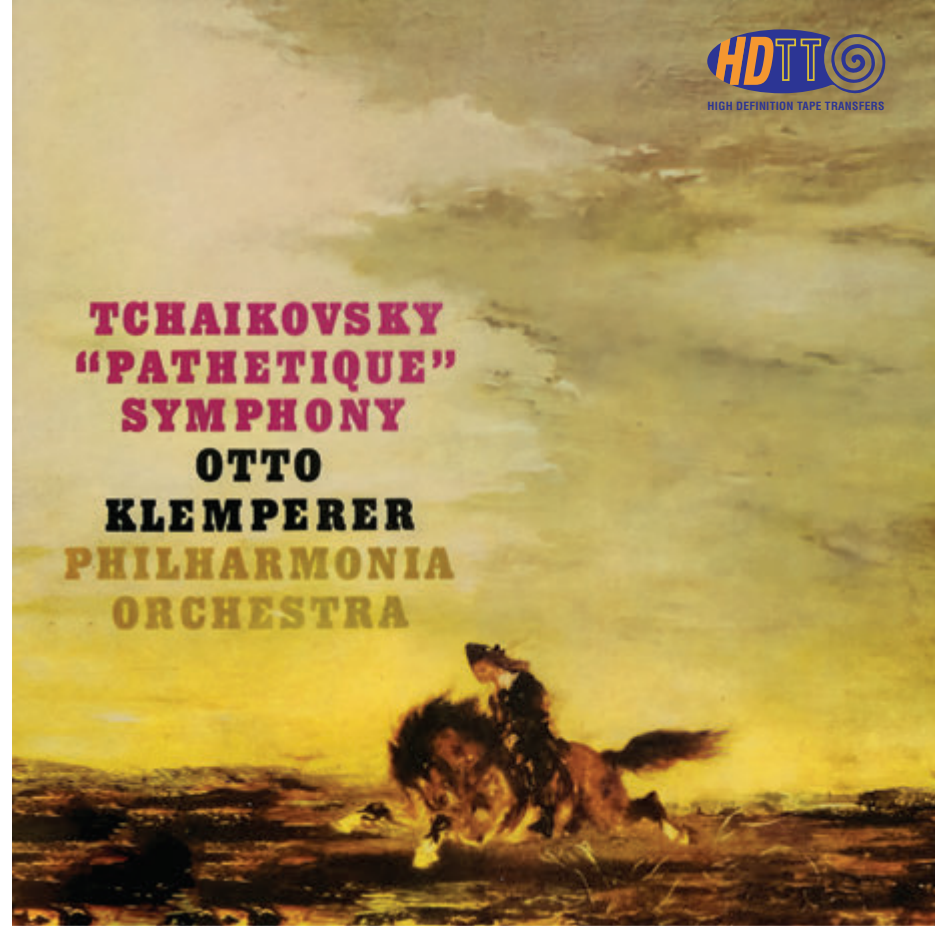


Orthodox liturgy. The first movement is brought to a close by brass and woodwinds accompanied by pizzicato strings.

The second movement, *allegro con grazia*, is an orchestral waltz, distilling an airy charm, but at the same time by no means alien to Tchaikovsky's despondent temperament. The 5/4 time signature gives the waltz a halting character which continues throughout, even in the trio, as if the music were locked within an impenetrable and relentless circle.

The third movement, a march, *allegro molto vivace*, has been considered by some critics to be a funeral march and is certainly one of the most marvelous that Tchaikovsky conceived. The movement builds with intensely dramatic tension, variations on short motifs rising through descending scales for full orchestra to a tremendous climax.

The fourth movement, *adagio lamentoso*, is an unusually lengthy section for the conclusion of a symphony. The strings begin with a downward leaping theme and the entire movement is characterized by descending melodies and changes of tempo. The symphony ends with a hushed *pianissimo* bassoon melody over darkly colored ostinato strings.



Tchaikovsky's final and most important symphonic work is the sixth symphony. The name *Pathétique*, suggested by his brother Modest, came to replace the original name given to the work by the composer himself, that of Program symphony. A symphony with a story, but not one to be told in words. Tchaikovsky confided to his cousin Vladimir Davidov that the program arose from deep personal feelings and that during the symphony's composition he often found himself in tears. The day before the premiere Modest paid a visit to his brother at home and discovered him worrying anxiously about the problem of a suitable name, as the score was to be sent off that same day to the publisher. 'Tragic,' suggested Modest at first, then, 'Pathétique'.

The-idea for the symphony was born during a concert tour. At the beginning of 1893 Tchaikovsky conducted in Brussels, then went on to Cambridge where he joined the illustrious company of Grieg, Bruch and Saint-Saëns as the recipient of an honorary doctorate. In Cambridge he conducted Francesca da Rimini; in London, his fourth symphony. Back in Russia, he directly set to work on the elaboration of his ideas and in a matter of weeks the symphonic score was ready for performance.

Tchaikovsky conducted the premiere in St. Petersburg on 28 October 1893. The title page of the manuscript bears a dedication in Tchaikovsky's own handwriting to his beloved cousin Vladimir 'Bob' Davidov.

Although we officially know very little about the program behind the sixth symphony other than that it moved the composer profoundly, it is allowable to speculate on the probabilities governing these emotions. Three years earlier Nadezhda von Meck had written to Tchaikovsky, breaking off their relations. A year later his sister died and at the same time he was confronted with the deaths of three good friends. It is perhaps likely, though we have no way of knowing for certain, that his own death greatly occupied his thoughts.

In any event the sixth symphony is a symphony in which death plays an undeniable role. Notes found among Tchaikovsky's papers after his death indicate that the symphony was an expression of 'life, love, disappointment and death'.

The first movement, *allegro non troppo*, begins with a low bassoon melody, supported by threatening harmonies from the strings and giving rise to the first theme. The well-known second theme, often referred to as the 'love theme', is introduced by the strings, undergoes a development involving many changes of tempo and subsides into a slow *pianissimo* played by a bass clarinet. A startling outcry from the full orchestra ushers in an *allegro vivo* which, after substantial development leading to a climax, is followed by the melody of a burial hymn deriving from the Russian

Tchaikovsky "Pathetique" Symphony

Otto Klemperer, Philharmonia Orchestra

1 Adagio - Allegro Non Troppo 18:23

2 Allegro Con Grazia 8:39

3 Allegro Molto Vivace 10:52

4 Finale: Adagio Lamentoso 9:34

Recorded at Kingsway Hall 18th-20th October 1961



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