



MOSCOW STATE RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Alexei Kornienko, conductor | Alexander Sinchuk, piano
Thursday, February 25, 2010, at 7:30pm
Foellinger Great Hall | Great Hall Series

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PROGRAM

Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra
Alexei Kornienko, conductor
Alexander Sinchuk, piano

An Evening of Works by Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Op. 24

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso—Allegro con spirito

Andantino semplice—Prestissimo

Allegro con fuoco

20-minute intermission

Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique"

Adagio—Allegro non troppo

Allegro con grazia

Allegro molto vivace

Finale: Adagio lamentoso

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Born May 7, 1840, in Votkinsk, Russia
Died November 6, 1893, in St. Petersburg
Polonaise from *Eugene Onegin*, Op. 24

It has been suggested that Tchaikovsky's marriage in 1877 was as traumatic to him as the death of his mother when the composer was 14. As a homosexual man in the late 19th century, he felt that a marriage would "save his reputation." On the contrary, it almost drove him to suicide. He ended up pouring out his feelings into two of his greatest and most powerful compositions, *Symphony No. 4* and his most popular opera, *Eugene Onegin*.

Basing his opera on one of the greatest masterpieces of Russian literature, the narrative poem by Pushkin, Tchaikovsky wrote what he termed "lyrical scenes." Once he decided on the subject, he produced the following scenario in one evening:

First Act: Scene I: Mme. Larina and the nurse are sitting in the garden, making preserves. Duet. A song is heard from the house: Tatyana and Olga sing a duet with harp-accompaniment. Enter reapers (with the last sheaf); they sing and dance. Suddenly the servant announces guests. Enter Yevgeny and Lensky. Ceremony of introduction and entertainment (bilberry wine). Yevgeny exchanges impressions with Lensky and Tatyana with Olga: quintet à la Mozart. The older women go away to prepare dinner. The young people stay and walk in the garden in pairs (as in *Faust*). Tatyana is reserved at first, then falls in love.

Scene II: Tatyana's letter.

Scene III: Scene between Onegin and Tatyana.

Second Act: Scene I: Tatyana's name-day. Ball. Lensky's jealousy. He insults Onegin and challenges him. General confusion.

Scene II: Lensky's aria and the duel.

Third Act: Scene I: Moscow. Ball in the Noble's Hall. Tatyana meets a whole string of aunts and cousins. They sing a chorus. Appearance of the general. He falls in love with Tatyana. She tells him her story and agrees to marry him.

Scene II: Petersburg. Tatyana awaits Onegin. He appears. Big duet. Tatyana still loves him and fights a hard inner battle with herself. Her husband comes. Duty triumphs. Onegin rushes off in despair.

The final shape of the opera is not too far from what Tchaikovsky originally envisioned. The first act has some changes, and the final scene in the last act was abandoned for a new one. The opera was first performed by students at the Moscow Conservatory on March 29, 1879, and was given its professional debut on January 23, 1881, at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow.

In Pushkin's poem and in the opera itself, the characters appear as rather everyday, normal people. Because of this, Tchaikovsky poured out his most dramatic music and musical effects in the purely orchestral sequences. This is quite apparent in the dance numbers. The *Polonaise* occurs during the Third Act at Prince Gremin's ball in the St. Petersburg palace. A fanfare announces the arrival of the royal couple and is followed by the main body of the dance. There is a short lyrical section before the return of the effervescent dance and a brilliant conclusion.

