

TEENNS and TWENTIES

The Sleeping Beauty of Russia : Peter Tchaikovsky

by Asrarul Islam Chowdhury

TRYING to describe the music of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (b 7 May 1840, d 6 Nov 1893), the Great Russian composer of the 19th Century, would be like trying to contain an underwater river. Indeed, music, the most abstract medium in which we express our thoughts, cannot be understood simply by reading an article or two. It has to be felt from the heart. Those of us who have listened to the music of Tchaikovsky, will, hopefully, agree with me on this point. Nevertheless, the inquisitive reader must want to know about this luminary of western classical music. After all, the environment of any person influences his or her life to a great extent.

Tchaikovsky was born in Votinsk in Russia. His father was a super-intendant of state-owned mines in the region and his mother was half French. Although the young Tchaikovsky was inclined towards music, his parents did not encourage him too much as he was neurotically excited. His father moved to St Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) in 1848 and to Moscow in 1850, where Tchaikovsky was admitted in the preparatory section of the School of Jurisprudence in 1850.

Like almost all great men, Tchaikovsky was deeply attached to his mother. Unfortunately, he received a blow in 1854 at the age of only 14, when his mother died of cholera (ironically, Tchaikovsky himself also died of the disease). To add to his pain, his father's attitude was indifferent. The blow was so severe that Tchaikovsky composed a piano waltz to express his sorrow and respect and to relieve himself of the pain.

During his days at the School of Jurisprudence, singing and piano lessons were the only type of music education Tchaikovsky received. However, he used to make frequent visits to the opera which were to imprint deep images in his later life. Although, he joined as a clerk at the Ministry of Justice, his growing devotion to music acted as an impediment and he soon quit the Government service to become a music disciple. In 1864, he composed his first

major work: an overture based on the play "The Storm" of Aleksandre Ostrovsky. It was full of vulgarity and stylistic features which were later to take their toll in his career.

It was from 1866 that Tchaikovsky started to compose music full-fledgedly. In that year, he composed "Symphony No. 1 in G Minor" (1866) which later led to a mental crisis due to overwork on the symphony. In 1869, he composed "Romeo and Juliet" at the suggestion of Mily Balakiev, leader of a Russian Nationalistic group. However, his humour was profoundly expressed in the comic opera "Valka the Smith" (1876).

During this time, Tchaikovsky had an unsuccessful love affair with Desiree Antot, an Italian. He then had another unfruitful affair with another woman. These failures were expressed in his works through hysteria in composing "Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Opus 36" (1877) and the opera "Eugene Onegin" (1877-78). The latter was based on a poem of one of the Greatest poets of the 19th Century, Alexander Pushkin. Meanwhile, a former music student of Tchaikovsky, Antonina Milyukova, became infatuated with him and threatened to commit suicide should he reject her. He finally married her, but was never mentally attached to the relationship. He even tried to kill himself.

While still married to Antonina, Tchaikovsky started correspondence with an ardent admirer of his music, Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow. It was on her terms the two never met physically and in return, Tchaikovsky would receive an annuity sufficient enough for him to give up his Professorship at the Moscow conservatory and devote himself to composing music. To show his gratitude towards Nadezhda, Tchaikovsky composed a huge amount of music in the ensuing years. The major works within this time include the immortal "The Swan Lake" (1877), "Piano Sonata in G Minor, Opus 37" (1878), "Suite No. 1 in D Minor, Opus 43" (1878-79), "The Maid of Orleans" (1878-79), Violin

Concerto in D Minor, Opus 35" (1878), "Serando for Strings in C Major, Opus 48" (1880), Capriccio Italien, Opus 45" (1880) and the great "1812 Overture, Opus 49" (1880). Due to the admiration of the then Czar, "Eugene Onegin" received immense popularity in St Petersburg.

In 1885, Tchaikovsky bought a house at Maidanovo near Moscow and lived there till 1892, the year before his death. From 1885 to 1888, he roamed around Russia before embarking on a foreign tour in 1888 which took him to Hamburg, Berlin, Prague, Paris

works, "The Queen of Spades" (1890) and "The Sleeping Beauty" (1890). The former was his second salute to Pushkin, while Walt Disney expressed their salute by making an animation of the latter. During a later tour to England and America, Tchaikovsky composed the unforgettable ballet "The Nutcracker Suite" (1892). In 1890 Nadezhda ended both her correspondence and annuity. This however, did not affect him as by then, he was receiving handsome royalties from "The Queen of Spades" and also a Government pension.

Tchaikovsky caught the disease by drinking contaminated water. He died of the disease, just like his Mother.

True talent is seldom appreciated within the lifetime of a person. May be Tchaikovsky was ahead of his time. Although, he enjoyed enormous popularity, both in and outside Russia, his neurotic problems posed a threat to his genius. Nevertheless, his genius is locked in the works of Swan Lake, The Nutcracker Suite, 1812 Overture, The Sleeping Beauty, and the 6th Symphony. As I said at the beginning, to understand the magnanimity of the music of this luminary, one has to feel



A scene from Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake

and finally, London. It was on this tour he met Johannes Brahms and Edvard Grieg, two other legendary composers of his time.

