

*H. Dinova*

### Unknown Tchaikovsky

(A dialogue with cellist/composer Yuriy Leonovich about his work and rarely performed instrumental concertos by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky)

*X. Динова*

### Незнакомый Чайковский

(Беседа с композитором и виолончелистом Юрием Леоновичем о его работе и о редко исполняемых концертах Петра Ильича Чайковского)

**T** Today I have met with Dr. Yuriy Leonovich, a young American cellist/composer who had finished Tchaikovsky's cello concerto by using Tchaikovsky's sketches dated back to 1893.

The full conductor score of the

Concerto was given as a gift to the Kazan State Conservatory with kind permission to perform the newly reconstructed work.

Leonovich shared his fascinating story of completing the Cello Concerto. Here are some things we spoke about.

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**Halida Dinova:** When did you learn of the Tchaikovsky Cello Concerto?

**Yuriy Leonovich:** I first heard of the Tchaikovsky Cello Concerto when I was 16 years old. After contacting Brett Langston, one of the foremost Tchaikovsky scholars today, he led me to the 60-measure sketch (dating back to 1893) found in the *Cajkovskij-Symposium*, published by Schott.

**H.D.** Finishing another's person's work is a difficult task. You must, in a way, become the composer, hear the music as composer would. How were you able to reproduce the "Tchaikovsky-sound?" Where there any challenges?

**Y.L.** I must admit that it is difficult to reproduce someone's idiom. It is like learning the second language at first. I learned the language by studying scores and listening to almost all of Tchaikovsky's works. He is my favorite composer, so listening to his beautiful music was not a chore. I found that Tchaikovsky's musical language did not change much from his graduation piece *Ode to Joy* to his *Pathetique Symphony*.

He became a cleverer orchestrator as time went on, but the idiom stayed the same. It's difficult to point exactly what makes Tchaikovsky's music sound the way it does, because many of the same characteristics may be found in Schumann and Brahms. Tchaikovsky's bass line descends, for the most part, and it accompanies a fairly simple melody. Even his most complex melodies are built on simple ideas. His music is also filled with half-diminished harmonies and omnibus progressions. Much of Tchaikovsky's music uses Russian folk music. My biggest challenge was to get past the 60-bar sketch without sounding like Tchaikovsky medley. It took four years, which included the loss of my original ideas in a computer crash and my moving to a different city. As I enjoyed the scenic Lake Erie in summer 2006, the ideas just started flowing and I finished the project within two months of my move.

**H.D.** What was your concept for the Concerto?

**Y.L.** I knew that the Concerto had to

be in three movements and have traditional thematic development. Looking at Rococo Variations and Pezzo Capriccioso would not do me any good because they are one-movement concert pieces. I had to look at the piano and violin concertos for guidance for thematic development, i.e. sonata form. The harmonic development of the first movement is based on descending thirds: B minor, G major, E major, and so on. The cadenza in the score is just a place marker. I intended on rewriting it, or just improvising one during the concert.

I placed the cadenza before the recapitulation of the first movement, as in Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No2 and 3 and the Violin Concerto. The movement ends quietly, like the last two Tchaikovsky's symphonies. The slow movement is actually by Tchaikovsky. It is derived from the sketch to the Third Piano Concerto, also dating to 1893. Originally in B-Flat major, I transposed it to G major. The movement is in ternary (A-B-A) form and lightly orchestrated. The B section is in E-flat major, another third relationship to B major.

A cadenza returns us to the A section, which is followed by brief coda. This movement has also been used in Semyon Bogatyrev's realization of Tchaikovsky's unfinished symphony No7. The finale is a B-minor rondo. The two themes used are a Russian folk song "Our Wine Cellar" ("Vinnyi nash kolodez"), and the sketch to a Cello Sonata, never realized by Tchaikovsky.

This movement is a typical Tchaikovsky rondo.

