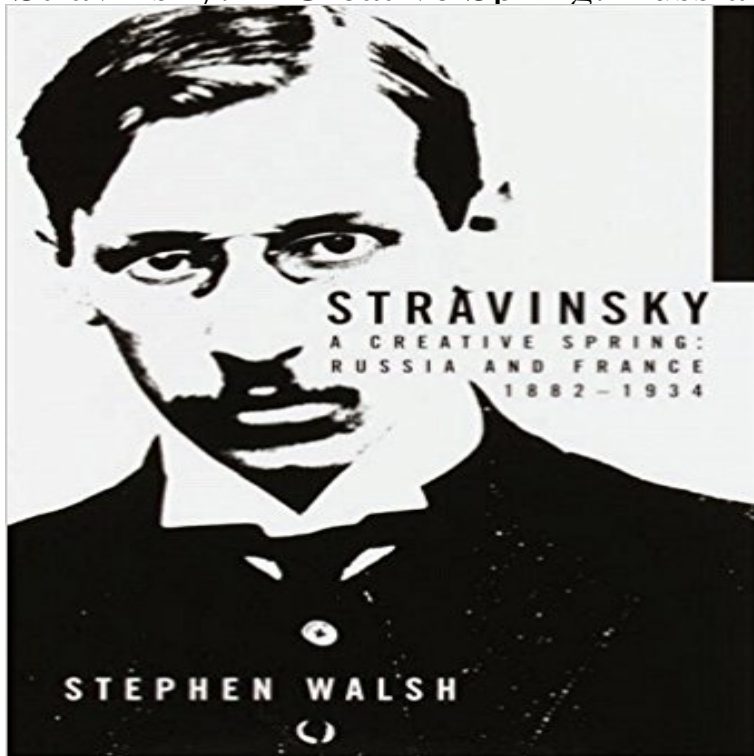


Stravinsky: A Creative Spring: Russia and France, 1882-1934



Widely regarded the greatest composer of the twentieth century, Igor Stravinsky was central to the development of modernism in art. Deeply influential and wonderfully productive, he is remembered for dozens of masterworks, from *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring* to *The Rakes Progress*, but no dependable biography of him exists. Previous studies have relied too heavily on his own unreliable memoirs and conversations, and until now no biographer has possessed both the musical knowledge to evaluate his art and the linguistic proficiency needed to explore the documentary background of his life--a life whose span extended from tsarist Russia to Switzerland, France, and ultimately the United States. In this revealing volume, the first of two, Stephen Walsh follows Stravinsky from his birth in 1882 to 1934. He traces the composers early Russian years in new and fascinating detail, laying bare the complicated relationships within his family and showing how he first displayed his extraordinary talents within the provincial musical circle around his teacher, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov. Stravinskys brilliantly creative involvement with the Ballets Russes is illuminated by a sharp sense of the internal artistic politics that animated the group. Portraying Stravinskys circumstances as an emigre in France trying to make his living as a conductor and pianist as well as a composer while beset by emotional and financial demands, Walsh reveals the true roots of his notorious obsession with money during the 1920s and describes with sympathy the nature of his long affair with Vera Sudeykina. While always respecting Stravinskys own insistence that life and art be kept distinct, Stravinsky makes clear precisely how the development of his music was connected to his life and to the intellectual environment in which he found himself. But at the same time it demonstrates the composers remarkably

pragmatic psychology, which led him to consider the welfare of his art to be of paramount importance, before which everything else had to give way. Hence, for example, his questionable attitude toward Hitler and Mussolini, and his reputation as a touchy, unpredictable man as famous for his enmities as for his friendships. Stephen Walsh, long established as an expert on Stravinsky's music, has drawn upon a vast array of material, much of it unpublished or unavailable in English, to bring the man himself, in all his color and genius, to glowing life. Written with elegance and energy, comprehensive, balanced, and original, Stravinsky is essential reading for anyone interested in the adventure of art in our time. Praise from the British press for Stephen Walsh's *The Music of Stravinsky* One of the finest general studies of the composer.--Wilfrid Mellers, composer, *Times Literary Supplement* The beautiful prose of *The Music of Stravinsky* is itself a fund of arresting images. For those who already love Stravinsky's music, Walsh's essays on each work will bring a smile of recognition and joy at new kernels of insight. For those unfamiliar with many of the works he discusses, Walsh's commentaries are likely to whet appetites for performances of the works.--John Shepherd, *Notes* This book sent me scurrying back to the scores and made me want to recommend it to other people. Above all, it is a good read.--Anthony Pople, *Music and Letters*

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