

Popular But Disparaged:  
Sonata Structures In Tchaikovsky's Symphonies Four, Five, And Six  
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## ABSTRACT

Few composers can claim the same level of popularity with the public and in the concert hall as Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Unfortunately, however, many early-twentieth-century scholars, music critics, and music theorists have discussed Tchaikovsky's music in a manner which reveals their biases against both the feminine and the queer community. In this document I have first surveyed analytical writing about Tchaikovsky's symphonies Four, Five, and Six and specifically his use of form in those works. I believe this survey reveals many of the same patterns in musical analysis that other scholars such as Richard Taruskin and Malcolm Brown have already compiled in music criticism and history. My second goal has to been to analyze these three symphonies using James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's method: Sonata Theory. By so doing I have attempted to uncover the strategies within a sonata form that are normative for Tchaikovsky, although deformational for other composers. This includes an innovative strategy for paragenetic zones, the use of P0 modules, the tri-modular block, and IACs rather than PACs for essential structural closures. My final goal throughout this document is to trace those analysts who describe Tchaikovsky's music as weak or somehow failing, and correlate that to an intentionally crafted instability on the part of Tchaikovsky. This instability often presents as harmonic or rhythmic weakness, as in symphonies Four and Five, or a kind of melodic stasis that can be created by sequencing. I believe that these thematic areas, generally in the locus of the P theme, create powerfully moving and expressive works of art. By writing this document I hope to fill gaps in the literature regarding Tchaikovsky's use of form.

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## Introduction

The 1990s marked a new beginning for Tchaikovsky scholarship in the United States. Although always popular in the concert hall, musicological and analytical study of Tchaikovsky's music can easily be divided into two groups: The early and middle twentieth century, and a resurgence beginning in 1993, the centennial anniversary of Tchaikovsky's death. Considering, however, that Tchaikovsky is one of the most frequently performed composers of orchestral music, I would describe the attention he has received from musical analysts as sparing at best. Although there are some excellent exceptions, the analysis of Tchaikovsky's use of large-scale forms has gone either unnoticed, or worse, has simply suffered under an expectation of mediocrity.

What causes this lack of interest in Tchaikovsky's sonata forms? As with any issue, the reasons are complex and range from the obvious to the obscure. The most often cited by academics is Tchaikovsky's claim, in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, that he himself often struggles with form.<sup>1</sup> Another reason, more insidious, is the perceived *femininity* that accompanies Tchaikovsky's music, related to his sexuality. The musicologist Susan Brown makes a similar claim in her book *Feminine Endings*, accompanied by a narrative analysis of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. She discusses the various ways that musicologists and theorist have presented the feminine in negative terms.<sup>2</sup> A third reason simply relates to a lack of available tools.

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<sup>1</sup>Modeste Tchaikovsky, *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 569. This letter involves Tchaikovsky's discussion of the form of the *Manfred Symphony*.

<sup>2</sup> Susan McCleary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 60-70.

My aim with this document is to fill some of this empty space in the analysis of Tchaikovsky's music by analyzing his symphonies Four, Five, and Six. In the case of each symphony I intend to analyze the sonata forms of the first movements in depth, with an eye towards the relative success or failure of their tonal goals. I then will use elements of narrative analysis to interpret these forms. Additionally, I hope to expand upon a level of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic ambiguity which Tchaikovsky deliberately implements to enhance the meaning of his musical forms. It is my belief that many early analysts of Tchaikovsky's symphonies interpreted these ambiguities as a weakness of construction, which they then correlated with their own negative views of his sexuality and an inability to create successful sonata forms.

Recent texts such as *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, and Byron Almen's *A Theory of Music Narrativity* allow for an in depth and teleological analysis of these symphonies. Although methodologies for analysis of sonata form and musical narrativity certainly existed prior to these texts, for example Schenkerian analysis, I believe Sonata Theory combined with Almen's approach to narrativity reveal fascinating patterns in this music.

James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy have created a new system to analyze these forms. The type of analysis they have created, referred to as Sonata Theory, espouses the concept that the sonata form is a goal-oriented structure, which mirrors the human experience. They view the sonata form as a series of normative options, with a multitude of deviations available at every step, available to the composer to create an expressive or

dramatic trajectory.<sup>3</sup> The basic concepts of this theory are simple to grasp and include similar nomenclature to past methods of analyzing sonata form. Hepokoski and Darcy describe the exposition as having both a harmonic and a rhetorical task. It begins with a primary theme, which proposes an initial tonic key for the sonata, and then modulates through a secondary theme and cadences in a new key area. In a major-mode sonata this is nearly always the dominant. In a minor-mode sonata, however, this secondary theme area may be either the major mediant or the minor dominant key. This modulation and cadence in the new key comprises the harmonic objective of the exposition.

