

TO MY SONS



Pëtr Williams, Leonid Lavrovsky, Sergey Prokofiev (1946)



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

RUSSIAN NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF MUSIC

Svetlana Petukhova

SERGEY
PROKOFIEV's
ROMEO and JULIET
A STUDY



LRC Publishing House
Moscow, 2021

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Sergey Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. A Study. — Moscow: LRC Publishing House, 2021. — 352 pp., illustrated.

ISBN 978-5-907290-92-1

The present book is the first comprehensive study of the best known among Prokofiev's ballets. Over several decades, the history of how the 'woeful story' of the ballet's staging culminated in fantastic triumphs has become a theatrical legend almost as exciting as Shakespeare's play. Though the established facts and scholarly discoveries cannot compete with its hypnotic charm, they can supplement the intricate storyline, making its details and nuances more well-defined. The book is illustrated by rare musical, literary and pictorial materials from Russian and foreign archives.

The cover photographs feature a scene from the ballet Romeo and Juliet (with Galina Ulanova as Juliet and Yuriy Zhdanov as Romeo; Museum of the Bolshoy Theatre) and Prokofiev's statue at the Kamergersky Lane, Moscow (sculptor Andrey Koval'chuk, photographer Valeriy Milovanov). The fly-leaves feature photographs of a scene from the ballet Romeo and Juliet (with Galina Ulanova as Juliet and Konstantin Sergeyev as Romeo; Archive of the Russian National Museum of Music).

First Edition

ISBN 978-5-907290-92-1



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A STUDY

Juliet's leap (Bolshoy Theatre, 1946)



Photographic archive of the Scientific Library of the Union of Theatre Workers of the Russian Federation

Preliminary Remarks

The story of *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most popular subject matters in the world culture. It has served as a basis for a number of well-known musical works.¹ In the field of ballet, the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* is associated first of all with the genius work by Sergey Prokofiev, composed in 1935, first staged in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1938, and first produced in Russia in 1940 (in Leningrad).

Since the day of its première, Prokofiev's *Romeo* has been a gem of the world ballet repertoire, a favourite among the audiences and an object of constant interest among the music and theatre professionals. It is hardly surprising that the list of scholarly publications that are dedicated, at least partly, to this work is fairly impressive. The existing literature, however, still fails to provide answers to some of the questions that can be asked, in principle, by any theatre goer.

Why the theatrical legend about Prokofiev's *Romeo* begins with the rather mirthless, universally known words: 'For never was a story of more woe than Prokofiev's music for *Romeo*'? As is well known, no stage work appears at its première exactly as it was written by its author, be that a script writer (librettist) or a composer. So, what was wrong with Prokofiev's score? Why it could be produced in the composer's homeland only after several years of humiliating 'standstill', then a failed attempt, then an exhausting (and extraordinarily long) rehearsal process with seemingly ordinary, but nevertheless very sharp disappointments and disagreements, rejections and compromises, rifts and misunderstandings?

As a result, the ballet's music material underwent serious modifications. In what form has been preserved the first version of the finale – the 'happy ending', more than once mentioned by the composer himself? And is it possible to restore this music – and, hence, to actualise the legend related to it? Finally, what did Prokofiev alter in his score and for what reasons?

All these questions seem intriguing for specialists and thoughtful spectators. Trying to find appropriate answers, I embarked on studying *Romeo and Juliet* almost three decades ago. At that time, the most urgent task was to introduce to our scholarly and artistic community the music of the ballet's first version, which still remained unknown. My degree thesis on it appeared in 1992,² my PhD dissertation was defended in 1997.³ However, a number of problems and issues of which I became aware while working on my dissertation remained unresolved.

Now the time for addressing these unresolved issues has come. Numerous documents from Prokofiev's archives have been published; new scholarly publications on his life and work have appeared. Some rather unpleasant discoveries, formerly met with distrust or even with irritation, have become commonplaces. Around a decade ago the first version of *Romeo*, finally, succeeded in attracting the attention of scholars, artists and audiences: on 4 July 2008 Prokofiev's *Romeo* with happy ending was staged at the Bard College Centre of Performing Arts.⁴ And yet this emblematic event, though widely advertised by mass media,

¹ For their detailed list, see the thematic website *Romeo and Juliet*, section '*Romeo and Juliet* on the Wings of Music'. URL: <http://www.romeo-juliet-club.ru/music.html> (accessed 25 April 2021).

