

## Romeo and Juliet's Happy Ending

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It took several years and much difficult revision before Romeo and Juliet became the greatest success of Sergey Prokofiev's career, and its early history could not predict its arguably becoming the most popular ballet of the twentieth century. The conception and reception of Romeo and Juliet has been discussed before, of course: Nelly Kravetz, Edward Morgan, and Noelle Mann have published on the subject in the Three Oranges journal. David Nice takes it up in his 2003 Prokofiev biography; there exist a significant 1997 dissertation on the origins of the ballet from a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, Svetlana Petukhova, and a 2003 dissertation by Deborah Wilson, who worked with archival materials in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Even so, Romeo and Juliet has yet to be fully assessed both in terms of its political context and compositional genesis; relevant sources are found not only at RGALI but also the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI), the Glinka Museum, and the Public Library in St. Petersburg (RNB). What follows is an account of the original version of the ballet, as Prokofiev first conceived it, and its happy (or at least less tragic) ending. This version of the ballet was premiered on July 4, 2008 by the Mark Morris Dance Group to a newly restored score prepared from the archival manuscripts.

### The Scenario

Prokofiev suffered more than his share of disappointments in his career, and upon relocating from Paris to Moscow in 1936, had more than his share of unpleasant encounters with cultural officials. He adapted to the constraints imposed on him by the Stalinist regime as best he could. His talent overcame—even benefited from—outside control, a phenomenon that

undermines the Western musicological assumption that Soviet artists were passive victims of brutal, crude, and rigid politics. Yet from the start, Romeo and Juliet had a particularly hard time of it, enduring second-guessing, reworking, and censorship. In his final years, Prokofiev was able to take pride in its success, but he spent many years resenting the changes that had been imposed on it to the ending, the dramatic structure of the first and second acts, the relationship between solo and ensemble numbers, and the orchestration. The ending was actually the least of the problems, even as it raises a pressing question: why on earth is it happy? Part of the answer is found not on earth but in the heavens. Prokofiev was a devout Christian Scientist (he and his first wife Lina committed to the faith in 1924) and wanted his music to look toward the light, to be “life-affirming.” Even as his Soviet career turned tragic, his music celebrated, on its own terms, a state of happiness.

The conception of Romeo and Juliet dates back to late November 1934, when Prokofiev traveled to Leningrad from Paris to discuss the prospective performance of his operas The Gambler and The Fiery Angel at the State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet. According to a 1934 diary fragment, Prokofiev met with the dramatist Adrian Piotrovsky to discuss the prospects of staging one or more of these early operas in Leningrad. They also contemplated potential subjects for a new dramatic work, among them Pushkin’s The Blackamoor of Peter the Great, an unfinished historical novel about the poet’s great-grandfather. Following a trip to Moscow for the opening of Egyptian Nights, a theatrical project for which he had composed incidental music, Prokofiev returned to Leningrad for additional brain-storming. “I critiqued Blackamoor—too little material. We searched for a lyrical subject. Piotrovsky threw out [the names of] several classics including Romeo and Juliet. I immediately blurted out: a better [subject] cannot be found.”<sup>2</sup>

Further details of the discussions come from Prokofiev's annotated work list of 1951–52.<sup>3</sup> Before recommending Romeo and Juliet, Piotrovsky proposed two other love stories: Maurice Maeterlinck's Symbolist play Pelléas et Mélisande and Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan und Isolde epic. To work with either of these texts, Prokofiev realized, would have been to contend with the operatic specters of Debussy and Wagner. In settling on Romeo and Juliet, he joined the more agreeable (for him) company of Bellini, Berlioz, Chaikovsky, and Gounod. Once the decision was reached, Prokofiev began to discuss the specifics of the scenario with the innovative and influential director Sergey Radlov, a long-time acquaintance. In April 1934, Radlov had mounted a stripped-down, unsentimental version of Romeo and Juliet with young actors at his Studio Theater in Leningrad. Prokofiev saw the production when it toured in Moscow and admired its contrapuntal juxtaposition of comic and tragic scenes.

