

Ключевые слова

Прокофьев, критическое издание собрания сочинений, «Ромео и Джульетта», «Золушка», «Каменный цветок», «Вещи в себе», Восьмая соната для фортепиано, Янкелевич, Магритт, Кржижановский.

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Прокофьев: размышления в связи с годовщиной и обоснование необходимости нового критического издания собрания сочинений

Key Words

Prokofiev, critical edition, Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, The Stone Flower, Things in Themselves, Eighth Piano Sonata, Jankélévitch, Magritte, Krzhizhanovsky.

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Prokofiev: Reflections on an Anniversary, And A Plea for a New Critical Edition

Abstract

This article looks at how censorship affected Prokofiev's later Soviet works and in certain instances concealed his creative intentions. In the first half I discuss the changes imposed on his three Soviet ballets; in the second half I consider his little-known, pre-Soviet *Things in Themselves* and what these two piano pieces reveal about his creative outlook in general. I also address his Eighth Piano Sonata in this context. Prokofiev, I argue, thought of his music as abstract, pure, even when he attached it to words and choreographies. A new Prokofiev critical edition would peel away the layers of censorship to ascertain how his original thoughts changed, under different kinds of influence. This is more than a question of historical fidelity, but instead a matter of aesthetic urgency, one that relates to the Prokofiev celebrations held last year across the Russian Federation and elsewhere in 2016.

Аннотация

В настоящей статье рассматривается влияние цензуры на позднее советское творчество Прокофьева. В первой половине статьи речь идет об изменениях, которые Прокофьеву пришлось внести в свои балеты советского периода. Во второй половине я рассматриваю его малоизвестные, созданные еще до переезда в СССР «Вещи в себе» и показываю, какие общие выводы позволяют сделать эти две фортепианные пьесы относительно творческих установок композитора. В этом контексте я обращаюсь также к его Восьмой фортепианной сонате. По моему убеждению, Прокофьев мыслил свою музыку как абстрактное, «чистое» искусство даже в тех случаях, когда связывал ее со словом и хореографией. Новое критическое издание сочинений Прокофьева должно очистить его творчество от наслоений, обусловленных цензурой, и выявить его первоначальные идеи, подвергшиеся всевозможным модификациям под воздействием разнообразных факторов. Речь идет не только о восстановлении исторической правды, но и об актуальнейшей проблеме эстетического порядка, непосредственно связанной с прокофьевской годовщиной, которая отмечалась в 2016 году в России и за ее рубежами.

Readers of this journal will know that last year marked the 125th anniversary of Sergey Prokofiev's birth. It was a great year for him and his music: new books on Prokofiev were published along with CDs, and DVDs, plus concerts and exhibitions were organized throughout the Russian Federation and elsewhere. Mikhail Brizgalov, CEO of the Glinka National Museum Consortium of Musical Culture, and his staff, including the intrepid Nataliya Emelina and Irina Belaya, organized three days of events in St. Petersburg celebrating Prokofiev as part of an international cultural forum. The composer's grandson Gabriel, himself a prominent composer, traveled from London to Moscow and St. Petersburg to participate in panel discussions, adjudicate a composition competition, host a Prokofiev-themed cabaret evening, and present some of his own music.

Prokofiev's other anniversaries have been sadder affairs, owing to political and historical events beyond his control. 2016 tried to make up for it. Perhaps the celebration will continue, as Brizgalov has proposed, in the form of an electronic database of Prokofiev resources, one that brings together the collections at the Glinka Museum, the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), and Columbia University in New York to the benefit of researchers. I know that this is something the three archives in question would like to see happen, along with the publishers of Prokofiev's music.

