

## Dialogue of Cultures

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### Pyotr Tchaikovsky: The Composer's Circle of Virtual and Real Communication

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**Abstract.** The article sets out to reveal the specifics of cultural dialogues between the composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky and the poet Lord George Gordon Byron, as well as with the writer Leo Tolstoy and the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. Regardless of whether the creative communication between these figures was real or “virtual,” the author focuses on aspects that contribute to: (1) the accumulation of new knowledge regarding the composer’s worldview; (2) understanding the essence of the profound foundations of one of Tchaikovsky’s most beloved works — the opera *The Enchantress*; (3) generating interest among Chinese audiences in *The Enchantress*, given that at the core of this work lies the phenomenon of transformation, representing an integral concept in Chinese philosophy, along with the theme of patriotism (the latter revealed through the image of the opera’s heroine, Nastasya “Kuma,” embodying the archetype of the native land). At the same time, the study of the dialogical interaction of geniuses of world culture allows us to identify “strange convergences” between them, which occur at the crossroads of ways, eras and countries.

**Keywords:** Pyotr Tchaikovsky, George Gordon Byron, Vladimir Solovyov, Leo Tolstoy, opera *The Enchantress*, novel *Resurrection*, dialogue

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## П.И. Чайковский: круг виртуального и реального общения композитора

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**Аннотация.** В статье осуществляется попытка раскрыть специфику культурных диалогов композитора Петра Чайковского с поэтом лордом Джорджем Гордоном Байроном, писателем Львом Толстым и философом Владимиром Соловьёвым. Независимо от того, было ли творческое общение обозначенных персоналий реальным или виртуальным, автор останавливается на таких его моментах, которые способствуют: 1) приращению нового знания относительно мировоззренческих установок композитора; 2) смыслопостижению глубинных основ одного из любимейших произведений Чайковского — оперы «Чародейка»; 3) интересу китайского зрителя к опере «Чародейка» ввиду того, что в центре этого произведения — феномен преобразования как неотъемлемый концепт китайской философии, а также тема патриотизма (последняя раскрывается в том, что образ главной героини оперы Кумы Настасьи воплощает собой архетип родной земли). Вместе с тем исследование диалогического взаимодействия гениев мировой культуры позволяет выявить «странные сближения» между ними, которые встречаются на перепутье дорог, эпох и стран.

**Ключевые слова:** Пётр Чайковский, Джордж Гордон Байрон, Владимир Соловьёв, Лев Толстой, опера «Чародейка», роман «Воскресение», диалог

### Introduction

The past year, 2025, was marked by an anniversary date associated with the name of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, whose 185th birthday was celebrated by the international community. While, in the context of this event, it might seem that everything that in one way or another bears the stamp of this genius of Russian musical culture has long been studied, the current state of musical art, including creative innovations on the part of foreign masters, convinces us of the opposite. The present work offers a new perspective in the study of the master's creative legacy, which clearly shows that today Tchaikovsky's place among the most researched composers remains secure.

### Pyotr Tchaikovsky and George Gordon Byron

It is known that the closet drama *Manfred*, written by George Gordon Byron, formed the basis for Tchaikovsky's programmatic symphony of the same name, on which he was working in 1885. The fact that the composer was attracted to the philosophical and dramatic poem is not surprising. His interest in philosophical problems and philosophy in general manifested itself throughout his life, not only through reading relevant literature, but also through direct communication with philosophers. Among them was the composer Sergei Taneyev's brother, Vladimir Ivanovich Taneyev (1840–1921). It is known for certain that Vladimir Taneyev was part of Tchaikovsky's

circle of close friends from his time as a student at the School of Law. [1]

As Pavel Morozov [2] notes, Tchaikovsky, Doctor Alexander Buturlin, who knew the Gospel very well, actress Maria Ermolova, Sergei Taneyev, Ivan Turgenev, as well as various doctors, lawyers, and historians attended the so-called “academic dinners” at Vladimir Ivanovich’s house. The appeal of the philosopher Taneyev’s house for all these people lay not only in his hospitality, but also in the unique library that Vladimir Ivanovich began collecting in his youth. It contained over twenty thousand volumes, which were located in three rooms.<sup>1</sup> No less attractive for meetings was the Demyanovo estate, located near Moscow, where Vladimir Taneyev also hosted the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. [Ibid., pp. 16–17]

Byron, as is known, not only showed respect for the works of the French philosophers Montaigne, Voltaire and Rousseau, but was also familiar with the philosophical maxims of the English philosophers Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, as well as the Scottish philosopher Hume. From this point of view, Tchaikovsky’s interest in Byron’s work presumably arose not so much due to the poet’s romantic nature and the characters born of his genius as to the philosophical nature of his artistic legacy.

