

Friday 13 January 2012

Free pre-concert performance

6.00–6.45pm

Royal Festival Hall

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Prokofiev Ballade for cello and piano, Op. 15

Prokofiev Chout ('The Buffoon'): Suite from ballet, Op. 21

(Arranged for cello and piano by Roman Sapozhnikov)

- 1 Chout and Choutikha (*The Buffoon and the Buffooness*)
- 2 *The Merchant is dreaming*
- 3 *Dance of the Buffoon's daughters*

Prokofiev Sonata for solo cello (Unfinished), Op. 133

Rostropovich Humoresque, Op. 5

Gabriel Prokofiev Jerk Driver/Outta Pulser for nine cellos

(World première, introduced by the composer)

Prokofiev Andante from Concertino for cello and orchestra, Op. 132

(Arranged for five cellos by Mstislav Rostropovich)

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Alexander Ivashkin cello/speaker/conductor

Coady Green piano

TrinityGold Cello Ensemble directed by **Natalia Pavlutskaya**

Peter Gregson, Deniss Jankovskis, Wei-Tsen Lin, Alisa Liubarskaya, Thomas Shelley, Matthew Strover, Rebecca Turner, Miriam Wakeling, Valerie Welbanks

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In association with the Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths, University of London

At the end of his life Prokofiev was busy with several works for cello: the *Symphony-Concerto* for cello and orchestra (a new version of his Cello Concerto, which he had written in the 1930s); the Sonata for cello and piano; the Concertino for cello and orchestra (1952); and the Sonata for solo cello (1953). All were inspired by Mstislav Rostropovich, who was just beginning his fantastic career. The latter two of these works were left unfinished at the time of Prokofiev's death in 1953.

Prokofiev's interest in the cello was first revealed in his early years. *Ballade* (1912), is an extended one-movement piece. A gifted pianist himself, Prokofiev considerably developed the piano part, while the cello plays long, intense lines, sometimes in an unusually high register. Prokofiev here used material from his early 'notebooks'; the melody for *Ballade* was borrowed from his Violin Sonata of 1903. The piece was written at the request of Nikolai Ruzsky – 'a very nice person, a wealthy businessman, who played the cello well and loved to organise chamber groups' – with whom Prokofiev often played. Prokofiev performed *Ballade* for the first time with the cellist Evsei Belousov in the Maly Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire on 23 January 1914, a few months before his triumphant graduation concert.

The ballet *Chout* ('The Buffoon'), composed in 1920, was definitely intended as a parallel to Stravinsky's 'Russianisms': *Petrushka* and *The Soldier's Tale*. The libretto was based on a Russian fairytale from Alexander Afanasiev's collection. The first performance, by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, took place in Paris. This little-known 1971 arrangement for cello and piano by Roman Sapozhnikov reveals brilliant details of Prokofiev's early instrumental style.

The Sonata for solo cello (planned as a work in four movements) is the very last piece that Prokofiev began in the latter half of 1952, and did not finish, only managing to complete sketches for the first movement. The single movement was completed by Mstislav Rostropovich and edited by Vladimir Blok.

At the time he met Prokofiev, Rostropovich was studying composition and orchestration under Dmitri Shostakovich and Vissarion Shebalin at the Moscow Conservatoire. His *Humoresque* was a birthday present for his cello professor Semyon Kozolupov. Kozolupov used to 'torture' his students with boring exercises, so Rostropovich decided to write his own piece which would be both effective musically and demanding technically.

In 1952 Prokofiev wrote, 'After recomposing the Cello Concerto, I wanted to continue writing music for the cello and to compose a light, transparent Concertino for this instrument.' He finished only the second movement of the Concertino, the *Andante*, in the cello and piano version. In this movement he wanted to emulate the beautiful *cantilenas* in Italian operatic arias, even asking Rostropovich to provide him with all the known arrangements for cello of existing operatic arias. The *Andante* is played here in Rostropovich's unpublished arrangement for five cellos.

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Australian pianist **Coady Green** is acknowledged as a major rising talent on the international concert circuit. Before relocating to Europe from Australia in 2006, he won almost all the most prestigious prizes and awards his native Australia had to offer. He regularly performs in prominent venues throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia.

TrinityGold Cello Ensemble is a group of students from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and Goldsmiths, University of London. Under director Natalia Pavlutskaya it has performed at London's Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre; The Queen's Hall in Edinburgh; and at various festivals in France.