Yet isn't all of Prokofiev's music already available to us? It would appear so, but appearances can be deceptive. Alternate versions of his ballets and operas, lesser-known folksong arrangements, unpublished childhood piano pieces, occasional works like *Fizkul'turnaya muzika*, or *Music for Athletes*, and some partial drafts—so much music, in recent years, has received its premiere. For those interested in such rarities as the opera he composed as a child, *Velikan (The Giant)*, and its relationship to famous works like *Romeo and Juliet*, an excerpt can be viewed online.¹

¹ <https://mariinsky.tv/969-en>.

A few years ago, the Glinka Museum unveiled the extant scene of *Dalëkiye morya (Distant Seas)*. Valery Gergiev has conducted both the original and revised versions of *The Gambler*, and Louisiana State University presented the surviving fragments of Prokofiev's Bach-inspired Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra at a Prokofiev celebration organized at the start of last year. The inchoate Tenth Piano Sonata has been performed in Paris with the all-important permission of the composer's estate. With the exception of the sketches of Prokofiev's opera *Khan Buzai*, and some arcane incidental pieces like the "Sokol March" he wrote as a teenager in St. Petersburg,² most of Prokofiev's music has been performed; even those drafts of things that he himself did not see fit to hear have been aired. Little is unknown, except, it would seem, for the truly preliminary materials, like the abandoned original verses for *How Pioneer Peter Caught the Wolf*, better known, as Prokofiev wanted, by its de-politicized title *Peter and the Wolf*. Some of his agitprop songs are hard to track down, but inspired, energetic musicological detectives can find them. One such detective is the Shostakovich expert Laurel Fay, who located, in a Glasgow Library, the first edition of Prokofiev's "Song of the Motherland" in the 1939 collection called *Songs of Heavy Industry*.³

Still, I maintain that everything could be better known, and in different ways. For those hoping to obtain a copy of the score of the 1943 film *Tonya*, directed by Abram Room to music by Prokofiev, there is alas none to be found. RGALI has a copy of the draft manuscript, but the score used to make the film, and the orchestral and vocal parts that went with it, are missing. (In truth, not much effort has been put into finding these materials.) Like the conductor's scores of *Lermontov*, filmed in Moscow in the Detfil'm studios, and *Alexander Nevsky*, produced by Mosfil'm, the conductor's score of *Tonya* is unavailable. *Tonya* was filmed and edited but never publically released. Thus the best the hopeful listener can do is order up the manuscript held at RGALI and compare it to the sounds heard on the print of the film. Supposedly *Tonya* can be rented from Prokofiev's publishers in the United States and Europe, but there is in fact no actual score to rent. Such is also the case with Prokofiev's first film project, *Lieutenant Kizhe*. We have the film, and the suite arranged from the soundtrack, but not the soundtrack itself in manuscript.

Likewise Prokofiev's manuscripts from his adolescence in St. Petersburg and first years in the West suffered various fates: abandonment,

² See Arkadiy Klimovitsky, "Sergey Prokofiev and Yuriy Tyulin: Several Unknown Subjects," *Three Oranges: Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 28 (January 2015): 2-13.

³ See Sergey Prokof'ev, "Pesnya o Rodine," in *Pesni tyazhelyy industrii* (Moscow: Industriya, 1930), 22-32.

in the case of the first version of the Second Piano Concerto; sales to private collectors (the Fourth Piano Concerto); and incineration in Berlin during the war. The Soviet operas and ballets survive, but in bowdlerized form, proof that Prokofiev had fooled himself into believing that his return to Russia in the mid-1930s would allow him to compose more or less as he liked, so long as he produced, when asked, the right kind of political pieces for the right kind of political occasions. His three Soviet ballets offer up a case in point.

First the ballets.⁴ Shortly before his 1936 repatriation, Prokofiev was contracted by Vladimir Mutnikh, director of the Bolshoi Theater, to compose the ballet score *Romeo and Juliet* with dramatist Adrian Piotrovsky and the director Sergey Radlov. The composer hoped to push dance and pantomime to the background and foreground real life such that, in the original scenario, the drama between the Montagues and Capulets is interrupted by a Soviet May Day parade. Prokofiev also devised a happy ending whereby the young lovers escape into a cosmic elsewhere.

