Universidade de Lisboa
Faculdade de Letras

SHAKESPEARE AND PROKOFIEV'S 'PAS-DE-DEUX' IN *ROMEO AND JULIET:* A CASE-STUDY IN INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION

KAREN BENNETT

Mestrado em Estudos Anglísticos
Especialidade: Estudos de Tradução

Professor Orientador: Professor Doutor João Ferreira Duarte

2002

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the process of translation has been described in many different terms. Metaphors have been borrowed from the domains of discovery and colonization, property and class relations, love and marriage, portrait painting, and cannibalism, to name but a few, and study of these has yielded a great deal about the way in which the activity has been perceived in different cultural situations at different moments in time. In the current theoretical climate, a metaphor which seems to my mind to be particularly apt is that of the dance, more specifically the courtship dance or *pas-de-deux*: for like translation, it involves a special kind of negotiation within a framework governed by norms and constraints. In the dance, the music sets the basic rhythm and mood, providing as it were the 'operational norms'[1] within which the actual steps are worked out; and at any given time, the dance may be led by either one of the partners, just as translation choices may be determined by the either the source or the target culture.

As a dynamic metaphor, the courtship dance is particularly appropriate to describe relations between semiotic systems that unfold in time, as is the case of all the performance arts (unlike painting or sculpture, or even certain kinds of literary texts, which have a concrete existence as products rather than as processes). These art forms have in recent years begun to acquire the status of 'languages' in their own right, and may be shown to possess vocabularies and grammars rivalling those of the verbal system in their complexity. Consequently, there has been a new surge of interest in the way in which meaning can be transferred between different semiotic codes, a process that has come to be known as 'intersemiotic translation'.

This article is concerned with one particular intersemiotic translation, the *pas-de-deux* between Shakespeare and the composer Prokofiev that gave rise to the ballet *Romeo and Juliet.* Ironically, the collaboration between these two artists was as beset by obstacles as the romance that motivated them, and due to the intervention of the authoritarian Soviet state, the project almost suffered a premature death. But there the parallel ends, for in this case tragedy was avoided, and the ballet went on to become one of the most famous and best loved works of its genre ever created, undergoing multiple stage productions and recordings all over the world.

[1] Cf. Toury (1978). See Chapter 2 for a discussion of recent translation theory.

The composer's own fortunes were not quite so clear-cut, however. He was at different times feted and rejected by the regime, held up as a model of compositional virtue and ostracised as a Formalist. Even today it is not easy to determine where his sympathies lay, as both sides of the ideological divide have claimed him as their own, interpreting his music in accordance with their own interests. My main aim here, then, is to consider this intersemiotic translation from a socio-political perspective, trying to establish the extent to which his distinctive interpretation of the play was conditioned by the circumstances under which he lived. Could the ballet be read as Socialist Realism, for example, like so many other reworkings of Shakespeare executed at that time? Or is it, as some critics have suggested, being furtively subversive, introducing ironic subtexts while ostensibly toeing the official line?

The process of analysis also contributes to a debate that was particularly virulent during the 1930s when the ballet was being composed, namely about whether music can in fact mean at all. At that time, musicians were still reacting to the semiotic excesses of the Romantics, not to mention to attempts by totalitarian regimes to bring all art into the service of the state. As a result, the Formalist (or Absolutist) position was in the ascendancy, giving rise to such dogmatic assertions as Stravinsky's famous claim that music is, 'by its nature, incapable of expressing anything, whether a feeling, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon etc.' (*cit* Nattiez, 1990:108). Today, however, the picture is very different. Saussure's 'self-contained dyad' of signifier and signified has been superseded by semiotic models that take account of the world outside the sign system and of the process of diachronic change by means of which societies actively construct their semiotic grids; consequently, music, alongside most other human activities, is now being approached as a form of social semiotic that has a great deal to reveal about the culture that gave rise to it.

I hope to demonstrate here that music does in fact have the resources to express quite precise meanings in a way that has clear parallels with literary or cinematic art. With Theodor Adorno, and more recent social semioticians such as Van Leeuwen, I hold that Western tonal music is an internally coherent semiotic system which emerged during the paradigm shift of early modernity in order to carry out particular social functions, and that, consequently, meanings are encoded into its very grammar. It is thus possible to 'read' a piece of music in much the same way as we can read a written text or a film, essentially by examining how the composer uses this resource inherited from tradition,

how he works with the constraints inherent in the system and to what extent he observes the *norms* governing the different aspects of it.

In the case of Prokofiev, the very act of choosing to operate within the tonal system in *Romeo and Juliet* was also significant, given the particular period in which he was writing. For of course, in the early decades of the 20th century, tonality itself was in the process of being dismantled. This had already begun in the Romantic period, with the introduction of chromatic elements into the diatonic structure by figures such as Wagner, Strauss and Mahler; but by the 1920s, atonality and then serialism were rapidly becoming the dominant idioms for erudite composers. It is not clear whether Prokofiev's decision to return to a more traditional approach after the experimental years of his youth was the result of his private development as a musician, or whether it was a gesture of submission before the authoritarian Soviet state, virulently opposed to 'Formalism' in all its manifestations. Still less clear is how we should interpret some of the less conservative elements of his score, such as the use of discordant 9ths and other chords not considered legitimate within the diatonic system. Are they there, as his official biographer claims, in order to act as a foil for tonality and provide an auditory metaphor for the destructive reactionary forces in the world? Or do they rather subvert the main text, adding an ironical comment to an enforced harmonic optimism?

The first part of this thesis therefore sets out to explore the signic potential of the system that Prokofiev inherited, in order to more precisely assess the composer's individual contribution. Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of semiotic systems in general, moving on in Chapter 2 to examine how meaning can be transferred between one sign system and another; the model used here is provided by C.S. Peirce, whose notion of 'unlimited semiosis' (*Collected Papers,* Vol.II §303) seems to me eminently qualified to explain the process involved in translation and provides unexpected justification for some of the attitudes assumed by contemporary translation theorists. Chapters 3 and 4 consider the specificities of tonal music in the light of Pierce's taxonomy of signs into Icons, Indexes and Symbols, and in Chapter 5 we see how this was appropriated by the Soviets as a vehicle for their own ideology. Chapter 6 goes on to analyse the narrative structure of *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of the signic potential of tonal music already discussed; Chapter 7 compares Prokofiev's version of the story with Shakespeare's; and finally, in Chapter 8 we discuss the extent to which the work conforms to the demands of Socialist Realism, attempting to uncover something of the ideology encoded into the discourse.

Reference is made in places to a particular performance of the ballet, Nureyev's 1995 production for the Paris Opera, as seen on the 1997 Warner Music Video. A ballet production is of course a very complex work of art in its own right, involving an elaborate system of multiple semiotic codes that each add further dimensions of meaning to the musical and linguistic texts; there is however no space here to examine all these aspects with the care they deserve. For this reason, the production will be dealt with very superficially, merely as an example of how Prokofiev's score may actually work in practice.

The text is also accompanied by a cassette of musical extracts, designed to illustrate aspects of the thematic structure of the work as described in Chapter 6: these are taken from the 1999 recording of the ballet by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by André Previn (EMI Classics). Musical quotations within the text are from the piano score, published by Edition Sikorski, Hamburg.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have helped me with advice and support during the course of this work. These include not only my official supervisor, Prof. João Ferreira Duarte, but also friends and family members who have contributed by offering their own opinions on my ideas and musical interpretations. I hope that the final product will justify all the time and attention that they have given me.

PART ONE

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

Chapter 1

SIGN SYSTEMS: CHALLENGING THE HEGEMONY OF THE VERBAL

Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* is, in the modern sense of the word, a translation, and as such, may be approached with the tools that are currently being employed in the young discipline of Translation Studies. That is to say, consideration of the way in which Shakespeare's famous play is rewritten in this work will certainly shed light upon the values of the culture that first commissioned it, then apparently rejected it and finally, following the immense success of the ballet abroad, re-appropriated it and honoured it with a prominent place in its musical canon.

However, this is also no ordinary translation, since it does not merely transfer meaning from one language to another. In this work, the very code itself is abandoned, and the text is reconstrued in a completely different sign system. It is this that gives it the right to be considered as an intersemiotic translation, a term first used and defined by Roman Jakobson in 1959 in his article 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'.[2]

But this very fact of operating in a different medium raises all sorts of complications for the process of interpretation. Unlike verbal language, the semiotic potential of music has scarcely been studied at all, and there is still a great deal of controversy in some camps about whether it in fact can refer at all to anything outside itself or whether it is a purely formal art, an edifice with its own internal logic but utterly unable to express or reflect external realities. Consequently, we are unable to proceed with our analysis of Prokofiev's treatment of Shakespeare without first developing in some detail a model of musical semiotics, at least as employed in this particular work.

Prokofiev obviously believed that music bore some signic potential, else he would never have embarked upon the project of trying to put Shakespeare into music. Likewise, the Soviet authorities must have believed in its capacity for transmitting ideology, else they would not have issued the famous edict about socialist realism (see Chapter 5), demanding that their composers reflect the values of the regime. Music critics also habitually describe musical works in terms of emotional states; and of course, instructions such as *Allegro, Con brio, Scherzando, Capriccio, Appassionato, Fuoco,*

[2] In Schulte and Biguenet (Ed) 1992: 145: 'Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language'.

Precipitato etc all presuppose that it is possible to represent these in the execution of a particular composition. Yet there have been remarkably few attempts to analyse exactly how it may be done; the critical discourse of music is usually restricted to a series of commonplaces that are tacitly accepted by the discourse community without any real concern for the mechanisms giving rise to them. We take it for granted that the clarinet or the flute is a better instrument for portraying Juliet than the trombone, that the minor key better expresses wistfulness than the major, and that a fight should portrayed loudly and in a rhythmically pronounced way; but very few scholars have actually inquired about the mechanisms involved in the transferral. In this work, therefore, I am concerned to examine the nature of the musical signs used in Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, and to analyse just how they are put together to create the particular text that is this intersemiotic translation.

I am also concerned with a claim that has frequently been made for music, namely its ability to express the ineffable, to somehow go beyond words to give voice to the soul. Of course this is a very nebulous notion that does not easily lend itself to analysis, and those that have asserted it have usually been singularly unconcerned to pursue the issue of just how this is done. But a useful starting-point might be to consider just what is meant by 'ineffable', since this gives us an idea of the priorities of a culture that makes such a claim.

The very assertion that there exist things that are 'unspeakable' or 'unutterable' should surely be seen as a kind of protest against logocentricity,[3] a challenge proffered to the hegemonic status occupied by the verbal code in the transmission of meaning. It implies that other meanings may exist, and that verbal language is inadequate to deal with them; it also suggests that there may be other semiotic codes that could be better suited to the expression of those meanings.

In this sense, the proposition that music can express the ineffable does not need to be seen as outside the bounds of rational enquiry; rather, it merely claims that the musical code, like any other, has semantic categories that are specific to it and which do not necessarily overlap with those of the dominant one. This is not a difficult notion to come to grips with, since the idea that different languages divide up reality in different ways has been accepted in linguistics for a long time. It was Benjamin Lee Whorf who asserted it most clearly:

[3] I am of course not using this term in the sense of Derrida's 'logocentrism', but rather to describe a semiotic orientation centred upon the word.

> We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organised by our minds – and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way – an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (*cit*.Crystal, 1987:15)

However, there are few people nowadays who would subscribe to the strongest form of the Whorfian Hypothesis, namely that we are unable to perceive or conceive anything outside the referential categories provided by our mother tongue, or indeed outside of verbal language. For the experiences of learning foreign languages, appreciating painting or music, or becoming socialised to the subtle meanings expressed by others through body language and facial expression all involve the development of alternative interpretative grids that illuminate different aspects of the underlying reality. Indeed, Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of semiology himself, implies the existence of other codes beyond the verbal:

> Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them. Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within a mass of anthropological facts. (1974 [1915]:16)

Apart from this assertion, Saussure himself did not venture beyond linguistics into other sign systems, and this may partly be responsible for the overwhelming value

that has been given to verbal language as the semiotic code par excellence in modern society. It fell to later scholars to extend his concepts to other areas. As a result, we have had Roland Barthes studying the semiotic potential of fashion and photographs, Levi-Strauss looking at the significance of cooking methods, and Umberto Eco interpreting theme parks and the World Cup, to name but a very few examples. Nowadays, almost anything can be analysed in semiotic terms, and the notion of 'text' has been redefined to extend far beyond the verbal. Indeed, most modern texts employ multiple codes, which interact and enmesh in a way that defies simplistic analysis. We only have to think of how meaning is transmitted in film, advertisements, theatre etc, to realise that the verbal element no longer has hegemonic status; in those examples, photography, set design, graphics, gesture, and sound effects all play roles at least as important as that of language, each code operating in accordance with its own internal conventions.

Even within verbal language itself, a similar kind of decentralisation has taken place. The naïve realist view, according to which a word merely stands for some objectively existing entity in the outside world, is no longer tenable; language is no longer understood to be a single unified code but instead is seen to contain a number of different systems operating in network, which complement and contradict each other in a continuous shifting dance of signification. There are now felt to be different kinds of meaning - the interpersonal and the textual, as well as the ideational or referential - all transmitted simultaneously in the simplest of utterances. We now have to take account of the part played in oral discourse by pragmatic features, such as the context and purpose of an utterance and the relationship between the interlocutors; by paralinguistic features, like gesture and body language, and by prosodic features like stress and intonation: and in written discourse, we have to consider the semiotic dimensions added by the physical appearance of the text, typeset, graphics, illustrations etc. It would seem, therefore, that the meaning of a verbal text is so complex and so transient that *any* attempt at interpretation will inevitably be partial and incomplete.

This, of course, explains why the great works of literature are able to generate a seemingly endless stream of comment and criticism; and why it is possible for there to be so many different translations of a single work. In the past, there were attempts to contain the burgeoning of signification by focusing, firstly, on the intention of the author, and later, with the New Criticism of the thirties and forties, upon the text itself as autonomous entity. With Postmodernism, the emphasis has now shifted to the interpreter as principal agent in the construction of meaning, the argument being that, given the

impossibility of pinning-down any essential meaning, it would seem to be much more productive to concentrate on a particular meaning that emerges from the interaction between a particular reader and a particular manifestation of the text at a particular time. Hence the privileged place that is now being allocated to translation, which is nothing if not a concrete manifestation of a specific interaction.

This raises another very important issue, the question of whether meaning is something that exists independently of the observer and is *discovered*, or whether it is instead *constructed* by the code. As we have seen, the tendency in many disciplines has been away from realist explanations towards constructivist ones, and there has been a great deal of exploration of the way in which certain kinds of discourses are systematically fabricated by their users in order to fulfil specific purposes. However, to my mind, these two perspectives are not necessarily contradictory. Perhaps it is more useful to view all languages and discourses as *semiotic grids* superimposed upon the raw matter of experience. The reality precedes us, and we can sense it in some unconscious unstructured way; but are unable to process it or talk about it without the mediation of the codes that our communities develop for that purpose.

C.S. Peirce's concept of 'Firstness' suggests a kind of primal soup of sensation, in which we, as little children, float about without being limited by conventional representations; but as we get older, our need to communicate with others about practical matters of life results in the organisation of these experiences into categories that are shared and labelled by all the members of our speech community. There is therefore a great deal of primal experience that gets 'lost' during this process. Some of it may be bunched together in verbal categories that are so vast that they are practically meaningless, while other experiences fall through the cracks in the grid, having no adequate representation in the system of signs that is our language. This, then, is what is meant by the ineffable, experiences that are outside the scope of words.

Manuel Frias Martins (1995) has coined the term 'matéria negra' to describe this body of unnameable experience that is unaccounted for by the semiotic grid, based on an analogy with the so-called 'dark matter' that fills the physical universe. It is experience that is not yet illuminated by the bright light of consciousness, and which, inaccessible to normal language, may be known only intuitively. Suzanne Langer has also stated a similar idea:

> Sign and symbol[4] are knotted together in the production of those fixed realities that we call 'facts'… But *between the facts* run the threads of unrecorded reality, momentarily recognized, wherever they come to the surface, in our tacit adaptation to signs; and the bright, twisted threads of symbolic envisagement, imagination, thought – memory and reconstructed memory, belief beyond experience, dream, make-believe, hypothesis, philosophy – the whole creative process of ideation, metaphor, and abstraction that makes human life an adventure in understanding. (1957: 281)

A poet, in stretching language to its extremes, may manage to capture something of this elusive 'unrecorded reality' or 'matéria negra'. Just like children who do not yet have the lexical and syntactic resources to express their perceptions, the poet, in his quest for new ways of seeing, uses the old words in unexpected ways, unleashing the sign from its referential moorings and allowing it to float freely over the primal soup. A familiar word may suddenly be seen to possess a host of phantom meanings that mysteriously accrue to it from its shadowy past; or it may be used metaphorically to denote some entirely different object, indicating relationships that we never dreamed were there. In the hands of an able poet, great tracts of 'matéria negra' may suddenly emerge into view; only to subside into the misty depths like Atlantis the moment we attempt to pin them down.

It is this which various authors have called the 'soul' of a literary text, the ineffable, unspeakable aura that overflows the grid of referential language. Literary translators in vain grapple with it, knowing that they are engaged in a hopeless task. For each time they capture a shoal of meanings in the net of their own language, a great many more slip through the holes. They are forced to admit the limited nature of their catch and augment it with meanings culled from the waters of their own language, or else they give up altogether in humble recognition of their linguistic limitations.

[4] It must be pointed out that Langer uses the terms 'sign' and 'symbol' in a particular way. In her description of the evolution of symbols in human consciousness, she points out that animals have a primitive semantic based upon the 'power of learning by trial and error that certain phenomena in the world are signs of certain others, existing or about to exist' (1957:30). This narrow kind of 'sign', therefore, is no more than a 'symptom' of something else, it is caused by that object, and is thus identifiable as an Index in Peirce's terminology. She goes on to say, 'Man, unlike all other animals, uses "signs" not only to *indicate* things, but also to *represent* them. To a clever dog, the name of a person is a signal that the person is present; you say the name, he pricks up his ears and looks for its object…. With man it is different. We use certain "signs" among ourselves that do not point to anything in our actual surroundings…. They serve, rather, to let us develop a characteristic attitude toward objects *in absentia*, which is called "thinking of" or "referring to" what is not here. "Signs" used in this capacity are not *symptoms* of things, but *symbols*." (*ibid:*31).

And yet, as we have seen, verbal language is not the only sign system that exists in the world. Painting, music, photography and ballet are all alternative codes that are able to express things that verbal language cannot. They are different types of net, and they catch different things; there is nothing mystical about that. Consequently, when an artist, composer or choreographer adapts a work of literature to his particular medium, we can expect to find omissions, alterations and indeed additions resulting from the constraints imposed by the target code (which of course is what happens in conventional interlinguistic translations too).

In addition to this, an intersemiotic translation, like all others, takes place within a particular socio-political context and thus will be subject to further constraints of a cultural and ideological nature.[5] These gain the force of law when the target system is a totalitarian regime, with severe penalties imposed upon artists that do not comply. Consequently, no analysis of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* can avoid taking into account the particular conditions under which that ballet was produced, the Soviet Union of the 1930s during the period of Stalin's dictatorship that has subsequently come to be known as 'The Terror'.

These will all be discussed in the second part of this dissertation. But before considering the implications of the particular reworking of the *Romeo and Juliet* story that is Prokofiev's ballet, let us look more closely at the semiotic process involved in the transfer of meaning. This will be the topic of our next chapter.

[5] See Chapter 2 for further discussion of these theoretical issues.

Chapter 2

THE TRANSFER OF MEANING: C.S.PEIRCE AND CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION THEORY

Any analysis of how meaning is transferred between sign systems requires a theoretical model adequate to deal with the needs of the particular reality in question. Saussure, considered the father of the science of semiology, proposed, as we know, a two-part sign, consisting of Signifier and Signified, the signifier denoting the form the sign takes (sound-image), and the signified, the mental concept it represents. In this model, meaning is seen as residing in the systematic relationship of signs to each other, rather than in any reference to the outside world. The signifier and signified form a 'self-contained dyad' with no connection to physical reality, and language as a whole is therefore a system of functional differences and oppositions, with meaning constructed internally, within the system. This clearly does not allow for the transfer of meaning between different codes, and therefore is not the ideal model for an analysis of the process of inter-semiotic translation.

For this we have to turn to the American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, whose tripartite model opens the process of signification up to the outside world. According to him, the sign vehicle (or *Representamen*) stands for something external to the system, which has impinged upon the consciousness of the interpreter. This external entity, which he calls the *Object*, is received in the mind of the interpreter as a kind of reflection (the *Interpretant*), which resembles the original object in some respect:

> A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. (*Collected Papers*, Vol.II §228)

Although in this model there is a connection between the outside world of things and the mental world of the sign system, it is clear that Peirce is by no means a naïve realist. He makes the point of emphasising that the Interpretant, the image formed in the mind of the observer, is not an exact replica of the Object in the outside world, but merely resembles it in some way.

> The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen. 'Idea' is here to be understood in a sort of Platonic sense, very familiar in everyday talk; I mean in that sense in which we say that one man catches another man's idea… (*Ibid)*

Peirce seems here to be deliberately making an ontological distinction between some independently existing object and the partial or altered version of that object that is captured in the Sign. The reference to Plato would suggest that the object itself exists only as some kind of intangible and unknowable Form or Ideal, which also needs to be interpreted in order to find concrete manifestation in the Sign.

Thus, although the universe is 'suffused with signs', things only become signs when they are interpreted as such. Meaning therefore resides very much in the mind of the beholder, and the Interpretant formed in the mind of one person in response to a given sign may differ considerably from that of somebody else, in some cases being even more elaborate than the original sign that gave rise to it. This clearly supports an ideological weighting away from the Author towards the Interpreter in the signification process, and also interestingly accounts for the phenomenon known as 'over-interpretation' without making any pejorative value judgements in this respect. That is to say, since a Sign only becomes a Sign when it is interpreted, each individual interpretation is as valid as the next, no matter how eccentric some may seem to others. In addition, as the Object behind the Sign is ultimately unknowable, authorial intention also ceases to be relevant. The interpretation becomes all.

When the recipient of a sign (the reader of a literary text, say) decides to try to transmit his interpretation of that sign to others (in the form of a critical commentary, lecture, published edition, adaptation for other medium, translation etc), then the original Sign (the Source Text) becomes the Object in a new semiotic process. Accordingly, a new Sign is created (the commentary, translation etc) which is received

by its readers through the creation of a new mental image of that sign. If these Interpretants are then further transmitted to others, by means of the creation of new Signs, then the whole cycle begins again. This is the process that Pierce terms 'unlimited semiosis' (*Ibid.* §303), a chain of reflections in a series of distorting mirrors.

Of course the process is not merely linear; rather it is a kind of branching-out, as each sign gives rise to multiple interpretations, which in turn each become the object of more. It is a sprouting of new meanings, each new sign becoming more and more removed from the original Object. The *Romeo and Juliet* story is a good example of such a semiotic sequence.[6] Shakespeare seems to have encountered the tale through Arthur Brooke's 1562 translation of an Italian novella by Bandello (probably via the 1559 French translation by Boaistuau), which was in turn based upon a 1530 account by Luigi da Porto of a supposedly true event that took place in Verona in the days of Bartolommeo della Scala: motifs from the legend are evident as far back as antiquity in early 'separation' and 'potion' romances, and of course in Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. Since Shakespeare, there have been hundreds of versions, of course: translations, adaptations, retellings in different languages and forms, theatrical, ballet and opera productions, films, musicals etc. The characters and basic themes have been transported into many different cultural contexts, and details of the narrative have been shifted and altered many times to suit the needs of the particular version. Whether there is some Archetype behind all these versions that is common to all cultures, narratologists may one day be able to tell us; if so, we may be close to the first Sign, the first human rendering of that mystical primordial Object.

Peirce does not view the process of distancing from that original Object as implying deterioration. He makes it clear that no new Sign can alone fully capture the essence of the Object that gave rise to it; instead, the various manifestations should be regarded as *Tokens* or instances of a particular *Type* (cf. *Collected Papers,* Vol.4 §537), which only cumulatively can get close to expressing the full essence of the very first sign. This of course is an interesting revision of traditional attitudes to translations and adaptations, which for many years privileged the perceived 'original' over subsequent versions. As such, Peirce arrived by a different route, and a century earlier, at a position very similar to that occupied by contemporary translation theory. This is what we will turn to next.

[6] All information about Shakespeare's sources is taken from Gibbons (1998:32-42).

Contemporary Translation Theory

The fact that Peirce's writings have as yet failed to achieve mainstream status, despite their clear relevance, is probably due largely to their inaccessibility, both on the practical level (most of his papers remain unpublished even today) and on the level of his discourse, which is frequently very dense. In addition, his approach is informed by a philosophical idealism that is far removed from the cultural materialism of current theory. This of course makes all the more curious the convergence of these two perspectives on the issue of value. Both ultimately take a stand against traditional attitudes that view original texts as possessing some kind of sacred aura that is defiled and reduced by translation. For Peirce, meaning does not reside independently in any object but is attributed by the interpreter; hence a translation represents one of many equally valid interpretations of a given text. For the culturalists, who object to the notion of a fixed unchanging aesthetic, all texts are produced and received within specific socio-political contexts and are thus subject to and conditioned by changing values; consequently, translations play as important a role as 'originals' in the development of cultural history. (Indeed, the very notion of 'originality' has itself been discredited by post-modernist studies into intertextuality, once again in terms very similar to those used a century before by Peirce).