The scenario for Prokofiev's treatment of the drama passed through different hands and different drafts. The first 5-act draft, dated January 1935, survives in the London Prokofiev Archive; a second 4-act draft, dated May 1935, is preserved at RGALI. Prokofiev appears to have written the first draft himself in Paris and then turned it over to Piotrovsky and Radlov in Leningrad for their input. Noëlle Mann, who translated and published the first 5-act draft, remarks that it is unclear whether Prokofiev worked on it using an English-language edition of Shakespeare's play, a Russian-language edition, "or both."<sup>4</sup> It is also unclear whether this version of the text was intended for a ballet: it reads like an opera script.

On May 17, 1935, the newspaper Smena (Change of Work Shift) released a habitually terse statement from Prokofiev about his work on Romeo and Juliet.<sup>5</sup> He reveals that the State Academic Theater in Leningrad (the Kirov) had encouraged the creation of the ballet, but that an agreement had not been finalized. He does not indicate the reason for the cancellation, but it was

likely tied to the infighting at the theater that followed Radlov's extremely bitter resignation as its artistic director on June 22, 1934. Vladimir Mutnikh, the new manager of the Bolshoy Theater in Moscow, acquired the ballet a year later with the understanding that Piotrovsky would remain involved in the staging as scenarist, and Radlov as both scenarist and director. Radlov offered his general thoughts on the chain of events in an August 8, 1935 letter to Prokofiev:

As before, I think ahead with enormous interest and happiness to that time when it will be possible to begin staging your wonderful ballet. Please inform VI[adimir] Iv[anovich] Mutnikh, if he's still in Polenovo [the summer home of the Bolshoy Theater troupe, where Prokofiev composed Romeo and Juliet], that I haven't yet signed the contract for the libretto only because I must consult with Adr[ian] Piotrovsky about it. Meanwhile I'm not sure when and where I'll see him. In essence, however, nothing has changed because of this. That is, in the area of ballet I feel not the slightest surge of Leningrad patriotism. To the contrary, I'm more than loyally disposed to the Bolshoy Theater.

With Mutnikh, a former Red Army official, committed to Romeo and Juliet, Prokofiev moved ahead on the assumption that, following an official hearing, it would be produced by the Bolshoy Theater in the spring of 1936. He worked on the music through the summer of 1935 in Polenovo, finishing the piano score on September 8 and the orchestral score on October 1. Insight into the creative process comes from two letters, the first to Vera Alpers, a St. Petersburg Conservatory classmate and long-time friend, and the second to the composer Nikolay Myaskovsky, Prokofiev's musical confidant. To Alpers, he reported that the score involved 58 numbers, "a list painstakingly worked out and annotated during my stay in Leningrad, and nothing gives me

greater pleasure than putting a cross beside a composed number (a black cross, if the music is conceived in principle and a red cross if the number is composed and written out).”<sup>6</sup> To Myaskovsky, he bemoaned the time it took to work up the orchestration. “I am maintaining a pace of about 20 pages a day [...], but it is hard and the main thing is to avoid succumbing to [...] the path of least resistance.”<sup>7</sup>

Before the music was complete, forces had begun to align themselves against Romeo and Juliet. The October 4, 1935 run-through of the piano score at the Bolshoy Theater did not impress the audience. The conductor Yuriy Fayer, who served as Prokofiev’s page-turner, described the performance in grim terms, noting that the hall emptied out as it wore on. “When Sergey Sergeyevich finished playing, it became clear that there would be no adjudication: there was simply nobody to do it. This was an unexpected and hard blow to the composer.”<sup>8</sup> Fayer, an ill-tempered conductor with a tin ear, deemed the music convoluted.

