

# The University Musical Society

of  
The University of Michigan

*Presents*

## Leningrad Philharmonic

EVGENY MRAVINSKY, *Music Director*

GENNADY ROZHDESTVENSKY, *Conductor*

VIKTORIA POSTNIKOVA, *Pianist*

SATURDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1973, AT 8:30

HILL AUDITORIUM, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

### All-Prokofiev Program

Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100

Andante

Allegro marcato

Adagio

Allegro giocoso

INTERMISSION

Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra in G minor, Op. 16

Andantino; allegretto

Scherzo; vivace

Intermezzo; allegro moderato

Finale; allegro tempestoso

VIKTORIA POSTNIKOVA

Scythian Suite (*Ala and Lolli*) Op. 20

Adoration of Veles and Ala (allegro feroce)

The Evil-God and Dance of the Black Spirits (allegro sostenuto)

Night (andantino)

Glorious Departure of Lolli and the Procession of the Sun (tempestuoso)

*Vanguard, DGG, Everest, Monitor, and Parliament Records*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Symphony No. 5 in B-flat major, Op. 100

In an interview with Robert Magidoff, an account of which appeared in the *New York Times* in 1945, Prokofiev said of his Fifth Symphony that "It was a very important composition for me, since it marked my return to the symphonic form after a long interval—my Fourth Symphony was written in 1928. I regard the Fifth Symphony as a culmination of a large period of my creative life. I conceived it as a symphony on the greatness of the human spirit. When war broke out, I felt that everyone must do his share and I began composing songs, marches for the front. But soon events assumed such gigantic and far-reaching scope as to demand larger canvases. I wrote the Symphonic Suite 1941, reflecting my first impressions of the war. Then I wrote *War and Peace*. This opera was conceived before the war, but the war made it compelling for me to complete it. Following the opera I wrote the *Ballad of an Unknown Boy* for orchestra, choir, soprano, and dramatic tenor to the words of the poet, Pavel Antokolsky. Finally, I wrote my Fifth Symphony on which I had been working for several years, gathering themes for it in a special notebook. I always work that way and probably that is why I write so fast. The entire score of the Fifth was written in one month in the summer of 1944. It took another month to orchestrate it, and in between I wrote the score for Eisenstein's film, *Ivan the Terrible*." The place of composition was the composer's rest-home in a picturesque Russian village near Ivanovo. Prokofiev's companions that summer were Shostakovich, Miaskovsky, Khachaturian, and Kabalevsky.

The Fifth Symphony was first performed at a concert of Prokofiev's music in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on January 13, 1945. The composer conducted. It was immediately acclaimed as one of the most important phenomena of twentieth-century Russian symphonic writing.

For those listeners who have heard only this composer's witty Classical Symphony—his first—the present symphony may come as something of a surprise, for here is a work cast in epic proportions.

### Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra in G minor, Op. 16\*

Unfortunately we probably can never know how the Second Concerto sounded at its first performance, for the original score was lost. The present version was "reconstructed" by the composer ten years later, and first performed with Prokofiev as soloist at the Concerts Koussevitzky in Paris in 1924. As we hear the work today, its occasional harmonic harshnesses are so few and far between that, barring the possibility that Prokofiev toned down the Concerto in his reconstruction, it is almost impossible to imagine that it once sounded wild and chaotic.

*Andantino, Allegretto, Andantino.* The first movement opens with a long lyric piano solo in a vein that seems to us today very romantic and close to Rachmaninoff, for example. The first measures present the principal theme, marked *narrante* and suggesting a leisurely, bardic style.

After the solo presentation of this material, the woodwinds take up the melody and pursue it in dialogue with the piano. There is a momentary contrast with a livelier rhythm and a dryer, more astringent thematic line which, however, is related to the principal theme. The latter soon returns and in fact dominates the whole first movement. About halfway through, the pianist launches into a long cadenza-like passage which is extended to include a development section and recapitulation. The orchestra is kept discreetly in the background until the very end of the movement.

*Scherzo: vivace.* The tiny second movement is all glittering scales and mechanical figurations for the piano. It has strong driving power and comes to a swift, surprising end.

*Intermezzo: allegro moderato.* This movement opens with a heavy *ostinato* figure: Pitted against raucous, sustained tones of the brass, this produces a touch of what may have been considered "primitivism" by shocked members of the Concerto's early audience. Midway through the movement, there are passages of more tranquil melody and reminiscences of the first movement.

*Allegro tempestoso.* The finale is a bravura piece with brilliant octave passages and giant skips which became characteristic of Prokofiev's more vigorous piano style. There is a contrasting section with a long piano solo in a gentle rocking rhythm. The orchestra joins the piano in this characteristic motion which is then built to a big climax followed by a cadenza and a return to the *Allegro tempestoso* of the opening.

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\*Program note by Edward Downes for the New York Philharmonic. Used by permission.

