

# Tschaikowsky-Gesellschaft

## Mitteilungen 15 (2008)

S. 63-75

"I will not alter a single note"

New Information on the History of Čajkovskij's First Piano Concerto  
(Brett Langston)

Abkürzungen, Ausgaben, Literatur sowie

Hinweise zur Umschrift und zur Datierung:

[http://www.tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de/index\\_htm\\_files/abkuerzungen.pdf](http://www.tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de/index_htm_files/abkuerzungen.pdf)

Copyright: Tschaikowsky-Gesellschaft e.V. / Tchaikovsky Society

<http://www.tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de/impressum.htm>

[info@tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de](mailto:info@tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de) / [www.tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de](http://www.tschaikowsky-gesellschaft.de)

Redaktion:

Thomas Kohlhase (1994-2011),  
zusammen mit Kadja Grönke (2006-2008),  
Lucinde Braun und Ronald de Vet (seit 2012)

ISSN 2191-8627

## "I will not alter a single note"

### New Information on the History of Čajkovskij's First Piano Concerto

By Brett Langston

Over 130 years since its composition, Čajkovskij's opus 23 continues to hold a secure place in the repertoire, and remains one of the most famous of all piano concertos. But did Čajkovskij himself ever hear the version of his concerto that we know so well today? Newly-discovered testimony from his contemporaries includes a surprising suggestion as to who might really have been responsible for the final, definitive text. But before examining this new evidence, let us first consider the facts already known about the origins of the concerto, and its different versions.

#### "First Version" (1874-75)

Little is known about the early stages of composition. On 29 October 1874, just after completing the vocal score of his opera *Kuznec Vakula*, the composer wrote to his brother Modest that "I wanted to start a piano concerto – but for some reason it didn't work out."<sup>1</sup> On 9 November he told Vasilij Bessel' that "I am again beginning to think about a new large-scale composition which, since I finished the piano score of the opera, has taken over all my thoughts."<sup>2</sup> Twelve days later we find Čajkovskij "totally immersed in composing a piano concerto", which was "going with much difficulty and rather badly. I'm constantly having to be strict with myself, and to force my mind to think of piano passages."<sup>3</sup> On 26 November Čajkovskij told Modest that he was "completely bogged down in the composition of the piano concerto; it's coming along – but very poorly."<sup>4</sup>

Between 7 and 12 December, Čajkovskij visited Kiev to attend a production of his opera *Opričnik*. On his retuning to Moscow, he reported that he had been working "tirelessly" on the concerto, which in his words "certainly should be finished this week."<sup>5</sup> It seems likely that by this stage the rough draft had already been completed, as the manuscript of the arrangement for two pianos is dated "21 December 1874. Moscow".<sup>6</sup>

On 24 December, Čajkovskij played the concerto to Nikolaj Rubiņštejn and Nikolaj Gubert (Hubert). Some years later, the composer gave a detailed account of the occasion to Nadežda fon Mekk:<sup>7</sup>

In December 1874 I wrote a piano concerto. As I am not a pianist, it was necessary for me to turn to a specialist-virtuoso, so that he might indicate to me anything which in a technical sense might be impracticable, awkward, ineffective, and so forth. What I required was a firm, yet at the same time, friendly appraisal solely of this aspect of my composition. I do not want to go into details, I do not want to explain all the circumstances and plunge into an abyss of petty squabbles, except to say that some internal voice warned me against selecting Rubiņštejn to judge the technical side of my composition. I knew that he would not be able to resist the opportunity to be high-handed. Nevertheless, he is not

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 29 October [1874] to Modest Čajkovskij; ČPSS V, No. 368, p. 371-372.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 9 November 1874 to Vasilij Bessel'; ČPSS V, No. 369, p. 373-376.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 21 November 1874 to Anatolij Čajkovskij; ČPSS V, No. 372, p. 379-380.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of 26 November 1874 to Modest Čajkovskij; ČPSS V, No. 373, p. 380-381.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of [16 December 1874] to Modest Čajkovskij; ČPSS V, No. 375, p. 383.

