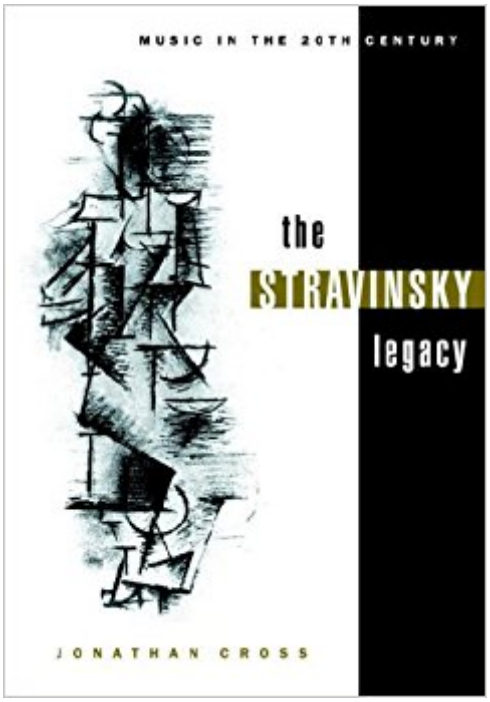
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The Stravinsky Legacy (Music In The Twentieth Century)



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Synopsis

The music of Igor Stravinsky has had a profound impact on the development of twentieth-century music. In this book, Jonathan Cross explores the technical and aesthetic legacy of Stravinsky in relation to a broad range of composers, from VarÃƒÂ¨se to Andriessen, from Messiaen to Birtwistle. He also proposes a reexamination of Stravinsky's own neoclassical music and Theodor Adorno's notorious critique of Stravinsky. This book is part history, part analysis, part aesthetics, and will be of value to anyone who takes an interest in the music of our time.

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Customer Reviews

"...The Stravinsky Legacy is a landmark achievement...superb work....The Stravinsky Legacy opens new vistas in Stravinsky scholarship. Thank you, Jonathan Cross, for suggesting this intriguing possibility." Notes

The music of Igor Stravinsky has had a profound impact on the development of twentieth-century music. In this book, Jonathan Cross explores the technical and aesthetic legacy of Stravinsky in relation to a broad range of composers, from VarÃƒÂ¨se to Andriessen, from Messiaen to Birtwistle. He also proposes a re-examination of Stravinsky's own neoclassical music and Theodor Adorno's notorious critique of Stravinsky. This book is part history, part analysis, part aesthetics, and will be of value to anyone who takes an interest in the music of our time.

Took awhile but it’s all good!

It is widely agreed that the three most important innovators in 20th Century classical music were Debussy, Stravinsky and Schoenberg. But I recently began to wonder whether I really understood Stravinsky’s place in this pantheon. Debussy and Schoenberg both challenged standard harmony, Debussy by pushing the boundaries toward chromaticism of a distinctively pretty variety, and Schoenberg with two successive innovations -- first, an expressionist atonality which shattered the old system entirely, and then the 12-tone/serialist system which was built as a new alternative. Stravinsky’s innovation, from what I could recall reading several years ago, was mainly in two areas -- rhythm and orchestral coloration. These are both prominent in his most well-known work,Ã Â "Le sacre du printemps (The Rite of Spring)". But neither of these seemed to me to be on the same level as the fundamental revolution in/beyond harmony represented by Debussy and Schoenberg. Further, Stravinsky moved on to a long neoclassical period, which certainly doesn’t sound innovative based on the name, and later to a 12-tone period, adopting Schoenberg’s method. So I went in search of Stravinsky’s contribution, if indeed there was something more to be found.THE STRAVINSKY LEGACY by Jonathan Cross is what I was looking for. Cross enunciates and elaborates the nature of Stravinsky’s modernism, which involved new structures for composition at a much deeper level than rhythmic drive or exotic orchestration. The best parts of the book are the 15-page introduction, "Stravinsky’s modernism," and the 15-page conclusion, "Stravinsky, Adorno, and the problem of development," which addresses the well-known critique inÃ Â Adorno’s essays on Schoenberg and Stravinsky. The bulk of the book consists of four chapters on "Block forms," "Structural rhythms," "Ritual theatres," and "Minimal developments," in which Cross presents detailed analyses of numerous Stravinsky compositions to illustrate their structural principles. But these are summarized in main outline in the introduction.Cross persuasively argues that Adorno was influential in creating a Grand Narrative of Modernism in which Schoenberg represented progress, and Stravinsky was a representative of regression. Cross argues that in retrospect it is clear that there is no One Modernism, but rather a pluralistic modernism in which Stravinsky represents an alternative strand to Schoenberg’s. Stravinsky did not advance a method and did not create a school, which put him at a disadvantage relative to Schoenberg. But Fredric Jameson has called Stravinsky "the true precursor of postmodern cultural production," and Dutch composer Louis Andriessen has noted that the "true influence of Stravinsky has only just begun," in contrast to Schoenberg, whose serialism is no longer as influential as it once was (5). Elliott Carter has noted Stravinsky’s ability to achieve a "unified fragmentation," describing "The Soldier’s Tale," for

