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TCHAIKOVSKY'S BALLETS

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Ballet and Dance in Nineteenth Century Russia

The concept of ballet was born in Italy in the fifteenth century. However, it was brought up and developed in France where dancing became a vital part of court entertainments. The Paris Opera Ballet springs from the Academie Royale de Musique which Louis XIV founded in 1671.

Simultaneously, in Russia, society under Peter the Great attempted to encourage social dance. Peter the Great's policy to "Westernize his country" tried to make his people aware of the outside world. (Clarke, 26). Russian ballet traces its origins back to productions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that combined dance with speech and song. Ballet was imported into Russia during the country's first period of Westernization when many European fashions, including dancing, were widely imitated. The Russians were attracted to French opera and the traditions of the Paris Opera, which included ballet. Within half a century of Peter's reforms, the first dancing school was opened in St. Petersburg in 1738 by French-born Jean Baptiste Lande. In 1766, Catherine II established the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres, which had jurisdiction over opera, drama, and ballet.

The Russian nationalist movement in the Romantic period helped to establish Russian opera and ballet. This tradition was established by the composer, Mikhail Glinka. Glinka composed only two operas in his lifetime: *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and *A Life for the Tsar*. However, he is known as "the father of Russian opera" (Calland, 19). In 1828, Glinka heard several Rossini operas when a touring Italian opera company came to St. Petersburg. In 1830, Glinka left St. Petersburg for Italy, and there met Bellini and Donizetti. He also attended the opera and studied composition. There were no

opportunities for compositional study in Russia for there were few composers there at the time. In 1836, *A Life for the Tsar* premiered and in 1842, Glinka presented his score for *Ruslan and Lyudmila* to the Imperial Theatres. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* included a series of three Oriental Dances, No. 20. These ballet dances were the Turkish Dance, the Arabian Dance, and the Lesginka (Caucasian Dance). Glinka's success with his two operas established Russia as a leader in operatic composition.

In the wake of the rise of Russian opera, the importance of ballet also escalated. In the late 1830s, the Imperial ballet school was established under the protection of the Tsar. St. Petersburg became the home of the Imperial Ballet and other companies were maintained in Moscow. However, the Imperial Russian Ballet still owed much of its successes to French and Italian choreographers, teachers, and dancers.

In the nineteenth century, the Imperial Theatre's directors felt that ballet was no more than an elaborate "diversion." It was part of the "pretty, the elegant and the fantastic which have always been facets of Russian life" (Warrack, 7).

In the later part of the nineteenth century when ballet fell out of favor in most of Western Europe, it flourished in Russia. Russian dancers became the finest in the world and masterpieces like *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* were created.

Classical ballet refers both to the system of training and to a small number of ballets. The training is of the academic style of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* are examples of Classical ballets in that they are regarded today as ballets of a classical style. In contrast, Romantic ballet was originally meant to describe any ballet between 1830 and 1850 when ballet became tremendously popular in Western Europe. Ballerinas such as Taglioni, Elssler, and Grisi danced in Romantic ballets. The

bedrock of the Romantic tradition founded in the mid nineteenth century continued until the late 1800s. Even though these ballets are situated in the Romantic period of music, they are referred to as Classical today to distinguish them from modern dance. The structured movements, training, costumes (like the tutu), and shoes are all considered “classical” because they differ greatly from the freer movements and costumes of modern dance.

The first Romantic ballet produced was *La Sylphide* at the Paris Opera in 1832. It is the earliest major ballet to survive in anything like its original form. *La Sylphide* is centered in the remote Scottish highlands and the plot focuses on James and the Sylph. The Sylph is a magical creature who captures James’ affections and lures him away from his fiancée. Madge, an old witch disturbs James’ wedding celebration and after he causes her to leave, threatens him with revenge. James escapes with the Sylph to the forest where the Sylph is tempted by Madge and results in the death of James. This ballet includes elements of fantasy and magic and has a devastating ending.

Marie Taglioni danced the lead part choreographed by her father, Filippo Taglioni. Taglioni is considered to be one of the first ballet masters. The term originally described the person who actually staged the ballets. In the later nineteenth century it encompassed the director of a company and the ballet masters of today are “the people in charge of rehearsing works after they have been choreographed” (Robertson, 258).

Romantic ballet rejected the heroic themes that had been previous ballet subject matter such as Greek warrior battles and historical events. *La Sylphide* displaced the male as the principal dancer in ballet with the female. The focus of the ballet was directed towards the prima ballerina and as a result, the music composed for the ballets was written

to emphasize the lightness and grace of the ballerina more than the ballet's drama and plot.

Marie Taglioni embodied all the characteristics of the Romantic ballerina. She possessed an ethereal lightness and a brilliant technique. She was one of the first dancers to perform on *pointe*, or in toe shoes. In addition, the new ballet costume consisting of a bell-shaped skirt and fitted bodice allowed the dancer to become more poetic and less illustrative. In the first performance of *La Sylphide* she bounded across the stage with grace and created the illusion of floating. However, later in the century there was a movement towards making the ballerina's role more athletic and demanding. The shoes that Taglioni wore are quite different than the shoes worn in the later nineteenth century which were composed of a wooden toe box that provided more structural support for the dancer. *La Sylphide* created the Romantic notion "of an unobtainable feminine ideal hovering just out of reach" (Robertson, 15). It also established Marie Taglioni as an international star. Filippo Taglioni exposed Russia to French ballet in 1837 when his production of *La Sylphide* was performed in St. Petersburg.

The crown of the Romantic ballet was *Giselle*. It was staged in 1841 at the Paris Opera and was designed to showcase the remarkable talent of Carlotta Grisi. She was discovered by Jules Perrot in Naples in 1836. Perrot and Grisi arrived in Paris in 1840. Opera houses usually had a ballet school associated with it so as to ensure that dancers were always available for dancing parts within the operas.

There has been a long standing tradition of opera and dance combined together in an entertainment. Most operas have a dance sequence or *divertissement* within the plot. Composers incorporated dance scenes into operas to provide a distraction from the heavy emotional matters of the opera plot line. Weber used ballet in his 1810 opera, *Silvana*, in

order for the mostly mute heroine to express the romantic woodland spirit and her own feelings. In the 1820's ballet became an integral part of French opera. Rossini provided two extensive dance sequences in his *Guillaume Tell* in 1829. In Russia, Glinka composed opera scenes that grew out of the opera's dramatic action especially in *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842). However, Grisi discovered that in 1840, the Paris Opera was without a star ballerina. The poet and balletomane, Theophile Gautier fell in love with Carlotta and devised the libretto of *Giselle* for her in order to facilitate her entry to the Opera. The score was composed by Adolphe Adam who extended the expressive character of ballet music. *Giselle* was inspired by a book of German folk tales. The ballet involves the supernatural and unrequited love. The plot of *Giselle* begins with Giselle being chosen as the queen of the harvest festival. She falls in love with a stranger at the party only to learn that he is a nobleman named Albrecht and is already engaged. Giselle attempts suicide and dies of a broken heart. Her soul is transported to the realm of the Wilis where the souls of young women who died betrayed in love are kept. The transformed women trap men in their forest as revenge and force them to dance to their deaths. As a repentant Albrecht enters the forest, Giselle gives him the strength to dance all night until the Wilis return to their tombs at sunrise. At the end of the ballet, Giselle sinks into her tomb, lost to Albrecht forever. The ballet and Carlotta's performance were immediate successes, and *Giselle* remains even today in contemporary ballet repertoire.

Despite the production of these triumphant ballets, patrons of the arts and audience members were dissatisfied with ballet because it featured female dancers and ignored male dancers. As a result, ballet suffered a decline in Western Europe and became little more than a poor relation found in operas and music halls as incidental dances.

Seeing ballet's downfall, Jules Perrot went to St. Petersburg in 1849 and for the next ten years staged ballets for dancers such as Fanny Elssler and Carlotta Grisi. Perrot created the "danse d'action" in which the dance arises from the action and furthers it (Wiley, 7). He also helped to form a generation of Russian ballerinas that emerged from the well established schools of Imperial Russia. He served as Imperial Ballet Master from 1851 to 1858. His large scale productions served as a direct model for Marius Petipa.

Ballet in nineteenth-century Russia grew rapidly in popularity. Elena Andreyanova became the first Russian romantic ballerina in St. Petersburg with her performance in *Giselle*. In Moscow, Ekaterina Sankovskaya danced in *La Sylphide*, *La Esmerelda*, *La Fille du Danube*, and *Giselle*. She was admired for her "sense of human truthfulness she had brought into ballet" (Warrack, 7).

There were several privately run companies and ballet troupes attached to the state-supported or Imperial theatres. The directors of these companies were appointed by the Tsar, and the dancers were considered "Imperial servants" (Anderson, 85). Imperial patronage made dancing a respectable career for both men and women in Russia. Male students at ballet schools were considered equals of those attending military or naval academies.

By the mid-nineteenth century, there were state supported companies in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. In Moscow, performances took place at the Bolshoi Theatre and in St. Petersburg, at both the Bolshoi and the Maryinsky Theatres. The Moscow and St. Petersburg companies were rivals. Patrons of the St. Petersburg ballet considered Moscow dancers to be flamboyant while Muscovites considered the St. Petersburg troupe

“too coldly academic” (Anderson, 86). In addition, Moscow focused more on the development of the plot and action than did St. Petersburg.

When Perrot left Russia, he was succeeded by another Frenchman, Arthur St. Leon as chief ballet master. From 1860-69, St. Leon commuted between St. Petersburg and Paris and produced ballets in both cities. In 1869 he left Russia for the last time and choreographed his final ballet, *Coppelia*. *Coppelia*'s ballet score was composed by Delibes and was the first composer to raise the status of ballet music from the “slough into which it had been allowed to fall” (Abraham, 184). *Coppelia* is based on an E.T.A. Hoffmann tale. *Coppelia* is a doll that is so life-like that the ballet's hero, Franz, falls in love with her. Swanilda, Franz's fiancée, goes to Dr. Coppelius' work-shop to confront *Coppelia*. Surprised, she learns that *Coppelia* is just a doll. As a result, Swanilda disguises herself as *Coppelia*, to get back at Franz, and pretends to come to life. Dr. Coppelius is overjoyed at believing that he created a toy with a soul, but is disappointed to learn that Swanilda is a real person. Franz and Swanilda are then reunited and married. Tchaikovsky was to use Delibes as a model for his own ballet compositions to come. Unfortunately, in 1870, the Franco-Prussian war broke out and France suffered terrible privations. In the fall of 1870 St. Leon died and his interpretation of *Coppelia* vanished with him. However, at the end of the war, the ballet returned to the Paris Opera and was staged in St. Petersburg with different choreography.

Marius Petipa, another Frenchman, succeeded St. Leon as chief ballet master in St. Petersburg. He originally went to Russia as a dancer but had also helped Perrot with his productions. “Under Petipa's rule, which lasted more than forty years, ballet entered its greatest period in Imperial Russia” and a truly Russian style was developed (Clarke, 53).

In 1862 he was appointed ballet master of the Russian Imperial Ballet and at St. Leon's death became chief ballet master.

The ballet companies in St. Petersburg and Moscow were part of the Tsar's household and every year Petipa was required to stage a new ballet. He conceived ballet differently from his predecessors. His ballets were full of difficult choreography and contained much spectacle. His ballets became the "most elaborate and lavish events the dance world has ever known" (Robertson, 13). Petipa liked to stretch the narrative over three or four acts. At the end of the ballet occurred a *divertissement*. Also near the end of the ballet, convention prescribed a "*grand pas de deux* for the ballerina and *premier danseur*" (Anderson, 88). Other dances that Petipa conceived were character dances.

Petipa's ballets were conceived as "treats for the eyes" (Robertson, 90). His *La Bayadere* (1877) was set in the India of the rajahs. In addition to these exotic ballets, Petipa also choreographed ballets that ranged in emotional depth. His *The Daughter of the Pharaoh* is a florid drama while *Don Quixote* is a light comedy. However, Petipa achieved his highest success while in collaboration with Tchaikovsky. The zenith of Petipa's career occurred during his production of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Each of Petipa's ballets was centered around the *grand pas de deux* for the ballerina and her partner. In these dances, Petipa pushed ballet technique to new heights of virtuosity.

Ballet and formal dance scenes are often incorporated into opera. This tradition was found in both French and Russian opera, the latter modeled after the former. Tchaikovsky even incorporated ballet scenes into his operas *Eugene Onegin* (1879) and the *Queen of Spades* (1890). These dances were meant as distractions for the characters in the operas and did not usually contribute to furthering the plot line of the opera.

Therefore, ballet music was long considered inferior because it was meant to be background music or an accompaniment for the visual spectacle of the dancers on stage.

The first ballet music was required to be negligible. Its primary purpose was to provide aural decor and rhythmic support for the choreography. Ballet composers never stood up to ballet masters who wanted the music to be purely decorative and very conventional. In the Imperial Theatres, the ballet master's authority over the composer was "sanctioned by law" (Wiley, 4). Even the choreographer Charles Didelot "regarded [the] music as the servant of the choreography" (Wiley, 6). The music took second place to the choreography because only the melodic development of the score was important and the other qualities of a ballet score were considered unimportant.

The official Imperial Composer, Ludwig Minkus, composed music that contained "an enormous variety of melodies, brilliant orchestration and, chiefly, consistency of musical style" (Wiley, 7). However, Tchaikovsky discredited these compositions and regarded them as "marketplace concoctions" (Wiley, 5). Yet, it is unfair to label these composers as uncreative and untalented.

These specialist composers had many constraints and provisions set upon them. They had to acknowledge the visual component of the ballet and needed to write music that complemented the movements of the dance: it needed to have a clear rhythm and melodiousness. In addition, the composer had to respond to unusual artistic demands of dancers and choreographers. The composer-ballet master collaboration set out to achieve "a unity of sound and gesture" (Wiley, 5).

