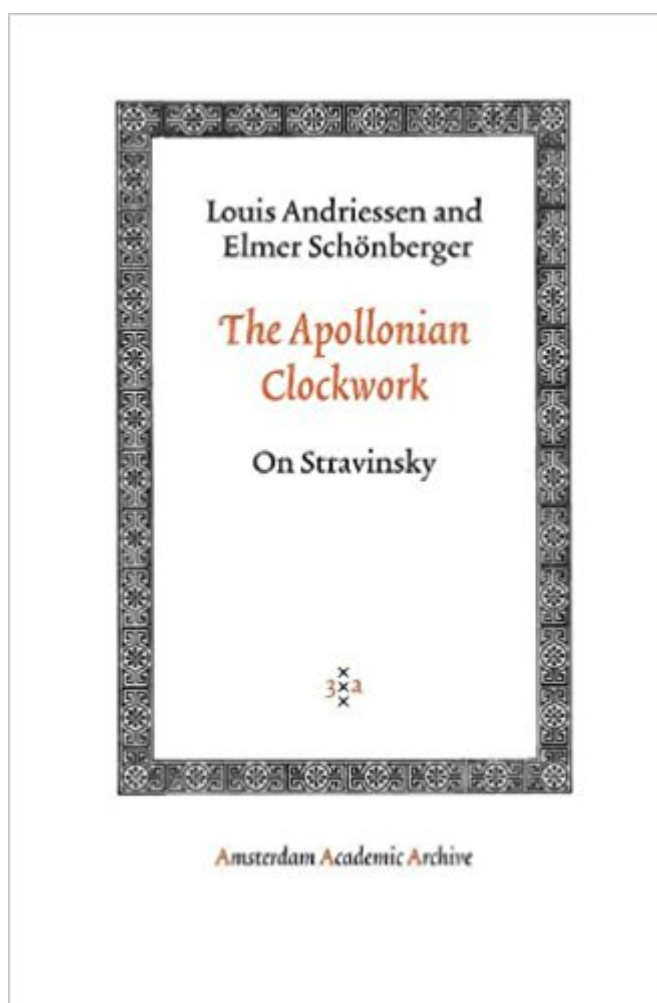


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The Apollonian Clockwork: On Stravinsky (Amsterdam University Press - Amsterdam Archaeological Studies)



Synopsis

"I think my music deserves to be considered as a whole", Igor Stravinsky remarked at the end of a long and restless career, and that is exactly what the authors of *The Apollonian Clockwork* do. In 1982, convinced that there is no essential difference between "early" and "late" Stravinsky, Louis Andriessen and Elmer Schönberger were the first to write a monograph on the composer which radically breaks with the habit of dividing his works into "Russian", "neoclassical" and "serial". In an essay which continually shifts in its approach, style and perspective, the authors elaborate on their insight that a single, immutable compositional attitude underlies the whole of Stravinsky's oeuvre. By this token the book not only offers an analysis of the composer's protean work and artistry but takes example by it as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you have any abiding interest in 20th-century music, buy this book and read it at once. If music as culture means anything to you, buy this book. It made so little splash the first time around that I've hardly run into anyone who's aware of it. But any composer living would give his left arm to be assured that so witty, wise, creative, simpatico, and insightful a book would be written about him after his death. Richard Taruskin has aptly called it *The one book about Stravinsky Stravinsky would have liked.*" And, thanks to an editorial miracle, it has reappeared after some 15 years' unforgivable absence."[-][-] Kyle Gann - Village Voice

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Dutch --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the essential - and widely overlooked - books on 20th century music...unfortunately long out of print with no re-issue plans on the horizon. For anyone interested in Stravinsky, Andriessen, or contemporary music in general, I highly recommend getting a copy by any means necessary...

I love this book! I read a single chapter every week. It is not difficult reading but the ideas are so provocative that I needed time to digest them. For anyone interested in a creative and non-dogmatic approach to understanding the compositional process of one of the greatest composers of all time, this is the book. Did I mention that I love it?