The plan was to premiere Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* during the 1936-37 season. But Mutnikh, who had come to the directorship of the Bolshoi from the Central House of the Red Army, died a victim of the purges. His arrest and execution put the staging of Prokofiev's ballet on hold, since anything associated with an arrested cultural official was considered contaminated. Moreover, the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, involving a potion thought to be poison, a stabbing, and class conflict, could not possibly be produced in 1937, the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution.

To see the ballet performed, Prokofiev had to jettison the happy ending, the long divertissement of exotic dances, the jarring harmonic shifts, and the ironic juxtapositions of numbers (the exotic divertissement follows the scene of Juliet taking poison, for example) that had convinced the censors Prokofiev was not taking the task of composing a ballet to Shakespeare seriously. Owing to the censorship of the score, Prokofiev forfeited, among other things, the music for the dance of Antilles maidens, which was to have been part of a mock "Ballets des nations" sequence in the third act. Between 1938 and 1940, Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* was transformed into a *drambalet*, a genre as much about mime as dance, so that a work that had meant to challenge balletic conventions ended up reinforcing them.

During the Soviet phase of the Second World War, Prokofiev received a commission for another ballet, *Cinderella*, which reached the stage on November 21, 1945. The scenario, crafted by the versatile, talented

⁴ The following information is adapted from Simon Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: 4th Estate, 2016), 258-329.

dramatist Nikolay Volkov, is exquisite, and the official censors of Glavrepertkom found nothing wrong with it. *Cinderella* was, allegorically, a perfect Soviet nationalist ballet, just as the *Cinderella* staged at the Bolshoi in the 1830s had been a perfect tsarist nationalist ballet, with a heroine an enduring symbol of Mother Russia no longer willing to be a maidservant to Europe. Her years of neglect and disrespect had come to an end through the defeat of Napoleon in the nineteenth century, Hitler in the twentieth.

Prokofiev, the choreographer Rostislav Zakharov, and the rest of the creative team agonized over details as trifling as the toothache suffered by one of the cobblers. The crown worn by the Prince was a sticking point: It looked monastic to some, fanciful to others, but all agreed it had no place in a Soviet *Cinderella*. Zakharov made clear that he respected the richness of the classical traditions but would not allow his dances to drift into abstraction. He explained that his first task was to listen closely to the music, then fill the ballet with action. He wanted to ensure that the dancing, including the *fouetté* turns he had in mind for his heroine, elucidated the central concept of triumph over adversity. As a result, Prokofiev's music was amplified, bolstered, the dreamlike textures eliminated, and the brasses made more exultant. The composer lost one of his mazurkas along with a scene that featured the Prince roaming the African subcontinent in search of the woman who had worn the glass slipper. The final ballet merited a spectacular command performance on December 23, 1945, before two thousand foreign diplomats in Moscow busy negotiating the postwar world order.

Yet changes to the scenario, score, and even the decor drained the magic from *Cinderella*. It became a morality play not just about the war, but also about a working-class victim who overcomes her upper-class oppressors. At least the heroine transcends the strictures of *drambalet*. Her stepmother lives only in pantomime, and the lumpy stepsisters are also unable to dance. Cinderella's glory shines in the court dances of the ballroom scene where she is free to move, to feel. Mercifully, we have the manuscript of the original version of this score, and the Prokofiev Foundation provided funding to RGALI for its restoration, since the original, written on different types of paper during the war, was in decay. This restored score could be, should be, the basis for a new critical edition.

