

PROKOFIEV

Alexander Nevsky - Lieutenant Kijé Suite

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UTAH SYMPHONY

THIERRY FISCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR

ALISA KOLOSOVA, MEZZO-SOPRANO

Utah Symphony Chorus

University of Utah A Cappella Choir

University of Utah Chamber Choir

Barlow Bradford, Director



If Prokofiev had written nothing else, he would be remembered for his film scores, especially those he wrote for the historical satire *Lieutenant Kijé* and for Eisenstein's epics *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*. *Lieutenant Kijé*, made in 1933, was the first film he worked on, at a time when the technology of recording sound on film stock was still only a few years old. This was also his first Soviet project, from the period when he was going back to Russia periodically, before taking up full-time residence again in 1936.

He seems to have been uncertain about the new medium at first, but to have come round partly because music for a film would re-establish him with the widest possible audience in the country he had left a decade and a half before. Also, the subject appealed. Satire had been a strong suit of his since his youth, and the film's setting in 1800 would allow him to revive the spirit of his Classical Symphony.

The film's story, an old anecdote developed by Yuri Tynyanov, a noted literary theorist and novelist, concerns an officer who never existed, but who has to be brought into existence, and kept there, to cope with the erratic demands of Tsar Paul I, whose brief reign followed the much longer rule of his mother, Catherine the Great. One afternoon, the tsar is woken from his nap by a noise made by a couple canoodling. When he demands to know who is responsible, a scapegoat fortunately appears in the form of an error made by a clerk who, in copying a document, mistakenly inserts the name "Kizhe" into a list of lieutenants. (The French form "Kijé" has persisted because Prokofiev's score was published in Paris.) The tsar duly sends this miscreant to Siberia, but then brings him back as commander of the palace guard, raises him to the rank of general, and has him married. When the courtiers cannot produce the

general for the tsar to congratulate him, they explain that he has died, and so the tsar calls for a funeral.

Tynyanov was a formalist writer, with a focus on literature as a play of abstract principles, and something of that aesthetic went into the direction and cinematography of the film. Prokofiev's music was also recognized as contributing importantly, but the inevitable request for a concert suite was not easy for him to answer. Some of the sequences he had composed for the film had no real ending; some were very short; and the orchestra was a small one. By July 1934, however, he had completed a set of five movements for symphony orchestra, a work whose premiere he conducted himself in Paris at the end of the year.

The first movement opens with a bugle call, played by an offstage cornet, creating a toy-soldier atmosphere that continues into a march, delivered first as if by a band of fifes and drums. In the film, this music cues the editing of an innovatory sequence in which images are multiplied on the screen to give the impression of soldiers drilling or servants cleaning with exactly identical movements within the highly regimented palace of the tsar. The imaginary Kijé's slightly melancholy theme, drawn from the scene of the clerk's miscopying, soon joins the march.

For the Romance (the Russian term for 'art song'), Prokofiev developed a song with harp he had written for a lady of the court. Not only did he have to score the number, he also had to expand it from the brief minute it occupies in the film, a task he achieved by presenting several different orchestrations of the melody, with some work for the saxophone.

His music for Kijé's wedding underscores the rumbustious goings-on when the church ceremony is over, a scene the film places after the Troika and the

Romance, appearing in that order. The Troika is sung in the screen version by an unseen man over scenes of a three-horse carriage (a troika) rattling through the night to bring the imaginary lieutenant back from exile. Kijé's funeral music provides the finale, again framed by the offstage cornet, and revisiting the Kijé theme, the Romance, and the Troika.

Prokofiev immediately went on to score another Russian film, based on Pushkin's tale *The Queen of Spades* (again, a period topic) but the production was abandoned. Then, in 1938, came the first of his collaborations with Eisenstein, both of them newly returned expatriates. *Alexander Nevsky* was not only the director's first Soviet film but also his first with sound, and he very obviously wanted music to have an important place in it, to impart structure as well as atmosphere. For the most part, music is used outside the dialogue scenes, in choral, solo vocal or purely orchestral tableaux that punctuate the drama rather as choruses and orchestral interludes do an opera. Within these sequences, film-making can be more abstract, cutting back and forth among a small range of images, or holding on to one, existing more in the music's time than in that of the spoken narrative.