The rhetorical task of the exposition is to present the framework of thematic material that will form the base of both the development and recapitulatory sections of the sonata. Hepokoski and Darcy term this initial layout as the *structure of promise*,<sup>4</sup> meaning that the relative success or failure of the sonata hinges on this presentation of events: the exposition and the resolution of tonal goals in the recapitulation. The layout of their exposition makes up much of the nomenclature I will use in this document to describe thematic zones in Tchaikovsky's symphonies.

The label P refers to the primary theme. This is usually followed by a transition, labeled TR, whose main function is to lead us to the medial caesura and secondary theme. The transition is usually marked by a gain in musical energy that generally modulates to the secondary key. Labeled MC, the medial caesura is a break in music before the secondary theme, marked S. Although in sonatas of the eighteenth century the MC is quite often a literal break in the music, in the nineteenth century a deviation called

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<sup>3</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Hepokoski, 18.



caesura fill is at least as common. This is often a short passage of a limited number of instruments; generally a smaller amount than was present in the transition and often a single voice. The caesura fill functions as a type of grappling hook; tossed from the end of TR and connecting it with S.

The secondary theme, in a distinct key area from the primary theme, has one clear function: to cadence in the new key area. Hepokoski and Darcy label this cadence as the essential expositional closure and it is the first of the sonata's two rhetorical and harmonic goals. The location of the EEC can sometimes be difficult to locate. It is described as being "the first satisfactory PAC [perfect authentic cadence] within the secondary key that goes on to differing material."<sup>5</sup> This differing material is labeled C, meaning: the closing zone. These closing zone modules often contain additional PACs and are not an essential part of the exposition. When hunting for a specific cadence that is the EEC, the ear is often a better guide than the eye in sussing out a structural rather than ephemeral cadence.

In its entirety the exposition is considered the first of three generic rotations which make up a normative sonata form. The other two rotations, the development and the recapitulation, are based on the thematic material used in the exposition. The recapitulation resolves, or attempts to resolve, the tension originating in the exposition between two disparate keys. In the most common types of sonatas the recapitulation will move through each of the thematic zones used in the exposition. To be considered successful, this rotation must include a PAC at the end of the S theme in the original key of the sonata, not the secondary key of the exposition. In a minor-mode sonata, which

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<sup>5</sup> Hepokoski, 18.

includes all the symphonies examined in this document, the expectation for the secondary theme is to cadence on the original tonic, but in the major-mode. Deviations from this goal have various triumphant or tragic ramifications to the narrative.

My narrative interpretations of Tchaikovsky's music largely rely on Byron Almen's concept of narrativity in music as discussed in his text *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. Almen's text unifies musical analysis with devices often used in literary criticism, for our purposes, the four narrative archetypes of Northrop Frye, discussed in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye's four narrative archetypes are: romance, tragedy, irony, and comedy. Although the music I will discuss fits mainly into either the romance or tragic archetypes, it often flirts with each category, and so I will explain them all briefly here.

Each archetype builds its meaning upon the narrative outcome which would be considered positive to the listener. In the romance archetype, for example, the initial condition or existing hierarchy is a desirable state which we, as listeners, sympathize. The drama of this archetype unfolds when a transgression threatens this desirable state and is ultimately defeated by the original hierarchy. This type of narrative is common to music of the classical period; literary examples of the romance archetype abound in Greek mythology in which the hero triumphs over an evil aggressor. Almen uses the example of Hercules to illustrate this concept: the hero is challenged and ultimately overcomes these challenges without introspection or loss of innocence. In terms of a sonata, this is a common archetype for major-mode sonatas of the classical period. We, as listeners, expect the standard modulations and set of essential cadences and those expectations are fulfilled.

