

London **Philharmonic** Orchestra

Tchaikovsky
Complete Symphonies
Vladimir Jurowski





Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13, 'Winter Daydreams'

Tchaikovsky's First Symphony is such an endearing, vital, seductively atmospheric work that one would imagine it must have been a joy to write. In fact the opposite is true: few, if any of his other works caused Tchaikovsky such protracted pain. He was 26 when he began it, having freshly graduated from the St Petersburg Conservatoire and walked straight into a job at the newly created Conservatoire in Moscow. At first things were looking encouraging. His first orchestral performance (an Overture in F major) had been a success, and his teacher, the pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein, had urged him to write a symphony. But then came a crushing review of another work, and Tchaikovsky's confidence plummeted: 'I spent the entire day wandering aimlessly about the town', he told a friend, 'repeating to myself "I am sterile, I am a nonentity, nothing will ever come of me, I have no talent"'. He soldiered on with the new symphony, but his determination to keep working through the nights (inevitably resulting in insomnia) led to a frightening breakdown.

In the end, work seems to have saved Tchaikovsky, and the Symphony was finished in piano score by the beginning of June 1867.

But his troubles weren't over yet. Rubinstein was highly critical of the completed score, and virtually ordered Tchaikovsky to revise it. Even that didn't please, and only the *Scherzo* was performed – unsuccessfully. More alterations were made then, at last, in February 1868, the First Symphony had its first full performance in Moscow. This time it was a huge success; but Tchaikovsky's self-doubt was not appeased, and it wasn't until 1874 that he at last allowed the further-revised score to be published.

Surprisingly, despite memories of this agonising slow birth, Tchaikovsky always maintained a special affection for his First Symphony. 'For all its glaring deficiencies', he wrote in 1883, 'I have a soft spot for it. Although it is immature in many respects it is essentially better and richer in content than many other more mature works.' As so often, he was being harsh: the First Symphony may have its faults, but they are hardly 'glaring', and most of the time the freshness of the material fully compensates. The opening theme (flute and bassoon above shimmering violins) is a lovely inspiration, with an unmistakable Slavic accent. From the first there is a strong sense of forward-gliding momentum, like the easy movement of a sleigh across smooth snow. Tchaikovsky's sharp, clear orchestration registers impressions of cold

very effectively, while from time to time warm string harmonies manage to convey a sense of cosiness and security – this traveller is clearly well wrapped up and enjoying his ‘winter daydreams’.

The slow movement is still more effective. An eloquent theme for muted strings leads to a long oboe tune, with answering birdcalls on flute, unmistakably Russian in so many of its melodic twists and turns. The rest of the movement is essentially a meditation (daydreams again) on phrases from this tune, with occasional reminiscences of the flute’s birdsong, all done with much more skill and imagination than Tchaikovsky’s later judgement would have us believe. The return of the opening string theme at the end is also deftly timed.

Next comes an agile, lightly dancing *Scherzo*, with wonderful use of woodwind colours (a very mature Tchaikovskian touch). Hesitant cellos and basses suggest for a moment that the central trio section might be darker-hued, but what actually emerges is a warm, suave waltz theme on violins and cellos. Then, after a sombre slow introduction, the *Finale* soon sets off at a more determined pace in the major key, with trombones, tuba, cymbals and bass drum adding their weight to the orchestra for the first time. The exuberance can sound a little forced (a rare indication

of Tchaikovsky’s state of mind at the time he wrote it?). But after all his labours, Tchaikovsky is surely entitled to a bit of over-the-top celebration.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 17, ‘Little Russian’

Composers often blow hot and cold about their own music, but few have been subject to such extreme mood- and valuation-swings as Tchaikovsky. The Second Symphony is a case in point. At first his pride in his achievement was immense, clearly boosted by the judgements of trusted friends like Nikolay Kondratyev. ‘This work of genius (as Kondratyev calls my symphony) is close to completion ... I think it’s my best composition as regards perfection of form – a quality for which I have not always been conspicuous.’ The positive feedback kept coming. When Tchaikovsky played the finale of the new symphony to his Russian nationalist colleagues – the so-called ‘Mighty Handful’ – at the house of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov in November 1872, he was thrilled by their reaction: ‘The whole company nearly tore me to pieces with rapture – and Madame Rimsky-Korsakov begged me in tears to let her arrange it for piano duet.’

