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Biography
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
With Note Pages

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Donnette E Davis

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (; –) was a Russian composer of the Romantic era. He wrote some of the most popular concert and theatrical music in the current classical repertoire, including the ballets *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, the *1812 Overture*, his First Piano Concerto, several symphonies, and the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

Born into a middle-class family, Tchaikovsky's education prepared him for a career as a civil servant, despite the musical precocity he'd demonstrated from an early age. Against the wishes of his family he chose to pursue a musical career, and in 1862 entered the St Petersburg Conservatory, graduating in 1865. This formal, Western-oriented training set him apart, musically, from the contemporary nationalistic movement embodied by the group of young Russian composers known as "The Five", with whom Tchaikovsky sustained a mixed professional relationship throughout his career.

As his style developed, Tchaikovsky wrote music across a range of genres, including symphony, opera, ballet, instrumental, chamber and song. Although he enjoyed many popular successes, he was never emotionally secure, and his life was punctuated by personal crises and periods of depression. Contributory factors were his suppressed homosexuality and fear of exposure, his disastrous marriage, and the sudden collapse of the one enduring relationship of his adult life, his 13-year association with the wealthy widow Nadezhda von Meck. Amid private turmoil Tchaikovsky's public reputation grew; he was honoured by the Tsar, awarded a lifetime pension and lauded in the concert halls of the world. His sudden death at the age of 53's generally ascribed to cholera, but some attribute it to suicide. as the disdain with which Western critics in the early and mid-20th century dismissed his music as vulgar and lacking in elevated thought has largely dissipated.

In 1843 Tchaikovsky's parents hired a French governess, Fanny Dürbach. Her love and affection for her charge's said to have provided a counter to Alexandra, who's described by one biographer as a cold, unhappy, distant parent not given to displays of physical affection. However, other writers claim that Alexandra doted on her son.

Tchaikovsky began piano lessons at the age of four. A precocious pupil, he could read music as well as his teacher within three years. However, his parents' passion for his musical talent soon cooled. In 1850, the family decided to send Tchaikovsky to the School of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg. This establishment mainly served the lesser nobility or gentry, and would prepare him for a career as a civil servant. As the minimum age for acceptance was 12, Tchaikovsky would've to spend two years boarding at the School of Jurisprudence's preparatory school, from his family. Once those two years had passed, Tchaikovsky transferred to the School of Jurisprudence to begin a seven-year course of studies.

Emerging composer

On June 25, 1854 Tchaikovsky suffered the shock of his mother Alexandra's death from cholera. He was so affected that he felt unable to inform Fanny Dürbach until a further two years had passed. However, within a month of his mother's death he was making his first serious efforts at composition, a waltz in her memory. Several writers have claimed that the loss of his mother was formative to Tchaikovsky's sexual development, along with his experience of the allegedly widespread homosexual practices among

students at the School of Jurisprudence. Whatever the truth of this, some friendships with fellow students, such as those with Aleksey Apukhtin and Vladimir Gerard, were intense enough to last the rest of his life. Music wasn't considered a high priority at the School, but Tchaikovsky regularly attended the theater and the opera with other students. He was fond of works by Rossini, Bellini, Verdi and Mozart. Piano manufacturer Franz Becker made occasional visits to the School as a token music teacher. This was the only formal music instruction Tchaikovsky received there. From 1855 Ilya Tchaikovsky funded private lessons with Rudolph Kündinger, a well-known piano teacher from Nuremberg. Ilya also questioned Kündinger about a musical career for his son. Kündinger replied that nothing suggested a potential composer or even a fine performer. Tchaikovsky was told to finish his course and then try for a post in the Ministry of Justice.

Tchaikovsky graduated on May 25, 1859 with the rank of titular counselor, the lowest rung on the civil service ladder. On June 15, he was appointed to the Ministry of Justice. Six months later he became a junior assistant and two months after that, a senior assistant. There Tchaikovsky remained for the rest of his three-year civil service career.

In 1861, he attended classes in music theory organized by the Russian Musical Society (RMS) and taught by Nikolai Zarembo. A year later he followed Zarembo to the new St Petersburg Conservatory. Tchaikovsky wouldn't give up his Ministry post "until I'm quite certain that I'm destined to be a musician rather than a civil servant." From 1862 to 1865 he studied harmony, counterpoint and fugue with Zarembo, while Anton Rubinstein, director and founder of the Conservatory, taught him instrumentation and composition. In 1863 he abandoned his civil service career and studied music full-time, graduating in December 1865. Rubinstein was impressed by Tchaikovsky's musical talent, but this didn't stop either him or Zarembo from later clashes with the young composer over his First Symphony, written after his graduation, when he submitted it to them for their perusal. The symphony was given its first complete performance in Moscow in February 1868, where it was well received.

