

ST. PETERSBURG MUSICAL ARCHIVE

Northern Flowers



Boris Tischenko
Complete String Quartets

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ АРХИВ ПЕТЕРБУРГА

Boris Ivanovich Tischenko (1939-2010)

Complete String Quartets

***String Quartet No. 1, Op. 8* (1957)†**

1	Andante mesto	4:18
2	Allegro giocoso	2:12
3	Lento	5:11

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 13* (1959)

4	Allegro energico	12:16
5	Largo	11:27
6	Presto	5:52
7	Lento	9:00

***String Quartet No. 3, Op. 47* (1970)†**

8	Sostenuto	7:07
9	Presto inquieto	3:56
10	Robusto	5:14
11	Tranquillo	10:32

***String Quartet No. 4, Op. 77* (1980)°**

12	Moderato	16:14
13	L'istesso tempo	6:01
14	Allegro risoluto. Intermezzo	10:27
15	Moderato	7:33

String Quartet No. 5, Op. 90* (1984)

16	Allegro	8:46
17	Allegretto dolce	10:41
18	Allegro con moto	11:46

String Quartet No. 6, Op. 148* (2008)

19	Allegro	6:08
20	Andante	9:40

* **Ilya Ioff & Elena Raskova**, *violins* • **Lidia Kovalenko**, *viola* • **Alexey Massarsky**, *cello*

† **The S.I. Taneyev Quartet**

Vladimir Ovcharek & Grigory Lutzky, *violins* • **Vissarion Solovyev**, *viola* • **Josef Levinzon**, *cello*

° **Tver' Philharmonic String Quartet**

Irina Svetlova & Lyubov' Shevrekuko, *violin* • **Alexandra Franzeva**, *viola* • **Galina Soboleva**, *cello*



THE STRING QUARTETS OF BORIS TISCHENKO

The works of **Boris Ivanovich Tischenko** have a unique position in the panorama of today's art. There is no need to remind how difficult the development of music in the 20th century was.

Probably the greatest trial it had to pass was the urge towards radical innovations, which often led to the nearly complete loss of an individual style. Tischenko's music has a rare quality - it is instantaneously identifiable, literally by the first notes and bars. They form a world imperiously establishing its own laws and demanding maximum concentration of thought from the listener. Integrity, scale of artistic issues, and finally constant feeling of artist's responsibility - such are the key points of the composer's personality.

The whole life of Boris Tischenko was related to Saint Petersburg; it was there that his genesis as musician began. First of all, one should remember the years of study at the Rimsky-Korsakov School of Music, where Tischenko studied piano with Violetta Michelis and composition with Galina Ustvolskaya. Her influence proved to be powerful and fruitful, and no surprise that Tischenko as author can be amply heard even in his early works (among them are the piano Variations, with which Tischenko entered the Conservatory.)

Apart from composition, at the Conservatory, Tischenko studied as pianist (with A. Logovinsky). His composition classes were with Vadim Salmanov, Valentin Voloshinov and Orest Yevlakhov, and his postgraduate studies, with Shostakovich. The role of creative contacts with Shostakovich cannot be overestimated. It was to him that Tischenko dedicated his Third and Fifth Symphonies afterwards (the latter was written after the death of Shostakovich.) Already in his student years, many of his works became known, especially as some of them were performed for the first time by the author (First Piano Concerto, Third Piano Sonata.) In 1965, Tischenko started

his professor activity teaching various subjects at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, in particular score reading and instrumentation, and composition from 1974. Among his students were several well-known composers of Saint Petersburg.

