



Sergey
PROKOFIEV

Symphony No. 7

Lieutenant Kijé – Suite

March and Scherzo from
'The Love for Three Oranges'

São Paulo
Symphony Orchestra

Marin Alsop



Sergey Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Symphony No. 7 • Lieutenant Kijé – Suite • The Love for Three Oranges – Suite (excerpts)

Sergey Prokofiev was born on 15 April 1891 in Sontsovska, Ukraine. His precocious musical talents were fostered by his mother and his first compositions emerged when he was only five. In 1904, on Glazunov's advice, his parents allowed him to enter St Petersburg Conservatory, where he continued his studies until 1914 and quickly left behind the influence of formative mentors such as Liadov and Taneyev; his music arousing enthusiasm and hostility in equal measure. During the First World War, he was exempted from military service – then, following the Russian Revolution was given permission to travel abroad – first to North America, where he took with him several major scores which were presently to establish his reputation in the West.

Unlike Stravinsky and Rachmaninov, Prokofiev left Russia with the idea of returning home. His stay in the United States was at first successful, he often appeared as concert pianist and fulfilled prestigious commissions for organisations such as the Chicago Opera. By 1920, however, he had begun to find life more difficult and relocated to Paris, renewing contact with Diaghilev for whom he wrote several ballet scores. He spent much of the next 16 years in France, though returning periodically to Russia where his music was accorded growing approval. By 1936, he decided to resettle permanently in his native country – taking up residence in Moscow in time for the first official onslaught on music that did not accord with the social and political aims of the Soviet authorities. Twelve years later, his name was included in the notorious 'Zhdanov decree', which persecuted several prominent Soviet composers for not conforming to the Communist party line in their creative works. His final years were clouded by ill-health and his death – in Moscow on 5 March 1953, barely an hour before that of Stalin – went largely unreported in East and West alike.

Composed during 1951–52 the *Seventh Symphony*, Prokofiev's last such work as well as his final work of any consequence, was premiered in Moscow by Samuel Samosud with the All-Union Radio Orchestra on 11

October 1952. Despite essaying numerous 'official' pieces, the composer had still to be fully rehabilitated following the 'Zhdanov decree' of four years earlier – reflected in a precarious financial position that ostensibly persuaded him to revise the final bars in favour of a loudly affirmative ending; in the process securing a Stalin Prize of 100,000 roubles. This was to find acceptance with the majority of performers in the next three decades, though the original reflective ending – more in accord with the mood of this work as a whole – has since returned to favour, as Prokofiev seems to have desired all along.

The opening *Moderato* is typical of Prokofiev in its distinctive take on sonata form, texture and harmony. It begins with a sombre piano chord, over which upper strings unfold a wistful theme to which woodwind and lower strings respond in more animated terms. This is repeated in altered guise as transition into the second main theme, set out in eloquent terms by woodwind and lower strings, with a whimsical codetta from flutes and glockenspiel. The development proceeds haltingly on strings and brass – both themes again being heard, along with the codetta now underpinned by subtle shifts in harmony and orchestration. This leads into a reprise that proceeds largely unaltered, but is thrown into relief by a fleeting return of the first theme in a bittersweet coda – the home key being reaffirmed in the deftest of terms.

The *Allegretto* which follows is an intriguing conflation of scherzo, intermezzo and waltz. It opens with a suave idea on strings and woodwind that quickly gains in energy and humour before launching into a graceful melody given mainly to the violins. This reaches a climax that sounds a more ominous tone, before subsiding into an ambivalent theme for strings and woodwind. The suave idea duly reappears and the music proceeds much as before, though with subtle changes in orchestration and a greater impetus through to the final return of the idea. Without warning, the music plunges into a coda in which the underlying waltz rhythm is transformed into a gallop that brings about the hectic conclusion; the whole

confirming Prokofiev's formal ingenuity even with the most unassuming material.

The *Andante espressivo* centres on a melody of disarming simplicity, strings and woodwind exchanging gestures in a mood of wistful recollection. A subsidiary theme is little more than a complement to the foregoing, but the middle section features a piquant idea for oboe over lower strings that soon takes on a more nonchalant manner. The return of the main melody is taken by full strings, woodwind sounding a questioning tone before the theme's last return is marked by notably felicitous touches from harp and piano, before a close of winsome poise.

The *Vivace* finale launches with animated gestures on strings and woodwind, heading into a capering theme in which upper and lower strings exchange phrases, and are complemented by an imperious idea for brass and percussion. A sudden transition slows things appreciably, out of which stealthy piano chords initiate a genial march-like theme shared between woodwind and strings. This builds to a lively climax, before the capering theme is recalled in curtailed form prior to a further steadying transition. From here the music heads with mounting anticipation towards a broad restatement of the eloquent theme from the first movement, now heard twice and followed by the whimsical codetta whose final phrase is extended into an evocative coda. This gradually winds down on woodwind and brass to the quietly conclusive pizzicato chord.

Despite its provenance, the alternative ending is certainly viable in the context of this finale. Here the capering theme is resumed prior to the final bar, its rhythm moving up through the strings and closing with a series of chords that makes for an appreciably more decisive end.

