

= Sergei Prokofiev =

Sergei Sergeyevich Prokofiev ( / pr??k?fi?f , pro?- , -?k??- , -?ko?- , -j?f , -j?v , -i?f / ; Russian : ?????? ?????????? ?????????? , tr . Sergej Sergejevi? Prokofjev ; 23 April 1891 ? 5 March 1953 ) was a Russian and Soviet composer , pianist and conductor . As the creator of acknowledged masterpieces across numerous musical genres , he is regarded as one of the major composers of the 20th century . His works include such widely heard works as the March from The Love for Three Oranges , the suite Lieutenant Kijé , the ballet Romeo and Juliet ? from which " Dance of the Knights " is taken ? and Peter and the Wolf . Of the established forms and genres in which he worked , he created ? excluding juvenilia ? seven completed operas , seven symphonies , eight ballets , five piano concertos , two violin concertos , a cello concerto , a Symphony @-@ Concerto for cello and orchestra , and nine completed piano sonatas .

A graduate of the St Petersburg Conservatory , Prokofiev initially made his name as an iconoclastic composer @-@ pianist , achieving notoriety with a series of ferociously dissonant and virtuosic works for his instrument , including his first two piano concertos . In 1915 Prokofiev made a decisive break from the standard composer @-@ pianist category with his orchestral Scythian Suite , compiled from music originally composed for a ballet commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes . Diaghilev commissioned three further ballets from Prokofiev ? Chout , Le pas d 'acier and The Prodigal Son ? which at the time of their original production all caused a sensation among both critics and colleagues . Prokofiev 's greatest interest , however , was opera , and he composed several works in that genre , including The Gambler and The Fiery Angel . Prokofiev 's one operatic success during his lifetime was The Love for Three Oranges , composed for the Chicago Opera and subsequently performed over the following decade in Europe and Russia .

After the Revolution , Prokofiev left Russia with the official blessing of the Soviet minister Anatoly Lunacharsky , and resided in the United States , then Germany , then Paris , making his living as a composer , pianist and conductor . During that time he married a Spanish singer , Carolina Codina , with whom he had two sons . In the early 1930s , the Great Depression diminished opportunities for Prokofiev 's ballets and operas to be staged in America and western Europe . Prokofiev , who regarded himself as composer foremost , resented the time taken by touring as a pianist , and increasingly turned to Soviet Russia for commissions of new music ; in 1936 he finally returned to his homeland with his family . He enjoyed some success there ? notably with Lieutenant Kijé , Peter and the Wolf , Romeo and Juliet , and perhaps above all with Alexander Nevsky .

The Nazi invasion of the USSR spurred him to compose his most ambitious work , an operatic version of Leo Tolstoy 's War and Peace . In 1948 Prokofiev was criticized for " anti @-@ democratic formalism " and , with his income severely curtailed , was forced to compose Stalinist works , such as On Guard for Peace . However , he also enjoyed personal and artistic support from a new generation of Russian performers , notably Sviatoslav Richter and Mstislav Rostropovich : for the latter , he composed his Symphony @-@ Concerto , whilst for the former he composed his ninth piano sonata .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early childhood and first compositions = = =

Prokofiev was born in 1891 in Sontsovka ( now Krasne , Krasnoarmiisk Raion , Donetsk Oblast , eastern Ukraine ) , a remote rural estate in the Yekaterinoslav Governorate of the Russian Empire . His father , Sergei Alexeyevich Prokofiev , was an agronomist . Prokofiev 's mother , Maria ( née Zhitkova ) , came from a family of former serfs who had been owned by the Sheremetev family , under whose patronage serf @-@ children were taught theatre and arts from an early age . She was described by Reinhold Glière ( Prokofiev 's first composition teacher ) as " a tall woman with beautiful , clever eyes ... who knew how to create an atmosphere of warmth and simplicity about her . " After their wedding in the summer of 1877 , the Prokofievs had moved to a small estate in the

Smolensk governorate . Eventually Sergei Alexeyevich found employment as a soil engineer , employed by one of his former fellow @-@ students , Dmitri Sontsov , to whose estate in the Ukrainian steppes the Prokofievs moved .