- H.D.** This is very interesting! Has the work been premiered?
- Y.L.** As of now, the premiere is scheduled for October 2013 in Yekaterinburg, Russia with cellist Vladislav Kozin and conductor Anton Shaburov at the Ural State Conservatory.
- H.D.** I know that Kazan State Conservatory Orchestra is interested in performing this Cello Concerto in the near future. That must be exciting to see your work performed internationally, especially in Russia!
- Y.L.** Yes, absolutely. I speak Russian fluently because I grew up in Kiev (I read and write in 5 different languages), all of my adult life I lived in the U.S. and received my musical education at an American Conservatory: M.M. in cello performance and D.M.A. at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Now I live in Detroit, Michigan.
- H.D.** This is remarkable! You can read archive documents and books in five languages in addition to being a composer and such an accomplished cellist.
- Y.N.** Thank you. Now I would like to share with you an interesting story about Tchaikovsky's Piano

Concerto No3.

**H.D.** Yes, please do.

**Y.L.** Piano Concerto No3 in E-flat major Op.75 was published posthumously in 1894, as a single-movement Allegro Brillante. The concerto is considered unfinished. However, the genre of a single-movement concerto has been popular among Tchaikovsky's contemporaries, just recall Mily Balakirev's First Piano Concerto, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's concerto, Felix Blumenfeld's Allegro de Concert, Fantasie Russe in B minor by Eduard Napravnik.

Third Concerto is dedicated to French pianist Louis Dimier. Then the French one-movement concertos have been popular as well: Gabriel Faure's Ballade, Cesar Frank's symphonic poem Les Djinns and Symphonic Variations. Tchaikovsky met pianist Louis Dimier in Paris, when Dimier had performed Tchaikovsky's Concert Fantasia. Dimier, a well known pianist-virtuoso from that generation also performed all the French single movement concertos mentioned above.

It is known fact that Tchaikovsky's Concerto for piano and orchestra No3 Op.75 was originally conceived as a symphony. Tchaikovsky started to work on the symphony but in 1893 turned the sketches of the first movement in E-flat major into Allegro Brillante (Concerto No3).

After Tchaikovsky's death Sergei Taneyev received from Modest (Tchaikovsky's brother) the unfinished sketches of the E-Flat Symphony. Tchaikovsky himself had begun to arrange these movements for piano and orchestra. Sergei Taneyev (who was the first performer of the Tchaikovsky's Concerto No3 in St. Petersburg in 1897) completed the two movements of Tchaikovsky's sketches into Andante and Finale Op.79 for piano and orchestra. Very rarely pianists perform Allegro Brillante Op.75 together with Andante and Finale Op.79, forming a three-movement concerto listed as Piano concerto No3 in E-flat major, Op.75/79.

The story of Tchaikovsky's Third Piano concerto doesn't end there. I previously mentioned in our conversation the name of the Russian musicologist and composer Semyon Bogatyrev who in 1950's decided to reconstruct the abandoned 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony by studying sketches of Allegro Brillante Op.75 and Andante and Finale Op.79, as well as the Tchaikovsky's notebooks at the House-Museum at Klin. Bogatyrev believed that Tchaikovsky's new Symphony has to be in four movement format. The orchestral sketch matching the tenth piece of the Eighteen Pieces for Piano Op.72 was found. This Scherzo has become a Third movement of

the reconstructed 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony which was premiered and recorded by the USSR Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leo Ginsburg and by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy.

**H.D.** Very interesting. I see that you wrote your dissertation on Gaspar Cassado's Concerto for Cello and Orchestra based on Tchaikovsky's Piano Pieces Op.72. I have never heard about such a piece. Tell me more about it, please .

**Y.L.** Gaspar Cassado was a magnificent cello soloist and chamber musician. Cassado's career provided the opportunity to present his own compositions and arrangements. The great Cellist wrote a total of eight cello concertos, seven of which are transcriptions, elaborate arrangement and paraphrases of other composer's work. In 1940 Cassado produced his fifth published cello concerto, freely utilizing ten of the eighteen Tchaikovsky's Piano Pieces Op.72.

