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COCO & IGOR  
STRAVINSKY





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4 COCO CHANEL & IGOR STRAVINSKY

CLAUDIE OSSARD, CHRIS BOLZLI and VERONIKA ZONABEND  
present

MADS MIKKELSEN

ANNA MOUGLALIS

CHANEL  
COCO & IGOR  
STRAVINSKY

Afilm by  
JAN KOUNEN

With  
ELENA MOROZOVA - NATACHA LINDINGER - GRIGORI MANOUKOV  
ANATOLE TAUBMAN - NICOLAS VAUDE

Screenplay by  
CHRIS GREENHALGH

Adapted by  
CARLO DE BOUTINY et JAN KOUNEN

Adapted from the novel *Coco & Igor* by CHRIS GREENHALGH

A EUROWIDE FILM PRODUCTION  
In association with HEXAGON PICTURES  
In partnership with CANAL+ and TPS STAR  
and WILD BUNCH  
With the support of REGION ILE-DE-FRANCE  
In association with CINEMAGE 3

Running time : 1 h 55/Scope/Dolby SRD

# PARIS 1913

At the Theatre Des Champs-Élysées, Igor Stravinsky premieres his *The Rite Of Spring*.

Coco Chanel attends the premiere and is mesmerised...

But the revolutionary work is too modern, too radical: the enraged audience boos and jeers. A near riot ensues.

Stravinsky is inconsolable. Seven years later, now rich, respected and successful, Coco Chanel meets Stravinsky again - a penniless refugee living in exile in Paris after the Russian Revolution. The attraction between them is immediate and electric. Coco offers Stravinsky the use of her villa in Garches so that he will be able to work, and he moves in straight away, with his children and consumptive wife.

And so a passionate, intense love affair between two creative giants begins...

The production of *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky* has had the support of Karl Lagerfeld and CHANEL who have generously made available their archives and collections. CHANEL has lent several original garments and accessories to be worn by Mademoiselle Anna Mouglalis in the role of Mademoiselle Chanel, and Karl Lagerfeld has specially created a 'timeless' suit and an embroidered evening dress for the scene recreating the legendary and scandalous 1913 performance of *The Rite Of Spring*. In order to recreate the world of Coco Chanel as faithfully as possible, CHANEL has also granted the film makers full access to its archives and to Coco Chanel's celebrated apartment at 31, rue Cambon, Paris.



How did you begin work on “Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky” ?

First with the help of diverse documents and biographies, I did a lot of research on the era, the Ballets Russes and the characters. The project, which was suggested to me by Claudie Ossard, was already a screenplay written by Chris Greenhalgh. I immediately read Chris’ novel. I digested the lot, then I worked on the screenplay with the author. I suggested adding some scenes and removing others. We worked together for weeks and with Chris’ agreement I added my world to the story. Finally I completed the adaptation in French with Carlo de Boutiny.

You once said: “*You can read piles of books but to conceive of a character you have to meet him*”. How did you ‘meet’ Igor Stravinsky and Coco Chanel and what was it like?

To enter the world of a character who has lived and moreover who has become an icon is very strange. I met Igor Stravinsky through his music. I already knew “The Rite of Spring” but in order for that meeting to take place I listened to it non-stop about thirty times in the dark; then I found its place amongst his previous works and

# A CONVERSATION WITH JAN KOUNEN

the ones that followed. It was very different for Coco. I really did meet her by spending a whole day in her apartment; I touched her objects, read her books. Those are moving moments, where you feel you have a responsibility towards the dead and where the character you have conceived evolves with that feeling in mind. I didn’t think about this at first but that’s how it happened. I was caught off guard but I made a pact with them, they are still here... somewhere.

How did you get into this story which is both intimate and legendary?