By the time Prokofiev began work on his third Soviet ballet, *The Tale of the Stone Flower* ("Skaz o kamennom tsvetke"), the Iron Curtain had closed across the continent. The story was drawn from a prize-winning collection of tales native to the Ural Mountains, collected by Pavel Bazhov and published under the title *The Malachite Casket* ("Malakhitovaya shkatulka"). The Mistress of the Copper Mountain guards a cache of fabulous jewels and stones buried beneath the rugged terrain. The hero is a

stonecutter, an artist-laborer obsessed with chiseling a dazzlingly lifelike flower out of malachite for his betrothed; the villain is a corrupt bailiff doomed to be entombed in the core of the mountain at the Mistress's command. The symbolism might seem opaque—Mother Earth subdues the lawless outback within the dark, deep context of the mining folklore of the 19th-century Russian interior—but it comes down to good versus evil and even art versus life. This is the one and only time that Prokofiev created a score with an artist as a hero. This artist shapes and reshapes objects from clay, seeking the divine perfection of organic inorganicism, a stone flower.

Even so, the ballet was meant to be less ruminative, in this philosophical sense, than broadly entertaining. Together with the wild trio of gypsies who take over the central market scene, the death of the bad guy was intended as a tremendous *coup de théâtre*, accompanied by the copper instruments of the orchestra and illuminated in glistening malachite green. In concept and realization, *The Stone Flower* suggested an alchemical project, with everyone involved seeking a magical artistic and political formula to make ballet an exciting adventure again.

That did not happen. Ideologues imposed changes on the plot, then on the music, and finally on the choreography, yoking the ballet to socialist realism. Choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky recalled his miseries with the censors. “Prokofiev and I brought our libretto to Glavrepertkom over and over again, endlessly, and they told us: yours is a love triangle; please make it about labor. We rewrote it fifteen times, pared the romance, making it about real life, showing labor. We put it on the stage. But during this time attitudes began to change, and even our own interpretation of the subject. And they said: we don't need this.”⁵ There followed the familiar complaints about the music from the artistic and political council. It was bleak, it lacked emotion, the rhythms tripped up the dancers.

Prokofiev never quite understood the situation he found himself in under Stalin, and so refused to be part of it. Accused in 1948 of the vague musical crime of formalism, he believed that if he changed this or that the charges would be dismissed and his works would be staged. But his castigation was not a problem to be solved. Stalinism resisted revision. In the opinion of Prokofiev's nemesis Tikhon Khrennikov, the head of the Union of Soviet Composers, everything Prokofiev composed, *propaganda ili net*, bore some ineradicable stain.

The Stone Flower eventually made it to the stage in 1954, a year after Prokofiev's death, and was panned. That the choreographer Lavrovsky was out of favor with cultural officials at the time did not help, but in truth it

⁵ Ibid., 323.

was an enfeebled ballet. The music ended up being stitched together out of bits and pieces of other scores by Prokofiev and the musical hangers-on in his life. It has never been performed in anything close to the intentions the composer and his second wife Mira had for it when they drafted, and re-drafted, the scenario.

Hence my plea for a new critical edition that will peel away the layers of censorship to find out what the composer intended for his music at the start, then show how those original thoughts changed, under different kinds of influence. This is more than a question of historical fidelity, but instead a matter of aesthetic urgency, one that relates to the Prokofiev celebrations held last year across the Russian Federation and elsewhere. Prokofiev thought of his music as abstract, pure, even when he attached it to words and choreographic gestures. A critical edition could catalogue (and strip away) the layers of Soviet sediment to reveal Prokofiev's initial creative impulses.

Prokofiev's aesthetic orientation is clear in two pieces for piano in 1928, titled *Things in Themselves* (*Veshchi v sebe*). The classical music website *Belcanto.ru* provides the essential details of this composition.⁶ The author of the entry, V. Del'son, notes the five years of silence, in terms of works for piano, preceding Prokofiev's the creation of his *Things in Themselves*; three years of silence, in terms of writing for piano, then followed. This was a period of transition, a stylistic “crossroads” representing the search for a “new simplicity,” a pivot comparable to Aaron Copland's later “imposed simplicity,”⁷ but with more idiosyncratic features, a specific Prokofievan imprint. Del'son argues that the music cannot be interpreted as modernist in the “nihilistic” sense, nor can a “nationalist principle” be detected within it. Instead, *Things in Themselves* has a “nobler” neoclassical bearing, he writes, compared to the “graphic” experimentalism of, for example, Prokofiev's pianistic *Sarcasms*.⁸

