

TIME FOR THREE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2024 | 7:30 PM



Daniel Hege

Music Director & Conductor

Time for Three

String Trio

CENTURY II CONCERT HALL

PROGRAM NOTES

EDWARD KENNEDY "DUKE" ELLINGTON

Born April 29, 1899 in Washington DC

Died May 24, 1974 in New York City

Three Black Kings: Martin Luther King (7')

This is the first performance of a movement from "Three Black Kings" by the Wichita Symphony.

In this 80th Anniversary season of the Wichita Symphony, the first concert was held on January 21, 1945, almost eighty years ago to the day. The program included an arrangement of Duke Ellington's classic song, "Sophisticated Lady," conducted by Orien Dalley.

The Roaring Twenties witnessed the emergence of the Big Band and jazz in American music. Duke Ellington was one of the principal figures and creators in the spotlight. Nicknamed "Duke" during his childhood by a friend who thought Ellington's casual and polite manners and dapper dress reflected nobility, the name stuck throughout his life. Although both parents played piano with preferences for parlor songs or operatic arias, Ellington's formal training as a pianist was short-lived. Instead, he came to rely on imitating and learning from the club pianists he observed, names like Doc Perry, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and others known as "two-fisted" piano players.

The earliest Ellington ensembles reflected the classic Dixieland combos, which featured a single trumpet, trombone, clarinet, piano, drums, and banjo. Moving to New York City, where he eventually landed a job in 1927 playing with his orchestra at the Cotton Club, Ellington's band expanded to include saxophones but generally remained between ten and fourteen musicians. There were no strings except for a single double bass, so the jazz orchestras of the day differed from the symphonic orchestras. By the time Ellington's Orchestra began touring the United States and two tours to Europe in the 1930s, Ellington's band had expanded to three trumpets, three trombones, a quartet of sax players, each of whom could double on clarinet, with a rhythm section of drums, double bass, and guitar, with Ellington on piano.

Ellington's music was rooted in improvisational oral traditions since some of his musicians could not read music. Composition was a collaborative effort, with Ellington leading the ensemble in a general outline of how the music would go. His players embellished and improvised on the given directions. Utilizing the talents of his musicians, Ellington focused on tone quality leading to some of his signature sounds like the "trumpet growl" introduced by band member Bubber Miley in the 1920s. Most of Ellington's works during the 1920s and 1930s lasted about three minutes, a duration specifically intended to accommodate the 78-rpm recordings of the day. One of his longer works from the period, *Creole Rhapsody* (1931), written in response to Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, took up two sides of a 78-rpm.

Others subsequently arranged and transcribed Ellington's music into written notation. Thus, all of Ellington's music we hear at a symphony orchestra concert was orchestrated by others.

In 1937, Ellington began collaborating with the classically trained Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967), who joined Ellington's orchestra as a composer, arranger, and occasional pianist. Strayhorn's influence led Ellington to pursue longer compositional forms, most notably "Black, Beige, and Brown," which they debuted at Carnegie Hall in 1943. This work led to multi-movement jazz suites and even film scores. In the 1960s, Ellington and Strayhorn collaborated on jazz suite versions of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* and Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*. Strayhorn was the composer of the Ellington Orchestra's signature piece, "Take the A Train."

Three Black Kings: Martin Luther King (7')

continued

In 1957, Ellington and his orchestra recorded many of his band's popular songs with Ella Fitzgerald, firmly establishing Ellington's music in the canon of the Great American Songbook.

Ellington considered his music "beyond category," even rejecting the word "jazz" as a descriptor of his music. Echoing that perspective, Ellington's New York Times obituary on May 25, 1974, quoted Ralph Gleason, a noted jazz historian and critic, who wrote, "Ellington has created his own musical world which transcends every attempt to impose category upon it and has emerged as a solid body of work unequalled in American music."

Among his many lifetime and posthumous honors, Ellington was recognized for the following:

- Academy Award Nomination (1961)¹
- Presidential Medal of Honor (1969)
- Pulitzer Prize for Music (a special citation awarded posthumously in 1999)
- Twenty-five Grammy nominations, winning fourteen times (1959-2000)

With schools named for him, his image on a US postage stamp and circulating US quarter representing Washington DC, and his music a continuing legacy of American music, Duke Ellington remains an American icon fifty years after his death.

