



Western Illinois University

presents

OCTET

&

THE DEVIL'S TALE

BY JIM STEPHENSON

*Musical Companions to  
Stravinsky's Octet and The Soldier's Tale*

# Musical Companions:

## Stravinsky and Stephenson

*with*

Western Illinois University Faculty & Friends

*James M. Stephenson, composer*

*Dr. Mike Fansler, director*

*Morgan Miller, compiler*

The successes of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* and *Octet* are attributed in part to his unique instrumentation. A group assembled to perform either may wish to pair a companion at the same concert. Jim Stephenson has made that possible creating *The Devil's Tale* and *Octet*, employing the exact instrumentation and strategic compositional "nods" to Stravinsky's originals. Jim will explain his compositions and the WIU Faculty Chamber Players will present excerpts of Jim's companion pieces.

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# Musical Companions: Stravinsky and Stephenson

## Stephenson Octet

General Harmonic Structure

**Mvt. I - A Mvt. II - Gb Mvt. III - E**

(Movements end loosely in these keys)

Derived from intervals in Stravinsky's  
*Octet* melody, but transposed by a  
tritone: i.e. distant, yet related (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm.  
42-43.

## MVT I - agitato lyrica

Stephenson begins with dovetailing, an idea borrowed from Stravinsky.

Figure 2 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm. 1-9.

**agitato lyrica** ♩ = 112 James M. Stephenson

I.

Flute

B $\flat$  Clarinet

Bassoon 1

Bassoon 2

C Trumpet

B $\flat$  Trumpet

Trombone

Bass Trombone

Figure 3 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm. 31-40.

End of the movement is a quote from Stravinsky, originally in the bassoons, turned upside down (Figures 4, 5).

Figure 4 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm. 190-192.

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Figure 5 - Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. II, box 50.



Final notes found in the trumpets are the same notes in the opening of the Stravinsky.

Figure 6 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm. 188, 191-192. Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-2.

**Stephenson**

**Stravinsky**

## MVT II - andante cantare

Begins with the opening cascading figures from the first movement inverted while continuing to dovetail (Figures 2, 7).

Figure 7 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. II, mm. 1-4.

**andante cantare** (♩ = 72) II.

[2 + 2 + 3 + 2] sempre

Stephenson wrote what he considered a beautiful second movement, showcasing the lyrical capabilities of Stravinsky's instrumentation. • Key of Gb gives the movement a warm sonority. • At the end of the movement, Stephenson quotes a trumpet line (from the very end of the original Stravinsky *Octet*) in the bassoons (Figures 8, 9).

Figure 8 - Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. I, fourth bar of box 19-box 20.



Figure 9 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. II, mm. 75-77.



The last chord is similar to Stravinsky's chord before the box six melody (see Figure 1) - there is a break before, and they both sound ambiguous.

Figure 10 - Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. I, mm. 38-41. Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. II, mm. 76-78.

Stravinsky				Stephenson			
Fl.				Fl.			<i>attacca</i>
Cl. in Sib				Cl.			
I				Bsn. 1			
Fag.	<i>sim.</i>			Bsn. 2			
II							
I in D				C. Trpt.			
Tr.				B. Trpt.			
II in La				Tbn.			
I				B. Tbn.			
Trb.							
II							

### MVT III - presto energico

An immediate change of atmosphere occurs. Begins with virtuosic flute and clarinet, which is similar to Stravinsky's contrapuntal pairing of the two instruments (Figures 11, 12).

Figure 11 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 1-24.

III.  
presto energico (♩ = 138)

Fl.  
A. Clar.

*f*

*f*

*poco accel.*

J

Figure 12 - Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 100-108.

Fl.  
Cl. in La  
Fag. I

67

The ensemble is secco and bitonal around the trumpet hemiola, sounding Stravinskian.

Figure 13 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 25-33.

**K** piu mosso (♩ = 144)

Fl.

A Clar.

C Tpt.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Stephenson references an arpeggiated figure from *The Soldier's Tale* in the 7/8 section.

