

CHAN 2022

an introduction to Sergey Prokofiev



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Classical music is inaccessible and difficult.

It's surprising how many people still believe the above statement to be true, so this new series from Chandos is not only welcome, it's also very necessary.

I was lucky enough to stumble upon the wonderful world of the classics when I was a child, and I've often contemplated how much poorer my life would have been had I not done so. As you have taken the first step by buying this CD, I guarantee that you will share the delights of this epic journey of discovery. Each CD in the series features the orchestral music of a specific composer, with a selection of his 'greatest hits' played by top quality performers. It will give you a good flavour of the composer's style, but you won't find any nasty surprises – all the music is instantly accessible and appealing. The discs are beautifully presented, and very good value for money, too.

I sincerely hope this CD marks the start of your own lifelong passion for classical music.

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Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891–1953)

		Symphony No. 1 in D major,	
		Op. 25 'Classical'	14:38
1	-	Allegro	4:21
2	Ш	Larghetto	4:12
3	Ш	Gavotte. Non troppo allegro	1:43
4	IV	Finale. Molto vivace	4:19
		Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67	29:20
		A Musical Tale for Children	
		Lina Prokofiev narrator	
		Richard Chester solo flute - John Digney solo oboe	
		John Cushing solo clarinet • Lesley Wilson solo bassoon	
_		Laurence Rogers principal horn • Martin Gibson timpani	
5		'I am going to tell you a story about Peter and the Wolf' –	2:15
6		'Early one morning Peter opened the gate' -	1:05
7		'On a branch of a big tree sat a little bird' -	1:41
8		'Just then a duck came waddling around' -	2:26
9		'Suddenly, something caught Peter's attention' -	1:02
10		"Look out!" shouted Peter' -	1:02
11		'Just then Grandfather came out' -	2:25
12		'No sooner had Peter gone' -	1:15
13		'In a twinkling the cat climbed up the tree'-	0:28
14		'The duck quacked' -	1:32
15		'And now, this is how things stood' –	1:47
16		'In the meantime, Peter, without the	
		slightest fear' -	1:20

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1 /	reter said to the bird, rly down	1:41
18	'Meanwhile, Peter made a lasso' -	2:12
19	'Just then, the hunters came out of the wood	ds' – 2:24
20	'Now, just imagine the triumphant procession	n' – 2:01
21	'And winding up the procession, Grandfather and the cat'	2:35
22	Troika from the Symphonic Suite	
	'Lieutenant Kijé', Op. 60	3:09
23	March from the Opera 'The Love for	
	Three Oranges', Op. 33	1:42
	Excerpts from the Ballet 'Romeo and .	Juliet',
	Op. 64	23:47
24	Montagues and Capulets	6:14
25	Folk Dance	4:26
26	Romeo and Juliet	8:29
27	Death of Tybalt	4:36
	Т	otal time 72:37
	Scottish National Orchestra	

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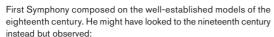
symphony no. 1 'classical'

The seven works to which Sergey Prokofiev gave the title 'symphony' are spread through the greater part of his professional career. He was but three years graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatory when he completed Symphony No. 1, the 'Classical' Symphony as he called it, in 1917, the year of the Russians' October Revolution which brought about the Soviet Union. The next three symphonies date from the years he spent abroad, based mainly in Paris, and the last three were written after his momentous decision in the mid-1930s to return permanently to the USSR.

Taken together, they suggest that Prokofiev was not by nature a symphonist in the nineteenth-century sense of developing musical thoughts and ideas by a symphonic process in a conventional mould of three or four contrasting movements. Only Symphony No. 6 (1945–47) resembles the older style of symphony, and it incurred official displeasure shortly after its premiere. For the rest, Prokofiev was as ready to drop an idea once he had used it as he was to develop or return to it, but his undoubted skill lay in making musical material that was sometimes taken from other contexts (ballet or opera, for example) the subject matter of orchestral works on a symphonic scale, whose progress is achieved through dramatic changes in orchestral textures, made the more effective thanks to Prokofiev's brilliant sense of instrumental colour and balance.

In his early years Prokofiev acquired the reputation of an enfant terrible among his contemporaries with works such as the first two piano concertos (1911–13), written while he was still a piano student at the St Petersburg Conservatory (having already graduated in composition). There were also various instrumental and chamber works of which some, like the piano pieces he called Sarcasms, had a wry flavour and biting wit that suggested a musical caricaturist. He then confounded all expectations with a

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It seemed to me that had Haydn lived to our day he would have retained his own style while accepting something of the new at the same time. That was the kind of symphony I wanted to write: a symphony in the classical style. And when I saw that the idea was beginning to work I called it the Classical Symphony: in the first place because that was simpler, and secondly for the fun of it, to 'tease the geese', and in the secret hope that I would prove to be right if the Symphony really did turn out to be a piece of classical music.