In his short *Autobiography*, Prokofiev claimed introspection as inspiration. The opus reflected a turning inward. “Along with the [Third] Symphony,” the composer explains, “I worked on two rather large pieces for the piano where I permitted myself to indulge in a little musical introspection, without trying to come up with an easily graspable form for the content. (Although I am by no means trying to defend this approach, I felt that, have written a number of lightly accessible pieces, I could in this instance compose something for myself.) The pieces became *Veshchi v sebe*, opus 45. The first and longer piece has a lot of thematic material,

⁶ http://www.belcanto.ru/prokofiev_things.html.

⁷ See Elizabeth B. Crist, *Music for the Common Man: Aaron Copland During the Depression and War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5–6.

⁸ http://www.belcanto.ru/prokofiev_things.html.

quite diatonic in places and not too complicated, or so it seemed to me at the time. The second has two features, chromatic and lyrical, the latter heard three times in variation. Unfortunately the title of the work engendered the wrong impression, suggesting an abstract, pure game with the notes. Reading the title, noticing the complexities of certain places, some people didn't bother trying to understand the music itself. One and the same composer can, after all, conceive something both complicated and simple. Case in point: the second volume of Beethoven's sonatas. No one could argue that the simpler sonatas in this edition are better or worse than the complicated ones. So the darts so often tossed at *Veshchi v sebe* tend to miss the mark; the criticism is based on a false assumption, a misunderstanding of the matter at hand.⁹

Those people who "didn't bother trying to understand the music itself" perhaps refers to the likes of Soviet musicologist Isaïl Nest'yev. In Nest'yev's formulation, the period preceding Prokofiev's return to Russia was marked by disappointment: success in opera had eluded him, and his experience with the Ballets Russes was decidedly mixed. Prokofiev had supposedly succumbed to modernist formalist decadence, but could not best his expat rivals like Igor Stravinsky. He could not countenance the surrealistic "lifestyle modernism" of Frances Poulenc,¹⁰ the neoclassicism of Maurice Ravel, or the impressionism/symbolism of the older Claude Debussy; nor had he been able to compete, on the American virtuoso concert circuit, with Serge Rachmaninoff. Only Russia, and socialist realism, saved him, or so the Soviet story goes.

But what of the *Things in Themselves* in themselves? What of the title itself? The obvious reference is to Arthur Schopenhauer, whom Prokofiev read as a precocious adolescent, and who used the term *Ding an sich* to describe the realm of essences, of noumena, which exists beyond empirical perception. The language comes from Immanuel Kant, whom Schopenhauer critiqued, and it proposes that "empirical perception actually is and remains our mere representation; it is the world as representation." Sensation, it follows, is "undeniably subjective." Elsewhere, Schopenhauer asserts that "what objects may be in themselves . . . remains completely unknown to us." They are, in this understanding, "transcendent."¹¹

Suppose that Prokofiev, in Paris in 1928, had this in mind. How could he connote a condition of transcendent perception? Of an immaterial

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 98ff.

¹¹ <https://skeps.wordpress.com/2007/06/29/forthcoming-schopenhauers-critique-of-kant-ii-the-ding-an-sich/>

elsewhere? Indulging in inexcusable gendered clichés, David Nice speculates on the matter, proposing that the second of the *Things in Themselves* is "a kind of feminine response to the masculine energy of the first" and, as such, "is perhaps the more spellbinding."¹² Less binary structures are at play within these pieces. The C-major andante theme of the second piece is interrupted by a capricious, scherzo figure, then displaced upon its return upward twice by half step, moving from C major to D-flat major to D major. The score opens up as the original, essential C major is lost in the tonal mists. Something similar happens in the first piece of the *Things in Themselves*. There, a lyrical passage in B major, which follows a passage of "dolorous" chromaticism, is supplanted by an "accumulation of more elaborate textures."¹³ For Nice, the melodic content must somehow be the thing itself, which makes the rest of the music... what? Mere representation?

