



Ludwig van Beethoven - Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus (The creatures of Prometheus)

The ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (*The creatures of Prometheus*) op. 43 is the result of the collaboration of Beethoven and Salvatore Viganò, the well-known Neapolitan choreographer dance master at the court of Vienna. Flattered by the invitation of an international dance celebrity like Viganò, Beethoven gladly accepted the job. The mythological subject must surely have pleased him; at the basis of the ballet there is in fact the fable of the fearless hero Prometheus, who after having stolen the fire from the gods frees humanity from ignorance by making himself the bearer of progress. Seven full orchestral chords open the short and famous Overture, where two themes full of momentum and panache chase each other between dynamic contrasts. Then there are sixteen musical episodes in which Beethoven faithfully adheres to the track indicated to him by Viganò: Prometheus brings his creatures to Mount Parnassus, two statues that thanks to the intervention of Apollo and the Muses come to life and learn the beauty of the arts. The ballet debuted at the Burgtheater in Vienna on March 28, 1801, achieving considerable success. Among the best known pieces, in addition to the overture, there is also the Finale where the thematic idea appears which will then be taken up by Beethoven in the last movement of the '*Eroica*' Symphony.

Pëtr Il'ič Čajkovskij - Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33

Tchaikovsky composed the Variations on a Rococo Theme for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 33 in 1876 for his friend Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, cello virtuoso and teacher at the Moscow Conservatory. Not being a cellist, Tchaikovsky asked his musician friend for advice, who, however, did not limit himself to revising the solo part, but intervened on the entire score by changing the order of the variations, deleting the last one and adding some virtuosic passages. Thus, after their debut in Moscow on November 30, 1877, the Variations circulated for many decades with this heavily retouched dress by Fitzenhagen, which is still the most widespread today. The gallant atmospheres of measured elegance at the base of this work were dictated by Tchaikovsky's predilection for eighteenth-century music, and in particular for that of Mozart. However, Tchaikovsky's eighteenth-century reinterpretation is filtered through his typically nineteenth-century sensitivity, always prone to intense lyricism and a particularly accentuated pathos.

Pëtr Il'ič Čajkovskij - Symphony No. 4 in F minor Op. 36

The composition of the Symphony No. 4 in F minor op. 36, built between December 1876 and January 1878, coincided with Tchaikovsky's period of deepest existential crisis. After the end of his disastrous marriage with one of his former students, the composer suffered a psychological meltdown that brought him to the brink of suicide. The only glimmer of hope in that period of profound despair was the beginning of the correspondence with Nadezda von Meck, a music lover and a great admirer of her, who soon became her confidant, friend and patron. In addition to the substantial annuity given to the composer, von Meck will also subsidize the trip to Europe during which Tchaikovsky will devote himself to the composition of *Evgenij Onegin* and Symphony no. 4. As the author tells his friend in a sort of program written during the writing of the score, the keystone of Symphony no. 4 is contained in the introduction, where the brass fanfare is responsible for presenting the motif of fate "the nefarious force that prevents our rush towards happiness from reaching its goal and that, like a sword of Damocles, hangs over the head and poisons the soul in an infallible and perennial way". Since this is the main idea that substantiates the tragic and passionate content of the symphony, the motif of fate reappears, as a sinister signal, during the first and last movements. The Andantino, with its heated lyricism, is the moment dedicated to nostalgia for the past, while the Scherzo has the flavor of confused memories that pile up quickly, as if in a state of intoxication, in the composer's mind. The Allegro con fuoco finale instead takes on the tones of a dance party where the swirling joy of the music is nevertheless disturbed by the motif of fate, which reappears at the end ready to erase any hope of happiness.