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CHAN 8400



Photo: Eric Thorburn

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PROKOFIEV

SYMPHONY No.1 in D Op.25, 'Classical'
SYMPHONY No.4, Op.112
(Revised 1947 version)

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
NEEME JÄRVI conductor

Chandos
DIGITAL



In his early years Prokofiev acquired the reputation of an **enfant terrible** among his contemporaries with works like the first two Piano Concertos (1912-13), written while still at the St Petersburg Conservatory as a piano student (having already graduated in composition). There were also various instrumental and chamber works of which some, like the piano pieces he called **Sarcasms**, had a wry flavour and biting wit that suggested a musical caricaturist. He then confounded all expectations with a First Symphony which he composed in 1917 on the well-established models of the 18th century.

'It seemed to me that had Haydn lived to our day he would have retained his own style while accepting something of the new at the same time', observed Prokofiev. 'That was the kind of symphony I wanted to write: a symphony in the classical style. And when I saw that the idea was beginning to work I called it the **Classical Symphony**: in the first place because that was simpler, and secondly for the fun of it, to "tease the geese", and in the secret hope that I would prove to be right if the Symphony really did turn out to be a piece of classical music'.

Prokofiev took Haydn for a model and worked that through the prism of his own imagination. He brought to it the unexpected twists of melody and pungent, sharp-featured harmony which characterised his own musical personality. Strongly constricted themes are discussed in the sonata-form first movement, followed by a more romantic mood for the **Larghetto** and a well-accented **Gavotte** that was a precursor of some later ballet music. The finale is another sonata movement brimming with gaiety of spirit and effervescent charm, and the overall effect, in light, transparent orchestration throughout, has ensured the Symphony's continued popularity since its first performance at Petrograd on 21 April 1918.

Nearly 30 years later, having meanwhile returned home to the USSR from his sojourn in the West, Prokofiev began to look again at some of his earlier works with a view to improving whatever had not satisfied him (or his audiences) at the time they were first heard. He did this with his Cello Concerto, his Piano Sonata No. 5, and he planned to do so with his Second Symphony, but died before this was accomplished. His Symphony No. 4 in C major, however, published as Op. 47, was sufficiently revised in 1947 for him to note: 'The previous material has been preserved to some degree, but I have added so much that this work could actually be called my Seventh Symphony'.

The 'previous material' can be heard and compared on another recording in this series, and was composed on an invitation to mark the 50th anniversary in 1930 of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Stravinsky, Hindemith, Honegger and others also responded). For this Prokofiev turned to his music for the ballet **The Prodigal Son**, Op. 46, the last new production presented by Sergey Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes at Paris in 1929 before Diaghilev's sudden death later that year brought the disbandment of his company. The ballet, with choreography by George Balanchine and designs by Georges Rouault, nevertheless continues in the classic repertory, including that of the Royal Ballet in Britain.

According to Prokofiev's autobiographical sketch, he decided to use music from the ballet partly to see how it would work in symphonic form. Some proved impractical and he discarded this. However, he wrote: 'Music that had been written for but not included in **The Prodigal Son** proved perfectly suitable for the first movement of the Fourth Symphony (I composed a new introduction). The music of the Son's homecoming was used for the second movement, that of the

Beautiful Maiden for the third. The finale was the most difficult . . . I worked on this Symphony in the Autumn of 1929 and the Spring of 1930. First performed in Boston on 14 November 1930, it was not a success, but I have always liked it for its subdued tone and the wealth of material it contains'.

His revised version of No. 4 was made soon after his Symphony No. 6 in E-flat minor, Op. 111, and because, as he said, he could look on it almost as a new work, he gave it the opus number 112. In its new and longer form, and with generally richer orchestration, it benefited from Prokofiev's experience in his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, and in other major works of those years. To his previous instrumentation he added a piccolo clarinet, which gives sharper piquancy to the woodwind writing, and he also incorporated both a harp and a piano: these are heard to prominent effect in the second movement, in particular.

The opening movement, already having a slow introduction based on a warmly reflective theme for the woodwind, was further framed by a strong assertive flourish in the opening bars which returns as a reaffirmation of confidence at the end of the last movement. The main theme is related to that of the Prodigal's false 'friends' who fleece him of his goods. Marked ***Allegro eroico***, it has a less rigid outline and pulse than in the Symphony's first version, but a more dramatic urgency and contrast of texture in relation to the gentler second subject, as well as a fiercer character when it returns towards the end of the movement.

All the second movement originated in the ballet as the scene of the Prodigal's return and his Father's welcome and forgiveness, characterised by the lambent flute theme. This benediction becomes a bold statement towards the end of the movement, but it dies away quietly. For the third movement,

Prokofiev took over the music written for the Beautiful Maiden, a character newly created for the ballet as the embodiment of exotic allure and graceful enticement. Both this movement and the finale were extended in this revised version by more gradual introduction and development of the subject-matter.

The finale is based on an agitated theme which first served to represent the Prodigal's eagerness to get away from home and family. It is here extended into a rhythmically exuberant development with a highstepping central section of more lilting charm. A return of the opening leads on to a coda, then to the Symphony's opening motif now delivered with a kind of 'wake up Stalin' flourish, to assert the optimism expected of Soviet music at that time. The Symphony remained unperformed in the revised version until 1959, six years after Prokofiev's death, and was first heard in Britain by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Norman Del Mar at the 1967 Cheltenham Festival.

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Also available:

Symphony No. 2 plus Romeo and Juliet, Suite No. 1

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NEEME JÄRVI took up his appointment as Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra on August 1, 1984.

He was born in Tallinn, Estonia in 1937 and graduated from the Tallinn Music School with degrees in percussion and choral conducting before continuing his studies at the Leningrad State Conservatory. In 1963 he became Director of the Estonian Radio and Television Orchestra and began his 13-year tenure as Chief Conductor of the Opera Theatre Estonia. In 1971 he won first prize in the Conductors' Competition at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome. Before his departure from the Soviet Union, he had held almost every conducting post his home state could offer and was regularly conducting the great orchestras of Moscow and Leningrad, both at home and abroad.

In January 1980 he emigrated to America with his family, and the next month made his début with the New York Philharmonic. He now regularly conducts the San Francisco, Toronto and Montreal Symphony Orchestras and has appeared with the Philadelphia and Boston Symphony Orchestras and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His début at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, was conducting Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

He is Principal Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra with which he toured America in 1983, and with which he has recently won a Swedish Grammy Award. His first recording with the Scottish National Orchestra was a highly-acclaimed 3-disc/cassette set of 6 Operatic Suites by Rimsky-Korsakov, released on Chandos in the Winter of 1984.

Recording Producer: Brian Couzens.
Sound Engineer: Ralph Couzens. Assistant Engineer: Philip Couzens.
Recorded in the SNO Centre, Glasgow in December 1984 and April 1985.
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**SERGEY SERGEYEVICH
PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)**



**SYMPHONY NO. 1 in D major Op. 25,
Classical Symphony (14:28)**

- ① I – Allegro (4:17)
- ② II – Larghetto (4:09)
- ③ III – Gavotte: Non troppo allegro (1:40)
- ④ IV – Finale: Molto vivace (4:11)

**SYMPHONY NO. 4, Op. 112 (37:12)
(Revised 1947 Version)**

- ⑤ I – Andante – Allegro eroico –
Allegretto (12:50)
- ⑥ II – Andante tranquillo (9:10)
- ⑦ III – Moderato, quasi allegretto (5:58)
- ⑧ IV – Allegro risoluto (9:06)

SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

Leader, **Edwin Paling**

conducted by

NEEME JÄRVI

DDD

TT = 51:48

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