Ballet music was long regarded as second to the choreography until the era of Delibes and Tchaikovsky. With Delibes' *Sylvia* greater attention was focused on the

music. Rather than remain solely an accompaniment, the music began to express thoughts, feelings, and emotions. The music furthered plot lines and enhanced the drama of the overall production. The score became as memorable as the choreography itself. Delibes expanded upon Adam's idea of associating themes with characters. Tchaikovsky was even attracted to Delibes because he felt that Delibes "found a way of combining short characteristic dances, virtuoso solos, and ensembles with longer scenes into a structure that was at once colorful and cohesive" (Warrack, 11). Tchaikovsky admired the beauty, exactness, and lightness of Delibes. As a result, he took Delibes model for his full length ballet scores and created strongly designed scores for plots of substance.

Marius Petipa, in his ballet reforms, wanted to enlarge the expressive range of ballet and thought the way to accomplish this was to increase the amount of musical importance. After hearing Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, he realized that Tchaikovsky possessed the musical strength that he was searching for. Petipa liked the way in which Tchaikovsky used the characteristics of Russian folk song and dance as a structural force in his symphonies and concertos. The *lyrical idea* and its symphonic quality were completely unknown in Russia until Tchaikovsky used it in his musical compositions.

Ballet Terminology

Before studying ballet in depth, it is important to discuss the various words and phrases that comprise ballet terminology. Tchaikovsky came in contact with these words as ballet masters specified their musical requirements. All ballet terms are in French because the tradition began in France and choreographers never bothered to change the set terms.

Types of Dances:

Each ballet is usually centered around three types of dances: narrative/ action, formal/ traditional or *divertissement*. Narrative dance describes a type of emotion or conveys a certain feeling. They are usually referred to as *pas d'action*, which is defined as any scene in which the narrative of the ballet is carried forward in dancing. Another descriptive word that describes a narrative event is *scene*. When there is mimed dialogue or exchanges between characters, they take place in a *scene*. Tchaikovsky used this term more often than any other type of dance because this type furthers the plot line most effectively.

Formal or traditional dances include solos or small ensemble dances. They are sometimes called *pas de deux* or *pas de quatre*. The *pas de deux* is usually a highlight of the ballet because it is the dance for the prima ballerina and her partner. The *pas de deux* has a strict formula in which there is an introduction, a variation for the male dancer followed by a variation for the female dancer and ends with a virtuosic coda. The success of the *pas de deux* “depends upon the skillful partnership between the two dancers and upon the man’s dignity and pride in presenting his ballerina to best advantage” (Clarke, 103). A *pas de quatre* is for four dancers. Sometimes they are used as four variations or represent four characters. For example, in *The Sleeping Beauty*, each of the four dancers represents a different jeweled fairy in one of the final dances.

A *divertissement* is a collection of dances that usually comprise the last act of “jollifications” in the big nineteenth century ballets. They are regarded as a “sparkling suite of dances that in no way advanced the plot, but was inserted into the ballet-as the term suggests-simply to divert” (Anderson, 88). Literally diversions, these are suites of

dances where the plot comes to a halt for display of technical virtuosity. These dances are not integral to the plot. They give the choreographer a chance to create a visual spectacle. Divertissements often include parts for the *corps de ballet*. These are the “rank and file” members of the ballet company and usually dance together in group formations which create a backdrop to the main action. It is said that “great corps de ballet are often rarer than great ballerinas” (Clarke, 102). Dances that also fall under the umbrella of *divertissement* are called character or *caractere* dances sometimes derived from folk forms, such as the “mazurka, czardas, or tarantella” (Robertson, 89). These dances also can include certain occupations, social classes, or personalities.

The Influences on Tchaikovsky to Compose Ballet Music?

Tchaikovsky was exposed to opera and ballet at an early age. In 1851-1852, Tchaikovsky saw Adam’s *Giselle* and Weber’s opera, *Der Freischutz* which includes the supernatural/fantastic Wolf’s Glen Scene. Tchaikovsky loved ballet from his childhood. When he was thirty five, and Saint-Saens age forty, the two composers “performed” the small ballet *Galatea and Pygmalion* on the conservatory stage to show off their talent for imitating ballerinas. (Volkov, 144)

In 1859, it was noticed that Tchaikovsky had a gift for dance music: “His facility for improvising polkas, waltzes and the like, and his readiness to play for dancing made him popular at parties” (Brown, 52). It is documented that that summer, he was attracted to “ballet, Italian opera and French plays” (Brown, 52). However, Tchaikovsky only enjoyed those ballets with fantastic or magic elements. These types of ballets really appealed to him and of those, *Giselle* was his favorite. *Giselle* became Tchaikovsky’s ideal while he wrote *Swan Lake*. (Newmarch, 54). Tchaikovsky also saw Glinka’s opera,

A Life for the Tsar during his childhood and came to like it better than *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.

In 1861, Tchaikovsky traveled abroad for the very first time. On this trip he was exposed to Italian and French operas. On his trip he saw Verdi's *Il Travatore* and Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. He noted that the performances and theaters were inferior to those found in St. Petersburg.

Tchaikovsky's friend Hermann Laroche recalled that Tchaikovsky's "love of ballet was not at all typical of the Russian intelligentsia." He was criticized for his idealization of ballet. Most others felt that ballet existed to arouse "impotent, old men". Tchaikovsky felt that "ballet is the most innocent, the most moral of all the arts. If that is not so, then why do they always bring children to the ballet?" (Volkov, 144). Tchaikovsky was convinced from the days of his youth that ballet "was an art, equal to the other arts" (Volkov, 145). This love for ballet was a strong factor that led to his eventual endeavors in ballet composition.

There are many ideas and speculations as to why Tchaikovsky turned to ballet composition. Some believe that his love for ballet led to it and others think that ballet composition provided an escape for Tchaikovsky. Laroche recalled that Tchaikovsky turned to ballet because he "wanted to test himself in a fantastical musical drama, to get away from opera's realistic limitations and into the kingdom of dreams, whims, and marvels. In that magical world there was no room for words, it was pure fairy tale expressed by pantomime and dance." (Volkov, 153).

Tchaikovsky felt that “going to the ballet for the plot is like going to the opera for the recitatives” (Volkov, 156). He became somewhat disillusioned once he began his composition of *Swan Lake*:

“The procedure for composing ballet music is as follows. A subject is chosen, then the theater management develops-in accordance with its financial abilities-the libretto, then the ballet master compiles a detailed plan of the scenes and dances. And it gives in detail not only the rhythm and character of the music, but the actual number of bars. Only then does the composer begin to write the music.” (Volkov, 156).

This series of events that Tchaikovsky deemed “necessary” to compose ballet music are evident in his first ballet composition *Swan Lake* and continue in *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*. Although Tchaikovsky was annoyed by having to deal with all those involved in the ballet production, it is evident through a study of his ballet works that these impositions did not in any way reflect in the quality and creativity of his music. The following in depth examination of his ballets will illustrate Tchaikovsky’s development as a ballet composer and justify his position as the world’s leading ballet composer of the nineteenth century.

Before Tchaikovsky composed his first ballet, *Swan Lake*, in August, 1875 to April, 1876, he had plans for other ballets as early as 1870. Tchaikovsky loved music for dancing and planned a four-act score for a ballet on Cinderella. Even though he abandoned this project early on, his idea of the dance as a stimulus to music lasted throughout his life. Most ballet composers before Tchaikovsky found they were unable to sustain and develop dance music as a vehicle for anything but the most conventional action and emotion. Few of the composers stood up to the ballet masters whose focus was on the dance and the decorative. (Warrack, 5) Charles Didelot, a French balletmaster who worked in Russian theater from 1801-1812 and 1816-1831, attempted to change the position of music in ballet by mapping out specific dramatic scenes in a ballet and to make them fit with the music. However, his intention kept the music in its former place rather than to devise for it expressive opportunities. Didelot regarded the music as the servant of the choreography. In 1848, Jules Perrot made a similar attempt and worked out a *danse d'action* where the dance was to arise from the action and to further it. (Warrack, 6) Despite these failed attempts at improving the importance of the musical score in ballet, Tchaikovsky succeeded with his *Swan Lake* on March 4, 1877 with its premier at the Bolshoi Theatre..

The origins of the *Swan Lake* tale and libretto are not quite certain. The libretto was finished before October 19, 1876 because it was published in a Moscow newspaper on that date. (Wiley, 32) The best explanation for the birth of *Swan Lake* is that while spending the summer of 1871 at his sister Alexandra Davydova's house at Kamenka, Tchaikovsky amused himself and his nieces and nephews by writing a one-act domestic

ballet called *Swan Lake*. Historically, nothing is known for certain of this entertainment, yet it has been passed into family lore. Yury Lvovich Davydov, Tchaikovsky's nephew born in 1876 wrote:

A celebrated event was the production by Peter Ilyich of a ballet, in which my older sisters and Uncle Modeste participated. The ballet was created by Peter Ilyich, as was also the music, on the theme "The Lake of Swans". Of course, this was not the ballet which is given on stages now, but a children's one-act short ballet, although the principal theme—"The Song of the Swans"—was then the same as now. Peter Ilyich in his later, large composition used the theme of the children's ballet of 1871." Davydov heard this account from his elders.

The initiative for *Swan Lake* came from Vladimir Begichev, the inspector of repertory of the Imperial Theatres. Begichev is associated with the "Artistic Circle", a group of poets and musicians in Moscow and with the Shilovskaya salon. Other people involved were Turgenev, Serov, Ostrovsky, Nikolai Rubinstein, and Tchaikovsky. No one in the Artistic Circle claimed authorship to the libretto, yet it is assumed that the story of *Swan Lake* arose out of their meetings based upon Tchaikovsky's explanation of his family entertainment and some well-known fairy tales. In Tchaikovsky's biography, Tchaikovsky's brother Modeste lists V. Begichev and the Moscow dancer, Geltser, as the librettists. Johann Mausaus's *Volksmarchen der Deutschen*, published in 1872-76, seems a likely source for their subject matter. Mausaus's tales were familiar to educated Russian children in the German original. The tale, "The Swans' Pond" bears some resemblance to *Swan Lake* in that one of the character's names is Benno and that the swans take human

form at night. (Wiley, 35)

Even though one may speculate on who the real author is, because the identity of the librettist has never been identified with certainty, another plausible explanation for the source of *Swan Lake*, is that it was put together from balletic conventions. Many critics have pointed out that the legends of several countries share the ideas of the *Swan Lake* libretto. In *La Fille du Danube* (1836), a ball is held so that a young man may choose a wife. Another parallel is found in *Giselle* (1841) where a noble prince is tricked into betraying his lover. One other similarity is where the swan maidens can be seen as variants of wilis and sylphides, stock characters in Romantic ballet. (Wiley, 34)

A second hypothesis of the origins of the libretto are linked to the works of Richard Wagner. When Wagner toured Russia in 1863, Tchaikovsky was highly impressed with his conducting. Tchaikovsky was very impressed when he heard parts of *Tannhauser* (1845) and *Lohengrin* (1850). He said that *Lohengrin* contained "some of the most beautiful pages in contemporary music". (Wiley, 36) *Lohengrin* uses a swan as a symbol of purity and innocence and in both works there is the presence of an evil sorceress who transforms humans into swans. There is also a similarity between the swan theme and *Lohengrin's* warning to Elsa. (Wiley, 37) *Lohengrin* tells Elsa that if he is to marry her, she must promise never to ask him, or seek to discover his name, lineage, or where he came from. The motive of the "forbidden question" is heard for the first time in the following example. (Osborne, 117) The motive is heard in the trumpets and trombones in the key of F minor.

Example 1 (Osbourne, p. 117)



Tchaikovsky even attended the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876 when the entire *Ring Cycle* was premiered. In addition, the parallel that may be drawn between Tchaikovsky and Wagner is that both of the Siegfrieds from *Swan Lake* and *The Ring Cycle* unwittingly betray their lovers through magic.

The third possibility is that *Swan Lake* is the “variant of a story used by him in several earlier compositions” (Wiley, 37). Between 1869 and 1873, Tchaikovsky wrote three large theater works in which the love of a non-mortal woman for a mortal man ended in tragedy. These works were the early operas *Undine* (1869) and *Mandragora* (1869-1870), and incidental music for the play, *The Snow Maiden* (1873).

At the end of May in 1875, Tchaikovsky received the commission for a full length ballet on *Swan Lake* from the Directors of the Moscow theatre for 800 rubles (Abraham, 185). In a letter to Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky described his reasons for writing the ballet:

“I worked very assiduously and, besides the Symphony [No.3], I wrote (in draft) two acts of a ballet. At the invitation of the Moscow directorate I am writing music for the ballet *The Lake of the Swans*. I took on this work partly for the money, which I need, and partly because I have long wanted to try my hand at this kind of music” (Wiley, 39).

The entire composition took Tchaikovsky about a year to complete. Before *Swan*

Lake was completed, Tchaikovsky consulted with Reisinger, the balletmaster of the Bolshoi Theatre, to work out the program of the dances and the entire scenario of the ballet. Reisinger laid out the design of *Swan Lake* and outlined the story and the basic requirements for the dances. When Tchaikovsky wrote *Swan Lake* he was somewhat ignorant of the traditional way of ballet writing. Unlike composers before him, Tchaikovsky did not concern himself with Reisinger's requirements as balletmaster and wrote music according to his own desires. However, Tchaikovsky did study ballet scores to gain knowledge from composers before him on how to write for ballet. (Wiley, 40). Ultimately, the ballet was written for the music and not the opposite as had been the precedent since the inception of ballet. The conductor of the orchestra said that he "had never seen so complicated a score" (Abraham, 186).

