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Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and the Russian Musical Society. The Creative Aspect of Interaction

The present work is devoted to the little researched influence of the Russian Musical Society (RMS) on the artistic activities of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Examination is made of composer's original musical works performed in the concerts of the Russian Musical Society, as well as his orchestrations, which are viewed for the first time in the historical realities of the life of the Society and the artistic priorities of this organization. The fact of regular performances of the composer's music in the Society's concerts is presented as a manifestation of the realization of one of the crucial positions of the Statute of the RMS. The other position of this document substantiates the monetary payments to Tchaikovsky for the first performances of his compositions in the Society's concerts. The special attention which the RMS gave to the composers' works in the orchestral genre is highlighted and explained. Four compositions by Tchaikovsky connected with orchestrations of works by other composers are illuminated in detail. It is demonstrated on the basis of analysis of these works that by means of the choice of a particular instrumental range of the orchestra and the use of particular techniques of orchestration, in each of the four cases the composer made attempts to reconstruct the absent scores. The article is concluded of a brief generalization of Tchaikovsky's contribution to the activities of the RMS and the role of the Society in the composer's creative development.

Keywords: Russian Musical Society (RMS), musical education, concert life, orchestration, Piotr Tchaikovsky.

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П. И. Чайковский и Русское музыкальное общество. Творческий аспект взаимодействия

Предлагаемая работа посвящена малоизученному влиянию Русского музыкального общества (РМО) на творческую деятельность Петра Ильича Чайковского. Оригинальные музыкальные произведения композитора, исполнявшиеся в концертах Русского музыкального общества, а также его инструментовки впервые рассматриваются в контексте исторических реалий жизни Общества и художественных приоритетов этой организации. Сам факт регулярного исполнения сочинений композитора в концертах Общества представлен как реализация одного из ключевых положений Устава РМО. Другим положением этого документа обоснованы денежные выплаты Чайковскому за первые исполнения его сочинений в концертах Общества. Отмечается и объясняется особое внимание, которое РМО уделяло произведениям композитора в симфоническом жанре. В статье подробно освещаются четыре работы Чайковского, связанные с инструментовками сочинений других композиторов. На основании анализа этих работ показано, что посредством выбора определённого состава оркестра и использования характерных приёмов инструментовки, в каждом из четырёх случаев композитор делал попытки реконструировать отсутствующие партитуры. Статья завершается кратким обобщением вклада Чайковского в деятельность РМО и роли Общества в творческом развитии композитора.

Ключевые слова: Русское музыкальное общество (РМО), музыкальное образование, концертная жизнь, инструментовка, Пётр Чайковский.

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The activities of the Russian Musical Society (from April 1873 – the Imperial Russian Musical Society) was one of the most significant factors in the professional biography of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The formation of the composer's style and the entire period of his independent compositional work took place at the time when the musical life of Russia was in many ways defined by the initiatives of the Society. Efforts of the Russian Musical Society / Imperial Russian Musical Society (RMS/IRMS) resulted in the creation of opportunities for receiving a systematic musical education in Russia. Concert life and the music publishing business were placed on a regular basis, which played a significant educational role in the preparation of professional bringers, as well as the upbringing of the auditorium of listeners who were capable of perceiving and appreciating classical music. One cannot fail to notice, how varied Tchaikovsky's contacts with the RMS/IRMS were. They included passing through the total complex of educational subjects at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (1862–1865), teaching at the Moscow Conservatory (1866–1878), membership in the Directorate of the Moscow Section of the Society (1885–1890), and participation in the concerts of the RMS/IRMS as a composer and performer. The institutions of musical life founded and supported by the Russian Musical Society became for Tchaikovsky an exclusively productive environment in which he was able to develop his talent intensively.

