Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

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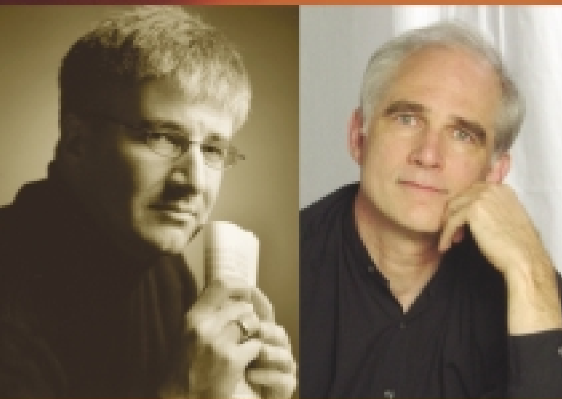

From Bach to Carter

January 28, 2006

Bach
Carter
Varèse
Stravinsky

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley

Berkeley Symphony Orchestra

2005–06 Season

Kent Nagano, Music Director
George Thomson, Conductor

8:00 pm, Saturday, January 28, 2006
Zellerbach Hall

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
Concerto for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos, and basso continuo (violone and harpsichord) in G major, BWV. 1048, "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 3

[Allegro]—Adagio
Allegro

ELLIOTT CARTER
Piano Concerto
I. Fantastico
II. Molto Giusto (Orchestra); Quasi Rubato (Concertino)

Jerry Kuderna, *piano*

— INTERMISSION —

EDGARD VARÈSE
Octandre
I. Assez lent
II. Très vif et nerveux
III. Grave—Animé et jubilatoire—Subitement Très vif et nerveux—Animé et jubilatoire

IGOR STRAVINSKY
Suite from *The Firebird* (*L'oiseau de feu*)
Introduction
The Firebird and Its Dance—Variation
Round Dance of the Princesses (*Khorovode*)
Infernal Dance of King Kashchey
Berceuse (Lullaby): Andante
Finale: Lento maestoso—Allegro non troppo—Maestoso

Program Notes

"Brandenburg" Concerto No. 3, Concerto for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos, and basso continuo (violone and harpsichord) in G major, BWV. 1048

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685–1750)

J. S. Bach was born on March 21, 1685, in Eisenach, in what is now the state of Thuringia in east-central Germany. He died on July 28, 1750, in Leipzig. The third of the so-called "Brandenburg" concertos attained its final form during Bach's tenure as Kapellmeister in the principality of Anhalt-Cöthen, although the work is probably a revision of a concerto (now lost) written while Bach served in Weimar between 1714 and 1717. The date of the work's first performance is not known; it was not published until 1850 (although some earlier manuscript copies exist), when C.F. Peters of Leipzig issued both score and parts. Bach's score calls for 3 violins, 3 violas, 3 cellos, and basso continuo (consisting of violone and harpsichord). Duration ca. 11 min.

In March of 1719, Johann Sebastian Bach traveled to Berlin to take delivery of a splendid new harpsichord for his then-current employer, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. While in the Prussian capital, Bach would no doubt have managed to get himself presented at court, where he would probably have performed before some of the more musically-minded members of the royal family. Presumably, one family member, Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg, was moved to request that Bach send him some compositions for his own library.

It took Bach two years to comply with Christian Ludwig's request. On March 24, 1721, he put the finishing touches on an elaborate manuscript. This beautifully copied-out score (titled *Six Concertos with Diverse Instruments*) contains a half-dozen previously-composed instrumental concertos together with a dedication to the Margrave. Bach's dedication, written in passable courtly French, runs in part:

> Your Highness deigned to honor me with the command to send Your Highness some pieces of my composition: I have then . . . taken the liberty of rendering my most humble duty . . . with the present concertos, which I have adapted to several instruments.