Three Black Kings was Ellington's final work and was unfinished at his death. As he lay dying in a New York City hospital from lung cancer and pneumonia, he instructed his son, Mercer, on his intentions for completing the work. Mercer later related that Ellington intended the work to be a stand-alone eulogy for Martin Luther King but given his penchant for multi-movement suites after 1940, decided to add tributes to two Biblical Kings, Balthazar, the black king of the Magi, and King Solomon.

Mercer assembled the completed parts with his notes, and Ellington's longtime collaborator Luther Henderson orchestrated the work. The entire suite was premiered at an Ellington Tribute Concert at Buffalo's Artpark in 1976. Alvin Ailey created a ballet from the score that same year.

Martin Luther King: The Music

Ellington's tribute to Dr. King begins with four bars, introducing the basic chord progression in C major with a rhythmic and murmuring accompaniment that will underline the entire piece. It's a slow gospel beat with a processional feel. This pattern immediately repeats, joined by the violins playing the main melody.

The music adds instruments with each repetition of the four-bar pattern. The horns enter with a contrasting phrase. Except for an interesting and brief diversion to an ascending chromatic passage, the music adheres closely to the original chord progression.

The entire orchestra reaches a celebratory climax with full gospel splendor marked by an uplifting key shift to E-flat major. Following this, the music returns to the quiet opening with additional variants by the woodwinds and bells with a final clarinet solo lick over an "amen" cadence.

[1] Ellington's score for the 1961 movie *Paris Blues* about two jazz musicians starring Sidney Portier and Paul Newman earned an Oscar nomination, losing out that year to *West Side Story*.

Three Black Kings: Martin Luther King (7')

continued

In the version of *Martin Luther King* heard at this concert, the Wichita Symphony uses Luther Henderson's arrangement and orchestration for two flutes, piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, drum set, tambourine, bells, cymbal, harp, piano, and strings. WSO Music Librarian Jacob Mashak made additional adjustments to eliminate a fourth trumpet and trombone and add a saxophone part. Terence Blanchard created a version of *Martin Luther King* for a smaller orchestra that is frequently performed.

Before attending the Wichita Symphony performance, you can listen to a performance of the *Martin Luther King* movement from *Three Black Kings* in this performance by the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music Symphony Orchestra. The Martin Luther King movement begins at 12:20.

https://youtu.be/LesNSzkXSwA?si=Pc_j9cmtA-81KHEo&t=738

KEVIN PUTS

Born January 3, 1971 in St. Louis, Missouri

Contact

1. The Call (8')
2. Codes (Scherzo) (4')
3. Contact (9'30")
4. Convivium (7'30")

This is the Wichita Symphony's first performance of music by Kevin Puts.

It has been about thirty years since Kevin Puts was described as a "promising composer" and "a young composer to watch." During the intervening years, Puts fulfilled those predictions and is now one of the leading composers of his generation.

Puts studied piano at the Eastman School of Music with Nelita True and music composition at Eastman and Yale under notable composers like Samuel Adler, Jacob Druckman, and Christopher Rouse. He earned his Doctorate in composition at Eastman. Additional composition studies at the Tanglewood Music Festival were with William Bolcom and Bernard Rands.

Puts has been commissioned and performed by leading organizations worldwide, including the Metropolitan Opera, the Minnesota Opera, Opera Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, and many others. He has collaborated with world-class artists, such as Renée Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, Yannick Nezet-Seguin, Marin Alsop, and many others.

A composer-in-residence award (1996-1998) from Young Concert Artists helped launch Puts' career. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001 and a 2012 Pulitzer Prize for his opera *Silent Night*, premiered by the Minnesota Opera. The recording of *Contact* by Time for Three and the Philadelphia Orchestra on the Deutsche Grammophon label received the 2023 Grammy Award for "Best Contemporary Classical Composition."

Puts' fourth opera, *The Hours*, premiered with sold-out houses at the Metropolitan Opera in November 2022. Starring sopranos Renée Fleming, Kelli O'Hara (a Music Theatre Wichita alumna), and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato (a Wichita State University alumna), critics hailed the opera "a stunning triumph" (*Variety Magazine*).

Since 2006, Puts has taught composition at the Peabody Institute of Music in Baltimore and is a Distinguished Visiting Composer at the Juilliard School in New York City this academic year.

