

**Chandos**

**CHAN 8359**



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**Chandos**  
**DIGITAL**

**PROKOFIEV**  
SYMPHONY NO. 6 in E flat minor Op. 111  
THREE WALTZES Op. 110  
SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA  
NEEME JÄRVI conductor



**W**hen Prokofiev made his momentous decision to return home to the USSR in the mid-1930s, after living in Paris since 1922, the first four of his seven symphonies were already composed. All but the early 'Classical' Symphony, Op 25, were written during his Paris years. He waited a long time for a fifth symphony to come to fruition during the Second World War, occupying himself with operas, including the Tolstoy-based *War and Peace*, the ballet *Cinderella*, film music (Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*) and other works including three great Piano Sonatas, Nos 6, 7 and 8.

Ideas for his Sixth Symphony were already germinating even before the Fifth was premiered early in 1945, when the fortunes of war had begun to bring a new hope and spirit of elation to the Soviet people. Sadly for Prokofiev, however, he suffered serious concussion in an accident soon after conducting the Fifth Symphony's première in Moscow, and the effects were felt throughout the remaining eight years of his life. For a time he had to limit his creative work to two half-hours a day, but he immersed himself in several different projects, of which the Sixth Symphony was one.

During a Summer spent at Ivanovo, a country house run by the Union of Composers not far from Moscow, Prokofiev sketched the new Symphony in short score but, for various reasons including further bouts of ill-health, he did not finish orchestrating it until about eighteen months later. Its première performance had to wait until 10 October 1947, when it was given by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Evgeny Mravinsky.

At first the response was enthusiastic, but only four months later Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturyan and other Soviet composers were publicly censured by the Communist Party Central Committee for alleged 'formalist perversions and undemocratic tendencies' in their music. Their works were measured against the political and social criteria then prevailing, not by artistic principles, and were condemned for anything resembling atonalism, 'contempt for melody' and 'neuropathic discords'.

Shortly before this Prokofiev told his biographer, Israel Nestyev, that the Symphony was to some extent inspired by the war years: 'Now we are rejoicing in our great victory, but each of us has wounds which cannot be healed. One has lost those dear to him, another has lost his health. This must not be forgotten'. Nestyev also mentions that the composer considered dedicating the Symphony to the memory of Beethoven, though he did not in fact do so. It has an underlying mood of compassion as well as hope, of dark and tragic remembrances amid a wealth of imaginatively wrought invention that contains much of Prokofiev's finest symphonic writing.

Certainly there is something Beethovenian about the new sense of musical purpose and direction apparent in it, after Prokofiev's earlier works in this form, and in the way the elements of his often self-contradictory musical personality are brought into balance with each other. He employs the resources of a normal full symphony orchestra, adding an E-flat clarinet and two keyboards, celesta and piano. Of the opening movement he said it was 'agitated in character, lyrical at times and austere at others'.

For the most part its mood is elegiac, intensifying in places to a deeper sense of tragedy.

After the first harsh chords, a lonely, sorrowful melody unwinds on muted first violins and violas, passes to the woodwind and thence from section to section of the orchestra, but without seeming to find a way forward. A second theme, marked to be played 'smoothly and dreamily' is heard from the oboes in octaves, but after a further reference to the previous subject, bassoons and piano begin a march-like rhythm under a sad melody from cor anglais and muted strings. A climax with thudding drums is reached, and a solo horn introduces a peaceful episode based on the wistful second theme, but the march returns and builds to another climax before the movement fades away without achieving any sense of repose.

A long slow movement is distinguished by its richness of harmony and texture, the opening chromatic outburst settling into the key of A-flat and answered by a poignant theme from trumpet and first violins which alludes unmistakably to the 'Spear' motif in Wagner's *Parsifal*. A lyrical theme, marked *molto espressivo*, is begun by the cellos, then interwoven with what has gone before. Another Parsifalian cadence is reached before renewed threats of violence lead to a benign C major serenade from the horns. The earlier themes now return, restraining further hints of disruption until a repeat of the shrill chromatics from the start of the movement heralds a quietly elegiac ending.

The finale opens in celebratory style and jaunty high spirits in E-flat major, the main theme recurring as if in a rondo,

separated by episodes no less cheerful in character. Yet all the time there is a threat posed by a pounding rhythm, at first low on the bass instruments and timpani, which seems to gather strength with repetition. Prokofiev himself related this to the forces of evil which, though temporarily turned aside by other matters, including a reminiscence of the oboes' theme from the first movement, finally erupts to dominate the Symphony's dissonant end, as if insisting that the tragedy and suffering must not be forgotten.

**M**ost of the orchestration of the Sixth Symphony was done in Prokofiev's new home in the village of Nikorina Goya, west of Moscow, where he moved on medical advice in the Summer of 1946 and lived until his death. With his customary liking for working on more than one project at a time, he continued his Ninth and last Piano Sonata, and put together a *Waltz Suite*, Op 110, taken from other works. Three of the six waltzes came from his ballet *Cinderella*, two from the opera, *War and Peace*, and the remaining 'Mephisto Waltz' from his music for the film, *Lermontov*. Prokofiev gave them his own titles, and of those recorded here, 'In the Palace' (No 2) is the beautiful ballroom waltz from the second Act of *Cinderella*, and 'Happiness' (No 6) is based on a waltz theme associated with Cinderella during the ballet. The 'New Year's Eve Ball' (No 5) is the second scene of *War and Peace*, where the waltz is danced by the elegant assembly in a St Petersburg mansion. The full Suite was first performed at Moscow on 13 May 1947.

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**NEEME JÄRVI** succeeded Sir Alexander Gibson as Music Director of the Scottish National Orchestra with the 1984/5 season, having previously scored a great success and become very popular with Scottish audiences through several guest appearances. His world-wide reputation has been achieved through his concerts with the Moscow Radio, Moscow Philharmonic and Moscow State Symphony Orchestras, the Leningrad Philharmonic and an impressive number of international orchestras including the New York Philharmonic. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1937, Neeme Järvi studied operatic and symphonic conducting at the Leningrad State Conservatory with the distinguished professors Rabinovich and Mravinsky and made his operatic début with *Carmen* at the Kirov Theatre. In 1963 he became Director of the Estonian Radio and Television Orchestra and Chief Conductor of the Opera Theatre 'Estonia', during which time he conducted the Soviet première performances of several important operas including *Der Rosenkavalier*. He won First Prize in the Conductors' Competition at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome and during the 1978-79 season made his Metropolitan Opera début with *Eugene Onegin*. Mr. Järvi and his family took up residence in the United States early in 1980.

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PROKOFIEV: SYMPHONY NO. 6 etc. — Järvi/SNO

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**SERGEY SERGEYEVICH  
PROKOFIEV** (1891-1953)

**SYMPHONY NO. 6 in E flat minor Op. 111**

- ① I — Allegro moderato (14:22)
- ② II — Largo (15:18)
- ③ III — Vivace (11:42)

**WALTZ SUITE Op. 110**

- ④ No. 2. 'In the Palace' from *Cinderella* (5:27)
- ⑤ No. 5. 'New Year's Eve Ball' from *War and Peace* (5:48)
- ⑥ No. 6. 'Happiness' from *Cinderella* (3:15)

**SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA**

Leader **Edwin Paling**  
conducted by

**NEEME JÄRVI**

DDD



0 95115 83592 0 TT = 56:30

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