<sup>6</sup> The manuscript of the arrangement for two pianos is now preserved in the M. I. Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow (fond 88, No. 90). No sketches or drafts for the concerto are known to be extant.

<sup>7</sup> Letter of 21-22 January / 2-3 February 1878 to Nadežda fon Mekk; ČPSS VII, No. 736, p. 64-67.

only the leading Moscow pianist, but truly an excellent pianist, and I knew he would be deeply insulted to find out that I had first approached someone else, and so I asked him to listen to the concerto and to comment on the piano part. This was on Christmas Eve 1874. On that evening we were both invited to Albrecht's Christmas party, and N[ikolaj] G[rigor'evič] suggested we should place a fir tree in one of the conservatory's classrooms. And so we did. I appeared with my manuscript, followed by N. G. and [Nikolaj] Gubert. My friend, do you know anything of the latter? He is a very good and intelligent person, completely lacking in independence and very loquacious, needing an entire preamble before giving a simple yes or no, incapable of expressing a decisive and straightforward opinion, and always shying away from expressing anything in a bold or decisive manner. I hasten to add that this is not due to a meanness of spirit, but a deficiency of character.

I played the first movement. Not a single word, nor a single comment! If only you could have known how foolish, how intolerable is the position of a man, when he presents his friend with food he has prepared, and his friend eats it and remains silent! Well say something, if only to tear it to pieces with constructive criticism, but for God's sake, just one kind word, even if not of praise. Rubištejn was preparing his thunder, and Gubert was waiting until the situation became clear and the moment came to choose one side or the other. But the main thing is that I did not want artistic criticism of my composition. I just needed advice about piano virtuoso technique. R[ubištejn]'s eloquent silence had tremendous significance. It was as if he was saying to me: "My friend, how can I talk about details when the very essence of the thing is repellent to me!" I persevered and played through to the end. Again there was silence. I arose and asked, "Well then?" It was then that there began to flow from N[ikolaj] G[rigor'evič]'s mouth a stream of words, quiet at first, but subsequently assuming more and more the tone of Jove the Thunderer. It turned out that my concerto was worthless, that it was unplayable, that passages were trite, awkward, and so clumsy that it was impossible to put them right, that as a composition it was bad and vulgar, that I had stolen this bit from there and that bit from there, that there were only two or three pages that could be saved, and that the rest would have to be torn up or completely rewritten. "Take this, for instance – whatever is it?" (at this point he plays a caricature of the passage in question). "And this? Is this really possible?", etc., etc. I cannot convey to you the most significant thing, that is, the tone in which all this was spoken. In a word, any outsider who happened into the room might think that I was an imbecile, an untalented scribbler who understood nothing, who had come to an eminent musician to pester him with his rubbish. Noticing that I was dumbfounded that a person who had written so much and teaches a conservatory course on free composition could make such a categorical and contemptuous denunciation – a lecture which could not even have been delivered to any half-decent student – Gubert began to interpret N. G.'s invective, without disputing it at all, only to regret that His Excellency had expressed it altogether too unceremoniously.

I was not only astonished, but insulted by this whole scene. I was no longer a youth, mustering his forces for composition, and I no longer needed to be lectured to, especially in such a harsh and lofty manner. I needed and will always require constructive criticism, but constructive criticism this was not. This was a dogmatic and indiscriminate rant, the like of which I have never experienced in my life. I silently left the and went upstairs. Because of my agitation and anger I could say nothing. R. soon appeared and, noticing my distraught state of mind, called me into a distant room. There he told me again that my concerto was impossible, and after pointing out a number of places that required radical changes, he said that if by a certain date I would revise the concerto in accordance with his demands, then he would do me the honour of playing the thing in one of his concerts. "I will not alter a single note", I replied, "and I will print it just as it stands!". And so I did.

