



JOINT FACULTIES  
OF HUMANITIES  
AND THEOLOGY

“Little Russia” No Longer: A Narrative Analysis of the  
Wartime Change of P. I. Tchaikovsky’s Historical Culture  
at Kyiv’s National Music Academy of Ukraine Named  
After Petro Tchaikovsky

Donna LaMore

Supervised by Tomas Sniegon

Master of Arts in European Studies

August 2024

Word Count: 19,481

# Abstract

The thesis explores the de-Russification process in Ukraine since the 2022 Russian invasion using the case study of P. I. Tchaikovsky and the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music. Students, staff, and alumni have protested the inclusion of the Russian composer's name, but the governing body of the conservatory has repeatedly kept the name. Each side of the debate references different historical narratives to support how Tchaikovsky is or is not a Ukrainian symbol. The thesis answers how Ukrainian actors use the symbol of Tchaikovsky to redefine cultural boundaries, reassert Ukrainian autonomy, and contest narratives around Ukraine. The thesis utilizes a narrative analysis and applies the "usages of history" typology by Klas-Göran Karlsson to the arguments put forth by Ukrainian actors on both sides of the debate. The thesis identifies four narratives: 1) Tchaikovsky is Russian and a Russian symbol; 2) Ukraine enjoyed a close relationship with Russia due to a shared Soviet past; 3) Ukraine was a victim of Russian and Soviet imperialism; and 4) the USSR unjustly appropriated the Ukrainian symbol of Tchaikovsky, which needs to be reclaimed. Using Ann Rigney's theory of mnemonic regime change and the formation of counter-memory, I find that both the name-removalists and the name-preservationists are engaging in postcolonial counter-memory. The removalists accept the Soviet narrative of Tchaikovsky's past and wish to rewrite the memory of Ukraine's Soviet era spanning to the present. The preservationists, on the other hand, deny the Soviet narrative of Tchaikovsky's past and look to counter the nineteenth-century imperial narrative to enrich Ukraine's cultural heritage. Finally, I check the historicity of each argument and include possible perspectives from Tchaikovsky himself using primary sources from his life. However, changed nomenclature prevents Tchaikovsky from conclusively describing his relationship with Ukraine; the debate must resolve based on his dominant historical memory instead. Overall, this thesis is situated within research on Tchaikovsky's historical culture in Ukraine.

Key words: Tchaikovsky, Ukraine, historical culture, historical narrative, historical memory, Rigney's theory of mnemonic regime change, counter-memory

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Directory of Ukrainian Actors</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Aim, Research Questions, and Structure.....	3
1.2 Previous Research.....	4
1.3 Background.....	7
1.3.1 Higher Music Education in the Russian Empire.....	7
1.3.2 Toponymic History of the UNTAM.....	8
1.3.3 Brief Biography of P. I. Tchaikovsky.....	10
1.3.4 Historiography of Tchaikovsky.....	11
<b>Chapter 2: Theory and Methodology</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1 Theory.....	12
2.1.1 De-Russification.....	15
2.2 Methods.....	16
2.2.1 Definition of the Historical Memory Narratives.....	17
2.3 Sources.....	19
2.4 Limitations.....	20
<b>Chapter 3: Analysis</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>3.1 Preservation Perspectives</b> .....	<b>22</b>
3.1.1 Ethnicity.....	22
3.1.2 Relationship with Ukraine.....	24
3.1.3 Reclaiming Tchaikovsky’s Legacy.....	26
3.1.4 The UNTAM’s Tchaikovsky Connection.....	28
3.1.5 Globalist Perspective.....	29
3.1.6 The Weapon of Culture.....	30
<b>3.2 Removal Perspectives</b> .....	<b>32</b>
3.2.1 Supporting the Imperial Narrative of Tchaikovsky.....	32
3.2.2 Rewrite Soviet Narrative about Ukraine.....	36
3.2.3 Refute Counter-Counter-Memory of Preservationist Perspective.....	42
I. Ethnicity.....	42
II. Relationship with Ukraine.....	43
III. Reclaiming Tchaikovsky’s Legacy.....	47
IV. The UNTAM’s Tchaikovsky Connection.....	47
V. The Weapon of Culture.....	49
3.3 Tchaikovsky’s Perspective.....	51
3.3.1 Ethnicity.....	52
3.3.2 Relationship with Ukraine.....	54

3.3.3 The UNTAM Connection.....	55
3.3.4 Imperial Subject.....	56
3.3.5 Russian Symbol.....	58
3.3.6 Globalist Perspective.....	59
<b>Chapter 4: Conclusions.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>63</b>

## List of Abbreviations

HMAU: National Music Academy of Ukraine Named After Petro Tchaikovsky

UNTAM: Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music

CAS: Court of Arbitration for Sport

ROC: Russian Olympic Committee

RMS: Russian Musical Society

Russian SFSR: Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

UkSSR: Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

WFIMC: World Federation of International Music Competitions

# Directory of Ukrainian Actors

## UNTAM Leadership

Maksym Tymoshenko: Chairman of the Academic Council, Rector

Mykhailo Mymryk: Vice-rector for Educational, Creative Work and International Relations, Member of Academic Council (current)

Iouri Loutsenko: presidential advisor of academy

Yuriy Rybchinsky: Member of Academic Council (past)

Anatoly Kocherga: Member of Academic Council (past)

Dmytro Havrylets: Head of the String and Bow Instruments Department, Member of Academic Council (current)

Valeriya Zharkova: Head of the World Music History Department, Member of Academic Council (current), editor-compiler of *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky* (2020)

## UNTAM Professors

Yuriy Chekan: resigned since March 2023, musicologist, PhD in art history and ex-professor of World Music History Department

Olena Korchova: resigned since March 2023, musicologist, PhD in art studies and ex-professor of World Music History Department, member of National Union of Composers of Ukraine

Volodymyr Sirenko: resigned since March 2023, main conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra, UNTAM alum and ex-professor of opera and symphonic conducting

Iryna Tukova: musicologist, PhD in art history and associate professor of Music Theory Department

Alla Zagaikevich: resigned since March 2023, composer and head of Association of Electroacoustic Music of Ukraine

## UNTAM Students and Alumni

Emiliia Dmitrieva: 2nd year cello student (as of 2022)

Daryna Masiuk: 2nd year piano student (as of 2022), drafter of the student petition

Oleksandr Ostrovskiy: postgraduate student in Department of Theory and History of Culture, co-founder of The Claquers

Anastasia Poludenna: UNTAM alum of bachelor's and current master's student in Department of Theory and History of Culture, violinist, joined Armed Forces on March 4, 2022

Illia Razumeiko: composer alum, approximate graduating class of 2008

Ihor Zavhorodnii: violinist alum, approximate graduating class of 2009

Andriy Bondarenko: composer alum, piano and composition bachelor's graduating class of 2000 and piano master's graduating class of 2003

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, Ukraine has been fighting for its continued freedom. The Ukrainian government encouraged the boycott of Russian products and businesses domestically and abroad to stifle Russia's ability to wage war. International sanctions have similarly focused primarily on economic warfare to limit Russia's military capabilities. Yet some Ukrainians believe the war is taking place on all fronts—not just economically, but culturally and informationally. Thus, motions have been made to protect Ukraine on the cultural front as well as to go on the offensive; in 2022 then Ukrainian Minister of Culture and Information Policy Oleksandr Tkachenko encouraged the world to boycott Russian culture by not performing musical works by Russian composers or cooperating with Russian artists.<sup>1</sup> Domestically, Ukraine removed hundreds of Russian symbols, names, statues, and other reminders of Russian culture from their country. In general, this transformation acts to reassert Ukrainian autonomy and independence, especially since its escalation in response to the war. After Ukraine became independent in 1991, it started on its path toward “de-Russification,” but the war heightened the stakes and revived debates surrounding Russian symbols.

One such debate is taking place in Kyiv, at the largest and one of the top music schools in Ukraine: the Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music (UNTAM). (In Ukrainian, *Національна музична академія України імені П.І. Чайковського*, literally “National Music Academy of Ukraine Named After Petro Tchaikovsky”). Even before the war, members of the student body and staff called for removing the Russian composer's name from their academy.<sup>2</sup> In June 2022, the Academic Council<sup>3</sup> (governing body of the conservatory) met and unanimously voted to preserve the name of the academy based on their own arguments on what Tchaikovsky means to the academy and Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> The decision met pushback; in addition to picketing,

---

<sup>1</sup> Oleksandr Tkachenko, “As Ukraine's culture minister, I'm asking you to boycott Tchaikovsky until this war is over,” *The Guardian*, December 7, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/07/ukraine-culture-minister-boycott-tchaikovsky-war-russia-kremlin>.

<sup>2</sup> This is according to student Daryna Masiuk: “A letter from the students of the NAU named after P. I. Tchaikovsky regarding the exclusion of Tchaikovsky from the name of the educational institution,” *The Claquers*, uploaded June 20, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/9465>.

<sup>3</sup> For context, the Academic Council currently has 47 members: “Academic Council,” HMAU, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/en/academiccouncil/>.

<sup>4</sup> See Section 3.1: Preservation Perspectives



students created a petition both reaffirming their desire to remove Tchaikovsky's name from the school and refuting the arguments put forth by the Academic Council. At least four professors<sup>5</sup> resigned in protest. Despite this feedback, the Academic Council postponed another proposition to change the name in December 2022.

According to traditional Western scholarship, P. I. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was one of the most influential and popular Russian composers of the nineteenth century. He composed ballets, operas, and symphonies that have become mainstays of classical music canon.<sup>6</sup> He traveled across Europe and North America, conducting his pieces and exporting Russian music. However, during his lifetime, much of modern-day Ukraine fell under the jurisdiction of the Russian empire. Due to this shared imperial history, much of the Ukrainian and Russian pasts are intertwined, with inexact delineations between national symbols. Even though the predominant historical memory of Tchaikovsky is built upon his lifetime reputation as an international symbol of Russian culture, part of postcolonial reconstruction of national identity is the rewriting of historical memory with new information. Ukrainian historians have gone back into said shared past with Russia and, in the tradition of Eric Hobsbawm,<sup>7</sup> found historical material that can be recontextualized into Ukrainian national symbolism. Serhii Plokhy gives one example:

Both Ukrainians and Russians claim Yaroslav the Wise as one of their eminent medieval rulers, and his image appears on the banknotes of both countries. The Ukrainian bill depicts Yaroslav with a Ukrainian-style moustache in the tradition of Prince Sviatoslav and the Ukrainian Cossacks. On the Russian note, we see a monument to him as the legendary founder of the Russian city of Yaroslavl... The Russian bill shows Yaroslav with a beard in the tradition of Ivan the Terrible and the Muscovite tsars of his era.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Yuriy Chekan, Olena Korchova, Volodymyr Sirenko, and Alla Zagaikevich

<sup>6</sup> His ballets *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Swan Lake* are the three most popular ballets of the genre; the two most popular operas are *Eugene Onegin* and *Queen of Spades*, both based on works by Alexander Pushkin, and he wrote eight operas in total, including *Mazeppa* and *Vakula the Smith*, of particular relevance.

<sup>7</sup> Hobsbawm believed that both nations and nationality are constructed, comprised of “invented traditions” which “establish continuity with a suitable past and ‘use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion’”; he famously compared historians’ role in nationalism to the poppy-growers for the heroin addict: Umut Özkırmılı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd ed., (London: Palgrave, 2017), 103, ProQuest Ebrary; Özkırmılı *Theories of Nationalism*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, rev. ed. (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2021), 115, eBook.

Tchaikovsky has not escaped this postcolonial scrutiny. In its argumentation, the Academic Council cites research that attempts to rewrite Tchaikovsky's historical memory into a Ukrainian symbol. On the other side, removalists view Tchaikovsky as a Russian symbol that needs to be "de-Russified" from Kyiv. "De-Russification" takes place not only physically, but in memory and identity as people grapple with what it means to be Ukrainian. In some cases, this involves "othering" Russian culture to emphasize what Ukraine is not and forming cultural borders. Plokhy suggests that that very liminality has always been part of Ukrainian ontology; "centuries of borderland existence contributed to the fuzziness and fragmentation of Ukrainian identity... the borderlands served as contact zones where... loyalties were traded, and identities negotiated."<sup>9</sup> Under existential threat where Russia has decided to violently reconstruct borders in the eastern Slavic region, Ukraine must allot symbols which do not fit neatly on one side or the other, and decide how to treat the symbols that ultimately end up on the Russian side of the culture war. The consequences could not be more severe; instead of nitpicking academics tussling over abstract questions of identity, thousands have died for their belief in what constitutes Russia and what constitutes Ukraine since 2022.

## 1.1 Aim, Research Questions, and Structure

I aim to analyze the proliferation of Tchaikovsky's historical culture in Ukraine as a result of the war. I apply narrative analysis to the various historical memories of Tchaikovsky, Russia, and Ukraine being contested as a result of the UNTAM name debate: whether Tchaikovsky is a symbol of Ukraine, Russia, or somewhere in between. The paper also demonstrates a realistic look into the de-Russification process in the determination of symbols and how to treat them. I hope to illuminate the cultural border between Russia and Ukraine and on a deeper level, explore how history contributes to the construction of national identity and personal national identification. I aim to answer the following research question:

How do Ukrainian actors use the symbol of Tchaikovsky to redefine cultural boundaries, reassert Ukrainian autonomy, and contest narratives around Ukraine?

---

<sup>9</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2008), 293.

The structure is as follows: an introductory chapter provides background information and previous research. The second chapter outlines the methodology and limitations. The third chapter presents the analysis, followed by a final chapter with conclusions.

The theoretical structure is Ann Rigney's theory of mnemonic regime change and the formation of counter-memory. My method is a narrative analysis using the "usages of history" typology put forth by Klas-Göran Karlsson in *Echoes of the Holocaust*. First I define the narratives being contested and then I ground the historical memories in historical fact and present historical culture arguments from each side of the debate. I begin with the "preservationists," or those who wish to keep Tchaikovsky's name on the academy. I follow with the "removalists," those who argue for the removal of Tchaikovsky's name from the academy. I analyze the arguments that form the narratives being put forth and refuted by the groups associated with the UNTAM. Finally, I present the perspective of the historical figure whose visage has become an ideological battleground. I form a historical-based argument for Tchaikovsky's perspective based on his own words from primary sources.

## 1.2 Previous Research

While no other research in English has covered the case of the UNTAM's name removal debate, likely owing to its recency, the body of literature covering Ukrainian-Russian relations is large. So too is the scholarship on Tchaikovsky, as one of the most prominent composers of classical Western music. My sources were in English or translated from Ukrainian and Russian, and those available internationally, either in print or online. For general Ukrainian culture and history, I consulted Serhii Plokhy's 2021 edition of *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. I also read his monograph *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (2008) for his description of the development of the cultural border between Russia and Ukraine by exploring the historiography of shared symbols that developed concurrently with national identities throughout the past centuries. Polish law professor and former ambassador to Germany Jerzy Kranz's article "Russian Crimes in Ukraine: Between Guilt and Responsibility" (2022) explores who within Russia can be included in the "guilt" of the war; to what extent is Putin, the Russian people, the Russian individual, or the Russian nation responsible for the damage being done using a legal

framework. This matters because part of the international effort to support Ukraine has involved boycotting Russian performers and performances of Russian music (including Tchaikovsky): if the Russian people are not responsible, then Russian performers should not be punished. He concludes that the nation (“a community which is usually not chosen, and which is bound by the shared history of many generations”)<sup>10</sup> is not guilty for the actions, but morally responsible for actions taken in the war. This has ramifications for my work: as a symbol of Russia, is Tchaikovsky’s legacy included within the Russian nation? Is his name to bear the brunt of the blame and suffer the consequences of the war?

I consulted a wider variety of sources for histories of Tchaikovsky’s works and life in order to compare historical narratives. His historiography has evolved since the 20th century, with earlier works misconstruing primary documents to obfuscate his homosexuality and taking too much liberty in interpreting his artistic pieces. For example, experts initially cited his Symphony No. 6 as evidence that his sudden death was a suicide, fulfilling the fate of the tortured nineteenth-century homosexual. Today, historians attribute his death to the less-dramatic cholera. As much of the current controversy surrounds his nationality and the nuance that comes with it, sources about him can differ greatly depending on where and when they were written, whether Soviet, Russian, Ukrainian, or Western, especially considering the historical cleft between Russian and Western scholarship over the course of the previous centuries. With a multiplicity of facts to support each historical narrative, I consulted several sources for each line of argumentation. My sources were mostly from a Western point of view, but included scholars with Russian connections. The most widespread Western secondary sources are the Norton Anthology of Western Music textbook (9th ed., 2014) and the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (2001 edition). Both are written by various American musicologists. Roland Wiley wrote the Grove entry on Tchaikovsky and specialized in nineteenth-century Russian music and ballet. I also consulted his work *Tchaikovsky* (2009). The previous rendition of the Grove article (1st ed., 1986) was written by David Brown, a British musicologist with an affinity for Russia; I have found modern scholars criticize his work for being diminutive of Ukraine, perpetuating harmful narratives about the superiority of Russian culture within the eastern Slavic sphere. I referenced his book *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music* (2006). An enormously in-depth

---

<sup>10</sup> Jerzy Kranz, “Russian Crimes in Ukraine: Between Guilt and Responsibility,” *Polish Yearbook of International Law* 42, no. 1 (2022): 7.

resource was the Tchaikovsky Research Project, which is an online encyclopedia on the life and works of Tchaikovsky. It is a “global collaboration,” and its main article on Tchaikovsky’s life was written by Alexander Poznansky.<sup>11</sup> He is a Russian-American who was born in Russia and emigrated in the 1970s, and today works as a librarian at Yale. I referenced his books *Tchaikovsky: Quest for the Inner Man* (1991) and *Tchaikovsky Through Others’ Eyes* (1999). For the work closest to Tchaikovsky’s lived experiences, his brother Modest wrote an immense biography, including Pyotr’s<sup>12</sup> personal correspondences. It is available in English due to the work of Rosa Newmarch, who translated and condensed the work into *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky* (1906), which is a rich source of primary material pertaining to Pyotr Tchaikovsky as well.

Research on the symbolic power of Tchaikovsky exists, albeit mostly centered around his queer identity. Sources about that include Philip Ross Bullock’s article, “That’s Not the Only Reason We Love Him: Tchaikovskii Reception in Post-Soviet Russia,” about the historiography of Tchaikovsky’s gay identity throughout the twentieth century. Stephen Amico also uses Tchaikovsky as a starting focal point of Russian homosexuality in music, although he continues his investigation within the popular music sphere of today in his 2014 book *Roll Over, Tchaikovsky!: Russian Popular Music and Post-Soviet Homosexuality*. In regard to Tchaikovsky’s symbolic Russianness, Rutger Helmers’ book *Not Russian Enough?: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Opera* (2014) explores the “Russian” nature of classical music, specifically Tchaikovsky’s use of foreign<sup>13</sup> source material and musical techniques in his operas. In this, Helmers challenges the continuum of “Russianness” between Tchaikovsky and the Russian composers known as the Mighty Five,<sup>14</sup> whose predominant historical narrative has dubbed them nationalist and “more Russian” than Tchaikovsky. Most importantly, Lena Leson explores the pinnacle of Tchaikovsky’s symbolic representation of

---

<sup>11</sup> “Contributors include Brett Langston, Alexander Poznansky, Luis Sundkvist, Valery Sokolov, Lucinde Braun, Ronald de Vet, Jean-Pierre Mabilie, Thomas Kohlhase, Alexander Komarov, Henry Zajaczkowski, Uwe Sauerteig, Yuliya White, Anna-Maria Leonard, Anthony Fisher, Simon A. Morrison, Alex Carter, and Ivan Morozov”: “About Tchaikovsky Research,” Tchaikovsky Research, last modified March 20, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Project:Tchaikovsky\\_Research](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Project:Tchaikovsky_Research).

