

on sacred ground: stravinsky's rite of spring

arranged and performed by **the bad plus**



The Rite of Spring imagined by The Bad Plus...

"Igor Stravinsky's most famous piece---and one of the most famous pieces of 20th-century art---is now approaching its 100th birthday. What has been learned? What can still be learned from this masterpiece?"

The Rite is renowned for being the pinnacle achievement of "modernism meets primitivism". The modernism is supplied by dense chordal structures that even the most strict atonal theorists (e.g., Pierre Boulez and George Perle) found worthy of study. The primitivism is provided by churning ostinato rhythms and folkloric Russian melodies--- the first famous bassoon theme is "borrowed" from a folksong. Stravinsky's own recordings of *The Rite* are justly celebrated. But there is still room to explore his immortal ostinatos with a kind of rhythmic authority off-limits to most of the classical world. A century later, the rhythmic authority and harmonic sophistication found in *The Rite* coexist most naturally in the worlds of jazz and rock. In fact, it's arguable that a lot of modern jazz and progressive rock is as spiritually indebted to *The Rite* as the canon of post-Rite classical music. Groove is the issue here: modern jazz, progressive rock and *The Rite* all demand that the odd-meter groupings and repetitive off-kilter rhythms feel ancient and powerful.

The Bad Plus has always been interested in 20th century classical, jazz, and progressive music. On our record, *For All I Care*, we perform short pieces by György Ligeti, Milton Babbitt and Stravinsky. The melding of modernist classical music with jazz has been attempted before, but typically in such experiments the drums are left behind.

Of course, The Bad Plus could never leave the drums behind. In our covers of classical composers, we've worked on and explored the integration of jazz, rock, and electronica drumming traditions into densely abstract harmonic designs. The result has been fresh and seemingly successful, and it is our hope to bring the same spirit of rhythmic integrity and innovation to *The Rite*.

Like our previous classical covers, we are not interested in creating a "vehicle for jazz improvisation" or "putting a backbeat to it" (the latter being all-too-reminiscent of Koussevitzky's notorious rebarrring of numerous 5/8 and 3/8 passages into 4/4). We will study the piece as thoroughly as possible and render it in our style. The evening is conceived as one long set, with a prelude of our original compositions before a brief pause and the 40-minute *Rite*. We are still in discussion concerning the production. The possibility of additional musicians is not off the table, but we will have to go into rehearsals before any such decision is made. Theatrical touches will also be implemented so that *The Rite* stands out from the preceding repertoire. We are committed, and truly excited, to creating the richest, and most interactive, process possible.

There are still vital musical lessons to be learned from *The Rite*, and there are new discoveries to be made. We hope audiences will find our discoveries and journey through *The Rite of Spring* a source of pleasure and inspiration."

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