



CHAN 10541(2) X

**PROKOFIEV**  
**EUGENE ONEGIN**  
**INCIDENTAL MUSIC**  
TIMOTHY WEST · SAMUEL WEST · NIAMH CUSACK  
DOMINIC MAFHAM · SINFONIA 21  
**SIR EDWARD DOWNES**

Classics



Painting by Pyotr Konchalovsky (1876 - 1956) © Labrecht Music & Arts Photo Library

Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev, 1934

## Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev (1891 - 1953)

### Eugene Onegin, Op. 71

Melodrama in Sixteen Scenes

Text by Alexander Pushkin in Sir Charles Johnston's English translation

Directed by Timothy West

#### COMPACT DISC ONE

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[2]	Scene 2. Onegin and Lensky at Lensky's country house -	9:10
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[5]	Scene 5. Tatyana in the park -	1:53
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[8]	Scene 8. Onegin receives Tatyana's letter -	4:33
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COMPACT DISC TWO

1	Scene 12 (cont'd). 'Zaretsky left without discussion...' –	3:22
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4	Scene 15. They say goodbye to peaceful valleys –	7:55
5	Waltz –	
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**Timothy West** speaker (Narrator)

**Samuel West** speaker (Eugene Onegin)

**Niamh Cusack** speaker (Tatyana)

**Dominic Mafham** speaker (Lensky)

**Helena McCarthy** speaker (Nurse • Larina • Anisia)

**Terrence Hardiman** speaker (Zaretsky • Prince • Neighbour)

**Katherine Fuge** soprano

**Andrew Rutt** bass

**Julian Walker** bass

**The New Company** chorus

**Sinfonia 21**

**Alison Kelly** leader

**Sir Edward Downes**

## Prokofiev: Eugene Onegin

1937 was an important year in the Soviet Union. It was the twentieth anniversary of the 1917 Revolution and it was the centenary of the death of Pushkin. During the preceding year, Sergey Prokofiev had been involved in three different projects based upon works of Pushkin: music for a film version of *The Queen of Spades*, incidental music for a production by Meyerhold of *Boris Godunov*, and music for a dramatised version of the verse-novel *Eugene Onegin*. The scores for all three projects were completed but, through no fault of the composer, none of them was performed in his lifetime.

In 1933 Prokofiev had collaborated with Alexander Yakovlevich Tairov, the founder and head of the Moscow Kamerny Theatre (Moscow Chamber Theatre), in a production called *Egyptian Nights*. When in 1936, in preparation for the centenary celebrations, Tairov decided to stage a dramatisation of *Eugene Onegin*, it was natural that he should ask Prokofiev to collaborate again.

He entrusted the stage adaptation of the novel to the writer S.D. Krzhizhanovsky, who was instructed to make his version as complete as possible and specifically to include those scenes which had been

omitted by Tchaikovsky (Tairov had reservations about the dramatic aspect of Tchaikovsky's opera). In addition to the main actors there were to be two 'sputniks' – companions – who would carry the continuity of the narrative and who would voice Pushkin's comments on the action 'from the outside', as the poet does in the novel.

By the autumn of 1936 all forty-four musical numbers were completed. Then, on 3 December 1936, Prokofiev received a letter from the 'Committee for the Arts' instructing him 'not to continue any further work on the orchestration and the score for this play and not to advise at rehearsals'. The production was to be 'excluded from the repertoire of the Moscow Kamerny Theatre'.

Why the ban was imposed is not clear, but a likely clue lies in the date. 1936 was the year *Pravda* printed its famous anti-Shostakovich article 'Chaos instead of Music', attacking his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. By now all the arts were under attack. Both Meyerhold and Tairov were condemned for their experimentation and shortly afterwards the theatres of both of them were closed down.



The music for *Eugene Onegin* was not published during Prokofiev's lifetime. During the cultural thaw of the early 1960s, Elizaveta Dattel, a Soviet musicologist, discovered a set of sketches and a virtually complete piano score of *Eugene Onegin* with the orchestration indicated, ready for the copyist. From this manuscript, four pages, comprising three musical numbers, were missing. In 1973, a score was published in Moscow which retained Prokofiev's original order for the musical numbers but had an extensively revised scenario for the spoken text. The three musical numbers were still missing. In this version the music was performed and recorded in Moscow.

Shortly after I had been invited by the BBC to conduct the first British performance of this work, an announcement appeared, advertising an auction at Christie's at which a collection of Prokofiev's letters and manuscripts were to be offered for sale. Among these I was delighted to find the four missing pages from the complete piano score. Through the kindness of Madame Lina Prokofiev, the composer's widow, I was able to complete the orchestration and use the pages for what was to be the first complete performance of this major work.

It is difficult to categorise Prokofiev's *Eugene Onegin*. It is not an opera – there is

scarcely any singing in it. Nor is it merely a play with incidental background music. The music is much more important than that. It helps to heighten the dramatic tension and, by means of thematic association with particular characters and emotional situations, it creates a variety of almost subliminal reference points and comments.

One specially effective characteristic of the work is the use of melodrama – i.e., a text spoken over music. Words and music have their own necessary tempo (pace) and to convey to us fully their respective emotional meaning they must unfold at their own natural tempo. Very rarely do these seemingly incompatible tempi coincide. When they do, the effect is overwhelming. One of the great advantages of melodrama lies in the fact that each element – the words and the music – can move simultaneously at its own pace without inhibiting or obscuring the other.

A case in point is the treatment of Lensky. In Tchaikovsky's version, this character has to be established in a very short space of time, and somewhat sketchily. But Prokofiev is able to take much more time: the strength of Lensky's friendship with Onegin is firmly established. Facts and relationships can be conveyed in speech much more quickly and in much greater detail than they can in song.

The work opens with Lensky brooding over mortality at the grave of Monsieur Larin, the father of Olga and Tatyana. We hear a haunting oboe theme which is further developed in the next two numbers, numbers that show the friendship between Onegin and Lensky. It is heard again at the beginning of the Duel scene which is the tragic ending of their friendship. This theme serves as a tragic *leitmotiv* throughout the work and forms an important element in the extended final number. There are several such motifs in the work, which are associated with particular characters or emotional situations, and their recurrence becomes a Prokofievian commentary on the drama.

Prokofiev was not one to waste a good piece of work. As Lensky dreams of Olga's beauty his poetic ardour is reflected in a tender, soaring melody in C major. The theme returns at the end of the duel scene – his last thoughts are of Olga. Five years later, in the first scene of his opera on Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Prokofiev used a theme which he had previously used in Tatyana's letter scene, depicting restless love. Other music from *Eugene Onegin* found its way into the opera

*Betrothal in a Monastery*, the ballet *Cinderella* and the Seventh Symphony.

In an article in *Pravda* in 1937, Prokofiev wrote:

The search for a musical idiom in keeping with the epoch of socialism is a worthy, but difficult, task for the composer...

It is something like shooting at a moving target: only by aiming ahead, at tomorrow, will you avoid being left behind at the level of yesterday's needs. That is why I consider it a mistake for a composer to strive for simplification. Any attempt to 'play down' to the listener is a subconscious underestimation of his cultural maturity and the development of his tastes; such an attempt has an element of insincerity. And music that is insincere cannot be enduring.

In my own work written in this fruitful year, I have striven for clarity and melodiousness. At the same time I have scrupulously avoided palming off familiar harmonies and tunes.

That is where the difficulty of composing clear, straightforward music lies: the clarity must be new, not old.

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Edited by Jessica Duchen

# Eugene Onegin

COMPACT DISC ONE

## 1 Scene 1

*Lensky at Larin's grave*

### Lensky

A humble sinner, Dmitri Larin,  
beneath the stone reposes here,  
servant of God, and Brigadier.

### Narrator

Vladimir Lensky cast an eye  
over his neighbour's plain memorial,  
and offered to that ash a sigh.  
Sadly he mourned for the departed –

### Lensky

Poor Yorick!

### Narrator

– said he, broken-hearted,

### Lensky

He dandled me as a small boy;  
how many times I made a toy  
of his Ochakov decoration!  
He destined Olga's hand for me,  
kept saying, 'Shall I live to see...?'

### Narrator

Our poor young poet – Olga fired him  
in his first dream of passion's fruit;  
and thoughts of her were what inspired him  
to the first moanings of his flute.

### Lensky

Farewell the games of golden childhood!  
I fell in love with darkest wildwood,  
solitude, stillness and the night,  
the stars, the moon – celestial light  
to which so oft I've dedicated  
those walks amid the gloom and calm  
of evening, and those tears, the balm  
of secret pain... but it's now rated  
by judgement of the modern camp  
almost as good as a dim lamp.

