NAXOS
PROKOFIEV
Romeo and Juliet
(Highlights)
National Symphony
Orchestra of Ukraine
Andrew Mogrelia

Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953)
Romeo and Juliet, Op. 64: Ballet in Four Acts (Highlights)

Sergey Prokofiev was born in 1891 at Sontsovka in the Ukraine, the son of a prosperous estate manager. An only child, he was encouraged by his mother, a cultured amateur pianist, to develop his musical abilities and at the age of five tried his hand at composition, later being tutored at home by the composer Glière. In 1904 he entered the St Petersburg Conservatory, where he continued his studies as a pianist and as a composer until 1914, owing more to the influence of senior fellow-students Asafyev and Myaskovsky than to the older generation of teachers, represented by Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. He was able to avoid enlistment in the army as the only son of a widow and continued at the Conservatory, now as an organ student. Prokofiev began to make his mark as a composer very early in his career, arousing enthusiasm and hostility in equal measure and inducing Glazunov, now director of the Conservatory, to walk out of a performance of the *Scythian Suite,* apparently in fear for his sense of hearing. After the Revolution of 1917 he was given permission by the new authorities to travel abroad, at first to America, taking with him the scores of the *Scythian Suite,* arranged from a ballet originally commissioned by Dyagilev, the *Classical Symphony* and his first *Violin Concerto.*

Unlike Stravinsky and Rachmaninov, Prokofiev had left Russia with official permission and with the idea of returning home sooner or later. His stay in America was at first successful. He appeared as a solo pianist, as he had done in Russia, and wrote the opera *The Love for Three Oranges* for the Chicago Opera. By 1920, however, he had begun to find life more difficult and moved to Paris, where he re-established contact with Dyagilev, for whom he revised *Chout* (The Tale of the Buffoon), a ballet successfully staged in 1921, and wrote *Le pas d'acier*. He spent much of the next sixteen years in France, returning from time to time to Russia, where his music was still acceptable.

In 1936 Prokofiev decided to settle once more in his native country, taking up residence in Moscow in time for the first official onslaught on music that displeased the Soviet authorities, notably the attack on the hitherto successful opera by Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District.* Twelve years later the name of Prokofiev was openly joined with that of Shostakovich in an even more explicit condemnation of formalism, with particular reference now to his own opera *War and Peace.* He died in 1953 on the same day as Stalin and thus never enjoyed the subsequent relaxation in official policy to the arts.

As a composer Prokofiev was prolific. His operas include the remarkable *The Fiery Angel,* first performed in its entirety in Paris the year after his death, with ballet-scores in Russia for *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella,* after his earlier ballets for Dyagilev. The idea of a ballet on the subject of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was suggested to him during a visit to Russia in 1934 by Sergey Radlov, who had staged the first Russian performance of *The Love for Three Oranges* in Leningrad in 1926. Radlov was artistic director of the Leningrad State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, which in late 1934 became the Kirov Theatre, after the assassination of Sergey Kirov, party secretary in the Leningrad area and later a member of the Politburo. The murder of Kirov in 1934 brought the beginning of the Great Purge and there were swift changes in the Leningrad Theatre that led to the rejection of Prokofiev's proposed ballet, which was then taken up by the Bolshoy in Moscow.

Prokofiev completed the piano score in a relatively short time, occupying himself with the work during the summer months of 1935 spent at Tarussa, where other members of the Bolshoy Theatre had holiday accommodation. By October he had started work on the orchestration, but when he played the music through in Moscow to the dancers they pronounced it undanceable. More sensibly they insisted that the happy ending that Prokofiev and Radlov had proposed should be replaced by the original Shakespearian ending, the death of the lovers, an episode that Prokofiev had at first considered impossible in a ballet.

In the event music from *Romeo and Juliet* was given a concert performance in Russia before the ballet could be staged there. The first production was in December 1938 in Brno, the capital of Moravia. Thirteen months later it was danced at the Kirov, with Ulanova as Juliet and Sergeyev as Romeo. The choreography was by Lavrovsky, who annoyed Prokofiev by making changes in the score without previous consultation, a procedure very different from that of the reputedly dictatorial Dyagilev, who had always discussed matters with his composers and choreographers. The Kirov took the production to Moscow, where, in 1946, it became part of the Bolshoy repertoire. The music provides themes associated with the principal characters and with their actions, with love and with conflict. There is room for neo-classical elements in the formal dances at the Capulet ball and elsewhere in the score. The connection of music and narrative is easily apparent from the titles of the episodes of a ballet that is very much in the Russian tradition of full-length dramatic works, in which the story is important.