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Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23

"In December 1874 I had written a Piano Concerto! Not being a pianist, I considered it necessary to consult a virtuoso as to any points in my Concerto that might be technically impracticable, ungrateful or ineffective. I had need of a severe critic, but at the same time one friendly disposed towards me." Thus wrote Tchaikovsky to his patron Nadezhda von Meck, describing the circumstances in which he presented his newly written *First Piano Concerto*—one of the best-loved in the repertoire today—to his much admired and trusted senior colleague at the Moscow Conservatory, Nikolay Rubinstein. Tchaikovsky suffered one of the biggest disappointments of his career when, on Christmas Eve, Rubinstein—who had been so supportive of the composer in the past—rejected the concerto with a rush of scathing criticism, summarily declaring the work ill-composed and unperformable:

I played the first movement. Not a single word, not a single remark. . . . Oh for one word, for a friendly attack, but for God's sake, one word of sympathy, even if not of praise. Rubinstein was amassing his storm. . . . Above all I did not want sentence on the artistic aspect. My need was for remarks about the virtuoso piano technique. R's eloquent silence was of the greatest significance. . . . I fortified myself with patience and played through to the end. Still silence. I stood up and asked 'Well?' Then a torrent poured from Nikolay Grigorievich's mouth. . . . It turned out that my concerto was worthless and unplayable; passages were so fragmented, so clumsy, so badly written that they were beyond rescue; the work itself was bad, vulgar; in places I had stolen from other composers; only two or three pages were worth preserving; the rest must be thrown away or

completely rewritten. . . . A disinterested person in the room might have thought I was a maniac, a talentless, senseless hack who had come to submit his rubbish to an eminent musician.

This unexpected reaction from Rubinstein left the composer totally devastated and sank him into a severe state of depression.

However, so sure was the composer about his creation that upon Rubinstein's gentler admonitions to completely revise the concerto, Tchaikovsky yelled, "I shall not alter a single note. I shall publish the work exactly as it is"—which he did. The determined composer then sent his concerto to Hans von Bülow, who found it "original, noble and powerful." On October 25, 1875, under the direction of Benjamin Johnson Lang, Bülow took the concert world by storm when he presented the work in Boston with unprecedented success. Tchaikovsky conducted the Russian premiere just a few weeks later. After this, Rubinstein reconsidered his position, recognizing the concerto for the masterpiece it is, and added it to his repertoire, playing it quite often throughout Russia. The rift that had ensued between Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein was eventually repaired and, later on, the composer did make a few revisions to the score, primarily in the solo passages.

The first movement begins with a lengthy—106 measures long—introduction marked *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso*. At the outset, the horns present a four-note descending motif, punctuated by sharp chords from the rest of the orchestra. The piano then enters with a long series of chords, as the violins play an impassioned theme based on the opening motif. Eventually, the first movement proper, *Allegro con spirito*, arrives as the piano introduces

the main theme with minimal support from the orchestra. One of Rubinstein's criticisms was that he found this an unseemly theme to ennoble by incorporating it into a piano concerto; the theme is derived from a Ukrainian folk song commonly sung by blind beggars. The somewhat more relaxed and stately second theme begins with an ascending scalar motif and ends with descending leaps. Both themes are subjected to a brilliant double exposition, with the exchange of virtuoso and expressive elements and argumentative tension between soloist and orchestra. The soloist has plentiful occasion to shine with its many ornate and rhapsodic passages and several demanding cadenzas.

The contrasting second movement, *Andantino semplice*, takes the form of a scherzo but in reverse—instead of the normal fast-slower-fast pattern, a soulful episode surrounds a jaunty middle section. It begins with a tender love theme played by a solo flute against pizzicato strings and then taken over by the piano. After a contrasting phrase is heard, the oboe once again takes the main melody. Then the piano embarks on a frolicsome scherzando episode marked *Allegro vivace assai*. Although it does so at first by itself, soon the violas and cellos join in with a melody of their own—the French song *Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire* (*One Must Have Fun, Dance, and Laugh*), which was a favorite of Désirée Artôt, to whom the composer was briefly engaged. After an ingenious reference to the first movement's second theme, the soloist plays a short cadenza that leads into the main love theme once again to conclude the movement.

