

TCHAIKOVSKY
Peter Il'ich
(1840 - 1893)

The second of six children of Il'ya and Alexandra Tchaikovsky, Peter Il'ich was born on 25th April, 1840, at Votkinsk in the Government of Vyatka, nearly 850 kms. east of Moscow. Votkinsk was a town of importance by virtue of its mining industry, and Il'ya Tchaikovsky occupied a senior managerial position, with a suitably imposing house on three levels commanding fine views. The parents had moved to Votkinsk from St. Petersburg on account of Il'ya's appointment and, on his relinquishing it in 1848, it was to St. Petersburg that they and their growing family returned.

After leaving the Conservatoire in St. Petersburg (under Anton Rubinstein) in 1865, Tchaikovsky accepted a teaching post at the newly formed Moscow Conservatoire (under Nikolai Rubinstein) the following year. Both these conservatoires assisted very materially in creating business for the new publishing houses of, respectively, Bessel in St. Petersburg and Jurgenson in Moscow. Although Tchaikovsky knew Bessel from his student days in St. Petersburg, he was not particularly close to him and disputes arose. Bessel only published six works of Tchaikovsky. These were the opera 'The Oprichnik', the two sets of songs, Ops. 16 and 25, the six piano pieces, Op.21, the Second Symphony, Op.17 and the first published version of 'Romeo and Juliet' fantasy overture (in association with Bote and Bock).¹ Composition of all these works was between 1870 and 1880.

All remaining works of Tchaikovsky were published by Jurgenson, almost without exception.² However, he did leave four of substance for orchestra, unpublished at the time of his death, for reasons set out in the commentaries which follow. Thanks to the efforts of Modest Tchaikovsky and his influence with Glazunov, the works were rescued and published by Belaieff in 1896/1897, three of them with striking title pages. Although rejected by the composer, they are by no means unworthy of him and help to enhance the quality of Belaieff's Catalogue as representative works of Russia's greatest composer. Perhaps the most interesting of these very neglected works is the symphonic ballad, the 'Voevoda', which, to the writer Ralph W. Wood, recalled Sibelius effects.³ Was he referring to the introductory galloping motive on the lower strings, so suggestive of Sibelius's 'Night Ride and Sunrise'? The 'Voevoda' also possesses a central 'love' episode of an intense beauty seldom surpassed in Tchaikovsky's music which should have guaranteed the work a high rating which, unfortunately, it has never enjoyed.

Tchaikovsky was one of the first winners of Belaieff's 'Glinka' awards instituted in 1884, before the founding of the publishing house. In that year, he received a prize of 500 roubles for his 'Romeo and Juliet'; in 1885, 500 roubles for the 'Storm' Overture, Op.18. A further prize followed for 'Francesca da Rimini'.⁴

On 25th October, 1893, Tchaikovsky died tragically in St. Petersburg, in circumstances still not established beyond doubt.⁵

OVERTURE, 'GROZA/THE STORM', OP. 76

Orchestral score	plate number	1315
Orchestral parts		1316
Reduction for piano solo by N. Sokolov		1317

The title page states: 'Overture/for the drama, 'THE STORM/OF/ A.N.OSTROVSKY/ for/ORCHESTRA/composed/by/P.TCHAIKOVSKY/OP.76/(Posthumous work).'

This work, the first of the four to be published by Belaieff after Tchaikovsky's death, was also his first for full symphony orchestra and written in 1864 when Tchaikovsky, aged twenty-four, was still a student at the St.Petersburg Conservatoire. The outcome of a summer task set by Anton Rubinstein for his composition students to write an opera overture, it fell naturally to Tchaikovsky to choose Ostrovsky's play which he had seen and evinced a desire to set as an opera.¹

Modest Tchaikovsky refers to notes for a programme which his brother had made in the margin of the score of his instrumentation of two of the Symphonic Studies, Op.13, of Robert Schumann, for piano solo.² The programme set forth was followed, certainly in essence, and in places in detail by Tchaikovsky, though A. Dolzhansky finds divergences.³