In a tragic archetype, the initial state of an order imposing hierarchy is a burden which we, as observers of the narrative, long to cast off. In this archetype a transgressive element which threatens the existing order, and with whom we sympathize, is ultimately crushed and the pre-existing hierarchy remains in place. This is the most common archetype in Tchaikovsky's sonata forms. A literary example of the tragic archetype is George Orwell's book *1984*. The protagonist of the novel, Winston Smith, commits an act of rebellion with his lover, but is ultimately forced to renounce her through torture. In the final moments of the book Smith realizes that he now loves "the party" symbolized by Big Brother. The reader sympathizes with Winston originally and longs for the overthrow of the Oceania party; In Smith's ultimate defeat and transformation into a loyal party member the tragic archetype is realized.

In a sonata, this archetype is often attached to the minor-mode. In a minor-mode sonata the secondary theme zone implies an agency of change, struggling against the initial condition by the primary thematic zone. This type of sonata can end positively; in which case S would retain its major-mode in the recapitulation. These minor-mode sonata, however, often end tragically with the S theme appearing in the minor-mode in the recapitulation, or with deformed or failed structural cadences.

The third archetype, irony, is the most difficult to nail down of all four. It involves the defeat of an order imposing hierarchy by a transgressive element. Often a fundamental element of an ironic archetype is the creation of a set of expectations, and the ultimate thwarting of those expectations. An excellent musical example of an ironic archetype can be heard in the finale of Haydn's joke quartet, Op. 33 no. 2. In this finale, a rondo, Haydn sets up an expectation of the refrain, or A section, to return and end

normatively for a rondo. At the last moment in this finale, however, Haydn subverts our expectations by using the melodic material from the opening of the refrain over the final cadence of the movement. It is as if we, as listeners, do not realize the shackles imposed on our expectations by form until Haydn comically subverts them. In many ironic narratives a crucial element is becoming aware, slowly or in an epiphany, of the absurdity of the initial hierarchal order. In a sonata this archetype would have a similar progression. The composer would set our expectations for a normative sonata and then subvert said expectations, perhaps by reversing the order of themes, or playing with the narrative roles involved.

The final narrative archetype of comedy is the opposite of the tragic archetype. In this narrative an initial state, which is negative, is threatened and finally overcome by a positive transgressor. An example of the comedic archetype is the movie *Star Wars: A New Hope*. In this movie the initial hierarchy, the galactic empire represented by Darth Vader, is overthrown by the young, soon to be, Jedi: Luke Skywalker. This narrative archetype is closely associated with tragedy. In a sonata, the positive outcomes for a minor-mode sonata (expected modulations and cadences) would be considered a comedy. The S theme struggles against the initial hierarchy of the P theme and succeeds in overthrowing that initial state.

In literature, which compared to music overflows with specificity, the roles of who to sympathize with and who to abhor are often, though not always, clearly delineated. In music, however, the vagueness of expectations over what should happen versus what actually happens have made the application of narrativity to music tricky, to say the least. That is why an analytical method such as Sonata Theory makes such a

useful coupling with these narrative archetypes. In each subgroup of themes and larger rotations, norms and their various deformations combine to create multiple levels of hermeneutic meaning.<sup>6</sup>

This document will begin with a survey of existing analytical research as it pertains to the symphonies of Tchaikovsky and particular to the sonata forms of Symphonies Four, Five and Six. Although such a survey could never be entirely comprehensive, I believe the data compiled shows the trends in Tchaikovsky research as they have developed over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The analyses compiled come from sources as diverse as music critics, such as Sir Donald Tovey, musicologists David Brown and Susan McCleary, and music theorists including Timothy Jackson and Joseph Kraus. Although in many cases, such as with Kraus, McCleary, and Jackson, these analyses are highly informative and of excellent quality; sadly, there are many more scholars who are dismissive of Tchaikovsky's attempts at creating large scale forms under various pretexts. In this chapter I hope to draw correlations between Tchaikovsky's composition of formal zones that are intentionally presented as weak or deformed for narrative purposes, and the analysts' choice to label those moments as demonstrative of Tchaikovsky's inability to create cohesive formal designs.

In chapters two through four I intend to fully examine the sonata structures and their individual elements in the first movements of Tchaikovsky's final three symphonies. This will include a narrative analysis that I will interpret through the ability of these sonatas to create successful expository and secondary closing cadences. In the case of Symphonies Four and Five, where introductory motifs also make several noteworthy

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<sup>6</sup> The four narrative archetypes taken from: Byron Almen, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Indiana University Press, 2008), 64-67.

appearances in the other movements of the symphony, I will examine the overall narrative of that symphony as well.

