

Prokofiev's  
*War and Peace*

# ВОЙНА И МИРЪ.

СОЧИНЕНІИ

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ТОМЪ ШЕСТОЙ.

МОСКВА.

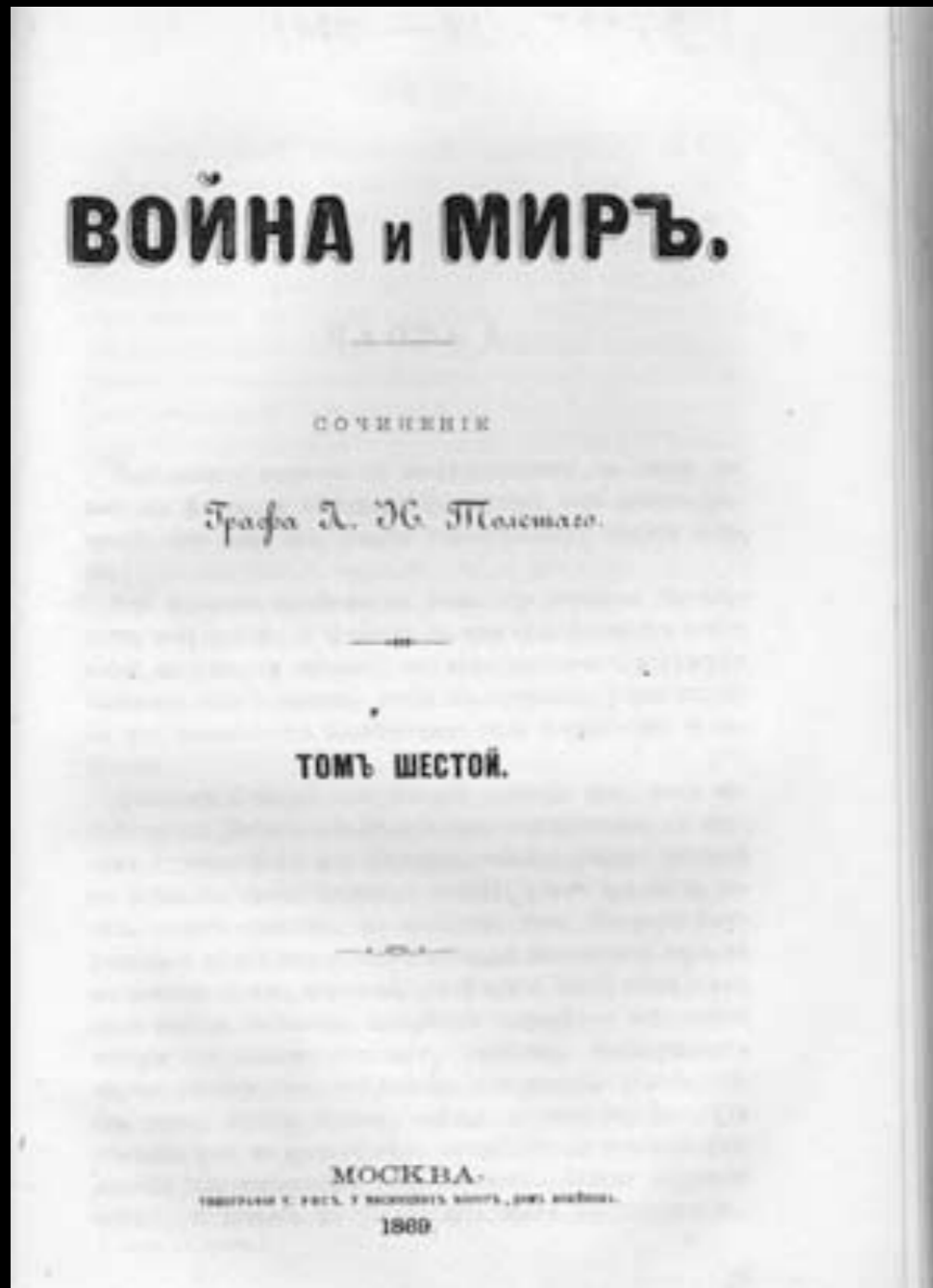
ИЗДАНИЕ Т. ПЕТЛ. И КОМПАНИИ ВЪЗНУ, ДРУГ. КОМПАНИИ.

