

**Chandos**

**CHAN 8348**



**THE BORODIN TRIO** – a renowned ensemble whose violinist is Rostislav Dubinsky who was for thirty years first violinist of the celebrated Borodin String Quartet. The Trio was formed after the three musicians – Dubinsky with Luba Edlina (piano) and Yuli Turovsky (cello) – left Russia in 1976.

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**DIGITAL**

**TCHAIKOVSKY**

PIANO TRIO IN A MINOR Op. 50

BORODIN TRIO



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Recording Producer: Brian Couzens. Sound Engineer: Ralph Couzens.  
Recorded at the Church of St. George the Martyr, Bloomsbury, London on June 11 & 12, 1981.  
Front Cover Photo: David Usilt.

Tchaikovsky was surely a unique figure in the history of Western music. Egocentric, yet thoroughly Russian, he was a misanthrope who courted fame and who, virtually from his day to ours, was to remain the world's most popular composer. An almost hysterical romantic who worshipped Mozart, he was a complete professional, and the first Russian composer of his stature to become so.

From 1865-78, in fact, Peter Ilyich was a somewhat unwilling academic, teaching at the newly-formed Moscow Conservatory under Nicholas Rubinstein, an important pianist and conductor, and brother of the more famous Anton. 'Without you, I should have been condemned to perpetual mishandling', wrote Tchaikovsky to the promulgator of many of his orchestral works. Their relationship was never an easy one (Rubinstein first maligned, then actively promoted, the celebrated First Piano Concerto), but after the death of his friend in 1881, Tchaikovsky was to dedicate his only Trio 'to the memory of a great artist'.

He had once expressed only antipathy when his patron and benefactor, Mme. von Meck, suggested his writing something for piano, violin and 'cello (small wander, for one who so readily employed the bassoon, cor anglais or celeste!). One may speculate that he changed his mind not only to please his friend, but to revel once more in some of the towering piano virtuosity of the famous concerto.

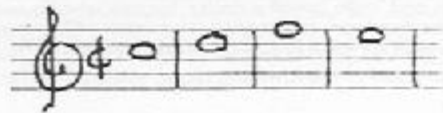
The composer who became justly celebrated for the pignancy and almost speechlike accessibility of his melodies chose for the opening of this 'elegaic piece' a 'motto' theme of an unusually expansive nature which seems to anticipate the greatly protracted quality of the Trio as a whole. An intense, plangent fervour is never once relinquished in its first 20-bar unfolding, *moderato assai*. The soulful tones of the 'cello, first yielding to the violin, soon re-enter to form an ecstatic union which is a mixture of conversation, counterpoint and a kind of double melody. Akin to much of the



composer's orchestral writing, this peculiarly intimate effect is heard again in the restatement of the theme by the piano, and many more times in the course of the entire work.

The transition now begins, as the violin speaks in a gently drooping semiquaver figure of a faintly Russian cast; then it joins the other two for a surging reply in the manner of a *lutti*. Moving through the familiar Tchaikovskian patterns of simple repetition and endlessly rising, passionate sequences, the three instruments engage in a tug of war from which the piano emerges victorious. Tumbling violently to a half-cadence, it opens the door to a weighty second theme which, with its characteristically short, repeated phrases, has a distinctly nationalistic character. Perhaps this was viewed mainly as a requirement of the sonata 'rule', for it soon gives way to the effusive and much more extended closing section.

Clothed in some very florid piano writing is yet another theme, one of whose elements opens the Finale of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony:



In Tchaikovsky's hands, it is no stranger to hyperbole, nor to some ingratiatingly tender permutations. At last, over an insistent figure in the piano, one is dropped almost imperceptibly into the Development.

Here, an anxious and obsessive variant of the motto theme first rises in increasingly agitated motion; then, still at fever-pitch, it is carried into a sort of free variation of the same material before

exhausting itself in a now-familiar series of offbeat chords in the piano. Finally, in one spellbinding harmonic transformation, there is a drawn-out reverie where, over the quiet marking of time in the piano, the transports of the strings seem like two lovers mingling their vows with their tears. A song-like violin cadenza leads into a Recapitulation from which the rhapsodic stream of the beginning has flown, leaving one, as it were, heavily burdened with memory.

