Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat*:
A Facsimile of the Sketches

Edited by Maureen A. Carr
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Circumstances Surrounding the Collaboration

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) and the Swiss writer Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947) became acquainted during the years Stravinsky lived near Lausanne, Switzerland (1914–20). In his autobiography, Stravinsky wrote about his collaborations with Ramuz:

I saw a great deal of Ramuz at this time, as we were working together at the French translation of the Russian text of my Poétique, Revue de la Chose, and Renard. I initiated him into the peculiarities and noble deeds of the Russian language, and the difficulties presented by its tonal score. I was surrounded by his insights, his intuitive ability, and his gift for transforming the spirit and poetry of the Russian folk poems into a language so remote and diffused as French. Ramuz helped Stravinsky with the French translation of texts for other vocal works, as well as for the ballets Cendrillon, Les Noces (short score 1916–17). In 1929, Ramuz would record his memories of Stravinsky in Souvenirs sur Stravinsky (1882–1969) and the painter René Auberson (1872–1957)—planned an artistic collaboration that would result in a small theater piece capable of being transported easily for performances at different locations. Werner Reinhardt (1884–1951) of Winterthur provided the financial support that these struggling artists needed. Stravinsky and Ramuz developed a scenario that limited the number of participants to a small ensemble of seven musicians, two actors, and three narrators, thus making it practical for a touring group. About his work on Histoire du soldat during the early part of 1918, Stravinsky recalled in his autobiography that "my uninterrupted collaboration with Ramuz was the more precious to me because our friendship, growing closer and closer, helped me to bear the difficult times through which I was living, sickened and, as a patriot, desperately humiliated, as I was by the monstrous Peace of Brest-Litovsk." The outcome of their artistic efforts culminated in a performance of Histoire du soldat at the Théâtre Municipal de Lausanne on 28 September 1918, conducted by Ansermet.

Histoire du soldat is "Stravinsky's pivotal work" because it reflects his continued preoccupation with his past while at the same time foreshadowing compositional techniques he would develop in later works. One retrospective feature involves the dramatic adaptation of a Russian folk tale; other traits are associated with polyphonic allusions to his earlier works, such as the Poétique (1907), Three Easy Pieces (1914–1915), and Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914). In spite of Stravinsky's tendency to muse over aspects of his Russian heritage or to use earlier compositional techniques as he was writing Histoire, he nevertheless shaped and reshaped his musical vocabulary in a more linear fashion that prefigures his approach in such later works as the Octet (1922–23), Duo concertant (1926–27), and Duo concertant (1932). But the uniqueness of Histoire du soldat results from the distinctive ways in which Stravinsky used musical means to illustrate the soldier's struggle between two worlds. Stravinsky's musical imagination is fueled by the interaction with Ramuz, but neither collaborator overpowers the other. Because the text is narrated rather than set to music, composer and author both retain their artistic autonomy. The musical results would have been much different had Stravinsky underlined the entire text. By maintaining their artistic autonomy, each of the artists was free to experiment.

As Ansermet has pointed out, the theatrical basis for Histoire "is diametrically opposed to the Wagnerian theory of blending various forms of art." He concluded that although the author and the composer combined certain elements of the story with the music, they never really mixed these elements. In his unedited "Petit avertissement," which was reprinted in the program that accompanied the seventieth-anniversary performance of Histoire du soldat in 1988, Ramuz differentiated between linguistic sounds and musical sounds. It is as though the collaborators were weaving two strands, the spoken text and
the music. Each would take turns in coming to the forefront. In Rameau's words, "[The text and the music are conceived with each existing on its own level . . . the text and the music interlace by alternate exchanges of focus." Curiously, Adorno also acknowledged the interaction between the text and the music: "the score leads to the very threshold of consciousness of the state of affairs expressed in the text."^{14}

**Does Histoire du soldat Represent Stravinsky's Transition to Neo-classicism?**

**Parallel to Picasso, Stravinsky had launched neo-classicism in the early 1920s. But unlike Picasso he practised the style for more than three decades.**

—Theodor W. Adorno, Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music (1992)

The question of where Histoire du soldat belongs among Stravinsky's works in terms of neo-classicism is difficult to answer with certainty. For example, Adorno concludes that "the compositions grouped around Histoire du Soldat and belonging to the First World War could easily be labeled infantile; traces of this development, incidentally, go all the way back to Petrouchka."^{15} In Adorno's opinion, "no distinction between infantile and neo-classical works can be discerned."^{16} The implication is that Stravinsky's neo-classical works are infantile.