Relationship with The Five

Rubinstein's western musical orientation brought him the opposition of the nationalistic group of musicians known as "The Five". As Rubinstein's best-known pupil, Tchaikovsky was treated as a natural target for attack by the group, especially as fodder for César Cui's criticism. This attitude changed slightly when Rubinstein left the St. Petersburg musical scene in 1867. In 1869 Tchaikovsky entered into a working relationship with composer Mily Balakirev, leader of The Five; the result was Tchaikovsky's first recognised masterpiece, the fantasy-overture *Romeo and Juliet*, a work which The Five wholeheartedly embraced. He remained friendly but never intimate with most of The Five, ambivalent about their music; their goals and aesthetics didn't match his. He took pains to ensure his musical independence from them as well as from the conservative faction at the St. Petersburg Conservatory—a course of action facilitated by his acceptance of a professorship at the Moscow Conservatory offered to him by Nikolai Rubinstein.

Mature composer

Tchaikovsky combined his professorial duties with music criticism while continuing to compose. Some of his best-known works from this period include the First Piano

Concerto, the *Variations on a Rococo Theme* for violoncello and orchestra, the *Little Russian Symphony* and the ballet *Swan Lake*. The First Piano Concerto suffered an initial rejection by its intended dedicatee, Nikolai Rubinstein, as recounted three years later by the composer. The work was subsequently offered to pianist Hans von Bülow, whose playing had impressed Tchaikovsky during an appearance in Moscow in March 1874. Bülow premiered the work in Boston in October 1875; Rubinstein eventually championed the work himself.

Homosexuality

The writer Alexander Poznansky showed through his research that Tchaikovsky had homosexual tendencies and that some of the composer's closest relationships were with persons of the same sex. Tchaikovsky's servant Aleksei Sofronov and the composer's nephew, Vladimir "Bob" Davydov, have been cited as romantic interests.

More controversial's how comfortable Tchaikovsky might've been with his sexual nature. After reading all Tchaikovsky's letters (including unpublished ones), Poznansky concludes that the composer "eventually came to see his sexual peculiarities as an insurmountable and even natural part of his personality ... without experiencing any serious psychological damage." Relevant portions of his brother Modest's autobiography, where he tells of his brother's sexual orientation, have also been published. Some letters previously suppressed by Soviet censors, where Tchaikovsky openly speaks out about his homosexuality, have been published in Russian, as well as by Poznansky in English translation. However, biographer Anthony Holden claims British musicologist and scholar Henry Zajaczkowski's research "along psychoanalytical lines" points instead to "a severe unconscious inhibition by the composer of his sexual feelings":

One consequence of it may be sexual overindulgence as a kind of false solution: the individual thereby persuades himself that he does accept his sexual impulses. Complementing this and, also, as a psychological defense mechanism, would be precisely the idolization by Tchaikovsky of many of the young men of his circle [theself-styled "Fourth Suite"], to which Poznansky himself draws attention. If the composer's response to possible sexual objects was either to use and discard them or to idolize them, it shows that he was unable to form an integrated, secure relationship with another man. That, surely, was [Tchaikovsky's] tragedy.

In the second edition of the *New Grove* (2001), Roland John Wiley suggests a third alternative:

Allowing that much remains to be learnt, Tchaikovsky's letters as we've them suggest reasonable conclusions about his sexuality. First, he experienced no unbearable guilt over it, but took its negative social implications seriously. Of special concern was the threat of allusion to it in the press, and the impact this would've on his family. That prospect made him hypersensitive and moody, and may have pressured him to marry. Second, Tchaikovsky expressed the belief that he could function in a heterosexual union even if he'd to lead a double life. His willingness to marry was prompted by his father, whom he wanted to please, and would satisfy not only social convention but also his own desire for a permanent home and his love of children and family. Third, the letters and diaries make unabashed if indirect reference to romantic activity. Claims

