

DUO AMIE

# MUSIC & THE MIND



## About the Pieces

### **Rachmaninoff Elegie in E-flat Minor, Op. 3, No. 1:**

Rachmaninoff's Elegie is the 1st of his 5 Fantasy Pieces, opus 3, written in 1892 at the time he graduated from Moscow Conservatory, and which he dedicated to his teacher Anton Arensky. With its eloquent, almost divine sadness, Rachmaninoff's E flat minor Elegie captures this human emotion, without being depressing at the same time. It differs from much of his virtuosic solo piano music in its contemplative nature. The arch of the piece changes keys and rhythms with the use of off beats in particular, to keep the listener anticipating and wondering where it will go next. In the beginning one feels the expression and depth of an almost sublime sadness, interspersed with more tumultuous expressions of angst. In the middle section, one feels a hopeful yearning, culminating in a questioning murmur (played by the cello in this transcription of the piece). The ending surprises in its almost defiant soul-refreshing passion.

### **Rachmaninoff Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14:**

Rachmaninoff's Vocalise is the final piece in his 14 Songs (Op. 34), the first thirteen of which were set to poems written by Russian poets. In contrast, Vocalise was written without words. It was meant to be sung with just with one vowel sound of the singers choosing, relying purely on the beauty of the melodic line to connect to the listener. The lack of lyrics lends itself to the cello and piano as a dialogue, allowing the song to take on a deeply personal meaning to all who hear it.

### **Arensky 4 Pieces, Op. 56: Orientale,**

Romance, Chanson Triste, & Humoresque  
Arensky's four pieces for cello and piano were probably written for his friend Karl Davidoff, a great cellist of the 19th century. What is particularly lovely is that each piece captures a tableau or mood, often mirrored in the title itself (ie Chanson Triste (sad song), Humoresque, Romance). He was a relative minimalist (indeed in Chanson Triste the pianist only uses the left-hand voice!

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## **Tchaikovsky Nocturne in d minor, Op. 19, No. 4**

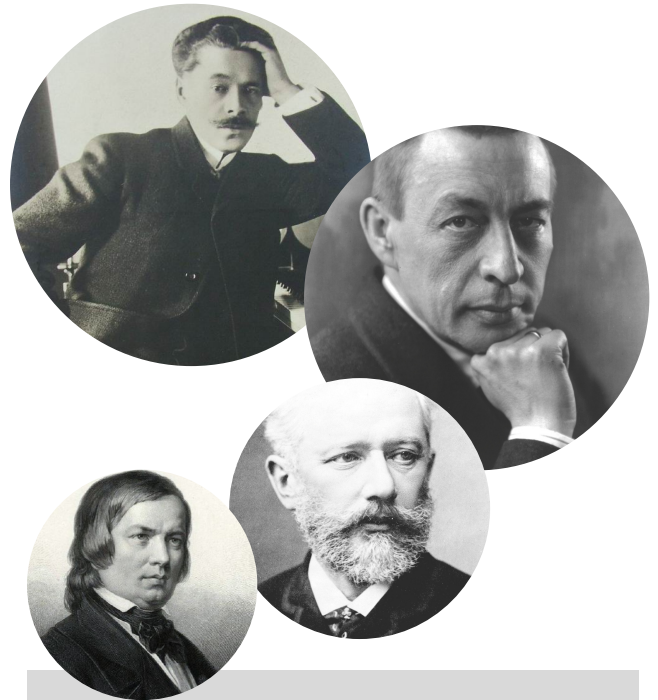
Tchaikovsky wrote the Nocturne in d minor originally in 1873, as piece 4 in his “6 Pieces for Piano” opus 19. In 1888, he arranged it for solo cello and small orchestra, for his cellist friend Anatoly Brandukov. The piece has a simple yet haunting melody, followed by a more lilting section in the middle, and then returning eventually to a reprise of the melody with a lovely intertwining second melody in the piano.

## **Tchaikovsky the Seasons, Op. 37a: No. 10, October**

(Autumn Song) Tchaikovsky’s ‘Autumn (or October) Song’, the 10th song of his set of 12 pieces titled “The Seasons”, was written for solo piano in 1876. While Tchaikovsky composed these pieces as a commissioned project that he accepted for financial reasons, these pieces became quite popular, and many in the set have been transcribed for other instruments, including Autumn Song. The plaintive melody of Autumn Song captures the drifting of autumn leaves to the earth, and the nostalgia of long-ago summers.

## **Tchaikovsky Valse Sentimentale, Op. 51, No. 6:**

Tchaikovsky’s Sentimental Waltz, which he wrote in 1882 for solo piano as a set of 6 piece, is arguably the most popular of the set. At once melancholy and wonderfully romantic, it has been transcribed for many different string instruments, and lends itself very well to this medium.



## **Schumann Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73:**

Schumann wrote the Fantasy Pieces (opus 73) in just a couple days. Each of the 3 pieces evokes a particular mood. The first is (tenderly and with feeling) begins in a brooding slightly melancholy fashion, yet ends in a more upbeat mood, heralding the next piece, tilted Lively and Light, which uses a triplet motif to convey a lighthearted and playful dialogue between the piano and cello. The final movement “Fast and with Fire” is an impetuous and headlong romp full of mercurial turns of phrase, and which ends in a triumphant flourish.

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