

09-10 SEASON LEGENDS

DAYTON
PHILHARMONIC
ENGAGE. ENJOY. EMERGE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009
PROGRAM
"HEART & HEARTLAND"

TCHAIKOVSKY

Sleeping Beauty Waltz

GLINKA

Kamarinskaya

TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 2, op. 17
Ukrainian



CLASSICAL CONNECTIONS

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

WELCOME

Tchaikovsky has been in the Classical Connections spotlight twice before. We explored his Sixth Symphony (*Pathétique*) in March 1998 and the Fifth in October 2000. In each case, we focused on links between the music and the composer's life. Both symphonies have "Fate Motives", and both are believed to relate to the fierce inner conflict between Tchaikovsky's homosexual orientation and his desire to lead a conventional life.

Although those symphonies can easily be spun that way, this emphasizes the soap-opera-ish aspects of Tchaikovsky's life and plays to a nasty stereotype that denigrates Tchaikovsky as a sentimental composer of beautiful but unimportant melodies, not as good a composer as Mozart, Beethoven, or Brahms. The message: we talk about his

personal life because his music's not worth talking about.

For me, them's fighting words. The opening program of the 2009-2010 Classical Connections season is the perfect rebuttal. Tchaikovsky's Second Symphony (called the *Little Russian* or *Ukrainian*) lacks the personal programmatic content of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth. It predates by five years the major upheavals of his personal life — his disastrous nine-week marriage and subsequent nervous breakdown. If there's a story to tell about the Second, it's musical rather than personal: a story about creating a

unique Russian musical identity and about bringing folk tunes out of the countryside and into the concert hall. It may lack the pizzazz of the gossipy personal stuff, but I think the musical story of this beautiful symphony is compelling enough to merit our attention.

Neal Gittleman
Music Director, Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra





PORTRAIT
PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
- & -
**Nationalism
in Music**

There's a great old Jewish joke: Every Jewish community needs two temples — one you attend and one you wouldn't set foot in! The message: everyone needs both something to love and something to hate.

What does this have to do with Tchaikovsky, whom everybody (everybody worth knowing, anyway) loves?

It has to do with the great divide in music, a divide with many manifestations — serious music vs. popular music, classical music vs. commercial music, “real music” vs. “that crap you kids listen to”. It comes down to this: music you love (“good music”) vs. the music you don't (“bad music”).

This goes back to the very beginning. Academics tell us that Western Music began in the Middle Ages with the chants of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Indeed, Catholic liturgical music is the spring from which came the great line of European classical music: Josquin, Monteverdi, Bach, Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms — all the canonical composers.

But that's not the whole truth. There wasn't just church music — which survived because it was written down. There were also secular musical traditions — folk traditions that passed down orally from one generation to the next. The Church authorities' stance was simple: sacred music good, secular music bad. Every effort was made to keep the chant liturgy pure, free from the dubious popular trends of the secular side.

During the first millennium of Western Music the labels of the great divide shifted. Once secular music established itself as a respectable genre complementary to sacred music, the new esthetic divide separated “art music” (sacred and secular) from folk music.

Things finally began to change in the 19th century, reflecting changes in society and in politics. The American and French revolutions marked the beginning of the end of the old European ways. Absolutist church-based government of the nobles by the nobles and for the nobles began to give way to more democratic, secular institutions as the Holy Roman Empire disintegrated and individual sovereign nation-states came into being.

The parallel revolution in musical styles challenged the Austro-German tradition embodied by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. The challenge came from nationalist composers eager to integrate their own authentic musical traditions into the mainstream: Liszt writing Hungarian rhapsodies, Dvořák writing Slavonic dances, Grieg setting Norwegian folk songs, Albéniz incorporating echoes of Spanish folk music in his *Iberia* piano suite.

TCHAIKOVSKY DREW INSPIRATION FROM THE LIVES AND MUSIC OF RUSSIAN COUNTRY FOLK.

THIS EARLY COLOR PROCESS IMAGE WAS CAPTURED BY RUSSIAN PHOTOGRAPHER SERGEI PROKUDIN-GORSKII IN THE EARLY 1900'S.



ST. PETERSBURG
CONSERVATORY,
TODAY



In Russia, the first flowering of musical nationalism came with Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), who returned home from training in Italy and Germany and began to work Russian folk materials into his compositions. His 1848 orchestral showpiece *Kamarinskaya*, which closes the first half of our September Classical Connections program,



MIKHAIL GLINKA

is the crown jewel of early Russian nationalism: a lively seven-minute set of variations on a peasant wedding dance. Nowadays it's rarely performed, considered too light for serious programs and too serious for pops concerts. But in mid-19th century Russia, Glinka's wedding of folk and classical traditions sparked a revolution in Russian classical music.

Russian composers made a concerted effort to create their own national school — "school" in both the figurative sense of a style and in the literal sense of an institute.

The home base of Russian nationalism was the St. Petersburg Conservatory, opened in 1862 with pianist-composer Anton Rubenstein as its director.

Until then, serious Russian classical musicians could only study abroad. Home was not an option.



ANTON RUBENSTEIN

Rubenstein, who had been trained in Berlin and Vienna, patterned the school on the great European conservatories, with a curriculum rooted in the study and emulation of the great masters — Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven — and rigorous training in harmony, counterpoint, and technique.