On the other hand, Tchaikovsky's active diverse efforts as a composer, a performer, a pedagogue and one of the directors of the Society's Moscow Section made a considerable contribution into the development of the RMS/IRMS and the consolidation of its social status. Separate aspects of Tchaikovsky's collaboration with the RMS/IRMS have already been elucidated in scholarly literature. The works of Elena Shabshaevich recount of the participation of the Society at the World and the Russian Exhibitions in Moscow in 1872 and 1882, as well as of the way the composers whose works were performed at the concerts of the RMS/IRMS received material incentives, which had a direct connection to Tchaikovsky [13–15]. Elena Polotskaya's articles and dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Arts are devoted to comprehensive research of Tchaikovsky's pupilage and teaching activities inseparably connected with the RMS/IRMS [9–11; 17]. Grigory Moiseev

researched in detail the composer's contacts with the august patrons of the Society, as well as the Chairman of the RMS in Moscow Nikolai Rubinstein [5–8]. At the center of our attention lies the role of the Russian Musical Society as the initiator of Tchaikovsky's creative concepts. The composer's original musical compositions performed at the concerts of the RMS/IRMS and, in particular, his orchestrations made in the context of the historical realities of the Society's life and the artistic priorities of this organization.

The concerts of the Russian Musical Society became one of the main venues on which Tchaikovsky's compositions were performed during his lifetime. However, the cause for the creation of these compositions, as a rule, was not directly connected with the perspective of their performance at the concerts of the RMS/IRMS, but is conditioned both by the reasons of artistic character and by various circumstances of life. The rare examples when a certain musical composition was created particularly in connection with a performance at the RMS/IRMS concerts are presented by the history of the creation of the second version of the Overture in F major, the “Marche Slave” and the Suite from the Ballet “The Nutcracker.” Especially noteworthy is the history of the new version of the Overture in F major, the first version of which was written by Tchaikovsky during the time of his studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, presumably for a student orchestra, and performed under the direction of the composer on November 27, 1865.

Having moved to Moscow in the first days of January 1866, the composer upon recommendation of Nikolai Rubinstein presented for performance at a concert of the RMS another composition of his, also performed at the Conservatory – the massive Overture in C minor. However, for some unknown reasons this composition aroused harsh criticism from Nikolai Rubinstein and was not accepted for performance. Instead, Tchaikovsky showed Rubinstein the score for his Overture in F major, which was as a whole approved, but the condition for its performance was that the composer revise the composition considerably [3, pp. 134–135]. Apparently, the composer was recommended to take as a reference point the Overture in C minor, which was not accepted for performance, with which the second edition of the Overture in F major finds numerous common features in both the form and the scale of the composition, as well

as the correlation between the respective sections and the orchestration techniques. Following the instructions of Nikolai Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky expanded the Overture in F major considerably: in the new version the composition comprised 687 measures, whereas in the primary version it was 377. In the second version the introduction was greatly enlarged (28 measures in the first version, 109 measures in the second) and the development section (80 measures in the first version and 101 measures in the second), and there also appeared a slow section before the recapitulation (mm. 364–372) and a new coda (mm. 514–687) which included an extensive fugato. The constituency of the orchestra in the second version included four horns, two trumpets and three trombones, whereas in the first version the brass section was limited to one horn and one trumpet. The emotional range of the composition was enriched by new dramatic images which sharply contrasted with the main jovial color of the first version. In the revised version the Overture in F major was performed for the first time in a special symphonic assembly of the RMS in Moscow under the direction of Nikolai Rubinstein on March 4, 1866.