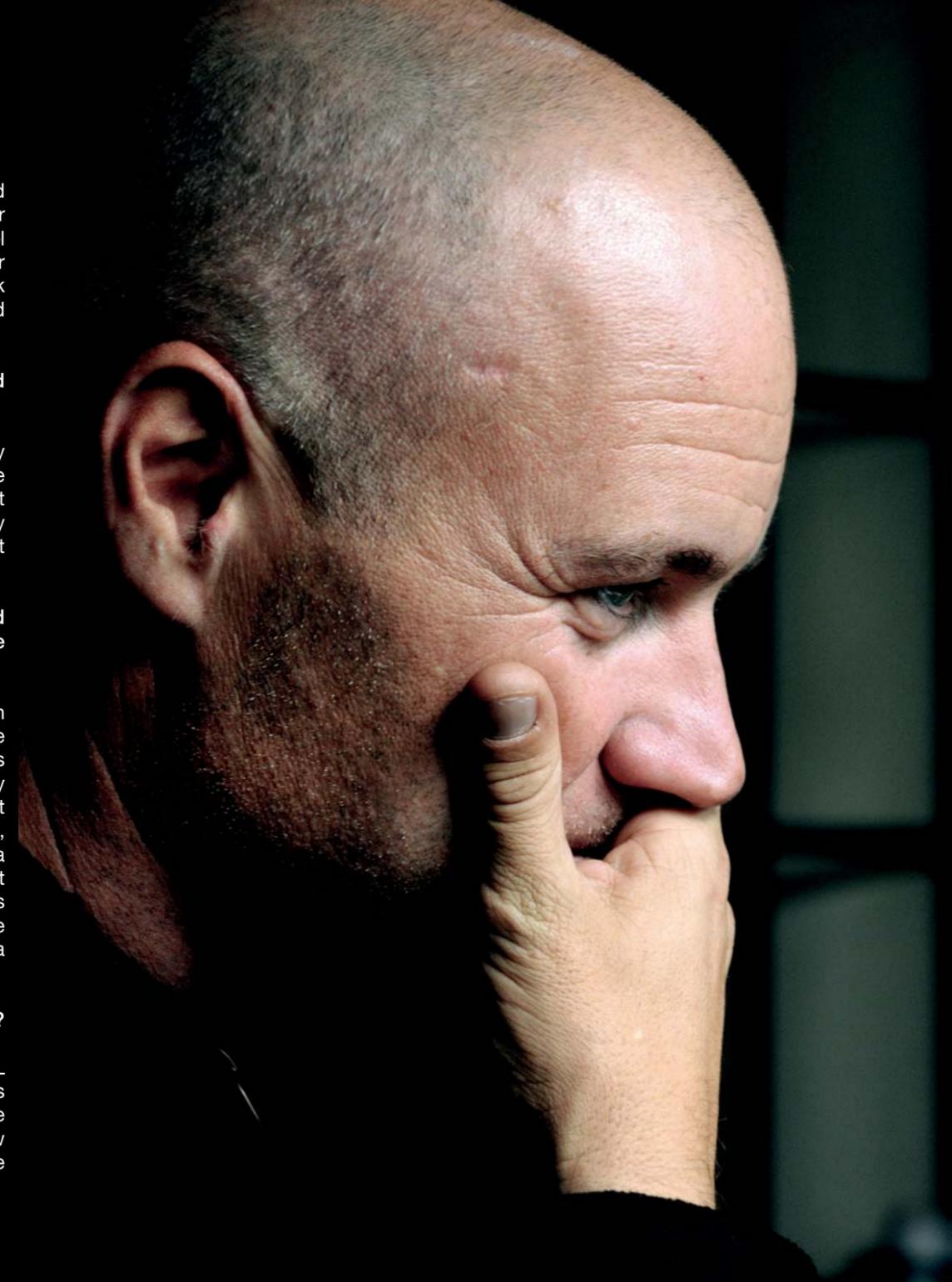
The characters are legendary; the intimacy allows you to embody them. What is interesting is to work on the feeling even though we are talking with characters that have grown mysterious. The result rings true to me: it is not Igor Stravinsky and Coco Chanel as they were that you see, but their essence. Their stamp is very present today.

When did Mads Mikkelsen and Anna Mouglalis become involved as the famous but clandestine couple? And Elena Morozova, the third, fragile character between these two giants?

Mads was one of the reasons I agreed to make this film: he’s an actor I wanted to work with. From “Adam’s Apples” to “After The Wedding”, he shows great talent and intelligence in creating his characters. For me, Anna represented Chanel: her voice, the way she moves, everything in her was the character. I had my doubts at first; she had a great handicap, having been the muse of CHANEL, but she was the character and that was the main thing. I met Elena at a casting session in Moscow. I had met a lot of actresses but from the first test I knew my search for Catherine Stravinsky was over. Her character had to be very attractive and very strong, she had to be Coco Chanel’s rival and make Igor Stravinsky’s dilemma even worse. Elena will be a great discovery for the audience.

From there, how did you bring these two mythical characters to life?

The actors took care of that. Anna has been inhabited by CHANEL for a long time. Mads created his version of Igor Stravinsky. I was there to help and guide them but above all it is their creation. We had little time for preparation knowing that Mads had to learn how to play the piano and speak Russian. We didn’t rehearse but the





three of us spent three days exploring each scene, the motivations, the personalities, the desires and the frustrations of the characters. What was said but also what they thought, how they felt. With this framework we went straight on set with plenty of room for freedom and creativity.

**The film depicts an era and its protagonists, and two bodies of work – Chanel's and Stravinsky's – as if both were great revolutions and a single passion. How did you connect the personal and the larger stories?**

That is exactly what made this project exciting. In fact I had planned to spend a year writing but I interrupted that once I read the screenplay; it contained the elements of your question: the creation of the premiere of “The Rite of Spring” at the Champs-Élysées Theatre in 1913 – a massive scene to recreate – with, behind the scenes, a psychological drama between a small number of characters... the paths of desire, of creation and the era. The whole project was unusual. I had some of the required knowledge; the rest was unknown to me.

**The film relates each step of Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky's passion as much as each step of their work: “The Rite of Spring” and CHANEL N° 5. How did you translate the intimate connection between creation and passion?**

I tried to describe the rapport between an artist and his – or her – work, between personality, psychology and creation; the artist's ability to transcend the dramatic events of his life but also his obsession and the sacrifice that he makes of his life for the sake of his art.

**The film opens with the historical performance of “The Rite of Spring” at the Champs-Élysées Theatre in 1913. How did you conceive this spectacular reconstitution of the original performance with Nijinsky's ballet on stage; a war of ideas breaking out in the audience; Coco Chanel in the shadows and at the heart of the event, the film's audience?**

Some of my hair turned white because of it but you can't see that on my shaved head! First we had the historical facts, which we wanted to respect as much as we could. We took the liberty of having



Coco Chanel walk into the theatre with Misa even though that is not how it happened. We also used slightly fewer dancers, but all the rest is historically accurate. For example, Nijinsky did jump on stage to shout the tempo to his dancers who couldn't hear the orchestra amidst the roaring of the audience. Dominique Brun was in charge of recreating the ballet. I had loved her recreation of Nijinsky's “The Afternoon of a Faun”. We used statements made at the time for this, as there were no dance scores, unlike for “The Afternoon of a Faun”. The scandal was like no other, and therefore very much talked about; again statements made at the time helped us with the dialogue. I had to study the music in order to know at which precise moment each instrument was played so we could synchronise audience, musicians and dancers.

