

# The New Criterion

## Features

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## Prokofiev abroad

by [John Simon](#)

On the diaries of Sergey Prokofiev.

Three things give diaries universal interest: the eminence of the diarist; his or her psychological, philosophical, or political acumen; and a distinctive style of writing. The historical significance and the writer's sense of humor are not to be overlooked either. On all these counts, Sergey Prokofiev's diaries score very high indeed.

The second volume, *Behind the Mask: Diaries 1915–1923*, has recently appeared.<sup>[1]</sup> The first volume, *Diaries 1901–1914: Prodigious Youth*, is of somewhat lesser interest, as prior to age twenty-four Prokofiev (1891–1953) had not yet reached creative maturity. The third volume remains to be published in English, but even that will take us only to 1933, after which, though there are some autobiographical writings, systematic diary-keeping ends.

This, possibly because Prokofiev was then beginning to ma ...

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