

**Chandos**

**CHAN 8508**

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

**SINFONIA CONCERTANTE Op.125**

for Cello and Orchestra

- 1 I Andante (9:59)
- 2 II Allegro giusto (17:09)
- 3 III Andante con moto (10:00)

**ROMEO AND JULIET: Suite No.3 Op.101**

- 4 I Romeo at the Fountain (1:46)
- 5 II Morning Dance (2:28)
- 6 III Juliet (4:34)
- 7 IV The Nurse (2:10)
- 8 V Aubade (2:12)
- 9 VI The Death of Juliet (4:57)

TT = 55:45

**RAPHAEL WALLFISCH, Cello**  
**SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA**

Leader, **Edwin Paling**

conducted by

**NEEME JÄRVI**

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**A**lthough it was given a new title and opus number when it was first performed in 1952, the *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violoncello and Orchestra is effectively an extended revision of the Cello Concerto in the same key, E minor, composed by Prokofiev in the 1930s. He began that in 1933, shortly before his momentous decision to return home to the Soviet Union after living and working for some years in the West, but it was put on one side for a few years before it was finished and first performed in 1938 as Op.58.

A decade later, the emergence of Mstislav Rostropovich as the outstanding Soviet cellist of his time reawakened Prokofiev's interest in the cello. After hearing Rostropovich play his Concerto at a Moscow concert in 1947 the composer went backstage and, according to the cellist, 'told me that after listening carefully to the Concerto he had decided to rewrite it. I reminded him of this each time I met him after that, but without success,' until Rostropovich and the pianist Sviatoslav Richter introduced the Cello Sonata, Op.119, that Prokofiev composed for them in 1949.

By this time the composer was talking of a new concerto, but perhaps because his health was failing and he was forbidden on medical advice to spend more than one hour a day on composition, he decided instead on what he himself called, in an article for *Sovietskaya Muzika*, 'the revision of my violoncello concerto'. Rostropovich was invited to spend some time with him in 1950 and 1951 during the summer, at his country home at Nikolina Gora, west of Moscow, where the cellist played over parts of the work as they emerged and helped the composer with technical advice. Rostropovich was the dedicatee, and is also named as editor of the published score.

In its new form, premiered at Moscow on 18 February 1952 with Rostropovich as soloist and Richter making his debut as a conductor, the work divided opinion as to whether Prokofiev had simply 'incorporated in it, in radically altered form, a certain amount of material from the First Cello Concerto' as noted by his biographer, Israel Nest'yev, or whether it was more a question of extending the older work by making the solo writing more virtuosic, the structure correspondingly longer, but the harmonic character simpler and less dissonant than before.

As it stands, without any unusual instrumental elements but with an orchestra of classical

size inventively used, the first movement is mainly lyrical and lightly scored as it develops two principal themes. The first is heard from the cellist after a preliminary orchestral flourish, and the second is introduced by the violins with a poignant, graceful character reminiscent of a theme associated with Cinderella in Prokofiev's ballet of that title (1945). Some decorative writing for the soloist adorns the working-out.

The central movement is the longest of the three, the first few bars followed by an introductory solo for the cellist unaccompanied, who also has a long cadenza of considerable intricacy later in the movement. Some alternative passages in this are marked, on the composer's instructions, *Facilitazione*. When Rostropovich asked him why this instead of the more usual *Ossia* Prokofiev replied: 'Surely no self-respecting musician would want to play a "simplified" version.' Again there are two main themes, the second having a broad sweep of eloquent emotional appeal, with more virtuosic writing for the soloist near the end. The finale is in variation form, with another two themes as the basis, the tempo quickening to dance-like vivacity, and with some of the old sardonic wit to characterise the contrast of soloist and orchestra.

**S**oon after Prokofiev's return to the USSR he became involved in plans for a *Romeo and Juliet* ballet in the three-act form still favoured there, in contrast to the Western trend, set by Sergey Diaghilev with his Ballets Russes, for one-act ballets, three of which Prokofiev had composed. The *Romeo and Juliet* he completed in 1935 is today the most successful score of its kind for classical ballet since Tchaikovsky, but to begin with it was turned down as not 'danceable' enough both by the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow and the Kirov in Leningrad, for which it was commissioned.