The rhythmic writing came in for general critique for its terseness, the harmonic and melodic writing for its anti-Romantic rationalism. The greatest point of contention, however, concerned the plot of act IV. The title characters live rather than die in accord with a daring re-conception of Shakespeare’s play as a

play about the struggle for love, about the struggle for the right to love by young, strong, and progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family. This makes the entire play live, breathing struggle and passion as one— makes it, perhaps, the most “Komsomol-like” [Communist-Youth-League-like] of all of Shakespeare’s plays.”<sup>9</sup>

This statement comes from Radlov, who decided, in consultation with Piotrovsky and Prokofiev, to update Shakespeare's play along proletarian lines. The decision to add a happy ending to the ballet was vetted by several people, including, crucially, Sergey Dinamov, a critic, writer, and Central Committee advisor who sat, for purposes of political control, on the repertoire board of the Bolshoy Theater. In a May 2, 1935 letter to Prokofiev, Radlov reports discussing the scenario with Dinamov, who "in general approves of it, even with the happy ending, but he recommends being careful naming it—adding something like 'on motives of Shakespeare' or another cautious subtitle." This became the name of the ballet: Romeo and Juliet, on Motifs of Shakespeare.

The May 16, 1935 version of the scenario details the happy ending, as well as the intriguing dramaturgical oddities of the Prokofiev-Radlov collaboration.<sup>10</sup> Acts I to III include, for example, several episodes in which the drama between the Montague and Capulet factions is interrupted by processions of merry-makers intended to block the audience's view of the action. (Imagine a square in Renaissance Verona masked by footage of a Soviet May Day parade.) Later, to alleviate the gloom of the scene in which Juliet drinks the "death" potion prepared for her by Friar Laurence, Radlov conceived—and Prokofiev composed—three exotic dances. These dances represent the nuptial gifts that Paris, convinced that he will succeed in marrying Juliet, has brought to her bedchamber. The entertainment fails to rouse Juliet from her toxin-induced slumber.

There follows the "happy" ending. Juliet lies in her bedchamber. "Romeo enters," "dispatches the servant," and "pulls back the cover," but he is unable, like Paris before him, to rouse Juliet; Romeo concludes that she has died and, grief-stricken, resolves to commit suicide. The arrival of Friar Laurence prevents him from pulling out his dagger, and the two of them engage in a brief struggle during a break in the music (No. 51). Juliet begins to awaken (No. 52).

Friar Laurence “strikes a gong”; Romeo clutches Juliet and bears her from the room into a grove (No. 53). The people gather, and Friar Laurence directs their attention to the lovers (No. 54). “Juliet slowly comes to herself.” She and Romeo express their feelings of relief and joy in a final dance (No. 55), which Prokofiev intended to be “bright” but not overblown. It would not, he writes, “attain a forte.” The final three minutes and twenty seconds of the score (No. 56) are unscripted: in the apotheosis, the music expresses that which the visuals cannot. This, then, is the “happy” ending, but, as Prokofiev’s music and Morris’s choreography reveals, it is in fact sadder than the familiar, “tragic” ending.

The composer found merit in his and Radlov’s daring re-conception of Shakespeare’s play, but his colleagues did not. The writer Alexander Afinogenov, one of the people who convinced Prokofiev to relocate from Paris to Moscow in 1936, mocked it in his journal:

The librettist (Radlov) resurrected Romeo, did not allow him to take poison—the end is thus happy and unnatural. Shakespeare, he says, would have written this ending himself if he were alive now. . . . But if Shakespeare were alive he would have written about something else. The issue is not one of fidelity but of the spirit of the work: “For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”<sup>11</sup>

Prokofiev resisted the criticism but shared it with Radlov, suggesting that perhaps it might be time for the scenario to be rethought. On December 6, 1935, he sent his collaborator a jocular postcard from Casablanca, where he was on tour, asking him “Do you still remember Romeo? Are you pressing on with it? Have you devised an ingenious ending?”<sup>12</sup>

