

RUSSIAN Giants

PROKOFIEV
SHOSTAKOVICH
WEINBERG
STRAVINSKY



Yuri Gandelman, viola and Janna Gandelman, piano

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YURI GANDELSMAN VIOLA
JANNA GANDELSMAN PIANO

SERGEI PROKOFIEV:

SUITE FROM ROMEO AND JULIET (arr. Borisovsky)

1	Introduction	2:29
2	Juliet as a Young Girl	2:58
3	Dance of the Knights	5:33
4	Balcony Scene	5:50
5	Mercutio	2:25
6	Parting Scene and Death of Juliet	6:44

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH:

SONATA FOR VIOLA AND PIANO, OP. 147

7	I Moderato	8:29
8	II Allegretto	7:31
9	III Adagio	13:28

MIECZYSLAW WEINBERG:

SONATA FOR CLARINET AND PIANO, OP. 28

(Version for Viola and Piano)

10	I Allegro	5:26
11	II Allegretto	6:54
12	III Adagio	6:00

IGOR STRAVINSKY:

13	ELEGY FOR VIOLA SOLO, 1944	5:14
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TOTAL TIME 1:19:01

Produced and engineered by
Sergei Kvitko. Assistant audio
engineer Vitaly Serebriakov.
Recorded on August 25-26,
2015 at Blue Griffin Studio *The
Ballroom*. Graphic design: Eleonora
Machado. This recording was
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PROGRAM NOTES by Kevin Bartig

At the age of twenty-seven, Prokofiev fled his Saint Petersburg home in the wake of the portentous events of 1917, embarking on an itinerant life that spanned eighteen years. As he crossed the globe, first testing the waters in America but eventually settling in Paris, he gained an international reputation as a concert pianist, as a composer in a range of genres, and as a collaborator with cultural luminaries such as Serge Diaghilev. Beginning in the 1930s, however, his interest increasingly fixed on his homeland, where lucrative commissions were far easier to come by than in Western Europe. The most enticing of these was for a new ballet to be premiered at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater. The Russian dramaturge Adrian Piotrovsky suggested Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* as a subject, an idea that immediately appealed to Prokofiev. Part of the attraction was contributing to a venerable body of works inspired by the play, including Hector Berlioz's "symphonie dramatique" *Roméo et Juliette* (1839) and Peter Tchaikovsky's "fantasy overture" *Romeo and Juliet* (first version 1869).

His imagination fired by the ballet scenario Piotrovsky and Sergei Radlov provided him, Prokofiev mapped out a ballet of fifty-eight individual numbers, which he dashed off at dizzying speed during the summer of 1935. The ballet score he finished that summer differed radically from Berlioz's and Tchaikovsky's in one important detail, however: his had a happy ending in which *Romeo and Juliet* live. Justifying the final scene, in which *Romeo and Juliet* were to dance to a radiant conclusion in C major, Prokofiev asserted that "living people can dance, the dying cannot." But such a departure from Shakespeare scandalized Prokofiev's colleagues; even Prokofiev's close friend

Nikolai Myaskovsky called the happy ending "ridiculous." A deflated Prokofiev rewrote the ending, but thanks to increasing bureaucratic oversight of the arts in Soviet Russia, no theater director would touch a new ballet that had already caused critical uproar. To Prokofiev's presumed consternation, his ballet premiered first in Czechoslovakia and only three years later, in 1938. During the years between composition and premiere, Prokofiev extracted from the ballet several orchestral suites (op. 64bis, op. 64ter, and—later—op. 101) and a set of ten pieces for solo piano (op. 75). The six numbers on the present recording derive from the latter work, which the violist Vadim Borisovsky transcribed for viola and piano. Borisovsky, a formidable performer and teacher (he played in the famed Beethoven Quartet and taught at the Moscow Conservatory) vastly increased the viola (and viola d'amore) repertory through such transcriptions, which number in the hundreds.