The modern argument for the relativity of interpretation is put forward clearly by André Lefevre:

> Interpretation, a way of reading a work of literature which sometimes leads to writing about that work of literature, rewriting it to some extent, has never been an enterprise of cast-iron scholarship and erudition only, but always of scholarship and erudition in the service of something else. There has, in other words, never been a truly autonomous criticism, responsible only to the truth, the eternal, the one and only. There have always been different attempts at interpretation undertaken on the basis of a certain concept of what the world should be like (ideology) as well as a certain concept of what literature should be like (poetics), and these attempts, neo-classical, romantic, existential, psychoanalytic, have always been temporary, transient. They have accepted or rejected works of literature on the basis of the ideology and the poetics they happened to be serving, but,

> much more often, they have adapted works of literature, 'rewritten' them until they happened to fit their own poetics, their own ideology. (1985:217)

He goes on to identify a series of constraints operating upon writers and rewriters within a literary system: the *patronage* required before a work can become accepted; the *poetics* of the system (understood essentially as the inventory of literary devices available and a particular concept of what literature should be); the *universe of discourse* (the knowledge, learning and customs of a particular society at a particular time); and of course the limitations imposed by the syntax and lexis of the *natural language* in which the work is composed. (To this list could also be added the limitations imposed by the *original work* in the case of a translation).

A similar case was put forward by Gideon Toury some years previously in a discussion entitled 'The Nature and Role of Norms in Literary Translation':

> Sociologists regard norms as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a certain community – as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate – into specific performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to specific situations, providing they are not (yet) formulated as laws. These instructions, the norms, are acquired - even internalized - by individual members of the community during the socialization process, and may be said to serve as criteria, in comparison with which actual instances of behaviour are evaluated or judged by the group as a whole and by its members individually. (1978:83-4)

This passage is followed by a catalogue of the norms operating at different stages of the translation process and at different levels in its product, the translation itself.

As Susan Bassnett (1993-4:171) has pointed out, this 'cultural turn' in literary studies, which led to a new valuing of translational phenomena and to the formal constitution of the discipline now known as Translation Studies, came about in the 1980s in the wake of the polysystems theory of the early 1970s. According to this, semiotic phenomena, such as culture, language, literature etc, is viewed not as a conglomerate of disparate elements, but as a system of relations that alters and shifts in time in accordance with the changing balance of power in the society that gives rise to it. Consequently, translated texts are valued not so much as aesthetic entities in their

own right but rather for what they reveal about the values of the culture that commissions them. (cf. Even-Zohar, 1990:45-51).

This perspective will be of importance for our discussion of Prokofiev's interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*, occurring as it did in the highly restricted context of reception that was Stalin's Russia. Ultimately I will be concerned to investigate the role played by the ballet in that cultural system and Prokofiev's specific reaction to the constraints imposed upon him.

But first, let us return to Peirce and his taxonomy of signs, in preparation for our examination of the musical sign system used by Prokofiev.

Types of Sign

One of the crucial aspects of Saussure's semiology was his emphasis upon the arbitrariness of the sign. He stressed that there is no inherent, essential, 'transparent' or 'natural' connection between signifier and signified, and that the relationship is a purely conventional one, dependent upon social accord.

This position has, however, been modified by subsequent theorists to take into account the process of diachronic change in the system. Levi-Strauss (1972:91) pointed out that while the sign may be arbitrary *a priori* (that is to say, it is ontologically arbitrary as regards its relationship to the continuum of perceived sense impressions in the world), it ceases to be arbitrary *a posteriori.* After the sign has come into historical existence it cannot be arbitrarily changed, and indeed is subject to intralinguistic determination: compound words, for example, are meaningful combinations of two existing signs.

C.S. Peirce suggested that there were different degrees of arbitrariness of the sign, and that symbolism reflected only one form of relationship between referents and their objects. He suggested three basic categories:

i. Icon: a sign which resembles its object in some way:

> 'The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them.' (*Collected Papers*, Vol. II §229)

We could thus include in this category: portraits; diagrams; scale-models; imitative gestures, etc.

ii. *Index:* a sign that is not purely arbitrary but is really connected to the Object and is affected by it:

> 'The index is physically connected with its object, they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established'. (*Ibid.*)

This category would then include things like: smoke (as a sign of fire); weathercock; thermometer; clock; spirit-level; footprint; fingerprint; physical symptoms of illness etc.

iii. *Symbol:* a truly arbitrary sign, entirely unconnected with its Object:

'A Symbol is a Representamen whose Representative character consists precisely in its being a rule that will determine Its Interpretant. All words, sentences, books and other conventional signs are Symbols. We speak of writing or pronouncing the word "man"; but it is only a *replica* or embodiment of the word, that is pronounced or written.'(*Ibid.* §292)

These signs are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A sign can be an icon, index, symbol or any combination of the three. A map for example has elements of each: it is indexical in that it indicates where places are, iconic in that it represents places in topographical relation to each other, and symbolic in that its notional system must be learned.

This taxonomy of signs, in suggesting different degrees of arbitrariness, goes some way towards bridging the gap between the natural/universal and the culturally constructed. Peirce implies that iconic and indexical signs are somehow more 'natural' than symbolic signs, and that perhaps the Symbol somehow develops out of the others. This introduces a diachronic element into his model:

> Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols. (*Ibid.* §302)

Suzanne Langer suggests that it is this use of the arbitrary symbol as opposed to the simple motivated sign (which she calls 'signal') that distinguishes human semiotic systems from animal ones:

> Even animal mentality…. is built up on a primitive semantic; it is the power of learning, by trial and error, that certain phenomena in the world are signs of certain others, existing or about to exist; adaptation to an environment is its purpose and hence the measure of its success…..
>
> Man, unlike all other animals uses 'signs' not only to *indicate* things but to *represent* them…..We use certain 'signs' among ourselves that do not point to anything in our actual surroundings. Most of our words are not signs in the sense of signals. They are used to talk *about* things, not to direct our eyes and ears and noses towards them….[Such signs serve] to let us develop a characteristic attitude toward objects *in absentia*, which is called 'thinking of' or 'referring to' what is not here. 'Signs' used in this capacity are not *symptoms* of things, but *symbols*. (1957: 29-31)

The development of modern writing systems out of hieroglyphs is surely an example of how symbolic signs evolve out of iconic ones, and, on the auditory level, onomatopoeic sounds may well be vestiges of earlier iconic representations. Indexical symptoms of emotion (such as the physiological effects of happiness or sadness upon our posture, heartbeat, intonation etc) may also have given rise to the many of the semiotic elements presently used in the performing arts. This question will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

The distinction between a motivated and unmotivated sign is, however, not always that easy to make. It has frequently been pointed out that for a sign to be truly iconic, it would have to be transparent to someone who had never seen it before. This probably occurs far less frequently than we would suppose. What seems to happen most of the time is that we see the resemblance when we already know the meaning, and therefore our very notion of likeness is conditioned culturally. Similarly with the indexical sign: once the causal relationship between the representamen and its object has been recognised by a culture, then the particular sign becomes associated with the object and can be used to evoke that meaning even in cases where the causal relationship is absent.

Symbols also continue to grow in meaning long after they have acquired their primary signification. As Peirce says:

> A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Such words as *force, law, wealth, marriage,* bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors. (*Collected Papers*, Vol.II §302)

This process is particularly clear as regards the dimension of meaning known as *connotation,* which is obviously not arbitrary at the outset, but culturally and socially determined. For as soon as a symbol starts to be used in concrete contexts, it acquires a series of associations that accumulate and are perpetuated until they may eventually become arbitrary in their turn. A pertinent example of this might be the connotations accruing to certain musical instruments. The organ, for example, is frequently found in a church, and thus has an indexical relationship to the kinds of rituals that take place there, an association which, once established, means that the instrument can be used as a symbol of spirituality, marriage etc (the organ is in fact used in this way by Prokofiev near the beginning of his Balcony Scene). Similarly, the trumpet or the drum may become symbols of war in certain compositions given their obvious associations with the martial context.

Whether or not *denotation* is in fact prior to and underlies *connotation* is a highly controversial matter. Hjelmslev suggested that denotation represented a *first order of signification,* from which connotation, as *second order of signification* is derived. However, this is misleading as it suggests that the denotative meaning is in some way more literal or more natural than the others, a position clearly difficult to defend if we assume the fundamental ontological arbitrariness of the sign. Stuart Hall states the counter-position very clearly:

> The term ‘denotation’ is widely equated with the literal meaning of a sign: because the literal meaning is almost universally recognized, especially when visual discourse is being employed, ‘denotation’ has often been confused with a literal transcription of ‘reality’ in language – and thus with a ‘natural sign’, one produced without the intervention of a code. ‘Connotation’, on the other hand, is employed simply to refer to less fixed

> and therefore more conventionalised and changeable, associative meanings, which clearly vary from instance to instance and therefore must depend on the intervention of codes.
>
> We do *not* use the distinction – denotation/connotation – in this way. From our point of view, the distinction is an *analytic* one only. It is useful, in analysis, to be able to apply a rough rule of thumb which distinguishes those aspects of a sign which appear to be taken, in any language community at any point of time, as its 'literal' meaning (denotation) from the more associative meanings for the sign which it is possible to generate (connotation). But analytical distinctions must not be confused with distinctions in the real world. There will be very few instances in which signs organized in a discourse signify *only* their 'literal' (that is, nearly-universal consensualized) meaning. In actual discourse, most signs will combine both the denotative and connotative aspects (as redefined above). It may, then, be asked why we retain the distinction at all. (1980 [1973]: 128-38)

Indeed, if denotation is no more than the dominant or consensualized meaning, then there is no rigid distinction between the two, and any connotation may become denotation if it manages to get itself accepted as the dominant meaning. That is to say, the meanings of signs constantly shift and dance in response to the changing power relations in the society that generates them.

I would like to suggest that this process of meaning creation is also present in the semiology of music. That is to say, musical signs, be they melodic sequences, harmonic progressions, rhythmic patterns or certain instrumentalizations, are apt, like any other sign, to gain connotation through usage, and when this usage is sufficiently generalised, it may become something akin to denotation. The linguist Michael Halliday (1998:222) has suggested of discourse that this process of semogenesis takes place both within the individual text (*logogenetic* evolution) and on the level of the system as a whole (*phylogenetic* evolution), and that the one feeds into the other. It is my view that the same process may happen in music: a semiotically-inclined composer may choose to use the basic signs of rhythm, pitch, timbre, volume etc to build up melodic and harmonic sequences, which are then in turn incorporated into motifs that may be used to denote certain characters or certain abstract themes. If these elements

are then repeated in other works by other composers, it can be said that we have the creation of a symbol on the level of the system as a whole. It is this that I would like to discuss in more depth in the following chapter.

Chapter 3.

THE QUESTION OF MUSICAL MEANING (I): BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS

The question of musical meaning is one that has concerned philosophers and musicologists for a great many years. Nattiez (1990: 107-11) in his brief survey of the field, presents a panorama that is sharply polarized between the Formalists (or Absolutists), on the one hand, who assert that music is essentially a self-referential art, unable to represent or express anything other than itself, and the Expressionists, on the other, who acknowledge music's capacity to evoke or express feelings, and accept that it may also be capable of referring to the non-musical.

The extreme Formalist position is most clearly represented by Stravinsky, who wrote in 1971:

> I consider music, by its nature, incapable of expressing anything, whether a feeling, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon etc. Expressiveness has never been an immanent feature of music. (*cit.* Nattiez, 1990:108)

A similar attitude was expressed over a century earlier by Hanslick, in 1854, in an essay entitled *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (translated by G.Cohen):

> The beauty of a musical work is specifically musical – i.e. it inheres in the combinations of musical sounds and is independent of all alien, extramusical notions. (*Ibid*)

Indeed, Nattiez himself, in an earlier work, seemed to support the same position. He wrote:

> A música não é contudo desprovida de possibilidades expressivas ou significantes, mas esta função semântica é-lhe dada de certo modo do exterior pelo ouvinte: não nos parece, pois, que a ligação entre a face

> significada e a face significante possa ser comparada à ligação que se manifesta na linguagem…É verdade que toda a música age sobre nós, mas… a música em si nada significa… (undated: 26-9)

The difference between this assertion and the more balanced appraisal evident in this musicologist's later work not only reflects the broader perspective that he subsequently develops on the issue, but is also a measure of the changes that have taken place in the theoretical climate in the meantime, described in some detail in Chapter 2. The dogmatism of the extreme formalist position may be largely attributed to the overwhelming influence of Structuralism in the first part of the twentieth century. For while meaning in verbal language was understood as being constructed within the system, without reference to any extra-systemic reality, then it was natural that other semiotic systems would have been approached in the same way. Subsequent theories have, however, rendered this analysis untenably simplistic, and there has been a move in recent years towards viewing music, like other cultural artefacts, as a kind of social semiotic, embodying some of the deeply engrained values of a society. Theodor Adorno was a pioneer in this direction, developing over the course of many different works a stance upon tonality in general and the sonata-form in particular analogous to that taken by Lukács on the novel, namely that these structures encode some of the most deeply held values of bourgeois ideology (Witkin, 1998: Ch.2; Leppert, 2002). A similar approach has been taken by linguists such as Van Leeuwen (1999) seeking to apply to musical texts some of the precepts of critical discourse analysis, not to mention work undertaken in the area of sociology of music.

Nattiez, in his later work (1990:108), also pointed out that formalist doctrines largely developed as reactions against various semantic conceptions of music, and this is particularly clear in the case of Stravinsky, who chose exile rather than submit to the Soviet Union's attempts to bring music into the service of the state (the cultural consequences of the Soviet demand that composers privilege an 'ideological and emotional content' in order to present the 'new social meaning',[7] will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). Taking a historical perspective on the issue (1990:110), Nattiez now perceives musical aesthetics as swinging between the formalist and the expressionist extremes over time, with a whole range of intermediary nuances in

[7] From the 1932 instructions to composers provided by Nikolai Chelyapov, the president of the Union of Soviet Composers (Seroff, 1969:216).

between. In the Romantic era, for example, the expressionist position was dominant, with Richard Wagner as its most high-profile exponent, while in the early part of the twentieth century the formalist stance was clearly in the ascendancy. Thus, musical aesthetics may be seen as arising out of particular cultural circumstances, with theories shifting from the periphery to the centre and back again in accordance with the political fortunes of the group that gives voice to them.

Nowadays, it is disputable whether purely formal music can be said to exist at all. Quite apart from the social meanings encoded into the very grammar of the idiom, there is also an emotional dimension to music, which many authors feel operates on the much deeper level of human nature. The *Oxford Companion to Music*, in its discussion of Programme Music, claims:

> …some play of emotions seems to be inseparable from the act of musical creation, so almost any composition, however 'abstract' or 'absolute' in the composer's intention, is capable of having a story or series of pictures read into it by an imaginative listener… (Scholes, 1970:835)

Earlier in the same section, the claim is made that 'even, a prelude or fugue of Bach, a sonata of Mozart or Beethoven, in writing which the composer has worked to no literary or pictorial scheme' depends 'in a greater or lesser degree, upon… a play of emotional contrasts, of emotions freed from material associations, of sublimated emotions…' (*Ibid*, 834). This would suggest that the emotional dimension is somehow intrinsic to the musical experience and may underlie more complex semiotic codes employed by different composers. This is a position that I will explore further in this chapter.

Other theorists have arrived at the same conclusion from different perspectives. The psychiatrist Anthony Storr advances the theory that aesthetic form itself satisfies a very primitive emotional need, namely the desire to find Gestalt, or shape, in the chaos of existence:

> Aesthetic appreciation…is not simply a cold, cerebral, intellectual exercise; it touches human feelings. We delight in perceiving coherence where there was none before; we take pleasure in contemplating perfect form. (1997:183)

This may be why patterns that are incomplete cause us a certain amount of tension, which is relaxed upon resolution. Certainly, sequences of tension and release are an important aspect of the musical aesthetic experience, discussed in some detail by Roger Scruton on the level of melody (1997: 52-3), harmony (*ibid,* 66-67 and 266-269), and phrase organisation (*ibid*, 190-191).

I would like to suggest that the basic units of musical discourse (pitch, rhythm, volume etc) do in fact possess a capacity to evoke emotion resulting from an indirect link to human physiology, activated to different degrees by individual composers according to their aesthetic purposes. This quasi-indexical component may be used to construct larger symbolic units to which denotational significance can be arbitrarily attached, and it is these that provide the building blocks for a narrative or dialogue dimension, thus enabling composers to musically recreate literary works in a process of intersemiotic translation.

Such a process would represent a musical equivalent of the *semogenesis* that Halliday describes as taking place in the creation of verbal discourses (see Chapter 2). It would operate both on the level of the individual composition and of the system as a whole, with the one feeding into the other through the process of *intertextuality*, by means of which composers consciously or unconsciously employ motifs and sequences from each other, thus contributing to the construction of an edifice of signification, intelligible to members of its *discourse community.* Western tonal music, I will argue, is one such edifice, which has evolved over the centuries into a rich resource that composers can draw upon, and which gains especial relevance when the composition in question is based upon a literary work, as is the case of ballet that will be under consideration here, Prokofiev's version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Musical Building Blocks

No one who has ever studied both music and phonology could fail to be aware of the similarities between the two. There is a parallelism not only as regards the expression of emotional states, but also on the pragmatic level, with much tonal music imitating the Initiation-Response patterns of human conversation rituals, or the equilibrium-disruption-equilibrium sequences of narrative. This parallelism would at first sight suggest a dimension to music that is indexical, in Peirce's terminology; that is to say, it posits a connection between some of the more fundamental musical signs and human physiology, thus pointing to an underlying universality in some aspects of musical expression. While

this is of course too simplistic an analysis and insufficient to explain all the semiotic complexities of a work like Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, it does provide us with a useful starting point for our exploration of how the semiotic edifice that is Western tonal music came into being.

In human speech, emotional involvement is signalled by a series of factors that clearly have their origin in our physiology. We tend to speak more rapidly, accompanying the increased heart rate that results from arousal, and more erratically when the emotion in question is an unpleasant one; the volume of the utterance increases; there is a wider tonal range, and the intonation contour may be smooth or jagged, depending upon whether the emotion in question is harmonious or discordant. Finally the timbre of the voice may change, becoming harsher in situations of stress.

All of these aspects have their equivalents in music, which might suggest an intimate connection between speech and music back in our evolutionary past (see Wallin, Merker and Brown, 2000). Tempo and volume are increased to mark increased emotionality; rhythms may become jerky; the pitch range widens and the melodic line may be smooth or jagged. Timbre is signalled by choice of instrumentation. However, the discussion is complicated by the fact that the emotion that we feel in music is not usually an expression of some *real* emotion in the composer, nor does it provoke a real emotion in response in the listener. Rather it is an *evocation* of an emotion, or, in the words of Suzanne Langer, a formalized borrowing from the realm of expressive emotions (1957:216).[8] Consequently, these musical signs cannot really be considered as Indexes in the same way as their counterparts in speech can. They seem to have at some point become conventionalised, to have been liberated from physical dependency upon an emotional state, although without attaining the complete arbitrariness of the Symbol. That is to say, they retain a certain degree of transparency, which would seem to give them a status half way between Index and Symbol. This is the issue that I wish to consider in the course of this section.

Cooke (1959) and Van Leeuwen (1999) both accept unequivocally the connection of these musical signs with basic human emotion, but do not attempt to explain the process by means of which they became conventionalised. Discussing the semiotic potential of ***volume***, Van Leeuwen claims 'it is not accidental that Romantic music, in which the expression of emotion became more foregrounded, began to use an increased

[8] This issue of musical emotion is discussed in length in Scruton (1997: Ch.6); Storr (1992: Ch.4); Langer (1957: Ch.8); and Cooke (1963: pp16-22).

dynamic range,' while 'instruments which do not allow ongoing dynamic variation are always a touch more abstract, lacking the most immediate traces of human articulation. Sacred instruments like the organ are of this kind' (1999:173).

A similar claim is made for ***rhythm***:

> …the wide durational range can be tied to the expression of affect. In emotive speech we lengthen the keywords considerably ('Amaaaaaaazing!'), while rushing other words, stumbling over them in our excitement or anger. Speakers who restrain their emotions, on the other hand, speak in more 'measured' and even ways. (*Ibid.*)

If we instinctively associate rhythmic variety with emotionality, then it seems equally natural that its opposite should come to connote the calm unchanging world of spirituality. Cooke describes the semiotic effect of medieval plainsong, a music devoid of time tensions:

> Plainsong….uses time not as a dimension in which to set up tension, but as a continuum in which to flow freely….it is just this lack of a measured rhythm which removes plainsong from the human categories of time into those of 'other-worldliness' and gives it its spiritual quality. (1959:39)

When musical time began to be divided and measured in the fourteenth century, with the introduction of the bar line, and the subordination of voices and instruments to a regular beat, the effect was revolutionary and excited the wrath of the pope (which to Van Leeuwen, 1999:37-8, represents a first symbolic step in the conquest of the eternal world of the monasteries by secular values). Measured rhythms are frequently used today as a symbol of the sacred or non-human (in conjunction with other markers, described below), which would seem to illustrate how the natural feeds into the cultural in the process of semiosis.

The same thing is certainly true of ***pitch movement,*** which has a close relationship to intonation in language. Cooke (1959:104), anticipating by several decades Brown's notion of the Sentic Modulation Spectrum,[9] points out that rising and

[9] See Brown (2000:287-8): 'the sentic system is a general modulatory system involved in conveying and perceiving the intensity of emotive expression along a continuous scale. It expresses intensity by means

falling pitch is closely associated with rising and falling vitality, which means that it lends itself naturally to the expression of happiness and despair. Van Leeuwen (1999:94-97) also concludes that the relationship between pitch and emotion is not arbitrary, and quotes concrete examples to demonstrate how the melodic expression of joy, tenderness, surprise and anguish in music reflects the intonational contours of the same emotional expression in speech.

Cooke (1959:102), however, takes the claim further, arguing that pitch is therefore universally perceived as an 'up-and-down' dimension, which makes it eminently suitable for the depiction of up-and-down movements in the physical world:

> It should hardly be necessary to point out the connexions between the following facts: (1) By the law of gravity, 'up' is an effort for man, 'down' a relaxation; (2) To sing 'high' notes, or play them on wind, brass or string instruments, demands a considerable effort; (3) To tune a string 'upwards', one screws 'up' its tension; (4) Scientists, talking of 'high' notes, speak of a 'high' number of vibrations per second…..
>
> On the simplest level – that of tone-painting – we find that composers have been unanimous in accepting 'up' and 'down' in pitch as equivalent to up and down in the physical world: in settings of the Mass in all periods, the Resurrexit has been set to rising phrases, and 'descendit de coelis' to falling ones; and the music of many a Magnificat goes down and up at the words 'he hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek'. *Ibid,* 102)

It is therefore, he claims, naturally associated with other directional movements:

---

of three graded spectra: tempo modulation (slow-fast spectrum), amplitude modulation (soft-loud spectrum), and register selection (low-pitched-high-pitched spectrum). This system appears to be invariant across modalities of expression in humans, such as speech, music and gesture… It also appears to function in a similar way in emotive behavior in nonhuman animals, suggesting that the sentic system might be one feature of musical processing that has homologues in vertebrate expressive behavior generally. The universality of this system for human emotional expression can be demonstrated by pointing out that in speech, gesture, and music, the same sentic profile occurs to express a given emotional intensity state, regardless of the modality of expression. For example, happy music and happy speech are both characterized by fast tempos, large-amplitude sounds, and high registers; sad music and sad speech are characterized by the opposite sentic spectrum. Looking at gesture instead of vocalization, one sees that happy movements are characterized by fast tempos, large amplitudes (broad gestures) and high positioning (the equivalent of high register), with sad gesturing showing exactly the opposite spectrum. In all cases, the level of sentic modulation reflects the intensity level of emotional

> …'up' and 'down' are, by analogy, made to stand for all other directions, in an obvious way. By the law of gravity, as we have said, 'up' is an effort for man, 'down' a relaxation. Now, from a given starting point, to go out or move away implies an active effort; and to come in or come back implies a relaxation of the initial exertion. Consequently, composers have used 'up' in music to suggest 'out' and 'away'; and 'down' to suggest 'in' and 'back'. (*Ibid,* 103*)*

Although Cooke's observations may hold true for Western tonal music in general, they are unlikely to have the universality he claims. This is because, as cognitive semanticists have shown, different cultures 'metaphorize' primary experience in different ways. Lakoff and Johnson, discussing the connection of 'happy' with 'up' in the English language make this point:

> Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary. They have a basis in our physical and cultural experience. Though the polar oppositions up-down, in–out etc, are physical in nature, the orientational metaphors based on them can vary from culture to culture. For example, in some cultures the future is in front of us, whereas in others it is in back. (1980:14)

It seems, then, that, in pitch, we have one more example of a sign that started life as an Index, naturally connected to the emotional reality it represented, but which, over time, became conventionalised into a Symbol. Its use as a metaphor for spatial relations in Western music may be widespread, and is probably related to similar metaphorizations in language; it is not however as natural and universally transparent as Cooke claims.

Pitch range, on the other hand, may be more transparent as a sign, in that it is more closely associated to our physiological state. Van Leeuwen explains it thus:

> The semiotic force of this again rests on what it is we *do* when we increase or decrease pitch range. When we increase it we are 'letting more energy out', when we decrease it we are 'holding more energy in', either because

---

expression, thus highlighting the gradient nature of the sentic system. Happy movements are fast, but ecstatic movements are ballistic; sad movements are slow, but depression is immobilizing.'