Boris Tischenko was writing virtually in all existing genres, from super symphonies to songs a cappella. At the same time, it is evident that certain genres enjoy a special position in his creative work. Primarily, it is the genre of symphony. Addressing it is a special "plot" in the composer's biography, from the early First written at the age of 22 to the Eighth. Each of the symphonies is unique, from the scoring of instruments to the overall concept and drama. Extended solo meditations and stunning tutti, acute and harsh contrasts keeps the listener in great tension from the beginning to the end of the opus. Strict economy of resources is also surprising, with a brief motive generally used as the basis becoming the core for the whole development (suffice it to remember Postscriptum in the Third Symphony.) This can also be said about the instrumental concertos: the "playing" element, where the soloist discloses his or her virtuoso abilities, which usually gives way to a strained monolog where the soloist and the orchestra make one voice (understandably, the Second Violin Concerto has also the title of "Violin Symphony.")

Chamber music is a special sphere. For instance, symphonic drama mightily shows itself in the Second and Third String Quartets, and in piano sonatas. They may be rightly called symphonies for piano. The author's idea seems to be tending to destroy the borders of traditional abilities of the instrument - by using a maximum dynamic range, or by combining transparent one-voice chant and deafening clusters (in the Seventh Sonata, bells chime in addition to the piano.) The emotional gamut is extremely vast there, and makes one recall the style of Ancient Russian frescoes, and lyrical sentimentality (this is also very clearly indicated in the "Portraits" cycle for organ.) The range of artistic

themes of the composer's vocal music is really broad. They include the vocal cycle "Sad Songs" written in the year of graduation from the Conservatory in Composition, and the parody grotesque of the "Little Orange" cycle (to words by various poets), and the piercing "The Race of Time" to words by Anna Akhmatova.

Interestingly, as regards musical theater, Tischenko preferred ballet to opera. The plasticity of dance becomes a visible embodiment of his music, which is as always subordinated to the symphony logic. Moreover, the very personages addressed by the composer demand some conflicting, dramatic symphonic development: The Twelve (after the poem by Alexander Blok), Yaroslavna (inspired by The Tale of Igor's Campaign), a monumental choreosymphonic cycliade titled Beatrice (after Dante's Divine Comedy.) The opera The Stolen Sun and operetta The Giant Cockroach (both after Korney Chukovsky's poems) refer to fabulous subjects but outwardly: the sarcasm and irony, and the very musical language in them are far from being "childish".

A very important line in Tischenko's creativity is the history of Ancient Russia, often referred to simply as "Rus", full of stern fascination and detachedly proud greatness. The noble glory of warlike feats and sorrow for lost freedom, rejoicing chimes of bells and ascetic, severe sounds of sacred chants - these images will immediately come to the mind of a listener of the ballet Yaroslavna and soundtracks to the films Suzdal and The Tale of Igor's Campaign.

The uniqueness and individuality of Boris Tischenko's style is strikingly emphasized by its relationship to absolutely different cultural traditions. On one hand, it is the music of past ages, Renaissance and Baroque. The passion for it has proved to be very stable - this primarily relates to works of Johann Sebastian Bach and Claudio Monteverdi (it is worth reminding that the composer created his own orchestral version of The Coronation of Poppea.) They are also the origins of the linear polyphonic type of thinking as the

structural base of Tischenko's music. It is this feature that gives an impression of strict rationality and discipline, knowing nothing excessive and just emphasizing the rich fantasy of the author.

Another very important source of creative discoveries was non-European cultures: India, China, Japan etc., and folklore (the composer went to folklore expeditions a conservatory student). It is due to them he generated a monodic type of melodies, infinite rhythmic diversity and freedom, and finally the development technique itself, where the whole grows out of a brief melodic "grain".

And finally, we cannot avoid remembering the impact of the 20th century music, and primarily Bartók, Berg, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and of course the composer's teachers Ustvolskaya and Shostakovich. Probably the main thing connecting Tischenko to them is conviction that any innovation turning into end-in-itself is disastrous for art. All discoveries of Tischenko in the sphere of rhythm, melodic texture and orchestration, and drama originate from his creative goals achieved under the laws of the art of music.

