



# TCHAIKOVSKY

GREATEST MELODIES

ARRANGED AND PERFORMED BY  
**PETER BREINER, PIANO**



Pyotr Il'yich  
**TCHAIKOVSKY**  
(1840–1893)

**GREATEST MELODIES**

- |           |  |              |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op. 42 – No. 3. Mélodie (1878)</b>                               | <b>2:57</b>  |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Piano Concerto No. 2 in G major, Op. 44 – II. Andante non troppo (1880)</b>               | <b>3:29</b>  |
|           | <b>Serenade in C major, Op. 48 (1880)</b>  | <b>11:25</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | I. Pezzo in forma di Sonatina  | 3:49         |
| <b>4</b>  | II. Valse  | 1:57         |
| <b>5</b>  | III. Elegia  | 3:41         |
| <b>6</b>  | IV. Finale: Tema russo   | 1:58         |
|           | <b>12 Morceaux, Op. 40 (1878) (excerpts)</b>   | <b>9:22</b>  |
| <b>7</b>  | No. 6. Song Without Words  | 2:25         |
| <b>8</b>  | No. 8. Waltz   | 2:28         |
| <b>9</b>  | No. 9. Waltz   | 2:08         |
| <b>10</b> | No. 12. Interrupted Dreams   | 2:21         |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Six Romances, Op. 6 – No. 6. None but the Lonely Heart (1869)</b>                         | <b>3:18</b>  |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Six Romances, Op. 28 – No. 3. Why did I dream of you? (1875)</b>                          | <b>2:40</b>  |
| <b>13</b> | <b>The Queen of Spades, Op. 68, Act I –<br/>Arioso: The name of her I do not know (1890)</b> | <b>3:10</b>  |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 –<br/>II. Andantino in modo di canzona (1878)</b>       | <b>2:41</b>  |
| <b>15</b> | <b>String Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 11 – I. Andante cantabile (1871)</b>                 | <b>4:14</b>  |

	<b>Swan Lake, Op. 20 (1876) (excerpts)</b>	<b>7:02</b>
16	Act II: Dances of the Swans – V. Pas d'action	3:49
17	Act II: Scene	3:13
	<b>Album for the Young, Op. 39 (1878) (excerpts)</b>	<b>9:16</b>
18	No. 9. Waltz	1:21
19	No. 10. Polka	0:56
20	No. 15. Italian Song	1:37
21	No. 16. Old French Song	1:07
22	No. 18. Neapolitan Song	1:08
23	No. 21. Sweet Dreams	2:03
24	No. 24. The Organ Grinder's Song	1:04
	<b>Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (1888) (excerpts)</b>	<b>5:33</b>
25	I. Andante	2:40
26	II. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza	2:53
27	<b>Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70 – II. Adagio cantabile e con moto (1887–90, rev. 1891–92)</b>	<b>2:14</b>
	<b>The Nutcracker, Op. 71 (1892) (excerpts)</b>	<b>6:32</b>
	<b>Act II Tableau 3</b>	
28	Dance of the Mirlitons	2:09
29	Waltz of the Flowers	2:13
30	Variation 2 [Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy]	2:10
	<b>Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 'Pathétique' (1893) (excerpts)</b>	<b>5:35</b>
31	I. Andante	3:09
32	IV. Finale: Adagio lamentoso	2:26

**Peter Breiner, Piano**

All works arranged for piano by Peter Breiner (2023)

## Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

### Greatest Melodies

Tchaikovsky is one of the best-loved of all Russian composers, on account of his abundant gift for writing memorable and emotive melodies. A precocious pianist, he wrote many appealing pieces for the instrument in a solo capacity, while his orchestral music can also be distilled into attractive piano reductions.

This collection begins with the *Melodie*, which began life as a projected slow movement for Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*. In the event he settled on a lighter *Canzonetta*, with the *Melodie* repurposed to front a three-movement piece for violin and piano, *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*. Both pieces were completed in Switzerland in 1878.

Tchaikovsky completed two piano concertos, with each written for Nikolay Rubinstein as soloist. The first has become a repertoire staple, but the second is also a rewarding work, original in design and with fervent lyricism in its slow movement, where violin and cello are drawn from the orchestra to join the pianist.

