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SERGEI PROKOFIEV
Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5
Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra
James Gaffigan



SUPER AUDIO CD

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

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SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Symphony No. 1, Op. 25 (1917)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| [1] Allegro | 4:33 |
| [2] Intermezzo. Larghetto | 4:16 |
| [3] Gavotta: Non troppo allegro | 1:27 |
| [4] Finale: Molto vivace | 4:11 |

Symphony No. 5, Op. 100 (1944)

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| [5] Andante | 12:59 |
| [6] Allegro marcato | 8:54 |
| [7] Adagio | 12:14 |
| [8] Allegro giocoso | 9:54 |

total time 58:33

Symphony No. 1, Op. 25 (1916-1917)

The image Sergei Prokofiev seems to project, particularly when it comes to the music he wrote while living in the West from 1914 to 1935, is one of a joker and an agitator, yet a classical composer at the core. This double identity can be heard even in his earliest works, mostly for piano, written before 1914, and was sealed with his 'Classical' Symphony in 1917. The subtitle is the composer's own. Indeed, Prokofiev stated, 'I wanted to write a symphony that Haydn or Mozart would have written had they lived in the twentieth century.' In this way, he codified not only his own image, but also that of neoclassicism itself (the prevailing style during the interwar years) as 'classical music with a few wrong notes here and there'. His French contemporary Florent Schmitt called the work 'an unpublished Haydn', a characterization which is in part justified. In terms of their length, form, instrumentation and harmony, the first and last movements resemble a classical sonata. The second is a quirky Adagio, while the third demands a number of special effects from the strings. Prokofiev arranged this movement for piano, performed it frequently on his own recitals and even recorded it, although he did make it a point of honor to say that he had composed the symphony away from the keyboard. While the melodic style sounds classical, the harmony is consistent with the rebel Prokofiev then strived to be, even though some musicologists have successfully tried their hand at righting those 'few wrong notes', transforming the work into a 'faultless Haydn'.

Prokofiev's nod to Haydn points not just to a possible retrospective disposition. Prokofiev, like Haydn, loved succinctness – even in his longer works – and a

rich sound palette, no matter whether he was composing for a large or small ensemble. He was hardly one to pour out his heart, and neither was Haydn. Indeed, both composers communicated their personalities, and consequently their expressivity, through small, subtle gestures and the characters of their works. Pathos and sentiment à la Chopin or Tchaikovsky were entirely alien to them.

Despite not returning to his homeland from 1914 to 1927, Prokofiev certainly did not forget its musical tradition. He incorporated into the finale a theme from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*, altering its rhythm and harmonic development. According to Prokofiev's biographer David Nice, the idyllic quotation may have been inspired by the idyllic spring of 1917, when he wrote this movement.

After the 1918 premiere in St. Petersburg, conducted by Nikolai Malko (the work was also premiered in the West the same year), the symphony quickly gained fame, although Prokofiev was not entirely pleased about it. By 1925, he no longer thought so highly of the work, having lumped it together with Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, another defining neoclassical work. After this symphony, Prokofiev would never again flaunt his classical instincts so openly.

He dedicated the symphony to the critic Boris Asaf'yev, one of his best friends at the time. Thirty years later, however, Asaf'yev would be one of the instigators of the public condemnation in the Soviet Union of Shostakovich and Prokofiev for their alleged formalism and modernism. Some claimed Asaf'yev's sudden death in 1949 was the result of a guilty conscience.

Symphony No. 5, Op.100 (1944)

It is often said that the music Prokofiev wrote after returning to his homeland is of a less angular and fiery nature than the works he wrote during his 'Western period' (1910–33). This view does not hold true of his Symphony No. 5, however. Prokofiev wrote the work in the Soviet Union in 1944, when the Nazis were increasingly losing ground but had certainly not yet been defeated. Although the symphony lacks a programme per se, it is undeniably a depiction of war and victory. Heroism is always tinged with the tragedy inherent in war (and vice versa), and the grand gesture is both sincere and theatrical. All this ties the symphony to other 'allied' war compositions, such as Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements* and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 7*. Entirely fitting here is the anecdote which Sviatoslav Richter told of attending the Moscow premiere, conducted by the composer himself, in January 1945. After Prokofiev had taken to the stage and nearly started, an unexpected air raid alert was heard, and musicians were instructed by the police to wait. Music and real life were inextricably bound up.