<sup>12</sup> Different regions spell this name differently, but I am choosing the most common spelling as it appears in English, which happens to be the Russian spelling.

<sup>13</sup> “Foreign” in this case meaning French, or European. He does not mention Ukraine.

<sup>14</sup> Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), César Cui (1835-1918), Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), and Alexander Borodin (1833-1887)

Russia in her article chronicling the use of his Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 23 as the pseudo-Russian anthem in the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Games. Research on the relationship between Tchaikovsky and Ukraine<sup>15</sup> was recently explored in the book *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky* (2020), written by professors at the UNTAM and edited by the head of the Department of History of World Music Professor Valeriya Zharkova.<sup>16</sup> Hereafter, this book will be referred to as the ArtHuss book, after its publisher.

## 1.3 Background

### 1.3.1 Higher Music Education in the Russian Empire

The emergence of higher music education in the Russian Empire coincided with the life of Tchaikovsky. Not only is he a contemporary of several conservatories' foundings, but he also played an active role by attending and teaching at the nascent universities. The nineteenth century saw an expansion of musical activity. The Industrial Revolution allowed for greater manufacturing and access to musical instruments. Developments in democracy and the rise of the middle class opened up music-making and job opportunities for the general public, instead of relying solely on patronage<sup>17</sup> and church employment. In turn, there was a need for institutions to produce musicians and composers that fit the demands of the public. Conservatories began operating throughout Europe during the early nineteenth century. In Russia, brothers Anton (1829-1894) and Nikolai Rubinstein (1835-1881) had witnessed musical excellence across the continent during their travels, and wished to build up musical education in Russian society and raise the standards of Russian music. Along with Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, aunt of Emperor Alexander II, Anton Rubinstein founded the Russian Musical Society (RMS)<sup>18</sup> in 1859 in St. Petersburg. It put on concerts for the public, hosted classes, and opened satellite campuses in Moscow and Kyiv. In 1862, the St. Petersburg location became the St. Petersburg

---

<sup>15</sup> There has been research at least since 1940, such as *П. І. Чайковський на Україні* ("P. I. Tchaikovsky in Ukraine") by L. D. Feinstein and A. V. Olkhovskiy in Ukrainian; and Galina Aleksandrovna Tyumeneva's 1955 *Чайковський и Украина* ("Tchaikovsky and Ukraine") in Russian.

<sup>16</sup> Valeriya Zharkova, ed., *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky* (Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> This only lessens the role of the patron, not eliminates; indeed, patrons will still play an important role in Tchaikovsky's life and that of Russian conservatories.

<sup>18</sup> also sometimes referred to as the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS), albeit not in this text

Conservatory on Russia's 1000th birthday;<sup>19</sup> the Moscow branch quickly followed suit, becoming the Moscow Imperial Conservatory in 1866. In 1868, the Kyiv Music College was born out of the Kyiv satellite campus of the RMS. In 1913, the Kyiv Conservatory became one of the first conservatories within Ukrainian territory.<sup>20</sup>

Tchaikovsky was personally involved in the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the Moscow Imperial Conservatory, and the Kyiv Music College to some extent. He attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory from 1862 upon its opening until his graduation in 1865. At the Moscow Conservatory, he joined the professorial staff upon its opening in 1866 and taught music theory for the next twelve years. Tchaikovsky was invited to direct the Kyiv Music College in 1880 but declined, and visited at least once in 1890. The UNTAM's history page on their website says

Petro Tchaikovsky also made a significant contribution to the transformation of the Kyiv Music College into the conservatory. The famous composer often visited Kyiv, readily communicated with many musicians and always sought to support interesting initiatives and help them grow. After one of the concerts at the music college, he congratulated the students on the progress that they were making and expressed confidence that the development of music education in Kyiv was in trustworthy hands and looked promising. This played an important role in facilitating the music college's reorganization into a higher education institution.<sup>21</sup>

Today, two of the aforementioned conservatories are named after the influential composer in Moscow and Kyiv.

### 1.3.2 Toponymic History of the UNTAM

In 1863, when the Kyiv branch of the RMS was founded, the country of Ukraine did not exist. Instead, the Russian Empire controlled much of its current-day territories<sup>22</sup> as according to the Pereiaslav Agreement of 1654 and the subsequent abolishment of the Hetmanate's<sup>23</sup> autonomy in

---

<sup>19</sup> On the 8/20 Oct. 1862, defined as the anniversary of Rurik's arrival to Novgorod

<sup>20</sup> The Kyiv Music College may have become the Kyiv Conservatory in 1913, or it may only have influenced its founding; the degree of causation is debated. See Section 3.1.4 and 3.2.3: UNTAM's Tchaikovsky Connection

<sup>21</sup> "History of UNTAM," HMAV, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/en/history-of-untam/>.

<sup>22</sup> as defined by the 2014 borders, prior to the Russian annexation of Crimea

<sup>23</sup> the Cossack Hetmanate was a Ukrainian Cossack state from 1649-1764

1764. Yet the nineteenth century saw the Ukrainian national revival, which entailed a rising interest in Ukrainian independence, language, literature, and culture. Figures like Ivan Kotlyarevsky (1769-1838), Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), and Mykola Lysenko (1842-1912) founded nationalist movements in literature, poetry, and music. Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866-1934) wrote grand narratives of Ukrainian national history and led the nationalist movement which strove for Ukrainian language usage in schools and autonomy from the Russian Empire.

In 1868, the RMS Kyiv branch became the Kyiv Music College. On November 3, 1913, the Kyiv Conservatory opened. The degree to which the Kyiv Music College was its institutional predecessor is debated by historians; the official university stance is that the college became the conservatory.

Throughout the late 1910s and 20s, Ukraine underwent a series of revolutions and conflicts, including a civil war. By 1919, Ukraine had stabilized from the chaos of the revolutionary period and coalesced into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkSSR), which joined in a union with three other Soviet republics, forming the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922. In 1940, the USSR was in the midst of World War II, allying with Nazi Germany. Despite the turmoil of war, celebratory efforts commemorated Tchaikovsky's 100th birthday. Accordingly, the UNTAM website says "the conservatory was named after Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky."<sup>24</sup>

In 1995, following the 1991 independence of Ukraine, the UNTAM gained its current moniker, which changed the Russian spelling of Pyotr to the Ukrainian spelling of Petro: in English, Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music; translated literally, the "National Music Academy of Ukraine Named After Petro Tchaikovsky." In the same year, it was granted national status by President Leonid Kuchma, which at the time served as a method of accreditation with various benefits including state funding. Since 2021, however, the "national status" was reduced

---

<sup>24</sup> The website does not explicitly state the full name of the conservatory at this time, but I assume they used the Russian spelling as this is how it was spelled on the English version of the webpage. For perspectives on whether this decision came from Moscow or Kyiv, see Section 3.1.4 and 3.2.3: UNTAM's Tchaikovsky Connection: HMA, "History of UNTAM."



to an honorific by the Cabinet of Ministers.<sup>25,26</sup> Today, it is the biggest and arguably the most prominent conservatory in Ukraine, winning such accolades as first place in the Kyiv National University of Economics's rating of art institutions.<sup>27</sup>

### 1.3.3 Brief Biography of P. I. Tchaikovsky

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, Russia in 1840. He took piano lessons as a child but attended law school after his family moved to St. Petersburg. Tchaikovsky worked for the civil service for four years beginning at the age of 19. In 1861, he attended a class on harmony offered by the RMS. When the St. Petersburg Conservatory opened the following fall, Tchaikovsky enrolled as one of its first students and started to compose in earnest. Upon his graduation in 1865, Nikolai Rubinstein hired Tchaikovsky to teach harmony and music theory in the newly-forming Moscow Conservatory, where he would remain for twelve years. His compositions were successful and grew popular within Russia and around Europe by the 1870s. Within the Western classical music sphere, Tchaikovsky became the most well-known living Russian composer. He traveled extensively around Europe, later touring as a conductor—he went to the United States in 1891 and participated in the inauguration of Carnegie Hall in New York.

Tchaikovsky struggled more in his personal than his professional life with poor mental health, financial woes due to overspending, and living as a homosexual man in the nineteenth century. He married Antonina Milyukova in 1877. His marriage was intended to help with their finances and his homosexuality, but it ended disastrously when they separated after only two months. Instead, Tchaikovsky formed a close bond with wealthy widow Nadezhda von Meck who became his patroness, providing a regular income that allowed him to quit his position at the Moscow Conservatory to focus on composition. The two corresponded regularly although they never met in real life. Out of his six siblings, Tchaikovsky was close to his sister Aleksandra

---

<sup>25</sup> The Cabinet of Ministers is the highest body of executive power in the Ukrainian government, led by the prime minister.

<sup>26</sup> “Міністерство освіти і науки України - Уряд погодив із законодавством питання надання закладу вищої освіти статусу національного,” Ministry of Education and Science, published February 4, 2021, <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/news/uryad-pogodiv-iz-zakonodavstvom-pitannya-nadannya-zakladu-vishoyi-osviti-statusu-nacionalnogo>.

<sup>27</sup> “UNTAM took first place in the ranking of higher art institutions of Ukraine,” HMAU, uploaded May 15, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/en/untam-took-first-place-in-the-ranking-of-higher-art-institutions-of-ukraine/>.

(1841-1891) and his brothers Anatoly (1850-1915) and Modest (1850-1916). He traveled frequently to Aleksandra's husband's estate at Kamenka, today known as Kamianka, Ukraine, in order to compose. Modest became Tchaikovsky's first biographer and an important source of information about Tchaikovsky's personal life after Pyotr's sudden death in 1893.

### 1.3.4 Historiography of Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky's historical memory has evolved several times; the term "Russian" has changed drastically since his death. Though in his lifetime he composed music that glorified the imperial crown, the Soviet and modern Russian states adapted his posthumous image to fit their own political values. In early Soviet-written biographies, authors replaced Tchaikovsky's imperial relations for mentions of class struggle. Many Soviet historians also erased the fact that Tchaikovsky was homosexual and pursued several same-sex relationships throughout his life due to Soviet-era homophobic culture and laws.<sup>28</sup> Even his music did not escape censorship; musical quotations of the imperial national anthem (such as in *1812 Overture*) were removed or replaced with more Russia-glorifying music of Mikhail Glinka.<sup>29</sup> Today's Russians are more likely to acknowledge Tchaikovsky's homosexuality, but still there remains a holdout of political and cultural elite (and the media that represents them) that deny Tchaikovsky's homosexuality. Deniers accuse primary documents of being forgeries while others argue against the morality of delving into and publishing a person's personal effects. Some Russians today point to the narrative of homosexuality as proof of Western values infiltrating Russian media and culture; this is likely due to the anti-Western sentiment that is a pillar of Putin's regime.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Ukrainian attempts to craft narratives of Tchaikovsky either being patriotically Ukrainian or an extension of Russian oppression have precedent.

---

<sup>28</sup> Some earlier historians acknowledged Tchaikovsky's sexuality, but by 1940 the composer's image became sanitized: Philip Ross Bullock, "That's Not the Only Reason We Love Him: Tchaikovskii Reception in Post-Soviet Russia," *Slavic Review* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 59-60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26565349>.

<sup>29</sup> Geoffrey Norris, "Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture: The Complete Guide," uploaded January 3, 2023, <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/article/tchaikovsky-s-1812-overture-the-complete-guide>.

<sup>30</sup> Bullock, "That's Not the Only Reason We Love Him," 65-66.

## Chapter 2: Theory and Methodology

### 2.1 Theory

Historical facts can be interpreted and analyzed differently. If facts are stars in the sky, a historical narrative is a constellation; a picture made to fit the rough configuration of facts. By its very nature, a historical narrative must be constructed by an actor. A person or group forges a story by using causation and contextualization, emphasizing some facts and excluding others. A narrative is also constructed after the events, or adjusted to fit an ever-changing present. Thus, a historical narrative can change over time or evolve.

Historical memory, on the other hand, is how people and groups remember history. Historical memories include historical narratives that inform the construction of sociopolitical identity. Historical memory helps situate groups within a time and place, adding continuity. But memory can be malleable; its nebulous nature implies constant alterations, additions, and subtractions.

The study of history is not static. The past is not the same as history, because history analyzes and creates meanings from the events of the past; the past is simply the material from which to draw. Historical culture is a subcategory of academic inquiry that studies the relationship between history and the present; how history is used in the present, and the reception of history that changes based on current political and cultural contexts. Historical narratives change over time based on shifting cultural values. For example, someone who studied Richard Wagner (1813-1883) during his lifetime may have noted that he held anti-Semitic beliefs, but could have accepted it as a somewhat common viewpoint of the time. Yet a historian in 1945 or later would have a completely different interpretation of Wagner's anti-Semitism due to how the Third Reich employed him as a symbol. The Nazi party used Wagner's anti-Semitic statements to help justify their systematic murder of Jewish people in the Holocaust and played Wagner's music at party events to "prove" the superiority of German artists. Not only did his operas contain harmful Jewish caricatures, but his words and actions helped normalize the hate that enabled the Holocaust. The study of historical culture reveals why the modern Jewish state of Israel has never staged any Wagnerian opera, though Wagner died before the Nazis came to power. In the same way, I apply the study of historical culture to Tchaikovsky's symbolism, treating him as "an

abstract, cultural phenomenon or product, changing form, meaning, relevance and usefulness in time and space,” and analyzing how the symbol of Tchaikovsky has changed meaning over time and space.<sup>31</sup>

This ideological discussion over Tchaikovsky’s symbolism has come to a head because of its physical manifestation of the UNTAM. Accordingly, I use Ann Rigney’s “Toxic Monuments and Mnemonic Regime Change” to define a monument and how what it represents can change over time. Rigney defines monuments using four criteria: that monuments (1) “evoke narratives;”<sup>32</sup> (2) “are material presences;”<sup>33</sup> (3) “offer a material resource for counter-memory;”<sup>34</sup> and (4) “are platforms for dissent.”<sup>35</sup>

The original narrative of naming the UNTAM after Tchaikovsky comes from the 1940 name change. At the time, the USSR governed Ukraine and recognized Tchaikovsky as a Soviet hero. The name change simultaneously elevated Tchaikovsky’s memory by naming an accomplished music conservatory after him and reaffirmed Kyiv as part of the Soviet sphere. Likewise, 1940 also saw the USSR rename the Moscow Conservatory in the USSR’s capital after Tchaikovsky. Having two prominent conservatories change their names the same way at the same time reinforced Soviet unity.

The university institution existed before the 1940 name change. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky’s face and name appear intertwined with much of the university’s visuals. His portrait adorns classrooms and plaques with his name and his bust decorate the main building’s foyer. His name adorns official university documents, promotional material, and programs. The physical building, an iconic landmark on “Independence Square” in Kyiv’s city center, has now been associated with Tchaikovsky’s name for 84 years. Additionally, as a monument, the UNTAM represents more than a physical piece. Tchaikovsky represents all the physical components of the UNTAM as well as the nonphysical elements—including performances, research, and pedagogy.

---

<sup>31</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson, “The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture,” in *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), 14.

<sup>32</sup> Ann Rigney, “Toxic Monuments and Mnemonic Regime Change,” *Studies on National Movements* 9, no. 1 (2022): 16.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

In the wake of Ukraine's independence, the UNTAM decided to keep its moniker as it was, without explicitly redefining the 1940 name change narrative. But throughout the "de-Russification" process, a counter-memory emerged as people began to view Tchaikovsky's name as a relic of Russian imperialism, a lasting reminder of Ukrainian music's perceived inferiority in the face of Russian cultural dominance. To justify the continued presence of Tchaikovsky's name at the university, preservationists created a "counter-counter-memory" in a retroactive attempt to redefine the 1940 narrative now brought under scrutiny by protestors.

Finally, protestors have shown their dissent at the UNTAM. Since the war began, students and alumni have picketed in front of the main steps of the building, holding anti-Russia and anti-Tchaikovsky signs. Professors resigned, refusing to allow their work and music-making to contribute to the abstract symbolism of Tchaikovsky within the classrooms.

How has the narrative of the UNTAM as a monument changed over time, and why? Rigney defines "mnemonic regime change" as "engineering a change in the collective narrative and, indirectly, of social relations in the present;" it is how people talk about and remember their past, which indirectly reflects on the values of the present.<sup>36</sup> When Ukraine gained independence in 1991, Ukrainians' dominant collective memory shifted from a Soviet-camaraderie past into a counter-memory of a postcolonial past as a potential nation-state under the dominion of Russia. But transition requires time, and many physical remnants of a shared Soviet past remained in street names and statues, Russian speakers in Ukraine, and Russian language used in schools. The 1940 name change narrative did not fit the new status quo, but was not important enough to amend until circumstances changed: Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022 to annex the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

With the physical threat to life, political autonomy, territorial integrity, and national identity that comes with war, the counter-memory removalist arguments gained popularity as they "challenge[d] the authority" of the past Soviet narrative; "counter-memory is as much about undermining the power of the old narrative as it is about proposing a new one."<sup>37</sup> The old Soviet narrative, as used by Putin, is bombing Ukraine and killing Ukrainians. Thus, removalists see the

---

<sup>36</sup> Ann Rigney "Toxic Monuments," 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

need to destroy the old narrative and install a new one as paramount to the life and liberty of Ukraine.

However, those who wish to preserve Tchaikovsky's name reject the counter-memory proposed by the removalists. To them, removing the name would be iconoclastic destruction. Instead, they hope to form a Ukrainian counter-counter memory to the Soviet narrative of the Russian symbol of Tchaikovsky. By reclaiming Tchaikovsky as a Ukrainian symbol, they can effect positive iconoclastic change while still "giv[ing] public expression to an hitherto occluded story and challeng[ing] the priority" of the dominant Soviet narrative of Tchaikovsky's past.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, both the removalists and the preservationists are engaging in counter-memory. The removalists accept the Soviet narrative of Tchaikovsky's past and wish to rewrite the memory of Ukraine's Soviet era spanning to the present. The preservationists, on the other hand, deny the Soviet narrative of Tchaikovsky's past and look to counter the nineteenth-century imperial narrative to enrich Ukraine's cultural heritage. Preservationists use that cultural heritage as a foundation for Ukraine's ontological basis of statehood to justify their existence against Russian aggression.

### 2.1.1 De-Russification

Theory of memory and creating counter-memory comes into practice during such recalibrations as the de-Russification process in post-Soviet states. In order to undo physical remnants of ideological memory, the phenomenon of de-Russification can incorporate many means; some examples include Russian-language usage, removing Russian-associated statues and street names, transitioning out of the Cyrillic alphabet, decommunization of the national economies, sorting through historical figures, and rewriting textbooks to fit new narratives. Each of these processes is undertaken from bottom-up or top-down, or a combination thereof. Russian-identifying people may move out due to social pressure, or not feeling welcome in the community anymore. Governments, from local to national, can change official policy on the languages used in school instruction and curricula. In the case of toponyms, both enforcement methods can be seen: the Verkhovna Rada has passed official legislation mandating the change

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 14.

of Russian place names, and compliance has been high throughout all levels of government. Additionally, the policy is favorable with voters, with one survey in 2022 showing “76% support the initiative of renaming streets and other objects whose names are related to Russia.”<sup>39</sup> It is clear what should be done with Russian place names; but who gets to decide if Tchaikovsky is considered Russian or not?