By the time of Prokofiev 's birth Maria , having previously lost two daughters , had devoted her life to music ; during her son 's early childhood she spent two months a year in Moscow or St Petersburg taking piano lessons . Sergei Prokofiev was inspired by hearing his mother practicing the piano in the evenings ? mostly works by Chopin and Beethoven ? and composed his first piano composition at the age of five , an ' Indian Gallop ' , which was written down by his mother : this was in the F Lydian mode ( a major scale with a raised 4th scale degree ) as the young Prokofiev felt ' reluctance to tackle the black notes ' . By seven , he had also learned to play chess . Much like music , chess would remain a passion , and he became acquainted with world chess champions José Raúl Capablanca , whom he beat in a simultaneous exhibition match in 1914 , and Mikhail Botvinnik , with whom he played several matches in the 1930s . At the age of nine he was composing his first opera , The Giant , as well as an overture and various other pieces .

= = = Formal education and controversial early works = = =

In 1902 , Prokofiev 's mother met Sergei Taneyev , director of the Moscow Conservatory , who initially suggested that Prokofiev should start lessons in piano and composition with Alexander Goldenweiser . When Taneyev was unable to arrange this , he instead organised that composer and pianist Reinhold Glière should spend the summer of 1902 in Sontsovka teaching Prokofiev . This first series of lessons culminated , at the 11 @-@ year @-@ old Prokofiev 's insistence , with the budding composer making his first attempt to write a symphony . The following summer Glière revisited Sontsovka to give further tuition . When decades later Prokofiev wrote about his lessons with Glière , he gave due credit to his teacher 's sympathetic method but complained that Glière had introduced him to " square " phrase structure and conventional modulations which he subsequently had to unlearn . Nonetheless , equipped with the necessary theoretical tools , Prokofiev started experimenting with dissonant harmonies and unusual time signatures in a series of short piano pieces which he called " ditties " ( after the so @-@ called " song form " ? more accurately ternary form ? they were based on ) , laying the basis for his own musical style .

Despite his growing talent , Prokofiev 's parents hesitated over starting their son on a musical career at such an early age , and considered the possibility of his attending a quality high school in Moscow . By 1904 , his mother had decided instead on Saint Petersburg , and she and Prokofiev visited the ( then ) capital to explore the possibility of their moving there for his education . They were introduced to composer Alexander Glazunov , a professor at the Conservatory , who asked to see Prokofiev and his music ; Glazunov was so impressed that he urged Prokofiev 's mother that her son apply to the Saint Petersburg Conservatory . By this point , Prokofiev had composed two more operas , Desert Islands and The Feast during the Plague , and was working on his fourth , Undina . He passed the introductory tests and entered the Conservatory that same year .

Several years younger than most of his class , he was viewed as eccentric and arrogant , and he annoyed a number of his classmates by keeping statistics on the errors made by fellow students . During this period , he studied under , among others , Alexander Winkler for piano , Anatoly Lyadov for harmony and counterpoint , Nikolai Tcherepnin for conducting , and Nikolai Rimsky @-@ Korsakov for orchestration ( though when Rimsky @-@ Korsakov died in 1908 , Prokofiev noted that he had only studied with him " after a fashion " ? he was just one of many students in a heavily attended class ? and regretted that he otherwise " never had the opportunity to study with him " ) . He also shared classes with the composers Boris Asafyev and Nikolai Myaskovsky , the latter becoming a relatively close and lifelong friend .

As a member of the Saint Petersburg music scene , Prokofiev developed a reputation as a musical rebel , while getting praise for his original compositions , which he performed himself on the piano . In 1909 , he graduated from his class in composition with unimpressive marks . He continued at the Conservatory , studying piano under Anna Yesipova and continuing his conducting lessons under Tcherepnin .