The six numbers Borisovsky transcribed show off Prokofiev's greatest talent: his ability to write beautiful, perfectly balanced melodies. In "the young Juliet," there are two contrasting tunes, one acrobatic and meant to convey Juliet's youth, the other an arching tune that evokes her daydreaming about love. Networks of these melodies hold both the ballet and the suites together. Juliet's second, more reflective tune, for instance, returns during the Balcony Scene (the fourth number) and finally in "The Death of Juliet," where its presentation as a slow, expansive melody signals the transformation of Juliet's youthful dreams into true love. The "Dance of the Knights" opens with a ponderous, angular melody that Prokofiev uses to evoke the aggression of the play's warring families, the Montagues and the Capulets. When that clash erupts into street fighting, Romeo's close friend Mercutio perishes while trying to defend his friend's

honor. Prokofiev conveys Mercutio's hot-headedness and impulsiveness with a rhythmically charged theme as well as a more comical tune that recalls the bawdy jokes Mercutio tells throughout Shakespeare's play.

The ballet *Romeo and Juliet* premiered in the Soviet Union only in 1940, and then in Leningrad's Kirov Theater, not the Bolshoi as originally projected. A little over a year later, Nazi troops threatened Russia's second capital and the Soviet government spirited its cultural elite to sheltered locations away from the front lines. Dmitri Shostakovich, for example, ended up in Tashkent, Vissarion Shebalin in Kuibyshev, and Prokofiev in Alma-Ata. Joining Shostakovich in Tashkent was a young Polish composer, Mieczysław (Moisey) Weinberg. Unlike Prokofiev and Shostakovich, Weinberg was a recent immigrant and virtually unknown, his precarious physical condition rather than fame sparing him the front lines. Scarcely three years earlier he had been a student at the Warsaw Conservatory, where his talents had earned him a spot in the great pianist Josef Hoffmann's class at the Curtis Institute. War disrupted his plans, however, and rather than board a flight for Philadelphia, Weinberg fled to the USSR when Hitler invaded his native Poland. During the uneasy peace brokered by the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, Weinberg enrolled as a composition student at the Minsk Conservatory, graduating in 1941 almost at the exact moment Hitler violated the pact and invaded Weinberg's adoptive country (the concert featuring his diploma piece reportedly took place on the eve of Operation Barbarossa).

Thus Weinberg's first years as a professional composer coincided with the wartime evacuation, when Prokofiev and especially Shostakovich—then the twin pillars of Soviet music—exerted a strong influence on the young

composer. Nowhere is this more evident than the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, op. 28, which the then twenty-six-year-old composer completed in 1945, not long after Weinberg had taken up residence in Moscow. Like so many chamber works for clarinet, Weinberg's sonata lends itself wonderfully to the viola, both instruments having similar ranges and resonant sonorities. After a plaintive monologue that begins the Allegro first movement, viola and piano engage in a duet, their simple melodies often combining in the two-part counterpoint so typical of Shostakovich's writing. Only in the middle section of the movement does the mood become more agitated; here there are fleeting references to specific Shostakovich works, particularly the Piano Trio No. 2, which Shostakovich had completed in 1944, immediately before Weinberg set to work on op. 28. The Allegretto second movement shows off Weinberg's other great influence, Jewish vernacular traditions. Here the music darts back and forth between major and minor modes, while interspersed chromatic passages bristle with trills and glissandos (indeed, the middle of the movement convincingly evokes the mood of a klezmer lament). Although these musical traits also have analogues in many of Shostakovich's works, Weinberg's usage most likely derives from his childhood years, when he heard on a daily basis the music his father composed for Jewish theater troupes. The sonata concludes with a slow Adagio, a haunting movement that carries the listener from a foreboding C-sharp minor opening to a radiant, peaceful D-major conclusion.

