

University of Washington

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents the

UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY
Robert Feist, *conductor*

in a program of music by

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

with

Peter Mack, *piano*

April 22, 1987

8:00 PM, Meany Theater

PROGRAM

Tape 11.184

Overture to WAR AND PEACE*

5:29

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C major, Op. 26

Andante: Allegro

Andantino

Allegro ma non troppo

29:14

Peter Mack, *piano*

INTERMISSION

Tape 11.185

Symphony No. 7 in c sharp minor, Op. 131**

Moderato

Allegretto

Andante Espressivo

Vivace

32:24

*First Seattle performance

**First performance by the University Symphony

Prokofiev entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory when he was thirteen. He remained there a decade, a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, Nicholas Tcherepnin, and Anatol Liadov. During his student days he composed prolifically, including such impressive and unconventional works as his first piano sonata, the *Suggestion diabolique* for piano, and his first piano concerto. He was graduated in 1914 with the Rubinstein Prize for the piano concerto. In subsequent works completed during the period of World War I, Prokofiev reached full maturity as a composer; these works included his First Violin Concerto, two piano sonatas, and the *Classical Symphony*. He also crystallized that individual style and manner which would henceforth identify him: the impudent leaps in the melody which injected into his lyricism an often mocking or satiric attitude; the unexpected alternation from the direct and the simple to the complex and the subtle; the plunge down to, or leap up to, unexpected tones; the juxtaposition of naive tunes with complex harmony; the use of orthodox chords in unorthodox progressions. These elements injected surprise and freshness into his music; but they did not keep him from projecting dramatic, meditative, or passionate moods with compelling creative force.

Prokofiev left the Soviet Union in 1918 to undertake a tour of the United States. He made his American debut with a piano recital in New York on November 20, 1918. While in Chicago, he was commissioned by the Chicago Opera to write a work for that theater; the result was *The Love for Three Oranges*, produced on December 30, 1921. Two weeks earlier, on December 16, Chicago also heard the world premiere of his Third Piano Concerto.

Prokofiev had been exploring the operatic potential of Tolstoy's novels for some time before his re-discovery of *War and Peace*. He drafted a scenario for an opera in eleven scenes in April 1941, but must have had little concrete hope of the plan ever coming to realization. With the outbreak of war, however, new impetus was given to the scheme; Tolstoy's account of the events of 1812 suddenly acquired "a particular poignancy". More than that, the plot's obvious contemporary analogies (Napoleon/Hitler; Kutuzov/Stalin) promoted Prokofiev's confidence in the timeliness of his find: here was a plot which not only strongly attracted him as an operatic composer, but which could also have a positive social purpose at a time of national crisis.

By April 1943 he had completed the second, revised version of the score. The changes were fairly extensive. The process of transformation in *War and Peace*—which was to continue off and on almost until Prokofiev's death—had begun, and this process, in general, was designed to strengthen the opera's monumental appeal.

Various concert performances of the work, in its 1943 version, took place in Moscow in 1944 and 1945, and their success gave rise to plans for a staged performance at the Leningrad Maly Theatre in 1946. This was conceived as an elaborate spectacle, and, on the recommendation of the conductor Samosud, was to be a two-evening affair—an idea which apparently appealed to the composer, and for which, in the course of 1946 and 1947, he wrote two additional scenes. Only the first eight scenes of this new thirteen-scene version reached the stage, however—in June 1946. In the following few years the state of crisis in Soviet music left Prokofiev's concept of Tolstoy out on a limb, and despite the composer's lasting belief in the work of his score, his constant revisions to the more controversial episodes, and his provisions for various cuts and rearrangements, the opera did not again reach the Soviet stage until April 1955—two years after his death—and then in a shortened form. Much thought was subsequently given by Soviet theatres to performing versions of the work—aided by the publication of the entire score by the State Publishing House in 1958—and the present production of the Bolshoi Theatre, first presented on 15 December 1959, is an amalgam of the various recommendations drawn up by Prokofiev in his last years. The Overture to be heard in this concert dates from an earlier version of the opera, and is not used in the final revision (which opens with a powerful choral tableau instead.)

Prokofiev wrote five piano concertos—the first in D-flat major, op. 10, in 1911. He achieved full maturity with Concerto No. 3 in C major, op. 26 (1921), introduced by the composer in Chicago on December 16, 1921, Frederick Stock conducting. There is a short, quiet introduction to the first movement after which an unaccompanied clarinet presents the first main theme. A change of tempo takes place, then the first subject is reviewed by the piano. A chordal passage for the piano leads to an expressive second theme in the oboe to a pizzicato accompaniment. After an extended development the movement sweeps to a climax. The first theme now recurs loudly in the orchestra, with the piano soon joining in. Brilliant treatment is then given to both main ideas and a crescendo brings the movement to a dramatic conclusion. The second movement consists of a theme heard in the orchestra, and five variations. After the fifth variation, the theme is repeated by the orchestra with piano adornments. A staccato theme for bassoons and pizzicato strings opens the finale. This theme is soon amplified by the piano, then built up into a climax. A subsidiary subject is then introduced by woodwinds and answered by the piano. Virtuoso passages for the piano ensue, and the concerto ends with a forceful coda.

The *Seventh Symphony* occupies a special place in the development of Prokofiev's music, marking the culmination of the long

compositional road of an outstanding composer-symphonist—it is Prokofiev's triumphant "swan song."

This symphony is particularly interesting in its lyric conception—it is the composer's reflection on life and a bright future. At the same time, many of the composition's pages evolve as memories of a long-past childhood, of a world of favorite stories, fantasies, toy marches, mischievous dances...

