

ing it the aura of an improvisation. The second movement has been eloquently described by Beethoven's biographer Adolph Bernhard Marx (1795–1866): “[It] opens with a chorale...[that] awakens memories of many a devotional melody to which we have opened up our desolate and fearful soul under the oppression of life. It is a profound introversion, addressing us from outside and filling the soul within. But this chorale is only one aspect of the content. It is...as if, on a nocturnal walk, one heard the solemn song of the faithful softly re-echo[ing] from a distant and barely visible church, a song of penitence and fear of eternal death, and felt profoundly involved with what [was being sung].” A transitional passage advances immediately to the third movement (*Allegro; allegro fugato*) that features skillful contrapuntal devices, pre-saging the polyphonic style found later in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, *Missa solennis*, and last string quartets.

Schnittke's *Second Cello Sonata* is dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich, for whom the composer also wrote his moving *Second Cello Concerto* in 1990. The sonata has five movements, each clearly separated from the other. The work begins solemnly and without tempo, with soaring melodic figures in the cello. A fast-moving *Allegro* follows, in which cello and piano play equal roles. In the ensuing *Largo*, on the other hand, the piano assumes the task of providing the chordal underpinning, while the fourth movement resembles the first *Allegro* in construction and character. The work comes to a close with a static *Lento*, consisting of only a few half and whole notes, that dies away on a single note from the cello.

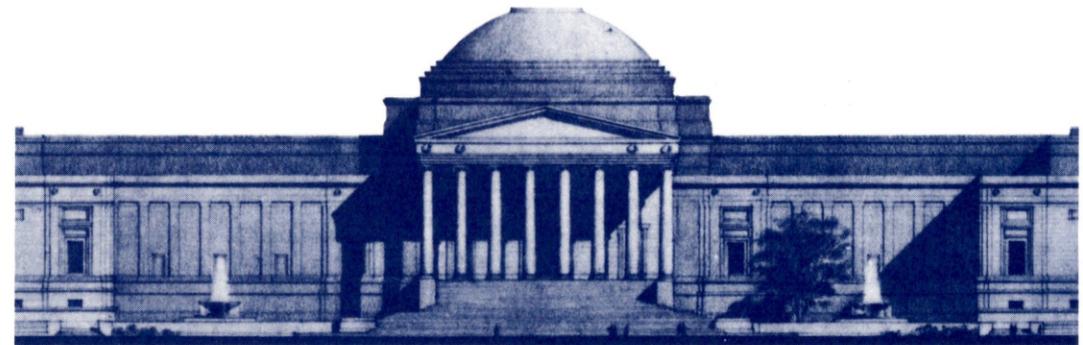
Of the *Four Pieces for Cello and Piano*, *Pezzo capriccioso*, *Opus 62* is Tchaikovsky's own arrangement of a piece for cello and orchestra. *Mélodie* is from *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*, *Opus 42*, originally for violin and piano. The other two were originally solo piano pieces: *Méditation* (from *Dix-huit morceaux*, *Opus 72*), transforms its repeated theme with forceful dissimilarity, harking back to the slow movement of Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony*; and the *Humoresque* (from *Deux morceaux*, *Opus 10*), with its buoyant beginning and ending, which has as its centerpiece a florid French folk song that Tchaikovsky purportedly first heard during a trip to Nice.

-Program notes by Elmer Booze, with notes on Schnittke by Helmut Peters, translated from the German by Stephen Ackert

The Fifty-seventh Season of

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