

Prokofiev Listener's Guide

**2011-2012 Demirjian
Classical Connections Series
Concert Two: October 14, 2011
Profile: Sergei Prokofiev
Program: "Sergei and Will
and Romeo and Juliet"**

It's an old story. Boy meets girl. Boy and girl fall in love. Boy's parents hate girl's parents. Vice versa. Things end badly. Get out your handkerchiefs. * Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1st century, C.E.), Xenophon's *The Ephesian Tale* (3rd century), Salernitano's *Mariotto and Gianozza* (1476), *Romeo and Juliets* by da Porto (1530), *Bandello* (1554), *Boaistuau* (1559), *Brooke* (1562), *Painter* (1567), and a guy named Shakespeare (1595). * The tale of star-crossed

lovers resonates throughout Western culture not just because it's a good story. It's a true story reenacted time and again in real life. Some of us have lived it ourselves — without the dead bodies at the end, I hope! * *Romeo and Juliet* is also one of the recurring tropes of classical

music. There's Tchaikovsky's tone-poem, Gounod's opera (check out Dayton Opera's February 2012 production, conducted by DPO Assistant Conductor Patrick Reynolds), David Diamond's incidental music. And don't forget *West Side Story*! * In the second concert of the Demirjian *Classical Connections* Series we turn to music from Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* ballet.

We'll present it in a unique form, combining Prokofiev's music with a one-man show of Shakespeare's immortal words created and performed by one of Dayton's great actors, Bruce Cromer. * Our October *Classical Connections* presentation will explore the beauties of Prokofiev's music, Shakespeare's text, and how they blend to move our hearts yet again.

* Get out your handkerchiefs!



DAYTON
PHILHARMONIC



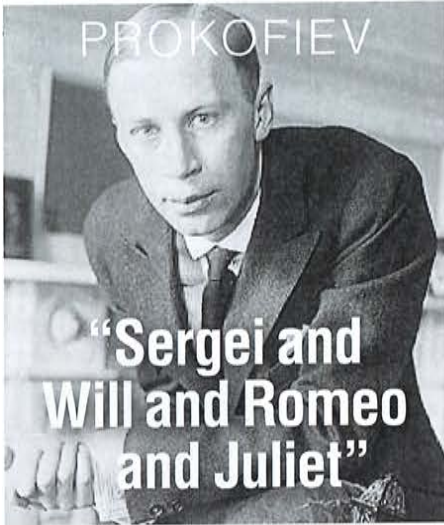
NEAL GITTLEMAN
MUSIC DIRECTOR

MEET
THE



PROGRAM

PROKOFIEV



DEMIRJIAN CLASSICAL CONNECTIONS

Friday, October 14, 2011 8:00 p.m. Schuster Center Q&A after the concert

Neal Gittleman conductor, host Bruce Cromer actor

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

- Music from Romeo and Juliet, op 64 -

INTRODUCTION TO ACT I

FINAL WALTZ

(RECONSTRUCTED BY SIMON MORRISON)

MONTAGUES AND CAPULETS (SUITE 2, No. 1)

THE YOUNG JULIET (SUITE 2, No. 2)

ROMEO AND JULIET (SUITE 1, No. 6)

FRIAR LAURENCE (SUITE 2, No. 3)

FOLK DANCE (SUITE 1, No. 1)

THE DEATH OF TYBALT (SUITE 1, No. 7)

ROMEO AT JULIET'S BEFORE PARTING (SUITE 2, No. 5)

ROMEO AT JULIET'S GRAVE (SUITE 2, No. 7)

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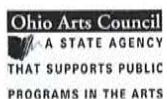
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Classical WDPK 88.1

Concert Broadcast on Saturday, November 12, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

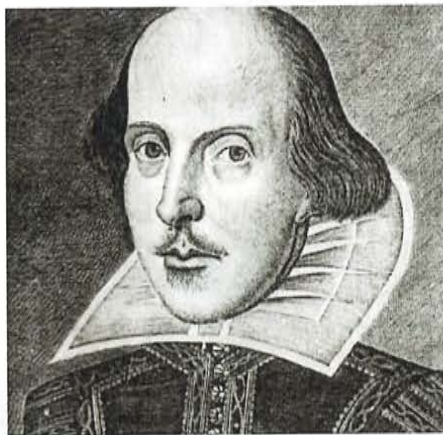
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BY NEAL GITTLEMAN