### Narrator

Let me acquaint you on the nail  
now with the *hero* of my tale.  
Onegin, my good friend, was littered  
and bred upon the Neva's brink,  
where you were born as well, I think,  
Listener, or where you've shone and glittered!  
There once I too strolled back and forth:  
but I'm allergic to the North.  
We all meandered through our schooling  
haphazard; so, to God be thanks,  
it's easy, without too much fooling,  
to pass for cultured in our ranks.  
Onegin was assessed by many  
(critical judges, strict as any)

as well-read, though of pedant cast.  
Unforced, as conversation passed,  
he had the talent of saluting  
felicitously every theme,  
of listening like a judge-supreme  
while serious topics were disputing,  
or, with an epigram-surprise,  
of kindling smiles in ladies' eyes.  
Some days he's still in bed, and drowzes,  
when little notes come on a tray.  
What? Invitations? Yes, three houses  
have each asked him to a *soirée*:  
a ball here, there a children's party:  
where shall he go, my rogue, my hearty?  
Which one comes first? It's just the same –  
to do them all is easy game.  
Meanwhile, attired for morning strolling  
complete with broad-brimmed bolivar,  
Eugene attends the boulevard,  
and there at large he goes patrolling  
until Bréguet's unsleeping chime  
advises him of dinner-time.  
More wine, he calls, to drench the flaming  
fire of the cutlets' scalding fat,  
when Bréguet's chime is heard proclaiming  
the new ballet he should be at.  
That world where every man's a critic  
who'll clap an *entrechat*, or scoff  
at Cleopatra, hiss her off,  
boo Phaedra out as paralytic,  
encore Moëna. – and rejoice  
to know the audience hears his voice.  
He mounts the sledge, with daylight fading:

'Make way, make way', goes up the shout;  
his collar in its beaver braiding  
glitters with hoar-frost all about.  
Applause. Onegin enters – passes  
across the public's toes; he steers  
straight to his stall, then turns his glasses  
on unknown ladies in the tiers;  
he's viewed the boxes without passion,  
he's seen it all; with looks and fashion  
he's dreadfully dissatisfied;  
to gentlemen on every side  
he's bowed politely; his attention  
wanders in a distracted way  
across the stage; he yawns:

Onegin 'Ballet –  
they all have richly earned a pension';

### Narrator

he turns away:

### Onegin

'I've had enough –  
now even Didelot's tedious stuff.'

### Narrator

The illness with which he'd been smitten  
should have been analysed when caught;  
something like spleen, that scourge of Britain,  
or Russia's chondria for short.  
It mastered him in slow gradation,  
thank God he had no inclination  
to blow his brains out, but instead

to life grew colder than the dead.  
 So, like child Harold, glum, unpleasing  
 he stalked the drawing-rooms remote  
 from Boston's cloth or gossip's quote,  
 no glance so sweet, no sigh so teasing;  
 no, nothing caused his heart to stir  
 and nothing pierced his senses' blur.

## 2 Scene 2

*Onegin and Lensky at Lensky's country house*

### Narrator

The place where Eugene loathed his leisure  
 was an enchanting country nook;  
 there any friend of harmless pleasure  
 would bless the form his fortune took.  
 The manor house, in deep seclusion,  
 screened by a hill from storm's intrusion,  
 looked on a river: far away  
 before it was the golden play  
 of light that flowering fields reflected:  
 villages flickered far and near,  
 and cattle roamed the plain, and here  
 a park, enormous and neglected,  
 spread out its shadow all around –  
 the pensive Dryads' hiding-ground.  
 Meanwhile another new landowner  
 came driving to his country seat,  
 and, in the district, this persona  
 drew scrutiny no less complete –  
 Vladimir Lensky, whose creator  
 was Göttingen, his alma mater,  
 good-looking, in the flower of age,

a poet, and a Kantian sage.  
 He'd brought back all the fruits of learning  
 from German realms of mist and steam,  
 freedom's enthusiastic dream,  
 a spirit strange, a spirit burning,  
 an eloquence of fevered strength,  
 and raven curls of shoulder-length.

### Lensky

He sang of love, to love subjected,  
 his song was limpid in its tune  
 as infant sleep, or the unaffected  
 thoughts of a girl, or as the moon  
 through heaven's expanse serenely flying,  
 that queen of secrets and of sighing.  
 He sang of grief and parting-time,  
 of something vague, some misty clime;  
 roses romantically blowing;  
 of many distant lands he sang  
 where in the heart of silence rang  
 his sobs, where his live tears were flowing,  
 he sang of lifetime's yellowed page –  
 when not quite eighteen years of age.

### Narrator

So, verse and prose, they came together.  
 No ice and flame, no stormy weather  
 and granite, were so far apart.  
 At first, disparity of heart  
 rendered them tedious to each other;  
 then liking grew, then every day  
 they met on horseback; quickly they  
 became like brother knit to brother.

Friendship, as I must own to you,  
 blooms when there's nothing else to do.  
 He smiled as Lensky talked: the heady  
 pervervid language of the bard,  
 his mind, in judgement still unsteady,  
 and always the inspired regard –  
 to Eugene all was new and thrilling;  
 he struggled to bite back the chilling  
 word on his lips, and thought:

### Onegin

It's sheer folly for me to interfere  
 with such a blissful, brief infection –  
 even without me it will sink;  
 but meanwhile let him live, and think  
 the universe is all perfection;  
 youth is a fever: we must spare  
 its natural right to rave and flare.

### Narrator

Since earliest boyhood Lensky had doted  
 on Olga; from heart's ache still spared,  
 with tenderness he'd watched and noted  
 her childhood games; in them he'd shared,  
 by deep and shady woods protected;  
 the crown of marriage was projected  
 for them by fathers who, as friends  
 and neighbours, followed the same ends.

### Lensky

Away inside that unassuming  
 homestead, before her parents' gaze,  
 she blossomed in the graceful ways

of innocence: a lily blooming  
 in deepest grasses, quite alone,  
 to bee and butterfly unknown,  
 full of obedience and demureness,  
 as gay as morning and as clear,  
 poetic in her simple pureness,  
 sweet as a lover's kiss and dear  
 the sky-blue eyes, the flaxen tresses,  
 smile, voice and movements, little waist;  
 all of that is Olga.

### Onegin

You're off? Why, there's a poet for you!

### Lensky

Goodbye, Onegin, time I went.

### Onegin

Well, I won't hold you up or bore you;  
 but where are all your evenings spent?

### Lensky

At the Larins!

### Onegin

But how mysterious.  
 For goodness' sake, you can't be serious,  
 killing each evening off like that?

### Lensky

You're wrong.

**Onegin**

But what I wonder at  
is this – one sees from here the party:  
in the first place – listen, am I right? –  
a simple Russian family night:  
the guests are feasted, good and hearty,  
on jam, and speeches in regard  
to rains, and flax, and the stockyard.

**Lensky**

I don't see what's so bad about it.

**Onegin**

Boredom, that's what's so bad, my friend.

**Lensky**

Your modish world, I'll do without it;  
give me the homely hearth, and lend...

**Onegin**

You pile one eclogue on another!  
For God's sake, that will do. But, brother,  
you're really going? Well, I'm sad.  
Now, Lensky, would it be so bad  
for me to glimpse this Phyllis ever,  
with whom your thoughts are so obsessed –  
pen, tears, and rhymes, and all the rest?  
Present me, please.

**Lensky**

You're joking.

**Onegin**

Never.

**Lensky**

Gladly.

**Onegin**

So when?

**Lensky**

Why not tonight?

They will receive us with delight.  
Let's go!

**Narrator**

The friends, all haste and vigour,  
drive there, and with formality  
are treated to the fullest rigour  
of old-time hospitality.  
The protocol is all one wishes:  
the jams appear in little dishes;  
on a small table's oilcloth sheen  
the jug of bilberry wine is seen.  
List'ner, the elder sister now  
must be my theme, if you'll allow.

### **3** Scene 3

*At the sisters' home*

**Narrator**

So she was called Tatyana. Truly  
she lacked her sister's beauty, lacked  
the rosy bloom that glowed so newly

to catch the eye and to attract.  
Shy as a savage, silent, tearful,  
wild as a forest deer, and fearful,  
Tatyana had a changeling look  
in her own home. She never took  
to kissing or caressing father  
or mother; and in all the play  
of children, though as young as they,  
she never joined, or skipped, but rather  
in silence all day she'd remain  
ensconced beside the windowpane.  
Reflection was her friend and pleasure  
right from the cradle of her days;  
it touched with reverie her leisure,  
adorning all its country ways.  
Seeing herself as a creation –  
Clarissa, Julie or Delphine –  
by writers of her admiration,  
Tatyana, lonely heroine,  
roamed the still forest like a ranger,

**Tatyana**

sought in her book, that text of danger,  
and found her dreams, her secret fire,  
the full fruit of her heart's desire;  
she sighed, and in a trance co-opted  
another's joy, another's breast,  
whispered by heart a note addressed  
to the hero that she'd adopted.

### **4** Scene 4

*Having taken a short cut, they're on their way  
home as fast as possible.*

**Narrator**

And home was now their destination;  
as by the shortest way they flew,  
this was our heroes' conversation  
secretly overheard by you:

**Lensky**

You yawn, Onegin?

**Onegin**

As I'm used to.

**Lensky**

This time I think you've been reduced to  
new depths of boredom.

**Onegin**

No, the same.

The fields are dark, since evening came.  
Drive on, Andryushka! Quicker, quicker!  
The country's pretty stupid here!  
Oh, *à propos*: Larin's a dear  
simple old lady; but the liquor –  
I'm much afraid that bilberry wine  
won't benefit these guts of mine.  
But tell me, which one was Tatyana?

**Lensky**

She was the one who looked as still  
and melancholy as Svetlana,  
and sat down by the windowsill.

**Onegin**

The one you love's the younger daughter?

**Lensky**

Why not?

**Onegin**

I'd choose the other quarter  
if I, like you, had been a bard,  
Olga's no life in her regard:  
the roundest face that you've set eyes on,  
a pretty girl exactly like  
any Madonna by Van Dyck:  
a dumb moon, on a dumb horizon.

