

# NINA KOTOVA ♦ TCHAIKOVSKY

Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra ♦ Vladimir Fedoseyev



DE 3521



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A woman with dark, wavy hair, wearing a vibrant red strapless gown, is seated and holding a cello. She is looking upwards and to the left with a serene expression. The background is a grand, dimly lit hall with ornate architectural details and warm, glowing lights.

# NINA KOTOVA ♦ TCHAIKOVSKY

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY:**

**Pezzo capriccioso, Op. 62 (6:24)**

**Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33 (18:54)**

**Serenade for Strings, Op. 48 (34:08)**

**Nina Kotova, cello**

**Vladimir Fedoseyev, conductor**

**Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra**

**Total Playing Time: 59:37**

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## **PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY:**

1. *Pezzo capriccioso, Op. 62* (6:24)

### ***Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op. 33*** (18:54)

2. **Moderato assai quasi Andante—Thema: Moderato semplice** (2:46)

3. **Variation I: Tempo della Thema** (0:53)

4. **Variation II: Tempo della Thema** (1:25)

5. **Variation III: Andante sostenuto** (3:52)

6. **Variation IV: Andante grazioso** (1:51)

7. **Variation V: Allegro moderato** (3:18)

8. **Variation VI: Andante** (2:42)

9. **Variation VII e Coda: Allegro vivo** (2:04)

### ***Serenade for Strings, Op. 48*** (34:08)

10. **Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo—Allegro moderato** (10:44)

11. **Valse: Moderato—Tempo di valse** (4:51)

12. **Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco** (10:27)

13. **Finale (Tema russo): Andante—Allegro con spirito** (8:06)

**Nina Kotova, cello**

**Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra**

**Vladimir Fedoseyev, conductor**

Total Playing Time: 59:37

Known for his warm, expansive melodies and profound expressions of emotion, Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) pursued composition studies at the newly opened St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862. He studied music theory and composition with the Russian composer and piano virtuoso Anton Rubinstein, who was the founder of the conservatory. Upon graduating in 1865, Tchaikovsky immediately accepted a position as professor of music theory at the Moscow Conservatory, which had just been opened by Nicolai Rubinstein, Anton's younger brother.

Tchaikovsky wrote the ***Pezzo capriccioso*, Op. 62** in one week in August 1887. It was first performed in Paris by cellist Anatoliy Brandukov, with Tchaikovsky playing the piano part. Brandukov also gave the first performance of the piece with orchestra, with Tchaikovsky conducting. The work is dedicated to Brandukov, who had studied with the German cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen at the Moscow Conservatory.

The composition has been in Nina Kotova's recital and concerto repertoire since she was fifteen. Nina writes this about the piece: "*Pezzo capriccioso* connotes capriciousness in the sense that there are multiple changes in musical character in the score. The work's introduction opens with a dramatic line after which the mood changes into a captivating lyrical melody followed by alternating thematic material of ornate refinement, changes from minor to major, running passages and broad lyrical lines in the

solo cello part. This character brings to mind the expression of 'light sadness,' a term coined by Pushkin to describe the Russian soul. The middle section and coda are contrasting and highly virtuosic with shimmering spiccato and scherzo-like rhythmic elements. The solo cello part ends with a crescendo culminating with a dizzying passage in the third octave."

Tchaikovsky's ***Variations on a Rocco Theme, Op. 33, for Cello and Orchestra*** is a major component of the literature for solo cello and orchestra. The Variations were first performed by Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, who was teaching at the Moscow Conservatory at the time. Fitzenhagen, who was also a composer, took liberties with the cello part and even rearranged the order of the variations. Still, Fitzenhagen's version is the one most often performed, and it is the version heard on this recording.

For the most part, Fitzenhagen seems to have been more concerned with showing off his technique than paying conscientious attention to Tchaikovsky's musical intentions. As he wrote to Tchaikovsky after a performance of the work in Wiesbaden in 1879: "I produced a furor with your variations. I pleased so greatly that I was recalled three times, and after the Andante variation in D minor there was stormy applause. Liszt said to me: 'You carried me away! You played splendidly!'"

