

浦羅歌菲夫【彼得與狼】

Prokofiev "Peter and the Wolf"

Together with Shostakovich and Khachaturian, Prokofiev (1891-1953) was one of the three titans of the Soviet Union. Prokofiev demonstrated his musical genius at an early age. Inspired by his mother who practiced piano every evening, Prokofiev wrote his first piano piece at the age of five. Upon the recommendation of Taneyev, then the director of Moscow Conservatory, Prokofiev started to have some formal musical training with Reinhold Glière in 1902. The youngster's musical talent and innovative mind also came with a rebellious character for which Prokofiev was notorious among the Soviet musical scene. He belittled Glière's teaching as conventional and square, which he had to unlearn later. In 1904, Prokofiev enrolled in St. Petersburg Conservatory at an age much younger than his fellow students, and he was regarded as a musical rebel with arrogance. And yet there were also reports of him being a subject of bullying. Ten years later, he entered a piano competition at the conservatory for the Rubenstein Prize. He insisted on playing his own piano concerto even though the rule stipulated that a classical concerto should be played. Knowing that his concerto had not been published, the jury refused his entry unless he could provide each jury member with a copy of his score. Somehow Prokofiev managed to fulfill the requirement and the judges had to grudgingly award Prokofiev the prize as he was the deserving winner. Due to the turmoil of the 1917 Revolution, he decided to leave his homeland and exercised a self-exile in the USA and subsequently in Paris. For some unknown reasons, Prokofiev decided to return to the Soviet Union in 1935, when the Soviet regime was tightening controls over the arts for propaganda. In the following year, Prokofiev was commissioned by the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow to write a musical symphony for children, with an objective to teach them the different instruments

of an orchestra. For someone who starting composing his first opera at the age of nine, who had great passion for theatrical works throughout his life, such commission would be a piece of cake. Prokofiev finished Peter and the Wolf with his own story lines within days, and completed its orchestration within another week. The simple plot, and the vivid representation of the characters by different instruments are clearly portrayed in the music and explained in the narration, and therefore require no further elaboration here. However, there might be a hidden agenda disguised in this innocent children's story. Under the regime of Joseph Stalin, compositions by Soviet composers were under constant scrutiny. In the story, Peter, the protagonist, is a smart but rebellious little kid who does not like to listen to his nagging grandfather. Like Peter, Prokofiev was a rebel and the grandfather might be symbolic of the higher authority. Unfortunately, later in 1948, Prokofiev was denounced by the Soviet authority as a 'formalist'. Musically, Peter and the Wolf is by far not the most sophisticated work of the composer, but it is destined to be his most performed and recorded work which is adored by both children and adults.

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