A final chapter is intended to show the commonalities that are inherent to all of these symphonies and Tchaikovsky's skill in using his sonata form deformations to create clear narratives which resonate so powerfully with the audiences for classical music. Among these similarities are Tchaikovsky's use of an uncommon type of sonata form which Hepokoski and Darcy label as a Type II Sonata. This is a sonata which has only two rotations rather than three. In these cases the developmental rotation and the recapitulatory rotation merge together, with the development taking place in P and TR spaces, and the recap and tonal resolution taking place in S and C space. Also ubiquitous to all three symphonies is the use of a device which Heinrich Schenker would call a *nested structure*, and which Hepokoski and Darcy term as a *tri-modular block*. This is a secondary zone which contains more than one thematic section, and often a second medial caesura (giving the exposition three sections, rather than the more common two, hence the name tri-modular). I believe the understandings exposed by these analytical methods allow for a deeper understanding of how this music communicates its meaning.

## Chapter 1:

### A Survey of Analytical Writing Regarding Tchaikovsky's Late Symphonies

The centennial of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's death in 1993 sparked a renewed interest in scholarship about his life and music in many different regions. A trend arose, among English speaking writers and academics, in which scholars took notice of the treatment Tchaikovsky had received in the past. The most prominent of these scholars are Malcolm Hamrick Brown at Indiana University and Richard Taruskin, author of the five-volume work *The Oxford History of Western Music*.

The emerging research around the time of this centennial is credible and mainly of a musicological bent. Relevant to this survey is Taruskin and Malcolm Brown's work in cataloging the reception history of Tchaikovsky and unearthing patterns which developed over the course of the twentieth century. Taruskin, in his book *On Russian Music*, relates an increase in negative criticism of Tchaikovsky's music to the trial of Oscar Wilde in 1895. He equates this trial with a shift in view that homosexuality now related to an immoral character itself rather than simply an immoral action.<sup>7</sup>

Malcolm Brown's writing, which appears in the edited collection *Queer Episodes*, is mainly a catalogue of writings that were previously published in English. The chapter, called "Tchaikovsky and his Music in Anglo-American Criticism: 1890's to 1950's," is similar to Taruskin's in that it catalogues the same trends in critical response to this music and displays many of the same publications. However, Brown also provides a significant amount of documentary evidence for views of homosexuality in both Great

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 76-104.

Britain and the United States. He is interested mainly in the early twentieth century transition from viewing homosexuality as an action (as it was viewed in the nineteenth century) to an all-encompassing, and sinful, character trait.<sup>8</sup>

I have highlighted the strategies of Taruskin and Brown because I am working towards a similar end. My goal with this document is to catalogue the writing of the past century about Tchaikovsky as it relates to his use of form in his Symphonies Four, Five, and Six. Below I have collected writing from various sources and authors but limited the scope to publications in English. Although such a list could never be entirely comprehensive, I believe what follows is a representative sampling of thought about Tchaikovsky's use of large forms in his symphonic writing and its development over the century. By cataloging such writing, parallels between the critical reception of Tchaikovsky's music and the theoretical analysis of the music are revealed. This catalogue is chronological and begins with an American music critic of the late eighteenth century.

James Huneker (1857-1921) was a popular American music critic at the turn of the century and is one of the earliest writers in English to comment on Tchaikovsky's music. Huneker composed two separate writings about Tchaikovsky and interesting contradictions arise between the two. Huneker first wrote in an 1891 article that Tchaikovsky "says great things in a great manner." He continues throughout the article to praise Tchaikovsky as one of the greatest men alive today.<sup>9</sup> Less than a decade later, in

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Hamrick Brown, "Tchaikovsky and His Music in Anglo-American Criticism: 1890's to 1950's," in *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity*, ed. Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 134-49.

<sup>9</sup>Original not available, full article shown in: Elkhonon Yoffe, *Tchaikovsky in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 121-3.



his book *Mezzotints in Modern Music* of 1899, Huneker retracts his earlier praise of Tchaikovsky specifically. He walks back his earlier comments about Tchaikovsky's greatness and goes on to say that Tchaikovsky's weak melodies often contributes to even weaker formal designs. Huneker does give specific examples of this melodic or formal weakness. Far from calling Tchaikovsky great, Huneker now claims that "his entire existence was clouded by some secret sorrow, the origin of which we can dimly surmise, but need not investigate."<sup>10</sup> These comments are, unfortunately, within the normal limits for Tchaikovsky commentary in this early miasma of negative commentary. As we continue, many theorists point out that Tchaikovsky's themes are weak or ineffectual. What I hope I have shown in my own analysis is deliberately crafted rhythmic and harmonic instability that Tchaikovsky implements to subvert expectations of form and narrative, thereby creating powerfully expressive music. The following critic, however, writes differently.

