



Boris Tchaikovsky
Piano Quintet
Composer (piano)
Prokofiev Quartet
The Last Spring
(vocal cycle)
Natalia Burnasheva (mezzo)
Sergey Bubnov (flute)
Alexander Ivanov (clarinet)
with composer (piano)

Boris Tchaikovsky (1925–1996)

Piano Quintet (1962)

1	I. Moderato	10:30
2	II. Allegro – Largo	8:29
3	III. Allegro	5:15
4	IV. Adagio	12:06

Prokofiev Quartet

Polina Guberman & Irina Listova, violins • Nina Belskaya, viola, Tatyana Prokhorova, cello

Boris Tchaikovsky, piano

The Last Spring

vocal cycle for mezzo-soprano, flute, clarinet and piano (1980), on verses by **Nikolay Zabolotsky**

5	A Joyful Mood	3:15
6	Spring's Movements	2:31
7	The Sun Is Up	4:34
8	Green Beam	1:59
9	September	3:59
10	Autumn	9:48
11	Who Responded to Me	3:36

Natalia Burnasheva, mezzo-soprano

Sergey Bubnov, flute • Alexander Ivanov, clarinet

Boris Tchaikovsky, piano

Boris Alexandrovich Tchaikovsky (1925–96) is an outstanding Russian composer of the second half of the 20th century, whose importance has recently become more and more clear. Among the enthusiastic performers of his music were renowned musicians as Mstislav Rostropovich, Galina Vishnevskaya, Kirill Kondrashin, Rudolf Barshai, Alexander Gauk, Samuel Samosud, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Viktor Pikaisen, Igor Oistrakh, and the Borodin Quartet. Boris Tchaikovsky composed 4 symphonies, 4 instrumental concertos, several symphonic opuses, 6 string quartets, many chamber and vocal works, and various music for film and radio.

According to the composer's friend and prominent Russian poet David Samoilov, "The outward pattern of Boris Tchaikovsky's life is simple. Its plot and content are in his works. "He grew up, he studied, and what followed was music, music, and more music." Tchaikovsky was born in Moscow on September 10, 1925; his father was an expert in statistics and economic geography (and a capable self-taught violinist), and his mother was a medic. In 1934, Tchaikovsky entered the Gnessin Musical School. He continued his musical education at the Gnessin College, and then at Moscow Conservatory. Upon graduation from the Conservatory in 1949 (where he studied under Vissarion Shebalin, Dmitry Shostakovich and Nikolay Miaskovsky), Tchaikovsky got a job as a radio editor. In 1952, however, he decided to quit that job in order to devote himself to composing. In his last years (1989–1996), he taught at the Gnessin as professor of composition. Boris Tchaikovsky died on February 7, 1996.

A pupil of Shostakovich, Shebalin, and Miaskovsky, Tchaikovsky created his own style of composing, which, while seemingly traditional, combined with his absolutely individual re-interpretation of all elements of the musical language. The uniqueness of that style has allowed the composer's heritage

to show in many experimental currents of modern music. Easily manipulating any advanced composition tools, Tchaikovsky primarily strived for simplicity and clear expression of the key components of musical language. His bright individuality reveals itself first of all at the 'molecular' level of melody building. Tchaikovsky's tone is always identifiable, be it in a brief tune or a theme in unhurried development.

Both works presented here can be confidently called important milestones in Tchaikovsky's career, each representing the beginning of a new period in his work.

The Quintet for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello, Tchaikovsky's largest chamber work, was written in 1962, with the premiere performance by the composer and the famous Borodin Quartet in 1963. While Tchaikovsky's 'musical voice' is definitely independent even in works from the 1940s and 50s (as, for example, in two of his finest compositions from that time: the *Sinfonietta for Strings* and the *Piano Trio*, both 1953), the music that he wrote prior to the *Quintet*, in one way or another, was quite traditional, both in the character of the musical themes and in their development. In the *Quintet*, however, the composer attains perfect independence in building the musical process. In the place of familiar, more or less developed themes, he now uses either short themes, like musical formulas (movements II and III), or endless themes (movement I). These themes are key to extraordinary psychological states. They are like individual photographs from a movie, which may have neither prior mention nor denouement. Partitioning these themes as complete blocks of composition, Tchaikovsky reaches the musical development that became the major hallmark of his mature works. Musical form is created through combining pre-made thematic blocks, each of which is unique in its tone, rhythm, texture, and

instrumentation. The combinations seem kaleidoscopic, almost arbitrary. However, Tchaikovsky's other major hallmark is the constant movement towards some sort of resolution, whose final musical character is often difficult or even impossible to predict at the beginning.

