

## **Stravinsky, Igor: Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materials for a Biography (vol. 1, 1998; vol. 2, 2000; vol. 3, 2003; vol. 4, 2024)**

Assembling a total of 2,826 documents and spanning over 3,000 pages, this collection of Stravinsky's Russian correspondence has been published in four substantial volumes. Letters, postcards and telegrams sent by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) and his correspondents are supplemented by excerpts taken from his diaries, as well as selected correspondence of his Russian contemporaries — including S. Prokofiev, N. Myaskovsky, A. Glazunov, N. Medtner and B. Asafiev — containing references to Stravinsky and evaluations of his character. Covering the composer's entire life, the materials in this edition are presented in chronological order. The first volume opens with notes from Stravinsky's father dating back to 1881 (before Igor's birth), while the final volume concludes with letters of condolence to his widow, in 1971. All documents are supplemented by detailed commentary, while an appendix containing reviews from the Russian press on performances and publications of Stravinsky's works is included at the end of each volume.

Russian musicologist Viktor Varunts collected the materials for all four volumes, while conducting research in the main archives of Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Library of Congress in Washington and the Center for Russian Music in London. Due to his untimely death in 2003, Varunts unfortunately only managed to publish the first three volumes. The fourth volume was edited by Svetlana Savenko, who also wrote the commentary.

Like his letters in French, German and English, Stravinsky's Russian correspondence reflects the evolutions of cultural and spiritual life over several generations, the historical events of the time, but also the composer's aesthetic credo, psychology and vivid personality, with its striking embedded contradictions. Stravinsky's letters in his native language are the most direct, emotional, and stylistically vivid, the composer admitting in later years: 'I have spoken Russian all my life. I think in Russian; I have a Russian way of expressing myself'.

The first volume (1881-1912) contains extensive correspondence between members of the Stravinsky family, including letters from the young Igor to his parents and siblings, a period of early creativity, studies with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (from 1902) and first major successes. During this time, he discussed his artistic plans and advocated new aesthetic views in letters to his new friends, including Rimsky-Korsakov's sons (Andrey and Vladimir), as well as the composer Maximilian

Steinberg. One can find a notably vivid letter, defending ballet as a serious genre to the conservative and sceptical Vladimir Rimsky-Korsakov (8/21 July 1911). Stravinsky's correspondence with the librettists and designers of his works, such as S. Mitusov (*Rossignol*), A. Benois (*Petrushka*) and N. Roerich (*The Rite of Spring*), is invaluable. Some documents testify to the composer's contacts with the Jurgenson and Belyaev publishing houses, as well as the beginning of his friendship with Diaghilev.

The second volume (1913–1922) covers the period from *The Rite of Spring* to *Mavra*. Some letters from the 1910s recount the rejection of Stravinsky's early work for Diaghilev by what might be termed the 'Rimsky-Korsakov faction' among Russian musicians. Of particular interest is a letter sent by Andrei Rimsky-Korsakov to his mother from Paris on 15 June 1913: '*Petrushka* is crude and repulsive in its musical essence [...] But *Sacre* is even worse, if you only knew! From beginning to end, with two or three exceptions, it's disgusting nonsense. And parallel to this musical savagery, a kind of dull savagery reigns on stage. I'm terribly glad that this project has failed'. Other letters testify to the close, friendly relationships entertained with fellow *émigrés*, including S. Prokofiev, P. Suvchinsky, B. Kochno and P. Tchelitchev. The composer continued negotiations with the publishing houses Jurgenson, Bessel and Belyayev, as well as with 'Édition Russe de Musique' through its directors Nikolai Struve, E. Öberg and G. Paichadze, and with Koussevitzky personally. The first letters from Vera de Bosset-Sudeikin, Stravinsky's future second wife, date back to 1921.

The third volume (1923–1939) covers the period during which the composer toured extensively as a pianist and conductor. During this time, his correspondence with family members was particularly intense, including letters to his wife Ekaterina, sons Theodore and Sulima, daughters Milena and Lyudmila, and son-in-law Yuri Mandelstam. Some letters were addressed to a sanatorium for consumptive patients, where almost all of his family were treated for many months. He also continued to correspond with S. Diaghilev, V. Nouvel, A. Lourié, G. Balanchine and S. Lifar. New names also appear: M. Chagall, J. Handschin and A. Kahl. Some letters, including those to Diaghilev, display a new stage in the composer's spiritual life: his reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church and its charitable endeavours. Tatyana Stravinsky, Igor Fedorovich's niece from Leningrad (daughter of his brother Yuri), was an intelligent and observant young woman who stayed at the Stravinsky home in Nice in 1925, managing to create a vivid portrait of her lively, witty and generous uncle in letters to her parents.

The fourth volume (1940–1971) opens with letters from January 1940, when Stravinsky arrived in the United States, finding himself cut off from Europe due to the outbreak of World War II. The letters from this period reflect events in his personal life, such as his marriage to Vera de Bosset and providing financial assistance to his children and relatives who had remained in Europe. Those who appear most frequently in the correspondence from this period are S. Koussevitzky, N. Nabokov, P. Suvchinsky, Sir Isaiah Berlin and the artists E. Berman and P. Tchelitchev. Topics of discussion include various events in artistic and musical life, new trends in contemporary music, Stravinsky's latest creations, theatre projects featuring his music, and his participation in concerts and festivals. Among

Russian *émigrés*, his friendships with Nabokov and Suvchinsky lasted the longest; his correspondence with Suvchinsky in particular, remained particularly candid, testifying to his deep understanding of the composer's work and personality. One of the most acute, and at times painful topics in their correspondence concerned Stravinsky's relationship with representatives of the new musical avant-garde, primarily Pierre Boulez.

Russian correspondence declined significantly in the 1950s: in 1950 and 1955, there were only three letters from Russia; in 1953, there were five; and in 1956, there were four. After Stalin's death, and especially following Stravinsky's visit to Moscow and Leningrad in 1962, it became possible again to establish contact with Soviet Russia. Pianist Maria Yudina and conductor Igor Blazhkov were the first to send particularly detailed and interesting letters to Igor Fedorovich. Contacts were also established with Stravinsky's niece (the daughter of his brother Yuri), who lived in Leningrad. Some letters were addressed to Soviet officials T. Khrennikov and K. Khachaturian. Stravinsky corresponded with his Russian counterparts both in Russian and French (for example, with his son Theodore and the artist Berman), or even in a mixture of the two languages. These documents are included in the publication (in Russian translation), albeit in limited quantities and fragments.

Shortcomings of this edition are but the consequence of the extraordinary difficulty for one scholar alone to work through such a vast quantity of material. The edition contains unwarranted cuts and erroneous dates; fragments of illegible handwriting are sometimes misinterpreted. Nevertheless, the significance of these four volumes cannot be overestimated. The materials presented in these four volumes have served, and will undoubtedly continue to serve, as an instrumental source for research into not only the life and work of Stravinsky himself, but his entire era.

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03/05/2025

To quote this article: Tatiana Baranova-Monighetti, "Stravinsky, Igor: Perepiska s russkimi korrespondentami. Materials for a Biography (vol. 1, 1998; vol. 2, 2000; vol. 3, 2003; vol. 4, 2024)", Dictionary of Composer's Writings, Dictéco [online], ed. E. Reibel, last edited: 28/11/2025, <https://dicteco.huma-num.fr/anthology/67134>.