1869

War and Peace  
1863-69



# War and Society?



## War and Peace 1863-69



- Events of 1805-1812
- Tolstoy's novel written in 1863-69
- Prokofiev's opera 1941-1953



- 559 characters in Tolstoy's novel
- over 70 in Prokofiev's opera, although many singers double up
- 229 words in the longest sentence
- the novel ends with an essay on the philosophy of history



БОЛЬШОЙ ЗВУКОВОЙ ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ ФИЛЬМ



# АЛЕКСАНДР НЕВСКИЙ

Александр — один из самых выдающихся  
государственных деятелей древней Руси, человек,  
который вывел нашу страну на путь величия.

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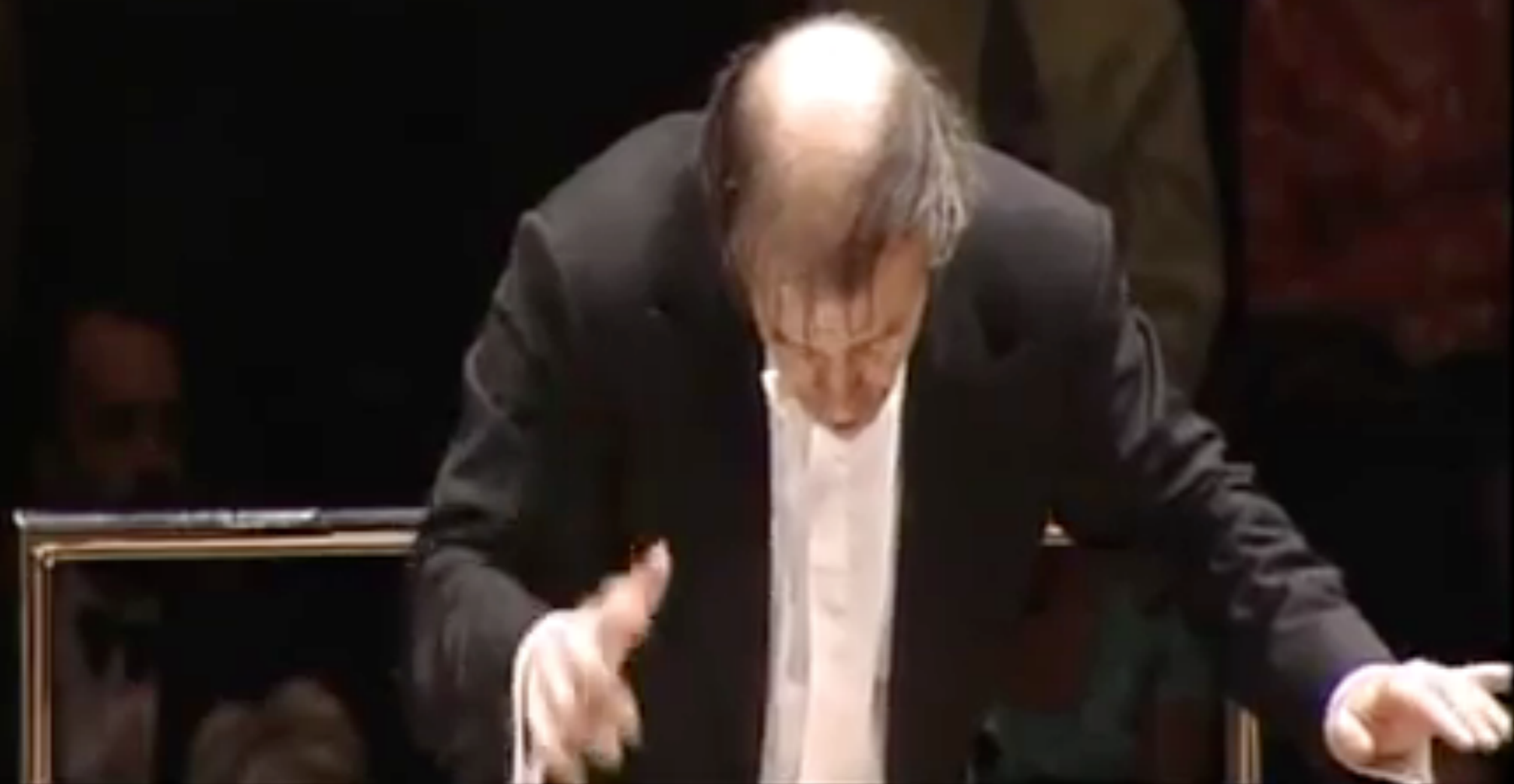


