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TCHAIKOVSKY

ROCOCO VARIATIONS

Opus 33

FOR CELLO AND PIANO

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Rococo Variations, Op. 33, , Alfred Music Publishing, 1985, 1457476894, 9781457476891, 32 pages. .

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Musically Mixed: Piano Solos and Duets , Barbara (COP) Meixner, Jan 1, 1995, Music, 32 pages. A dynamic collection of solos and duets in contrasting styles and moods for intermediate-level performers. The solo works feature pieces in the style of Bach, Chopin, and

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Concerto no. 1, opus 33, for cello and piano , , Mar 1, 1985, Music, 7 pages. .

In the Hall of the Mountain King, from Peer Gynt Suite, Issue 1 , Edvard Grieg, John (COP) Wasson, Mar 1, 1992, , 450 pages. 'We all know the tune' fittingly describes this work. In the transfer to the concert band medium, none of the charm has been lost. Careful voicing makes each part very playable..

Concert rhapsody for cello and piano, , Apr 1, 2001, Music, 16 pages. A cleanly printed edition of the cello concerto written in 1963. Includes a piano reduction of the orchestra part..

The Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33, for cello and orchestra was the closest Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky ever came to writing a full concerto for cello and orchestra. The style was inspired by Mozart, Tchaikovsky's role model, and makes it clear that Tchaikovsky admired the Classical style very much. However, the Thema is not Rococo in origin, but actually an original theme in the Rococo style.

Tchaikovsky wrote this piece for and with the help of Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, a German cellist and fellow-professor at the Moscow Conservatory. Fitzenhagen gave the premiere in Moscow on November 30, 1877, with Nikolai Rubinstein conducting. This was perhaps the only hearing of the Variations as Tchaikovsky wrote the piece until 1941, when it was played in Moscow without Fitzenhagen's by-then-standard emendations.

The piece is composed of a theme and seven variations (eight in Tchaikovsky's original version), making up roughly 20 minutes of music. Part of the difficulty of the piece lies in this seemingly disingenuous format involving eight sections that follow one another without a break, devoid of the usual extended orchestral tuttis allowing the soloist to rest for a few moments. The soloist is also challenged by mostly having to play in the high register using the thumb position.

The orchestra comes in with a somewhat brief (though it looks long on paper) introduction, and the solo cello states the simple, elegant theme. The theme is repeated a total of six times, then the cello plays a brief conjunctive passage, the same exact notes of which are used to link Vars. I and II. The same conjunction is played an octave lower to link Vars. II and III.

The fifth variation carries over trills from the end of the fourth variation, and after a grand "fall" by the solo cello onto a low E, the orchestra takes over gallantly. A cadenza follows, ending back in the trills from the beginning, and once again the melody is taken over by the full orchestra, at which point a second, much longer and more difficult cadenza follows. The second cadenza, which is brazen and filled with chords, steadfastly refuses to resolve its minor key.

The piece was written between December 1876 and March 1877, immediately following his tone poem *Francesca da Rimini*, and compared to the vehemence and intensity of *Francesca*, the Variations show a new elegant classical detachment. While the theme upon which the composition is based is Tchaikovsky's own, the graceful contours that make up the first half of this theme show clearly which style period Tchaikovsky had in mind.

Tchaikovsky had rarely been attracted to the variation form before, except for an eloquent piece for piano solo in F major, Op. 19, No. 6. The utility of this form became apparent for what he now set out to accomplish. In a traditional concerto format, structural complexities and dramatic issues that would have clashed with the 18th-century detachment and finesse could not have been avoided. A neater and easier solution was, in each variation, to retain the melodic outlines and harmonic support outlined in his initial theme.

The potential problem with this approach could be a lack of variety between variations. This would effectively kill the piece. Thanks to his consummate craftsmanship, Tchaikovsky avoided this trap. There is barely a phrase within each variation whose relationship with its progenitor is not explicit. However, no two variations assemble their constituent phrases in the same manner, nor build to the same proportions.

One device which helps Tchaikovsky greatly in this regard is a codetta attached to the end of the theme, to which is attached in turn a quasi-cadential or linking extension. Tchaikovsky varied this extension in length and direction, further modifying the proportions of individual variations and providing a bridge passage from one variation to the next. He even mixed the codetta material with the theme itself in the *Andante grazioso* variation (No. 4 in Fitzenhagen's arrangement, No. 5 in Tchaikovsky's original order).