instance, as follows: "all the brief, almost discrete fragments, however roughly they connect with each other, end up by producing a work that holds together in a very new and telling way." (8) Cross draws on Richard Taruskin to spell this out in greater detail. According toÃ Â Taruskin, Stravinsky was crucially influenced by his Russian heritage in his use of "drobnost," or splinteredness, like film montage, utilizing blocks that do not develop organically as in the Germanic sonata form. The overall effect is "nepodvizhnost," or stasis -- the music is non-teleological, and non-developmental (10). The emphasis on repetition and the use of rhythm as a central structural feature, equal to or greater than pitch, only makes complete sense in light of the overarching structure characterized by this "splintered stasis."Cross, drawing heavily on Taruskin, maintains that these structural features run through the entirety of Stravinsky's oeuvre, not just the early Russian ballets, where they are hard to miss. Elsewhere, Stravinsky's music has been described as "fractal," with discrete fragments that could in principle be reconfigured without changing the effect. Andriessen argues that it is the NEO in neoclassical, that is important, not classical, that Stravinsky radically modifies the existing forms as an "alienation technique" (13). Finally, Stravinsky's oft-noted "objectivity" can be seen as progressive, not regressive, which was Adorno's view. As Cross says, "many subsequent composers have read Stravinsky's objectivity differently: its playfulness, its sense of irony and critical distance from the musical materials, its eclecticism, its positive celebration of collective ritual, have all proved provocative and creatively fruitful" (14).The main composers who were decisively influenced by Stravinsky, and documented by Cross are: Olivier Messiaen, Edgard Varese, Elliott Carter, Steve Reich & the minimalists, John Adams, and the British composers perhaps nearest and dearest to Cross, Michael Tippett, Peter Maxwell Davies and Harrison Birtwistle (the subject ofÃ Â another book by Cross, which illuminates the Stravinsky influence extensively).Listening to Stravinsky's music, it is clearly distinctive -- cool, with angular sufaces, an elegant cubism, marked by irony and detachment. And the distinctive surface and tone of the music reflects its deeper structure. Are Stravinsky's innovations on a par with those of Debussy and Schoenberg? Upon reading Cross, as well as other sources, I am convinced that they are. Further than that I will not go. Cross forwards an argument that Stravinsky is greater and more influential than Schoenberg, his great rival of the early 20th century. But I will go as far as acknowledging that what Cross calls "the non-developmental, non-narrative objectivity of Stravinsky and the subjective, Expressionist continuity with the Romantic tradition in Schoenberg" have proved comparably influential (16).Many thanks to Jonathan Cross for answering my question!For a very stylish, witty, interconnected (drobnost-style) series of essays on Stravinsky that captures his sensibility perfectly, seeÃ Â The Apollonian ClockworkÃ Â by Andriessen and Schonberger.(verified library loan)

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