**You predicted it was going to be the most complicated scene you had ever had to shoot – were you right?**

We rehearsed with the sets in the mornings, then the actors were made up while I'd prepare the outline based on the acting, then we shot. It was impossible to do that with the “The Rite”. We had a limited time in the Champs-Élysées Theatre, so we had to recreate some scenes in the studio. We had more than 1000 extras, 25 dancers, 70 musicians and 4 choreographic tableaux. It was a monumental jigsaw puzzle. It took us three weeks to prepare this scene. I shot the dancers rehearsals on video. With Anny Danché, the editor, we made an animatic using other films, filmed rehearsals and videos of the “The Rite” concerts, to help with the timing and the drama. Finally I

made a complete storyboard of the sequence. We then took the pieces of the jigsaw apart to shoot by groups of shots. We had to take everything apart quickly every evening and put it all back together each morning as there was a nightly performance taking place in the theatre. We were very lucky that it all worked out. The dancers had rehearsed a lot; the theatre was full of extras. The theatre staff became very passionate about our project, they were really helpful. Yes, it was the most complex scene I've ever had to shoot because I had such little time, only three days in the theatre and four in the studio.

**Your associates say “Jan finds himself in Stravinsky’s savagery.” Do you think this is true?**

I don't think that Stravinsky was a savage. Perhaps I found some common ground with him in as much as he was an agitator and he suffered setbacks. My monumental slap in the face was the last twenty minutes of “Blueberry”, in a scene where I gave all my vital energy, where I took huge creative risks, and that ended up being booed by most of the audience.

**The sets and the costumes are characters in their own rights. You said you tried to have a cinematographic approach closer to style than to effect. How did you work with the visual aspect in this way?**

Style is sensory, this film contains few words. Much is conveyed through faces, costumes, objects and the layout of the shots. I worked on trying to use this language instead of the spoken word.

**Karl Lagerfeld created a dress especially for the film. Was it important to cast the CHANEL of today in its era? How was this collaboration?**

Karl and Anna are very close, so he created this sublime dress for her to wear at the last performance. The meeting with Karl and Maison CHANEL was important. The collaboration I dreaded was in fact very pleasant. Karl Lagerfeld advised us on the costumes and on Coco Chanel's habits. He also opened her private wardrobe for us. This time it was Chatoune, the costume designer, who did jumps worthy of Nijinsky! We also shot in Chanel's place and we had intimate objects of hers at our disposal for the shooting at the Ritz.

**Chanel's villa ‘Bel Respiro’ is the central location where the two artists’ passion explodes in the film and where Catherine, Igor Stravinsky’s wife, sees her failing health deteriorate further. How did you reconstitute this house and its decoration with no image left of it?**

Marie-Hélène Sulmoni, our set designer and her team decorated a villa entirely. We chose a larger house than the real ‘Bel Respiro’ to allow us more space to work. For me, his music is an extension of Igor Stravinsky and her house an extension of Coco Chanel.

**The soundtrack plays a major role in the film. How did you combine Igor Stravinsky’s existing works and the music composed by Gabriel Yared? Why did you choose Gabriel Yared?**

Gabriel Yared came late to the film at a time when we kept fitting his music to our images. The collaboration with Gabriel was beautiful; he found his place in relation to Stravinsky, whom he worships. Gabriel has a strong style and the music serves the feelings. The recording with him at Abbey Road Studios was for me one of the most beautiful times in the making of the film.

**You said that what interests you in cinema is to experience something different. How would you describe this experience today?**

A total departure from “99 Francs”. I could finally dig into what's human: sensitivity, relationships. I could explore the track I had opened up with “Panshin Beka Winonil” (my short film included in the feature length film “8”). Films are worlds, and some are worth exploring. When you immerse yourself for so long in a project, you'd better be sure that it will nourish you. Immersing yourself in “Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky” offers a very different kind of voyage than immersing yourself in the biography of a serial killer, don't you think?

**You said this film was going to be more classic but as original as your previous movies. How would you position “Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky” in your filmography?**

As atypical as the others really, but more restrained formally and therefore more classic. The subject required that, it was exciting to

film a dialogue in Russian in a long fixed shot. Looking through the eyepiece of the camera was like watching someone else's film.

**Stravinsky said: “We have a duty in music and that is to invent it.” Do you feel the same towards cinema?**

We have a duty in cinema; to do something different to what was done before, but without forgetting what was done before us. For inspiration we have the duty to welcome it and accept the fact that we are not its master.

**“Fashion fades, only style remains,” was one of Coco Chanel's famous quotes. Do you feel that this can be applied to film?**

Yes. Just look at Powell and Pressburger's “The Red Shoes”, or “2001: A Space Odyssey”, where nothing has dated... except perhaps the red 70's sofas in the space station.

**“I am a man for jumping, not one for sitting down,” Nijinsky used to say. Is this how you would define yourself as a filmmaker?**

In fact, no, I walk and I like to sit down but it is true that while I am shooting a film I am quite restless. I am trying to be less so on set.

PARIS, APRIL 2009



Brilliant, eventful, strewn with reversals, the life of Gabrielle Chanel delineates an incredible destiny lived through an eventful century. *“Reality is sometimes more surprising than fiction,”* is a quote much used by film producers. Gabrielle Chanel’s life is a dream come true for a filmmaker’s imagination.