Although the well-known English writer George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) does not discuss the form of these symphonies, he does make some interesting observations about their character. Particularly noteworthy is that Shaw calls Tchaikovsky's music *masculine* and expresses clearly that he wishes more composers would follow his example. In his review titled *Wanted: A Flute that is a Flute*, in 1894, Shaw also makes the claim that the symphony has little biographical meaning to it and is full of overblown tragedy.<sup>11</sup> Shaw, like most any critic, has both positive and negative comments regarding Tchaikovsky. This is in stark contrast to our previous writer, James Huneker, who's original impressions were positive, and then sharply redacted from his later writing.

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<sup>10</sup> James Huneker, *Mezzotints in Modern Music* (New York, Scribner's 1899), 86-92.

<sup>11</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Shaw's Music: Volume III* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1982), 153-5.

Another writer who seems to both praise and apologize for Tchaikovsky is his first biographer in English, Rosa Newmarch (1857-1940). She originally published her work, *Tchaikovsky: His Life and Works*, in 1900, with a new edition in 1908. Newmarch provides detailed analysis for Symphonies Five and Six, including thematic development, motivic development, key structure, as well as some narrative commentary. Before hashing out some of her analyses, I would like to draw attention to the section of her book called “Tchaikovsky and Form.” In this chapter Newmarch seems to be attempting to rebuff points made about the weakness of Tchaikovsky’s form. She believes that discrepancies between Tchaikovsky’s discussion of his forms and the denigration of his music by others lay in the fact that he was speaking of his specific use of form rather than a failure on the part of his formal designs. The letter in question (briefly discussed in the introduction), in which Tchaikovsky discusses his weaknesses in form, are not meant to generally apply to his music, but rather apply to one specific piece: The Manfred Symphony. Applying these comments outward to Tchaikovsky’s other music seems a tenuous connection at best. Newmarch, however, interprets it as meaning that his ideas of what form should mean was different, not the very constructions themselves. Newmarch does not supply a specific example of her theory but speaks of Tchaikovsky’s opinions of other symphonists: Schumann, Beethoven, and Mozart as her evidence.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to her previous opinions, Newmarch opens her discussion of the Sixth Symphony by stating that “the truth is that it was rare for Tchaikovsky to work at his best under formal restraint. ... we have no reply to those who find an inconsistency between his professed deference to an academic training and the unscholastic trend of many of his

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<sup>12</sup> Rosa Newmarch, *Tchaikovsky: His Life and Works* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 233-239.

own works.”<sup>13</sup> In her continued discussion of the movement she begs indulgences from the reader for allowing her to consider it in a form at all. Whether these comments, starkly different from her earlier writing, exist as a way for her to open others to the idea of Tchaikovsky and form, or whether she herself holds both opinions, is unclear.

Newmarch opens her lengthy conversation of the Fifth Symphony in a similar manner. She states at the opening “‘A fine symphony – wrought of little.’ Such, I remember, was my first impression of this work. ... Many have been my previous occasions to refer to Tchaikovsky’s sparse melodic material; but in the symphony before us, that characteristic is accentuated to a degree requiring some preliminary observations on the general subject.”<sup>14</sup> Although her treatment of the form as she continues is more positive, one cannot help but notice the contradictions in these sections.

Another British music critic, Edwin Evans (1874-1945), penned a subsequent biography and examination of Tchaikovsky’s music to stand alongside Newmarch’s as the second biography in English. Evans writes in 1906 of Tchaikovsky’s life and gives a brief overview of each of his major works. Of Symphonies Four, Five, and Six, Evans has little to say except to note the principal themes and discuss their transformations from major to minor. The most refreshing element of this writing is that it does not appear to hint at some implied vulgarity or sorrow which influenced Tchaikovsky’s life, an uncommon trait in the works examined here.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most famous of these critics listed, Sir Donald Francis Tovey (1875-1940), is also the most detailed in his writing about Tchaikovsky’s music. In his essay on

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<sup>13</sup> Newmarch, 305-6.

<sup>14</sup> Newmarch, 360.

<sup>15</sup> Edwin Evans, *Tchaikovsky* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.:1921), 115-125.

Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Tovey begins by discussing both Tchaikovsky and Brahms and their relationship to history, which is a common theme in writing about Tchaikovsky. Tovey goes on to explain of each symphony, not only the principal melodic material, but also the general structure of each movement. Discussing the first movements of each symphony in sonata terminology, Tovey uses the language of a narrative structure to discuss thematic transformation. Of the fifth symphony Tovey comments on the structure of the primary theme, briefly discussing how the starting note is often confused (the pick-up note is C, but as the key of the theme is E minor, B would be the expected option).<sup>16</sup> Tovey also points out the rhythmic dissonance which underscores many of the themes in the first movement, interestingly he relates these cross-rhythms to Brahms, going so far as to call them "Brahmsish."<sup>17</sup> Of course there are bounteous examples of Brahms employing cross-rhythms, but it is interesting that this technique is considered a staple of Brahms's writing when Tchaikovsky implements it often as well, but nowhere is it labeled as "Tchaikovskyish." A final specific in Tovey's discussion of the fifth symphony is his terming of the coda as containing a basso ostinato<sup>18</sup>. The section in question does repeat (28 times according to Tovey), but I would argue that the effect is less of an ostinato and more of a tonic pedal. Tchaikovsky uses a similar effect in the coda of the Sixth Symphony. Regarding the Sixth Symphony Tovey offers fewer specifics, but I would draw attention to his discussion of the aforementioned first movement's coda. He describes the coda as "severely simple... solemn cadence for trumpets and trombones over a pizzicato descending scale... a crowning beauty that

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, *Symphonies & Other Orchestral Works* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2015), 524.

<sup>17</sup> Tovey, 525.

<sup>18</sup> Tovey, 527.

greatly strengthens the pathos.”<sup>19</sup> Tovey’s use of the language *severe* and *solemn* is interesting for this major-mode coda, and I intend to discuss this further in the conclusion of this document.

Tovey originally published these articles in 1907, after Newmarch made the fact of Tchaikovsky’s sexuality widely known to English speakers in her biography. Tovey makes no allusion to this, however, and the fact seems to have no bearing on his writing. Whether he chose to ignore this information, was untroubled by it, or was simply unaware is not known. Tovey is only the second writer to discuss Tchaikovsky’s form at any length at all, but the reader will notice that this discussion is brief and barely covers more than ten pages. Unfortunately, what seemed to be an increase of analysis for Tchaikovsky decreased somewhat in the following years. Many of the critics and authors who follow present their comments on Tchaikovsky’s forms without providing analytical evidence.

The American musician, composer, and writer Thomas Whitney Surette (1862-1941) is often credited as the originator of the music appreciation course. In Surette’s 1915 text *Course of Study on the Development of Symphonic Music*, Surette has little to say that specifically relates to musical form. However, Surette does mark the point at which the views on Tchaikovsky take on negative, and at times racist, connotations. These comments relate to the barbarity of Russian folk music and its influences on Tchaikovsky. In a manner that will surprise no one, Surette’s tone relays confidence that his insults directed at Russia and Russians are, in fact, compliments. He speaks of the barbarism of this music, and inferring Slavic people in general, translating into a

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<sup>19</sup> Tovey, 532.

barbarous tone to the music. I am confident that no peoples would consider the use of the term barbarous to be a positive.<sup>20</sup> Surette writes that the main reason for Tchaikovsky's failure to create successful symphonic forms is due to Russia's separation from Europe during the development of vocal polyphonic music. Although he is negative about Tchaikovsky's ability to produce a successful sonata form, he does not offer a concrete example of this failure.<sup>21</sup>

Another American, Daniel Gregory Mason (1873-1953) writing in *The New Music Review*, discusses elements of form in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. Mason catalogs each main thematic area and then supplies the narrative for tonal trajectories over the entire symphony. Mason also supplies information on the reception of the premiere of this work in Russia and discusses its mixed reviews at the premiere. Near the beginning of the article, Mason makes the significant comment that the creation of art necessitates a clear and sane mental outlook. If Mason were aware of Tchaikovsky's sexuality, he does not allow it to negatively influence his perception of this symphony, or of Tchaikovsky in general.<sup>22</sup>

Returning to England, Henry Cope Colles (1879-1943) compares Brahms and Tchaikovsky in his book *The Growth of Music: Ideals of the Nineteenth Century*. In the book, he makes several comments about Tchaikovsky's use of form. Colles's commentary follows along the form of Tchaikovsky's Fifth symphony in its final movement. He writes that Brahms was no fan of it and claims the finale of the symphony

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Whitney Surette, *Course of Study on the Development of Symphonic Music* (Boston: National Federation of Music Clubs Press, 1915), 147.