My preference, which better accords with the ideals of modernism, would be the opposite. Texture and timbre—not melody or pitch—constitute the "ineffable" attributes of music, to invoke Vladimir Jankélévitch. These elements free us from discussing cause-and-effect formal-functional relationships, narrative interpretation, hermeneutic guessing. In referring to Jankélévitch, I am conscious of the fact that he disliked *Things in Themselves*, describing them in terms that Nest'yev, not to mention Prokofiev's occasional antagonists Dmitriy Kabelevsky and Semyon Shlifshteyn, would have appreciated. For Jankélévitch, Prokofiev's opus 45 consists of nothing more, and nothing less, than "abstract sonorous combinations, formal and arid." He proposes that Prokofiev "was seeking a pure musical object without passing through the deforming a priori of affective psychology."¹⁴ Musicologists have expressed much affection for Jankélévitch over the past few years for his privileging of the "drastic" elements of music over the "gnostic" ones.¹⁵ And in Prokofiev's *Things in Themselves* we could have, if we want, a superb example of content-free content. It is all-drastic all of the time. There are suggestions of form, and possible allusions to other compositions, but this synergistic slab of suggestion is about synergism as such, synergism itself.

There may a better context for Prokofiev's abstraction than Schopenhauer, an understanding drawn not merely from philosophy but also from the visual arts. Consider the Belgian artist René Magritte, whose

¹² David Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 257.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 33.

¹⁵ See, for the original impulse, Carolyn Abbate, "Music – Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30:3 (2004): 505-36.

works from the late 1920s provide a kind of primer on semiotics. (*Things in Themselves* actually received its premiere in Belgium.) Magritte endeavored to “paint representation.”¹⁶ He addressed signification as such, how signs operate, and what happens when the relationship between signifier and signified is uncoupled. In his painting *The Threshold of Freedom* from 1929, a cannon is trained on images of clouds and wooden windows and a female torso. The idea, to quote one expert on the subject, is to “blast signs into oblivion and encounter unmediated things in themselves.”¹⁷ The painting has a sensual dimension, fixating as it does on the textures of flesh and wood and vapor, but stresses textures as exchangeable, not specific. The grain of the wood feels like to rub of bare skin. Later in his career Magritte began to place words in “blobs,” oval shapes that float above the ground but nonetheless have the ground, and shadow, as point of reference. One of the words is “cloud,” so the oval shape surrounding it makes sense. Another is “horse” – no sense, non sense.¹⁸

So if Prokofiev’s task was to present music as music, sound as sound apart from semantics, how, then, might we describe these *Things in Themselves*?

If the first movement has a form, it is a rondo, but one that most pianists cannot perform without banging, *con brio*. Prokofiev gives us a sense of the model by sketching a kind of spatial outline that makes us aware of the form qua form. But perhaps the music does not have a form, only the image of one, only the echoes in our own imaginary of a form. Whereas form is defined by repetition and recall, perhaps here the thought is to stress the separate and distinct, the discrete. Form as defined by function is obliterated, together with narrative, in favor of the material. The banging comes from an instrument made of wood and wire, a percussive object, a machine meant to bang. The opening of the movement comprises, for the most part, spare lines. There is no depth to the sound; it harkens back, on the one hand, to the rumbling, rattling figurations of Prokofiev’s opus 11 *Toccata*, but also indulges Bachian counterpoint amid insistent iterations of scale segments and jagged intervals. The harmonies, once presented, are left to fend for themselves without a clear sense of key or even, as the banging increases, pitch. Space opens up, but reveals a kind of hollowness in the first of the movements.