Shostakovich's Sonata for Viola and Piano ends with a similar, radiant conclusion, although here the key is C major. The context of its composition could not be more different than Weinberg's sonata, however. Shostakovich wrote almost the entire piece during the summer of 1975 while confined to a hospital

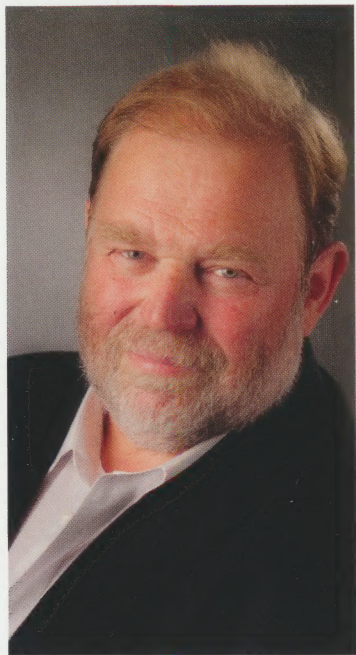
bed, the lung cancer that would take his life having sapped his strength. He knew the sonata would be his last work. Shostakovich wrote the work for Fyodr Druzhinin, the violist of the Beethoven Quartet, and a musician who had played in the premieres of most of Shostakovich's fifteen string quartets. As Elizabeth Wilson relates in her documentary study of the composer, Shostakovich began phoning Druzhinin regularly from the hospital in early July, asking about the viola's capabilities. According to Druzhinin, the composer's physical condition was precarious and he lamented that "it's very difficult for me to write, or rather to write down the notes. I spend an awful lot of time as it as my hand shakes, and won't obey me." Rather atypically, he also intimated a program to Druzhinin: "The first movement is a novella, the second a scherzo, and the Finale is an adagio in memory of Beethoven; but don't let that inhibit you. The music is bright, bright and clear."

Despite Shostakovich's skeletal program, the sonata is one of his most enigmatic works. Shostakovich was a habitual quoter, and references to his own works and those of other composers crop up in almost all of his pieces. But the density of references in the Viola Sonata is striking. Over the work's three movements, bits of the Berg Violin Concerto, Shostakovich's Suite for Two Pianos op. 6, his Fourteenth Symphony, Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata (at the opening of the third movement), and many others fill the musical texture. The second movement, in fact, repurposes large parts of *The Gamblers*, an unfinished setting of Gogol's play of the same name on which Shostakovich worked during 1942. All of this varied material is fitted into a harmonic language that wavers between pure diatonicism and passages that approximate twelve-tone ambiguity. Thus the quiet, C-major conclusion comes as a profound moment of repose, one that

Shostakovich described as "radiance." Shostakovich heard this moment only in his imagination; he died on August 9, 1975, shortly after sending off the sonata to be copied for Druzhinin. The work's premiere in October, featuring Druzhinin and pianist Mikhail Muntian, was part of a memorial concert for the composer.

Stravinsky's short *Élégie* for solo viola is also a memorial work, though one hardly as autobiographical as Shostakovich's. It originated in 1944 as a commission from the violist Germain Prévost, a member of the Pro Arte Quartet (a group that, like Stravinsky, had recently emigrated to the United States). Prévost wanted a work to commemorate the life of the quartet's founder, the violinist Alphonse Onnou, whose untimely death earlier that year had shaken a group whose membership had been largely stable for three decades. Owing to financial difficulties brought on by war, Prévost could manage only \$100 for the commission. Stravinsky agreed, but the resulting work was of correspondingly modest proportions. It is a work in simple three-part structure, the outer sections meditative and chant-like. The inner section is the work's real attraction, featuring a technically challenging fugue for the solo instrument. Prévost himself was reportedly challenged by the writing when he premiered the work at the Library of Congress's Coolidge Auditorium on January 26, 1945. (Frequently the work's date is erroneously listed as 1940 thanks to misinformation from Stravinsky's assistant, Robert Craft.) *Élégie* enjoyed a substantial afterlife thanks to the choreographer and New York City Ballet co-founder George Balanchine. At roughly two-decade intervals (1945, 1966, and 1982), he created three different ballets using Stravinsky's music. The last of these ballet premiered at New York's Lincoln Center as part of a centennial celebration of Stravinsky's life and music, a remarkable success for a work with such humble origins.

Yuri Gandelsman



Yuri Gandelsman is professor of viola at the Michigan State University College of Music.

He has been hailed by the Jerusalem Post as "...undoubtedly one of the greatest violists of our time." He has been entertaining audiences around the world for the last 30 years as a soloist, chamber musician and a conductor.