Commenting on this letter, Modest recalled that: "Pëtr Il'ič not only 'did so', but on he crossed out the dedication to N. Rubištejn on the score of the concerto, and replaced it with the name Hans von Bülow instead. Pëtr Il'ič did not know the latter personally, only

through Professor Klindworth,<sup>8</sup> but it was known that the eminent pianist was very interested in his works and he had been a passionate advocate of them in Germany."<sup>9</sup>

However, the documentary evidence suggests that Modest was mistaken with regard to the dedication. Probably, he heard this story from Nikolaj Kaškin, who also claimed that Čajkovskij crossed out a dedication to Rubiňštejn.<sup>10</sup> And yet at this point the concerto only existed in its arrangement for two pianos, the manuscript of which carries no dedication. Čajkovskij only began the orchestration in January 1875, completing this process on 9 February (according to the date on the manuscript). In fact, the concerto's manuscript full score was originally inscribed to Čajkovskij's student Sergej Taneev, and it was this name that was subsequently struck out and replaced by the dedication "To M[onsieur] Hans von Bülow". The piano part in the autograph is written by a copyist, and is virtually identical to Čajkovskij's own version in his two-piano arrangement.<sup>11</sup>

At some point during the spring or early summer, Čajkovskij sent the piano score of the concerto to Bülow, whom he hoped might give its first performance. The pianist could scarcely control his enthusiasm:

Perhaps it would be presumptuous on my part, being unfamiliar with the whole scope of your works and prodigious talent, to say that for me your op. 23 displays such brilliance, and is such a remarkable achievement among your musical works, that you have without doubt enriched the world of music as never before. There is such unsurpassed originality, such nobility, such strength, and there are so many arresting moments throughout this unique conception; there is such a maturity of form, such style – its design and execution with such consonant harmonies, that I could weary you by listing all the memorable moments which caused me to thank the author – not to mention the pleasure from performing it all. In a word, this true gem shall earn you the gratitude of all pianists."<sup>12</sup>

In the same letter Bülow promised to perform the work "at the first venue" in his American tour that autumn. And so he played the concerto for the first time on 13 October 1875 at the Music Hall in Boston, with Benjamin Johnson Lang conducting. He quickly relayed news of the concerto's great success to the composer. "The other day I received a letter from Bülow with a whole heap of clippings from American newspapers about my concerto", Čajkovskij wrote to Rimskij-Korsakov on 12 November. "One of them was delightful. It said that the first movement suffers from the absence of a central idea, instead of which there are a host of musical fantasias which on the whole comprises a light and ethereal movement. In the finale, the author of this article found 'syncopations on trills, spasmodic repetitions of themes and staggering passages in octaves!!!'. And how about this for American tastes: after each performance ... Bülow had to repeat the Finale. That never happens over here."<sup>13</sup>

The Russian première took place a few weeks later, on 1 November 1875 at the first symphony concert of the Russian Musical Society (RMS) in St. Petersburg, with Gustav Kross as soloist, and Eduard Nápravník as conductor. Čajkovskij attended, but considered that the work "was thoroughly ruined, mainly because of the conductor of the orchestra, E.

<sup>8</sup> Karl (Charles) Klindworth (1830-1916), German pianist, composer, and professor of piano at the Moscow Conservatory.

<sup>9</sup> Žizn'Č 1, p. 458.

<sup>10</sup> N. D. Kaškin, *Vospominanija o P. I. Čajkovskom* (1954), p. 96.

<sup>11</sup> The manuscript full score is also preserved in the M. I. Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow (fond 88, No. 89).

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Hans von Bülow to Čajkovskij, 1/13 June 1875; ČZM, p. 197-198.

<sup>13</sup> Letter of 12 November 1875 to Nikolaj Rimskij-Korsakov; ČPSS V, No. 417, p. 417-418.