Puts writes on his website that the genesis for *Contact* came in April 2017 when he heard the Trio perform at Joe's Pub in New York City. The Trio had contacted him about the possibility of writing a concerto, and that evening prompted the beginning of a collaboration. Impressed by the Trio's "infectious energy and joy," plus their abilities to play, improvise, and sing, Puts, "elated" and "daunted" by the possibilities, set to work.

The COVID-19 pandemic postponed the concerto's original premiere, scheduled for the summer of 2020, but it gave Puts and Time for Three more time to consider it. As Puts explains in the notes on his website:

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"Though my original title was simply Triple Concerto, we all agreed there was something more than abstract musical expression going on, that there was a story being told. Could the refrain at the opening of the concerto be a message sent into space, a call to intelligent life across the vast distances containing clues to our DNA, to our very nature as Earth people? Could the Morse code-like rhythms of the scherzo suggest radio transmissions, wave signals, etc.? And might the third movement (originally called simply "Ballad") represent the moment of contact itself? (Admittedly, the climax of the film adaptation of Carl Sagan's Contact, at which point Ellie, played by Jodie Foster, en route via a wormhole to an alien civilization, witnesses a radiant cosmic event to which she tearfully breathes, "No words...they should have sent a poet...no words..." was in my mind during these discussions.)"

The **first movement** (The Call) perhaps has the most striking and unique opening of any concerto. The three soloists don't play. They sing softly in falsetto on the simple vowel "oo."¹ Listen carefully as these four brief fragments, or motives, will underlie the entire movement and return at the end of the first movement in a "sense of questioning," where the trio now sings and plays simultaneously. The motives will also be featured prominently in the third movement and make a stunning return towards the end of the fourth movement when – spoiler alert – the entire orchestra will "sing."

Following the motives' vocal introduction, the woodwinds repeat them, eventually joined by the horns, while the solo violins accompany with cross-string arpeggio patterns. Roles are reversed when the three soloists take up the motivic theme accompanied by florid gestures in the flutes. This "give and take" characterizes much of the movement. The solo trio has a brief contrasting interlude alone with more syncopated rhythms. Afterward, the music surges forward, reaching a moment when the horns alone have the motivic theme. The movement ends quietly.

The **second movement** (Codes) is indicated as a scherzo and marked "very fast." It's a relentless, perpetual motion piece. Orchestral chords "stab" the texture, while the soloists drive the music forward with "syncopated rhythms and virtuosic arpeggios." Hidden within the chords are references to the first movement's motives.

The **third movement** (Contact) begins with the clarinets and bassoons referencing the opening motives, only now they are more discordant. Low strings harmonize, and an English horn enjoys a brief solo. The slow, expressive nature of the music contrasts with the previous wild scherzo. The composer writes that he "had the image of an abandoned vessel floating inert in the recesses of space."

Puts writes further:

The soloists interrupt this with a quiet, gently rolling meditation, eventually inviting a solo oboe and a solo clarinet to join in lyrical counterpoint high above. Eventually, the soloists recall the stark opening of the movement, rendering its rhythms into an unaccompanied phrase of tenderness and longing.

[1] It is unusual to ask instrumental musicians to vocalize, but it has been done occasionally in the classical repertoire over the last fifty years. George Crumb's *Makrokosmos* 1 and 2 for solo piano (1972 and 1973), Joseph Schwantner's tribute to Martin Luther King, *New Morning for the World* (1982), and Peter Vask's Cello Concerto #2 are three works that come to mind. Of course, folk, rock, and jazz musicians frequently play instruments and sing simultaneously. Some classical singers have the talent to accompany themselves when practicing, but singing or vocalizing has not been traditionally taught to classical instrumental musicians as a performance skill.

Contact

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The **fourth movement** is subtitled “Convivium,” which is a banquet, feast, or gathering. It can also have sacred connotations. The composer writes that he was inspired after hearing a class of twelve young cellists, including his son, play a Bulgarian folk song. The result is a very energetic *Gankino Horo*, an intricate folk pattern with an irregular rhythm, in this case, notated as eleven sixteenth notes to the bar (11/16) and divided into groups of 4+3+4.

The solo trio starts the whirlwind dance. Blocks of orchestral texture punctuate the music in a call-and-response fashion. At the height of the frenzy, the opening motives (the Call) from the first movement reappear to arrest the momentum. An extended cadenza occurs for the solo trio. The score indicates that the soloists will improvise the cadenza.

