

Tchaikovsky

Russian by Default

Beginnings

- Unlike many great composers, he began his musical career relatively late. His original training was for the law and he worked in government service for a short while.

Career

- He was able to move into a compositional career rather easily and, in fact, had one of the more spectacularly successful careers in the history of music.

Nadezhda von Meck

- He was subsidized for many years by an odd, interesting woman by the name of Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow. She agreed to pay him a generous stipend so he could compose without worry, but on the condition that they never met.
- They did write letters back and forth.

Nadezhda von Meck

- Von Meck terminated the relationship abruptly; she gave no explanation but it appears that she had suffered some financial setbacks and worried that she could no longer support Tchaikovsky.

Character

- Neurotic, unhappy man who suffered from bouts of depression and anxiety of the exposure of his homosexuality, which would have been a serious problem for him in 19th century Russia.
- He even married an equally unstable woman to try to cover up, but the marriage was a fiasco.

Carnegie Hall

- Tchaikovsky was present for the dedication of the great new Music Hall in New York, which was soon renamed Carnegie Hall.
- He enjoyed America and was very positively inclined towards the country and its citizens—unlike many Europeans who had travelled here.

The End

- He returned to Russia and died from cholera, caused by drinking a glass of contaminated water.
- There has been some sensationalist reporting that perhaps it wasn't accidental, but nothing is proven.

Tchaikovskyian Style

- Harps at cadences

Tchaikovskyian Style

- Drumrolls at climaxes

Tchaikovskyian Style

- Cymbals at climaxes

Tchaikovskyian Style

- The occasional odd Russian-style tune.

Romeo and Juliet

- Romeo & Juliet is not a plot-line kind of symphonic poem
- It does not tell the story of the play.
- Works with melodic materials that are suggested by the story
- Musical themes represent themes in the play.

Themes

- Hymn Theme
 - At the beginning of the piece
 - During the development

Themes

- Vendetta Theme
 - First statement
 - Beginning of development

Themes

- Sighing Theme
 - First appearance
 - In the coda

Themes

- Love Theme
 - In Exposition
 - In Recapitulation
 - “Transfigured” in the Coda

Romeo & Juliet

Overture-Fantasy
Peter Tchaikovsky

Introduction (Andante)

Hymn theme

Low woodwinds, *pp*

String motives

Anguished quality; contrapuntal

Strumming harp

With “announcements” in the high woodwinds

Hymn theme

High woodwinds with pizzicato strings. Followed by the string motives and harp; the “announcements” are now in the strings

Buildup

Ends with drum roll, *f*

Preparation

Prepares for the main section; *p*, then crescendo