In 1910 , Prokofiev 's father died and Sergei 's financial support ceased . Fortunately he had started making a name for himself as a composer and pianist outside the Conservatory , making appearances at the St Petersburg Evenings of Contemporary Music . There he performed several of his more adventurous piano works , such as his highly chromatic and dissonant Etudes , Op. 2 ( 1909 ) . His performance of this impressed the organizers of Evenings sufficiently for them to invite Prokofiev to give the Russian premiere of Arnold Schoenberg 's Drei Klavierstücke , Op. 11 . Prokofiev 's harmonic experimentation continued with Sarcastms for piano , Op. 17 ( 1912 ) , which makes extensive use of polytonality . He composed his first two piano concertos around this time , the latter of which caused a scandal at its premiere ( 23 August 1913 , Pavlovsk ) . According to one account , the audience left the hall with exclamations of " ' To hell with this futuristic music ! The cats on the roof make better music ! ' " , but the modernists were in rapture .

In 1911 , help arrived from renowned Russian musicologist and critic Alexander Ossovsky , who wrote a supportive letter to music publisher Boris P. Jurgenson ( son of publishing @-@ firm founder Peter Jurgenson [ 1836 ? 1904 ] ) ; thus a contract was offered to the composer . Prokofiev made his first foreign trip in 1913 , travelling to Paris and London where he first encountered Sergei Diaghilev 's Ballets Russes .

= = = The first ballets = = =

In 1914 , Prokofiev finished his career at the Conservatory by entering the so @-@ called ' battle of the pianos ' , a competition open to the five best piano students for which the prize was a Schreder grand piano : Prokofiev won by performing his own Piano Concerto No. 1 . Soon afterwards , he journeyed to London where he made contact with the impresario Sergei Diaghilev . Diaghilev commissioned Prokofiev 's first ballet , Ala and Lolli ; but when Prokofiev brought the work in progress to him in Italy in 1915 he rejected it as " non @-@ Russian " . Urging Prokofiev to write " music that was national in character " , Diaghilev then commissioned the ballet Chout ( The Fool , the original Russian @-@ language full title was ?????? ??? ????? , ??????? ????? ????????????? ( Skazka pro shuta , semerykh shutov pereshutivshavo ) , meaning " The Tale of the Buffoon who Outwits Seven Other Buffoons " ) . Under Diaghilev 's guidance , Prokofiev chose his subject from a collection of folktales by the ethnographer Alexander Afanasyev ; the story , concerning a buffoon and a series of confidence tricks , had been previously suggested to Diaghilev by Igor Stravinsky as a possible subject for a ballet , and Diaghilev and his choreographer Léonide Massine helped Prokofiev to shape this into a ballet scenario . Prokofiev 's inexperience with ballet led him to revise the work extensively in the 1920s , following Diaghilev 's detailed critique , prior to its first production . The ballet 's premiere in Paris on 17 May 1921 was a huge success and was greeted with great admiration by an audience that included Jean Cocteau , Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel . Stravinsky called the ballet " the single piece of modern music he could listen to with pleasure , " while Ravel called it " a work of genius . "

= = = First World War and Revolution = = =

During World War I , Prokofiev returned to the Conservatory and studied organ in order to avoid conscription . He composed The Gambler based on Fyodor Dostoyevsky 's novel of the same name , but rehearsals were plagued by problems and the scheduled 1917 première had to be canceled because of the February Revolution . In the summer of that year , Prokofiev composed his first symphony , the Classical . This was his own name for the symphony , which was written in the style that , according to Prokofiev , Joseph Haydn would have used if he had been alive at the time . It is more or less Classical in style but incorporates more modern musical elements ( see Neoclassicism ) . This symphony was also an exact contemporary of Prokofiev 's Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major , Op. 19 , which was scheduled to premiere in November 1917 . The first performances of both works had to wait until 21 April 1918 and 18 October 1923 , respectively . He stayed briefly with his mother in Kislovodsk in the Caucasus . After completing the score of Seven , They Are Seven , a " Chaldean invocation " for chorus and orchestra , Prokofiev was " left with nothing to do and time

hung heavily on my hands " . Believing that Russia " had no use for music at the moment " , Prokofiev decided to try his fortunes in America until the turmoil in his homeland had passed . He set out for Moscow and Petersburg in March 1918 to sort out financial matters and to arrange for his passport . In May he headed for the USA , having obtained official permission to do so from Anatoly Lunacharsky , the People 's Commissar for Education , who told him : " You are a revolutionary in music , we are revolutionaries in life . We ought to work together . But if you want to go to America I shall not stand in your way . "