The features of the artistic space of Tischenko's music generally tend to support the musical utterance as a monolog. The author does not reproduce a model of the surrounding world in his music, but rather builds a separate enclosed world. The result is an utterance appealing to the depth of human mentality, to individual consciousness. In this aspect, Tischenko presents two polar modes of human consciousness, the state of ultimate self-absorption, introspective meditation - and an image of total destruction, when everything perishes in chaos only to be reborn again. Therefore in many of his works we hear a dialog of archaic monodic cultures and aleatorics, dodecaphony, playing with metro-rhythms, and methods of contrapuntal development. Thus the most ancient forms of the art of music become involved in the system of today's musical thinking. The image of the inner world appears in the integrity and uniformity of the author's "Self" refracted through the prism

of the 20th century culture.

Tischenko's music addresses various strata of musical experience, from allusions to the Renaissance art (in the finale of the Fifth Symphony) to dancing pop rhythms (in the Seventh Symphony, for example). The bare tragic intonations of Requiem to words by Akhmatova, alumnus patriotism of the cantata The Music Garden and restrained touching intimacy of songs to words by Ovsey Driz, and finally the infinity of senses in the Dante Symphonies - all this emphasizes once again the universality and abundance of the composer's artistic world.

STRING QUARTET NO. 1, Op. 8

The First Quartet was written in 1957 (at the time when the author had entered the Leningrad Conservatory; in 1975, the composer wrote a new version of the quartet). Outwardly, the opus is of a chamber scale (lasting about 15 minutes), however its inner intonational life is extremely plentiful. The most important focus is not on vast dramatic scenes or acute collisions, but rather details, subtle thematic transformations determining a gradual increase of tension.

The quartet has three movements: Andante mesto, Allegro giocoso, and Lento. The predominance of slow tempos in the first and last movement creates the overall restrained attitude of the opus. Opposite to it is the scherzo middle movement.

The quartet opens in a melodious theme of the viola containing the intonational "sign" of the whole movement - soft descending motion on the triad sounds. Its features are multimodal structure and prose-like syntax and metrical freedom reminding the genre of drawling lyrical song. Other instruments join in, their thematic material subjected to flexible transformations in motives. As a result of development, the rhythmic motion accelerates but declines at once. The viola regains the theme that sounded in the

beginning, its motives gradually fade away on pianissimo with other instruments; with the viola and cello, they freeze in a low register.

The second movement is based on two themes. The first one uses whimsical rhythms and sudden changes of register, and the second one is a cantilena. It is conveyed by the violins; dissonances intruding the soft two-voice texture render it a special acerbity and somewhat capricious nature. The first theme reappears; after two crisp bow knocks on the cello sounding board, the motion on semiquavers in a high register leads to a growing crescendo, and the second theme is played on ff. The action goes down, preparing the final statement of the first theme. Generally, any changes of dynamics, rhythmic motion, and themes in this movement are subordinated to a concerto logic having an expressly playing nature.

The quartet's finale is built upon expressive intonations of the theme played by the first violin. The choral accompaniment by other instruments creates an atmosphere of lucid and restrained sorrow remaining throughout the movement. During the development, the theme's intonations are also played by other instruments; in the culmination on ff they are gathered into one rhythmic node. Suddenly, abatement comes, and the theme, after a glissando and general pause, is retaken by the first violin, gradually dissolving in phantasmal silence.

STRING QUARTET NO. 2, Op. 13

Tischenko finished the Second Quartet in 1959. Predominating in it are fast tempos and accelerated developments, plainly reminding the author's large-scale symphonic opuses.

The first movement (*Allegro energico*) is laid out in a sonata form. Right after the statement of the main part theme, sculptured and rhythmically clear, its dynamic development follows, and is completed in powerful chords. The side part

theme is a polar emotional sphere, a violin cantilena in a high register. The development is based on the main part's material. Against the suppressed background of semiquavers, the cello plays the theme with reduced intervals, which is step by step taken over by the violins and viola. Gradually the progress of semiquavers fills the whole space, and a culmination in the *Largo* tempo is heard, abruptly broken off with pauses. After a violent soar of semiquavers, an abridged reprise comes, to be crowned with a coda based on the material of the main part's theme: it sounds on a suppressed pp at first, gradually reaching the final fortissimo.