It is no coincidence that the hero of Byron’s poem was included in the title of the four-hand piano piece by the philosopher Nietzsche, entitled *The Melancholy of Manfred*.<sup>2</sup>

Remarkably, the names of Tchaikovsky and Lord Byron again appeared side by side centuries later, but for a completely different reason. [3] Thus, in 2017, an announcement was posted on the website of the University of Michigan’s School of Music, Theatre, and Dance, which trains undergraduate and graduate students in the performing arts,<sup>3</sup> about the premiere of an opera entitled *The Enchantress* scheduled for November 11. While information about a premiere opera production might seem commonplace for Michigan students,<sup>4</sup> the author of the present article found this information quite intriguing. After making some enquiries, it was possible to ascertain that this Michigan *Enchantress* had nothing to do with Tchaikovsky’s opera. The teachers and students had created an entirely new work, borrowing only the title from their great predecessor.

The newly commissioned *Enchantress* from Michigan artists, led by composer Kamala Sankaram and librettist Rob Handel, is dedicated to Lord Byron’s daughter, Ada Lovelace (1815–1852), who is remembered for her contributions to science. The full title of the opera is:

<sup>1</sup> When, at the request of Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vladimir Taneyev was offered to sell the library for one hundred rubles, he refused and handed it over to the Soviet government free of charge, for which he received a “letter of protection” from Lenin. [2, p. 17]

<sup>2</sup> See: Walters E. The Musical Equivalent of a “Crime in the Moral World,” the Music of Friedrich Nietzsche. URL: <http://www.critical-theory.com/the-musical-equivalent-of-a-crime-in-the-moral-world-the-music-of-friedrich-nietzsche/> (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>3</sup> The school was founded in 1880 after Henry Simmons Freese, founder and president of the Union Choirs and the University Musical Society, urged the school’s leaders to include music in the curriculum. It is located on the University of Michigan’s North Campus, which also houses the College of Engineering, the Stamps School of Art and Design, and the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. Every year, more than a dozen productions and concerts are presented on the main stage.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, the studio productions organised annually by the university include, as a rule, three musicals, two operas (opera scenes), four or five theatrical productions, and many choreographic performances.

“Ada Lovelace. Opera performance of *Enchantress*” Since the opera’s plot revolves around the life and fate of a female mathematician who paved the way for the computer revolution, the Enchantress here is not Nastasya “Kuma,” but a brilliant scientist far ahead of her time. At the same time, like Tchaikovsky’s heroine, who exists only in the space of artistic reality, Ada Lovelace was a stunningly beautiful woman (Il. 1), whose life turned out to be no less tragic than Nastasya’s.

The opera called for two sopranos, a mezzo-soprano, a tenor, a baritone, a bass-baritone, a piano and a string quartet. It is noteworthy



Il. 1. Margaret Sarah Carpenter. Portrait of Ada Lovelace

that this work that first emerged on the main stage of the University of Michigan later went beyond the boundaries of the higher educational institution to enjoy repeated productions on more prestigious stages, with the only caveat that these new productions received a different title from the original. First the work was renamed to *The Number Enchantress Ada Lovelace*, but subsequently lost its connection with the title of Tchaikovsky’s opera altogether, as indicated on the University of Michigan School website. In 2022, the production, now staged by New Camerata Opera — one of New York City’s most active and prominent opera companies — was titled *The Infinite Energy of Ada Lovelace*. The same title appeared in the 2023 production, when the opera was presented by the Marble City Opera company. Among the performers of the title role were Emily Hughes and Teresa Kesser.

#### Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Leo Tolstoy

When mentioning works dedicated to Tchaikovsky’s opera *The Enchantress*, it is necessary to acknowledge the extensive research of Boris Asafiev, who examined this — perhaps the composer’s most beloved — creation from various angles. Here it is relevant that the academician repeatedly places the name of Leo Tolstoy next to Tchaikovsky’s name, sometimes bringing them closer together, sometimes moving them apart. Asafiev reveals similarities between the composer’s work on his musical creations and the writer’s work on texts. In particular, he notes that Tchaikovsky’s search for “an absolutely non-formal form” and flexible intonations took place “in the same way as Leo Tolstoy searched for them, for a long time and passionately, for example, ... when he agonized over the appearance of Katyusha Maslova.” [4, p. 143]<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “In this work of Tchaikovsky there is a similarity with the corresponding work, secondary, tertiary, etc., on texts by Leo Tolstoy.” [4, p. 155]

The appeal to the words of one of the most prominent researchers of Tchaikovsky's work seems important due to the fact that in the opera *The Enchantress*, written in 1887, and Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*, which was completed in 1899, there are direct and indirect echoes. Along with the phenomenon of transformation, which is key to both the opera and the novel, the main heroine of *Resurrection*, like Kuma, has a "demonic attraction..., sees nature and enjoys it...; lives in love for people despite the fact that people... strive to kill this love in her."<sup>6</sup> No less interesting is the fact that in the 1914 Japanese theatrical production of *Resurrection*, which took place on the stage of the Tokyo Theatre, the image of Katyusha Maslova was perceived exclusively in a musical sense, for which a song was specially written for the main character, which gained incredible popularity. Its authors were director Hogetsu Shimamura, who also wrote the lyrics, and composer Nakayama Shimpei. "When you sing this song," Hogetsu Shimamura testified, "you mentally imagine a river carrying its waters across the endless fields of Russia, now winding, now twisting, like life itself..." (quoted from: [5, p. 74]).

Considering that Tchaikovsky's opera *The Enchantress* has never been staged in Japan, the resemblances revealed between the production of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* by Japanese masters and the stage version of the said opera on the Russian stage cannot fail to impress. In the absence of precise information

regarding whether Tolstoy was familiar with Ippolit Shpazhinsky's drama or Tchaikovsky's opera based on it, we can only agree that, alongside Asafiev, modern researchers are quite justified in placing the names of the composer and the writer next to each other.

No less important in the question of the writer's cultural sensitivities is Tolstoy's virtual dialogue with representatives of Chinese philosophy. Among the concepts close to the writer's heart, one can name the teachings of Confucius and Laozi. Thus, at the end of February 1884, Tolstoy wrote to Vladimir Chertkov<sup>7</sup> about his immersion in the world of Chinese philosophy: "I am sitting at home in the heat with a severe runny nose and have been reading Confucius for the second day. It is difficult to believe what kind of extraordinary moral height this represents. One enjoys seeing how this teaching sometimes reaches the heights of Christian thinking."<sup>8</sup>

A few days later (4–6 March), Tolstoy again shares his spiritual discoveries with Chertkov: "I am busy with Chinese religion. I learned a lot of good, useful and joyful things for myself. With God's help, I want to share with others."<sup>9</sup> (In parentheses, we note that this intention of Tolstoy was realised, which can be judged on the basis of the exposition of the Chinese teaching of Confucius [6] that he wrote.) On 27th March 1884, in his Diary, Tolstoy makes the following entry: "I also attribute my moral state to reading Confucius and, most importantly, Laozi."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For more details on this issue see: Vinogradova O. *Resurrection. Tolstoy. Maslova-Christ*. URL: <https://proza.ru/2020/10/19/1215> (accessed: 05.12.2025).

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Chertkov (1854–1936) — prominent "Tolstoyan" and publisher of Tolstoy's works.

<sup>8</sup> [Tolstoy L.N.] *Chinese wisdom. Books of Confucius*. (In rubric "Chinese Wisdom"). URL: <https://tolstoy-lit.ru/tolstoy/chernoviki/kitajskaya-mudrost.htm> (accessed: 05.12.2025).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

It seems that Tolstoy's attention to Confucius is explained mainly by the fact that the teachings of the Chinese thinker were opposed to everything obscure, transcendental and miraculous. Confucius was not inspired by abstract problems or questions of religious metaphysics, but preferred to concentrate exclusively on clarifying questions of practical morality and the foundations of human coexistence. The high level of humanity and the preaching of selflessness and love for people that distinguish the teachings of Confucius were very much in line with Tolstoy's own thoughts on this matter. As for Laozi, it is believed that the Russian writer responded particularly to his preaching about physical abstinence, which is necessary for the development of the spiritual principle within oneself, which alone constitutes the basis of human life.