> we do not have any left, or because we restrain or repress it….The wide pitch range allows us to give vent to strong feelings, whether of excitement or shock, of grief or joy, and the narrow pitch range *constrains* the expression of strong feelings…. (1999:106)

This has led to the conventionalisation of wide pitch range as a marker of emotion and, by extension, of the human temporal dimension of experience, with its reverse associated with the non-human or eternal:

> Maximally reduced pitch range negates human emotion. It is used, for instance, to present or represent the sacred in ritual chanting or drones, and in the presentation of machine speech. (*Ibid*, 172).

Prokofiev exploits this in his portrayal of Father Laurence, who represents the cool voice of the spirit in *Romeo and Juliet*. His theme has a narrow pitch range, reinforced by a similar lack of movement in the dimensions of volume and rhythm; these create a sense of tranquillity and spirituality, contrasting significantly with the wild passions described elsewhere.

Timbre, when used as a sign in music, is also related to human physiology, in the sense that the quality of the human voice varies dramatically according to age, sex and emotional state. Van Leeuwen (*ibid,* 125-155) devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of the semiotic values of the different components of voice timbre, which he identifies as follows: high/low; tense/lax; rough/smooth; breathiness; soft/loud; vibrato/plain; nasality. In speech, most of these signs will be indexical, in the sense that they will directly result from some physical or emotional condition. However, in music, the manipulation of timbre is once again conventionalised, and should be seen as a symbol that has developed on the back of the index. Consequently, it has, in certain contexts, a degree of transparency. It seems to us natural that Prokofiev should have depicted the young Juliet with high-pitched instruments, like the piccolo, oboe and bells, while her more womanly, graceful B theme is given on the mellow clarinet, since the human voice naturally changes in pitch and quality with age. Similarly when she is being forced her marry Paris, her A theme returns at a higher pitch played by violins at their most shrill, clearly an attempt to reproduce the effects of anguish in the young girl's voice.

Van Leeuwen, in his analysis of timbre, does not refer specifically to musical instruments; however it is clear that a composer can recreate a wide variety of different timbres using the resources of an orchestra. Instruments are made of different materials, are pitched differently, and may be blown, plucked, bowed and hit; all of these parameters together create a wide range of semiotic resources for the depiction of different voices.

Pragmatic Dimension of Music

We have spoken at some length about how musical signs are related to linguistic ones by virtue of their capacity to connote emotion. But there is another way in which the verbal and musical systems relate. Stress and intonation in speech also play a part in the organisation of verbal discourse, and as such have a pragmatic function that goes beyond the merely emotive. In this section, I would like to consider briefly how this too may be paralleled in musical discourse.

One of the basic aspects of the way intonation organises discourse is in its ability to signal closure or incompleteness. A fundamental, if highly simplified, distinction is between the use of the falling tone, moving back to neutral pitch level, to indicate that a speaker has reached the end of the utterance, and a rising tone to signal that he is planning to continue speaking and should therefore not be interrupted. Tonal music also follows this pattern in a very basic way. Harmonic organisation around a tonic means that every composition has a clearly defined 'home base' to which it returns when the phrase or passage in question is complete. Failure to return to the tonic thus signals incompleteness and creates a certain tension or expectation which can also be exploited by composers for dramatic effect.

We should, however, be cautious about seeing in this characteristic any universal feature that could be unequivocally decoded by members of other speech communities. Van Leeuwen (1999:98) points out that musical organisation around a tonic is specific to Western music, and that it only developed during the Renaissance period in response to certain paradigmatic changes in society (see my discussion of Melody in Chapter 4). Indeed, even in language, it is by no means clear yet to what extent intonation patterns are culture specific. Nevertheless, language and music are both forms of social semiotic, and as such will partake of a common worldview within a particular culture. To this extent, they are clearly related, although the exact nature of that relationship may remain fuzzy.

The intonation markers of completeness/incompleteness in verbal discourse also contribute to the interactional element of conversation. Pragmatic linguists have shown that human conversation is organised into a series of Initiation/Response sequences[10] and that, in English at least, intonation plays an important role in not only signalling the end of the turn but also in determining what sort of response is required.[11] This is also a feature that can be imitated in music. While much of the phrase structure of conventional compositions can be analysed into series of Initiation/Response pairs, this phenomenon has perhaps achieved fullest expression in jazz repartee, in which two or more soloists interact conversationally, creating cohesion by picking up phrases from each other's musical discourse and bandying them back and forth, with modifications through pitch variation, inversion or incorporation into a fresh context.

Van Leeuwen (1999:66-91) devotes an entire chapter to the issue of interacting sounds in music and analyses in considerable depth the social effects of different modes of musical interaction (antiphony, polyphony, interlock, unison etc). Particularly interesting is his account of the development and significance of homophony in Western music (in which one voice, the melody, becomes dominant, against a background of subordinate accompanying sounds), thus accompanying the general social trend towards individualism (*Ibid*, 81-2). This gains a new significance in the context of the Soviet Union, with its emphasis upon collective experience, and it is clearly no accident that Israel Nestyev, Prokofiev's official biographer, praises the composer's use of free polyphony in some of his works (1960:460).

Musical Form

Before moving on to look at the semiotic potential inherent in the harmonic and melodic systems of tonal music, let us linger briefly on the question of musical form. As in literature, the choice of form will condition the receptive posture that an audience will assume. Labelling a work as a 'Fugue', 'Minuet', 'Lied' etc will immediately categorise it with all the works in history that have been similarly labelled, thus setting up a series of expectations, both musical and social in nature. Composers of the modern period have of course manipulated these expectations in very creative ways, sometimes deliberately upsetting them in order to call into question the underlying

[10] See for example Levinson (1983: 294-369); Coulthard (1985:59-96)
[11] Coulthard (1985:97-119); Halliday (1994:302-307)

assumptions. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we shall see how Prokofiev uses form as a semiotic device in the episodes entitled Minuet, Gavotte and Madrigal.

On the deeper level, musical form also encodes social values. Adorno was a pioneer in this kind of analysis, concentrating particularly on the sonata as a musical manifestation of bourgeois ideology. Witkin explains it thus:

> Adorno's position concerning the sonata-form bears comparison with that of Lúkacs on the novel. The sonata, too, he saw as a means of developing a rich individuation of parts of elements, each of which unfolds organically from within itself towards the development of a totality with which it is integrally identified. Classical tonality was the means of achieving that. The hierarchical construction of music in which tones are related to one another through their tonal centres is paralleled by the structural ideal of a bourgeois society. Such a society, like the sonata-allegro, was both individuated and hierarchical. The sonata-form is a closed form; its illusory dynamism is achieved at the cost of a restriction in the openness of the 'sensuous particulars' to each other – a restriction inherent in diatonicism. The system of tonal relations which ensured the lawfulness of all relations among elements concealed the unfreedom of the individual tones and the force with which they were constrained in their relations. The individuated and hierarchical structure of the classical sonata-allegro made it an analogue of formal relations in bourgeois society. It is in that sense that one might claim that entrepreneurial bourgeois society was a 'society in sonata-form'. (1998:45-6)

Of course the possibilities for this kind of analysis are unlimited, and there is not the space here to explore them with all the attention they deserve. It is sufficient to say that Adorno's observation that the values of bourgeois society were mirrored in the very structure of tonality itself has found resonance in the more recent work of Systemic Functional Linguists and Social Semioticians, engaged as they are in uncovering the hidden ideologies underlying all kinds of social texts. Moreover, his claim that 'the inherent historical development of bourgeois society was not towards more individual freedom and expression but towards totalitarian collectivist forms which threatened to annihilate the individual and all expression' (*Ibid.*46) is of importance in the context of

this present work, given the Soviets' propensity for diatonicism. In Chapter 5 we will look further at the way they attempted to appropriate this musical code for their own ends.

Chapter 4

THE QUESTION OF MUSICAL MEANING II: THE GRAMMAR

I have tried to show in the previous chapter how even the most basic units of music contain meaning to some degree or another, and that, in many cases, these, though conventionalised, retain traces of earlier indexical components, thus forming a connection with some of our deepest emotions.

In this chapter, I would like to move on to consider how meaning is also present in the very grammar of tonality, the systems of harmony and melody.

Harmony

The harmonic structure of a musical composition can be understood as its *paradigmatic* dimension. A paradigmatic analysis of a musical work (the question of why certain chords are selected instead of others in a given sequence) will therefore reveal a great deal about the constraints operating upon a composer and about the *value* of his particular choices, thus proving indispensable for a socio-cultural interpretation.

However, the question of harmonic signification is by no means an easy matter. One of the most daring attempts to identify a harmonic code was Deryck Cooke's 1959 work, *The Language of Music*, which proposed a kind of vocabulary of music drawn from the analysis of a wide range of composers. He suggests that each of the twelve notes of the diatonic scale has a basic expressive function in context, which has been used time and time again by different composers thereby creating an intricate web of signification within the Western tradition. He summarizes his 'code' as follows:

> *Tonic* – emotionally neutral, context of finality;
> *Minor Second* – semitonal tension down to the tonic in a minor context, therefore anguish in a context of finality;
> *Major Second* – as a whole-tone tension down to the tonic, in a major context, pleasurable longing, context of finality;
> *Minor Third* – concord, but a 'depression' of a natural third, indicating stoic acceptance, tragedy;
> *Major Third* – concord, natural third, therefore joy;

Normal Fourth – as a semitonal tension down to the major third, pathos;

Sharp Fourth – as a modulating note to the dominant key, active aspiration, and as an 'augmented fourth', devilish and inimical forces;

Dominant – emotionally neutral, context of flux, intermediacy;

Minor Sixth – semitonal tension down to the dominant in a minor context, therefore active anguish in a context of flux;

Major Sixth – as a whole-tone tension down to the dominant, in a major context, pleasurable longing in a context of flux;

Minor Seventh – semitonal tension down to a major sixth or whole-tone tension down to a minor sixth, both unsatisfactory, resolving again down to the dominant, giving a 'lost' sound, mournfulness;

Major Seventh – as a semitonal tension up to the tonic, violent longing, aspiration in a context of finality. (1959: 89-90)

It will be seen that many of the emotional values he ascribes to progressions operate according to Brown's theory of Sentic Modulation described in Footnote 9 (i.e. a rise in pitch is associated with positive emotion or aspiration, while a fall is depressive or sad), or can be interpreted as manifestations of the closure/continuity functions of intonation in verbal discourse. However, these associations with the verbal code are insufficient in themselves to account for the full complexity of meanings that he claims resides within the tonal system. For this we have to consider the phenomena of concord and discord, as they appear in nature and in culture.

It was Pythagoras that first observed that there existed in nature an arithmetical relationship between harmonic intervals. He discovered, by experimenting with different weights of hammers and different lengths of cord, that when these weights and lengths were related by a ratio of 1:2, they would produce a perfect octave, while a ratio of 2:3 produced a major fifth, and one of 3:4 would produce a perfect fourth (intervals which are today still the basic ones around which harmonic structure coheres). This would seem to point to the existence of natural harmony in the universe.

Helmholtz took Pythagoras' notions further with his theory of the Harmonic Series. Given that the pitch of a sound is a function of the vibrations that produce it, Helmholtz observed that when an object vibrates at a certain frequency, it sets up subsidiary vibrations at higher frequencies, which are natural number multiples of the root frequency – that is to say, their frequencies will be multiples of the root frequency

by 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc. Helmholtz believed he could explain the traditional consonances in terms of the overtone series; he claimed that consonance arises when two vibrations nestle together, so that the peaks of one coincide with the peaks of the other, while dissonance was explained by a kind of interference pattern that arises when the peaks of one wave cross those of the other, alternately augmenting and cancelling its force so as to set up subsidiary vibrations which trouble the ear. The consonant character of the major triad is explained by the mathematical relation of the frequencies, and the harmonic importance of the triad stems from the fact that it reproduces the first and most prominent overtones of the root. Thus it would seem from this that there is indeed something universal and transcendent about our experience of musical harmony, which suggests an exciting link with broader notions of concord and discord throughout the rest of the natural world.

Unfortunately, however, Helmholtz's theory has since been discredited. Not only does the harmonic series fail to explain the minor chord,[12] it has also been shown that our perceptions of what are consonant and dissonant do not correspond exactly to those patterns of vibrations in nature. Our modern sense of hearing has been conditioned by our sense of the tonal system as a whole, and this is in fact a man-made construct: in the 16th century, a division of tones known as 'equal temperament' was established in order to provide greater regularity and manipulability than offered in nature (in much the same way as the modern calendar with its regular temporal divisions was superimposed onto the natural order of the spheres). So, while there clearly is a natural basis to harmony, the Western tonal system by no means coincides perfectly with this. In addition, the fact that notions of consonance and dissonance have been different at different times also points to an important social dimension to our sense of harmony.[13]

Once again, then, as regards the system of harmony used in Western tonal music, we may consider the ***chord*** to be a Symbol that has grown out of an Index. It is motivated to some degree, in the sense that it bears some trace of a former Indexical relationship with an Object (concord or discord), but has been adapted and altered by the culture to the extent that its meaning is now more conventional than natural.

This does not of course negate its value as a sign. The significance that Cooke attributed to the notes of the diachronic scale may well be present for a given

[12] See Nattiez (1990:202)
[13]These issues are discussed in detail in Scruton (1999: 241-246); James (1995: 87-97); Cooke (1963:40-47), and Storr (1997: Ch 3).

interpretative community, and he argues the case convincingly for each interval in turn, using numerous examples drawn from Western tonal music. However, the existence of many examples of a particular interval allied to a particular significance does not prove that the relationship between Representamen and Object is inherent or natural: rather, it simply illustrates the fact that meaning gradually accrues to a sign through repeated use in similar contexts.

Similarly, when a familiar chord is used in a new musical context, it may gain a fresh dimension of meaning and thereby seem something very innovative and revolutionary. Roger Scruton claims that the much-vaunted and much analysed 'Tristan' chord[14] was really only an old chord used in a new way:

> You should not think of the first chord of *Tristan and Isolde* merely as a new acoustical effect – as though nobody had used the *chord* before. Acoustically speaking, they had: witness Mozart, in the Piano Sonata in F major, K.533, or Purcell, in *Dido and Aeneas.* Described in one way (which is acoustically, but not *musically* accurate), the 'Tristan' chord is an inverted minor triad with added major sixth. And such a chord forms a natural subdominant harmony in Bach or Purcell, as we see….Wagner's originality consists in the way in which the voices that compose this chord promptly move away from it, on to a quasi-resolution that leaves the key only weakly determined, by the dominant seventh of A on which the sequence pauses. The originality of the harmony derives at least in part form its inner counterpoint, and when we speak of the 'Tristan' chord, we really mean the chord in *this* contrapuntal setting. (1997:263-5).

However, once it had gained its connotations of pathos and yearning from being used in the *Liebestod* setting, then it could function as a symbol of those emotions for other composers. This, then, is an example of how the creation of a symbol in an individual musical text may, if generally accepted, pass into the system as a whole and become part of the resource pool that subsequent composers may draw upon for use in their own compositions.

[14] The first chord of the *Liebestod* in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, supposed to evoke pathos and yearning in an unprecedented way.

Melody

Melody is the syntagmatic dimension of music, and like a narrative, unfolds through time. Also like a narrative, it conventionally (in Western music) moves out of a state of Equilibrium in the Tonic to Disruption in some other chord or key and then back again to the Equilibrium of the Tonic to signify termination and rest. This very basic symbolism may be related to primitive patterns of Tension and Release, or to the indexical relations of pitch in verbal discourse to closure/continuity (discussed above). However, Van Leeuwen argues that this too is by no means universal:

> The role of the tonic as a means for providing closure in music is specific to Western music. It was developed in the same period as central perspective in painting and had the same kind of unifying function. In the medieval modes, based as they were on the pentatonic, any note of the scale could provide the sense of an ending, and act as a 'key centre'. In the Renaissance a strict hierarchy became established between the fundamentals, so that any melody, whatever the harmonic progressions it traversed, had to return, ultimately, to the same predetermined note, the tonic. In this music there could be only one centre, one outcome, one conclusion. (1999:98)

The habit of foregrounding one melodic voice at the expense of the others (homophony) developed shortly afterwards, which Van Leeuwen links to the paradigm shift that was taking place in society then:

> Homophonic music began to develop around 1600, in the work of Italian opera composers. By the time of the Industrial Revolution it had become dominant to the exclusion of almost everything else, and it still is, in the vast majority of popular music. Its culmination was the symphony orchestra, which dates from the time of the Industrial Revolution and is a form of making music which relates to the small ensemble as the factory relates to the small workshop. A large number of musicians perform music which is, into the minutest details, master-minded, first by a blueprint, the score, then by an overseer, the baton-wielding conductor in front of the orchestra, the only one to have the full score in front of him. (*Ibid,* p.82)

These two factors together, the centralising of melody around the tonic and its foregrounding in relation to other sounds, meant that composers now had a resource for the creation of musical narratives. This reached its apogee with the Wagnerian notion of the *Leitmotif,* with which Western music moved as close as it ever had to the representational function of verbal language. A leitmotif is essentially a melodic theme used to identify a character (or sometimes an abstract notion such as Love or Death). As it is constructed by combining and contrasting the basic semiotic building blocks of pitch, rhythm, timbre etc, it allows for the creation of quite complex portraits, which may thereafter be subjected to variation, thus suggesting development over time. The melodic contour itself is also significant, since in classical harmony, a smooth curving melodic line is considered to be more pleasant than a jagged one. Hence, a listener brought up within the tonal system would have no difficulty in understanding that Prokofiev's Romeo, whose theme changes from jerky gracelessness to sweeping lyricism, matures over the course of the ballet; or that his Nurse, whose theme bobs comically around the tonic, is being portrayed as unsophisticated and simple-minded. I would go as far as to assert that these qualities can be read from the music even without a prior knowledge of Shakespeare's play, since they make use of significances that have been consecrated over centuries within the whole edifice of tonality itself.

The leitmotif's capacity to denote is acquired in much the same way as happens with verbal language: like a verbal neologism, it is constructed from existing signs (in this case, the basic building blocks of rhythm, pitch, volume etc), then is allocated to its concept, and confirmed through repetition. It may in some cases go on to be quoted by other composers, in which case it could be said to have entered the system as a new higher-order symbol. In response to criticisms that it is inherently unmusical,[15] Roger Scruton points out that the true leitmotif is not attached arbitrarily to its referent, but gradually acquires its significance:

> The leitmotif is not attached by convention to its subject, as is a code. Or rather, if it is attached by convention, it must inevitably cease to be musically relevant. The true leitmotif earns its meaning, from the dramatic contexts in which it appears….A leitmotif is not a symbol in a code, but a musical magnet, around which meaning slowly accumulates… (1997:137)

[15] Debussy famously criticised Wagner's use of the leitmotif as a 'visiting card' (*cit.* Scruton, 1997:137).

That is to say, the leitmotif is constructed from elements that are themselves meaningful (for, as we have seen, the basic building blocks of pitch, rhythm etc still possess some trace of a connection to an object from the emotive realm); and, after being allocated its Object, continues to develop by being passed through different musical contexts which endow it with new qualities and new meanings in much the same way as words acquire layers of significance through being used in different ways. This is yet another similarity with language, as Peirce pointed out (see quotation on page 21).

Once the leitmotif has been established, it does not necessarily remain intact throughout the whole work. It may be modified by transposition, inversion or a new harmonic underlay, or be subjected to pressures that cause it break up altogether or to mutate into something new. Thus the original meaning of the motif is extended, giving the impression that it is developing through time. This then is musical narrative, a device which has become indispensable to all composers involved in the intersemiotic translation of works of literature. We shall observe it in action when we come to analyse the narrative structure of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in Part II of this work.

* * *

I hope that I have succeeded in showing that, contrary to many opinions, music does possess the capacity to refer to realities external to itself, and that this capacity may be activated to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the artistic designs of the composer. Like verbal language, it may be viewed as a *semiotic resource*, which is constantly growing and adapting in function of the different uses made of it.

The basic level of signification, I have argued, has resulted from the conventionalisation of the prosodic elements of human speech. While in spontaneous utterances, these features (pitch, rhythm, volume etc) are largely indexical, in that they result directly from our physiology and natural reactions to the environment, in music they have become crystallized into symbols that may be evoked at will without being called into being by the emotion in question. These symbols may then be combined and contrasted in infinite ways to signify emotional states of an untold complexity.

In addition, they may be used together to create more complex symbols such as harmonic progressions or melodic motifs that have a capacity for *denotation* no less than verbal language. By overtly associating a chord sequence or leitmotif with some aspect

of the non-musical world (easily done when the musical work is based on or accompanied by another semiotic code), a composer is involved in the construction of his code in exactly the same way as the scientist who coins a neologism or designs a new taxonomy.[16] If his sign is accepted by others (as happened with Wagner's 'Tristan' chord, for example), it enters the system as part of its signifying resource, which others can then draw upon in their own constructions of further orders of signification.

Like in language, there are also mechanisms in music to guide the receiver to the preferred interpretation. The *context* in which the signs are used is immensely important: this includes the internal musical context (the reinforcement of a preferred meaning through *redundancy,* for example, or the deliberate creation of an ambivalent message through the use of contradictory signs); and also the external non-musical context, such as the use of evocative titles, programme notes, and of course the association with another work expressed in a different medium. Indeed, the very attribution of *genre* to a musical composition itself indicates to the listener the receptive posture they are expected to assume: a work that is labelled Symphony or Sonata and is devoid of any expressive title would not be approached with the same semiotic expectations as would a ballet or an opera.

Therefore, the argument about musical meaning no longer seems to be about whether music *can* denote or represent concepts (since it evidently does possess this capacity), but about whether it *should.* As Adorno points out, there was clearly a feeling amongst composers that Wagner had gone too far in this direction, and that music was somehow in danger of losing its specific nature:

> The allergy to the linguistic element in music is inseparable, historically, from the turn away from Wagner. It refers, to use a metaphor from the Wagnerian world, to a wound that awakens the most violent emotions, at once unhealed and guilt-ridden. In fact, Wagner, with his radical demand for a declamation that would do justice to language, not only drew vocal music much closer to language than it had ever been before, and did so in a specifically mimetic way, but also assimilated musical construction itself to the gesture of language to the point of exaggerated clarity. What music lost in the way of autonomous development, and

[16] See Halliday (1998) for an account of how scientific discourse is constructed.

> what surrogate qualities it assumed as a result of the unbroken repetition of gesture similar to language, I do not need to say. (2002: 122-123).

Adorno himself occupies a place mid-way between the formalists and the expressionists on the issue:

> Music without any signification, the mere phenomenological coherence of the tones, would resemble an acoustical kaleidoscope. As absolute signification, on the other hand, it would cease to be music and pass, falsely, into language. Intentions are essential to it, but they appear only intermittently. Music points to the true language as to a language in which the content itself is revealed, but for this it pays the price of unambiguousness, which has gone over to the signifying languages. And as if to give it, the most eloquent of all languages, comfort for the curse of ambiguity – its mythical element – intentions stream into it. Time and time again it points to the fact that it signifies something, something definite. Only the intention is always veiled. (*Ibid,* 114)

We are back again, it seems, at the notion of the ineffable. Music's greatest value, in the eyes of Adorno and many other commentators, would seem to be its very refusal to be semiotically constrained, its capacity to generate a vast aura of signification that is unrestricted to particularities of time and space. It is not that it *cannot* be precise; as we have seen, when manipulated in the right way, the musical code seems to possess the resources to signify very clearly indeed. However, when this is taken to its limits, something intrinsic to its nature is irrevocably lost. As Adorno says, 'No art can be pinned down as to what it says, and yet it speaks. Mere dissatisfaction with this fact will only undermine the principle of art without salvaging it as something else, for example discursive knowledge' (*Ibid,* 122).

What then would be its fate in a political regime where all meanings are tightly controlled and ambiguity is punished by disgrace and oblivion? This is what we will consider next, in a discussion of the social context that gave rise to Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet.*

PART II

SHAKESPEARE INTO MUSIC

Chapter 5

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION

Western tonal music is, as we have seen, far more than a simple system of elementary signs with only a rudimentary capacity for referring to the outside world. On the contrary, by Prokofiev's time, it had developed into a rich semiotic resource, with the signic potential inherent in rhythm, pitch, volume etc augmented many times over by their combination into larger units, themselves acquiring multiple layers of meaning through extended intertextual use. This capacity for signification reached its peak in the Romantic era, with a great many examples of operas, ballets, programme music and symphonic poems all aiming to express unqualified sentiment in the most exquisite way. Therefore, it was surely as a reaction against the excesses of Romanticism that, in the twentieth century, with the advent of Modernism in literature and the visual arts, the pendulum swung away in the opposite direction, and it became fashionable once again to compose music that was ostensibly devoid of any reference to either the outside world or the inner world of the emotions, but was merely an exercise in pure aesthetic form.

This more abstract kind of music was what interested Prokofiev in his youth, and he spent several years in Paris and the United States experimenting with some of the new techniques. But after returning to his native land in 1929, he abandoned this path, and *Romeo and Juliet* represents one of his first ventures into a more traditional lyrical style. While there may have been musical reasons for this, the State was also putting considerable pressure upon composers to revive the semiotic possibilities of music with the aim of more 'truthfully' depicting 'objective' reality, thus bringing their compositions into the service of the regime.

