



Petrushka

# Petrushka

- *Petrushka* is a story of a Russian traditional puppet, Petrushka, who is made of straw and with a bag of sawdust as his body, but who comes to life and develops emotions.

Nijinsky as Petrushka, 1911



# Petrushka – The Story

- The ballet opens on St. Petersburg's Admiralty Square
- In progress is the Shrovetide fair - A Russian carnival before Lent
- The Charlatan appears, charming the captivated audience with his flute playing.

# Petrushka – The Story

- The curtain lifts – and the Charlatan introduces the inert, lifeless puppet figures of Petrushka, a Ballerina and a Moor



# Petrushka – The Story

- The Charlatan casts a magic spell with his flute.
- The puppets come to life, and perform a vigorous dance (Russian Dance)

Petrouchka  
The Charlatan



Charlatan – a quack

# Petrushka – The Story

- The second scene is set in Petrushka's Cell 'inside' the little theatre.
- The walls are painted in dark colours
- With a resounding crash, the Charlatan kick Petrushka into this barren cell

# Petrushka - The Story

- We see Petrushka's dismal 'life' behind the show curtains.
- Although Petrushka is a puppet, he feels human emotions which includes 1) bitterness towards the Charlatan for his imprisonment; and 2) love for the beautiful Ballerina.

# Petrushka – The Story

- The infuriated clown-puppet tries to escape from his cell but fails.
- The Ballerina then enters the room
- Petrushka professes his love for her but is rejected by the Ballerina

# Petrushka – The Story

- The third scene -
- The audience learns that the Moor leads a much more comfortable 'life' than Petrushka.
- The Moor's room is spacious and lavishly decorated with bright colorus

# Petrushka – The Story

- The Moor tries to cut a coconut but fails.
- He believes the coconut is a God and proceeds to pray to it.
- The Charlatan places the Ballerina in the Moor's room.
- The Ballerina is attracted to the Moor and plays a saucy tune on the trumpet

# Petrushka – The Story

- Petrushka finally breaks free from his cell and interrupts the seduction of the Ballerina.
- Petrushka attacks the Moor but soon realises he is too small and weak.
- The Moor beats Petrushka. Petrushka flees.

# Petrushka – The Story

- The fourth scene returns to the carnival.
- Some time has passed – it is now early evening.
- Lots of merry making is taking place – the Wet Nurses Dance, a peasant with his dancing bear, gypsies, coachmen, masqueraders

Preparation?  
2



Alexander Benoit 1911

The Dancing Bear



Russian Carnival

# Petrushka – The Story

- As the merrymaking reaches its peak, a cry is heard from the puppet-theater.
- Petrushka suddenly runs across the scene, followed by the Moor with his sword and the terrified Ballerina chasing after the Moor.

# Petrushka – The Story

- The Moor slays Petrushka with a single stroke.
- The police questions the Charlatan.
- The Charlatan tries to restore calm but shaking the ‘corpse’ above his head to remind everyone that Petrushka is but a puppet

# Petrushka – The Story

- As night falls, the Charlatan leaves, carrying Petrushka's limp body.
- Petrushka's ghost appears on the roof of the little theatre, his cry now in the form of angry defiance.