= = = Life abroad = = =

Arriving in San Francisco after having been released from questioning by immigration officials on Angel Island on 11 August 1918 , Prokofiev was soon compared to other famous Russian exiles ( such as Sergei Rachmaninoff ) . His debut solo concert in New York led to several further engagements . He also received a contract from the music director of the Chicago Opera Association , Cleofonte Campanini , for the production of his new opera *The Love for Three Oranges* ; however , due to Campanini 's illness and death , the premiere was postponed . This delay was another example of Prokofiev 's bad luck in operatic matters . The failure also cost him his American solo career , since the opera took too much time and effort . He soon found himself in financial difficulties , and , in April 1920 , he left for Paris , not wanting to return to Russia as a failure .

In Paris Prokofiev reaffirmed his contacts with Diaghilev 's *Ballets Russes* . He also completed some of his older , unfinished works , such as the *Third Piano Concerto* . *The Love for Three Oranges* finally premièred in Chicago , under the composer 's baton , on 30 December 1921 . Diaghilev became sufficiently interested in the opera to request Prokofiev play the vocal score to him in June 1922 , while they were both in Paris for a revival of *Chout* , so he could consider it for a possible production . Stravinsky , who was present at the audition , refused to listen to more than the first act . When he then accused Prokofiev of " wasting time composing operas " , Prokofiev retorted that Stravinsky " was in no position to lay down a general artistic direction , since he is himself not immune to error " . According to Prokofiev , Stravinsky " became incandescent with rage " and " we almost came to blows and were separated only with difficulty " . As a result , " our relations became strained and for several years Stravinsky 's attitude toward me was critical . "

In March 1922 , Prokofiev moved with his mother to the town of Ettal in the Bavarian Alps , where for over a year he concentrated on an opera project , *The Fiery Angel* , based on the novel by Valery Bryusov . By this time his later music had acquired a following in Russia , and he received invitations to return there , but he decided to stay in Europe . In 1923 , Prokofiev married the Spanish singer Carolina Codina ( 1897 ? 1989 , whose stage name was Lina Llubera ) before moving back to Paris .

In Paris , several of his works ( for example the *Second Symphony* ) were performed , but the audiences ' reception was now lukewarm and Prokofiev sensed that he " was evidently no longer a sensation " . However the *Symphony* appeared to prompt Diaghilev to commission *Le pas d 'acier* ( *The Steel Step* ) , a ' modernist ' ballet score intended to portray the industrialisation of the Soviet Union . It was enthusiastically received by Parisian audiences and critics .

In around 1924 , Prokofiev was introduced to Christian Science . He began to practice its teachings , which he believed to be beneficial to his health and to his fiery temperament , and to which , according to biographer Simon Morrison , he remained faithful for the rest of his life .

Prokofiev and Stravinsky restored their friendship , though Prokofiev particularly disliked Stravinsky 's " stylization of Bach " in such recent works as the *Octet* and the *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* . However , Stravinsky himself described Prokofiev as the greatest Russian composer of his day , after himself .

= = = First visits to the Soviet Union = = =

In 1927 , Prokofiev made his first concert tour in the Soviet Union . Over the course of more than

two months , he spent time in Moscow and Leningrad ( as Saint Petersburg had been renamed ) , where he enjoyed a very successful staging of *The Love for Three Oranges* in the Mariinsky Theatre . In 1928 , Prokofiev completed his Third Symphony , which was broadly based on his unperformed opera *The Fiery Angel* . The conductor Serge Koussevitzky characterized the Third as " the greatest symphony since Tchaikovsky 's Sixth . "

In the meantime , however , Prokofiev , under the influence of the teachings of Christian Science , had turned against the expressionist style and the subject matter of *The Fiery Angel* . He now preferred what he called a " new simplicity " , which he believed more sincere than the " contrivances and complexities " of so much modern music of the 1920s . During 1928 ? 29 , Prokofiev composed what was to be the last ballet for Diaghilev , *The Prodigal Son* . When first staged in Paris on 21 May 1929 , with Serge Lifar in the title role , both audience and critics were particularly struck by the final scene in which the prodigal son drags himself across the stage upon his knees to be welcomed by his father . Diaghilev had recognised that in the music to this scene , Prokofiev had " never been more clear , more simple , more melodious , and more tender . " Only months later , Diaghilev was dead .

