

1452. Serenade for Strings

Backgrounds Of S. Radic

Peter Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), was a Russian composer. Already during his lifetime many of his works became internationally known. Today they are among the most important of the Romantic period. In Russia today he is regarded as the most important composer of the 19th century, although he did not belong to the Group of Five, but continued the school influenced by Western influences.

Tchaikovsky's most famous compositions include his last three symphonies, the Violin Concerto, his First Piano Concerto, the *Overture of 1812* and his opera *Eugene Onegin*. With *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker* he also wrote three of the most famous ballets in music history.

The musical inclinations of the family were not very pronounced. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky received piano lessons at the age of four at his request. From 1844 Tchaikovsky's parents employed the French governess Fanny Dürbach (1822-1901), who exerted a great influence on Tchaikovsky's development and with whom he remained in contact throughout his life. At this time Tchaikovsky was already writing poems and became *le petit Pouchkin* by Fanny Dürbach. ("little Pushkin").

The first music that influenced him came from a mechanical piano that his father had brought from Petersburg - Peter, who was not even five years old, was enthusiastic. When his mother let him play scales on a piano for the first time, he could already play a piece that he had heard. The family was amazed at his talent, and so his father hired Maria Paltschikowa, who gave his son piano lessons. Peter soon played better than his piano teacher. Since the parents had planned a career in the civil service for their son, Tchaikovsky attended the law school in St. Petersburg from 1850 to 1859 and then worked in the Ministry of Justice. During this time, he received further musical training only in private piano lessons with the pianist Rudolf Kündinger, who came from Nördlingen and emigrated to Russia. He wrote about Tchaikovsky: *"He was undoubtedly very talented, had a fine ear and a good memory, but it could not yet be concluded that he would one day become a great pianist, let alone a famous composer [...] The only thing with which he captivated my attention to a somewhat greater degree were his improvisations"*. Kündinger was right on one point: Tchaikovsky did not become a pianist, because his eight years of piano lessons



(as a child and as a prospective music student) were not enough - it was no coincidence that his piano concertos were premiered by others. It is also suspected that Tchaikovsky was influenced by an Italian singing teacher named Luigi Piccioli. He did not think much of Bach and Mozart, but was very familiar with Italian opera and Tchaikovsky published his first work, an Italian canzonette under the title *Mezza notte*.

Although Tchaikovsky's civil servant status provided him with a good livelihood that enabled him to pursue all sorts of expensive pleasures, he became tired of this life in 1861. He, who until then had had only mediocre musical knowledge, began to study music - a step that did not meet with the understanding of all family members. His uncle Peter Petrovich commented: *"This Peter. This useless Peter! Now he has swapped jurisprudence for bagpiping!"*

And his brother Modest later noted in his memoirs: *"Whether the oversaturation had suddenly awakened in him - perhaps under the impression of some event unknown to us, or whether it had gradually sneaked into his soul, nobody knows that, because Peter Ilyich had made his way through these difficult hours all by himself. His surroundings only noticed something of it when the transformation had already taken place."*

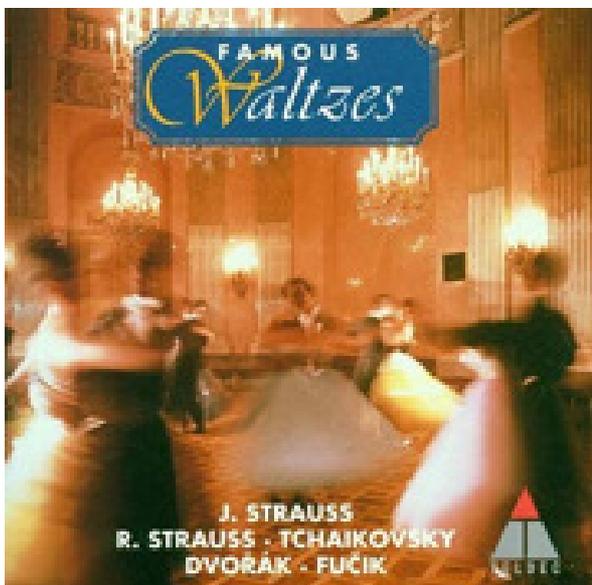
Tchaikovsky died unexpectedly on 25 October 1893 in St Petersburg at the age of 53. A few days earlier he had conducted his *Pathétique*. Modest Tchaikovsky later noted: "His soul mood in the last days was neither exclusively cheerful nor particularly depressed. In the company of his intimate friends he was cheerful and content, in company of strangers as usual nervous and excited and later exhausted and wilted. Nothing gave reason to think of the approach of death.

Klassik-Walzer (T=190)

Main 1

Main 2

The musical score is arranged in a 7-staff format. The top two staves are for Bells and Strings, both in 3/4 time. The third staff is for Str.-Akk. (String Accompaniment) in bass clef, 3/4 time, with an 'ADV.' marking. The fourth staff is for Guitar in bass clef, 3/4 time. The fifth staff is for Bass in bass clef, 3/4 time. The sixth staff is for Drums in 3/4 time, featuring a bass drum (BD), middle crash, small crash, and tambourine (Tamb.). The score is divided into two main sections: Main 1 (measures 1-4) and Main 2 (measures 5-8). In Main 1, the Bells and Strings play a sustained note, while the Str.-Akk., Guitar, and Bass play a rhythmic accompaniment. In Main 2, the Bells and Strings play a melodic line, while the Str.-Akk., Guitar, and Bass continue their accompaniment. The Drums play a consistent pattern throughout.



Programming instruction. If you enter the term "classical waltz" in the Internet, you will usually see this CD advertisement, which puts the Tchaikovsky in the third place! Sure: You are powerless against the Strauss waltzes anyway - the Strauss duo Vater+Sohn have "invented this style"! In the above programming scheme, 4 bars per part are given - actually only because in May2 a 4-bar phrase of the Bells+Strings can be seen - so even Main 1 "technically" must have four bars, even if the first two would have been enough. The steady bass-bass is conspicuous. Why? Because the classical waltzes are very harmonious and because of the skilful use of the third bass as a leading tone, you can create beautiful transitions! In the drum section, the tambourine gives the waltz look-up and the two crashes provide the "hiss" variety!