Gandelsman was born in Russia and studied in Moscow with professors Heinrich Talalyan and Valentin Berlinsky. In 1974 he won position in Moscow Philharmonic orchestra, under Kirill Kondrashin.

After winning the National Viola Competition in 1980 and joining the Moscow Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra as principal violist and soloist, he became one of the USSR's most

sought-after musicians. His collaborations in Russia included concerts with renowned musicians including Sviatoslav Richter, Yevgeni Kissin, Vladimir Spivakov, the Borodin and the Shostakovich quartets.

In 1990, Gandelsman became the principal violist with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO). During the next 10 years he frequently performed as a soloist with the IPO under Maestro Zubin Mehta in Israel, the U.S., Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain. Gandelsman has performed solo recitals in many parts of the world, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Warsaw, Istanbul, Budapest, and Florence. He has made numerous solo recordings for Melodya, Sony Classical, Lyrinx, ASV, Blue Griffin, and Naxos labels.

Upon his arrival in Israel, Gandelsman was appointed as a professor of viola at the Rubin Academy at Tel Aviv University, a position he held for 12 years. From 2000-02 he was the chairman of the Chamber Music Department at the university.

Many of Gandelsman's students hold positions in orchestras and chamber groups in Israel and Europe. His students have also been prize-winners at numerous international competitions. He has appeared as a guest professor at Yale University and the Paris Conservatoire. Gandelsman has given many master classes in Finland and during 1995 he was the director of the "Viola School" at the Kuhmo Festival. He has also taught

and performed at several chamber music festivals in Europe, including the Pablo Casals, Verbier, Kuhmo, Portogruaro, and Savonlinna festivals.

Gandelsman's chamber music collaborations include performances with well-known musicians such as Yefim Bronfman, Vadim Repin, Lynn Harell, Yuri Bashmet, Natalia Gutman, Gary Hoffman, Leonidas Kavakos, Midori, Gil Shaham and many others. He has been a jury member of International Competitions in Italy, France, Finland, and Israel. Gandelsman has also studied conducting with Professor Yuri Simonov and has conducted several orchestras in Russia, Finland, Italy, France, Israel, and Hungary.

For more than 12 years Gandelsman was professor of Viola in the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv University and has appeared as a guest professor at Yale University and the Paris Conservatoire. In 2001 Gandelsman joined the Fine Arts Quartet, one of the most distinguished ensembles of today, whose members are artists in residence at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He retired from the quartet in June 2008.

In 2008, Yuri Gandelsman has been appointed a Professor of Viola at the Michigan State University College of Music.

He plays a 1748 Paolo Testore viola.

In 2013 together with pianist Ralph Votapek, Gandelsman released a CD entitled "Hindemith Retrospective", on Blue Griffin label. In its April 2013' issue, International Record Review rated the album as "Outstanding", praising it as "A wonderful recording. Superbly played and a magnificent performance, so finely musical and involving throughout."

Janna Gandelsman



Janna Gandelsman graduated from the Gnesin Institute of Music in Moscow where she was a student of professor B.Berlin.

As a student, she won First Prize at the Institute's Chamber Music Competition, together with her future husband Yuri Gandelsman. In 1980 she received a Diploma at the All Russian National Competition. In 1990, Janna immigrated to Israel with her family, and joined the faculty at Rubin Academy of Music at the Tel Aviv University.

Together with Yuri Gandelsman, with whom she performs for over 40 years, she played recitals in prestigious concert

halls of major cities in Russia and Europe, including Alte Oper Frankfurt, Auditorium Louvre Paris, Philharmonia Atta Turk Center, Istanbul.

Mrs. Gandelsman has played recitals in Germany, Italy, France, England, Japan, Brazil, Austria, USA and in Israel. She recorded programs for Japan KBS television and Israel TV. She performed in such festivals as Radio France in Montpellier, Istanbul Festival, Schlesvig-Holstein Festival Germany, Ascoli Piceno and Interharmony Festival in Italy. She made several recording in Germany, France, USA and Israel.

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Yuri Gandelsman **VIOLA**
Janna Gandelsman **PIANO**

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