Having taken Haydn for a model, Prokofiev worked the genre and its forms through the prism of his own imagination. He brought to them the unexpected twists of melody and pungent, sharp-featured harmony that characterised his own musical personality. Strongly contrasted themes are discussed in the sonata-form first movement, followed by a more romantic mood in the *Larghetto* and by a well-accented *Gavotte* that was a precursor of some of the composer's later ballet music. The Finale is another movement in sonata form, brimming with gaiety of spirit and effervescent charm, and the overall effect of the symphony, in light, transparent orchestration throughout, has ensured its continued popularity since the first performance at Petrograd on 21 April 1918.

peter and the wolf

After Prokofiev returned home to the Soviet Union, having spent the best part of twenty years living and working in the West, his music was for a time viewed with a certain suspicion in official quarters. Even his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, completed in 1936 on a commission from Leningrad and a contract from Moscow, was declared to be not 'danceable' enough. But, at the time he was

composing this, Prokofiev was also aware of a newly developed Soviet interest in music for children, something he was keen to support as an aspect of a composer's practical function.

'We must seek a new simplicity', he wrote in an article for *Izvestia* at the end of 1934, adding that so desirable an idiom and technique 'must be clear and simple, but not banal'. He put this into practice during 1935 with an album of short piano pieces entitled *Music for Children* (Op. 65), and later with some children's songs (Op. 68), and between these, in the spring of 1936, he responded to an invitation from the recently opened Central Children's Theatre in Moscow with 'a musical tale for children' which he called *Petya i Volk* (Peter and the Wolf).

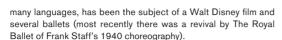
For this Prokofiev wrote his own text and, according to his memoirs.

composed the music quickly, approximately within one week, and another week was spent on the orchestration.

It was his idea to interweave the storytelling with music of easily recognisable colours and contours, each character having its own motif played every time by the same instrument, and each identified by the storyteller in the introduction. Before the performances in Moscow the instruments were shown and demonstrated to the children. The composer wrote:

For me the story was important only as a means of inducing children to listen to the music.

In some ways it was an extension of a much earlier idea which Prokofiev had had when, in 1914, he set *The Ugly Duckling*, from Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales, for singer and piano. *Peter and the Wolf* is a 'young person's guide to the orchestra' of a particularly charming kind. According to the composer the first performance, at a Moscow matinee concert on 2 May 1936, 'was rather poor and did not attract much attention'. The work soon made up for that and, as well as becoming a universal favourite in



troika from 'lieutenant kijé

The sharp satirical aspect for which Prokofiev is widely renowned is engagingly expressed in the suite Lieutenant Kijé. Taken from his first film score (1933), the suite was his first major project after he had decided to return permanently to his native country. The film was to have been made in Leningrad as a satire on the foibles of Tsar Paul I from a story by Yury Tynyanov, The Tsar Sleeps. By a slip of a bureaucratic pen an imaginary Lieutenant Kijé is entered on certain military documents, for whom an identity and an existence has to be invented once the documents have been approved by the Tsar. With slight changes of the original orchestration, Prokofiev's Symphonic Suite, arranged for performance in the concert hall, makes a digest of Kijé's imaginary life story. During the 'Troika' Kijé is taken on a breezy sleigh ride to the sounds of a tavern song (the alternative vocal version infers some fickleness of womenfolk).

march from 'the love for three oranges'

The opera *The Love for Three Oranges*, composed in 1919, is based on an eighteenth-century *commedia dell'arte* farce by Carlo Gozzi. It was premiered at Chicago on 30 December 1921, and Prokofiev published the revised version of his orchestral suite from it in 1924. In the opera the celebrated March forms an interlude before the Prince under a Witch's curse is sent in search of three oranges. Recent stage productions have shown the opera to be a diverting theatrical comedy, displaying the wonderful wit and fantasy of Prokofiev's musical invention.

excerpts from 'romeo and juliet'

The music for *Romeo and Juliet* which Prokofiev composed in 1935–36 is now widely acclaimed as the most successful ballet score of its kind since Tchaikovsky, but it had to contend with many difficulties at first. It was one of the composer's first projects after he had decided to return home permanently to the USSR. Here he found that Soviet taste still favoured the evening-long story ballet rather than the one-act ballets towards which Sergey Diaghilev with his Ballets russes had established a trend in the West.