Despite the level of inconsistency in his assessment of Stravinsky's music, Adorno does provide some useful commentaries on the interpretation of Histoire in his Philosophy of Modern Music (some of these were acknowledged earlier). Adorno discusses Stravinsky's manipulation of the elements of music for Histoire into "a second language of dream-logic regression." He then compares the "new language of Histoire to the 'dream monologues which the surrealists constructed out of the residue of the wakeful day.'" To Adorno's way of thinking, "the basic strain of neo-classicism is not far removed from surrealism..." The implication is that neo-classicism is the eventual outcome of Stravinsky's surrealism.

After generalizing on the "synthetic and primitive aspects of Stravinsky's 'second language,'" Adorno excludes the two rags from the "dream-process of remembrance," since these passages do not participate in the alienation of the oral language.^{17} Adorno considers the Rags for Eleven Instruments, the Piano Rag Blues, and the "Tango" and "Ragtime" from Histoire du soldat among his most successful pieces.^{18} Stravinsky's other "successful" works, according to Adorno, include the Concerto for String Quartet (1920) and the Octet (1922-23), "because they preserve the aggressive fragmentation of infantilism without deforming a model in any obvious way. They neither parody nor celebrate." They include fragmentation (a characteristic of Stravinsky's infantilism) but do not conflict with classical models, so Adorno finds it difficult to classify the Concerto and the Octet as "infantile or neo-classical."^{19} Adorno is of the opinion that Stravinsky's neo-classicism practices the old custom of joining brokenly disparate models together. It is traditional music combed in the wrong direction."^{20} The implication is that these so-called successful works are traditional and therefore are not neo-classical.

Furthermore, Adorno says that "Histoire du soldat seems as fresh as ever because the modernity of dull aimlessness formulated at the beginning or in the soldier's voice, has only revealed itself fully today."^{21} The implication is that Histoire du soldat was ahead of its time and thus, in 1918, futuristic.

Using Adorno's observations as a backdrop for defining my position regarding where Histoire du soldat belongs among Stravinsky's works in terms of infantilism, primitiveism, surrealism, and neo-classicism, it is my opinion that Histoire du soldat is a transitional work that incorporates characteristics of all four of these "isms." Histoire’s "Valse," "Petit choral," and "Grand choral" are futurist and perhaps neo-classical, or, in Adorno's words, "traditional music combed in the wrong direction."^{22} In that they imitate the language of their classical models.

The music of other sections of Histoire reflects Stravinsky's unique ability to integrate aspects of his primitivism as the basis for what Adorno defines as surrealism. If one agrees with Adorno's definition of success, then, it is clear that the "Tango" and "Ragtime" are neither primitive nor neo-classical but successful and traditional because they adhere to traditional language.

"The motivic network that Stravinsky created in Histoire supports the narrative and integrates primitive compositional techniques from his Russian past with more futurist techniques that would continue to evolve in his future works. It is for these reasons that I interpret Histoire as a transitional work that is implicitly futurist for its time. Although Adorno might have agreed with this assessment, he would likely have denied that Stravinsky "would ever have liberated himself from his unfreedom."^{23}

**Dates in the Manuscript of the Conductor's Score**

Table 1, based on the inventory at the Sadtbibliothek Winterthur (SBW), is a summary of the dates that Stravinsky inscribed into the conductor's score.^{24} At the end of each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 September 1918</td>
<td>Lusanne.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table lists each section in the order in which it was performed with a transcription of the dates for each section; it shows the dates exactly as written by Stravinsky and the number of the page where Stravinsky signed the score. Titles from the Chester edition (1987) are included in square brackets.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Outline of the manuscript of the conductor’s score.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcription of the title for each section in the order performed. (Titles in square brackets are those of the Chester edition [1987].)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Soldat au ruisseau [Petits airs au bord du ruisseau]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avant la lente du rideau du second tableau [Pastorale]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fin du 3ème tableau et de la 1ère partie [Petits airs au bord du ruisseau (Reprise)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction pour la deuxième partie [Marche du soldat] [Marche du soldat (Reprise)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marche Royale [Marche royale]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerto Piccolo [Petit concert]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le soldat et la princesse [Pavane (tango) [Tango] Vale [Vale]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragtime [Ragtime]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danse du diable [Volonté du Soldat] [Dance du diable]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amour au 5ème tableau [Scène de la fille guérisse] [Petit choral]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Couplets du Diable] [Couplets du diable]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charal (le soldat et la princesse) [Grand choral]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table of Sketches Organized by Grouping

The musical origins of *Histoire du soldat* are intertwined with the preliminary musical sketches for "Antony and Cleopatra," a collaboration between Igor Stravinsky and André Gide that was abandoned. Stravinsky did not follow a logical sequence within the 263 sketch pages, and it seems likely that he moved back and forth among groups of sketch pages. Had he used larger sheets of paper, he might have employed the kaleidoscopic approach found in the sketching process for earlier pieces such as *Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* and for later works such as *Apollon Musagète* and *Oedipus Rex*.