From the point of view of this essay, it is noteworthy that Tchaikovsky also showed interest in Chinese culture. We learn about this from a publication dedicated to the dance entitled "Tea" from the ballet *Nutcracker*. To reveal the character of this dance number, the composer used, along with genuine folk melodies, instruments characteristic of Chinese musical culture (see more details: [7, pp. 146–151; 8]).

Based on the available data, we believe that, just as Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, according to literary scholar Viktor Shklovsky, "came to the Land of the Rising Sun as an opera, turned into a song and showed the people a new essence of love," [5, p. 74] in the Chinese context, Tchaikovsky's opera *The Enchantress* takes an exalted position among such works as the most beloved by Chinese audiences, such as the opera *Eugene Onegin* and the ballet *Nutcracker*. Firstly, we are talking about the fact that the philosophy of transformation realised by Tchaikovsky in the image of Nastasya

"Kuma" is close to the moral philosophy of the teacher Confucius. This is clearly demonstrated by the 1993 Sichuan opera version of Puccini's opera *Turandot* (libretto by Wei Minglun, score by Liao Zhongrong), entitled *Princess Turandot*.

Let us recall that according to the Sichuan version, "...the consequence of the transformation of Turandot's character... is the beauty of Liu's deed, which is beautiful because it corresponds to such qualities as her nobility, fidelity and the correspondence of words to deeds, etc. That is why, shocked by the moral greatness of the girl, Turandot renounces worldly passions and, thus *transformed*, takes on the sublime image of Liu, relentlessly following the Nameless Wanderer (mine italics. — *Sh. M.*)." [7, p. 112]

Secondly, Tchaikovsky's opera *The Enchantress* is permeated with a feeling of the Motherland, as stated by Asafiev: in the music of *The Enchantress*, "rays shine that warm the consciousness of the listeners, drawing them beyond the boundaries of passions: this is the feeling of the Motherland. How does Tchaikovsky evoke them in music? He probably did not think about this <...> *Russian* in the melody and harmony of the score of *The Enchantress* goes beyond the limits of only externally audible colouring or imitation: while national in essence, in content, it is communicated to a sensitive ear without the use of specific devices." [4, p. 157] Here we attach special importance to the fact that Tchaikovsky's image of Nastasya represents the archetype of the native land. [9] In our opinion, the feeling of patriotism evoked by Tchaikovsky's opera *The Enchantress* is what also brings Russians and Chinese closer together. Therefore, staging this opera in China can teach a lot not only to the musicians and performers living in this country, but also to the audience.

### Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Vladimir Solovyov

Taking into account the influence of Benedict Spinoza's ideas on the concept of the philosophy of love in the opera *Iolanta*, in the case of the opera *The Enchantress*, we consider it possible to speak of Vladimir Solovyov's philosophy of love, which does not create any cognitive dissonance in relation to Tchaikovsky's ideological attitudes. The fact is that it was Spinoza that Solovyov called "his first love." [10, p. 3] Moreover, Solovyov's own philosophical system, which affirms "the immanent unity of all that exists and its connection with the original principle — God" [11, p. 39] was built on the basis of Spinoza's monistic ideas. As Teresa Obolevich writes, "Solovyov was delighted with the Spinozist concept of the unity of all that exists — the spiritual and material beginnings of the universe, God and nature." [Ibid.]

Both Archpriest Vasily Zenkovsky and Alexey Losev pointed out the intersections in the philosophical legacy of Spinoza and Solovyov.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, Nelly Motroshilova sees the kinship between the philosophies of both thinkers in the fact that they both "tried to develop teachings of a comprehensive, that is, metaphysical plan, encompassing universal philosophical issues and centering them around ethics, and most importantly, around the concept of God." [12, p. 183] This explains why, for Spinoza, his chief

d'oeuvre was his *Ethics*, while for Solovyov it was the book *Justification of the Good*.

