

The New Criterion

Music

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Juilliard plays Stravinsky

by [Alexander Coleman](#)

On the Juilliard Symphony's performance at Alice Tully Hall, New York

I saw Igor Stravinsky conduct only once, at Carnegie Hall in January 1957, when the New York Philharmonic performed *Perséphone* (1934), a “melodrama” in three parts, with a text by André Gide. (Vera Zorina narrated, Richard Robinson was the tenor soloist.) Stravinsky’s conductorial manner lived up to its reputation for idiosyncrasy. Unlike most of the flailers and sawyers occupying major podia, Stravinsky often did not move a muscle for entire pages. Crouched over the score, he gave almost no clues to the orchestra. Every so often he would majestically raise his left hand to his lips in order to moisten the fingers for a more rapid turning of the page below. As would be expected from any professional orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, along with the soloists and mixed chorus, busied itself with an attentive sonic realization of the work at hand. A few churlish types must have asked whether, during ...

Alexander Coleman was a long-time contributor to The New Criterion and a close friend of the editors. He died on June 17th, 2002.

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