- Prokofiev's love of setting prose to music
- *The Ugly Duckling* (1914)
- Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of October (1937)





BBC FOUR







- April 1941 P writes a scenario in 11 scenes
- 22 June 1941 Germany attacks the USSR
- August 1941-April 1942 first version finished in vocal score (with piano)
- February 1942 Khrapchenko and Shlifshteyn visit Tbilisi and Prokofiev plays the completed scenes on the piano
- May 1942 begins orchestration but is already aware of the necessity for revisions
- 12 May 1942 Richter and Vedernikov play the opera for the Ministry
- Orchestrated all the peace scenes +Andrei's death
- Mid-July received official letters demanding changes

- made revisions while continuing to orchestrate and produced Version II by 1943

# Version I

11 scenes; completed April 1942 in vocal score

## PEACE

Overture		
Scene 1	Otradnoe	presenting Andrey and Natasha
Scene 2	At Bolkonsky's	Natasha is humiliated by her father-in-law
Scene 3	At Hèlène's	Anatole confesses his love for Natasha
Scene 4	At Dolokhov's	Anatole prepares to elope with Natasha
Scene 5	At Akhrosimova's	The elopement fails
Scene 6	At Pierre's	Pierre sends Anatole away; war is declared

## WAR

Scene 7	Before the battle of Borodino	The Russians mass their forces
<i>Scene 8 *</i>	<i>The Shevardino Redoubt</i>	<i>Napoleon during the battle of Borodino</i>
Scene 9	Moscow	The French are in Moscow; devastation and fire
Scene 10	Mitishchi	Natasha and the dying Andrey
Scene 11	The Smolensk Road	The Russian victory

\* Scene 8 was planned but not written at that stage



Original version: Beginning of Scene 1  
Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



Prince Andrey: Clear spring sky - is this not an illusion?



“Yes, here in this forest was that oak with which I agreed,” thought Prince Andrew. “But where is it?” he again wondered, gazing at the left side of the road, and without recognizing it he looked with admiration at the very oak he sought. The old oak, quite transfigured, spreading out a canopy of sappy dark-green foliage, stood rapt and slightly trembling in the rays of the evening sun. Neither gnarled fingers nor old scars nor old doubts and sorrows were any of them in evidence now. Through the hard century-old bark, even where there were no twigs, leaves had sprouted such as one could hardly believe the old veteran could have produced.

“Yes, it is the same oak,” thought Prince Andrew, and all at once he was seized by an unreasoning springtime feeling of joy and renewal. All the best moments of his life suddenly rose to his memory. Austerlitz with the lofty heavens, his wife’s dead reproachful face, Pierre at the ferry, that girl thrilled by the beauty of the night, and that night itself and the moon, and... all this rushed suddenly to his mind.

Original version: Scene 1  
Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



Sonya, Sonya, how can one sleep?!





Original version: Scene 1

Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



Natasha: I would like to crouch, put my arms around my knees... tightly... as tight as possible... and fly off...



Opera production - Scene 2 (as in the original version)



Scene 2: Natasha's longing "Maybe he will come back today... perhaps he is here already and I've forgotten..."