## Scythian Suite, Op. 20\*

Sergei Diaghilev (1872– 1929), creator and director of the famous Russian Ballet in Paris, was responsible for many of the dance works written in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Prokofiev met Diaghilev in London in 1914 and was asked to prepare a ballet based either on a Russian fairy tale or a prehistoric theme. Prokofiev selected the latter, and, with the aid of the poet, Sergei Gorodetsky, set to work on the ballet-pantomime *Ala and Lolli*.

The setting for the ballet was the legendary country of Scythia, located by the ancient historian Herodotus as lying in the southeastern section of Europe between the Carpathian mountains and what is now the Don River (a region close to the one in which Prokofiev grew up). The Scythians were said to be a fierce, nomadic race who kept livestock, lived in tent-covered wagons, and fought with bows and arrows on horseback. They worshipped many deities, chief among whom were Veles (the Sun) and Ala (daughter of Veles) .

The piano score of the ballet, completed at the close of 1914, was shown to Diaghilev who quickly rejected the idea as being unsuited for the dance. It was then that Prokofiev decided to revamp the music into an orchestral suite. The basic plot of the ballet may be reduced from the description of each of the four movements.

I. Adoration of Veles and Ala (*Allegro feroce*)—An invocation to Veles, followed by a sacrifice to Ala.

II. The Evil-God and Dance of the Black Spirits (*allegro sostenuto*)—A frenetic diabolical dance by the monstrous Evil-God, who is surrounded by the seven pagan monsters he has summoned from the netherworld.

III. Night (*andantino*)—The Evil-God attacks Ala in the dark of night and brings her harm before the moon maidens descend to comfort her.

IV. Glorious departure of Lolli and the Procession of the Sun (*tempestuoso*)—The Scythian hero, Lolli, sets forth to save Ala. He is no match for the Evil-God, however, and would have been overcome but for the intercession of the Sun-God, who smites the evil deity. Sunrise comes like a benediction.

The music, like Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* is a powerful evocation of pagan rites and legends. It is splendidly barbaric, filled with exultation, terror and vitality.

\*Program note by Sam di Bonaventura for the Baltimore Symphony. Used by permission.

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The Leningrad Philharmonic presents a second concert tomorrow afternoon at 2:30

with

THE FESTIVAL CHORUS of the UNIVERSITY CHORAL UNION  
JOY DAVIDSON, *Mezzo-soprano*  
NEEME JARVI, *Conductor*

### Program

Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44  
(Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth)

Prokofiev: *Alexander Nevsky*, A cantata for Mezzo-soprano,  
Chorus and Orchestra, Op. 78, sung in Russian.

## COMING EVENTS

- LENINGRAD PHILHARMONIC . . . . . Sunday, 2:30, November 4  
Rachmaninoff: Symphony No. 3; Prokofieff: "Alexander Nevsky" cantata, with the Festival Chorus and Joy Davidson, mezzo-soprano
- ABREU BROTHERS, *Guitarists* . . . . . Wednesday, 8:30, November 7  
First concert of Guitar Series, followed by Narciso Yepes, November 28, Carlos Barbosa-Lima, February 2; Romero Quartet, March 20. Limited series tickets still available.
- BUDAPEST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA . . . . . Saturday, 8:30, November 10  
GYORGY LEHEL, *Conductor*; GYORGY SANDOR, *Pianist*  
Debussy: Two Nocturnes; Beethoven: Symphony No. 1; Szöllösy: Musica per Orchestra;  
Bartók: Piano Concerto No. 3
- THE LITTLE ANGELS . . . . . Sunday, 3:00, November 11  
National Folk Ballet of Korea
- TEL AVIV STRING QUARTET . . . . . Wednesday, 8:30, November 14  
with YONA ETLINGER, *Clarinetist*  
Bartók: Quartet No. 3; Mozart: Clarinet Quintet; Schubert: Quartet in G major, Op. 161
- MODERN JAZZ QUARTET . . . . . Thursday, 8:00, November 15  
(piano, vibraharp, bass, drums)
- MARTINA ARROYO, *Soprano* . . . . . Monday, 8:30, November 19  
Songs by Stradella, Gluck, Handel, Fauré, de Falla
- NARCISO YEPES, *Guitarist* . . . . . Wednesday, 8:30, November 28
- HANDEL'S "MESSIAH" . . . . . Friday, 8:30, November 30;  
Saturday, 8:30, December 1; Sunday, 2:30, December 2  
For over ninety years, the University Choral Union has presented the "Messiah" in celebration of the Christmas season. Donald Bryant conducts the 350-voice chorus, members of the Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra, and soloists RUTH FALCON, *soprano*, MURIEL GREENSPON, *contralto*, JOHN SANDOR, *tenor*, and SAVERIO BARBIERI, *bass*.
- KRASNAVYARSK SIBERIAN DANCERS . . . . Saturday, 3:00 and 8:00, December 1

Tickets on sale at Burton Memorial Tower—telephone 665-3717

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The University Musical Society relies on public support in order to maintain the scope and artistic quality of these programs. Tax-deductible contributions to our Gift Program are welcome.