

Composer Profile: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

1 Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born on May 7, 1840, in Vyatka, Russia.

Tchaikovsky died in St. Petersburg on November 6, 1893.

3 Tchaikovsky is most celebrated for his ballets, specifically Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty and The Nutcracker.

4 Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture was composed to commemorate the Battle of Borodino, fought in September 1812, Tchaikovsky called his own work "very loud and noisy and completely without artistic merit, obviously written without warmth or love".

5 First performed in 1877, Swan Lake was Tchaikovsky's first ballet score. Considering its success today, it's hard to believe that it wasn't an immediate hit – but the story of Odette, a princess turned into a swan by an evil sorcerer's curse, was an initial box office failure.

Notable pieces:

- 1812 Overture
- The Nutcracker Ballet
- Swan Lake
- Piano Concerto No. 1
- Symphony No. 5



To support his early musical career, Tchaikovsky took work as a music critic. Among the targets of his critical ire were Schumann, who he thought was a poor orchestrator, and Brahms.



"Inspiration is a guest that does not willingly visit the lazy." –Tchaikovsky



Pyotr Tchaikovsky



Tchaikovsky was a composer during the Romantic period



Tchaikovsky trained for, and became a civil servant in Russia. At the time, a musical profession didn't convey the sort of social status that was acceptable to his family's respected position. Music instructors and chamber musicians were looked down upon, so in 1859 he embarked on his public service career and spent three years in the Ministry of Justice, rapidly advancing to senior assistant.



Throughout his career he received harsh criticisms concerning his works. Many critics felt that Tchaikovsky's music pandered to audiences, and therefore was contemptible.

Because of the unique time period in which he composed, and his unique ability to merge Western music concepts with traditional Russian ones, it was difficult for him to receive unanimous praise.



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