**Narrator**

Lensky had a curt word to say  
and then sat silent all the way.  
Meanwhile the news of Eugene coming  
to the Larins' had caused a spout  
of gossip, and set comment humming  
among the neighbours round about.  
Conjecture found unending matter:  
there was a general furtive chatter,  
and jokes and spiteful gossip ran  
claiming Tatyana'd found her man;  
and some were even testifying  
the marriage plans were all exact  
but held up by the simple fact  
that modish rings were still a-buying.  
Of Lensky's fate they said no more –  
they'd settled that some years before.  
Tatyana listened with vexation

to all this tattle, yet at heart  
in indescribable elation,  
despite herself, rehearsed the part:  
the thought sank in, and penetrated:  
she fell in love – the hour was fated...  
so fires of spring will bring to birth  
a seedling fallen in the earth.  
Her feelings in their weary session  
had long been wasting and enslaved  
by pain and languishment; she craved  
the fateful diet; by depression  
her heart had long been overrun:  
her soul was waiting... for someone.  
Tatyana now need wait no longer.  
Her eyes were opened, and she said,  
'this is the one!' Ah, ever stronger,  
in sultry sleep, in lonely bed,  
all day, all night, his presence fills her,  
by magic everything instils her  
with thoughts of *him* in ceaseless round.  
She hates a friendly voice's sound,  
or servants waiting on her pleasure.  
Lost in her dream she cannot hear  
the talk of guests when they appear;  
she calls down curses on their leisure,  
and, when one's least prepared for it,  
their tendency to call, and sit.

**5 Scene 5**

*Tatyana in the park*

**Narrator**

Tatyana, hunted by love's anguish,  
has made the park her brooding-place,

suddenly lowering her eyes that languish,  
too faint to stir a further pace:  
her bosom heaves, her cheeks are staring  
scarlet with passion's instant flaring.

**Tatyana**

Upon my lips the breathing dies,  
noise in my ears, glare in my eyes...  
the night comes on; the moon's patrolling  
far-distant heaven's vaulted room;  
a nightingale, in forest gloom,  
sets a sonorous cadence rolling –

**Narrator**

Tatyana, sleepless in the dark,  
makes to her nurse low-voiced remark:

**6 Scene 6**

*Tatyana and Nurse*

**Tatyana**

I can't sleep, nyanya: it's so stifling!  
Open the window, sit down near.

**Nurse**

Why, Tanya, what...?

**Tatyana**

All's dull and trifling.  
The olden days, I want to hear...

**Nurse**

What of them, Tanya? I was able,  
years back, to call up many a fable;

I kept in mind an ancient store  
of tales of girls, and ghosts and lore:  
but now my brain is darkened, Tanya:  
and I've forgotten all I knew.  
A sorry state of things, it's true!  
My mind is fuddled.

**Tatyana**

Tell me, nyanya,  
your early life, unlock your tongue;  
were you in love when you were young?

**Nurse**

What nonsense, Tanya! In those other  
ages we'd never heard of love:  
why, at the thought, my husband's mother  
had chased me to the world above.

**Tatyana**

How did you come to marry, nyanya?

**Nurse**

I reckon, by God's will. My Vanya  
was younger still, but at that stage  
I was just thirteen years of age.  
Two weeks the matchmaker was plying  
to see my kin, and in the end  
my father blessed me. So I'd spend  
my hours in fear and bitter crying.  
Then, crying, they untwined my plait,  
and sang me to the altar-mat.  
So to strange kinsfolk I was taken...  
but you're not paying any heed.



**Tatyana**

Oh, nurse, I'm sad, I'm sad, I'm shaken,  
I'm sick, my dear, I'm sick indeed.  
I'm near to sobbing, near to weeping!...

**Nurse**

You're ill, God have you in his keeping,  
the Lord have mercy on us all!  
Whatever you may need, just call...  
I'll sprinkle you with holy water,  
you're all in a fever... heavens above.

**Tatyana**

Nurse, I'm not ill; I... I'm in love.  
I'm in love. I am in love...  
I am in love... I am in love!  
Go, nurse, leave me here apart.  
Give me a pen and give me paper,  
bring up a table, and a taper;  
good night; I swear I'll lie down soon.

**Narrator**

She was alone, lit by the moon.  
Elbow on table, spirit seething,  
still filled with Eugene, Tanya wrote,  
and in her unconsidered note  
all a pure maiden's love was breathing.  
She folds the page, lays down the plume...  
Tatyana! It's addressed... to whom?

**7 Scene 7**  
*Tatyana's letter*

**Tatyana**

I write to you – no more confession  
is needed, nothing's left to tell.  
I know it's now in your discretion  
with scorn to make my world a hell.  
But if you've kept some faint impression  
of pity for my wretched state,  
you'll never leave me to my fate.  
At first I thought it out of season  
to speak; believe me: of my shame –  
you'd not so much as know the name,  
if I'd possessed the slightest reason  
to hope that even once a week  
I might have seen you, heard you speak  
on visits to us, and in greeting  
I might have said a word, and then  
thought, day and night, and thought again  
about one thing, till our next meeting.  
But you're not sociable, they say:  
you find the country godforsaken;  
though we... don't shine in any way,  
our joy in you is warmly taken.  
Why did you visit us, but why?  
Lost in our backwoods habitation  
I'd not have known you, therefore I  
would have been spared this laceration.  
In time, who knows, the agitation  
of inexperience would have passed,  
I would have found a friend, another,  
and in the role of virtuous mother  
and faithful wife I'd have been cast.  
Another!... No, another never  
in all the world could take my heart:

decreed in highest court for ever...  
heaven's will – for you I'm set apart;  
and my whole life has been directed  
and pledged to you, and firmly planned;  
I know, God-sent one, I'm protected  
until the grave by your strong hand:  
you've made appearance in my dreaming;  
unseen, already you were dear,  
my soul had heard your voice ring clear,  
stirred at your gaze, so strange, so gleaming  
long, long ago... no, that could be  
no dream. You'd scarce arrived, I reckoned  
to know you, swooned, and in a second  
all in a blaze, I said: it's he!  
At this midnight of my condition,  
was it not you, dear apparition,  
who in the dark came flashing through  
and, on my bed-head gently leaning,  
with love and comfort in your meaning,  
spoke words of hope? But who are you:  
the guardian angel of tradition,  
or some vile agent of perdition  
sent to seduce? Resolve my doubt.  
Oh, this could all be false and vain,  
a sham that trustful souls work out;  
fate could be something else again...  
So let it be! For you to keep  
I trust my fate to your direction,  
henceforth in front of you I weep,  
I weep, and pray for your protection...  
Imagine it: quite on my own  
I've no one here who comprehends me,  
and now a swooning mind attends me,

dumb I must perish, and alone.  
My heart awaits you; you can turn it  
to life and hope with just a glance –  
or else disturb my mournful trance  
with censure – I've done all to earn it!  
I close. I dread to read this page...  
for shame and fear my wits are sliding...  
and yet your honour is my gage,  
and in it bodily I'm confiding...

**Narrator**

Now Tanya's groaning, now she's sighing;  
the letter trembles in her grip;  
the rosy sealing-wafer's drying  
upon her feverish tongue; the slip  
from off her charming shoulder's drooping  
and sideways her poor head is stooping.  
But now the radiance of the moon  
is dimmed. Down there the valley soon  
comes clearer through the mists of dawning.  
Down there, by slow degrees, the stream  
has taken on a silvery gleam;  
the herdsman's horn proclaimed the morning  
and roused the village long ago:  
to Tanya, all's an empty show.  
She's paid the sunrise no attention,  
she sits with head sunk on her breast,  
over the note holds in suspension  
her seal with its engraven crest.  
Softly the door is opened, enter  
grey Filátevna, to present her  
with a small tray and a teacup.

**Nurse**

Get up, my child, it's time, get up!  
 Why, pretty one, you're up already!  
 My early bird! You know, last night  
 you gave me such a shocking fright!  
 But now, thank God, you're well and steady,  
 your night of fretting's left no trace!  
 Fresh as a poppy-flower, your face.

**Tatyana**

Oh nurse, a favour, a petition...

**Nurse**

Command me, darling, as you choose.

**Tatyana**

Now don't suppose... let no suspicion...  
 but nurse, you see... oh, don't refuse...

**Nurse**

My sweet, God warrants me your debtor.

**Tatyana**

Then send your grandson with this letter  
 quickly to O... I mean to that...  
 the neighbour... you must tell the brat  
 that not a syllable be uttered,  
 not a mention of my name...

**Nurse**

Which neighbour, dear? My head became  
 in these last years all mixed and fluttered.  
 We've many neighbours round about;  
 even to count them throws me out.

**Tatyana**

How slow you are at guessing, nyanya!

**Nurse**

My sweet, my dearest heart, I'm old,  
 I'm old, my mind is blunted, Tanya;  
 times were when I was sharp and bold;  
 times were, when master's least suggestion...

**Tatyana**

Oh nyanya, nyanya, I don't question...  
 what have your wits to do with me?  
 Now here's a letter, as you see,  
 addressed to Onegin...

**Nurse**

Oh, well, that's easy.  
 But don't be cross, my darling friend,  
 you know it's hard to comprehend...  
 Why have you gone all pale and queasy...

