

Some Damn Panda



Where does musical creativity come from? In the case of *Le rossignol*, Stravinsky claims his opera was inspired by an early childhood memory: Igor was strolling down a Saint Petersburg boulevard one day when a giant songbird, a nightingale, suddenly dropped from the sky and commenced attacking him, peck, peck, peck! The bewildered lad fled, but the bird followed. Down the winding streets of the city they raced until the winged fiend finally cornered Igor in a courtyard. Through a series of avian gestures, Stravinsky was made to sit in a chair. Then the nightingale whipped out a camera, photographed him, and promptly vanished! No matter it was an awful memory, it did inspire a fine tune. Only decades later, following dream analysis with Roy Harris, did Stravinsky discover that the creature wasn't a nightingale after all. But he opted not to revise his work, for who would want to see an opera about some damn panda?