That summer , Prokofiev completed the *Divertimento* , Op. 43 ( which he had started in 1925 ) and revised his *Sinfonietta* , Op. 5 / 48 , a work started in his days at the Conservatory . In October that year , he had a car crash while driving his family back to Paris from their holiday : as the car turned over , Prokofiev pulled some muscles on his left hand . Prokofiev was therefore unable to perform in Moscow during his tour shortly after the accident , but he was able to enjoy watching performances of his music from the audience . Prokofiev also attended the Bolshoi Theatre 's " audition " of his ballet *Le pas d 'acier* , and was interrogated by members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians ( RAPM ) about the work : he was asked whether the factory portrayed " a capitalist factory , where the worker is a slave , or a Soviet factory , where the worker is the master ? If it is a Soviet factory , when and where did Prokofiev examine it , since from 1918 to the present he has been living abroad and came here for the first time in 1927 for two weeks [ sic ] ? " Prokofiev replied , " That concerns politics , not music , and therefore I won 't answer . " The RAPM condemned the ballet as a " flat and vulgar anti @-@ Soviet anecdote , a counter @-@ revolutionary composition bordering on Fascism " . The Bolshoi had no option but to reject the ballet .

With his left hand healed , Prokofiev toured the United States successfully at the start of 1930 , propped up by his recent European success . That year Prokofiev began his first non @-@ Diaghilev ballet *On the Dnieper* , Op. 51 , a work commissioned by Serge Lifar , who had been appointed maitre de ballet at the Paris Opéra . In 1931 and 1932 , he completed his fourth and fifth piano concertos . The following year saw the completion of the *Symphonic Song* , Op. 57 , which Prokofiev 's friend Myaskovsky ? thinking of its potential audience in the Soviet Union ? told him " isn 't quite for us ... it lacks that which we mean by monumentalism ? a familiar simplicity and broad contours , of which you are extremely capable , but temporarily are carefully avoiding . "

By the early 1930s , both Europe and America were suffering from the Great Depression , which inhibited both new opera and ballet productions , though audiences for Prokofiev 's appearances as a pianist were ? in Europe at least ? undiminished . However Prokofiev , who saw himself as a composer first and foremost , increasingly resented the amount of time that was lost to composition through his appearances as a pianist . Having been homesick for some time , Prokofiev began to build substantial bridges with the Soviet Union . Following the dissolution of the RAPM in 1932 , he acted increasingly as a musical ambassador between his homeland and western Europe , and his premieres and commissions were increasingly under the auspices of the Soviet Union . One such was *Lieutenant Kijé* , which was commissioned as the score to a Soviet film . Another commission , from the Kirov Theatre ( as the Mariinsky had now been renamed ) in Leningrad , was the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* , composed to a scenario created by Adrian Piotrovsky and Sergei Radlov following the precepts of " drambalet " ( dramatised ballet , officially promoted at the Kirov to replace works based primarily on choreographic display and innovation ) . Following Radlov 's acrimonious resignation from the Kirov in June 1934 , a new agreement was signed with the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on the understanding that Piotrovsky would remain involved . However , the ballet 's original happy ending ( contrary to Shakespeare ) provoked controversy among Soviet cultural

officials ; the ballet 's production was then postponed indefinitely when the staff of the Bolshoi was overhauled at the behest of the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs , Platon Kerzhentsev . Nikolai Myaskovsky , one of his closest friends , mentioned in a number of letters how he would like Prokofiev to stay in Russia .