New ballets were uncommon productions in Moscow, so when *Swan Lake* was being cast, it attracted some of the best dancers in the company. The cast was as follows:

Princess (Siegfried's mother): Olga Nikolayeva
Rothbart: Sergey Sokolov
Wolfgang: Wilhelm Wanner
Odette/Odile: Pelageia Karpakova
Siegfried: Stanislav Gillert
Benno: Sergey Nikitin

Swan Lake is a ballet set in four acts. The plot of *Swan Lake* centers around Prince Siegfried, Odette, and Rothbart. The ballet opens with Prince Siegfried's coming-of-age party. He learns that he must choose a bride the following day. At the close of the party, he sees swans flying across the sky and follows them. He learns from Odette in Act II that the head of the swans that she is being kept prisoner by Rothbart, an evil sorcerer who has put a spell upon Odette and her friends. By day, the girls are swans, and at night

they assume human form. She also tells Siegfried that true love from a human man and marriage will break the spell. Siegfried proposes and Odette is relieved. In Act III, however, Rothbart learns of their plans and brings a woman, Odile, with him who resembles Odette. Siegfried is tricked into believing that Odile is Odette and announces their engagement to the crowd. In Act IV after Siegfried learns that he has been duped, he runs to the forest to see Odette. However, the lake begins to overflow and Odette dies in Siegfried's arms. Siegfried then throws Odette's crown into the water and submerges himself. (Wiley, 33-34)

Musically, Tchaikovsky's ballet shows careful planning. The tonal plan, for example, is carefully constructed. Tchaikovsky associates certain characters with particular keys. Siegfried's key is D Major, while the swans usually appear in b Minor, the relative minor. Another example is that moments for Siegfried's distress are in the key of A-flat major and Rothbart's actions are associated with A-flat Major's relative minor, F minor. Tchaikovsky is ingenious in diametrically opposing the love duet in G-flat major to Rothbart's appearance as the owl which is in C major. (Wiley, 82) This opposition results from G-flat major, a key that has six flats and C major which has no sharps or flats. These two keys are the furthest apart in the Circle of fifths. The table below illustrates the tonality of the entire ballet:

Act, Scene	Key	Explanation
Introduction	b minor	First swan theme; oboe rising and falling
Act I, No. 1: Scene	D major	fast strings, merry making music
Act I, No. 2: Waltz	A major/ F# minor	waltz of peasants
Act I, No. 3: Scene	A minor	Siegfried's mother enters and tells him he must choose a bride

Act I, No. 4: Pas de trois	I: B-flat major; II: G minor; III: E-flat major; IV: E-flat major/ c minor; V: F major; Coda: B-flat major	peasants divertissement- five sections and a coda
Act I, No. 5: Pas de deux	I: D major; II: A major; III: B-flat major; Coda	two waltzes separated by a contrasting movement for the peasants
Act I, No. 6: Pas d'action	E major/ C# minor	Wolfgang, the tutor spins out of control as he gets drunk
Act I, No. 7: Sujet	E major	very short: guest proposes a dance with goblets
Act I, No. 8: Goblet Dance	E major	polonaise; flat accidentals occur to suggest the upcoming menace and evil of Rothbart
Act I, No. 9: Finale	B minor/ B major climax	Second (famous) Swan Theme
Act II, No. 10: Scene	B minor	Second Swan Theme that remains in minor key- incredibly Romantic
Act II, No. 11: Scene	G major-E minor-B-flat major- C major	Odette explains herself; musical dialogue between Odette and Siegfried; Rothbart appears
Act II, No. 12: Scene	A minor	narrative; Siegfried asks Odette to attend the ball
Act II, No. 13: Dance of the Swans	A major- E major- A major- F# minor- G flat major- E flat minor- A major- E major	A major Waltz; grand adagio/ pas d'action for Odette and Siegfried
Act II, No. 14: Scene	B minor	re-statement of Second Swan Theme
Act III, No. 15: Allegro giusto	C major	style similar to beginning of Act I; Siegfried's ball
Act III, No. 16: Dance of the Corps de ballet and the dwarfs	F major	merry-making dance for Siegfried
Act III, No. 17: Scene	A flat major	Waltz- arrival of guests
Act III, No. 18: Scene	D flat major- F minor	Siegfried refuses to choose a bride; Rothbart and Odile enter
Act III, No. 19: Pas de six	F major- B flat major- E flat major- E flat major- A flat	Intrada, four variations, and a coda; Dance for the

	major- A flat major	visiting princesses
Act III, No. 20: Hungarian Dance	A major- A minor- A major- F# minor	Divertissement
Act III, No. 21: Spanish Dance	F# minor/ F# major	Divertissement
Act III, No. 22: Neapolitan Dance	D major	Divertissement
Act III, No. 23: Mazurka	G major	soloists and corps de ballet
Act III, No. 24: Scene	C major/ A minor	No. 17 recurrence/ second Swan Theme is harsh sounding
Act IV, No. 25: Entr'acte	C major	sets the stage for the ending
Act IV, No. 26: Scene	A minor/ C major	fragments of Second Swan Theme
Act IV, No. 27: Dance of the Young Swans	D flat major/ B flat minor	Russian sounding; melancholy dance
Act IV, No. 28: Scene	E flat minor	Allegro agitato; Odette rushes to her friends
Act IV, No. 29: Final Scene	E major- C# minor- B minor- B major	Odette dies, Second Swan Theme heard in major

Table 1

The character of each dance within a ballet falls into one of three categories: the dramatic or narrative dance, the formal or traditional dance, and the decorative or extraneous dance. As outlined above, an example of a dramatic dance would be in Act II, No. 11. Here, Odette explains her strife to Siegfried. A traditional dance would be the pas de trois (No. 4) or the pas de deux (No. 5) from Act I. These dances are found in all ballets and give excellent dancers a chance to display their talent without being soloists. The divertissements in Act III (Nos. 20-22) such as the Hungarian Dance are illustrative of the decorative type dance. They do not have a functional relation to the plot, yet they provide color and excitement to the ballet.

In the Introduction, Tchaikovsky, introduces the emotional tone of the ballet with an introductory lyrical theme in the oboe. This theme is known as the first “Swan Theme”

and sounds melancholy. It is the first glimpse of the sad tale of the maiden swan. It is in the predominant key of the ballet, b minor, and is associated with the swan maidens and the melancholy. Tchaikovsky uses the oboe because of its innate tone color, and its association with bird calls, which is appropriate for the subject matter of *Swan Lake*. The melody then continues to the clarinet and then to cello. The outline of the melody is characterized by falling and rising phrases. After this meditation, the “narrative passes through an impassioned upsurge to dramatic protest and despair” (Wiley, 63).

Example 2: “First Swan Theme” (score, p. 3)



No. 4 is a pas de trois and the first of the formal dances in the ballet. It is comprised of five sections and a coda. The pas de trois is really a peasant divertissement and the third movement is a polka. Number 5 is a pas de deux composed of two waltzes separated by a contrasting movement again for the peasants. In the B section of this ternary structure, there is a violin solo that is reminiscent of a folk melody and employs several double stops. The coda of the pas de deux uses the piccolo and brass and has a full orchestral color.

In dance No. 6, the pas d'action, Wolfgang, the tutor is represented by a dignified, slow theme in the cello. As he gets extremely drunk and spins out of control, his stately motive is transformed.

Example 5: "Wolfgang" (score, p. 166)



time in the ballet the “Second Swan Theme” is heard in the oboe with harp and tremolo strings accompaniment. However, Act I ends in major and perhaps this is a foreshadowing of the ending of the ballet.

This Swan theme is then heard again in No. 10, the beginning of Act II, in almost the same form at the end of Act I. This time the music ends in minor. The “Second Swan Theme” begins on a I chord, proceeds to a IV⁶ chord, and moves to a I chord in the third measure. On the fourth beat of the fourth measure, the theme cadences with a IV to I. The soaring melody depicts the beautiful swans flying through the moonlight sky. This theme is deeply Romantic and is characteristic of the emotional melodies that Tchaikovsky is known for.

Example 7: “Second Swan Theme” (score, p. 223)



In Act II, No. 11, Benno and Siegfried see the swans swimming on a lake near some temple ruins. This is the most narrative scene within the ballet thus far. When they take aim at the swans with their crossbows, fragments of the “Second Swan Theme” are heard, and the swans are transformed into maidens. Odette asks why they are there and explains that she is Princess Odette and that she and her friends have been cursed by her evil stepmother and her accomplice Rothbart. Siegfried learns that only a marriage proposal can save Odette and break the spell. At this first meeting, the oboe, a soprano instrument represents Odette, and the cello represents Siegfried. This is an example of Tchaikovsky’s use of orchestral dialogue (Wiley, 74). The melody played by the oboe is

then repeated on cello.

Example 8: "Dialogue between Odette and Siegfried" (score, p. 240)

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Oboe and Cello. The Oboe part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). It begins with the tempo marking 'moderato' and the dynamic 'f espress.'. The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some slurs and accents. The Cello part is written on a single staff with a bass clef and a common time signature (C). It features a similar rhythmic pattern to the Oboe part, with slurs and accents. The key signature for both parts is one sharp (F#).

However, Rothbart suddenly appears as an owl with his motive:

Example 9: "Rothbart" (score, p. 249)

The image shows a musical score for Tenor Trombone. The staff is in a tenor clef (C4) and has a common time signature (C). The tempo is 'moderato' and the dynamic is 'ff'. The music features a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note, with accents on the eighth notes. The key signature is one flat (Bb).

Tchaikovsky chose to associate Rothbart with the flat keys and dissonance in his overall plan of tonality. Rothbart's motive is agitated and full of accents and is reinforced by brass instruments and percussion. It is a very rhythmic motive with triplet figures. After Rothbart leaves, Siegfried is surrounded by the swan maidens and invites Odette to his betrothal ball the following day where he will choose her, yet she reminds him of the threat of Rothbart, in No. 12.

Act II contains many focal scenes of Swan Lake. In Act II, Odette and Siegfried declare their love for each other in their pas de deux love duet in No. 13. No. 13, The Dance of the Swans is the focal point of the ballet. The Dance of the Swans is a functional part of the plot and is the lyrical center of the act. It serves as a substantial pas d'action and is another waltz in the form of a rondo. No. 13 is divided into seven parts. In number one, the A major waltz is heard.

Example 10: "A Major Waltz in Dance of the Swans" (score, p. 271)



In number two, moderato assai, there is a staccato violin melody in E major. The tempo gradually increases as the movement progresses. The tempo of the strings gets faster and is accented by percussion and brass. Number three is a return to the A major waltz. Number four is an allegro moderato in F sharp minor, the relative minor of A major.

Example 11: "Dance of the Swans no. IV: Staccato Melody" (score, p. 297)



The fifth movement is an andante movement where Odette and Siegfried declare their love. Number five is the core of the ballet because it is the longest dance that Odette and Siegfried have together. This movement is marked by some chromaticism. The muted violin solo that expresses Odette's love for Siegfried is expressive and emotional.

Example 12: "Odette and Siegfried's Love Theme" (score, p. 305)



It eventually gets faster and sounds Russian. It is then repeated in the cello to represent Siegfried returning Odette's love. This repetition is similar to Number 12 where

Tchaikovsky uses this same technique. Number six returns again to the A major waltz and number seven is the allegro vivace coda. The ending of this scene is energetic, bright, and vital and is marked by incredible amounts of syncopation. In the coda, Tchaikovsky uses every orchestral instrument to its potential. The strings have fast runs, and the percussion, brass, and woodwinds play forte. This scene is designed to incorporate all of the “swans” and to demonstrate their virtuostic dancing ability. The choreography for this dance involves many leaps and quick jumps. This energetic dancing complements Tchaikovsky’s brilliant and buoyant sounding coda. This music sounds heroic and militaristic and is full of motion and expression. The act ends this happy note because Odette and Siegfried are satisfied and complete with their newfound love.

At the end of Act II, No. 14, dawn breaks and the B minor melody is repeated. This is significant because, despite Odette and Siegfried’s contentment, the evil threat of Rothbart is still present.

Act III, No. 15, allegro giusto, begins in Siegfried’s castle. The brass and percussion relate in style to the beginning of Act I at the peasant’s merry-making. The Master of Ceremonies declares the festivities are about to begin in No. 16. No. 16, the moderato assai, is also the dance of the corps de ballet and the dwarfs. The Dwarfs’ Dance is orchestrated with woodwinds and horns. Many guests are announced in No. 17 as are the six visiting princesses from who Siegfried may choose his bride. Each princess is introduced by a brass interlude. Siegfried’s mother asks which princess he desires, but he refuses to comment, thinking only of Odette. Their conversation is depicted by a flute and oboe duet. Rothbart then enters with Odile, the black swan, disguised as Odette in

No. 18. Siegfried is overcome with joy. When Odile is presented, the swan theme is heard, yet, rather than in the anticipated key of b minor, the theme is heard in f minor, a key that is related to Rothbart's flat keys. A descending scale is also heard in the brass, bassoons and lower strings which is similar to the descending Fate motive heard in the Introduction to Act I.

Example 13: "Odile, the Black Swan: transformed Second Swan Theme" (score, p. 409)



This "Black Swan theme" is harsher and more allegro than the one used to represent Odette. It is not nearly as legato and smooth. Rather than sounding melancholy, it sounds angry and forceful which reveals Odile's true intentions. The theme is also subjected to higher and higher sequences building the tension of the scene. The triplet figure of Rothbart is heard again in the brass, but this time it is accompanied by tremolo strings.

Example 14: Rothbart's Theme with different accompaniment (score, p. 409)



The Pas de six in No. 19 consists of the variations for the visiting Princesses. The movement is made up of an Intrada, five variations, and a coda. Each variation uses different instruments. One example, variation III is for strings with woodwind decorations and variation V has a harp solo. Although No. 19 may seem like a divertissement, it really

fits into the overall design of the act. Each variation is well contrasted and represents the different personality of each Princess.