## 2.2 Methods

First, I identified the historical narratives as referenced for or against by both sides’ arguments. I found four narratives, three about Tchaikovsky and one about Ukraine. Then I attempted to ground each narrative in historical accuracy by cross-checking multiple primary and secondary sources where possible. As the researcher, I do not pass normative judgment on the debate, but provide multiple sources or contextualizations for each claim; according to historian Romila Thapar, “disagreements among historians are either over the nature of the historical fact or the reliability of the evidence, or the feasibility of the explanation proposed for the historical event.”<sup>40</sup> What I mean by historical accuracy is that the events and quotes took place and that they are appropriately contextualized. Historical narratives can have “bias in the facts that are selected to make a point, and then there can be a bias in how the facts so selected are read...At this level, the selection can be motivated to assist a particular reading.”<sup>41</sup>

In addition to checking historicity,<sup>42</sup> my narrative analysis deconstructs how each point contributes or takes away from its relevant narrative(s). According to the “uses of history” typology developed by Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, agents can use history in a variety of ways for different functions within society. The debate over the UNTAM’s name mainly focuses on the ideological use of history, which seeks “to convince, influence, rationalise, and

---

<sup>39</sup> “The Eighth National Poll: Ukraine During the War (April 6, 2022),” *Sociological Group Rating*, April 8, 2022, [https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/vosmoy\\_obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ukraina\\_v\\_usloviyah\\_voyny\\_6\\_aprel\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/vosmoy_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ukraina_v_usloviyah_voyny_6_aprel_2022.html).

<sup>40</sup> Ramin Jahanbegloo, Romila Thapar, and Neeladri Bhattacharya, “The Function of the Historian,” in *Talking History: Romila Thapar in Conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo with the Participation of Neeladri Bhattacharya* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), 81, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199474271.003.0002>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Historical accuracy

authorise with the aid of the relevant history.”<sup>43</sup> In this case, all the arguments have an ideological tilt in that they are trying to convince their audience about the academy’s name; without that motivation, not all actors would have made public statements. Many of the removal arguments also include the existential use of history, which uses history to justify current structures—in this case, the autonomy of an independent nation-state of Ukraine. Moral usage applies to both sides of argumentation, but is especially found within the removal arguments. According to Karlsson, this use “has proved to be prominent in a situation where a functional, culturally insensitive government is... suddenly exposed to criticism because essential aspects of the past have been concealed from the population.”<sup>44</sup> In this case, the Academic Council can be viewed as a ruling body that, according to removalists, used history to conceal or mislead. Political-pedagogical usage is comparative and/or symbolic use, more likely to discard historical context in order to make a statement about a current political or social problem. The comparative example, pulled from history, is used in this case to make a statement about the UNTAM debate. Finally, there is a non-usage of history, which comes from suppressing historical facts on the basis of history not being the main source of legitimacy; several removalists accuse preservationists of this usage.

### 2.2.1 Definition of the Historical Memory Narratives

These are the dominant narratives being contested by the Ukrainian actors of the UNTAM.

The first narrative is that Tchaikovsky is a Russian symbol. He was born in Russia and believed himself to be Russian. During his lifetime, he supported the tsar and imperialist policy. His music represented Russia then, and since his death, his music and his visage have become symbolic of Russia. Because of this, the world views Tchaikovsky as a symbol of Russia.

This narrative is the dominant narrative of Tchaikovsky’s historical culture which originated during his lifetime, started by imperial Russians and continued by Soviets and modern Russians. This narrative became cemented by the Soviets, who adjusted it by replacing tsar influence with class consciousness. Russians and Soviets have enacted the most memorialization of

---

<sup>43</sup> Karlsson, “The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture,” 41.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



Tchaikovsky with monuments including his centenary celebrations. Modern Russia still employs the nationalist narrative by using Tchaikovsky as a symbol of Russia on the world stage such as the Tchaikovsky Competition and the Olympics. The UNTAM preservationists are challenging this narrative, whereas removalists accept this narrative.

The second narrative is that Ukraine was a Soviet republic, falling under the umbrella of the “Russian world.” The Russian SFSR<sup>45</sup> and the UkSSR were closely intertwined with their shared history and Slavic ethnicity. As such, Ukraine is not and should not be an independent country, but is a historical and cultural part of modern Russia, the heir of the Soviet Union.

This narrative originated as the USSR narrative of Soviet brotherhood and is now the rationalization behind the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While both sides of the UNTAM debate support Ukrainian independence and call for Russian surrender and an intact Ukraine, each side reacts differently to this narrative. Preservationists ignore or downplay the role of culture as a basis of the war while trying to redefine Tchaikovsky as a Ukrainian symbol.

The removalists challenge the previous narrative of Soviet Ukraine history with a counter-memory of their own, as follows: The UkSSR was a victim of imperial Soviet ideology and lost its autonomy to centralized power in Moscow and the Russian SFSR. Subsequent Russification techniques attempted to erase Ukrainian culture to homogenize the Slavs under what the Russians viewed as “superior” Russian culture. Thus, threats to Ukrainian culture and attempts to elevate Russian culture, especially over Ukrainian culture, constitute threats to Ukrainian autonomy. An appropriate postcolonial response is unearthing suppressed Ukrainian names and replacing old Russian and Soviet monikers within Ukraine.

Keeping Tchaikovsky’s name on the UNTAM serves as a two-pronged threat. His name represents Russia and is prominently featured in the heart of the capital city of Ukraine; Russia can point to it as an example that Ukraine still holds onto a shared past, justifying a potential shared future. Additionally, the choice of a Russian name over a Ukrainian name feeds into the “inferiority of Ukraine/Ukrainian culture” part of the Soviet narrative; if Ukrainian music were as good, there would be a famous Ukrainian name on the institution. Since it is a Russian name,

---

<sup>45</sup> Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Russian Soviet Republic of the USSR

Russian music must be superior. Thus, Tchaikovsky's name is taking up space that should be Ukrainian and posing an existential threat to Ukrainian independence.

The preservationists, however, do not agree with this narrative. They form their own counter-memory, a "counter-counter-memory," to both the removalist response to the Soviet narrative and the Soviet narrative itself with this narrative: The Russian Empire and the USSR unjustly appropriated symbols for the empire that rightfully belong to Ukraine. By proving that important Russian symbols are actually Ukrainian, it simultaneously elevates Ukrainian culture to the world and deprives Russia of cultural importance. An appropriate postcolonial response is revisiting Russian symbols and discovering unacknowledged Ukrainian influence or reclaiming Russian symbols on behalf of Ukraine.

In this case, preservationists argue that newfound knowledge about Tchaikovsky proves that he can be considered a Ukrainian symbol.

## 2.3 Sources

My secondary sources included the aforementioned<sup>46</sup> body of work of Tchaikovsky biographies. I relied on online news articles, social media posts, op-eds, petitions, and reports of academic council meetings to find relevant actors' opinions on the UNTAM controversy. An important Ukrainian-language source was *The Claquers*, an online Ukrainian music journal that reports on contemporary classical music issues. Several of the founders are current students at the UNTAM.<sup>47</sup> Multiple professors at the UNTAM were involved in the writing of the book *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky*, which helped illuminate the preservationist perspective. It was written and unveiled to celebrate Tchaikovsky's 180th birthday and the 80th anniversary of the UNTAM's naming after Tchaikovsky.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, it is only available in print in Ukraine, and I was limited to preview pages online. Museum websites provided many histories used for contextualization and the development over time of

---

<sup>46</sup> See Section 1.2

<sup>47</sup> These are co-founder Oleksandr Ostrovsky, postgraduate student in Department of Theory and History of Culture; editor-in-chief and co-founder Dzvenyslava Safian, master's student; and co-founder Yelyzaveta Sirenko, master's student.

<sup>48</sup> HMAV, "All-Ukrainian premiere 'Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of life and creativity!'" uploaded September 25, 2020, <https://knmau.com.ua/vseukrayinska-prem-vera/>.

Tchaikovsky's historical culture, especially within Russia. Tchaikovsky's own words come from his letters, as sourced from Tchaikovsky Research, where most have been officially translated into English. Another primary source on his life includes Rosa Newmarch's translation of the biography Modest wrote. When sources were only available in Ukrainian or Russian, I used Google Translate and occasionally Facebook's built-in translation. I have inserted original quotes where I can; unfortunately, not knowing the language, I could not always insert the relevant Cyrillic, but have included the translations instead. Thus, mistranslations are due to language barrier and human error.

## 2.4 Limitations

The Russian invasion of Ukraine sent shockwaves around the world; everyone has opinions on appropriate ways to express their own views. However, I only included the actors immediately associated with the UNTAM: students, staff, and alumni. Additionally, I did not conduct any interviews myself, but relied on news articles and social media posts for direct quotes.

Performances of Russian music, including Tchaikovsky, contain not only moral implications but financial. Entire ballet companies are funded by their yearly *Nutcracker* performances. As his work lies in the public domain, there is no financial barrier to entry or legal limits as to who can perform his work. Questions of economic impact and financial beneficiaries are largely out of the scope of my work.

The usage of Tchaikovsky's name may have financial impacts for the university because it has a partnership with the Tchaikovsky International Academy of Music and Art at Hengshui University. As a result, some professors have accused the academy of keeping the Tchaikovsky name to preserve the partnership, and by extension Chinese state funding. Without access to data, I cannot say for certain how much the finances have contributed to the debate. This includes aspects of the work culture within the university that I cannot know from a distance and language barrier, including professor salaries. However, the "administration denies that the renaming has

anything to do with China”<sup>49</sup> or the political relationship between Ukraine, Russia, and China. A removalist even quoted a preservationist as saying if “there will be no Tchaikovsky - there will be no financing,”<sup>50</sup> so the economic factor may be understated in this thesis. Nevertheless, Tchaikovsky will remain the focal point in this examination.

---

<sup>49</sup> “A letter from the students of the NAU named after P. I. Tchaikovsky regarding the exclusion of Tchaikovsky from the name of the educational institution,” *The Claquers*, uploaded June 20, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/9465>.

<sup>50</sup> Pysanka, “Time ‘C’ for the Tchaikovsky Conservatory.”

## Chapter 3: Analysis

### 3.1 Preservation Perspectives

The preservationist perspective argues for the continued use of Tchaikovsky's name by the academy. They propose a counter-counter-memory to challenge the Russianness of Tchaikovsky by emphasizing the close relationship between Tchaikovsky and Ukraine. The vocal proponents of the preservationist perspective are among the professors, academic leadership, and the entire Academic Council. One particularly important source to note is the ArtHuss book edited by Zharkova as it mostly argued that Ukrainian influence is underemphasized in Tchaikovsky scholarship.<sup>51</sup> The preservationist arguments explore the nature of nationality and culture. To them, Tchaikovsky is Ukrainian in every way that matters: his blood, his engagement with the land and its specific local musical colors, and his role in creating their institution. As such, Ukraine deserves to reclaim Tchaikovsky's name on the basis of their ownership of him and concurrently on the basis of his belonging to the world as a universal musical icon.

#### 3.1.1 Ethnicity

A popular argument for Tchaikovsky belonging to Ukraine is in his ancestry. As Yuriy Rybchinsky, a member of the UNTAM's Academic Council, puts it, "Pyotr Tchaikovsky was not ethnically Russian: his father came from the family of Zaporozhian Cossacks, and his mother was French."<sup>52</sup> His fellow council member Valeriya Zharkova echoed his sentiments. The

---

<sup>51</sup> However, not all of the contributors may be equally as preservationist as Zarkova; two contributors were Olena Korchova and Yuriy Chekan, removalists who both resigned in protest. Additionally, of the contributors, UNTAM alum Lyubov Kyyanovska and current UNTAM professors Tetyana Husarchuk, Valentina Redya, Korchova, and Chekan signed a musicologists' petition supporting the removal of Russian symbols in Ukraine, although this petition did not mention Tchaikovsky or UNTAM specifically.

<sup>52</sup> HMAV, "The working meeting."

Academy's presidential advisor, Iouri Loutsenko, also mentions Tchaikovsky's Cossack heritage.<sup>53</sup> The ArtHuss book dedicates at least two chapters to his biological roots.<sup>54</sup>

Tchaikovsky's great-grandfather Fyodor Chayka was a Zaporozhian Cossack, a fact which has gained recognition over the last two decades in Tchaikovsky scholarship.<sup>55</sup> According to this argumentation, Tchaikovsky is considered Ukrainian based on any percentage of Ukrainian heritage he may have and regardless of where he was born due to his genetics. Additionally, the potential symbolic power increases because of his great-grandfather's military history. The Zaporozhian Cossacks count among the most powerful symbols in Ukrainian culture as 17th century figures who gained symbolic importance in the nineteenth century during the nascent national awakening. They represent independence and glory based upon their political autonomy and military prowess. Though Russian history includes Cossacks, they remain a periphery in Russian historical culture. Some Russian historians even view them "as a destructive element that complicated the building and consolidation of Russian nationhood instead of facilitating it."<sup>56</sup> Conversely, the Cossack mythos strengthened in post-independence Ukraine and its diaspora, especially in the former Soviet Union.<sup>57</sup> It owed its success to its inclusive nature "that allowed not only Ukrainians but also millions of Russians, many of whom have mixed ancestry, to associate themselves with the mythologized Cossack past."<sup>58</sup>

It is this dual heritage of nineteenth-century Ukrainian nationalism and the united diaspora of the 1990s that the preservationists hope to evoke by emphasizing the Cossack iconography. However, the preservationists do not acknowledge that Fyodor Chayka reputedly fought for the "wrong" side. The Tchaikovsky family story alleged that Chayka fought under Peter the Great in

---

<sup>53</sup> Isabella Bengoechea, "Ukraine war: Cancelling Russian culture is a mistake and helps no one but Putin, say art lovers," *iNews*, April 4, 2022, <https://inews.co.uk/culture/ukraine-war-cancelling-russian-culture-is-a-mistake-and-helps-no-one-but-putin-say-art-lovers-1528898>.

<sup>54</sup> "Про український «генетичний код» Чайковського" ("About Tchaikovsky's Ukrainian 'genetic code'") by Lyubov Kiyanova and "Український родовід Петра Ілліча Чайковського" ("Ukrainian genealogy of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky") by Lesya Oliynyk

<sup>55</sup> Appearances included Poznansky's *Tchaikovsky Through Others' Eyes* (1999) and Wiley's *Tchaikovsky* (2009) (but not his 2001 Grove article). Brown had not included that fact as of his 2006 *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music*, as well as earlier sources by Poznansky and Wiley.

<sup>56</sup> Plokhly, *Representations of the Past*, 268.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 180.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

the infamous 1709 Battle of Poltava against the rebellious hetman<sup>59</sup> and hero of Ukrainian nationalism Ivan Mazepa.<sup>60</sup> Tchaikovsky himself later composed an opera with Mazepa as its subject.

Tchaikovsky's mother had some French heritage, as Rybchinsky claimed. Her father, Tchaikovsky's maternal grandfather, was born in the Holy Roman Empire to a French father and German mother and moved to Russia when he was seventeen. He took an oath of allegiance in 1800 to become an official subject of the Imperial Crown; additionally, his wife, Tchaikovsky's maternal grandmother, was ethnically Russian.

This line of argumentation seems to be a non-use of history due to its misleading nature. Tchaikovsky was born in Russia, as were both of his parents.<sup>61</sup> His genealogy is decently well documented; with a Russian maternal grandmother and a likely Russian paternal grandmother,<sup>62</sup> using modern borders and a modern conception of heritage, Tchaikovsky's ancestry would have likely been 50% Russian, 12.5% French, 12.5% German, and 25% Ukrainian. On their own, these numbers do not disprove any arguments of Tchaikovsky's Ukrainess, but they are necessary context nonetheless. Even Ukrainian lands of today may not be synonymous with Ukrainian identification then; Plokhy warns against the "tendency to Ukrainize groups and institutions that never possessed an identity that might be called Ukrainian. Recent research on the formation of political, cultural, and national identities in the lands now known as Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus points to the danger of assigning to the masses of the population national identities that did not exist at the time and did not become 'majority faiths' at least until the twentieth century."<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> A hetman was a military leader and ruler within the hetmanate

<sup>60</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, "Fyodor Chayka," last modified January 7, 2023, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Fyodor\\_Chayka](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Fyodor_Chayka).

<sup>61</sup> His father Ilya in Slobodskoy and mother Aleksandra in St. Petersburg

<sup>62</sup> His grandfather Pyotr, born in Poltava, UA, was serving in the imperial army as a physician's assistant when he married Anastasiya Stepanovna Posokhova in 1776; they married in Kungur, RU.

<sup>63</sup> Plokhy, *Representations of the Past*, 289.

### 3.1.2 Relationship with Ukraine

There are many ways to belong to a culture that do not rely on ancestry. Any immigrant can come to claim a new country as their own by living there, adopting cultural practices, assimilating with the people, and pledging their patriotic support. Belonging to a country is not just physical but emotional. Zharkova also argued along these lines, claiming that Tchaikovsky had a “close relationship with Ukraine, which he considered his native home, where he wrote most of his works, whose culture and nature he passionately admired.”<sup>64</sup> The ArtHuss book contained five chapters arguing these points, seemingly a more popular argument than Tchaikovsky’s genetic ethnicity.<sup>65</sup> Rybchinsky claimed Tchaikovsky held great admiration for Ukraine: according to Rybchinsky, Tchaikovsky said “I knew geniuses, but I also knew one nation of geniuses - they are Ukrainians!”<sup>66</sup>

I could not verify the veracity of this quote. Tchaikovsky never used the term “Ukrainian,”<sup>67</sup> yet, he did spend much time in what is today Ukraine.

Tchaikovsky visited his sister in Kamenka (today’s Kamianka, Ukraine) frequently from 1865 until his death in 1893. Pyotr also visited his brother Anatoly who lived in Kyiv for a period of time. Thus, either seeing family and friends or en route to other travels, Tchaikovsky traveled extensively throughout Ukraine and Kyiv. His time spent composing in Kamenka was significant enough to warrant the preservation of the estate as a Tchaikovsky landmark; its grounds opened as the Kamenka Literary Memorial Museum of A. S. Pushkin and P. I. Tchaikovsky in 1936 to commemorate both Tchaikovsky’s time there and Pushkin’s, who stayed there several times in the 1820s. As Lesya Oliynyk put it, “starting from his student years, P. Tchaikovsky visited Ukraine every year. Every summer, and sometimes in the spring or autumn, he lived here,

---

<sup>64</sup> НМАУ, “The working meeting.”

<sup>65</sup> “Екстази від краси... Україна на ‘емоційній карті’ життя Чайковського” (“Ecstasy from beauty... Ukraine on the ‘emotional map’ of Tchaikovsky’s life”) by Valeriya Zharkova, “Мандри української народної пісні в музиці Чайковського” (“Journeys of the Ukrainian folk song in the music of Tchaikovsky”) by Olga Solomonova, “«Я насолоджуюся тут життям...» (географія українських маршрутів Чайковського)” (“I enjoy life here...” (Tchaikovsky’s geography of Ukrainian routes)”) by Valentina Redya, “Київські адреси та друзі Чайковського” (“Kyiv addresses and friends of Tchaikovsky”) by Olena Zinkevich, and “Харківські сторінки життя Петра Ілліча Чайковського” (“Kharkiv pages of the life of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky”) by Iryna Drach

<sup>66</sup> Original quote “Я знав людей геніїв, але я знав і один народ геніїв – це українці!”: НМАУ, “The working meeting.”