When the orchestra breaks in, it is another Bulgarian dance. This time, it is a *Grancharsko*, which will be even faster and with a metrical pattern of beats equivalent to 2+2+2+3. In Bulgaria, a *grancharsko* is a circle dance in which the leader calls out the direction and variations in which the dancers will move. As before, the elongated notes of the “Call” emerge to underlie the texture until the *entire* orchestra softly sings the motives while the trio continues the rhythm of the dance.

The reprise of the opening motives brings us full circle in a musically satisfying way, conveying a universal message and a feeling of wonderment. A final burst of rhythmic propulsion concludes the concerto.

Kevin Puts leaves us with these final thoughts:

The word contact has gained new resonance during these years of isolation [during the pandemic]. It is my hope that this concerto might be heard as an expression of yearning for this fundamental human need. I am deeply grateful to Time for Three for their belief in my work and for the tireless collaborative spirit that allowed us to develop this showcase for their immense talents.

A consortium of orchestras and festivals, including the San Francisco Symphony, the Colorado Symphony, the Spokane Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Sun Valley Music Festival, commissioned *Contact*. The concerto premiered in March 2022 with Time for Three and the Florida Orchestra.

The work is scored for two solo violins and a solo contrabass (double bass), each amplified. The large orchestra is scored for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, an English horn, two clarinets, a bass clarinet, two bassoons, and a contrabassoon. The brass section has four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and a tuba. In addition to timpani, the colorful (and busy) percussion section of three players uses a glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, triangle, tambourine, woodblock, crash cymbals, tam-tam, snare drum, and bass drum. There is an orchestral pianist and the strings.

Time for Three recorded *Contact* on the Deutsche Grammophon label with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Xian Zhang. It is paired with Jennifer Higdon’s *Concerto 4-3*, a work the Wichita audience heard on January 31 and February 1, 2015, when Time for Three last appeared with the Wichita Symphony.

Contact

continued

Limited quantities of the CD will be for sale in Century II's lobby during intermission and after the concert.

For more information about Kevin Puts and his music, visit his website at <https://www.kevinputs.com/>.

Since *Contact* will be unfamiliar to many listeners, it is encouraged that you listen to it before attending the concert. It will enrich your experience. This link will take you to the first movement on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/4ksOciXtZcE?si=iolbSCUiTtNzSwuw>

Then, you must scroll through the options to find the other three movements since the recording is not posted consecutively.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV

Born April 27, 1891 in Sontsovka, Russian Empire (now in the Donetsk Oblast region, Ukraine)

Died March 5, 1953 in Moscow, Soviet Union (now Russia)

Romeo and Juliet, Suite from the Ballet, Op. 64

1. The Montagues and the Capulets (5')
2. The Young Juliet (3'30")
3. Masks (2')
4. Romeo and Juliet (7'30")
5. Death of Tybalt (5'30")
6. Romeo and Juliet Before Parting (8'30")
7. Romeo at the Grave of Juliet (6')

The Wichita Symphony last performed a suite from the ballet on February 19 and 20, 2005. The WSO's previous Music Director, Andrew Sewell, conducted it on that occasion.

Disillusioned with life as a touring pianist and dissatisfied with inconsistent reviews of his original compositions, Prokofiev transitioned back to permanent residency in the Soviet Union during the early 1930s. Prokofiev, who had a reputation as an *enfant terrible* and musical "modernist" earlier in his career, left Russia after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution to seek his fortune in the West. Recognizing that the primary musical influences of the 1920s had become Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg, representing two different musical streams, neither of which felt comfortable to him, Prokofiev disavowed his earlier modernist tendencies and proclaimed he would seek a more straightforward and melodic style, one that was sympathetic to the Soviet definition of realism.

His Soviet peers were eager to welcome him home and recognized him as a leading composer of the Soviet people. In 1934, Sergei Radlov (1892-1958), Theater Director of the Mariinsky Theater in Leningrad, approached Prokofiev about composing a ballet based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare's works, especially his tragedies, were held in high esteem by Soviet authorities. The Soviet State recommended ballets relating to actual stories and sought to replace some ballets danced to abstract scenarios. Radlov and his colleague, Adrian Piotrovsky (1898-1937),¹ began creating the synopsis for the ballet. Misinterpreting Soviet wishes for "happy" and "optimistic" outcomes, Radlov and Piotrovsky rewrote Shakespeare's ending so Romeo would find Juliet alive at the end – a kind of "and they lived happily ever after scenario." Prokofiev went along with this, wryly remarking that "living people can dance, but the dead can't dance lying down."