It is not known whether the Margrave thanked Bach for the gift, or whether the works were even played. After the Margrave's death, his library (including the manuscript) was sold, eventually becoming part of what is now the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (German State Library) in Berlin. During the revival of interest in Bach's music in the 19th century, the manuscript was published for the first time and one of Bach's biographers named the set after their dedicatee. To this day, the works are known as the "Brandenburg Concertos."

The composition dates of the concertos are not known. Based on stylistic features, it seems most likely that they originated during Bach's years as Court Organist and Chamber Musician to the Duke of Weimar (1708–1714), when Bach first got to know the Italian concerto style and in particular the music of Antonio Vivaldi. It also seems likely that

Bach, who presided over an instrumental ensemble of extraordinary ability in his capacity as Kapellmeister to the prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, tested and revised the concertos before presenting them to the Margrave.

It was Bach's usual practice, when gathering together collections of his works for presentation or publication, to treat his subject encyclopedically—in other words, to try to demonstrate everything it was possible to achieve within a genre. The "Brandenburg" Concertos are no exception to this habit. The six works exhibit an astonishing variety of instrumentation, as well as approaches to texture and formal considerations. No two concertos use the same orchestration, nor the same formal procedure.

In the past 250 years or so, the term "concerto" has come to mean "an orchestral work featuring a solo instrument." Yet from the birth of the genre in the early 17th century up through Bach's time the term was used for pieces with a great variety of configurations. A common arrangement was the *concerto grosso,* in which a small group of instruments (the *concertino*) was pitted against the full orchestra (the *ripieno*). Other, more flexible arrangements were also possible, including ones in which the various members of the orchestra take solos in turn.

The third Brandenburg concerto is scored for three groups of three string instruments each, composed of violins, violas, and cellos, respectively, supported by a *basso continuo* group. Almost certainly, Bach envisioned a single player per part, and that is how the work will be performed tonight (although modern orchestras often employ larger forces). Furthermore, as Bach's son recorded that it was his father's habit to play viola in an ensemble, in order to be "in the middle of the harmony" (when not directing from the keyboard), Maestro Thomson will lead tonight's performance from the viola section.

Bach treats the ensemble in a dazzling variety of ways. Sometimes he treats each trio of instruments as a unit, creating a texture stratified by range. At other times, he treats one of the trios as if it were *a concertino* group (a soloist with two accompanying instruments) and the rest of the ensemble acts as the *ripieno.* In the course of the piece, every one of the string parts gets the opportunity to shine as soloist. Then occasionally, the entire orchestra coalesces into a single unit, playing in unison to emphasize a particular point of arrival.

One unusual feature of the work is the lack of a proper slow movement. In Bach's manuscript there are simply two chords marked "Adagio" between the two fast movements. These are often interpreted to signify that an improvisation was called for, but Bach placed a fermata (or "hold" sign) over the second chord, rather than over the first, which would be the normal cue for a cadenza. In any case, it is up to each performer to decide how to deal with the situation.

The first movement is based on a simple neighbor-note motive (main note—step below—main note) which chugs along, providing an inexorable rhythmic drive. Bach avoids monotony by shifting the motive frequently between upbeat and downbeat positions. When in the downbeat position, the motive has a tail that includes wide leaps that get bigger as the piece progresses. At the movement's climax, the leaps extend to wide-ranging arpeggios, outlining a dissonant chord over a dominant pedal. When that chord finally resolves, the journey back to tonic begins and soon the opening melody is heard in its original guise.

The final movement is cast as a fleet *perpetuum mobile* that pauses only at the ends of each half (each of which is repeated). At the start, the instruments enter canonically, but this turns out to be a ruse; there is no strict counterpoint here. The rushing sixteenth-note motive is paired with an innocuous-seeming repeated-note countersubject. Soon after the start of the second half, a new, lighthearted theme is introduced. Each of its occurrences is marked *piano,* as if to say "this is just a bit off the subject, but . . . ." In the course of the second half, the repeated-note motive elbows its way to the foreground, causing the original sixteenth-note tune to throw up its hands in despair. This effectively brings the work to an end.

