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PETER TSCHAIKOWSKY
(1840-1893)

Symphonie Nr. 5 e-moll op. 64
Symphony no. 5 in E minor
Symphonie n° 5 en mi mineur
Sinfonia n. 5 in mi minore

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | 1. Andante – Allegro con anima | [14'44] |
| 2 | 2. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza –
Moderato con anima – Andante mosso –
Allegro non troppo – Tempo I | [12'54] |
| 3 | 3. Valse. Allegro moderato | [6'07] |
| 4 | 4. Finale. Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace –
Molto vivace – Moderato assai e molto maestoso –
Presto | [12'10] |

Ouverture Solennelle »1812« op. 49

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|---|---|---------|
| 5 | 5. Largo – Andante – Allegro giusto – Largo –
Allegro vivace | [15'01] |
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Berliner Philharmoniker
SEIJI OZAWA

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PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

TCHAIKOVSKY: SYMPHONY NO. 5 • "1812" OVERTURE

Tchaikovsky's enduring contribution to the history of symphonic composition lay in his radicalized liberation of orchestral sound and the unfiltered directness of sweeping emotion that it carried in its path. His music's immediate, physical impact has always been controversial, and for over a century it has been *de rigueur* for traditionalist critics to disapprove of individual passages (or even entire works) that transgress previously presumed limits of decorum, thematic type, dynamic range, and so on. From the current, much-needed reassessment of the composer, though, it is clear that his major works — embraced by audiences from the beginning — had an incalculable impact on the emerging conception of permissible orchestral sound. Strauss, Mahler, and Sibelius — not to mention the later Russians, including Rachmaninov and Stravinsky — were, among other things, post-Tchaikovskian composers; their attitudes towards orchestral sound often owe much to this powerful precedent.

Tchaikovsky composed his Fifth Symphony on the heels of a brilliantly successful international conducting tour from January through March 1888 — a high-water mark in his career, despite his characteristic emotional swerves throughout it all between exhilaration and despair. Once back in Russia the composer began to write the symphony in May, and it was first performed, under his own direction, in St. Petersburg on 17 November.

The Fifth may be approached from many different

angles — melodic, motivic, tonal, to mention a few. From the point of view of orchestral sound itself, though, Tchaikovsky's central challenge was to manufacture the timbres and emotional statements that would justify the work's sonorous goal: the risky, triple- and quadruple-*fortissimo* sound-apotheosis in its final three minutes. The symphony's basic outline could scarcely be clearer. The introduction to the first movement — a dark, ominous E minor procession that casts its shadow over much of the symphony to come — is ultimately transformed into full "Lisztian" triumph as the marchlike, E major coda of the finale. Moreover, this "external" framing-theme intrudes at selected points within the middle movements as a neo-Berliozian *idée fixe*; sounded more fully in major, it also reappears as the now-confident introduction to the finale itself.

In a fragmentary program note later found in the sketches, Tchaikovsky described this introductory theme as representing "total submission before Fate — or, what is the same thing, the inscrutable design of Providence." Certainly by 1888 the implied narrative here, a victorious reversal of this initial condition, was one of the most generic of musical plots, and the success or failure of such a work lay not in the generalities of this standardized program but in the richness of detail encountered as one progresses through it. In other words, the main interest was musical, as Tchaikovsky seems to have suggested when he reported, in an apparently contradictory

letter to Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich midway through the Fifth's composition, that this was "a symphony without a program."

And richness of details is precisely what Tchaikovsky provides. The bulk of the symphony, contained within the minor-major *idée fixe* frame, is refracted into a multi-movement series of strikingly tinted dream-tableaux, as though the plan were to fill as much of the interior as possible with balletic fantasies rather than orthodox "Germanic" material. The result is a "fantastic symphony" in its own right and on its own terms. Following the gloomy introduction, the themes of the first movement's sonata proper, the Allegro con anima, were once planned, according to the early sketch-note, to be concerned with "1. Murmurs, doubts, laments, reproaches against . . . XXX [usually interpreted to refer to his homosexuality], 2. Shall I cast myself into the embrace of *faith*?" As some writers have noted, though, how one might fit this description to the succession of rich moods actually provided in the music is anything but self-evident. Once again, it may be that this rudimentary program was either discarded or substantially altered early in the compositional process.

The slow movement, which opens with the justly famous horn solo, is twice interrupted near its end, as fierce eruptions of the *idée fixe* tear into the sumptuous dream-fabric — brutal reminders of the external problem to be faced. The third movement is an unmistakably Tchaikovskian waltz, swirling together surpassing elegance and melancholy — as if

one were perceiving a glittering ballroom not as a participant, but as a reflective observer: at its end a fragment of the "Fate" idea comments tellingly on what it has perceived "from outside." The finale begins with a sturdy, major-mode version of the *idée fixe* theme — the initial problem confidently on the verge of solution — and the Allegro vivace sonata that follows provides us with a vigorous shaking-out of the remains of E minor, coupled with an exuberant, major-mode courting toward the culmination not only of the movement but of the whole symphony: the fully unfurled coda-apotheosis.