There followed a run-through of Romeo and Juliet at the offices of the newspaper Sovetskoye iskusstvo (Soviet Art) on January 25, 1936, which Mutnikh and Dinamov both attended. Prokofiev performed the first three acts to mixed results. Even in its absence, act IV remained a subject of discussion, this time both positive and negative. Some in attendance lauded the idea of basing proletarian art on the classics, others decried it. Dinamov continued to approve of the happy ending, while also stressing the collective nature of the ballet's conception: eight people, he claimed, had weighed in on the scenario. "Personally I'm for changing the finale," he informed the gathering, "Ballet is ballet. People need to leave the theater afterward feeling joy. [...] Hence I conclude that in Prokofiev's work the two main characters of Shakespeare's drama must not die." The dramatist Osaf Litovsky (who worked for the censorship bureau Glavrepertkom) and journalist David Zaslavsky concurred, noting that Prokofiev's hero and heroine were entirely different characters than Shakespeare's. The composer Alexander Ostretsov disagreed, declaring that "there's nothing to fear if the ballet ends with death. A somber ending does not necessarily lend a pessimist character to the whole of a ballet. The life-enhancing tone of Prokofiev's entire piece, clearly manifest in the culmination, will not be weakened if he follows in Shakespeare's footsteps in the ballet's denouement." Radlov, for his part, no longer had the wherewithal to defend his scenario, quipping that he did not think it worth dying "so that Romeo and Juliet should live."<sup>13</sup>

Irrespective of the debate over the ballet's ending, the Bolshoy Theater kept Romeo and Juliet in the repertoire; the premiere, however, was pushed back from the 1935–36 season to the 1936–37 season. The eventual cancellation of the premier stemmed from an overhaul of the administration of the theater, and a personal review of its repertoire by the imperious, repressive Chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs (Platon Kerzhentsev). All of this took place in the

wake of the denunciation of Dmitriy Shostakovich's opera Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District. A June 3, 1936 memorandum from Kerzhentsev to Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov, the Chairman of Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) resulted in the dismissal of the conductor Nikolay Golovanov as part of a "decisive change within the theater." This memorandum still listed Romeo and Juliet as a forthcoming Bolshoy Theater production.<sup>14</sup> Preparations were suspended, however, pending an "assessment" of the repertoire "by the theater's new leadership." The arrest of Mutnikh followed on April 20, 1937 as part of a wave of repression within cultural circles, and his execution on November 11 (see figure 1).

### **Figure 1: Attestation of Mutnikh's Removal from the Bolshoy Theater**

Because of its association with a vanquished "enemy of the people," Romeo and Juliet, a ballet involving murder, poison, and class struggle, became taboo, unfit for performance during the Twentieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It disappeared from the repertoire. Kerzhentsev, meantime, had determined that Prokofiev required ideological guidance, describing him, in a December 19, 1937 memorandum to Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov, as a "captive of formalism."<sup>15</sup> There would be further tragedies: Dinamov would be arrested in executed, as would Piotrovsky.

In 1941, the composer laconically discussed the crisis in an autobiographical essay commissioned by the editor of Sovetskaya muzika, the journal of the Union of Soviet Composers:

There was quite a fuss at the time about our attempts to give Romeo and Juliet a happy ending—in the last act Romeo arrives a minute earlier, finds Juliet alive and everything ends well. The reasons for this bit of barbarism were purely choreographic: living people can dance, the dying cannot. The justification was that Shakespeare himself was said to have been uncertain about the ends of his plays (King Lear) and parallel with Romeo and Juliet had written Two Gentlemen of Verona in which all ends well. Curiously enough whereas the report that Prokofiev was writing a ballet on the theme of Romeo and Juliet with a happy ending was received quite calmly in London, our own Shakespeare scholars proved more papal than the pope and rushed to the defense of Shakespeare. But what really caused me to change my mind was a remark someone made to me about the ballet: “Strictly speaking your music does not express any real joy at the end.” That was quite true. After several conferences with the choreographers it was found that the tragic ending could be expressed in dance and in due course the music for that ending was written.<sup>16</sup>