F. Nápravník, who took everything too quickly, so that the accompaniment was one awful solid cacophony."<sup>14</sup>

Sergej Taneev performed the concerto much more satisfactorily for the first time in Moscow on 21 November 1875, at the third RMS symphony concert, conducted by Nikolaj Rubiňštejn. Now regretting his earlier harsh appraisal of the work, Rubiňštejn went on to become one of the concerto's greatest advocates. He first performed it himself on 10 March 1878 at an RMS concert in Moscow, before going on to perform it in St. Petersburg and Paris later that year. Čajkovskij himself wrote a very favourable review of the Moscow performance for the *Russian Register*: "The author could not wish to hear a better performance of the piece than this one, for which he is indebted to the sympathetic talent of Mr Taneev and Mr Rubiňštejn's mastery as a conductor."<sup>15</sup>

By the end of 1875 Jurgenson had issued the concerto in the composer's arrangement for two pianos, as well as the orchestral parts, but not, as yet, the full score.

### "Second Version"

After Taneev's performance of the concerto in Moscow, it seems that Čajkovskij decided to make some minor changes to the piano part, about which he wrote to Hans von Bülow in December 1875. Unfortunately Čajkovskij's letter outlining these changes has not survived, but we do have the pianist's response from 1/13 January 1876:

Why did you tell me that you want to make changes to your concerto? Naturally I received them with great interest – but at this point I should tell you frankly that in my view no changes are necessary – except for some augmentations to the piano part – in a few *tutti* which I had already taken the liberty of introducing, as I had already done something similar in Raff's concerto. If I might be permitted to make another observation: the great effect of the finale is *diminished* if the triumphal 2nd motif, before the last *Stretta*, is played "Molto meno mosso". Passion rather than formality is necessary here. Perhaps I am mistaken, but the public and some musicians favour my idea.<sup>16</sup>

The concerto was heard in London for the first time on 11 March 1876, at a concert in the Crystal Palace, conducted by Sir August Manns. The pianist on this occasion was Edward Dannreuther,<sup>17</sup> who immediately wrote to Čajkovskij giving his view on how the piano part might be made more effective.<sup>18</sup> The composer thanked Dannreuther for his "very sensible and practical suggestions", and assured him that he would adopt them "if there is any question of a second edition of my concerto."<sup>19</sup>

A second edition, "reviewed and corrected by the author", duly appeared in August 1879, which incorporated all Dannreuther's suggested improvements to the piano part in the first movement. Shortly afterwards, Jurgenson issued a revised edition of the concerto's two-piano arrangement, which corresponded to the first edition of the full score.

---

<sup>14</sup> Letter of 19 November 1875 to Hans von Bülow; ČPSS V, No. 418, p. 418-419.

<sup>15</sup> P. Čajkovskij, 'Russkoe muzykal'noe obščestvo. Benefis g-ži Aleksandrovoj', *Russkie vedomosti* (30 November 1875); ČPSS II, p. 292-293, *Musikalische Essays*, p. 339.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Hans von Bülow to Čajkovskij, [1/13 January 1876; ČZM, p. 198-199.

<sup>17</sup> Edward George Dannreuther (1844-1905), a Strasbourg born pianist who spent most of his later life in England.

<sup>18</sup> Although the pianist's letter to Čajkovskij has not survived, a printed copy of the first edition of the score, containing Dannreuther's handwritten alterations to 140 bars in the first movement, is preserved in the British Museum. See also J. Friskin, 'The Text of Tchaikovsky's B-flat minor Concerto', *Music and Letters*, vol. 1 (1969), p. 246-251.

<sup>19</sup> Letter of 18 March 1876 to Eduard Dannreuther; ČPSS VI, No. 455, p. 32.

### "Third Version"

Between 1888 and 1893, Čajkovskij conducted his B-flat minor concerto on no fewer than ten occasions at concerts in Russia, western Europe and the United States.<sup>20</sup> His conducting notes for some of these performances have survived, and these are largely in accordance with the version published in 1879, except for a cut of sixteen bars in the finale that had proved extremely awkward for both soloist and orchestra, which Čajkovskij referred to as *die verfluchte Stelle* ('the accursed place').<sup>21</sup>

However, at around this time the composer seems to have been surprised to learn that a new edition of the concerto was in preparation. On 27 December 1888, Čajkovskij wrote to Aleksandr Ziloti:

