



NORTHSTAR
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SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Symphonies Nos. 2 & 4 (second version)

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra

James Gaffigan



SUPER AUDIO CD

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SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891 - 1953)

Symphony No. 2, Op. 40 in D Minor (1925)

[1] Allegro ben articolato	11:26
[2] Theme: Andante	1:50
[3] Variation 1: L'istesso tempo	2:23
[4] Variation 2: Allegro non troppo	2:45
[5] Variation 3: Allegro	2:06
[6] Variation 4: Larghetto	5:29
[7] Variation 5: Allegro con brio	2:43
[8] Variation 6: Allegro moderato	4:36
[9] Theme	1:55

Symphony No. 4 (Second Version), Op. 112 In C Major (1947)

[10] Andante – Allegro eroico	12:37
[11] Andante tranquillo	9:28
[12] Moderato, quasi allegretto	5:46
[13] Allegro risoluto	10:25

total time 73:36

Symphony No. 2, Op. 40 in D Minor (1925)

The Dutch composer, music journalist and novelist Elmer Schönberger once described the Second Symphony as a sub-genre – of a primarily psychological nature, albeit with considerable stylistic consequences: in a first symphony, a composer will more or less reflect the traditions from which he comes, and in a second he will deliberately break away from them. Schönberger's two most prominent examples (Prokofiev and Roussel) are very well chosen to illuminate this. Prokofiev's First Symphony (dating from 1917) is a paragon of neo-classicism and a work that gained its composer considerable fame and a certain image. By contrast, the Second, from eight years later, appears to be a defiant ode to the modern era, witnessed by the layers of mechanically persistent rhythms, expressionist harmonies, ostensibly unfathomable forms and its very expansive take on tonality. The phrases often seem elliptical, with no harmonic preparation for the transitions.

But just as the First Symphony is not entirely classical, so the Second is not entirely modernist. The phrasing is generally imbued with a classical sensitivity to tension and relaxation, despite the many changes of metre and key, and Prokofiev also had a classical example in mind for the overall form: Beethoven's last piano sonata, opus 111, in two movements. The first movement is rapid and agitated, in modified sonata form, while the second is a theme with variations. The textures here become increasingly hectic until, just before the end, after the final variation and a repetition of the theme, dissonance in the coda brings the symphony to an ambiguous conclusion.

The work was premiered in Paris in 1925, conducted by Serge Koussevitsky, to whom it is dedicated, and was a fiasco. According to the composer neither the audience nor the conductor understood anything about the work. This is Prokofiev's only 'absolute' composition from these years, among a variety of programmatic compositions. In this symphony, he seems to be making no attempt to write a work with any narrative character, but is rather seeking a conscious departure from his narrative style. For many who heard the work, the piece confirmed Prokofiev's image as an incomprehensible modernist, in a single breath akin to Stravinsky (with the capricious rhythms) and at the same time the Second Viennese School of Berg, Schoenberg and Webern (with the atonal harmonic structures). None of the known reviews associates the work with Prokofiev's Russian background. The work was performed a few times after its premiere, but never became a great success. Shortly before his death, Prokofiev decided to revise the symphony (he already had an opus number – 138 – up his sleeve for the revised version), but never got around to completing this exercise.

Emanuel Overbeeke

Translation: Bruce Gordon/Muse Translations

Symphony No. 4 (Second Version), Op. 112 In C Major (1947)

Prokofiev decided to revise his Fourth Symphony, Op. 47, after the successful premieres of his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies (in January 1945 and December 1947 respectively). He had written the work just before his decision to return to the country of his birth, and was also undergoing a change in his compositional style. In 1933, while living in Paris, he had bought a second home in Moscow, which was to become his main home in 1936. Then, from 1939, he was no longer allowed to leave the USSR.

The revision dealt with a number of matters. The original four movements remained largely intact, but the changes say a great deal about his style at that point. The first alteration was to insert or expand some passages that were predominantly reflective, with a strong emphasis on melody. One example of this is the insertion of a new theme in the first movement, starting with a resolute C major chord.

Another example is the attempt to align the scale more closely with what was required by Social Realism, in which the neo-classical is overlaid with a considerable dose of heroism and sometimes even bombast. What this actually boils down to is a greater emphasis on the serious and dramatic elements, perhaps at the expense of those passages where refinement in sound and rhythm might detract from an atmosphere of resolution and heroism.

The revision of the third movement gave the composer the most headaches, as this movement had been transplanted into the original version of the symphony, in virtually unaltered form, from the composer's ballet *The Prodigal Son*. Ultimately, Prokofiev opted for a new introduction and coda, while also

adding details to emphasise the classical proportions. So that the finale would conform more closely to the artistic demands expected by the authorities, he added a slow passage in the first half, a somewhat carnivalesque episode midway through and then a contrasting coda, sounding even more solemn after the carnival, to draw the work to a close. The energetically dance-like nature of the conclusion (even described by some as a 'can-can') provides an extra flourish to bring the work to a close.

The revision also marked a significant break for the composer away from his 'Western' predilection for major, unexpected digressions. One of his first Soviet biographers, Nestiev, wrote on this topic that the composer had not yet entirely distanced himself from the 'chill' and 'intellectualism' that had been so typical of his work in Paris. This anticipated the Communist Party's condemnation of the music of Prokofiev, Shostakovich and others in 1948, for formalism and modernism. The work was not premiered in Russia until 1959, long after the death of Prokofiev and Stalin (both of whom died on 5 March 1953), although the world premiere had been already given in 1950 by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. The association of op. 112 with Social Realism subsequently proved to be an obstacle to its acceptance in the West, while at the same time the Communists did all they could to trivialise the value of the 'Western' original version, Opus 47. Few reputations changed as much as Prokofiev's during the 20th century. During his years in the West, he was far too modern for conservatives and far too traditional for modernists; Stravinsky and the Dutch composer Willem Pijper felt that his forms were naive. During his Soviet years, he was regarded as predominantly traditional by everyone in the West. Nowadays, his work is seen to embody the symbiosis of modernity and classicism. And the Soviet arguments against Prokofiev and Shostakovich from 1948 have much in common with the criticism of Western modernism by Western

anti-modernists from around 1980. These anti-modernists applauded the music of the 'modernist' Shostakovich more enthusiastically than that of the much more modernist Prokofiev!

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.radiofilharmonischerkest.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



Executive producer: Anne de Jong

Recorded at: Studio 5, Muziekcentrum van de Omroep, Hilversum, The Netherlands

Recording dates: Symphony 2 – 23-25 August 2016 - Symphony 4 – 2-4 March 2015

Recording: Northstar Recording Services BV

Recording producer, balance engineer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf

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Translations: Bruce Gordon/Muse Translations

Booklet editing: Boudewijn Hagemans

Cover photo: Juan Carlos Villarroel

Product coordination: Boudewijn Hagemans

Graphic Design: Natasja Wallenburg & Juan Carlos Villarroel, newartsint.com

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