Clearly, then, the Soviets were aware that music possessed the capacity to express not only emotional states, but also *ideology*. To this extent, they had developed a theory of music as social semiotic long before most of the Western world awoke to the notion, and were concerned to prescribe exactly which aspects of the inherited idiom were to be used by their composers.

The most radical position seems to have been occupied by certain theoreticians of the Association for Contemporary Music, who maintained that the socialist

revolution should bring about a complete change in the contemporary musical idiom,[17] (an attitude that would seem to make sense in the light of Adorno's claim that tonality embodies bourgeois values). However, most members of the regime were not in agreement. The mainstream posture seems to have been not to abandon the existing discourse altogether, but rather to appropriate it and redefine it in line with official ideology. The aim was not to make a radical break with everything that had gone before, but rather, to portray socialism as emerging inevitably out of the decay of bourgeois capitalism, and to re-write the canon as precursor of the new reality. Also, given that the great objective of socialist art was to 'show life truthfully' in order to 'point out what is leading it towards socialism' (Stalin, *cit.* Jaffé, 1998:131; Shurbanov & Sokolova, 2001:96) it made sense that this should be undertaken in a language that was readily understood.

Pronouncements about the right way to compose music under the regime began to appear at about the same time as edicts about socialist realism in painting and literature.[18] Seroff tells us that the dreaded term 'formalism' was first used in 1932 when the Central Committee of the Communist Party advocated more self-criticism; it was explained by Nikolai Chelyapov, the president of the Union of Soviet Composers thus:

---

[17] See Nestyev (1960:467)

[18] Shurbanov & Sokolova (2001:83-104) provide a detailed account of the development of Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union. According to them, it had its roots in early Marxist aesthetics, though 'the odd mixture of realism and romantic generalizing advocated by the doctrine….was in fact a rejection of Marx's clear distinction between the two and his strong preference for the former. While paying lip service to realism as it was handed down by the nineteenth century, the new ideologists obviously needed the romantic mode to produce mouthpieces for their abstract theories.' The first use of the term 'socialist realism' was possibly in an editorial of the official literary weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of 29th May 1932, which announced that 'the masses expect from the artist sincerity, truthfulness, revolutionary socialist realism in the representation of the proletarian revolution' (*Ibid,* 96). A few months later, came Stalin's famous remarks, partly quoted above. Then, in August 1934 came the first explicit proclamation of policy. This took place at a meeting of the Union of Soviet Writers addressed by Andrei Zhdanov, the secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Russia Communist Party and Stalin's trusted henchman on artistic matters, where it was declared that literature was expected to 'organise the working masses and the oppressed in a struggle from the ultimate demolition of all exploitation and of the yoke of hired slavery'. Thus it was supposed to focus upon heroes that were actively building a new life - workers, collective farmers, Party members, economic functionaries, engineers, young communists etc. It was also expected to be 'permeated with enthusiasm and heroic emotion. It is optimistic […] because it is the literature of the rising class of the proletariat, the only progressive and forward-looking class'. Zhdanov also urged Soviet writers to salvage the great writers of the past, study them and assimilate them in order to 'continue the march forward'; in contrast, contemporary bourgeois literature was rejected outright as decadent and perilous for the spiritual health of the masses. Consequently, say the authors, 'a point was reached where the early opposition between proletarian literature and everything preceding it was replaced by a new polarity, that between socialist literature allied with the classics and the pseudo-literature of the present-day bourgeois world'.

> ‘Every composition should be considered formalistic in which the composer fundamentally does not have as his aim the presenting of new social meaning, but focuses his interest only on inventing new combinations of sounds that have not been used before. Formalism is the sacrifice of the ideological and emotional content of a musical composition to a search for new tricks in the realm of musical elements – rhythm, timbre, harmonic combinations, etc.’ (1969:216)

Soviet composers were clearly being instructed here to abandon any modernist experiments they may have been engaged in to return to traditional tonality. Moreover, music also had to contain a clearly identifiable ideological content: like literature and painting, it had to be optimistic, and deal with humanistic themes that were edifying and inspiring for the people. Just how this was to be achieved in this particular artistic medium was not made explicit, however, and the term soon gained an ominous elasticity, described by Seroff thus:

> Everything could become ‘formalistic’, and the critics who were to guide not only the public but the artists as well never knew which way to use the term. The fateful word hung over the heads of the men who were desperately trying to keep their positions by following Pravda’s comradely advice… (*Ibid,* 215).

It is perhaps only in retrospect that the notion of socialist realism as applied to music has gained any sort of coherence. For, during the 1930s while it was effectively being defined, composers had to work on a trial and error basis, never knowing what the official reaction would be. Consequently, works which at one moment were considered perfectly legitimate, even praiseworthy, could become infamous overnight, leading to the composer’s ostracism from musical life. Such was the fate of Shostakovitch, whose opera *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk* had been running for two years to packed houses before it was suddenly condemned by the *Pravda* editorial of 29th January 1936 (ostensibly following a visit to the theatre by Stalin and Molotof), resulting in the composer’s virtual annihilation.[19]

[19] See Seroff (1969: 210-219); Jaffé (1998:140-1)

Critical responses to musical works during the Soviet era offer the best indication of qualities that were valued by the regime. Nestyev's biography of Prokofiev (the 'official' one authorised by the regime) tells us that a 'transparent diatonic style' was desirable, no doubt because chromaticism undermined tonality and led towards the dreaded 'formalism' (1960: 460, 479), and that, on the level of melody, polyphony was considered to be ideologically sound (*Ibid*, 460, 465). This of course makes sense in the light of Van Leeuwen's account of the historical development of homophony (see Chapter 4). The use of melodic and harmonic elements from Russian folk song was also welcomed, since this would demonstrate national pride (*Ibid,* 460). As regards other historical epochs, these were to be treated as prefiguring the contemporary era, with forces antagonistic to socialism clearly exposed; while different geographical spaces had to be projected through 'the spectrum of…national sensibilities' (*Ibid*). Similarly, the rewriting of the classics from the past was encouraged in order to illuminate the connection of socialist values with tradition.

Prokofiev's attitude to these prescriptions is not easy to determine. According to Nicholas Nabokov, he agreed with the pronouncement in the Central Committee Resolution of 23rd April 1932 that musical works should have a socialist content and be expressed in a readily understood language addressed to the people at large:

> 'Prokofiev welcomed the official edict as a realization of some of his own ideas about the function of music. "I always wanted to invent melodies…which could be understood by large masses of people – simple, singable melodies". This he considered to be the most important and difficult task of the modern composer' (*cit.* Jaffé, 1998:127).

However, there is some evidence that by 1936, he had become concerned about the direction developments were taking and was making some attempts to protest. He argued that the struggle against formalism should not be 'a struggle against the perfection and improvement of technique', and attacked 'lazy-minded or uncultured comrades' for welcoming socialist realism as a way of 'writing without any clever philosophising' (*Ibid,* 147-8). Later, however, when the purges intensified and it became clear that anyone at all might be arrested and charged with crimes against the state, he toned down his arguments, and in a *Pravda* article at the end of 1937, spoke of it in these terms:

> ‘The search for a musical idiom in keeping with the epoch of socialism is a worthy but difficult task for the composer …
>
> It is something like shooting at a moving target: only by aiming ahead, at tomorrow, will you avoid being left behind at the level of yesterday’s needs. All attempts to “play down” to the listener not only inherently underestimate his cultural maturity and the development of his taste – they also contain an element of insincerity. And music that is insincere cannot endure.’ (*Ibid.*148)

Following the official proclamation of Soviet policy in the arts, Prokofiev did produce a number of works designed to respect these demands. Many of these were cantatas: the *October Cantata* of 1937 commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, and set to music texts from Marx, Lenin and Stalin; *Songs of our Days* had verses on subjects such as the collectivisation of peasants into state farms, the perils of being a frontier guard, and a tale of how a resourceful young Communist rescues a little girl from a burning building; and the *Zdravitsa* (subtitled ‘Hail to Stalin’) extolled the Russian country people’s pastoral contentment and Stalin’s paternal care. There were also operas, such as *Semyon Kotko*, based on a Socialist Realist novel by Valentin Katayev, the tale of a Ukrainian peasant boy’s struggles to ‘rescue’ his sweetheart from the clutches of her ideologically unsound father. Whether or not this stance represents capitulation to the regime, or whether the composer was being secretly subversive, is a matter of contention amongst critics. While Nestyev (the official biographer) lauds the works, Jaffé claims that the official line was often undermined by the musical semiotic:

> Far from glorifying the heroes of the Bolshevik revolution, the strident, horror-filled music which opens the ‘October’ cantata presages some terrible calamity. The texts themselves paint a deeply unflattering portrait of the Bolshevik leaders: Lenin candidly admits, ‘We don’t have the people on our side,’ and his words ‘we shall strip the capitalists of everything, even their boots’ are set to loud, angular music. Following the movement representing the Revolution itself, the bland, major-key music, to which the female chorus sings of ‘cold, hunger, typhus and devastation’, is bitterly ironic. And the opening of the final movement – supposedly celebrating the

> new Soviet Constitution – is no glorious apotheosis, but something horrible and doom-laden. (1998:149)

This question of Prokofiev's use of musical discourse and commentators' varying interpretations of it will be taken up again in Chapter 8, since it has an important bearing upon the musical work under consideration here. For *Romeo and Juliet*, too, has aroused very contradictory responses, and its chequered history no doubt reflects an ideological ambiguity that did not allow it to be easily assimilated by the official line. This is what we will turn to next.

Romeo and Juliet: from conception to production

It is tempting to perceive, in the development of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet,* a narrative of potentially tragic dimensions that both enacts and parallels Shakespeare's famous tale of emotional awakening through a forbidden liaison. For in the repressive atmosphere of Stalin's regime, composers, like all artists, had to be very careful about the company they kept. No one could risk being caught flirting with art forms or concepts belonging to the 'other side' of the great ideological divide, and those that did were condemned to an exclusion every bit as severe as the banishment meted out to Romeo in Act III Sc.I of Shakespeare's play.

It was not that Shakespeare himself, or this play in particular, were forbidden. As we have seen, one aspect of Soviet cultural policy seems to have been the systematic appropriation of canonical works from the past, and Shakespeare was in fact very much appreciated as one of the Great Precursors of Communism. Consequently, his plays were frequently adapted to the new politics, typically by the introduction of more crowd scenes to represent the proletarian element, by expansion of the comic elements in the tragedies to give them a more optimistic tone, and by sharpening the contrast between good and evil characters to reflect social antagonism.

Romeo and Juliet, alongside *Hamlet,* appears to have been a particular favourite, and there were a number of productions during the Soviet era. There was, however, some resistance to making it into a ballet.[20] According to Nestyev:

[20] There had been previous attempts, such as the Schall version performed in Copenhagen in 1811, and the Constant Lambert of the 1920s, but both were considered 'musically trite, unworthy of the great theme' (Nestyev, 1960:267).

> …the thought of putting Shakespeare's great tragedy on the ballet stage seemed little less than blasphemous; it would be impossible…to express the subtle psychological nuances, the entire range of feelings expressed in the tragedy, without the power of the poetic word. (1960:267)

As it happens, the idea for this particular work did not come from Prokofiev himself; it was Sergey Radlov, artistic director of the Leningrad State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, who first approached him with the project in December 1934.[21] Radlov was recognised as the leader of Leningrad's avant-garde theatre and had staged the first Russian production of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* in 1926 and Berg's *Wozzeck* in 1927. He also ran his own dramatic theatre, and had produced a number of Shakespeare plays, *Othello* in 1932 and then *Romeo and Juliet* in 1934; it was no doubt this that gave him the idea of commissioning a full-length ballet based on Shakespeare's famous tragedy, to be produced at the State Academic Theatre.

Like the love affair that is the subject of the work, it at first seemed that this project was to be haunted by 'consequences hanging in the stars', and would be doomed to a tragic and premature death. In addition to a series of unfortunate circumstances that prevented performance for a number of years, the play was almost subjected to the travesty of a happy ending, with Romeo returning a minute sooner, and finding Juliet alive. The reasons for making this alteration remain unclear, and critics are divided as to whether there were practical or ideological factors behind it (discussed further in Chapter 8); however, the decision was eventually revoked, and the final version ended in much the same way as Shakespeare's, with the deaths of the two lovers.

The first of the circumstantial misfortunes to befall the ballet occurred shortly after work had begun on it. In an administrative reshuffle following the assassination of Kirov, Radlov was forced to leave the Leningrad State Academic Theatre, and the project was shelved. It was, however, taken up some months later by the Bolshoi Company, and Prokofiev composed intensively over the summer of 1935. His piano score was approved in October and performance was scheduled for the following spring. But then, in early 1936, it was dropped again. It is not clear exactly why there was this sudden change of heart at this time, but Jaffé (1998:145) attributes it to a perceived 'lack of socialist realist

[21] Historical information in this section is taken mostly from Jaffé (1998:133-6).

content', especially since the crisis had just erupted over *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk*, and all sorts of works were being condemned as 'formalistic' in a frenzy of denunciations.

Following the rejection of the ballet score, Prokofiev used it to make two separate orchestral suites, and these were performed fairly early on, the first on 24th November 1936 in Moscow under the direction of George Sebastian, and the other on 15th April 1937 in Leningrad, with Evgeni Mravinsky conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic.[22] The ballet itself, however, would not be performed in Russia until 1940, after it had (to the embarrassment of the cultural bureaucrats, some say) become a great success abroad.

Even then, things did not run smoothly. The dancers at the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad, who were unused to the syncopated rhythms and unusual orchestration, deemed it 'undanceable'. The choreographer, Lavrovsky, had to explain to Prokofiev that

> …his harmonically complicated musical language and the sharpness of his rhythm simply did not 'reach' the dancers, did not inspire them…For decades ballet dancers had dealt with powerfully orchestrated music, and it was firmly embedded in their technique…The art of ballet at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century...consisted of a variety of separate numbers which pleased the audience because of the dancers' purely technical mastery. The performer, therefore, was not concerned with expressing the thoughts and emotions of a character through the musical image, but with following the well-accentuated rhythm to show off his technical mastery and disciplined body. (Seroff: 1969:207).

Prokofiev was eventually prevailed upon to make the alterations that Lavrovsky suggested, and finally, on 11th January 1940, the ballet was presented at the Kirov, with the leading roles danced by Galina Ulanova and Konstantin Sergeyev. This production remained the work of reference for some time.

Since then, of course, there have been numerous productions all over the world and the ballet has gone on to become one of the most popular works of its kind ever. If there was anything in its musical discourse that was not entirely aligned with the precepts of socialist realism, this was now overlooked by the authorities. Eager to portray Prokofiev as a product of the regime, they appropriated his language and

[22] Seroff (1969:203)

represented it as exemplary of everything the Soviets stood for. Nestyev, in the official Soviet autobiography[23] claims:

> The writing of *Romeo and Juliet* marked a truly 'revolutionary leap' in Prokofiev's artistic development, a leap from cold experimentalism to a consistent affirmation of realism. Never before had the composer achieved such a truthful portrayal of life in all its diversity, such a profound communication of humanist ideas. Here we find no trace of surface inventiveness, grotesquerie, or expressionistic hyperbole, and none of the anemic, intellectual abstractions of his Paris period. The music recreates with extraordinary power and compassion the transports, passions, and dramatic conflicts of Shakespeare's immortal characters. The form of the work is characteristically fresh and original, but dramatic and musical innovations are subordinated throughout to an expressive unfolding of the story. (1960:266-7)

The analysis of the score following this paragraph of Nestyev's text is an unequivocal appropriation of the work for Socialist Realism. As Lawrence and Elizabeth Hanson point out in the preface to their own biography of the composer, 'this book by the Soviet musicologist Israel Nestyev […..] makes nonsense of biography, of art, of the man Nestyev is writing about. The result is a picture of Prokofiev and his music which is riddled with misjudgements deliberately made to support a political creed' (*cit.* Seroff, 1969.276).

This is why we shall now attempt a critical analysis of Prokofiev's musical discourse in *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of the values inherent in the code that he inherited from tradition. His version of the story will then be compared with Shakespeare's original (in Chapter 7) and with some Soviet versions of *Romeo and Juliet* (in Chapter 8) in an attempt to discover what it yields about his own ideology and relationship with the culture within which he was writing.

[23] According to Seroff (1969:275-7), this was first written in 1945, enlarged in 1957 and translated into English in 1960.

Chapter 6

ROMEO AND JULIET: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

As we have seen, this ballet marked a turning point for Prokofiev in that it signalled a return to a more lyrical and 'realist' approach to musical composition after his experimentalist years in Paris and America. Although there are undoubtedly both political and musical reasons for this change (see Chapter 5), Sergei Radlov clearly also had a great influence over the style adopted. Radlov had already produced 'choreodramas' with Prokofiev's friend Asafyev (such as *Flames of Paris* composed with themes sent by Prokofiev from Paris, and *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*) and it is likely that he was looking to use the same approach in this ballet. Indeed, it has been claimed that *Romeo and Juliet* was conceived as a 'silent opera',[24] which would indicate that aimed to be as figurative as it is possible for a musical work to be.

The scenario for the ballet was conceived by Prokofiev and Radlov together, and, in its final version with the tragic ending intact, is largely faithful to the Shakespeare play. Of course, owing to the particular requirements of ballet dramaturgy, the play had to be abridged, and Shakespeare's five acts of twenty-four scenes were divided into (originally) fifty-eight short episodes – even shorter than had been the norm with Diaghilev's ballets – with a descriptive title for each. This gave the composer the chance to create sharply contrasting moods in a short period. Scenes are presented in almost the same order as the original, although they are grouped differently, with Act II beginning only after the Balcony Scene in the ballet, for example. Those scenes that lend themselves particularly well to dance have been considerably extended (the fights, and the ball scene notably) and a number of folk-dances have been included in order to allow the chorus to demonstrate its virtuosity (although musically speaking, few of these dances play any part in the narrative structure of the whole).

The principal way in which narrative structure is created musically is through the use of Leitmotif, the technique developed by Wagner for opera. As explained in Chapter 4, this involves the allocation of musical themes to characters and to abstract concepts, which are then altered rhythmically and harmonically to reflect shifting interactions and emotional states. The way in which character is interpreted through these musical themes will be the main focus of my analysis here, and I shall be looking in some detail at the

[24] Samuel, 1971:135.

way rhythm, pitch, volume and orchestration contribute to the depiction of complex realities.

The fabric of the work is largely constructed through the intricate interweaving of these musical threads. But there are also passages that are not thematic, but clearly designed to be iconic representations (or tone-pictures), of particular events. An example of this is the Quarrel, which deteriorates into the Fight in Act I Sc I. These too will be analysed with a view to determining to what extent they reflect, alter or add to Shakespeare's verbal rendering.

I use as reference one particular production of Prokofiev's ballet, Nureyev's 1995 production for the Paris Opera Ballet, as seen in the 1997 Warner Music Video, in order to observe how Prokofiev's score actually works in practice. The Appendix provides an overview of the basic narrative structures of Shakespeare's play, Prokofiev's score, and Nureyev's production. The score is treated as a 'translation' of the play, and the ballet production as predominantly a 'translation' of the score (although Nureyev's production does of course also make reference back to the play); therefore, the chart should be read from left to right. That is to say, the Shakespearian scenes are presented in the correct order, with Prokofiev's versions of the same slotted in alongside, and with Nureyev's version of Prokofiev presented alongside those. Consequently, any omissions, additions or alterations to the sequencing may be seen at a glance. For example, it is immediately clear that the first part of Act I Sc I has been extensively developed by Prokofiev, extending what is a mere 70 lines or so in Shakespeare into four separate musical episodes.[25] The same is true of the scene at the Capulet Ball, which obviously lends itself to extensive exploitation through dance, and to the fights in Act III. On the contrary, the more explicitly verbal scenes, such as those in which Friar Laurence or the Nurse are providing comfort, have been minimized or cut completely. One or two scenes have been altered sequentially; for example, the scene in which Romeo is alone mooning about his love for Rosaline appears at the beginning of Prokofiev's score, instead of coming after the fight in Act I Sc I, as in the Shakespeare. This suggests a highlighting of the character of Romeo as a romantic-style hero, rather than a mere pawn in a family feud (an interpretation which is borne out in musical terms by the development of his leitmotif, see below).

[25] This would be the same in a straight dramatic production of the play, of course. The paucity of verbal information at this point does not indicate the duration of the scene; on the contrary, it would be

Character Themes

Most of the main characters have at least one theme of their own. The Romeo theme has been extensively developed in order to reflect the maturing of character (see below), while others appear with modal alterations to suggest changes of mood (Mercutio's and Juliet's are extensively exploited in this way, for example). The minor characters, on the other hand, are presented as fairly static caricatures (eg. the Nurse).

In addition, there are musical themes that do not accrue to character but instead reflect abstract themes such as Love, Death, Strife etc. In some cases, these are very neatly developed out of character themes or motifs, thus providing a very interesting subliminal comment upon the nature of the theme in question.

All the themes discussed below may be heard on the cassette accompanying this work.

a) Juliet's themes:

Juliet first appears on the stage in Act I Sc II of the ballet (Act I Sc III of the play) and this, the piece entitled 'The Young Juliet' or Nº 10 in the Score (sections 50-59 of the whole work), is the main exposition of her themes. Juliet is the only character who is allocated three distinct themes to herself, and these are clearly designed to reflect different sides of her nature.

Juliet A (50-52)

This is a very light and fast melody (**Extract 1** on tape) played on high-pitched instruments (strings, accompanied in places by the piccolo, oboe and bells). The musical instruction is '*vivace'*, and the melody dances about over the upper registers with the vivacity of a young animal. Harmonically and melodically, it is simple; the melody essentially runs up and down the C major scale, and the phrasing is easily identifiable into basic Initiation/Response patterns of 2 bars each. It is accompanied by a few pizzicato chords all based around the main triads.

The semiotic effect of all of these factors together (speed, pitch, volume, orchestration, and harmonic and melodic simplicity) is of youth, spontaneity and

---

understood that Shakespeare at this point was passing the semiotic buck over to the scenographer to encode in his own manner.

eagerness for life. It is no surprise that, in Nureyev's production, this section shows Juliet playing Hide and Seek with her girlfriends in an exuberant, childish fashion.

Juliet B (53)

At 53, we are given a very brief snatch of a different theme (**Extract 2**), before the A theme returns in a different key at 54. The B theme is quite different, graceful and elegant, though still with an endearing simplicity. The melody, played on a clarinet, is smooth and *legato*, and the melodic contour undulates in a gentle wave-like motion. Harmonically, it is fuller sounding than A, though still unsophisticated, with the strings providing a simple bowed accompaniment.

This is clearly a more womanly side of Juliet's character than Theme A suggests. It is less breathlessly spontaneous, more measured and dignified, but with a balance and poise that does not yet allow space for tragic passions.

Juliet C (55-56)

This theme (**Extract 3**) is much more complex than the previous two. The initial poignant motif offered in the opening bars by the flute is never developed into a completed melody, but instead gently subsides into the first expression of some as yet unidentified yearning. Then other voices (another flute, the clarinet and then the rich mellow voice of the cello) enter with their own lyrical demands, as if the young girl's previously simple childish world is now being stirred by some unnamed longings. Many of these voices begin down deep, as if emerging from some profound unexplored region of her subconscious, and swell up in a smooth *legato* surge, petering out in the upper regions. The effect is like waves of emotion, gradually appearing in a calm sea, and rolling along up the beach to break gently on the shore. As yet they are little more than ripples; yet we can feel in them the potential to become massive violent breakers if the climate were to change. It is the sheer range[26] of pitch that creates this effect; these surging melodies encompass more than two octaves, and yet they are presented sweetly and expressively, on instruments noted for their mellowness. An additional romantic effect is provided by tremolo violins in 56, which emulate the excited shiverings of sublimated sexuality.

[26] Sturman, in his book *Harmony, Melody and Composition*, explains how 'melodies with a small range (about 1-5 notes) often tend to be calm and gentle in style. Melodies with a wide range (more than 10 notes) have a more open and bold quality. There is more room for the melody to spread out.' (1995:6)

In Nureyev's production, Juliet is for the moment left alone by her friends as they run off to hide during their game, and her thoughts clearly turn to love. She briefly sees her mother with Paris in the wings, and encounters the Nurse rollicking with a man on her bed. Tybalt then enters and hands her the Capulet dress, a symbolic initiation both into womanhood and into the clan.

The development of the Juliet themes

As the Appendix shows, the Juliet themes make a number of appearances throughout the work as a whole. The B Theme is first heard in the Overture, and it is this one that is generally used as the 'label' for the character of Juliet; for example, a snatch of it is given at 86, in the midst of the belligerent Knights Theme, when she is encouraged by her family to dance with Paris at the ball. Then, when she first meets and dances with Romeo, we are given an interesting variation (**Extract 4**); here, the graceful B theme of the womanly Juliet is superimposed with motifs from the excited A theme, creating the effect of a young woman trembling with her first sexual interest, yet desperately trying to contain this excitement within the bounds of decorum.

Theme A is repeated in Nº 27 (sections 204-206), when the Nurse hands over Juliet's letter to Romeo (the choice of this one, rather than the more mature B theme, might be making some kind of comment upon the nature of Juliet's infatuation at this point). Then we get a snatch of the B theme, when Romeo is trying to resist Tybalt's provocations to fight (sections 253-254):

> I do protest I never injuried thee,
> But love thee better than thou canst devise;
> (Act III Sc 1 66-68)

this is clearly Juliet in her idealised role as spiritual inspiration to choose love above war.