For Gabrielle Chanel: *“Legend honours celebrity.”* More than forty biographies have related her journey and her story. Hers is a life that reflects a 20<sup>th</sup> century marked by daring, loves, turmoil and style.

Born on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1883, from a humble, provincial background, Gabrielle is quickly orphaned. Her education provided by nuns, she is taught basic sewing and is hired at the age of twenty as a hosiery assistant. She embroiders, she sews, and she gets bored, distracting herself at café concerts. Her graceful figure gets her noticed and when she takes the stage as a singer, the audience loves her and nicknames her “Coco”. Etienne Balsan, a rich racehorse breeder, spots and quickly falls for her. Through him she discovers the equestrian world, which will become such a source of inspiration, as well as racetrack society, whose women’s hats according to her resemble meat pies. Amongst Balsan’s entourage, she meets Arthur “Boy” Capel, who will be the great love of her life. Capel encourages her and provides the necessary funds to open her first milliner’s

shop, on rue Cambon in Paris, in 1910. More shops quickly follow, in Deauville, then Biarritz and Cannes. Chanel’s success is rapid, and she is soon able to repay Boy Capel’s loan to the last centime.

The young Chanel is fashion designer like no other. When American magazines gain access to her innovative creations, it’s a thunder clap and the reverberations are felt worldwide. Her affair with Boy Capel has helped her introduce a masculine energy to her ever-evolving designs, which will quickly be described as androgynous. She ‘steals’ his trousers, his pyjamas, his boaters and his jerseys. Her lovers will have a direct impact on her designs: from Grand Duke Dimitri she borrows the *roubachka*, a typical Russian smock, pelisses, furs and embroideries. From the staff of the Duke of Westminster’s yacht she appropriates jerseys, golden buttons, white facings and tweed jackets.

In 1921 Chanel launches her first perfume, N°5, which is based on May Rose and jasmine essences. She is also the first to use aldehydes. The launch marks a breakthrough in the perfume world unequalled before or since.

Marilyn Monroe, when asked what she wore in bed, replied laconically: *“CHANEL N°5, of course”*.

# THE LIVES OF COCO CHANEL



Coco launches a style language that is unique to her and structures the excellence of CHANEL. Reckless, but with an extra sense, the sense of style. Her 'little black dress' of 1926 is a stroke of genius. *"Women think of all colours except the absence of colour. I said that black has everything. White also. They possess an absolute beauty. A perfect harmony."*

In 1932, she presents to an awe-struck Paris an *Haute Joaillerie* collection made entirely from platinum and diamonds - her favourite stone - of which she said: *"I choose the diamond because it represents the most value in the smallest volume."*

Chanel associates with the luminaries of her times: she collaborates with Cocteau and Picasso for the theatre; she financially supports Stravinsky, Diaghilev, Raymond Radiguet and Pierre Reverdy. She is everywhere, in Venice with friends such as Misia Sert, and in Paris, of course, at the Ritz where she has taken up residence. She is a consummate businesswoman who leaves nothing to chance. Her judgements ring like aphorisms: *"If you are born without wings, don't do anything to stop them growing"* or *"I don't like to hear about CHANEL fashion. CHANEL is a style. Fashion passes, style remains."*

In 1939, she closes her couture house. Then, at the age of 71, she returns to the forefront with a memorable fashion show presented on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1954. It is a second revolution: she establishes the tweed suit, the "2.55" bag of quilted leather, the camellia, the two-tone shoe...

Once again she is Empress of a world that had believed it could live without her. She launches "Pour Monsieur", and is awarded a Fashion Oscar in Dallas as *"The most influential designer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century."*

Her entire life, her loves and her style, are present in her work. She doesn't erect barriers, everything is connected: her fashion is deeply coloured by her life, her learning, her discoveries. The sports she practices are reflected in the simplicity of her clothes. The jewellery she receives as gifts are present in her designs, as are her travels, her encounters, the friendships she cultivates, her superstitions. She digs over everything, thus creating an enduring body of work that speaks deeply of her time.

*"I created fashion for a quarter of a century. Why? Because I knew how to talk about my era,"* said Coco Chanel, who died on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1971, a few days before her spring-summer haute couture show. The world bid farewell to the most influential woman of her century, but the great CHANEL book remains far from closed.

## CHANEL' S N°5 A REVOLUTIONARY PERFUME

**GRASSE**, South of France, 1921, the already celebrated Coco Chanel entrusts Ernest Beaux, (formerly official perfumer to the Tsars' Court) with the creation of her first perfume. Her wish: *"A woman's fragrance that smells of woman."*

Chanel dreams of a revolutionary fragrance in her own image: abstract, unique. And not only 'pretty'. A perfume that will favour the natural beauty of woman. And to achieve authenticity, Coco pursues the artificial.

*"An artificial perfume, and I do mean "artificial", as a dress is artificial. Which is to say, fabricated."*

When Ernest Beaux presents two series of samples numbered from 1 to 5 and from 20 to 24, she chooses N°5. It will be the first perfume ever composed of synthetic floral fragrances, aldehydes.

*"What will you call it?"*

*"I launch my collection on May 5th, the fifth day of the fifth month of the year; leave it the number it has and this number 5 will bring luck."*

For Chanel, what is important is inside. She herself designs the minimalist bottle that will contain the 80 ingredients: the simplest possible glass bottle and its black and white label. Its avant-garde status is such that it will be exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1959, five years after Marilyn made her famous statement and elevated Coco's fragrance to stary heights.