This forty minute cello concerto in three movements was published by SCHOTT (ED 3742) Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich. Concert fur Cello und Orchester (nach Opus 72). Arranged by Gaspard Cassado. Piano reduction by Willie Hammer. Mainz: B. Schott's Sohne, 1940.

Cassado planned to celebrate his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1967 with a concert in Kiev, playing the Brahms Double Concerto with David Oistrach, and the piano pieces arranged in the form of Concerto for cello and orchestra. But the event never happened because Cassado died on December 24, 1966.

**H.D.** As a pianist I would like to know which ten piano pieces from Tchaikovsky's Op.72 have been selected by Cassado as a thematic material for his cello concerto?

**Y.L.** Cassado employs excerpts of "Scene Dansante (Invitation au trepak)," "Tendres Reproches" and "Chant elegiaque" in his first movement; "Meditation," "Un poco di Schumann" and "Dialogue" in his second movement; and "Danse Caracteristique," "Echo Rustique," "Berceuse," "Passe Lointain" and "Un poco di Chopin" in the finale.

The first movement Allegro moderato is in sonata-allegro form. Cassado added a harp to the score.

This pairing of cello and harp is similar to that seen in Swan Lake and Sleeping Beauty. He also utilized a chamber-style accompaniment, particularly in the first and second movements, which consist of solo winds and solo strings. The second movement of Cassado's concerto Andante mosso is in sonata-ternary form, where the material from "Dialogue" and "Meditation" is

used throughout, but "Un poco di Shumann" plays only a small role in transitions. This Andante movement of Cassado's concerto has traits of Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto. Both have the same tonic key beginning on a half diminished seventh harmony and include a solo cello.

Allegro finale is in modified sonata-rondo form. It is not exactly a sonata-rondo, but it is noteworthy that theme derived from "Danse Caracteristique" returns so frequently. The finale features more fragmentation. Four-bar fragments are often passed between the soloist and the orchestra.

This style of writing has some similarities with the finales of Tchaikovsky's Violin concerto and the first two piano concertos. Lyrical melodies do appear occasionally, but they are always accompanied by trepak rhythms.

**H.D.** Thank you for your wonderful description of the Cassado's concerto. I would certainly like to hear this unusual cello concerto. Would you mind sharing your thoughts about some of Tchaikovsky's rarely performed concert works in our remaining time?

**Y.L.** Sure. As a cellist I really appreciate the cello solos in all three of his Piano concerto slow movements and the Concert Fantasy, Op.56. The slow movement of the second Piano concerto and "Contrasts" from the Concert Fantasy are especially beautiful – together with the first Piano concerto. The slow movement of the Piano concerto No2 Op.44 in the original version is a Piano Trio with the orchestral accompaniment. The main theme is derived from the Bach-Gounod "Ave Maria." I highly recommend that you avoid the abridged Siloti edition, because it takes out the passionate middle section that gives the return of Ave Maria more meaning.

**H.D.** I agree with you a hundred percent about Siloti influenced edition of the Concerto No2 Op.44. Such "amputation" of the trio in the second movement and some simplifications of the piano texture in the other movements have been a painful issue for Tchaikovsky, this is confirmed by his letters quoted in the Introduction to the 1954 Asafiev's edition of the original version of both Tchaikovsky's concertos. The realities of a concert practice unfortunately are making the performance of the Concerto No2 in the original version difficult, due to a lack of a rehearsal time. As you can imagine the Trio part needs an additional rehearsal and a willingness of an orchestral musician to do additional work. The Siloti's version of the Second Piano concerto is shorter, but noticeably less attractive for the Soloist, that's why this concerto is not performed more often, as I can tell from my personal experiences of performing it.