Figure 14 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 74. Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale*, Petits Airs, mm. 61.

*Stephenson*

Tbn.

*mf*

*Stravinsky* [*poco pesante*]

Trb.

*mp*

"Apotheosis" - an occurrence in some of Stravinsky's music where the piece's ending has an otherworldly identity all of its own. Stephenson does the same at the end, and it is also marked by a hemiola with gradually changing harmony that repeats eight times, a reference to the eight musicians performing.

Figure 15 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 254-261.

The piece ends on a replica of the last chord of the Stravinsky, except the flute is taken up an octave, and the tutti chord is a decided *fz* (instead of *p*), thereby making a bold statement to the similarities and differences all at once.

Figure 16 - Stephenson, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 289-290. Stravinsky, *Octet*, Mvt. III, mm. 185-186.

## Musical Companions: Stravinsky and Stephenson

## *The Devil's Tale*

## Central motives in The Devil's Tale

- Palindromes of what appears in *The Soldier's Tale*
- Falling fourths = devil motive
- Downward chromatic = devil motive
- High instruments = good, low instruments = evil

### General stylistic characteristics that recall Stravinsky

- Mixed meters (“never odd or even” - itself a palindrome)
- Dry textures
- Polytonal
- Stacked fifths

# Introduction

*The Devil's Tale* begins with an identical quote of the percussion solo that ends *The Soldier's Tale*.

Provides context to where Stephenson begins in relation to the Stravinsky, setting up the palindrome form.

Figure 17 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Introduction, mm. c-n.

Percussion

3 Toms

*c* *d* *e* *f* *g*

*h* *i* *j* *k* *l* *m* *n*

Perc.

B.D.

*ff*

Figure 18 - Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale*, Marche Triomphale, mm. 102-112.

Bat.

102

L R L R

R L

L

R

L

Bat.

108

3

L R L

R R L

R L R L

3

Fin

Morges, 1918

## MVT I - Never Odd or Even

All movement titles are palindromes.

The ostinato pitches A-B are a reference to *The Soldier's Tale* Pastorale movement. Stephenson played the piece in college and noticed how the bassoonist was struggling with the interval. The reference also implies that Sam is longing for the simple home life outside of Vegas.

Figure 19 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. I, mm. 1-2. Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale*, 16, mm. 36-39.

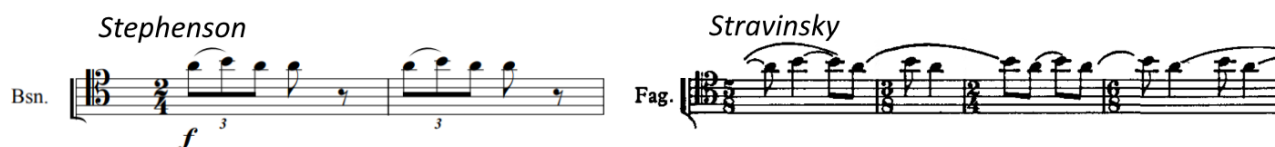


Figure 20 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. I, mm. 56-59.



At box F, there is a dance motive that is a hemiola, referencing the never odd or even feel of Stravinsky.

## MVT II - Live, O Devil, revel ever! Live! Do evil

Stephenson continues the palindrome with a chorale near the beginning of his work, mirroring Stravinsky's near the end of *Soldier's Tale*. • Players' parts are written as if they are warming up, because the story has the character of Hannah warming up for her Vegas dance show. There are slow quarter notes in the winds, and every trumpet line in the movement can be played as a lip slur. At rehearsal O, strings are on all open strings, as if they are tuning.

Figure 21 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. II, mm. 169-174.

**Adagio**      **II. LIVE, O DEVIL, REVEL EVER! LIVE! DO EVIL!**

## MVT III - Seven Eves

The number seven is a large influence: 7/4 time, 7 sharps, groups of 7 repeated notes representing knocking on a door. • Pulsing notes at the beginning of the movement represent a heartbeat: Joseph is leading Hannah to trust him, and they are falling in love. • The trumpet solo represents the heroic Joseph, which always comes before the violin solo representing Hannah, thus showing Joseph leading the way. • Some descending half steps throughout (not shown) represent the devil, which are resisted by ascending half steps in the violin. • Stacked fifths occur throughout.