The opening scene shows a street in Verona 1. It is early morning, and Romeo now enters, lost in thought and not noticing the girls who try to stop him. Gradually the street awakes: people come out and greet each other, and revellers return home 2. There is a morning dance 3. A quarrel breaks out, leading to a more serious fight which ceases at the entry of the Duke on horseback. He seeks to know what is happening, and the weapons are laid aside, while old Capulet and Montague come forward before him. There is now an Interlude between scenes, depicting the power of the Duke.

The second scene is set at the house of the Capulets, where the servants, with Juliet's nurse, busy themselves with preparations for a ball. Juliet, a girl of fourteen, comes in 4. She is only a child, and does not want to prepare for the ball, but is persuaded by her nurse. She looks at herself in the glass and runs out. To the sound of a minuet the guests arrive, taking off their cloaks and mantles and moving to an inner room. Now Romeo, Mercutio and Benvolio enter wearing masks, the first thoughtful and the other two in jovial mood 5. The inner room is revealed and the knights dance 6. Juliet is partnered by Paris, to whom she is indifferent. Romeo looks on in admiration and the general dance resumes. Juliet is shy and then dances in more animated fashion, before running away. Mercutio now jokes and enlivens the company 7. Romeo looks with admiration at Juliet, who is playful before a tender scene. The Capulet Tybalt recognises the intruder Romeo, a Montague, and has to be calmed by old Capulet and led away by his friends after her departure 8. To a *Gavotte*, drawn from the *Classical Symphony*, the guests disperse, leaving the hall dark and empty 9. Juliet enters, seeking a flower she has dropped during her meeting with Romeo. He appears from behind a column and they dance together 10. After Romeo's Variation 11 there is a dance of love, the counterpart of the balcony scene in Shakespeare 12.

The second act opens with a popular holiday in the street. After a folk-dance, Romeo appears. He is thinking of Juliet and is teased by his friend Mercutio. The delicate paces of the dance of the five couples are interrupted by the appearance of a brass band. Dancing continues to the sound of a mandolin band 13 and now Juliet's nurse appears, seeking Romeo. She gives him Juliet's ring and Romeo runs out, agitated. The scene that follows is at the cell of Friar Laurence, at first with Romeo and the Friar 14. They are joined by Juliet, dressed in virginal white, and the Friar marries them. The curtain closes and merry-making continues, as the people continue to celebrate the holiday 15.

In the street once more Mercutio and Benvolio join in the dance, interrupted by the arrival of Tybalt, who glares in angry hatred at Mercutio. Romeo comes in and tries to make peace between them, but Tybalt throws down his glove before him, a challenge that Romeo refuses. Mercutio attacks Tybalt 16. To Romeo's despair the two fight and Mercutio is mortally wounded. Tybalt makes off, while Mercutio dies, with a joke on his lips 17. At Benvolio's insistence, Romeo resolves on revenge and fights with Tybalt, who has now returned, and kills him. Benvolio urges him to escape and the Capulets gather to mourn their dead kinsman and swear revenge 18.

The third act opens in Juliet's bedroom. The Introduction suggests the power of the Duke over Romeo 19. It is early dawn, and the lovers are together. They bid

each other farewell 20 and Romeo leaves, as Juliet's nurse comes in. She warns Juliet of the imminent arrival of her parents and Paris, who now enter, telling her that the Count is to be her husband. Paris gives her a bouquet of flowers. Juliet weeps and is distraught, then angry. Her father tells her she must marry Paris or be cast off. Left alone, she decides to go again to Friar Laurence. In the Friar's cell she receives the potion that will make her appear to die. An Interlude allows a change of scenery.

In her room once more, Juliet agrees to marry Paris and dances with him, although her despair can at times be perceived. She sends everyone away and now dances with the potion. She drinks it and falls asleep. The sound of the mandolins is heard and Paris, with his followers, arrives with presents for his bride. There is a dance of girls with flowers 21. Juliet shows no sign of waking and the nurse is sent to waken her. She is found dead.

The *Epilogue* takes place at Juliet's grave. There is a funeral procession 22, observed by Romeo, who kills himself. Juliet wakes and sees Romeo dead. In grief she stabs herself and dies slowly, embracing her lover 23. People approach fearfully.

