

*Octet:*

Even though this *Octet* is, I suppose, referred to as the first fully-formed piece in Stravinsky's neo-classical style, I was surprised to hear how far away so much of the writing is from standard tonality. I guess my previous exposure to Stravinsky's neo-classical music had really only been through the *Pulcinella Suite*, so I had assumed that harmonic functions were more traditionally used in the neo-classical work. While many of the passages in the *Octet* sound vaguely tonal, I think a lot of harmonies and chords are used almost in a collage sort of way, inserted one after one another without any sense of direction per se. Some parts sound almost starkly atonal, such as the end of the variations (Reh. #s 51-55).

The counterpoint that fills up the *Octet* is also quite surprising. A lot of it I would call "white-note counterpoint," by which I mean that as long as the composer stays within whatever collection he/she is using and employs a variety of rhythmic structures, the music will sound vaguely contrapuntal and basically work to our modern ears. That scalar bassoon part at the beginning of the Finale is a great example, but there seems to be a whole lot of similar parts in other movements, such as Reh. #8 in the first movement. In general, Stravinsky seems to have realized that as long as a part is moving up or down in linear motion, he can get away with almost anything.

*Concerto in D for Violin and Orchestra:*

This *Concerto*, at least as compared to the *Octet*, sounds obviously more tonally based to my ears, almost in a neo-Romantic way (especially during the third movement), which is odd since Stravinsky seems to have professed how much he wanted to get away from the sounds of Romanticism. I suppose the fact that there is more aurally-obvious hints of tonality in this work should be no surprise, as the title clearly says "in D." Of course, even this pseudo-tonal environment has a very "Stravinsky" sound. I think I remember Walsh describing the harmonic language of this piece as "added-note diatonicism" where an extra note is added as an extension to typical triads. I guess the "passport chord" is one example, since the E kind of acts as a ninth on top of the D-A fifth.

The Capriccio movement is particularly a lot of fun. I personally find one of Stravinsky's best qualities is the writing he does in up-tempo or highly-rhythmic settings. Even though there are a few meter changes in this movement, I am surprised there aren't more. Would it not have been more "capricious" to have constantly-changing meters throughout, especially since such a device is so common to Stravinsky? I have to agree with Jeanne that the low string and percussion playing starting in the Presto at Reh. #123 are quite reminiscent of the primal energy as seen in *The Rite of Spring*. I am not surprised that there are not more passages like this Presto, though, as it seems somewhat at odds with the whimsical nature of the rest of the movement.