The foreign tour was extremely significant as his music was received with great appreciation almost everywhere. Moreover, during this tour he composed two major

Tchaikovsky put in all his effort and soul in his last work, "Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Opus 74" (1893) just a few months before his death. To his dismay, the public however, did not receive it as they had his earlier works. At that time an epidemic cholera broke out in St Petersburg and

Tchaikovsky's music from the heart, mind and soul

Music is playing inside my head
Over and over and over again, my friend
There's no end, to the music
— Carole King

Being Old

by Trishna

alarm clock. Today getting up becomes chiefly a moral problem, but my advice is to place both feet firmly on the floor, bend forward from the hips, rise to an upright posture and then keep the balance. A sideward step may help in this case; practice it.

For an old man clothes are like medicines, you cannot stay without them and again taking them is a real problem. A man of uncertain balance faces a big problem pulling on his trousers. It is something that cannot possibly be done in the middle of a room without the risk of falling. The best thing is to stand next to a wall so as to be on the safest side. Be content if you do not put both your legs into one leg of the pants.

Stairs are perilous — always. You have to grasp the railing firmly, take just one step up or down, then pause to observe how much longer you have to do that. In order to show the youngsters that I am not THAT old, I take the steps more quickly and refuse to accept a helping hand. But yes, I do count them as I climb up or down as it can prevent stumbling in the darkness.

Sitting down too is a pain. Deep, comfortable overstuffed chairs or sofas may become prison cells for an old person. You seem to sink in them without being able to get up without another's hand. The solidly made hard bottomed straight-backed chairs are the best for me, although I doubt if I do sit straight on it. Walking hence, is the crowning achievement, besides the best form of exercise. But you must always have the cane in your hand even when you are not using it.

Besides those loathsome syrups, tablets and capsules, everyone seem to snatch away the mouth-watering food from you. Na, chocolates, cakes, nuts, cheese or even 'briyani'

as they say that mutton would increase my blood pressure. In my teens I smoked behind my mother's back as I thought I was too young for smoking openly. Now I have to hide and do it as they think I am too old for it. Why bother about health anyway, when the first thing that comes to your mind when you wake up is what that day ahead might bring. I live cherishing hours the way lovers value moments, when a week is ended, it seems I have gone through another fortune. I remember my mother waking me up and taking me to the window to show Halley's comet streaking across the sky. I was almost four then and she told me to remember it always because my mother said it comes around only once every 76 years and that 76 years is a long time. The years seem to have gone by as fast as Halley's comet as now I have already crossed those 76 years. But if I had known I was going to live this long then I would have taken better care of myself.

Sometimes I do feel isolated thinking that yesterday's fun-loving flirt is today's part of a huge and commonplace problem. Thus nowadays when my stomach aches, I just lie down and patify it with cool thoughts of my golden years instead of complaining to my sons and daughters. They would probably suspect another new disease in me or argue with me for not controlling my diet properly. After all, how can I when they refuse to give me the food I want and instead pushes down fruit juices and vegetables through my throat? Sometimes I feel like a rabbit and not a human being, except for the fact that if prefers being a herbivore and I don't.

If I sleep a little late, my grandchildren sneak in my room and put their hands under my nose to check if I am breathing. How ridiculous! But I understand that now they are more curious in increasing the 'health span' and not the 'life span', as they cannot do so. So they want me to die a healthy death. But now who cares how you die? At this age, there is only one goal and that is to add life to your years and not years to your life.

How Gods Came into Being-II

by Shamsad Mortuza

MYTHICAL gods came into being as primitive men tried to explain a world that appeared alien to them, and this we all know. Human imagination defied various natural phenomena or objects in human terms, and thereby furnished the world with gods.

This deification, quite interestingly, was conducted not by an individual but by a whole community. These primitive gods did not have any particular prophet (like in most of the modern religions) to solidify their niche as supreme beings. Rather, they had priests and a whole clan of devotees to carry on with the necessary rituals.

Each community had its own way of explaining the natural phenomena or their surroundings. Therefore, the gods created by each community had their own taste and colour. Still many of these gods, surviving in the myths of different races and communities, share some interesting resemblances.

The Native Americans, for instance, believed that there is a single, free spirit — Wakhonah — lying beneath the earth, which is the source of all other spirits including human. For the Aryans (early invaders in India), the term for such a timeless spirit is Brahma — the oldest spirit in the Veda. The concept of an eternal spirit is again echoed in the Melanesian myths

and the knowledge of Sharaswati and Athena sprung from the male head.

In patriarchal ancient India, the female, although frequently deified, kept a low profile. Hera, the wife of the thunder-god Zeus, for example, tried to give birth to a child without the assistance of any male partner. The result was the deformed deity of creative fire and divine smith — Hephaestus. Also known as Vulcan in Roman myths, Hephaestus meets his Indian counterpart in the form of fire god Agni.