Towards the end of the act, Tchaikovsky presents the audience with another divertissement: a suite of national dances danced by the guests in attendance from various lands. Tchaikovsky paid careful attention to the keys in which he composed the dances. Most of the dances are in the sharp keys which are mostly different from the keys associated with certain characters and points of dramatic action. In doing this, Tchaikovsky musically sets the divertissement apart from the dramatic action.

The Hungarian Dance has a sultry, exotic sound that is full of syncopation. As the dance progresses, it eventually becomes an energetic, stamping rhythm.

The Spanish Dance is set in F# minor and begins with clicking castanets. The dance has a bolero opening and a pulsing, energetic rhythm. Tchaikovsky sets the main melody in 2/4 against the 3/4 bolero melody. (Warrack, 28) The warmer middle section is in F sharp major.

FLUTE

Example 15: "Spanish Dance" (score, p. 471)



CASTANETS



Dance No. 22, the Neapolitan Dance is a tarantella.

Tchaikovsky enjoyed composing these various dances because it provided him with an opportunity to explore the sounds of new instruments and to expand upon the tone color of the orchestra. The foreign dances typify the decorative element that Tchaikovsky aspired for in his ballets without compromising the music of the dramatic

scenes. The melodies for the foreign dances are exotic and draw upon folk elements.

The Mazurka, No. 23, the Polish national dance, is a lively piece full of percussion, especially the tambourine, and dotted rhythms. No. 23 is in a ternary structure with a woodwinds focus in the middle section. Tchaikovsky did not include the Mazurka in the divertissement because No. 23 is danced by soloists and the corps de ballet, not just the soloists that had performed in the previous national dances.

No. 24: Scene is the most dramatic of the ballet. In this scene, Siegfried accepts Odile as his bride and pleases his mother. The Princess and Rothbart join hands and then the scene darkens. Rothbart assumes the shape of an owl and flies out of the castle. Odette is seen through the archway and Siegfried rushes out to find her. The music of No. 24 is related to the waltz in No. 17. The "Second Swan Theme" is also heard again, but in A minor. This harsh ending without a pleasant resolution is based on the fact that evil has triumphed over Odette and Siegfried's love and that Odile's deception of Siegfried has been successful. This ending contrasts well with the previous music within the act. Act III contained the national dances and other divertissements. It illustrates the irony between the pleasing, exotic dances and the presence of evil that brings them to a halt.

Act IV begins with the Entr'acte, No. 25. This number is in C major which sets the stage for the happy ending to come.

In No. 26, Odette's friends are worried because she has not yet returned. Fragments of the "Second Swan Theme" are heard in the oboe at the beginning. There is much confusion among Odette's friends. In No. 27: The Dance of the Young Swans, Tchaikovsky uses a Russian folk melody which aptly describes the melancholy dance of

Odette's companions. The beautiful string melody illustrates the grace of the swans, however, the maidens innately know that something is desperately wrong. This may be viewed as a reflection upon the impending tragedy. This dance may not be regarded as a mere divertissement. Its theme is similar to both Swan themes in that it conjures up feeling of distress and tragedy. The main motive in No. 27 is slow like the Swan theme and makes use of thematic material presented in the ballet: "In its gentle, obsessive, swaying rhythm it reflects the distress of the trapped, bewitched swans" (Warrack, 31).

Example 16: "Dance of the Young Swans" (score, p. 550)



Odette rushes to the arms of her friends, in No. 28 after feeling betrayed by Siegfried. The music of No. 28 is the most symphonic in the entire ballet. The coming storm is musically illustrated by the brass, timpani and rushing strings.

The final scene of the ballet is No. 29 in which Siegfried rushes to the lake and begs Odette's forgiveness. Tragically, she dies in his arms. The Swan theme heard here differs from the one heard at the end of Act I and at the beginning of Act II. The melody is in the oboe, but rather than a tremolo and harp accompaniment, the strings play syncopated, off-beat chords which cause an agitated, driving effect that complements the turmoil that the two lovers are in.

Example 17: "Transformed Second Swan Theme" (score, p. 588)



After Siegfried realizes he will never be with Odette, he casts her crown into the overflowing lake waters which submerge the two lovers. As the ballet closes, the swans are seen gliding across the lake. The Swan theme is then heard in the key of B Major. The theme sounds deliberate and slow and is played by the trumpet. It is also loud, triumphant, and accented. This transformed theme is accompanied by tremolo strings and a triplet figure in the bass, French horns, trombone, and timpani and sustained notes in the woodwinds.

Example 18: "Triumphant Second Swan Theme" (score, p. 610)



Tchaikovsky uses B major, the parallel key of b minor to possibly represent the triumph of the pure love between Siegfried and Odette over the malevolent forces of Rothbart. He may also be suggesting that true love may be found in a world beyond earth, maybe in heaven, and that real emotions are not confined to the concrete world they live in. Tchaikovsky suggested the same premise in his *Romeo and Juliet* where the love theme comes back very high and ethereal before the ending. Perhaps Tchaikovsky uses the harp at the end of the ballet to illustrate the floating of Siegfried and Odette's souls to heaven or to depict a placid, calm feeling. Tchaikovsky's own views on the ending were that "love was to be found only against the direst opposition and might even then be cruelly denied realization" (Warrack, Tchaikovsky, 100).

The music of *Swan Lake* may be summarized in a passage by Laroche, who saw

Swan Lake eighteen months after it opened:

“The melodies, one more plastic than the last, more harmonious and more captivating, flow as from a horn of plenty; the rhythm of the waltz, which prevails among the danced numbers, is embodied in such varied, graceful, and winning designs that never did the melodic invention of the gifted, many faceted composer stand the test more resplendently.” (Wiley, 54)

Swan Lake was an innovative ballet because Tchaikovsky reformed the importance of music in the ballet. It is ironic that Tchaikovsky stated after he heard Delibe’s *Sylvia* “this is the only ballet I know where the music is of the only and vital importance...If I had known this music earlier I would not have written my *Swan Lake*”. (von Meck, 126). Both composers achieved the same goal with their compositions. As a result: “ballet music became the most important, an absolutely essential component of the choreographic spectacle” (Wiley, 64). Tchaikovsky was able to connect the music with the dramatic action and general style of the dance. *Swan Lake*’s score is sensitive to the needs of the narrative and emotions of the characters. The *Swan Lake* score demanded more from the dancers rather than the usual music that was designed to complement and show off their ability. Tchaikovsky was not concerned with merely displaying the dancers virtuosity, and this may be the reason why an authentic production of *Swan Lake* was difficult to find after Tchaikovsky’s death.

The success that Tchaikovsky achieved with his *Swan Lake* was well deserved. He made his mark as a successful ballet composer and was regarded by the public and critics alike as a reformer of the role of music in ballet. *Swan Lake* was a substantial ballet and put Tchaikovsky in a position to compose more music for ballet. It is therefore plausible to question why Tchaikovsky, in spite of his triumph, waited ten years to try his hand at ballet composition again. The answer to this question has many answers. Tchaikovsky was dissatisfied with having to compose music around dancers' wants and desires. He was also angry at how *Swan Lake's* conductor, Riccardo Drigo mutilated and altered his score, ruining the carefully laid tonal plan of *Swan Lake*. Drigo eliminated Nos. 26 and 27 in the years following *Swan Lake's* premier.

During the ten years that elapsed between *Swan Lake* and Tchaikovsky's new ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty*, he experienced changes in his personal, musical, and social lives. These ten years included a disastrous marriage to one of his students, the beginnings of his patronage relationship with Nadezhda von Meck, and a battle with his sexuality. Tchaikovsky's life had become extremely unpleasant due to his unhappiness with his homosexuality. He was tormented by this fact and looked to music as a means for escape. He composed operas and symphonies as a means of self expression and used ballet music and all of its prettiness and fantastic aspects to create an unreal dream world where he could escape himself.

On May 28, 1888, Ivan Vsevolozhsky, the Director of the Imperial Theatres wrote to Tchaikovsky to explain his ideas for a new ballet and to see if Tchaikovsky was interested in composing a score. Vsevolozhsky was born in 1835 and was originally a diplomat and served in Paris before his appointment to the Imperial Theatres in 1881. He

possessed many positive characteristics. He was artistic, intelligent, and worldly. Most importantly, he had a vision to change the concept of ballet in Russia. He “did not simply want to provide entertainment, but to act as a beneficial influence on literature, mores, and national consciousness, to establish a school and to encourage a tradition” (Wiley, 95). He wanted to improve ballet’s artistic quality and the amenities of a ballet production. He set up many ballet reforms because he felt that ballet had sunk to such a low level of artistry. These included organizing a teaching syllabus, the founding of the Annual of the Imperial Theatres (a newsletter for the theatre), and forming an advisory panel for the production of ballets. He wanted a collaboration among all those involved in the production of a ballet so to insure its uniformity and cohesiveness. These reforms are the factors that were instrumental in getting Tchaikovsky to compose ballet music again.

Vsevolozhsky’s letter to Tchaikovsky immediately grabbed his attention:

“It would be very nice, incidentally, to write a ballet. I’ve planned a libretto on *La Belle au bois dormant* to [Charles] Perrault’s tale. I want the *mis en scene* to be in the style of Louis XIV..Here one could work up a musical fantasia and write melodies in the spirit of Lully, Bach, Rameau etc. If you like the idea, why don’t you write the music?” (Warrack, 33)

Tchaikovsky became interested in the subject and when he received a synopsis of the ballet, he told Modest that it was “superb”. In his correspondence with Vesvolozhsky, Tchaikovsky replied: “I want to tell you at once that it’s impossible to describe how charmed and captivated I am. It suits me perfectly, and I couldn’t want anything better than to write music for it.” (Warrack, 33)

La belle au bois dormant is from Perrault’s *Contes de ma mere I’Oye ou Histoires du temps passe*, published in Paris in January 1697. It is divided into two separate tales: the first concludes with Aurora’s wedding and the second describes how she and her two

children avoid being eaten by her cruel mother-in-law. Obviously, the libretto was based on the first tale, the second being inappropriate for a ballet. Vsevolozhsky added scenes to the story such as the Prince awakening Aurora with a kiss and the kingdom surviving a hundred years sleep. The final scenario is almost identical to the Grimm Brothers' *Dornroschen*, with the exception of the presence of the Lilac Fairy.

Tchaikovsky's interest in *Sleeping Beauty* went back two years previously. In November 1886, he held a meeting with Vsevolozhsky to discuss the possibility of writing a ballet based on *Salammbô* or *Undine*, both of which held no fascination for him. However, Tchaikovsky jumped at the idea of composing music for *The Sleeping Beauty*. As with *Swan Lake*, Tchaikovsky, had once before staged a ballet in 1867 based on the subject at Kamenka for the children of his sister Alexandra.

In November of 1888, Tchaikovsky met with Vsevolozhsky and Petipa, the famous ballet master, to discuss the outline of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Because of the difficulties he ran into with *Swan Lake*, Tchaikovsky worked closely with Petipa on *Sleeping Beauty* to create a unified ballet. Vsevolozhsky contributed important material to the collaboration and most importantly, the libretto. In December, Petipa sent Tchaikovsky a detailed scenario of his designs written in black ink while the meticulous musical instructions were written in red.

On May 26, 1889, Tchaikovsky finished the sketches for the ballet. In a letter to Nadezhda von Meck written on August 6, 1889, he wrote:

"It seems to me, my dear friend, that the music of this ballet will be one of my best creations. The subject is so poetic, so grateful for music, that I have worked on it with enthusiasm and written it with the warmth and enthusiasm upon which the worth of a composition always depends. The orchestration is causing me, as I think I already wrote

to you, more trouble than it used to, and the work is going much more slowly, but perhaps this is all for the best.” (Warrack, 35)

The conductor of the premier was Riccardo Drigo, the man who changed the *Swan Lake* score. The costumes were based on Ciceri’s Paris opera production of Herold’s *La Belle au bois dormant* which was performed from 1829-1840. Eugene Scribe wrote the libretto for the opera. The cast of *Sleeping Beauty* is as follows:

Princess Aurora: Carlotta Brianza
Prince Desire: Pavel Gerdt
King Florestan: Felix Kshesinsky
Bluebird and Carabosse: Enrico Cecchetti
Lilac Fairy: Maria Petipa

The first performance was unsuccessful. Critics felt that the music was too symphonic and that it was composed for “china dolls” (Warrack, 36). Detractors felt that the ballet resembled a “ballet-feerie” (Wiley, 107), a genre in which the audience is indulged with elaborate visual spectacle to compensate for the weakness of the plot. However, despite these criticisms, *Sleeping Beauty* has been performed over 500 times since 1946 which insures *Sleeping Beauty* as a timeless, classic ballet.

Supporters of *Sleeping Beauty* feel that it is a ballet contrived upon a dramatic subject that defies the structure of previous ballets. *Sleeping Beauty* “instead of providing the conventional row of short, disjunct dances, engages properly with a strong, flexible dramatic and choreographic design.” (Warrack, 37) In *Sleeping Beauty* there is a conflict between good and evil and the resulting tension is developed. The dances are part of the plot and are not mere divertissements as seen before in *Swan Lake* and especially in *The*

Nutcracker. The plot line is complex and does not obey the unity of time established by Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Sleeping Beauty is similar to *Swan Lake* because they both contain dramatic aspects and engaging story lines. They also center around princesses and involve elements of the fantastic. However, *Sleeping Beauty* is a more detailed and balanced ballet. It is the longest of Tchaikovsky's three ballets and contains more spectacle than *Swan Lake*. It does not strictly associate keys with particular characters. *Swan Lake* differs from *Sleeping Beauty* in that the tonality of the former came full circle by the end of the ballet. However, in *Sleeping Beauty*, each act illuminates one situation of the story. *Sleeping Beauty*'s less dramatic plot line helps to justify this tableau-like approach to key. Yet, *Sleeping Beauty* makes use of the "lyrical idea" as used before in *Swan Lake*. The melodies in *Sleeping Beauty* are flowing and memorable. There is a flow of continuous ideas which contrast nicely with each other and are well orchestrated. The prettiness of the music parallels the beauty of the story line. The music also suggests movement which is needed and appropriate for a ballet score. In writing *Sleeping Beauty*, Tchaikovsky was influenced by Delibes and by Adam's *Giselle*.