Piano Concerto

ELLIOTT CARTER (b. 1908)

Elliott Carter was born in New York City on December 11, 1908. His Piano Concerto was commissioned by the pianist Jacob Lateiner by way of the Ford Foundation. The work was begun in 1963 while Carter was in residence at the American Academy in Rome and was completed in Berlin during September of 1965. Carter dedicated the Piano Concerto to Igor Stravinsky on the occasion of his 85th birthday. The world premiere took place at Symphony Hall, Boston, on January 6, 1967, with Lateiner as soloist accompanied by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf conducting. The work is scored for two ensembles: a chamber group (the concertino*), which includes the piano soloist, and the customary large orchestra (the* ripieno*). The* ripieno *is scored for 2 flutes (both doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani (2 players using 6 instruments), and strings The* concertino *is made up of the solo piano, flute, English horn, bass clarinet, violin solo, viola solo, cello solo, and bass solo. Duration ca. 24 min.*

Elliott Carter is considered one of the leading American composers of the latter half of the 20th century, and continues his remarkable creative activity into the 21st century. Well into his nineties now, he remains a vibrant force on the contemporary musical scene. Born in New York City, he had piano lessons as a child but otherwise showed no particular talent for music. In his teens, he became interested in modernism as expressed in the arts in general, but started to show a special attraction to music. He often attended concerts of new music in the company of Charles Ives, who became something of a mentor. Carter attended Harvard University, but felt its music program was inadequate to his new-found goal of becoming a composer, so he took supplemental courses at the Longy School of Music, also in Cambridge. After earning an M.A. in music from Harvard in 1932, he went to France, where he spent three years studying with the famed teacher Nadia Boulanger at the École Normale de Musique. Here, at last, he felt that he was getting the training in compositional technique he needed. Since his return to the States, he has held a number of academic posts, with his longest tenure on the faculty of the Juilliard School (1964–1984).

Carter's voluminous work-list includes compositions in a wide range of vocal, chamber, and orchestral genres, and he has received commissions from most of the world's major orchestras. His many honors include two Pulitzer Prizes (1960 and 1973) and the Sibelius Medal (1961). Among his recent works are a Clarinet Concerto (1997), *Symphonia: sum fluxae pretium spei* (1998), an Oboe Quartet for Heinz Holliger (2001), a Cello Concerto for Yo-Yo Ma (2002, heard at these concerts last season), *Dialogues* for piano and orchestra (2003), and his first completed opera, *What Next?,* which premiered in Berlin in 1999 and received its West Coast

premiere in a November 2000 Berkeley Symphony concert performance. As part of the buildup to Carter's centenary, earlier this month the Barbican Centre in London hosted a weekend-long celebration of Carter's music, called "Get Carter!," with the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Over the course of his long career, Elliott Carter has revisited the concerto form many times. He has said, "What has always interested me in my concertos are the possibilities for strong contrasts." He has always been stimulated by the dramatic potential inherent in the juxtaposition of the mammoth orchestras of the 20th century and the lone voice of the soloist. In the case of the Piano Concerto, Carter sought to depict a struggle "between an individual of many changing moods and thoughts and an orchestra treated more or less monolithically—massed effect pitted against protean figures and expressions." In an interview at the time of the Concerto's premiere, Carter provided this overview of the plan of the work:

> The piano is born, then the orchestra teaches it what to say. The piano learns. Then it learns the orchestra is wrong. They fight and the piano wins—not triumphantly, but with a few weak, sad notes—sort of Charlie Chaplin humorous.

Carter does not leave this rebellious protagonist (the solo piano) to fend for itself. In this work (as in the Cello Concerto) Carter is keenly aware of the difficulty of writing a concerto so the lone soloist can be heard against the backdrop of a large modern orchestra. In this case, the solution is to provide the soloist with a cadre of cohorts: a small ensemble of soloists, who extend the sound of the piano, to help it to stand out from the crowd. In homage to the Baroque genre of the *concerto grosso,* Carter calls this small group the *concertino,* and the full orchestra the *ripieno* (see the essay on Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, p. 15, for more on this subject).

