



IV. Finale: Tema Russo
from *Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 48*
Piotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Analysis

Broad Description / Type The **Finale** is the fourth and final movement of this standard repertoire for string orchestra.

Background Information

Piotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was a Russian composer of ballets, opera, concertos, symphonies and chamber music during the Romantic period.

The *Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 48* was written in 1880 as an homage to Mozart and his many Serenades for strings. At the time, he was supported by his wealthy patroness Nadezhda von Meck.

Elements of Music

Form

The **Finale** is in Sonata form:

Introduction m.1, Exposition (Theme 1) m. 44, Theme 2 m. 84 (B), Development m. 168 (E), Recapitulation (Theme 1) m. 264, Theme 2 m. 296 (K), Coda m. 386. The Coda recalls music from the first movement, then returns to Theme 1 of the Finale for the ending.

Rhythm

Meter is written as 2/4 throughout. The second theme can be conducted in 1.

Melody

The introductory theme (m. 5 and 18) and the second theme (m. 84 & 296) are lyrical melodies. The main theme (Theme 1) is more rhythmic and technical in character. Tchaikovsky also uses two Russian folk songs as sources for the melodies in this movement.

Harmony

C major is the key center for most of the piece. The Intro is in G Major, but only cadences once (measure 29) in G. The first theme is in C Major, the Second in E-flat Major. The Development visits many key centers and returns to C Major for the Recapitulation where it stays through both themes and the Coda

Timbre

Traditional orchestral timbre is utilized, including dynamic variations throughout the ranges of the instruments.

Texture

All sections play most of the time (the very beginning of the introduction and the start of the Development being the exceptions), so standard string orchestra texture is varied mostly by *arco* and *pizzicato* combinations as well as by short repeated accompaniment figures.

Expression

The exaggeration of clearly noted dynamics is of paramount importance and students should also add phrase shapes as well as emphases on their “favorite notes” or arrival points.

The Heart

The climactic **return of the first movement motive** and the **seven dramatic silences** form the heart of this movement.

Addition Considerations

Antonin Dvorak brought back the first movement in the finale of his *Serenade for Strings*, written just five years before Tchaikovsky's. Tchaikovsky also used this technique in his Symphony No. 4, written just two years earlier.

Music Selection

Reasons to Study and Perform

The **Serenade for Strings, Op. 48 Finale** is a challenging and engaging work by a major composer with accessible challenges in the area of technique, bowing, rhythm, dynamics and harmony. Difficulty level is Grade 6.

Things to Teach in the Piece

- Sonata form
- Pure music (no story or program, and written from pure inspiration, no financial concerns)
- Dramatic effect of silence
- Return of familiar themes
- A “patron” or “benefactor” of the arts.

The Plan

Introducing the piece

Prior to the official sight reading, students will the first theme rhythm (with 8ths off and 16ths on the strong) and scales in fast triplets (a triplet on each pitch) as part of daily warm up and scale pattern repetitions.

Also prior to the initial reading, I will introduce the concept of dramatic silence, in speech and in music (Haydn, Handel and Beethoven).

Skill Outcome

Skill 1: Students will play pizzicato 8th notes rhythmically while accompanying a legato melody. Students will keep the lyrical melodies steady and adjust to the pizzicato as needed, and vice versa in multiple contexts.

Strategies

Using clapping, speaking, scattered seating and dynamic variations, students will learn to listen and adjust to the other lines in the ensemble.

Assessment

1. Visual and aural assessment in class. (within full group active playing)
2. Visual and aural assessment in sectional rehearsals. (small group, pairs and individuals)
3. Individual assessment in playing exam / quarterly audition.

Knowledge Outcome

Knowledge 1: Students will understand and describe **sonata form** in specific and general terms.

Strategies

Students will create posters and visual representations of “ABA” to get the basic form in place. The first of these will be done in small groups using whatever materials (including themselves and things in the room) each group would like. Students will do an individual project option, which can be creating a poster, analysis of another sonata form piece, composing a piece of music or poem in sonata form or any other approved format. Students will also be asked to start in rehearsal at the Intro, Expo, Dev., Recap or Coda.

Assessment

Students will take a brief written quiz on Sonata form.

Affective Outcome

Students will use silence in a dramatic fashion in their own speech in and out of class, and will also appreciate the power of returning music after a long absence.

Strategies

Students will pair up or in groups of three or four, then brainstorm examples of music that created heightened emotions in them when they heard it after not hearing it for a time. Students will also identify dramatic moments of silence in speeches and in music of many genres.

Assessment

1. Collection of examples.
2. Observation of participation in activity and group reports.
3. Concert reflection writing.

Ways to “Take Out the Piece”

1. The piece by Piotr Tchaikovsky
2. The piece by a Russian composer
3. The piece that ends in C major
4. The piece that was composed as an homage to Mozart
5. The piece with a lyrical second theme
6. The piece that recalls an earlier movement
7. The piece by a composer famous for writing ballet
8. The piece with seven dramatic moments of silence