The crucial words of this politically correct confession are “in due course.” Two letters from Prokofiev to his assistant Pavel Lamm reveal that he did not begin the music for the tragic ending—Nos. 51 and 52 of the score—until the late summer of 1936, and did not complete it until the late summer of 1938 (see figure 2).<sup>17</sup> Prokofiev trimmed the ending but did not entirely rewrite it. Indeed, comparing the ballet’s two endings reveals a striking overlap: the music associated with the post-awakening reunion of the two lovers in the happy version became the music of Juliet’s death in the tragic version. The theme in question derives from an earlier passage in the ballet called “Juliet the Young Girl.” Once associated with wistful reverie, it

comes to stand, in both versions of the ballet, for mature passion. Prokofiev enhances the theme's emotional impact by transposing it into the highest register of the violins.

### **Figure 2: The Start of the Happy Ending**

In the happy ending, Prokofiev aligns this theme with another theme from “Juliet the Young Girl.” Like the first theme, it appears to express longing, an emotion that is sated when the two lovers avoid death and reunite. The positive sentiments are enhanced in the concluding measures of the happy ending, which develop a theme first heard in the balcony scene (which Prokofiev and Radlov alternately conceived as an after-the-ball scene). The apotheosis of this version of the ballet, in short, embellishes the music associated with the hero and heroine's first declarations of love.

In Shakespeare's play, the death of Romeo and Juliet cannot be undone; Prokofiev and Radlov perhaps wanted to believe that the two lovers had merely gone to sleep, that the fantastic energies in their relationship remained unaffected by potions and daggers. One finds in this formulation an elaboration of a central precept of Christian Science, whose teachings Prokofiev esteemed: “No form or physical combination is adequate to represent infinite Love.”<sup>18</sup> The original version of the ballet accepts the existence of earthly evil but also the pre-existence of celestial harmony. Prokofiev represents the two lovers willing away their reality—the Verona square and the palace—and entering another, greater one.

At the same time, however, the happy ending, with its various symbolic breaches of the proscenium, affronts the religious sentiment that lies at the heart of Shakespeare's play. In act IV, scene 5, Friar Laurence declares: “She's not well married that lives married long, but she's

best married that dies married young.” Prokofiev and Radlov overturn this idea. Romeo learns in the nick of time that the potion only makes Juliet appear dead. The noble bride shakes off its effects in his arms. The ballet suggests that genuine tragedy, in the Russian conception, cannot happen by accident, as it does in the Shakespearean conception.

Romeo and Juliet had a successful Czechoslovakian premier in Brno at the end of 1938, but it was only partial, involving highlights of the score taken primarily from the first and second orchestral suites. The production extended seven performances from December 30, 1938 to May 5, 1939. It was choreographed by Ivo Váňa-Psota, who took the part of Romeo. Zora Šemberová danced the role of Juliet.<sup>19</sup> Prokofiev wanted to attend the performance but by this point was no longer allowed to travel abroad: following his return to the Soviet Union from a three-month tour of (primarily) the United States, he never left again. The Commissariat of Foreign Affairs declined to give him back his external passport, with various reasons being invented to explain the official change in his status from vīyezdnoy (allowed to travel) to nevīyezdnoy (disallowed). Even having the external passport would not have enabled him to leave the country, since he would also have needed to obtain an exit permit (razresheniye na vīyezd zagranitsu) from the militia, issued on behalf of the NKVD.

The ballet suffered considerable vandalizing before reaching the Russian stage. On August 28, 1938, just before the Brno Opera House started to rehearse the ballet, Prokofiev received a telegram from the Kirov Theater expressing interest in including it in the 1939–40 season. The Leningrad production, choreographed by Leonid Lavrovsky and conducted by Isay Sherman, involved changes to the scenario and then the music that Prokofiev largely resisted, but that he did not fully know about until the January 11, 1940 premier.