Carter calls for the *concertino* to be set apart, physically, from the *ripieno* onstage (and in fact provides three different seating plans in the score). The personnel of the *concertino* consists (aside from the piano) of seven soloists: three winds and four strings. The *concertino* includes English horn and bass clarinet, which are not present in the *ripieno*; this helps to differentiate the two bodies. Furthermore, says David Schiff in *The Music of Elliott Carter* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998):

> The sonority of the concertino is an idealization of chamber music: sensitive, singing, and with much interplay between instruments. By contrast, the orchestra is an insistent, brutal machine. Individual instrumental colors are repressed in favor of dark heterophonic mixtures . . . .

Schiff goes on to point out that the two groups are distinguished harmonically as well. Working within the context of the twelve-tone chromatic scale, there are twelve unique ways of combining intervals into groups of three. Carter treats each of these groups of three intervals as "chords," and sets aside six of them for the exclusive use of the *concertino,* and allots the other six to the *ripieno* (full orchestra). In addition, in the first movement, each of these chords is associated with a limited number of precise metronome speeds as well as with a specific musical affect.

Musical materials are distributed in a much less stereotyped fashion in the second movement. According to Carter:

> I wanted the second movement to become a very free treatment of materials that in the first movement had been restricted to a more limited pattern of behavior, and to open a broader, more expressive character . . . .

This increased expression manifests itself in a greater role for the piano, and indeed for the entire *concertino.* The piano soloist is an almost continuous presence, stepping aside only to allow other members of the *concertino* to have their say in three cadenzas for bass clarinet, English horn, and flute. In the background, the orchestra keeps up two different sorts of mechanical textures, namely staccato pulses and thick string chords. The two groups live in distinct temporal spaces, further heightening the distinction between them: the orchestra plays in strict time throughout, while the *concertino* employs tempo *rubato,* meaning that it enjoys a degree of freedom from the tyranny of the barline. In the course of the movement, these background processes threaten to overwhelm the soloist, but after one final crisis, the *concertino* breaks free of domination by the *ripieno.* The work ends not with a bang, but a whimper, with a quiet (if equivocal) statement from the piano. Again, in the composer's words:

> The piano doesn't beat the orchestra down. It is victorious by being an individual—if there is a victory. Anyway, the orchestra stops before the piano does. Maybe that's a victory. I don't know.

Octandre

EDGARD VARÈSE (1883–1965)

Edgard Victor Achilles Charles Varèse was born on December 22, 1883 in Paris. He died on November 6, 1965 in New York City. Octandre *was composed in 1923, and was first heard on January 13, 1924, in a performance sponsored by the International Composers Guild (ICG) at the Vanderbilt Theater in New York conducted by E. Robert Schmitz, the work's dedicatee. J. Curwen and Sons of London published* Octandre *in 1924. The piece is scored for eight soloists playing a variety of instruments: flute (alternating with piccolo), oboe, clarinet in B-flat (alternating with clarinet in E-flat), bassoon, horn, trumpet, tenor trombone, and double bass. Duration ca. 7 min.*

Parisian by birth, Edgard Varèse felt his true home to be Burgundy, where he spent much of his childhood. His family moved to Turin in 1893, and in 1903 he struck off on his own to Paris to study music. There his teachers were Albert Roussel (counterpoint and fugue), Vincent d'Indy (conducting), and Charles-Marie Widor (composition). From 1907 to 1915 he divided his time between Paris (where he came to know Claude Debussy) and Berlin, where he made the acquaintance of Ferruccio Busoni and Arnold Schoenberg. In 1915, he moved to New York City, which was to remain his home base for the rest of his life (he became an American citizen in 1926).