Since Marilyn, other great actresses have lent their faces to N°5: Candice Bergen, Ali MacGraw, Lauren Hutton, Catherine Deneuve, Carole Bouquet, Nicole Kidman and Audrey Tautou. Celebrated directors such as Ridley Scott, Gérard Corbiau, Luc Besson, Baz Luhrmann and Jean-Pierre Jeunet have hymned it, with Andy Warhol going so far as to feature it as one of his portraits of the incontestable icons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, a bottle of Chanel N°5 is sold somewhere in the world every 55 seconds.

*"A woman without perfume is a woman with no future."*  
Coco Chanel

## THREE MEN FOR ONE DESTINY

Three successive paternal figures mark the early years of Igor Stravinsky. Born June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1882 in Oranienbaum while his parents are on holiday, Igor is brought up in Saint Petersburg. His father is an opera singer. Although according to his teachers and his father the young Stravinsky shows no signs of any particular musical predisposition, he wants to study music to satisfy his desire to be a composer. His father forces him to study law, but dies in 1902, leaving his son free to accomplish his dream.

Shortly after, Stravinsky meets Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, the famous composer, who advises him to avoid the Conservatoire and suggests he becomes his tutor. It is during this decisive period that Stravinsky composes his first work, in 1907: "Symphony in C". Rimsky-Korsakov dies in 1908 and Stravinsky dedicates a funeral lament to him, the manuscript of which is lost during the Russian Revolution. In 1906, he marries his cousin Catherine Nossenko, his greatest source of encouragement. Theodore is born the following year, and then a daughter, Ludmilla. Igor pursues his composing – this is his Russian period.

The third man in Igor Stravinsky's extraordinary life is Sergeï Diaghilev, famous art critic and impresario, and creator of the Ballets Russes, who hears the orchestral fantasy "Fireworks" in 1909. Diaghilev asks Stravinsky to orchestrate some of his compositions for him. In Paris, the first season of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes is a triumph. Secluded in Switzerland Stravinsky has just fathered a third child, Soulima. He is in the midst of writing his opera "The Nightingale" when Diaghilev commissions his first ballet from him: "The Firebird". The piece marks the beginning of Stravinsky's relationship with western culture and makes him the darling of all Paris.

## PARIS, THE BELLE ÉPOQUE AND THE ANNÉES FOLLES

When Stravinsky arrives in Paris, the City of Lights is the world's cultural capital. Two World Fairs, the Eiffel Tower, the construction of the Metro, of 175 cinemas, of the Petit and the Grand Palais and two districts in artistic turmoil, Montmartre and Montparnasse. Fauvism, Cubism and Expressionism have already transformed the capital.

Paris and Diaghilev's commissions for the Ballets Russes liberate Stravinsky from the artistic influence of his Russian master, Rimsky-Korsakov. The next commission, "Petrouchka", signals a real rupture in his work until the culmination of his musical innovations with "The Rite of Spring", considered the pre-eminent symbol of the musical avant-garde of the early 20th century. The work remains a major influence for classical, contemporary and jazz musicians.

Following the scandalous premiere of "The Rite", typhoid fever strikes Stravinsky, who has to spend six weeks in a sanatorium. His fourth child is born: Maria Milena. His wife learns she has contracted tuberculosis and is institutionalized. Igor starts working on his opera again. His style having changed in the meantime, he adds a prologue, "The Song of the Nightingale", considered to be his "final farewell to The Rite". Diaghilev's activities are interrupted by the war. Between 1914 and 1917, Stravinsky composes "Les Noces" and "The Fox". In dire financial straits he conceives a travelling theatre with writer Charles Ferdinand Ramuz. "A Soldier's Tale" signals the beginning of his second, "neoclassical" period.

In 1920, settled in a Jazzy, Art Deco, Dada Paris, Stravinsky collaborates with Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau and George Balanchine. The famous piano-making firm Pleyel administers his contracts, pays him and provides him with a studio to work in. Then Diaghilev

# THE LIVES OF STRAVINSKY





organizes a momentous encounter with an admirer who is herself universally celebrated: Coco Chanel. Stravinsky falls madly in love with her. She will finance his work long after their passionate affair has run its course. Stravinsky becomes a French citizen in 1934. But in 1938, tragedy follows tragedy: his daughter Ludmilla succumbs to tuberculosis, then his wife the following year and finally his mother. World War II erupts and Stravinsky leaves for the U.S.A.

## AMERICA, AMERICA

Lecturing at Harvard and with his friend, then wife, Vera de Bosset, Stravinsky settles in Hollywood, near the home of Arnold Schoenberg. An artist who draws inspiration from different cultures and languages,

he is considered a major player of his era. In California, he meets the famous Europeans in exile: Otto Klemperer, Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, George Balanchine, Arthur Rubinstein, and the English writers who admire him: Dylan Thomas, Aldous Huxley – who introduces him to Christopher Isherwood – and W.H. Auden. Stravinsky advises Charlie Chaplin on the music Chaplin composes for his films. Walt Disney chooses “The Rite of Spring” for one of the great musical set pieces in his feature “Fantasia”. In 1940 Stravinsky is arrested in Boston for his orchestration of the American national anthem.