Figure 22 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. III, mm. 184-189.

**III. Seven Eves**

184 **Andante** ♩ = 84 (suggested: 4+3)

The musical score for Mvt. III, "Seven Eves", measures 184-189, is presented in 7/4 time. The tempo is marked "Andante" with a quarter note equal to 84 beats per minute, with a suggested 4+3 grouping. The key signature consists of seven sharps (F# major or C# minor). The score includes parts for Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Violin, and Double Bass. The Clarinet and Bassoon play a pulsing eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand, both marked *p*. The Trumpet in C has a solo starting in measure 185, marked *p* and then *mp*, with a "Cup Mute" instruction. The Trombone is silent until measure 189, where it plays a short phrase marked *mp* with a "Cup Mute" instruction. The Violin has a solo starting in measure 185, marked *p* and then *mp*, with a crescendo and decrescendo. The Double Bass is silent until measure 189, where it plays a short phrase marked *mp*.

## MVT IV - Too hot to hoot

Figure 23 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. IV, mm. 217-221.

217 T

The musical score for Mvt. IV, "Too hot to hoot", measures 217-221, is presented in 7/8 time. The key signature consists of seven sharps (F# major or C# minor). The score includes parts for Bb Cl., Bsn., C Tpt., Tbn., Perc., Vln., and D.B. The Bb Cl. and Bsn. play a pulsing eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand, both marked *p*. The C Tpt. has a solo starting in measure 218, marked *p*. The Tbn. has a solo starting in measure 218, marked *p*. The Perc. plays a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand, marked *pp*. The Vln. has a solo starting in measure 218, marked *p*. The D.B. has a solo starting in measure 218, marked *p*. Dynamics include *mf* and *f* markings for the woodwinds and strings.

Content borrowed from another Stephenson piece because it fit into the sequence of events as a dance movement for the devil. • Similar to Stravinsky's use of meter changes, Stephenson takes a 2/4 rhythm in the percussion and turns it around using the 7/8 bar.

## MVT V - Three Dances: Cigar, Toss it in a Can, It is so Tragic

Stravinsky's three dances are a ragtime, tango, and waltz. Stephenson wanted something different, so he wrote a Cuban rumba, a bluesy dance, and a tarantella.

### **Cigar:**

The high voice trumpet will eventually win out and is heroic here. However, the solo begins with a short downward chromatic, referencing the devil. • There are also many devilish fourths in the melody. The bass part is also largely fourths throughout (not shown).

Figure 24 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. V, mm. 273-277.

Figure 24 shows a musical score for measures 273-277 of Mvt. V of *The Devil's Tale*. The score includes parts for Bassoon, Trumpet in C, Trombone, Percussion, and Double Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of rests and active passages, with a strong emphasis on the final measure (277) which is marked 'f' (forte). The percussion part includes a Police Whistle, B.D. (Bass Drum), Floor Tom, W.B. (Wire Brush), and Tamb. (Tambourine).

In measures 313 and 317, Stephenson employs harmonic chords and voicings closely mimicking Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Figure 25 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. V, mm. 313-317.

Figure 25 shows a musical score for measures 313-317 of Mvt. V of *The Devil's Tale*. The score includes parts for B♭ Cl., Bsn., C Tpt., Tbn., Perc., Vln., and D.B. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of rests and active passages, with a strong emphasis on the final measure (317) which is marked 'f' (forte). The percussion part includes a Police Whistle, B.D. (Bass Drum), Floor Tom, W.B. (Wire Brush), and Tamb. (Tambourine).

## ***Toss it in a Can:***

Given a “sexy and jazzy” feel, in Stephenson’s words. • Falling fourths are found within, and the movement ends with a descending chromatic line in the trombone and bass (not shown).