² See: Petukhova S. A. Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Prolegomena to Source Studies. Degree thesis / supervised by Professor Ye. M. Levashev. Moscow State Conservatoire, 1992. Manuscript (in Russian).

³ See: Petukhova S. A. The First Author's Version of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Problems of Source Studies. PhD dissertation / supervised by Professor Ye. M. Levashev. Moscow State Conservatoire, 1997. Vol. 1. A Study. Vol. 2. Appendices. Manuscript (in Russian).

⁴ Edited by Simon Morrison; choreography by Mark Morris; set design by Allen Moyer; conductor Leon Botstein, President of the Bard College; costumes by Martin Pakledinaz. The performers included 17 members of Mark Morris Dance Group and 11 guest dancers.

had little influence on the musicological research related to Prokofiev's ballet. The fragrance of this wonderful flower has inspired artists and theorists for more than eighty years, and their activities should, in principle, result in great scholarly achievements, but we are still expecting their publication.

During the last decade, the situation did not change, and the peripeteia of the stage history of *Romeo* still remain largely unexplored. New archival findings, plus the persistent interest in the work, which is actively stimulated by the current theatrical situation, plus the music scholars' aspiration to get a picture of Prokofiev's oeuvre as a whole, plus the questions of my colleagues and students – all this does not allow me to stay aloof from the topic, to perceive it as something fixed.

It is impossible to rewrite the work's compositional history, as is impossible to revive the neophyte's enthusiasm for the great innovations that were temporarily hidden in archives. Nevertheless, it is necessary to write a scholarly text of general nature, for the history of *Romeo* is not synonymous with the compositional history of its *musical versions* only or even with the history of the *ballet as such*. It is necessary to pay due attention to nuances and details, impressions and evaluations, dates and facts. It is not unlikely that the study of all these aspects will change our perception of Prokofiev's music and suggest new ideas concerning its stage production.

More than a quarter of a century ago I took up this subject matter on the initiative of Yevgeniy Mikhaylovich Levashev, the supervisor of both of my writings mentioned above. He proposed *Romeo and Juliet* as a topic for scholarly study at the time when the details of the ballet's history were all but forgotten, while the testimonies of those who had been involved in the process found their place in the storeroom of theatrical legends. At that time, the publications of archival findings, especially those concerning the music material, were extremely rare. Levashev taught me the basic principles of working with sources. Later it became clear that it is virtually impossible to teach the 'archival' mode of life, which calls for a specific complex of qualities, including, perhaps, some inborn ones. In the process of work, however, I came to understand that any (even superficial) acquaintance with authentic documents is more important for one's development as an attentive and accurate researcher than dealing exclusively with their descriptions or interpretations. This book could have been written not least due to the fact that I was Levashev's student.

While preparing to defend my degree thesis in 1992, I met Nataliya Pavlovna Savkina, a unique specialist who has devoted her whole professional life to Prokofiev. Nataliya Pavlovna believed that the time for a special monograph on Prokofiev's *Romeo* had come long ago. While investigating different Prokofiev-related subjects, Savkina noticed, collected and compared details, references and documents pertaining to *Romeo*. I owe her some materials that otherwise would remain unavailable for me; they have become a part of the general narrative, testifying to her active interest in my work and her willingness to help.

To be 'with Prokofiev' without feeling too constrained, you have to be sufficiently fluent in four languages (like he), or even more if you are interested especially in the opinions and reviews of the performances and productions of his works. I am very grateful to my friends and colleagues who assisted me with translations from different languages for the Russian-language edition of this book. During several months Anna Valentinovna Bulichëva helped me with translating from the French and English Prokofiev's voluminous correspondence and numerous press clipping. Mikhail Yevgen'yevich Pilayev translated from the German the letters addressed to Prokofiev by the administration of the Brno Theatre.

An important contribution to the present research has been made by the book's translator into English, my musicologist colleague, Doctor of Arts Levon Oganessian. His highly professional and attentive attitude to my text resulted in some important amendments to the book's original version, for which I am deeply appreciative to him.