<sup>67</sup> See Section 3.2.3: Relationship with Ukraine and Oleksandr Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter. To the topic ‘Tchaikovsky and Ukraine,’” *The Claquers*, March 8, 2023, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/10983>.



looking for peace and creative inspiration. He... visited the surrounding villages, studied folk life and customs, recorded folk melodies.”<sup>68</sup> Tchaikovsky worked on over a dozen works during his times in Kamenka including five operas, three symphonies, and the *1812 Overture*.<sup>69</sup>

Of particular importance to musicians is Tchaikovsky’s use of Ukrainian folk melodies within his compositions. To those who call attention to it, including Rybchinsky, Zharkova, and Loutsenko, it demonstrates a deep appreciation for uniquely-Ukrainian culture as expressed through its musical motifs. Tchaikovsky incorporated folk melodies he heard in Kamenka into at least four pieces<sup>70</sup> as well as his Piano Concerto No. 1. Notably, they appear in his two Ukraine-set operas *Vakula the Smith* (1874), based on a story by Ukrainian-born Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), and *Mazeppa* (1884), based on a poem by Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) about Ukrainian hetman Ivan Mazeppa.

The UkSSR created several toponyms in his honor. In addition to the Kamenka Literary Memorial Museum’s 1936 opening and the UNTAM’s 1940 name change, memorial sites opened in Braïliv and Trostianets.<sup>71</sup> Several streets were also named for Tchaikovsky in Kharkiv and Kyiv. Other countries have similar sites, especially those where he visited, but the UkSSR established them both due to the composer’s fame and the length of time he spent in Ukraine.

Historically, the preservationists’ argument that Tchaikovsky spent much time in Ukraine seems to be true and unexaggerated.

### 3.1.3 Reclaiming Tchaikovsky’s Legacy

If Tchaikovsky does belong to Ukraine, then it is their right to reclaim that heritage and visibility as a Ukrainian symbol. Academic Council member and head of stringed instruments department

---

<sup>68</sup> Original quote “Починаючи зі студентських років, П. Чайковський щороку бував в Україні. Кожного літа, а інколи й навесні або восени він жив тут, шукаючи спокою і творчого натхнення. Дуже любив прогулянки пішки, катання на човні, збирання грибів, відвідував навколишні села, вивчав народний побут і звичаї, записував народні мелодії.”: Lesya Oliynyk, “Ukrainian genealogy of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky,” in *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky*, ed. Valeriya Zharkova (Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2020), 100.

<sup>69</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Kamenka,” last modified April 11, 2023, <https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Kamenka>.

<sup>70</sup> String Quartet in Bb Major, TH 110, String Quartet No. 1, op. 11, Symphony No. 2, op. 17 *Little Russian*, and *Scherzo à la russe*, op. 1 no. 1. Neither side called attention to the fact that Tchaikovsky used a Ukrainian melody in a piece called “Russian Scherzo.”

<sup>71</sup> This memorial site was destroyed in the war as of April 2022.

Dmytro Havrylets argued that not only did Ukraine provide inspiration to Tchaikovsky, but that Tchaikovsky then gave back to Ukraine by forming “an integral part of the cultural history and spiritual heritage of Ukraine.”<sup>72</sup> Being Ukrainian via blood and culture, Tchaikovsky can then become an important Ukrainian symbol in his own right. The war elevates this need as well; instead of eliminating a potentially powerful symbol, Ukraine can use Tchaikovsky to gain more exposure and possible support on a global level and simultaneously undermine Russia by taking back part of their heritage. Loutsenko accused that the “...Russians have stolen Tchaikovsky only for themselves... This is typical for Russia; they steal the common heritage of the Russian empire.”<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, in the Academic Council meeting, Anatoly Kocherga<sup>74</sup> suggested that Ukraine take over holding the International Tchaikovsky Competition.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, this line of argumentation falls under the “moral” category in Karlsson’s typology. Tchaikovsky spent time in both cultures; it is only fair that Ukraine gets to claim him as well. Additionally, as justice for being denied stewardship for almost two centuries, perhaps Ukraine is entitled to more of a claim as reparations. To demonstrate his Ukraineness, the UNTAM uses the Ukrainian spelling of “Petro” in the name, as opposed to the more common Russian spelling of “Pyotr.”

Plokhly gives some credence to reclaiming Ukrainian-born historical figures back into Ukraine’s national narrative. In his history, Hrushevsky was biased towards Ukrainian nationalists; accordingly, “...large numbers of ethnic Ukrainians were allotted little space in the Ukrainian national narrative...Hrushevsky also reduced the history of the nineteenth century to that of the Ukrainian liberation movement. Intellectual and cultural currents that were not part of the Ukrainian national project were left out of his narrative...Thus, neither Nikolai Gogol nor Ilia Repin, both ethnic Ukrainians born in Ukraine, made it into the mainstream of Ukrainian national history.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, even the first Ukrainian textbooks did not contain “all” of

---

<sup>72</sup> HMAI, “The working meeting.”

<sup>73</sup> Bengoechea, “Cancelling Russian culture.”

<sup>74</sup> An accomplished opera singer, Kocherga won the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1974.

<sup>75</sup> UNTAM, along with other institutions, had signed petitions advocating for separating the Tchaikovsky Competition from the Russian government and removing Tchaikovsky’s name from it. Thus far, the competition has only been kicked out of the World Federation of International Music Competitions: HMAI, “The working meeting.”

<sup>76</sup> Plokhly, *Representations of the Past*, 288-289.

Ukrainian history. Whether the same logic can be applied to Tchaikovsky, as non-Ukrainian born but arguably Ukrainian-adjacent, remains to be seen.

### 3.1.4 The UNTAM's Tchaikovsky Connection

The UNTAM's official stance is that Tchaikovsky contributed to the founding of their institution by frequently visiting Kyiv, communicating with musicians, attending concerts, and supporting “initiatives,” as per their website.<sup>77</sup> Loutsenko stated that he “was the most instrumental person in opening our academy,”<sup>78</sup> and Havrylets said that as one of the academy's founders, Tchaikovsky's name honored the academy.<sup>79</sup>

Zharkova goes as far to say that Tchaikovsky was “the founder of higher musical education in Ukraine.”<sup>80</sup> This point has been open to debate, as some have claimed that the presence of the RMS in Ukraine was an extension of top-down imperial power aiming to homogenize musical culture across the Russian empire by supporting a classical canon over folk traditions: Anton Rubinstein emphasized the importance of “the conformity of the educational process in this institution to the high criteria of conservative education.”<sup>81</sup> Yet in her chapter for the ArtHuss book, Tetyana Husarchuk argues that the impetus came from within Kyiv itself, not St. Petersburg.<sup>82</sup> Regardless, the burgeoning institution benefited greatly from established musicians like Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein. They imparted experience from founding similar institutions in St. Petersburg and Moscow, provided monetary support, and encouraged staff and students with their presence at concerts.

Tchaikovsky visited the Kyiv Branch of the RMS twice: he attended a concert on December 15/27, 1890, and he conducted a concert of his own works on December 21st, 1891/January 2nd, 1892.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> “History of UNTAM,” HMA Y, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/en/history-of-untam/>.

<sup>78</sup> Bengoechea, “Cancelling Russian culture.”

<sup>79</sup> HMA Y, “The working meeting.”

<sup>80</sup> HMA Y, “The working meeting.”

<sup>81</sup> Tetyana Husarchuk, “The soul of a genius lives here (Tchaikovsky and Kyiv Conservatory),” in *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky*, ed. Valeriya Zharkova (Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2020), 184.

<sup>82</sup> Husarchuk, “Tchaikovsky and Kyiv Conservatory,” 184.

<sup>83</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Kiev,” last modified January 3 2023, <https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Kiev>.

However, claiming that Tchaikovsky had a pivotal role in founding the university depends on when the university believes their founding is, which has not always been the same year. The UNTAM previously acknowledged 1913 as its official founding, as evidenced by their celebration of its centenary in 2013.<sup>84</sup> Celebratory efforts included concerts and the issue of a commemorative two-hryvnia coin by the National Bank of Ukraine, which had Tchaikovsky on its face.<sup>85</sup> Most importantly, the UNTAM published a journal that contained congratulatory statements from important government figures like the president and prime minister, international and domestic conservatory rectors, and various articles written by professors.<sup>86</sup> Two of the articles were written by Husarchuk, who contributed to the ArtHuss book, and Yuriy Chekan, who also contributed a chapter to the ArtHuss book but later resigned to protest the academy's name in 2022. The alteration of the founding date occurred somewhere between 2013 and 2023, as the September 2023 charter reflects the UNTAM's beginning as the Kyiv branch of the RMS opening on October 27, 1863, with an 1863 on the logo to match.<sup>87</sup> One could argue that the celebration could be honoring the university's ascension to a conservatory; however, that was not the language used at the time. Despite this, neither side of the debate has mentioned the change of founding date as a factor in their argumentation.

### 3.1.5 Globalist Perspective

Calls to remove Tchaikovsky's name felt threatening to those who believe Tchaikovsky "belongs" to everyone, such as "...some instructors [at the UNTAM] who signed a letter declaring that Tchaikovsky's free-spirited musical gifts transcended nationality."<sup>88</sup> Rybchinsky

---

<sup>84</sup> This is mentioned in the Ukrainian version of the UNTAM website's history page, acknowledging the 105th anniversary in 2018, but not the English version: "Історія," HMAU, accessed July 16, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/istoriya/>.

<sup>85</sup> "100 years of the National Music Academy of Ukraine named after P. I. Tchaikovsky (coin)," *Wikipedia*, last modified May 17, 2024, <https://w.wiki/ArtF>.

<sup>86</sup> I could not find this journal in the official UNTAM library system; however, perhaps I lacked the correct credentials: *До 100-Річчя НМАУ ІМ. П. І. Чайковського* ("To the 100th Anniversary of NMAU named after P. I. Tchaikovsky"), *Journal of the National Music Academy of Ukraine named after P. I. Tchaikovsky*, no. 4 (2013), [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Chasopys\\_2013\\_4\\_3](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Chasopys_2013_4_3).

<sup>87</sup> "September 4, 2023 Conference of the labor team of the P. I. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine," HMAU, uploaded September 4, 2023, <https://knmau.com.ua/advert/konferentsiya-trudovogo-kolektivu-4-09-2023/>.

<sup>88</sup> Laura King, "Ukraine wages its own war against Russia's cultural icons in its midst," *LA Times*, July 17, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-07-17/decolonization-drive-targets-russian-luminaries-as-ukraine-war-rages>.

says that, “Tchaikovsky, like Shakespeare, like Joan of Arc, like Christ, does not belong to one specific people, he belongs to the whole world.”<sup>89</sup> Instead of disputing which country Tchaikovsky belongs to, this argument states that he simultaneously belongs to everyone, and thus, no one. If every country has an equal claim to the best artists in history, that also affirms Ukraine has an equal claim. Halyna Poberezhna argues that it is due to his intrinsic nature; Tchaikovsky writes music that appeals to universal senses that every human has, and thus it is that very universality that elevated him to his high status in the first place.<sup>90</sup>

Rybchinsky’s comparisons are a political-pedagogical use of history because he compares the universality of other national figures to Tchaikovsky. Rybchinsky attempts to compare Tchaikovsky’s universal appeal to that of the symbol of Christianity, a French revolutionary, and the father of English literature. However, this argument ignores all the ways that Shakespeare and Joan of Arc have a much bigger presence in their home countries than anywhere else. For example, statues of Shakespeare are mostly found within Great Britain and the rest are mostly within the bounds of the Anglosphere. His work has to be translated to be accessible to other countries, so his “universality” has limits. Joan of Arc, similarly, is a French symbol. Jesus, as a historical figure who lived 2,000 years ago, is incomparable in this situation.

### 3.1.6 The Weapon of Culture

The very heart of this debate is the ideological power of culture itself, and the morals on how it can and should be used. In the official Academic Council vote, the meeting report “refer[red] to the danger of manipulating Tchaikovsky's name as an imperial narrative.”<sup>91</sup> This acknowledges that Russia can utilize Tchaikovsky’s legacy as a weapon in the war and that it is dangerous to let Russia control the narrative. The UNTAM must keep Tchaikovsky’s name and reclaim it as Ukrainian “to protect his heritage from being used by the aggressor as a tool to destroy the Ukrainian essence.”<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> HMAY, “The working meeting.”

<sup>90</sup> Halyna Poberezhna, “The genius of Tchaikovsky: on the wings of hidden meanings,” in *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky*, ed. Valeriya Zharkova (Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2020), 67.

<sup>91</sup> HMAY, “The working meeting.”

<sup>92</sup> HMAY, “The working meeting.”

Others disagree about the very use of culture within the war. Rector Maksym Tymoshenko disputed the stratagem of protesting Russia by banning Russian music, as the two concepts are inequivalent; “modern Putin’s Russia has nothing to do with the culture of the Russian empire.”<sup>93</sup> He argued that it is “twisted logic” to not be able to perform great works of art due to their origins.<sup>94</sup> In the Academic Council meeting, Rybchinsky had agreed; he said that “governments and armies can fight, but cultures can never fight with each other. They can compete or enrich each other.”<sup>95</sup> Vice-rector Mykhailo Mymryk acknowledged the crisis that the war presents; however, he believes that “Tchaikovsky is the genius of music. We cannot just demand all the bridges to be burnt.”<sup>96</sup> He calls the pushback to Russian culture a “violent reaction” and claims that wartime is not the right time for renaming.<sup>97</sup>

This represents a non-use of history, as the academy leadership is denying the logic that their counter-counter-memory is based on. According to their efforts, as long as they consider history to be part of culture, cultures can absolutely “fight each other;” why else would they put this much effort into promulgating the counter-counter-memory? The various historical narratives “fight” each other for dominance via their human actors. Tymoshenko’s denial of modern Russia’s nineteenth-century heritage erases the very concept of historical consciousness. Karlsson defines historical consciousness as “a mental process that connects contemporary human beings to what they apprehend as ‘their’ past and ‘their’ future, but also to various larger histories or ‘imagined communities’ which are of longer duration than an individual life... [it tells] you who you are in relation to other generations and to the world.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, modern Russians construct their identity in part from their cultural heritage of the Russian imperial times. Figures such as Tchaikovsky, Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoevsky are part of modern Russian culture because they lived in the Russian Empire, which has imagined connections to

---

<sup>93</sup> Bengoechea, “Cancelling Russian culture.”

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Original quote «Воювати можуть уряди і армії, культури ж ніколи не можуть воювати одна з іншою. Вони можуть конкурувати чи взаємобагатуватися.»: НМАУ, “The working meeting.”

<sup>96</sup> “Get rid of Tchaikovsky: students fight with the rectorate to de-Russify the leading conservatory of Ukraine,” *Espresso*, July 14, 2022,

<https://global.espresso.tv/get-rid-of-tchaikovsky-students-fight-with-the-rectorate-to-de-russify-the-leading-conservatory-of-ukraine>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Karlsson, “The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture,” 11-12.

today. While there are arguments to be made about the ethics of “cancel culture,” denying history and the power of culture denies the epistemological basis of history.

## 3.2 Removal Perspectives

The removalist perspective argues for the removal of Tchaikovsky from the academy’s name and sometimes for a Ukrainian replacement. They form a counter-memory that refutes the Soviet narrative of Russian and Ukrainian unity. In supporting the narrative of Tchaikovsky’s Russianness, it refutes the preservationists’ counter-counter-memory of Tchaikovsky’s Ukraineness. The argument agrees that Tchaikovsky is a Russian symbol and rewrites the Soviet-to-present relationship between USSR and Ukraine as imperialist and colonialist in nature. Removalists include some students, some professors, and some alumni. Petitions were a popular way of expressing these opinions, including the aforementioned student petition, a composer petition, and a petition on behalf of the musicological community to boycott Russian culture that did not specifically mention the UNTAM’s name.

### 3.2.1 Supporting the Imperial Narrative of Tchaikovsky

The removalists believe that Tchaikovsky is Russian because he supported the imperial regime during his life and with his work, Russia has cultivated him as a symbol of their culture, and the world views him as Russian.

The main author of the student petition, Daryna Masiuk, argued that Tchaikovsky “considered himself Russian, lived in the Russian Empire, [and] worked under the tsar” during his lifetime.<sup>99</sup> Tchaikovsky lived under the authority of the Russian Empire. The tsar was the ultimate power of the state, but nationalism was also growing. The tsar represented the Russian Empire on a global level, and at times Tchaikovsky reinforced imperial narratives or composed material uplifting the imperial regime. Post-graduate student and Claquers co-founder Oleksandr Ostrovsky emphasized that Tchaikovsky’s time in the civil service was in service to the tsar.<sup>100</sup> As a

---

<sup>99</sup> “Get rid of Tchaikovsky.”

<sup>100</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

composer, Tchaikovsky was paid by the tsar to write three works: the *Festival Overture on the Danish National Anthem*, op. 15 in 1866 for Alexander III's<sup>101</sup> wedding<sup>102</sup> and two works for Alexander III's coronation in 1883: a festival cantata *Moscow*, TH 69 and the orchestral *Coronation March*, TH 50. Tchaikovsky also wrote a cantata to honor Peter the Great's 200th birthday and the 1876 *Slavonic March*, op. 31 commissioned by the RMS to support Russian troops in the Balkans.<sup>103</sup> The piece quotes from "God Save the Tsar," the imperial anthem of the Russian Empire, as well as Russian folk song. Furthermore, in 1884 Alexander III bestowed unto Tchaikovsky the Order of Saint Vladimir (4th class), granting him hereditary nobility<sup>104</sup>. For the last nine years of his life, Tchaikovsky was a legitimized participant within the imperial system. Upon his death, the tsar mandated a state funeral for the composer.

Tchaikovsky composed nationalistic music in addition to music celebrating the imperial crown, music that removalists believe "can be called ideological and even propagandistic."<sup>105</sup> In 1881, the government put on the Moscow All-Russia Industrial and Art Exhibition to celebrate Alexander II's silver jubilee and consecrate a cathedral built in honor of the 1812 Russian military victory. The Russian government commissioned Tchaikovsky to write *The Year 1812, Solemn Overture*, op. 49 to commemorate the successful Russian defense against Napoleon. Within Russia, this conflict is known as the "Patriotic War of 1812." Popularly known as *The 1812 Overture*, Tchaikovsky successfully inspired fervent patriotism through its instrumentation. The piece remains known for its famed use of cannons as a percussive instrument, adding bombastic flair. The piece tells the story of the French invasion, starting with quotes from Russian folk song and Orthodox chant to represent typical life—multiple auditory focal points from the musical vernacular, recognizable by the audience. Suddenly, he quotes the French anthem "La Marseillaise" to represent the invading army and finally triumphantly trumpets the

---

<sup>101</sup> at the time, Grand Duke Aleksandr, heir to the throne

<sup>102</sup> It was the Danish anthem because he was marrying Princess Dagmar of Denmark.

<sup>103</sup> The Russian Empire was fighting the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus and Balkans to re-establish its base of power in the Black Sea (thus weakening Great Britain's position) and support several Balkan national movements, including in Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro.

<sup>104</sup> He had no children to pass it on to, though.

<sup>105</sup> "Get rid of Tchaikovsky."