Varèse is regarded as one of the more adventurous composers of his generation, and was a pioneer in the field of electronic music. In the 1920s and 1930s he composed music for such newly invented electronic instruments as the theremin and the ondes martenot. In 1933 he tried, and failed, to raise funds to establish a center for electronic music; only after an anonymous donor gave him an Ampex tape recorder in 1953 was he able to pursue his dream of exploring electronic composition in depth. His best-known work from this period is the *Poème électronique,* composed for the Philips pavilion (designed by Le

Corbusier) at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair.

Self-critical and perfectionist, Varèse's output of works is small: only a dozen or so completed compositions survive. As he told an interviewer from the *New York Times* in December 1923:

> I have always been an experimenter. But my experiments go into the wastepaper basket. I give only finished works to the public.

About a month later, Varèse's *Octandre* for eight solo instruments had its premiere (the title refers to the biological term for a flower with eight stamens). *Octandre* is a set of three meticulously crafted miniatures played without a break. The first movement is framed by a plaintive oboe melody that exhibits one of Varèse's chief stylistic characteristics: a penchant for the interval of the minor second (and by octave extension, the minor ninth) and its inversion, the major seventh. The answering clarinet passage employs another melodic gesture characteristic of Varèse, a series of repeated notes. Reducing the melody to a single pitch allows the composer to focus attention on the rhythmic and coloristic aspects of the music. Indeed, the second movement is a fleet scherzo whose interest comes from rhythmic patterns distributed among ever-changing combinations of instrumental colors. As Paul Griffiths has written in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

> Varèse's music is typically composed of parallel streams, each made up of "sound-masses" and silences, but with continuity maintained by the overlapping of the streams.

The third movement opens with a somber introductory passage that leads into a brisk fugal section (the employment of such a traditional form is unusual for Varèse). The fugue subject is then broken into its component parts and subjected to a series of rhythmic transformations, but the original subject returns at the very end to close the work.

Octandre contains many echoes of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring,* though paradoxically reduced to chamber proportions. For example, the oboe melody that opens *Octandre* recalls the high bassoon solo that opens the *Rite.* Some of the metric dislocations heard in the third movement seem to be inspired by "The Glorification of the Chosen One" from Part II of Stravinsky's masterpiece. But Varèse gave to music history as good as he got, and in spite of his small œuvre, he played a large role in the development of the music of the 20th century. A diverse array of later composers, including Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Frank Zappa (who put *Octandre* at the top of his "desert island" music list) count him as a major influence.

Suite from *The Firebird* (*L'oiseau de feu*)

Introduction
The Firebird and Its Dance—Variation
Round Dance of the Princesses (*Khorovode*)
Infernal Dance of King Kashchey
Berceuse (Lullaby): Andante
Finale: Lento maestoso—Allegro non troppo—Maestoso

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky was born in Oranienbaum (now Lomonosov) in Russia on June 17, 1882. He died in New York City on April 6, 1971. He began work on The Firebird *(also known by its Russian title,* Zhar'-ptitsa*) in the autumn of 1909 while staying at the country home of the Rimsky-Korsakov family (even before receiving the commission from Sergei Diaghilev), and completed it early in the spring of 1910 in St. Petersburg. Its premiere took place at the Paris Opera on June 25, 1910 with G. Pierné conducting. The complete ballet is a substantial work, running about 45 minutes. Stravinsky prepared three different concert suites from the complete ballet in 1911, 1919, and 1945. The version heard at tonight's performance dates from 1919. The scoring of this suite (much reduced from the original work) is for 2 flutes (both doubling on piccolo), 2 oboes (second doubling on English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, xylophone, harp, piano, and strings. Duration ca. 23 min.*

In February of 1908, the Paris Opera mounted a spectacular production of Modest Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov,* starring the great Fyodor Chaliapin. Staged and performed entirely by Russians, its huge success brought fame to its guiding genius, the theatrical impresario Sergei Diaghilev. Thus encouraged, Diaghilev resolved to institute a full season of theatrical performances employing the best Russian dancers and musicians in productions created by outstanding Russian visual artists. The new company, called *Les Ballets Russes,* had its debut in May of 1909, and was a smash hit from the very start.