My research is based primarily on archival materials. Working in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts (RGALI), I managed to examine more than 120 archival units of different size and content during four months. Such a tight schedule could be achieved due to the excellent organisation of working conditions, for which I am grateful to the archive's director Tat'yana Mikhaylovna Goryayeva and the former reading room manager Dmitriy Viktorovich Neustroyev.

My work has become easier due to the open access to numerous foreign publications, which some 15 years ago were virtually unavailable to a researcher working in Moscow. I would like to mention with gratitude the initiatives of the creators of the French website 'Gallica' (the online branch of the National Library of France), as well as those of all the scholars who decided to promulgate their findings via the Internet.

I am extremely thankful to Sergey Svyatoslavovich Prokofiev for giving me his permission to copy and publish all the essential materials. It is necessary to underline that in RGALI the business letters addressed to Prokofiev were unavailable to researchers at least from 2003 until January 2017. This important change, initiated, undoubtedly, by Sergey Svyatoslavovich, allowed to bring together the whole correspondence related to *Romeo and Juliet* and to present it for the first time on these pages.

My most sincere appreciation goes to those who supported my intention to publish theatre photographs that sometimes are the only documents providing evidences of particular productions. Jitka Nováková, the head of the Department of Artistic Documentation of the Brno National Theatre Archive, promptly responded to my request and sent me the unpublished photographs from her institution. I am also thankful to Vyacheslav Petrovich Nechayev, the director of the library of the Union of Theatre Workers (Moscow), and the staff of the archive of the Russian National Museum of Music.

Many thanks to my colleagues Marina Pavlovna Rakhmanova and Natela Isidorovna Yenukidze for their support, advices and suggestions.

I would like to express my gratitude to Liliya Koval' (ScoresMaker Company), who set up the peculiar music text of Prokofiev's sketches, as well as to the artist Valeriy Milovanov and the employees of the publishing house *Yaziki Slavyanskoy Kul'turi* ('LRC Publishing House') Irina Bogatirëva, Sergey Zhigalkin and Ol'ga Neklyudova, as well as the editor of the present publication Alla Varavitskaya for their professional and enthusiastic assistance during the final stages of my work on this book.

Finally, my foremost gratitude goes to Mikhail Arkad'yevich Brizgalov, the director of the Russian National Museum of Music, and to Irina Sergeyevna Belaya, the director of the Sergey Prokofiev Museum at the Kamergerskiy Lane. The present book is the first monograph on Prokofiev published under the aegis of the Museum of Music. It continues the great tradition of the Museum's scholarly publications, including a number of articles on Prokofiev and editions of his works. Fortunately, this tradition has survived despite all the hardships of our times.

Prokofiev's *Romeo* in Scholarly Literature

The great composer Prokofiev, who lived and worked in three different cultural spaces – Russia, Western Europe and North America – is one of those Russian musicians whose oeuvre has been explored in detail by scholars from around the world. The Prokofiev research develops quickly, especially during the last 15–20 years; almost any notable contribution to the huge Prokofiev bibliography not only attracts the attention of professionals, but also arouses public interest, which in many cases seems rather unexpected.

At present the facts of Prokofiev's biography – including the compositional history of his works and the history of his family, his professional or personal contacts – are widely discussed even outside the academic community. A special attention of both Russian and foreign scholars and readers is focused nowadays on the so-called Soviet period of his life.

The reasons behind Prokofiev's decision to return to the USSR, the influence of his repatriation on his aesthetics, the hidden aspects of his seemingly successful Soviet existence – all these subject matters are so appealing that the music itself is often put in the shade. And yet it is just the music that counts more than anything else and deserves the most serious discussion.