Star Crossed

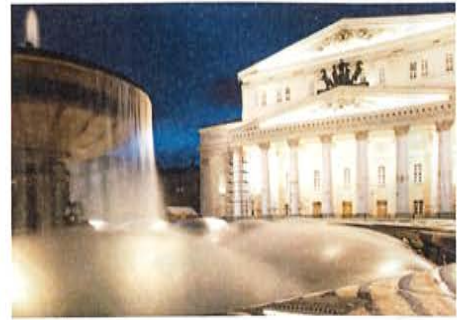
'A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life'... The sixth line of Shakespeare's play is etched in the hearts and minds of all who know this classic tale. So much is set against them, and their luck is impossibly bad. Their families hate each other. Romeo kills Juliet's cousin Tybalt after Tybalt kills Romeo's friend Mercutio. Word of Friar Laurence's sleeping potion never reaches Romeo. Romeo returns to Verona just a few moments too soon to see Juliet awaken.



THE BARD

But even though there "never was a story of more woe than this of Juliet and her Romeo", Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers triumph. Despite the family feud, they find love. They die true to each other. And they "do with their death bury their parents' strife."

The Romeo and Juliet of Sergei Prokofiev, a four-act ballet composed in 1935 to a scenario adapted from Shakespeare by Adrian Piotrovsky and Sergey Radlov, was as star-crossed as its teenage protagonists. At first all was well. A commission from Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre promised a high-profile production backed by political clout.



BOLSHOI THEATRE IN MOSCOW

1935 was a turning point in Soviet culture. Socialist realism — unambiguous, heroic depictions of modern life — had been introduced in a 1932 decree from Stalin and reinforced by the Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934.

Prokofiev had recently returned to the Soviet Union after residing in the West and wanted Romeo and Juliet to make a good impression. So it's no surprise he signed on to Radlov's socialist realist interpretation of Shakespeare's text as "a play about the struggle for love, about the struggle for the right to love by young, strong, and progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family." You can almost see young Montagyusky and Capuletovna on the balcony in their Young Pioneer uniforms!

To make their Romeo and Juliet conform to socialist realism's anti-tragedy bias, Prokofiev and his collaborators made a big change in the story. As in Shakespeare, Juliet is asleep — seemingly dead — when Romeo returns from exile. But before Romeo can do himself in, Friar Laurence enters and stops him. Juliet awakens. Romeo carries her to a wooded grove, where the two lovers dance a glorious, joyous, tender waltz. Curtain. A revolutionary reinterpretation for a revolutionary culture!

But Soviet culture wasn't really so revolutionary. Word of this happy ending caused a firestorm of controversy. The Bolshoi postponed the production for a year.

Things got worse for *Romeo and Juliet* in 1936. There were administrative and artistic changes at the Bolshoi. A series of *Pravda* editorials attacked progressive tendencies in art (the same editorials that figured in September's *Classical Connections* on Shostakovich). Given the chill in the air, messing with a classic suddenly seemed dangerous. Radlov quipped that it wasn't worth his dying so *Romeo and Juliet* could live! Prokofiev, Piotrovsky, and Radlov agreed to revise the ballet to follow Shakespeare's ending.

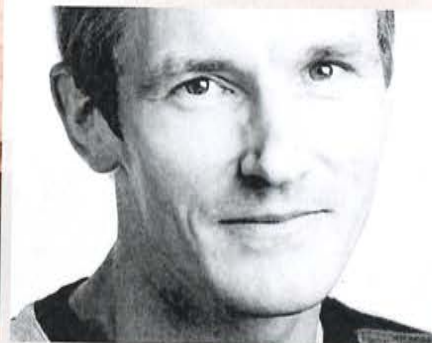


RUDOLF NUREYEV & MARGOT FONTEYN IN *ROMEO & JULIET*

The new Bolshoi management cancelled the ballet anyway.

Prokofiev didn't want to see two and half hours of glorious new music go to waste. After the initial postponement he created two orchestral suites from the ballet score. Because the ballet music was closely tied to the scenario and choreography, Prokofiev didn't simply extract numbers from the ballet. He made significant revisions to make the music more suitable for the concert hall. The first suite comprises seven numbers — five characteristic dances

plus the beautiful balcony scene music and a slightly condensed rendition of the music for the fateful duels. The second suite follows the same pattern: adaptations from the ballet — some narrative, some set pieces. In each case, Prokofiev chose the movements for musical flow rather than for telling Shakespeare's story. The two suites salvaged almost half of the ballet music for concert use. Our DPO version of *Romeo and Juliet* uses three movements from Suite No. 1 and five from Suite No. 2 — about 45 minutes of music — arranged in the order of Shakespeare's narrative.