Nina Kotova quotes Konstantin Sergeievich Stanislavsky, the originator of a system of training

and preparing actors, who said that "Cliché and convention are the chains that enslave performers and deprive them of their artistic freedom."

About the music on this album, Nina Kotova writes, "Although the *Variations on a Rococo Theme* showcase cellistic virtuosity, a thoughtful interpretation of the score is key to a truly deep understanding of the music. A refined sense of style encapsulated in the work's title, 'Rococo,' is required to capture the elegance, depth, and poeticism of Tchaikovsky's music. The music does not tolerate interpretive clichés imbued with sweetness, lightness, and an emphasis on the performer's own personality.

"The theme is said to be in the rococo style, yet it also reflects the purity of Russian melodicism. There are certainly references to the rococo style in both the music and its structure, but the work is in its essence, full, spirited, warm, and Slavic. The very first sounds of the orchestral introduction with its melodic intervals set the Romantic mood for the entire score, recalling the musical verse of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

"From the first phrases of the recording session with conductor Vladimir Ivanovich Fedoseyev, his clear vision and powerful interpretive insight into honoring Tchaikovsky's intentions were reassuring of my own beliefs. For me, the journey of recording Tchaikovsky in his homeland with a great conductor reaffirmed the true purpose of making music."

Tchaikovsky began work on the Variations in December 1876, at about the time when his remarkable relationship with Nadezhda von Meck began. Having been deeply moved by a performance of Tchaikovsky's symphonic tone poem *The Tempest*, von Meck, a wealthy widow, wrote to Tchaikovsky and commissioned a few pieces of chamber music. Tchaikovsky had just finished these pieces when he began work on the Rococo Variations. Von Meck was his patron for thirteen years, providing him with a generous stipend, which allowed Tchaikovsky to leave his position at the Moscow Conservatory and concentrate exclusively on composing. Although the two agreed they would never meet, they exchanged more than 1,200 letters over the thirteen years of their association.

Tchaikovsky composed the ***Serenade for Strings*** following his *1812 Overture*, two pieces about which he wrote to Nadezhda von Meck: "The overture will be very loud and noisy, but I wrote it without any warm feelings of love and so, it will probably be of no artistic merit. But the serenade, on the contrary, I wrote from inner compulsion. This is a piece from the heart, and so, I venture to hope that this work is not without artistic qualities."

The Serenade's first movement, marked "piece in the form of a sonatina," bears little resemblance to a sonatina by Clementi or Mozart. It begins with a slow, majestic introduction that also ends the movement. In the Allegro moderato section, Tchaikovsky presents and develops

his themes, but omits a development section; in this sense, the movement may be called a sonatina rather than a sonata.

The second movement is marked *Tempo di valse*. The waltz grew out of the 18th-century minuet, a courtly dance in 3/4 time. The waltz is faster than the minuet, but the biggest difference between the two dances is that in a waltz, the dancers touch.

The third movement, an elegy, is the dark, emotional core of the Serenade. To intensify the elegiac emotions, Tchaikovsky enriches his soaring melodies with lush harmonies and intricate counterpoint.

The fourth movement, based on a Russian folk song, demonstrates how brilliantly Tchaikovsky succeeded in integrating Russian subject matter and Western European form into a personal style that, above all, communicates profound feeling. His musical expression of deep emotions, especially when tempered by a classical refinement and when written “from the heart,” has ensured the endurance of his works for generations.

—David Brin

Russian-American cellist **Nina Kotova**, “a strong and individual artist whose depth of feeling and technical control are never in doubt” (*Gramophone*), has performed in recital and as a soloist with major orchestras across the globe, touring the capitals of Europe, Asia, and the Americas and performing in the world’s great concert halls, including London’s Wigmore Hall, New York’s Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, the Berliner Philharmonie, and the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow. She has had the distinction of performing in a live broadcast from Red Square in Moscow, for the Imperial Family of Japan, and at Buckingham Palace in a special concert for Prince Charles.