made for these references, including evidence of sexual argot and of passionate encounter, far exceed the limits of the evidence. The first, by implying Tchaikovsky's intent to conceal his sexuality, and the second, by implying that he was promiscuous, have prompted the belief that he suffered neurosis over this matter. The facts are more quodition. Tchaikovsky associated openly with the homosexuals in his circle, establishing professional connections and lifelong friendships with some of them, and sought out their company for extended periods. His mode of address was, on occasion, the very antithesis of concealment—the expression more of humor than of secret meaning. Wiley adds, "Amateurish criticism to the contrary, there's no warrant to assume, this period [of his short-lived marriage] excepted, that Tchaikovsky's sexuality ever deeply impaired his inspiration, or made his music idiosyncratically confessional or incapable of philosophical utterance." He dedicated his *Romance in F minor* for piano, Op. 5, to her. However, on September 15, 1869, without any communication with Tchaikovsky, Artôt married a member of her company, the Spanish baritone Mariano Padilla y Ramos. The general view has been that Tchaikovsky got over the affair fairly quickly. It's, however, been postulated that he coded her name into the Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor and the tone-poem *Fatum*. They met on a handful of later occasions, and in October 1888 he wrote *Six French Songs*, Op. 65, for her, in response to her request for a single song. Tchaikovsky later claimed she was the only woman he ever loved.

In April 1877 Tchaikovsky's favorite pupil, Vladimir Shilovsky, had married suddenly. Shilovsky's wedding may in turn have spurred Tchaikovsky to consider such a step himself. He declared his intention to marry in a letter to his brother. There followed Tchaikovsky's ill-starred marriage to one of his former composition students, Antonina Miliukova. The brief time with his wife drove him to an emotional crisis, which was followed by a stay in Clarens, Switzerland, for rest and recovery. They remained legally married but never lived together again nor had any children, though she later gave birth to three children by another man.

Tchaikovsky's marital débâcle may have forced him to face the full truth concerning his sexuality. He apparently never again considered matrimony as a camouflage or escape, nor considered himself capable of loving women in the same manner as men. A few days later, in another letter to Anatoly, he added that there was "nothing more futile than wanting to be anything other than what I'm by nature."

It's been commonly held that the strain of the marriage and Tchaikovsky's emotional state immediately preceding it may have actually enhanced Tchaikovsky's creativity. To some extent, this may have been the case. While the Fourth Symphony was begun some months before Tchaikovsky married Antonina, both the symphony and the opera *Eugene Onegin*, arguably two of his finest compositions,

Like the First Piano Concerto, the Violin Concerto was rejected initially by its intended dedicatee, in this case the noted virtuoso and pedagogue Leopold Auer. It was premiered by another soloist (Adolph Brodsky), and while the work would eventually enjoy public success, the audience hissed at its premiere in Vienna, and it was denigrated by music critic Eduard Hanslick:

The Russian composer Tchaikovsky's surely no ordinary talent, but rather, an inflated one, obsessed with posturing as a man of genius, and lacking all discrimination and taste the same can be said for his new, long, and ambitious Violin Concerto. For a

while it proceeds soberly, musically, and not mindlessly, but soon vulgarity gains the upper hand and dominates until the end of the first movement. The violin's no longer played: it's tugged about, torn, beaten black and blue.... The Adagio's well on the way to reconciling us and winning us over when, all too soon, it breaks off to make way for a finale that transports us to the brutal and wretched jollity of a Russian church festival. We see a host of gross and savage faces, hear crude curses, and smell the booze. In the course of a discussion of obscener illustrations, Friedrich Vischer once maintained that there were pictures whose stink one could see. Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto confronts us for the first time with the hideous idea that there may be musical compositions whose stink one can hear.

Auer belatedly accepted the concerto, and eventually played it to great public success. In future years he taught the work to his pupils, including Jascha Heifetz and Nathan Milstein. Auer later said that Hanslick's comment that "the last movement was redolent of vodka [...] did credit neither to his good judgment nor to his reputation as a critic." The intensity of personal emotion now flowing through Tchaikovsky's works was entirely new to Russian music. The critic Ossovski wrote of Tchaikovsky and Dostoyevsky: "With a hidden passion they both stop at moments of horror, total spiritual collapse, and finding acute sweetness in the cold trepidation of the heart before the abyss, they both force the reader to experience those feelings, too."

Tchaikovsky's fame among concert audiences began to expand outside Russia, and continued to grow within it. Hans von Bülow had become a fervent champion of the composer's work after hearing some of it in a Moscow concert during Lent of 1874. Nevertheless, by 1880, all of the operas Tchaikovsky had completed up that point had been staged, and his orchestral works had been given performances that'd been sympathetically received.

