



Davidov

**Cello Concertos 1,2
3 Salon Pieces
At the Fountain
Berceuse-Romance**

**Marina Tarasova (cello)
Davidov Symphony Orchestra
Konstantin Krimetz
Alexander Polezhaev (piano)**

alto

Karl Davydov

(1838-1889)

[1]	<i>Cello Concerto No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 5</i>	20:19
	Allegro moderato - Cantilena - Allegretto	
	<i>Cello Concerto No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 14</i>	
[2]	I. Allegro	11:23
[3]	II. Andante	8:27
[4]	III. Allegro con brio	6:32
	<i>Drei Salonstücke, Op. 30</i>	
[5]	No. 1	4:07
[6]	No. 2	4:50
[7]	No. 3	5:03
[8]	<i>Am Springbrunnen (At the Fountain), Op. 20 No.2</i>	4:11
[9]	<i>Berceuse, Op. 10 No. 2</i>	3:33
[10]	<i>Walzer, Op. 41 No. 2</i>	5:24
[11]	<i>Romance, Op. 22</i>	3:37

Marina Tarasova, cello
Davydov Symphony Orchestra ([1]-[4])
Konstantin Krimetz, conductor ([1]-[4])
Alexander Polezhaev, piano ([5]-[11])

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

100 miles west of the Latvian capital Riga is a small town, the medieval origins of which are betrayed by its crooked, irregular streets. This town, founded in the 13th century, is Kuldiga, and its history is as colourful as that of all the surrounding province. To this day the province remains better-known internationally by its German name, Kurland, and the town itself was formerly called not 'Kuldiga' but 'Goldingen'. Over the centuries Kurland, which in ancient times was populated by Baltic and Finno-Ugric peoples, enjoyed a brief period of independence but also fell under the control of a wide variety of rulers including the Scandinavian Vikings, the Teutonic Order, the Poles and the Lithuanians. In 1795 it became part of the Russian Empire, like the entire Baltic region. When Karl Yulievich Davydov (3 possible english spellings) was born in Goldingen on 3rd (15th) March 1838, he could thus have been regarded — despite what was probably a very varied list of ancestors — as a Russian composer.

In any other country Davydov could have become a well-known composer. In Russia, however, it has almost been forgotten that he 'also' composed. His achievements as a Conservatory director were so outstanding, and his abilities as a cellist so great, that they have overshadowed his creative output. We should also bear in mind that, at Davydov's time, Russia was a termite's nest of brilliant composers — an environment in which it was extremely difficult to achieve a prominent position. There is, however, a further reason why Davydov's cello works are played so seldom: they are exceptionally difficult. Davydov was a child prodigy and appeared as a solo cellist at public concerts when he was only 14. His subsequent academic studies were not in the field of music, however; he graduated from Moscow University in 1858 (when he was only 20) as a mathematician.

During his studies he had perfected his cello playing as a student of Genrich Schmidt and Karl Schubert and had also written two complete operas, after which it was natural for him to continue his training as a musician. He did this in Leipzig in 1859, as a student of Moritz Hauptmann, and in that very year he enjoyed a notable success when he performed his own *Cello Concerto No. 1* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Even amid the musical abundance of Leipzig he achieved distinction — as we may see from his appointment as conservatory professor and first cellist of the Gewandhaus Orchestra the following year.

In 1862 Davydov moved back to Russia, this time to St. Petersburg, where

he became first cellist at the Italian Opera and also, later that year, a professor at the newly-founded conservatory (Tchaikovsky was one of the institute's first students). He was to retain his position as first cellist for 20 years; he held his teaching post until 1887, serving as conservatory director from 1876-87. He introduced modern methods of tuition that were better suited to practical music-making, and in consequence he attracted criticism from reactionary circles; it was partly on account of these conflicts that he eventually resigned. For many years he was the cellist of the famous string quartet of the St. Petersburg branch of the Russian Musical Society, the leader of which was first Henryk Wieniawski and later Leopold Auer; as a soloist he could be heard alongside such pianists as Anton Rubinstein, Sergei Taneyev, Camille Saint-Saëns and Hans von Bülow. He also appeared frequently as a conductor. He was a close friend of numerous composers, and attempted to entice Pyotr Tchaikovsky from the Moscow Conservatory to Leningrad with an offer of double his previous pay and only four hours of teaching per week! Tchaikovsky declined, but was very fond of Davydov both as a musician and on a personal level, speaking of him as 'the king of all cellists in the present [19th] century'.

Davydov's stature as a cellist was regularly confirmed on an international basis as well. When he played Anton Rubinstein's *Cello Sonata* with Franz Liszt in Weimar, the critics spoke of it as an historic performance. He can be regarded as the founder of the Russian cello tradition and, although he lived a long time ago, he is separated from us by only three generations: among his many cello pupils was Alexander Verzhbilovich, who was in turn the teacher of Semyon Kozolupov — who taught Mstislav Rostropovich!

Karl Davydov's death in Moscow on 14th (26th)? February 1889, at the age of just 51, was a great shock and a terrible loss for Russian music. The outline of his career above explains why his output as a composer is fairly small: his work as a performing artist left him too little time for his own works. These are principally cello pieces in various combinations (including four cello concertos); there are also a few orchestral and chamber works and some songs.

He also arranged music by other composers — such as Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin — for cello and piano. Apart from the two youthful operas mentioned already, there exists a fragment entitled *Poltava* with a libretto by Viktor Burenin, after the poem by Pushkin. He started work on this in 1876 but when, after some years, it became

apparent that he would never have time to finish it, Tchaikovsky asked if he might use the libretto instead. The resulting opera, known as *Mazeppa*, was premièred in 1884. Interestingly, in accordance with Tchaikovsky's wishes, the rôle of Orlik at the St. Petersburg première was taken by the famous singer Fyodor Stravinsky (father of the composer).