But as so often with Tchaikovsky, the picture changed. When the publisher Bessel prevaricated about printing the score, Tchaikovsky began to see this as a blessing in disguise. Seven years later he set to work on a major revision. The original first movement now made him shudder with horror: 'My God, how difficult and noisy and disconnected and obscure it was!' Indeed the whole Symphony was 'unlucky' – Tchaikovsky seems to have forgotten that the first public performance in 1873 was so successful that the Symphony had to be repeated two months later! Soon he was threatening to burn the first version, and doing his best to suppress the printed parts.

Listening to the familiar revised version, the first-time listener may find Tchaikovsky's radical change of heart baffling. Could the original really be that bad? Granted the work isn't quite as 'perfect' formally as he originally thought. Certainly the finales of his later symphonies are more subtly constructed. But the work is so generously tuneful, so imaginatively scored, and so full of what is obviously mature Tchaikovsky that it's hard to identify any cause for shame on his part – however exaggerated. Perhaps the real problem is that by the time he came to revise the Second Symphony, Tchaikovsky had turned his back decisively on the nationalism of the Mighty Handful.

His musicianship, he realised, was altogether more cosmopolitan than theirs. Could it be that the original version of the Symphony was simply tainted by association?

Whatever the cause, we must be grateful that Tchaikovsky deemed the Symphony worth saving. The very first notes make it clear we are in for something special. From an emphatic full-orchestral chord a hushed horn solo emerges, intoning a soulful theme – the first of three ideas in this work based on Ukrainian folksongs. (In Tchaikovsky's time the Ukraine was known as 'Little Russia', hence the Symphony's nickname.) This builds to a powerful and dramatic *Allegro vivo*. But just when it seems that memories of that atmospheric slow introduction are forgotten, the horn cuts in again with its folk-inspired melody, its final phrase echoed by a lugubrious 'dying' low bassoon – a typically Tchaikovskian touch.

Instead of the usual slow movement, Tchaikovsky brings contrast with a sweetly innocent march movement, its outer sections taken from his rejected opera *Undine* (one of those scores which, alas, Tchaikovsky did manage to destroy). At its heart a solo clarinet introduces another Ukrainian folk-based tune, with a deliciously light accompaniment on two flutes. The following *Scherzo* raises the Symphony to new imaginative heights: the colours

scintillate, the rhythms dance with remarkable freedom and flexibility – from this movement alone you could probably guess that Tchaikovsky was also a great ballet composer. The *Finale* is dominated by the Symphony's third Ukrainian folk-based tune (presented by the full orchestra in the brief slow introduction). As craftsmanship it may be a lot less refined than the *Scherzo*, but it can be tremendous bracing fun in performance – conjuring up the smell of vodka, the twang of balalaikas and the creaking of leather boots. There is one darker moment: rasping low woodwind, bass brass and an ominous *fortissimo* stroke on a gong. But the exhilarating *Presto* coda soon dismisses such thoughts, and the Symphony ends in wild elation.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29, 'Polish'

In August 1875 Tchaikovsky wrote to the composer Sergey Taneyev that he had 'written a symphony. It is in D major and consists of five movements'. This seemingly bald statement actually identifies two important features that set Tchaikovsky's Third Symphony apart from its fellows. Generally speaking, Tchaikovsky preferred

the darker minor mode for his big symphonic utterances; and even in this, the brightest of his symphonies, he feels the need to temper that brightness by setting the middle three movements, plus the first movement's slow introduction, in minor keys. And the five-movement structure is equally unique: the 'extra' movement is the *Alla tedesca* – a lilting symphonic waltz, whose declared 'German' (*tedesca*) style makes nonsense of the Symphony's still-frequently used nickname, 'Polish'. That name has nothing to do with Tchaikovsky: it seems to have been invented by the conductor August Manns for one of his popular Crystal Palace concerts. True, the *Finale* is largely based on the rhythm of the 'polonaise' or 'polacca' – a dance strongly associated with Poland at the time, and much favoured by Tchaikovsky. Otherwise it is hard to identify anything specific to that nation in the Third Symphony.