<sup>21</sup> Surette, 135-151.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, "Short Studies of the Great Masterpieces," in *The New Music Review*, 16, no. 186. (1917): 574-578.

is most in dialogue with a “German style,” and that this raises it in interest. Interestingly, the last movement of this symphony is possibly the least cohesive formal construction of Tchaikovsky’s works if one approaches it with templates of traditional form, which in the symphony, has real narrative correlations. Colles summarizes by saying that Tchaikovsky missed inventive melodic material in Brahms’s music, and that Brahms missed formal structure in Tchaikovsky’s. If true, then both composers formed an opinion of each other that is far from accurate. Colles does not supply the reader with any evidence for these statements.<sup>23</sup>

At this point in the historiography of Tchaikovsky, Gerald Abraham (1904-1988) dominates the field of study, not only in terms of the composer, but in Russian and Slavic music in general. Abraham was a Jewish-English musicologist and his career spanned writing, radio, and teaching. As well as writing his own works and biographies of Tchaikovsky, Abraham also edited a collection of other writings about the composer. In this section I will first discuss Abraham’s own writings and then the writings that appear in his collection entitled *The Music of Tchaikovsky* (1946).

In his own writing, Abraham does not seem to take a particularly active interest in musical form. The most revealing comment made can be found in Abraham’s diminutive biography of Tchaikovsky and reads, “As a symphonic architect, he was... able to develop organic sections, but not organic wholes. Taneev summed up the nature of Tchaikovsky’s music in general with deadly accuracy when he spoke of the Fourth Symphony as ‘ballet music’.”<sup>24</sup> In Abraham’s larger collection titled *Slavonic and*

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<sup>23</sup> Henry Cope Colles, *The Growth of Music: Ideals of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Clarendon Press, 1916), 176-81.

<sup>24</sup>Gerald Abraham, *Tchaikovsky: A Short Biography* (London: Duckworth, 1944), 130-1.

*Romantic Music*, he makes a similarly disparaging statement. He claims that although Tchaikovsky's melodic writing is beyond reproach, large scale forms do not seem to follow.<sup>25</sup>

Even more denigrating than Abraham's comments, are those he collected from Martin Cooper in his chapter about Tchaikovsky's symphonies. Cooper writes that Tchaikovsky, like all romantics, struggled with form. He takes the opportunity to quote Tchaikovsky's own self-deprecating remarks about his formal writing and presents them as though he agrees. Cooper goes on to discuss at length the various flaws he finds in Tchaikovsky's use of sonata form. Particularly relevant are his feelings that the development sections are weak, and that the primary and secondary thematic material does not contrast enough. Cooper also apparently expects it to conform to a masculine primary structure and feminine secondary structure. James Hepokoski authors an article about the masculine and feminine in sonata form and its relation to Tchaikovsky which we will examine later. Cooper makes one comment which is particularly revealing of his opinions of Tchaikovsky. He describes the composer as *hysterical* and *sick*, and goes on to say "this man is ill, we feel: must we be shown all his sores without exception? Will he insist on our not merely witnessing, but also sharing one of his nervous attacks?"<sup>26</sup> The pervasive feeling of this and other writing is so often negative, any reader would wonder what drives these writers to discuss Tchaikovsky at all?

At this point the British musicologist, David Brown (1929-2014) takes his place as one of the most important Tchaikovsky scholars of the twentieth century. Brown was

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<sup>25</sup> Gerald Abraham, *Slavonic and Russian Music* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 107-115.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Cooper, "The Symphonies," in *The Music of Tchaikovsky*, ed. Gerald Abraham (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1946), 24-46. [quote from pg. 34]



active as a musicologist beginning in 1959 and over the course of his career he wrote prolifically about Russian music and Tchaikovsky specifically. Active in the field for over five decades, there are no examples of Tchaikovsky authors active since the 1980s who have not cited, countered, or agreed in some way with his work. Among his more controversial hypotheses are claims that Tchaikovsky's death was a suicide, rather than death by cholera. Included in Brown's writings on Tchaikovsky are four volumes of biographies begun in 1978 and completed in 1991, and two independent works:

*Tchaikovsky Remembered*, and *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music*. Within the four-volume work, Brown gives a detailed analysis of the Fourth Symphony in volume II, *The Crisis Years*; he gives analyses for Symphonies Five and Six in Volume IV, *The Final Years*.

