

Jean Martinon was born in Lyon, where he began his education, going on to the Conservatoire de Paris to study under Albert Roussel for composition, under Charles Munch and Roger Désormière for conducting, under Vincent d'Indy for harmony, and under Jules Boucherit for violin. He served in the French army during World War II, and was taken prisoner in 1940, composing works such as *Chant des captifs* while incarcerated. Among his other compositions are four symphonies, four concertos, additional choral works and chamber music.



After the war, Martinon was appointed conductor of the *Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* of Paris, and, in 1946, of the *Bordeaux Philharmonic Orchestra*. Other orchestras with which he was associated were the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra* as music director from 1963 to 1968; the *Düsseldorfer Symphoniker*, the *French National Orchestra*, the *Israel Philharmonic Orchestra*, the *London Philharmonic Orchestra*, the *Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra*, the *Concerts Lamoureux* and *Het Residentie Orkest* in The Hague.

Martinon's repertoire focused on the works of early twentieth century French and Russian composers. The premieres of his violin- and cello-concerti were given by Henryk Szeryng and Pierre Fournier respectively. He was a National Patron of Delta Omicron, an international professional music fraternity.

Martinon was diagnosed with bone cancer, not long after he guest conducted the *San Francisco Symphony* in their first complete performances of Deryck Cooke's orchestration of Gustav Mahler's tenth symphony. He died in Paris.

Prokofiev

SYMPHONY No.7 & No. 5

Jean Martinon conducting the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra



Symphony No 7

Prokofiev returned to Russia in 1933, and the decade-and-a-half that followed saw the composer produce some of his greatest music, including the ballet score *Romeo and Juliet*, the film scores *Lieutenant Kijé* and *Alexander Nevsky*, the opera *War and Peace*, and the *Symphony No. 5*. Each of these works confirmed his position as one of Soviet Russia's leading composers, a figure of international stature. But an event in 1948 that initially had nothing to do with Prokofiev called all of that into question.

The premiere of a new opera by a young composer at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater was the match tossed into the powder magazine, so to speak. Stalin was in the audience, and he was infuriated by the opera's inadvertent exaltation of one of his most hated rivals. In the purges of musicians that followed, many less prominent figures were arrested, and much of Prokofiev's music was proscribed. In another indication that his former privileged status was a thing of the past, Prokofiev's first wife Lina was arrested (they had separated in 1941), charged with espionage, and sent to Siberia. For the remaining five years of his life, Prokofiev would live in poverty and fear, sometimes on the verge of starvation, composing to the very end.

The Seventh Symphony was Prokofiev's last completed major work. It was written for the Soviet Children's Radio Division, but the simplicity of the composer's approach in the work often conceals deeper expressive currents. Though the Symphony adheres to the typical four-movement layout – opening movement in sonata form, scherzo, slow movement, and finale – it is hardly an easy work harmonically, with its home key of C-sharp minor.

The Moderato opens with an emotive string theme that sounds more wistful and nostalgic than anything else. This mood dominates for much of the movement. The only material in the movement that sounds at all "childish" is first introduced at the end of the exposition by flute and glockenspiel, and even this will take on greater weight when Prokofiev revisits it in the finale.

The second movement, a spirited waltz, shows Prokofiev's mastery of the orchestra with its abundant imaginative instrumental effects – languid winds, comic bassoons and trumpets, rushing strings, and so on – and recalls some of his more successful ballet music. The ensuing Andante espressivo is warm in tone and almost pastoral in character. Moments such as the soaring outburst from the cellos over a trudging ostinato about a minute and a half into the movement recall the mood of the Symphony's opening Moderato.

The rambunctious finale, with its galloping main theme, chugs along in delightful perpetual motion for most of its eight-odd minutes. Prokofiev seems to revel in enchanting instrumental combinations and in playing around with the theme – a march here, a bit of the dance hall there. In the work's coda, Prokofiev brings back a rapturous theme from the opening movement before revisiting that little flute-and-glockenspiel motive. Here, unsettled by shifting harmonies and punchy brass chords, this material takes on a different significance, bringing the Symphony to an enigmatic close.