A possibly more relevant fact is that Tchaikovsky conceived the Symphony around the time he was working on his ballet *Swan Lake*. The balletic character of the *Alla tedesca* is clear from the start, and while the central *Andante elegiaco* is more funereal in character, the mysterious string *tremolos* near the end of the movement strongly recall Tchaikovsky's dramatic use of the same device in *Swan Lake*. And the airborne *Scherzo* that follows is far less remarkable for its 'symphonic' development of motifs

than for its brilliant use of orchestral colour. Particularly striking are the washes of string sound at the heart of the movement Tchaikovsky creates by having the players move their bows rapidly forwards and backwards across their strings. This too is reminiscent of some of the magical orchestral effects in the ballet score.

Surrounding these three gentle but flavoursome movements are two bracing, extrovert *Allegros*. The first movement's confident, distinctly Russian-inflected main theme is all the more outstanding on its first appearance for the way it seems to cast off the gloom of the slower introduction – as though Tchaikovsky, having led us to expect something sombre, suddenly breaks out into a cheery 'fooled you!' The first movement's exhilarating momentum is sustained magnificently, with the final build-up particularly well engineered.

On the whole critics have been less kind to the *Finale*; and it is true that there is something slightly academic about the fugue at the centre of the movement (led off by clarinets and second violins). But the themes are catchy enough, and the conclusion is suitably roof-raising without outstaying its welcome. The mature mastery of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth symphonies is only just around the corner.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

Tchaikovsky wrote most of his Fourth Symphony in 1877, the year of his greatest emotional crisis, unresolved and intensified by his impossible marriage, and culminating in a suicide attempt. In a letter to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck, which he was at pains to point out was written after the Symphony, he described the work as dominated by the idea of Fate, which 'hangs above your head like the sword of Damocles, and unwaveringly, constantly poisons the soul'.

This notion is embodied in the stern fanfares of the introduction to the first movement – after which the main theme of the ensuing *Moderato con anima* ('with soul') depicts the resulting 'cheerless and hopeless feeling' which 'grows yet stronger and more burning', and the waltz-time second-subject group represents a retreat from reality into a world of daydreams. The 'Fate' theme recurs three times amidst the mounting excitement of the development section, and then again after the very free, truncated recapitulation and in the much faster coda. 'Thus', in Tchaikovsky's words, 'all life is an unbroken alternation of hard reality with swiftly passing dreams and visions of happiness.'

The two middle movements are more straightforward in form and expression. The description *in modo di canzona* in the heading of the B flat minor slow movement indicates a song-like style, exemplified in the oboe's first long melody, and also the 'song form' of A–B–A – though this is complicated by the fact that there are two alternating principal themes in the outer sections, the second beginning with the opening phrase of the first turned upside-down. Tchaikovsky said that this movement suggested 'that melancholy feeling which comes in the evening when, weary from your labour, you are sitting alone', reflecting on a host of distant memories: 'happy moments, when the young blood boiled, and life was satisfying ... painful moments, irreparable losses'.

The *Scherzo*, the composer went on, 'expresses no definite feeling', but 'is made up of capricious arabesques, ... fleeting images', including 'a picture of drunken peasants and a street song', and later, 'somewhere in the distance, a military procession'. But this unusual duple-time movement is chiefly concerned with what Tchaikovsky called in an earlier letter 'a new instrumental effect of which I have great hopes'. The strings play *pizzicato* throughout the movement: the scherzo sections are for them alone. The trio is in two sections, the first for woodwind

and the second for the brass and timpani. And in a tailpiece to the trio, and again in a coda to the whole movement, the three elements, and their different tempi and thematic ideas, are ingeniously combined.

The *Finale* could be analysed in terms of variation and sonata forms, but it is most likely to be perceived as a kind of rondo, in which statements of the brilliant opening flourish in F major – joined later by a march-like idea in the same key – alternate with a subsidiary theme in various minor keys. This subsidiary theme, a Russian folksong called 'In the fields there stood a birch tree', also forms the basis of two developmental episodes. The second of these culminates in the return of the 'Fate' theme from the first movement – after which the two major-key themes return in reverse order to launch a triumphant coda. Tchaikovsky's programme here speaks of finding joy amidst the merry-making of the people, who 'have not noticed that you are solitary and sad'. 'Rejoice in others' rejoicing', he wrote to Madame von Meck, but really to himself. 'To live is still possible!'