The last movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, is built upon a rondo structure with elements of sonata form. After a few introductory measures from the orchestra,

the piano presents the main recurring theme; this assertive mazurka-like theme is derived from yet another Ukrainian folk song. Two other subjects come into play here: one is of great significance and bears a syncopated dance rhythm; the other is of a subsidiary nature and is gentler in character. The two principal themes are freshly emphasized within a different context each time they are repeated. At the coda, now in the major key, the subsidiary theme finally attains its full import. Then, with minimal intervention from the orchestra and in a flurry of virtuoso playing, the piano rushes to the work's exhilarating conclusion.

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Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique"

During the year 1892, Tchaikovsky embarked on a European conducting tour that was cut short due to homesickness and a general feeling of depression. It was at this time that the composer devised a plan for a "Programme Symphony"; this, however, was not realized and was temporarily abandoned in favor of a new symphony in E-flat major—what is now referred to as "Symphony No. 7," a work which was never completed and which has been somewhat reconstructed from the material employed in *Piano Concerto No. 3*. The following year, on February 15, 1893, the composer began what was to become his valedictory work, *Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74, "Pathétique."* Tchaikovsky admitted that there was a program—not a specific story, but certainly an idea—behind the music of the *Sixth Symphony*; nonetheless, he refused to tell what it was, only saying, "Let him guess it who can."

There have been plenty of guessers as to the composer's programmatic intentions, most of them guided by the work's nickname, "Pathétique." And even though the appellation was attached, not by the composer but by his brother Modest after the work's first performance, it may indeed be surmised to be indicative of its hidden program. The answer may have finally arrived in the middle of the 20th century when a sheet of music paper was discovered among some sketches by the composer. In Tchaikovsky's own handwriting, it read: "The ultimate essence of the plan of the symphony is LIFE. First movement—all impulsive passion, confidence, thirst for activity. Must be short. (Finale DEATH—result of collapse.) Second movement love; third disappointments; fourth ends dying away (also short)." Through research it has been established that the sheet comes from 1892, and it is, in all likelihood, the aforementioned abandoned plan for a symphony. By 1893, the plan was much modified; among these modifications was Tchaikovsky's decision that the finale would be a long-drawn Adagio. Another modification seems to be the expression of "disappointment" in the second movement as opposed to the third. These disappointments may well have stemmed from two events in the composer's life: the failed and tormented marriage to Antonina Milyukova, a union into which he was goaded, despite self-awareness of his sexual orientation, by her repeated threats of suicide; the other in Nadezhda von Meck's inexplicable withdrawal as the composer's longtime patron, correspondent, and confidante.

Although it should not be assumed that Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony* was originally intended as a swan song, it indeed serves this function, as it was the last work he wrote (works with opus numbers higher than 74 were actually composed at an earlier

date and published posthumously). The symphony received its premiere performance on October 28, 1893, with the composer conducting the Kirov Orchestra in St. Petersburg. Nine days later, the composer died, presumably by self-inflicted arsenic poisoning (not by drinking unboiled water and thereby contracting cholera, as has been popularly expounded); this, apparently, he did at the behest of a court of honor to avert a scandal involving the nephew of a Russian aristocrat, thus avoiding the tarnishing of his "school uniform."

The *Pathétique Symphony* is Tchaikovsky's most profoundly pessimistic work; it begins as if enshrouded in darkness and deepest despair and in this same tone it ends. The first movement is ushered in by a somber Adagio introduction. From the lowest depths of the orchestral palette, a solo bassoon intones a sad theme, the first four notes of which foreshadow the motif of the main theme of the first movement proper; this creates the aura of melancholy that is so characteristic of the work as a whole. A contrasting, tender second theme is soon heard on the muted strings, eventually leading into the *Allegro non troppo* that constitutes the main body of the movement. The development is concerned for the most part with the main theme; as the tempo quickens the theme is tossed about from one instrumental choir to the other, becoming successively more fragmented. In due time the emotional intensity reaches its peak, but the movement ends in the same grief-stricken mood with which it commenced, including a quotation from the music of the Russian Orthodox Requiem. The coda is notable for its masterful transformation of the stormy first theme into a lyrical one; a solemn cadence for the brass over falling pizzicato scales on the strings brings the movement to its resolution.

