

Newsletter

Tchaikovsky

Last week, we learnt about the beauty of classical music and Beethoven's "Shepherd Song" and "Ode to Joy". This week we will bring to you another renowned composer, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and his pieces; Swan Lake, Marche Slave and Piano Concerto No. 1.

Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was undoubtedly the first Russian composer to leave a lasting impression internationally. He grew up in a big family of six children and interestingly first trained to be a civil servant but eventually gave up his civil service career and began his journey to being one of the greatest composers of the romantic era. Tchaikovsky was great in every manner, even his death became one great mystery... passing just nine days after the premiere of one of his most impassioned works, Symphony No.6. Many speculated that it was caused by drinking unboiled water!



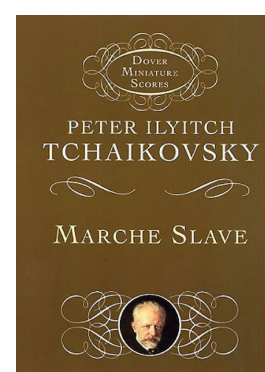
Swan Lake

"Swan Lake" is one of the most famous and mesmerising classical ballets, although it was composed over 100 years ago by Tchaikovsky in 1875. It was first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Sadly, when the ballet debuted, it was not well received. The ballet combined with Tchaikovsky's music, tells a beautiful, timeless love story. Under the spell of a sorcerer, Odette, a young woman spends her days as a swan alone in a lake made of tears but at night, she becomes a beautiful human. Soon the prince Siegfried falls in love with Odette. But again, the sorcerer plays tricks and makes this love story tug at the audience's heartstrings and feelings. But don't worry...the happy ending brings the ballet full circle!



Marche Slave

Unlike the romantic love story in "Swan Lake", Tchaikovsky's "Marche Slave" was a rousing patriotic orchestral composition based on Serbian and Russian folk themes. It was also first performed in Moscow in November 1876. Although the piece does not have a specific storyline, from the awakening tune, we can grasp how it was written specifically for a concert to entertain Serb soldiers wounded while fighting against the Ottoman Empire. At different moments of this inspiring piece, different instruments have their own melodies at the same time, creating a layered effect and building to a triumphant conclusion.



Piano Concerto No.1

Composed before "Swan Lake" and "Marche Slave" was "Piano Concerto No.1" in 1874, however it was revised in 1879 and 1888 as it was not universally loved initially. As the name suggests, this piece was a "concerto" which means a musical composition for an instrument accompanied by an orchestra. The concerto followed the traditional form of three movements with each movement being deeply expressive and romantic; from a roaring opening to soulful melodies and finally the thrilling conclusion. Almost 80 years after Tchaikovsky's initial composition of his "Piano Concerto No.1", it became the first classical music to sell a million records!



Links

Swan Lake:

- Some young students are learning it in the Piano Adventure for Young series.
- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tx24IOX6qP4>

Marche Slave:

- March Slave is in Piano Adventure 3A. Please appreciate the symphony version in the link below. Conductor, Pletnev is a great musician!
- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSf8uF5UE-U>

Piano Concerto No.1:

- Some students are leaning a simplified version version of the second movement. Please go to 20:35 and appreciate the beautiful flute playing the theme.
- Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItSJ_woWnmk

And finally...

Since we have learnt about all about Tchaikovsky in this issue, it is only fair that we end on his wise words; “Inspiration is a guest that does not willingly visit the lazy.”. So students... get practising!