In terms of Prokofiev's biography, the place of *Romeo and Juliet* is between the foreign and the 'Soviet' periods. The scholarly literature on *Romeo and Juliet* can be divided into two parts of unequal size: musicological and historical-contextual. Until the end of the 1990s, the first of these two parts prevailed, especially in Russia. During the first six decades of *Romeo's* stage life its expressive devices and the system of its leitmotifs, its libretto and the author's manuscripts, its choreographic and musical interpretations were described and analysed in depth. As regards the historical-contextual and the social-contextual approaches, it is necessary to underline the contribution of our foreign colleagues, who became regular visitors at the Russian archives around the end of the 20th century. Quite recently the Prokofiev scholarship was enriched with interpretations of events and facts based on the analysis of ideological and political contexts of his life and work. Such approaches, characteristic first of all of the American musicology, shed a new light on the early stages of the history of *Romeo and Juliet*. On the other hand, the interpretations of this kind tend to overlook the earliest and, in terms of quantity, the most considerable part of the *Romeo*-related literature, namely the press reviews.

The first reviews saw the light of the day when there was no need to prove the existence of two versions of the ballet, when the ballet's première had not become a part of the history, and the great Galina Ulanova, just after her Leningrad triumph, had reconciled herself to the uncommon character of Prokofiev's music.

It is hardly surprising that the first detailed musicological analyses of the ballet appeared shortly after its first performances virtually side by side with the first reviews of the production itself. Since the early 1940s, the studies of the ballet developed in three

directions: reviewing concert and stage performances, analysing the music material (in the form of texts devoted exclusively to *Romeo* or in the context of more general Prokofiev studies), and using the material of the ballet in scholarly works dealing with general problems of music theory (melody, harmony, form).

In 1940, the outstanding Russian musicologist Izrail' Nest'yev (1911–1993) embarked on his dissertation on Prokofiev. The book was finished in 1941, attentively read by the composer himself and set up in type,⁵ but its material was destroyed shortly thereafter 'because of wartime circumstances'.⁶ In the Soviet Union it was never published in its original form, but its English and French translations appeared in New York and Paris almost immediately after the war.⁷ Only eleven years later its considerably enlarged version was published in Moscow under the title *Prokofiev*.⁸

The first academic monograph on Prokofiev, Nest'yev's book is still in demand among the specialists throughout the world, who constantly refer to its polished text and quote from it. Nest'yev's authority is undeniable inasmuch as no other important musicologist, author of a large-scale book on Prokofiev, knew him personally. The personal aspect is strongly felt, in particular, in the chapter on the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. The author mentions first of all the events of which he was an immediate witness, namely the ballet's compositional history and the history of its earliest productions. Apart from this, the analytical section contains a detailed discussion on the work's genre nature, on Prokofiev's principles of working with Shakespeare's play, as well as on the character of the music and on the classification of the most important leitmotifs.

In March 1940, the leading Soviet music periodical *Sovetskaya Muzika* published Mikhail Druskin's article 'Sergey Prokofiev's Ballet *Romeo and Juliet*'.⁹ Druskin's text is a good example of the typically Soviet approach to reviewing. Thoroughly discussing the ballet's particular excerpts and its musical form, the reviewer considers the use of leitmotifs as a shortcoming rather than as a lucky idea: 'Particular "leit-episodes" (or their excerpts) migrate from one act to another, from one scene to another without any modifications. ... Their mechanical rearrangements arouse but the feeling of disappointment.'¹⁰ On the other hand, when Druskin found the choreographic interpretation inadequate to Prokofiev's music, he did not hesitate to come out in the composer's favour: '... it is a pity that the director of the production was unable to find a satisfactory visual solution for some of the most powerful

⁵ The first version of the book's page-proof can be found in the reading room of the library of the Moscow State Conservatoire: Nest'yev I. V. *Sergey Prokofiev. Life and Work*. Moscow and Leningrad: GMI (State Music Publishers), 1941 (in Russian). The book contains numerous author's amendments and publisher's marks done in purple ink (one of such marks reads: 'to give to proofreading at the author's expense'; on the title page, the dates 14 and 23 August are seen), as well as the mark 'dissertation' done in red ink, evidently, by the librarian.

⁶ See: Nest'yev I. V. Something new about the great master // *Sovetskaya Muzika*. 1971. No. 4. P. 52 (in Russian).

⁷ See: Nest'yev I. V. *Sergei Prokofiev: his Musical Life* / Tr. from the Russian by R. Prokofieva, introduct. by S. Eisenstein. N.-Y.: A. A. Knopf, 1946; Nest'yev I. V. *Prokofiev* / Trad. de M.-R. Hofmann. Paris: Éd. du Chêne, 1946.