THE APOLLONIAN CLOCKWORK was originally published in the Netherlands in 1983, and the English translation was published in 1989. The authors, Louis Andriessen and Elmer Schonberger, are both Dutch composers (Schonberger is also a musicologist and critic), and are clearly both steeped in and enamoured of Stravinsky: "The authors' decision to collaborate on this book arose not only from a shared love of Stravinsky's music, but from an agreement on a few fundamental points: that there is no essential difference between early and late Stravinsky; that the familiar division of his works into 'Russian', 'neoclassical', and 'serial' periods more often obscures rather than clarifies the music; and that the distinction commonly made between 'arrangements' and 'original compositions' is not pertinent to Stravinsky. What they heard in the music was that all his works have been composed from an immutable musical *mentality*." (xiii) The book, not one linear narrative but rather 45 interconnected essays, vignettes on various aspects of Stravinsky's music, life and context, is "a paradigm of Stravinsky" in its *drobnost* structure (splinteredness -- from Taruskin). Stravinsky's sensibility is captured in a quote from D.C. Muecke's "Irony": "There is yet another feature of irony which appears regularly in discussions of irony. We can choose from among a number of terms: detachment, distance, disengagement, freedom, serenity, objectivity, dispassion, 'lightness', 'play', urbanity." The authors go on to say: "It cannot be coincidence that precisely these terms (or their pejorative counterparts: lack of feeling, coldness, superficiality, etc.) rate highly in the descriptions of Stravinsky's music. Stravinsky is first and foremost an ironic buffo-composer, no matter how serious the music may get. But his good humour is not carefree." (219-220) In this light, there is a priceless photo on page 51 of Stravinsky face-to-face with a giraffe,

seemingly carrying on a conversation. This accompanies a chapter called "Zoonology" which is about the many and various animals that appear in Stravinsky's music. Of Stravinsky himself, the authors conclude, "[h]e reminds one of the Cheshire Cat in 'Alice in Wonderland', whose grin 'remained some time after the rest of it had gone'." (54) Speaking of animals, the authors' wit is illustrated by their analogy of Stravinsky as a wasp in his 1942 book of essays "Poétique musicale", based on six lectures delivered at Harvard in 1939: "The Stravinsky of 'Poétique' is like a wasp who tries to remove its own sting, who says it will not harm a fly, or better, thinks it *is* a fly, a responsible, hard-working, cultivated, reasonable fly that believes in a Supreme Fly, but a fly that, oh dear, is continually being hit by the fly-swatter, first from the right, now from the left." (84)

Stravinsky, the musical revolutionary of "Le sacre", did not want to be considered a revolutionary! Many think that with his "neoclassical" phase Stravinsky ceased to be a revolutionary, a view the authors emphatically reject. They quote Friedrich Blume, who says the classical artistic attitude "leaves the finding of some content in this form to the listener's power of imagination," as opposed to Romanticism, which imputes to music "concrete content, condemning the listener to passivity." The authors then go on to say that "[c]lassicism is radical. It manifests itself in art as avant-garde and defines the attitude of the artist who holds back, distances his work from the audience, withholds information ... Stravinsky's classicism is always slightly irritating, the music is unfinished ... But it cannot be emphasized enough: renewal is concealed in the old. It hides itself. Only a sharp sleuth will discover it and thereby change history." (101) And finally, on the great Stravinsky-Schoenberg battle, regarding Stravinsky's use of the 12-tone method after Schoenberg's death: "The Viennese School was history, that was the crux. And the Viennese School were always the others, the representatives of 'Mitteleuropa', separated from him by a 'gigantic abyss', the kind of abyss that cannot be bridged. 'The principle of developing variation that led to the twelve-tone technique and at the same time legitimized it, is known just as little in the serial scores of Stravinsky as in his earlier scores,' wrote Adorno, who detested Stravinsky but who sometimes had a clear insight into his music." (119) This is a fantastically enjoyable read, a glimpse into the Stravinsky universe that conveys in its light, ironic tone and splintered structure the essence of his "immutable musical mentality." For a more standard treatment of Stravinsky that focuses on the nature of his innovations and his influence on later 20th Century composers, see *The Stravinsky Legacy* by Jonathan Cross. (verified library loan)

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