In Petersburg, Rahter<sup>22</sup> gave me a copy of the full score of the First Concerto, and asked me to look through it ... This copy bears your name and your notes, and it was somehow given to Rahter by Blumenfeld ... it must be returned to Rahter, but meanwhile I must ask you to review it once more. In the finale, I have now altered *die verfluchte Stelle*. I think it will be shorter and better; mainly because where previously there had been the strange rhythmic motif:



... this aberration has now been eliminated. I have retained your pages (i.e. the copy with my previous changes). I noticed that you have proof pages from the First Concerto. I do not understand at all whom you did these corrections for – was it Jurgenson or Rahter?<sup>23</sup>

When a new edition was subsequently issued by Jurgenson, this included the cut in the finale sanctioned by Čajkovskij. However, there also were numerous additional alterations, which had either not been mentioned at all in Čajkovskij's correspondence with Ziloti, or had already been rejected by him. Perhaps the most striking change involved a further redistribution of the opening octave chords of the introduction, now no longer played arpeggio, with the tempo 'Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso' instead of 'Andante non troppo', etc. The marking of the central section of the second movement was quickened from 'Allegro vivace assai' to 'Prestissimo', and other tempo and dynamic indications were also introduced or amended.

The authenticity of these later changes has long been questioned. The Soviet complete edition of Čajkovskij's works follows the original 1875 score, based on the composer's manuscript full score and arrangement for two pianos. Differences in the edition of 1879

<sup>20</sup> The soloists for these performances were Vasilij Sapel'nikov (Hamburg, 8/20 January 1888; London 30 March / 11 April 1889); Aleksandr Ziloti (Berlin, 27 January / 8 February 1888; Prague, 7/19 February 1888; Moscow, 11 November 1889); Adele aus der Ohe (New York, 27 April / 9 May 1891; Baltimore, 3/15 May 1891; Philadelphia, 6/18 May 1891; St. Petersburg, 16 October 1893); Franz Rummel (Brussels, 2/14 January 1893).

<sup>21</sup> The manuscript of this revised passage is now preserved in the P. I. Čajkovskij State House-Museum at Klin (a<sup>1</sup>, No. 219).

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Rahter (1828-91), German music publisher, who in 1879 founded a music publishing firm in Hamburg. In 1888 Rahter negotiated a contract with Jurgenson concerning the rights to Čajkovskij's works in Germany and Austria-Hungary. Although in many instances merely reprinted Jurgenson's copies of the scores, he also published specially-prepared editions, and it is possible that Ziloti could have been commissioned by Rahter to prepare a new edition of Čajkovskij's Piano Concerto No. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Letter of 27 December 1888 to Aleksandr Ziloti; ČPSS XIV, No. 3751, p. 613-615. The copy of this printed edition bearing Čajkovskij's and Ziloti's markings is now held in the P. I. Čajkovskij State House-Museum at Klin (d<sup>3</sup>, No. 407).

are shown in footnotes or as *ossia*. The editorial preface noted that "numerous changes to the piano part in later editions are not taken into account in the present edition, as Čajkovskij's involvement with them has not been established. They have been sharply disputed by S. I. Taneev, and also A. K. Glazunov."<sup>24</sup>

Sergej Taneev, writing to the pianist Konstantin Ugumnov in 1912, was sufficiently offended by the later changes to call for the preparation of an "Urtext" edition of the concerto. "I believe that a return to the original text is essential, and we should forget about pernicky editorial interventions and perform it just as the author intended. As a musician you have all the information you need to interpret the author's intentions, and as a virtuoso, all the skills to execute them."<sup>25</sup>

The editors of the new thematic and bibliographical catalogue of Čajkovskij's works have suggested that there may even have been multiple editions issued during the late 1880s and 1890s, representing various stages of revision:

Jurgenson's catalogues from 1886 onward inform about a new revised edition of the concerto (in full score, piano duet transcription, and in orchestral parts), though [they] give the plate numbers of the earlier publications (1875 and 1879). The extant lifetime publications ... have the same plate numbers, although they contain some changes and addenda. In particular, the title-page of the transcription and the cover of the full score contain the following indication: *2de édition revue et corrigée*. The changes concern mainly the piano part, including mov[emen]t III.<sup>26</sup>