⁸ See: Nest'yev I. V. *Prokofiev*. Moscow: Muzgiz, 1957; Nest'yev I. V. *The Life of Sergey Prokofiev*. 2nd revised and enlarged edition. Moscow: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1973. The differences between the two published versions of Nest'yev's work have been touched upon, in particular, in: Vishnevetsky I. G. *Sergey Prokofiev*. Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2009. P. 492–494; *Mendel'son-Prokofieva M. A. On Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev. Reminiscences. Diaries (1938–1967)* / edited, prefaced and commented by Ye. V. Krivtsova. Moscow: Kompozitor, 2012. P. 396–399 (all in Russian).

⁹ See: *Druskin M. S. Sergey Prokofiev's Ballet Romeo and Juliet* // *Sovetskaya Muzika*. 1940. No. 3. P. 10–19 (in Russian).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* P. 16.

pages of the music ... because of an exaggerated tendency to make the dance “justified” in terms of theatre.”¹¹

Druskin's article – chronologically the third serious analysis of *Romeo*¹² – is notable for some of the features that are characteristic of the Russian music scholarship when it addresses to ballet music. Even the most talented, erudite and fine among our musicologists regard ballet first of all as a musical text; only in exceptional cases they perceive it also as a text of choreographic nature. Obviously such an approach to the ballet genre is peculiar not only to musicology but to the academic musical culture as a whole.

In 1923, the composer and Prokofiev's friend (and later the ‘dean’ of Russian musicologists and member of the Academy of Sciences) Boris Asaf'yev (1884–1949) published an article emphatically entitled ‘A fettered musician’.¹³ In it he sharply criticised the theatrical practice of treating music as a ‘slave to choreographic action’, due to which the process of preparing the production becomes a ‘fateful combat between music and dance’ and the performance itself continues this struggle between ‘the choreographer and his henchmen (i. e. all the performers of the ballet) and the conductor and his henchmen (i. e. the orchestra)’. According to Asaf'yev, ‘almost all classical ballets are based on the lack of correspondence with music, and when it seems that there is some correspondence, this is so either because the composer or the conductor yielded to the ballet master or because music as such is absent and replaced with a kind of “sub-music”’.¹⁴

This quotation gives some idea about the atmosphere in which the great art of composing ballet music developed during the last century, at least in Russia.¹⁵ Therefore, if we want to comprehend to what extent the dance in the early performances of *Romeo* corresponded to the musical substance conceived by Prokofiev, we have to cite the testimonies of the opposing party.

The theatre director and the outstanding ballet critic and historian Boris L'vov-Anokhin, describing in his book on Galina Ulanova the great ballerina's interpretation of the part of Juliet, noted that

¹¹ Ibid. P. 18.

¹² Both earlier analyses were produced by I. I. Sollertinsky and published in January 1940 in the newspaper *Leninogradskaya Pravda* and the journal *Iskusstvo i Zhizn'*. They will be discussed below.

¹³ See: Asaf'yev B. V. A fettered musician. On the role of music in ballet and on the situation of ballet conductor // *Teatr*. 1923. No. 4, 23 October; No. 5, 30 October (in Russian).

¹⁴ Asaf'yev B. V. A fettered musician. Quoted after: Asaf'yev B. V. On Ballet. Articles. Reviews. Reminiscences / compiled, prefaced and commented by A. N. Dmitriyev. Leningrad: Muzika, 1974. P. 113, 115, 116 (in Russian).

¹⁵ Symptomatic in this respect is the opinion of the outstanding conductor Gennadiy Rozhdestvensky, the artistic director of the Bolshoy Theatre in 2000–2001, about his theatre's repertoire, quoted in the reminiscences of the ballerina and ballet critic Tat'yana Kuznetsova:

‘I have just browsed your repertoire book for the next season – and what did I see?’ – the artistic director raised his voice – ‘Two *Boris Godunovs* and seven *Pharaoh's Daughters*! Two *Musorgskys* and seven *Pugnis*! ... There is no place for *Pugni* in the theatre's repertoire!’ All the ballet contracts and the premières planned for the current season were annulled... Apart from this, the director ordered to forget about the classical production of *Corsaire* with its ‘wretched music’ (indeed, this ballet's music was compiled from pieces by several composers – nevertheless, it remained a repertoire ‘hit’ during almost one century and a half). See: Kuznetsova T. A. *Chronicles of the Bolshoy Ballet*. 2nd revised edition. Moscow: RIPOL Classic, 2011. P. 117–118 (in Russian).