*“To continue in one direction is to go backwards.”*

Igor Stravinsky

An inexhaustible experimenter, Stravinsky carries out a last drastic artistic turn, marking his third period – “serialism” – and positioning himself in the musical movement initiated by Schoenberg. In parallel he continues to give concerts, and conducts the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. In 1945 Igor Stravinsky becomes an American citizen. Influenced by the cinema and broadcast media, he composes his first opera for television, “The Flood”, broadcast on CBS in 1962.

*“The modern audience prefers recognition to knowledge.”*

Igor Stravinsky

President Kennedy invites Stravinsky to dinner; Stravinsky is decorated by Pope Paul VI after a concert at the Vatican; Stravinsky plays for the last time in 1967 where he conducts sitting down. In 1969 he settles in New York where he will die two years later. His body is flown to Venice and then transported by gondola to the island of San Michele. He is buried beside his friend Diaghilev, the man who propelled him from the hands of his Old Russian master into the conquest of the new world. Today, Stravinsky has his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, alongside those of the biggest American movie stars.



In 1910 while working on “The Firebird” in Paris, Igor Stravinsky has a vision: “I imagined the spectacle of a pagan rite: the wise elders are seated in a circle and observing the death dance of a maiden they are sacrificing to propitiate the God of Spring”. He tells his friend, the artist and expert on paganism Nicolas Roerich, who mentions it to Sergeï Diaghilev. Diaghilev commissions a ballet libretto from Vaslas Nijinsky, the choreographer and dancer, based on this idea. He also commissions an “enormous” orchestration, convinced that ballet orchestras will get larger and larger. “The Rite Of Spring” is composed

in a small room of the pension de Clarens where Stravinsky has settled with his wife and children: “A closet with as its only furniture an upright piano with which I deafened everyone, a table and two chairs”.

The libretto is ready a year later, the music in November 1912. Rehearsals begin at the end of that year in Berlin, then in Vienna, London and Monte Carlo. Stravinsky quickly dismisses the German pianist so he can play himself, twice as fast, pushing the dancers to the very limits of their abilities. The composer writes to his mother: “Diaghilev and Nijinsky are crazy about my new child, *The Rite*.”

Nicolas Roerich is in charge of the sets and costumes. Valentine Cross-Hugo, the French artist and a friend of Les Six, draws sketches based on Nijinsky’s indications; the latter elaborates the choreography with the help of his sister Bronislava. In her memoirs, she talks about her brother’s work: “The men are primitive creatures, they look almost bestial. Their legs and feet face inwards, they clench their fists, their heads hang down, their shoulders sag, they walk awkwardly with buckled knees... all this demands great precision from the dancers... who feel too much is being asked of them.” Nijinsky abandons the idea of traditional symmetrical choreographies and the academic “feet outward” dogma. He clashes with Diaghilev who accuses him of mistreating his dancers. In return, Nijinsky complains that the impresario lacks musical culture. The rehearsals begin again in April 1913.

# THE RITE OF SPRING A REVOLUTIONARY WORK

May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1913, one day before the premiere at the Champs-Élysées Theatre in Paris. The dress rehearsal goes extremely well in front of a prestigious and enthusiastic audience: Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, the intelligentsia of the times and the whole of the Parisian press. “*Music for savages with all mod cons*,” says Debussy while Ravel claims “The Rite” as a work of genius.

But the next day it’s total chaos: the music and the choreography, too audacious, come as a cataclysmic shock. Amongst the audience of season tickets holders and the bourgeoisie a confrontation erupts: a brawl between the supporters and the detractors explodes. More than a performance takes place that night: it is one of the biggest artistic scandals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“I left the theatre at the beginning of the *Prelude* which was immediately received with laughter and mockery,” says Stravinsky in “Chronicles of My Life”. “I was appalled. These displays soon grew widespread while provoking reactions from the supporters; it quickly became a dreadful racket.”

“The din turned into a brawl,” relates Jean Cocteau. “The Countess of Pourtales was brandishing her fan, red-faced, shouting: In sixty years it’s the first time anyone dares make fun of me!”

In the auditorium, pandemonium. Mocking cries of “A doctor! A dentist! Two dentists!” assail the virgins on stage, dancing with their heads in their hands. In the wings, panic reigns. Standing on a chair, Nijinsky shouts out the tempo to the dancers who can no longer hear the the orchestra, conducted by the imperturbable Pierre Monteux. After one last attempt – “Kindly allow the performance to finish!” Diaghilev orders the house lights turned on and off in an attempt to calm the audience. During Act II, the police are forced to intervene.

Valentine Cross-Hugo: “All that was written about the battle of “*The Rite of Spring*” is is nothing compared to what really took place. It is as if the theatre had been shaken by an earthquake. It seemed to sway with the turmoil. Howling, swearing, hooting, steady booing overtook the music, and then slapping, even punches.”

The ballet will be performed six times only. But these six performances in 1913 at the Theatre des Champs-Élysées will mark the death of Old World ideas and the transition to modernity. It is only a year later, in April 1914, that “The Rite of Spring” will be properly

celebrated for its tremendous audacity. Igor Stravinsky will be praised to the skies after playing a concert in Paris, his admirers pulling the back of his morning coat in the streets of Paris.

In 1971, Millicent Hodson, the choreographer, writes a thesis on the Ballets Russes and Kenneth Archer a study on Nicolas Roerich. Together they decide to re-create the “Rite of Spring revolution” as it happened in 1913 in Paris. They launch an investigation and meet all the survivors of that night. With the help of Marie Rambert, Nijinsky’s assistant, they recreate the original Rite on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1987 as performed by the Joffrey Ballet. At the time, Diaghilev had originally asked Marie Rambert to assist Nijinsky, and it is thanks to her “bar by bar” notes that the ballet can be reconstructed.

