

Music in Facsimile

Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*:

A Facsimile of the Sketches

Edited by Maureen A. Carr

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# Igor Stravinsky and Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz

## A Study of Their Artistic Collaboration for *Histoire du soldat* (1918)

Maureen A. Carr

*Histoire du soldat . . . reveals itself as the true focal point of Stravinsky's work in that, in the composition of the Ramuz text, the score leads to the very threshold of consciousness of the state of affairs expressed in the text.*  
—Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (1973)

### Circumstances Surrounding the Collaboration

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) and the Swiss writer Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947)<sup>1</sup> 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 *Pribaoutki*, *Berceuses du Chat*, and *Renard*. I initiated him into the peculiarities and subtle shades of the Russian language, and the difficulties presented by its tonic accent. I was astonished at his insight, his intuitive ability, and his gift for transferring the spirit and poesy of the Russian folk poems to a language so remote and different as French.<sup>2</sup>

Ramuz helped Stravinsky with the French translation of texts for other vocal works, as well as for the ballet/cantata *Les Noces* (short score 1914–17). (In 1929, Ramuz would record his memories of Stravinsky in *Souvenirs sur Igor Stravinsky*).<sup>3</sup>

In 1917, Stravinsky, Ramuz, and some members of their circle of friends—specifically, the conductor Ernest Ansermet (1883–1969) and the painter René Auberjonois (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 Reinhart (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.<sup>4</sup>

About his work on *Histoire du soldat*<sup>5</sup> during the early part of 1918, Stravinsky recalled in his *Autobiography* that “my interrupted 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.”<sup>6</sup> The outcome of their artis-

tic 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”<sup>7</sup> 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 folktale; other traits are associated with stylistic allusions to his earlier works, such as the *Pastorale* (1907), *Three Easy Pieces* (1914–1915), and *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (1914).<sup>8</sup> In spite of Stravinsky’s tendency to muse over aspects of his Russian heritage or to use earlier previous 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), *Oedipus Rex* (1926–27),<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 underlaid 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 Ramuz's words, "[T]he text and the music are conceived with each existing on its own level. . . . the text and the music intersect by alternate exchanges of focus."<sup>13</sup> Curiously, Adorno also acknowledged the intersection between the text and the music: "the score leads to the very threshold of consciousness of the state of affairs expressed in the text."<sup>14</sup>

### Does *Histoire du soldat* Represent Stravinsky's Transition to Neoclassicism?

*Parallel to Picasso, Stravinsky had launched neoclassicism 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 neoclassicism 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*."<sup>15</sup> In Adorno's opinion, "no distinction between infantile and neoclassic works can be discerned."<sup>16</sup> *The implication is that Stravinsky's neoclassical 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-like regression." He then compares the "new language" of *Histoire* to the "dream montages which the surrealists constructed out of the residue of the wakeful day."<sup>17</sup> To Adorno's way of thinking, "the basic stratum of neoclassicism is not far removed from surrealism."<sup>18</sup> *The implication is that neoclassicism 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 tonal language.<sup>19</sup> Adorno considers the *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, the *Piano Rag Music*, and the "Tango" and "Ragtime" from *Histoire du soldat* among his most successful pieces.<sup>20</sup> Stravinsky's other "successful" works, according to Adorno, include the *Concertino* 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 *Concertino* and the *Octet* as "infantile or neoclassic."<sup>21</sup> Adorno is of the opinion that "Stravinsky's neoclassicism practices the old custom of joining brokenly disparate models together. It is traditional music combed in the wrong direction."<sup>22</sup> *The implication is that these so-called successful works are traditional and therefore are not neoclassical.*

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 violin, has only revealed itself fully today."<sup>23</sup> *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, primitivism, surrealism, and neoclassicism, 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 futuristic and perhaps neoclassical, or, in Adorno's words, "traditional music combed in the wrong direction,"<sup>24</sup> in that they alienate 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 neoclassical 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 futuristic 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 futuristic 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."<sup>25</sup>

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

Table 1, based on the inventory at the Stadtbibliothek Winterthur (SBW), is a summary of the dates that Stravinsky inscribed into the conductor's score<sup>26</sup> at the end of each section. This score was used by Ernest Ansermet at the first performance, on 28 September 1918 in Lausanne. The table lists each section in the order in which it was performed with a transcription of the titles 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 I. OUTLINE OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE CONDUCTOR'S SCORE.