While the tasteful invention and refined craftsmanship that Tchaikovsky admired in classical-era music is thoroughly in evidence, the structure he intended in his ordering of variations was subverted by the work's dedicatee. Tchaikovsky scholar Dr. David Brown points out that, in the composer's original order, the first five variations show "a progressive expansion and evolution of the theme's structure ... the sixth briefly recalling the original phrases of the theme before the seventh, C major variation, new in meter and key," reveals "a vast melodic sweep," providing "the real peak of the piece," after which the final variation (the one Fitzenhagen eventually jettisoned) would guide listeners back toward the point where the piece had started.[1]

As music critic Michael Steinberg points out, "Fitzenhagen intervened considerably in shaping what he considered "his" piece."^[2] Much of the detail in the solo part is his and was actually written by him into Tchaikovsky's autograph.^[3] "More importantly," Steinberg adds, "he dropped one entire variation and reshuffled the order of the others. This, in turn, necessitated further cuts and splices."^[2]

Tchaikovsky had in fact asked Fitzenhagen to go through the Variations—something about which the composer apparently neglected to inform his publisher, P. I. Jurgenson. In the autograph score the majority of the solo part is actually in Fitzenhagen's hand and the cellist apparently exercised the role of reviser vigorously enough to lead Jurgenson to protest to Tchaikovsky, "Horrible Fitzenhagen insists on changing your cello piece. He wants to 'cello' it up and claims you gave him permission. Good God! Tchaikovski revu et corrigé par Fitzenhagen!"^[4]

Fitzenhagen was proud of the success he had in performing the work,^[5] and in a report he wrote Tchaikovsky after playing it at the Wiesbaden Festival in June 1879, he gave a clue as to why he rearranged the order of variations as he did.^[6] "I produced a furore with your variations. I pleased so greatly that I was recalled three times, and after the Andante variation (D minor) there was stormy applause. Liszt said to me: 'You carried me away! You played splendidly,' and regarding your piece he observed: 'Now there, at last, is real music!'"^[7]

The D minor variation Fitzenhagen mentions is actually the third in Tchaikovsky's original sequence. Fitzenhagen may have thought it more effective later in the piece because of its ability to draw applause.^[6] He exchanged it with Tchaikovsky's slow penultimate variation, the one in 3/4 time in C major. The Allegro vivace variation which now followed the D minor contrasted very effectively. However, the eighth and final variation was extremely similar to the Allegro vivace. Fitzenhagen did not hesitate to jettison this variation and tack the final 32 bars of the piece onto the Allegro vivace.^[6]

Nevertheless, in one of his occasional fits of insecurity about his work, especially when it came to form, Tchaikovsky allowed the changes to stand.^[1] Eleven years later one of Fitzenhagen's students, Anatoliy Brandukov, approached the composer about whether he would restore his original idea to the piece. Apparently irritated by the question, Tchaikovsky replied, "Oh, the hell with it! Let it stay the way it is."^[8]

The Variations were played in Fitzenhagen's order until the Russian cellist Victor Kubatsky started researching the piece for himself. By subjecting the manuscript to X-ray experiments, he discovered that Tchaikovsky's text had been inked over. As a result of this discovery, the original version was finally published and has since been recorded. Nevertheless, most cellists still use the Fitzenhagen version of the piece.^[9] A large part of the problem was that, while the Russian complete edition of Tchaikovsky's complete works included the original version of the Variations, the State Publishing House issued neither the orchestral parts nor a piano reduction for study purposes.^[10]

Variations on a Rococo Theme: Free scores at the International Music Score Library Project Please note: the information regarding the "original" version on this site is not entirely true; the theme and all the variations (except Variation IV) are what Tchaikovsky originally wrote, whereas the final coda is Fitzenhagen's version. However, since most cellists today play Fitzenhagen's version throughout, this score will still be substantially different from most modern recordings.

This "urtext" or "scholarly" (scientific) edition was published at least 25 years ago in the EU (or 20 years ago in Italy, before 1992 in the former USSR). Hence, the edition is public domain in its country of origin or a government publication. Such editions are also public domain in Canada because they fail to meet the minimum 'threshold of originality' to qualify for copyright as an 'adaptation'. They may not be public domain elsewhere. More information about this can be found here.

