

# Paper of Listening to Music

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# Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (Biography)(1840–1893)

## Why Tchaikovsky?

"The seasons", his twelve character pieces for piano, are the pearls of my heart. They were leading me into the beauty of the classical music. Each piece in The Seasons depicts a different month of the year in Russia. They are beautiful and make me think of nature, the flowers blooming, the birds singing, the leaves falling and the time flowing. Once I caught it through I was charmed and wanted to listen more and learn more.

Besides, when I was a little child, I watched many Disney's movies which used loads of Tchaikovsky's compositions, including "Swan Lake" to "The Nutcracker", which demonstrate the beauty of music.

## The Life Of Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky was born in 1840 in Vojinsk, Russia, a city of metal industries. Tchaikovsky's father was a mine inspector and his mother's ancestors moved to Russia in the 16th century. Tchaikovsky began to play the piano at home by himself at the age of four, and by the age of six he had mastered the first few skills without a teacher. At the age of eight, the family moved to St. Petersburg because of his father's work. Tchaikovsky went to a local school and began formal music education, which was soon suspended due to his father's work.

Tchaikovsky's parents, on the other hand, although they knew of his musical talents, did not approve of his pursuing the profession, so they decided to study law for him. So Tchaikovsky, at the age of ten, went with his elder brother to a preparatory school for the law. Tchaikovsky did not lose himself in music during his study, and he often used it to compose music when he was free. After graduating from the law school in 1859, Tchaikovsky entered the Judicial Academy as a clerk. But Tchaikovsky was so uninterested in the law that in 1861 he persuaded his father to attend the conservatory of the great pianist Anton Rubinstein.

In the conservatory, Tchaikovsky was a diligent student who could learn modestly what the teachers taught, so he made rapid progress in composition. During this period, he completed some orchestral and chamber music sketches. Tchaikovsky graduated from the Conservatory in 1865. My graduation work is an oratorio based on Schiller's "Ode to Joy", which won the silver medal of the academy.

Tchaikovsky's graduation work was appreciated by Nikolai Rubinstein (Anton Rubinstein's brother), who asked Tchaikovsky to teach his voice at the Moscow conservatory. Teaching at the Moscow Conservatory was not much, but he had plenty of time to compose. So within his first year, he finished symphony No. 1, "Winter's Dream," but was not given the cold shoulder. Later, he composed some piano music, overture and so on, but these works were not very successful.

In 1868, Tchaikovsky began associating with members of the Russian folk music group "The Five", and in 1869 he accepted the suggestion of the group's leader, Baraskirev, to write the famous orchestral fantasy overture "Romeo and Juliet". At this time, however, Tchaikovsky's composition style also gradually alienated from the Russian folk music school, which advocated writing music with national characteristics with Russian national materials, while Tchaikovsky's composition style was more inclined to the music style of western European composers. These two different ways of writing became the two major trends in Russian music.

In 1869 Tchaikovsky experienced the only love affair of his life. In that year, he fell in love with female singer Daisy Jarto. The two had a relationship, but the introverted Tchaikovsky was too slow to propose to Daisy, so she was chased away by others. Despite his emotional setbacks, Tchaikovsky had new musical achievements, and his early masterpieces, such as the first orchestral quartet, symphony No. 2, and fantasia, "The Tempest," appeared one after another. In 1874 Tchaikovsky composed piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, which became one of his most popular compositions.

Tchaikovsky began a mysterious 13-year relationship with Madame Von Meck at the end of 1876. Madame von meck was a rich widow, transporters, because she admired Tchaikovsky's music talent, and is willing to provide six thousand rubles to Tchaikovsky every year, so Tchaikovsky as music college faculty, concentrate on work in the music, but she also proposes two people never met conditions, so the Tchaikovsky and madame von meck always contact only by letters, two people haven't seen his whole life.

From 1875 to 1880, Tchaikovsky finished third and fourth symphony, ballet music as "Swan Lake", the "Four Seasons", symphony fantasia "The Seasons", "Slavic March", "Italy Caprice", "1812 Overture" and "Variations on a Theme by Paganini" and opera masterpiece "Eugene Onegin" and so on. The success of these works greatly raised Tchaikovsky's profile in Russian music and made him an internationally recognized Russian composer.

In honor of Nikolai Rubinstein, who died in 1881, Tchaikovsky wrote a piano trio called "Memories of a Great Artist" to recur to him. Tchaikovsky received a present from the Tsar in 1884 and became president of the Moscow branch of the Russian Musical Society in 1885. In the same year, he also completed the famous Manfred Symphony based on Byron's poems.

In 1887, Tchaikovsky toured Europe and performed with great success. He met with Brahms, DeForzak, Charlie Strauss, Gregg Frei and other composers. He conducted a performance of "Eugene Onegin" in Prague and wrote the famous "Sleeping Beauty" by Barre on his return home in 1889.

In 1890 Tchaikovsky went to the Russian Caucasus, where he received a letter from Madame Von Meck, in which she said that his financial situation had deteriorated, so that he could no longer offer Tchaikovsky financial support, and from now on to cut off their contact between the two. Although Tchaikovsky was by this time a composer of established fame, and his life was in short supply, his decision with Madame Von Meck took a considerable spiritual toll.

In 1891, he visited the United States and conducted and performed his works in New York, Washington and other cities. The results were highly praised. Tchaikovsky was so popular in The United States that he was surprised by how well his music was appreciated in the New World.

In 1892 Tchaikovsky completed Barre's "Nutcracker" and the next year he took up his symphony No. 6. The result was a symphony that was profoundly profound, final and, contrary to tradition, adagio that hinted at despair and death. It was first performed by Tchaikovsky himself in 1893, and although the audience applauded, they did not seem to appreciate that it was a way for Tchaikovsky to express his sadness, pain and despair.

The Symphony no. 6, the Pathétique, which Tchaikovsky once described as a requiem and a curse, turns out to be Tchaikovsky's swan song. Four days after the first performance, on November 1, 1893, Tchaikovsky was said to have contracted cholera and died on November 6, 1893, after a five-day struggle.

On November 18, 12 days after Tchaikovsky's death, the Pathétique symphony was performed by renowned conductor Napravniko at the same place, and this time people finally realized how impressive the piece was.

## The Compositions of Tchaikovsky

- the ballets *Swan Lake* (1877)
- *The Sleeping Beauty* (1889)
- The Nutcracker (1892)
- the Romeo and Juliet overture (1870)
- Symphony No. 6 in B Minor (Pathétique) (1893).
- The Seasons (1877)

## The evaluation of Tchaikovsky

- His music had great appeal for the general public by virtue of its tuneful open-hearted melodies, impressive harmonies, and colourful, picturesque orchestration, all of which evoke a profound emotional response.
- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky is widely considered the most popular Russian composer in history.

# The evalution of the Seasons

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In fact, I cannot evaluate it professionally as teacher do. I just try hard to express my feelings and use my little knowledge to guess the meaning and find the beauty.

Originally written for piano solos, some pieces were choreographed into different ensembles. The publisher of Four Seasons added approved inscriptions at the beginning of each score of the original Russian book: At the lively Mardi Gras soon a large feast will overflow. It shows a world full of bright and bold warm sunshine. The excitement and drive is high, even through the slightly quieter section in the middle of the piece. The delicate quiet responses to the bold proclamations offer light and shade to the music, with Tchaikovsky's intricate writing being at the centre of the music. The piece becomes much quieter before finishing with a thrilling flourish.