In the second movement, the opposite occurs. The three *andante* passages reveal a tune of five-star loveliness, but its outline becomes blurred, scumbled by chromaticism. This effect is most apparent in the

¹⁶ <https://courses.washington.edu/hypertext/cgi-bin/book/wordsinimages/magritte.html>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

second of the iterations of this theme, where the sixteenth note figures in the middle lines create a shimmering effect. The background is blurred as the theme is given a close up. The music is in D flat, but in a clever, estranging trick, the phrase reaches its highest point in an octatonic array built on G-sharp, the enharmonic equivalent of the “dominant” pitch of A flat.

Prokofiev showed this music to Sergei Diaghilev, who told him that he ought to bring out the theme more, to write in a “simpler,” “softer and more tender” fashion.¹⁹ Then Diaghilev reminded the composer that he had a contract to fulfill for a ballet on a subject taken from the bible, the tale of the prodigal son. There the connection between innocence and experience is obvious; there, too, Diaghilev convinced Prokofiev to get the noise, the banging, out of his music and stick to melodicism. The lovely tune became part of the ending of Prokofiev’s ballet *The Prodigal Son*. The theme is subject to chromatic manipulation, representing a protagonist subject to forces beyond his will, but it is indeed simpler. Distillations and dilutions of the tune appear in other Prokofiev compositions: the Fifth Piano Concerto, for one example, and Prokofiev’s first Soviet ballet, for another. The thing in itself became, in variation, Juliet’s C-Major expression of innocence.

So is the melody the thing itself, the music? Or does the noise, sound per se, represent the *Ding an sich*? Or does the entire attempt to point to something in the music and say, “There it is!” float away like the thought-bubbles in Magritte’s paintings? Prokofiev, the enfant terrible turned socialist realist, never quite resolved this question in his own mind.

Yelena Krivtsova argues that opus 45 is about Prokofiev’s creative personae. The two movements are likened to the two halves of his career, which she characterizes (borrowing words from a novella by Prokofiev’s acquaintance Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky) as a tale of “wandering, strangely,” of being estranged from the world and oneself. “That country, the people and things that I have been watching with some interest, is not the same country anymore; I no longer need to bother about tickets and visas to become a stranger.”²⁰

Indeed, Prokofiev was a stranger everywhere. Or perhaps, if we want to think about his situation positively, he was equally at home everywhere. A statue recently unveiled in front of the Prokofiev Museum in Moscow derives explicitly from a photograph of him walking along Michigan

¹⁹ Sergey Prokofiev, *Diaries 1924-1933: Prodigal Son*, trans. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 738; entry of November 23, 1928.

²⁰ Yelena Krivtsova, “Opus 45: ‘Stranstvuyushchee ‘Stranno’”, *Sergeya Prokof'yeva*,” in *Al'manakh. Sbornik nauchnikh trudov. Vypusk IV*, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2013), 421.

Avenue during a visit to Chicago in 1919. Nothing further from his final years under Stalin can be imagined. And far from a socialist realist, he increasingly tends to be interpreted as a religious thinker steeped in Christian Science, which is about as far from the Marxist-Leninism he was forced to absorb as can be imagined. Even when setting the words of Lenin, Marx, and Stalin, even in the theme with variations that he invented for the prodigal son in the ballet of the same name, even when provoking angels and demons in his enfant terrible supernatural works, Prokofiev believed that his sounds were not grounded in anything. In being only itself, his music had and has no obligations to be, to do, to represent anyone or anything else. This does not mean that it is meaningless; rather, his music can bear the weight of multiple potential meanings.