**Tatyana**

It's nothing, nurse, nothing, I say...  
 just send your grandson on his way.

**Narrator**

Hours pass; no answer; waiting, waiting.  
 No word: another day goes by.  
 She's dressed since dawn, dead pale; debating,  
 demanding: when will he reply?  
 Olga's adorer comes a-wooing.  
 'Tell me, what's your companion doing?'  
 enquired the lady of the hall:

'It seems that he forgot us all.'

Tatyana flushed, and started shaking.

**Lensky**

The mail explains the time he's taking.

**Narrator**

Tatyana lowered her regard  
 as at a censure that was hard.  
 Day faded; on the table, glowing,  
 the samovar of evening boiled,  
 and warmed the Chinese teapot; flowing  
 beneath it, vapour wreathed and coiled.  
 Already Olga's hand was gripping  
 the urn of perfumed tea, and tipping  
 into the cups its darkling stream –  
 meanwhile a hall-boy handed cream;  
 before the window taking station  
 plunged in reflection's deepest train,  
 Tatyana breathed on the cold pane,  
 and in the misted condensation  
 with charming forefinger she traced,  
 'OE', religiously inlaced.

**8 Scene 8**

*Onegin receives Tatyana's letter.*

**Onegin**

Tatyana's letter, treasured ever  
 as sacred, lies before me still.  
 I read with secret pain, and never  
 can read enough to get my fill.  
 Who taught her an address so tender,

such careless language of surrender?  
 Who taught her all this mad, slapdash,  
 heartfelt, imploring, touching trash  
 fraught with enticement and disaster?  
 It baffles me.

**Narrator**

The flirt has reason's cool volition;  
 Tatyana's love is no by-play,  
 she yields to it without condition  
 like a sweet child come what come may.

**Tatyana**

Why did you visit us, but why?  
 Lost in our backwoods habitation  
 I'd not have known you, therefore I  
 would have been spared this laceration.

**Onegin**

I've known too many a haughty beauty,  
 cold, pure as ice, and as unkind,  
 inexorably wed to duty,  
 unfathomable to the mind;  
 shocked by their modish pride, and fleeing  
 the utter virtue of their being,  
 I've run a mile, I must avow,  
 having deciphered on their brow  
 hell's terrifying imprecation:  
 'Abandon hope for evermore.'  
 Our love is what they must abhor;  
 our terror is their consolation.  
 Ladies of such a cast, I think,  
 you too have seen on Neva's brink.

Thronged by adorers, I've detected another, freakish one, who stays quite self-absorbed and unaffected by sighs of passion or by praise. To my astonishment I've seen her, having by her severe demeanour frightened to death by a timid love, retrieve it with another shove – at least by a regretful kindness; at least her tone is sometimes found more tender than it used to sound. I've seen how, trustful in his blindness, the youthful lover once again runs after what is sweet, and vain. Why is Tatyana guiltier-seeming? Is it that she, poor simple sweet, believes in her elected dreaming and has no knowledge of deceit? That, artless, and without concealing, her love obeys the laws of feeling, that she's so trustful, and imbued by heaven with such an unsubdued imagination, with such reason, such stubborn brain, and vivid will, and heart so tender, it can still burst to a fiery blaze in season? Such feckless passion – as I live, is this then what you can't forgive?

**Tatyana**  
So let it be! For you to keep  
I trust my fate to your direction,  
henceforth in front of you I weep,  
I weep, and pray for your protection...

## 9 Scene 9

*Onegin scolds Tatyana in Larin's garden.*

### Narrator

Meanwhile with pain her soul was girdled,  
and tears were drowning her regard.  
A sudden clatter... blood was curdled...  
Now nearer... hooves... and in the yard  
Evgeny!

### Tatyana

Ah!

### Narrator

Tatyana, fleeting  
light as a shadow, shuns a meeting,  
through the back porch runs out and flies  
down to the garden, and her eyes  
daren't look behind her; fairly dashing –  
beds, bridges, lawn, she never stops,  
the *allée* to the lake, the copse;  
breaking the lilac bushes, smashing  
parterres, she runs to the rivulet's brink,  
to gasp, and on a bench to sink.

### Tatyana

It's he! Eugene arriving!  
Oh God, what did he think!

### Narrator

A dream  
of hope is somehow still surviving  
in her torn heart – a fickle gleam;  
she trembles, and with fever drumming

awaits him – hears nobody coming.  
But finally she heaved a yearning  
sigh, stood up, and began to pace;  
she walked, but just as she was turning  
into the *allée*, face to face,  
she found Evgeny, eyes a-glitter,  
still as a shadow, grim and bitter;  
seared as by fire, she stopped.

### Onegin

You wrote to me, and nothing spoken  
can disavow that. I have read  
those words where love, without condition,  
pours out its guiltless frank admission,  
and your sincerity of thought  
is dear to me, for it has brought  
feeling to what had long been heartless;  
but I won't praise you – let me join  
and pay my debt in the same coin  
with an avowal just as artless;  
hear my confession as I stand –  
I leave the verdict in your hand.  
Could I be happy circumscribing  
my life in a domestic plot;  
had fortune blest me by prescribing  
husband and father as my lot;  
could I accept for just a minute  
the homely scene, take pleasure in it –  
then I'd have looked for you alone  
to be the bride I'd call my own.  
Without romance, or false insistence,  
I'll say: with past ideals in view  
I would have chosen none but you

as helpmeet in my sad existence,  
as gage of all things that were good,  
and been as happy... as I could!  
But I was simply not intended  
for happiness – that alien role.  
Should your perfections be expended  
in vain on my unworthy soul?  
Believe (as conscience is my warrant),  
wedlock for us would be abhorrent.  
I'd love you, but inside a day,  
with custom, love would fade away;  
your tears would flow – but your emotion,  
your grief would fail to touch my heart,  
they'd just enrage it with their dart.  
What sort of roses, in your notion,  
would Hymen bring us – blooms that might  
last many a day, and many a night?  
What in the world is more distressing  
than households where the wife must moan  
the unworthy husband through depressing  
daytimes and evenings passed alone?  
And where the husband, recognising  
her worth (but anathematising  
his destiny), without a smile  
bursts with cold envy and with bile?  
For such am I. When you were speaking  
to me so simply, with the fires  
and force that purity inspires,  
is this the man that you were seeking?  
Can it be true that you must await  
from cruel fortune such a fate?  
I've dreams and years past resurrection;  
a soul that nothing can renew...

I feel a brotherly affection,  
or something tenderer still, for you.  
Listen to me without resentment:  
girls often change to their contentment  
light dreams for new ones... so we see  
each springtime, on the growing tree,  
fresh leaves... for such is heaven's mandate.  
You'll love again, but you must teach  
your heart some self-restraint; for each  
and every man won't understand it  
as I have... learn from my belief  
that inexperience leads to grief.

**Narrator**

So went his sermon. Almost dying,  
blinded to everything about  
by mist of tears, without replying  
Tatyana heard Evgeny out.  
He gave his arm. In sad abstraction,  
by what's called *máchinál* reaction,  
without a word Tatyana leant  
upon it, and with head down-bent  
walked homeward round the kitchen garden;  
together they arrived, and none  
dreamt of reproving what they'd done:  
by country freedom, rightful pardon  
and happy licence are allowed,  
as much as in Moscow the proud.

**10 Scene 10**

*Lensky and Onegin together in Lensky's house*

**Narrator**

The fire was dying; cinders faintly

covered the golden coal – the steam  
tumbled and whirled and twisted quaintly  
its barely noticeable stream.  
The hearth was low beyond all stoking.  
Straight up the chimney, pipes were smoking.  
Still on the board, the beakers hissed,  
and evening now drew on in mist...  
(I like a friendly conversation,  
the enjoyment of a social drink,  
at hours, which, why I cannot think,  
somehow have got the designation  
of time between the wolf and dog.)  
Now hear the friends in dialogue:

**Onegin**

Tell me, our neighbours, are they thriving?  
And how's Tatyana? Olga too,  
your dashing one, is she surviving?

**Lensky**

Just half a glass more... that will do...  
All flourishing; they send their duty.  
Take Olga's shoulders now – the beauty!  
What breasts! What soul!... We'll go one day  
visit the family, what d'you say?  
If you come with me, they'll be flattered;  
or else, my friend, how does it look?  
You called there twice, but since then took  
no notice of them. But I've chattered  
so much, I've left no time to speak!  
Of course! You're bidden there next week.

**Onegin**

!?

**Lensky**

Saturday. The invitation  
Olinka and her mother sent:  
Tatyana's name-day celebration.  
It's right and proper that you went.

**Onegin**

But there'll be such a rout and scrabble  
with every different kind of rabble...

**Lensky**

No, no, I'm sure the party's small.  
Relations. No one else at all.  
Let's go, our friendship's worth the labour.

**Onegin**

All right, I'll come then...

**Lensky**

What a friend!

**Narrator**

He drained his glass down to the end  
by way of toast to their fair neighbour;  
then he began to talk once more  
of Olga: love's that kind of bore!

**11 Scene 11**

*Tatyana's dream*

**Narrator**

Tanya's undressed, and lies in bed.  
Lel floats about above her head;

and underneath her downy pillow  
a young girl's looking-glass is kept.  
Now all was still. Tatyana slept.  
She dreamt of portents.