Of course, the music is thoroughly atmospheric at the same time, as when the first sight of the German enemies, their helmets almost completely concealing their faces as they take over Pskov in their invasion of thirteenth-century Russia, is accompanied by low brass snarls. Alexander Nevsky was – and remains – a standard-bearer of Russian patriotism, a soldier-prince who dominated the loosely allied cities of the north-west and, while maintaining peace with the Mongols to the east, defeated the Teutonic Knights who, coming in from the west, would have extinguished not only Russia's emergent nationhood but also

its Orthodox Christianity. When the film was released, in December 1938, it caught the mood of anxiety aroused by Hitler's recent triumphs in Prague and Vienna, though it had to be withdrawn on the signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact eight months later, only to be restored to circulation when German troops again threatened the country, in 1941.

Just as the music approaches the film imagery in its vivid character, whether in depicting malevolent Germans (heavy, chromatic brass) or heroic Russians (strong echoes of folk song, whether in minor-mode grief or major-mode victory), so the imagery draws near the music in how it is cut. Sometimes Prokofiev was scoring finished episodes, but sometimes the score may have come first, as in the long climactic scene depicting a battle on a frozen lake, where Eisenstein is said to have edited his film to a completed score. Whichever was the priority, music and image mesh together, and, as with pictures in an illuminated manuscript, exist on a plane different from that of the words that surround them. Only at one touching point towards the end of the film is there a meeting of these planes, when a soldier on the battlefield after the engagement hears his beloved, who duly appears, except that the only female voice to be heard is that of a mezzo-soprano in a great lament.

In terms of musical style, the music conforms with Prokofiev's other works of the period, such as the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* (1935-6), being strongly characterized, frank and direct, founded on the Russian Romanticism of half a century and more before, that of Tchaikovsky and Borodin. It was a style that suited him and that suited film, allowing for a wide range of expressive gestures that would be immediately understood, whether as signals of emotion (the sinister helmeted knights, the battlefield lament), as rhythmic actualizations (of charging

cavalry) or as sound effects (the scrape of metal on ice, or of metal on metal, in the “Battle on the Ice”). At the same time, while hooked into the narrative in these various ways, symphonic music created a powerful continuity all its own, to which the film might bow – as it so often does – or not.

Prokofiev understandably wished to give his vivid and majestic score a life in the concert hall, and this time probably had that end in view from the start; the resulting cantata was given its first performance, under his baton, in Moscow on May 17, 1939, within six months of the film’s release. As with *Lieutenant Kijé*, making a concert version gave him the opportunity to extend some sections and to rescore his music for larger resources, the original film score having been recorded by a relatively small studio orchestra. The mezzo’s lament, the longest musical passage in the film, is taken over wholesale, with modest alteration. In other movements, musical elements are given more space and development, notably in the “Battle on the Ice,” where Prokofiev took passages that appear in sporadic fashion in the film to make a big concert showpiece – if one that, to anyone who has seen the film, cannot but evoke Eisenstein’s fearsome staging.

This was something Prokofiev himself recognized: “Despite my effort this second time around to approach the music from an exclusively symphonic perspective,” he wrote, “the pictorial element from Eisenstein’s film obviously remained.” That had not been so with *Lieutenant Kijé*, where the suite does not in any sense tell the story (partly because an invisible minor officer is less easy to portray in music than a valiant warrior-prince) and can be fully enjoyed for its musical delights without the listener’s knowing anything of their original purpose. The *Alexander Nevsky* cantata is hardly less musically splendid, and yet it does powerfully convey the narrative it was made to help drive. To

look at it another way, everything in the *Kijé* music is incidental to the story; nothing in the *Nevsky* score is.

Prokofiev helped bolster the narrative element by keeping to the film's order, as he had not done in making the *Lieutenant Kijé* suite. The cantata opens with the music for the film's first scene, a C minor slow movement in which the pain of the Russian people is suggested by a forced flourish up a minor third and down. C in octaves, maintained through most of the number, might evoke the Russian plain, inscribed with folk-style laments.