Transcription of the title for each section in the order performed. (Titles in square brackets are those of the Chester edition[1987].)	Exact page numbers of the manuscript of the Conductor's score where Stravinsky's signature appears. (Please note that some sections are not signed.)	Exact dates exactly as written by Stravinsky
Introduction. Marche du soldat [Marche du soldat]	p. 16	Igor Strawinsky 12/25 Juin 1918
Le Soldat au ruisseau [Petits airs au bord du ruisseau]	p. 22	Igor Strawinsky 6-IV-18
Avant la levée du rideau du second tableau [Pastorale]	p. 53	Igor Strawinsky 10 Juin 1918
Fin du 3ème tableau et de la 1ère partie [Petits airs au bord du ruisseau (Reprise)]		
Introduction pour la deuxième partie (Marche du soldat) [Marche du soldat (Reprise)]	p. 58	5 Août 1918 Morges
Marche Royale [Marche royale]	p. 85	23 Mai 5 Juin 1918 Igor Strawinsky
Concerto Piccolo [Petit concert]	p. 120	Igor Strawinsky 10 Août 1918 Morges
Le soldat et la princesse Prélude (tango) [Tango]	p. 126	Igor Strawinsky 16 Juillet 1918
Valse [Valse]		
Ragtime [Ragtime]		
Danse du diable (Violon du Soldat) [Danse du diable]		2 Sept. 1918 Morges Igor Strawinsky
Annexe au 6ème tableau (Scène de la fille guérie) [Petit choral]	p. 186b	Igor Strawinsky 23 Sept. 1918 Morges
[Couplets du Diable] [Couplets du diable]	p. 186f	Igor Strawinsky 20 Sept. 1918
Choral (le soldat et la princesse) [Grand choral]	p. 194	I. Strawinsky 12 Mai 1918
Marche triomphale du Diable [Marche triomphale du diable]	p. 206	Igor Strawinsky 12 Sept. 1918 Morges

# 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 *Perséphone* and *Orpheus*.

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 Rochat of the Centre de recherches sur les lettres romande, 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.

Fig.	Scene or group	Description of entries on sketch page	Chester 1987 edition Page Mm.		Translations and comments
1.1–1.46	Group 1	"Antony & Cleopatra," separate pages and some bound pages; 46 images (PSS)			
1.1	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The passage for "3 TROMBE" (3 trumpets) with percussion suggests orchestration that could have been intended for "Antony and Cleopatra."</li> <li>An earlier sketch for this melody appears in Fig. 1.5 with a primitive sketch at the bottom of the page starting on D.</li> <li>A further evolution of this melody occurs in Fig. 1.10 in two voices, at the bottom of the page, transposed to A.</li> </ul>	5	71–80	C. Cl. [Caisse Caire, "Snare Drum"] Gr. C. [Grosse Caisse, "Bass Drum"]
1.2	Valse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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. 7.2, that could be related to <i>Histoire</i>.</li> </ul>	54	1–9	
1.3	Marche triomphale du diable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 "Danse du diable."</li> </ul>	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 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 *Perséphone* and *Orpheus*.

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 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 Rochar of the Centre de recherches sur les lettres romande, 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.

Fig.	Scene	Description of entries on sketch page	Chester 1987 edition		Translations and comments
			Page	Mm.	
4.70	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening measures (mm. 1–4); top line and cadence coincide with the printed edition; bottom line in the sketch is a minor second lower than the printed edition.</li> <li>The section that is crossed out relates to mm. 6–8.</li> </ul>	1	1–4	
4.51	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"3" at top right.</li> <li>Passage at the top of the page (right) is a primitive sketch for the opening measures.</li> </ul>	1	1–3	
4.57	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last entry relates to mm. 1–4.</li> </ul>	1	1–4	
4.58	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the bottom of the page, further experimentation with the opening measures.</li> </ul>	1	1–4	Начало ["The beginning"]
4.59	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last two passages are related to the opening measures.</li> </ul>	1	1–4	
4.52	Marche du soldat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"4" at top left.</li> <li>Primitive sketches for the opening measures; related to passage at the top of the previous page (Fig. 4.51) on the right side.</li> </ul>	1	1–8	