However, more significant for us in the context of the dialogue between Tchaikovsky and Solovyov will be the assessment of the Russian philosopher made by Vladimir Ern: "Solovyov was the first after Plato to make a new, enormous discovery in metaphysics. In the sea of intelligible light, which was fleetingly revealed to Plato, Solovyov, with the greatest power of insight, reveals certain dazzling features of the eternal feminine." [13, p. 134] And further: "Under the dialectic of Solovyov ... there always trembles the great joy of love for the mysterious and gracious basis of the world, as known in intimate experience." [Ibid., p. 205]

Comparing these words with those cited by David Brown in his study of Tchaikovsky's life and work: "Since being tempted by *The Enchantress* I have remained completely faithful to my soul's fundamental need to illustrate in music what Goethe [in his *Faust*] said: '*Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan*' (The Eternal in woman leads us on),"<sup>12</sup> one cannot help but feel the commonality of attitudes between Solovyov and Tchaikovsky.

Strikingly, both geniuses were distinguished by their ability to experience mystical experiences. This can be seen even in the composer's early poems written in childhood. The presence of mystical experiences

<sup>11</sup> According to the philosopher, "this teaching about the universal substance, which we might nowadays call the theory of actual infinity, is equally Solovyovian and Spinozist... Solovyov is well aware of the contradictory nature of Spinoza's teaching on the plurality of things and the presence of mechanistic elements in Spinoza, as well as the conventionality of his 'geometric method' and the absence of historicism in Spinoza. For Solovyov, Spinoza's thought is characterised by a certain one-sidedness. Nevertheless, he agreed with Spinoza that at the basis of being lies actual infinity and that every philosophy must be crowned with the teaching of *causa sui* — about this, there was never any doubt in Solovyov's mind. In terms of this theory, Spinoza was always the basis for him." For more details on this issue see: Losev A.F. *Vladimir Solovyov and his time*. URL: <https://litlife.club/books/159133/read?page=44> (accessed: 05.12.2025).

<sup>12</sup> Brown D. *Tchaikovsky: The Man and his Music*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2010. URL: <https://ru.z-lib.fm/book/2950807/d2d9ae/tchaikovsky-the-man-and-his-music.htm> (accessed: 05.12.2025).

in Tchaikovsky's life is also evident in his Diary, to which Antonina Makarova refers in her dissertation research as "existential." [14] Similarly, we find information about the "revelation of communion with God" in the composer's experience in another work by the same author. [15, p. 59]

The revealed analogies give grounds to assert that, even before the time when the philosophy of love was embodied in the opera *Iolanta* based on the ideas of Spinoza, the sought-after philosophy clearly declared itself in the opera *The Enchantress*. It seems that its disclosure was based on Solovyov's religious philosophy. As an example, let us turn to the verbal text of Kuma's Arioso from Act IV of the opera *The Enchantress*.

Where are you, my darling? I'm here!  
Come quickly, light of my soul,  
Beauty is the joy of the eyes!  
I'm burning with impatience to see you  
And press it to your warm heart.  
Without you, my soul is exhausted by melancholy  
Come, come!!!  
Come quickly, and we'll rush off together.  
We are far away from here,  
                    away from evil and troubles!  
Come quickly, come, my light!  
We will fly away from evils  
                    and troubles together!  
Come, clear falcon,  
Beauty and joy, light of my soul!  
I'm burning with impatience to see you...

In full agreement with Semyon Frank, for whom the discovery of the national spirit in cultural texts was connected with the discovery of ideas and philosophemes objectively contained in the cultural text, [16, p. 163] let us turn to the verbal emotives present in the poetic text of Arioso, highlighting from among them the following:

– emotive meanings: darling, exhausted, melancholy, impatient, burning, etc.;

– emotive connotations: light of the soul, beauty/joy of the eyes, my light, clear falcon, etc.;

– emotive potentials: heart etc.

Further, trying to understand the originality of these emotives through "intuitive deepening and empathy" [Ibid.] as the second step towards the national spirit, for which Frank was searching, we emphasise that already one of the first *emotive meanings* — the emotive *darling* — turns out to be ambiguous. This emotive simultaneously incorporates such lexemes as: *expected*, *awaited*, *sweet*, *dear*, *beloved*. Let us note that the importance of the choice is determined both by the nature of the performance of this Arioso (if we are talking only about a loved one, then this is one emotion, if about someone who is not only loved, but also awaited, then the emotion is different) and by the understanding of its meaning.