There is some symbolism in *Sleeping Beauty*. Aurora's name implies the "Dawn" which has connotations of re-birth which happens after she is awoken from a hundred years sleep. Beneath its seemingly simple story line, Aurora's life is a cycle that is common to humankind: infancy, youth, love, and marriage. (Wiley, 108) A sense of timelessness is also found in *Sleeping Beauty*.

The Prologue of *Sleeping Beauty* begins at the castle of King Florestan on his daughter, Aurora's, christening day (No. 1). Catalabutte, the Master of Ceremonies

announces to the assembled courtiers that the King and Queen will soon be arriving. A footman asks if no one has been left off of the invitation list. The King then enters and proceeds to the cradle of his sleeping child (No. 2).

Six of the seven fairies in the kingdom arrive at the baptism and present the infant with gifts which foretell her attractive attributes. At a sign from Catalabutte, they move forward. Candide gives Aurora the gift of candor; Coulante- the gift of grace; Fee aux miettes- that Aurora will never know hunger; Canari qui chante- the gift of eloquence; Violante- the gift of energy (No. 3). As the Lilac Fairy, the leader of the fairies, approaches the cradle, she is interrupted by the abrupt entrance of the uninvited, wicked, seventh fairy, Carabosse. Carabosse is furious that she has not been invited to be godmother and tears out Catalabutte's hair after he begs forgiveness for his error. Carabosse bestows her gift on the child: that Aurora will prick her finger on a spindle and die. Because the Lilac Fairy's magic is not powerful enough to override Carabosse's curse, she alters Aurora's fate by turning death into sleep. After one hundred years, Aurora will be awoken by the kiss of a prince. Enraged, Carabosse drives off in her rat-driven carriage while the others gather around the cradle (No. 4).

Act I takes place twenty years later on Aurora's birthday. Four foreign princes, Charming, Avignon, Fleur-de-pois, and Fortune have come to the castle to court her. She entrances her suitors, but does not choose among them. At the celebration, Catalabutte notices among the villagers an old woman threading spindles. He removes the spindles and orders the woman to prison. The King notices this disturbance and asks Catalabutte what the problem was. Catalabutte reveals what happened, and the King threatens the woman with death. However, the Princes intercede and she is pardoned (No. 5).

The Princes then approach the King and Queen as suitors for Aurora's hand. As they are admiring a portrait of Aurora, she enters and greets her parents (No. 7). While she is dancing, she captures a glimpse of a hooded woman who proffers her a spindle wound with colored thread. Aurora seizes it and continues to dance (No. 8). She then pricks her finger and falls as is she is dead. The old woman then throws off her hood and is recognized as Carabosse. The princes charge at her, but she disappears in a cloud of smoke and fire. Then the Lilac Fairy appears and she consoles the King and Queen. She commands that Aurora be carried into the Palace. She puts the entire kingdom to sleep for a hundred years. The stage is transformed as everything and everyone falls into a deep sleep and the greenery grows wild. The royal garden becomes an impenetrable forest (No. 9).

A century has passed at the beginning of Act II. In a forest, Prince Desire's hunting party pauses for a rest and his tutor, Gallifron proposes some diversions (No. 10). During the game, the Prince stands alone and uninterested in the girls' attentions (No. 11). The ladies then propose a farandole (No. 13). The hunt moves again, but the Prince remains behind. As night falls, the Lilac Fairy appears in a boat drawn by two butterflies. She tells Desire the story of the Sleeping Beauty, the woman of his desires. She shows Aurora to him in a vision. A second vision shows Aurora dancing with fairies in the forest. He is prevented from catching her by the fairies (No. 14). Aurora then dances with the Prince (No. 15). Overwhelmed by this vision, he implores the Lilac Fairy to bring him to the sleeping princess (No. 16). The two get into her boat and they journey to the castle among a panorama of moving scenes (No. 17).

In Act II, Scene 2, the Lilac Fairy and Prince Desire are seen making their way through the tangled undergrowth to the Palace. He gazes at the princess and recognizes her as the woman from his vision. Desire tries to awaken her, but then it occurs to him to kiss her (No. 19). As Aurora awakens, she sees the Prince of whom she has dreamt. As the spell is broken, everyone awakens and the King joins the hands of the young couple (No. 20).

Act III is centered around Aurora's wedding. After the King, Queen, Aurora, and Desire enter, they are followed by the Diamond, Gold, Silver, and Sapphire fairies (No. 21). There then follows a procession of fairy-tale characters from Perrault's stories, such as Puss in Boots and the White Cat, Cinderella, Prince Fortune, the Blue Bird, Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf (No. 22-27). Aurora and the Prince then have their love duet (No. 28). The guests then parade around the floor (No. 30) and the Lilac Fairy appears to bless the marriage (No. 31).

The music of *Sleeping Beauty* links the score with recurring melodies. The Lilac Fairy's theme is repeated in the same manner of the swan theme in *Swan Lake*, at major points in the drama. The hunt music of Desire's hunting party frames the scene the way Siegfried's did in *Swan Lake*. In addition, the chords that are played as the kingdom is put to sleep are repeated just as Desire arrives to awaken it. These recurring themes contribute to the coherence of *Sleeping Beauty*.

The key scheme of the ballet is described below:

Dance	Key	Explanation
Prologue- <i>Introduction</i>	E minor then major	Carabosse's theme in E minor and the Lilac Fairy's theme in E major
Prologue- No. 1: <i>March</i>	A major - C# minor- A	Rondo structure with

	major - F# minor - A major	contrasting “narrative” scenes
Prologue- No. 2: <i>Scene dansante</i>	F major - A major	F major waltz that tends to be associated with Aurora
Prologue- No. 3: <i>Pas de Six</i>	Introduction: F# minor; Adagio: B-flat major 1. Candide: B-flat major 2. Coulante: G minor 3. Fee aux Miettes: D major 4. Canari qui chante: D major 5. Violente: D minor 6. La Fee des Lilacs: Cmajor Coda: D major	Each fairy presents Aurora with their gift
Prologue- No. 4: <i>Finale</i>	D major - C major - E major	Carabosse enters and her theme is heard. The Lilac Fairy counters Carabosse’s evil curse and her theme is heard. The triumph of E major over E minor
Act I: <i>The Spell</i> , No. 5: <i>Scene</i>	E major - C minor - E/C minor	At Aurora’s birthday, a woman with a threading spindle and Catalabutte orders her to prison. The visiting Princes intercede on her behalf; lots of tension created by the underlying “curse theme”
Act I, No. 6: <i>Waltz</i>	B flat major	Famous Waltz; tension alleviated
Act I, No. 7: <i>Scene</i>	B flat major - A major C major	The princes admire a painting of Aurora; prepares for No. 8 in which Aurora enters
Act I, No. 8: <i>Pas d’action</i>	E flat major (Rose Adagio) - G major - E flat major	Three dances and a Coda: Aurora dances with the four visiting Princes (Rose Adagio); maids of honour dance; Aurora’s solo variation; Aurora seizes the spindle
Act I, No. 9: <i>Finale</i>	C minor - F minor - E major	Aurora pricks her finger and Carabosse is revealed; Aurora is brought to the palace and dense greenery

		grows around the castle
Act II, No. 10: <i>Entr'acte and scene</i>	B flat major	Allegro con spirito: Prince Desire's hunting party; hunting calls
Act II, No. 11: <i>Blind Man's Buff</i>	C major	The Prince is unimpressed by the attention he receives
Act II, No. 12: <i>Scene</i>	C major - G major - C major - F major	Different types of dances are performed by women
Act II, No. 13: <i>Farandole</i>	F major	The ladies propose a Farandole; a mazurka is danced; the dance is intended to be a diversion
Act II, No. 14: <i>Scene</i>	F major - D flat major - E major - (F major)	The Lilac Fairy tells Desire about Sleeping Beauty
Act II, No. 15: <i>Pas d'action</i>	F major - B flat major - G minor	Aurora and Desire meet and she vanishes
Act II, No. 16: <i>Scene</i>	E flat major	Desire implores the Lilac Fairy to bring him to Aurora
Act II, No. 17: <i>Pamorama</i>	G major	The Lilac Fairy and Desire venture to the castle
Act II, No. 18: <i>Entr'acte</i>	C major - E minor - C major	Music to link Scene 1 with Scene 2
Act II, Scene 2, No. 19: <i>Symphonie Entr'acte (The Sleep) and Scene</i>	C major - D major	Desire sees Aurora and recognizes her as the "Sleeping Beauty" from his dreams; he kisses her and breaks the spell; The Lilac Fairy Theme and Carabosse theme are heard
Act II, Scene 2, No. 20: <i>Finale</i>	E flat major	Ternary structure: Aurora awakens as do the servants at the palace; the weeds that have grown clear away
Act III, No. 21: <i>March</i>	D major	A formal wedding march for Desire and Aurora with a trio section
Act III, No. 22: <i>Polacca</i>	G major - C major trio	A dance for Perrault's literary characters
Act III, No. 23: <i>Pas de quatre</i>	B flat major - E-flat major - A-flat major - C major - G major - E major	Introduction, Four Variations and a Coda: Dances for the Jeweled Fairies
Act III, No. 24: <i>Pas de caractere: Puss in Boots</i>	G minor	Music that imitates cat-like movement and behavior

<i>and the White Cat</i>		
Act III, No. 25: <i>Pas de quatre</i>	C major - F major	Two variations and a Coda
Act III, No. 26: <i>Pas de caractere</i>	G minor- B flat major	a) Red Riding Hood and Wolf; b) Cinderella and Prince Fortune
Act III, No. 27: <i>Pas Berrichou</i>	A major	A short descriptive piece
Act III, No. 28: <i>Pas de deux</i>	G major - C major - A minor - A major - E major	Introduction; Variation 1; Variation 2; Coda; A lyrical love duet for Aurora and Prince Desire
Act III, No. 29: <i>Sarabande</i>	A minor	A formal sarabande in the court style of Louis XIV
Act III, No. 30: <i>Finale</i>	D major	A mazurka for the entire company and coda
Act III, No. 31: <i>Apotheosis</i>	B flat major - G minor	The Lilac Fairy appears and blesses the marriage

The Introduction of the Prologue presents the themes of the wicked Carabosse and gentle Lilac Fairy. The opening chords of Carabosse's theme reveal tension, danger and drama. This emotional beginning is surprising and is meant to capture the audience's attention. Tchaikovsky's decision to begin the piece this way may have been a personal one considering the dissatisfaction he was experiencing in his life. However, another potential reason may be that he wanted to end the Introduction on a peaceful, tranquil note to dispel any fears that the ballet would not have a happy ending. Whatever the reason, the Introduction provides a sharp contrast of the duality between good and evil. Carabosse's theme has no definite tonal center because of its constant modulations. However, it seems to be in E minor. The theme begins on an A sharp diminished chord which then chromatically moves to a B minor chord on the second beat. There is lots of chromaticism. The violin part moves from A# to B to C to C# to D at m. 1. At measure 2, the bass doubles the cello part. In measure 2, the notes that make up the chord are B-

that even though they sound completely different, they are inherently linked. For example, both fairies have magical powers and are supernatural beings.

Tchaikovsky employs many formal structures in his ballet music. A first example is the March, No. 1. This movement is a rondo with two middle sections and takes the form of ABACA'. The A section is a march in A major and sounds grandiose and majestic. The B section is in C# minor and represents Catalabutte's first "narration" where he arranges the guests in their places. This theme sounds nervous and anxious and illustrates Catalabutte's worry that everything be perfect. The C section is in F# minor and climaxes with a horn fanfare to represent the entrance of the King and Queen. The A' section is an embellished form of the march which is scored for full orchestra.

Another example of a formal structure is another rondo, No. 6. This is the famous "Sleeping Beauty Waltz". It is in an ABA'CABA coda form. The Waltz is in B flat major and in 3/4 time.

Example 3: "The Sleeping Beauty Waltz" (score, p. 284)



The melody is sequenced and is played by the strings with much vibrato. In addition, No. 6 may be viewed as a divertissement. It immediately follows the commotion caused by the woman with the spindle. It provides a distraction for the guests and turns the focus back towards Aurora and her suitors.

Sleeping Beauty contains the three categories of dances found in Swan Lake: narrative, formal, and divertissement.

One example of a narrative dance takes place at Aurora's christening, No. 4. When Carabosse expresses her anger over not being invited to be godmother, her theme is played. As she threatens Catalabutte and tears out his hair, the supplication of the King and Queen are heard in the strings while a fragment of Carabosse's theme in the woodwinds answers them.

Example 4: "The King's Supplication and Carabosse's Response" (score, p. 167)

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: 1st Violin and Oboe. The 1st Violin part is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of a melodic line with several phrases, each marked with a dynamic: *mf*, *f*, and *mf*. The Oboe part is written on a treble clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. It features a triplet of notes marked *fff* (fortississimo) and is labeled "CARABOSSE".

No. 4 continues with the theme of Carabosse's death curse and the intercession of the Lilac Fairy with her theme.

In No. 5, when Catalabutte spies the forbidden spindles, the cheerful party music is juxtaposed with Carabosse's curse theme. It causes an atmosphere of latent tension in the festivities. The vigor of the music rises to a climax on a diminished seventh to tonic cadence and is interrupted by the appearance of the King. A new section during Catalabutte and the King's discussion rises to a climax and then pauses. After the four Princes implore the King's mercy, he consents while the bassoon plays phrases that bring the movement to an uncertain end. There is something suspenseful in the music. The woman is pardoned, but something is innately wrong.