The person responsible for creating the definitive version of the concerto that we know today is normally presumed to be Alexander Ziloti, on the grounds that he was known to be preparing a new edition in the late 1880s, and his posthumous revisions to Čajkovskij's Second Piano Concerto are well documented. However, no direct evidence to corroborate Ziloti's authorship has yet come to light, and an altogether different name has been now suggested as a result of a recent discovery.

## New Materials

Three previously unknown documents shedding further light on the history of the concerto have lately emerged. These were found by Dr Pedro Sánchez Palma of Cartagena, Spain, among the pages of a copy of Rosa Newmarch's biography *Tchaikovsky, his life and works, with extracts from his writings* (London: Grant Richards, 1900). The volume in question was formerly owned by the English music critic Edgar Francis Jacques, and bears his signature in the fly-leaf. We are indebted to Dr Sánchez Palma for sharing this information with us, and for allowing us to reproduce facsimiles of the correspondence in question.

The first item is a postcard, postmarked 23 October 1900, written by Karl Klindworth from Potsdam (near Berlin) to the Danish pianist Frits Hartvigson,<sup>27</sup> who was then resident in London. The text is written entirely in English, and contains a response to a previous enquiry by Hartvigson concerning Čajkovskij's Piano Concerto No. 1. Klindworth writes:

---

<sup>24</sup> ČPSS 28 (1955), edited by Aleksandr Gol'denvejzer, p. xiii.

<sup>25</sup> Letter of 20 September 1912 from Sergej Taneev to Konstantin Igumnov; published in SovM 1946, No. 1, p. 88-89.

<sup>26</sup> ČS (2006), p. 394-395.

<sup>27</sup> Frits Hartvigson (1841-1919) was a Danish pianist who studied under Hans von Bülow, and later lived and worked in England. He also corresponded with Čajkovskij in 1877 and 1893 (see ČSt 3, 1998, p. 223-228).

All the editions and <sup>revisions</sup> <sup>of the</sup> <sup>score</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>programs</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>concert</sup>  
 The second edition I have made for 1879. in  
 Moscow. But since, <sup>in these</sup> there has been issued a third edition  
 with new alterations of my second one; this I believe is  
~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> <sup>unusually</sup> <sup>early</sup>; <sup>and</sup> <sup>there</sup> <sup>are</sup> <sup>also</sup> <sup>changes</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>score</sup>, <sup>and</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>text</sup>  
 in the finale. Some of the present alterations (made by others by I have  
 heard) I do not like at all, in the other <sup>and</sup> <sup>had</sup> <sup>rather</sup> <sup>than</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>effect</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>changes</sup>  
 I do I should think to. I can give this list to <sup>and</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>one</sup> <sup>who</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>charge</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>edition</sup>  
 was not published, because I did not wish it. — Thanks for your  
 kind appreciation of my N. 1. I am very pleased  
 that you play it. Just finished the construction of the first half of the 2nd  
 movement. (And since after a year and a half I have not finished the  
 finale of (my, dear!) Beethoven's 2nd. N. 1. and Beethoven's 2nd. N. 1.

All the alterations of The second edition I have made for Tsch[aikowsky] in Moskau. But since, there has been issued a third edition, with new alterations on those of my second one; this 3rd edition is now universally used, as there are also a few changes in the form, i.e. the cut in the finale. Some of the present alterations (made by Arensky I have heard) I do not like at all, i.e. the rather brutal chords-effect at the beginning; still I should think T[sc]h[aikowsky] has given his assent to them and that we must consider this edition authorized. My name was not published, because I did not wish it.

Thanks for your kind appreciation of my Nib[e]lungen work,<sup>28</sup> I am very pleased that you play it. Just finished the corrections of the first half of the Götterdämm[erun]g. (Only imagine after a year and a half I have got waifer [= waiver] from Novello (hear, hear)! Beethoven's Rond[o] No. 1, and Hummel's Rondo op. 12. Is not that wonderful and encouraging?