What made the St. Petersburg Conservatory unique was Rubenstein's parallel desire to give the school a distinctively Russian character. Instead of promoting European models at the expense of home-grown musical traditions, the Conservatory embraced Russian folk music and followed Glinka's model of integrating European and home-grown traditions.

The first class at Rubenstein's St. Petersburg Conservatory included a talented pianist who had just finished nine years of study at the School of Jurisprudence but longed to drop the law and devote himself full-time to composition: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Tchaikovsky's four years in the Conservatory served him well, giving him solid technical skills to match his innate musicality and gift for melody. Six years after graduation Tchaikovsky composed his *Symphony No. 2*, based on Ukrainian folk tunes, and seemed on his way to joining the nationalist movement.

But Tchaikovsky never became a true Russian nationalist like the "Mighty Five" of the next generation (Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin). Instead, he developed into an internationalist who assimilated Russian folk traditions into his own personal style, where they hid just below the surface, occasionally appearing full-force in the *Nutcracker's* Trepak or the slow passages of the 1812 Overture.

In the Second Symphony, however, we hear a Pyotr Ilyich with a European technique and a Russian soul.

Pen Pals



Ask Tchaikovsky who was the most important person in his life, and he'd have said his brother Modeste. Family loyalty aside, however, the true answer was probably Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, his patron, correspondent, and confidante. Without her, Tchaikovsky might never have become the great composer whom we know and love today.

Mme. von Meck (1831-1894) was a wealthy widow, the mother of 11 children, an amateur musician, and a passionate music lover. In 1876 Anton Rubenstein introduced her to the music of his protégé Tchaikovsky, who was then teaching at the Moscow Conservatory. Tchaikovsky had already composed some significant works, including three symphonies, a piano concerto, three string quartets, the tone-poem *Romeo and Juliet* and the Variations on a Rococo Theme for cello and orchestra (the latter two are featured on the Thursday/Saturday concerts that bracket September's Classical Connections program). But financial success still eluded the 36-year-old composer. Rubenstein hoped that Nadezhda von Meck would fall in love with Tchaikovsky's music and become his patron.

She did. They began corresponding in December 1876, and less than two years later von Meck agreed to provide Tchaikovsky with a 6,000-ruble annuity to allow him to compose free from financial worry. For a dozen years — until illness, financial difficulties, and complaints from her children forced her to stop her support — Mme. von Meck was Tchaikovsky's economic lifeline.

She was his emotional lifeline as well. Their over 1,200 letters show Tchaikovsky sharing his most intimate feelings and struggles, details of his disastrous wedding and ensuing breakdown, and fascinating insights behind many of his works — especially the Fourth Symphony. Mme. von Meck's emotional support was essential to Tchaikovsky's psychological well-being. Her absence from his life in the final years probably contributed to his early, unfortunate demise.

Despite their intimate correspondence, Pyotr Ilyich and Nadezhda Filaretovna agreed early on that they would never meet face-to-face. Only once did they accidentally lay eyes on each other, when their carriages passed each other on the von Meck estate.

They were true romantic soul mates, and we who love his music owe her our deepest gratitude.

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PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY *A Life & Times*

- 1840 -

May 7, Tchaikovsky is born in Kamsko-Votkinsk to Il'ya Petrovich Tchaikovsky, a mining engineer, and the former Alexandra Andreyevna Assier.

- 1845 -

First piano lessons.

- 1849 -

Begins composing, though his first serious piece, a piano sonata, is still three years off.

- 1850 -

Enters the St. Petersburg School of Jurisprudence, following his parents' desires for a conventional career.

- 1862 -

Enrolls in the St. Petersburg Conservatory as a member of its inaugural class.

- 1872 -

Composes first version of Symphony No. 2.

- 1876 -

Begins a 14-year correspondence with wealthy widow Nadezhda von Meck, who becomes his patron.

- 1877 -

Tchaikovsky marries Conservatory student Antonina Milyukova. The marriage ends after nine weeks and Tchaikovsky suffers a nervous breakdown.

- 1881 -

Revised version of Second Symphony premieres in St. Petersburg.

- 1890 -

First performance of *Sleeping Beauty*.

- 1893 -

October 24, dies under suspicious circumstances in St. Petersburg, one week after the premiere of his Symphony No. 6.

- 1840 -

England's Queen Victoria marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Birth of French artists Claude Monet, Pierre August Renoir, and August Rodin.

- 1845 -

U.S. Naval Academy opens.

- 1849 -

Zachary Taylor becomes 12th U.S. President. Armand Fizeau measures the speed of light.

- 1850 -

Pres. Taylor dies 4 months into his term, succeeded by Millard Fillmore. Hawthorne writes *The Scarlet Letter*.

- 1862 -

Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation.

- 1872 -

Jules Verne writes *Around the World in 80 Days*.

- 1876 -

National Baseball League founded. Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.

- 1877 -

Congress names Rutherford B. Hayes 19th U.S. president over Samuel Tilden. Thomas Edison invents the phonograph.

- 1881 -

Booker T. Washington founds the Tuskegee Institute. First cabaret opens in Paris.

- 1890 -

First all steel-framed building goes up in Chicago.

- 1893 -

Dvořák premieres his *New World Symphony*. Henry Ford builds first auto. Cole Porter born.



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