Russian imperial anthem “God Save the Tsar” to represent the victory of the Russian troops.<sup>106,107</sup> The piece remains to this day a nationalist mainstay.

Even Tchaikovsky’s music upholds “the Russian imperial myth... his opera *Mazeppa*, following Pushkin’s ‘Poltava,’ had the goal of forever cementing the outstanding Ukrainian hetman’s status as a ‘traitor.’”<sup>108</sup> The historical tale of Cossack hetman Ivan Mazepa rebelling against Peter the Great enjoyed a spate of popularity during this time period and was mentioned in works by Voltaire, Victor Hugo, and Franz Liszt. The Western artists sympathized with Mazepa and portrayed him as a wild horseback-riding freedom seeker. However, Tchaikovsky used Alexander Pushkin’s poem as a source for his opera’s libretto. The Russian Pushkin had depicted Mazepa from the imperial perspective: as a traitor to his tsar and his empire.

The student petition views “P. Tchaikovsky [as] a symbol of Russian culture, Russia emphasizes P. Tchaikovsky's belonging to its ‘unique’ cultural heritage.”<sup>109</sup> The Russian SFSR and modern Russian state have put in effort to preserve Tchaikovsky’s memory as a part of Russian national history.

After the composer’s death, the Russian SFSR preserved his memory by turning important places in Tchaikovsky’s life into museums and sites of memory. His final home, located in Klin, was willed to his brother Modest who transformed the estate into the Tchaikovsky State House-Museum. Upon Modest’s death in 1916, ownership of the museum transferred to the RMS, then subsequently became property of the state in 1921. Another of Tchaikovsky’s brothers, Ippolit, served as a curator at Klin from 1919 until his death in 1927. Lenin described Tchaikovsky’s home as “a national and cultural monument whose preservation intact is of importance for the entire country.”<sup>110</sup> In 1936, the Votkinsk house wherein Tchaikovsky was born became a museum. A flurry of memorialization occurred in 1940 in honor of Tchaikovsky’s

---

<sup>106</sup> This is historically inaccurate as neither anthem was in use during Napoleonic times. “God Save the Tsar” became the anthem in 1833. While “La Marseillaise” had become the anthem of the First Republic in 1795, Napoleon banned it and it was not used as the French national anthem again until the 1870s.

<sup>107</sup> Geoffrey Norris, “Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture: the complete guide,” *Gramophone*, January 3, 2023, <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/article/tchaikovsky-s-1812-overture-the-complete-guide>.

<sup>108</sup> Natalka Pysanka, “Time ‘C’ for the Tchaikovsky Conservatory. What is wrong with her and why is the problem not only in the name,” *Ukrainian Pravda: Life*, January 26, 2023, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/2023/01/26/252535/>.

<sup>109</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>110</sup> Bullock, “That’s Not the Only Reason We Love Him,” 59.

100th birthday, including the Moscow Conservatory which added Tchaikovsky to its name. In Russian culture, Tchaikovsky's visage has achieved equal idolization as other behemoths of Russian culture like Pushkin, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky.

The most relevant memorializations, however, have taken place on the international stage. While studying abroad, UNTAM student Emiliia Dmitrieva noticed that "...in other countries, as well as in Ukraine now, the direct association with Tchaikovsky is Russia," after she reported people asking her why her Ukrainian university was named for a Russian composer.<sup>111</sup> Tchaikovsky's music represents Russia in multiple international events, such as international competitions including the Olympic Games, and even galactically; the International Astronomical Union designates Tchaikovsky as a "Russian" in their entry on a Mercury crater named after the composer.<sup>112,113</sup>

The International Tchaikovsky Competition is a state-run and financed classical music competition that takes place every four years since its founding in 1958. Historically one of the most prestigious music competitions, it draws participants from around the globe. Vladimir Putin often participates in the festivities by giving speeches or attending concerts, as it is a government function; he has said it showcases the "rich history and unique traditions of Russian culture."<sup>114</sup> Responding to calls from musicians worldwide, including a petition signed by the UNTAM, the World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC) saw sufficient reason to remove the Tchaikovsky Competition from the WFIMC in 2022 in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>115</sup>

Most prominently, Tchaikovsky's work has been used by Russia as an unofficial national anthem. While Tchaikovsky's work appeared in the official opening ceremony in Sochi 2014, some

---

<sup>111</sup> "Get rid of Tchaikovsky."

<sup>112</sup> "MERCURY – Chaikovskij," U.S. Geological Survey, updated October 17, 2016, <https://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/Feature/1121>.

<sup>113</sup> According to the International Astronomical Union (IAU), craters on Mercury are to be named after famous deceased artists, writers, and composers. Taras Shevchenko has his own crater on Mercury; both were designated in 1976: "Mercury Crater-naming Contest Winners Announced," International Astronomical Union, uploaded April 29, 2015, <https://www.iau.org/news/pressreleases/detail/iau1506/>. "MERCURY – Shevchenko," U.S. Geological Survey, updated October 14, 2016, <https://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/Feature/5486>.

<sup>114</sup> Javier C. Hernández, "Tchaikovsky Competition, Normally Rousing, Is Diminished by War," *New York Times*, June 30, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2831149450/citation/37F4FBF2AF9E4184PQ/1>.

<sup>115</sup> This banishment despite the competition's storied history of transcending politics. The first winner, in the midst of the Cold War, was an upset win by American pianist Van Cliburn; coincidentally, his characteristic work was none other than Piano Concerto No. 1, one of the pieces that won him the competition.

Russian athletes were later convicted of doping and the Russian delegation was prohibited from competing as a national team. In subsequent Olympic Games, no Russian national symbols were allowed, including “the Russian national anthem (or any anthem linked to Russia).”<sup>116</sup> Russian athletes were allowed to compete individually under the banner of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) and needed a song to play during any potential medalling ceremonies. The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected their first suggestion “Katyusha,” a World War II-era Russian classic, for being too “linked with Russia;” however, they accepted Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1.<sup>117</sup> This piece, deemed by the CAS as not explicitly linked to Russia, went on to be the faux national anthem of the ROC athletes in Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022. Even if before it had not been too closely associated with Russia, after two Olympics, its symbolage has intertwined markedly closer. Additionally, the pianist that recorded the piece for the Olympics, Denis Matsuev, was also a signatory on a 2014 petition endorsing the Russian annexation of Crimea and a public supporter of the Putin regime.<sup>118</sup>

Given evidence such as the aforementioned examples, removalists believe that Tchaikovsky’s legacy as a Russian symbol is inextirpable. Violinist and UNTAM alum Ihor Zavhorodnii explains, “[Tchaikovsky] is the number one Russian, both in world art and in Russian cultural policy... If [the preservationists] thought [they] could compete with Russia in this... that [they] can convince world art studies, [they] do not have and will not have sufficient tools, arguments, sufficient worldwide influence, recognition, prestige, media power, specialists, [or] time for this.”<sup>119</sup>

### 3.2.2 Rewrite Soviet Narrative about Ukraine

To combat the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian-Russian unity, removalists highlight historical facts about Ukrainian suppression during the Soviet era. Composer and since-resigned UNTAM professor Alla Zagaikevich compared the current violence to “the genocide of the Ukrainian

---

<sup>116</sup> Lena Larson, “‘No Anthem Linked to Russia’: Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 at the Olympic Games,” *Music & Politics* 17 (September 5, 2023): 5, <https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.4570>.

<sup>117</sup> It includes two Ukrainian folk melodies, one in the first movement and one in the third.

<sup>118</sup> Larson, “No Anthem Linked to Russia,” 18.

<sup>119</sup> Dzvenyslava Safian, “Is Tchaikovsky Ukrainian? The musicians’ reaction to the dubious decision of the conservatory management,” *The Claquers*, June 18, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/en/posts/9436>.

people by Stalin – the Holodomor. Now it’s all happening again.”<sup>120</sup> During the Holodomor, also known as the Ukrainian famine, millions of Ukrainians starved to death in the 1930s as a result of industrialization policy under Stalin. Whether or not it was purposeful is debated, but many UN states consider it a genocide. She continues by referencing other forms of crackdown, such as “in the 1930s the Soviet system really destroyed all living and progressive areas of Ukrainian culture and music. The attack by the Russian military only confirms the colonial policy of the USSR towards Ukraine and its music. Once again, Russia wishes to wash it all away forever.”<sup>121</sup> Plokhly points out how these counter-memories help to unify Ukrainians in “...the inclusiveness of the historical myths of both the [1933] famine and Chernobyl, in which all citizens of Ukraine, whatever their national, social, or political affiliation, were viewed as innocent victims of the Soviet system.”<sup>122</sup> Ostrovsky directs attention to bans on Ukrainian language as well.<sup>123,124</sup> All of these efforts culminated in a concentrated attempt to de-Ukrainize and homogenize Soviet culture from the top down.

To combat the deliberate suppression of Ukrainian culture, Ukraine had to rediscover suppressed history as part of its “de-Russification” and postcolonial processes after 1991. The postcolonialism paradigm necessitates an active intellectual fight against the Soviet narrative. This process also applies to music; wartime boycotting of Russian music has allowed for accelerated “musical de-Russification.” For example, artists have critically examined canon repertoire and dug deeper, “...extracting scores, often long embedded in honed repertoires, [as] a deliberate postcolonial act, creating new openings and fresh interpretations on the Ukrainian music scene, at home and abroad.”<sup>125</sup> Decades of cultural suppression and Russian paternalism have resulted in a Ukrainian inferiority complex, as described by the student petition, with Ukraine always revering Russia.<sup>126</sup>

However, the process of postcolonial deconstruction can pose difficulty, especially due to the intrinsic emotional nature of the music medium. Since-resigned UNTAM professor Olena

---

<sup>120</sup> Daniel Jaffé, “Protect and Survive,” *BBC Music Magazine* (November 2022): 38-41.

<sup>121</sup> Jaffé, “Protect and survive.”

<sup>122</sup> Plokhly, *Representations of the Past*, 246.

<sup>123</sup> See Section 3.2.3: Relationship with Ukraine

<sup>124</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

<sup>125</sup> Iuliia Bentia, “Our enemy is not Tchaikovsky himself,” *Eurozine*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.eurozine.com/our-enemy-is-not-tchaikovsky-himself/>.

<sup>126</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

Korchova<sup>127</sup> explains that “it is difficult for us to admit this and it is even more difficult to give up Tchaikovsky's name, because it has almost literally grown into our common musical ‘body,’ it has long become our family, our own. It is embedded in our collective past, sanctified by memories, illuminated by hopes.”<sup>128</sup> Even Anastasia Poludenna, a master’s student who paused her studies to join the defense forces, acknowledges the emotional connection to Russian music. She performed Shostakovich’s Second Concerto for her master’s degree. Any artist that dedicates a high level of time and care to a piece creates an emotional bond with it; Poludenna was not an exception. Russian music has been more prevalent for generations in Ukrainian musical culture, so she understands the emotional power of the music, but is also willing to abstain from Russian-written music for the time being nonetheless.<sup>129</sup> However difficult this may be, removalists believe the process could be expedited. Owing in part to possible feelings of inferiority, Poludenna accuses some Ukrainians of Stockholm Syndrome towards Russian culture.<sup>130</sup>

Others accuse the UNTAM of de-Russification stagnation at an institutional level. Professor Zagaikevich cites the potential power of “the music educational institution [as] a part of social and artistic processes;” by keeping the name, the academy “[tolerates] stagnation, [and] legitimiz[es] ignoring the social life of the country and modern artistic processes in Ukraine and the world.”<sup>131</sup> Two alumni from the early 2000s blamed such stagnation on the work culture among faculty. UNTAM alum and composer Illia Razumeiko lobbed harsh accusations that a significant part of the academic leadership is made up of “Soviet teachers who never spoke Ukrainian, who never respected Ukrainian culture and the country in which they live,” calling for the lustration<sup>132</sup> of corrupt administrators.<sup>133</sup> His fellow UNTAM alum and composer Andriy Bondarenko testified that “when I studied at the conservatory, it was 20 years ago, then more than half of the teachers there had pro-Russian views, communicated in Russian, taught in

---

<sup>127</sup> In 2022, she was a professor in the World Music History Department, but resigned in protest in March 2023.

<sup>128</sup> Olena Korchova, “An open letter to the staff of the National Music Academy of Ukraine,” *The Claquers*, July 4, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/8783>.

<sup>129</sup> Oleksandr Ostroyskyi, “Violinist Anastasia Poludenna: ‘Until we undergo a course of treatment, we are allergic to Russian culture,’” *The Claquers*, April 21, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/8884>.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Pysanka, “Time ‘C’ for the Tchaikovsky Conservatory.”

<sup>132</sup> the removal of authority figures associated with a corrupt regime

<sup>133</sup> Maria Kabatsii, “‘Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia.’ Ukrainian composers against the ‘Ukrainization’ of Tchaikovsky,” *Ukrainian Pravda: Life*, February 27, 2024, <https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/ukrajinski-kompozitori-proti-ukrajinizaciji-chaykovskogo-300246/>.

Russian. Already after me, there were speeches by students with the demand that the educational process be conducted in Ukrainian. That is, most likely, pro-Russian teachers still prevail there.”<sup>134,135</sup> Such stances seem to occupy the radical left side of the debate, along with Korchova, who stated that the “attachment to [Russian culture] ...literally ties our hands, deprives us of our freedom, and turns us into hostages of a dead tradition.”<sup>136</sup> Korchova also blamed the university’s lethargy and unwillingness to change, as “...to decide on a difficult discussion, to disturb the academic balance of interests, to leave the comfort zone is difficult and even scary for us... But we will have to, because it is in this way and only in this way that we can join the struggle directly.”<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the most powerful tool against generational inertia seems to be the generation born after Ukrainian independence, including the current students of the UNTAM working to expand Ukrainian history in the postcolonial movement.<sup>138</sup>

Postcolonial efforts to distinguish Ukraine from Russia include emphasizing the differences; what Ukraine is, and what Ukraine is not. Plokhy describes the post-Soviet differences between Ukraine and Russia as “...one of the main characteristics of the Ukrainian nation-building project has been the restoration and reinvention of national tradition, orienting the nation’s culture towards the West and stressing its distinctiveness from Russian culture and tradition. In Russia, on the contrary, the nation-building project has recently taken on a clear anti-Western orientation, with a strong emphasis on the idea of the Slavic and Orthodox unity of the Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians.”<sup>139</sup> A common theme found in the removalist arguments is that of democracy, which was weak during the Soviet era. At least four petitions have been circulated in favor of removing Tchaikovsky’s name: one to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy,<sup>140</sup> the previously-mentioned student petition, a composer petition, and a petition on behalf of the musicological community to boycott Russian culture, which did not mention the Tchaikovsky name debate.<sup>141</sup> The students who organized the student petition also circulated a survey which

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> I cannot verify these statements.

<sup>136</sup> Korchova, “An open letter.”

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>139</sup> Plokhy, *Representations of the Past*, 211-212.

<sup>140</sup> This petition did not reach the threshold of names needed for the President to view it. Additionally, the full text is only available on the presidential website to those who hold Ukrainian IDs.

<sup>141</sup> The UNTAM-affiliated signees in this petition include 20 professors, 17 postgraduates, 9 undergraduates, and 1 alum among the 170 total signatures.

resulted in 122 student respondents out of 161 answering to remove the name. These results were included with their student petition which had 261 signers. However, this may not represent an actual majority of the students, as the UNTAM usually has around 1,000 students; statistics have not been released about how the war has impacted enrollment numbers.<sup>142</sup> The removalists accused the preservationists of being like Russia in suppressing democracy. The main author of the petition Masiuk also emphasizes standing up to suppression, no matter if it comes from Russia or within the university. She points to the power of the people, saying that, “I think we will succeed, because there are so many of us. If [the UNTAM administration] are going to repress, then everyone will have to be repressed... Even if there are repressions, then so be it.”<sup>143</sup> Razumeiko claims that consequences have already been enacted, with “many passionate students... subjected to such repressions, such as not being given a place in graduate school or master's departments that support such a policy.”<sup>144,145</sup> Korchova questions the nature of the Academic Council vote, criticizing the lack of transparency. She wants to know more information than the single article on the official website provided, such as more inclusion of discussion and breakdown of voting, as little public information combined with a unanimous vote could seem suspect.<sup>146</sup> Korchova may be right to suspect dissent under the surface; one member of the Academic Council, Iryna Kokhanyk, Head of the Music Theory Department, signed the musicologists’ petition to boycott Russian culture.<sup>147</sup> While the petition does not mention Tchaikovsky specifically and it can be argued that if she considers Tchaikovsky Ukrainian, then he would not be boycotted, the ideology of this petition leans closer towards the removalists than the preservation of the name for which she voted.

Finally, Ukraine combats the Russian narrative through military action, as Russia has been attempting to retain the original Soviet narrative through violence. A nation at war requires war effort. Razumeiko had posted himself outside of the main university building, seeing for himself the prevailing opinions of students. He reported that some of the people who study at the

---

<sup>142</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>143</sup> “Get rid of Tchaikovsky.”

<sup>144</sup> Kabatsii, “Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia.”

<sup>145</sup> The author cannot verify these statements.

<sup>146</sup> Олена Корчова, “Про гібридність,” Facebook, June 17, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Wicj4eoLYiEGW4bd/>.

<sup>147</sup> Irina Tukova et al., “Open letter of the musicological community of Ukraine,” *The Claquers*, May 4, 2022, <https://theclaquers.com/posts/8766>.

university “are satisfied with [the university's name]. And they agree with it... actively - and tell tales about the Cossack Chaika, or passively - ‘well, I'm learning for myself, and I'm ‘out of politics.’...I can imagine exactly such an atmosphere in the Moscow Tchaikovsky Academy, where people also say: ‘Well, we are for the SVO’<sup>148</sup> or ‘we don't talk about the war, we just play classical music.’”<sup>149</sup> This concurs with another angle in memory studies, which argues that once “the memory of a person or event was outsourced to an object... people would start to forget them. ...Many people indeed overlook monuments in their neighbourhood and often are not even aware of having seen them at all.”<sup>150</sup> Some of these students do not notice Tchaikovsky’s name, despite the war. An uncharged political monument can become a banal part of the background of everyday life until circumstances change and attention is drawn to it.

Occasionally, these circumstances necessitate a name change due to new standards. The student petition stated that instead of the preservationists’ claim that war is no time for name changes, Ukraine must be more defensive of its identity and independence because of the war.<sup>151</sup> The removalists also denounce the violence committed by the Russians, further cementing their desire to be disassociated from them. As the student petition puts it, “since the full-scale invasion of Russia on the territory of Ukraine, the defense of our identity, independence, originality and self-sufficiency is critically important...when we all witnessed the inhuman cruelty of the ‘Russian world’, which supposedly protects culture, we feel an aversion to everything Russian.”<sup>152</sup> Korchova agrees that the current violence perpetrated by Russia necessitates the removal of Tchaikovsky as part of the war effort: “In my deep conviction, the Academy cannot continue to function under this brand; in the conditions of war it is unacceptable and even immoral.”<sup>153</sup> She explains that it is a way for every Ukrainian to support the war effort, as “the absolute majority of us are not at the front, the vast majority of us are safe. Of course, we want to help, to be useful, to be next to those who are fighting” and by giving up Tchaikovsky’s name “it is in this way... that we can join the struggle directly, make that one (metaphorical) shot at the

---

<sup>148</sup> “Special military operation,” which is the official Russian government term used for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

<sup>149</sup> Kabatsii, “‘Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia.’”