It is already apparent that a dutiful adherence to what was conceived to be classical sonata form was continually at variance with Tchaikovsky's romantic sensibility. After its opening, the Recapitulation literally recasts the Exposition; yet where the movement should end a second development is attached, including a passage where the 'vows and tears' portion of the true Development is repeated *verbatim*. The total self-absorption felt here is scarcely dispelled by the dreamlike reappearance of the last, sorrowful strains of the motto theme in the Coda.

The second movement (IIa) comprises a theme with eleven variations (the seventh of which, just before the fugue, is omitted on this recording). First stated by the piano alone, the folkish naivete of the theme is lent a charming touch of sophistication by a rhythmic lilt on alternate measures. The variations, said to recall scenes from the life of Nicholas Rubinstein, are in general both vivid genre pieces somewhat in the manner of Schumann and freely imaginative departures from their original theme. Special mention can be made of No. 3, a delicious and dizzying romp of staccato chords and piano ripples; the music box (or sleigh bell?) enchantment of No. 5, and the two gems, a waltz (No. 6) and mazurka (No. 10). In the waltz, the solo 'cello yields to a genteel abandon in the trill measures, conjuring up visions of several *Eugene Onegins*. And, after the synthetic excitement of the fugue, the waving melodic fragments and arpeggios of No. 9 might have been named, after the second movement of the First Symphony, 'A land of gloom, a land of mists'.

An enormous final variation, in strict sonata form, appears in the Finale (IIb). Seemingly influenced by its counterpart in Schumann's *Symphonic Etudes*, which the composer had orchestrated as a student, it betrays his expressed concern that the Trio might be merely a reduction of symphonic writing. The large cut which he authorized does not completely mitigate the tendentious effect of compulsive activity. Even so, in a recollection of several earlier passages, there is some wonderful modal bell-ringing in the subsidiary theme.

Finally, it is difficult not to be moved by the monumental recollection of the motto theme in the Coda. In the last thirteen bars, we are lured from an elaborate despair to an ominous, and frightening, death rattle.

*Jean Wentworth*

**LUBA EDLINA** is especially noted for her brilliant performances and recordings with the original Borodin String Quartet. When she was studying at the Moscow Conservatory she met fellow-student Rostislav Dubinsky, and they were later married. During her 20-year association with the Quartet, she was permitted to appear with them in the West only once, when they gave a rapturously acclaimed concert in the Palace of Versailles.

**ROSTISLAV DUBINSKY**, after completing his studies with Abraham Yampolsky at the Moscow Conservatory in 1944, became first violinist of the newly-formed Moscow Conservatory Quartet, later known as the Borodin String Quartet. The ensemble received the Russian decoration for 25 years of service as 'Musical Artists of Great Merit' in 1968 and by 1976, when he left the Soviet Union, the Borodin Quartet had given some 3000 concerts around the world. During this period he became a celebrated chamber music coach, preparing a number of prize-winning groups for international competitions and he has continued working with chamber ensembles at several leading conservatories in Holland, where he and his wife now live.

**YULI TUROVSKY**, who studied with Galina Kozolupova at the Moscow Conservatory, was a cello soloist with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra under Rudolf Barshai, appearing with them on international tours until his emigration from the Soviet Union in 1976. While still in Russia, he made a number of recordings both as a soloist and in chamber groups with such musicians as violinist Vladimir Spivakov – with whom he appeared in 1979 at the *Mostly Mozart Festival* in the Lincoln Center in New York.

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TCHAIKOVSKY: PIANO TRIO - Borodin Trio

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# PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

TRIO IN A MINOR FOR VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO  
Op. 50 (1881-2)

- 1 I - Pezzo elegiaco
  - 2 IIa - Tema con Variazioni
  - 3 IIIb - Variazione Finale e Coda
- DDD

## BORODIN TRIO

LUBA EDLINA - Piano  
ROSTISLAV DUBINSKY - Violin  
YULI TUROVSKY - Cello

TCHAIKOVSKY: PIANO TRIO - Borodin Trio

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