

# Editorial Notes

Pëtr Il'ič Čajkovskij (1840–1893) composed his *Twelve Pieces* for Piano solo, subtitled “of moderate difficulty”, between February and April 1878. Of particular interest is his statement to have decided to write something new each morning<sup>1</sup>, at the same time while he was composing his *Concerto* for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 35, and the *Grand Sonata* in G major, for Piano solo, Op. 37. One of those new pieces was this collection, eventually completed and published by Pëtr Jurgenson in 1879.

The set quickly acquired popularity and was arranged for several instrumentations already in the immediate years following the composition. The two main arrangements for Cello and Piano of the *Chanson Triste*, second piece of the collection, come from Alexandr Veržbilovič (1850–1911), cellist of the *St. Petersburg Russian Musical Society Quartet*, and David Popper (1843–1913), Bohemian cellist and composer whose name still resonates dearly in every cellist's heart to the present day.

## Analysis of the sources

The first arrangement was published by the same Jurgenson in 1891, with plate number 16939, and dedicated to Arcady Bauler. The second, instead, was published by Johann André in 1896, with plate number 14778, as no. 9 in the *Perles Musicales* collection, an anthology of arrangements originally conceived for violin and piano.

The main differences between the two arrangements lie in the middle section, where Popper allows the piano to have a singing moment on stage, compared to Veržbilovič giving the melody in exclusivity to the cello. This last feature is possibly what caused it to be chosen as the version to be included in the Suzuki Cello School, Book 4. Barring a few minor discrepancies in slurs and articulation, in fact, the version found in the Suzuki book is the same as the one written by Veržbilovič. As usual with the Suzuki books, no mention of the source of the material used is given, which forced a thorough note-by-note check. Possibly aware of potential copyright disputes, the Suzuki board may have deemed it appropriate to create a new piano accompaniment for the piece which carefully masks the original material by mixing the voices, creating inversions, and splitting the previously direct melodic movement. The only part where they could not do much more than hiding behind a sheet of

glass is the middle section (bb 21–40). All considered, the piano part included in the Suzuki book does not help the student understand the style of Čajkovskij, nor the inner, pathetic humour of the piece.

The piano part of the Veržbilovič version is extremely discreet, with a bass line in the left-hand alternating with chords on the second and fourth beat of each bar. It remains quite close to the original piano solo version by Čajkovskij, basically stripping it of the top line and giving it to the cello, lightly adjusting the register of a few chords in a handful of places.

Popper's skill and musical gift come to the forefront already in b 9 where the cello begins its ascending line and the piano depicts a delicate accompaniment in counterpoint, the resulting depth immediately evident. A peculiar choice by Popper is that of marking the initial tempo as *Andantino*, instead of the original *Allegro non troppo* found in all other sources. In the middle section, Popper treats the piano part as if it would be accompanying a singer, thus doubling the melody one octave above. The return of the main theme of this simple-ternary (ABA) form (b 41) starts with the denser, more dialogical accompaniment in quavers that we saw before, favouring the keeping of a steady rhythm that doesn't look behind.

Popper's version keeps the cello part in bass clef while both Veržbilovič's and the Suzuki's one write it in tenor clef—a more appropriate choice, in my opinion. The Russian version doesn't include any fingering or bowing suggestion while Popper's one is abundant in markings, all of which have been faithfully reproduced in the separate cello part.

## About the edition

The idea to create an edition of this widely and easily available piece came for two main reasons. First and foremost, the quality of the scan available is not ideal: on a 13-inch tablet screen the notation is too small and printing it is not going to improve much because of the definition of the colour scan. So, this edition originates to save the players' sight. Secondly, I wanted to give my students a chance to play this piece with an accompaniment that at least reminded them of the original by Čajkovskij.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 758 to Nadezhda von Meck, 12/24 February 1878, written in Florence, Italy.

This edition is therefore dedicated to all Suzuki students and teacher who are brave enough to venture forth, going beyond what the canonical book dictates. The hope is to spark in young students a desire for re-searching, for constantly striving to take the extra step in the unknown, constantly asking themselves:

*Where does this come from?*

The Editor

Michele **Galvagno**

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## Critical Notes

These notes list the main differences between Popper’s version and the original score by Čajkovskij. The following sources have been used:

- © **A:** *12 | Morceaux | de difficulté moyenne* | pour Piano | composés | par | P. Tschaikowsky | Op. 40 | Seule Edition autorisée, revue par l’Auteur — D. Rahter, Hamburg (Germany). Plate n° 2902.402 (ca. 1906-07).
- © **B:** *Chanson Triste* | de | P. Tschaïkowsky. | Transcrite | pour le Violoncelle | avec accompagnement de Piano | par | Alexandre Wierzbilowicz — P. Jurgenson, Moscow (Russia). Plate n° 16939 (1891).
- © **C:** *Perles Musicales* | Pièces célèbres | transcrites | pour Violoncelle et Piano par | David Popper — Johann André, Mainz (Germany). Plate n° 14778 (1896).
- © **D:** *Suzuki | Cello School | Volume 4 | Cello Part | Revised edition* — Summy-Birchard Inc., United States of America (1983, 2003).

- © b 1 **A, C, D:** *Allegro non troppo*
- © **A:** “la melodia con molto espressione”
- © **D:** “con molto espressivo”<sup>2</sup>
- © bb 5-6, 43-5: crescendo and diminuendo hairpins added in dashed typeface from piano source **A**.
- © bb 7-8, 47-8: crescendo and diminuendo hairpins not present in piano source **A**.
- © bb 25-8: replaced long crescendo hairpin in **C** with the 2-bars-long “cresc.” and 2-bars-long hairpin from **A**.
- © b 31-2: in **A**, the diminuendo hairpin starts one beat later, at the beginning of b 32
- © bb 53-54: crescendo hairpin and F dynamic not present in **A**.
- © b 60: diminuendo hairpin added from **A** in dashed typeface.
- © bb 61-7: **A** has accents on each quarter note from here until. They have been added as editorial markings in square brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Neither A’s nor D’s solution are correct Italian: A’s version should use “molta” before “espressione”, while D’s version should either remove “con” or replace “espressivo” with “espressione”.