The symphony score is dated March 20, 1952. The orchestration is dated July 5th and the first performance took place on October 11, 1952, in the Colonnade Hall of the House of the Unions with Samosud conducting the USSR Radio Orchestra. Prokofiev was present at this performance which was enthusiastically received by the audience and, later, by the international music world. It was the last concert he was to hear, for five months later he died of a brain hemorrhage on the day of Stalin's death, an ironic coincidence.

Moderato. This movement stands out in its absence of dramatic contrasts or sharp conflicts. Rather, three images or moods emerge gradually. It opens with a soft, melancholy theme which brings to mind many Russian songs. Soon, agitated ornamentations of the strings introduce a feeling of anxiety and tension. This episode, however, only accentuates the broad sweep of the first lyric theme with a kind of expressive counterpoint. Almost without warning, the central theme of the movement arises—a lyric-epic tremolo. One of the most expansive of Prokofiev's themes (as if born of contemplation over the limitless Russian expanse), it is associated with the image of the Motherland. As an unexpected contrast to this powerful melody comes the third image—a fragile figment of fantasy which is assigned to the capricious sounds of oboe, flute and bells. The development is devoid of sharp dramatic collisions and flows naturally together with the last section of the movement—a reprise where the leading themes return in a somewhat abbreviated form.

Allegretto. Here is a picture of a ball, charming and sparkling. Indeed, the waltz genre occupies a substantial place in Prokofiev's works as exemplified in his *Cinderella*, *Winter Bonfire* and *War and Peace*. In the *Seventh*, as in most of the Russian concert waltzes, Prokofiev builds the waltz part as a chain of contrast in character and motion episodes, concluding with a whirlwind coda.

Andante espressivo. This lovely and dreamy movement is the lyrical center of the work. The basic dreamily-melancholic theme is transferred to the symphony by the composer from his incidental music

for the production of *Eugene Onegin* in which it served as Tatyana's leitmotif. In the symphony, this theme receives extensive development which exudes warmth and emotion. The expressive cello monologue flows unrestrained and free, assuming lyric-epic character.

Vivace. The basic theme of the finale is full of provocation and youthful gaiety. It ingeniously contrasts with the singing melody reminiscent of pioneer marches. In the middle section of the finale, the composer artfully contrasts polar voices of the orchestra such as whistling flutes and warning trombone, muted trumpet and the strings. The culmination of the finale coincides with the return of the first movement's central theme—the theme of Motherland, which sounds like an inspired hymn to life and happiness. And now, for the first time, the shadowy and fantastic image of the first movement's concluding part and the basic theme appears—the gallop of the finale.

UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY
Robert Feist, *Conductor*

Violin I

Michelle Davis,
Concertmistress
Shaun McBride
Jennifer Adams
Michelle Burgess
Myung Hee Yang
Uyen Trueng

Violin II

Leif Peterson
Paul Elliott
Margaret Thomas
Justin Hill
Karen Law
Trang Huynh

Viola

Marianne Lacrosse
Linda Chang
Julia Young
Jubilee Cooke
Donna Fogle
April Acevez
Matthew Underwood
Lila Pannhauer
Chris Boyd

Cello

Michael Center
Joseph Bichsel
Bret Smith
Kyeong Chung
John Wennberg
Megan Lynch
Ying Wang
John Kushleika

Bass

Brian Kennedy
Robert Beerman
Diane Rhoades
Veronika Rudolph
Todd Gowers

Piccolo

Thea Reynolds
Titan Rodick
Wendy Wilhelmi

Flute

Maya Johnson
Thea Reynolds
Wendy Wilhelmi
Titan Rodick

Oboe

Tad Margelli
Chiun-Mei Huang

English horn

Laurie Bare

Clarinet

Mac Cantrell
Karlin Love

Bass clarinet

Beverly Setzer

Bassoon

Krista Lake
Jeff Eldridge
Jerry Turner

Contra bassoon

Jeff Eldridge

Horn

Jennie Knezovich
Tony Miller
James Hendrickson
Holly Tuttle

Trumpet

Craig Ball
Sam Mann
Jim Peters

Trombone

Andrew Hillaker
Shelley Greer
David Bentley

Tuba

Nathan Bastuscheck

Timpani

Brian Caldwell

Percussion

Chris Monroe
Dan Oie

Harp

Melissa Brennick

Piano

Walter Atha

UPCOMING CONCERTS:

April 28, THE UNIVERSITY WIND ENSEMBLE, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

May 14-19, THE UNIVERSITY OPERA: **Die Fledermaus**, Thursday and Friday at 8:00 PM; Saturday at 7:00 PM, and Sunday at 3:00 PM, Meany Theater.

May 18, THE UNIVERSITY PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE, 8:00 PM, Roethke Auditorium (Kane Hall).

May 19, SONI VENTORUM WIND QUINTET, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

May 20, THE CONTEMPORARY GROUP, 8:00 PM, Studio Theater.

May 21, THE UNIVERSITY CHORALE, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

May 25, UNIVERSITY JAZZ COMBO, 8:00 PM, Music Building Auditorium.

May 26, UNIVERSITY SINGERS, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

May 27, UNIVERSITY MADRIGAL SINGERS, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

June 1, UNIVERSITY JAZZ ENSEMBLE, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

June 3, YOUNG COMPOSERS, 8:00 PM, Music Building Auditorium.

June 5, UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORATORIO, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater.

June 9, OPERA WORKSHOP, 8:00 PM, Studio Theater.