TALENTED BRUCE CROMER JOINS NEAL AND THE DPO AS ACTOR & NARRATOR FOR THIS UNIQUE ONE-MAN-PLUS-ORCHESTRA PERFORMANCE

When he created the *Romeo and Juliet* suites Prokofiev was making lemonade with his lemons. But he still hoped for a production of the full ballet score. That came, two years later, but not at Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet or Leningrad's Kirov Ballet. The world premiere, in an abbreviated version, took place in August 1938 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. The Kirov finally gave the Soviet premiere, with new choreography and many musical revisions that Prokofiev resisted, but ultimately, tolerated.

As a poet might have said, "never was a story of more woe than this of Sergei and his Romeo". *

Adapting Classics

Adapting a classic is a challenge. Adapting two classics is scary!

But that's exactly what Bruce Cromer and I did to create our version of *Romeo and Juliet*. We adapted two classics — Shakespeare's 16th-century play and Prokofiev's 20th-century ballet — to create an hour-long theatre piece for actor and orchestra.

Our mash-up uses movements from Prokofiev's suites interspersed with dramatic excerpts from Shakespeare's text plus brief narratives that Bruce created to provide continuity. In most cases we link the text with music written for that particular scene. Sometimes the words and music alternate. Sometimes the music serves as underscoring for the words.

In one case we take great liberties. One of my favorite passages in Shakespeare's play is the Queen Mab speech from Act I, Scene 4, in which Mercutio teases Romeo, suggesting that his moody behavior is the result of being visited in his sleep by Mab, the mischievous queen of the fairies. Speeches don't really work in ballet, so Prokofiev omitted this one. But I love it, so Bruce and I figured out a way to fit it in. We've moved it (placing it just before Mercutio's fateful duel with Tybalt) and illustrated it with music that Prokofiev wrote for a dance that opens the ballet's second act. But once Bruce does the speech, I think the music titled "Folk Dance" will turn into the perfect musical incarnation of Mercutio's words.

In the "Friar Laurence" movement, Bruce and I have restored Prokofiev's music to its original function. This part of Prokofiev's second suite is a static character portrait of the kindly monk sitting in his cell, mixing potions from flower and herbs. In the ballet this music accompanies the preparations for the Friar marrying Romeo and Juliet. We'll use Prokofiev's music as underscoring for excerpts from Shakespeare's wedding scene, thus restoring the original intent.

Bruce and I hope you'll enjoy this different approach to *Romeo and Juliet*. It's not what either Shakespeare or Prokofiev had in mind. But I think you'll find it to be a beautiful and moving way to re-experience the classic tale of the star-crossed teenage lovers.

A Prokofiev Timeline

1891

April 23, born in Ukraine to agricultural engineer Sergei Alekseyevich Prokofiev & amateur pianist Maria Grigoryevna Zhitkova.

1902

Composition lessons with Reinhold Glière.

1904

Youngest student ever admitted to the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Studies under Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Liadov.

1914

Emigrates to Paris. Ballet impresario Diaghilev commissions dissonant ballet score *Ala and Lolly*, later recast as the Scythian Suite.

1927

Tours the Soviet Union for the first time since emigrating. Back in Paris, begins thinking of returning to Soviet Union permanently.

1935

Romeo and Juliet commissioned by Kirov Ballet.

1936

Moves back to Moscow. Finishes *Romeo and Juliet*, which is rejected for performance.

1938

Romeo and Juliet premiered in Brno, Czechoslovakia.

1941

Begins an opera based on *War and Peace*, completed in 1952.

1948

Denounced (along with Shostakovich) by Soviet culture authorities.

1953

March 5, dies in Moscow of a brain hemorrhage. An hour later, Stalin dies (Prokofiev's passing is ignored).

1891

Japan earthquake kills 10,000. Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Toulouse-Lautrec's first music hall posters. Mahler's First Symphony.

1902

Boer War ends. Monet paints *Waterloo Bridge*.

1904

Russo-Japanese War. Teddy Roosevelt elected U.S. President. Work begins on Panama Canal. James Barrie writes *Peter Pan*.

1914

Start of World War I. Goddard begins rocket experiments. James Joyce writes *Dubliners*. Ghandi returns to India from South Africa.

1927

Lindbergh's flight from New York to Paris. *The Jazz Singer* ushers in talkies. Isadora Duncan meets end in bizarre motorcar accident.

1935

Porgy and Bess. Social Security launched in U.S.

1936

Spanish Civil War. Completion of Hoover Dam. Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

1938

Kristallnacht pogroms in Germany and Austria. "A-Tisket-a-Tasket".

1941

Germany invades Russia. Pearl Harbor.

1948

Marshall Plan adopted to rebuild Europe. Death of Orville Wright.

1953

Eisenhower's inauguration. Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. First Newport Jazz Festival.