When illuminating the episode of preparing Piotr Tchaikovsky's composer's debut in Moscow, both Modest Tchaikovsky and Nikolai Kashkin observed that the main reason for the changes made by the composer in his Overture in F major was the necessity for expanding the makeup of the orchestra from a small to a large one, which was customary in the practice of the Moscow concerts of the RMS [Ibid., p. 134]. However, the composer did not limit himself to merely orchestrating the work anew, but virtually prepared a new composition, in its overall conception and in its details profoundly different from the initial version. It is hardly possible to indicate certain varied technical or aesthetic impediments for performance of the first version of the Overture in F major. An analysis of the changes made upon the creation of the second version of the composition makes it possible to come closer to approach an understanding of the position of Nikolai Rubinstein as chairman of the RMS in Moscow. Presenting to his audiences a new composer who was one of the first graduates of the first Russian conservatory and who started his teaching activities in Moscow, Rubinstein deemed it important to show him as a developed professional who was in possession of the contemporary musical language, compositional techniques and forms customary in artistic practice. This position stems from the Statute of the Russian Musical Society, in which all the current valid versions of which upon the formulation of the aims

of organization and the work of the Society the accent is made particularly on the development of the art of music in general and education in particular:

“§ 1. The goal of the Society: development of musical education and musical taste in Russia and encouragement of Russian talents” (1859)¹;

“Article 1. The Imperial Russian Musical Society has the goal of furthering the dissemination of musical education in Russia, to aid the development of all the sections of the art of music and to encourage skillful Russian artists (composers and performers) and teachers of musical subjects” (1873)².

The Society provided the public with new Russian music, which, on the one hand, was original, and on the other hand, was comparable with the Western European in terms of possession of skill. Performance of all the latest compositions of the large-scale form, as well as some of his vocal and instrumental small-scale compositions in the concerts of the RMS in Moscow and in other cities met the needs of this mission. Not a single one of them required bringing in significant compositional changes, with the exceptions of the First Piano Concerto and the Violin Concerto, where the object of criticism from the potential performers (Nikolai Rubinstein and Leopold Auer) were not the compositions as such, but the parts of the solo instruments. Nonetheless, these compositions too soon after their first performances outside of Russia (respectively, in Boston and Vienna) became a part of the programs of concerts of the Russian Musical Society. The fact itself of the regular performances of Tchaikovsky's compositions in the concerts of the RMS/IRMS may also be regarded as the realization of one of the crucial positions of the Society's Statute: “To grant Russian composers with the opportunities of hearing their compositions in performances”³. By no means an unimportant stroke to the overall picture of interrelations of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and the RMS/IRMS is also the circumstance that certain works by the composer the first performances of which took place in the Society's Moscow-based concerts were marked by material incentives. In the reports published by the Moscow Section of the Society the figures for the following payments are cited:

1871/1872: for the “Romeo and Juliet” overture – 200 rubles;

1872/1873: for the Second Symphony – 300 rubles;

1873/1874: for the “Storm” fantasy – 300 rubles;

1874/1875: for the overture to the opera “The Blacksmith Vakula, or The Night Before Christmas” – 300 rubles;

1875/1876: for the Third Symphony – 300 rubles;
1876/1877: for “Marche Slave” and the “Francesca da Rimini” fantasy – 500 rubles;

1877/1878: presumably for the Fourth Symphony (the Report lists: “for the composition”) – 200 rubles;

1879/1880: for the First Suite⁴ – 300 rubles.

(As a comparison, according to the reports of the Moscow section of the RMS, Tchaikovsky’s monthly salary for teaching at the Moscow Conservatory in 1871/1872 was equal to app. 124 rubles, in 1872/1873 – 192 rubles, in 1873/1874 – 172 rubles, in 1874/1875 – 193 rubles, in 1875/1876 – 206 rubles, in 1876/1877 – 225 rubles.)

The payments to Tchaikovsky were made by virtue of the Society’s Statute⁵ and were, on the one hand, an acknowledgement of the outstanding artistic merit of the composer’s works, and, on the other hand, – a special sign of attention and support particularly compositions of the symphonic genre. From the first years of its activity, the repertoire policy of the RMS preserved the priority particularly of symphonic music. Herein can be traced the connection with the undertakings of the Russian Symphonic Society, on the basis of which the Russian Musical Society was founded in 1859⁶. Subsequently the character of the material incentives changed somewhat, and the composer received annual sums not for the premiere performance of a certain composition, but for all of his compositions performed in the concerts during the seasons.