Born in Russia, Nina Kotova belongs to the third generation of a family of musicians—most notably her father, the renowned virtuoso double-bass player Ivan Ivanovich Kotov. At the age of seven, she was accepted into an adult cello class at the Moscow Conservatory. At fifteen, she won First Prize at the Prague International Competition. And at nineteen, having graduated from the Moscow Conservatory, she left her homeland to continue her studies in Germany and the United States, where she now resides.

In addition to performing as a soloist and collaborative artist, Nina Kotova has long expressed a strong interest in expanding the cello repertoire. Her previous release on the Delos label includes her performance of her own *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* as well as works by Ernest Bloch and Max Bruch. After the

2000 premiere of her Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in San Francisco, the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared, "Kotova is destined for greatness." She has already been included in Deutsche Grammophon's 2003 "Masters of the Bow," a tribute to the greatest cellists of the past fifty years. For more information, please visit [www.ninakotova.com](http://www.ninakotova.com).

**Vladimir Ivanovich Fedoseyev** has been the artistic director and conductor of the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra since 1974. From 1997 to 2006, Fedoseyev was chief conductor of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. He has also been the guest conductor of a number of other symphonic ensembles, including the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra of Paris, the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, and the Cleveland Symphony.

Fedoseyev began his conducting career with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra and made his theatrical conducting debut at the Mariinsky Theater in his native city, St. Petersburg (then Leningrad), where he staged Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride*. His wide-ranging repertoire includes operas and symphonic works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Verdi, Berlioz, Shostakovich, Janáček, Berg, and many others. In addition, he has been regularly involved with opera and ballet productions in some of Europe's top venues. In 2015–2016, Fedoseyev conducted new La Scala productions of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. In early 2017, he conducted

the premiere nights of Puccini's *Turandot* at Moscow's Helicon-Opera, which invited him to be the theater's musical director. Fedoseyev has received numerous international awards and honors, including the Silver Cross of Merit of the Republic of Austria, the Trebbia European Award for creative activities, and the Gold Medal of the International Gustav Mahler Society. In 2016, he was given the title of Honored Artist of the Russian Federation and the State Prize of the Russian Federation.

Founded in 1930 as the Soviet Union's first orchestra and originally known as the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, the **Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra** was renamed in 1993 in recognition of Russia's most famous composer. Known for its "inimitable sound and unique melodious flavor" (Georgy Sviridov), the orchestra is one of Russia's leading ensembles, performing throughout Russia and touring across Europe and Asia. Its current artistic director and chief conductor, Vladimir Fedoseyev, has been leading the ensemble for more than forty years. The orchestra's repertoire is wide-ranging, and its discography includes works by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Mahler, and Brahms, as well as contemporary music. The orchestra has also premiered a number of new works by such Russian composers as Prokofiev, Khachaturian, and Kabalevsky—a contribution recognized in this statement from Dmitri Shostakovich: "The composers of this country owe a special debt of gratitude to the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra, which was the first to perform many of our works and deeply interpret the scores."

Recorded at the State House of Radio Broadcasting and Sound-recording, Studio 5, Moscow. The building was erected on the site of the Church of St. George the Victorious, built in 1635 and demolished in 1932. Tchaikovsky and Antonina Ivanovna Miliukova were married in this church on July 18, 1877.

Recording producer: Chris Craker

Recording engineer: Alexander Van Ingen

Editing / Mastering: Matthew Snyder, Allegro Recordings

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## Also Available



BLOCH, BRUCH, KOTOVA  
Nina Kotova, cello • Philharmonia of Russia,  
Constantine Orbelian, conductor

Bloch: ***Prayer from Jewish Life, No. 1 • Schelomo***  
Kotova: ***Concerto for Cello and Orchestra***, recording premiere  
Bruch: ***Kol Nidrei***

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