Prokofiev's diaries establish that he viewed himself as a conduit of divine energies. In his conception, the most crucial moment in the creative process was the first, when a musical gesture sprang into his mind. This was the moment when his music existed in an unfettered state, when it was closest to the divine. The inspiration, for Prokofiev, remained pure—in part, because he did not always compose with a specific context, much less a specific purpose, in mind. For this reason, perhaps, Prokofiev took unusual care to preserve his sketches. The clearness of the notation in the sketches, preserved in bulk at RGALI, is remarkable. His are not sketches in the usual sense; they are neatly preserved, written nicely in pencil, traced over nicely in pen.

He rooted through his sketchbooks for suitable melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic material when assembling a particular score. Even when musical ideas were later assigned crude political texts, they maintained, in his view, their original essence. Prokofiev also shifted his melodies from work to work, again reflecting his faith that music remained somehow apart from the piece itself. The most appealing tune in his *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, for example, reappears, less appealingly, in his *Ode to the End of the War*. *Romeo and Juliet* anticipates the melodies in *Zdravitsa*, Prokofiev's notorious 1939 paean to Stalin.

The abstraction of the music, in sort, is of a peculiar type, one that allows it to be purposed, remixed, as it were. His grandson Gabriel does this when hosting Prokofiev cabaret nights. The Glinka Museum has too—by putting on performances of different Prokofiev remixes, including, for children, a version of *The Love for Three Oranges* titled *Cure for Sadness*.

Prokofiev would not have opposed this, not at all. I think he would have loved it. But what he would have opposed, I am convinced, is the state of the published scores. The current edition of Prokofiev's famous ballets and operas dates back to 1958, the fifth anniversary of his death, and cut to suit the rhetorical bombast of the Cold War. Orchestral textures were thickened and enriched, the cuts demanded by Soviet bureaucrats fixed in

place. If these clotted, censored scores remain the source for performances of his ballets, operas, and symphonies, Prokofiev will forever be chained to the socialist realist sound imposed on him, forever associated with the politics of the Cold War. Launching a new critical edition would allow us to celebrate the resurrection of his scores as the composer conceived them—hearing their melodies, harmonies, and rhythms afresh through his ears, rather than those of others. His music would be freed, and we would hear Prokofiev not just as a composer of the Silver Age, or of Parisian modernism like Stravinsky, or of the Soviet period, but of all of these things and more.

Some scores are in less immediate need of critical intervention than others, of course. Consider the Eighth Piano Sonata, completed in 1944, which is an edition of its own, a kind of summary of Prokofiev's career that he carefully prepared and proofread for publication without meddling from the censors. The Sonata teems with echoes from Prokofiev compositions that did not see the light of day. His incidental music to a theatrical adaptation of Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* is quoted, likewise the music that he composed for a cinema version of Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*, two works that went to waste in the later 1930s. Stalinist cultural officials ensured that neither the play nor the film made it into production. Prokofiev completed the Eighth Sonata after the Soviets defeated the Nazis, and there is a sense of relief, and spiritual exhaustion, built into the score. The third movement is most clearly linked to the war. There is a simulacrum of soldiers marching, and fanfares, and there are dances, some of the allusions more maniacal than others, and there are puzzling tolling sounds. The glittering starkness of the whole perhaps reflects Prokofiev's psychology circa 1944—though, as Mira Mendelson records, he conceived some of the melodic material for the sonata five years earlier, in the fall of 1939.²¹

Prokofiev lived long enough to compose another piano sonata, and the opera *War and Peace*, and the ballet *The Stone Flower*. He began other works that find him recalling Bach, on the one hand, and retreating to the subject matter of childhood, on the other. Ultimately Prokofiev did not want to be like the times in which he lived; rather he wanted those times to be like him. In this, he never lost the capacity to enchant. Although he tried to, he did not have the chance to oversee the proper preservation of his output in uncensored, unmediated guise.

It can and should be done for him, to keep the celebrations going.

²¹ M. A. Mendel'son-Prokof'eva, *O Sergeye Sergeyevice Prokof'yeve. Vospominaniya. Dnevnik. 1938-1967*, ed. Ye. V. Krivtsova (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2012), 40.

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ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

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