Along with Tchaikovsky’s original compositions, the concerts of the RMS/IRMS featured orchestrations made by him of works by other composers. One of the main goals of the Society already proclaimed in the Statute for 1859 was “performance in the utmost possible perfection of the best musical compositions, instrumental and vocal”⁷. In the Statute of 1873 the same goal was described in greater detail: “Article 2. <...> The Society has the right: <...> 2. To organize for its members musical assemblies and concerts which shall feature in programs affirmed by the directorates of works of vocal and instrumental, sacred and secular music of both Russian and foreign composers <...>, operatic and musical-dramatic compositions, as well as assemblies for chamber music”⁸.

Piotr Tchaikovsky made his orchestrations upon commission for concrete concerts. For the Second Symphonic Assembly of the RMS in Moscow, which took place on November 6, 1870, the composer orchestrated the Aria of Paris (“O del mio dolce ardor”) from Christoph Willibald Gluck’s opera “Paride ed Elena.” The Special Assembly of the RMS/IRMS in Moscow to the benefit of the Fund for Assistance of Widows and Orphans of Artists

on January 29, 1871 featured a performance of the trio of Carolina, Elisetta and Fidalma (“Le faccio un inchino contessa garbata”) from Domenico Cimarosa’s opera “Il Matrimonio Segreto.” The special concert to the benefit of the selfsame fund which took place on April 7, 1874, featured the performance of the orchestration of Robert Schumann’s ballad “The Prophetic Dream” (in the Schumann’s original – “Ballade vom Haideknaben”). The program of the daytime concert of the St. Petersburg of the Society on December 26, 1876 included the vocal trio of Alexander Dargomyzhsky “Nochevala tuchka zolotaya” [“The Golden Cloud Spent the Night”] in the orchestration of Piotr Tchaikovsky. Orchestrations of operatic numbers were made due to the unavailability of the original scores, the chamber compositions were orchestrated in connection with the widespread habit of performing them in orchestral concerts in orchestral format. We shall briefly present each of the enumerated orchestrations.

The Aria from Gluck’s opera was orchestrated by Tchaikovsky in 1870 from the piano-vocal score, in which it was composed that the work was written by another composer – Alessandro Stradella. We have traced out the historical peripeteia of the history of this aria and have stated argumentative suppositions concerning the date and the reasons of the substitution of authorship, and have also ascertained that Tchaikovsky’s orchestration was carried out from the transcription of the Aria for voice and piano published in 1854 by the Berlin music publishing house “A. M. Schlesinger” in the series of sacred songs “Sion” [16]. The numerous differences between the music in this edition from Gluck’s original version are also cited in our article. Among them is the change of the tempo of the Aria from *Moderato* to *Largo*, the lowering of the tessitura (D minor instead of G minor), the addition of new embellishments in the vocal part and of dynamic markings (in the range of *pianissimo* – *forte*). Gluck’s quivering, airborne Aria acquired an emphatically majestic and dark color and a massiveness untypical for it.

The composition’s pretended affiliation with a long past time (the publisher’s subtitle was – “Arie nel sec. XVII” / “Aria from the 17th Century”) impelled Tchaikovsky to highlight this remoteness of time in his work, among other things, by the choice of the chamber orchestral ensemble. The Aria was orchestrated for flute, oboe, clarinet (in B \flat), bassoon, two horns, first and second violins, violas, cellos and double-basses. Tchaikovsky demonstrated striking artistic intuition – unlike the transcription for voice and piano, which served as a source for the music for the orchestration, his score is transparent and in many ways is very close

to Gluck's score. For example, the main instrument in the woodwind group imitating the motives of the vocal in Tchaikovsky's score, as in Gluck's, is the oboe. Other wind instruments are used only in brief dynamic accretions (mm. 5–7, 21–22, 36–38) and in a number of other places for the enrichment of the sound. The rendition of the string groups in both orchestrations is identical. Finally, in the autograph score of his work Tchaikovsky did not write out the tempo *Largo* and did not indicate any deviations from it (later these components of the text were brought into the score by an unidentified person)⁹.