<sup>150</sup> Rigney, “Toxic Monuments,” 20.

<sup>151</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>152</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>153</sup> Korchova, “An open letter.”



enemy that many of us think about in moments of despair.”<sup>154</sup> The student petition makes their argument more personal by calling attention to the fact that many of the UNTAM students, some of whom signed the petition, have joined the military to protect their country. To truly appreciate their sacrifice, the institution should not remind them of their enemy by having a Russian name on their university and their diploma.<sup>155</sup> Total mobilization for the war effort includes history and historical memory.

The Ukrainians who wish to rewrite the Soviet narrative of Ukrainian-Russian brotherhood, regardless of their sentiment on the academy’s name, argue so based on an existential use of history. If history is essential to the legitimacy of a nation state, then Soviet efforts to diminish Ukrainian history threatens their current sovereignty by threatening Ukraine ontology. For Russia to base their invasion on said Soviet narrative, Russia is threatening the Ukrainian past, present, and future. Through rewriting this historical narrative into a postcolonial memory, historians reinforce Ukrainian identity and culture. Additionally, reinforcing national beliefs reminds soldiers why they are fighting and who they are as Ukrainians.

### 3.2.3 Refute Counter-Counter-Memory of Preservationist Perspective

Due to the nature of this debate, these argumentative narratives do not exist in a vacuum. To challenge the preservationist counter-counter-memory of Tchaikovsky, many removalists refuted points by re-contextualizing or challenging positions posed by the preservationists.

#### I. Ethnicity

The removalists minimize the Ukrainian ethnic identity argument by arguing how distant Tchaikovsky’s Ukrainian ancestor was and that choice matters more than blood; in their eyes, Tchaikovsky and his family chose to live as Russians and therefore are Russian.

Tchaikovsky’s ancestors were predominantly Russian, so he is Russian according to removalists. His “partial ethnic affinity,” as Zavhorodnii describes it, does not negate his Russian birth,

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

Russian rearing, or similarly Russian-born and Russian-reared parents.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, only one of Tchaikovsky's great-grandfathers could be considered Ukrainian; as since-resigned UNTAM professor Yuriy Chekan<sup>157</sup> asked, "What indicates Tchaikovsky's Ukrainianness? His great-grandfather's nationality? But his other great-grandfather was French, and his great-grandmother was Austrian. Perhaps Tchaikovsky is a French or Austrian composer?"<sup>158</sup> Dmitrieva challenged the validity of linking "some distant Ukrainian blood" with an ethnic identity with her own perspective: "My relatives have Russian roots. But this doesn't make me Russian and I don't consider myself Russian because of it."<sup>159</sup>

Others agree with Dmitrieva's definition of ethnic identity as what one identifies oneself as; Bondarenko reiterates that Tchaikovsky was Russian because that was his "self-identification" and that Tchaikovsky had "the right to identify himself as a Russian."<sup>160</sup> Ostrovsky goes further and says that Tchaikovsky and his family cemented their Russian identity through their career choices, despite the trace of Ukrainian ancestry:

Pyotr Tchaikovsky's ancestor belonged to the Cossack Chayok family, but at one time chose the path of an imperial 'Great Russian' official. It was this identification that became decisive for the following generations of the family: the father of the composer Ilya Tchaikovsky worked for the development of Russian industry, managing the Kama-Votkin factory, and [Pyotr] Ilyich, before becoming a composer, graduated from the Imperial School of Law and even worked for a short time in the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Empire.<sup>161</sup>

The removalists accuse the preservationists of overstating Tchaikovsky's Ukrainian ancestry and underemphasizing the agency one has in choosing how to identify and express that identification.

---

<sup>156</sup> Safian, "Is Tchaikovsky Ukrainian?"

<sup>157</sup> In 2022, he was a professor in the World Music History Department, but resigned in protest in March 2023.

<sup>158</sup> Юрий Чекан. "Сьогодні прочитав про одностайну підтримку консерваторцями (виглядає так, що ми уповноважили Вчену раду на прийняття такого рішення)," Facebook, June 17, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/y.chekan/posts/10218311066802737>.

<sup>159</sup> "Get rid of Tchaikovsky."

<sup>160</sup> Kabatsii, "Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia."

<sup>161</sup> Ostrovsky et al., "Passion for Peter."

## II. Relationship with Ukraine

The preservationists argued that Tchaikovsky had a close relationship with Ukraine based on the amount of high-quality visits he enjoyed, his admiration of Ukrainian culture, and his use of Ukrainian folk melodies. They also allude to his collaboration with Ukrainian composers in their claim that he helped support the burgeoning classical music culture in Ukraine. The removalists re-contextualize each line of argumentation.

Tchaikovsky spent a lot of time in Ukraine, but Chekan argues that this does not matter, as “cultural affiliation... is not determined by the place of residence.”<sup>162</sup> Additionally, Tchaikovsky may have admired Ukrainian culture, but only did so through the lens of imperialism which used demeaning terms. The term ‘Little Russia’ was a degrading, diminutive term that infantilized Ukraine. It paternalistically defined Russia as a bigger, more knowledgeable older sibling or parent and remains an offensive term to this day. The context of this term is that the Ukrainian language had been suppressed for centuries. As part of the crackdown on nationalism the terms “Ukraine” and “Ukrainian” were forbidden, as was most publishing in Ukrainian since 1863. In 1876, Tsar Alexander II banned all printing in Ukrainian, removed school books in Ukrainian, transferred suspected Ukrainophile teachers outside of Ukraine, and forbade teaching in Ukrainian. Tchaikovsky’s symphony no. 2 (1872) is famously nicknamed “Little Russian.”<sup>163</sup> In all of Tchaikovsky’s letters, he never used the term “Ukraine;” he used “Little Russian,” such as “Little Russian laziness”<sup>164</sup> and an additional demeaning term “*хохливі*” on at least five separate occasions in his letters which “othered” the local Ukrainian people. It had derogatory connotations at the time and still today.

While Tchaikovsky uses some Ukrainian melodies in his works, further context is needed. Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), the founder of Russian classical music who was born in the generation before Tchaikovsky, had pioneered the usage of folk tunes within Russian classical music. Yet folk song cataloguers of the time treated Ukrainian songs as a “sub-species” of Russian song, in essence flattening distinct regional variances: this demonstrates the concept of

---

<sup>162</sup> Чекан, “Сьогодні прочитав про одностайну підтримку консерваторцями.”

<sup>163</sup> See Section 3.3.2

<sup>164</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 299,” last modified February 24, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_299&oldid=65574](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_299&oldid=65574).

“musical Russification.”<sup>165</sup> Additionally, composers can use folk music to insinuate that the folk culture is more primitive than the upper-class classical canon. For example, primitivism, such as seen in Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* (1913), can perpetuate racial stereotypes in its evocative depictions of indigenous cultures;<sup>166</sup> or Claude Debussy’s attempts to deride the operatic style of Richard Wagner by juxtaposing it against the “lowbrow” African American genre of the cakewalk in his piece “Golliwog’s Cakewalk” (1908).<sup>167</sup> Some Russian composers, such as Stravinsky during his “Russian” period, made use of Ukrainian melodies as “a mere regional curiosity that can lend ‘local color’ to serious compositions,” suggesting “that Ukrainian music is inferior to Russian music.”<sup>168</sup> Tchaikovsky himself may have respected the music, as the Ukrainian tune he uses in the third movement of Piano Concerto No. 1 retains its “melodic and harmonic repetition, both notable features of Ukrainian dance tunes, as well as the song’s two-voice character... indicating his understanding of the music’s style and structure.”<sup>169</sup> However, it does not necessarily escape the musical Russification applied by others such as Tchaikovsky scholar David Brown in his 2006 book *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music* when he exclaimed in disbelief, “In any case, can you really imagine beginning the concerto with the Ukrainian folktune?” He later clarified that “obviously Tchaikovsky himself had to extend and supplement the tiny Ukrainian folktune, and it proves to be merely the launch pad for a substantial ternary structure.”<sup>170</sup> Here Brown accuses the Ukrainian folk melody of being too simplistic, suggesting that it was an insufficient and undeserving source motif for Tchaikovsky’s development.

Regardless of how Tchaikovsky used Ukrainian folk tunes or how they were perceived, many preservationists disregard the connection between Tchaikovsky and the usage of folk tunes at all. Chekan argues that “Beethoven also used Ukrainian melodies in his compositions, but no one

---

<sup>165</sup> Larson, “No Anthem Linked to Russia,” 10-11.

<sup>166</sup> See Lucy Weir, “Primitive Rituals, Contemporary Aftershocks: Evocations of the Orientalist ‘Other’ in four productions of ‘Le Sacre du printemps,’” *Avant* IV, no. 3 (2013): 111-143, <https://doaj.org/article/b4d6f65394424b4692c6bbf98099d55c>.

<sup>167</sup> Debussy interposes quotations from *Tristan und Isolde* against the ragtime-esque cakewalk form; this has been interpreted as him making fun of Wagner by comparing his music to the music seen as “lowbrow” by upper class white Europeans; as both a black genre and American, the cakewalk form was “doubly primitive.” Elizabeth De Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk,’” *Current Musicology* no. 90 (September 2010), <https://doi.org/10.7916/cm.v0i90.5187>.

<sup>168</sup> Larson, “No Anthem Linked to Russia,” 11.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

considers him a Ukrainian composer.”<sup>171,172</sup> Dmitrieva flips the argument, as “Beethoven wrote on the theme of English or French songs, but we can’t call [him] an Englishman or a Frenchman.”<sup>173</sup> Zagaikevich asserts that the argument is in bad faith; if the academy leadership truly values Tchaikovsky’s use of folk songs, they should expand and better fund the UNTAM’s folk music department. She says that “the Folklore Laboratory of the Academy has a unique archive, but ethnomusicologists developed [it] and take care of it almost single-handedly... The Academy has very small folklore courses. There is a large department of folk instruments, but it is currently impossible to learn the... folklore instrumental tradition of certain Ukrainian regions at the Academy.”<sup>174,175</sup> To her, instead of attempting to add Tchaikovsky to the Ukrainian music culture, the academy should support the more obviously Ukrainian programs.

A final line of argumentation challenged by the removalists is Tchaikovsky’s source material and use of language. Bondarenko values Ukrainian themes and the Ukrainian language, saying that Tchaikovsky predominantly utilized Russian themes and poems. By designating him as Ukrainian, that legitimizes “that Ukrainian artists can calmly ignore the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, as Tchaikovsky did.”<sup>176</sup> He suggests that a better role model is Mykola Lysenko, namesake of the Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Academy of Music.<sup>177</sup>

Tchaikovsky set two of Taras Shevchenko’s poems to music,<sup>178</sup> but Ostrovsky points out that Tchaikovsky used Russian translations of them instead of the original Ukrainian.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, Ostrovsky questions the veracity of Tchaikovsky’s support of other classical music composers in Ukraine. For example, when Lysenko was attempting to stage his opera *Taras Bulba*,<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> Specifically, *Ten National Airs with Variations for Flute and Piano* Op. 107, nos. 3 and 7

<sup>172</sup> Чекан, “Сьогодні прочитав про одностайну підтримку консерваторцями.”

<sup>173</sup> “Get rid of Tchaikovsky.”

<sup>174</sup> Pysanka, “Time ‘C’ for the Tchaikovsky Conservatory.”

<sup>175</sup> This also pulls in another debate, which pertains to what types of music should be taught at conservatories. Once classical music purists, the development of ethnomusicology over the last 150 years and proliferation of popular genres is resulting in a reckoning across the world of music schools. Such transition can be seen in conservatories now having robust jazz degree programs, a choice which would have been unthinkable a century ago.

<sup>176</sup> Kabatsii, ““Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia.””

<sup>177</sup> Lysenko founded his own Music and Drama School in 1904, the first institution of higher music education where classes were taught in Ukrainian and Ukrainian folk traditions given a place on the curriculum: Jaffé, “Protect and survive.”

<sup>178</sup> *Six Romances and Songs*, op. 27 no. 4 “Evening” (1875) and *Six Duets*, op. 46 no. 4 “In the Garden, By the Ford” (1880)

<sup>179</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

<sup>180</sup> based on a novella by Gogol, set in Kyiv about a Cossack military victory against the Poles

Tchaikovsky helped him with “tentatively outlin[ing] the distribution of roles among the artists of the Mariinsky Theater” in St. Petersburg.<sup>181</sup> However, Lysenko struggled to have his opera performed because it was in Ukrainian and had to be translated to avoid the censors. He sketched a Russian translation, but his dissatisfaction with it prevented him from staging it. Thus, he never saw the opera live, as the first performance happened in 1924 after Lysenko’s death. Ostrovsky argues that Tchaikovsky acted as part of the imperial mindset, as he only used Russian settings of Shevchenko’s poetry and was complicit in the suppression of Ukrainian culture by not defending the Ukrainian language, as his contemporary Lysenko had.<sup>182</sup>

### III. Reclaiming Tchaikovsky’s Legacy

Since removalists argue that Tchaikovsky is not Ukrainian, there is no need to reclaim his legacy. Instead, Korchova redefines Tchaikovsky’s legacy as belonging wholly to Russia; “our enemy is by no means Tchaikovsky himself, but only his simulacrum, the Soviet and Putin ideological brand of the same name, attachment to which literally ties our hands, deprives us of our freedom, and turns us into hostages of a dead tradition.”<sup>183</sup> She sees Putin and the Soviet corruption of Tchaikovsky’s visage as completely preventing any potential rebranding and that allowing any lingering connection to his legacy as Ukrainians is harmful to their political and physical safety. Conversely, several students want to reclaim Ukraine’s legacy by replacing Tchaikovsky’s name on the academy with a decidedly Ukrainian one. According to Poludenna, Tchaikovsky “can be as cool as he wants and do as much as he wants for the world cultural heritage, but (damn it), what, we don’t have our own?!”<sup>184</sup> According to the student petition, many students were of a similar opinion. However, they only wanted to temporarily remove the name and plan for a meeting after the war in order to democratically choose an appropriate name for the university.

---

<sup>181</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Korchova, “An open letter.”

<sup>184</sup> Ostroyskyi, “Violinist Anastasia Poludenna.”

#### IV. The UNTAM's Tchaikovsky Connection

Whether or not removalists believe that Tchaikovsky had an intense personal connection to the UNTAM, he has represented the academy for over eight decades and is “visualized in the modern media image of the Academy as its own face.”<sup>185</sup> An alternate form of the UNTAM logo comprises only Tchaikovsky's face surrounded by text of the university's name, as seen in pre-2022 videos on the university's YouTube channel. The current logo shows the main university building instead.<sup>186</sup> Still, removalists question the pivotal role that preservationists say Tchaikovsky had in founding the university. First, it depends on what each person believes is the institutional ancestor of the UNTAM; whether it be the 1863 opening of the Kyiv branch of the RMS or the 1913 Kyiv Conservatory. 1913 is after Tchaikovsky's death, so logically he could not be considered a founder if that is the university's founding date. Accordingly, preservationists put 1863 as the first iteration of modern-day UNTAM.

According to Ostrovsky, in Tymoshenko's foreword to the ArtHuss book, the rector had called Tchaikovsky the founder of the UNTAM; the definite article of “the,” as in “most prominent” or “only.”<sup>187</sup> To him, UNTAM owes its transformation of “the status of the Kyiv Music School to a university” to the “authority and active support of Tchaikovsky.”<sup>188</sup> Yet Ostrovsky believed Tymoshenko had misconstrued the nature of Tchaikovsky's interactions. He chronicled Tchaikovsky's direct interactions with the RMS branch: Tchaikovsky visited on December 16, 1890, but a newspaper report of the occasion “demonstrates the admiration of teachers and students for the presence of an outstanding composer in the walls of the school, rather than Tchaikovsky's real contribution to the development of the educational institution... Tchaikovsky's visit was casual,” more analogous to a quick visit by a famous composer than that of a “founding father.”<sup>189</sup>

---

<sup>185</sup> Korchova, “An open letter.”

<sup>186</sup> Such as this video posted December 25, 2021, containing Christmas wishes from rector Tymoshenko. The logo with Tchaikovsky's face is shown at the beginning and ending; additionally, the background music is Tchaikovsky's “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from *The Nutcracker*: нмаи нмаи, “Новорічне привітання Ректора НМАУ ім.П.І.Чайковського Максима Тимошенка,” YouTube Video, 0:46, December 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awTpuNByDMs>.

<sup>187</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

Regardless of how involved Tchaikovsky was in the founding of the Kyiv branch of the RMS, removalists object to the very narrative of the 1860s founding at all. They cite the 1863 RMS branch founding as part of an imperial extension of power and thus not worthy of the UNTAM's founding mythos. Ostrovsky points to the social context of populist Ukrainian nationalist sentiment threatening the central, top-down power of the tsar, and therefore opening music classes "was a way of influencing possible anti-imperial sentiments through culture and education."<sup>190</sup> He then cites a letter from the director of the Kyiv RMS branch, who declared that "the formation of a Russian opera in Kiev... is even necessary here for the maintenance and development of the Russian nation in the region."<sup>191</sup> If the UNTAM considered this its institutional ancestor, its heritage would be that of an imperial power intent on homogenization. Even the 1940 name change, Ostrovsky argues, is due to Soviet homogenizing strategy and not because of any Tchaikovsky connection. He cites the Moscow Conservatory 1940 name change as taking place only two days before the UNTAM's on May 9 as proof that it was an expression of top-down "all-[Soviet] Union" level power.<sup>192</sup> The UNTAM history webpage does not go into detail regarding the 1940 name change. Only one sentence on the topic can be found, which solely states that the name change occurred. Perhaps there existed more primary documents in the ArtHuss book that I could not access, but no preservationist provided primary sources, university artifacts, or archival material from this time period for this line of argumentation.

The removalists view not only Tchaikovsky as an imperial relic, but the entire RMS and 1863 UNTAM founding narrative. A teleological reading of the UNTAM's founding myth might emphasize the 1913 founding date as that occurs during the escalation to Ukraine's independence in 1917. This ultimately emphasizes Ukrainian agency over the oppressive imperial top-down expression of power of the RMS Kyiv branch founding in 1863. Thus, removalists advocate to de-Russify the UNTAM's name and its founding myth.

---

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.



## V. The Weapon of Culture

The main ideological difference between the preservationists and the removalists is the removalists' belief in culture as a weapon. While preservationists argue that culture cannot be a weapon, removalists say that it is and that Russia is already using it in the conflict. Korchova declares that "artistic heritage is an important tool of the state's internal and external cultural policy," especially Russia, because of how its culture has retained the "imperial narratives of 'greatness.'"<sup>193</sup> Russia has used Tchaikovsky in its propaganda by playing his music at charged sites and linking the two Tchaikovsky-associated conservatories of Moscow and Kyiv. Razumeiko points out that "in the summer of 2022, the St. Petersburg orchestra came to Mariupol and on the square in front of the destroyed drama theater they played Tchaikovsky's symphony... It's stupidly their imperial instrument."<sup>194</sup> Mariupol, a city in the southeast of Ukraine, was the location of many months of bloody siege warfare in 2022 which ended in Russian victory. Presumably, the concert was filmed and televised on Russian TV to celebrate the military victory. Said celebratory concert after thousands of civilian deaths and the city's destruction occurred in front of the site of a war crime.<sup>195</sup> The Donetsk Regional Drama Theatre was being used by hundreds of civilians as an air raid shelter when the Russian Armed Forces bombed it, largely destroying the building and killing anywhere from 12 to 600 men, women, and children. Korchova explains that Tchaikovsky and his music, "detached from the real human, historical and artistic essence of the artist, [has become] a tool of Putin's aggressive propaganda... primarily as a misleading symbol of the non-existent greatness, superiority, spirituality and humanism of the so-called 'Russian world.' After all, the composer's work is used as another shield behind which the monsters of civilization hide."<sup>196</sup> The removalist position is not "burning all bridges" with Russian culture as Mymryk had suggested, but merely "put[ting] [Russian culture] on hold" during the war because of its use as propaganda.<sup>197</sup>

Though classical music has long been elevated upon a pedestal as "high brow", especially in correlation with culture, removalists move to reject it due to its use as an instrument of war.