Just as one of the middle movements in the composer's preceding symphony is made up of a waltz, so is the second movement of his sixth; however, by casting this—essentially—Scherzo movement in the asymmetrical 5/4 meter, and thus impeding the flow of the normally jovial dance, this particular waltz acquires a curious limp which lends an air of idiosyncratically serene melancholy. The principal theme of the *Allegro con grazia* section is a song-like melody announced by the cellos. Marked *con dolcezza e flebile* (sweetly and plaintively), the trio section introduces a new theme in the violins; here the composer exploits some of the harmonic tension exhibited in the outer movements by pitting the theme against an incessantly beating pedal point in the timpani, bassoons, and basses. After a return to the waltz section, a coda, combining the theme of the waltz with that of the trio, concludes the movement.

Coming in the unusual form of a march, the third movement was unprecedented; Gustav Mahler was to follow this example in his own symphonies a decade later. Bearing the tempo marking of *Allegro molto vivace*, the movement begins softly as a busy triplet figure is heard alternating between strings and woodwinds. This leads to the march figure that grows stronger at each moment until the ever-whirling figuration that began the movement disappears and the triumphant theme is heard unimpeded in the entire orchestra. Angry beats from the percussion underline and strengthen its progress. In contrast to the preceding movement, here the composer seems to be recollecting past moments of joy and glory; however, toward the end of the movement these triumphs and joyful remembrances appear to be marred by the adversities of life as the

persistent march, in its exultant brass sonorities, is heard against conflicting scale passages between woodwinds and strings. The intensity of this conflict increases to the very end.

The last movement, once again, is not the traditional type of brilliant finale; the requiem-like manner of this concluding *Adagio lamentoso* seems to point to the finality of death. The strings announce the despairing first theme immediately. The nobility of the consoling second theme that is presented by violins and violas, over a syncopated horn figure, contrasts the painful chord progression of this theme. The themes seem to be of opposite natures yet they bear close musical relation, being originated from the same basic thought. These themes are worked up to an enormous climax which eventually recedes until a fateful clash of the gong brings back the second theme; this time, however, the once consoling theme is now cast in the sad minor mode, thus extinguishing the last ray of light and hope in the proceedings. For its final measures, the symphony returns to the somber abyss of despair from which it initially emerged, reflecting that same mood of comfortless melancholy in which Tchaikovsky found himself at the end of his life—one rich in success but full of pain, trials, and tribulations.

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Alexei Kornienko, music director

Maestro Kornienko is a deeply committed musician whose musical drive is rooted in a strong sense of loyalty to the composer's intentions within the score as well as in a modern responsibility to interpret and demonstrate his individuality in performance. The results of his work are always charged by his personal obsession for music. His strong personality and individual style in his performances have been cause for considerable praise on Europe's greatest concert hall stages. Maestro Kornienko's life has followed almost to the letter the pattern of a story-book career. Beginning music lessons at the age of five, he went on to study the piano and conducting at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and was subsequently awarded first prize in the Rachmaninoff Piano Competition. In 1986, after acting as the conductor of concerts for the USSR, Maestro Kornienko was appointed professor of piano at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory. In 1990 after a relocation to Austria, Maestro Kornienko was appointed music director of the Collegium Musicum Carinthia chamber orchestra. In 1995, he was engaged as guest conductor of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra before founding the Classical Etcetera music series in 1997. In 2001, he was appointed artistic director of the Worthersee Classical Festival, and in 2005 Maestro Kornienko was engaged as the music director of the Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra. In recent years, his activity as a highly sought-after conductor in Europe and around the world has increased exponentially. Not only is Maestro Kornienko known as a member of the elite "middle generation" of Russia's great conductors, but also his skill and ability in interpreting contemporary scores is praised

throughout the world of classical music. Maestro Kornienko is regularly engaged for world premieres of highly complex contemporary scores. Maestro Kornienko has performed with orchestras throughout Europe, including the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Slovakian Youth Symphony Orchestra, Munich Symphony Orchestra, Zagreb Symphony Orchestra, Ukrainian National Philharmonic Orchestra of Kiev, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London, and Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Kornienko is the president of the Orchestra of the Russian Federation.

