Great Russian Symphonies - Vol. 2 (2012)

Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64 *1. I. Andante - Allegro con anima 00:15:09 2. II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza 00:13:38 3. III. Valse: Allegro moderato 00:05:39 4. IV. Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivo 00:12:19*
Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture (3rd version, 1880)
5. Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture (3rd version, 1880) 00:19:03
Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (1-4) Antoni Wit - conductor Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi Chamber Orchestra (5) Adrian Leaper - conductor

Tchaikovsky composed this work between May and the end of August 1888, and conducted its premiere at St. Petersburg on November 17 of that year. Eleven years separated the "fateful" Fourth Symphony of 1877 from the Fifth, about which Tchaikovsky expressed ambivalent feelings both during its composition and later on. To his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, he wrote in August 1888 that "it seems to me I have not failed, and that it is good." After conducting it in Prague, however, he wrote "...It is a failure; there is something repellent, something superfluous and insincere that the public instinctively recognizes." Yet by March he could write: "I like it far better now."

By no means did Tchaikovsky neglect the orchestra between 1877 (when he committed, in his words, the "rash act" of marriage) and 1888. He composed four wholly charming and fanciful suites, of which the second and third could have passed as symphonies had he chosen to call them that. Furthermore, he wrote the unnumbered but inspired Manfred Symphony in 1885. Yet Tchaikovsky never found symphonic structure as congenial as opera or ballet. His method was closer to Liszt's tone-poem procedure than to the Austro-German heritage, continued by Brahms and Bruckner among his contemporaries. Tchaikovsky favored sequences (in his case, the iteration and reiteration of four-bar cells) over enharmonic evolution. Listeners who've sometimes found his music as irritating as he found Brahms' tend do so because of sequence overload, finding that such repeated gestures result in an overblown effect. His greatest gifts were melody and orchestration: witness the popular songs plagiarized from his music, such as

"Moon Love," cribbed from the slow movement of Symphony No. 5.

Like the Fourth, the Symphony No. 5 is unified by a six-measure "Fate" motto, heard straightaway in a darkly colored Andante introduction until, after a pause, the body of the opening 4/4 movement becomes a sonata-form Allegro con anima (with "soul" as well as spirit). It builds to a ferocious fortissimo climax before ending gloomily. Tchaikovsky marked this melodically rich slow movement Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza (songfully unhurried, with some freedom). In D major basically, it is a 12/8 sonatina (exposition and reprise), with an elaborate three-part song structure replacing the development section. Its special glory is the solo-horn arietta looted by "Moon Love", although the ominous motto theme from the first movement interrupts twice -- like the Commendatore's Statue answering Don Giovanni's invitation to dinner.

The quasi-scherzo third movement is a waltz in A major out of Tchaikovsky's top balletic drawer, with a trio in F sharp minor plus a long coda that reprises the motto, now in 3/4 time. Germanic academics were scandalized by the presence of a waltz in a numbered symphony, but not Brahms, who stayed over in Hamburg to hear a rehearsal, and during a bibulous lunch with Tchaikovsky the day after praised the first three movements. The motto launches the last movement as it did the first, but now in E major, Andante maestoso, leading to another sonata-allegro construct -- this one vivace rather than moderato, with an alla breve meter that keeps it moving. At the end of the reprise, Tchaikovsky writes six B major chords -- a false cadence that invariably provokes applause -- before the motto, now bedecked in alb and fanon, launches a major-key coda as long as the entire development section. It quickens to a Presto dash for the double bar before broadening at the very end for a triumphantly sonorous tetrad of "end-of-file" chords. ---Roger Dettmer, allmusic.com

Numerous composers have responded to Shakespeare's timeless drama of forbidden and youthful love, but Tchaikovsky's response (along with Berlioz's and Prokofiev's) is at the top of the list. It is the only one of the three to be intended as a number in a symphony concert, and, hence is by default the most famous of the lot.

Tchaikovsky, a lawyer, was still developing as a composer at age 29 when Mily Balakirev (self-appointed father figure to Russian composers) persuaded him to write an orchestral work on the subject of the "star-cross'd lovers." Balakirev outlined the form, planned the keys, and

even suggested some of the actual music. After the 1870 premiere, he convinced Tchaikovsky to revise it. The work's success in this form did much to transform the composer's tendency toward crippling doubt into useful self-criticism. (Not that the transformation was ever total; Tchaikovsky suffered bouts of depression and self-doubt throughout his career.) The composer revised it again in 1880; this version is almost universally the one played. While the final version is probably the best one, the 1869 text is also a fine work and very much worth hearing. The earlier version begins with a charming tune that carries elements of the great love theme. In the first and second revisions Tchaikovsky eliminated this and replaced it with the benedictory theme representing Friar Laurence. The effect of this change on the overture's structure is large. The first version seems to begin with Juliet still in a relatively childlike state, but with the potential for the great love present in the disguised premonitions of the love theme. The focus is, therefore, on the development of the drama as it unfolds. The later versions, beginning as it were with a prayer, seem to invite the hearer to look back on a tragedy that has already happened.

Both versions proceed identically through depictions of the clashes between the houses of Montague and Capulet, and then unveil the great love music. After that, though, Tchaikovsky's original idea seems to this writer to be superior: There is a great development, fugal-sounding and allowing for contrapuntal conflict based on the overture's main rhythms and themes. It is tremendously exciting, more so than the music which replaced it. Justification for dropping it might be made along the lines that the original version has too much dramatic weight and overshadows the rest of the music. The main differences thereafter are in details of scoring, and in the finale, which in the original version is much too curt.

It is often instructive to see what a great composer has done at two different times with the same ideas and material. Whether or not it has greater musical merit, Tchaikovsky's blessing of his final version served to ensure that it is the one that prevailed, and in that form it is accepted as one of the greatest programmatic pieces in the symphonic repertoire. The yearning love theme, in particular, is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest melodies ever written, while the exciting fight music and Tchaikovsky's unfailingly clear and imaginative orchestration carry the listener through with hardly a misstep. But the original version is not far behind it in musical worth; it should be given more frequent revivals, if only for the sake of hearing the great fugato passage described above. ---Joseph Stevenson, allmusic.com

download (mp3 @320 kbs):

yandex mediafire uloz.to cloud.mail.ru gett

back