Paris Opera production - Scene 2 (as in the original version)

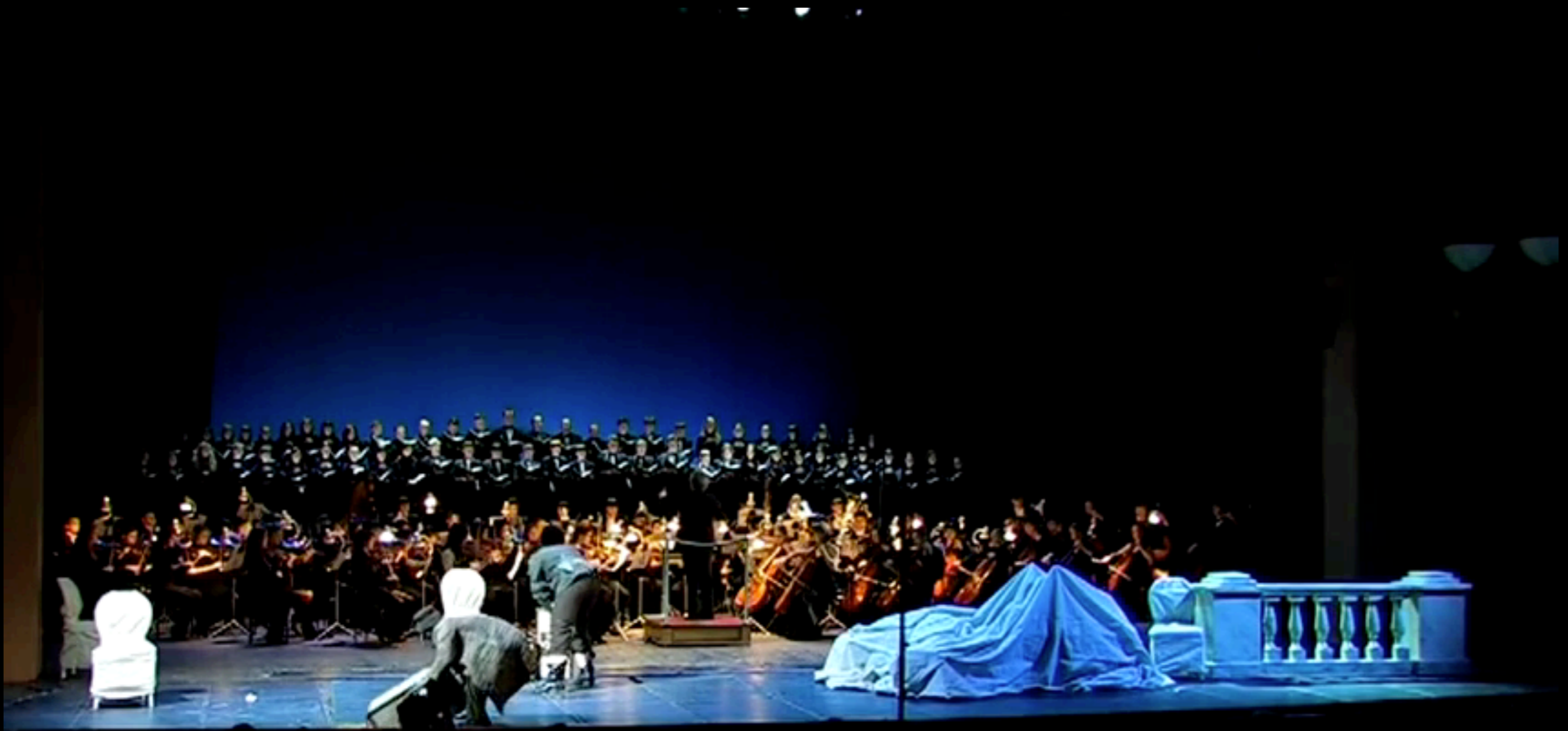


The old Bolkonsky: cutting sarcasm





Original version: Scene 7  
Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



How our Kutuzov came out to meet the people  
And how he called them to beat the French





Original version: Scene 11 (last)  
Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



Kutuzov: The enemy has been vanquished...