Alexander Sinchuk, pianist

Alexander Sinchuk was born on July 27, 1988, in Nakhodka in the Russian Primorsky region. He began his study of the piano in the Children's Art School under Elena Kulikova at the age of seven. By the age of nine, he had begun to participate in regional competitions of young musicians and several times became the winner in these competitions.

In 2000, Sinchuk began his studies with Izolda Zemsikova, Honored Artist of Russia and a professor of the Far East Academy of Arts in Russia. Under Zemsikova's tutelage, Sinchuk trained for his first significant piano competition and in March 2002 entered and won First Prize in the International Competition for Pianists in Vladivostok, Russia. In August 2002, Sinchuk participated in master classes at the 10th International Creative School "New Names" in Suzdal, where he received training under the guidance of Naum Shtarkman, People's Artist of Russia and a distinguished professor of the Moscow P.I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory of Music. In September 2002, Sinchuk entered the

Central Music School at the Moscow P.I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory of Music in the studio of Nina Makarova, Honored Worker of Culture of the Russian Federation. During his training in Vladivostok, Sinchuk repeatedly performed solo concerts in Japan and Korea and also with the Pacific Orchestra at the Chamber Theatre of Vladivostok, where he played Mendelssohn's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in A* in May 2002.

In January 2003, Sinchuk took part in the fifth international competition named after the legendary pianist Maria Yudina in St. Petersburg and was awarded First Prize. In January 2004, Sinchuk became the First Prize winner of the Second All-Russia Open Competition for Young Musicians in Hanty-Mansijsk, and in April 2004 he went on to become the First Prize winner of the international competition The Art of the 21st Century in Kiev, Ukraine. In November 2005, Sinchuk won First Prize in the Sixth International Piano Competition named after K.N. Igumnov.

While finishing his studies at the Central Music School, Sinchuk regularly performed in the concert halls of the Moscow P.I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory and in the Moscow International House of Music. In the 2004-05 season, Sinchuk performed solo concerts in Turkey and Russia in such halls as the Taneev Hall of the Vladimir Regional Philharmonic Society, where he played Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 1* in February 2006 as well as a solo concert in December 2006. On December 12, 2006, Sinchuk performed a solo concert in the Moscow concert hall Na Kislovke.

At the Second International Competition of Young Artists of the Central Music School of the Vladimir

Spivakov International Charity Foundation, Sinchuk was awarded a stipend to participate in the July 2005 international master classes in Zurich, where he received training under the guidance of Rudolf Bukhbinder, an outstanding professor at the Basel Music Academy. From that time, Sinchuk has been a permanent participant of concert programs of the Spivakov Foundation.

Sinchuk graduated in 2006 with distinction from the Central Music School and entered the Moscow P.I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory in the piano studio of V.V. Pyasetsky, Honored Artist of the Russian Federation.

Since September 2006, Sinchuk has been a scholar with the Spivakov Foundation. From October 29 until November 2, 2006, Sinchuk traveled to Italy with a group of young musicians from the Spivakov Foundation as part of the Forum on Russia, organized by the Russian-Italian Forum-Dialogue and sponsored under the direction of the presidential administration of the Russian Federation. In the period from 2006 to 2008, Alexander participated in a great number of subscription and charitable concerts by the Spivakov Foundation in different cities of Russia.