Keith Anderson

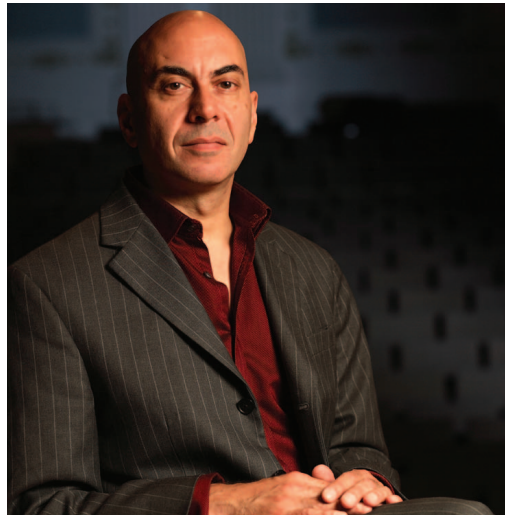

Photo: Matthew Washburn

Andrew Mogrelia

Andrew Mogrelia has had a varied career of concerts, recording and work with major dance companies. He has conducted many ensembles including BBC orchestras, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Noord Nederlands Orkest, Dutch Radio and Residentie orchestras, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonic, Nashville Symphony and Empyrean Ensemble (USA), Queensland and West Australian Symphony Orchestra, Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and the Australian Youth Orchestra's Music Camp. He has worked with the English National, Dutch National, Finnish National, Norwegian National ballets, Netherlands Dance Theatre, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Australian Ballet, West Australian Ballet and American Ballet Theater. He has served as Conductor-in-Residence at Birmingham Conservatoire (1992-2002), Co-Music Director at Dutch National Ballet (1992-1994), Music Director and Principal Conductor of San Francisco Ballet (2003-2005), leading the orchestra's thirtieth anniversary concert (2005), and Music Director of the Conservatory Orchestra in San Francisco (2005-2012), where he directed a residency for composer John Adams in 2007, conducting *Harmonielehre* in the composer's presence. He has an extensive discography for Naxos/Marco Polo, with his complete *Sleeping Beauty* (8.550490-92) acclaimed as a 'clear first choice' by *Gramophone* magazine. He has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Queensland Ballet since 2008 and guest conducts the orchestras in Brisbane and Canberra as well as ensembles in Europe.

National Symphony of Ukraine

The National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, formerly the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, was established in November 1918 by the Ukraine Council of Ministers. The first conductor was Oleksander Horilyj. Natan Rachlin was Artist Director of the orchestra from 1937 for 25 years, and Stefan Turchak, Volodymyr Kozhuchar, Fedir Hlushchenko, Igor Blazhkov and Theodore Kuchar went on to serve as Principal Conductors. Other distinguished conductors have worked with the orchestra and there have been collaborations with leading soloists. During its long history the orchestra has given the first performances of works by Sergey Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Aram Khatchaturian, Boris Lyatoshynsky, Valentyn Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, and Evgen Stankovych. Since April 1999 Volodymyr Sirenko has been Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, with Alexander Hornostai, from 2006, as Managing Director and Producer.

Photo: Igor Gaidai

"Living people can dance, the dying cannot", Prokofiev wrote to explain the problems he faced when writing music for the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. His original score was rejected as 'undanceable' by the Bolshoy Theatre and his initial scheme for a happy ending for the lovers was, fortunately, vetoed. The revised score, however, proved a masterpiece of expressive beauty and drama, with melting love music and huge bravura, and it remains one of the most loved ballet scores of the twentieth century.

Sergey PROKOFIEV
(1891–1953)

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Ballet in Four Acts (Highlights)

Act I

1	Introduction	2:51
2	The Street Wakens	2:26
3	Morning Dance	2:20
4	The Young Juliet	3:31
5	Masks	2:47
6	Dance of the Knights	5:50
7	Mercutio	2:23
8	Madrigal	3:59
9	Gavotte	3:47
10	Balcony Scene	3:51
11	Romeo's Variation	1:14
12	Love Dance	5:44

Act II

13	Dance with Mandolins	2:07
14	Romeo at Friar Laurence's	3:28
15	Public Merrymaking	3:48
16	The Duel	1:31
17	Death of Mercutio	2:56
18	Finale	2:12

Act III

19	Introduction	1:18
20	Romeo Bids Juliet Farewell	5:42
21	Aubade	2:31

Act IV

22	Juliet's Funeral	6:21
23	Juliet's Death	3:59

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