Only after it was given a first production at Brno (Czechoslovakia) in 1938, and Leonid Lavrosky's historic ballet at Leningrad in 1940 (this reached Moscow six years later, after the war) did the music travel to other ballet centres of the world, including the Royal Danish Ballet (Frederick Ashton, 1955), Stuttgart Ballet (John Cranko, 1962), and the Royal Ballet, London (Kenneth MacMillan, 1965). Prokofiev, however, made two Suites from it for concert



performance in advance of any stage production, and added the Suite No.3 Op.101, as recorded here, in 1944.

First performed at Moscow on 8 March 1946, the six movements begin with music from the start of Act I. 'Romeo at the Fountain' comprises themes associated with the lovers from the brief Introduction, with the nocturnal portrait of Romeo in the opening scene still at that time occupied with thoughts of Rosalind. 'Morning Dance' slightly later in the same scene was adapted by Prokofiev from a movement in his Piano Sonata No.2 (1912) in order to furnish the extra ensemble dance Lavrovsky wanted at this point.

'Juliet' combines the music from her variation (solo dance) at the Capulets' ball, when the masked Romeo first sees her, with that of her desperate entreaty to Friar Laurence in her later dilemma. 'The Nurse' likewise mixes music from two scenes, before and after the ball, in a cheerful character-portrait, and 'Aubade' is the mandolin dance heralding Juliet's intended wedding-morning. 'The Death of Juliet' is portrayed by the tragic adagio which ends the ballet, when Juliet wakes to discover Romeo dead at her feet, the moment of stabbing herself clearly pointed in the music.

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**Raphael Wallfisch** was born in 1953 into a distinguished musical family and took up the cello at the age of eight. Later he studied in Rome with Amadeo Boldovino, with Derek Simpson at the Royal Academy of Music and in America with Gregor Piatigorsky.

In 1977 he won the Gaspar Cassadó International Cello Competition and since then he has built up a busy concert career, playing with many famous orchestras both nationally and internationally. He is a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

Other recordings for Chandos include highly acclaimed performances of Britten's Cello Symphony and a coupling of the Shostakovich No.1 and the Samuel Barber Cello Concertos, Moeran's Cello Concerto, Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*, a collection of twentieth century pieces for cello and piano, in which he is accompanied by his father Peter Wallfisch, and a recital, 'The Romantic Virtuoso'.

**Neeme Järvi** took up his appointment as Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra in August 1984, since when both he and the orchestra have received great critical acclaim. Born in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1937, he graduated from 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.

He took up residence in North America in 1980 and almost immediately made his début with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He now makes frequent appearances with the San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal and Chicago Symphony Orchestras and has also appeared with the Philadelphia, Boston and Los Angeles Symphony Orchestras. His engagements at the Metropolitan Opera have included *Eugene Onegin* and a new production of Mussorgsky's *Khovantschina*. He works frequently in Europe — at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and with German and Scandinavian Orchestras — and is Chief Conductor of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden.

His extensive recordings with the SNO on Chandos include the complete Prokofiev Symphonies, a set of 6 Opera Suites by Rimsky-Korsakov, Scriabin's Symphony No. 2, Shostakovich's Symphonies 1 & 6, Rachmaninov's Choral Symphony *The Bells* and a coupling of *Scheherazade* and *Stenka Razin*. Neeme Järvi and the SNO are currently recording a complete cycle of Dvořák's Symphonies with Symphonic Poems on Chandos.

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Sound Engineer: Ralph Couzens; Assistant Engineer: Philip Couzens

Recorded at the SNO Centre, Glasgow on August 14-23, 1986

Sleeve Design: Christopher Sims; Art Direction: Janet Osborn

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PROKOFIEV: SINFONIA CONCERTANTE etc. Wallfisch/SNO/Järvi

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