Later, after Romeo has been banished and Juliet's family are trying to force her to marry Paris, the A theme returns, but in tragically altered form (Nº 41 sections 300-302, **Extract 5** on tape). The melody is no longer allowed to develop and fulfil itself as it does in 'The Young Juliet', but instead is truncated into a series of shrill shrieks, each at a slightly higher pitch than the one before and punctuated by heavy assertions from the trombones, like a foot stamping furiously. The emotional intensity is once again indicated by the range of pitch (two octaves), jagged rhythms, and the instrumentation

(violins at their most shrill and trombones at their most brassy). At 302, the furious bowing from the violins is reminiscent of a similar effect created for 'The Fight' (Nº6); and on the pragmatic level, the instruments appear to be arguing, as one shrill ascending phrase is answered by a descending one, in rapid succession. At 303, this fury suddenly gives way to a motif from the C theme, as if Juliet's energy is all spent, and she collapses in tears. To my mind, this is a musical rendition of her desperate appeal to her mother:

> Is there no pity sitting in the clouds
> That sees into the bottom of my grief?
> O sweet my mother, cast me not away…
> (Act III Sc V 195-197)

Indeed, in Nureyev's production, this is how it is interpreted.

It is in the very final scene of the ballet, Nº 52, 'Juliet's Death', that the C theme truly reaches its fruition (**Extract 6**). As we have seen, motifs from the theme appeared in our first introduction to the character, and elsewhere, but were never fully developed, merely serving as a fleeting evocation of some unnamed yearning. It is now, at the end, that this motif is allowed to live out its melodic and harmonic potential, swelling into a richly orchestrated tune, full of poignant chords and bitter melodic commentaries from unexpected sources (such as the trumpet's brief descant at bar 351). This in itself is surely an eloquent commentary upon the character of Juliet, whose unidentified yearning may only find fulfilment in death, and also upon the nature of tragedy, present in human nature even before any of the socially engineered events have been set into motion. After the discordant thump from the brass in bar 358 that is surely meant to reproduce the sound of Juliet stabbing herself, and a few nostalgic echoes of the Love Theme from the clarinet, the melody gradually loses its movement, and stabilises around the tonic on a long high drawn-out note. The bass movements slowly sink in the opposite direction, down to the bottom of their range, and thus, the ballet ends, with the instruments at the extreme ends of the pitch spectrum drawn off into their respective poles, leaving the central, human range of sound utterly bare.

b) Romeo's Theme

Musically, the development of the Romeo theme seems to be one of the most complex in the whole work. The character first appears right at the very beginning of the ballet, immediately after the overture (representing an important alteration to the Shakespeare play, in which he does not appear until after the fight) and the musical portrait at first bears very little resemblance to the lovelorn young man depicted by Shakespeare.

> Griefs of mine own lie heavy in my breast,
> /……/
> Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs,
> Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
> Being vex'd, a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears;
> What is it else? A madness most discreet,
> A choking gall, and a preserving sweet…
>
> (Act I ScI 184-191)

This first rendition of Romeo's theme is not only extremely disjointed and incoherent, but also somewhat comic (**Extract 7**). It begins with light pizzicato chords from the strings in 2/4 time, and before the measure seems to be complete, the bassoon comes in with a disjointed 'melody' that only just manages to resolve itself in a conventionally tonal manner. A slightly more convincing tune is then taken over by the clarinet (Sections 6), and repeated immediately by strings (Section 7), before the whole thing dies away in the same way as it began. But even this tune can scarcely be deemed a 'theme' in the conventional sense; the melodic line is jerky, with clumsy leaps instead of smooth contours, and full of accidental notes that have no place in the harmonic scheme. As such, it is utterly unmemorable, despite the lyrical potential displayed in the smooth *legato* lines of the clarinet and strings. Even rhythmically the piece is bizarre; the first section has an irregular 13 bars, and second 9, and the 'melodies' begin at utterly unexpected moments.

Despite the similarities between this and some of the examples given by Sturman (1995:42) of the work of inexperienced students of musical composition, such musical ineptitude is clearly intentional on the part of Prokofiev. Romeo is being portrayed as immature and uncoordinated, and gawkily clownish, but without the wit and style of

Mercutio. Indeed, at this point, the instrumentation is similar to that used in the comic relief passages (the bassoon of course is traditionally a humorous instrument, and Prokofiev makes use of pizzicato strings for comic effect in Mercutio and the Nurse's themes, and in that which I have labelled the 'Flirt' theme). Nureyev's interpretation of Romeo at this point is clearly taken from Prokofiev rather than from Shakespeare. It involves a slightly foppish, light-hearted solo, which, in the next number (Nº3 The Street Awakens) is developed into a distinctly bawdy flirtation with Rosaline.

The lyrical potential inherent in the Romeo theme first begins to reveal itself in Nº 16 (The Madrigal), when he has just met Juliet and has begun to fall in love (**Extract 8**). A distinct melody is now beginning to develop, sweetly sung by the strings in a swelling *legato* passage. However, it is still obscured by other melodic voices and strange discords, as if the young man has not yet discovered his true identity. This is because the episode is essentially polyphonic and emulates a style of composition dating from before the full maturing of the tonal system (as the title implies). While this is clearly appropriate for the depiction of adolescence, it does, however, also contain an implicit judgment about the relative values of polyphony and homophony, which could be interpreted as subversive in the context of the Soviet Union.

After the party is over, Juliet, alone with her Nurse, rehears this melody, played solemnly on a church organ, clearly evoking not only the spiritual nature of her love, but also her hopes for marriage (Nº 19 Section 135). The theme then appears again in a dramatically altered form in the section entitled 'Variation Romeo' (Nº 20), designed to correspond to the Balcony Scene in Shakespeare's play (Prokofiev, clearly aware of the dance potential of this part of the play, extended this scene into three distinct numbers, the Balcony Scene *per se*, Romeo's solo and the Love Dance). This melody (**Extract 9**) is scarcely recognisable as the Romeo theme. Indeed, it bears a strong resemblance to the 'Courtly' theme of the Minuet (Extract 29), and it may be that we are being invited to view Romeo in a new light; it is as if the foolish boy of the first scene has been influenced by the manners and courtesy of Paris, and is trying to develop those qualities in himself. Like the 'Minuet', the melody is now in ¾ time (a little awkwardly, as if dressed in garments that do not quite fit it yet) and grows more rhapsodic and exuberant as it progresses, with ever more extravagant orchestration. Eventually it blossoms into the wonderful pure melody of the Love Theme (Nº 21), the *pas-de-deux* that represents the emotional peak of the play, the ecstatic delight of love in its most idealistic form, before the inevitable decline into tragedy.

Superficially, there would seem to be very little similarity between the first jerky rendering of Romeo's theme in Nº2, and the gorgeous lyrical swoop of the Love Dance. But if we follow the tune's development from this inauspicious beginning, it becomes clear that the Love Dance has in fact emerged out of the Romeo theme like a butterfly from a chrysallis. In the Madrigal, the tune gains melodic cohesiveness, and whilst no longer as stiff and awkward, has a certain 'uprightness' about it that gives it an almost religious severity/purity. In 'Variation Romeo', the unexpected foray into ¾ time, seems to release some lyrical potential – we can hear the Love Theme there, struggling to get out, particularly in the triplets that embellish the melodic line with a new courtly charm. Then at last, in Nº 21 (**Extract 10**), the full melody soars free in an ecstatic burst of strings. Having experimented with different rhythms, it now find its true beat in 4/4 time; and for the first time, the final part of the melody is satisfactorily completed.

The Love Theme, now that it has found its identity, is thenceforth used to evoke the purity of true love that is subsequently so cruelly thwarted. It alternates with the Main *Romeo and Juliet* Theme in Nº 39 ('Farewell before Parting'); with the 'Friar Laurence' theme in Nº 44 when Juliet is pouring her heart out to the priest; and appears again in Nºs 46 and 47 when she is alone after having submissively agreed to the marriage with Paris. In all of these renderings, it is poignant and sad, the rhapsodic ecstasy being now no more than a mere memory.

c) Knights Theme

The Knights Theme is partly an identification tag for the Capulets in general, and for Tybalt in particular, but it is also evokes the clannish belligerence that has provoked this tragedy. It is first and foremost a martial dance, an example of tribal posturing, designed to keep the enemy at bay. Its most complete rendering comes in Nº 13, 'Dance of the Knights' (**Extract 11**), which takes place at the Capulet Ball, and as such, is ritualistic, as yet without any of the wild emotions that characterise its later appearances.

The martial quality is given by many markers: the bass rhythm is very heavily stressed and purposeful, like the stamping of angry feet; volume is loud and *pesante*; and the instrumentation of brass instruments and drums evokes those used in a military band to boost company morale and intimidate the enemy. Superimposed onto this basic martial background, the main melody in the violins is rhythmically staccato and jerky (like the movements of an aggressively tense person), and in terms of pitch, passes up and down a

very wide range. Indeed, the overall pitch range over the complete orchestration is vast, and this is accentuated when the violins move in one direction and the trombones in another (as in Section 79). Nureyev has exploited this in his crowd scenes by having the violin passages danced by the women, and the brass by the men.

There is great potential for this music to become hysterical, therefore, and this is indeed what happens later on. There is a section of 'The Fight' (**Extract 12**) where the first bars of the theme are belted out by different instruments at different times, simulating the utter breakdown of group co-ordination that happens when feelings are running high, and this is immediately followed by an utterly discordant version of the theme, full of accidentals that have no place in the natural key, and played by the trumpets, that most aggressive of instruments.

It also appears in Nº 41 'Juliet refuses to marry Paris' to indicate the family identity that Juliet is having forced upon her (Nureyev expresses this visually, as Juliet is obliged to put on the red dress used by all the women of her family). It is equally a label for Tybalt, as representative of the Capulet clan. For example, it is shrieked out in Nº 16, when Tybalt recognises Romeo at the ball; and alternated with Mercutio's theme in Nº 32 ('Tybalt meets Mercutio', Extract 15).

It is interesting from the point of view of Prokofiev's interpretation of character that Tybalt is not identified as an individual separate from the family. He is seen simply as an element of the larger unit, a mere pawn that is sent out onto the front lines; as such, he cannot be considered the satanic provocateur that he is in some interpretations of this play. Thus, it is somewhat difficult to pin down Tybalt's character from Prokofiev's music, a problem acknowledged by Alexei Yermolayev, one of the first people to dance the part:

> 'It was difficult because, my tempestuous character, Tybalt, did not have his own "portrait" theme. He was characterised by the whole music of "enmity". It was most difficult to extract Tybalt's specific features, characteristic of him alone, from this…' (*cit.* Bok, 1978:250)

d) Mercutio's Themes

Mercutio, on the other hand, is very well defined musically. He has his own character theme, but is also associated with two others (the 'Flirt' theme and Masks B), which reveal different facets of his personality and aspects of his relationship with the other characters.

Mercutio portrait theme

Mercutio's main theme (**Extract 13**) is full of energy, shooting up and down the pitch spectrum with an astounding rapidity, as befits a mercurial nature. There are hints of aggression (eg. the brass instruments provocatively stamping up the scale in Section 99), but these are always resolved stylishly as if into a game (in this case, the brass are answered by playful violins). This music is used for his fight with Tybalt (Nº33), thus suggesting that it is he who clearly has the upper hand; consequently, the fact that he, Mercutio, receives a fatal wound must clearly signify the most terrible bad luck.

'Flirt' theme

In the dance that opens the ballet (Nº3 'The Street Awakes', **Extract 14**), we have the first renderings of a playful motif that I have termed the 'Flirt' theme, since it is light-hearted and flirtatious, clearly designed to accompany the playful bantering between the young men and girls of the Montague clan. It is not exclusively a portrait theme, and seems to be associated with playfulness in general. However, Mercutio, as the chief clown of the party, rapidly appropriates the motif for himself (particularly when it is rendered on the bassoon, giving a slapstick or even bawdy quality).

It is used to good effect when Mercutio is teasing Tybalt (Nº32 'Tybalt meets Mercutio', **Extract 15**.) This number opens with rapid bowings by the violins giving the effect of nervous panting, and an ominous blast from the brass on a chord that augments the tension. The Flirty theme here is presented on the bassoon and saxophone (that can sound very much like the noisy passing of wind), and with melodic embellishments that give it an especially cheeky quality (indeed, Nureyev has Mercutio waggling his bottom provocatively at Tybalt). This assumed laxity contrasts dramatically with the taut, shrill quality of the Knights theme, and we get a very convincing musical picture of a roguish Mercutio deliberately winding Tybalt up to a pitch of nervous fury.

The Flirt theme comes in again later when Mercutio is dying (Nº 34 'Mercutio's Death', **Extract 16**), alternated with the Masks B theme. Here it is slow, losing energy,

but still comical; Shakespeare has Mercutio verbally witty until the end, and of course his friends all think he is still clowning about and expect him to get up:

> ..'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man…
>
> (Act III Sc I 97-99)

Masks themes:

The Masks themes are the group portraits of Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio together (indeed, in the score, the episode known as 'Masks', Nº 12, is given those three names as a sub-title). Here the individual personalities of the boys are subsumed under a group identity, which is swaggering and 'cool' (the social 'mask' that is, to an extent, belied by the individual theme, at least in Romeo's case). The rhythm is described as *Andante marciale*, but is in fact soft, light and alert, rather than openly belligerent.

Masks A

This theme (**Extract 17**) seems to have been derived melodically from the first version of the Romeo theme (Nº 2), but is much more coherent than that one was. In its first rendition (which corresponds to the moment in the play when the three boys are on their way to the party in disguise), it is light and staccato, taut with controlled energy, and frivolous with melodic embellishments – a convincing portrait of a group of swaggering young men intent on impressing the world and each other.

Masks B

This melody is jaunty and light-hearted, and perhaps a little more relaxed than Masks A. It maintains the slightly martial rhythm of the other, and the melody shoots up and down the register with wide leaps and dramatic glides between intervals. It is associated with Mercutio in Nº 34 'Mercutio's Death' (Extract 16, above); and is contrasted with Romeo's theme in Nº 23 'Romeo and Mercutio', when Mercutio is trying to cajole his friend out of his love-sickness in Act II Sc IV and return him to his 'gang' (**Extract 18**).

e) Friar Laurence themes

Friar Laurence, in Shakespeare's play, is the cool voice of the spirit in the midst of passion and anguish, advisor to both the lovers. As such, we would expect his musical portrait to be calming and sedate, in sharp contrast to the emotional turbulence of the surrounding passages, and this is indeed the case. Friar Laurence has two themes that are presented initially in Nº 28, 'Romeo with Father Lorenzo'.

Friar Laurence A

This theme (**Extract 19**) is noticeably restrained. The tempo is slow and measured, with notes that are rhythmically the same length, and there is very little variation in terms of pitch. This lack of melodic and rhythmic movement creates an effect of stillness. The melody is carried by the bass line, which also adds to the solemnity.

Friar Laurence B

This theme (**Extract 20**) contains a little more rhythmic variation than the previous one, and also has slightly more melodic movement, making it sound lyrical and romantic, though still restrained. One imagines that Prokofiev intended it to represent the priest's sympathy for the lovers and his attempts to ensure that their passion does not become intemperate:

> These violent delights have violent ends
> And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
> Which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey
> Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,
> And in the taste confounds the appetite.
> Therefore love moderately; long love doth so.
> Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.
>
> (Act II Sc VI 9-15)

e) Nurse's Theme

The melody associated with the Nurse is scarcely more than a motif, but is distinctive enough to identify her in each of her appearances. It has its main exposition in Nº26 'The Nurse' (**Extract 21**), when she is looking for Romeo to give him Juliet's message. As befits the character, it is melodically naïve, the first bar scarcely moving off

a single note, and the final two bars merely descending the arpeggio. It is also mildly comical, but in a rather slow-witted fashion.

Interestingly, the 'Flirt' theme is also used for the Nurse in Nº 9 ('Preparations for the Ball'), which provides a link between her character and that of Mercutio, clearly as comic relief.

Abstract Themes

As we have seen, there is no clear dividing line between the character themes and those that illustrate some abstract quality: the Romeo theme develops into the Love theme; the Knights theme is simultaneously the mark of Tybalt and the theme of Enmity; and while Mercutio has his own theme, he also draws some measure of his identification from the 'Flirt' theme and from 'Masks'.

It may be that all the abstract themes are ultimately derived from character themes, thus providing an interesting musical analogy to the Romantic notion that plot in drama results inevitably out of character. But unfortunately there is no space here to explore this with the attention that it deserves.

a) The Main (Romeo and Juliet) Theme

A motif from this theme begins the Overture to the ballet, so it is clearly considered to be the title piece. However, it is not fully developed until Nº 39 'Farewell before Parting' (**Extract 22**) corresponding to the first part of Act III Sc V of Shakespeare's play.

> Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet day.
> It was the nightingale and not the lark
> That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear.

It is a very poignant melody, bittersweet like the emotions that beset the young couple at this first and last consummation of their love. The melody is slow and expressive, with a soulful clarinet answered by trembling violins, but pushes up and down a range of two octaves like the barely-controlled surges of powerful emotion. The rhythm of the first two bars is also irregular, like the spontaneous clenching that occurs when strong feelings must be contained; and in terms of volume, the melody heaves in and out, alternating between gentle tender phrasing and rebellious bursts.

This, we should consider as the musical centrepiece of the ballet. It is the theme of the whole tragedy, containing within it not only the rhapsodic ecstasy of the love dance, but also the unspeakable tragedy of death. This theme speaks of the impossibility of achieving perfect love in this world, and as such is redolent with yearning, passion and revolt.

b) Death theme

The section of the ballet corresponding to Juliet's lying in state (**Extract 23**) is reproduced in full on the tape accompanying this work, since it provides an unprecedented example of the musical expression of emotion. At the beginning, Juliet is in her tomb and her family are around her mourning. The Death theme is slow and stately, yet bears the markers of extreme emotionality in the wide range of pitch and volume. It is initially played by the strings, but then is taken over by the brass (the male voices, perhaps), which gives it a hard cutting edge. At 353, all melody is lost in a harsh discordant scream of anguished bowing from the strings and frantic surges up and down the register from the trombones (this corresponds in Nureyev's production to Romeo's sudden bursting upon the scene). Then, following a discordant fragment of the Main theme, there is a burst of the Love theme, *fortíssimo,* dying away into nothing. Finally, the Death theme returns with a vengeance, with full orchestration, and strong accentuation; at 356, the strings shriek up and down two octaves, great screams of anguish that reach heights that our nerves and ears can scarcely bear; then, it all subsides into a dark, deep tolling of the death.

The Descriptive Dimension

Although most of the musical fabric of this ballet is created through the interplay and development of thematic material, Prokofiev does on occasions use a kind of descriptive writing typical of the tone poem, in which he attempts to reproduce in sound events or processes from the real world. The most clear-cut example of this is 'The Quarrel' (Nº 5), corresponding to the dispute between Montagues and Capulets that gets out of hand in Act I Sc I.

a) The Quarrel

This is third in a sequence of four musical episodes designed to describe the increase in tension that eventually culminate in the fight in Act I Sc I. To my mind, this is one occasion where music is clearly able to go beyond words, masterfully capturing the way in which sexual energy may be imperceptibly transformed into aggression.

The sequence begins with the light-hearted dance number 'The Street Awakens' (Nº 3), in which the 'Flirt' theme is presented for the first time. Predictably, Nureyev presented this as a chorus dance of Montagues, in which the young men and girls are playing and flirting together in an innocuous fashion (see Extract 14). The next dance, 'Dance in the Morning' (Nº 4), is a little more pugnacious. The tempo has moved up from *Allegretto* to *Allegro*, and the busy bowing from the strings and fairly wide range of pitch indicates a new level of arousal. The melody, when it appears at 16 is quite martial-sounding; it is played by brass instruments, and the determined crotchets sound like the stamping of feet. Nureyev has chosen to interpret this as a show of force on the part of the Montague clan before the Capulets, who have meanwhile appeared in the background, and as such, this melody may be considered a badge for the Montagues in the same way as the Knights theme is a badge of the Capulets.

The tempo increases even more in Nº 5, 'The Quarrel' (**Extract 24**), which is labelled *Allegro brusco*, as does the volume, which is now *forte/fortíssimo*. It begins with a snatch of the previous dance, played in a very tense staccato fashion, followed by a series of short angry chords, and a roll on the timpani. The unfinished nature of first phrase suggests that the capacity for coherent thought or dialogue has now been exhausted, and that verbality is deteriorating into empty abuse and body language. Indeed, Nureyev has his Montagues and Capulets openly provoking each other using rude gestures.

In the 6th bar, we get the first example of an 'accumulated'[27] chord, used to good effect here and elsewhere to indicate the build-up of tension as more and more voices join into the fray. Musically it is achieved by each instrument coming in one at a time and sustaining their note until the full chord is reached; it is a technique used by bell-ringers (which clearly brings connotations of alarms to this piece). Here, it is particularly evocative, not only because the chord itself is discordant and jarring, but also because it sweeps up from the bass to the top of the treble register like a great wave of anger

[27] This is my word. I do not know if a technical term exists for this effect.

passing through a crowd, with a corresponding crescendo in volume, culminating in a short sequence of angry quavers, played *fortíssimo* and *marcatissimo* by the brass. Then comes a shiver of nervous fury from the high-pitched violins, answered by a similar tremolo effect in the bass.

These various techniques are subsequently repeated throughout the piece, interspersed with a few fragments from the 'Flirt' theme (23-24), which, when directed at the enemy, becomes a provocation (as it is in Nº 32, 'Tybalt meets Mercutio', Extract 15). The tension is gradually increased, until the final angry discords make way for the rapid furious bowing that begin the next number (Nº6 'The Fight', **Extract 25**).

b) The Duke's Order

Another example of descriptive rather than narrative music is the episode entitled 'The Duke's Order' (Nº7, **Extract 26**). This is redolent with suppressed violence; vast chords accumulate as the entire orchestra one by one is brought into service in a great crescendo passing from *pianíssimo* to *fortíssimo* and back again in the space of two bars. The chords themselves are harmonically full of tension and cry out for resolution, and as such, this is an excellent musical expression of fear and doom, the terrible calm that comes before the dreadful tragedy.

Personally, I feel that the emotional power of this episode is somewhat belied by the title. Prokofiev obviously intended it as an illustration of the immense power that the Duke had over his subjects; the anxiety in the music is what they must feel, quaking before his threats (a reading which is supported by the fact that, on this first rendering, the discordant chords do in fact resolve quite peacefully at the end of the piece, like the calm of a paternal figure that has made his point). However, I feel that the latent fear in this episode is too powerful to be 'wasted' on a fallible human agent. It has the potential to express all the massive cosmic doom imminent in the early part of the tragedy, the sheer powerlessness of frail humanity before the great tragic forces driving the action, as expressed by Romeo following Mercutio's 'Queen Mab' speech:

> I fear too early, for my mind misgives
> Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels, and expire the term
> Of a despised life clos'd in my breast

By some vile forfeit of untimely death.

(Act I Sc.V 106-111)

Nureyev clearly felt the same way, because in his production, this part of the music has been shifted to the beginning and is played immediately after the Overture, whilst on stage a deathly procession silently passes, and a black sheet flutters down from the sky.

The Dances

Apart from the narrative and descriptive parts of the musical score mentioned above, this ballet also includes a number of dance numbers, a concession, of course, to the particularity of this art form. Some of the dances are, in dramatic terms, perfectly gratuitous, and do not seem to play any part in the intrinsic structure of the whole; this is the case of Nº 22 'Folk Dance', Nº 24 'Dance of the Five Couples', and Nº 17, the 'Gavotte' (which has actually been lifted wholesale from Prokofiev's Classical Symphony, and is also repeated in 'Peter and the Wolf'). Others, however, have a multiple functions. The 'Dance in the Morning', as we have seen, is also a stage in a sequence of increasing tension between the opening dance and the Fight, incorporating a previously-stated theme and introducing a new one.[28]

The Minuet (Nº11, **Extract 27**) is perhaps the dance number that has the most complex role to play in the ballet. Whilst obviously being a stately dance of the type that might well have been danced at such a ball, it also has a descriptive function, illustrating the behaviour of the guests arriving at the Capulets' mansion. After the initial exposition of the melody, Section 61 contains a simple motif that is repeated by different instruments in a restrained and dignified fashion, exactly as if these were different voices making polite 'small talk'. Later (at 81, **Extract 28**), we have a graceful and melodic new theme coming in which Prokofiev has labelled as 'Ladies Dance', but which seems to me to function as leitmotif for courtly behaviour in general. It may almost be a portrait theme for Paris; the piano score, which contains a certain number of stage directions, frequently indicates this character's presence whenever it appears and Nureyev also has him in a prominent role at these moments. Melodically and rhythmically, this theme seems to be influencing Romeo's Theme in Nº 20 'Variation Romeo'. It is as if Romeo were attempting to assume some of the courtly graces that characterise Paris' behaviour,

[28] Seroff (1969:205) tells us that this was originally a *Scherzo* from the Second Piano Sonata which the choreographer, Lavroksky, introduced in order to provide more dance material.

imitating him in order to better deserve Juliet's love, and it is this pressure upon his leitmotif that ultimately causes it to blossom into the gorgeous Love Theme. Thus we have a very clear example of how music is able to express subtle psychological changes much more eloquently than words could ever do.

