses the frontier, he falls into the power of the Devil, who appears in gorgeous scarlet apparel, and has got hold of the fiddle again. The Soldier leaves with the Devil, very slowly and without resisting, in the *Marche Triomphale du Diable* (Triumphal March of the Devil).

Program Note by Jonathan Musgrave. Synopsis adapted from Eric Walter White's *Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1966).

## THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK SUITE

The *Suite* was inspired by *The Good Soldier Švejk* (Schweik is the German spelling of his name), the brilliantly realistic anti-war satire by the Czech novelist and journalist Jaroslav Hašek. Written shortly after the First World War, it is essentially the story of the civilian, the common man, forced to become a soldier who must fight for a cause for which he has no sympathy. Although he is classified by his German masters ("the authorities") as "feeble-minded" (that is, someone who doesn't quite appreciate their reasons for waging war), Švejk is, in reality, crazy like a fox, exposing the arrogance, stupidity, and hypocrisy of these "authorities" by his seemingly idiotic behavior. In spite of the indignities to which Švejk is subjected, his optimism manages to emerge indestructible and triumphant. He is, therefore, not only a single individual, but also the symbol of the common people and their resistance to a war whence they can derive no benefit, but only suffering.

Each of the six short pieces which comprise the *Suite* represents a general idea of theme which reoccurs throughout the book, rather than any specific episodes. Thus, the *Overture* is a character sketch of Švejk, the good-natured common man, the genial collector of homeless dogs. The *Lament* represents the element of sadness and seriousness that underlies many of the episodes, such as the outbreak of war. The *March*, of course, represents the soldier's chief means of getting from place to place – Schweik does quite a bit of it. The *War Dance* represents the "authorities," both civilian and military, and their fanatical pounding of the war drum. The *Pastorale* is heavy and oppressive, depicting the countryside in time of war. The *Finale* is Švejk's optimism, triumphant and indestructible in the end.

Program Note by Robert Kurka

# PERSONNEL

## SUITE - HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT ENSEMBLE

### CLARINET

Bradley Pipenger

### CORNET

Michael Banewicz

### VIOLIN

Ian Salmon

### BASSOON

Joshua Malison

### TROMBONE

Eddie Steenstra

### CONTRABASS

John Romey

### PERCUSSION

Elayne Harris

## THE GOOD SOLDIER SCHWEIK SUITE ENSEMBLE

### PICCOLO

Mira Shifrin

### CLARINET

Erik Jönsson

### HORN

Dana Barrett  
Andrew Welkie  
William Llarch

### FLUTE

Andrea Reges

### BASS CLARINET

Bradley Pipenger

### OBOE

Alana Rosen

### BASSOON

Joshua Malison

### TRUMPET

Brian Binder  
Michael Banewicz

### ENGLISH HORN

Andrew Whitson

### CONTRABASSOON

Margaret Oswald

### TROMBONE

Eddie Steenstra

### PERCUSSION

Emma Alban  
Elayne Harris