

# Prokofiev

Suites from Cinderella  
and Romeo and Juliet

Ian Scott  
clarinet

Jonathan Higgins  
piano



intangible classics

  
Divine Art

# Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

## Ballet Suites arranged for clarinet and piano

### Cinderella – Ballet Suite, Op. 87

1	I	The Dancing Lesson *	3:03
2	II	Winter Fairy *	3:48
3	III	Passepied *	1:58
4	IV	Adagio *	4:13
5	V	Oriental Dance **	2:06
6	VI	Kubishka Variation **	1:36
7	VII	Summer Fairy **	1:55
8	VIII	Grasshoppers **	1:06
9	IX	Spring Fairy **	1:37
10	X	Dance of the Cavaliers **	1:32
11	XI	Grand Waltz **	5:06

### Romeo and Juliet – Ballet Suite, Op. 64

12	I	Juliet's Entrance *	3:58
13	II	Masks *	2:12
14	III	Dance of the Knights *	4:04
15	IV	Mercutio *	2:26
16	V	Dance of the Girls with Lilies **	2:21
17	VI	Gavotte **	1:34
18	VII	Street Scene **	1:27
19	VIII	Letter Scene **	2:08
20	IX	Death of Tybalt **	1:48

\* arranged by Br. Prorvich | \*\* arranged by I. Scott/M. McMillan

Total playing time 50:09

Ian Scott *clarinet* | Jonathan Higgins *piano*

## The Music

notes by Ian Scott

The ballet repertoire has been generous in providing long, exposed and extremely challenging clarinet solos from composers such as Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Ravel, but probably the most demanding of all have been written by Sergei Prokofiev. When Mozart wrote his clarinet concerto, every note was a gem and every long melody a joy to play. Prokofiev, on the other hand, writing at the piano, gave us melodies which we then have to make sound as natural as possible. His chromatic melodic writing at times makes his solos awkward to play but they are always telling, and often amusing or chillingly beautiful.

It was in the orchestra pit during a run of Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella* that I came up with the idea of recording suites from his two greatest ballet scores. *Cinderella* is a masterpiece of orchestration, and Prokofiev uses the clarinet as a prominent solo instrument throughout. He makes it clear from the opening numbers that he wants the clarinet to dominate, and he relies on it to convey character and different moods. The idea seemed so simple and everything fell into place. As I sat in the pit I could hear it in my head: the piano would take the place of the orchestra and the clarinet would have the freedom to interpret the ravishing melodies.

Prokofiev's most popular ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, also features the clarinet prominently, although it has a darker feel to it and the solos are somewhat shorter and more to the point. The two ballets go well together as they represent two completely different sides to the composer.

In advance of the first staging of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1938, Prokofiev arranged ten selections from the score for piano solo as his opus 75. Similarly, before *Cinderella* had its premiere in 1945, Prokofiev published piano arrangements of three of the numbers in 1942 as opus 95, ten in 1943 as opus 97 and a further six in 1944 as opus 102. It was natural for Prokofiev, a virtuoso pianist, to transcribe the music for piano, and this brought the ballets' music to a wider audience. The version for clarinet and piano, I feel, would have pleased him as it

recreates many of the sounds and moods he had in his head. The clarinet's enormous range really excludes using any other wind instrument in this repertoire, and is utilised to the full in these arrangements. Other popular arrangements of music from these ballets have been made for violin and for cello, but because many of the solos appear on the clarinet in the ballet scores, my version would be closer to the original than the previous string versions.

Prokofiev's own set of piano pieces from the two ballets served as the basis for two four-movement suites arranged for clarinet and piano in the 1950's by Bronislav Fedotovitch Prorvich, a clarinetist with the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. I set about adding to these two suites with twelve movements from the ballets, most of which originally featured the clarinet, and some that didn't but which suited the instrument perfectly. Prorvich's excellent arrangements are very free, using material from different parts of the ballet but always relevant to the character. He also shares the big melodies between the two instruments: a few bars on the clarinet, then a few bars on the piano. In contrast, my transcriptions are more or less complete numbers with little structural deviation from the original. Prokofiev's piano arrangements are written so clearly that the original clarinet line can be extracted, still leaving enough material for a complete piano part.

In making my arrangements, I was helped enormously by my producer Malcolm McMillan, a fellow clarinetist who sat next to me in the orchestra pit for 15 years, and who elaborated on my basic sketches.