...the famous scene of wedding is by no means perceived as a static pantomime, for here almost all the principal movements used in the duets of Romeo and Juliet are repeated in slowly changing and statically fixed postures. These movements and postures are familiar to us, they are the same as in the balcony scenes, but now they are carefully selected and reverently slowed down. Lavrovsky is not inclined to differentiate between mimic scenes and dance scenes. He develops the movement in an interesting way: quite often it starts with a very simple gesture and then becomes light, brilliant, progresses towards a complex dance and ends again with a natural gesture, which is often unusual for ballet. And here Ulanova shows her ability to 'poetise' even the simplest movements, such as run or step.¹⁶

These details allow us to make at least three important conclusions, which were overlooked by the ballet's early analysts and reviewers:

- some of Prokofiev's leitmotifs, evidently, found their sufficiently adequate representation in the choreography, for their development gave rise to a peculiar leitmotivic-choreographic 'stretto';¹⁷

- on the basis of the music text, Leonid Lavrovsky created a stylistic and genre synthesis, which is essentially of the same nature as Shakespeare's and Prokofiev's stylistic 'pluralism' – an unconstrained mixture or juxtaposition of 'high' and 'low' modes of utterance;

- the ballet master, naturally, counted first of all on the unique personality and extraordinary plastic resources of 'his' actress.

The confrontation of the composer's and the choreographer's aesthetic attitudes is typical of any theatre. In the case of Prokofiev, however, it was aggravated by a number of non-theatrical circumstances. One of these deserves special attention. The exclusive artistic atmosphere that was formed around Prokofiev at that time was supported not only by composers and musicians of Prokofiev's circle (N. Ya. Myaskovsky, P. A. Lamm, V. V. Derzhanovsky, V. A. Dranishnikov and others), but also by some musicologists. Some of them witnessed the ballet's 'thorny path' to the stage of the Kirov Theatre,¹⁸ others learned about it from their colleagues, friends, and teachers; be that as it may, they laid the foundation for a particular approach to the description and study of *Romeo's* music. According to this approach, the score of *Romeo* was regarded first of all from the perspective of 'symphonisation' of the ballet genre. The work's 'symphonic' quality was presented as its self-sufficient feature; hence, the choreographic interpretations of such a bold compositional idea, even the most successful ones, were treated as something secondary and unimportant.

¹⁶ *L'vov-Anokhin B. A. Juliet // L'vov-Anokhin B. A. Galina Ulanova. Moscow: Iskustvo, 1970. P. 130 (in Russian). Though the text was published only in 1970, it can be of an earlier origin: the critic began writing on Ulanova in the first half of the 1950s.*

¹⁷ Ballet scholars quite often employ terms borrowed from other humanities, adapting them to the context of ballet theatre – for instance, transforming the term 'theme' into 'choreo-theme' (cf., in particular: *Gayevsky V. M. Mats Ek's Swedish Ballet // International Ballet Festival 'The Century of The Rite of Spring – A Century of Modernism'. Programme Book / compiled and edited by P. D. Gershenzon and V. A. Vyazovkina. Moscow: Bolshoy Theatre, 2013. P. 33, in Russian). Similarly, a choreographic 'compression' of several 'carefully selected' characteristic gestures-movements-motifs, following each other, can be termed 'choreographic stretto'.*

¹⁸ In 1920–35 – State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (GATOB); in 1935–92 – Kirov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet ('Kirov Theatre').

The trend in question is represented by two student degree theses,¹⁹ a number of musicological articles and reviews,²⁰ chapters and sections in larger books.²¹

Of a somewhat different nature are the analytical texts produced by the outstanding ballet historian Yuriy Slonimsky (1902–1978) and by no less outstanding musicologist Ivan Sollertinsky (1902–1944).