The second movement is opened by an introduction in the *Largo* tempo. Its essence is progressive deposition of fifths, starting from the cello's low register. The main section, *Allegro*, starts a violin solo with frequent metro-rhythmic changes. Against the resonant pizzicato of the cello, the viola plays the same theme in an intonationally transformed version. The incessant development results in a culmination. It is a chorale accompanied by dashing passages of the first violin. The main theme reappears against the background of a sinister tremolo of violins, to be replaced by fifths of the introduction's material, breaking out to quintuple-forte (fffff). After that, this and that instrument play certain intonations of the theme at a piano (p) dynamic level, and the introduction material completing the movement reappears muted as well.

The third movement (*Presto*) is a frantic scherzo combining the composition principles of double fugue and sonata form. Its first theme sounds in the imitating statement by the first and second violin, and next by the viola; the second one is played by viola against the cello's gloomy motion on semiquavers. Unexpectedly, a new material appears - its heavily dancing attitude is emphasized by the author's mark *brusco* (roughly, brusquely.) A gradual glissando of all instruments leads to the final section, where both themes of the first section appear, in turn and in a contrapuntal

combination.

The quartet's finale (Lento) is variations based on the material of the chorale that sounded in the second movement's culmination. In the variations we hear progressive acceleration of rhythmic motion and enhancement of action; abruptly, the chorale theme is played in its initial form, at pianissimo, and is followed by a reminiscence of the beginning of the second movement. Another crescendo leads to solemn sounds of the chorale crowning the entire concerto.

STRING QUARTET NO. 3, Op. 47

Tishchenko's Third Quartet was written in 1970. It is dedicated to his composition teacher, Galina Ustvolskaya. The quartet has four movements, Sostenuto, Presto, Robusto, Tranquillo.

The first movement is based on a vivid theme rendered in long durations, sometimes interrupted by brisk throbbing of quavers. Gradually, the rhythmic motion accelerates, becoming more and more whimsical and producing a pseudo aleatoric effect. Against the background of this motion, the first violin, like in *cantus firmus*, regains its first theme sounding as an unshakable thesis. In fact the whole movement is built upon the contrasting opposition of sound flow formed by weaving of different rhythms, and the initial theme, as if cut from marble. After another spontaneous onrush of the rhythmic flow, it sounds as three-voice canon with violins and viola abruptly broken off; the second movement begins without an intermission.

It begins in convulsive rhythmic figures interrupted by pauses and restive triplets of the viola. It takes rather long time for the instruments to arrive at a rhythmic unity, however it falls into pieces at once. Lingering intonations get into the texture, broken off in an acute minor second. The motion gets faster and faster; the plays a rhythmic figure reminding pulsation on *diminuendo*. Another outburst

of triplets and the fourth movement begins right off.

Its main theme is full of forceful energy, quite justifying the author's description of the movement: *robusto*, ie. "manly", strong. It is built fully upon a fanciful metro-rhythmic play; both the measure and the mid-measure grouping of time-values combining double- and triple-time units are continuously changing. The boundaries of the bars often differ with different instruments, thus producing an effect of metric polyphony. The instrument parts seem to fail in gaining unity, stubbornly standing up for their own position in musical Time. Sometimes this unity can be heard, though - as harsh chords appearing amid the incessant metro-rhythmic play, now with violin, then with cello.

The quartet's finale opens in a quiet duo of two violins; it is on their sound that nearly the whole movement is based. Soft *siciliana* rhythms are clearly heard in the warm twinkling of the theme; from time to time only, the consonant two-voice texture is disturbed by acerbic dissonances. A mysterious pianissimo is used to sound a thematic reminiscence from the first movement interrupted by sonorous octaves of cello and viola - and the violin duo retakes the first theme.