Davydov belonged to the same generation as Borodin (b.1833), Mussorgsky (b.1839), Tchaikovsky (b.1840) and Rimsky-Korsakov (b.1844) and, as already indicated, he was well acquainted with most of the composers then active in Russia. Stylistically, however, his work differs significantly from the compositions of his colleagues, because his music does not sound especially Russian — but then we should have no reason to expect typically Russian music from Davydov. For one thing the tuition he received in Leipzig was hardly inclined to favour the development of national characteristics; the conservatory — in itself of excellent standard and internationally admired — was rather the fortress home of a typical 'Made in Germany' style in the traditions of Mendelssohn and Schumann (a style that also infected students from abroad, unless they possessed the nationalist zeal of an Edvard Grieg). Secondly, despite his citizenship, Davydov was not a genuine Russian (this could also be said of others, however, such as Borodin, Cui or Shostakovich). Thirdly, and not least important, in many of his works Davydov set out to display the capabilities of the cello — and such music rarely reveals national features.

We must therefore wait until almost the end of Davydov's ***Cello Concerto No. 1 in B minor, Op. 5***, before encountering some modulatory twists that could be perceived as 'Russian'. When we hear this concerto, we can easily see why it was so successful when the composer played it in the year of its composition, 1859. It is an ideal bravura piece, combining abundant musical imagination with technically demanding passages. The beginning of the Allegro moderato, including the first cello entry, sounds almost like Mendelssohn, but the development contains passages of great virtuosity. The second movement, Cantilena, is of simple construction but not without elements of drama, and the structure of the finale — which is formally a rondo — has similarities with that of the first movement: it begins peacefully and melodically, and is then developed in a virtuoso manner, in this case with striking double-stopping in high position. The three movements are played attacca, without a break.

The ***Cello Concerto No. 2 in A minor, Op. 14***, was written in 1863, after Davydov had returned to Russia. (His remaining two concertos were

composed in 1868 and 1878.) In character there are great similarities with the First Concerto, and the major structural difference is that the movements do not follow on without a pause but are clearly differentiated. This makes its relationship with the continental solo concerto tradition easier to recognize. During Davydov's period in Leipzig, many of the professors there were adherents of the so-called 'Romantic Classicism', and in this concerto we can clearly see that this style also left its mark on Davydov's music. As in the First Concerto, the opening Allegro is reminiscent of Mendelssohn; the final sections of both themes and also the development section demand great virtuosity. In particular, our attention is drawn by rapid triplets across the cello's entire range and by an elegant cadenza played by the soloist double-stopping in high position. The second movement, Andante, is a moment of respite — like a song, which only becomes more dramatic for a brief moment in the middle section. The finale, Allegro con brio, offers more virtuoso fireworks. At a very rapid tempo the composer here calls for less double-stopping, but all the more fast and difficult runs.

The *Three Salon Pieces, Op. 30*, are somewhat enigmatic. The editions available today do not provide the descriptive titles for the individual pieces that one might expect in this type of music; the second piece even lacks a tempo indication! Their date of composition is not absolutely certain but, because the chronology of Davydov's opus list is otherwise very reliable, we can assume that the pieces were written in 1877-78, and in any case not before 1875. Finally, there is a great difference between the first two pieces and the concluding Vivace: whilst the first two could be regarded as good-quality light music — peaceful, melodic pieces in ABA form — the last one could serve as a sinister scherzo in a larger composition, full of temperament in a dramatic dialogue between the two instruments.

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NOTES ON THE ARTIST

"A greater expressive sound, excellent technique."

– *Golos Pribrezhiya*, Poland

"Her execution of J.S. Bach's Cello suites left unforgettable impressions."

– *Il Gazzettino*, Italy

"Among the most brilliant artistic individuality we credit to Marina Tarasova, her manner of execution draws attention to skill and her search for new expressive means."

– *Le Figaro*, France

"I did not notice Tarasova earlier, but now I am quite convinced, she is one of the outstanding cello players of her generation."

– Martin Anderson, *CD Review*, England

Marina Tarasova, the Russian cellist, is soloist with the Moscow State Academic Philharmonic, honoured artist of Russia, and born in Moscow. She graduated from Gnesins' Moscow Special Music School and Moscow State Conservatory in the class of professor N.Shahovsky. She was awarded the laureate titles and first prizes at international Competitions in Moscow (Tchaikovsky Competition 1982), Prague (1975), in Florence (1979), and the Grand Prix in Paris (1985). Her great concert repertoire includes sonatas and concertos for cello by many Russian and European composers, such as (inter alia) Locatelli, J.S.Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Saint-Saens, Brahms, Debussy, Rachmaninov, Miaskovsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Schnittke, both Boris and Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Britten, Vivaldi, Haydn, Boccherini, Davidoff, Khrennikov, Kabalevsky, and Ashpai. She has recorded the Davidoff, Myaskovsky, Khachaturian and Kabalevsky concertos as well as much chamber music. Marina Tarasova has recorded performances on radio in Moscow, in Frankfurt-on-Main, and on the island of Madeira. In solo recitals or with Symphony orchestra, has successfully performed in Russia, England, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Portugal, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, China and other countries, and has played with many remarkable world-famous musicians, such as viola player Yuri Bashmet, conductors Kurt Mazur, Mikhail Pletnev, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, Veronica Dudarova, and many more.

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