

Share via

# Our Brand New Self-service features

You can now manage your holiday requests\* online, amend some personal details, check out your subscription benefits and sign up to our newsletter bulletins

\* Holiday allowance is only applicable with subscription packages that include newspapers



**THE TIMES**

## Rite of Passage

# One of the greatest scandals of modern culture will be reproduced at the Proms

Published at 12:01AM, July 13 2013

The first performance of Stravinsky’s ballet *The Rite of Spring*, in May 1913, was a riot. Literally. The scandalised audience at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris howled in outrage at the thumping, discordant rhythms. The scandal is among the most significant events in the music of the last century, in which the great Russian composer inaugurated a musical revolution.

The music will be performed tomorrow at the Proms in the most faithful reproduction possible. Stravinsky made many revisions to his score. François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles, a French conductor and orchestra, have painstakingly reconstructed Stravinsky’s original orchestration. They will be performing it on original instruments, with exactly the orchestra that the composer specified. They will thereby be paying homage to a great work by one of the great cultural figures of the modern age.

Stravinsky scored his ballet for a large orchestra. It depicts a pagan spring ritual in the Russia of the Stone Age, concluding with the sacrifice of a virgin. Its rhythms are so discordant that one critic of the original performance termed it “The Massacre of Spring”. The protest at the original performance managed to drown out the music.

In his long career as a composer Stravinsky did not stay with this musical idiom. He swiftly moved on to a sparer approach. But nothing would be the same again. Until *The Rite of Spring*, composers had typically founded rhythm on a stable pattern of beats. Stravinsky used it in irregular sequences, giving a constant sense of movement. It was an immense creative achievement.

Stravinsky was as important to music as his contemporary Picasso was to painting and sculpture. Modern listeners will now be able listen to his art just as Parisians did a century ago, and perhaps more appreciatively.

4 comments

livefyre



Claire Willis

8 people listening

+ Follow
Post comment

Newest | Oldest | Most Recommended



Mrs Julia Pomeroy

1 hour ago

Incredible piece of music, it should be brilliant. However, it is good to hear they are not putting on the ballet as well, that was pretty poor, I read!

Recommend Reply



Henry Percy-Pole

11 hours ago

Oh yeah. The last, and very recent, broadcast by the BBC of The Rite of Spring I heard was barely recognisable as the work I listened to on the odd occasion 50 and more years ago.

There is no way the BBC is going to reproduce the original work tomorrow, since it would define the prevailing work as clearly a different composition. It is just going to be a further progression in the shameless misrepresentation of these works.

2 Recommend Reply



putneytony

2 hours ago

@Henry Percy-Pole What has the BBC to do with this? I know the BBC runs the Proms but the conductor

and orchestra are nothing to do with the beeb.

1  [Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

**Peter Evans**

12 hours ago

It doesn't half grip you!

[Recommend](#) [Reply](#)

Livefyre

© Times Newspapers Limited 2013 | Version 4.6.0.0(86651)

Registered in England No. 894646 Registered office:

3 Thomas More Square, London, E98 1XY

[My Account](#) | [RSS](#) | [Classified advertising](#) | [Display advertising](#) | [The Times Whisky Club](#) | [Encounters Dating](#) | [Sunday Times Wine Club](#) | [Privacy & Cookie Policy](#) | [Syndication](#) | [Site Map](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Contact us](#) | [iPhone](#) | [Android smartphone](#) | [Blackberry](#) | [Windows phone](#) | [Android tablet](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Kindle Fire](#) | [Place an announcement in The Times](#) | [The Times Bookshop](#)