

Dear Richard,

I just came across your article and postscript in *Text and Act* (from 1994) for the first time, as I am preparing my third performance of the *Rite* with the Boston Philharmonic at the end of April - (previous ones were 1990 and 2000, so a pattern seems to be developing!).

I am a huge admirer of your work, but I had to laugh because almost everything in your postscript is misconstrued. So, if you will forgive me, since you clearly had a lot of fun poking holes in my work, may I take the liberty of poking a few into yours?

Firstly, the premise of your thesis is incorrect. You suggest that my intention was to subject the *WHOLE* of the *Rite of Spring* to scrutiny, whereas, as my note in the CD booklet clearly states, the *ONLY* section that had caught my attention for special treatment was the *Danse Sacral*. I made no attempt in my note, or anywhere else, to argue for or against the notated tempi in the rest of the piece, so the first five paragraphs of your Postscript are irrelevant, being based on the idea that I was intending to re-interpret *ALL* the tempi in the *Rite*.

Had that been my agenda I would indeed have been open to virulent criticism, since my tempi are not particularly accurate, either according to the score, or to the Piano Roll. But since the recording is from a live performance and it was the first time the orchestra and I had ever played through the *Rite* from beginning to end I think we should consider ourselves fortunate we were able to get through the work without any serious mishap (there are no edits).

It was certainly my intention to stay close to the tempi that Stravinsky marked in the score, but it was not my overriding concern. The fact that a few tempi sped up and a few, as you rightly point out were below his marking was not a result of careful forethought, but the result of conducting one of the most treacherous works in the repertoire for the first time.

There was, incidentally, not the slightest hope of producing a "definitive orchestral realization of the score" Anyone who thinks he can do such a thing on the first outing with a piece of this difficulty is fit for the mad house.

As a result of this misunderstanding, you wasted a lot of valuable time poring over my attempts to make a convincing rendition of the *Jeu du rapt*, where my adrenaline (and no doubt that of the orchestra) led us into a slightly faster tempo that was marked at the outset. However, you are very far off the mark indeed suggesting it was MM152. Put your metronome on MM152 and try to imagine any orchestra, even the Berlin Philharmonic, playing that section at that tempo. It would be ludicrous! What actually happened was that I misjudged the transition slightly at #37 and started above the marked tempo, but by the time the horns are playing at #40 the tempo has settled at MM126 (sic) and it remains there for the rest of the section. (This recording is now on line, so these facts can be verified)

I will not waste further time, going over the other calculations in the first five paragraphs, because pricking holes in a balloon that was never intended to be blown up in the first place is not an edifying process. But I will, if you don't mind, dwell for a moment on the final two paragraphs - on the issue of the *Danse Sacral*, because that was the purpose of issuing the record. I was so determined to bring this idea to fruition that I handed out the parts of the *Rite* to the orchestra in September and we worked away in small bursts till the performance in April!

Now, I must take you to task for really misrepresenting my efforts. My tempo is nowhere near MM172!! Indeed like the MM152 for the *Jeu du rapt*, that tempo is literally unplayable. I fear that in your desire to make your point, as part of **your** larger agenda to discredit Stravinsky Lite, along with every other kind of Lite, you got carried away. The first bar is quite fast - and a little unstable - it's a hard transition! But by bar 2 it has settled at MM152. This is verifiable through the miracle of modern technology, by playing the passage at

#142 (and #186) on the BPO recording and then on the piano roll back to back. If you do so, you will find that they are identical. At no point does the tempo go above 152. So your accusation is unfounded in aural fact. Until now, no one could check the facts, because the recording is out of print, but now these pieces of evidence are available to the minute band of people who care about such matters.

In the next paragraph you somewhat undermine your premise by praising the performance as a way of showing that your thesis is correct. "What is all the upshot of all these facts and figures" you ask? Well, I would say is that the upshot is that, since your facts and figures are inaccurate we don't really know what is being proved.

I do believe, however, that my point about the Danse Sacral remains valid. Stravinsky himself notated and performed the final section at a considerably slower tempo than he appears to have originally intended. The piano roll, the 1929 Monteux recording and the quotations from Prokofiev and Bartok all suggest that MM152 (or something in that area) and not MM126 was the intended tempo and the story line certainly supports that. I was happy to hear Esa Pekka Salonen's riveting performance with the LA Phil. (on Youtube) which goes at almost MM152 for the Danse Sacral. It certainly seems to suggest the hysteria of a young girl dancing herself into a frenzy sufficient to cause death. How could that conceivably be construed as Lite.

With warm wishes and deep respect for your extraordinary contribution to musical understanding

Ben