The low C goes on into "Song About Alexander Nevsky," but B flat major (which was to be the key of Prokofiev's emphatically positive Fifth Symphony) soon establishes its sure radiance for the song, which has the grandeur of a national anthem. Its first stanza is sung by the tenors and basses, who then converse through most of the middle section, after which comes a second stanza, more fully scored, with altos joining the men.

Attention then shifts to the western invaders, who, having taken over the city of Pskov, indulge their alien rites. Black dissonance – C sharp minor plus the raised seventh – sets the tone. For the religious ceremony, Prokofiev first researched old liturgical music, then created his own image of a brutal past. It took fifty years and a choral soprano (also veterinarian), Morag Kerr, to recognize that, in doing so, he chewed up the text of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. There is a middle section, on a folk-song theme expressive of the Russians' suffering.

Bells ring out to prompt retaliation, which comes voiced in a stomping chorus in E flat, again in the manner of a folk song. Assurance arrives in the central section in D major, from altos and then basses in what could be another national hymn.

There follows the irresistible “Battle on the Ice,” made for scenes of Alexander Nevsky defeating the Teutonic Knights on the frozen Lake Preipus. After a slow introduction suggestive of dawn, the first main section is in the Teutons’ key of C sharp minor, bringing back their chant from the third movement. The Russians counter-attack with their own music, and the sounds of galloping horses are unmistakable. Though the noisome chant returns, it is jubilantly combated by Russian songs and horses again, and the battle reaches its climax. (We might remember Tchaikovsky’s *1812* overture for a not dissimilar musical rendering of warfare by means of opposing melodies.) A powerful chromatic theme rising up implies that though the Russians have won the day, it was not without sacrifice, and the scene clears for a postlude in D flat on the theme from the central section of the previous movement.

“The Field of the Dead,” in C minor, is the moving lament over the cost of victory, sung by one on behalf of all, and ultimately endorsed by the strings.

“Alexander’s Entry into Pskov” turns from loss to gain. The prince’s triumph is a victory for the whole people, and the “Song About Alexander Nevsky” is reprised *grandioso* by the full chorus, with bells. More patriotic hymns follow, including that from the heart of the fourth movement, as well as an orchestral presto with athletic woodwinds, before the celebration reaches its peeling close, firmly home in B flat once more.

—Paul Griffiths

Alexander Nevsky English Translation

No. 2: Song about Alexander Nevsky

This all happened on the Neva River on the great water.

There we battled the wicked army, the Swedish army.

Oh, how we fought, how we slashed the foe!

How we hacked their ships into splinters!

Our life-blood we did not spare for the great Russian land.

Where the axe fell, a street formed,
where the spear flew, a lane opened.

We slew the Swedes, those foreigners,
like roadside weeds upon dry earth.

We will not yield the Russian land.

Whoever comes against it, shall be slain to death.

Russia has arisen against the enemy;
rise up to battle, glorious Novgorod!

No. 3: The Crusaders in Pskov

Peregrinus, expectavi, pedes meos in cymbalis.

(Broken Latin chant of the Teutonic Knights)

No. 4: Arise, ye Russian People

Arise, O Russian folk, to a glorious fight, to a deadly fight,

arise, O freedom loving folk, on behalf of our great land!

To the surviving warriors – esteem and honor,
and to the slain ones – eternal glory!

For our fatherland, for the Russian land, arise, O Russian folk!

No enemy shall walk upon our dear, great Russia.

Rise up, dear Mother Russia!

The enemy shall not come against Russia,
their regiments they shall not lead there,
they shall not find the way to Russia,
the Russian fields they shall not trample.