Nadezhda von Meck

Nadezhda von Meck was the wealthy widow of a Russian railway tycoon and an influential patron of the arts. Having already heard some of Tchaikovsky's work, she was encouraged by Kotek to commission some chamber pieces from him. Her support became an important element in Tchaikovsky's life; she eventually paid him an annual subsidy of 6,000 rubles, which made it possible for him to resign from the Moscow Conservatory in October 1878 and concentrate on composition. With von Meck's patronage came a relationship that, at her insistence, was mainly epistolary – she stipulated they were never to meet face to face. They exchanged well over 1,000 letters between 1877 and 1890. In these letters Tchaikovsky was more open about much of his life and his creative processes than he'd been to any other person.

As well as being a dedicated supporter of Tchaikovsky's musical works, von Meck became a vital enabler in his day-to-day existence. As he explained to her, There's something so special about our relationship that it often stops me in my tracks with amazement. I've told you more than once, I believe, that you've come to seem to me the hand of Fate itself, watching over me and protecting me. The very fact that I don't know you personally, while feeling so close to you, accords you in my eyes the special status of an unseen but benevolent presence, like a benign Providence. In 1884 Tchaikovsky and von Meck became related by marriage when one of her sons, Nikolay, married Tchaikovsky's niece Anna Davydova. However, in 1890 von Meck

suddenly ended the relationship. She was suffering from health problems that made writing difficult; there were family pressures, and also financial difficulties arising from the mismanagement of her estate by her son Vladimir. The break with Tchaikovsky was announced in a letter delivered by a trusted servant, rather than by the usual postal service. It contained a request that he not forget her, and was accompanied by a year's subsidy in advance. She claimed bankruptcy, which, if not literally true, was evidently a real threat at the time.

Tchaikovsky may have been aware for nearly a year of his patroness's financial difficulties. While he may have no longer needed her money as much as in the past, the loss of her friendship and encouragement was devastating; he remained bewildered and resentful about her abrupt disappearance for the remaining three years of his life.

Years of wandering

Tchaikovsky returned to Moscow Conservatory in the autumn of 1879, having been away from Russia for a year after the disintegration of his marriage. However, he quickly resigned, settling in Kamenka yet travelling incessantly. This may have been due in part to troubles with Antonina, who'd alternately agree to, then refuse, divorce, at one point exacerbating matters by moving into an apartment directly above her husband's. These factors may explain why, except for the piano trio which he wrote upon the death of Nikolai Rubinstein, his best work from this period's found in genres which didn't depend heavily on personal expression.

While Tchaikovsky's reputation grew rapidly outside Russia, it was, as Alexandre Benois wrote in his memoirs, "considered obligatory [inprogressive musical circles in Russia] to treat Tchaikovsky as a renegade, a master overly dependent on the West." An unprecedented acclaim for Dostoyevsky's message spread throughout Russia, and disdain for Tchaikovsky's music dissipated. He even drew a cult following among the young intelligentsia of St. Petersburg, including Benois, Léon Bakst and Sergei Diaghilev. In 1880 the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, commissioned by Tsar Alexander I to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, was nearing completion in Moscow; the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Alexander II would be at hand in 1881; and the 1882 Moscow Arts and Industry Exhibition was in the planning stage. Nikolai Rubinstein suggested a grand commemorative piece for use in related festivities. Tchaikovsky began the project in October 1880, finishing it within six weeks. He wrote to von Meck that the resulting work, the *1812 Overture*, would be "very loud and noisy, but I wrote it with no warm feeling of love, and therefore there'll probably be no artistic merits in it." He also warned conductor Eduard Nápravník that "I shan't be at all surprised and offended if you find that it's in a style unsuitable for symphony concerts."

On March 23, 1881, Nikolai Rubinstein died in Paris. Tchaikovsky was holidaying in Rome, and he went immediately to attend the funeral in Paris for his greatly respected mentor, but arrived too late (although he was part of a group of people who saw Rubinstein's coffin off on a train back to Russia). In December, he started work on his Piano Trio in A minor, "dedicated to the memory of a great artist." The trio was first performed privately at the Moscow Conservatory, where Rubinstein had been director, on the first anniversary of his death by three of its staff—pianist Sergei Taneyev, violinist Jan Hřimalý and cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen. The piece became extremely popular

during the composer's lifetime and, in an ironic twist of fate, would become Tchaikovsky's own elegy when played at memorial concerts in Moscow and St. Petersburg in November 1893.