## Cinderella

1. *The Dancing Lesson*. Two onstage fiddlers perform this gavotte while the clarinet continues the melody in the pit. In this arrangement, Prorvich uses the material quite freely. Cinderella can be seen dancing with her substitute Prince: her broom!
2. *Winter Fairy*. This solo is a repetitive mesmeric melody from the original score which conjures up a chilly atmosphere. The central section introduces us to the Fairy Godmother's theme. Prorvich creates an ethereal, unwordly effect with an unprecedented bit of writing, requiring the clarinetist to hold a trill whilst simultaneously playing a melody underneath.
3. *Passepied*. Along with other 16<sup>th</sup>-century French dances, the Passepied had a revival with composers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably Stravinsky in his *Symphony in C* and Debussy in his *Suite Bergamasque*. This Passepied requires some nimble footwork from both players.
4. *Adagio*. In this piece also known as The Prince and Cinderella Duet, we begin with the clarinet taking the cello line and then moving to the original two-clarinet filigree melody which repeats later on. Recreating the large orchestral sound in this number is challenging, but here Jonathan on the Steinway does a superb imitation.
5. *Oriental Dance*. Many ballet productions omit this evocative number. Originally a solo for the cor anglais, I think the clarinet brings something a little more exotic to this dance.
6. *Kubishka Variation*. Also known as Capriccio, this is Kubishka, one of the ugly sisters. I think this works very well on the clarinet and features a virtuosic central section for piano. The movement ends with a typical Prokofiev downward flourish leaving no one in doubt that it's all over.
7. *Summer Fairy*. I wanted to include this number as it is one of the most beautiful in the ballet. It features a virtuosic clarinet cadenza and one of the most extraordinary endings to any movement, a very slow four-note figure culminating, hopefully, in an extremely quiet top note.
8. *Grasshoppers*. A description of the coachmen and their lizard footmen. Each production seems to feature different insects and reptiles. An energetic movement with another spectacular ending.
9. *Spring Fairy*. One of the liveliest numbers of the suite. A large orchestra *tour de force* which has a charming coda normally played on the bassoon, but here by the piano. I play the coda up a few octaves and finish with an exciting running scale shared between the two instruments.
10. *Dance of the Cavaliers*. A strong orchestral number from the beginning which leads to a central section featuring a quirky phrase so typical of Prokofiev which is then emulated on the piano. This is written in the old dance style of the bourrée.

11. The real inspiration for this project, the *Grand Waltz* is full of original clarinet solos. We open with three chords on the piano conjuring up the magical setting of the ballroom. The main waltz theme in the central section leads to a contemplative slow section in which the clarinet ends on a very high note and, in a cadenza-like episode, scurries down with an *accelerando* to the bottom register before bringing the waltz to a very satisfactory ending.

## **Romeo and Juliet**

12. *Juliet's Entrance*. Three melodies make up this depiction of the young Juliet, each one representing a different aspect of her character. In the original score the full orchestra takes the first theme, the clarinet the second and the tenor saxophone the third. Prorovich very cleverly joins all three melodies together

13. *Masks*. This steady march features the original jaunty clarinet theme and demands some virtuosic playing from the piano, worthy of any of Prokofiev's piano concertos.

14. *Dance of the Knights*. Otherwise known as *The Montagues and Capulets*, this movement depicts the dark and menacing tension between the two families. The contrasting dreamlike middle section sees the clarinet take the original high flute line before returning to the opening statement.

15. *Mercutio*. One of the most exciting fast dance numbers pushes the two instruments to their limits. The middle section, again, provides some relief before accelerating seamlessly back into the opening theme.

16. *Dance of the Girls with Lilies*. In this sombre procession we hear the original clarinet tune weave its way up to the high register. Interestingly, we end in the low register with the piano imitating the bass clarinet in the last few bars.

17. *Gavotte*. One of Prokofiev's most widely known compositions, this was borrowed from the third movement of his "Classical" symphony. The clarinet's range comes into its own here, providing the contrast needed.

18. *Street Scene*. This lively number in 2/4 time depicts the awakening of the town. A sudden change of tempo halfway through eventually slows down and brings us back to the opening speed. The excitement in this movement comes primarily from the rhythm rather than the melody.

19. *Letter Scene*. Prokofiev writes a very steady musical description of the Nurse and her character. In my version I steal the main melody usually played on the oboe.

20. *Adagio (Death of Tybalt)*. 15 very loud and shocking discords depicting the violent death of Tybalt precede the main dramatic yearning melody. The original scoring is for large orchestra at full volume, a hard act to follow for two players, but hopefully we capture the tension and drama nevertheless. This is not the final number in the ballet, but I think it brings some finality to the end of the suite.

## The Musicians

### IAN SCOTT

Ian is the principal clarinet of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, having previously held the same post with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon.

Born in Perth, Scotland, he studied initially with Charles Maynes, then with Henry Morrison at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, subsequently journeying to the University of Arizona to study with leading British clarinetist John Denman.

He has been a guest principal with all the major London orchestras, and appeared as soloist with I Solisti Veneti, the Izmir Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Concert Orchestra and the Gulbenkian Orchestra on tour in the Far East.

He has previously recorded British clarinet concertos for ASV White Line and Dutton Epoch, all featuring world premiere recordings. His most recent concerto disc, "From Russia", was released by Divine Art Records in 2021.

Ian plays on Peter Eaton Elite clarinets.



## JONATHAN HIGGINS

Jonathan studied at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music, winning all the major piano prizes. He subsequently pursued a freelance career making several BBC radio broadcasts and giving Promenade performances of Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1984) and Stravinsky's Les Noces (1987).

He first worked in ballet in 1983 in Basle and joined the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet in 1987 becoming principal pianist in the now Birmingham Royal Ballet in 1995 where he remained for 26 years.

Since 1999 he has taken part in the summer festival in Neuchatel, Switzerland, giving solo and chamber recitals.







Jonathan Higgins and Ian Scott at the recording session

Rehearsals in the costume department of Sadler's Wells Theatre, London



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Photo of Ian and Jonathan at the recording session: Ian Scott

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Arrangements (Copyright Control):

Tracks 1-4 arr. Prorvich

Tracks 5-11 arr. Scott/McMillan

Tracks 12-15 arr. Prorvich

Tracks 15-20 arr. Scott/McMillan

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