



## **Sergej Prokof'ev - *Romeo et Juliette*, suite**

Prokofiev's ballet masterpiece, *Romeo and Juliet* was composed between 1935 and 1936 and first performed at the Brno Opera in December 1938. Having reached his fifth experience in the genre of ballet, Prokof'ev chose to follow faithfully the Shakespearean tragedy, outlining with a marked lyricism not only the two protagonists, but also the secondary characters and some peculiar situations of the drama. "*I'm sure people will find there the melody they expect*" - asserted the author - and he was not wrong. Just think of the moments of musical poetry and elegance of writing that accompany the events of Romeo and Juliet, for example. But in addition to a very intense lyrical vein, Prokof'ev also fielded a rhythmic vivacity and a plastic drama of immediate involvement. From *Romeo and Juliet* the composer extrapolated three orchestral suites - op. 64 bis, op. 64 ter and op. 101- which collect the best known passages in a free way with respect to the development of the plot. For this reason, it is not uncommon to hear musical episodes taken from the three suites in concert and combined according to the taste of the interpreter.

## **Béla Bartók – *The miraculous mandarin* op. 19**

*The miraculous mandarin*, pantomime in one act, was composed by Bela Bartók in the post-war period. However, the roughness of the subject dealt with in Menyhert Lengyel's story, which inspired the pantomime, prevented its staging at least until 1926. The story, set in a metropolis, tells of a very young girl exploited by three criminals who they oblige to lure passers-by and then rob them. But one day the girl meets a foreigner, a Chinese Mandarin who falls madly in love with her. The criminals surround him to rob him, stab him and suffocate him but the mysterious man seems to be immortal; nothing can distract him from the passion he has for the girl, and in fact he will die only after having possessed her. A story of violence with decidedly expressionist hues that relives in a page of equal sound violence. In Bartók's music, the portrait of that alienated and hallucinated world takes on the contours of rhythmic paroxysm and sharp and livid engravings in which the dark and menacing color of the brass and of the large section of percussion which joins the piano prevails.

## **Igor Stravinskij - *Petruška***

Soon after the success of the *Firebird*, in the summer of 1910 Igor Stravinskij sketched a piece for piano and orchestra inspired by a fantastic situation he imagined: "By composing this music I had the clear vision of an unleashed puppet who, with his diabolical cascades of arpeggios exasperate the orchestra's patience, which in turn replies with threatening fanfare. A terrible fight ensues which, having reached its paroxysm, ends with the painful and lamentable collapse of the poor puppet ". Some time later, that only imagined puppet took the form and name of *Petruška*, the eternal and unhappy protagonist of the shows in Russian village fairs, and the initial piece sketched by Stravinsky was thus transformed into the homonymous ballet, the second masterpiece of the genre created for Sergej Diaghilev's company of Russian Ballets. In *Petruška* Stravinskij declines the village fable in a pyrotechnic sound collage made of juxtapositions and overlapping of the most disparate melodic elements (fair music, marches, waltzes, cabaret songs, fanfare) and of unusual and ever-changing orchestral rhythms and colors, from the dazzling and overwhelming ones of the party teeming square to the stinging and mechanical ones associated with *Petruška*.