STRING QUARTET NO. 4, Op. 77

Tischenko wrote Quartet No. 4 in 1980 (dedicated to I. A. Shostakovich.) It is his largest opus in this genre, a real "symphony for four soloists" Hence the predomination of zoomed drama, gradual transformation of the material, and importance of monothematic development principle in each movement.

The first movement (Moderato) opens in a theme played by viola solo. It contains a rhythmic pulse, a figure on quavers interrupting the soft sound of large durations. Its asymmetric structure is also characteristic, with three phrases of three bars each interrupted with pauses. The

theme is further played by all four instruments in a chord statement with a clear consonant tertian base.

Next, an extended phase of gradual accumulation of tension follows - the impulse contained in the theme "explodes" but after a long time. A dynamic development phase starts, with Tischenko's typical active deformation of material, after which, a reprise is played on pp; the initial state of rest reappears.

The material of the relatively short second movement (L'istesso tempo) is based on metro-rhythmic changes, giving it a fanciful scherzo nature combined with meandering chromatic motion.

Quiet action and muted colors predominate (all instruments play muted.) This requires a special sensitivity to texture details, subordinated simultaneously to strict laws of imitation technique and concerto/play logic.

The third movement (Allegro risoluto) begins in a furious and resolute ff. The basis of the thematic material is ascension on triad sounds; its vigorous nature is supplemented with acute expressive chromatic intonations. All this movement is subordinated to one emotional tone, up to the last bars. After that, cello solo plays Intermezzo - the violent intonations of the third movement get "smoothed" little by little, the motion gets slower, imperceptibly preparing the finale (Moderato). It is in a sharp contrast with the drama of the preceding movement (significantly, both are written in the same measure and proceeds from the basso ostinato variations technique: cello pizzicato several times repeats a theme built upon a smooth descending motion. Step by step, the viola "grows" material based on soft twinkling of triplets; it is emphatically placid. Its intimate, quiet intonations are taken over by other instruments, gradually rising to higher and higher registers. The violins start to play the rhythm of the ostinato theme, but more clearly shaped. The development is followed by the first section's reprise - the high sounds of flageolets render it a shadowy aspect. The theme played by the cello

in the very beginning dies down little by little, and intonations of the first movement appear in a low register, also vanishing in separate scattered sounds.

STRING QUARTET NO. 5, Op. 90

Quartet No. 5 was written in 1984, and dedicated to the composer's son Andrei Tischenko (it was he who composed the quartet's finale theme, while I. Donskaya wrote the first bars of the first movement's theme.) It has three movements with fast tempos predominating: Allegro - Allegretto dolce - Allegro con moto. Hence the feeling of active motion, combining in this composition with a clear texture and strict proportions.

The first movement is written in a sonata form. The consonant sound of the main part theme reminds the style of classicism, but this does not last long; minor shades get into the theme in a low register, the interval pattern is saturated with dissonances. The imitation, canonical development of the themes intonations leads to the side part: a theme combining the playing and cantilena elements at once is heard over the meandering

triad figures. The main part theme completes the exposition, appearing as imitation in the beginning and then played by all instruments in a tense-intoned version.

The development's beginning is based on the same theme. Quite soon, just the rhythmic pattern scanned out tutti is left of it. Suddenly, the side part theme appears on a brilliant fff, bright registers and amply sounded texture transforming its intonations in an unrecognizable manner. The sonority abates gradually, and both themes are played in the reprise in a contrapunctal combination.

The second movement intimate intonations of the first theme played violin the characteristic rhythm of accompaniment renders it some covert dancing attitude. The drama is based on the concerto principle: with

variations, the theme later appears with the cello, second violin, and viola; the instruments seem to be involved in a quiet dialog.