Figure 26 - Stephenson, *The Devil’s Tale*, Mvt. V, mm. 349-355.

Figure 26 shows a musical score for measures 349-355 of *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. V. The score includes staves for A. Cl., Bsn., C. Tpt., Tbn., Perc., Vln., and D.B. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of dynamics including *mp*, *f*, *pp*, and *ppp*. Percussion includes S.D., Splash Cymb., Triangle, Floor Tom, and B.D. The string section plays *arco* and *ppp*. The woodwinds and brass have various articulations and dynamics.

## ***It is so Tragic:***

The chromatic motive is now reversed. • The movement is high speed, in a challenging meter, and is overall virtuosic, similar to Stravinsky.

Figure 27 - Stephenson, *The Devil’s Tale*, Mvt. V, mm. 445-456.

Figure 27 shows a musical score for measures 445-456 of *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. V. The score includes staves for A. Cl., Bsn., C. Tpt., Tbn., Perc., Vln., and D.B. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a mix of dynamics including *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The woodwinds and brass have various articulations and dynamics. The string section plays *arco* and *pizz*.

## MVT VI - Now, I Won

The devil is going to win the card game, but the music suggests he will win more than that. Minor key suggests the devil is still winning. Every melody in the movement begins in a bass voice, suggesting the devil again. Additionally, the high and low instruments duel throughout, paired against each other. • The movement is also secco and polytonal like Stravinsky.

The very last rhythm heard in the work is foreshadowed in this movement through a quote from the opening of *The Soldier's Tale*.

Figure 28 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. VI, mm. 693-697. Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale*, Marche du Soldat, mm. 1.

**Stephenson**

693

Stravinsky

Cornet à pistons in La

Trombone

## MVT VII - Part I Finale (Three Dances Reprise)

Figure 29 - Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale*, Mvt. VII, mm. 850-860.

850

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Vln.

D.B.

*The Soldier's Tale* has several reprises, so to stay true to the palindrome form, reprises are included in *The Devil's Tale* as well.

Hear **Part 2** in WIU's premiere performance here: [composerjim.com/works/devils-tale](http://composerjim.com/works/devils-tale)

## Appendix

- Figure 1 - Igor Stravinsky, *Octet* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952), 3, mm. 42-43.
- Figure 2 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 1, mm. 1-9.
- Figure 3 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 3, mm. 31-40.
- Figure 4 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 16, mm. 190-192.
- Figure 5 - Igor Stravinsky, *Octet* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952), box 50.
- Figure 6 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 16, mm. 188, 191-192.
- Igor Stravinsky, *Octet* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952), 1, mm. 1-2.
- Figure 7 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 17, mm. 1-4.
- Figure 8 - Igor Stravinsky, *Octet* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952), fourth bar of box 19-box 20.
- Figure 9 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 25, mm. 75-77.
- Figure 10 - Igor Stravinsky, *Octet* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952), 2-3, mm. 38-41.
- Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 25, mm. 76-78.
- Figure 11 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 26, mm. 1-24.
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- Figure 13 - Jim Stephenson, *Octet* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2021), 27, mm. 25-33.
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- Figure 17 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), Introduction, mm. c-n.
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- Figure 19 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 4, mm. 1-2.
- Igor Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale* (London: Chester Music, 1992), 16, mm. 36-39.
- Figure 20 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 8, mm. 56-59.
- Figure 21 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 16, mm. 169-174.
- Figure 22 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 18, mm. 184-189.
- Figure 23 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 21, mm. 217-221.
- Figure 24 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 28, mm. 273-277.
- Figure 25 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 32, mm. 313-317.
- Figure 26 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 35, mm. 349-355.
- Figure 27 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 40, mm. 445-456.
- Figure 28 - Jim Stephenson, *The Devil's Tale* (Chicago: Stephenson Music, 2013), 52, mm. 693-697.
- Igor Stravinsky, *The Soldier's Tale* (London: Chester Music, 1992), 1, mm. 1.
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