Another narrative scene is when Aurora pricks her finger on the spindle during No. 8. The tempo increases and sounds agitated. The sixteenth note string motives lead up to a sustained cello chord that pronounces Aurora dead.

Example 5: "Aurora's Death" (score, p. 425)

The musical score for Example 5 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled "VIOLIN II" and the bottom staff is labeled "CELLO". Both staves are in 2/4 time and have a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Violin II part begins with a sixteenth-note figure: F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5. The Cello part begins with a similar sixteenth-note figure: F#2, G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3. Both parts have a fermata over the final note. The Cello part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) under the final note.

Carabosse's theme is heard again as she is revealed, but it is transformed. The music then escalates to a thicker texture to illustrate Carabosse's power and the princes who attempt to kill her. The Lilac Fairy theme sounding complacent and reassuring then intercedes. As she puts the kingdom to sleep, tremolo strings and a brass motive appear. The gardens surrounding the castle are turned into a forest with a "dolce" woodwind passage accompanied by thirty-second note passages in the violins.

Example 6: "The Forest Transformation" (score, p. 455)

The musical score for Example 6 consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled "FLUTE" and the bottom staff is labeled "1st VIOLIN". Both staves are in 2/4 time and have a key signature of two sharps (D major). The Flute part begins with a melody marked *p dolce* (piano dolce). The 1st Violin part begins with a tremolo passage of thirty-second notes.

Another example of a narrative dance is No. 14, the meeting of the Lilac Fairy and Prince Desire. The scene opens with tremolo strings and melody played by an interchanging of instruments. The Lilac Fairy's theme has a different accompaniment. In

No. 15, Desire meets Aurora in a vision. This *pas d'action* has an andante cello melody. This is accompanied by an intensely expressive melody similar to the oboe/cello solo where Odette and Siegfried meet in *Swan Lake* (No. 11).

Example 7: "Aurora and Desire's First Meeting" (score, p. 582)



In No. 19, when the Lilac Fairy and Prince Desire enter the room of the sleeping Aurora, Carabosse's theme is heard in the strings. This delicately scored music of Carabosse's enchantment creates an ominous atmosphere but thematically links the curse with its being broken. The texture becomes extremely thin and there is a diminution when they enter. The Lilac Fairy's theme is played on muted trumpet. The intertwining of melodic lines and the hazy texture convey an aura of mystery.

Example 8: "The Lilac Fairy Breaks the Curse" (score, p. 677)



When the Prince kisses Aurora, the clouds part and a vigorous trumpet theme is heard. This leads into No. 20 the Finale which sounds joyful. It is full of bright, colorful sounds.

The formal dances of Sleeping Beauty are usually a pas de quatre, pas de six, or pas de deux and are in a theme and variations structure. The pas de six in No. 3 is a dance for the six fairies. There is an Introduction followed by six contrasting movements each designed to musically illustrate their gifts to Aurora. Each movement differs in tempo, rhythm, and orchestration. One of the most interesting movements is the third variation, *Fee aux miettes*. This dance is based on Russian folklore that if a baby is sprinkled with crumbs, it will never know hunger. Tchaikovsky uses pizzicato strings to illustrate the falling “crumbs”.

Example 9: “Fee aux miettes” (score, p. 114)



Another formal dance is found in Act II, Scene 1 at Desire’s hunting party. No. 12, *Scene*, has an introduction and is followed by four dances. The Duchess has a stately, 3/4 minuet, the Baroness a gavotte, the Countess a heavily accented, slow tarantella, and the Marchioness a 2/4 allegro non troppo movement. These dances may also be viewed as a *divertissement* because their function is not integral to the development of the plot.

A pas de quatre is found in No. 23. In this Theme and Variations, Tchaikovsky uses innovative rhythms and orchestration to enhance the tone color of the ballet. The four jeweled fairies are presented and perform a dance. The gold fairy has a heavily accented waltz. She is followed by the Silver fairy who performs to a dance in ternary

structure. The B section is in a minor key which highlights the woodwinds. This dance is light and includes the orchestration for chimes.

The third variation for the Sapphire Fairy consists of a *Vivacissimo* in the unique meter of 5/4. A triangle and piano are also heard and convey the sparkling of the gem. The diamond fairy has a brilliant, extremely fast dance. The Coda then brings all of the dancers together.

The grand pas de deux, No. 28 is the love duet for Aurora and Prince Desire. It consists of an Introduction, Entrance, Adagio and two variations. Petipa requested that the Adagio be “a rather large adagio with fortes and with pauses” (Wiley, 146). This is the first occasion in the ballet when their tenderness and love for each other is expressed in a lyrical movement. This movement also demonstrates their individual characters, and reflects the ballet’s happy ending with their happiness in marriage. In the Entrance, a lyrical *allegro moderato* melody is heard on strings and woodwinds. The Adagio is a 6/8 movement which may be associated with the Lilac Fairy because of its relaxed, flowing melodic development and choice of orchestration. The oboe plays the famous, tender theme over pizzicato strings which builds to a climax.

Example 10: “Aurora and Desire’s Love Theme”



Aurora’s adagio has an immensely expressive power which overshadows the remainder of the *pas de deux*. The Variation for Desire is a 2/4 *Prestissimo* which shows

off the virtuosity of the dancer, but its real function is to display exuberance and vitality.

The pulsing, accented rhythm conveys a feeling of expression and joy.

Aurora's variation centers around an elegant, solo violin melody.

Example 11: "Aurora's Variation" (score, p. 970)



The Coda brings the lovers together in a dance of joy.

Almost the entire drama of Act III is centered around a series of divertissements intended for characters from Perrault's tales. One of the peculiar movements is No. 24, a Pas de caractere for Puss in Boots and the White Cat. This movement is in G minor and the cats are represented by the oboe and bassoons. This music imitates the mannerisms of cats such as purring, spitting, and mewing. This movement portrays cats as sneaky and creepy. This sinuous melody contains tremolo strings which create a scary atmosphere.

Example 12: "Puss in Boots" (score, p. 850)

Tchaikovsky employs some unusual instrumentation in the Apotheosis, No. 31.

Instead of using a harp, Tchaikovsky put a piano in the score. This new sound does not have the light, ethereal, heavenly tone color of the harp. The piano is also used in

Aurora's variation and the *pas de quatre* of precious stones. Tchaikovsky felt that the

piano would enhance the musical depiction of silver and sapphire. Rather than remembering Aurora's majestic adagio, the listener hears the "valedictory accents of its epilogue" (Wiley, 150). When played in the higher register of the keyboard, the piano may simulate a sound similar to that of the harp. It is interesting why Tchaikovsky chose to use the piano in this ballet as a part of the percussion section when he had not done this in *Swan Lake*. One possibility is that when the piano is heard, it is in the Third Act, where all of the characters are awake and celebrating. The harp is heard during dream sequences and when the Lilac Fairy puts the kingdom to sleep. Thus, the harp may be associated with the unconscious and supernatural and the piano with awareness and consciousness.

Sleeping Beauty is by far Tchaikovsky's most crowning achievement in ballet. None of his other ballets have been so well received by critics and audiences at their first production. Tchaikovsky maintains a dedication to pretty, attractive melodies which flow into one another. He is successful at depicting dramatic scenes musically, a trait that was not as necessary in *The Nutcracker*. There is an extremely wide range of tone colors and contrasting movements in the ballet that do not sound repetitive or over-used. Tchaikovsky's inventive powers are at their pinnacle in this ballet. Not only is it his longest work, it is the most carefully contrived and orchestrated.

Despite these characteristics, however, *Sleeping Beauty* lacks the melancholy, emotional melodies heard in *Swan Lake*. It also lacks the overly dramatic story line. *Swan Lake* is a true tragedy unlike *Sleeping Beauty* where the dramatic tension only centers around the Prologue and Act I. Carabosse is a real threat to Aurora, but her spell is countered with magic equally as powerful to protect Aurora. The problematic incidents

are ultimately resolved in *Sleeping Beauty*. *Sleeping Beauty* does not have the character development or human emotions expressed in *Swan Lake*.

Despite the differences between the ballets, *Sleeping Beauty* was probably Tchaikovsky's favorite ballet. He developed his skills as a ballet composer. He was finally satisfied with his compositional masterpiece of unsurpassed quality.

After the success of *Sleeping Beauty*, Tchaikovsky once again tried his hand at ballet composition. A new ballet was commissioned from him and was to be presented on the same night as Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada*. The one exception is that this new ballet was intended to be performed on a double bill with an opera, *Iolanthe*. The story of *Iolanthe* is short and intense. Iolanthe, a blind princess has been protected from the concept of sight and learns about her affliction from the man she falls in love with. The pairing of *Iolanthe* and *The Nutcracker* was natural for the serious opera "gives way to the diverting ballet". (Wiley, 205). Tchaikovsky also designed this new ballet to be a little more than half the length of *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*. It was to be a ballet in two acts as opposed to four. The end result was the ballet score of *The Nutcracker* or *Le Casse-Noisette*. What sets *The Nutcracker* apart from Tchaikovsky's previous two ballets is that there are more characters in it. There is also less drama and individual character development: "The plot of *The Nutcracker* offers no opportunity for further development along the lines opened up by *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*. But it did allow Tchaikovsky to indulge to the full his taste for "le joli" or his attraction towards pretty, aesthetically beautiful music. The only real action that transpires is in Act I as compared to the more static moments in Act II. The ultimate outcome of *The Nutcracker* was a ballet that was designed to entertain and please.

The Nutcracker provided Tchaikovsky with an opportunity to compose decorative music. The libretto of *The Nutcracker* did not require Tchaikovsky to compose music to further the dramatic action. Rather than the music dictating the choreography, *The Nutcracker* is an example of a ballet in which the music was composed to fit the libretto.

As compared to *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker* lacks many recurring themes. Hence, in *The Nutcracker*, the audience is provided with more variety of melodies and divertissements. However, there are some elements in *The Nutcracker* that are similar to the other ballets. The formal, traditional dances such as the pas de deux are found. Also, much of the composed music fits into a formal structure whether it be a binary, ternary, or rondo form. In addition, the element of evil is still present except this time it is in the form of the Uncle Drosselmeier and the Rat King instead of Rothbart and Odile. There is also the duality of good/evil in the Drosselmeier figure as there was with Odile.

The Nutcracker was intended for younger audiences due to its less intense and somewhat light subject. This ballet also includes dances for young children. More importantly, *The Nutcracker* deals with the fantastic and the supernatural more than the other ballets. A wooden nutcracker comes alive, a Christmas tree grows, and there is a magic land of sweets. These are just some of the characteristics that truly make *The Nutcracker* a fantasy ballet.

One aspect of *The Nutcracker* that emphasizes its distinction from *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty* is Tchaikovsky's masterful use of orchestral color. Here he uses new instruments to convey sounds and to express characters.

The origins of the libretto are not complicated with *The Nutcracker* as they were with *Swan Lake*. On February 3, 1882, Tchaikovsky, wrote to Sergey Flerov, a Russian critic and journalist, to thank him for E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *Nussknacker and Mausekonig*. Tchaikovsky remembered that the libretto of *Coppelia* was based upon another Hoffmann tale, *Der Sandmann*. Hoffmann's work is a children's fairy tale but

contained strange elements such as the juxtaposition of reality and fantasy in a close relationship. For Tchaikovsky, the tale had appeal because it contained opposing elements such as evil characters and a candy land type atmosphere. For example, Drosselmeier appears first as a human and then transforms himself into an owl clock. In contrast, the Sugar Plum Fairy and her colorful, sweet, unthreatening companions represent childhood fantasies and dreams.

The original Hoffmann tale contains a complex plot and delves into a debate of human nature and evil. When it was first published, people debated whether it was a tale really focused at children. (Warrack, 56). It also dealt with philosophical asides. However, in order to choreograph and write a successful ballet libretto, Petipa, the balletmaster who worked on *The Sleeping Beauty* watered down the tale to make it more accessible to audiences and especially the dancers. In the first tale, Hoffmann uses the battle between the Nutcracker and the mice as an example of battle and war and, in the ballet, this scene serves no more purpose than a diversion that furthers the plot along and allows Clara to venture to the Kingdom of Sweets.

The Nutcracker differs from previous ballets in that the first act contains almost all of the dramatic action. Act II functions as an extremely long divertissement where Clara is celebrated for saving the Prince's life by a series of dances presented in her honor. *The Nutcracker* is devoid of weightiness with the exception of Drosselmeier and the tension between Clara/Fritz and the soldiers/mice.

At the time of this composition, Tchaikovsky was beginning to feel older and less fluent in his composition. He was also doubtful about the subject of the ballet and was

having trouble depicting certain characters in the ballet musically. He talked with Petipa and the Directors of the Imperial theatres in St. Petersburg on March 18 and discussed how he was struggling to complete *The Nutcracker* before his tour in America.

Tchaikovsky complained that he “was sensing a decline in [his] inventive powers” (Warrack, 57). However, when he attempted to work on his opera, *Iolanthe*, his thoughts strayed to the ballet.

One of the distinctive elements of *The Nutcracker* that Tchaikovsky cleverly employed was the use of children’s instruments. He had enjoyed their presence in Haydn’s *Toy Symphony* and in Bernhard Romberg’s *Kinder-Symphonie*. Some of the instruments eventually incorporated into the score were the trumpet, drum, rattle (the sound of the Nutcracker), cuckoo, quail, cymbals, and rabbit drums. Yet, the instrument that captivated Tchaikovsky most was used to symbolize the Sugar Plum Fairy:

“I have discovered a new orchestral instrument in Paris, something between a small piano and a Glockenspiel, with a divinely beautiful tone....The instrument is called the Celesta Mustel...but no one must know about it. I am afraid that Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov might hear of it and make use of the new effect before I can” (Warrack, 57).