Considering that the lexeme *come* is used in the text of Arioso exactly seven times, we make our choice in favour of the expected (awaited) Kuma Knyazhich. As for the other emotive meanings we have highlighted, it is obvious that they all relate to the negative emotions that determine the heroine's state. On the contrary, what we have designated as, in essence, *emotive connotations* have an exclusively positive emotional assessment. The salient point here is that each of them is related to light. This refers both to an inner light, when we are talking about the soul, about the beauty and joy of the eyes (the eyes are the mirror of the soul, and accordingly, the heroine speaks of spiritual joy), as well as to an external light, which is given by the image of the beloved.

It is significant that the very concept of *inner light* can also be considered in several aspects:

- strength, wisdom, truth;
- spiritual awakening, which results in "awareness of one's true nature and connection with the surrounding world" [Ibid.];
- connection with others. [Ibid.]

In this context, the etymology of the lexeme *clear* (clear falcon) also leads to exclusively “light” concepts: *spark*, *bright star*.

Finally, in carrying out the “sympathetic comprehension of the internal tendencies and uniqueness of the national spirit,” [Ibid.] which Frank defined as the final activity of thought, we will emphasise the fundamental importance for us of the fact that all these emotive connotations also carry religious symbolism. In particular, according to spiritual mentors, “joy is ... a touch of Divine grace upon us ... for spiritually enlightened people this is not just a quiet state, but an abundant heartfelt joy, which turns out to be the brightest, the most powerful, in the positive sense of the word, manifestation of the human soul.”<sup>13</sup>

In turn, “the light of the soul is not just an expression of an internal state, but also a universal language that is spoken by the heart.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, noting the synonymy of the concept *inner light* with the concepts of *heart* and *conscience*, Alexander Tuberovsky sees the reason for this in the fact that the source of such light is God. Accordingly, with the presence of

this light, “contemplation of objects and beauty of the spiritual world becomes accessible.”<sup>15</sup> The essence of the lexeme *heart* as an emotive potential is also revealed in the reflections of Boris Vysheslavtsev.<sup>16</sup> According to him, the heart simultaneously represents the unity of the conscious and the unconscious, as well as the unity of soul, spirit and body.<sup>17</sup>

It is through the heart that “mystical contact with God and with one’s neighbour” occurs in Christianity,<sup>18</sup> since “the heart is the organ that establishes this special intimate connection,”<sup>19</sup> which has received the name of Christian love. “Differing from all other non-Christian love in terms of its mystical depth, it is revealed by the fact that it is a connection of depth with depth, a bridge thrown from one abyss of the heart to another.”<sup>20</sup>

It is no coincidence that the lexeme *heart*, according to Galina Sklyarevskaya’s calculations, is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures about 750 times, being placed alongside other biblical concepts. Among these are: *God*; *angel*; *prophet*; *repentance*; *sacrifice*; *saint*; *Church*; *apostle*.<sup>21</sup> The human heart is also connected

<sup>13</sup> *How to find joy? Words from spiritual mentors*. URL: <https://mbrsm.ru/2018/11/09/kak-obresti-duxovnuyu-radost-slova-duxovnyx-nastavnikov/> (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>14</sup> Ionnikov S. N. *The light of the soul and its reflection*. URL: <https://proza.ru/2020/10/19/1215> (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>15</sup> Tuberovsky A. Hieromartyr Inner Light [Interpretation of the words “the light that is in you” (Matt. 6:23; Luke: 11, 35)]. *Theological Herald*. 1914. Vol. 2. No. 5. pp. 25–47. URL: [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksandr\\_Tuberovskij/vnutrennij-svet-tolkovanie-slov-svet-kotoryj-v-tebe-mf-6-23-lk-11-35/](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Aleksandr_Tuberovskij/vnutrennij-svet-tolkovanie-slov-svet-kotoryj-v-tebe-mf-6-23-lk-11-35/) (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>16</sup> Boris Petrovich Vysheslavtsev (1877–1954) — Russian religious thinker, who received a professional philosophical education in Marburg.