On March 18, 2007, Sinchuk performed a solo concert at the Ivanovo Regional Philharmonic Society. Since 2007, Sinchuk has participated as a guest of honor in concerts of the international festival Chords of Hortitsa in Ukraine, and he also performed in 2007 with the Academic Symphonic Orchestra of the Zaporozhe Regional Philharmonic Society in a concert hall named after M.I. Glinka (under the baton of Vyacheslav Redya, People's Artist of the Ukraine). On April 20, 2007, at the Third International Festival of Spiritual Singing "Christ Raising," Sinchuk

performed Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 3* with the Academic Symphonic Orchestra of the Zaporozhe Regional Philharmonic Society. In June 2007 as a member of the delegation of young musicians, Sinchuk took part in the unveiling of the concert hall in London's Pushkin House. In August 2007 and January 2008, due to the support of the Spivakov Foundation, Sinchuk performed solo concerts in Belgrade, Serbia, and in September 2007 he performed a concert in the hall of the Sofia Philharmonic Society in Bulgaria.

Alexander Sinchuk was named a scholar of the Russian Performing Art Foundation in 2003 and 2005 and of the presidential program Young Talents in 2002 and 2004. On February 11, 2009, Sinchuk made his Carnegie Hall solo recital debut in Weill Recital Hall, where he performed works of Scriabin, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, and Rachmaninoff. Beginning in January 2010, Sinchuk will participate as a piano soloist on a coast-to-coast tour of the United States with the Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra

The Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1978 as an outgrowth of the need for the symphonic repertoire of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries to be broadcast throughout Russia for the benefit of its citizens. It was decided that the orchestra should broadcast performances on a weekly basis.

The orchestra expanded its activities into Russian television, including projects with Korean KBC and German ZDF. In 1980, the orchestra created a major subscription series in Moscow's Tchaikovsky

Hall and Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. The orchestra's first music director was Alexander Mikhailov, who received his education with Evgheny Mravinsky and Ilia Musin. He headed the orchestra until 1996 before Anatoli Nemudrov (a disciple of Danila Tulin) assumed the music directorship.

Presently the orchestra follows the European music tradition and does not have a permanent chief conductor. Music Director Anatoli Nemudrov invites maestros from Russia and abroad in order to facilitate the continuing development and mastery of the musicians. Among the conductors who have worked with the orchestra are F. Glutchenco, E. Serov, F. Mansurov, V. Verbitsky, N. Alekseev, V. Ponkin, P. Sorokin, V. Ivanov, F. Korobov, D. Tarasov, S. Kondrashev, Alexei Kornienko, Klaus Peter Khan, Verner Stiefel (Germany), Jose Collado (Spain), Andre de Quadros (Australia), David Barg, and Scott Spek (United States).

In addition to the orchestra's extensive work for television, radio, and film soundtracks, the orchestra has performed at the Kremlin Palace with the Moscow Classical Ballet in performances of *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Don Quixote*, *Cinderella*, and *The Firebird*. The orchestra was featured in a concert on the Sobor Square in the Kremlin in 1998 with Monserrat Coballiet.

At the present, the Moscow State Radio Symphony Orchestra is one of the best Moscow orchestras. The orchestra gives subscription concerts in the Young Stars of Russia series at Tchaikovsky Hall and at the Great Hall of Moscow Conservatory. These concerts are broadcast by the radio stations Orpheus, Voice of Russia, Mayak, Radio of Russia, and Yunost and the Cultura and TV Center television stations. Music

Has No Borders concerts with the participation of foreign musicians and conductors have started at the Moscow House of Radio.

The orchestra has given performances in Munich, Stuttgart, Rome, Naples, Milan, Florence, Madrid, Barcelona, Saragossa, Seoul, Pusan, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, New York, Chicago, Fort Worth, Los Angeles, and other cities. In 2004, Columbia Artists Management organized the orchestra's tour of the United States. The orchestra gave 42 concerts in 22 states. Programs including works by Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov were presented.

The orchestra records the Golden collection of classical music (Russian and European) together with the State Television and Radio Foundation. From 1995 until 2006, the orchestra issued 32 CDs with Mediafon Hanssler, Santec Music, and other firms.