On March 19, 1891, Tchaikovsky first presented *The Nutcracker Suite* at a St. Petersburg concert. The final score was completed at Maidanovo on April 4, 1891. After the score was completed, Tchaikovsky and Petipa decided to collaborate again in the wake of their success with *The Sleeping Beauty*. However, in the winter, Petipa fell ill and the responsibility of the choreography passed into the hands of Lev Ivanov who also had worked on *The Sleeping Beauty* and who had devised the dances for Borodin’s *Prince*

Igor and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mlada*.

The cast of the first performance consisted of: Stanislava Belinskaya (Clara), Timofey Stukolkin (Drosselmeier), Sergey Legat (the Nutcracker), Antonietta dell'Era (the Sugar-Plum Fairy) and Pavel Gerdt (Prince Orgeat). Tchaikovsky criticized the ballet's first performance as follows: "The staging was both splendid, but that of the ballet even too splendid-one's eyes grew tired of this luxuriance" (Warrack, 59).

Tchaikovsky's gift for the "lyrical idea" is obvious in *The Nutcracker*. Because the ballet does not focus around a specific theme, Tchaikovsky had to rely on his talent to provide a unique tone color and melody for each part of the ballet. He also had to compose music that would interest the audience and not bore them. Out of Tchaikovsky's association of tone color and melody, he devises "moments of exquisite charm, limited in expressive range but enduringly memorable" (Warrack, 60). The music in *The Nutcracker* does not convey or express emotion as well as in previous ballets, yet the story of *The Nutcracker* does not require it to do so. Tchaikovsky designed the music so that the audience would be entertained and would get a taste of the exotic and fantastic. *The Nutcracker* is the best example of Tchaikovsky's incredible orchestration and instrument choice: "the special orchestral effects in *The Nutcracker* may be classified into three groups on the basis of the libretto: the images of childhood suggested by the overture and march; more fearsome and peculiar sounds associated with Drosselmeier; and effects associated with non-threatening magical occurrences, produced by the celesta, frulato, and other instruments of Confiturembourg [the Land of Sweets]" (Wiley, 231).

Act I of *The Nutcracker* begins at the Silberhaus family Christmas party. The

parents of Clara and Fritz Silberhaus and their friends are decorating the Christmas tree and when they are finished, the children are called. Many gifts are then distributed, but the party is interrupted with the appearance of Clara's godfather, Councillor Drosselmeier. Upon his entrance, the clocks begin to chime and the children are frightened by Drosselmeier's appearance. He brings extravagant gifts for Clara and Fritz which intrigue them. When the extraordinary gifts are put away, Drosselmeier surprises the children with another toy, a nutcracker. Clara is drawn to the toy and is heartbroken when Fritz breaks it. After the party ends, the children are sent to bed. Just before midnight, Clara ventures downstairs to check on her nutcracker. At the stroke of midnight, Clara, sees Drosselmeier's image on the face of the clock. The Christmas tree grows to an incredible height, and all of the dolls come alive. The toys and mice begin to fight and the toys are defeated. As a result, the Nutcracker enters into combat with the seven-headed Mouse King. In defense, Clara hurls her slipper at the Mouse King and kills him. The Nutcracker then turns into a prince, who leads Clara between the branches of the enormous Christmas tree into a winter forest and snowstorm.

Act II takes place in the Kingdom of Sweets, Confiturembourg. The Sugar Plum Fairy and the other inhabitants await Clara and the Nutcracker Prince. When they arrive, the Nutcracker Prince presents Clara to his sisters and the Sugar Plum Fairy. They are filled with thanks and gratitude because of Clara's bravery and saving the Nutcracker's life. As a result, the celebration begins featuring a long divertissement followed by a pas de deux danced by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her partner, Prince Orgeat. The Nutcracker tells Clara about the "fairy tale wonders and the unusual customs of Confiturembourg, in

order to oblige her wish not to wake from what appears to be a dream. The ballet ends with Clara and the Nutcracker Prince flying away in a magical sled.

Although *The Nutcracker* does not have the emotional depth of *Swan Lake* or *The Sleeping Beauty*, it possesses a certain charm and likeability. There is a level of appeal which reaches every age. *The Nutcracker* is brimming with memorable, popular melodies. Tchaikovsky had to rely on his creative powers to create a ballet so full of variety without any melodic repetition. Each dance differs from the one preceding it in several musical characteristics. Even though the ballet does not have a definite tonal plan and the numbers are not unified, Tchaikovsky is successful at giving the audience a taste of various melodies and visual delights.

The music of *The Nutcracker* is based on a loose tonal plan where essentially the overture and apotheosis are in the same key of B flat major. The opening melody of the overture is light, joyful, singable, and designed for a string ensemble and woodwinds. It is in a ternary structure with the A section consisting of staccato notes and a thin texture. The B section has pizzicato strings and syncopation.

Example 1: "Overture" (score, p. 3)



The overture does not contain motives to be heard later in the ballet, yet it sets the emotional tone for Act II which consists of the divertissements.

The following table describes the tonality and music of each number in *The*

Nutcracker:

Act, Scene	Key	Explanation
Overture	B-flat major	staccato, buoyant melody
Act I, No. 1	D major, b minor, A major	decoration of the Christmas tree
Act I, No. 2	G major, E minor	March- trumpets, staccato strings
Act I, No. 3	G major, C major, F major	Galop des enfants et entree des parents: tempo variations (presto-andante-allegro)
Act I, No. 4	A minor/ B minor; A major waltz; F sharp minor	Drosselmeier's theme: fast flute motives, ascending scales, sinister yet mischievous; 2/4 presto in F sharp minor-exotic rhythms
Act I, No. 5	A major, D major, D flat major, F major, C major	Scene et danse du Gross-Vater; presentation of the nutcracker; trumpets played by the children, 3/8 dance
Act I, No. 6	C major, A major	Departing of the Guests and The Magic Spell Begins: no defined tonal center, flutes, dissonance
Act I, No. 7	E minor	The Battle: allegro vivo, oboes, horns, trumpet calls
Act I, Scene 2, No. 8	C major	In the Pine Forest: harp, legato melody
Act I, No. 9	G major, B minor, E major	Waltz of the Snowflakes: flute and piccolo, wordless children's choir
Act II, No. 10	E major	Confiturenbourg castle
Act II, No. 11	C major, D major, G major	Prince tells the story of the battle: trumpet calls, allegro agitato
Act II, No. 12		Divertissements (see other table)
Act II, No. 13	D major, G major/B minor, D major	Waltz of the Flowers: ternary structure plus coda
Act II, No. 14	G major/ E minor, B minor, E minor, D major	Dance of the Prince and the Sugar-Plum Fairy: Pas de deux, Variation 1, Variation 2, and Coda

Act II, No. 15	B flat major	Final Waltz and Apotheosis
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Table 1

Act I begins with No.1, the scene in the home of President Silberhaus and his children, Clara and Fritz. The parents are decorating the Christmas tree and the children burst into the room with some of their friends. The theme while decorating the tree is played by a violin solo. It is characterized by a falling melody. The middle section of No. 1 consists of a scherzando dialogue between the clarinet, flute, and bassoon. Its sound is a little darker than the violin solo theme.

Example 2: "Decorating the Tree" (score, p. 30)

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'CLARINET' and features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The bottom staff is labeled 'BASSOON' and features a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. Both staves show a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a fermata over a measure in the clarinet part.

However, the opening section, upon its return, is interrupted by a passage coming from the owl clock in the room. This strange theme may be foreshadowing events to come such as the appearance of Drosselmeier or the battle between the Mouse King and the Nutcracker. At the end of No. 1, the President orders that a march be played.

At the beginning of No. 2, the March is played by the clarinets and brass and is answered by a dotted-note figure on the strings.

Example 3: "March" (score, p. 48)

The image shows a single staff of musical notation labeled 'TRUMPET'. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time (C) signature. The notation includes a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a dynamic marking of 'mf' at the end.

The contrasting middle section consists of motives played by the flutes and violins. This part is extremely fast and short and demonstrates the virtuosity of the flutes.

Example 4: "B" Section of the March (score, p. 57)



In this number, Tchaikovsky is inventive with rhythm. The steady march contrasts nicely with the syncopated strings in the first section and also with the fast string patterns up the scale.

The children's gallop and entrance of the parents make up No. 3. The parents enter in the clothes of the *merveilleuses* and *incroyables* (slang for the fops and dandies at the time of the Revolution and Directory). (Warrack, 62). This dance is separated into three parts. The first section is the gallop for the children in a 2/4 presto. The second section, where the parents enter is an andante minuet in the French classical style in a 3/4 andante. The final section introduces the tune, "Bon voyage, cher Dumollet", a popular song at the time. The tune is in a 6/8 allegro tempo characterized by a tambourine and brass.

At the stroke of the clock, Drosselmeier, Clara's godfather enters the party in No. 4. The children are frightened by his appearance, especially the patch over his eye. However, they are delighted to learn that he has brought them toys- a mechanical doll, toy soldiers, Harlequin, and a Columbine. The music that accompanies Drosselmeier's appearance reflects Hoffmann's portrayal of the character. Petipa wanted the music to be

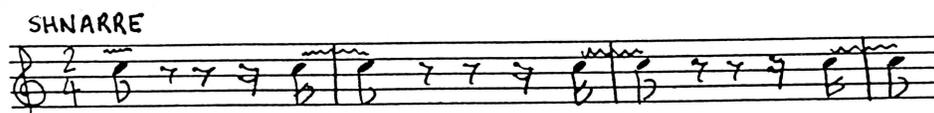
“serious, somewhat frightening, then comic” (Warrack, 62). The resulting sound is sinister, yet mischievous. This is the first time within the ballet that a certain motive or phrase is associated with a character. This technique had been developed by Tchaikovsky in *Swan Lake* where he had instruments and keys associated with each part. Drosselmeier’s theme is marked by an ascending scale with fast flute flourishes, followed by short, accented notes and is played by the viola.

Example 5: “Drosselmeier’s Theme” (score, p. 90)



The Grossvater Dance, No. 5 consists of the toys being taken away from Clara and Fritz. When this occurs, Clara bursts into tears and Fritz throws a tantrum. However, they are happily surprised by the appearance of another toy, a huge nutcracker that Drosselmeier presents. Unfortunately, Fritz attempts to crack a nut way too large for the mouth of the nutcracker and inadvertently breaks it. Clara then takes the wounded toy and puts it in her doll cradle and sings it a lullaby. The presentation of the nutcracker is accompanied by a waltz which is then transformed to a 2/4 passage including a rattle to represent cracking of the nuts.

Example 6: “The Nutcracker” (score, p. 122)



The theme eventually speeds up, the music gets louder, and the theme culminates with a triplet chromatic scale that describes Fritz breaking the nutcracker.

Example 7: "The Nutcracker Breaks" (score, p. 125)



The scene ends with the Grossvater, a traditional dance that signals that it is time for guests to leave. It is in a ternary structure with coda. The main theme is stately and slow and in triple meter. It has a full orchestral sound. The contrasting middle section has a fast 2/4 meter. This version was taken from a music book in Tchaikovsky's own library, *Dances favorites et modernes*.

In No. 6, the guests leave and the children go to bed. While the guests depart, a slow, swaying melody is played that suggests nighttime and sleep. After Clara is sent to bed, Tchaikovsky "paints a sinister nocturne" (Warrack, 65) with tremolo strings, the harp, flute trills, and a piccolo staccato figure. This music is then developed as to suggest Drosselmeier. His theme is then heard, but it sounds distorted. In the middle of the night, Clara sneaks back to the room to check on her toy and notices that it emits a strange light. The clock then strikes twelve and Drosselmeier's face is seen on the face of the owl clock. She tries to run away, but cannot and suddenly mice appear all around her.

Example 8: "The Distorted Drosselmeier's Theme" (score, p. 151)



After Drosselmeier's appearance, the "magic" begins and a full orchestra rich and lush, is heard. The Christmas tree then begins to grow and is musically depicted with a harp motive and a violin phrase in sequences higher and higher to illustrate the growing of the tree.

Example 9: "The Christmas Tree Grows" (score, p. 155)



The battle scene in No. 7 has the most physical action in the entire ballet. The nutcracker challenges and fires a shot. He then rouses the toy rabbits and the toy soldiers and mice prepare themselves for battle. The mice who win the battle, eat the gingerbread soldiers. The Nutcracker and Mouse King are about to fight when Clara intervenes by throwing her slipper at the Mouse King which kills him. The Nutcracker is then transformed into a Prince and he offers Clara a journey to his kingdom in exchange for saving his life. Tchaikovsky succeeds in creating the traditional military sounds by using rataplan rhythms and trumpet calls. However, because he keeps it light, "it keeps any suggestion of a real battle at a distance". (Warrack, 65). However, real tension is created during the battle by a faster tempo, more dissonance, and crescendo passages.

At the beginning of Scene II, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince venture through the middle of the Christmas tree. The room is transformed into a forest and gnomes gather around the tree with torches. Snow begins to fall and Clara and the Prince begin their journey. The melody that is played during this scene is more emotional than anything that has so far occurred. It is an expansive tune that is heard over the arpeggios of the two harps. This new theme suggests that Clara is embarking on a magical fantasy beyond the confines of her house.

The Waltz of the Snowflakes in No. 9 contains the first real ballet choreography in *The Nutcracker*. It occurs as Clara is met by the King and Queen who join their subjects in a waltz. The music is based on a flute figure that depicts the falling of snowflakes from the sky.

Example 10: "The Snowflakes" (score, p. 218)



Although this waltz is not as famous as *The Waltz of the Flowers*, it is meant to be illustrative rather than beautiful. Laroche described this dance as "a feeling of shivering from the cold and the play of snowflakes in the moonlight" (Warrack, 66). This waltz does, however, use many different sounds and depicts a winter wonderland well. This illustration is further aided by the use of a wordless children's choir which sings in thirds. The choir makes the music child-like and innocent and adds to the fantasy atmosphere. The tempo increases drastically, and the meter changes to 2/4. The themes heard

previously are shortened. The waltz then returns and ends with a grand arpeggio on the harp with a very full orchestral sound.