* * *

I hope that this analysis has served to demonstrate the extent to which music is capable of not only reproducing many of the narrative and descriptive devices of literature, but also of capturing complex emotional states and psychological transitions with a compactness that is rare in the verbal system. It is for this reason that this kind of composition may rightly be termed 'realism'. By remaining constantly in contact with their external referents, the musical signs are able to build up a coherent picture of an extra-musical world that is as convincing as anything achieved in literature or painting.

However it must be pointed out that Prokofiev's version of *Romeo and Juliet* is by no means a mirror image of Shakespeare's play. In any translation, the target language imposes its own limitations, and this is even more evident when the code is a non-verbal one. In this particular case, there was a double constraint; the composition had not only to be able to stand alone as a convincing musical narrative (as in the Orchestral Suites that Prokofiev created from the ballet score) but had also to be danceable and stageable. As we have seen, this meant that physically static and highly verbal scenes had to be cut out or reduced, while those that lent themselves to movement or to visual symbolism could be considerably extended and milked for their semiotic potential.

In addition, new meanings are imposed upon the original work by the very act of selection and ordering, and by the particular form in which the 'translated' elements are construed; and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* seems to be making an interesting comment upon Shakespeare's play. Why, for example, is Tybalt not given a theme of his own, since he is such a pivotal character to the whole tragic dénouement? Why is Juliet given three themes while Romeo only one, and what is the significance of the way in which each of them develops? Why also has the order of the scenes been changed around at the beginning?

These questions gain a new ominous significance in the light of the overpowering ideology to which Soviet composers were bound during the Stalin regime. Prokofiev was writing musical realism, this we have established. But was it *socialist* realism? To what extent was his music 'relevant to the life of the Soviet people' and 'pointing out what was leading them towards socialism'?[29] And how was it possible that the same composer could become an icon for the regime and for the dissent simultaneously, resulting in the bitter struggle for his appropriation that took place in two conflicting biographies published in English in the same decade? These are the issues that I will be considering in the last two chapters of this work.

[29] Stalin, *cit.* Jaffé (1998:131); Shurbanov & Sokolova (2001:96)

Chapter 7

PROKOFIEV'S INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE

Romeo and Juliet is certainly one of Shakespeare's most popular plays, for, over the years, the story has been told and retold endlessly, and transported into many different media and contexts. In some cases, alterations have been made to the temporal and geographical setting while maintaining the narrative structure basically intact; other interpretations have introduced modifications on the level of character and plot that have profound implications for the whole ideological infrastructure of the work. In this chapter, we shall be looking at how Prokofiev interpreted Shakespeare's play and discussing some of the implications of the changes that he introduced.

The Setting

Music of course possesses a strong scene-setting capacity, and is frequently used in films and television to evoke places or epochs. This symbolism, which may in some cases verge on a kind of musical stereotyping, is achieved by activating motifs or using combinations of instruments that have come over the years to be associated with a particular culture; it is clear, therefore, that if Prokofiev had wanted to explicitly maintain the original setting of Shakespeare's play, he could have done so quite economically by restricting himself to the kind of instruments and musical forms that were used in Renaissance Italy. As Nestyev points out:

> The composer….might have strung together, in divertissement fashion, a succession of Italian folk dances (tarantellas, saltarellos, etc) or even literally resurrected sarabandes, pavannes, and other old aristocratic dances. But this method, so widespread in ballet dramaturgy, would have diverted him from his lofty poetic conception and led him into the realm of surface description. (1960:274)

As it is, there are only a few pieces in this ballet that seem to point unequivocally to a contextualization in Renaissance Italy. There are indeed echoes of tarantella rhythms in the 'Folk Dance' (Nº22); and the Italian theme is continued in the 'Dance with Mandolins' (Nº25), through the foregrounding of a now rarely used instrument

associated with both place and epoch (a glancing allusion, however, undermined by other aspects of the piece, such as the jazzy clarinet melody in sections 196 and 199).

A Renaissance flavour is provided elsewhere. The first Interlude (Nº8) is reminiscent of regal processional music from that era, played on drums and trumpets; while two of the dances used at the Capulet ball, the 'Minuet' (Nº11) and the 'Gavotte' (Nº18), and also the 'Madrigal' (Nº16), were popular forms in the sixteenth century. The 'Gavotte', which Prokofiev lifted wholesale from his *Classical Symphony*, is the most authentic-sounding of the three and largely respects the traditional form (in 4/4 time, binary form, with a steady rhythm and stately feel, each section opening on the half-measure). The 'Minuet' is also quite conventional in formal terms, being a graceful dance in ¾ time, beginning on the first beat of the measure (as in the older examples), and making use of ternary form. However, as we have seen, this piece is more than a mere scene-setting device, as the section corresponding to the 'Trio' (63-64) also functions as the 'Courtly' theme associated to Paris. Prokofiev was certainly also using the form itself symbolically, since proficiency in the minuet was considered to provide an important training in the courtly graces.[30]

The 'Madrigal', on the other hand, is only loosely related to the traditional form. Madrigals were usually unaccompanied vocal compositions sung at private gatherings and, as they date from an era before the establishment of key and homophony, tend to sound somewhat archaic to modern ears. Not only do the different voices have a degree of independence and a rhythmic freedom that tonality later rendered unacceptable, but most madrigals also retain some influence of the earlier modes in their harmonic structure. Prokofiev's Madrigal merely hints at these characteristics. There are three voices operating in the first section but the effect of this is minimized by the prominence given to the top melodic line in performance; and the apparently unconstrained rhythm in fact fits quite neatly into the conventional 16 bars allocated to it. This melody of course represents the second stage of the development of Romeo's theme into the Love Theme, and the structure of the whole piece is in fact largely a conversation between this transformed Romeo theme and Juliet's B theme, opening out into the Main Romeo and Juliet Theme at 111. Therefore it would seem to me that this piece is less a scene-setting device than an essential part of the narrative structure.

[30] Scholes (1970:645) cites Lord Chesterfield writing to his son in 1748: 'I would have you dance a minuet very well, not so much for the sake of the minuet itself (though that, if danced at all, ought to be danced well), as that it will give you an habitual genteel carriage and manner of presenting yourself'.

These examples of musical scene setting in the ballet are, however, fairly few and far between, and I think we can securely say that Prokofiev has not made historical realism one of his priorities. Indeed, Nestyev says that the composer 'refrained almost completely from using local and historical elements do describe sixteenth-century Italy' (1960:274-5) and claims that certain passages have a distinctly Russian feel about them. If this is true (and my feeling is that it is), then it is interesting to speculate whether this was deliberate, or whether the composer was unconsciously reproducing in his music melodies and rhythms he had imbued throughout his life from the culture in which he grew up.

Structural Reorganisation

There has been a considerable reorganisation to the structure of Shakespeare's play resulting from the practical demands of presenting this work as a ballet. The need to reduce undanceable scenes and extend those with dance potential has meant that the scenes are weighted differently. As Fig. 1 shows, a great deal of musical time is given to Acts I and II, to exploit the fight scene and the ball to the full, while the last part of the play relies almost entirely upon repetition of previously stated themes. This imbalance has been pointed out by a number of critics. Nestyev writes:

> …there is almost no new music in the last four scenes; this somewhat weakens the dramatic tension in the final scenes, in which most of the music sounds like an echo, or sometimes even an enfeebled repetition, of what has gone before. (1960:274)

There has also been a reorganisation of scenic boundaries. There are only three acts instead of five. Act I ends with the Balcony Scene, which means that this is now presented as the culmination of the events of the ball, rather than as the start of the conflict; Act II ends with the death of Tybalt, which reframes it as the end of a phase rather than as the beginning; and Act III closes with Juliet taking the sleeping potion. This means that the scenes at the tomb are presented as Epilogue, which substantially reduce their tragic force.

It is perhaps useful to remember at this point that Prokofiev and Radlov once considered giving the ballet a happy ending, with Romeo returning in time and finding Juliet alive (see Chapter 5). The facts that all the tragic action is presented in Epilogue,

and that this contains very little new music, might suggest that the ballet was conceived as a romantic comedy, but had the tragic ending somehow tacked on as a kind of afterthought, perhaps as a response to the outrage from Shakespearian scholars that apparently greeted the initial decision. However, this interpretation, neat as it sounds, is to my mind belied by the music itself. There is too much pathos in the Main R&J Theme, Death theme, and Love theme, and too much ominous horror in the episode known as 'The Duke's Order' for us to seriously consider that Prokofiev had conceived this as a comedy from the outset. Perhaps we would be better to regard the imbalance as resulting from the undeniable need to give more time to action scenes than to verbal ones.

Character

By far and away the biggest change that Prokofiev has introduced into *Romeo and Juliet* is on the level of character, and involves a shift in perspective that has far-reaching implications. In the original play, the tragedy is a social, not individual, matter that afflicts the two households equally; the perspective is panoramic, not partisan, and character is firmly subordinated to action in true Aristotelian fashion. In Prokofiev's version, on the other hand, we are given a perspective much closer to that of the nineteenth century novel. The plot is now centred upon an individual hero (Romeo), and the narrative becomes the tale of his personal development in the face of obstacles. All the other characters are perceived as they relate to him; Juliet and Mercutio develop too but are fragmented and unrounded; the Nurse and Friar Laurence are mere caricatures, and Tybalt almost disappears altogether, subsumed into the anonymous mass of enmity that is the Capulet clan.

This difference in focus is evident from the very start of the work. In Shakespeare's Prologue, it is the feud between the two families that is presented as the theme of the play:

> Two households both alike in dignity
> (In fair Verona where we lay our scene)
> From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
> Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
> From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
> A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life…

Prokofiev's Overture, on the other hand, does not speak of enmity.[31] He could have used the Knight's Theme, elements from 'The Fight', or even the ominous passage known as 'The Duke's Order' to create a sense of conflict and tragic premonition; instead it is the Main Romeo and Juliet Theme that has precedence, interspersed with fragments from Juliet's B Theme and the Love Theme. The overwhelming tone is thus lyrical, romantic and poignant, which unequivocally summarizes the work as a tale of love. Thus, its scope is reduced from the social plane to the private domain of the psyche, and the panoramic vision is narrowed down to the partial perspective of one individual soul.

Romeo's prominence becomes evident almost as soon as the ballet opens. While in Shakespeare, he is introduced to us only at the end of Scene I, after the fight and the Prince's warning, in Prokofiev's version he is the first figure to appear upon the stage. In fact, Nureyev has him on stage throughout the whole of Act I, bawdily courting Rosaline during the group dances and participating in the fight. Taking the ballet as a whole, he is present in over 70% of the musical episodes, which gives him a much more centralised role than he has in the original play.

This dramatic prominence is reflected musically by the enormous development undergone by Romeo's Theme. When he first appears on stage in the ballet, he is a very different character from the lovesick young romantic of Shakespeare. The first rendition of his theme (Nº2) portrays him as foolish, gauche, even bawdy (see Chapter 6), and it is contact with Juliet and with the Courtly theme associated with Paris that causes it to mutate and evolve, until it eventually blossoms into the graceful Love Theme. Thus, we have a kind of Ugly Duckling story superimposed onto Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and it is significant that the transformation is attributed to the alchemy of love.

There is no other character in the ballet whose theme changes so dramatically. Juliet is presented in a fragmented way, with three themes, each representing a different facet of her nature; Mercutio has his own portrait theme but is also associated closely with two group themes; the Nurse and Friar Laurence are no more than caricatures, with static simple themes that highlight a single trait, and most of the other characters disappear into an undifferentiated mass. Thus, Prokofiev has managed to achieve musically the kind of characterisation that the writers of the *Bildungsroman* strove for in words. He has drawn a rounded psychological portrait of the central protagonist who

[31] Scholes (1970:752) tells us that the function of the Overture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as opposed to earlier ones, serves 'to awaken the expectation and proper mood of the audience. If a distinction of name be desired, the words *Symphonic Prologue* can be adopted for this type'.

develops and grows throughout the course of the action, introduced secondary developing characters who are perceived in relation to the protagonist and are therefore fragmentary, and peopled the background with a series of static minor characters who serve only to personify some particular characteristic that is of interest to the protagonist at the moment.

The fact that Juliet is not given a single unified theme in the ballet is of course indicative of the role of Other that she occupies in this male-centred perspective. Instead of being portrayed as a coherently developing rounded character, as Romeo is, she is fragmented into facets: there is the playful and innocent child; the idealised young woman whose love is an inspiration to better behaviour, and the voice of tragic passion. These of course are all classic female stereotypes, which have been amply studied by feminists in other literary contexts. It is also significant that her C theme only achieves completion in death. This might suggest that Prokofiev was interpreting the play as a version of the *Liebestod* myth[32] (thus aligning his own work with some of the great Romantic operas, such as Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*) and also making her into a foil for Romeo, whose own theme is realised in love.

One of the most important changes introduced by Prokofiev into Shakespeare's play is of course the minimization of Tybalt. Why he did not choose to give this character, who has such a pivotal role, his own portrait theme is a question open to speculation. One answer might be that Prokofiev did in fact intend this ballet to have a happy ending (also suggested by restructuring of scene boundaries, and by the absence of strife imagery in the Overture, see above). Tybalt, as Susan Snyder (1990:170) has pointed out, is the only truly tragic character in Shakespeare's play; it is essentially his intervention that transforms *Romeo and Juliet* from a romantic comedy into a tragedy, since, up to the death of Mercutio, the action could have developed in a completely benign direction. Thus, diminishing this character's importance would automatically diminish the tragic potential of the play, and make a happy ending all the more plausible, if that were in fact the composer's intention.

On the other hand, there could be ideological reasons for the reduction of Tybalt's role. Since he is effectively the catalyst of the tragic action, the character has frequently been interpreted as the devilish agent of a dark Fate; indeed, there are several

[32] i.e. the tragic forbidden passion that seeks its own destruction. Mahmood (1990:153-5) discusses this reading with regards to Shakespeare's play, pointing out the repeated motif of Death as Juliet's

hints in the play that the catastrophe is somehow preordained, such as Romeo's premonition before the ball:

> I fear too early, for my mind misgives
> Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels….
>
> (Act I Sc.V)

Reducing Tybalt's role thus effectively de-activates fatalistic or supernatural interpretations of the tragedy and returns the action to the merely social plane. By not allowing him a theme of his own, his potential as free-thinking individual and satanic provocateur is dramatically reduced;[33] instead, the role of villain is taken over musically by the whole clan, or rather, by the feudal society that propagates such tribal strife. Thus, it is these that become the tragic forces in the ballet, a transformation of Shakespeare's vision that is perhaps significant in the light of the ideology of the regime in which Prokofiev lived.

As we can see, then, Prokofiev, in his interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, has introduced several important changes. Some clearly are the result of the practical demands made by the ballet form; others, however, do not appear to be motivated in this way and are thus deserving of closer attention. For we must remember that Prokofiev, like all artists working under the Soviet regime, was operating under exceptionally harsh constraints. He was not free to make his own artistic decisions, and risked severe punishment for displaying values that were not in line with the official ideology. He must frequently have found himself torn between his own artistic conscience and the demands of the authorities, and it is not immediately clear to which impulse, if either, we owe the wonderful ballet score that is *Romeo and Juliet.* To what extent were the choices made in this work influenced by the official policy of Socialist Realism? Was he toeing the party line, or being covertly subversive? These are some of the difficult questions that I shall be approaching in the next, and last, chapter of this dissertation.

---

bridegroom. The classic literary statement of the *Liebestod* involved adultery and a suicide pact, such as in J.S. Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows.*

[33] It is reinstated by Nureyev, however, using predominantly visual symbolism.

Chapter 8

PROKOFIEV AND SOCIALIST REALISM: CONFORMIST OR REBEL?

Finally we are in a position to approach the issue of the ideology underlying the musical discourse of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in relation to the political climate of the Soviet Union at the time. This is not, however, an easy matter to determine. For, despite the celebration of the work by the Soviet authorities following its great success abroad, it is not at all clear that it does in fact abide by the norms of Socialist Realism; indeed the early fortunes of the ballet would indicate that perhaps the authorities themselves were unclear about its status.

Prokofiev himself has in fact been appropriated by both sides of the ideological divide. Two Russian biographies published in English in the 1960s are in sharp contradiction as to his politics: *Prokofiev,* by I.V. Nestyev (1960), the official Soviet version, paints him unequivocally as a son of the regime, and attempts to prove through detailed interpretations of his works that these are exemplary cases of socialist realism; while *Sergei Prokofiev – a Soviet Tragedy* by Victor Seroff (1969) takes the opposite line, seeing him essentially as a non-conformist who was co-opted against his will. Other more recent non-Russian biographies, such as *Prokofiev*, by Claude Samuel (1971), *Prokofiev* by David Gutman (1988) and *Sergey Prokofiev* by Daniel Jaffé (1998) wisely shy away from simplistic interpretations, preferring to reserve judgment on most of the politically delicate issues.

Neither is it easy to determine Prokofiev's political attitudes from the events of his life. The fact that he clearly enjoyed a privileged status and was showered with honours at a time when so many other composers were undergoing persecution would support Nestyev's case. On the other hand, we cannot forget that, as early as 1936, his ballet *Le Pas d'Acier* was rejected as a 'flat and vulgar anti-Soviet anecdote, a counter-revolutionary composition bordering on Fascism',[34] while ten years later, he was officially accused of Formalism, and sacked from the directorate of the Soviet Composers' Union.

[34] Jaffé, 1998:118

It is of course also possible that his sentiments changed over the years as the true implications of Stalin's policies became clear. While his decision to return to the Soviet Union after his years abroad may have been partly the consequence of the Central Committee Resolution of 23rd April 1932 (according to Nicholas Nabokov,[35] he was apparently in favour of the abolition of the proletarian arts organisations, and broadly agreed with its edict on musical language and content), it would not have been clear at that point that the resolution was in fact a prelude to the implementation of direct state control of the arts as social engineering and propaganda, nor that cultural policy would take on a much more draconian form in the near future. Certainly, there is some evidence that by 1936, Prokofiev had become concerned about the direction developments were taking and was making some attempts to protest,[36] while by 1948, he seems to have become completely demoralised, suffering from ill health and living in poverty.[37]

Musically, the composer is equally difficult to pin down and never so much as in *Romeo and Juliet*. Nestyev describes his trajectory as a blossoming, brought about by his dawning awareness of the Truth residing in socialism:

> In tracing his development as a composer, we have attempted to divide his creative life into three periods: the very productive if somewhat contradictory period of his youth (1907-1918), vestiges of which remain in the works he composed between 1918 and 1921; the difficult foreign period, ending in 1933, which was in many respects intellectually detrimental to him; and finally, the Soviet period (1933-53), the most valuable and productive period of his work, during which he overcame many of his past errors and took a stand for musical realism. (1960:454).

Seroff, on the other hand, claims that Prokofiev's musical idiom is far from conformist. According to the definition of 'formalism' given by Nikolai Chelyapov (see page 51), 'most of Prokofiev's works obviously should have been scrapped as formalistic because of his constant "search for new tricks in the realm of musical elements – rhythm, timbre, harmonic combinations, etc"' (1969:216)

[35] *Ibid*, 127
[36] *Ibid*, 149
[37] *Ibid,*199-200

Jaffé takes a different line again. He points out that, following the undermining of the very infrastructure of tonality by avant-garde experimentalism, composers of the late 1920s were faced with a stark choice: they could either 'find new ways of structuring their music or somehow renovate past practices'. He attributes Prokofiev's return to lyricism to the influence of Schopenhauer, whom the composer was reading at the time:

> Schopenhauer's…. insistence on the primacy of the harmonic series…as the basis of diatonic harmony must have impressed Prokofiev, as did his insistence on music being built on 'constantly renewed discord and reconciliation' – hence Prokofiev's stated desire to have 'dissonance again relegated to its proper place as one element of music.' (1998:120)

This author, as we have seen, also claims that Prokofiev systematically used the semiotic potential inherent in tonality to provide an ironic subtext to even his most apparently conformist works (*Ibid,*149; see pp53-4 of the present work). For this biographer, therefore, Prokofiev strove to retain his artistic integrity throughout the dark days of the terror.

Jaffé does not pronounce upon the ideological implications of *Romeo and Juliet*, beyond remarking that it 'marks the culmination of Prokofiev's dramatic art' (*Ibid*, 136). It is my aim here, therefore, to take up the thread where Jaffé left off, and to try to read *Romeo and Juliet* critically in the light of Soviet ideology at the time. For this, I will compare Prokofiev's work with official edicts on socialist realism in general and with commentaries made by ideologues about this play in particular.

Shakespeare and Socialist Realism

As we have already seen, Shakespeare was very much appreciated by the regime as one of the Great Precursors of Communism, and in fact underwent a new canonization during the Soviet era. Shurbanov & Sokolova tell us:

> Shakespeare was credited with an uncanny ability, perhaps higher than that of the other elect, to see through the class composition of his contemporary society and present a very precise picture of the class struggle in his age and its main course towards social change. He was also believed to have sided

> with the cause of the progressive forces and therefore to have been a mouthpiece of the people. His works became exemplary of populist literature also because of his affinity to characters derived from the 'depths of the masses'. (2001: 102)

Of his plays, *Romeo and Juliet* (along with *Hamlet*) was felt to lend itself particularly to the transmission of socialist values.[38] It was interpreted as depicting the struggles of a Socialist Hero and Heroine against the dark forces of feudalism and prejudice, with their deaths consequently transformed into a glorious martyrdom for the honourable cause. Of the many productions, the Popov version at the Moscow Theatre of the Revolution in 1935 was particularly influential and set the tone for those to come. It involved the addition of a proletarian sub-plot recounting a parallel romance between a maidservant from the household of the Montagues and a servant of the Capulets, apparently designed to show that 'the aristocratic feud in Verona was alien not only to Romeo and Juliet but to the people too'; and there was a sharp polarization of the main characters, with Tybalt blackened into the 'wild champion of feudal family prejudice'. As an optimistic closure was mandatory, the play finished with a brightening blue sky showing through the window of the charnel house, indicating that, spiritually at least, the characters had all got what they deserved.[39]

Examination of critics' responses to productions is particularly illuminating as regards the politically desirable way to recast the play. Shurbanov & Sokolova describe in detail a lengthy critical article in the influential cultural weekly, *Literaturen Front,* about a 1949 production of *Romeo and Juliet* by Georgi Georgiev in Ruse, Bulgaria:

> It begins with an exposition of the function of the theatre for the re-education of the working masses, declares the necessity of making it loyal to the new order, and defines the notion of 'true' art. The latter, unlike bourgeois art, is not 'marred by abstractness, formalism and decadence'.
>
> The next move comprises the establishment of a flimsy historical parallel between the critic's own age and Shakespeare's as periods of transition, characterized by a high intensity of class struggle. The language is that of

[38] All historical information in this section is taken from Shurbanov & Sokolova (2001:101-4)
[39] Another version by Takayshvili in Soviet Georgia in 1944 ended with the apotheosis of the lovers indicated by golden statues raised on a pedestals (*Ibid,* 2001:103).

warfare: all the virtues of the new socialist hero are destined to triumph over 'conservatism', 'prejudice', etc. The attitude which marks the rift between the old doomed world and the new victorious one is hatred. The bi-polar patter establishes the stable framework which, for all its modifications, was preserved as the dominant critical structure in the assessment of the achievement or failure of directors.

The characters of the play were neatly grouped in two warring camps which can be entitled 'powers of progress and humanism' and 'powers blocking the ways of progress'. The first consists of Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio, Benvolio, Father Laurence, 'the people', and, less committedly, the Prince of Verona. The focus of intensive critical spite is Tybalt, followed by the Capulets and Prince Paris. The critic of the Ruse production distinguishes 'the people' as a character possessing the power to hate. 'The people hates the feud between the two families which has caused it great sorrows. This means that it is a medieval prejudice.'

Following the logic of this framework, the 'truly Shakespearian' Juliet becomes a heroic fighter against conventions, an 'apotheosis of the new woman...who throws off the trammels of scholasticism and the middle ages'. It is a bit more difficult, however, to squeeze Romeo into the heroic mould, for there are considerable stretches in the play where he is given to despair, lamentations, and other such unheroic actions. Yet the need is that he should be 'courageous and brave throughout to become the destroyer of Tybalt, the epitome of prejudice and the dying social order'. The director is seriously reprimanded for not being able to create either character along the correct lines. Romeo has been cast as a 'sentimental lover who lacks straightforwardness', while Tybalt, 'this most hateful rigid supporter of prejudice' needs re-casting so as to render 'in more glaring terms his hatred for the Montagues'. Instead of being a 'humanist philosopher', Mercutio has been shown 'as a garrulous knight': a completely wrong way of seeing him, for Shakespeare, according to the critic, meant him as a 'remarkable representative of the new times, ready to sacrifice himself in the name of truth'. Similar is the problem with Father Laurence, who is presented as a 'cleric, rather than a New Man of the epoch of the Renaissance'.

> Enviably certain of Shakespeare's support for his interpretation, the critic plays his most powerful card: 'this serious historical tragedy has been treated formalistically and purely theatrically'. The director 'has narrowed the expression of socially meaningful issues, obliterated the sharp social conflicts, and used the entire theatrical arsenal to underline the formal side [*sic*] by expanding the emotional motives of the characters'. (1994:30-1)

In the light of this, let us now speculate a little about what this critic might have made of Prokofiev's version of the same play. Before the ballet's great success abroad, which of course cast it in a wholly different light, could it have really have been considered as an exemplary work of Socialist Realism, as Nestyev makes out, or might it have been open to charges of Formalism had it ever managed to reach the stage? It was of course begun before the severity of the cultural prescriptions had truly started to make themselves felt, and its oscillating fortunes would seem to indicate that the authorities themselves were uncertain how to receive it. Why was it not produced in the Soviet Union until 1940? Was it really chance that set so many obstacles in its path, or did this have something to do with a perceived ideological unsoundness? And what about the initial decision to give the play a happy ending: was this truly for practical reasons, as Prokofiev claimed in his autobiography, or does it represent another intervention on the part of the State? These are the questions that I would like to discuss in the final part of this work.