The Fifth's loosely cumulative drive toward a concluding maximal sonority unleashed in an expanded coda had a well-known, controversial precedent in which the principle had been displayed on the most elemental of levels. This was the unabashedly theatrical "1812" Overture (1880), the celebrated battle- and victory-piece which Tchaikovsky had composed grudgingly — and with considerable doubts — as a conspicuous element of the much-publicized Moscow Exhibition of Industry and the Arts. Here the central "battle sonata" — quoting the French *Marseillaise* as a symbol of clashes with the Napoleonic troops — is enveloped in a massive introduction-coda frame, in which the coda is treated as a colossal apotheosis of the introduction's Russian images. Drums, cymbals, bells, and cannon help to augment the victory-sonority, and the quadruple-*fortissimo* conclusion is capped with a quotation from "God Save the Tsar."

James A. Hepokoski

TSCHAIKOWSKY: FÜNFTE SYMPHONIE OUVERTURE SOLENNELLE »1812«

Fatum nannte Tschaikowsky 1868 eine Symphonische Fantasie. Zwanzig Jahre später machte der achtundvierzigjährige Komponist das eigene Fatum zum Gegenstand seiner Fünften Symphonie: Leben im Zeichen eines unausweichlichen Verhängnisses. Gibt er im Jugendwerk dem Schicksal noch eine äußerlich-dramatische Gestalt, kommt im späten opus eine innere tragische Lebenserfahrung zum Ausdruck.

»Völlige Ergebung in das Schicksal, oder, was dasselbe ist, in den unergründlichen Ratschluß der Vorsehung«, notierte Tschaikowsky in einem eigens für die Fünfte Symphonie angelegten Skizzenheft unter dem Klarinetten Thema von düsterem Ernst, das die Symphonie eröffnet und das als eine Art Schicksalsmotiv in allen vier Sätzen präsent ist. Es weist von den ersten Takten an den Weg in ein alternativloses Finale.

Dem Andante der Introduction folgt in einem Allegro ein aktivierend-pulsierendes Hauptthema, von expressiven Nebenthemen umlagert. Es kommt nach Tschaikowskys Worten zu »Murren, Zweifeln, Klagen, Vorwürfen wegen XXX« (eine von Tschaikowskys Chiffren für seine Homosexualität).

So intim-persönlich diese Aussage ist, so normhaft-streng handhabt der Komponist das Prinzip der Sonatenhauptsatzform. Das Hauptthema steigert das Geschehen bis zum fortissimo; pianissimo hebt im Fagott die Reprise an, und die Coda klingt in den tiefen Streichern leise aus: Erregung, schmerzvoll-lustvolle Höhepunkte und Resignation.

Betont regelhaft ist auch das Andante cantabile, als dreiteilige Liedform angelegt: »Sollte man sich nicht dem Glauben in die Arme werfen???« notierte Tschaikowsky zum zweiten Satz. Und tatsächlich: Versucherisch entspringt der choralartigen Streichereinleitung die berühmte emphatische, bisweilen auch sentimental gescholtene Hornmelodie. Dazu gesellt sich eine sanfte helle Weise in der Oboe, vom Komponisten als »Lichtstrahl« bezeichnet, und kündigt von Erlösung. Pastoral gibt sich auch der Mittelteil mit der eröffnenden Klarinette, bis das Schicksalsmotiv die Idylle zerstört. Zwar kommt es der Regel entsprechend zur Wiederholung des lieblichen A-Teils, aber gegen jede Norm fährt auch hier das Introductionsthema dazwischen, fällt das Himmelstor zu, verlöscht Hoffnung im vierfachen pianissimo.

Der dritte Satz hebt mit einem Trotzdem an, kündigt von einer »gewissen wohlthätigen freundlichen menschlichen Gestalt« (Tschaikowsky). Doch die A-dur-Beschwingtheit dieses Walzers ist trügerisch, auch hier lauert am Grunde, sich aus der Tiefe emporarbeitend, das allbekannte Thema.

Ist es im dritten Satz nur schattenhaft präsent, verhalten in den tiefen Holzbläsern anklingend, so eröffnet es in nackter Unmittelbarkeit und »maestoso«, nach kraftvollem E-dur gewendet, das Finale. Wieder fällt dem Schicksalsthema die Introduction zu, folgt ein Sonatennallegro, in dem das Hauptthema sich zum Geschwindmarsch steigert. Die Reprise stürzt wild voran, fff, sempre con tutta