



Prokofiev

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) was born in Sontsovka, Ukraine, hearing music even before he was born due to his mother's devotion to music and her practice of piano compositions – especially works by Chopin and Beethoven. Prokofiev composed his first piano composition at the age of five, an 'Indian Gallop', which was written down by his mother. By age seven, he had also learned to play chess, which would become another of his passions. After seeing Tchaikovsky's *The Sleeping Beauty*, he began composing his first opera, *The Giant*, at age 9, as well as various other pieces. As he composed and played, he left out the black keys on the piano because they frightened him.

Prokofiev was unpopular and was known to have an unpleasant and prideful personality. He could work 14 hours per day, pausing only to eat or to tell his children to be quiet. Despite his sometimes barbaric attitude, he wrote a famous children's work, *Peter and the Wolf*, calling it "a present not only to the children of Moscow, but also to my own." In addition to symphonic music, Prokofiev wrote ballets, operas, and music for films.

Much of Prokofiev's music was controversial. In fact, his final opera, *A Tale of a Real Man*, was banned by Joseph Stalin due to political reasons. Ironically, Stalin and Prokofiev died on the same day in 1953.

Sources: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prokofiev>

Krull, Kathleen. *Lives of the Musicians: Good Times, Bad Times (and What the Neighbors Thought)*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1993.