1st movement - is one of the earlier examples of Tchaikovsky's most characteristic style: an endless movement of notes of equal length, a sort of slow *perpetuum mobile*. It is interesting to note that a similar beginning, whether fast or slow, can be found in many of the composer's other works, particularly those conceptually close to the *Quintet*: the *Violin Concerto* (1969)(NFPMA 9946) and the *Piano Concerto* (1971). The 2nd and 3rd movements are a bright example of that kaleidoscopic combining of thematic blocks discussed above. As in the developmental movements of the *Violin Concerto* or in the 3rd & 4th movements of the *Piano Concerto*, the whirlwind of various musical ideas creates the impression of conflict with the hubbub of the mundane, suggesting the necessity to separate from it through internal concentration, of looking 'within oneself.' It is this concentration that we encounter in the *Quintet's* finale, the strict language of which summarises, all the previous development (we see something similar in the conclusions of the *Violin Concerto* and the *Piano Concerto*). The idea of the finale is the difficult path of accepting the world and obtaining internal harmony. The sternness and tension of this harmony, and its absence of joyful adoration is potentially key to Tchaikovsky's unusual sense of musical dissonance. The complex intonations and unpredictable harmonies are not necessarily linked to negative emotions or grotesque images. Rather, their appearance is mostly characterized by Tchaikovsky's attempt to be maximally precise and truthful in his own lyrical worldview.

The vocal cycle *The Last Spring* (1980) came after a lengthy

pause in Tchaikovsky's creative life. Four years separate *Last Spring* from his previous works. Between 1976 and 1980, he wrote only a little music for films. Apparently, these years were a time of intense mental work and creative search. In 1980, the creation of the *Sevastopol Symphony* and *The Last Spring* heralded a new phase in the composer's work. Indeed, such works as the symphonic poems *Juvenile* and *The Winds of Siberia* (both 1984), *Music for Orchestra* (1987), and *Symphony with Harp* (1993) are marked with the same unique combination of simplicity of musical expression and deep individual worldview that were first observed in *The Last Spring*. Commenting on his choice of timbre in this work, Tchaikovsky said, "*The only thing I did not want was for the flute and clarinet <...> to be in the foreground. Of course, they must be heard, and you do hear them. But on the other hand, they are 'muted,' and I thought it would be terrible if they suddenly started to 'jut out' as only open, solo instruments.*" These words are reminiscent of the sort of 'objectivity' present in the poetry of Zabolotsky; in his verses one hears not so much the lyrical voice of the author himself, but rather a somewhat mystical 'music-making' of nature itself. It is interesting that the 5th part of the cycle 'September' (a slow *perpetuum mobile* resembling the first movement of the *Piano Quintet*), and the large contemplative philosophical eulogy 'Autumn' (which has few comparisons in the music world) are dedicated to the opposite season of the cycle's name. As a consequence of this 'season mix-up,' the last part of the cycle, beautiful in a way that recalls Schubert, takes on a mystical separation, as though floating beyond time. *The Last Spring* premiered in 1983, was performed by very same musicians who also perform its recording presented here.

Boris Tchaikovsky himself performs in both recordings here. As a student of the Moscow Conservatory, he took piano lessons with the famous pianist Lev Oborin. Tchaikovsky's

remarkable mastery of the piano not only inspired a large number of his piano compositions (two sonatas, the *Sonata for Two Pianos*, the *Piano Trio* and *Quintet*, *Piano Concerto*, and a few cycles of piano pieces), but also allowed him to become his own ideal piano interpreter. Luckily, many recordings featuring Tchaikovsky's unique artistry have survived. Both in his playing and in his music itself, there is nothing superficial, nothing that strives for effect. Everything is subject to a strict and natural development of his musical plot.