---

<sup>193</sup> Korchova, "An open letter."

<sup>194</sup> I was able to verify that a concert did take place, but not necessarily which pieces the program contained: Kabatsii, "Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia."

<sup>195</sup> as classified by Amnesty International

<sup>196</sup> Korchova, "An open letter."

<sup>197</sup> Ostrotskyi, "Violinist Anastasia Poludenna."

Soldier and violinist Poludenna explained that “for Ukrainians, Russian culture is a poison that eats away at our whole body from the inside. We can say that until we undergo a course of treatment, we are allergic to Russian culture. This does not mean that if a person is allergic to tangerines, then all tangerines should be destroyed. But eating poison[ed] tangerines, as is happening now, is a bad idea.” She goes on to explain this metaphor encompasses working with Russian performers and performances of Russian composers, including dissidents. For her, associating with anything Russian “is like performing Wagner in a Jewish cultural center during the active phase of the Holocaust.”<sup>198</sup> Thus, she is willing to give up both performing and listening to Tchaikovsky and his name on her academy, “because his work in one way or another fuels the Russian narrative.”

Rejecting Russian cultural propaganda is also important as a visual because Russia and Ukraine are not the only states involved in the war. Ukraine has received monetary, humanitarian, and military aid from many countries including the EU, NATO states, and the United States. To keep receiving support, Ukraine has to fight “for the mind, for the heads of the whole world,”<sup>199</sup> on the cultural, physical, and informational fronts. Korchova points out that the world does not always take the time to parse through complex issues:

For the world, we are only formally a Ukrainian institution, but in fact, symbolically and nominally, we are Russian-oriented. After all, the world does not know the complicated circumstances of our state-political past, it is indifferent to our professional sentiments and does not take into account the pretended or real legal risks of changing the name. The world pays attention only to the strange and acutely resonant fact in the circumstances of the war, that while maintaining loyalty to the name of Tchaikovsky, we remain in the orbit of enemy culture.<sup>200</sup>

She believes that showing any willing linkage to Russia could demonstrate a weakness in Ukraine’s bid for autonomy and that it is more important to outwardly project staunch independence. This is especially imperative since Russian war efforts “[contain] propaganda

---

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Korchova, “An open letter.”

weapons that have the potential for mass intellectual destruction,” such as exploiting the connection between Moscow P. I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory and UNTAM.<sup>201</sup>

This argumentation is based on the roots of existential usage, but comes across in an almost commercial or campaigning sense. Removalists vie for popular support and the funds that come with it to support their war effort to keep their autonomy. Consequently, they must ensure that the world sees that Ukrainians want and deserve their independence enough to send any support they can.

### 3.3 Tchaikovsky’s Perspective

Tchaikovsky is not alive today to definitively state how he would like his visage and legacy to be; in the words of Lin-Manuel Miranda, “You have no control / Who lives, who dies, who tells your story?”<sup>202</sup> However, he leaves behind his own words in the forms of letters which provide his perspective on some of the historical circumstances over which the UNTAM actors fight.

#### 3.3.1 Ethnicity

Percentages of ancestral DNA can contribute to the formation of the national identity of an individual, but they do not completely determine it. Personal identity is as much formed by choice as it is by genetics, and Tchaikovsky believed himself to be Russian. He famously wrote in a 1878 letter to Nadezhda von Meck that “I am Russian in the fullest sense of the word.”<sup>203</sup> Rector Tymoshenko questioned the word choice, asking on Facebook for people to observe, “...the difference between the words «русский» (“Russian”) and «руський» (“Rusyn”)... Pyotr Tchaikovsky... wrote in his letters that he considered himself a «русьюкою людиною» (“Rusyn person”). And the concept of ‘Rusyn person’ is the concept of Kievan Rus, that is, a Ruthenian...

---

<sup>201</sup> The student petition also enumerates propaganda as something to defend against: Korchova, “An open letter.”; The Claquers, “A letter from the students.”

<sup>202</sup> Christopher Jackson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Original Broadway Cast of *Hamilton*, “History Has Its Eyes on You,” track 19 on *Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, Atlantic, 2015, compact disc.

<sup>203</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 778,” last modified May 8, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_778&oldid=66592](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_778&oldid=66592).

Assigning Tchaikovsky the title of ‘Russian man’ is a distortion.”<sup>204</sup> An analogous semantic difference might be interpreting “American” as being from either the American continent or the United States of America. However, he did not specify where he saw the original text. In the online Tchaikovsky Research archive, the Russian text shows *«русский»* (“Russian”). Unfortunately, this particular letter is stored at the Klin archive whose letters have not been uploaded to the ‘Tchaikovsky, Open World’ digital database. This argument remains inconclusive until the primary document can be checked again, but Ostrovsky argues that other usage of the terms “Russia” and “Russian” in Tchaikovsky’s letters clearly demonstrates that Tchaikovsky sees himself as part of the Russians; even in this same letter, Tchaikovsky refers to his “Russian brethren” with the word *«русских.»*<sup>205</sup>

The context of the letter also matters; in it, he is explaining the “Russianness” of his music to Nadezhda: “As regards the Russian element in my music in general, i.e. techniques related to folksong in the melody and harmony, then this happens as a consequence of my upbringing in the wilderness, being so imbued from early childhood with the inexplicable beauty of the characteristic features of Russian folksong, that I love the Russian element with a passion in all its manifestations...”<sup>206</sup> Thus, he credits his childhood in Votkinsk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Alapayevsk with his musical inspiration for his Russianness; he did not spend substantial time in Ukrainian lands until Alexandra’s marriage in 1860 when Pyotr was twenty.

It is unknown how much Tchaikovsky knew about his great-grandfather's heritage. In Rosa Newmarch’s translation of Modest’s biography, he says that “little is known of the early life of the composer’s father, Iliа Petrovich Tchaikovsky. In old age he rarely spoke of his youth, and

---

<sup>204</sup> Original post in full reads “Друзі, бачите різницю слів «русский» і «руський»? Тобто людина руська чи російська. Так от, єдине, що закидають Петру Чайковському - це те, що він у листах писав, що вважає себе «руською людиною». А поняття «руської людини» - це поняття Київської Русі, тобто русина. Рекомендую вам переглянути цей фільм, це дійсно цікаво. Присвоювання Чайковському звання «російської людини» - це перекручування. Тому ці заходи є просто нікчемними. Дякую!”: Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”

<sup>205</sup> Ostrovsky et al., “Passion for Peter.”; Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 778,” last modified May 8, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_778&oldid=66592](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_778&oldid=66592).

<sup>206</sup> The full quote reads “Что касается вообще русского элемента в моей музыке, т. е. родственных с народной песнью приемов в мелодии и гармонии, то это происходит вследствие того, что я вырос в глуши, с детства, самого раннего, проникся неизъяснимой красотой характеристических черт русской народной музыки, что я до страсти люблю русский элемент во всех его проявлениях, что, одним словом, я русский в полнейшем смысле этого слова.”: Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 778,” last modified May 8, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_778&oldid=66592](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_778&oldid=66592).

did not care to be questioned about it.”<sup>207</sup> Other sources have mentioned the family story of Fyodor’s military service, but Modest does not include that in his biography. He does mention other family origins. Tchaikovsky seemed to reject the non-Russian part of him, as “he was far from indifferent as to nationality...the mere suggestion of [his relatives’] Polish origin stirred him to instant wrath. Love of Russia and all things Russian was so deeply rooted in him that, while he cared nothing for questions of pedigree, he rejoiced to discover among his earliest ancestors on his father’s side one orthodox Russian from the district of Kremenschug.”<sup>208</sup>

Finally, in an 1878 letter to Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky found himself homesick while in Florence, declaring that, “I am, and shall ever be, faithful to my Russia... I have never yet come across anyone so much in love with Mother Russia—especially Great Russia—as myself?...I am passionately devoted to the Russian people, to the language, to the Russian spirit, to the fine Russian type of countenance and to Russian customs...”<sup>209</sup> Directly from Pyotr’s mouth, he clearly identified as and wanted to be Russian. However, this patriotic love does include Ukraine, because Tchaikovsky saw Ukraine as part of Russia.<sup>210</sup> He specifies “Great Russia” as a particular love, but clearly includes all of his “Russia” in his ardent declarations.

### 3.3.2 Relationship with Ukraine

Tchaikovsky considered Kamenka one of his most comforting places to be, even a home. By 1884, Tchaikovsky wrote from Paris that, “*I have no home anywhere. Life abroad no longer pleases me.... I must have a home, be it in Kamenka, or in Moscow. I cannot go on living the life of a wandering star.... Where will my home be?*”<sup>211</sup> Modest reports that, especially during this time, Kamenka had become a pseudo-spiritual retreat, as “from 1878-84 Kamenka was his chief place of residence... After the terrible illness in 1877 he found in Kamenka, far more than in San Remo, Clarens, or France, all he needed for his recovery... it was at Kamenka that he gathered

---

<sup>207</sup> Modest Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*, trans. Rosa Newmarch (New York: John Lane Company, 1906), 3, Project Gutenberg.

<sup>208</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 2.

<sup>209</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 269; Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 755,” last modified July 12, 2022, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_755&oldid=45614](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_755&oldid=45614).

<sup>210</sup> See Section 3.3.2 and 3.3.4

<sup>211</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 466.

force and recuperated....”<sup>212</sup> Like identity, “home” can encapsulate many facets, especially due to Tchaikovsky’s itinerancy for his work. Kamenka and the love that he had for his family there was stable. However, the estate, the village it was in, and Ukraine are all different concepts, and to say that he had love for one does not necessarily include the others. Tchaikovsky loved Kamenka but that does not indicate that he loved “Ukraine,” however he regarded Ukraine at the time. Since Tchaikovsky never used the term “Ukraine” nor defined what it would have meant to him, this is an unanswerable quandary.

Tchaikovsky mainly mentions Ukrainian culture in terms of the Ukrainian melodies he used in his compositions. He used the term “Little Russia,” and “Little Russian laziness”<sup>213</sup> in a letter mentioned above. His Symphony no. 2, “Little Russian” gained the moniker from music critic Nikolai Kashkin (1839-1920) in 1896, three years after Tchaikovsky’s death. The symphony was a success when he debuted it in 1873, but the finale, based on the Ukrainian folk melody “The Crane,” was the star of the show. In an 1873 letter to Modest, Tchaikovsky thanks the elderly steward of Kamenka for teaching him the melody, saying, “the credit for this success belongs not to myself, but to the true composer of the aforementioned work — Pyotr Gerasimovich, who while I was composing and playing "The Crane", continually came up and sang along with me.”<sup>214</sup> Yet Modest’s account of some of Tchaikovsky’s melody-seeking efforts contains the same belittling musical Russification as David Brown. Modest describes Tchaikovsky’s 1865 summer at Kamenka as having “...one disappointing experience. He had heard so much of the beauty of the Little Russian folk-songs, and hoped to amass material for his future compositions. This was not to be. The songs he heard seemed to him artificial and retouched, and by no means equal in beauty or originality to the folk melodies of Great Russia.”<sup>215</sup> The one melody he found acceptable that summer became the motif in *Scherzo à la russe*. He describes the folk song used in opus 11 as “based on a Russian folk song which Tchaikovsky wrote down at Kamenka in the summer of 1869. It was sung in Great Russian by a man who was working outside...”<sup>216</sup> Clearly

---

<sup>212</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 466.

<sup>213</sup> See Section 3.2.3: Relationship with Ukraine

<sup>214</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 289,” last modified June 25, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_289&oldid=67215](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_289&oldid=67215).

<sup>215</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 60.

<sup>216</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 730.

Tchaikovsky took inspiration from Ukrainian folk melodies, but through the “Great Russian” lens with a paternalistic point of view of what he considered “Little Russia.”

### 3.3.3 The UNTAM Connection

Tchaikovsky was familiar with the musical community in Kyiv. He attended the opera and even debuted *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, op. 41 there in 1878. However, he never claimed to have a founding role in the Kyiv branch of the RMS. Tchaikovsky visited the Kyiv Branch of the RMS twice; he attended an amateur concert on December 15/27, 1890 and he conducted a concert of his own works on December 21st, 1891/January 2nd, 1892.<sup>217</sup>

A decade before he visited, he had been offered the leadership of the Kyiv branch. On April 30, 1880, in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky reports that

...I received a letter from some director of the Kiev branch of the Musical Society, offering me to become the head of the musical affairs of this Society, i.e. to be the director of the school there and the concert manager. Without thinking for a single minute, I wrote a decisive refusal, even despite the fact that Kiev, as a city, has many attractive aspects for me... But I will not hide from you that my conscience reproaches me a little for the fact that I selfishly removed myself from activities for the benefit of student youth. What should I do if by nature I am deprived of talent for teaching and if I can live peacefully and happily only on the condition of not having any obligatory place of residence and in general no chains that tie me to anything?<sup>218</sup>

Modest wrote that although the benefits of “...its proximity to... Kamenka, [and] the neighbourhood of Kiev offered many attractions to him, he declined the offer without hesitation. He had tasted the fruits of liberty and was more than ever convinced that teaching was not his vocation.”<sup>219</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Kiev,” last modified January 3, 2023, <https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Kiev>.

<sup>218</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 1485,” last modified July 12, 2022, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_1485&oldid=46646](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_1485&oldid=46646).

<sup>219</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 376.

In a letter to Modest's son Kolya, Tchaikovsky describes the 1891 concert: "In Kiev I found a large and very decent orchestra, who flattered and pampered me in every possible way, and ultimately both my concerts...were hugely successful. But I'm becoming more and more convinced that I shouldn't spend the rest of my life on such journeys... they wear me out and still cause me much anxiety, worry and suffering."<sup>220</sup>

None of Tchaikovsky's descriptions bear personal affection for the institution. He did not particularly enjoy teaching at the Moscow Conservatory as he saw his teaching responsibilities as taking away time and energy from his composing efforts. Thus, rejecting the position does not necessarily mean he felt no connection to the Kyiv branch, but that he had other priorities in his career. Although he was "unanimously elected" Director of the Moscow branch of the RMS in February, 1885,<sup>221</sup> it remains unknown whether he desired this position or was forced into it. The differences between these roles and their requirements is also unclear. The 1891 concert, lauded by preservationists as showcasing Tchaikovsky's impact on the academy, is similarly impersonal.

### 3.3.4 Imperial Subject

Tchaikovsky was born into the Russian Empire and answered to the authority of the tsar. Politically, Tchaikovsky supported the tsar, opposed the socialist anarchists, and supported more representative measures for Russia. In 1879, he told von Meck that, "...the Tsar would do well to assemble representatives throughout all Russia, and take counsel with them [on] how to prevent the recurrence of such terrible actions on the part of mad revolutionaries. So long as all of us—the Russian citizens—are not called to take part in the government of the country, there is no hope of a better future."<sup>222</sup> Tchaikovsky met the tsar in 1892 and viewed it as an honor.<sup>223</sup>

To what extent Tchaikovsky believed in the imperial narrative he was helping create through his commissioned pieces can be debated; as a composer, Tchaikovsky had to make a living, and taking commissions from the tsar provided monetary support. Due to his overspending, he was

---

<sup>220</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, "Letter 4582," last modified January 6, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_4582&oldid=64778](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_4582&oldid=64778).

<sup>221</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 469.

<sup>222</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 358.

<sup>223</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 678.



not financially solvent until the autumn of 1877 when Nadezhda von Meck began sending him regular allowances. Additionally, Tchaikovsky could have faced repercussions for refusing the crown, as an imperial subject himself. Tchaikovsky enjoyed public support of the crown as demonstrated by the attendance of members of the imperial family to performances of his works. The nationalist music he wrote seemed to be only a business matter to him. In his letters, he confessed that he did not enjoy writing loud, noisy passages that lacked artistic merit for causes that he was apathetic towards at best, such as the consecration of the cathedral and the jubilee for which he composed *The 1812 Overture*.<sup>224</sup>

Additionally, Tchaikovsky supported the war effort. In an 1876 letter to his brother-in-law, Tchaikovsky worried about the impending declaration of war in Serbia.<sup>225</sup> He viewed the war effort as holding British power in the Ottoman Empire in check, though “it’s scary and at the same time acceptable that the loving fatherland is determined to uphold its dignity.”<sup>226</sup> He supported the war to the very bitter end, although he bemoaned the need for such bloodshed: “When, oh when will it finally end, this dreadful war! A war in which such relatively insignificant results are had at such a dreadful price! But of course we have to fight until the enemy is completely done down. This war cannot end through compromises and mutual concessions. One or [the] other side must be crushed.”<sup>227</sup>

Tchaikovsky considered Ukraine part of imperial Russia. In 1878, he told von Meck, “I shall return to Russia, probably to Kamenka...”<sup>228</sup> including Kamenka as part of Russia.

### 3.3.5 Russian Symbol

In his lifetime, Tchaikovsky traveled across Europe and noticed his nationality in contrast to the locations he visited. He complained about bad treatment because of his being Russian:

---

<sup>224</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 1525,” last modified July 12, 2022, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_1525&oldid=68175](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_1525&oldid=68175).

<sup>225</sup> Letter from September 1876; official declaration of war came in April 1877

<sup>226</sup> Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 495,” last modified July 12, 2022, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_495&oldid=53152](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_495&oldid=53152).

<sup>227</sup> Letter from November 1877: Tchaikovsky Research, “Letter 650,” last modified April 13, 2024, [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_650&oldid=66344](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_650&oldid=66344).

<sup>228</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 267.

In the first place I am a Russian, and consequently looked upon with prejudice by every Western European. Secondly—also because I am a Russian—there is something exotic in my music which makes it inaccessible to foreigners. My overture to *Romeo and Juliet* has been played in every capital, but always without success. In Vienna and Paris it was hissed. A short time ago it met with no better reception in Dresden. In some other towns (London and Hamburg) it was more fortunate, but, all the same, my music has not been included in the standard repertory of Germany and other countries.<sup>229</sup>

In 1878, he was invited to represent Russia as a musical delegate to the Paris Exhibition, but declined due to anxiety and lack of funding. He wrote to a friend, “What could I have done...to interest the Parisians in our music? ...I must... bring forward the compositions of Glinka, Dargomijsky, Serov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, and Borodin. And for all this I should have had to prepare myself, unless I risked bringing disgrace upon Russian music. That I should have disgraced it is certain. Then all Russia would have blamed me afterwards, and with justification....”<sup>230</sup>

On one of his tours through Europe, Modest described the Bohemians’ reception of Tchaikovsky as, “the honour done him in Prague far outstripped his wildest dreams. These ten days were the culminating point of Tchaikovsky’s fame during his lifetime. Allowing that nine-tenths of the ovations lavished on him were really intended for Russia, even then, he could not fail to be flattered that he was the chosen recipient of the sympathy of the Czechs for the Russians.”<sup>231</sup> Foreign newspapers referred to him as the head of the modern Russian school. Throughout Europe, Tchaikovsky acted as an ambassador of Russian culture.