Circumstances intervened, halting the ballet project at the Mariinsky Theater. Dancers were already complaining that the music was too difficult to dance to. But externally, the Communist Party Boss in Leningrad, Sergei Kirov, was assassinated on December 1, 1934, some thought on orders of Josef Stalin, who may have viewed Kirov as a problematic competitor. In the aftermath, the Mariinsky Theater and Ballet were renamed the Kirov Theater and Ballet. In the administrative shuffle, Radlov found himself out of a job.

The Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow expressed interest in the ballet, and Radlov moved the project to Moscow. Again, the efforts had to be aborted. Soviet officials expressed their discontent over the ballet's altered ending. The final nail in the coffin came on January 28, 1936, when the Soviet and Party newspaper, *Pravda*, printed the infamous critique of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, entitled "Muddle Instead of

[1] Piotrovsky would run afoul of the authorities, who criticized him in a February 1936 *Pravda* editorial for "balletic falsehoods." He fell victim to Stalin's purge of the intelligentsia and was arrested in July 1937 and executed on November 21, 1937.

Romeo and Juliet, Suite from the Ballet, Op. 64

continued

Music.” If the creative class had concerns before, the article, believed to have come from Stalin, struck fear into hearts. Subsequently, the Bolshoi Ballet reneged on their agreement to produce *Romeo and Juliet*.

Not wanting all his work to be wasted, Prokofiev extracted music from the ballet and created two Suites for Orchestra consisting of seven pieces each. He also felt that the ballet might be accepted later if audiences became more familiar with the music. The first Suite (Op. 64a) premiered in Moscow on November 24, 1936, and the Second (Op. 64b) on April 15, 1937, in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Prokofiev conducted the Suites in their American premiere with the Boston Symphony on March 25 and 26, 1938. A shortened two-act ballet production was performed in 1938 in Brno, Czechoslovakia (now Czech Republic), using music mainly from the two Suites.²

Eventually, the Kirov Ballet took up the ballet project again, this time with choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky in charge. He restored Shakespeare’s tragic ending to the play, made some additional cuts, and added other scenes without consulting Prokofiev, who reluctantly agreed to compose some additional music. Still, the preparation was not without challenges. As before, the dancers complained about the difficulties of dancing to Prokofiev’s music and threatened to boycott the premiere scheduled just two weeks later.

The ballet’s eventual premiere on January 11, 1940, in Leningrad at the Kirov Ballet was an unqualified success. Critics raved and called the evening a great moment for Soviet ballet. Prima ballerina Galina Ulanova, who danced the part of Juliet, alluded to the ballet’s difficult birth when she paraphrased Shakespeare’s words in a toast to Prokofiev at the premiere’s after-party:

Never was a tale of greater woe,

Than Prokofiev’s music to Romeo.

Prokofiev’s music for *Romeo and Juliet* is a masterful synthesis of the musical style he used in previous compositions. The neo-barbarism of his *Scythian Suite* (1915) portrays the violent conflict between the Montague and Capulet families. His neo-classical style, familiar from works like his *Classical Symphony* (1916-1917), becomes a throwback to the courtly dances of the ballet’s Renaissance setting. Lush late-romantic orchestration and lyrical melodies portray the passion between Romeo and Juliet.

The orchestra is large and offers an abundance of color. Prokofiev reduces the orchestration for the suites slightly from the eventual forces he employed for the ballet. For instance, there are four horns (plus an assistant) instead of six and three trumpets instead of four. A tenor saxophone adds its tone color to the orchestra. Despite the size of the orchestra, which is fully utilized many times, the music also offers contrasts in almost chamber music-like settings.

The complete orchestration for the suites consists of a piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, an English horn, two clarinets, a bass clarinet, two bassoons, a contrabassoon, one tenor saxophone, four horns (plus an assistant), cornett, two trumpets, three trombones, and a tuba. The percussion battery has timpani, triangle, glockenspiel,

[2] Prokofiev created a Third Suite (Op. 101) with six pieces of music from the ballet in 1946. He also published ten pieces for solo piano (Op. 75) using music from the ballet in 1937. These piano pieces remain among the most popular of Prokofiev’s piano works.