In the dawn of human civilization, fire was lit by rubbing two woodsticks. In Sanskrit the process is known as Pro-mantho. Phonetically, this reminds one of the Titan Prometheus. Like Agni, Prometheus ranked in-between the gods and the mortals. And it was Prometheus who taught mankind the use of fire.

Almost all the fire-gods: Zeus in Greece, Jupiter in Rome, Indra in India and Ra in Egypt belong to the upper classes of gods. They are all victorious and are often symbolised by eagles.

Of the eggless resemblances between the Greek and the Indian gods, the presence of the half-horse-half-man is probably the most striking. Archaeologists have failed to trace any real evidence of their existence.

dian gods also appear before their mortal counterparts in various shapes. Anything that went beyond ordinary human perception was attributed with divine explanations. Thus, the milk cow, the friendly ape, or the beautiful snakes became deities.

For many of the tribes, living in Africa or the Pacific, animals or birds were the main gods. Each tribe selected a particular bird or animal to worship. This, in Freud's term, is Totem. Members of the clan always considered their totem sacred; they were forbidden to eat or kill their totem. Dance and dramas were the best form of arts through which the totems could be satisfied or appeased.

The same rituals are traced in almost all the primitive societies. The agricultural people of ancient Greece worshipped the god of fertility Dionysus. The symbol of this fertility god was a goat. So, the followers of Dionysus dressed up as goats and danced in order to attract the attention of Dionysus. They would also paint their tender shoots with the blood of sacrificed goats. This they did in an attempt to assure the presence of fertility in their plants. They also sung tragic songs with a final note of transcendence. They preferred tragedy because they had a dead field before them and they had the optimistic over-

Bangabazar: A Market with a Difference

by Siraj-us-Saleheen Lovell

MULTICOLORED T-shirts or Hawaiian shirts combined with jeans and sneakers in the summer and a denim jacket with jeans and high boots in the winter are the trend among the young generation. Why this sudden jeans mania one may wonder? Probing a little deeply into the matter may lead to the answer.

If you are a young city dweller who wants to be in with the latest fashion then simply call on a rickshaw, i.e. a rickshaw, and tell him you want to go to a place called 'Bangabazaar'. Skipping through the city when he drops you in front of the infamous market premises the first thing you'll see is the lined up private cars and Pajero jeeps parked around the market, which is crudely in the shape of a box. Another most interesting fact about the place are the endless numbers of entrances. Well, don't be confused; just chose one and enter in the labyrinth of clothes and what do you see? Soon it is evident that this clothes-heaven is the root of the current jeans mania. As you enter the Bangabazaar Municipality Hawkers Market, in short, Bangabazaar the discreet odor of new cloths will strike your tender nostrils and seeing such abundance of

side the Fulbaria bus stand near Gulistan with at least twelve hundred shops clustered together, most of which are sized five feet in width and ten feet in length. All the shops are situated in rows with very little space between them. In one corner of the market there are two steep wooden ladders which bridge the ground floor with the upper one, where you may find more shops but with a different pur-

pose. These are all sewing shops where you can alter or fix your trousers or shirts any way you want (in exchange of money, of course). The whole center is divided into four parts, three of them named as Mahanagar, Gulistan and Bangabazaar respectively. The market has become popular during the last three or four years, mainly because it is an ideal shopping center for the middle-classes and the student

clan. This is the place where you'll get a good shirt, trousers, T-shirt, jacket, blazer, coat and even inner garments at amazingly reasonable prices. The interesting fact is that most of the clothes are of our own local garments industries, which either are rejected by the consumers or have are defects almost invisible. Jeans range from Tk 300 to Tk 350 a pair, shirts range from Tk 100 to Tk 140. T-shirts are extremely bargainable. Jackets in this season range from Tk 400 to Tk 1000. The problem is, if any body buys an expensive shirt or pant from the more posh markets, he or she will be undoubtedly confronted by their peers with their question, "When did you visit Bangabazaar?" What a tragedy! Foreigners also through this market. Believe me it is indeed like a tourist spot. Even they try a good bargain with the shop-owners. It's a funny scene to watch the foreign buyers trying to bargain with the shop-owners. Especially when neither of the two parties speak the same language.

If you're a fanatic for old clothes, then also Bangabazaar is the right place to visit. For

very low prices. A regular and experienced customer comments "This market is a lifesaver for my middle-class moghuls, but the sad thing is nowadays the prices are a bit higher. The reason is mainly those private car and Pajero-jeep owners. They come and buy clothes without bargaining and whatever price the shopkeepers demand. That's bad for us". He also gave a very interesting tip for bargaining, "Always divide the demanded price by three and then start your bargain". He finally remarked "This market has taught the Bengali kids how to wear jeans; they should be grateful to it."

On weekends or holidays the market bulges with buyers, half of which are women customers. Buying and selling goes on each day from ten in the morning upto nine at night. There are no dressing rooms in the shops. So if you want to check whether your pants fit or not you'll have to let go of your inhibitions and wear it front of everyone. There's nothing wrong in that, because everyone does it!

Well you guys, there's no more elaborate way to describe this astounding market. All I can say is that, as long as you have the chance, give this market a try and you will