**Tatyana**

In her dreaming  
she walked across a snowy plain  
through gloom and mist; and there came  
streaming  
a furious boiling, heaving main  
across the drift-encumbered acres,  
a raging torrent, capped with breakers,  
a flood on which no frosty band  
had been imposed by winter's hand;  
two poles that ice had glued like plaster  
were placed across the gulf to make  
a flimsy bridge whose every quake  
spelt hazard, ruin and disaster;  
she stopped at the loud torrent's bound,  
perplexed... and rooted to the ground.

**Narrator**

As if before some mournful parting  
Tatyana groaned above the tide;  
she saw no friendly figure starting  
to help her from the other side;  
but suddenly a snowdrift rumbled,  
and what came out? A hairy, tumbled  
enormous bear; Tatyana yelled,  
the bear let out a roar, and held  
a sharp-nailed paw towards her; bracing  
her nerves, she leant on it her weight,

and with a halting, trembling gait  
above the water started tracing  
her way; she passed, then as she walked  
that bear – what next? – behind her stalked.  
A backward look is fraught with danger;  
she speeds her footsteps to a race,  
but from her shaggy-liveried ranger  
she can't escape at any pace –

#### **Tatyana**

The odious bear still grunts and lumbers.  
Ahead of them a pinewood slumbers  
in the full beauty of its frown;  
the branches all are weighted down  
with tufts of snow; and through the lifted  
summits of aspen, birch and lime,  
the nightly luminaries climb.  
No path to see: the snow has drifted  
across each bush, across each steep,  
and all the world is buried deep.

#### **Narrator**

She's in the wood, the bear still trails her.  
There's powdery snow up to her knees;  
now a protruding branch assails her  
and clasps her neck; and now she sees  
her golden earrings off and whipping;  
and now the crunchy snow is stripping  
her darling foot of its wet shoe,  
her handkerchief has fallen too;  
no time to pick it up – she's dying  
with fright, she hears the approaching bear;  
her fingers shake, she doesn't dare

to lift her skirt up; still she's flying,  
and he pursuing, till at length  
she flies no more, she's lost her strength.  
She's fallen in the snow – alertly  
the bear has raised her in his paws;  
and she, submissively, inertly –  
no move she makes, no breath she draws;  
he whirls her through the wood... a hovel  
shows up through trees, all of a grovel  
in darkest forest depths, and drowned  
by dreary snowdrifts piled around;  
there's a small window shining in it,  
and from within come noise and cheer;  
the bear explains: 'My cousin's here –  
come in and warm yourself a minute!'  
He carries her inside the door  
and sets her gently on the floor.  
Tatyana looks, her faintness passes:  
bear's gone: a hallway, no mistake;  
behind a door the clash of glasses  
and shouts suggest a crowded wake;  
so, seeing there no rhyme or reason,  
no meaning in or out of season,  
she peers discreetly through a chink  
and sees... whatever do you think?

#### **Tatyana**

A group of monsters round a table,  
a dog with horns, a goatee'd witch,  
a rooster head and on the twitch  
a skeleton jerked by a cable,  
a dwarf with tail, and a half-strain,  
a hybrid cross of cat and crane.

But ever stranger and more fearful:  
a crayfish rides on spider-back;  
on goose's neck, a skull looks cheerful  
and swaggers in a red calpack:  
with bended knees a windmill dances,  
its sails go flap-flap as it prances,  
song, laughter, whistle, bark and champ,  
and human words, and horse's stamp!

#### **Narrator**

But how she jumped, when in this hovel  
among the guests she recognised  
the man she feared and idolised –  
who else? – the hero of the novel!

#### **Onegin**

Onegin sits at table, too;  
he eyes the door, looks slyly through.  
He nods – they start to fuss and truckle;  
he drinks – all shout and take a swill;  
he laughs – they all begin to chuckle;  
he scowls – and the whole gang are still.

#### **Tatyana**

He's host, that's clear, and thus enlightened  
Tanya's no longer quite so frightened  
and, curious now about the lot,  
opens the door a tiny slot...  
but then a sudden breeze surprises,  
puts out the lamps; the whole brigade  
of house-familiars stands dismayed...

#### **Narrator**

With eyes aflame Onegin rises

from table, clattering on the floor;  
all stand. He walks towards the door.  
Now she's alarmed; in desperate worry  
Tatyana struggles to run out –  
she can't; and in her panic hurry –  
she flails around, she tries to shout –  
she can't; Evgeny's pushed the portal,  
and to the vision of those mortal  
monsters the maiden stood revealed.  
Wildly the fearful laughter pealed;  
the eyes of all, the hooves, the snozzles,  
the bleeding tongues, the tufted tails,  
the tusks, the corpse's fingernails,  
the horns, and the moustachio'd nozzles –  
all point at her, and all combine  
to bellow out: 'She's mine, she's mine.'

#### **Onegin**

'She's mine!' Evgeny's voice of thunder  
clears in a flash the freezing room;  
the whole thieves' kitchen flies asunder,  
the girl remains there in the gloom  
alone with him.

#### **Narrator**

Onegin takes her  
into a corner, gently makes her  
sit on a flimsy bench, and lays  
his head upon her shoulder... blaze  
of sudden brightness... it's too curious...  
Olga's appeared upon the scene,  
and Lensky follows her. Eugene,  
eyes rolling, arms uplifted, furious,  
damns the intruders; Tanya lies



and almost swoons, and almost dies.  
 Louder and louder sounds the wrangle:  
 Eugene has caught up, quick as quick,  
 a carving-knife – and in the tangle  
 Lensky's thrown down. The murk is thick,  
 and growing thicker; then, heart-shaking,  
 a scream rings out... the cabin's quaking...  
 Tanya comes to in utter fright...

**12 Scene 12**  
*Larin's ball*

**Narrator**

But now Aurora's crimson fingers  
 from daybreak valleys lift the sun;  
 the morning light no longer lingers,  
 the festal name-day has begun.  
 Since dawn, whole families have been driving  
 towards the Larins' and arriving  
 in sledded coaches and coupés,  
 in britzkas, kobitkás and sleighs.  
 The hall is full of noise and hustle,  
 in the salon new faces meet,  
 and kisses smack as young girls greet;  
 there's yap of pugs, and laughs, and bustle;  
 the threshold's thronged, wet-nurses call,  
 guests bow, feet scrape, and children squall.  
 And from the nearby Army station  
 the Major's here: he's all the rage  
 with our Mamas, and a sensation  
 with demoiselles of riper age;  
 his news has set the party humming!  
 The regimental band is coming,

sent at the Colonel's own behest.  
 A ball: the joy of every guest!  
 Young ladies jump for future blisses...  
 But dinner's served, so two by two  
 and arm in arm they all go through;  
 round Tanya congregate the misses,  
 the men confront them, face to face:  
 they sit, they cross themselves for grace.  
 They buzz – but then all talk's suspended –  
 jaws masticate as minutes pass;  
 the crash of plates and knives is blended  
 with the resounding chime of glass.  
 And now there's gradually beginning  
 among the guests a general dinning –  
 none listens when the others speak,  
 all shout and argue, laugh and squeak,  
 then doors are opened, Lensky enters,  
 Onegin too. 'Good Lord, at last!' the hostess cries and, moving fast,  
 the guests squeeze closer to the centres;  
 they shove each plate, and every chair,  
 and shout, and make room for the pair.  
 Just facing Tanya's where they're sitting;  
 and paler than the moon at dawn,  
 she lowers darkened eyes, unwitting,  
 and trembles like a hunted fawn.  
 From violent passions fast pulsating  
 she's nearly swooned, she's suffocating;  
 the friends' salute she never hears  
 and from her eyes the eager tears  
 are almost bursting; she's quite ready,  
 poor girl, to drop into a faint,  
 but will, and reason's strong constraint,

prevailed, and with composure steady  
 she sat there; through her teeth a word  
 came out so soft, it scarce was heard.  
 The nervous-tragical reaction,  
 girls' tears, their swooning, for Eugene  
 had long proved tedious to distraction:  
 he knew too well that sort of scene.  
 He saw the sad girl's trembling state,  
 looked down in an access of hate,  
 pouted, and swore in furious passion  
 to wreak, by stirring Lensky's ire,  
 the best revenge one could desire.  
 Already, in exultant fashion  
 he watched the guests and, as he dined,  
 caricatured them in his mind.  
 Compliment and congratulation;  
 Tanya thanks each one with a phrase.  
 When Eugene's turn for salutation  
 arrives, the girl's exhausted gaze,  
 her discomposure, her confusion,  
 expose his soul to an intrusion  
 of pity: in his silent bow,  
 and in his look there shows somehow  
 a wondrous tenderness. And whether  
 it was that he'd been truly stirred,  
 or half-unwittingly preferred  
 a joking flirt, or both together,  
 there was a softness in his glance:  
 it brought back Tanya from her trance.  
 Here's tea: the girls have just, as bidden,  
 taken the saucers in their grip,  
 when, from behind the doorway, hidden  
 bassoons and flutes begin to trip.