Programme note © Anthony Burton

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Like Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, the Fifth begins with what is clearly a 'Fate' motif and which returns to haunt all three later movements. After Tchaikovsky's disastrous attempt to conquer – or at least conceal – his homosexuality by marrying one of his students in 1877, he became increasingly convinced that his life was directed by some kind of dark, implacable force. The Fifth's fateful motto theme however enters on low clarinets (a colour Tchaikovsky often used to great effect) singing a mournful, funereal theme, while low string chords underscore the sense of heavy, funereal tread. Then the string chords set out at a livelier pace, and a new theme – melancholic but with a new dancing momentum – emerges on clarinet and bassoon. This *Allegro con anima* has its exhilarating highs and stark lows, but the end echoes the beginning: a bassoon subtly recalls the outline of the original 'Fate' theme before descending to a cavernous low B, as timpani and double basses close the movement unambiguously in the minor.

Sombre low string chords begin the slow movement, but now they climb towards the light, which dawns fully in a wonderful long horn melody. If the first movement's motto

theme represents Fate, then this is almost certainly a 'Love' theme. Eventually the music grows agitated, and the first movement's 'Fate' theme storms in on trumpets, bringing the music to a dead stop. Tentatively at first, the 'Love' melody returns (now on violins with oboe countermelody) and the mood grows more ardent – until again Fate intrudes, still more aggressively, on trombones. This time there is no return of the 'Love' theme, but a tender, possibly resigned coda.

The following waltz movement is in striking contrast. Its elegant, lilting dance tune could have come straight from a ballroom scene in one of Tchaikovsky's operas or ballets. But just before the end, Fate returns again, this time quietly on low clarinets and bassoons – a dim but ghostly presence amid colourful merriment. Then Tchaikovsky begins his finale by transforming the 'Fate' theme into a resolutely major-key march tune. Before long the resolve seems to falter and a turbulent *Allegro vivace* explodes onto the scene.

At length this comes to a big expectant pause, then the major-key version of the Fate theme marches back in on strings to launch Tchaikovsky's most positive symphonic conclusion. Eventually the coda races to the finish post with memories of the first movement's dancing *Allegro* theme

shining out on trumpets and horns. Not every listener finds this final affirmation entirely convincing – but that may have been Tchaikovsky's point. After all, how often in life do we experience unequivocal triumph?

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, 'Pathétique'

In August 1893, as his Sixth Symphony was nearing completion, Tchaikovsky wrote to his nephew, 'Bob' Davidov: 'I can tell you in all sincerity that I consider this symphony the best thing I have ever done. In any case, it is the most deeply felt. And I love it as I have never loved any of my compositions.' Few would disagree with Tchaikovsky's assessment of his last work, a masterpiece of frank and disturbing emotion whose effect on the listener is made all the more powerful by the realisation that it reflects the composer's depressive state of mind during his final year.

At the time he began work on it in February 1893, he had told Bob that it was 'a programme symphony, but to a programme that should remain an enigma for everyone but myself: let them try and guess it! ... The theme is full of subjective feeling, so much

so that as I was mentally composing it ... I frequently shed tears.' Death was certainly a subject that occupied Tchaikovsky's mind at this time: although he presumably did not foresee his own demise the following autumn – almost certainly by his own hand – he did lose a number of close friends that year, and an early version of the programme scribbled down in 1892 had borne prominently the words 'life' and 'death'. But a more fundamental impetus for the Sixth Symphony was surely the spectre that had haunted the composer for many years: Fate. For Tchaikovsky, this was the implacable power that frustrated all his hopes of happiness, and his previous two symphonies had both attempted to respond to it in some way: the Fourth had confronted and then tried to brush it aside, while the Fifth had scored a somewhat hollow-sounding victory. The Sixth – subtitled by the composer 'Pathétique' – finally gives in to total defeat.

The Sixth Symphony differs from its two predecessors in having no recurring motto theme; instead, it makes use of a number of themes suggestive of upwards struggle followed by downward collapse, an outline that mirrors the overall course of the Symphony. Its presence can be detected in the murky opening of the first movement, and the material of this introduction also forms the basis of the main *Allegro non*

troppo section's restless first theme. A broad and passionate melody follows this, but any hope of consolation is violently shattered by the intervention of the central development section. This climaxes in a momentous and grinding downward sequence, and when the second theme re-emerges it is with a bitter irony that borders on pain. The passion subsides, however, and the movement closes in a mood of resignation.

