



NORTHSTAR
RECORDING
by BERT VAN DER WOLF



SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Symphonies nos. 3 and 4 (first version)

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra

James Gaffigan



SUPER AUDIO CD

SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

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SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Symphony no. 3 op. 44 in C minor (1928)

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| [1] Moderato | 12:20 |
| [2] Andante | 6:15 |
| [3] Allegro agitato | 8:20 |
| [4] Andante mosso | 5:41 |

Symphony no. 4 op. 47 in C major (1929)

First version

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|--|-------------|
| [1] Andante assai – Allegro eroico | 6:46 |
| [2] Andante tranquillo | 6:45 |
| [3] Moderato, quasi Allegretto | 4:11 |
| [4] Allegro risoluto – Moderato – Coda | 7:18 |

total time 57:40

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Symphony no. 3, op. 44 (1928)

Sergei Prokofiev has a large reputation, although many of his works are seldom heard. The reason for this is that his music has a certain image, one created to some extent by the composer himself and one from which he found it difficult in later years to distance himself, no matter how hard he tried.

One might summarise this image as that of a poker-faced comedian.

Compositions that confirm this impression, such as the Classical Symphony, the *Third Piano Concerto* and some of his early piano works are amongst his best-known works.

He shows a different side in his works for voice; a side that is clearly close to his heart, since even though most of his operas enjoyed little in the way of success during his lifetime, he wrote at least eight of them, with lyricism to the fore and a tendency for declamation and unpredictable forms. The less popular of these include *L'Ange de feu*, based on the 1907 novel by the writer Bryusov, setting a 16th century tale of the passionate young girl Renata, who becomes obsessed by the devil. She vacillates between fascination and rejection. She can neither circumvent nor defy her own sorcery and is ultimately condemned to death.

Prokofiev worked on this piece almost throughout the 1920s. When he realised that a performance was unlikely at the time, and because he was unaccustomed to leaving his musical inventions unperformed, he rearranged the material from the opera into a new symphony, his *Third*.

Despite this clear relationship, the symphony is neither a symphonic synopsis of the opera nor a pot-pourri of themes from it. The themes that are quoted from the opera are completely recast. The *first movement* opens with a slow introduction and there are clear aural traces of exposition, development and recapitulation in the ensuing moderato. Many themes may well have been drawn from the opera, but their development betrays the rhythmic alertness and refinement of orchestration that are features of Prokofiev's more grotesque works. The *second movement* contains elements of a classical adagio: a ternary form with the drama concentrated in the central section and a retrospective coda. The two final movements are more in the nature of movements from a suite; more rhapsodic in form, more instrumental than vocal in their melodic style. The listener who is unaware of the history of the work would be unlikely to recognise its operatic roots. Prokofiev considered the first movement – the furthest removed from the world of operatic music – to have been the most successful. He described the symphony as a whole as being 'much more profound' than many of his other works. He even went as far as to describe the work as 'one of my most important compositions'.

Critics and others who heard the work were less enthusiastic. At the Paris premiere on 17 May 1929, the conductor Pierre Monteux called the composer on to the platform to acknowledge the applause (an unusual step at the time) but this did not significantly help his cause. Hindsight might explain that there was another reason for the scant enthusiasm. He was to return to his homeland in the 1930s and many people attributed the later shift in his style to artistic

directives from the authorities. But his new style was already in evidence before his return to Russia, for instance in this symphony.

Emanuel Overbeeke

Translation: Bruce Gordon/Muse Translations

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

Symphony no. 4, op. 47 (1930), first version

Like the *Third Symphony*, the *Fourth* also has close links to an explicitly narrative composition, this time to the ballet *L'enfant prodigue*, on which the composer was also working in 1930. At that point, Serge Koussevitzky was the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which was commissioning works to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary from composers such as Prokofiev (*Fourth Symphony*), Stravinsky (*Symphony of Psalms*), Roussel (*Fourth Symphony*) and Hindemith (*Concert Music for brass and strings*). He was disappointed when Prokofiev told him of the relationship between the two works, as he feared that the symphony might only be partially original. The conductor need not have been too concerned, however. As with the *Third Symphony*, the material of the *Fourth* may well be derivative in part, but it is developed in a novel way. Only the *third movement* – a scherzo in nature, if not in name, with a characteristic Prokofiev twinkle in its eye – is drawn intact from the ballet, from the 'dancers' episode in Scene 1. Fragments from the ballet can also be heard in the *second movement* ('the return' from Scene 3 and 'the awakening' from Scene 2) and in the fourth movement ('the departure' and 'the meeting of friends' from Scene 1).

There are discernible traces of classical sonata form in the opening movement. Both of the outer movements are characterised by the tension between the material, which is sometimes thought of as being programmatic, and the way in which the material is developed, with instrumental angularity and rhythmic regularity vying against expansive lyricism and whimsical phrasing. This may

be why the composer described the *first movement* as being 'to some extent Mozartian'. The caustic tone of his earlier works, particularly those for piano, is largely gone and the tension between plangent harmony and melody on the one hand and Prokofiev's leanings towards classical forms on the other hand – so much a feature of his early period style – is elaborated in much gentler focus. The humour and cynicism of the short works have given way to the need to excel in a larger-scale work, where lyricism is more prominent than drama. The finale sounds more rhapsodic and improvisational than the first two movements, because the material borrowed from the ballet for the *third* and *fourth movements* is more extensive than in the *first movement* and because the ballet is laid out as a series of 'numbers'. Prokofiev enjoys playing with the contrast between minor and major keys, with an ever-changing instrumental palette, with large and small gestures in an unpredictable form and with his own unique form of modality.

Whether the early critics were aware of the background to the work or not, most of them felt that the work was far from cohesive. The upshot was that the composer seldom heard the work after its Boston premiere. Nonetheless, he regarded it as one of his most successful compositions. For the rehearsals leading up to the work's European premiere in Brussels in 1930, the musicians were forced to decamp to a smaller hall, as the main hall was being used for rehearsals of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. Prokofiev did not make any big fuss about this; he viewed his own *L'enfant prodigue* as his comment on Stravinsky's *Apollo*, another work of non-abrasive neo-classicism.

Emanuel Overbeeke

Translation: Bruce Gordon/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.



www.northstarconsult.nl

**RADIO
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