Act II, Scene III begins at the Palace of the Kingdom of Sweets, Confiturenbourg, where the Sugar-Plum Fairy appears to welcome Clara and The Nutcracker Prince to her kingdom. The act begins with a swaying 6/8 theme. The thick textures accentuate the richness of the scene, the candyland world of sweets. The flute, piccolo and clarinet scales help to emphasize the decadent surroundings and joys to come. The Sugar Plum Fairy then arrives with the sound of her figurative instrument, the celesta. The harp arpeggios accompany the main theme played by violin harmonics.

No. 11 is set beside a river of rose-water where Clara and the Prince are welcomed to the Great Hall of the Palace. The Prince then proceeds to tell everyone of Clara's bravery and how she saved his life in the allegro agitato scene where excerpts from the battle scene music are heard again. After the Prince tells his story, preparations for the banquet and entertainments ensue. The expectation is depicted by rising chromatic scales. The series of divertissements are then performed for entertainment. Each divertissement is very short, with none lasting more than three minutes. These dances were composed to delight both the spectators at the palace and the members of the audience. They lack any really emotional weight, but they are distinctive and unique and call upon Tchaikovsky's ability as a creative composer.

Type of Dance	Tempo	Key	Orchestration/ colors	Meter	Dynamics
a) Chocolate: Spanish Dance	Allegro brillante	E flat major	castanets, trumpets, strings	3/4	forte
b) Coffee: Arabian Dance	Commodo	G minor	English horn, clarinet, viola/bass	3/8	con sordino

Example 14: "Trepak" (score, p. 343)



The exuberant Russian rhythm is catchy, upbeat, and engaging. The fast paced melody is played by arco strings. The meter is a *molto vivace* 2/4 and is based on a "Russian melodic formula familiar from Glinka's *Kamarinskaya*, or indeed the finale of his own Violin Concerto" (Warrack, 68). The structure of this movement is Ternary.

The fifth section of No. 12 is *Les Mirlitons*, or the reed pipes. This movement has a clear Ternary formal structure. The first section has a thin texture where the main melody played by the flutes, is accompanied by pizzicato strings.

Example 15: "The Reed Pipes" (score, p. 353)



The tempo of this section is *moderato assai* in a duple meter. Tchaikovsky uses several fast runs on the strings for color along with the woodwinds as a nice complement to the flute melody. The first section is soft and pretty and in a major key. However, the middle section is a sharp contrast. The B section is played by the brass and percussion with a constant sixteenth note pulse in the trumpet. This is also the section of the movement where the entire orchestra plays with the exception of the flutes. Upon the return of the A section there is some imitation of phrases and motives between the flutes

and violins and violas.

The final dance is “La mere Gigogne et les polichinelles”. Tchaikovsky relied on his knowledge of French fairy tales for this dance. He based it upon the *Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*. The movement is divided into three parts. The first section is in 2/4, the second in 6/8 and the ending in 2/4. As the piece progresses, the tempo really increases. This dance is more childlike than the others if only for its use of a snare drum and other percussion instruments.

No. 13, the Waltz of the Flowers concentrates on strong, pleasing melodies. Tchaikovsky seems to create one beautiful melody after another. It is in a ternary structure with a contrasting minor section. The presence of the harp in the introduction adds to the graceful, mellifluous melody. The main theme is played by the French horns and is then answered by a descending line in the strings alternating with woodwind trills.

Example 16: “A’ Section of Waltz of the Flowers” (score, p. 387)

THEME
FRENCH HORN

ANSWER
VIOLIN

After this alternation is repeated several times, the B section arrives with a melody in G major played by the flute.

Example 17: “B’ Section of Waltz of the Flowers” (score, p. 394)

Following the flute melody, a gorgeous viola and cello duet arises and is marked by vibrato and a deeply moving melodic line.

Example 18: "Waltz of the Flowers" (score, p. 397)



The A section then returns along with a coda.

No. 14 is the Pas de deux between the Sugar Plum Fairy and Prince Orgeat, her companion. The movement is structured as follows: the pas de deux, then a variation for the Prince followed by a variation for the Sugar Plum Fairy ending with a coda.

The melody of the first part is purely a descending scale.

Example 19: "Pas de deux" (score, p. 419)



Yet, Tchaikovsky, using varied rhythms makes the scale musical and lush. The cellos play this gorgeous melody that is overflowing with romance and passion. This grand dance satisfies the need for a pas de deux between the prima ballerina and her partner. This dance is similar to the pas de deux in Act II of *Swan Lake* in that it is

emotional, dramatic, and expressive. The tempo is andante maestoso in 4/4 time. The flutes and clarinets followed by the strings play the melody and at one point there is a tutti section. The horns also play the melody, but it has a staccato, accented color, similar to the harsh statement of the Second Swan Theme when Odile appears at Siegfried's birthday. The effect is powerful and excessive. Petipa told Tchaikovsky that it should be "colossal in effect." This movement is similar in emotional content and sound to the love music of his Fifth Symphony (Warrack, 72).

The first variation is a Tarantella for the male dancer. The Tarantella is an Italian dance from Southern Italy, either Naples or Sicily. According to myth, the bite of a tarantula would cause insanity and the only way to cure the disease was by dancing. This dance is lively in a vigorous 6/8 tempo.

The second variation is The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. In this number, Tchaikovsky dazzled the audience with his use of the celesta, the instrument he imported from Paris.

Example 20: "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" (score, p. 451)



The delicate and pretty sound of the celesta is a fitting way to illustrate the Sugar Plum Fairy. The texture of this movement is very thin as the main melody is accompanied mostly by pizzicato strings and the bass clarinet.

The coda is a vibrant dance marked by great leaps and displays of virtuosity by the dancers. The coda builds up tension by using scale features.

The Final Waltz and apotheosis, No. 15 involves the entire court as they pay tribute to Clara. This final number contains much chromaticism and syncopation along with a displacement of the accent. Petipa asked Tchaikovsky to compose a “grandiose andante” for this final movement. This movement is based upon the themes heard at the beginning of the act in No. 10 except this time he added shimmering strings and arpeggios on the harp and celesta. In addition, each of the characters come back and the orchestral colors of each divertissement are heard again.

Although *The Nutcracker* lacks the emotional content and dramatic plot line of both *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, it makes up for these absences in its innovative orchestration, melodic content and popular appeal. Tchaikovsky’s clever use of instrumentation coupled with diverse melodies, harmonies, and modulations makes *The Nutcracker* a delight to hear and a treat to hear around the holidays.

The artistic perception and complexity of ballet was greatly revolutionized in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In fact, all of these monumental changes may be attributed to the talent and vision of Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Due to discriminating critics and their high artistic demands, Tchaikovsky not only composed music they admired, but made ballet composition an acceptable profession. At the peak of Tchaikovsky's career, ballet was being taken as seriously as opera and symphony. Ballet composition was no longer regarded as frivolous or inartistic because Tchaikovsky changed the place of music in ballet. He rearranged the ballet production hierarchy where choreography arose out of the music instead of the reverse. Tchaikovsky may be credited with the social accomplishments of ballet. He placed the composer on a par with the ballet master.

In the beginning of Tchaikovsky's ballet compositional career, he was not always pleased with his accomplishments. In a critic's response to *Swan Lake*: "The composer himself was not satisfied with the ballet, and regretted that he wrote it without first being familiar with the requirements of ballet music" (Wiley, 270). When he began his ballet music career in 1875 with *Swan Lake*, Tchaikovsky was unaware of the importance of the ballet master. Tchaikovsky composed music that he deemed acceptable for the ballet. Unfortunately, his score was criticized for being "unsuited for dances" and due to the tyranny of the ballet master, Tchaikovsky became disillusioned with the entire process of ballet composition. Ironically, it is the music, and not the choreography that has made *Swan Lake* the timeless ballet classic that it is today.

Musically, Tchaikovsky is responsible for the great innovations in ballet composition. With their thematic unity, superior melodies, and structured tonal plans,

Tchaikovsky's music changed the attitudes of Russians towards Russian music. The production of *Sleeping Beauty*, renewed many people's interest in ballet, not for the spectacle and visual delight, but because of the power of the ballet score. After viewing a production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, Leonty Benois, a Russian artist stated: "It turned out the music of Tchaikovsky was not only excellent and charming, but that there was something in it that I had somehow always been waiting for" (Wiley, 275). In addition, he felt the "music conquered me" (Wiley, 275). Comments such as these made Tchaikovsky the standard by which other ballet composers were judged.

During the interim between *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky developed a sophisticated artistic style with innovations in rhythm and orchestration. There was a refinement and enrichment of his style. His use of themes or instruments to represent emotions or characters became popular, providing unity for his ballet scores. He built on the foundations laid by Minkus and prepared them for Stravinsky.

Tchaikovsky is credited with "freeing" ballet music from the self-imposed restrictions set by the ballet masters of the mid-nineteenth century. He showed choreographers that the music did not have to be a mere accompaniment, but should be able to stand alone. Granted more attention is given to the visual components of the ballet, it is ridiculous to assume that people do not pay attention to the score. As Tchaikovsky's scores became increasingly popular, people were given another reason to attend ballet instead of going purely for the visual aspects. However, despite these innovations, Tchaikovsky was always aware of the practical requirements and the identity of the music. He was truly gifted in so much as he was able to create music that was symphonic and musically substantial while being suited for movement and dance.

With the composition of *Swan Lake*, Tchaikovsky fought against the established traditions and customs of the times. His work challenged the importance of the ballet master and the supremacy of the choreography to all other components of the ballet. However, when he composed *The Sleeping Beauty* ten years later, he mastered these traditions and used them to his advantage. He worked closely with Petipa and gained a fuller understanding of what was expected of him. For this reason, *The Sleeping Beauty* is often regarded as Tchaikovsky's crowning achievement.

Tchaikovsky had the innate ability to compose emotional, memorable melodies that were beautifully orchestrated and harmonically complex. His rich and satisfying sounds resulted from his superior talent for orchestration. His music could portray anything, from using the oboe to depict Odette's melancholic despair to using two contrasting themes to depict Carabosse and the Lilac Fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*. He had a great mind for musical detail and exploited the sounds of the orchestra. He even went so far as to agonize over the perfect instrument to portray the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Most importantly, Tchaikovsky could compose dances. It is difficult enough to compose pieces that will be musically challenging, artistically worthy and that will provide a good background for the choreography. However, he was required to compose music that would incite movement and further dance. With ballet composition, Tchaikovsky became what he needed to be. He learned flexibility and discovered the depths of his own compositional gifts. Although he uses musically complex devices, there is an underlying and fundamental simplicity that is appropriate for ballet composition. Ballet music should not over power the choreography, rather it should be an equal partner in contributing to the overall success of the ballet. To deem Tchaikovsky a "specialist" in the area of ballet

composition would be inaccurate. Tchaikovsky had “specialist” colleagues, but he possessed innate gifts that would never limit him to this sort of composition. That is why Tchaikovsky ballet scores are never mistaken for other ballet composers. He made the music symphonic without composing a symphony.

The greatest accomplishment of Tchaikovsky’s ballet music is not its artistic merit, but its ability to endure for over a hundred years. Children are continuously brought to see the *Nutcracker* during the holidays and many people are familiar with its joyful melodies. In addition, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* are perennial favorites in current ballet repertoire. These ballets are somewhat analogous to Beethoven Symphonies: no matter how often a person has heard Beethoven’s Ninth, they listen again and again to hear the music’s sense of passion and timelessness. These enduring classics are still performed as if they were contemporary works. When asked to name the quintessential ballet, it is not *Delibe’s La Fille au Danube* or Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*, but rather an image of *The Sleeping Beauty* that most people bring to mind.

Tchaikovsky’s ballets are enduring standards. They possess vitality. Ballet companies the world over work to preserve the choreography and music of these masterpieces.

Most importantly, Tchaikovsky made ballet music musical. It is exciting to listen to the complete score of *Swan Lake* or *The Sleeping Beauty*. The most wonderful thing, however, is that the music itself tells a story. It is difficult to fully grasp the plot of the ballets by listening to the music alone. However, the emotions of the scene and the feelings of the characters can be felt by listening to the music. By simply listening to the opening solo oboe “First Swan Theme” of *Swan Lake*, the listener will get the impression

that this ballet will center around sadness and isolation. This haunting theme will cause listeners to empathize with Odette and her plight. In *The Sleeping Beauty*, the contrast that Tchaikovsky makes apparent through the Carabosse and Lilac Fairy themes explains the battle between good and evil that will prevail throughout the entire ballet. In the *Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky conveys impressions of sweets and the countries they represent through melodic variation. In Act II alone, Tchaikovsky has so many completely contrasting melodies and uses of instruments that he creates diversity through a variety of orchestral tone colors and timbres.

Because of Tchaikovsky's influence, people listen to a ballet score just as they would listen to a symphony. It is doubtful that anyone would want to do the same with the ballet music by Minkus or even Adam. Today, Tchaikovsky's ballet music is found everywhere: in countless CD collections, as soundtracks to Disney movies, constantly played on classical radio stations, used by ice skaters at the Olympics, and even heard in television commercials. The music is so powerful, inventive, and exciting that people want to listen to it over and over again. What makes Tchaikovsky's music so superb is not its fundamental musical structure, but rather its richness in melodic variety. Within each ballet there are so many different contrasting themes and melodic lines where each surpasses the next. With these melodies, he is adept at manipulating our emotions and expectations. In addition, what makes a Tchaikovsky ballet so historically important is that it differs from its predecessors in its phenomenal degree of musical complexity. Tchaikovsky's talents are unparalleled and his art unequalled. He was the unrivaled ballet composer of the nineteenth century.

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