Three of Prokofiev's earlier ballet scores had been commissions from Diaghilev. They comprised *Chout* (The Buffoon, 1921), a broad, not to say 'black', comedy in Russian peasant style; *Le Pas d'acier* (The Steel Dance, 1927), on a post-Revolution theme of Soviet 'socialist realism'; and the Biblical parable *The Prodigal Son* (1929). This last proved Diaghilev's final new production, for his sudden death in August 1929 forced the company to disband, and it is still danced as part of the classical repertoire.

Romeo and Juliet was composed at the invitation of the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad, with a detailed scenario worked out by Sergey Radlov, well known for his Shakespeare productions at that theatre. For reasons never fully explained, the plan was shelved by Kirov's management, while the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow rejected Prokofiev's music as 'undanceable'. The first stage production took place in 1938 at Brno in Czechoslovakia, and only in 1940 did the version choreographed by Leonid Lavrovsky, which has since achieved historic status, reach the stage, at Leningrad.

Then war intervened, preventing further performances until 1946 when Lavrovsky's version was accepted for Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet; the celebrated Galina Ulanova danced the first Juliet there as she had previously done in Leningrad. The ballet's success at Moscow opened the way to many further productions around the world based on Prokofiev's score, including Frederick Ashton's at



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Copenhagen (1955), John Cranko's at Stuttgart (1962), Kenneth MacMillan's for The Royal Ballet at Covent Garden (1965), and Rudolf Nureyev's for London Festival Ballet (1977), later reproduced at Teatro alla Scala, Milan and for the Paris Opéra Ballet,

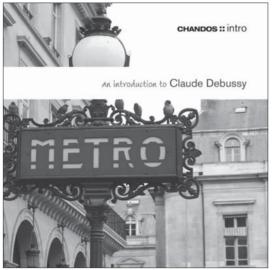
In 1936, however, even before the Brno production took place. Prokofiev assembled two orchestral suites of excerpts for concert performance (a third suite followed in 1946). He chose the most self-contained numbers, and arranged them as he thought best for listening, without regard for the storyline. 'Montagues and Capulets' comes from Suite No. 2 which was first heard at Leningrad on 15 April 1947. The opening bars derive from the introduction to Act I and lead directly to the formal dances at the ball of the Capulets (Allegro pesante), incorporating the quieter section in which Juliet dances with Paris to mark their betrothal. Prokofiev included the festive 'Folk Dance' (Allegro giocoso) in Suite No. 1, first performed at Moscow on 24 November 1936. Also from Suite No. 1 come 'Romeo and Juliet' - which comprises the Balcony Scene evoking the moonlit night, leading to the Andante amoroso in which Romeo declares his love for Juliet and they dance their passionately lyrical pas de deux - and 'Death of Tybalt' (Precipitato), which is the tragic climax to Act II: Tybalt is killed by Romeo in a violent duel to avenge Mercutio, and his body is borne away to a theme of anguished grief, spreading through the orchestra.

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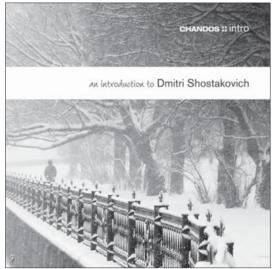
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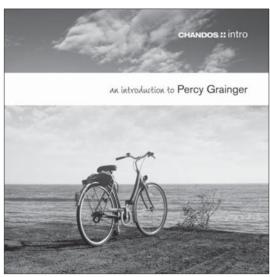
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March from The Love for Three Oranges)

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Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891–1953)

The bold and colourful music of Sergey Prokofieu, one of the great composers of the Soviet era, embraces both nineteenth—and twentieth—century idioms in a style entirely its own. His works are celebrated both for their striking orchestral textures and for the lyrical beauty of their melodies, and many of them, including the First Symphony and the ballet 'Romeo and Juliet', have become classics among the twentieth—century repertoire.

1 - 4	Symphony No. 1 in D major,
	Op. 25 'Classical'

14:38

5 - 21 Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67

29:20

22 Troika from the Symphonic Suite 'Lieutenant Kijé', Op. 60

3:09

23 March from the Opera 'The Love for Three Oranges', Op. 33

1:42

24 - 27 Excerpts from the Ballet 'Romeo and Juliet', Op. 64

23:47

Total time 72:37

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