It also continues in the middle section, albeit in a more dramatic version - when the instruments in turn play solo against the background of vigorous motion on quavers, which only calms down in the abridged reprise.

The third movement opens in the first violin theme; abrupt leaps on semiquavers to a descending octave make the intonations sound capricious and playing. A contrast to it is the second theme based on soft motion on quavers. The whole section is crowned with a transparent consonance of the strings; amid them, the rustling tremolo of the second violin imitates the sound of ocarina. The development is based on intonations of the first theme, first sounding against the ostinato of the cello's quarters, and then surrounded by semiquavers in vigorous motion. After the culmination, a graceful dancing episode appears, interrupted by a next culmination wave. A reprise of the second theme is heard; it also "calms down" the first theme, which completes the quartet's finale.

STRING QUARTET NO. 6, Op. 148

The Sixth Quartet was finished in 2008 (and dedicated to M.V. Donskaya.) The features of this opus are pointedly chamber interpretation, utterly reserved sound, maximum sparing, and above all, thoroughly checked rationality of the tools used.

No outward dramatic collisions, spontaneous explosions, or tragic cataclysms; the atmosphere of nearly the entire quartet is pointedly calm, consonant, and completely free of loud effects. The transparency of texture and strict organization of form seem to be intended to plunge the listener to a world of harmony and order.

The very structure of the quartet is unusual.

It has just two movements, contrasting and enhancing each other simultaneously. All the sonata-like sections of the first movement (Allegro), in the classicist manner, are strictly balanced, the development element is free of a destructive and conflicting attitude typical for many other works of Tischenko. The movement begins with a first violin theme - a scherzo one in its nature, and containing chromatically meandering gestures and a varying metrical pattern (5/8 - 6/8). Afterwards, the development is based on different modal and metro-rhythmic modifications of material. The motive played by the second violin in the fifth immediately collides with the first theme. This collision generates an impulse for development - the theme is restated by viola and cello, the density of musical events becomes unusually high since the developing quality intrudes every section of

the form. The reprise is opened with the main part theme statement by cello. The active rhythmic flow is broken off, and, as imitation, the cello and viola play the theme based on fifth motives; it enters a new wave of development. Prior to the side part theme, the violins reach the highest register, and the main part theme finishes the first movement in powerful octaves on fff.

Andante immerses your mind into unclouded tranquility; still, inner emotional "surges" can be heard in it now and then. The intonations of a fifth already known by the first movement are sounded in the first theme by the cello, with the viola starting a dialog with it. The violin solo sings the second theme, its soft, "shining" consonant sound is not disturbed by anything. The whole movement is based on alternation of these two themes, undergoing various transformations in their development. For example, the first theme suddenly appears as a biting staccato on quavers, but the staccato soon dissolves in the intimate intonations of the second theme melting in the transparent final chords.

— **Andrei Denisov**

NORTHERN FLOWERS NF9990~92
4607053328905



ST. PETERSBURG MUSICAL ARCHIVE

Recorded by the Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) Recording Studio in 1976 (Quartets Nos. 1 & 3), 1983 (Quartet No. 4), and 2010 (Quartets Nos. 2, 5 & 6)

Sound recording and supervision: **Felix Gurdzhi** (Quartets Nos. 1& 3), **Gerhard Tsess** (Quartet No. 4), **Alexey Barashkin** (Quartets Nos.2, 5 & 6)

Text: **Andrey Denisov**

English text: **Sergey Suslov**

Design: **Anastassiya Evmenova & Oleg Fakhrutinov**

Cover photo: **Oleg Fakhrutdinov**

©&© 2011, Northern Flowers

Digital edition © 2011, 2026, Northern Flowers and Musical Concepts. All rights reserved.

No part of this sound recording and its component audio, text, or graphics files may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, or shared electronically in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, file sharing, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

For permission requests, contact the publisher, using the subject line "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at info@musicalconcepts.net.

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ АРХИВ ПЕТЕРБУРГА