Lavrovsky was a conservative choreographer in a reactionary cultural climate. Prokofiev was educated in ballet by Diaghilev, and collaborated, before relocating from Paris to Moscow, with such innovators as George Balanchine. It is no surprise that he and Lavrovsky clashed, first over Lavrovsky's plans to change the scenario and then, extensively, over his requests for revisions to the music. At first Prokofiev did not take Lavrovsky particularly seriously. In a February 21, 1939 letter to Radlov, Prokofiev wrote: "So far nothing to fear [with the scenario]: he [Lavrovsky] wants Romeo to stand pensively in Mantua to the music of the entr'acte, and in a different place for him to kill the [Moorish] merchant with the carpets." Prokofiev adds that he had "put a stop" to Lavrovsky's "feeble" requests for additional changes, but these changes, notably the elimination of the exotic dances, were nonetheless made.<sup>20</sup> Radlov, sidelined during the tortured process of revision, altogether disowned the ballet, purportedly forewarning acquaintances who attended a rehearsal to "bear in mind that I don't take any responsibility for this disgrace."<sup>21</sup>

With respect to the music, Lavrovsky first asked Prokofiev to compose solo variations for the hero and heroine. Prokofiev refused until he realized that the ballet would not be staged otherwise, at which point he complied. Romeo's variation came from the music for the happy ending, and it was awkwardly stitched into the balcony scene. Juliet's variation was written from scratch. These additions came at the expense of three exotic dances, which represented, in the original scenario, Paris's courtship of Juliet. Lavrovsky simply deleted them from the score, no questions asked. Next came the reordering of the folklore-inspired Dance of the Five Pairs, the music drastically simplified. Lastly, Lavrovsky demanded that a group dance to be added to the opening of act I. Prokofiev once again refused, but the choreographer did not back down. There ensued a stand-off, with Lavrovsky threatening to import a scherzo from a Prokofiev piano

sonata into the ballet. In response, Prokofiev angrily cobbled together what became known as the “Morning Dance.”

In the run-up to the ballet’s Leningrad premier, Prokofiev discovered that Lavrovsky had further altered the music without consulting him. He protested the changes to Sherman, but Sherman—to whom credit goes for shepherding the ballet to the stage—could not convince Lavrovsky to undo them. Prokofiev’s post-premier letter to Sherman on the subject shows enormous frustration:

On numerous occasions I have appealed to the Kirov Theater to insert a number of corrections relating to the lack of coordination between the choreography and the music, superfluous repeats, insertions, and so on. For four months nothing has been done and I do not know the state in which the production will reach Moscow. On March 31st I sent a registered letter to the management with an official request for an enquiry into this matter. But the management has simply not answered.<sup>22</sup>

There are many superfluous repeats in the score, and many alterations of the orchestration that monumentalized the sound. Prokofiev conceived a score for no more than 59 musicians; the premier had upwards of 70, with most of the thickening coming in the brass (6 French horns instead of 4) and strings.

Eventually, Prokofiev forgave Sherman and learned to tolerate, if not respect, Lavrovsky. He found it necessary, given all that had happened, to credit the choreographer as co-author of the scenario. Despite the egregious manipulation of the score over the years, and despite the fact that it premiered in blackout conditions in Leningrad during the Finnish-Russian War, Romeo

and Juliet became a success. A March 23, 1940 memorandum from the Committee on Arts Affairs to Sovnarkom finds Stalin approving a performance in Moscow (see figure 3).<sup>23</sup> Later productions, including that led by Lavrovsky in Moscow in 1946, received international notice. The aristocratic décor risked undercutting socialist principles, but it represented something of a diplomatic breakthrough, helping to re-establish cultural relations between Eastern and Western Europe. By 1946, Prokofiev could no longer conceive of traveling abroad; the altered, Stalin-approved version of the ballet went in his stead. It would be too much to say that his Shakespearean tale of woe came with a happy ending; the historical record is at best bittersweet.