The *Serenade for Strings* was composed in 1880, the same year as the *1812 Overture*. Tchaikovsky professed to his patron, Madame von Meck: 'It is a heartfelt piece and so, I dare to think, is not lacking in real qualities'. Initially earmarked as a symphony or string quintet, the *Serenade* got its label on account of material written in thrall to Mozart. The first movement introduction looks back further, a call to arms in the style of a Baroque overture, before settling into a persuasive triple time melody. The second movement is a charming *Valse*, whose winsome melody gained it an immediate encore at its premiere. The third movement, an *Elegia*, is a beautiful utterance, slow and simply emotive, while the fourth movement is carried forward by the hustle and bustle of its main idea.

Tchaikovsky wrote a large amount of music for solo piano, published in collected volumes that were not necessarily designed to be performed together. *The Twelve Pieces*, Op. 40, published in 1878, are 'of moderate difficulty'; pieces in dance form or descriptive sketches. The imagination is left to the listener for *Song Without Words* (a nod to Mendelssohn), *Valses* in A flat major and F sharp minor respectively, and the evocative *Interrupted Dreams*.

In Tchaikovsky's songs for voice and piano, which number more than 100, the texts often reflect a longing for happiness that remained tragically beyond his reach. *None but the Lonely Heart* is among his most celebrated works, an early song championed in Moscow by the acclaimed contralto Elizaveta Lavrovskaya. *Why did I dream of you?* is of similar vintage, dominated by a single melodic phrase.

*The name of her I do not know* is one of the first arias from one of Tchaikovsky's finest operas. Composed at speed in 1889, *The Queen of Spades* is based on a Pushkin novella of the same name. This particular aria introduces us to Herman, an officer obsessed with the card table but also preoccupied with his love for a girl he does not know. As the plot unfolds, this love will bring tragic consequences.

The *Symphony No. 4 in F minor*, Op. 36 was written at a critical stage in Tchaikovsky's life, the first of a trilogy of 'fateful' symphonies where his musical character is laid bare. It is dedicated to Madame von Meck, who Tchaikovsky never met but who was sufficiently close to receive the piece with a heartfelt account of his ill-fated marriage to Antonina Miliukova. The symphony's second movement begins with a sorrowful melody before a chant-like refrain, initially assigned to strings.

Of the three published string quartets completed early in Tchaikovsky's career, the *String Quartet No. 1 in D major*, Op. 11 has proved the most popular. This is on account of the popular second movement *Andante cantabile*, often performed separately for cello and strings. Its deceptively subtle melody has an exquisite sadness but also a gentle calm.

As a ballet composer, Tchaikovsky was without equal in the second half of the 19th century, his reputation secured by three memorable works. The first, *Swan Lake*, is a deeply romantic score, epitomised by the *Scène* but also felt through the *Pas d'action*, part of the *Dances of the Swans* from Act II. Initially *Swan Lake* was criticised for over-symphonic writing, but its popularity has continued to soar, helped in recent times by Darren Aronofsky's 2010 film *Black Swan*.

Tchaikovsky's piano works appear at regular intervals in his output. The *Album for the Young*, subtitled *24 Easy Pieces* (à la Schumann), was completed in May 1878, Tchaikovsky completing as many as six pieces per day. As with Schumann's equivalent, the aim was to write pieces for children to play but with imagery for all ages. The selection chosen by Peter Breiner includes a bright and lively *Valse*, a playful *Polka*, its melody scrunched together, before the *Italian Song* recreates a melody sung by a boy in the streets of Florence. The *Old French Song* has a parallel tune in Tchaikovsky's opera *The Maid of Orleans*, while the cheery *Neapolitan Song* and charming *Sweet Dreams* are followed by *The Organ-grinder's Song*, where the composer uses a Venetian melody.

Tchaikovsky's return to the symphony after ten years brought with it another fateful piece, the *Fifth* once again combining symphonic form with programmatic personal content. The first movement is quintessentially Russian, the solo clarinet theme reproduced in the middle register of the piano, as is the doleful slow movement, its melody initially assigned to the horn.

*Souvenir de Florence* was a work for string sextet, later string orchestra, celebrating a holiday in the composer's favourite Italian city. Tchaikovsky recounts that it was written 'with the greatest enthusiasm and pleasure, without the smallest effort'. It is an appealing piece, with an *Adagio cantabile* of grace and poise.