Since 1913, this historical work has been considered to be the paragon of the Modern era and remains the most choreographed pieces of ballet music of all times: after Nijinsky, Maurice Béjart, Pina Bausch, Martha Graham and Angelin Preljocaj have all staged this musical monument. Much more than a score, “The Rite of Spring” remains a living arena for pioneering ideas and artistic liberty.

The priceless manuscript changes ownership many times over the years. In the thirties, it is held in a bank safety deposit box, but prior to the war Coco Chanel owns it and lends it to the Ballets Russes Exhibition in the Marsan Pavillion. No one knows how it ends up in Stravinsky’s hands once again. The composer puts it up for sale in New York on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1970. The journey of this manuscript bears testimony to the powerful bond – artistic and amatory – that united Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky for the rest of their lives, defying time and distance until their deaths, in the same year.

Robert Craft, the American conductor and close personal friend of Stravinsky, relates a moving anecdote about that which the French couturiere loved so passionately: “One evening Stravinsky pointed the windows of rue Cambon to me and says, furious: “That’s where the manuscript of “*The Rite*” is imprisoned.”

## COCO & IGOR, THE BOOK

After two collections of poetry and more than one prestigious award, English author Chris Greenhalgh elected to tell the story of the still-alleged love story between the greatest composer and the most celebrated designer of their times. His novel, "Coco & Igor", written in 2002, is a romantic reconstruction of the passion that played out between the walls of Chanel's house, 'Bel Respiro'. "Who would have thought so at the time, who would believe it now?" asks the writer. Through this artistic and sentimental encounter, the novel explores the creative development and birth of their great works: "The Rite of Spring" and the bestselling perfume ever, CHANEL N°5.

During his investigation, Chris Greenhalgh discovered that Stravinsky's music was described by a contemporary critic as "*Russian vodka with a French perfume.*"

His aim and his task were to bring out the obvious connections between these two great revolutionary destinies. The works of the modern lovers haven't finished crossing each other's paths. Seven years after completing his novel, Chris Greenhalgh has adapted "Coco & Igor" for Jan Kounen's film. The lovers are immortal.

# CHRIS GREENHALGH

AUTHOR AND CO-SCREENWRITER



## A CONVERSATION WITH CHRIS GREENHALGH

**How was the idea of your book “Coco and Igor” born?**

I saw a photograph of Chanel and Stravinsky together. A strange couple, I thought. And then I did some research. It turned out they lived almost exactly parallel lives. Stravinsky died at the age of 88, while Chanel died in her 87<sup>th</sup> year. This struck a chord because I knew there were 88 keys on a piano keyboard. And I liked the parallel of the senses, too – music and perfume, and the connection of black and white motifs – the black and white of the piano and the black and white of CHANEL’s designs. This sense of parallel lives, meeting in the middle and influencing each other before moving off, was how the novel was born.

**What was the process of investigation like?**

I read every book and biography I could about Chanel and Stravinsky, as well as about Misia Sert and Diaghilev, another strangely parallel pair. It took quite a long time. I discovered that Chanel, quite by chance, had been present at the riotous premiere of The Rite of Spring at the Champs-Élysées Theatre in 1913. It was the first classical concert she had ever been to. She was invited by her dance teacher, a Greek woman called Caryathis. They were accompanied by Caryathis’ wealthy German lover Von Recklinghausen and his friend, the actor Charles Dullin. Seven years later, Chanel had invited the newly exiled and impoverished Stravinsky, along with his consumptive wife and four children, to stay with her in her villa, ‘Bel Respiro’, outside Paris. There the couturiere and the composer had a brief but intense affair. Robert Craft and Steven Walsh, Stravinsky’s biographers, attest to this, as does Paul Morand, a confidant of Chanel’s.

**What elements were known for facts when you first started?**

That Chanel attended the premiere of “The Rite of Spring” in 1913, that Stravinsky lived in her house, with his wife and 4 children in 1920-21, that CHANEL N°5 was ‘born’ in 1920-21, that they both died in the same year, having been born just over a year apart, that Chanel sponsored the revival of The Rite in 1920-21 and continued to act as a patron for Stravinsky’s music many years afterwards

**What did you find out that wasn’t known at all?**

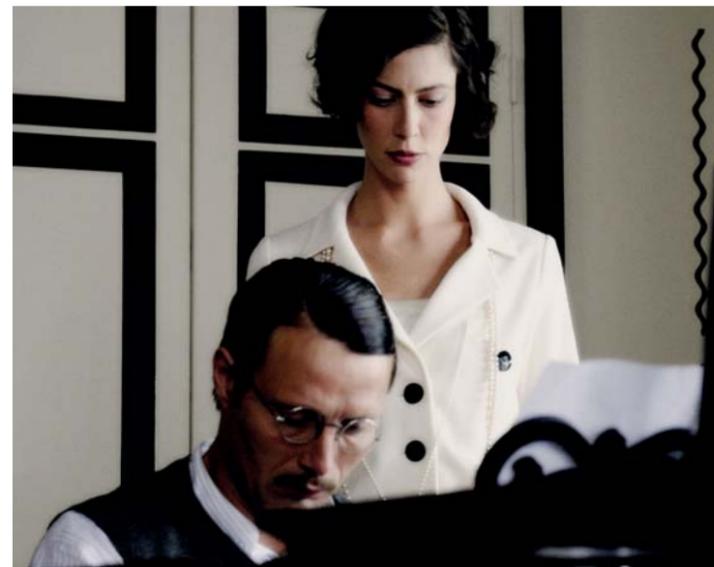
All the information was available, but no one before had made the connection of their parallel lives, or of the fact that CHANEL N°5 coincided with the revival of “The Rite” in 1920-21, when they were living together. This was the main discovery.