Was 'Romeo and Juliet' ideologically sound?

Prokofiev's decision to make use of traditional tonality in *Romeo and Juliet* was effectively an ideological act. This is not only because the idiom itself encodes value, as Adorno and Van Leeuwen have described; in the context of Russia in the early twentieth century, it also represented conformism to Soviet aesthetics and a rejection of the alternative approaches to musical composition that were being developed elsewhere. It meant too that he was consciously entering into dialogue with history, joining ranks with all the great composers of the tradition and adopting their perspective as his starting point. Every note he wrote, thereafter, would thus be interpretable in the light of what had gone before, and naturally the authorities would be keeping a look out to ensure that he was revising the past in a suitable manner.

The decision to use the established discourse in a representational way also aligned Prokofiev with official cultural policy. *Romeo and Juliet* is undoubtedly 'realism', both in the sense that it aims to draw a faithful portrait of some extra-musical world, and also in its use of centralised perspective, which connects it firmly with that movement in painting and literature. At a time when abstraction was in the ascendancy in all arts, this appears a very conservative approach. However, as we have seen, the reasons for this may go far deeper than mere political conformism. He may have independently arrived at the conclusion that music had developed as far as it could go in the direction of dissonance and that a retreat was necessary to prevent the whole edifice from collapse (Jaffé, 1998:120); on the other hand, he may simply have been giving expression to his Russianness. The same author claims:

> Today, there is growing recognition among musicians and musicologists that this expressive tradition not only played a vital part in such 'abstract' works as Shostakovitch's symphonies, but can be traced back to Tchaikovsky's famous cycle. In this light, the Earl of Harewood's desciption of Prokofiev's opera *War and Peace* as being in the grand epic tradition of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* or Borodin's *Prince Igor* no longer appears to be special pleading but seems a *sensible affirmation of the Russian tradition within which he worked.* [my italics] (*Ibid,*215)

Whatever his true reasons, then, in choosing to use lyrical expressive musical language in an overtly representational way, Prokofiev was in accordance with official Soviet policy. This made it easy for Nestyev to imply that the ballet's greatness resulted from the fact that it was 'done under new conditions, after the composer had joined his fate with the humanist Soviet culture' (1960:268).

The specifically Russian elements in *Romeo and Juliet* would also have ingratiated him with the authorities. As we have seen, Prokofiev evoked Renaissance Italy in the ballet only occasionally and unsystematically, and the dominant tone is distinctly Russian. For Nestyev, this was evidence of his talent 'for projecting images derived from foreign sources through the spectrum of his own national sensibilities' (*Ibid,* 460). Similarly, his treatment of the past was praised for its relevance to contemporary issues:

> …in his depictions of the past, Prokofiev shunned the approach of the antiquarian. He neither hid behind a screen of musical quotations, nor reveled in archaism and simulated the styles of the past; he recounted the past as a modern artist, re-creating from a twentieth-century point of view..…As a result of this, in Prokofiev's best works the spirit of the past seems to come alive in the present, and characters from the past (Juliet,….etc) seem to become people of our own time. (*Ibid,* 472-3)

There are aspects of the musical idiom of *Romeo and Juliet* that are less assimilable to the official line, however. Although the overall harmonic structure is clearly diatonic, the work does contain a great deal of dissonance that verges on atonality in places. This is used to create dramatic effects of anguish and foreboding so powerful that they would seem to entirely contradict the requirement that the tone be optimistic and edifying. It is interesting to note that one episode, which uses dissonance to express a foreboding of cosmic proportions, has been bathetically entitled 'The Duke's Order' (Nº 7). Could this verbal tag be an attempt by the composer to constrain interpretations of this episode, playing down any possible references to a malignant Fate by making the feudal overlord into the source of dread instead? Certainly Nureyev seemed sensitive to the alternative implications of the music: he used this episode right at the beginning to open the ballet, thus setting the tone for the whole work, and accompanied it with unmistakeably fatalistic symbolism (a deathly procession passing and a black sheet fluttering down).

The ending of the ballet also contains hints of unresolved harmonic tensions that contradict glibly optimistic interpretations. The melodic balance of Juliet's dignified C theme, which finally reaches its full expression as she prepares herself to die, is distinctly undermined by the insertion of discordant 9^{ths}between each rendering (in the first and sixteenth bars of section 361, for example); moreover the chord is in an inversion which places the ninth in the bass, something which distinctly transgresses the rules of harmony and which, for Adorno (discussing Schöenberg's usage of it in *Verklärte Nacht*), 'creates caesuras in the idiom' (2002:118).[40] Could this be interpreted as the kind of ironic subtext that Jaffé identified in the *October Cantata*? Certainly it is impossible to read anything heroic or triumphant into such an ending,

[40] It must be pointed out that these chords can be read in a number of different ways, some of which result in a more conventional kind of cadence.

even if we allow for the equilibrium suggested melodically by the fulfilment of Juliet's C theme. Rather we are left with a sense of subliminal tension, with the feeling that something very profound has been left unresolved.

It is interesting to see how Nestyev has dealt with these aspects in the official biography. Insisting upon the composer's loyalty to tonality, he implies that his use of dissonance merely serves as a foil to enhance the beauty of traditional harmonies:

> [Prokofiev] spurned the anarchic, alogical harmony of the atonalists and the hazy, overrefined play of colors cultivated by the impressionists and their imitators. On the contrary, he vividly demonstrated the principles of tonality in his own full and perfect cadences. Even when he used the most dissonant harmonies for purposes of description or contrast, they were almost always conceived as purely functional and inevitably gave way to clear and accepted harmonies. (1960: 467)

The 'eerie-sounding interval' of the ninth is justified on the grounds that it connotes 'grief and despair' (1960:475), and Nestyev takes it for granted that this is appropriate in contexts such as death (in addition to *Romeo and Juliet*, he refers to its appearance in the funeral theme of *Semyon Kotko*). However, he does not seem aware that admitting these emotions into the final bars of this ballet makes it impossible to argue that the work displays the kind of heroic optimism demanded by socialist realism. Consequently, this musicologist, in his anxiety to appropriate Prokofiev for the regime, has unwittingly argued himself into a knot, and we are left with the feeling that perhaps this work is not quite as neatly categorisable as he would have us believe.

Elsewhere in the same chapter, he attributes Prokofiev's harmonic non-conformism to a desire to 'revitalize the expressive means of music' (*Ibid,* 466); and later contextualizes it as part of a broader development towards a full acceptance of socialist values:

> In later years, tragic expressiveness, grotesquerie, and mockery ceased to exist in Prokofiev's music as ends in themselves, and gave way instead to bright optimism and a vigorous affirmation of life. And when the powerful effects, the fury and anger did appear, it was for a more specific and

> meaningful purpose: to expose the enemies of mankind, the misanthropes who murder and destroy. (*Ibid,*471)

Among the list of 'enemies of mankind' that follows this extract, Nestyev specifically mentions the 'haughty, vengeful knights' of *Romeo and Juliet*. Here, as in the rest of his critical assessment of the ballet, he seems determined to demonstrate that Prokofiev has adequately polarised the characters into progressive and reactionary forces in required Socialist Realist fashion. Hence, we are told that 'Romeo corresponds completely to Shakespeare's conception of the hero, seized at first with romantic yearning and later displaying the flaming passion of a lover and the valor of a warrior';[41] Juliet develops into 'a strong, selfless and loving woman'; Friar Laurence is a 'humanist'; and Tybalt is 'the personification of evil, arrogance, and class haughtiness' As for Mercutio, he is full of 'bitter jests' that are, we understand, directed towards the overthrow of 'medieval bigotry' (*Ibid,* 269-70).

I would argue that there is much to take issue with in this characterization. For one, the opposing forces are not musically polarised in such a clear-cut fashion as Nestyev would have us believe; instead, characters are foregrounded or backgrounded from a centralised perspective, and the protagonists display a much greater internal complexity than would be permitted by the simple allegory suggested here. There are also points where the characterisation seems actively to contradict the official line. Paris, for example, considered to be a highly reactionary figure in socialist commentary, is associated with a particularly harmonious and balanced leitmotif, which actively influences Romeo's in a positive way. Nor are the 'people' idealized in the required fashion. Although there is a suitable abundance of crowd scenes (providing plentiful opportunities for the *corps de ballet,* of course), these subjects are not noticeably oppressed by the feudal strife; instead they enthusiastically participate in it, as we see in the gradual transformation of the two initial folk dances, 'The Street Awakens' (Nº 3) and 'Dance in the Morning' (Nº 4) into 'The Quarrel' (Nº 5) and then 'The Fight' (Nº6).

In some cases the musical semiotic is just not subtle enough to support Nestyev's interpretations. For example, he claims that, in the characterisation of Friar Laurence, 'there is neither churchly sanctity nor mystical remoteness; the music

[41] According to Shurbanov & Sokolova (2001:102), the appropriation of Shakespeare was such that 'Shakespeare's conception of the hero' will have effectively meant 'Socialist Realist hero'.

underscores the Friar's wisdom, spiritual nobility and kindly love of people' (*ibid*): but just how the music manages to depict a spirituality that is specifically non-churchly, non-mystical and proletarian, he does not explain. Similarly, it is not clear exactly when or how Mercutio's humour actually becomes 'bitter'; my own analysis would suggest that this character is mostly drawn playful and light, in order to provide a more marked contrast with Tybalt's rigidity.

Tybalt, in Prokofiev's ballet, has suffered a considerable reduction of role in relation to Shakespeare, as we have seen; he is not given a theme of his own, but is subsumed into the general theme of enmity. This would suggest a deliberate attempt by Prokofiev to constrain interpretations of the play as a whole, for, if Tybalt is denied independence as a character, then he can no longer be considered as satanic provocateur or agent of external fate. This would then ensure that the destructive forces operating on the young couple are understood unequivocally as 'feudal prejudice'.

The extent to which Romeo may be considered a socialist hero is worthy of some attention. Clearly the character has been foregrounded far more than in Shakespeare, and his theme undergoes an unprecedented development. But could he be said to be an active participant in the proletarian struggle, idealized to the point of superhuman perfection, and displaying the internal coherence, courage, and love of life necessary to enable him to overthrow the forces of feudal prejudice?[42] I would say not. On his first appearance, he is portrayed as something of a buffoon, with a gauche, disjointed theme executed on that most comical instrument, the bassoon; and as we have seen, it is the acquisition of courtly graces (not proletarian virtues) that enable him to become worthy of Juliet's love. Even after his 'blossoming', he is associated with tunes that are above all sentimental and romantic, not heroic or militant. To my mind, therefore, Romeo's complexities align him with heroes of nineteenth century realism (or even romanticism) rather than those of the socialist kind, types which are quite clearly distinguished by the ideologues:

> 'The hero of Soviet literature is substantially different from Dostoevsky's heroes. The latter were marked by an intricate complexity of character, a constant inner reflection, a disjointedness, a "split" of personality. Gorki was right to point out that such inner complexity of character, while

[42] See Shurbanov &Sokolova (2001:99) for a detailed description of the socialist hero.

> constituting excellent material for the most delicate and sophisticated psychological analysis, is not a sign of strength but rather a sign of weakness in a personality. In the disjointedness of personality lies the source of its disintegration. The hero of Soviet art has a coherent and rich nature, and this fact could not but affect the specificity of psychological analysis in Soviet literature. The discovery of these new heroes embodying the communist ideals is one of the highest achievements of the literature of socialist realism.' (Borev, *cit.* Shurbanov & Sokolova, 2001:99)

The extent to which Juliet may be considered a suitable heroine of socialist realism is also open to debate. She refuses to marry Paris in a spectacular way, of course, and shows an exemplary willingness to die for her ideals. However, Prokofiev's version of this character is, to my mind, also more easily assimilable to traditional female stereotypes inherited from nineteenth century fiction. Her nature is fragmented: she is, simultaneously, the ingénue (Theme A); the idealised image of purity and goodness that inspires a man to noble acts and courtly love (Theme B); and of course, society's victim who, unprepared for the realities of a harsh world, finds realisation in death (Theme C). Shurbanov & Sokolova (2001:166) point out that, in socialist realism, there was no definition of the female role, since gender was entirely subordinated to class. Prokofiev's Juliet, therefore, is much too stereotypically feminine to correspond completely to the part.

Finally, what of the requirement that socialist realism be above all optimistic? To what extent has Prokofiev managed to turn Shakespeare's tragedy into a triumph for the forces of progress and light? Is there in his score any musical equivalent of the brightening blue sky at the end of the Popov production, or the golden statues on pedestals of the Takayshvili one?

Let us turn first to the question of the happy ending which was to be given to the tragedy at one point, but was later revoked. Could this have been an attempt by Prokofiev and Radlov to pander to the authorities on this issue? After all, the doctrine of socialist realism was still being defined at this time, and the Popov version of *Romeo and Juliet*, which became a model for how this play was to be represented, had not yet been produced. Could it be that, in the political climate of 1934-5, it just seemed to risky to stage a full-blown tragedy, and the authors took the only measures that occurred to them to bring their work into line with official decrees?

Prokofiev's officially sanctioned autobiography claims otherwise. 'The reason for taking such a barbarous liberty with Shakespeare's play was purely choreographic,' he wrote; 'live people can dance, but the dying can hardly be expected to dance in bed' (*cit*. Seroff, 1969:202-3; and Gutman, 1988:111-3). The decision was justified on the grounds that Shakespeare himself was said to have been uncertain about the endings of his plays, and parallel with *Romeo and Juliet,* had written *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in which all ends well. Although this argument interestingly anticipates the case put forward by Susan Snyder that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is structurally a comedy until the death of Tybalt (see Chapter 5), the move was apparently not popular with Shakespearian scholars who protested vehemently. Whether this had anything to do with the subsequent decision to revoke is also unclear. Seroff quotes Prokofiev as saying:

> 'Actually I was affected by something else – someone had remarked that at the end my music did not sound like 'true happiness', and this was true. Therefore, after discussing the whole problem with the choreographers, we found a way of ending according to the original play and I have rewritten the music.' (1969:203)[43]

What can the musical text itself tell us about all this? For of course, in a well-formed work of art, the ending is not arbitrary, but is present at the very beginning, indeed is *determined* by artistic choices inherent to the structure. If Prokofiev had intended the ballet to be a romantic comedy then surely there would be some musical indication of that from the outset.

As we saw in Chapter 7, there is indeed some evidence of this. Firstly there is the matter of the Overture, which sets the tone for a tale of romance and not a tale of conflict or anguish; and secondly, there is the scenic restructuring, by means of which all the tragic material occurs in Epilogue as if it were hurriedly tagged on the end. These might be vestiges of that earlier draft.

On the other hand, it is also true that the music does not sound like 'true happiness', as Prokofiev himself acknowledged in the quotation above. Many of the themes associated with the lovers (such as the Main Theme, the Love Theme, and Juliet's C Theme) contain strong overtones of pathos or yearning, which clearly would

[43]This is corroborated by Gutman (1988:112).

be inappropriate in a comedy. Could it be then that the composer himself was divided on this issue, emotionally committed to a tale of thwarted love, even while he was structuring the work as comedy to please either the authorities or the choreographer?

Given that the final version of the score has its tragic ending intact, is there evidence of any other attempt to give it an optimistic spin, thus bringing it more into line with Socialist Realist dogma? Once again there are contradictions, depending upon which level of analysis is being examined. If we consider the macro-semiotics of melody and harmony in music, which Prokofiev exploited to great effect, then, broadly speaking, the general message is indeed one of fulfilment and completion, of the defeat of discord, and of a kind of cosmic harmony after the violence. This is no modernist work full of unexplained dissonances and jagged or non-existent melodies, for most of the melodic and harmonic tensions set up during the course of the ballet seem to be satisfactorily resolved in a way that ultimately proclaims the final equilibrium of the universe. This is particularly true as regards the dimension of ***melody***. For although, as Nestyev points out, in this realm 'Prokofiev often juxtaposes the simplest and most traditional classical patterns with the sharpest, most angular ones' (1960:475), this was done systematically for representational effect; hence, a smooth, coherent melodic contour is used to depict integrity, grace and harmonious emotional states, while jagged irregular lines indicate their opposites. The deliberate confrontation of different melodies that occurs in overtly narrative episodes such as Nº 32, 'Tybalt meets Mercutio' (where we get not only a juxtaposition of Mercutio's 'Flirt' theme at its most languid and provocative with the tense jagged 'Knights', but also fragments of Friar Laurence B and Juliet B to represent Romeo's pleas for peace) serves to underscore the contrast between characters. This would surely have satisfied the Soviets' demands for a polarization between forces, however those are ultimately interpreted (the only proviso being of course the character of Paris, depicted by Prokofiev as the epitome of grace, rather than as a reactionary feudal figure).

On the level of ***harmony***, as we have seen, the message mostly seems to be similar. Consonance and dissonance are generally used contrastively to depict character and create atmosphere, reinforcing the messages provided by other musical signs as to which are the positive and negative forces at work; and the macro-narrative seems optimistic on the whole, since the forces of discord are mostly defeated and harmony is ultimately restored.

However, in certain passages, such as 'The Duke's Order' and 'Juliet's Death', described above, the harmonic underlay seems to become more subversive, and hints at some darker forces at work beyond the domain of the merely human. Could it be, therefore, that Prokofiev is superficially pandering to the demands of the regime while surreptitiously sneaking in a subversive subtext, as Jaffé suggests he does with the *October Cantata*? Is this a kind of encrypted resistance? If so, then this might explain why it took so long to be staged. Its ambiguity may have made it rather difficult to pin down in political terms, and the authorities might have thought it better not to risk endorsing it, not at least until its success abroad had rendered it too conspicuous to ignore.

On the other hand, Prokofiev may simply have been operating according to a musical, rather than political, agenda. As we have seen, there is evidence that his return to realism was provoked, not by a desire to appease the authorities in his home country, but by a genuine feeling that music had developed as far as it could reasonably go in the direction of atonality, and that there was a need for a return to something more expressive. We know he was reading Schopenhauer around this time and it may be that he was attempting in *Romeo and Juliet* something Wagnerian. Certainly, there is a lot in this ballet that is reminiscent of some of that composer's great operas, beyond the obvious use of leitmotif to affect narrative construction. Could Romeo not be seen as a Romantic hero in the Tristan mould? And could Juliet's death not be a kind of *Liebestod*, the inevitable culmination of a passion that desires its own end? Indeed, those strange chords undermining the melody in the final episode of the ballet, while not being harmonically analysable as the famous Tristan chord, may surely be said to serve the same purpose, namely to set up the most profound tension in a context where we might otherwise expect resolution.

In the end, of course, we will never know what Prokofiev's intentions truly were when he wrote this ballet. It clearly possesses qualities that endear it to ideologues of different persuasions, while managing to constantly escape total appropriation, just like Shakespeare's play itself, in fact. Perhaps it is this that makes it into a great work of art, and has caused it to be one of the best-loved ballets ever written. By remaining always elusive, it has ensured that it will continue part of our cultural heritage for a great many years, and will become, like Shakespeare's play before it, the source many new semiotic chains.

CONCLUSION

So, our quest to uncover the ideology encoded into the discourse of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* has proved inconclusive. We have found there traces of several very different positions, but it has been impossible to pin the text down to any one of those; it constantly manages to wriggle free of any simplistic reading, asserting its right to be interpreted and re-interpreted *ad infinitum*.

As such it provides an interesting example of Peirce's 'unlimited semiosis', with all the various commentaries and interpretations that have been made about the work continuing further the chain of signification that Prokofiev inherited from Shakespeare. Each time the score is performed by a different orchestra or the ballet staged by a different company, we are in the presence of a new sign, which will in turn become the object of further analysis and comment. Thus it is that the old tale of the two lovers from feuding families expands through the centuries, generating new meanings and adapting itself to different cultures and contexts in an endless process of semiotic propagation.

The ballet is also interesting when analysed in terms of the polysystem: for while it did not comply totally with the dominant cultural paradigm of the local system of reception (Socialist Realism), it clearly found resonance in the global one. Its entire trajectory from the moment patronage was withdrawn to its subsequent rehabilitation within the Soviet canon can thus be interpreted in the light of a cultural interplay between centres and peripheries. This reveals a great deal not only about the balance of power in the world in the 1930s, but also about the values of a cultural system that continues to find it a source of delight in the 21st century.

As regards the evolution of musical discourse, the work has had a different role to play again. Coming as it did at a moment of paradigm shift, when the old idiom of tonality was apparently giving way to an entirely different musical code, *Romeo and Juliet* would have seemed ridiculously conservative to the international avant-garde, and to be pandering to popular taste in its stubborn revival of Romanticism. Yet, with the hindsight we now have, it is clear that the revolution initially promised by Modernism has not completely come to pass. The gap between erudite and popular or mass-produced art, which seemed so unbridgeable during the early part of the twentieth century, has in fact narrowed during the Post-Modernist era in all

endeavours. Consequently many 'serious' composers now celebrate in their music not only new technologies for the production and transmission of sound, but also more popular idioms such as jazz and folk; indeed, one of the characteristics of the present age has been the breaking down of frontiers between genres and styles, and as a result, tonality still retains a very privileged place. Hence, Prokofiev's decision to abandon modernist experiments in favour of an updated form of the traditional idiom may be interpreted in the long run as a progressive, rather than conservative, gesture.

Certainly, his music is much more frequently performed than the experiments in atonality and serialism that seemed poised to revolutionize the scene in the mid-1930s, or than the works of Socialist Realism that dominated Soviet production. His version of *Romeo and Juliet* in particular has found a very secure place in the western musical canon, as is witnessed by the number of recordings, productions and broadcasts that exist, and by the inevitable inclusion of episodes from it in musical anthologies. The *pas-de-deux* between the English Renaissance playwright and Russian composer that took place during the creation of this very unique intersemiotic translation has thus been far more successful than that of the hapless lovers of fair Verona. For this courtship has led not to death (as at one point seemed threatened) but to a firmly established and respected marriage, which has given rise to immense offspring now settled with their own respective families in all parts of the globe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts

Shakespeare, W. *Romeo and Juliet*, Ed. Gibbons, B. (The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen & Co, Surrey) 1980

Prokofjew, S. *Romeo und Julia Op.64,* Piano Score (Edition Sikorski, Hamburg) undated

Prokofiev, S. *Romeo and Juliet* recording by London Symphony Orchestra conducted by André Previn (EMI Classics),1999

Nureyev, R *Romeo and Juliet,* Ballet Video, performed by the Paris Opera Ballet (Warner Music Vision /NVC Arts), 1995/1997

Secondary Texts

Adorno, T. *Essays on Music*, trans. Gillespie, S. (University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London), 2002

Bassnett, S. 'Taking the Cultural Turn in Translation Studies' in *Dedalus: Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada, 3-4,* 1993-4

Bok, V (Ed.) *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews* (Progress Publishers), 1978

Brown, S. 'The "Musilanguage" Model of Music Evolution', in Wallin, Merker and Brown (Ed) (Cambridge, Massachusetts), 2000.

Cooke, D. *The Language of Music* (Clarendon, Oxford), 1959

Coulthard, M. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis,* (Longman, London), 1985

Crystal, D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language,* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), 1987

Even-Zohar, I. 'Polysystem Studies' in *Poetics Today: International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication, Vol. 11, No.1* Spring 1990

Gibbons, B. (Ed) *Romeo and Juliet,* (Arden, Surrey), 1980

Gutman, D. *Prokofiev* (The Alderman Press, London) 1988

Hall, S. 'Encoding/decoding' in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79* (Hutchinson, London), 1980 [1973]

Halliday, M. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar,* (Arnold, London), 1994

Halliday, M. 'Things and relations: Regrammaticising experience as technical knowledge' in *Reading Science: Critical and Functional Perspectives on*

Discourses of Science, Ed. Martin, J.R. & Veel, R. (Routledge, London and New York), 1998

Hattaway, M., Sokolova, B. & Roper, D. (Eds), *Shakespeare in the New Europe* (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield), 1994

Hughes, S. (Ed) *Rudolf Nureyev's 'Romeo and Juliet'* (Warner Music Vision/NVC Arts) 1995/1997

Jaffé, D. *Sergey Prokofiev* (Phaidon, London) 1998

Jakobson, R. 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' in Schulte. & Biguenet (Ed), 1992

James, J. *The Music of the Spheres* (Abacus, London) 1995

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By,* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago), 1980

Langer, S. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (Harvard University Press, Massachusetts and London), 1957

Lefevre, A. 'Why Waste our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm' in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation,* (Ed) Theo Hermans (Croom Helm, London & Sydney), 1985

Leppert, R. (Ed), *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno*, trans. Gillespie, S. (University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London), 2002

Levinson, S.C. *Pragmatics,* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge), 1983

Lévi-Strauss, C. *Structuralist Anthropology*, Trans. Jacobson & Schoepf (Penguin, Harmondsworth), 1974

Mahmood, M.M. 'Wordplay in *Romeo and Juliet*' in Taylor, N. & Loughrey, B. (Ed), 1990 [1957]

Martins, M.F. 'A Tradução Literária e o Futuro da Literatura' in *Escritor* Nº 5 (Associação Portuguesa de Escritores), March 1995

Martins, M.F. *Matéria Negra: Uma Teoria da Literatura e da Crítica Literária* (Cosmos, Lisbon), 1995

Nattiez, J-J. 'Situação da Semiologia Musical' in Seixo, M.A. (Ed), undated.