The second movement promises brighter things, but its waltz-like geniality is undermined by a five-in-a-bar metre and a poignant trio and coda. It is followed by a brilliant movement in which scurrying preparations and fragments of melody lead to a seemingly joyful and triumphant march, but the descending accompaniment reminds us (as do similar figures throughout the work) that the gaiety is forced; happiness is still an illusion.

In the Finale it disappears forever in a bleak *Adagio* in which there is only hopelessness and dejection. It is a testament of despair in which optimism can find no place, and as the music sinks back into the depths from which it has struggled to rise, the final bars of Tchaikovsky's most personal and sincere symphonic statement are soft but devastating.

Programme note © Lindsay Kemp

Manfred Symphony in Four Scenes after Byron's Dramatic Poem, Op. 58 (1885)

Tchaikovsky was a composer who poured a great deal of his own emotional life into his best works – not least in the last three of his numbered symphonies, all of which are animated by unpublished programmes or storylines with an element of autobiography. And between the Fourth and Fifth came another, unnumbered Symphony – *Manfred* – based this time on an acknowledged literary programme, not even chosen by himself but suggested to him by a colleague, but nevertheless a work of great expressive power because of the way he could identify so closely with its tortured central figure.

The work's literary source was Lord Byron's poetic drama *Manfred*, written in the wake of his flight from England to the Swiss Alps following the breakdown of his marriage and the revelation of his incestuous affair with his half-sister Augusta. It had been published in 1817, and had created an international sensation lasting many years. In 1868, impressed by Berlioz's Byronic symphony *Harold in Italy* when the composer himself conducted it in Moscow, the influential Russian critic Vladimir Stasov drew up a plan for a similar four-movement

programme symphony based on *Manfred*. He offered it first to the composer Mily Balakirev, then to Berlioz himself: both declined it. It was not until 1882 that Balakirev resuscitated the plan, adding his own detailed suggestions for key-schemes and musical treatment, and sent it to Tchaikovsky. A similar collaboration, bizarre though it may seem, had a dozen years previously resulted in the celebrated *Romeo and Juliet Overture*. But this time Tchaikovsky refused, citing among other reasons his admiration for Schumann's earlier *Manfred Overture* and incidental music.

However, two years later he changed his mind, prompted by a meeting with Balakirev and a visit to Switzerland – and also by a reading of the drama, in which he must have recognised affinities between the guilt felt by Byron's hero about his incestuous past and his own feelings of shame about his secret homosexuality. Tchaikovsky composed the work in just over four months in the spring and summer of 1885, ignoring many of Balakirev's detailed suggestions but nevertheless dedicating the resulting work to him. After its first performance, in Moscow in March 1886, he briefly considered it 'my best symphonic work', before characteristically turning against it. At one stage, he considered retaining only the first movement, which he thought could stand as a separate symphonic poem.

But, as David Brown says in his biography of the composer, 'thankfully, nothing more was heard of Tchaikovsky's destructive intentions towards the last three movements'.

The first movement of the Symphony introduces the central figure of the poem, Manfred, who lives in an alpine castle and recklessly roams the peaks, shunning the company of men and communing with the spirit world, in an attempt to expiate his guilt over his illicit love for his sister Astarte. Two themes at the very outset suggest his state of mind, the first dark and despondent and dominated by a falling phrase, the second suggesting the weight of his guilt in its repeated downward plunges and painful ascents: these form the basis of an extended slow section, which culminates in a blazing climax. A more lyrical group of themes in triple time represents his memories of Astarte; and in the final section, marked *Andante con duolo* ('grief-stricken'), Manfred's first theme returns, also in triple time, at a peak of intensity.

The second movement was suggested by an episode in the poem in which 'The Alpine Fairy appears to Manfred beneath the rainbow of the waterfall'. It is a balletic scherzo of dazzling brilliance, with a more melodic Trio presumably representing the Fairy's own song. Manfred's first theme reappears in the course of this Trio, and also towards the end of the reprise of the scherzo.

The third movement is a pastorale, subtitled 'The simple, free and peaceful life of the mountain folk'. It presents a whole sequence of picturesque ideas, with the falling phrase from Manfred's first theme and a tolling bell casting only a momentary shadow over the sunlit landscape.