### **Figure 3: Committee on Arts Affairs Memorandum**

A final point about the score comes from a February 12, 1947 letter from Prokofiev to the Copyright Agency (Upravleniye po okhrane avtorskikh prav) in Moscow, in which he protests that the ballet is catalogued as a three act work with a prologue and epilogue, when in fact it was conceived and commissioned as a four-act work with, obviously, a happy ending.

### The Score

The happy ending begins with an elaboration of the tranquil, thinly-scored theme first heard in “Juliet at Friar Laurence’s” (No. 29). The post-awakening episodes (Nos. 53 and 54) feature a jubilant new theme: a rising arpeggiated pattern accompanied by ticking eighth notes and (in No. 53) the chiming of a bell and striking of a gong (by Friar Laurence) on the stage. Prokofiev does not use this theme anywhere else in the ballet and discarded it when he reconceived the ending. He did, however, eventually find a home for it. The nineteen-measure

passage between rehearsal numbers 360 and 362 recurs intact at the start of the second movement of his Fifth Symphony (1944). In No. 55, Romeo and Juliet step out of character at the back of the stage, out of the world of the ballet as the orchestra “updates” or “matures” their music; at the forte, they launch into a demonstration of breathtaking lifts and leaps, moves that Morris has not yet shown, because they are not part of the narrative: these movements and this coupling exist in the realm of non-narrative formalism. The point, from Morris’s perspective, is to push the dancers forward through the history of choreography into a realm of pointillist abstraction, to have them escape the pantomimed plot, with its fatal street fights, suffocating social rituals, and familial pressures, into something approaching “pure” choreography.

The décor changes accordingly. The panels that have framed the stage now rotate; the floor and walls are bathed in a blue glow, with 750 beams of soft white light emanating from a celestial backdrop and ceiling, creating an grid around Romeo and Juliet. The final chord, an iterated, rotated, C-major sonority, is marked by the two dancers lazily looping around the stage, circling each as does the harmony. The music no longer narrates: it merely repeats, recalling itself to itself in a simulacrum of timelessness.

The ending of this version of the ballet is sadder than the ending of the standard version. Romeo and Juliet live, but when the curtain comes down on act IV, they are in terra incognita, an imagined Christian Science paradise. Morris turns the cynicism with which twenty-first century audiences might react to a happy ending by actually building this cynicism into it: Romeo and Juliet dance out our doubt, our unwillingness, in the face of the long history of the ballet, to suspend our disbelief. The two lovers can either be seen as entering a dreamscape, which, wistfully, is the only place that they can remain alive, or they can be seen as simply leaving the

work, stepping out of it and escaping the realm of hotheaded, Dionysian impulses into an unsullied Apollonian landscape.

As the eminent dance scholar Vadim Gayevsky once observed, the music of Juliet's sleep is "on the level of emotion and orchestration, the least colorful episode of the score. It is as dry as a transcript and as brief as a death notice."<sup>24</sup> Gayevsky's description is entirely correct: this is the music of a composer—a Christian Scientist composer—who denied death. Death, according to the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, is nothingness. Ultimately, the question of Romeo and Juliet's physical state is irrelevant to a scenario and a score that has its own prerogatives. The music for the final number is unscripted, because Romeo and Juliet have entered a space of their own, with nary a Montague or a Capulet in sight—a third space of non-representation. They have left the real world for the world of art.

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More on Romeo and Juliet may be found in my book, from which the following is drawn, The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years (New York: Oxford University Press, in production).

<sup>1</sup> Nelly Kravetz, "Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of Romeo and Juliet," Three Oranges: the Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation 8 (November 2004): 16–21.

Noëlle Mann, "Background to Romeo and Juliet," Three Oranges: the Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation 8 (November 2004).

Edward Morgan, "Prokofiev's Shakespearian Period," Three Oranges: the Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation 10 (November 2005).

