

London Philharmonic – Prokofiev Man of the People?

5: Vladimir Jurowski conducts Chout & Cinderella – Leon Fleisher plays Left-hand Concerto

CONCERT REVIEW | By Kevin Rogers | January 25, 2012 | [LINK](#)

The London Philharmonic's "Prokofiev Man of the People?" series of concerts here moved to one of the composer's most popular pieces, in the form of a huge chunk from his ballet-score Cinderella. But, how does this series' epithet fit: the piano concerto was to Paul Wittgenstein's commission, the ballet music was the sequel to Romeo and Juliet, and Chout is practically a student piece, its original score dating from 1915 when Prokofiev was aged 14, although it was completed and premiered six years later. None of this music suggests anything other than Prokofiev as a composer working as best he could under the circumstances in which he found himself.

This 20-minute (of about 60) selection (the seven sections presumably from the Suite of twelve that Prokofiev himself compiled – the programme booklet makes no mention of this, let alone opus numbers!) from Chout (pronounced 'shoot') did Prokofiev no favours. Its primary-coloured textures wore on the ears very quickly, and the musical logic that tells the story was absent. Instead, it was the caricatures of the buffoon, the wives, and no humour. The LPO was wholly unanimous in the exciting climaxes of 'The Young Woman becomes a Goat' section. But, in these short extracts, Prokofiev's musical invention sounded repetitive. The full score might have been welcome though.

Any concerto with Leon Fleisher is an event, and this proved to be. He made his debut with the New York Philharmonic way back in 1944 (aged 16) but twenty years later two fingers in his right hand became immobile because of focal dystonia. He continued his playing by specialising in the left-hand repertoire, although recently, because of experimental botox treatment, he has regained the use of his right hand well-enough to perform. **He**



remains an expert in left-hand works, and this was an authoritative account of the Prokofiev as one could hope to hear. The opening and closing movements were fiercely dispatched with aplomb, but *it was in the middle two that he was most effective, bringing finesse and refinement; the Andante was particularly eloquent.* Throughout, the LPO and Jurowski were on-the-money partners.

Cinderella was a curate's egg indeed. As recounted here, it was abridged to 60 minutes (21 of the 50 numbers, taken from the full score), chosen to focus on Cinderella's journey and meeting with the Prince, the ballet's peripheral characters or dances not interfering. This was a good idea, although a ballet-score excised from the visual dance is never wholly satisfactory. However, for all the beautiful playing, Jurowski rarely brought out the yearning of love that should be omnipresent in *this* selection, and those gorgeous climaxes that represent this passed-by without ever hitting home. Curiously, the Prince's two gallops (Act Three) were more like the 'Ride to Hell' music from Berlioz's Damnation of Faust – very dark.