Ever yours KKl.

Four days later, Hartvigson wrote to E. F. Jacques, communicating Klindworth's information on the concerto, while adding some recollections of his own:

27.10.1900.  
Hertford Lodge,  
Albert Bridge. S.W.

Dear Mr Jacques,  
Tschaikowsky's 1st Piano Concerto –

1st performance at the Cr[ystal]. Palace by Dannreuther in March 11th 1876.

2nd performance (1st in "London", ha, ha!)<sup>29</sup> by me on March 17th 1877, at St. James' Hall, conducted by August Manns.

In the "book of words" [= score], a note about Ts[chaikowsky] about the concert was written by Dannreuther (I have the book still), & when I played it, there was printed in the book of words: "dedicated to Hans von Bülow".

Though not published I played for the first time all the alterations made in the 2nd edition, as I had them privately from Klindworth.

Klindworth has just written this week to me from Potsdam:

"The second edition I have made for Tschaikowsky in Moskow. But since, there has been issued a third edition with new alterations on those of my second one; this 3rd edition is now universally used, as there are also a few changes in the form, for instance the cut in the Finale. Some of the present alterations (made by Arensky I have heard) I don't like at all, i.e. the rather brutal chords-effect at the beginning; still I should think Tsch[aikowsky] has given his assent to them and that we consider this edition authorized. My name was not published, because I did not wish it."

This is what he writes, word for word! You may use the information above just as you please.

I suppose you know that of Tsch[aikowsky]'s Romeo & Juliet there is a masterly transcription for 2 Pianos by Klindworth.

Yours sincerely,  
Frits Hartvigson.

---

<sup>28</sup> Klindworth was commissioned by Wagner to make a complete piano transcription of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

<sup>29</sup> This was a humorous allusion to the location of Crystal Palace being outside central London.

27.10.1900.

HERTFORD LODGE,

ALBERT BRIDGE, S.W.

Dear Mr. Sacyres,

Tchaikowsky's 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto. —

1<sup>st</sup> performance at the Cr. Palace by  
Dannreuther in March <sup>11<sup>th</sup></sup> 1876.

2<sup>nd</sup> performance (1<sup>st</sup> in "London", 1874) by me  
on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1877 at St. James' Hall,  
conducted by August Manns.

In the 'book of words', a note about V. &  
about the concert was written by Dann-  
reuther (I have the book still), & when  
I played it, this was printed in the book of  
words: dedicated to Hans von Bülow.

Though not published I played for  
the first time all the alterations  
made in the 2<sup>d</sup> edition, as I had

21 them privately from Klindworth.

Klindworth has just written this  
week to me from Potsdam:

2 The second edition I have made  
for Tschekowky in ~~Montevideo~~ Moscow.

But since, there has been issued a  
third edition with new alterations  
on those of my second one; this 3<sup>d</sup> edition  
is now universally used, as there are also  
a few changes in the form, for instance  
the cut in the Finale. Some of the  
present alterations (made by Arensky  
I have heard) I don't like at all, so  
the rather brutal chord-effect  
at the beginning; still I don't think  
Tsch. has given his assent to them and

that we consider this edition authorized. My name  
was not published, because I did not wish it. —

This is not to enter, word for word!

You may use the information above just as you please.

I suppose you know that of Vol. 1. Powers & Schell  
there is a masterly transcription for 2 pianos by Klumpenholtz.

Your sincerely  
true friend,  
P. I. Tchaikovsky.

Jacques then communicated this information to Charles Ainslie Barry (1830-1915), a prolific writer of programme notes for London concerts, who responded as follows:

8 Nov[ember] 1900

20 Sydenham Hill, S.E.

My dear Jacques,

Thanks for calling attention to those two stupid *errata*. The *Lohengrin* one is of old standing, and is [illegible] in C. A. books. The other was due to printers. I have noted them both for future emendment.