No. 5: Battle on the Ice
Peregrinus expectavi pedes meos in cymbalis – est!
Vincant arma crucifera! Hostis pereat!
(Broken Latin chant of the Teutonic Knights)

No. 6: The Field of the Dead
I shall walk along the snow-covered field,
I shall fly above the death-field of battle,
I shall search there for the glorious falcons,
For my bridegrooms, fine fellows all.
Some lie slashed with swords,
others lie wounded with arrows,
with their crimson blood they sated the honorable land,
the Russian land.
Him who died a noble death for Russia
I shall kiss upon his dead eyelids,
and to that brave lad who remained alive
I shall be a faithful wife and sweetheart.
I shall not marry the one who has good looks:
earthly beauty passes away.
But I shall marry the one who showed valor.
Answer my call, O valiant falcons!

No. 7: Alexander's Entry into Pskov
To a great battle did Russia come out,
a wicked foe did Russia defeat.
No enemy shall walk upon our native land.
Whoever comes against us shall be slain to death!
Rejoice and sing, dear Mother Russia!
No enemy shall come against our dear Russia,
our Russian villages he shall not see!
For a great celebration has Russia assembled.
Rejoice, Russia!
Rejoice, dear Mother Russia!

THIERRY FISCHER, Music Director

Thierry Fischer has been Music Director of the Utah Symphony since 2009 and finishes his final term in Summer 2022, becoming Music Director Emeritus. He is Principal Guest of the Seoul Philharmonic 2017- 2020 and in March 2020 he begins as Music Director of the São Paulo Symphony.

In Utah he has led annual single composer cycles including Mahler, Ives and Nielsen, and released

acclaimed performances of Mahler's symphonies 1 and 8 on Reference Recordings, the latter with the world-renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir. 2019 saw the first release of a Saint-Saëns symphony cycle on Hyperion as part of an ongoing collaboration (also to excellent reviews). He has conducted the orchestra in Utah's five national parks and forged outreach links in Haiti. In celebration of its 75th anniversary season in 2016, he brought the orchestra to Carnegie Hall for the first time in 40 years, and released a CD of newly commissioned works by Nico Muhly, Andrew Norman, and Augusta Read Thomas.

Whilst Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales 2006-2012 Fischer appeared every year at the BBC Proms, toured internationally, and recorded for Hyperion, Signum and Orfeo, winning



the ICMA Award in 2012 for Frank Martin's *Der Sturm* on Hyperion with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. In 2014 he released a Beethoven disc on the Aparte label with the London Philharmonic and has since appeared regularly with the orchestra in concert. He has conducted many more of the world's great orchestras, and in 2019 made his Cleveland Orchestra debut.

Fischer started out as Principal Flute in Hamburg and at the Zurich Opera. His conducting career began in his 30s when he replaced an ailing colleague, subsequently directing his first few concerts with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe where he was Principal Flute under Claudio Abbado. He spent his apprentice years in Holland, and became Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Ulster Orchestra 2001-2006. He was Chief Conductor of the Nagoya Philharmonic.



UTAH SYMPHONY

THIERRY FISCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Founded in 1940, the Utah Symphony performs more than 175 concerts each season and offers all Utahns easy access to world-class live musical performances of the world's greatest music in the state's top venues. Since being named the orchestra's seventh music director in 2009, Thierry Fischer has attracted leading musicians and top soloists, refreshed programming, drawn increased audiences, and galvanized community support. In addition to numerous regional and domestic tours, the Utah Symphony has embarked on seven international tours and performed at Carnegie Hall in Spring 2016 coinciding with the orchestra's 75th anniversary celebrations. The Utah Symphony has released more than 100 recordings, including recent releases with Thierry Fischer of Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 8, Andrew Norman's *Switch*, Nico Muhly's *Control*, Augusta Read Thomas' *Eos*, and a full cycle of Camille Saint-Saëns' symphonies. Utah Symphony | Utah Opera, the orchestra's parent organization, reaches 450,000 residents in Utah and the Intermountain region each year, with educational outreach programs serving more than 155,000 students annually. In addition to performances in its home in Salt Lake City, Abravanel Hall, and concerts throughout the state of Utah, the Utah Symphony participates in Utah Opera's four annual productions at the Janet Quinney Lawson Capitol Theatre and presents the seven-week Deer Valley® Music Festival each summer in Park City, Utah. With its many subscription, education, and outreach concerts and tours, the Utah Symphony is one of the most engaged orchestras in the nation.