After the performance, the composer received a thunderous ovation. As the Soviet Union and the United States were allies during the war, the work was also performed frequently in the West right after the liberation, even after the Cold War had broken out. In the symphony, Prokofiev unites his ability to compose expressively with the formal requirements of state-imposed social realism. The second movement is based on material originally intended for *Romeo and Juliet*, which he had written in the late 1930s. In the third, he harks back to an elegiac waltz from his *Queen of Spades*. At the same time, he pours this very

lyrical and dancing material into a mould, imbuing it with a symphonic character which seems destined for the concert hall. Unlike Shostakovich, whose *Symphony No. 5* served as an important symphonic model to Soviet composers, Prokofiev was reluctant to impress through sheer massiveness. Conversely, he demonstrates a refinement of orchestral timbre which links this symphony with the orchestral works from his years spent in Western Europe. No matter how evocative the music is (the many moods following one another in rapid succession), Prokofiev's compositional style cannot be said to be collage-like. Never is the music aimless or ostensibly insouciant. The listener often feels the twists and turns approaching, and the tone is serious throughout. In contrast to this occasional predictability, there are many surprises in terms of harmony and timbre. At the core, Prokofiev is a tonal composer, but he plays extensively with the concepts of dissonance and consonance. A purely harmonic dissonance can create a pleasant, and therefore 'consonant', impression when paired with a rousing rhythm, as clearly heard in the second movement. Similarly, tonal harmonies can sound dissonant as a result of Prokofiev's use of various instrumentations, particularly in the third movement. Such subtle games, which still betray the traces of his old love of irony and innuendo, are most noticeable halfway into the respective movements. At the end of each one, Prokofiev inevitably adopts an unequivocal character – in the last movement, he does so with a shamelessly grand finale. Despite all its modernity, the symphony resolutely follows in the classical tradition of 'all's well that ends well', allowing Prokofiev to react to circumstances while remaining true to himself.

Translation: Josh Dillon/Muse Translations



James Gaffigan

Hailed for the natural ease of his conducting and the compelling insight of his musicianship, James Gaffigan continues to attract international attention and is one of the most outstanding American conductors working today. James Gaffigan is currently the Chief Conductor of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. He was also appointed the Principal Guest Conductor of the Gürzenich Orchestra, Cologne in September 2013, a position that was created for him.

In addition to these titled positions, James Gaffigan is in high demand working with leading orchestras and opera houses throughout Europe, the United States and Asia. In recent seasons, James Gaffigan's guest engagements have included the Munich, London, Dresden and Rotterdam Philharmonics, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Deutsches Symphony-Orchestra (Berlin), Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, BBC Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchester, Zurich, Bournemouth Symphony, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Leipzig and Stuttgart Radio Orchestras, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony and Sydney Symphony. In the States, he has worked with the Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, San Francisco and Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Minnesota, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Baltimore and National Symphony Orchestras and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra among others.

Born in New York City in 1979, Mr. Gaffigan has degrees from both the New England Conservatory of Music and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston. He also studied at the American Academy of Conducting at the Aspen Music Festival, and was a conducting fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center.

In 2009, Mr. Gaffigan completed a three-year tenure as Associate Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony in a position specially created for him. Prior to that appointment, he was the Assistant Conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra where he worked under Music Director Franz Welser-Möst from 2003 through 2006. James Gaffigan's international career was launched when he was named a first prize winner at the 2004 Sir Georg Solti International Conducting Competition.

The Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra

The Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra (RFO), founded in 1945, is an essential link in the Dutch music life. The RFO performs symphonic concerts and operas in concert, as well as many world- and Netherlands premieres. Most concerts take place in the context of concert series NTR ZaterdagMatinee (the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam), the AVROTROS Vrijdagconcert series (TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht), broadcasted live on NPO Radio 4 and regularly televised.

Markus Stenz was appointed chiefconductor in 2012, after predecessor as Bernard Haitink, Jean Fournet, Willem van Otterloo, Hans Vonk, Edo de Waart and Jaap van Zweden. The RFO has worked with internationally highly regarded conductors such as Leopold Stokowski, Kirill Kondrashin, Antal Doráti, Charles Dutoit, Michael Tilson Thomas, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Mariss Jansons, Peter Eötvös, Vladimir Jurowski and Valery Gergiev. The American conductor James Gaffigan is principal guest conductor since the season 2011-2012. Bernard Haitink has connected his name to the RFO as patron.

The RFO has build an extensive CD catalogue, with works by contemporary composers such as Jonathan Harvey, Klas Torstensson, James MacMillan and Jan van Vlijmen, the registration of Wagner's Parsifal, Lohengrin, die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. Complete symphonies of Bruckner, Rachmaninow, Shostakovich and Hartmann have been released in recent years. The release of Simplicius Simplicissimus (K.A. Hartmann) has especially received the highest



international critical acclaim. The RFO has been awarded the Edison Classical Oeuvre Award 2014 for its longstanding essential contribution to Dutch musical life.

www.radiofilharmonischorkest.nl

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



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**RADIO
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