Elated by the music's blaring,  
 Petrushkóv, the local Paris, tearing,  
 his tea with rum quite left behind,  
 approaches Olga; Lensky's signed  
 Tatyana on; Miss Kharlikova,  
 that nubile maid of riper age,  
 is seized by Tambov's poet-sage;  
 Buyánóv whirls off Pustyakova;  
 they all have swarmed into the hall,  
 and in full brilliance shines the ball.  
 Now the mazurka sounds. Its thunder  
 used in times past to ring a peal  
 that huge ballrooms vibrated under,  
 while floors would split from crash of heel  
 and frames would shudder, windows tremble;  
 now things are changed, now we resemble  
 ladies who glide on waxed *parquet*.  
 Yet the mazurka keeps today  
 in country towns and suchlike places  
 its pristine charm: heeltaps, and leaps,  
 and whiskers – all of this it keeps  
 as fresh as ever, for its graces  
 are here untouched by fashion's reign,  
 our modern Russia's plague and bane.  
 Buyánóv, my vivacious cousin,  
 leads Olga and Tatyana on  
 to Eugene; nineteen to the dozen,  
 Eugene takes Olga, and is gone;  
 he steers her, nonchalantly gliding,  
 he stoops and, tenderly confiding,  
 whispers some ballad of the hour,  
 squeezes her hand – and brings to flower  
 on her smug face a flush of pleasure.

Lensky has watched: his rage has blazed,  
 he's lost his self-command, and crazed  
 with jealousy beyond all measure  
 insists, when the mazurka ends,  
 on the cotillion, as amends.  
 But now, monotonously dashing  
 like mindless youth, the waltz goes by  
 with spinning noise and senseless flashing  
 as pair by pair the dancers fly.  
 Revenge's hour is near, and after  
 Evgeny, full of inward laughter,  
 has gone to Olga, swept the girl  
 past all the assembly in a whirl,  
 he takes her to a chair, beginning  
 to talk of this and that, but then  
 after two minutes, off again,  
 they're on the dance-floor, waltzing, spinning.  
 All are dumbfounded. Lensky shies  
 away from trusting his own eyes.  
 He asks. She can't accept.

**Lensky**

Why ever –?

**Narrator**

No, she's already pledged her word  
 to Evgeny.

**Lensky**

Oh God! She'd never –  
 How could she? Why, he'd never heard –  
 Scarce out of bibs! Already fickle,  
 fresh from the cot, an infant pickle,

already studying to intrigue!  
 Already high in treason's league!

**Narrator**

He finds the shock beyond all bearing;  
 so, cursing women's devious course,  
 he leaves the room, calls for his horse  
 and gallops.

**Lensky**

Pistols made for pairing  
 and just a double charge of shot,  
 will in a flash decide his lot.

**Chorus**

There he stands like a tall beanpole  
 with his ears a-flapping  
 and his fingers scratching,  
 with his toes a-tapping  
 and his eyes staring hard,  
 staring hard like a hungry hawk  
 on the hunt for its prey.

But the food they had prepared  
 had been eaten every scrap –  
 not a single thing remained  
 not a morsel, not a drop.  
 There he stands with his bright blue nose,  
 like a parson's son with his turned up nose.

**Narrator**

Pleasant, in spite of its compression,  
 gentlemanly, quite precise,

Vladimir's challenge found expression  
 that, though polite, was clear as ice.  
 Eugene's response was automatic;  
 he informed this envoy diplomatic  
 in terms where not a word was spared –

**Onegin**

At any time, I'll be prepared!

COMPACT DISC TWO

**Scene 12** (*continued*)

*Larin's ball*

**Narrator**

1 Zaretsky left without discussion;  
 he saw no point in staying on,  
 with work at home, but when he'd gone,  
 Evgeny, whom the repercussion  
 left quite alone with his own soul,  
 was far from happy with his role.  
 With reason, too: for when he'd vetted  
 in secret judgement what he'd done,  
 he found too much that he regretted:  
 last night he'd erred in making fun,  
 so heartless and so detrimental,  
 of love so timorous and gentle.  
 In second place the poet might  
 have been a fool; yet he'd a right,  
 at eighteen years, to some compassion.  
 Evgeny loved him from his heart,  
 and should have played a different part:

no softball for the winds of fashion,  
 no boy, to fight or take offence –  
 a man of honour and of sense.  
 Lensky at home awaits the answer:

**Lensky**

impatient, hatred flaming high;  
 but here comes our loud-talking prancer  
 who swaggers in with the reply.  
 The jealous poet's gloom is lightened!  
 Knowing the offender, he'd been frightened!  
 Lest he should by some clever trick  
 avert his chest from pistol's click,  
 smoothe his way out with humour's ointment.  
 But now Vladimir's doubts are still:  
 early tomorrow at the mill  
 before first light they have appointment,  
 to raise the safety catch and strain  
 to hit the target: thigh or brain.

**Narrator**

Now brooding thoughts slip his attention  
 once more, at that beloved sight,  
 and so he lacks the strength to mention  
 the happenings of the previous night;  
 he murmurs:

**Lensky**

Olga's mine for saving;  
 I'll stop that tempter from depraving  
 her youth with all his repertoire  
 of sighs, and compliments, and fire;  
 that poisonous worm, despised, degrading,

shall not attack my lily's root;  
I'll save this blossom on the shoot,  
still hardly opened up, from fading.

## 2 Scene 13

*Duel*

### Narrator

Pistols are out, they gleam, the hammer  
thumps as the balls are pressed inside  
faceted muzzles by the rammer;  
with a first click, the catch is tried.  
Now powder's greyish stream is slipping  
into the pan. Securely gripping,  
the jagged flint's pulled back anew.  
And now the two opponents doff  
their cloaks; Zaretsky's measured off  
thirty-two steps with great precision,  
and on their marks has made them stand;  
each grips his pistol in his hand.

### Zaretsky

Now march.

### Narrator

And calmly, not yet seeking  
to aim, at steady, even pace  
the foes, cold-blooded and unspeaking,  
each took four steps across the space,  
four fateful strides. And, without slowing  
the level tenor of his going,  
Evgeny quietly began  
to lift his pistol up. A span

of five more steps they went, slow-gaited,  
and Lensky, left eye closing, aimed –  
but just then Eugene's pistol flamed...  
The clock of doom had struck as fated;  
and the poet, without a sound,  
let fall his pistol on the ground.  
Vladimir drops, hand softly sliding  
to heart. And in his misted gaze  
is death, not pain. So gently gliding  
down slopes of mountains, when a blaze  
of sunlight makes it flash and crumble,  
a block of snow will slip and tumble.  
Onegin, drenched with sudden chill,  
darts to the boy, and looks, and still  
calls out his name... All unavailing:  
the youthful votary of rhyme  
has found an end before his time.  
The storm is over, dawn is paling,  
the bloom has withered on the bough;  
the altar flame's extinguished now.  
Giving his pistol-butt a squeezing,  
Evgeny looks at Lensky, chilled  
at heart by grim remorse's freezing.

### Zaretsky

Well, what?

### Narrator

Zaretsky says:

### Zaretsky

He's killed,

### Narrator

Killed!... At this frightful word a-quiver,  
Onegin turns, and with a shiver  
summons his people. On the sleigh  
with care Zaretsky stows away  
the frozen corpse, drives off, and homing  
vanishes with his load of dread.

### Onegin

A moment earlier, inspiration  
had filled this heart, and detestation  
and hope and passion; life had glowed  
and blood had bubbled as it flowed;  
but now the mansion is forsaken;  
shutters are up, and all is pale  
and still within. Behind the veil  
of chalk the windowpanes have taken.  
The lady of the house has fled.  
Where to, God knows. The trail is dead.

## 3 Scene 14

*Tatyana visits Onegin's house.*

### Narrator

Evening, and darkening sky, and waters  
in quiet flood. A beetle whirled.  
The choirs of dancers sought their quarters.  
Beyond the stream there smoked and stirred  
a fisher's fire. Through country gleaming  
silver with moonlight, in her dreaming  
profoundly sunk, Tatyana stalked  
for hours alone; she walked and walked...  
Suddenly, from a crest, she sighted  
a house, a village, and a wood

below a hill; a garden stood  
above a stream the moon had lighted.  
She looked across, felt in her heart  
a faster, stronger pulsing start.

### Tatyana

She hesitates, and doubts beset her:  
forward or back? It's true that he  
has left, and no one here has met her...  
'The house, the park... I'll go and see!'

### Narrator

So down came Tanya, hardly daring  
to draw a breath, around her staring  
with puzzled and confused regard...  
She entered the deserted yard.

### Tatyana

Could I just see the house, I wonder?

### Narrator

Tatyana asked. The children all  
rushed to Anisia's room, to plunder  
the keys that opened up the hall.  
At once Anisia came to greet her,  
she went inside the empty shell  
in which our hero used to dwell.  
She looks: forgotten past all chalking  
on billiard-table rests a cue,  
and on the crumpled sofa too  
a riding whip. Tanya keeps walking...

### Anisia

And here's the hearth –

**Narrator**

– explains the crone

**Anisia**

– where master used to sit alone.  
Here in the winter he'd have dinner  
with neighbour Lensky, the deceased.  
Please follow me. And here's the inner  
study where he would sleep and feast  
on cups of coffee, and then later  
he'd listen to the administrator;  
in morning time he'd read a book...