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The Prokofiev Quartet - one of the oldest Russian string quartets - appeared in 1957, in Moscow. The first members of the Quartet were Ella Brakker, Nadezhda Baikova, Galina Odinets, and Kira Tsvetkova. The Quartet was re-named after Sergey Prokofiev in 1962. The members of the Quartet changed from time to time, and the one here was: Irina Menkova, Irina Listova, Ekaterina Markova, and Galina Soboleva. The Quartet played many concerts in Russia (and USSR), and toured in many countries, including Great Britain, Austria, France, Germany, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Spain, USA, Canada, and Japan. The list of recordings includes many LPs and CDs, as well as radio. The Quartet were first performers of the works by famous Russian composers such as Mieczyslaw Weinberg, Yuri Levitin, Edisson Denisov, Sofia Gubaidulina, and others. Their collaboration with Boris Tchaikovsky lasted more than 25 years, starting from the premiere of the composer's *Third Quartet*, and includes concert performances and the recordings of *String Quartets No.3-6 (NFPMA 9964/5-complete)*, and the *Piano Quintet*. Boris Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Quartet* has a dedication: '*To The Prokofiev Quartet: Polina Guberman, Ludmila Granova, Galina Odinets and Kira Tsvetkova*'.

Natalia Burnasheva, mezzo-soprano, graduated from the

Moscow Conservatory (vocal department, class of Victoria Rozhdestvenskaya), and completed post-graduate studies under Nina Dorliak. She has performed with Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Vassily Sinaisky, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Dmitry Kitaenko, Yuri Bashmet, and has also toured in Russia and abroad (including Spain, U.S.A., Belgium, Italy, China, Turkey, Hungary). She has participated in international festivals in Belgium, Spain, Russia, China. She is an Honoured Artist of Russia, and a soloist of the Moscow State Philharmonic Society. She has made many recordings for LP, CD, radio etc.

Alexander Ivanov [1945-2000], clarinet, graduated from the Moscow Conservatory (classes of Alexander Volodin, Boris Dikov, and Victor Petrov). He was a 2nd Place Laureate at the International Competition in Budapest (1970). In 1968-1972 he played at the Orchestra of Moscow Stanislavsky & Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theatre. In 1972-90 he played in the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra (soloist from 1974). In 1990-93 he was the soloist in the Russian National Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Ivanov was a professor in the Moscow Conservatory. From 1993 until death he taught at the University of Colorado, Denver (U.S.A).

Sergey Bubnov, flute, graduated from Moscow Conservatory (Yuri Dolzhikov's class). A laureate of several international competitions, including the International Students Festival in Havana (1978), he won first prize at the International Competition in Prague (1977). He was solo flute in the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra for many years. In the 1990s, he took on the same position in the Russian National Orchestra, before joining the National Philharmonic of Russia in 2003. As a soloist, he performed under Vladimir Fedoseyev, Vladimir Spivakov, Vladimir Valek, and others. He is an Honoured Artist of Russia and has recorded several CD.

.“The Last Spring” to words by Nikolay Zabolotsky [English text here by Sergey Suslov]

1. A JOYFUL MOOD

Let me a tiny lodge, starling,
Settle me in an old nestling-box.
I will pledge my soul to you
For your sky-blue snowdrops.
Start your serenade, starling!
Through kettledrums
and tambourines of History
You're our first spring singer
From a birch-tree conservatory.
Open the show, you whistler!
Throw back your little pink head,
Tearing up the shine of the strings
In the very throat by the birch grove.
I, too, would be willing to add my voice,
But a wandering butterfly whispered to me,
“He who strains his throat in spring,
Will have lost his voice by summer.”
And the spring is so good, so good!
All my soul is embraced in lilacs.
Now soul, raise up a nestling-box
Over your spring gardens.

2. SPRING'S MOVEMENTS

Dear friend, every day
I am lost at that hillside.
A laboratory of spring days
Can be seen around.
In every teeny-weeny plant,
As if in a live little retort,
Solar fluid is foaming
And boiling all by itself.
Having studied these tiny retorts,
Like a chemist or a doctor,
A rook walks along the road

In long violet feathers.
He carefully analyzes
His lesson by a notebook
And he gathers large nourishing worms
In store for his children.
And there, on hummocks under the aspens,
To celebrate the sunrise,
Hares have a round dance
With ancient lamentations.
Just like little children,
Clasping their little paws together,
Are monotonously talking
Of their hare wrongs.
And every moment these days,
Over the songs and dances,
The sun's visage is blazing
Filling the earth with fairy-tales.
And probably it would bend over
Our ancient forest corner,
And it would smile unwittingly
At our forest miracles.

3. THE SUN IS UP

Having lit the roof's tiling
And warmed up the pine-tree's wood,
The spring's late sun
Is rising higher and higher.
In the pinkish and brown smoke
Of the branches still defoliated,
A nightingale is clapping his wings – and
singing,
All pierced with oblique beams.
How natural is this repetition
Of his phrases so laconic and slow.
Seems like this tiny being
Is now singing expressly for us!

