

Prokofiev - Romeo & Juliet, op.64 (Ozawa) [1999]

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Disc 1 01 1. Introduction 02:49 02 2. Romeo 01:31 03 3. The street awakens 02:21 04 4. Morning dance 02:08 05 5. The quarrel 01:48 06 6. The fight 03:52 07 7. The duke's command 01:15 08 8. Interlude 02:16 09 9. At the Capulets' (Preparations for the ball) 02:17 10 10. The young Juliet 03:26 11 11. Arrival of the guests 04:00 12 12. Masks 02:43 13 13. Dance of the knights 05:24 14 14. Juliet's variation 02:52 15 15. Mercutio 02:18 16 16. Madrigal 03:43 17 17. Tybalt recognizes Romeo 02:11 18 18. Gavotte 03:40 19 19. Balcony scene 03:24 20 20. Romeo's variation 01:37 21 21. Love dance 06:03 22 22. Folk dance 03:52 23 23. Romeo and Mercutio 02:18 24 24. Dance of the five couples 03:54 25 25. Dance with mandolins 01:50

Disc 2 01 26. Nurse 02:04 02 27. The nurse and Romeo 54 03 28. Romeo at friar Laurence's 02:57 04 29. Juliet at friar Laurence's 03:22 05 30. Public merrymaking 03:17 06 31. Further public festivities 02:36 07 32. Meeting of Tybalt and Mercutio 02:00 08 33. The duel 01:27 09 34. Death of Mercutio 02:30 10 35. Romeo decides to avenge Mercutio 02:05 11 36. Finale 01:50 12 37. Introduction 01:14 13 38. Romeo and Juliet 01:20 14 39. Romeo bids Juliet farewell 05:22 15 40. Nurse 02:01 16 41. Juliet refuses to marry Paris 02:26 17 42. Juliet alone 01:24 18 43. Interlude 01:26 19 44. At friar Laurence's cell 04:52 20 45. Interlude 01:37 21 46. Juliet's room 02:40 22 47. Juliet alone 04:16 23 48. Aubade 02:34 24 49. Dance of the girls with lilies 02:11 25 50. At Juliet's bedside 02:04 26 51. Juliet's funeral 05:29 27 52. Juliet's death 04:27

Boston Symphony Orchestra Seiji Ozawa – conductor

Romeo and Juliet, ballet in 4 acts, Op. 64 In the early- and mid-twentieth century, the three major Tchaikovsky ballets -- Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and The Nutcracker -- were viewed as the three greatest full-length ballets. Not surprisingly, they were also more popular by wide margins than all other works in the genre. By the latter quarter of the century, however, Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet had entered the trio's select company and remains exceedingly popular today. Some have even asserted it is the greatest of full-length ballets. Certainly, it is one of Prokofiev's supreme masterpieces and, via the three suites extracted from it, among his most often-played music.

His previous ballets had been shorter and more pungent, like Chout, Op. 21 (1915-1920), and Le Pas d'Acier, Op. 41 (1925), which created a bit of a stir in Paris when it premiered. Both, along with The Prodigal Son (1929), were composed for Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Romeo and Juliet was thus his first attempt at writing a full-length ballet, and while he would have further successes in the genre, most notably with Cinderella, no other stage work of his would quite approach it in popularity.

Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet, based on Shakespeare's play, consists of four acts and ten scenes, within which are 52 separate dance numbers. The work opens with a six-note motif that appears throughout the ballet. This same theme, cut to four notes, opens the composer's Symphony-Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1950-1952) and appears elsewhere in its first movement. There are many famous melodies in Romeo and Juliet, foremost among which is probably the march-like theme that appears in No. 13, "Dance of the Knights." This music symbolizes the strife between the opposing families. A variant of it is played in the next number, "Juliet's Variation," where its character changes from the austere malevolence in No. 13 to innocence and playfulness.

Another important and immensely popular melody is the love theme of Romeo and Juliet. It is a soaring melody in an arch-like pattern that exudes warmth and yearning, passion and grace. But there are many other memorable themes, including the joyous, rhythmic one in No. 12, "Masks," as well as the two in No. 22, "Folk Dance." Perhaps the most profound creation in the ballet, however, is the dark and tragic theme appearing in No. 51, "Juliet's Funeral," whose arch-like pattern is similar to that of the love theme.

Prokofiev also quotes from his own Classical Symphony here (No. 18 "Gavotte"), using music from the third movement Gavotte. It is not for want of thematic material that he resorts to this reference, but to show irony: this post-Renaissance French dance is as much miscast here as the two teenage lovers who are caught up in an unforgiving adult world. Romeo and Juliet lasts about two-and-one half hours in a typical performance. It was premiered in Brno, Czechoslovakia, on December 30, 1938. ---Robert Cummings, Rovi

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