**Narrator**

Tatyana in a deep emotion  
gazes at all the scene around;  
she drinks it like a priceless potion;  
it stirs her drooping soul to bound  
in fashion that's half-glad, half-anguished:  
that table where the lamp has languished  
beside the windowsill, that bed  
on which a carpet has been spread,  
piled books, and through the pane the sable  
moonscape, the half-light overall,  
Lord Byron's portrait on the wall,  
the iron figure on the table,  
the hat, the scowling brow, the chest  
where folded arms are tightly pressed.  
In the study's quiet setting,  
at last alone, and quite forgetting  
the world and all its works, she wept  
and sat there as the minutes crept;

the books then underwent inspection...  
at first she had no heart to range;  
but then she found their choice was strange.  
To reading from this odd collection  
Tatyana turned with thirsting soul:  
and watched a different world unroll.

**Tatyana**

And so, at last, feature by feature,  
Tanya begins to understand  
more thoroughly, thank God, the creature  
for whom her passion has been planned  
by fate's decree: this freakish stranger,  
who walks with sorrow, and with danger,  
whether from heaven or from hell,  
this angel, this proud devil, tell,  
what is he? Just an apparition,  
a shadow, null and meaningless,  
a Muscovite in Harold's dress,  
a modish second-hand edition,  
a glossary of smart argot...  
a parodistic raree-show.

**Narrator**

Can she have found the enigma's setting,  
is this the riddle's missing clue?  
Time races, and she's been forgetting  
her presence home is overdue.

#### **4 Scene 15**

*They say goodbye to peaceful valleys.*

**Narrator**

Some neighbours they have come together,  
talk to her mother, how and whether...

**Larina**

Tanya's no child – it's past a joke,  
why, Olga's younger, and she's bedded.  
It's time she went. But what can I  
do with her when a flat reply  
always comes back: I'll not be wedded.  
And then she broods and mopes for good,  
and trails alone around the wood.

**Neighbour**

She's not in love?

**Larina**

There's no one ever.  
Buyánóv tried – got flea in ear.  
And Ivan Petrushkóv; no, never.  
Pikhtin, of the Hussars, was here;  
he found Tatyana so attractive,  
bestirred himself, was devilish active!  
I thought, she'll go this time, perhaps;  
far from it! Just one more collapse.

**Neighbour**

You don't see what to do? That's funny:  
Moscow's the place, the marriage-fair!  
There's vacancies in plenty there.

**Larina**

My dear good sir, I'm short of money.

**Neighbour**

One winter's worth, you've surely got;  
or borrow, say, from me, if not.

**Narrator**

The old dame had no thought of ignoring  
such good and sensible advice;  
accounts were done, a winter outing  
to Moscow settled in a trice.  
Then Tanya hears of the decision.  
To face society's derision  
with unmistakable side view  
of a provincial *ingénue*,  
to expose to Moscow fops and Circes  
her out-of-fashion turns of phrase,  
parade before their mocking gaze  
her out-of-fashion clothes!... Oh, mercies!  
No, forests are the sole retreat  
where her security's complete.

**Tatyana**

Farewell, you vales and fountains!  
Farewell, you too, familiar mountains!  
Farewell, familiar woods! Farewell,  
beauty with all its heavenly spell,  
gay nature and its sparkling distance!  
This dear, still world I must forswear  
for vanity, and din, and glare!...  
Farewell to you, my free existence!  
Whither does all my yearning tend?  
My fate, it leads me to what end?

**Narrator**

Now for the first time she's escorted  
into the social whirl-about;  
jealously, shyly I've imported  
her steppe-land charms into a rout.  
Through the tight ranks – aristocratic,  
military-foppish, diplomatic –  
past the grand ladies, see her glide;  
she sits down calmly on one side,  
admires the tumult and the pressing,  
the flickering tones of dress and speech,  
the young hostess, towards whom each  
new guest is gradually progressing,  
while men, all sombre, all the same,  
set off the ladies like a frame.  
She enjoys the stately orchestration  
of oligarchical converse,  
pride's icy calm, the combination  
of ranks and ages so diverse.  
But who stands there, in this selected  
assembly, silent and dejected?  
All who behold him find him strange.  
Faces before him flash and change  
like irksome phantoms, null as zero.  
Is spleen his trouble, or the dumb  
torment of pride? And why's he come?  
Who on earth is he? Not... our hero?  
No doubt about it, it's Eugene.  
'How long has he been on the scene?'  
He was the slave of a tenacious,  
a restless urge for change of place  
(an attribute that's quite vexatious,  
though some support it with good grace).  
He's gone away and left his village,

the solitude of woods and tillage,  
where every day a bloodstained shade  
had come to him in field and glade;  
started a life of pointless roaming,  
dogged by one feeling, only one –  
and soon his travels had begun,  
as all things did, to bore him; homing,  
like Chatsky, he arrived to fall  
direct from shipboard into ball.

5 (Waltz)

**Narrator** (*continued*)

There came a murmur, for a fleeting  
moment the assembly seemed to shake...  
that lady the hostess was greeting,  
with the grand Prince that's in her wake –  
she was unhurried, unobtrusive,  
not cold, but also not effusive,  
no haughty state around the press,  
no proud pretensions to success,  
no mannerism, no affectation,  
no artifices of the vain...  
No, all in her was calm and plain.  
She struck one as the incarnation –  
Shishkov, forgive me: I don't know  
the Russian for 'le comme il faut'.  
Ladies came over, crossed to meet her,  
dowagers smiled as she went by;  
and bending deeply down to greet her  
men made their bows, and sought her eye;  
girls as they passed her spoke less loudly  
and no one in the room so proudly  
raised nose and shoulders high and wide

as did the Prince while at her side.  
You'd never class her as a beauty;  
and yet in her you'd not detect –  
rigorously though you'd inspect –  
what London calls, with humble duty  
to fashion's absolute dictate,  
'a vulgar touch'. I can't translate.  
And yet, although it's past conveying,  
I really dote upon the word:  
it's new to us, beyond gainsaying;  
from the first moment it was heard  
it had its epigram-potential...

But let's return to our essential,  
that lady whose engaging charm  
so effortlessly can disarm.  
She sits with Nina at a table –  
bright Northern Cleopatra she:  
but you'll undoubtedly agree  
that marble Nina's proved unable  
to steal away her neighbour's light  
or dim her, dazzle as she might.

**Onegin**

Can it be she?

**Narrator**

Eugene in wonder  
demanded.

**Onegin**

Yes, she looks... and yet...  
from deepest backwood, further under...

**Narrator**

And every minute his lorgnette  
stays fixed and focussed on a vision  
which had recalled, without precision,

**Onegin**

forgotten features. Can you say,  
Prince, who in that dark red beret  
just there, is talking to the Spanish  
Ambassador?

**Narrator**

In some surprise  
the Prince looks at him, and replies:

**Prince**

Wait, I'll present you – but you banish  
yourself too long from social life.

**Onegin**

But tell me who she is.

**Prince**

My wife.

**Onegin**

You're married? No idea whatever...  
Since when is this?

**Prince**

Two years or more.

**Onegin**

To...?



**Prince**  
Larina.

**Onegin**  
Tatyana? Never!

**Prince**  
She knows you?

**Onegin**  
Why, we lived next door.

**Narrator**  
So to his wife for presentation  
the Prince brings up his own relation  
and friend Evgeny. The Princess  
gazes at him... and nonetheless,  
however much her soul has faltered,  
however strongly she has been  
moved and surprised, she stays serene,  
and nothing in her look is altered:  
her manner is no less contained;  
her bow, as calm and as restrained.  
I don't mean that she never shivered,  
paled, flushed, or lost composure's grip –  
no, even her eyebrow never quivered,  
she never even bit her lip.  
However closely he inspected,  
there was no trace to be detected  
of the old Tatyana. Eugene tried  
to talk to her, but language died.  
How long he'd been here, was her query.  
And where had he arrived from, not

from their own country? Then she shot  
across to her consort a weary  
regard, and slipped away for good...  
with Eugene frozen where he stood.  
In Tanya what a transformation!  
How well she'd studied her new role!  
How soon the bounds of rank and station  
had won her loyalty! What soul  
would have divined the tender, shrinking  
maiden in this superb, unthinking  
lawgiver to the modish world?  
Yet once for him her thoughts had whirled,  
for him, at night, before the indulgence  
of Morpheus had induced relief,  
she once had pined in girlish grief,  
raised a dull eye to moon's refulgence,  
and dreamt that she with him one day  
jointly would tread life's humble way!  
Love tyrannises all the ages;  
but youthful, virgin hearts derive  
a blessing from its blasts and rages,  
like fields in spring when storms arrive.  
In passion's sluicing rain they freshen,  
ripen, and find a new expression –  
the vital force gives them the shoot  
of sumptuous flowers and luscious fruit.  
But when a later age has found us,  
the climacteric of our life,  
how sad the scar of passion's knife:  
as when chill autumn rains surround us,  
throws meadows into muddy rout,  
and strip the forest round about.  
Alas, Eugene beyond all query

is deep in love, just like a boy;  
spends light and darkness in the dreary  
brooding that is the lover's ploy.  
Each day, despite the appeals of reason,  
he drives up in and out of season  
to her glass porch; pursues her round  
close as a shadow on the ground;  
and bliss for him is when he hotly  
touches her hand, or throws a fur  
around her neck, or when for her  
he goes ahead and parts the motley  
brigade of liveries in the hall,  
or else lifts up a fallen shawl.  
But she refuses to perceive him,  
even if he drops or pines away.  
At home she'll equally receive him,  
in others' houses she may say  
a word or two, or stare unseeing,  
or simply bow: within her being  
coquettishness has got no trace –  
the *grand monde* finds it out of place.  
Meanwhile Onegin starts to languish:  
she doesn't see, or doesn't mind;  
Onegin wastes, you'd almost find  
he's got consumption. In his anguish  
some vote a doctor for the case,  
others prescribe a watering-place.  
But go he won't: for him, a letter  
fixing an early *rendez-vous*  
with his forefathers would seem better;  
but she (for women, that's not new)  
remains unmoved: still he's persistent,  
active and hopeful, and insistent:

his illness lends him courage and  
to the Princess, in his weak hand,  
he sends a letter, penned with passion.  
He deemed in general, letters vain,  
and rightly so, but now his pain  
had gone in no uncertain fashion  
past all endurance. You're referred  
to Eugene's letter, word for word.

