

Chandos

DIGITAL

TCHAIKOVSKY

Music for Cello & Orchestra

including original versions of
ROCOCO VARIATIONS & PEZZO CAPRICCIOSO

RAPHAEL
WALLFISCH
cello

• ENGLISH
CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA •

GEOFFREY
SIMON
conductor



Tchaikovsky wrote four works for Cello and Orchestra—two original compositions and two arrangements—and all four are here collected together for the first time on record. Although the published scores of the *Rococo Variations* and the *Pezzo Capriccioso* were heavily edited by their respective dedicatees, the present performances are based solely on Tchaikovsky's original manuscripts as published in the Russian Collected Edition of his Complete Works.

Variations on a Rococo Theme (Original 1876 Version)

Introduction (*Moderato assai quasi Andante*)

Theme (*Moderato semplice*)

Variation I (*Tempo della Tema*)

Variation II (*Tempo della Tema*)

Cadenza

Variation III (*Andante*)

Variation IV (*Allegro vivo*)

Variation V (*Andante grazioso*)

Variation VI (*Allegro moderato—with Cadenza*)

Variation VII (*Andante sostenuto*)

Variation VIII and Coda (*Allegro moderato con anima*)

The commission for the *Rococo Variations* came from the celebrated virtuoso cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen who had left a solo career in Germany to go to Moscow where he became one of Tchaikovsky's fellow professors at the Imperial Conservatory. Fitzenhagen had already played in the first performances of Tchaikovsky's three String Quartets, so it was natural that he should request a small-scale concerto-style work for his own recital tours. Tchaikovsky duly obliged by writing music of a lightness and grace which epitomised the Mozartian style he so cherished.

Initially, in December 1876, Tchaikovsky wrote the *Rococo Variations* in 'short-score' for cello-and-piano but before orchestrating the work he showed it to Fitzenhagen who made a number of changes to the solo part. When the work was first heard at a Russian Musical Society concert in November 1877 it was still in the form intended by the composer and consisted of an

Introduction and Theme with Eight Variations.

Now that he had given the *Rococo Variations* the first public performance (though Tchaikovsky himself wasn't present, having left Russia to recover from his disastrous marriage) Fitzenhagen went on to make further substantial alterations to the score. These were mostly to do with dynamics, phrasings and other technical aspects of the solo cello writing. But he also added unnecessary 'repeat marks' to both halves of the Theme and, most drastic of all, completely dropped one of the variations and changed the order of the remainder. He probably felt that the D minor *Andante* Variation, together with the preceding *Cadenza* and the following *Allegro vivo*, would be more effective if placed at the end of the work than left as Variations III and IV respectively. This, however, left Fitzenhagen with two similar *Allegro* variations at the conclusion of the piece, so to overcome this problem he simply omitted the Eighth Variation altogether, thus jettisoning nearly forty bars of music, and tacked the Coda onto the end of the *Allegro vivo*. This now became the final variation of seven, rather than the fourth of eight, as in Tchaikovsky's meticulously calculated original scheme. Fitzenhagen also had to find somewhere else for the penultimate C major Variation, the only one in triple-time, and this he shifted from its rightful place as the true 'slow movement' to a new position much earlier in the set where it became the Third Variation in the familiar revised edition.

At the beginning of 1878, Fitzenhagen took the altered cello and piano score to Pyotr Jurgenson for publication and in Tchaikovsky's continuing absence he told the publisher that he had been "authorised" to make the changes. Jurgenson was nevertheless incensed at what had been done and wrote to Tchaikovsky in Switzerland: "Loathsome Fitzenhagen! He is determined to 'cello-ise' your piece. Heavens above! Tchaikovsky 'revised and edited' by Fitzenhagen!"

Even so, when the cello and piano arrangement of the *Rococo Variations* appeared in the autumn of 1878, it was Fitzenhagen's edition which was printed and on seeing the score Tchaikovsky caustically commented on the number of errors it contained. The cellist tried to make amends by writing to the composer from Germany in June 1879 to say what a tremendous reception

the work had received when he played it at the Wiesbaden Music Festival. The great Franz Liszt, he reported, had told him that "now, at last, we have heard real music again."

There was a ten-year gap before Jurgenson finally published the full score but as this also corresponded to Fitzenhagen's cello and piano revision. Tchaikovsky's bitterness over the whole affair was re-kindled. Fitzenhagen's pupil, Anatoly Brandukov, asked the composer what he was going to do: "The devil take it," replied the exasperated Tchaikovsky, "Let it stand as it is!"

Not until 1941 was Tchaikovsky's original conception heard again in Moscow and in 1956 it was published as part of his Collected Works where, states the preface, it was "cleansed of all editorial changes made by Fitzenhagen." In 'The Crisis Years', David Brown describes the Fitzenhagen score as "deplorably corrupt" and puts in a plea for cellists to discard it in favour of the composer's original. It is this rarely-heard authentic version, corresponding to the Complete Works Edition, which is recorded here.