The finale, which departs substantially from Byron's narrative, depicts a subterranean bacchanal; the spirit of Astarte appears, and pardons Manfred for his earthly sins before his death. The movement begins with a resolute march, which is then swept up into a wild dance – in the course of which fragments of Manfred's first theme reappear once more. There is a slow interlude, of solemn chords leading to Manfred's dragging second theme, before the dance is resumed in fugal texture. Manfred's first theme alternates with fragments of the dance; after a pause, Astarte's music from the first movement returns, even more radiant than before. There is a reprise of the impassioned *Andante con duolo* statement of Manfred's first theme from the first movement, followed by an episode of gathering speed and excitement, and a solemn conclusion coloured by the sound of the organ and by repetitions in the bass of the first phrase of the plainchant *Dies irae* from the Mass for the Dead.

Programme note © Anthony Burton

Francesca da Rimini, Symphonic Fantasy after Dante, Op. 32

Throughout his life, Tchaikovsky was prone to feelings of guilt and foreboding. Arguments have raged about whether his homosexuality was wholly or partly the cause of this; but it is almost certain that Tchaikovsky was also bipolar – or, to use the older, more familiar label, manic-depressive. Feelings of guilt, sometimes inexplicable, and of dread for some indefinable fate, are common symptoms of the depressive phase. In Tchaikovsky's case however he was able to channel these feelings into some of his most remarkable music, and there were times when this may well have saved his sanity.

No doubt the presence of such powerful emotions, so memorably expressed in the poetry of Dante's *Inferno*, was one reason for Tchaikovsky's attraction to the subject of Francesca da Rimini. In the poem, Francesca's punishment for her adulterous affair is to be blown ceaselessly through dark space by whirlwinds. Almost certainly the theme of forbidden love added another strand of fascination for Tchaikovsky, in which case he would have been strongly moved

by Dante's description of his own reaction to Francesca's fate: hearing her story from her lips Dante is so struck with compassion that he faints, 'falling like a corpse to the ground'. Francesca's narrative begins with one of the most famous remarks in the whole of *Inferno*: 'There is no greater grief than to remember happy times in the midst of misery' – words Tchaikovsky clearly took to heart.

Initially Tchaikovsky thought of turning the story of Francesca into an opera. A libretto was provided for him by the Russian critic and composer Hermann Laroche early in 1876. But for a variety of reasons Tchaikovsky turned against the idea. When his brother Modest suggested an orchestral work, Tchaikovsky knew he had found the solution, and the resulting 'Fantasy after Dante' was composed quickly. Tchaikovsky's estimation of his own works often swung as widely as his own moods, but this time his pride in his musical achievement lasted: 'I wrote it with love and that lover, it seems, has come out rather well.' In fact *Francesca da Rimini* is not only one of his most stirring works, but as a whole it reconciles musical form and feeling triumphantly. The grim introduction is compact and tense, leading seamlessly into the music of the whirlwind, which gathers momentum, then falls back into the grim introductory music. Now the storm builds to full fury. As it abates, a solo clarinet

introduces the love theme – we can imagine Francesca recalling those lost 'happy times'. But then, inevitably, the storm returns, now rising to a devastating conclusion.

Programme note © Stephen Johnson

Serenade for Strings in C major, Op. 48

The popular image of Tchaikovsky as a tormented soul, laying bare his neuroses in music of extreme emotional charge, neglects an equally important aspect of his creative personality. Tchaikovsky adored Mozart's music as the epitome of 18th-century poise and elegance, qualities that he felt had been overshadowed by the much more extravagant gestures of late 19th-century Romanticism. His love of Mozartian grace found expression in his own inimitable ballet music, but he also composed direct tributes to Mozart in his Fourth Orchestral Suite (*Mozartiana*) and the *Variations on a Rococo Theme* for cello and orchestra.

The Serenade for Strings (1880) is another major work in which Tchaikovsky's deeply lyrical instinct is perfectly tempered by Classical elegance and restraint. An expansive, noble introduction eventually

subsidies, and the *Allegro moderato* follows after a brief pause. The term ‘Sonatina’ indicates that this is not a fully-fledged sonata-form movement complete with a central development section. The only development or elaboration is heard immediately after each theme, the first of which is yearning in character, the second delightfully buoyant. The movement ends with a return to the music of the introduction.