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BARLOW BRADFORD, *Symphony Chorus Director*

Dr. Bradford was appointed Director of the Utah Symphony Chorus at the start of the 2013-2014 season. Over the course of his musical career, Bradford has distinguished himself as a conductor, composer, arranger, pianist, organist, and teacher. As an orchestral and choral conductor, he co-founded the Utah Chamber Artists in 1991 and has led that organization to international acclaim for its impeccable, nuanced performances and award-winning recordings. Dr. Bradford's focused, energetic conducting style led to his appointment as Music Director of the Orchestra at Temple Square in Salt Lake City and Associate Director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Prior to that, he was Director of Orchestras at the University of Utah.

His compositions and arrangements have garnered much attention for their innovation and dramatic scope, from delicate, transparent intimacy to epic grandeur. Arrangements by Bradford have been performed/recorded by the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Tucson Symphony Orchestra, New York Choral Artists, Seattle Pacific University, Baylor University, Mormon Tabernacle Choir/Orchestra at Temple Square, Newfoundland Festival 500, and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, among others.

In addition to his post as Director of the Utah Symphony Chorus, Dr. Bradford continues as Artistic Director of Utah Chamber Artists and serves as the Ellen Neilson Barnes Presidential Chair of Choral Studies at the University of Utah.



ALISA KOLOSOVA – Mezzo-soprano

Alisa Kolosova has appeared to great acclaim at many of the most prestigious venues in the world, including Opéra National de Paris, Salzburg Festival, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Kennedy Center Washington and Carnegie Hall New York.

A former member of the Atelier Lyrique at Opéra National de Paris and Salzburg Festival Young Singers Program, Kolosova came to international attention in 2010 in Salzburg, performing in Mozart's *La Betulia liberata* under the baton of Riccardo Muti. Between 2011 and 2014 she was a member of the ensemble of

Wiener Staatsoper.

Highlights of her career include Isoletta in *La Straniera* by Bellini at Concertgebouw Amsterdam, her debut as Dalila in Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* at Theater Basel, her Dutch National Opera debut in a new production of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, and Foreign Princess in *Rusalka* at Opéra National de Paris under the baton of Sir Andrew Davis.

On the concert platform, recent successes of Kolosova include her Carnegie Hall debut with performances of Scriabin's Symphony No.1 and Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* with Riccardo Muti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *Glagolitic Mass* with Sir John Eliot Gardiner in Zurich and with Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France

conducted by Mikko Franck, Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* with the Orchestre National de Paris conducted by Jérémie Rhorer, with Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra and with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the BBC Proms.

Her most recent successes are Maddalena in *Rigoletto* at Bayerische Staatsoper and at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Marina in *Boris Godunov* at Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Schubert's Mass in E flat major conducted by Riccardo Muti at Salzburg Festival, Samaritana in *Francesca da Rimini* by Zandonai at Teatro alla Scala Milan, the title role debut of *Carmen* in Novara (Italy) and on tour in China.

Utah Symphony Chorus, University of Utah A Cappella Choir & University of Utah Chamber Choir

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Recording engineer: John Newton (Soundmirror, Boston)

Mixing and Mastering: Mark Donahue (Soundmirror, Boston)

Photo of Thierry Fischer: Marco Borggreve

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We hope you will enjoy listening to this recording as much as we enjoyed making it! —Mark Donahue, John Newton and Dirk Sobotka

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PROKOFIEV

Alexander Nevsky

- 1 Russia under Mongolian Tyranny 3:29
- 2 Song of Alexander Nevsky 3:50
- 3 The Crusade in Pskov 7:28
- 4 Arise, People of Russia 2:06
- 5 The Battle on the Ice 13:46
- 6 The Field of the Dead 6:13
- 7 Alexander enters Pskov 4:31

Lieutenant Kijé Suite

- 8 Kijé's Birth 3:58
- 9 Romance 3:51
- 10 Kijé's Wedding 2:33
- 11 Troika 2:42
- 12 Kijé's Funeral 5:22