By 1891 Tchaikovsky's reputation as a ballet composer preceded him, and a commission from the Imperial Theatres was forthcoming for a stage work based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann. *The Nutcracker* is beloved of all ages, its story of a strange Christmas present inspiring music of rich colour and character. *Dance of the Mirlitons* flourishes in this arrangement for piano, while few tunes have the balletic grace of that found in *Waltz of the Flowers*. *Variation II*, from the second act, is in fact the exotic *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*.

Completed in 1893, Tchaikovsky's *Sixth* and final symphony is one of the great tragic utterances in classical music. Subtitled '*Pathétique*', it reflects the deep suffering Tchaikovsky was undergoing in his private life, his homosexuality compromised with devastating consequences to his mental health. The first movement is deep in the mire but finds strength in its heroic second theme, heard here. The finale, unusual in its casting as a slow movement, uses melodic patterns that represented death for the composer. It was to be his final utterance, but one of his greatest works.

**Ben Hogwood**

## Peter Breiner



Photo: Gulnara Samojlova

Conductor, pianist, composer, arranger and writer Peter Breiner (b. 1957) is one of the world's most played musicians.

Peter Breiner is a graduate of the Košice Conservatory (piano, composition, conducting, percussion) and the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where he was among one of the last students of Alexander Moyzes. Between 1992 to 2007 he lived in Toronto, Canada, then moved to New York where among other things he became the curator and producer of the popular series of chamber concerts known as *Sounds of Serendipity*.

Breiner has conducted – often while playing the piano – renowned orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National de Lille, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Symphony Orchestra, Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra, Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and many others in Slovakia, Europe, Asia and North America. His commercially most successful projects are Baroque arrangements of well-known tunes – *Beatles Go Baroque* (Vol. 1: 8.990050, Vol. 2: 8.574078), *Elvis Goes Baroque* (8.990054) and *Christmas Goes Baroque I* (8.550301) and *II* (8.550670).

Breiner's arrangements of national anthems have been used at the Olympic Games, and he has recorded the complete national anthems of the world for Naxos, spanning ten volumes. His most recent Naxos releases have been the first in this series, *Dvořák – Greatest Melodies* (8.574371), the three volume series of *Calm Romantic Piano Music* (Vol. 1: 8.574256, Vol. 2: 8.574257 and Vol. 3: 8.574474) and the album *Slovak Dances, Naughty and Sad* (8.574184-85). Previous releases include an album of orchestral adaptations of works by Mussorgsky (*Pictures at an Exhibition, Songs and Dances of Death, The Nursery*, 8.573016) and Tchaikovsky (suites from the operas *Voyevoda* and *The Queen of Spades*, 8.573015), which were recorded with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under Breiner's baton. His albums of Janáček opera arrangements (Naxos) won worldwide acclaim and excellent ratings in prestigious music magazines and the world press – *Gramophone* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* ranked the album among the top ten discs of 2009.

Breiner's compositions and arrangements are performed day-to-day at concerts around the world and broadcast by hundreds of radio stations. Breiner has scored many films, including Slovak, Canadian and American productions such as *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Pianist's Daughter*, and *The Magic Flute*. Breiner's music, whether his own or his arrangements, has been used by dozens of choreographers at leading ballet ensembles such as the American Ballet Theatre, The Royal Ballet and Houston Ballet, and has also appeared frequently in many popular American television programmes. [www.peterbreiner.com](http://www.peterbreiner.com)

Tchaikovsky's gift for writing music of indelible beauty and emotive power has ensured he remains central to the repertoire. The acclaimed arranger, pianist and conductor, Peter Breiner, has selected from across the range of Tchaikovsky's compositions, including the symphonies, songs, opera and ballet, and chamber works, to create an album of the composer's greatest melodies arranged for piano.

Pyotr Il'yich  
**TCHAIKOVSKY**  
(1840–1893)

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**Peter Breiner, Piano**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet

All works arranged by Peter Breiner for piano (2023)

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Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd, 3rd Floor, Forum House, 41-51 Brighton Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6YS, UK. [info.NREU@naxos.com](mailto:info.NREU@naxos.com)

Contact: Naxos Deutschland Musik & Video Vertriebs-GmbH, Gruber Str. 46b, DE-85586 Poing, Germany. [info@naxos.de](mailto:info@naxos.de)