Tchaikovsky also aspired to authenticity in the recreation of the orchestration of the original in the work on the trio from Cimarosa's opera "Il Matrimonio Segreto" (1871). Tchaikovsky was familiar with a fragment of the original orchestration of this number. The initial measures are cited in Example 119 of François-Auguste Gevaert's "Guide to Orchestration," which the composer translated from the French into Russian in the summer of 1865. They are given as an example of relief shading of various parts of the string group. Tchaikovsky reproduced this fragment precisely and subsequently followed the principle of structure of the orchestral texture embedded in it. The trio is orchestrated for small symphony orchestra, including 2 horns (in G) and 2 trumpets (in G). The limitation of performance means only to this ensemble, apparently, had the aim of coming closer to the late 18th century and thereby to recreate more precisely and fuller the orchestral style of the original.

The similar artistic goal of reconstruction of the possible authorial orchestration was what Tchaikovsky aspired to in the case of Schumann's ballad "The Prophetic Dream" (1874). The intonational-thematic mode of the ballad is close to another composition by Schumann – the introduction to the oratorio "Paradise and the Peri." In addition, the similarity is shown in the texture and techniques of development of musical material. The texture of both compositions is characterized by the melodic sophistication of the voices, the abundance of counterpoint and imitation. The oratorio "Paradise and the Peri" belonged to a number of Tchaikovsky's favorite compositions in world musical literature in general. The composer knew it perfectly from his years at the Conservatory [4, p. 288]. Apparently, Tchaikovsky observed the similarity of the ballad and the introduction to "Paradise and the Peri" and virtually quoted in his score of "The Prophetic Dream" the orchestration of the introduction to the oratorio: the thick orchestral texture, an absolute predominance in the orchestra of the bowed string group

interpreted in the form of a small orchestra due to the sophistication and melodic independence of each part and to imitation. The other orchestral groups are of a subservient order, they are entrusted with performance of separate retorts, the support of the harmonic vertical aspect, the doublings of certain voices of the string group. At the same time, during his entire life Tchaikovsky criticized Schumann's orchestral style uncompromisingly, considering it to be devoid of color and rough, and once having expressed the intention to re-orchestrate all the symphonies of the German composer [1, p. 73]. However, in this work Robert Schumann's orchestration, which Tchaikovsky was unsympathetic to, was comprehended by him as a characteristic feature of the style, which it was necessary to reconstruct.

Tchaikovsky also oriented himself on the authorial orchestral writing of the original music in the orchestration of Dargomyzhsky's vocal trio "Nochevala tuchka zolotaya" ["The Golden Cloud Spent the Night"] (1876). That the same time, similarly to Schumann's orchestra, Dargomyzhsky's orchestra became the object of Tchaikovsky's criticism in his reviews: "...his orchestra is bland, dry and devoid of effects" [12, p. 150]. Dargomyzhsky's trio was orchestrated by Tchaikovsky for double ensembles of woodwind instruments (flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons), two horns and strings. In both stanzas of the composition (mm. 7–38, 42–66) the quiet sound of the string quintet is juxtaposed with the broad *tutti* of the entire orchestra gradually dispersed in short phrases of several instruments (mm. 38–41, 60–69). The very character of the music of the trio disposed towards a reserved color and laconism of expressive means (see also: [2, pp. 66–68]).

To sum up the cited observations, it may be asserted that in his works with the help of the choice of particular ensembles of the orchestra and use of characteristic techniques of orchestration Tchaikovsky made the attempts of reconstructing the unavailable scores of Gluck (Stradella) and Cimarosa or modeling the potential scores by Schumann and Dargomyzhsky. Such an approach answered to the greatest degree the educational mission of the Russian Musical Society, but was also concordant to the tendencies of the early and mid-1870s, when these works were done. In the second half of the 19th century historical comprehensive thought originated, the aesthetical originality of compositions from other time periods and their instrumental embodiments become comprehended.

