

The background of the image is a painting of a winter landscape. In the center, a church with a tall, dark spire and a smaller dome is visible. The church is partially obscured by bare, white-barked trees in the foreground. The ground is covered in snow, and the sky is a mix of blue and white, suggesting a cloudy day. Numerous birds are perched on the branches of the trees, adding a sense of life to the cold scene.

Myaskovsky

Cello Concerto Cello Sonatas

**Marina
Tarasova**

alto

Nikolay Myaskovsky

(1881-1950)

Cello Sonata No. 1 in D Major, Op. 12

[1] Adagio – Andante (attaca) – Allegro passionato 22:58

Cello Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 81

[2] I. Allegro moderato 9:41

[3] II. Andante cantabile 6:39

[4] III. Allegro con spirito 7:22

Cello Concerto in C Minor, Op. 66

[5] I. Brouillards. Modéré 3:16

[6] II. Modérément animé 2:54

Marina Tarasova, cello

Alexander Polezhaev, piano ([1]–[4])

Moscow New Opera Orchestra

Yevgeny Samoilov, conductor ([5]–[6])

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Nikolay Yakovlevitch Myaskovsky (1881-1950) was one of the most prolific of 20th century composers and as a teacher, held great influence at the Moscow Conservatoire from 1921 until his death. He himself, following military service, studied under Liadov and then Rimsky-Korsakov at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. Whilst at the Conservatoire he struck up a close friendship with the younger Prokofiev and both made their compositional debuts at the same concert.

Unfortunately Myaskovsky's career was interrupted by the First World War during which he was seriously wounded and, suffering from shell shock, he was eventually invalided out of the army. He moved from St Petersburg to Moscow and in 1921 was appointed Professor of Composition where his own pupils included Khachaturian, Kabalevsky and Shebalin. He kept abreast of modern trends in music, being almost as prolific a writer as composer but even so was perceived as being 'out of touch' by the younger generation of Soviet composers who came to the fore under Stalin: It was perhaps because of this that Myaskovsky was one of the famous group of composers denounced by the Communist Party in 1948 for 'formalist' tendencies. Among his compositions are 27 symphonies, 13 string quartets, symphonic poems, songs, several piano sonatas and concertos for violin and cello.

Myaskovsky's *First Cello Sonata in D Major* was composed in 1911 but underwent substantial revision in the years 1930-31. During the late 1920s Myaskovsky suffered a personal crisis and abandoned composition of orchestral pieces, concentrating instead on small scale material - works which were not necessarily to the liking of the authorities, who were at that time beginning to proscribe the activities of artists, writers and composers. The first movement of the sonata begins with a cello recitative whereupon the piano enters with the main melody, repeated by the cellist. This lyrical passage reminiscent of Rachmaninov is interrupted by a series of staccato chords and gives way; tension begins to mount as the tempo increases. This Allegro passionato section, distinguished by the piano's arpeggio accompaniment is not however allowed to

dominate and a brief pizzicato passage leads us back into the reflective mood of the opening. Additional ideas are extensively developed. A strident passage links this development section with the exquisite close in which Myaskovsky seems undecided as to whether this sonata should end in the major or the minor. As he settles on D major, the music dies away peacefully.

The ***Second Cello Sonata in A Minor*** was composed during the summer of 1948 for the young Rostropovich. Myaskovsky's original plan had been a sonata for viola or viola d'amore, and although a version of this sonata arranged for viola exists, this arrangement was not by the composer. Piano arpeggios lead into a folk-like cello melody which is fully developed alongside a similarly thoughtful theme in C major. In fact the tone of this movement is similar to the corresponding movement in the First Cello Sonata. The second movement, in triple time, has two livelier themes contrasting with the main motif, which returns to give the movement a peaceful, if subdued, conclusion. The cellist Stanislav Knushevitsky once reproached the composer for not writing more fast music in the sonatas, to which Myaskovsky replied that it had been his original plan to introduce a minuet in the second movement but had later changed his mind. And so the rondo finale provides both soloist and accompanist with their first opportunity in either sonata to exert themselves energetically. Both themes are rooted in Russian folklore, the one foot-stamping, the other more lyrical.

The ***Cello Concerto in C minor, Op. 66*** was composed in 1944-5 for Knushevitsky and in comparison with much of Myaskovsky's work is scored relatively modestly. The Cello Concerto became probably Myaskovsky's best known work in the West following the pioneering recording from 1956 with Mstislav Rostropovich playing with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent. Its elegiac tone of quiet resignation has inevitably drawn comparison with Elgar's Cello Concerto and it is interesting that both carry the same sense of world weariness - the Elgar being composed just following the First World War, the Myaskovsky in the dying days of The Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War (World

War II).

The work has two named movements but is clearly further subdivided into sections. The opening movement *Lento ma non troppo* is melancholic in tone with the cello soloist's range restricted for much of the time to the octaves surrounding middle C, thus drawing it into conflict with the remainder of the string section. Eventually the movement undergoes a change from C minor to C major, after which the soloist's run from low C to high G leads into the second movement, marked initially *Allegro vivace*. Agitated tarantella-like triplets played by strings on the notes C and E are contrasted with a more relaxed lyrical theme from the cello in C major. A powerful tutti followed by bass pizzicato provides the link to a gently lyrical passage which however is disturbed by the return of the opening triplet passage. Much of this material is developed further until an extended solo cadenza leads into a section restating material from the opening movement. Myaskovsky repeats his magical change from C minor to major, thus resolving any residual conflict and the concerto ends peacefully.

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NOTES ON THE ARTIST

Marina Tarasova, the Russian cellist, is soloist with the Moscow State Academic Philharmonic, honoured artist of Russia, and born in Moscow. She graduated from Gnesin's 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.

"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

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