I think the second and third piano concertos have great ideas and are among the best concertos ever written for the piano. I really believe that the popularity of the introduction of the first concerto makes this work stand out above all others. Perhaps the first concerto wouldn't have been so popular without this majestic introduction. This concerto holds popularity above all other concertos in the world, but only a few know of the existence of the original version, which was published by the State Music Publishers, Moscow in 1954 as a part of complete works of Tchaikovsky, Vol.6 under editorial of B.V. Asafiev.

Remember, when we met, Halida, you were sharing with me a story about learning Tchaikovsky's B-Flat minor concerto in that original version. My question to you as a pianist who plays the original version of this concerto:

What are the major differences between the original version of the Concerto No1 Op.23 and the later editions influenced by N. Rubinstein?

**H.D.** The early version of the first movement introduction doesn't have the same sound in D-Flat major. The chords in the piano part are nonexistent, instead there is a harp-like arpeggios. In general, the piano texture of the first movement has a desire to avoid vertical accents.

For example, from measure 620 till the end of the first movement there is a long legato melodic passages instead of rearranged between two hands martellat-like episodes or reinforced by octaves in both hands vertical approach to a texture (in style of Liszt) in later version.

Some of the more noticeable differences of the first movement include slower tempos. The second movement is identical to the later version. The finale is based on the Ukrainian song "Vesnianka" which means "the motive of spring" in the original version has an episode in measures 109–125 which is different from the later version.

**Y.L.** As I was reading the Tchaikovsky's letters in regards to Tchaikovsky's First Concerto I realized how severely Tchaikovsky was traumatized by N. Rubinstein's negative judgment of the concerto, even though, Tchaikovsky continued to work on the full score of the concerto and received a huge support from his favorite student, the young pianist and composer Sergei Taneyev. In 1875 Taneyev gave this masterpiece a successful premiere in Moscow with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting.

The Two piano score with editorial work of Sergei Taneyev was published in Moscow by Jurgenson, and orchestral parts for the performance also had Taneyev's corrections. The full score of the concerto was published by

Jurgenson only four years later in 1879. In Taneyev's personal collection which is now deposited at the library of Moscow Conservatory you can find the first edition of two piano score with marks (fingering) by Taneyev. In the U.S. the full score in original version is available from Kalmus Music Publishers. My question is: why pianists are not performing the First Concerto in it's original version?

**H.D.** The original version of the first Piano concerto was beautifully recorded by Lazar Berman and Yuri Temirkanov with Radio-Symphonie Orchester Berlin in 1987 for SFB/Schwann. I haven't heard other recordings of the original version of that concerto yet.

Outside of competitions, it is up to the performer to find the happy medium between what we want to play and what the audience wants to hear. My reason for learning the original version is this: I would like to perform the lesser popular version of the First concerto because it's the way the composer originally penned it. I have read in the letter from Tchaikovsky to Nadejda Von Meck dated May 9, 1879, the main theme of the first movement was heard by Tchaikovsky on the street in Kamenka (Tchaikovsky's sister's Family Estate in Ukraine). It was sung by blind singers accompanying themselves on Ukrainian folk instrument Lira (similar to primitive Harp). Tchaikovsky changed the tempo and character of that melody from Andante to Allegro con spirito (measure 118 of the first movement). This gave me an idea about the introduction to the first movement. The arpeggios and the slower tempo in a lesser accented more lyrical texture of the first movement are making this concerto closer to a vocal style of the thematic material. This doesn't diminish the virtuosity of the octave episodes. Of course, I enjoy both versions of the B flat minor concerto.

**Y.L.** As far as the rarely played original versions of Rococo Variations and Pezzo Capriccioso are concerned, I enjoy both. Brandukov's changes to Pezzo were not too extensive, he did however simplified some awkward passage work. Fitzenhagen's audacity to abridge and re-order the Rococo Variations can only be matched by Auer's edition of the Violin Concerto. But we cannot be angry with men that left this earth almost a century ago.

**H.D.** Thank you, Yuriy, for taking the time out of your busy schedule to discuss Tchaikovsky's music with me.

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