In his fundamental treatise on the history of Soviet ballet theatre, Slonimsky did not limit himself to the choreographic aspect. His approach, in principle, is characteristic of a high-class ballet scholarship. In particular, in the section on *Romeo*²² he compares the latter work with other contemporary ballets not only in terms of dance, but also in terms of music, bringing to light the innovatory elements in both spheres in their interaction.

In his large-scale article on *Romeo and Juliet*,²³ Sollertinsky appears largely as a Shakespeare specialist. He is interested especially in the correspondences between the work's general aura and the spirit of the Renaissance. Sollertinsky's opinion is mixed; it seems that having consciously chosen the method of comparing the musical and the choreographic components, he failed to envisage the ideal 'product', which, in principle, should have been the common goal of those who were responsible for the production. Be that as it may, some of his observations are of considerable value.

Sollertinsky's argument that the repetition of musical excerpts (which were already familiar to those from the audience who had heard the orchestral suites from the ballet) '...created the impression of stasis, limiting (or even reducing to zero) any chances for a really symphonic development of the score as a whole' was based not on the description of leitmotivic displacements but on the idea of 'mechanical assemblage', put forward in connection with the complexities of choreographic interpretation.

The principle of 'assemblage' as a characteristic feature of Prokofiev's large-scale forms was mentioned by the composer's critics and colleagues shortly after his repatriation as a negative consequence of his essentially *non-symphonic* thinking. In particular, the well-known music and ballet critic Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovsky in his report *On the Problems of Soviet Symphonic Music*, delivered at the plenary session of the Organisational Committee of the Union of Composers in May 1941, noted that Prokofiev's works contain episodes of a

¹⁹ See: *Olivkova V. B.* Prokofiev's Ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. Student degree thesis / supervised by V. A. Tsukkerman. Moscow State Conservatoire, 1947. Manuscript (in Russian). Five years later the work's abridged version was published as a brochure: *Olivkova V. B.* Prokofiev's Ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. A guide-book (series 'Guide-Books to Soviet Music'). Leningrad and Moscow: Muzgiz, 1952 (in Russian); *Senatova S. N.* Prokofiev's Ballet *Romeo and Juliet* as a New Stage in the Development of Russian Ballet. Student degree thesis / supervised by N. A. Tumanina. Moscow State Conservatoire, 1958. Manuscript (in Russian).

²⁰ See, in particular: *Bogdanov-Berezovsky V. M.* Galina Ulanova's parts in Soviet ballets // *Bogdanov-Berezovsky V. M.* Articles on Ballet. Leningrad: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1962. P. 168–176 (in Russian); *Orjonikidze G. Sh.* Sergey Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* // *Music of the Soviet Ballet* / edited by L. N. Raaben, Yu. I. Slonimsky and A. N. Sokhor. Moscow: GMI (State Music Publishers), 1962. P. 200–236 (in Russian).

²¹ See, for instance: *Mart'nov I. I.* Sergey Prokofiev. Life and Work. Moscow: Muzika, 1974. P. 340–349 (in Russian); *Katonova S. V.* Music of the Soviet Ballet. Essays on History and Theory. 2nd enlarged edition. Leningrad: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1990. P. 64–87 (in Russian).

²² See: *Slonimsky Yu. I.* Soviet Ballet. Materials for a History of Soviet Ballet Theatre. Moscow and Leningrad: Iskustvo, 1950. P. 217–232 (in Russian).

²³ See: *Sollertinsky I. I.* Shakespeare on ballet stage. *Romeo and Juliet* at the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet // *Iskustvo i Zhizn'*. 1940. No. 1. P. 28–31 (in Russian).

‘...typically “combinative”, *remplissage*-like²⁴ nature, though professionally well done’.²⁵ And Prokofiev’s faithful adept Nest’yev in the first edition of his monograph wrote that ‘[f]rom the point of view of drama, however, the ballet [*Romeo and Juliet*] was open to criticism. It lacked a broad symphonic development, the same themes were rather mechanically shifted from one scene to another, and in the last scenes there were practically no new themes at all.’²⁶

Only after more than twenty years the method of ‘assemblage’ was recognised as an organic attribute of Prokofiev’s musical thinking.²⁷ On the other hand, the commentators began to emphasise its ‘opposite’, the symphonic principle, calling for an adequate choreographic interpretation, which was not achieved in the ballet’s first Soviet production.