## 8 Scene 16 *Onegin's letter to Tatyana*

**Onegin**  
I know it all: my secret ache  
will anger you in its confession.  
What scorn I see in the expression  
that your proud glance is sure to take!  
What do I want? What am I after,  
stripping my soul before your eyes?  
I know to what malicious laughter  
my declaration may give rise!  
I noticed once, at our chance meeting,  
in you a tender pulse was beating,  
yet dared not trust what I could see.  
I gave no rein to sweet affection;  
what held me was my predilection,  
my tedious taste for feeling free.  
And then, to part us in full measure,  
Lensky, that tragic victim, died...  
From all sweet things that gave me pleasure  
since then my heart was wrenched aside;  
freedom and peace, in substitution  
for happiness, I sought, and ranged

unloved, and friendless, and estranged.  
 What folly! And what retribution!  
 No, every minute of my days,  
 to see you, faithfully to follow,  
 watch for your smile, and catch your gaze  
 with eyes of love, with greed to swallow  
 your words, and in my soul to explore  
 your matchlessness, to seek to capture  
 its image, then to swoon before  
 your feet, to pale and waste... what rapture!  
 But I'm denied this: all for you  
 I drag my footsteps hither, yonder;  
 I count each hour the whole day through;  
 and yet in vain *ennui* I squander  
 the days that doom has measured out.  
 And how they weigh! I know about  
 my span, that fortune's jurisdiction  
 has fixed; but for my heart to beat  
 I must wake up with the conviction  
 that somehow that same day we'll meet...  
 I dread your stern regard surmising  
 in my petition an approach,  
 a calculation past despising –  
 I hear the wrath of your reproach.  
 How fearful, in and out of season  
 to pine away from passion's thirst,  
 to burn – and then by force of reason  
 to stem the bloodstream's wild outburst;  
 how fearful, too, is my obsession  
 to clasp your knees, and at your feet  
 to sob out prayer, complaint, confession,  
 and every plea that lips can treat:

meanwhile with a dissembler's duty  
 to cool my glances and my tongue  
 to talk as if with heart unwrung,  
 and look serenely on your beauty!...  
 But so it is: I'm in no state  
 to battle further with my passion;  
 I'm yours, in a predestined fashion,  
 and I surrender to my fate.

#### Narrator

No answer comes. Another letter  
 he sends, a second, then a third.  
 No answer comes. He goes, for better  
 or worse, to a *soirée*. Unheard  
 she appears before him, grim and frozen.  
 No look, no word for him: she's chosen  
 to encase herself inside a layer  
 of Twelfth Night's chilliest, iciest air.  
 To batten down their indignation  
 is all those stubborn lips desire!  
 Onegin looks with eyes of fire:  
 where are distress, commiseration?  
 No tearstains, nothing. Wrath alone  
 is graven on that face of stone.

<sup>7</sup> The days flew past; by now the season  
 in warmer airs was half dispersed.  
 He's neither died, nor lost his reason,  
 nor turned a poet. In the burst  
 of spring he lives, he's energetic;  
 he leaves one morning the hermetic  
 apartment where a double glaze

has kept him warm in chimney's blaze  
 while, marmot-like, he hibernated –  
 along the Neva in a sleigh  
 past ice-blocks, blue and squared away,  
 he drives in brilliant sun; striated  
 along the street lies dirty snow;  
 and like an arrow from a bow  
 over the slush, where is he chasing?  
 You've guessed before it all began:  
 to his Tatyana, yes, he's racing,  
 my strange, incorrigible man.  
 He goes inside, corpse-like of feature...  
 the hall's without a living creature,  
 the big room, further, not a cat.  
 He opens up a door. What's that  
 that strikes him with such force and meaning?  
 The Princess, sitting peaked and wan,  
 alone, with no adornment on;  
 she holds a letter up, and leaning  
 cheek upon hand she softly cries  
 in a still stream that never dries.  
 Who in that flash could not have reckoned  
 her full account of voiceless pain?  
 Who in the Princess for that second  
 would not have recognised again  
 our hapless Tanya! An emotion  
 of wild repentance and devotion  
 threw Eugene at her feet – she stirred,  
 and looked at him without a word,  
 without surprise or rage... his laden,  
 his humbly suppliant approach,  
 his dull, sick look, his dumb reproach –

she sees it all. The simple maiden,  
 whose heart on dreams was wont to thrive,  
 in her once more has come alive.  
 Tatyana leaves Onegin kneeling,  
 looks at him with a steady gaze,  
 allows her hand, that's lost all feeling,  
 to meet his thirsty lips... What daze,  
 what dream accounts for her distraction?  
 A pause of silence and inaction,  
 then quietly at last says she...

#### Tatyana

Enough, stand up. It's now for me  
 to give you honest explanation.  
 Onegin, d'you recall the day  
 when in the park, in the *allée*  
 where fate had fixed our confrontation,  
 humbly I heard your lesson out?  
 Today it's turn and turn about.  
 For then, Onegin, I was younger,  
 and also prettier, I'll be bound,  
 what's more, I loved you; but my hunger,  
 what was it in your heart it found  
 that could sustain it? Only grimness;  
 for you, I think, the humble dimness  
 of lovelorn girls was nothing new?  
 But now – oh God! – the thought of you,  
 your icy look, your stern dissuasion,  
 freezes my blood... Yet all the same,  
 nothing you did gave cause for blame;  
 you acted well, that dread occasion,  
 you took an honourable part –

I'm grateful now with all my heart.  
 Then, in the backwoods, far from rumour  
 and empty gossip, you'll allow,  
 I'd nothing to attract your humour...  
 Why then do you pursue me now?  
 What cause has won me your attention?  
 Could it not be that by convention  
 I move in the *grand monde*? That rank,  
 and riches, and the wish to thank  
 my husband for his wounds in battle  
 earn us the favour of the Court?  
 That, for all this, my shame's report  
 would cause widespread remark and tattle,  
 a tempting plume for you to take?  
 I weep... In case there still should linger  
 your Tanya's image in your mind,  
 then know that your reproving finger,  
 your cold discourse, were less unkind –  
 if I had power to choose your fashion –  
 than this humiliating passion  
 and than these letters, and these tears.  
 At least you then showed for my years  
 respect, and mercy for my dreaming.  
 But now! What brings you to my feet?  
 What trifling could be more complete?  
 What power enslaves you, with your seeming  
 advantages of heart and brain,  
 to all that's trivial and inane?  
 To me, Onegin, all this glory  
 is tinsel on a life I hate;

this modish whirl, this social story,  
 my house, my evenings, all that state –  
 what's in them? All this loud parading,  
 and all this flashy masquerading,  
 the glare, the fumes in which I live,  
 this very day I'd gladly give,  
 give for a bookshelf, a neglected  
 garden, a modest home, the place  
 of our first meeting face to face,  
 and the churchyard where, new-erected,  
 a humble cross, in woodland gloom,  
 stands over my poor nurse's tomb.  
 Bliss was so near, so altogether  
 attainable!... But now my lot  
 is firmly cast. I don't know whether  
 I acted thoughtlessly or not:  
 you see, with tears and incantation  
 mother implored me; my sad station  
 made all fates look the same... and so  
 I married. I beseech you go;  
 I know your heart: it has a feeling  
 for honour, a straightforward pride.  
 I love you (what's the use to hide  
 behind deceit or double-dealing?)  
 but I've become another's wife –  
 and I'll be true to him, for life.

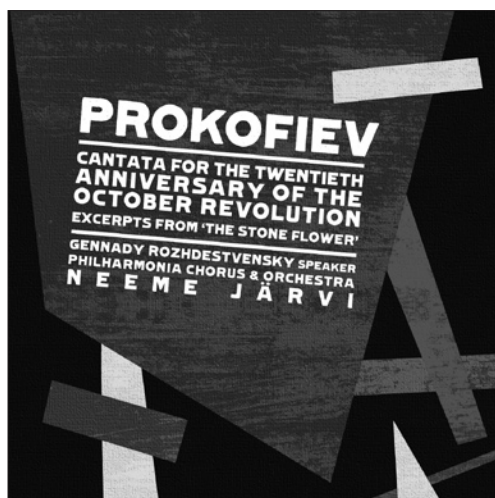
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PROKOFIEV: EUGENE ONEGIN – Soloists / Sinfonia 21 / Downes

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TEXT BY ALEXANDER PUSHKIN IN SIR CHARLES JOHNSTON'S  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION

DIRECTED BY TIMOTHY WEST

COMPACT DISC ONE

1–12 **SCENES 1–12**

**TT 74:05**

COMPACT DISC TWO

1–7 **SCENES 12 (CONT'D) – 16**

**TT 50:06**

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