During its first season, Diaghilev relied mostly on preexisting music from the Russian repertory, or potpourris of other composers' music. For example, Stravinsky's first commission from Diaghilev was to orchestrate some piano pieces by Chopin for the ballet *Les Sylphides*—a task he shared with five other composers: Anatoliy Lyadov, Nikolai Tcherepnin, Alexandr Glazunov, Nikolai Sokolov, and Sergei Taneyev. Nevertheless, it was clear from the beginning to Diaghilev and his colleagues that for the fledgling ensemble to make its mark they needed a series of new works. These works would tell stories drawn from Russian folktales and use décors by Russian artists that drew on themes and elements from Russian native art.

The centerpiece of the 1910 season would be a work in a new genre, writes Professor Richard Taruskin of UC Berkeley's Music Department, namely:

> . . . a Russian neonationalist ballet that could take the place of the operas that were no longer economically feasible to produce but that had represented for the French an authentically and seductively exotic Russian art.*

Choosing the subject for the new work was easy; it had to be the Firebird. The Firebird is a prominent figure in Russian folklore. As Professor Taruskin informs us, she was:

> Gorgeous yet enigmatic, a thing of preternatural, elemental freedom, she personified the indifference of beauty to the desires and cares of mankind. In this, she was the very symbol of art-for-art's-sake . . . .

The only problem was that there is no Russian fairy story in which the Firebird takes a major role in the plot. The solution was to create a new folktale, combining features from various stories. Pyotr Potyomkin, a poet in Dighilev's circle, sketched the basic idea for the plot by drawing on a popular poem by Yakov Polonsky, "A Winter Journey." The task of fleshing out this sketch into a full-fledged ballet scenario was assigned to a committee, but the

**Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

bulk of the work seems to have been done by Mikhail Fokine, Diaghilev's choreographer.

The plot, summarized by Stravinsky biographer Eric Walter White, runs as follows:

> A young Prince, Ivan Tsarevich, wanders into [the evil ogre] Kashchey's magic garden at night in pursuit of the Firebird, whom he finds fluttering round a tree bearing golden apples. He captures it and extracts a feather as forfeit before agreeing to let it go. He then meets a group of thirteen maidens and falls in love with one of them, only to find that she and the other twelve maidens are princesses under the spell of Kashchey.
>
> When dawn comes and the princesses have to return to Kashchey's palace, he breaks open the gates to follow them inside; but he is captured by Kashshcey's guardian monsters and is about to suffer the usual penalty of petrifaction, when he remembers the magic feather. He waves it; and at his summons the Firebird appears and reveals to him the secret of Kashchey's immortality [his soul, in the form of an egg, is preserved in a casket]. Opening the casket, Ivan smashes the vital egg, and the ogre immediately expires. His enchantments dissolve, all the captives are freed, and Ivan and his Tsarevna are betrothed with due solemnity.†

[The suite performed this evening contains only about half of the music in the ballet, so not all of these episodes are represented.]

Stravinsky was not Diaghilev's first choice to compose *Firebird.* Diaghilev began by approaching his principal musician, Tcherepnin, who composed several numbers but then abandoned the work. Diaghilev then went to the rest of the composers who had contributed to *Les Sylphides,* one after the other, with no success. Stravinsky, meanwhile, was aware of what was going on, and assumed that at some point Diaghilev would get around to asking him. So confident was he that he began work on the score in October or November of 1909, well before receiving the commission! Finally, Diaghilev decided to entrust the work to the relatively unknown Stravinsky.

The young Igor Fyodorovich certainly rose to the occasion. The dazzling score is a rich amalgam of Russian folk song, exotic harmonies, and brilliant orchestration—the fruits of his labors with Rimsky-Korsakov. Stravinsky sets up different harmonic realms for the different classes of characters. The humans (the prince and the princesses) inhabit a diatonic (if occasionally chromatically inflected) world marked by folksong-like melodies. The music of the magical creatures (including both the Firebird herself and Kashchey) is suffused with chromaticism, indulging in tonality-bending devices such as octatonic scales (another Rimskian trademark) and tritones.