In his article Sollertinsky plainly spoke about Lavrovsky’s struggle with Prokofiev’s conception – though not so much with the notorious idea of ‘symphonisation’ (which in this particular context looked rather abstract), as with ‘...Schlegel’s idealistic understanding of the tragedy: their [the protagonists’] love is too beautiful and elevated to survive in this cruel material world...’ The reviewer justly noted that ‘the turn to a more large-scale tragedy’, initiated by Lavrovsky, resulted in a livelier representation of the ‘street background’ – in other words, in emphasising the importance of the ‘crowd’. Nevertheless, the principal solo part stylistically differed from these choreographic solutions, for ‘Ulanova faithfully followed the composer’.²⁸

Generally speaking, the earliest reactions to the première of *Romeo*, together with the statements of the authors of the production made when it was still in preparation,²⁹ allow us to suppose that the traces of discrepancies between the work’s two versions, found in the music, gave rise to different expectations among the representatives of different target groups. The ballet troupe and the theatre administration from the very beginning were interested in music of dance-like character, showy and rich in contrasts. The composers and musicians wished to find in the score the elements of unusual, innovatory symphonic thinking, which attracted them in the first version. Having substantially reworked his score,

²⁴ Translator’s note: the French term *remplissage*, used here by Bogdanov-Berezovsky, means ‘filling in’ and denotes thematically commonplace stuff filling the space between more substantial music material.

²⁵ Quoted after: Vlasova Ye. S. Issues related to the study of Sergey Prokofiev’s creative biography in the funds of state and public organisations preserved at RGALI // Meetings with the Past. Virtual Journal of RGALI. 2008. URL: <http://www.rgali.ru/object/210799242?lc=ru> (accessed 25 April 2021). I am grateful to the author of the article who invited my attention to documents and opinions that had been unknown to me.

²⁶ Nest’yev I. V. Sergei Prokofiev: his Musical Life. Op. cit. P. 149.

²⁷ This theme has been touched upon in a number of writings. To mention but the most interesting ones: Slonimsky S. M. Prokofiev’s Symphonies: An Essay in Analysis. Moscow and Leningrad: Muzika, 1964. P. 15–20 (in Russian); Volkov A. I. On one principle of form-building in Prokofiev’s music // Problems of Musical Science / edited by G. A. Orlov, M. Ye. Tarakanov, Yu. N. Tyulin, V. N. Kholopova and V. A. Tsukkerman. Moscow: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1972. Issue 1. P. 109–124 (in Russian).

²⁸ Sollertinsky I. I. Shakespeare on ballet stage. P. 30, 31.

²⁹ See: Prokofiev S. S. *Romeo and Juliet* as Ballet // Moscow Daily News. 1935. No. 117, May 23. P. 3; Kut A. [Kutuzov A. V.]. Ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (at a meeting in ‘Sovetskoye Iskusstvo’) // Sovetskoye Iskusstvo. 1936. No. 5 (291), 29 January. P. 1 (in Russian); A. Constant Smith [Kuznetsov K. A.]. Prokofiev Plays Music of His New Ballet to Gathering of Critics. *Romeo and Juliet* as Ballet... // Moscow Daily News. No. 24, January 30. P. 3; Lavrovsky L. M. *Romeo and Juliet* on ballet stage. Ideas // Iskusstvo i Zhizn’. 1939. No. 7. P. 45 (in Russian); Lyukom Ye. M. *Romeo and Juliet*. Sergey Prokofiev’s ballet at the Kirov Theatre of Opera and Ballet // Sovetskoye Iskusstvo. 1940. No. 6, 21 January. P. 4 (in Russian); *Romeo and Juliet* has Premiere as Ballet // Moscow News. 1940. No. 7, February 12. P. 17; Gorodinsky V. M. First Shakespeare Ballet Scores Hit in Leningrad Theater // Moscow News. 1940. No. 9, February 26. P. 18, 21; Shlifshteyn S. I. The music of *Romeo and Juliet* // Sovetskoye Iskusstvo. 1940. No. 29, 24 May. P. 4 (in Russian); Mes[s]erer S. M. The ballet master and the ballerina // Ibid. P. 3 (in Russian).