O deceits so beloved by my heart,
O delusions of my infant years!
Can't get rid of you on such a day,
When the meadows are in full green.
Having lit the roof's tiling
And warmed up the pine-tree's wood,
The spring's late sun
Is rising higher and higher.

4. GREEN BEAM

Gleaming in its golden mounting
Flush with the blue sea,
A white-domed town is dozing,
Reflected in the depth.
It emerged from aggregation
Of a white ridge of clouds
Where the sun blazes out of the water
For a moment now and then.
I will set off to see
Those distant lands,
I will find the road
To the palace of white domes.
I will open all the gates
Of those cloudy heights.
Someone will cast me a green beam
From the setting eye.
A beam that's like an emerald,
A key to golden happiness.
I will get you anyway,
My feeble green beam.
But bulwarks turn pale,
Towers are falling far away,
The green beam's fading,
Far above the ground.
Only he whose spirit is young,
And whose body's eager and mighty,

Will break into the white-domed town
And snatch the green beam!

5. SEPTEMBER

The rain is pouring large peas,
The wind's in fits, and the expanse is not clear.
And the disheveled poplar is cloaked
With the silvery inside of its leaves.
But look: through a hole in the cloud,
As if through a stone-slab arch,
A first beam is struggling to fly
Into this realm of fog and gloom.
So the expanse is not curtained forever
With clouds, and it was not in vain,
The nut-tree started to shine in late
September
Blushing like a young maid.
Now then, painter, snatch out
Brush after brush, and paint
This girl for me on a canvass,
Let her be fire-gold and garnet-colored.
Paint me a young princess in a crown,
Unsteady as a sapling tree,
With a smile sliding uneasily
On her tear-strewn young face.
The rain is pouring large peas...

6. AUTUMN

When the day is over, and Nature
Cannot choose the lighting at its will,
The ample spaces of autumn groves
Rise in the air as neat clean houses.
Hawks live there, and crows spend their
nights,
And clouds roam high above like ghosts.
The substance of autumn leaves has shrunk
And covered the entire ground. Far off there

A huge creature on four legs
Is walking to the misty village bellowing.
Ox, Ox! Are you not king any more?
The maple leaf reminds us of amber.
The Spirit of Autumn, give me the power of
pen!
The air's build implies the presence of
diamond.
The ox has disappeared round the corner.
And the sun's mass,
A misty ball, is hanging over the earth
Blood-staining the earth's edge in its
twinkling.
A big bird is flying below,
Rolling its round eyes from under its eyelids.
A human is felt in its movements.
At least, it surely is hidden
In its embryo between the two broad wings.
A beetle has slightly opened his house
between the leaves.
The Autumn's Architecture. And the
arrangement
Therein of the air space, the grove, the stream,
Arrangement of animals and humans,
When little rings and curls of leaves
Fly in the air – and a special light –
That's what we should choose from other
signs.
A beetle has slightly opened his house
between the leaves
And is peeping out with his horns stuck out.
The beetle has dug out various rootlets
for himself
And is stowing them into a heap;
Next, he sounds his teeny-weeny trumpet
And disappears again like a teeny-weeny god.
But then the wind comes.
All that used to be clean,

And spacious, and shining, and dry,
All this becomes gray, and hazy, and
unpleasant,
And undistinguishable. The wind drives
smoke,
Rotates the air, throws leaves in heaps
And blows the surface of the earth up in
powder.
And then all nature starts to freeze.
A maple leaf rings like copper
Hitting against a tiny twig.
And we must understand that it is just a sign,
Sent to us all by Nature for some reason
On entering another season.

7. WHO RESPONDED TO ME

Who responded to me in the heart of the
forest?
Was it an old oak whispering to a pine tree,
Or was it a rowan that creaked far off,
Or was it ocarina singing of a goldfinch,
Or was it the robin my little friend
Who suddenly answered to me at the sunset?
Who responded to me in the heart of the
forest?
Was it you who recalled in spring
The years we had that are gone,
And our troubles, and our hardships,
Our wanderings in distant lands –
Was it you who had scorched my soul?
Who responded to me in the heart of the
forest?
Morning or evening, in cold and in heat,
I always hear some indistinct echo,
As if some breath of boundless love,
Love that made my tremulous verse
Strive to you out the palms of my hands...

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