During rehearsals before the work's first performance, the conductor suggested that Prokofiev rewrite the ending to make it more uplifting, since this could mean the difference between a first-class and a third-class Stalin Prize. The first-class Prize carried a 100,000 ruble reward, so Prokofiev submitted to the suggestion. This revised coda, published as a supplement to the Symphony's score, simply tacks on a return of the finale's opening material to the end of the movement.

Symphony No 5

Prokofiev composed this music in 1944, and conducted its premiere in Moscow on January 13, 1945. Everyone everywhere assumed that it symbolized "world-war agony and triumph" -- in other words, his counterpart of Dmitry Shostakovich's 1941 "Leningrad" Symphony. It was the composer's Sixth Symphony of 1945-1947, not his Fifth, that recollected the horrors of World War II. Those who insisted the Fifth Symphony was a mirror of wartime agonies didn't know that the scherzo movement was borrowed from *Cinderella*. Nor did Prokofiev help matters by issuing one of those "position papers" expected by Soviet officialdom: "I conceived [the Fifth] as a symphony of the greatness of the human spirit."

After the failure of his Fourth Symphony (a 1929 reworking of material from his then-recent ballet, *The Prodigal Son*), Prokofiev turned his back on the form. When finally he did return, his implicit model was Shostakovich's Fifth of 1937 -- four movements in concerto-grosso sequence: slow, fast, slow, fast. Otherwise, though, the music is pure Prokofiev both in substance and in style.

The inaugural Andante is a sonata-form movement that begins in 3/4 time with a fluid main theme played in octave unison by flutes and bassoon, with a tailpiece in triplets that later assumes a separate identity. A lot of working-over leads to a new tune in 4/4, introduced by flute and oboe. A jittery figure in the high and low strings acquires thematic status in the development that follows directly. Brass announce the reprise by playing the opening theme very dramatically. Rhetoric accumulates, culminating in a -- why not? -- "greatness of the human spirit" coda.

The Allegro marcato scherzo (in all but name) has a D minor, *Danse macabre*-ish song section, followed by a slightly faster, D major trio in waltz-time, borrowed from *Cinderella* without blinking (or acknowledgment).

The official slow movement is a passionately lyrical, ABA Adagio in F major that begins with a reminder of Aleksandr Nyevesky (1939), but continues in the mode of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* ballet. He changes keys frequently to intensify expression until the climax recalls Nyevesky's battle music. A slow introduction (lightly scored, based on music from the first movement) sets up this Allegro giocoso finale in B flat major. The strings begin a rhythm in bar 23 that prepares for merriment with a sweet-sour sauce. The clarinet plays a syncopated main theme recalling the high-spirits in *Romeo and Juliet*, prior to the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt; this returns throughout a rondo-like movement. Prokofiev's finale amounts to a retrospective of his stylistic direction following *Symphony No. 4* -- including a return to the U.S.S.R. in 1933 -- and ends with a *tour-de-force* coda.

The first performance was a triumph, the climax of Prokofiev's Soviet years, followed shortly after by a physical tragedy from which he never fully recovered. Dizzied by undiagnosed hypertension, he fell downstairs (where remains moot), causing a massive concussion.

Prokofiev

SYMPHONY No.7 & No. 5

Jean Martinon conducting the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra

Symphony No. 7, Op. 131

- 1 Moderato 9:47
- 2 Allegretto 7:27
- 3 Andante Espressivo 5:47
- 4 Vivace 8:03

Symphony No. 5 In B Flat, Op. 100

- 1 Andante 11:47
- 2 Allegro Marcato 7:47
- 3 Adagio 10:50
- 4 Allegro Giocoso 9:30

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Recorded by Decca October & November 1957 at the La Maison de la Mutualité, Paris

Producer: Michael Williamson Engineer: Ken Cress



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