<sup>17</sup> Vysheslavtsev B.P. The meaning of the heart in religion. *The Path*. 1925, no. 1, pp. 59–73. URL: [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Boris\\_Vysheslavtsev/znachenie-serdtsa-v-religii/#source](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Boris_Vysheslavtsev/znachenie-serdtsa-v-religii/#source) (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>18</sup> Vysheslavtsev B.P. *Ethics of the Transformed Eros*. Moscow: Respublika, 1994. URL: [https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Boris\\_Vysheslavtsev/etika-preobrazhennogo-erosa/](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Boris_Vysheslavtsev/etika-preobrazhennogo-erosa/) (accessed: 29.11.2025).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Sklyarevskaya G.N. *Heart in the Holy Scripture*. URL: [https://samlib.ru/p/-porjadin\\_m\\_e/serdcebiblia.shtml](https://samlib.ru/p/-porjadin_m_e/serdcebiblia.shtml) (accessed: 29.11.2025).

with love, which is presented in Christianity as “the main commandment — the main ethical principle.” [17, p. 104]

The fact that in the text of Kuma’s Arioso both physical and spiritual emotives are present allows us to turn to Vladimir Solovyov’s philosophical idea of the all-unity found through physical love. Let us emphasise that it was precisely physical love that Solovyov considered as “a force that not only overcomes human egoism, but also transforms reality,” contributing to “a feeling of mystical involvement in the unity of the world,” [18, p. 71] “the elevation of the divine in man to the divine in everything.” [19, p. 82] Moreover, “the goal of sexual love-Eros in Solovyov is not physical birth, but spiritual birth, bodily transformation...” [20, p. 60]

By endowing love with a metaphysical character, Solovyov considers it not only from the standpoint of culture, but also “in synonymy with such phenomena as the meaning of life, death, freedom, creativity...” [21, p. 5] In other words, the beauty and joy of Kuma’s eyes, or in other words, the rejoicing of her soul, her heart, are determined by only one thing: with the prince she impatiently awaits, she is able to survive the syzygy.

Victoria Kravchenko interprets this concept of Solovyov in the following way: experience organically connects “external existence and internal states of the individual, when a person does not distinguish between the personal and the universal, without being completely absorbed in the process, but remaining a self-acting and self-aware, self-creating and self-feeling individual.” [22, p. 32] The basis of the sought-after experience, according to the researcher, is “Love in its new quality — of a life-unifying force and infinitely uplifting power.” [Ibid.]

The fact that syzygy is simultaneously recognised at the level of “a special form of selfless cooperation of man with the Highest, in which human ideas and goals must be rejected in the name of incomprehensible ways of unique interaction,” [Ibid., p. 33] reveals the internal motivation of Kuma’s actions. Dreaming that she and Knyazhich would fly away “far from here, away from evil and troubles,” she abandons her home and her profitable business, leaving behind loved ones who were ready to come to her aid, unable to understand that there is no place on earth where one would not have to face grief and misfortune.

That is why Solovyov’s idea that, since the metaphysical level of love in a person is only rudimentary, “at the physical level this strong feeling, as a rule, remains unrequited and fruitless, and if reciprocated, can lead to a tragic end.” [18, p. 71] Moreover, Asafiev’s position, according to which all the characters in the opera *The Enchantress* are revealed exclusively depending on this central character, rhymes with the following position of Solovyov: “Hatred is only a modification of love and has no independent origin. Hatred comes from selfishness, which is exclusive love for oneself. Thus, there are two kinds of love: negative love, or hatred, and positive love, or love in the proper sense.”<sup>22</sup>

It is obvious that the princess is the bearer of negative love. It thus seems that the reason why it was possible to carry out the crime she had planned against Nastasya has one simple explanation. The deifying love that united Kuma with the whole world made her defenseless against cunning and meanness. If she had been the same kind of brash and cunning woman, she would hardly have trusted a man she didn’t know without being wary. However,

<sup>22</sup> Solovyov V. S. Sophia. Second Dialogue. RGALI. F. 446, list 1, portfolio 19.

in a situation where sensual eros transforms her being, raising Nastasya to a higher level of existence, marked by all-unity, she no longer fears anything, especially since divine love also presupposes love for one's enemies as the impossibility of responding to evil with evil.