Premiered in Chicago on 30 December 1921, the opera *The Love for Three Oranges* duly consolidated Prokofiev's standing in the West; the more so when he extracted an orchestral suite in 1924 that was first heard in Paris the following November. This recording features the third and fourth of the suite's six movements. The *March* (long among Prokofiev's most frequently heard

pieces) opens with a ricocheting fanfare that introduces a nonchalant theme taking in the whole of the orchestra as it proceeds; a brief upsurge brings this back in scintillating garb prior to the unlikely though conclusive cadence. The *Scherzo* commences with pulsating strings which launch a perky theme whose eventful course twice erupts in an effervescent climax before returning to its initial guise then curtailed by a terse final gesture.

Composed during 1933–34, Prokofiev's score for Alexander Feinzimmer's film *Lieutenant Kijé* – a satire on administrative ineptitude in Czarist Russia – was initially overlooked, but found success when recast as a suite which was first heard in Paris on 21 December 1934.

The Birth of Kijé opens with a muted trumpet sounding a distant reveille, side drum and piccolo gradually joined by other woodwind and strings as the music grows in activity. This brings a vivid climax with brass and percussion to the fore, dying away to leave woodwind musing pensively, before a muted trumpet returns over tremolo strings. The melody of the *Romance* is given to double bass and cello, then transfers to celesta and lower woodwind. A moodier theme is shared by woodwind and strings, the main melody returning for a heartfelt close.

Kijé's Wedding begins with a majestic fanfare for wind and percussion, the indelible main theme being heard on trumpet against a vamping accompaniment on lower brass. An earlier theme briefly announces itself on tenor saxophone, with the fanfare music heard again before the return of the trumpet theme and majestic close. A harmonically oblique gesture launches the heady theme of *Troika* on lower woodwind and strings over pizzicato strings and piano. There are brief passages for trombone and bassoon, with the main theme finally heard against rushing violins prior to a decisive final cadence. *The Burial of Kijé* begins with the opening reveille, then earlier themes are heard in subtly altered guise or evocatively superimposed. At length activity subsides on woodwind and strings, leading to an ethereal return of the reveille.

Richard Whitehouse

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra



Since its first concert in 1954, the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo / OSESP) has become an inseparable part of São Paulo and Brazilian culture, promoting deep cultural and social transformation. Besides touring Latin America, the United States, Europe and Brazil, it runs a large educational and outreach programme for over 30,000 children and teenagers every season. The orchestra has released over 80 recordings, and its concerts are regularly broadcast on television and radio, as well as the internet. In 2012 Marin Alsop took the post of principal conductor, and in 2013 she was appointed music director. In that same year, the orchestra made its fourth European tour, performing for the first time, and to great acclaim, at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, the Berlin Philharmonie, and the Royal Festival Hall in London. In 2014, to commemorate its 60th anniversary, the OSESP co-commissioned a saxophone concerto by John Adams, and performed it in five Brazilian states. The orchestra performs over a hundred concerts every season for nearly 10,000 subscribers at its own Sala São Paulo, which was chosen in 2015 by *The Guardian* as one of the ten best concert halls in the world. In 2016 the OSESP appeared at major European Summer festivals, conducted by Marin Alsop. www.osesp.art.br

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Marin Alsop



Marin Alsop is an inspiring and powerful voice in the international music scene, a music director of vision and distinction who passionately believes that 'music has the power to change lives'. She is recognised across the world for her innovative approach to programming and for her deep commitment to education and to the development of audiences of all ages. Marin Alsop made history with her appointment as the 12th music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO). With her inaugural concerts in September 2007, she became the first woman to head a major American orchestra. Her success as the BSO's music director has garnered national and international attention for her innovative programming and artistry. Her success was recognised when, in 2013, her tenure was extended to the 2020–2021 season. Alsop took up the post of principal conductor of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra in 2012, and became music director in July 2013. She also holds the title of conductor emeritus at the Bournemouth Symphony in the United Kingdom, where she served as the principal conductor from 2002 to 2008. In the summer of 2016, she serves her 25th and final season as music director of the acclaimed Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California. Alsop is often making history: in 2005 she was the first conductor to be awarded a MacArthur Genius award and in September 2013 as the first female conductor of the BBC's Last Night of the Proms in London.

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Sergey Prokofiev's final years were clouded by ill-health, and the *Seventh Symphony* was his last significant work, full of poignant nostalgia and restrained but deeply expressed emotion. *The Love for Three Oranges* consolidated Prokofiev's reputation in the West in the 1920s, both this and the satirical tale of *Lieutenant Kijé* producing two of his most popular suites. This is the final volume of the acclaimed cycle of Prokofiev's *Symphonies* with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra conducted by Marin Alsop.



Sergey
PROKOFIEV
(1891–1953)

Symphony No. 7 in C sharp minor, Op. 131 (1952) 32:36

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|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 I. Moderato | 9:19 |
| 2 II. Allegretto – Allegro | 8:09 |
| 3 III. Andante espressivo | 5:41 |
| 4 IV. Vivace | 8:59 |
| 5 IV. Vivace (revised ending) | 0:28 |

**The Love for Three Oranges – Suite,
Op. 33bis (excerpts) (1919) 4:09**

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|----------------------|-------------|
| 6 III. March | 1:47 |
| 7 IV. Scherzo | 2:22 |

Lieutenant Kijé – Suite, Op. 60 (1934) 18:54

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|---------------------------------|-------------|
| 8 I. The Birth of Kijé | 4:21 |
| 9 II. Romance | 3:46 |
| 10 III. Kijé's Wedding | 2:35 |
| 11 IV. Troika | 2:41 |
| 12 V. The Burial of Kijé | 5:31 |

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra • Marin Alsop

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