= = = Return to Russia = = =

In 1936 , Prokofiev and his family settled permanently in Moscow . In that year he composed one of his most famous works , *Peter and the Wolf* , for Natalya Sats 's Central Children 's Theatre . Sats also persuaded Prokofiev to write two songs for children ? " *Sweet Song* " , and " *Chatterbox* " ; these were eventually joined by " *The Little Pigs* " , published as *Three Children 's Songs* , Op. 68 . Prokofiev also composed the gigantic Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution , originally intended for performance during the anniversary year but effectively blocked by Kerzhentsev , who demanded at the work 's audition before the Committee on Arts Affairs , " Just what do you think you 're doing , Sergey Sergeyevich , taking texts that belong to the people and setting them to such incomprehensible music ? " The Cantata had to wait until 5 April 1966 for a partial premiere ( just over 13 years after the composer 's death ) .

Forced to adapt to the new circumstances ( whatever misgivings he had about them in private ) , Prokofiev wrote a series of " mass songs " ( Opp . 66 , 79 , 89 ) , using the lyrics of officially approved Soviet poets . In 1938 , Prokofiev collaborated with Eisenstein on the historical epic *Alexander Nevsky* . For this he composed some of his most inventive and dramatic music . Although the film had a very poor sound recording , Prokofiev adapted much of his score into a large @-@ scale cantata for mezzo @-@ soprano , orchestra and chorus , which was extensively performed and recorded . In the wake of *Alexander Nevsky* 's success , Prokofiev composed his first Soviet opera *Semyon Kotko* , which was intended to be produced by the director Vsevolod Meyerhold . However the première of the opera was postponed because Meyerhold was arrested on 20 June 1939 by the NKVD ( Joseph Stalin 's Secret Police ) , and shot on 2 February 1940 . Only months after Meyerhold 's arrest , Prokofiev was ' invited ' to compose *Zdravitsa* ( literally translated ' Cheers ! ' , but more often given the English title *Hail to Stalin* ) ( Op. 85 ) to celebrate Joseph Stalin 's 60th birthday .

Later in 1939 , Prokofiev composed his Piano Sonatas Nos. 6 , 7 , and 8 , Opp . 82 ? 84 , widely known today as the " War Sonatas . " Premiered respectively by Prokofiev ( No. 6 : 8 April 1940 ) , Sviatoslav Richter ( No. 7 : Moscow , 18 January 1943 ) and Emil Gilels ( No. 8 : Moscow , 30 December 1944 ) , they were subsequently championed in particular by Richter . Biographer Daniel Jaffé argued that Prokofiev , " having forced himself to compose a cheerful evocation of the nirvana Stalin wanted everyone to believe he had created " ( i.e. in *Zdravitsa* ) then subsequently , in these three sonatas , " expressed his true feelings " . As evidence of this , Jaffé has pointed out that the central movement of Sonata No. 7 opens with a theme based on a Robert Schumann lied , ' *Wehmut* ' ( ' Sadness ' , which appears in Schumann 's *Liederkreis* , Op. 39 ) : the words to this translate " I can sometimes sing as if I were glad , yet secretly tears well and so free my heart . Nightingales ... sing their song of longing from their dungeon 's depth ... everyone delights , yet no one feels the pain , the deep sorrow in the song . " Ironically ( because , it appears , no one had noticed his allusion ) Sonata No. 7 received a Stalin Prize ( Second Class ) , and No. 8 a Stalin Prize First Class .

In the meantime , *Romeo and Juliet* was finally staged by the Kirov ballet , choreographed by Leonid Lavrovsky , on 11 January 1940 . To the surprise of all its participants , the dancers having struggled to cope with the music 's syncopated rhythms and almost having boycotted the production , the ballet was an instant success , and became recognised as the crowning achievement of Soviet dramatic ballet .

= = = War years = = =

Prokofiev had been considering making an opera out of Leo Tolstoy 's epic novel *War and Peace* ,

when news of the German invasion of Russia on 22 June 1941 made the subject seem all the more timely . Prokofiev took two years to compose his original version of War and Peace . Because of the war he was evacuated together with a large number of other artists , initially to the Caucasus where he composed his Second String Quartet . By this time his relationship with the 25 @-@ year @-@ old writer and librettist Mira Mendelson ( 1915 ? 1968 ) had finally led to his separation from his wife Lina , although they were never technically divorced : indeed Prokofiev had tried to persuade Lina and their sons to accompany him as evacuees out of Moscow , but Lina opted to stay .

