

Programme note by Chris Darwin. Please use freely for non-commercial activities

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) from The Seasons Op. 37a (1876)

March: Song of the Lark - Andantino espressivo

October: Autumn Song - Andante doloroso e molto cantabile

"Our celebrated composer P. I. Tchaikovsky has promised the editor of *Nuvellist*, that he will contribute to next year's issues a whole series of his piano compositions, specially written for our journal, the character of which will correspond entirely to the titles of the pieces, and the month in which they will be published in the journal..."

Nuvellist - December 1875 issue (No. 12)

This notice appeared on the title page of the December 1875 issue of the St Petersburg monthly music review journal *Nuvellist* (Нувеллист), following the receipt by its editor Nikolay Bernard of a letter from Tchaikovsky. In the letter he agreed to composing Bernard's proposed cycle of 12 monthly pieces: *"I have received your letter. I am most grateful for your courtesy and readiness to pay me such a high fee [200 roubles]. So long as I am spared I shall endeavour to oblige you. I shall send you the first piece shortly, and perhaps the next two or three. If the circumstances are right then they will be done quickly —at the moment I am very much in the mood for piano pieces. Yours P. Tchaikovsky. I will retain all your titles"*

As well as providing the titles to these '12 characteristic scenes', Bernard probably also provided the accompanying short poetic quotations. Here are the ones published with tonight's pieces:

No. 3. Song of the Lark (March):
*'The field shimmering with flowers,
The stars swirling in the heavens,
The song of the lark fills the blue abyss.'*
— Apollon Maykov

No. 10. Autumn Song (October):
*'The autumn, falling on our poor orchard,
The yellow leaves are flying in the wind.'*
— Aleksey Tolstoy

The series was composed around the same time as his third string quartet and shortly after his third Symphony.