David Nice, Prokofiev: From Russia to the West (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

S[vetlana] A. Petukhova, "Pervaya avtorskaya redaktsiya baleta Prokof'yeva 'Romeo i Dzul'yetta'. Istochnikovedcheskiye problemī izucheniya" (Ph. D. diss., MGK. im. P. I.

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Chaykovskogo, 1997). Deborah Annette Wilson, Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet: History of a Compromise (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> RGALI f. 1929, op. 3 yed. khr. 44, l. 3.

<sup>3</sup> RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (Prokof'yev and M[ira] A[bramovna] Mendel'son, Notograficheskiy spravochnik proizvedeniy S. Prokof'yeva, 1951–52), l. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Mann, "Background to Romeo and Juliet," 25.

<sup>5</sup> The statement is translated by Morgan in "Prokofiev's Shakespearian Period," 5.

<sup>6</sup> Prokof'yev and V[era] V[ladimirovna] Alpers, "Perepiska," in Muzikal'noye nasledstvo: Sborniki po istorii muzikal'noy kul'turi SSSR, vol. 1, ed. G. B. Bernandt, V. A. Kiselyov, and M. S. Pekelis (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye muzikal'noye izdatel'stvo, 1962), 427. The letter is dated July 8, 1935.

<sup>7</sup> S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: Perepiska, ed. D. B. Kabalevskiy (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskiy kompozitor," 1977), 440. The letter is dated September 11, 1935.

<sup>8</sup> Yuriy Fayer, O sebe, o muzike, o balete (Moscow: Vsesoyuznoye izdatel'stvo sovetskiy kompozitor, 1970), 354.

<sup>9</sup> Sergey Radlov, "Yunost' teatra," Teatr i dramaturgiya (June 1935): 23. A variation of this same quotation is included in David Zolotnitsky, Sergei Radlov: The Shakespearian Fate of a Soviet Director, trans. Tatania Ganf and Natalia Egunova (New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 115.

<sup>10</sup> The scenario is housed at RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 66, ll. 1–2. Petukhova reproduces it largely intact in her dissertation, appendix 1, pp. 23–28.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksandr Afinogenov, Izbrannoye, ed. K. N. Kirilenko and V. P. Koshunova, 2 vols. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), 2:318.

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<sup>12</sup> RNB f. 625, yed. khr. 465, l. 3.

<sup>13</sup> RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 932, item 108 (A. Kut [Aleksandr Kutuzov], “Balet ‘Romeo i Dzhul’etta’ na soveshchanii v ‘Sovetskom iskusstve’,” Sovetskoye iskusstvo, January 29, 1936).

<sup>14</sup> RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 951, l. 1.

<sup>15</sup> RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 952, l. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Prokofiev, Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings, ed. and trans. Oleg Prokofiev (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 299.

<sup>17</sup> “Pis’mo S. S. Prokof’yeva k P. A. Lammu,” in Sergey Prokof’yev: Vospominaniya. Pis’mo. Stat’i, ed. M[arina] P[avlovna] Rakhmanova (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Deka-VS,” 2004), 283 and 290.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (Boston: First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1994), 256.

<sup>19</sup> Šemberová is still alive, residing at age 95 in Adelaide, Australia.

<sup>20</sup> RNB f. 625, yed. khr. 465, l. 4.

<sup>21</sup> November 15, 1972 letter from Boris Khaykin to Mikhaíl Khrapchenko, in Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel' 1939–yanvar' 1948, comp., ed., and introd. V. V. Perkhin (Moscow: Nauka, 2007), 549.

<sup>22</sup> Letter of April 30, 1940, quoted in Kravetz, “Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of Romeo and Juliet,” 20; translation adjusted.

<sup>23</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 163, d. 1257, l. 87.

<sup>24</sup> V[adim] Gayevskiy, Dom Petipa (Moscow: Artist. Rezhissyor. Teatr, 2000), 254.

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