Mstislav Rostropovich is the world's greatest cellist, and he has actually made at least five recordings of this greatest of all cello concertos. I have a certain preference for his later version, with

Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra on Erato. This version has long been a prime recommendation, and in this new remastering at mid-price, it's an even better deal now. Herbert von Karajan accompanies with his usual expertise, and the Tchaikovsky performance is quite simply the finest around. This concerto is one of those pieces of which you'll want to have five or six copies. Just make sure this is one of them. --David Hurwitz

This is a tough one to call. Admittedly, the sound quality of Erato's recording of Rostropovich performing the Dvorak Cello Concerto and the Tchaikovsky Rocco Variations is still better than Deutsche Grammophon's digital image bit remastered version with Rostropovich accompanied by Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. Certainly for both recordings, Rostropovich gives warm, passionate performances of these works; his interpretations in the Erato recording may sound more vibrant than these on the Deutsche Grammophon CD, but this may have more to do with sound quality than with his splendidly lyrical playing. However, without question, the Deutsche Grammophon recording does offer Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic at its best. I doubt I have heard a better concerto recording from them; most noteworthy is the lush, warm tone created by the strings, sounding almost as warm as any I have heard from the Vienna Philharmonic's string sections. You certainly won't go wrong acquiring either the Deutsche Grammophon or Erato CDs; I own both and enjoy them immensely.

This is a supreme classic of the gramophone catalogue. It is a glorious disc, representing Rostropovich at his peak. The Berlin Philharmonic and Karajan are on top form as well. From the rapt opening of the Dvorak concerto, Karajan and his band create the most wonderful atmosphere for the soloist to play in. Dvorak's Cello concerto is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, work for the cello in the concerto repertoire. Rostropovich's magnificently full tone is perfect for this work. There is hardly anything you could criticise about the disc. The Dvorak is full of passion, fire, lyricism you could wish for, but Rostropovich doesn't pull out all the stops. He keeps certain degrees of fire in reserve for the really big moments. The dialog between the soloist and orchestra are unmatched in its chamber-like quality. It's a give-and-take performance, and what a performance! This particular recording of the Rococo Variations is unsurpassed. It has so much wit, panache, elegance, and the addition of Karajan being a master Tchaikovskian helps enormously. The playing matches the beauty and elegance and the Rustic charm of this piece fully with the soloist. This piece is pretty difficult to play, as there are many technical difficulties which surround the soloist, but Rostropovich, with his rich palette of tone colours, make the piece sound easy, very easy. My favourite in the Variations has to be the Finale, where Rostropovich finally pulls out all his powers and lets rip. The way he 'talks' with the orchestra is unmatched in its imaginativeness. All the parties involved really give the impression that they are really having fun, which in turn gives the listener the same impression. A most joyful way to end a glorious disc. I realise that I have been pretty indulgent with my use of superlatives, but I am lost for words, really. It really is a great disc, whose reputation is for once not exaggerated. If you don't have this CD right now, you should get a copy immediately.

I found this CD to be an absolute delight! From opening to closing measure of both the Dvorak cello concerto and the Tchaikovsky Rococo Variations, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Herbert von Karajan, team up to establish a splendid musical dialog. The cello concerto, one of Dvorak's greatest masterpieces, is at the same time warm, passionate and lyrical. I've personally never heard a better performance of the second movement - *adagio ma non troppo* - with its almost ethereal quality. Tchaikovsky's "Rococo variations" are sheer magic from start to finish.

This is another of Deutsche Grammophon's "Originals" series, a digital re-mastering of recordings made in 1969. I found the sound quality to be quite outstanding. While retaining some of the characteristics of the original analog recording, dynamic range and realism in stereo imaging are enhanced. The recording's locale adds to the warmth of the performances.

Rostropovich's technique shimmers and sparkles.. like Heifetz on the cello. But unlike Heifetz, Rostropovich can let emotion and passion flow at precisely the right time. I could (and do!) listen to this recording ALL the time. It never gets old... and that's proof that this recording is somehow more than itself: it brings the listener to a higher plane- a heightened state of consciousness. When

listening to this piece, somehow everything in the world just makes sense. Dvorak and his world are long gone, but through this piece I hear him. And all of a sudden, I understand... it's strangely spiritual.

William Molina is Venezuelan, born in Maracay, Aragua State, where he began his studies in music at a very early age at the Federico Villena Music School. Later on he continued studying in Caracas and his cello professors in Venezuela were Andrés Herrera, Marek Gajzler and Hector Vazquez. He further developed his studies in France with professors Philippe Müller, Andrés Navarra and Paul Tortelier and specialised himself in chamber music with Jean Hubeau and Genevieve Joy Duttileux. He was also advised by the prominent masters Franz Helmerson, Leonard Rose and Mstislav Rostropovich.

He performed with Sergei Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante during its debut in Latin America. His repertoire is very broad and covers all the genders and styles within violoncello literature. Organizations and corporations such as CAF, UN, OAS and UNESCO among others, have invited him through FESNOJIV to give conferences, workshops and seminars in music conservatories, auditoriums and very important universities of various countries of the world.

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