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**Tchaikovsky and his Sexuality**

Tchaikovsky’s sexual orientation has been a topic debated for a long time. Whether or not he was gay is an important aspect of his musical career. A New York Times article by Dirk Olin entitled “Tchaikovsky” discusses the effects his sexuality had on his musical career and life. Olin quotes Joseph Kraus, a professor of music theory at the University of Nebraska, to show that there is reason to believe that Tchaikovsky’s sexuality impacted his career. Kraus says that his orientation can be clearly identified upon listening to one of his musical compositions. Kraus’ reasoning is, “If our interests in his homosexuality forms part of the filter through which we listen, then it would seem that an investigation into this area would be appropriate.” Not everyone agrees with Kraus’ belief. Some musical professors believe that li Tchaikovsky’s music isn’t a good source to determining whether or not Tchaikovsky was gay. Other music professors disagree with what Kraus says. They think that investigating Tchaikovsky’s sexuality has to been done in more depth. Determining whether he was a homosexual or not is more dependent upon the style, emotion, and structure of his work. Upon scrutinizing these details of his music, one can gather enough information for themselves to determine whether or not Tchaikovsky was gay.

Tchaikovsky's musical style was controversial for being more western while the rest of Russia was looking at more traditional eastern styles. Many music professionals and modernists criticized his style and attacked his music because they felt that it had too much “fluff” and “bombast”. Tchaikovsky’s sound was something that people weren’t used to during this time. Many today still believe that his compositions are “pretty”, but lack structure and complexity. Tchaikovsky admitting that he struggled to master some compositional forms, which may be why some people feel that his work lacks structure. In his article, Olin quoted other music professors like Walter Frisch in order to present the argument that the textbook structures of music are not always applicable to every piece of music and could even be described as “snobbery”. Frisch says that, “great art is complex, even when it appears simple”. I believe that Tchaikovsky is just another example of a brilliant person who was criticized for being different and stepping outside the preset boundaries of their field. His different way structuring and writing his music is one of the pieces of evidence people use to defend their argument for Tchaikovsky being a homosexual. While he might’ve been gay, I don’t agree with using the structure of his music as evidence to support what his sexuality was. Tchaikovsky could’ve merely been creative and experimenting with new ideas, and doing that isn’t something that makes you gay.

“Tchaikovsky Uncovered: The Secret Gay Life of a Legend” is an article by Christopher Treacy says Tchaikovsky definitely was gay.. Treacy quotes Dr. Jon Anderson, a musicologist and professor at Wayne State University, in order to explain the that there is evidence to prove Tchaikovsky was gay. Dr. Anderson says, “We now have so many documented letters that his younger brother, Modest - who was also gay - saved, but the family didn't release for quite some time after his death. They offer a clear, evidential track of his homosexuality. It's probably the most fascinating exchange in the history of composer correspondence.” These letters may prove that Tchaikovsky was gay, but he was still a very troubled soul and was depressed for most of his life. Anderson says that his sexuality is not the reason for this depression; many powerful people in Russia were gay and Tchaikovsky had a close circle of gay friends. The reason for his depression, as Anderson says, was that Tchaikovsky was not able to feel fulfilled in his love life. His marriage to Antonina Milyukova is also one of the reasons he was depressed. Milyukova had pestered Tchaikovsky into marrying her. He said yes because they agreed not to have sex and he thought that his parents would be thrilled. Milyukova tortured him about the truth of his sexuality afterwards. Some scholars even believe that she threatened to tell the world the truth about him. Naturally, his miserable marriage to Milyukova made him feel terrible. According to Treacy’s article, many homosexual men believe that “the angst, despair and suffering deemed so apparent in his music's "melodic lyricism" can be directly traced to the struggle of a closeted gay man living in torture with his secret”. It is more difficult to determine whether or not Tchaikovsky was gay because, according to Treacy, “composition is inherently linked with performance and, often, a ready knowledge of an artist's sexuality”. The issue of Tchaikovsky’s sexuality also raises up the question of what exactly gay music is. Dr. Anderson says, ”There's definitely been work done around the concept of music being masculine and feminine and the differing qualities of how we label our chords - almost a patriarchal ranking.”

Tchaikovsky died at the young age of 53 years old. In the letters exchanged with his nephew, Bob, there is some hint that there might’ve been a romantic relationship between the two. In these letters, Tchaikovsky “ tells Bob that he's come up with an incredible idea for his final symphony, but that, "...I'll take it to the grave with me" (i.e. he will not provide a text for explanation as to the piece's meaning)”. This symphony was his Sixth Symphony, Pathetique. It is often characterized as a suicide note. The symphony is in a minor key. It is slow and there is a lot of clashing themes and chords. Musicologists link this to all the confusion and misery Tchaikovsky had in his life. Tchaikovsky was a troubled soul, but he was still incredibly brilliant. Musicologists believe that Tchaikovsky’s sexuality is very important when analyzing his music because it might’ve been the reason he was open to new ideas and challenging what other people were accustomed to at the time.