**How did you have to “complete“ the story using your imagination?**

Aside from the ‘facts’ above, there is little information about their relationship, no letters or correspondence survive between them, where they went, what they did, so I was able to take the essential facts and imagine and invent the rest.

**What did you learn during the writing process?**

The process made me realise the need for a clear structure. The novel is in 32 parts and reflects the structure of Bach’s “Goldberg Variations”, with the first and the last part being very similar. The first and last parts are also in the past tense, while the middle 30 chapters are in the present tense. This allowed me to bring the



story alive more, and make it seem like it was happening now. This made it seem less stiff and taxidermal.

**What do you think this passion was made of?**

The passion of their relationship comes from an artistic and creative meeting of minds. Also, Chanel was in grief over her lover Boy Capel’s death, while Stravinsky was coming to terms with his wife’s illness – tuberculosis. In that sense, they both needed love to affirm themselves at this time.

**Are you convinced that both “The Rite of Spring” and the “CHANEL N°5” perfume bear the traces of their encounter?**

The Rite was already in place in 1913, but the revisions made in 1920 perhaps bear the marks of a revived passion. CHANEL N°5 may have a connection to Stravinsky’s “Five Easy Pieces” first performed in 1919 and his “Five Finger Exercises” written in 1920, probably in Chanel’s villa. The perfume bottle itself is, of course, a testament to cubism and the world of the Modernists. Stravinsky was already a close friend of Picasso, and so Chanel completed the triangle – or rather the cube!

**Your book became a film for Jan Kounen, for which you also wrote the screenplay. Did the fact of re-thinking this unbelievable love affair for the screen bring the story a new perspective?**

Yes, because the parallels had to be hinted at or suggested rather than fully developed or stated, and the information conveyed much more visually rather than merely through description or dialogue. Also, there was a necessary process of distillation, as there was not enough time or space in the film to fit everything in. Jan was fantastic at recognising the essential elements and knowing what to cut.

**Now that the film made your initial vision come true, is it a way of finally making your story even more real?**

It gives it the strength of a visual image, which I hope will endure. It also makes the villa a strong presence, and almost another character in the story. But I also hope that it is a convincing love story in its own right, and has universal appeal beyond any narrow interest in two historical figures.





The designer and the composer had a brief but intense affair. Stravinsky's biographers, Robert Craft and Steven Walsh confirm this, as did Paul Morand, a confidant of Chanel's.

Chris Greenhalgh

Igor Stravinsky Mads Mikkelsen  
Coco Chanel Anna Mouglalis  
Catherine Stravinsky Elena Morozova  
Misia Sert Natacha Lindinger  
Sergeï Diaghilev Grigori Manoukov  
Grand Duke Dimitri Rasha Bukvic  
Ernest Beaux Nicolas Vaude  
Boy Capel Anatole Taubman  
The Doctor Eric Desmarestz  
Milène Stravinsky Clara Guelblum  
Théodore Stravinsky Maxime Danielou  
Ludmilla Stravinsky Sophie Hasson  
Soulima Stravinsky Nikita Ponomarenko  
Marie Catherine Davenier  
Joseph Olivier Claverie

***The Rite of Spring***

Recording by Berliner Philharmoniker conducted by Sir Simon Rattle  
Sir Simon Rattle appears by courtesy of EMI Classics  
Recreation of the dance of *The Rite of Spring* by Dominique Brun, choreographer,  
from the original 1913 choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky  
Recreation carried out with the help of Valentine Hugo and Emmanuel Barcet  
with Igor Stravinsky's annotations on his Rite of Spring's manuscript  
and those stated in Marie Rambert's sheet music.

***The Rite of Spring***

(rev 1947) (Igor Stravinsky)

***Symphonies of Wind Instruments***

(rev 1947) (Igor Stravinsky)

***Sonata***

(Igor Stravinsky)

Courtesy of Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd, an Imaem Company

***The Five Fingers***

(Igor Stravinsky)

***Five Easy Pieces***

(Igor Stravinsky)

Published by Chester Music Limited and Schott Music GmbH and Co, KG

Directed by Jan Kounen  
Screenplay Chris Greenhalgh  
Adaptation Carlo De Boutiny and Jan Kounen  
Adapted from *Coco & Igor* by Chris Greenhalgh

Producers Claudie Ossard  
Chris Bolzli  
Co-Producer Veronika Zonabend

Production Designer Philippe Delest  
Director of Photography David Ungaro  
Sound Vincent Tulli  
Set Designer Marie-Hélène Sulmoni  
Costume Designers Chattoune & Fab  
Make up Joël Lavau  
Hair Stylist Agathe Dupuis  
1st assistant Director Dominique Delany  
Continuity Francine Cathelain  
Casting Gigi Akoka, A.R.D.A.  
Editor Anny Danché  
Sound Editors Raphaël Sohier  
Loïc Prian  
Visual effects Rodolphe Chabrier  
Choreography Dominique Brun  
Stills Photographer Régine Abadia

Original Music Gabriel Yared

Press kit written by Marcia Romano

**EUROWIDE**  
FILM PRODUCTION

wild bunch

CHANEL  
COCO & IGOR  
STRAVINSKY