During the war years , restrictions on style and the demand that composers should write in a ' socialist realist ' style were slackened , and Prokofiev was generally able to compose in his own way . The Violin Sonata No. 1 , Op. 80 , The Year 1941 , Op. 90 , and the Ballade for the Boy Who Remained Unknown , Op. 93 all came from this period . In 1943 Prokofiev joined Eisenstein in Alma @-@ Ata , the largest city in Kazakhstan , to compose more film music ( Ivan the Terrible ) , and the ballet Cinderella ( Op. 87 ) , one of his most melodious and celebrated compositions . Early that year he also played excerpts from War and Peace to members of the Bolshoi Theatre collective . However , the Soviet government had opinions about the opera which resulted in many revisions . In 1944 , Prokofiev spent time at a composer 's colony outside Moscow in order to compose his Fifth Symphony ( Op. 100 ) . Prokofiev conducted its first performance on 13 January 1945 , just a fortnight after the triumphant premieres on 30 December 1944 of his Eighth Piano Sonata and , on the same day , the first part of Eisenstein 's Ivan the Terrible . With the premiere of his Fifth Symphony , which was programmed alongside Peter and the Wolf and the Classical Symphony ( these conducted by Nikolai Anosov ) , Prokofiev appeared to reach the peak of his celebrity as a leading composer of the Soviet Union . Shortly afterwards , he suffered a concussion after a fall due to chronic high blood pressure . He never fully recovered from this injury , and was forced on medical advice to restrict his composing activity .

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

Prokofiev had time to write his postwar Sixth Symphony and his Ninth Piano Sonata ( for Sviatoslav Richter ) before the so @-@ called " Zhdanov Decree " . In early 1948 , following a meeting of Soviet composers convened by Andrei Zhdanov , the Politburo issued a resolution denouncing Prokofiev , Dmitri Shostakovich , Myaskovsky , and Khachaturian of the crime of " formalism " , described as a " renunciation of the basic principles of classical music " in favour of " muddled , nerve @-@ racking " sounds that " turned music into cacophony " . Eight of Prokofiev 's works were banned from performance : The Year 1941 , Ode to the End of the War , Festive Poem , Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October , Ballad of an Unknown Boy , the 1934 piano cycle Thoughts , and Piano Sonatas Nos 6 and 8 . Such was the perceived threat behind the banning of these works that even works that had avoided censure were no longer programmed : by August 1948 , Prokofiev was in severe financial straits , his personal debt amounting to 180 @,@ 000 rubles .

Meanwhile , on 20 February 1948 , Prokofiev 's wife Lina was arrested for ' espionage ' , as she had tried to send money to her mother in Spain . After nine months of interrogation , she was sentenced by a three @-@ member Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR to 20 years of hard labour . She was eventually released after Stalin 's death in 1953 and in 1974 left the Soviet Union .

Prokofiev 's latest opera projects , among them his desperate attempt to appease the cultural authorities , The Story of a Real Man , were quickly cancelled by the Kirov Theatre . This snub , in combination with his declining health , caused Prokofiev progressively to withdraw from public life and from various activities , even his beloved chess , and increasingly he devoted himself exclusively to his own work . After a serious relapse in 1949 , his doctors ordered him to limit his activities , limiting him to composing for only an hour a day .

In spring 1949 he wrote his Cello Sonata in C , Op. 119 , for the 22 @-@ year @-@ old Mstislav Rostropovich , who gave the first performance in 1950 , with Sviatoslav Richter . For Rostropovich , Prokofiev also extensively recomposed his Cello Concerto , transforming it into a Symphony @-@ Concerto , his last major masterpiece and a landmark in the cello and orchestra repertory today . The last public performance he attended was the première of the Seventh Symphony in 1952 . The

music was written for the Children 's Radio Division .