This is laid out at the very opening of the ballet, in the brief Introduction. The ominous figure in the low strings is the motive representing the Firebird herself: a descending melodic tritone containing a major third and two half-steps. After reaching the bottom, the figure reverses itself and rises, this time incorporating a minor third. This figure repeats as an ostinato, enabling us to hear the oscillation between major and minor thirds more clearly. Eventually, the trombones enter playing a series of major and minor thirds in alternation—this music represents Kashchey. Thus, both major characters from the realm of magic derive their musical material from the same source. In the ballet proper, Stravinsky distinguishes them primarily through instrumental color, giving the Firebird brilliant orchestration (as one would expect) and relegating Kashchey to the nether regions of the orchestra.

The Introduction leads without break into the Firebird's dance. This introduces the title character, who is being pursued by Prince Ivan in Kashchey's enchanted garden. Stravinsky uses dizzyingly arcobatic orchestral gestures (derived from the Firebird's motive) to depict the flight of the bird as she flits through the garden. The glittering orchestration of the passage (employing primarily the upper winds, piano, harp, and plucked strings) matches the radiance of her plumage.

The very beautiful "Round Dance of the Princesses" provides a stately accompaniment to the thirteen young women under Kashchey's spell. Its melody is folk tune of the type known as "khorovod," an ancient Russian dance traditionally performed by women. After a brief introductory passage based on a diatonic version of the Firebird's motive, the solo oboe plays one of the two actual Russian folksongs in the ballet. The end of the tune is a foretaste of the grand melody which is the basis for the Finale. A section in a quicker tempo uses another tune in Russian folk style. The quiet ending leaves one unprepared for the Infernal Dance of King Kashchey, which begins with one of the most ear-splitting chords in all of music. Stravinsky uses syncopated rhythms and snarling brass to depict the violence of the evil ogre and his henchmen. Brief lyrical moments express the sorrows of his suffering victims.

The lyrical Berceuse (Lullaby) features a solo for the bassoon in the style of a Russian folk melody, accompanied by harp and strings. In the second half, Stravinsky combines the diatonic bassoon melody with the chromatic Firebird theme—a magical effect. A series of eerie chromatic string chords lead into the Finale, which represents the general rejoicing after the defeat of Kashchey. A solo horn plays another khorovod, whose text tells of the love of a noble youth for a young girl—appropriate for the betrothal of Prince Ivan and his Tsarevna. The tune is repeated many times, with different harmonizations and orchestrations, building in power through the course of the movement. Just before the climax, the strings interrupt with one last statement of the Firebird's theme, as she blesses the throng before flying away for good. At the folktune's apotheosis, Stravinsky shifts it into the unusual meter of 7/4 and harmonizes it to sound like the ringing of huge bells.

Firebird was an immediate success. It made the reputation of the Ballets Russes, and established Stravinsky as one of the most important composers of the 20th century. His collaboration with Diaghilev continued until the latter's death in 1929, but in the intervening years they produced such masterpieces as *Petruchka* (1911), *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring,* 1913), *Pulcinella* (1920), and *Les Noces* (1923). Eventually, Diaghilev also commissioned works from non-Russian composers, including Claude Debussy *(L'après-midi d'un faune,* 1911, and *Jeux,* 1913), Maurice Ravel (*Daphis et Chloë,* 1913), Erik Satie (*Parade,* 1917) and Manuel de Falla (*Il tricorno,* 1919).

As the years passed, Stravinsky came to resent the popularity of *Firebird,* although he conducted more than one thousand performances of it in his lifetime. But still he worried that the success of *Firebird* overshadowed his later accomplishments. "And, oh yes, to complete the picture," he later wrote, "I was once addressed by a man in an American railway dining car, and quite seriously, as 'Mr. Fireberg.' "

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†*Stravinsky: The Composer and his Works.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.