Original version: Scene 11 (last)  
Glasgow/Rostov semi-staged production



Kutuzov's humorous banter ...  
Hurrah to the Saviour of Russia!





# Revised ending: the Bolshoi production





Mikhail Khrapchenko (1904-1986), literary scholar. 1939-1948 Chair of the Committee for Arts Affairs (essentially Minister of Culture)

Semyon Shlifshteyn (1903-1975), musicologist, 1939-1944 senior consultant of the Music Section of the All-Union Committee for Arts Affairs. In February 1942 Shlifshteyn came to Tbilisi to hear parts of *War and Peace*





- 12 May 1942 Richter and Vedernikov played the opera for the Ministry
- There was a project to stage the opera at the Bolshoi with Samosud conducting and Eisenstein directing
- Mid-July 1942 Prokofiev received a letter from Khrapchenko:
- lyrical scenes successful
- serious doubts about the war scenes - their general tone is wrong
- no organic connection between them, too many petty details
- bad idea to begin with a lyrical, intimate scene
- the opera needs to be seriously reworked

Shlifshteyn's letter  
(came in the same envelope as Khrapchenko's)

### **"Peace" scenes**

Natasha and Andrey are very good, their music is truly poetic, but  
Pierre is less satisfactory

Scenes 2, 4, 6 – too many conversations, too many irrelevant  
details

Scene 6 – cut Pierre's thoughts on the Masons' brotherhood; show  
him as a noble man rather than as a philosophizing romantic

Scene 10 "Pi-ti" [repeated syllables of Andrey's delirium] is  
ridiculous

## “War” scenes

**Scene 8** Good beginning; procession of the Russian troops – good, the chorus, the Cossack song – all good. But too many conversations. The Russian simple people are represented as colourful but simpletons. Where is that “wonderful people” that Kutuzov is talking about?

To show the unity of the Russian people

A good theme sung by Andrey can be used as a victory theme.

A broad vocal episode is needed for Kutuzov

**Scene 9** (Moscow) is no good except three moments (madmen, final song, etc). Suggests including a procession of Napoleon (this is not from Tolstoy, but from Tarlé). Demands big symphonic development here.

**Scene 11** should not just be the tying of loose ends. *Alexander Nevsky*-like music is needed. (Reminds him of the connection with the present.)

Thus, 9 and 11 have to be thoroughly reworked

## Version III

13 scenes in two parts (two nights); completed 1946-48

PEACE		
Overture		
Scene 1	Otradnoe	presenting Andrey and Natasha
Scene 2	The Ball	Natasha and Andrey dance their first waltz
Scene 3	At Bolkonsky's	Natasha is humiliated by her father-in-law
Scene 4	At Hélène's	Anatole confesses his love for Natasha
Scene 5	At Dolokhov's	Anatole's prepares to elope with Natasha
Scene 6	At Akhrosimova's	The elopement fails
Scene 7	At Pierre's	Pierre sends Anatole away; war is declared

## WAR

Scene 8	Before the battle of Borodino	The Russians mass their forces
Scene 9	The Shevardino Redoubt	Napoleon during the battle of Borodino
Scene 10	At Fili	Military council; Kutuzov proposes to withdraw from Moscow
Scene 11	Moscow	The French are in Moscow; devastation and fire
Scene 12	Mitishchi	Natasha and the dying Andrey
Scene 13	The Smolensk Road	The Russian victory

# New Scene 2 - The Ball (the Mariinsky production)









# Glinka Valse-Fantasie



Mariinsky 1978 Scene 10 - Kutuzov's Aria





Mariinsky 1978 Scene 9 - Napoleon's doubts







Mariinsky 1978 - Scene 12 (The dying Andrey)



Andrey's delirium and the invisible chorus: "pi-ti pi-ti"





Mariinsky 1978



“I cannot die! I love life...”



Mariinsky 1978 Scene 12 - reminiscences







## Scene 11

Napoleon's procession through the burning Moscow



Francesco Vendramini, The Great Fire of Moscow





