

When I was asked about seven months ago to be a monthly columnist for Creative Keyboard, I got very excited. The chance to be heard on a regular basis is rare and extraordinary in contemporary music life. So when it happened, I started to think about all the people I know who did similar things. There was a music critic for New York Times I have met, interviewers from the Russian Music Paper, Nashville Banner, Moscow Pullman News, and my amazing music history teacher Ekaterina Tsareva, who wrote program notes for the Grand Hall of Moscow Conservatory.

However, the first person who came to mind was Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, who in 1876 was commissioned by St. Petersburg magazine, *Nouvelliste*, to write one piano piece per month. The twelvepiece cycle represents the never-ending reappearance of life. Moscow Conservatory as well as Moscow Conservatory School from which I graduate, is named after Tchaikovsky. The two largest Moscow concert halls are the grand hall of Tchaikovsky Conservatory and Tchaikovsky Hall, and Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow is the greatest competition in the world that started the careers of such pianists as Barry Douglas, Mikhail Pletnev and Van Clibern.

As far as I know the writing of a twelve-piece monthly piano composition for a publication has not been repeated yet, and the idea of following in Tchaikovsky's footsteps sounds simply too fantastic to resist. So, here is the second piece from my cycle *The Seasons* op.104:

CD track 2 **February: St. Valentine's Day** by Misha V. Stefanuk

February is one of two months that were added later because Romans considered winter to be a season without months. February is named after Februus, the Roman god of Purity and has 28 or 29 days. In Ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday in honor of Juno, the goddess of marriage. Young Romans draw cards with girl names from a jar, and they would spend the following celebration called Lupercalia together. This led to long lasting friendships and sometimes marriages. Claudius the II outlawed marriage believing that that will increase the enrollment of young men into his army. Saint Valentine, who was a priest, continued to secretly marry couples, and was prosecuted by Roman government on the 14th of February 270. Before his execution he left a note to a prison guard's daughter signed "from your Valentine." Since then we celebrate St. Valentines Day by choosing Valentines and sending cards.

♩ = 80

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It contains a series of chords, starting with a half note chord and followed by quarter notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes, with some notes marked 'Ped.' (pedal). A dynamic marking of *mf* is placed above the first measure. Slurs are used to group the chords in the upper staff.

The second system of the musical score continues the two-staff format. The upper staff features chords and some melodic lines, with a dynamic marking of *mf* above the first measure. The lower staff continues the rhythmic pattern of quarter notes, with several 'Ped.' markings. Slurs are used to group the chords in the upper staff.

The third system of the musical score concludes the piece. It follows the same two-staff structure. The upper staff has chords and melodic lines, with a dynamic marking of *mf* above the first measure. The lower staff continues the rhythmic pattern, with 'Ped.' markings. Slurs are used to group the chords in the upper staff.

Treble clef: Chords in G major (G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4).
 Bass clef: Bass line with notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Pedal points are marked under G2, B2, D3, and G3.

Marchlike ♩ = 120

Treble clef: Chords in G major (G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4).
 Bass clef: Bass line with notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Pedal points are marked under G2, B2, D3, and G3.

Treble clef: Chords in G major (G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4).
 Bass clef: Bass line with notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Pedal points are marked under G2, B2, D3, and G3.

Treble clef: Chords in G major (G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4, G4-B4).
 Bass clef: Bass line with notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4. Pedal points are marked under G2, B2, D3, and G3.

Musical notation for the first system. The treble staff contains a sequence of chords and a melodic line. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords. A *Ped.* marking is placed below the bass staff.

Musical notation for the second system. The treble staff contains a sequence of chords. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords. A *mp* dynamic marking is placed in the treble staff. *Ped.* markings are placed below the bass staff.

Musical notation for the third system. The treble staff contains a sequence of chords. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords. A *p* dynamic marking is placed in the treble staff. *Ped.* markings are placed below the bass staff.

Tempo 1

Musical notation for the fourth system. The treble staff contains a sequence of chords with a crescendo hairpin. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords with a melodic line. A *mp* dynamic marking is placed in the treble staff. *Ped.* markings are placed below the bass staff.

First system of musical notation. The treble clef contains chords, and the bass clef contains a melodic line. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." below the bass line notes.

Second system of musical notation. The treble clef contains chords, and the bass clef contains a melodic line. A forte (*f*) dynamic marking is present. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." below the bass line notes.

Third system of musical notation. The treble clef contains chords, and the bass clef contains a melodic line. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." below the bass line notes.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble clef contains chords, and the bass clef contains a melodic line. A fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic marking is present. Pedal points are indicated by "Ped." below the bass line notes. The system concludes with a double bar line and an asterisk (*).