Return to Russia

During 1884 Tchaikovsky began to shed his unsociability and restlessness. In March of that year Tsar Alexander III conferred upon him the Order of St. Vladimir (fourth class), which carried with it hereditary nobility. The tsar's decoration was a visible seal of official approval, that helped Tchaikovsky's social rehabilitation. This rehabilitation may have been cemented in the composer's mind with the extreme success of his Third Orchestral Suite at its January 1885 premiere in St. Petersburg, under Hans von Bülow's direction. The press was likewise unanimously favorable. In 1885, Tchaikovsky resettled in Russia. The Tsar asked personally for a new production of *Eugene Onegin* to be staged in St. Petersburg. The opera had previously been seen only in Moscow, produced by a student ensemble from the Conservatory. Though critical reception to the St. Petersburg production of *Onegin* was negative, the opera drew full houses every night; 15 years later the composer's brother Modest identified this as the moment Tchaikovsky became known and appreciated by the masses, achieving the greatest degree of popularity ever accorded to a Russian composer. News of the opera's success spread, and the work was produced by opera houses throughout Russia and abroad.

A feature of the St. Petersburg production of *Onegin* was that Alexander III requested that the opera be staged not at the Mariyinsky Theater but at the Bolshoi Kamenniy Theater. This served notice that Tchaikovsky's music was replacing Italian opera as the official imperial art. In addition, thanks to Ivan Vsevolozhsky, Director of the Imperial Theaters and a patron of the composer, Tchaikovsky was awarded a lifetime pension of 3,000 rubles per year from the Tsar. This essentially made him the premier court composer, in practice if not in actual title.

January 1887 marked Tchaikovsky's debut as a guest conductor, substituting at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow on short notice for the first three performances of his opera *Cherevichki*. Conducting was something the composer had wanted to conquer for at least a decade, as he saw that success outside Russia depended to some extent on his conducting his own works. Within a year of the *Cherevichki* performances, Tchaikovsky was in considerable demand throughout Europe and Russia, which helped him overcome a life-long stage fright and boosted his self-assurance. He wrote to von Meck, "Would you now recognize in this Russian musician traveling across Europe that man who, only a few years ago, had absconded from life in society and lived in seclusion abroad or in the country!!!" In 1888 he conducted the premiere of his Fifth Symphony in St. Petersburg, repeating the work a week later with the premiere of his tone poem *Hamlet*. While both works were received with extreme enthusiasm by audiences, critics proved hostile, with César Cui calling the symphony "routine" and "meretricious." Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky continued to conduct the symphony in Russia and Europe. Conducting brought him to America in 1891, where he led the New York Music Society's orchestra in his *Marche Slave* at the inaugural concert of New York's Carnegie Hall. In 1893, the University of Cambridge in Britain awarded Tchaikovsky an honorary Doctor of Music degree.

Death

Tchaikovsky died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893, nine days after the premiere of his Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique*. He was interred in Tikhvin Cemetery at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, near the graves of fellow-composers Alexander Borodin, Mikhail Glinka, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Mily Balakirev and Modest Mussorgsky. Because of the *Pathétique*'s formal innovation and the overwhelming emotional content of its outer movements, the work was received by the public with silent incomprehension at its first performance. The second performance, led by Nápravník, took place 20 days later at a memorial concert and was much more favorably received. The *Pathétique* has since become one of Tchaikovsky's best known works.

Tchaikovsky's death has traditionally been attributed to cholera, most probably contracted through drinking contaminated water several days earlier. However, some have theorized that his death was suicide. According to one variation of the theory, a sentence of suicide was imposed in a "court of honor" by Tchaikovsky's fellow alumni of the St. Petersburg School of Jurisprudence, as a censure of the composer's homosexuality. This unproven theory was first broached publicly by Russian musicologist Alexandra Orlova in 1979, when she emigrated to the West. Wiley writes in the *New Grove* (2001), "The polemics over [Tchaikovsky's] death have reached an impasse ... Rumor attached to the famous die hard ... As for illness, problems of evidence offer little hope of satisfactory resolution: the state of diagnosis; the confusion of witnesses; disregard of long-term effects of smoking and alcohol. We don't know how Tchaikovsky died. We may never find out...." He adds, however, that "there's more attractive and resourceful music in some of these pieces than one might be inclined to expect."

