

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

NATALYA MEDVEDOVSKAYA

STRING QUARTET NO. 1

Written in 1992, Medvedovskaya's *Quartet No. 1* embodies the emotional experience of the August Coup. It is woven around a cleverly-designed structure, based on the transformation of several themes. The piece opens with an anguished melody on the first violin, which is then taken up by other instruments that interrupt each other as the theme gains an impulsive, rhythmic energy. The listener is carried away by the slow, singing intermezzo of the middle section, but soon the melody is transformed beyond recognition by the mad, fantastic gallop of a scherzo. Only at the end of the work does the initial theme gain a lyrical quality, yet is overtaken by an impetuous, terrible race into nothingness, and the voice of compassion attempts in vain to stand against merciless evil. At last, a melody reminiscent of the light middle section sounds out like a song of silent resignation in the face of tragedy.

• NATALYA MEDVEDOVSKAYA was born in 1974 and began to compose at age 6. One of the most talented and individual young composers of St. Petersburg, she studied under Professor Slonimsky at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, from which she graduated last year. She has written piano miniatures, a concertino for 2 pianos, a scherzo for violin and piano, pieces for harp and flute, for woodwind quartet, and vocal works including songs for children and settings of poems by Pasternak and Tsvetaeva. Her works have been performed on radio and television, in Composer's House, Philharmonic Maly Zal (Small Hall) and other halls. The work of this talented young composer is remarkable in its rich harmonies and fresh melodies, which reflect an extraordinary individuality and warmth.

Medvedovskaya was also a prizewinner at the "Young Virtuosi" International Piano Competition in Czechoslovakia in 1989, where she was awarded a special prize for the exceptional standard and sensitivity of her playing.

ALEXANDER BORODIN

STRING QUARTET NO. 2 IN D MAJOR

The development of Russian music after Tchaikovsky was almost entirely in the hands of "amateur" composers. Primary among this generation were the famous Mighty Five consisting of Borodin, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Musorgsky, and Cui. Nearly all these men conducted active careers outside professional music. Alexander Borodin, for example, was one of St. Petersburg's leading research chemists and professors. His musical activities were between professional commitments, so his music had to wait years to be published. In fact, many of his compositions, such as his *String Quartet No. 2*, were published after his death.

String Quartet No. 2 appears to have been written in a rare, uninterrupted period in the summer of 1881. Borodin dedicated it to his wife, Catherine, a woman of deep sentimentality. Although Borodin revealed no known extra-musical program for the quartet, its writing coincided with the 20th anniversary of their falling in love. The work is a nostalgic emblem of that first happy time the couple spent together, proven by the very lyrical nature of the quartet.

The sensuous sound of the cello in its high register dominates some important moments in the quartet, such as the opening theme of the first movement. Answered immediately in the first violin, this theme leads into and controls the entire movement. The opening movement and, indeed, the first three movements of the work,