

## War and Peace

### The original version

The story of the composition of Prokofiev's *War and Peace* is a long and tortuous one. He had the idea for an opera based on the main characters from the Tolstoy novel before the 1941-45 War began. In April 1941 he drafted a scenario for a work in 11 scenes; 9 of these would survive in all versions of the opera.

Given greater impetus by the outbreak of War, and with the encouragement of the Committee on the Arts in Moscow, he started composing the music for an opera in 11 scenes in August 1941. He finished the piano score in April 1942 and in May sent it off to the Committee on the Arts for approval. He started orchestrating the opera more or less immediately and had completed the Peace scenes and the Death of Andrei (scene 10) by July 1942, when the reply came from the Committee: the lyrical Peace scenes were praised but Prokofiev was advised to strengthen the patriotic element of the War scenes, giving greater emphasis to the heroic figure of Kutuzov (= Stalin) and to the People. Prokofiev complied; he made some tiny changes to scenes 4 and 5, revised the War scenes extensively and then orchestrated them. He also composed the choral Epigraph – though he didn't decide immediately where it fitted. He completed this revised version of the opera in April 1943. This is the version usually referred to as the First Version (presumably because it was the first fully orchestrated version); this is the version which was first published in mimeograph form by MUZFOND in 1943 – originally without the Epigraph. Actually this is the Second Version: the original version of the vocal score of *War and Peace* was completed by Prokofiev and is entirely restorable from his manuscript material in the Russian State Archive in Moscow.

The differences between the composer's original thoughts and the 'improvements' advised by the Committee can easily be seen by comparing the 1943 MUZFOND score – which Kostya has, and which he copied for me – with my amended score.

The Peace scenes, as well as the scene of Andrei's death, are virtually identical. Scene 8 has some revisions of detail. But the panoramic scenes of War, scenes 7, 9 and 11, were extensively revised: scene 11 in particular was virtually re-written with a stormy new opening and an extended choral finale. The new sections were 'heroic': mainly choruses, marches and lyric/heroic sections to arias. Much declamation and individual characterisation of, eg partisans and ordinary French soldiers, was discarded. The balance of the opera was thereby shifted, from emphasis on the personal and intimate to emphasis on the national and tableauxque.

The 1943 Second Version was given various performances in concert form in 1944 and 1945 and there were plans to stage it at the Leningrad Maly Theatre in

1946. It was to be a grand, two-evening event, and for this Prokofiev composed a new scene 2 (Ball) and new scene 10 (Fili) in 1946/47. He made other some other revisions to the War scenes and to the Epigraph. Only the first 8 of the (now) 13 scenes were staged, however, as Part 1 in June 1946. Thereafter, despite numerous revisions and proposals for different performing versions of the work which Prokofiev made between 1948 and 1953, the opera remained unperformed until after his death.

The first staged performance of anything like the Final Version (though, given the process of its composition, this is a fluid term) was in Florence in May 1953 when 11 out of the 13 scenes were staged. In Russia there were various cut performances between 1955 and 1957. In 1958 MUZGIZ published the full 13-scene version as part of the collected edition of Prokofiev's works and this remains the main performing edition. In 1959 the Bolshoy in Moscow gave the first almost-complete, classic production of War and Peace in 13 scenes, conducted by Melik-Pashayev.

The Second Version of 1943 was also staged by the Perm Opera between 1982 and 1987 and it toured to the Maryinsky in 1985/6. The original version has never been staged and there is no evidence from the surviving manuscript material that anyone has attempted to reconstruct it. I saw it first in 1969 and it looks to me exactly the same now! The manuscript material is mainly in the Russian State Archive, but there is some in the Glinka Museum including the piano score which was sent to the Committee on the Arts in 1942, in the hand of PA Lamm. The autograph material in RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art) is extensive, and includes Prokofiev's original piano score for the 11 scenes. This was subsequently overlaid with indications of orchestration but, quite naturally, Prokofiev did not orchestrate those sections which he revised after July 1942 (the exception being the opening of scene 11, where the original piano score has notes on the planned orchestration). Discarded sections were crossed out, but are easy to decipher.

So far, the process of reconstruction has been relatively straightforward. No musical material has had to be invented. About 300 bars will have to be orchestrated, but this should present few real difficulties as Prokofiev's style is quite distinctive and much can be drawn from the surrounding context. One or two passages were re-sited in the revision, e.g. Kutuzov's comments in the original finale were later re-allocated to Denisov.

On the comparative worth of the original and final versions of War and Peace, I offer no comment: I am simply attempting to reconstruct the composer's first, well-thought-out ideas. And to create new interest in the opera: it seems that this is, indeed, happening.