Nattiez, J-J, *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music,* Trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University Press, NJ), 1990

Nestyev, I.V. *Prokofiev* Trans. Florence Jones (Stanford University Press, California), 1960

Peirce, C.S. *Collected Papers* (unpublished)

Saussure, F. *Course in General Linguistics* (Fontana/Collins, London), 1974 [1915]

Samuel, C. *Prokofiev* Trans. Miriam John (Calder and Boyars, London), 1971

Scholes, P.A. *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford University Press, London and New York), 1970

Schulte, R. & Biguenet, J. *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London), 1992

Scruton, R. *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford University Press, Oxford) 1999

Seixo, M.A. (Ed), *Por uma Semiologia da Música,* Trans. Vieira de Carvalho, M. (Vega, Lisbon), undated.

Seroff, V. *Sergei Prokofiev – a Soviet Tragedy* (Leslie Frewin, London), 1969

Shurbanov, A. & Sokolova, B. 'From the unlove of *Romeo and Juliet* to *Hamlet* without the Prince: a Shakepearian mirror held up to the fortunes of new Bulgaria' in Hattaway, D., Sokolova, B. & Roper, D. (Ed), 1994

Shurbanov, A. & Sokolova, B. *Painting Shakespeare Red: An East-European Appropriation* (Associated University Presses, London & New Jersey), 2001

Snyder, S. 'The Comic Matrix of *Romeo and Juliet*' [1979] in Taylor, N. & Loughrey, B (Eds), 1990.

Storr, A. *Music and the Mind* (Harper Collins, London), 1997

Sturman, p. *Harmony, Melody and Composition* (Cambridge University Press), 1995

Taylor, N. & Loughrey, B. (Eds), *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies,* (Macmillan, London), 1990

Toury, G. 'The Nature and Role of Norms in Literary Translation' in *Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies,* Holmes, J. Lambert, J. & Van den Broek, R. (Eds), (Acco, Leuven), 1978

Van Leeuwen, T. *Speech, Music, Sound* (Macmillan, Basingstoke and London), 1999

Wallin, N.L., Merker, B. and Brown, S (Ed), *The Origins of Music* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts), 2000.

Witkin, R.W. *Adorno on Music* (Routledge, London & New York), 1998

APPENDIX

OVERVIEW OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE THREE VERSIONS OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*

The following chart has been designed to visually illustrate the way the narrative structures of *Romeo and Juliet* have been transferred between the different versions. Prokofiev's ballet score is presented as a translation of Shakespeare's play, and Nureyev's production as a translation of the score, therefore the chart should be read horizontally from left to right. The individual sequencing is indicated by the numbering of scenes and episodes in the case of Prokofiev, and by time references in the case of the Nureyev production. Episodes presented out of sequence in relation to the corresponding text are shaded.

Overview of Narrative Structures

Shakespeare's Play	Prokofiev's Score	Nureyev's Production
Prologue: summary of plot	**1. Overture:** (0-1) Motif from *R&J Theme* *(1)* ***Juliet B*** followed by variation of same ***(2-3)*** Motif from ***R&J Theme*** followed by ***Love Theme B*** ***(4)*** fragment of ***Juliet B***	**(2:00)** dark street; ominous bald figures in cloaks lurk in shadows; single powerful figure pushes apart city walls;
Act I Sc I: a) confrontation between members of rival households	**Act I Sc I** **3. The Street Awakens:** *Flirty Theme* ***(allegretto)***	**Act I Sc I The Market Place** **(5:52)** Foreground: Romeo courting Rosaline in flirty, almost bawdy way (+ other Montagues dressed in green) Background: shadowy cloaked figures
	4. Dance in the Morning: ***(15)*** Variation of ***Flirty Theme*** *(allegro)* ***(16) Montague Theme A*** ***(17)*** Variation of ***Flirty Theme*** ***(18) Montague Theme B*** with violin descant Final chords are discordant	**(8:25)** Shadowy figures at back illuminated, revealed to be Capulets dressed in red. Posturing on both sides. Finally someone is knocked over.
	5.The Quarrel: continues rhythm of dance *(allegro brusco);* 'bell pealing' effect; shrill tremolo violins answered by bass instruments; jagged staccatos; tympani; ***(24) Flirty Theme*** fragment by bassoon;	**(10:26)** Capulets and Montagues now openly provoking one another, using rude bawdy gestures, grabs and blows
b) fight started by Tybalt & Benvolio	**6.The Fight:** ***(26-30) Fight music*** (*presto)* ***(30)*** opening phrase of ***Knights Theme B*** *repeated several times* ***(33) Knights Theme B*** given by different instruments all out of time with each other	**(12:21)** Fully-fledged brawl between rival clans
	(34) Chromatic distortion of ***Knights Theme B;*** 'bell-pealing' effect; gong; trumpets; sudden shocked silences	Sudden entrance of Tybalt who ignites conflict even more
	(41) Sudden slowing of speed; ¾ time; trumpet & timpani herald.	Brawlers stop and flee at arrival of Duke and retinue
c) heads of families rebuked by Prince Escalus	**7. The Duke's Order**:	**(2:38)** Deathly procession passes; black sheet flutters down
	8. Interludium: trumpets & drums in heraldic display; ends on 4 unresolved chords	**(15:18)** Duke reprimands Tybalt & Benvolio; chorus bows to him.

d) Romeo alone, lovelorn because of Rosaline; found by Benvolio	**2. Romeo (5-8):** ***Romeo Theme***, clownish and lighthearted	**(3:53)** Romeo solo, lighthearted
Sc II: a) Paris asks Capulet for Juliet's hand; Capulet announces party **b)** Benvolio advises Romeo to look out other lovers; they learn of Cap's party & Rosaline's presence		
Sc III: Nurse, Juliet & Lady Capulet. Juliet's mother mentions marriage to Paris	**Sc II 9. Preparation for the Ball (Juliet and Nurse):** *(48) Flirty Theme* and *Nurse Theme* **10. The Young Juliet:** *(50-52) Juliet Theme A* *(53) Juliet Theme B* *(54) Juliet Theme A* *(55) Juliet Theme C* *(57) Juliet Themes A and B* *(58) Juliet Theme A* *(59)* change of mood, ***Andante***	**(16:35)** Romeo and his friends clowning about in street, light-hearted and frivolous. **Sc II Juliet's Antechamber** **(17:53)** Juliet playing with girlfriends Nurse – pensive Girls begin playing hide and seek; Juliet alone, dreaming of love (sees Nurse with man; her mother briefly with Tybalt); Mother indicates Paris in wings; Tybalt enters and offers her Capulet dress; Juliet dances with Tybalt, still girlishly. Tybalt insists she accept the Capulet gown.
Sc IV: Romeo, Mercutio & other Montague boys on way to party. Romeo heavy-hearted. Mercutio banters. 'Queen Mab' speech – premonition of tragedy	**12. Masks (Benvolio, Mercutio and Romeo masked):** ***Masks Theme A*** *(Andante marciale)* ***(73) Masks Theme B*** ***(75)*** Variation of ***Masks Theme A*** but with very different mood; slightly wistful.	**(25:00)** Montague boys clowning about, Romeo merely watches. Mercutio dances in Capulet cloak. Distributes masks. Romeo before leaving gives coin to beggar who promptly dies.
Sc V: a) Capulets welcome guests to party	**ScIII. 11. Arrival of the Guests (Minuet)** ***(60) Minuet Theme A*** ***(61)*** 'Conversational' passage between different instruments ***(62) Minuet Theme*** ***(63-64) 'Courtly' Theme*** ***(65) Minuet Theme A*** ***(66-67) Minuet Theme B*** ***(68) Minuet Theme A*** ***(69-70) Minuet Theme B***	**ScIII. Outside Capulet House (21:37)** Capulets receiving guests (Tybalt in central position) Enter Mercutio, Romeo & Benvolio Romeo courting Rosaline. Paris enters, greeted by Capulets. Mercutio is greeted by Lord Cap. At end, Mercutio gives Romeo a Capulet jacket
	13. Dance of the Knights: ***(76-80) Knights Theme A*** with ***Knights B*** on brass ***(81-82) Courtly Theme*** ***(83)*** Return to ***Knights A***, but lighter at first, then gradually increasing in intensity ***(84-85) Capulet Ladies Theme***	**Sc IV. The Capulet Ball (27:49)** Capulets dancing belligerently, led by Tybalt and Lady Capulet Juliet appears and dances with Paris, at first alone, then with family.

	(86) Juliet Theme B. ***(87) Capulet Ladies Theme*** ***(88)*** Return to ***Knights A.***	Men of family dancing. Lady Cap. gives them swords and dance turns more aggressive: Closes with banner held aloft.
b) Romeo sees Juliet and falls in love	**14. Variation Juliet:** ***(90) Capulet Ladies*** lighter, fading away. ***(91-92)*** Variation of ***Juliet Theme B*** lighter, excited ***(93)*** Jerky excited variation of ***Love Theme B*** ***(95) Love Theme B*** (smooth) ***(96)*** gradually slows, echoing ***JulietTheme B***	**(34:15)** Nurse emerges from under banner. Juliet enters, and Romeo, masked. They touch. Juliet solo. Romeo solo, then dances with Juliet. Paris asks for her back, but is retrieved by Mercutio who passes her back to Romeo.
	15. Mercutio: (97-101) *Mercutio Theme* ***(102-103)*** Variation of same on flute and bassoon ***(104-105) Mercutio Theme***	**(37:30)** Mercutio solo. Clowning about, pretends to be ill/hurt (foreshadowing his death)
	16.Madrigal: ***(107) Madrigal Theme*** ***(108) Juliet Theme B*** ***(109) Madrigal Theme*** ***(110)*** Variation of ***Juliet B*** ***(111-112) R&J Theme B*** ***(113)*** Variation of ***Juliet B***	**(40:08)** Romeo solo Juliet solo They dance together; J. removes R's mask. They kiss.
c) Romeo recognised by Tybalt, who tries to confront him but is stopped by Capulet.	**17.Tybalt recognises Romeo:** ***(114) Knights' Theme B & A*** ***(115)*** Variation ***R&J Theme B*** ***(116) Knights' Theme A;*** tremolo chords in violins, echoed by bass, reminiscent of 'The Quarrel'; ***(120)*** Variation ***R&J ThemeB***	**(44:13)** Tybalt recognises Romeo. Appeals to Lady Capulet. Lord Capulet rebukes him. Guests begin playing and dancing together
	18. Gavotte (Departure of Guests):	**(45:55)** Guests playing Blindman's Buff. Central white-clad blindfolded female held aloft with cymbals. Romeo accidently finds himself face-to-face with Tybalt. Flees with Tybalt in pursuit.

e) After guests have gone, Juliet finds out from Nurse who Romeo is – tragic revelation		
Act II Prologue: summary of story until now		
Sc I **a)** Romeo teased by his companions; leaves them to go back to Juliet's house **b)** Balcony Scene: Romeo and Juliet declare their love	**ScV.** **19.Balcony Scene:** ***(134) R&J Theme B*** ***(135) Madrigal Theme*** played on organ ***(136)*** fragment of ***Juliet Theme B*** urgently; several sharp chords ***(137) R&J Theme B*** **20. Variation Romeo:** Variation of ***Romeo Theme*** (bearing elements of ***Love Theme A***) **21. Love Dance:** **(*142-145*) L*ove Theme A*** ***(146-150) Love Theme B***	**ScV. The Capulets' Garden** **(49:47)** Romeo alone outside J's house. At back of stage, Juliet and Nurse saying prayers; goodnight Mercutio & Benvolio rush in and out; Tybalt appears briefly. Romeo dancing alone. Solo Romeo. Romeo & Juliet in a *pas-de-deux.*
Sc III: a) Friar Laurence – soliloquy on plants as metaphor of human nature **b)** Romeo enters and recounts his new love; Friar L. rejoices, seeing a possible end to feud.		
	Act II Sc I **22. Folk Dance:** *Folk Dance Themes A & B*	**Act II** Curtain closed (music acts as overture to Act II)
Sc IV: a) Mercutio & Benvolio enquiring after Romeo **b)** Romeo enters; Mercutio teases him about his love	**23. Romeo & Mercutio:** ***(170) Madrigal Theme*** ***(171-172) Masks Themes A &B*** ***(173) Madrigal Theme*** played in bass sombrely **24. Dance of the Five Couples** ***(174-177) Five Couples A*** ***(178) Five Couples Theme B*** ***(179-181) Five Couples A*** **(*182-187)*** March with trumpets and drums ***(****The Procession marches by)*** ***(188) Five Couples Theme B*** ***(189-191) Five Couples A*** ***(192-193) Five Couples B***	**Sc I. The Market Place** **(1:03:29)** In the square. Romeo sits alone dreaming. Mercutio teasing Nurse. Romeo recognises Nurse and goes after her but she disappears. **(1:05:47)** Romeo, Benvolio and Mercutio dance together exuberantly. Enter chorus of young men. General romping about. Mercutio dances alone. Romeo dances alone, then joined by Benvolio and Mercutio. Finish in same clownish position as at the end of opening dance of Sc 2.

	25. Dance with Mandolins:	**(1:10:05)** Montague boys dance with mandolins and chequered flags.
c) Nurse appears and is teased by boys;	**26. The Nurse:** ***(200) Nurse Theme*** ***(201-203) Nurse Theme*** intermingled with variation of ***Mercutio Theme***	**(1:13:00)** Nurse appears; teased by Mercutio and Benvolio. At end, Romeo plucks letter from her hand.
d) Nurse gives Romeo the letter; plans for wedding the next day	**27. The Nurse Hands Juliet's Message over to Romeo:** ***Juliet Theme A***	**(1:14:46)** Romeo solo.
Sc V: Juliet awaiting Nurse; Nurse enters and gives her new she is to be married the next day		
Sc VI: The Wedding at Friar Laurence's cell	**28. Romeo with Father Laurence:** ***(207) Friar Laurence Theme A*** ***(208) Friar Laurence Theme B*** ***(210) Friar Laurence Theme A*** ***(211)*** Bridge passage ending on ominous chords. **29. Juliet with Father Laurence:** ***(212-)*** fragments of motifs from Nº 38 and 44. ***(215) Friar Laurence Theme A*** ***(216) Friar Laurence Theme B***	**Sc II A Chapel** **(1:15:50)** Friar Laurence marries Romeo and Juliet. Friar Laurence goes to altar and picks up a bouquet of flowers and a skull. (omitted)
	Sc V **30. The Folk Festival Goes On.** ***(217-224) Folk Dance Themes B/A/B*** ***(225) Montagues Theme A*** ***(226-227) Montagues Theme B*** ***(228-229) Montagues Theme A*** ***(230-33)***slightly martial/heraldic folk dance music ***(233)*** Snatch of ***Folk dance Theme A.*** **31. Another Folk Dance:** ***Folk Dance Themes A/B***	**Sc III The Market Place** **(1:19:10)** *(music begins at 225)* Montagues and Capulets provoking each other in energetic folk dance (omitted)

Act III Sc I: a) Mercutio & Benvolio accosted by Tybalt's gang; **b)** Romeo enters and Tybalt tries in vain to provoke him;	**32. Tybalt Meets Mercutio:** ***(247)*** Nervous strings with ominous chords. ***Mercutio Theme*** cheekily ***(248) Knights Theme A*** ***(249) Mercutio Theme*** counterpointed with ***Knights A.*** *(250-251) Friar Laurence B* ***(252) Knights Theme A***; shrill tremolo strings answered by basses, as in 'The Quarrel' ***(253) Juliet Theme B*** ***(254) Knights A*** distorted	**(1:21:06)** Tybalt strides onto the stage, incensed. Mercutio and Benvolio provoke him and he gets progressively more enraged. Romeo appears and tries to diffuse situation. (250-251 omitted) Tybalt confronts Romeo. Romeo tries to make peace in vain.
c) Mercutio intervenes and fights with Tybalt; **d)** Mercutio is killed	**33. Tybalt Fights Against Mercutio:** *(255-261) Mercutio Theme* *(261)* gradual build-up of tension with 'bell-peal' effect. Sharp chords to end. **34. Mercutio's Death:** ***(262)*** fast bowing accompanied by sustained bass notes. ***(263) Flirty Theme*** slowly ***(264-267) Masks Theme B*** counterpointed with ***Flirty Theme*** gradually losing energy. Long chords at end.	**(1:22:35)** Mercutio leaps in and fights with Tybalt, always cheekily. At one point, he pretends to be badly hurt, but then gets up. He seems to have won. Then, on the final chord, Tybalt throws knife. **(1:24:09)** Mercutio is hurt but everyone thinks he is still clowning around. When he eventually collapses to the ground on final chord, his friends all clap the performance.
e) Romeo, incensed at death of his friend, fights and kills Tybalt	**35. Romeo Decides to Avenge Mercutio's Death:** ***(269-272)*** Nervous semi-quavers, gradually quickening. ***(272-280) Fight music*** ***(280)*** Series of isolated staccato chords.	**(1:26:18)** With growing nervousness, the friends realise Mercutio is dead. Romeo challenges Tybalt. They wrestle over knife. Tybalt charges like a bull, and Romeo uses red Capulet cloak like toreador. Tybalt is stabbed.
f) The families bewail the death;	**36. Finale Act II:** *Dirge*	**(1:28:37)** Enter the families, bewailing the death. (283) Juliet executes dance of rage and anguish.
g) Prince announces that Romeo is banished	**Act III Sc I** **37. Introduction:** Repeat of *7. The Duke's Order*	

		Act III Sc I. Juliet's Bedroom (1:30:50) Juliet sitting on edge of bed glassy-eyed with dagger in hand. Figure of death appears, picks her up and lays her on bed, then lies on top of her and covers her with his cloak.
Sc II: a) Juliet awaiting Romeo alone, longs for night **b)** Nurse enters and gives her news of Tybalt's death **c)**Juliet sends Nurse to find Romeo, with ring		
Sc III: a) Friar Laurence tries to comfort Romeo **b)** Nurse enters. Friar sends Romeo to Juliet, makes plans		
Sc IV: Paris visits Capulets; the wedding is brought forward.	**38. Romeo and Juliet (Juliet's Bedroom):** Descriptive bridge passage on flute and violins	**(1:32:20)** Juliet awakes. At side of stage, Paris is greeted by Lord and Lady Capulet, then he goes quietly away. (music fades out after *287*)
Sc V: a) Romeo leaving Juliet's chamber	**39. Farewell Before Parting:** ***(288-290) R&J Theme A*** ***(291-292) Love Theme A*** ***(293) R&J Theme A*** ***(294-295) Love Theme B***	**(1:33:14)** Romeo enters and the lovers make love passionately. On final notes, Romeo escapes out the window.
b) Nurse enters to warn that Lady Cap is coming; **c)** Juliet's premonition of death.	**40. The Nurse:** ***(296) Nurse Theme*** ***(297) Minuet Theme A*** ***(298) Courtly Theme*** ***(298-299)*** Variation of ***Courtly Theme***	**(1:38:28)** Nurse enters with red Capulet dress. Mother enters and tries to persuade her to put on dress. Paris appears in wings, then leaves. Juliet appeals tearfully to Nurse and refuses to put on dress.
d) Lady Capulet tries to convince Juliet to marry Paris	**41. Juliet Refuses to Marry Paris** ***(300-302) Juliet Theme A*** shrilly ***(303) Juliet Theme C*** sadly in cellos	**(1:39:51)** Juliet dances furiously alone. Dance becomes sad and poignant.
e) Lord Capulet bullies Juliet into submission	***(304) Knight Theme A***	Lord Capulet enters and bullies her into submission. At the end, she is forcefully bound into the red Capulet dress.
f) Juliet alone with Nurse, overcome with grief	**42. Juliet Alone:** *R&J Theme* very sadly, interspersed with fragments of *Love Theme A,* gradually becomes more anguished	**(1:42:01)** Juliet alone and anguished. Picks up knife.
	43. Interlude ***R&J Theme*** extremely anguished	Juliet continues to dance herself into a pitch of anguish.

	Sc II	**Sc II. The Chapel (1:45:10)**
Act IV Sc I: a) Friar Laurence with Paris **b)** Juliet enters & Paris leaves. Friar elaborates plan to take sleeping draught	**44. With Lorenzo:** **(*312-313) Friar Laurence Theme B*** interchanged with ***Love Theme A*** ***(314-315) Dream sequence*** ***(316--318)*** extension of ***Dream*** ***(319-320) R&J Theme B***	Paris with Friar Laurence. Juliet enters, and reluctantly dances with him. He leaves. Friar Laurence offers the potion. Romeo & Tybalt appear at side, fighting. At back, scene of her awakening (*finishes at 317)*
	45. Interlude: *(321-322) R&J Theme A* ***(322) Knights Theme B*** (interspersed with ***Knights A***) ***(323) R&J Theme*** Bridge Passage	**Sc IV. Juliet's Antechamber (1:47:40)** Juliet alone Father enters. Paris is presented to her and she submissively agrees to dance with him
Sc II: a) Capulet servants preparing for wedding **b)** Juliet submissively reports that she is ready for marriage	**Sc VIII** **46. Again with Juliet** ***(324) Capulet Ladies Theme*** very slowly and sadly ***(325) Capulet Ladies,*** repeated in anguished tone with echoes of ***R&J Theme A*** ***(326) Juliet Theme C*** ***(327) Capulet Ladies,*** submissively ***(328) Juliet Theme C***, wistfully	**(1:49:00)** Juliet, Paris, Lord and Lady Capulet dance together slowly. Juliet has moment of rebellion, then submits again.
Sc III: a) Juliet getting ready for bed; turns away Nurse and Mother **b)** Juliet vacillates before taking potion; afraid of death, ghosts etc Finally drinks potion	**47. Juliet Alone:** *(329-330) Dream sequence* interspersed with fragment of *Juliet Theme C* ***(331) Love Theme A*** ***(332) Dream sequence*** ***(333)Juliet Theme C*** very sadly and slowly	**(1:52:38)** Juliet ready to take potion. Shadowy figures of Romeo and Tybalt appear and struggle for her in dreamy fashion. At end she takes potion and collapses onto bed.
	48. Morning Serenade	**(1:56:57)** Chorus led by Paris in dance with mandolins
	49. Lily Dance of the Maidens	**(1:59:43)** Paris with chorus.
Sc IV: Capulets busy about preparing for wedding		***Omitted***
	50. At Juliet's Death Bed:	**(2:02:40)**
Sc V: a) Juliet found by Nurse, who calls Lady C.	***(344)*** Bridge passage with motif from the ***Nurse Theme*** and ***Juliet C Theme***	Nurse and Lady Capulet discover Juliet. Enter Father and Paris, and Friar Laurence.
b) Family and guests mourn and bear her to church		(Repeat of *Lily Dance*) Funeral procession led by Friar Laurence bearing Juliet's body. Balthasar sees and runs off shocked.

Act V Sc I: **a)** Romeo alone, happy after dreaming of being dead and awoken by Juliet **b)** Balthasar comes with news of Juliet's death; Romeo's grief **c)** Romeo goes to Apothecary to get poison		**Sc VI Mantua** **(2:06:66)** Graceful dance of girls in white. **(2:07:09)** *Repeat of R&J Theme as at 137* Romeo sleeping on floor is rocked by girls, who bring Juliet to him. **(2:08:03)** *Repeat of Interlude 43.* Balthasar wakes him to tell him the terrible news. They dance together in an anguished way. At end, Romeo runs off.
Sc II: Friar Laurence sends Friar John to Romeo with message		**Sc V** **(2.05.00)** Friar John on the road to Mantua is set upon by robbers and killed.
Sc III: a) Paris at Juliet's tomb **b)** Romeo enters and sends Balthasar off with letter **c)** Romeo finds Paris in tomb and kills him **d)** Romeo mourns Juliet at tomb, then drinks poison **e)** Friar Laurence enters and finds bodies of Paris and Romeo **f)** Juliet awakes. Friar Laurence leaves. She finds Romeo dead and kills herself. **g)** Watchmen arrive on scene, followed by Prince, Capulets and Montagues. Friar Laurence recounts events, supported by letter. **h)** Prince delivers final word on events.	**Epilogue** **51. Juliet's Lying in State:** ***(347)*** High-pitched tremolo strings ***(348-352) Death Theme*** ***(353)*** frantic agitated bowing in strings leading to ***R&J Theme A*** harmonically distorted. ***(354) Love Theme A*** ***(355) Death Theme*** very anguished. ***(356)*** Great lurching crescendos of strings. Tolling bass. **52. Juliet's Death** ***(359-383) Juliet Theme C*** ***(363)*** Subsides into monotone chord sequence. Ends on tolling bass.	**ScVII The Capulet Crypt** **(2:09:04)** Capulets bowed in grief around Juliet's body. All eventually leave except Paris. Romeo rushes in. He fights with Paris and kills him. Romeo picks up Juliet's body and dances with it desperately. He drinks poison. **(2:16:40)** Juliet awakens and at first leaps up ecstatic to be alive. Then she finds Paris' body, then Romeo's. Anguished, she grabs his knife and stabs herself with it. Bald cloaked figures claw their way across darkening stage.