I don't think that your Klindworth story quite holds water. Some time ago Dannreuther, who was the first to play Tschai[kowsky]'s concerto in England (at C[rystal] P[alace] in 1876) told me that he had sent Tschai[kowsky] a lot of emendations of his pianisms, and that he adopted them all in his new edition. I wanted to mention this first in my previous edition, but D[annreuther] said "Don't", it will only annoy Klindworth, who has been doing something of the same kind. I tell you this in confidence and may I trust that you will not mention it, especially to Hartvigson.

I feel sure that Klindworth was not solely responsible for the second edition, for you can be for certain that Bülow (the first to play the work) & N. Rubinstein would have made suggestions to the composer, which he more or less adopted.

Kind regards to you both.

Yours sincerely,

C. A. Barry

Karl Klindworth was invited by Nikolai Rubińštejn in 1868 to join the piano faculty at the Moscow Conservatory, where he remained for fourteen years. Here he taught alongside Čajkovskij, whom he knew well, and was responsible for arrangements and editorial work on several of his compositions. Klindworth received the dedications of Čajkovskij's piano *Capriccio*, Op. 8 (1870) and the *Grand Sonata*, Op. 37 (1878). As noted above, Modest Čajkovskij also recalled that Klindworth was responsible for introducing the composer to Hans von Bülow, who was to become the first exponent of Čajkovskij's B-flat minor concerto. Before moving to Moscow, Klindworth had lived in London for fourteen years, where his musical circle included both Edward Dannreuther and Frits Hartvigson.

Čajkovskij would therefore have had good reason to entrust Klindworth to revise the full score of his concerto, in accordance with the suggestions made by Edward Dannreuther and (possibly) Hans von Bülow. If Hartvigson's recollections were accurate, then the revisions must have been carried out between March 1876 (when Čajkovskij thanked Dannreuther for his changes), and March 1877 (when Hartvigson performed this version in London). This would correspond to the concerto's "Second version", i.e. the form in which it was published in 1879.

It is interesting to note that the archive of the Russian Institute of Arts History (Rossijskij institut istorii iskusstv) in Saint Petersburg holds a copy of the first edition of the concerto's arrangement for two pianos (published by Jurgenson in 1875), containing handwritten alterations by Čajkovskij. These mainly concern revisions to the piano part in the first movement, and correspond closely to the version published in 1879. The title page bears an inscription by the composer: "*à Monsieur Charles Klindworth. P. Tschaikowsky. 20 Mai, 1875*". The edition also bears annotations by Klindworth, and was previously owned by him.<sup>30</sup>

The date of the inscription presents a problem, as in May 1875 the concerto had not yet been performed, and (as we have already seen) Dannreuther's suggestions – written out here in Čajkovskij's hand – were not made until the spring of 1876. So we can only

---

<sup>30</sup> ČS (2006), p. 397.

speculate whether this copy was subsequently returned to the composer for the purpose of marking the later revisions, or whether Čajkovskij made a slip of the pen when writing the inscription, and the date should really have been '20 May 1876'.

It is evident from the above correspondence that Klindworth had no involvement with subsequent changes to the concerto, and he was only in a position to presume that these had been authorised by Čajkovskij. His suggestion that the composer Anton Arenskij could have been responsible for these alterations is surprising. Arenskij was professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Moscow Conservatory from 1882 until 1895, where he was well acquainted with both Čajkovskij and Taneev, and received much encouragement from them in exercising his compositional skills. Arenskij's *Variations on a Theme of Čajkovskij* (1894), based on the theme of Čajkovskij's children's song *Legend*, Op. 54, No. 5, remains his most enduring work. However, no documentary evidence has so far come to light that Arenskij was ever involved with preparing editions of Čajkovskij's compositions (or for that matter, the works of any other composers).

So for the moment at least, Klindworth's conjecture remains intriguing, but unproven. And while these previously unknown documents have presented us with a few more tantalising glimpses into the work's history, Čajkovskij's First Piano Concerto has still not yielded all its secrets.