### 3.3.6 Globalist Perspective

Tchaikovsky saw his global appeal, especially during his journey to New York. He wrote to his brother-in-law that, “I am convinced that I am ten times more famous in America than in Europe...Several of my works, which are unknown even in Moscow, are frequently played

---

<sup>229</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 290.

<sup>230</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 259.

<sup>231</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 552.

here.”<sup>232</sup> Despite this, he viewed his legacy not as a universal symbol of music, but as a Russian one: “my faith in the judgment of the future is immovable. I have a foretaste during my lifetime of the fame which will be meted out to me when the history of Russian music comes to be written.”<sup>233</sup>

Tchaikovsky did not allude to the universality of himself or his contemporaries. He idolized such giants as Mozart, Michelangelo, and Socrates, but did not connect them to his notion of nationality.<sup>234</sup> Tchaikovsky believed in the universality of Shakespeare’s characters, but not necessarily Shakespeare himself, as Rybchinsky argued.<sup>235</sup> Tchaikovsky wrote that he found “among [Shakespeare’s] characters, ...many of those universal human presentments who, independent of time and locality, belong to the eternal truth.”<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>232</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 639.

<sup>233</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 292.

<sup>234</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 517.

<sup>235</sup> See Section 3.1.5

<sup>236</sup> Tchaikovsky, *The Life & Letters*, 316.

## Chapter 4: Conclusions

Neither side of the debate can be reduced to pro-Ukraine or anti-Ukraine; rather, both sides are advocating for Ukraine using different methods. The preservationists believe that the power of Tchaikovsky's name will attract attention from the rest of the world and provide Ukraine with legitimacy as an accomplished, culturally-rich country. Yet the removalists believe that Tchaikovsky's name is too tarnished by Russian association and too well-known around the world as a Russian icon to even attempt to change his reputation at this time. Accordingly, they assess the preservationists' counter-counter-memory as too weak to make a claim against the looming legacy of Russian imperialism. The most important part of the debate for removalists is the web of meaning associated with Tchaikovsky. As Rigney explains, "where other media, such as text or film, can present an individual's life in a detailed way, monuments by and large give a condensed or shorthand version of a story that has been told in more detail elsewhere. They can thus be seen as nodal points in a plurimedial network, their meaning in part dependent on other media of remembrance with which they resonate."<sup>237</sup> Their complaint lies not with the historical figure himself, but in what they perceive as Russian historical culture's complete assimilation of him as a national symbol. The meaning of Tchaikovsky created by the Moscow Conservatory, Tchaikovsky Competition, and the Olympic anthem created the meaning behind the UNTAM.

An ideological stumbling block for the preservationists is that no modern individual has superseded their national identity because of how much it informs personal identity. Seeking to change Tchaikovsky's national identity, or erase it altogether like Rybchinsky suggested, is coincidentally exactly what Russians are aiming to do to Ukrainians. Preservationists wish to deny Tchaikovsky a national identity they disagree with, whereas Russia is endeavoring to replace Ukrainian national identity with Russian nationality through violence.

Additionally, each side comprehends the threat of propaganda differently. The removalists insist that changing the name will eliminate the weapon of propagandized culture from Russia's arsenal, but the preservationists say that removing the name will legitimize that very line of thinking; thus, they must keep the name to refute the propaganda. By letting Russia control the

---

<sup>237</sup> Rigney, "Toxic Monuments," 16.

narrative, removalists argue that preservationists are feeding into the “Little Russian” complex themselves.

What arguments are missing? With such a complex issue, not every point gets examined in depth. Additionally, many arguments relied solely on historical memory, not historical fact. Despite Tchaikovsky being well known in the West for his gay identity during the nineteenth century, not one UNTAM actor mentions his sexuality. Ostrovsky’s co-author, assistant professor of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Oleksandr Okhrimenko said that, “Tchaikovsky was gay, which was accompanied by Russian homophobia during his lifetime and now... Ukrainians and the world naturally want to save Tchaikovsky from Russian exploitation and say ‘he was different,’ ‘he was ours.’” Having not attempted to eradicate his gay identity, Ukrainians could perhaps claim to be better stewards of his memory. However, no one attempting to “reclaim” him went beyond national identity.

Finally, the debate brings up an ontological conundrum. Tchaikovsky could not predict the future. His primary sources do not answer questions such as what he thought about Ukraine because his definition of Ukraine is vastly different from Ukrainians’ definition today. Even his beliefs that are known do not necessarily correspond to what he represents; for example, he disagreed with socialist principles in his lifetime, but the Soviet regime memorialized him as part of the class struggle. To what extent the historical figure of Tchaikovsky has informed the historical memory of Tchaikovsky can be debated. However, Tchaikovsky’s historical memory is being used to “[justify] the conflicting territorial claims of different nations,” as Plochy describes.<sup>238</sup> Thus, if history is the base of legitimacy of the arguments in the UNTAM debate, then the historical arguments must be based in fact and unskewed for ideological reasons. While both sides have equal rights to forming historical memories based on historical facts, and have an ideological tilt in arguing on behalf of their proposed university name, the facts seem to support the removalist side over the preservationist.

If the UNTAM were to remove Tchaikovsky from its name, it would be the biggest name change among Ukrainian conservatories. The Dnipropetrovsk Academy of Music removed Glinka from

---

<sup>238</sup> Plochy, *Representations of the Past*, 180.

its name in 2006, but at least two other conservatories have debatably Russian names.<sup>239</sup> Yet I did not find evidence of a mainstream protest at either Odesa National Music Academy named after A.V. Nezhdanova or R. Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music. Kyiv-born Glier both graduated from and directed the academy that now bears his name.<sup>240</sup> Antonina Nezhdanova (1873-1950) was a Russian and Soviet soprano born near Odesa, and her name was added to the Odesa Academy upon her death. The different circumstances reiterate the UNTAM's greater symbolic power and location; UNTAM is located in the biggest city in Ukraine while Odesa is the third-biggest city. UNTAM also has more students, around 1,000 to Odesa's 700. Odesa also has more Russian speakers, including its own dialect of Russian, whereas the capital of Kyiv is as Ukrainian as Paris is French. The UNTAM is ranked higher globally and thus has more visibility both within Ukraine and abroad; there is more pressure to represent Ukraine well. As a symbol and historical figure, Tchaikovsky is much more famous than Nezhdanova. Given the enormous symbolic power of both Tchaikovsky and the UNTAM in its own right, whichever path forward the academy's name takes will have rippling ramifications across Ukraine. Only time will tell.

---

<sup>239</sup> A third would be the Donetsk State Music Academy named after S. Prokofiev, but due to Donetsk's ongoing Russian occupation since 2014, a political change would have to precede any discussion around name alterations.

<sup>240</sup> In the musicologists' petition, staff from the Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music included Glier's name in their signatures, whereas UNTAM-affiliated signers did not include Tchaikovsky in their job descriptors.

# Bibliography

- Amico, Stephen. *Roll Over, Tchaikovsky!: Russian Popular Music and Post-Soviet Homosexuality*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2014.
- Bengoechea, Isabella. “Ukraine war: Cancelling Russian culture is a mistake and helps no one but Putin, say art lovers.” *iNews*, April 4, 2022.  
<https://inews.co.uk/culture/ukraine-war-cancelling-russian-culture-is-a-mistake-and-helps-no-one-but-putin-say-art-lovers-1528898>.
- Bentia, Iuliia. “Our enemy is not Tchaikovsky himself.” *Eurozine*, October 30, 2023.  
<https://www.eurozine.com/our-enemy-is-not-tchaikovsky-himself/>.
- Brown, David. *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007.
- Bullock, Philip Ross. “That’s Not the Only Reason We Love Him: Tchaikovskii Reception in Post-Soviet Russia.” *Slavic Review* 77, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 53-76.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26565349>.
- Burkholder, Peter J., Donald Grout, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music*. 9th edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.
- Чекан, Юрій. “Сьогодні прочитав про одностайну підтримку консерваторцями (виглядає так, що ми уповноважили Вчену раду на прийняття такого рішення).” Facebook, June 17, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/y.chekan/posts/10218311066802737>.
- The Claquers. “A letter from the students of the NAU named after P. I. Tchaikovsky regarding the exclusion of Tchaikovsky from the name of the educational institution.” Uploaded June 20, 2022. <https://theclaquers.com/posts/9465>.
- De Martelly, Elizabeth. “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk.’” *Current Musicology* no. 90 (September 2010).  
<https://doi.org/10.7916/cm.v0i90.5187>.

“The Eighth National Poll: Ukraine During the War (April 6, 2022).” *Sociological Group Rating*, April 8, 2022.

[https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/vosmoy\\_obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ukraina\\_v\\_usloviyah\\_voyny\\_6\\_aprelya\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/vosmoy_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ukraina_v_usloviyah_voyny_6_aprelya_2022.html).

“Get rid of Tchaikovsky: students fight with the rectorate to de-Russify the leading conservatory of Ukraine.” *Espresso*, July 14, 2022.

<https://global.espresso.tv/get-rid-of-tchaikovsky-students-fight-with-the-rectorate-to-de-russify-the-leading-conservatory-of-ukraine>.

Guseynova, Olga and Omer Turkmenoglu. “Russian romance: synthesis of classical and folk music at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.” *Journal for the Interdisciplinary Arts and Education* 3, no. 3 (2022), 107-121.

Helmets, Rutger. *Not Russian Enough?: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in*

*Nineteenth-Century Russian Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<https://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=edsupo&AN=edsupo.9781580468732&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Hernández, Javier C. “Tchaikovsky Competition, Normally Rousing, Is Diminished by War.” *New York Times*, June 30, 2023.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2831149450/citation/37F4FBF2AF9E4184PQ/1>.

International Astronomical Union. “Mercury Crater-naming Contest Winners Announced.”

Uploaded April 29, 2015. <https://www.iau.org/news/pressreleases/detail/iau1506/>.

Jackson, Christopher, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Original Broadway Cast of Hamilton, “History Has Its Eyes on You.” Track 19 on *Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*.

Atlantic, 2015, compact disc.

Jaffé, Daniel. “Protect and survive.” *BBC Music Magazine* (November 2022): 38-41.

Jahanbegloo, Ramin, Romila Thapar, and Neeladri Bhattacharya. “The Function of the

Historian.” In *Talking History: Romila Thapar in Conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo*



with the Participation of Neeladri Bhattacharya, 71-125. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199474271.003.0002>.

Kabatsii, Maria. “‘Inside this building on the Maidan is the spirit of Russia.’ Ukrainian composers against the ‘Ukrainization’ of Tchaikovsky.” *Ukrainian Pravda: Life*, February 27, 2024. <https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/ukrajinski-kompozitori-proti-ukrajinizaciji-chaykovskogo-300246/>.

Karlsson, Klas-Göran. “The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture.” In *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, edited by Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, 9-57. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.uid&db=cat07147a&AN=lub.6602901&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Khotyn, Rostislav. “‘Native Russian man’. Should Tchaikovsky’s name be removed from the name of the National Academy of Music?” *Radio Svoboda*, December 28, 2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/ukrayina-kompozytor-chaikovsky-muzychna-akademiya-pereymenuvannya/32197362.html>.

King, Laura. “Ukraine wages its own war against Russia’s cultural icons in its midst.” *LA Times*, July 17, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-07-17/decolonization-drive-targets-russian-luminaries-as-ukraine-war-rages>.

Korchova, Olena. “An open letter to the staff of the National Music Academy of Ukraine.” *The Claquers*, July 4, 2022. <https://theclaquers.com/posts/8783>.

Корчова, Олена. “Про гібридність.” Facebook, June 17, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/Wicj4eoLYiEGW4bd/>.

Kranz, Jerzy. “Russian Crimes in Ukraine: Between Guilt and Responsibility.” *Polish Yearbook of International Law* 42, no. 1 (2022): 33-53.

Leson, Lena. “‘No Anthem Linked to Russia’: Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 at the Olympic Games.” *Music & Politics* 17 (September 5, 2023): 1–24.  
<https://doi.org/10.3998/mp.4570>.

Ministry of Education and Science. “Міністерство освіти і науки України - Уряд погодив із законодавством питання надання закладу вищої освіти статусу національного.”  
Published February 4, 2021.

<https://mon.gov.ua/ua/news/uryad-pogodiv-iz-zakonodavstvom-pitannya-nadannya-zaklada-du-vishoyi-osviti-statusu-nacionalnogo>.

HMAУ. “Academic Council.” Accessed July 17, 2024.  
<https://knmau.com.ua/en/academiccouncil/>.

HMAУ. “All-Ukrainian premiere ‘Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of life and creativity!’”  
Uploaded September 25, 2020. <https://knmau.com.ua/vseukrayinska-prem-yera/>.

HMAУ. “History of UNTAM.” Accessed March 14, 2024.  
<https://knmau.com.ua/en/history-of-untam/>.

HMAУ. “Історія.” Accessed July 16, 2024, <https://knmau.com.ua/istoriya/>.

HMAУ. “September 4, 2023 Conference of the labor team of the P. I. Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine.” Uploaded September 4, 2023.  
<https://knmau.com.ua/advert/konferentsiya-trudovogo-kolektivu-4-09-2023/>.

HMAУ. “UNTAM took first place in the ranking of higher art institutions of Ukraine.” Uploaded May 15, 2024.  
<https://knmau.com.ua/en/untam-took-first-place-in-the-ranking-of-higher-art-institutions-of-ukraine/>.

HMAУ. “The working meeting of the Academic Council of the NAU named after P. I. Tchaikovsky.” Uploaded June 17, 2022.  
<https://knmau.com.ua/roboche-zasidannya-vchenoyi-radi-nmau-im-p-i-chajkovskogo/>.

nmau nmau. “Новорічне привітання Ректора НМАУ ім.П.І.Чайковського Максима

- Тимошенка.” YouTube Video, 0:46. December 25, 2021.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awTpuNByDMs>.
- Norris, Geoffrey. “Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture: the complete guide.” *Gramophone*, January 3, 2023.  
<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/article/tchaikovsky-s-1812-overture-the-complete-guide>.
- Ostrovsky, Oleksandr. “Violinist Anastasia Poludenna: ‘Until we undergo a course of treatment, we are allergic to Russian culture.’” *The Claquers*, April 21, 2022.  
<https://theclaquers.com/posts/8884>.
- Ostrovsky, Oleksandr and Oleksandr Okhrimenko. “Passion for Peter. To the topic ‘Tchaikovsky and Ukraine.’” *The Claquers*, March 8, 2023. <https://theclaquers.com/posts/10983>.
- Özkırmılı, Umut. *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. Third edition. London: Palgrave, 2017. ProQuest Ebrary.
- Plokhyy, Serhii. *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2008.
- Plokhyy, Serhii. *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*. Rev. ed. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2021. eBook. (ISBN 9780465073948)
- Poznansky, Alexander. *Tchaikovsky: The Quest for the Inner Man*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1991.
- Poznansky, Alexander. *Tchaikovsky: Through Others’ Eyes*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Poznansky, Alexander. “Tchaikovsky: A Life.” Tchaikovsky Research. Last modified January 1, 2024. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Tchaikovsky:\\_A\\_Life](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Tchaikovsky:_A_Life).
- Pysanka, Natalka. “Time ‘C’ for the Tchaikovsky Conservatory. What is wrong with her and why is the problem not only in the name.” *Ukrainian Pravda: Life*, January 26, 2023.

<https://life.pravda.com.ua/culture/2023/01/26/252535/>.

Rigney, Ann. "Toxic Monuments and Mnemonic Regime Change." *Studies on National Movements* 9, no. 1 (2022): 7-41. <https://openjournals.ugent.be/snm/article/id/85270/>.

Safian, Dzvenyslava. "Is Tchaikovsky Ukrainian? The musicians' reaction to the dubious decision of the conservatory management." *The Claquers*, June 18, 2022. <https://theclaquers.com/en/posts/9436>.

Tchaikovsky, Modest. *The Life & Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky*. Translated by Rosa Newmarch. New York: John Lane Company, 1906. Project Gutenberg.

Tchaikovsky Research. "About Tchaikovsky Research." Last modified March 20, 2024. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Project:Tchaikovsky\\_Research](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Project:Tchaikovsky_Research).

Tchaikovsky Research. "Fyodor Chayka." Last modified January 7, 2023. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Fyodor\\_Chayka](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Fyodor_Chayka).

Tchaikovsky Research. "Kamenka." Last modified April 11, 2023. <https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Kamenka>.

Tchaikovsky Research. "Kiev." Last modified January 3, 2023. <https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Kiev>.

Tchaikovsky Research. "Letter 289." Last modified June 25, 2024. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_289&oldid=67215](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_289&oldid=67215).

Tchaikovsky Research. "Letter 299." Last modified February 24, 2024. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_299&oldid=65574](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_299&oldid=65574).

Tchaikovsky Research. "Letter 495." Last modified July 12, 2022. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_495&oldid=53152](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_495&oldid=53152).

Tchaikovsky Research. "Letter 650." Last modified April 13, 2024. [https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_650&oldid=66344](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_650&oldid=66344).

Tchaikovsky Research. “Letter 755.” Last modified July 12, 2022.

[https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_755&oldid=45614](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_755&oldid=45614).

Tchaikovsky Research. “Letter 778.” Last modified May 8, 2024.

[https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_778&oldid=66592](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_778&oldid=66592).

Tchaikovsky Research. “Letter 1485.” Last modified July 12, 2022.

[https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_1485&oldid=46646](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_1485&oldid=46646).

Tchaikovsky Research. “Letter 1525.” Last modified July 12, 2022.

[https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_1525&oldid=68175](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_1525&oldid=68175).

Tchaikovsky Research. “Letter 4582.” Last modified January 6, 2024.

[https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter\\_4582&oldid=64778](https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Letter_4582&oldid=64778).

Tkachenko, Oleksandr. “As Ukraine’s culture minister, I’m asking you to boycott Tchaikovsky until this war is over.” *The Guardian*, December 7, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/dec/07/ukraine-culture-minister-boycott-tchaikovsky-war-russia-kremlin>.

Tukova, Irina, Anna Hadecka, and Lidia Melnyk. “Open letter of the musicological community of Ukraine.” *The Claquers*, May 4, 2022. <https://theclaquers.com/posts/8766>.

U.S. Geological Survey. “MERCURY – Chaikovskij.” Updated October 17, 2016.

<https://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/Feature/1121>.

U.S. Geological Survey. “MERCURY – Shevchenko.” Updated October 14, 2016.

<https://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov/Feature/5486>.

Weir, Lucy. “Primitive Rituals, Contemporary Aftershocks: Evocations of the Orientalist ‘Other’ in four productions of ‘Le Sacre du printemps.’” *Avant* IV, no. 3 (2013): 111-143.

<https://doaj.org/article/b4d6f65394424b4692c6bbf98099d55c>.

Wikipedia. “100 years of the National Music Academy of Ukraine named after P. I. Tchaikovsky (coin).” Last modified May 17, 2024. <https://w.wiki/ArtF>.

Wiley, Roland John. "Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich." Grove Music Online. Edited by Deane Root.  
Accessed January 28, 2024.

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051766>.

Wiley, Roland John. *Tchaikovsky*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Zharkova, Valeriya, ed. *Tchaikovsky: Ukraine on the map of the life and work of P. Tchaikovsky*.  
Kyiv: ArtHuss, 2020.