What follows is a description of each facsimile page. An explanation of the "Criteria for Establishing the Ordering of the Sketches" is given in the Introduction (pp. 10–11). The columns of the following table include: (1) Figure numbers; (2) Group or Title; (3) Description of entries on sketch page; (4) Chester 1987 edition, page, measures; and (5) English translations of multiple languages that are found on the sketch pages, including comments about the literary sketches by Alain Rohat of the Centre de recherches sur les lettres romaines, Université de Lausanne (CRLR). In that column, translations are given within quotation marks and enclosed in square brackets; other editorial comments are enclosed in square brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.</th>
<th>Scene or group</th>
<th>Description of entries on sketch page</th>
<th>Chester 1987 edition</th>
<th>Translations and comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1-1.46 | Group 1 | "Antony & Cleopatra," separate pages and some bound pages; 46 images (PSS) | 5 | 71–80 | C. Cl. (Caisse Caisse, "Snake Drum")
| | 1 | Marche du soldat | The passage for "3 Trombes" (3 trompettes with percussion suggests orchestration that could have been intended for "Antony and Cleopatra.") | 5 | 71–80 | C. Cl. (Caisse Caisse, "Snake Drum")
| | | | An earlier sketch for this melody appears in Fig. 1.5 with a primitive sketch at the bottom of the page starting on D. | | | Gr. C. (Grosse Caisse, "Bass Drum")
| | | | A further evolution of this melody occurs in Fig. 1.10 in two voices, at the bottom of the page, transposed to A. | | | |
| 1.2 | Valse | This is one of the earliest sketches for the opening measures of the "Valse." A more primitive sketch, also entitled "Valse," appears in a file associated with sketchbook IV, Fig. 7.3, that could be related to *Histoire*. | 54 | 1–9 | |
| 1.3 | Marche triomphale du diable | At the bottom of this page is a passage from the opening measures of the "Marche triomphale du diable." The melodic line sounds a minor third lower than the printed edition (scored for trombone and violin). Other fragments occur in different layers and predict the "Diasse du diable." | 75 | 1–3 | |
Table of Sketches Organized by Scene in the Published Edition

The musical origins of *Histoire du soldat* are intertwined with the preliminary musical sketches for "Antony and Cleopatra," a collaboration between Igor Stravinsky and Andrei Gide that was abandoned. Stravinsky did not follow a logical sequence within the 263 sketch pages, and it seems likely that he moved back and forth among groups of sketch pages. Had he used larger sheets of paper, he might have employed the kaleidoscopic approach found in the sketching process for earlier pieces such as *Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* and for later works such as *Persephone* and *Oedipus*. What follows is a description of each facsimile page, organized by scene in the 1987 edition by Chester Music, edited by John Carewe, percussion part transcribed and edited by James Blades. The columns of the following table include: (1) Figure number, (2) Group or Title, (3) Description of entries on sketch page, (4) Chester 1987 edition, page, measures; and (5) English translations of multiple languages that are found on the sketch pages, including comments about the literary sketches by Alain Roche of the Centre de recherches sur les lettres romandes, Université de Lausanne (CRLR). In that column, translations are given within quotation marks and enclosed in square brackets; other editorial comments are enclosed in square brackets.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Mm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.70 | Marche du soldat | • Opening measures (m.m. 1–4); top line and cadence coincide with the printed edition; bottom line in the sketch is a minor second lower than the printed editions.  
• The section that is crossed out relates to m.m. 6–8. | 1 | 1–4 |                           |                         |
| 4.51 | Marche du soldat | • "3" at top right.  
• Passage at the top of the page (right) is a primitive sketch for the opening measures. | 1 | 1–3 |                           |                         |
| 4.57 | Marche du soldat | • The last entry relates to m.m. 1–4. | 1 | 1–4 |                           |                         |
| 4.58 | Marche du soldat | • At the bottom of the page, further experimentation with the opening measures. | 1 | 1–4 | ヘミヨト ("The beginning") |                         |
| 4.59 | Marche du soldat | • The last two passages are related to the opening measures. | 1 | 1–4 |                           |                         |
| 4.52 | Marche du soldat | • "4" at top left.  
• Primitive sketches for the opening measures; related to passage at the top of the previous page (Fig. 4.51) on the right side. | 1 | 1–8 |                           |                         |