Nocturne (arranged by Tchaikovsky)

In October 1873, to earn some money rather quickly, Tchaikovsky wrote a set of *Six Pieces for Piano* which Jurgenson immediately published. The fourth piece, a charmingly nostalgic *Nocturne*, was orchestrated by Tchaikovsky in February 1888 whilst he was in Paris, having become much in demand abroad as conductor of his own works. It was introduced to the Parisian audience by Brandukov at a musical soirée in which Tchaikovsky conducted members of the Colonne Orchestra. The concert also included a selection of his piano music and songs as well as his two other short cello works—the *Pezzo Capriccioso* and *Andante Cantabile*.

Pezzo Capriccioso (Original 1887 Version)

This was written in the summer of 1887 whilst Tchaikovsky was on a visit to Germany and he wrote to Jurgenson at the end of August: "I am sending you a cello piece dedicated to Brandukov

... it is the unique product of my creative inspiration for the whole of the summer!"

Jurgenson published the work in 1888, following the Paris première with Brandukov as soloist. Like Fitzenhagen before him with the *Rococo*

Variations, Brandukov had his own alterations to make to the *Pezzo Capriccioso*, but the present recording again reverts to Tchaikovsky's original score. Of the work John Warrack has written that it is "capricious in the sense of being a 'fancy', a brief toying with a mood in its various aspects, rather than as a 'jeu d'esprit' but in its modest way it is both original and touching".

Two Songs (orchestrated by Tchaikovsky)

(a) "Legend: Christ Had a Garden"

(b) "Was I Not a Blade of Grass?"

Tchaikovsky was a prolific song-writer yet it is surprising that he arranged only three of his songs for solo voice and orchestra. One of these, *Does the Day Reign?*, was featured in the Colonne Orchestra concert in 1888 but curiously has not been published in the Complete Edition. This suggests that on his return to Russia, the composer left the music behind in Paris where it may still be languishing to this day.

However, the other orchestrated songs *have* survived and both are included here in instrumental form with no changes to the scoring and an unaltered vocal line being taken by the solo cello. Richard Aldrich once wrote that "the best of Tchaikovsky's songs are an inestimable addition to the literature of lyric art" and in instrumental performances, as here, their prevailing moods are no less deeply felt than in their original vocal conceptions.

The Legend is the fifth of *Sixteen Songs for Children* composed in the autumn of 1883. The following year, Tchaikovsky arranged it for voice and orchestra and five years later came a version for unaccompanied chorus. Anton Arensky also used the melody in his *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky* in 1894. The song relates the legend of the Christ-Child playing in his garden and making garlands of roses for his companions. Finding no flowers left for himself he fashions and wears instead a little crown of thorns.

Was I not a Blade of Grass? dates from 1880 and comes from *Seven Romances*, several of which were composed to lyrics by Tolstoy, though this particular 'Little Russian Song' is to a text by I. S. Surikov. The orchestral version dates from 1884 and was first heard in St. Petersburg three years later. The poem is the despairing cry of a young girl betrothed against her will

to an old man for whom she feels nothing and she compares herself to a little blade of grass which has been cruelly cut down and trampled underfoot in the green and sunny meadow.

Andante Cantabile (arranged by Tchaikovsky)

At the beginning of 1871, Tchaikovsky wrote his First String Quartet for a special chamber-music concert of his own works and its popularity was quickly established by the *Andante Cantabile* movement with its Russian folk-song theme. Tchaikovsky's own arrangement for Cello and Strings, which was made in Paris in 1888 at the same time as the *Nocturne* transcription, is directed to be played 'muted' throughout and so loses none of the expressiveness and beauty of the original composition. EDWARD JOHNSON

RAPHAEL WALLFISCH, born in London in 1953 into a distinguished musical family, took up the cello at the age of eight. He studied in Rome with Amedeo Baldovino and at the Royal Academy of Music in London where he was awarded every cello prize. His winning of several scholarships including the Fulbright enabled him to spend two years in California completing his studies with Gregor Piatigorsky, during which time he had the honour of playing chamber music with Heifetz.

In 1977 he won the Gaspar Cassado International Cello Competition in Florence—the first time in eight years that a First Prize had been awarded. Since then he has played as soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras and his engagements have taken him to Australia, the United States and most European countries both as soloist and recitalist.

Television appearances have included a chamber music programme with Sir Georg Solti for the BBC, a first performance of Haydn folk songs with Stuart Burrows, and as judge in a nationwide television competition for young musicians. In 1982 he gave masterclasses at the Harrogate Festival where he was appearing as a performer.

Raphael Wallfisch is a Professor at the Guildhall School of Music in London and Head of the cello department at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. He gives chamber music recitals with his father, pianist Peter Wallfisch and clarinettist Anton Weinberg. In addition to this record, he has also recorded Cello Concertos by Samuel Barber and Shostakovich for Chandos, with Geoffrey Simon and the English Chamber Orchestra.

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