= = = Death = = =

Prokofiev died at the age of 61 on 5 March 1953 , the same day as Joseph Stalin . He had lived near Red Square , and for three days the throngs gathered to mourn Stalin , making it impossible to carry Prokofiev 's body out for the funeral service at the headquarters of the Soviet Composers ' Union . He is buried in the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow . He was an atheist .

The leading Soviet musical periodical reported Prokofiev 's death as a brief item on page 116 . The first 115 pages were devoted to the death of Stalin . Usually Prokofiev 's death is attributed to cerebral hemorrhage . He had been chronically ill for the prior eight years ; the precise nature of Prokofiev 's terminal illness remains uncertain .

Lina Prokofiev outlived her estranged husband by many years , dying in London in early 1989 . Royalties from her late husband 's music provided her with a modest income , and she acted as storyteller for a recording of her husband 's *Peter and the Wolf* ( currently released on CD by Chandos Records ) with Neeme Järvi conducting the Scottish National Orchestra . Their sons Sviatoslav ( 1924 ? 2010 ) , an architect , and Oleg ( 1928 ? 1998 ) , an artist , painter , sculptor and poet , dedicated a large part of their lives to the promotion of their father 's life and work .

= = Posthumous reputation = =

Arthur Honegger proclaimed that Prokofiev would " remain for us the greatest figure of contemporary music , " and the American scholar Richard Taruskin has recognised Prokofiev 's " gift , virtually unparalleled among 20th @-@ century composers , for writing distinctively original diatonic melodies . " Yet for some time Prokofiev 's reputation in the West suffered as a result of cold @-@ war antipathies , and his music has never won from Western academics and critics the kind of esteem currently enjoyed by Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg , composers purported to have a greater influence on a younger generation of musicians .

Today Prokofiev may well be the most popular composer of 20th @-@ century music . His orchestral music alone is played more frequently in the United States than that of any other composer of the last hundred years , save Richard Strauss , while his operas , ballets , chamber works , and piano music appear regularly throughout the major concert halls world @-@ wide .

The composer received honours in his native Donetsk Oblast , when the Donetsk International Airport was renamed to be " Donetsk Sergey Prokofiev International Airport , " and when the Donetsk Musical and Pedagogical Institute was renamed in 1988 to " S.S. Prokofiev State Music Academy of Donetsk . "

= = Works = =

= = Recordings = =

Prokofiev was a soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra , conducted by Piero Coppola , in the first recording of his Piano Concerto No. 3 , recorded in London by His Master 's Voice in June 1932 . Prokofiev also recorded some of his solo piano music for HMV in Paris in February 1935 ; these recordings were issued on CD by Pearl and Naxos . In 1938 , he conducted the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra in a recording of the second suite from his *Romeo and Juliet* ballet ; this performance was later released on LP and CD . Another reported recording with Prokofiev and the Moscow Philharmonic was of the First Violin Concerto with David Oistrakh as soloist ; Everest Records later released this recording on an LP . Despite the attribution , the conductor was Aleksandr Gauk . A short sound film of Prokofiev playing some of the music from his opera *War and Peace* and then explaining the music has been discovered .



= = Honours and awards = =

Six Stalin Prizes :

( 1943 ) , 2nd degree ? for Piano Sonata No. 7

( 1946 ) , 1st degree ? for Symphony No. 5 and Piano Sonata No. 8

( 1946 ) , 1st degree ? for the music for the film " Ivan the Terrible " Part 1 ( 1944 )

( 1946 ) , 1st degree ? for the ballet " Cinderella " ( 1944 )

( 1947 ) , 1st degree ? for Violin Sonata No. 1

( 1951 ) , 2nd degree ? for vocal @-@ symphonic suite " Winter bonfire " and the oratorio " On Guard for Peace " on poems by S. Marshak

Lenin Prize ( 1957 ? posthumous ) ? for Symphony No. 7

People 's Artist of RSFSR ( 1947 )

Order of the Red Banner of Labour

= = = Autobiography and diaries = = =

= = = Memoirs , essays , etc . = = =

= = = Biographies = = =

= = = Other monographs = = =

= = = Dictionary articles = = =