The permanent contacts between Tchaikovsky and the RMS/IRMS during the course of the composer's entire life testify to the fact that there was a deep living connection which existed between him and

Society. He composer's original compositions and orchestrations of works by other composers comprised a considerable portion of the contemporary Russian repertoire in the Society's concert programs. The continuous possibility to hear performances of his works presented Tchaikovsky with the opportunity to correct his mistakes and errors, to put the finishing touches on his compositions, to draw lessons for the

future and thereby to grow artistically. As a sign of his gratitude the composer dedicated to the Moscow Section of the Society his Second Symphony, which became one of Tchaikovsky's most often performed works during his lifetime. In September 1887 by the decision of the Main Directorate Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was chosen as an Honorary Member of the Imperial Russian Musical Society.

NOTES

¹ Statute of the Russian Musical Society. Consolidated by Imperial Court on May 1, 1859. St. Petersburg: Printing Office of the 3rd Section of the Administrative Office in Possession of His Majesty, 1859, p. 1.

² Statute of the Russian Musical Society. Consolidated by Imperial Court on July 4/16, 1873. St. Petersburg: Printing Office of R. Golicke, 1873, p. 1; Statute of the Russian Musical Society. Consolidated by Imperial Court on July 4/16, 1873, with changes, following with the Permission of His Imperial Majesty on August 9/21, 1885 and February 22 / March 6, 1891. St. Petersburg: Printing Office of S. L. Kind. 1904, p. 1.

³ Statute of the Russian Musical Society... 1859, p. 1; Statute of the Imperial Russian Musical Society... 1873, p. 2; Statute of the Imperial Russian Musical Society... 1904, p. 2.

⁴ I wish to express my gratitude to the Research Associate of the Music History Section of the State Institute for Art Studies Anna Sergeevna Vinogradova for informing me of the title of the composition. It is listed in the journal of the sessions of the Directorate of the Moscow Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society from March 18, 1880 (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. F. 661. Inv. 1. D. 21, p. 6 backside). The title is absent in the published Report.

⁵ From the Statute in the 1859 redaction: «§ 2. Point D) As far as the development of its means, the Society shall grant to the especially skillful in either musical composition or performance... monetary means and other premiums» [p. 1]. From the Statute in the 1873 redaction: "Article 2.

<...> The Society has the right: <...> 7. To grant monetary premiums and other awards to the most remarkable composers, performers, as well as to instructors of musical subjects" [p. 2]. It must be observed that in the journals of the sessions of the Directorate of the Moscow Section of the IRMS sometimes other reasons were presented for payments to Tchaikovsky. For example, despite the figures of the published Report, the payment for the Second Symphony in the journal was issued as the issue of funds for "the swiftest publication of the symphony" (Russian State Archive for Literature and Art. F. 661. Inv. 1. D. 21, p. 2). These data require further verification and analysis. I wish to thank the Research Associate of the Music History Section of the State Institute of Art Studies Anna Sergeevna Vinogradova for the information about the journals of the sessions of the Directorate of the Moscow Section of the IRMS.

⁶ In the project of the Statute of the Russian Musical Society (1859) it is written: "The Symphonic Society, implemented by Imperial consolidation on January 18, 1847, wishing to expand the scope of its activities, requests permission to supplement and alter its constituency, as well as the right to be called the "Russian Musical Society" (Russian National Museum of Music. F. 87. D. 90, p. 1). This preamble was not included in the text of the consolidated Statute of the RMS.

⁷ Statute of the Russian Musical Society... 1859, p. 1.

⁸ Statute of the Imperial Russian Musical Society... 1873, pp. 1–2.

⁹ Russian National Museum of Music. F. 88. D. 160.

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