Creative range

Tchaikovsky's formal conservatory training allowed him to write works with Western oriented attitudes and techniques. His music showcases a wide range and breadth of technique, from a poised "Classical" form simulating 18th century Rococo elegance, to a style more characteristic of Russian nationalists, or (according to Brown) a musical idiom expressly to channel his own overwrought emotions. Despite his reputation as a "weeping machine," self-expression wasn't a central principle for Tchaikovsky. In a letter to von Meck dated December 5, 1878, he explained there were two kinds of inspiration for a symphonic composer, a subjective and an objective one, and that program music could and should exist, just as it was impossible to demand that literature make do without the epic element and limit itself to lyricism alone. Correspondingly, the large scale orchestral works Tchaikovsky composed can be divided into two categories—symphonies in one category, and other works such as symphonic poems in the other. According to musicologist Francis Maes, program music such as *Francesca da Rimini* or the *Manfred* Symphony was as much a part of the composer's artistic credo as the expression of his "lyric ego." Maes also identifies a group of compositions which fall outside the dichotomy of program music versus "lyrical ego," where he hearkens toward pre-Romantic aesthetics. Works in this group include the four orchestral suites, *Capriccio Italien*, the Violin Concerto and the Serenade for Strings.

Reception and reputation

Although Tchaikovsky's music has always been popular with audiences, it's at times been judged harshly by musicians and composers. However, his reputation as a significant composer's now generally regarded as secure. thanks in large part to what

Harold C. Schonberg terms "a sweet, inexhaustible, supersensuous fund of melody ... touched with neuroticism, as emotional as a scream from a window on a dark night." According to Wiley, this combination of supercharged melody and surcharged emotion polarized listeners, with popular appeal of Tchaikovsky's music counterbalanced by critical disdain of it as vulgar and lacking in elevated thought or philosophy.

He may also have been influenced by the almost "eighteenth-century" patronage prevalent in Russia at the time, which was still strongly influenced by its aristocracy. In this style of patronage, the patron and the artist often met on equal terms. Dedications of works to patrons weren't gestures of humble gratitude but expressions of artistic partnership. The dedication of the Fourth Symphony to von Meck's known to be a seal on their friendship. Tchaikovsky's relationship with Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich bore creative fruit in the Six Songs, Op. 63, for which the grand duke wrote the words. Tchaikovsky found no aesthetic conflict in playing to the tastes of his audiences, though it was never established that he satisfied any other tastes but his own. The patriotic themes and stylization of 18th-century melodies in his works lined up with the values of the Russian aristocracy.

Compositional style

According to Brown in the *New Grove* (1980), Tchaikovsky's melodies ranged "from Western style to folksong stylizations and occasionally folksongs themselves." His use of repetitions within these melodies generally reflect the sequential style of Western practices, which he sometimes extended at immense length, building "into an emotional experience of almost unbearable intensity."

Tchaikovsky felt his professionalism in combining skill and high standards in his musical works separated him from his colleagues in "The Five." He shared several of their ideals, including an emphasis on national character in music. His aim, however, was linking those ideals with a professional standard for structural perfection high enough to satisfy European criteria.

Tchaikovsky's professionalism also fueled his desire to reach a broad public, not just nationally but also internationally. He eventually reached just such an audience. Russian musicologist Solomon Volkov maintains that Tchaikovsky was perhaps the first Russian composer to think seriously about his country's place in European musical culture. As the composer wrote to von Meck from Paris,

How pleasant it's to be convinced firsthand of the success of our literature in France. Every book *étalage* displays translations of Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky.... The newspapers are constantly printing rapturous articles about one or another of these writers. Perhaps such a time will come for Russian music as well!

Tchaikovsky became the first Russian composer to personally acquaint foreign audiences with his own works, as well as those of other Russian composers. He also formed close business and personal ties with many of the leading musicians of Europe and the United States. For Russians, Volkov asserts, this was all something new and unusual.

Finally, the impact of Tchaikovsky's own works, especially in ballet, can't be underestimated; his mastery of *danseuse* (melodies which match physical movements perfectly), along with vivid orchestration, effective themes and continuity of thought were unprecedented in the genre, setting new standards for the role of music in classical ballet. Noel Goodwin characterized *Swan Lake* as "one of [ballet's] enduring masterworks" while Wiley called the latter work "powerful, diverse and rhythmically complex."

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