Romeo and Juliet, Suite from the Ballet, Op. 64

continued

tambourine, snare drum, cymbals, and a bass drum.³ There is a harp. The keyboard musician doubles on piano and celesta. Prokofiev uses a large string section.

Many of the movements of the Suites are composites of a couple of scenes from the ballet, so efforts to find the exact copy in the complete ballet will be fruitless. Maestro Hege's selection of movements from the two Suites begins with the opening two movements from the Second Suite.

The Montagues and Capulets movement opens with two discordant screams of anguish in the woodwinds, brass, and percussion against the soft background harmony of muted strings. The brief introduction proceeds into a heavily accented, swashbuckling allegro representing the testosterone-driven animosity between the two clans. A tranquil interlude for flutes and clarinet accompanied by soft strings, harp, and small percussion with a celesta eventually joining in depicts a more civilized representation of court life.

The Young Juliet is a beautiful representation of an energetic, somewhat skittish young teenager. Slow passages, offering introspective reflection, contrast with the extroverted fast passages of her personality.

The following three movements are from the First Suite.

Masks takes us to a masked ball and the arrival of Romeo and his friends, who are intent on crashing the ball. The music is Prokofiev in a witty and sardonic mood. The percussion section introduces them with a swagger. Solo phrases for cornet, clarinet, and oboe impart a mocking tone.

Romeo and Juliet represents the famous balcony scene. A soft opening establishes the nighttime environment. Snippets of music from *Young Juliet* mark Juliet's appearance on the balcony. Hesitant chords in the low strings signal Romeo's approach. There follows a broad romantic melody in the English horn and cellos. As the movement progresses, it accumulates layers of instruments with Prokofiev slowly building a long musical arc that expresses the passion between the two young people. The music tapers off with their reluctant parting "with such sweet sorrow."

The Death of Tybalt is the finale of the ballet's Act II. Following the death of Mercutio, the story moves to the violent confrontation between Tybalt and Romeo. In this piece, which concludes the set of pieces in the First Suite, the music portrays the tension, the action of the swordfight, and ultimately, the fatal blow, stagger, and collapse of the mortally wounded Tybalt.

Returning to the Second Suite, next we hear **Romeo and Juliet Before Parting**. After the loud, bombastic sound of the entire orchestra in the preceding movement, the contrast of reducing the sound to a chamber orchestra level is striking. The music is Prokofiev at his most intimate, with solo passages for winds and strings. Prokofiev builds and thickens his textures with the choir of horns accompanied by surging winds and strings as the music gains momentum. As in the previous balcony scene, the arc of the music ebbs to a soft transparency of eighth notes beating like the passing of time. A chromatic solo for tuba enters ominously, foreshadowing the doom over the romantic duo.

[3] The Second Suite uses maracas for one of the dances, but that movement is not included in tonight's performance.

Romeo and Juliet, Suite from the Ballet, Op. 64

continued

Not quite the story's ending or of the ballet, Prokofiev chose **Romeo at Juliet's Grave** to conclude his Second Suite, and so does Maestro Hege this evening for his suite of movements from *Romeo and Juliet*. The music reprises the love music of the ballet, but notably now with chromatic and dissonant inflections that amplify Romeo's grief. The underlying rhythmic accents create a threnody and the funereal darkness of the scene. Softly, the violins intone the music of parting heard earlier. With a final whisper from the tuba and contrabassoon, the music dissolves into silence.

Since Maestro Hege selects pieces from both Suites 1 and 2 that Prokofiev compiled, a single YouTube version that's exactly the sequence outlined in these notes is hard to find, if it even exists. However, this performance by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic conducted by Antony Hermus in the Concertgebouw includes the first five pieces (and a couple of others) from Hege's Suite. Before attending the Wichita Symphony, listening to this will introduce you to Prokofiev's music.

https://youtu.be/7qqrlusxVAI?si=axog-Qy6sEMz_xkA

If you're curious, have two-and-a-half hours to spare, and want to experience the entire ballet, there are several productions on YouTube, but here's one from the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia.

https://youtu.be/1NbjiBSeC5M?si=az4UDGfkZ_Vo-tZr