In the captivating waltz – a dance-form in which Tchaikovsky has few equals – the scoring is a model of clarity and effectiveness. One regrets that he wrote nothing else for string orchestra, apart from a rarely heard *Elegy* of 1884, although an arrangement for strings of his string sextet *Souvenir de Florence* is another outstanding addition to the repertoire.

Much of the melodic material in the Serenade is uncomplicated. Some of the themes are derived from a mere scale-pattern, as we hear in the opening phrases of the heartfelt *Élégie*. An eloquent second theme introduced by the first violins is developed towards two impassioned climaxes. Here, however, the near-hysterical intensity of some climaxes in Tchaikovsky’s symphonies is avoided – this is, after all, a Serenade.

The last movement begins with an *Andante* introduction, the final notes of which

anticipate the main theme of the following *Allegro con spirito*. Both the theme of the introduction and the first theme of the *Allegro con spirito* are actual Russian folksongs.

In this exhilarating finale – unlike the first movement – Tchaikovsky includes a proper development section, based on both the lively folksong and the contrasting second subject. Towards the end Tchaikovsky recalls the very opening melody of the Serenade (now played by the cellos), before neatly demonstrating that its first four notes (C–B–A–G) are closely related to the main theme of the finale. The original tempo returns for the brilliant conclusion.

Programme note © Philip Borg-Wheeler



Vladimir Jurowski

conductor

One of today's most sought-after conductors, acclaimed worldwide for his incisive musicianship and adventurous artistic commitment, Vladimir Jurowski was born in Moscow and studied at the Music Academies of Dresden and Berlin. In 1995 he made his international debut at the Wexford Festival conducting Rimsky-Korsakov's *May Night*, and the same year saw his debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, with *Nabucco*.

Jurowski was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 2003, becoming Principal Conductor in 2007. He also holds the titles of Principal Artist of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Artistic Director of the Russian State Academic Symphony Orchestra and in 2017 became Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin. He has previously held the positions of First Kapellmeister of the Komische Oper Berlin (1997–2001), Principal Guest Conductor of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna (2000–03), Principal Guest Conductor of the Russian National Orchestra (2005–09), and Music Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera (2001–13).

He is a regular guest with many leading orchestras in Europe and North America, including the Berlin and New York philharmonic orchestras; the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; The Philadelphia Orchestra; The Cleveland Orchestra; the Boston, San Francisco and Chicago symphony orchestras; the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden and Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

His opera engagements have included *Rigoletto*, *Jenůfa*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Metropolitan Opera, New York; *Parsifal* and *Wozzeck* at Welsh National Opera; *War and Peace* at the Opéra national de Paris; *Eugene Onegin* at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan; *Ruslan and Ludmila* at the Bolshoi Theatre; *Moses und Aron* at Komische Oper Berlin and *Iolanta* and *Die Teufel von Loudun* at Semperoper Dresden, and numerous operas at Glyndebourne including *Otello*, *Macbeth*, *Falstaff*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Peter Eötvös's *Love and Other Demons*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which won the 2015 BBC Music Magazine Opera Award.

London Philharmonic Orchestra

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's finest orchestras, balancing a long and distinguished history with its present-day position as one of the most dynamic and forward-looking ensembles in the UK. This reputation has been secured by the Orchestra's performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, trail-blazing international tours and wide-ranging educational work.

Founded by Sir Thomas Beecham in 1932, the Orchestra has since been headed by many of the world's greatest conductors, including Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003, and became Principal Conductor in September 2007.

The Orchestra is based at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London, where it has been Resident Orchestra since 1992, giving around 30 concerts a season. Each summer it takes up its annual residency at Glyndebourne Festival Opera where it has been Resident Symphony Orchestra for over 50 years. The Orchestra

performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous international tours, performing to sell-out audiences in America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski.

lpo.org.uk





Design: Ross Shaw

Tchaikovsky Complete Symphonies

Live in concert

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13, 'Winter Daydreams'

Symphony No. 2 in C minor, Op. 17, 'Little Russian'

Symphony No. 3 in D major, Op. 29, 'Polish'

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74, 'Pathétique'

Manfred Symphony in Four Scenes

after Byron's Dramatic Poem, Op. 58

Francesca da Rimini, Symphonic Fantasy

after Dante, Op. 32

Serenade for Strings in C major, Op. 48



7 CD set

Total playing time: 6 hours 4 minutes

LPO-0101

Made in Lithuania