Accordingly, in Act I of the opera, in the aria entitled "Look from Nizhny," Nastasya demonstrates her elemental closeness with nature and the people around her, of which she is a part, just as people themselves are an integral part of nature. Therefore, Asafiev is absolutely right to assert that "the music of Act I of *The Enchantress* is a kind of unique example where a mass feeling of solidarity before the power of human beauty, revealed in its full completeness, is revealed in its gradual growth." [4, p. 145] Conversely, in the Arioso, which appears in Act IV, we see a different situation. Previously not "enlightened by either faith or education," Kuma, "having set herself the sole task of living happily," [23, p. 236] through physical love for Knyazhich becomes the owner of a feeling that differs from her previously spontaneous experience of kinship with nature and the people around her.

In our opinion, the internal transformation of this Kuma, who had not previously known Divine love, is clearly presented in Solovyov's poem, written on May 17, 1876:

The essence of this poem was expressed with all its depth and understanding by Alexey Kozyrev: "The power of love, unspent and hidden in the heart, will eventually come to the surface and 'unite heaven and earth' — this is the meaning of Solovyov's hexameters." [20, p. 73] Therefore, having been married, as usual, without love, which partly justifies Nastasya's refusal to observe the obligatory mourning and grief after the death of her husband, she, having met Knyazhich, experiences love, which Asafiev calls "sincere, overcoming elemental passion in the name of an ethically beautiful unity in life and mutual understanding of life's goals." [4, p. 147]

### Conclusion

In concluding our research aimed at identifying individuals within Tchaikovsky's inner circle, whether these contacts were real or "virtual," our focus on Tchaikovsky's interactions with Byron, Tolstoy, and Solovyov places the composer's personality in a slightly different light, prompting new searches and discoveries. In particular, the fact that in the new staged versions of the opera by composer Kamala Sankaram with a libretto by Rob Handel, which was dedicated to Lord Byron's daughter Ada Lovelace, the lexeme "enchantress" has lost its significance, is due,

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Truly he one is the favorite of gods, who in life's early springtime  
 Crowned not his head with the myrtle, whom only in reveries beckoned  
 Tenderly waving the golden-hued queen of Cythera. With bounties  
 Poorly endowed by the Muses and Graces, let ancient Cronus's offspring  
 Deep in his heart keep it hidden and nourish with thought that is sombre.  
 Sooner or later the flame that is secret will burst to the surface,  
 Flash like Hephaestus to grip the wide earth in a blaze that engulfs it.  
 All that lay buried within the deep breast, that in vain sought an image:  
 Impulses bold of the spirit so proud and the tenderness boundless of loving, —  
 All this shall fuse into one unrelenting great power, and magic  
 Mighty in stream shall embrace every thought that is human,  
 Closing the chain that is golden and wedding the heavens to earth.

in our opinion, to Tchaikovsky's prominent position in the world musical landscape. In other words, the opera by the Russian composer is too well-known to duplicate its title in the work of modern authors due to evoking associations that are inappropriate in this case.

In turn, the culturally boundary-breaking dialogue between Tchaikovsky and Tolstoy outlined points of intersection between the opera *The Enchantress* and the novel *Resurrection*, which were not obvious to most. The updating of Tolstoy's work by Japanese theatrical masters has determined a possible development vector for the opera *The Enchantress* in the space of contemporary Chinese musical theatre, which seems quite promising.

Finally, Tchaikovsky's dialogue with Solovyov provides grounds for asserting that

before critics discovered the ideologies of the Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza in the opera *Iolanta*, the opera *The Enchantress* became a creative laboratory for the composer, in which the maestro embodied the Russian religious philosopher's concept of love. The personality of Solovyov serves as a connecting link between Tchaikovsky and Asafiev with only one caveat. If in Tchaikovsky's worldview the name of Solovyov stands next to the name of Spinoza, then in Asafiev's worldview it stands next to the name of Losev. As argued in this essay, such echoes played a significant role in the development of the virtual dialogue between Tchaikovsky and Asafiev. A careful study of the latter has the potential to reveal new facets in the artistic legacy of both masters.

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