In the second volume of Brown's work, he supplies us with Tchaikovsky's letter to Madame Nadezhda von Meck, which gives the composer's program as it accompanies the main themes. Brown argues that Tchaikovsky conceived this program after composition, and that it therefore should not affect his analysis of the symphony. Brown also speculates about the opening fate theme in the horns and bassoons, claiming that it may be an amalgam of the forge and horn call leitmotifs from Wagner's ring cycle. Brown goes on to show the interspersions of the fate theme throughout the movement and, in a pattern well-worn by now, slips in a negative comment on Tchaikovsky's writing. Brown says of Tchaikovsky's thematic material that there is "a process of thematic synthesis whereby quite fresh melodies are generated through the apparently *intuitive* redistribution of thematic particles."<sup>27</sup> By using the word *intuitive*, Brown seems to be

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<sup>27</sup> David Brown, *The Crisis Years: 1874-1878* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983), 169. [emphasis added]

implying that this thematic unity is almost accidental, rather than carefully conceived. At a minimum, if we take Brown's statement at face value, we are expected to understand that Tchaikovsky's creation of cohesive forms is not the result of careful and intentional work, but rather an intuitive creation wherein any unity is merely incidental. In my opinion it is simply illogical to deny that this melodic continuity is anything but carefully constructed to best convey the expressive meaning that Tchaikovsky intends; rather than the, admittedly more romantic, idea that these melodic and formal devices sync together by intuition. Brown then goes on to show how all of the main themes in the first movement of this work expand and grow out of the Fate motif. From here Brown shows a diagram of the fourth symphony and analyzes the origin of the folk song which appears in the third movement of the symphony; this closes his discussion of the Fourth Symphony.<sup>28</sup>

In the fourth volume of Brown's work his discussion of the Fifth Symphony begins with praises for its similarities to a more German style of writing. Brown claims that Tchaikovsky balances the first movement of the Fifth much better than the first movement of the Fourth, and that there are three main thematic areas. He considers the primary theme to be a generation of the introduction rather than its own melody. Although there are commonalities between the two, Brown does not provide strong evidence of this synthesis claim. Particularly of note is Brown's discussion of the second movement. He asserts that the second movement is in dialogue with a Rondo, and orders it as ABA'B'C-Fate-AA'B'-Fate-B. Brown labels the introductory theme from the first movement as fate because Tchaikovsky wrote that it was the "Total submission before

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<sup>28</sup> Brown, 159-179.

fate.”<sup>29</sup> Aside from cataloging the themes of the last movement, Brown has the following to say: “This conclusion fatally mars a splendid symphony which earlier had demonstrated how convincingly Tchaikovsky could now create a large-scale symphonic work of complete technical assurance and structural equilibrium.”<sup>30</sup> His justification for this is that the melodic and motivic material of the symphony is strained to create expressive aims beyond its ability. I would argue that the pushing of motives to these extremes is what creates those same expressive aims.

In the same volume, Brown begins his discussion of the Sixth Symphony by likening Tchaikovsky’s use of a traditional sonata form as both a retreat and confrontation. He claims that Tchaikovsky’s earlier symphonies had broken the form, and that the Sixth is his attempt to recreate it. He provides a chart with bar numbers that show typical sonata structure. Brown, however, places the recapitulation in bar 245 outside of developmental space. This goes against the analysis of Timothy Jackson who we will discuss later. Brown has little to say about the second movement excepting the typical “limping dancer” comments and proceeds to dissect the third movement. Brown views this movement as generative in form, although he does note that some have claimed it resembles a sonata form without a development, what some refer to as “slow-movement form,” and which Hepokoski and Darcy would label a type 1 sonata. Brown begins his discussion of the fourth movement by showing the interaction involving rhythmic and harmonic dissonances between the string and wind parts. He claims that although the movement initially appears to be in sonata form, but that “to have played out the crisis in development (thus suggesting the final issue remained to be decided), then

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<sup>29</sup> David Brown, *The Final Years: 1885-1893* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 148.

<sup>30</sup> Brown, 155-6. [Entire passage found in pages 127-156]

attempted a recapitulation would have been unthinkable.” His argument regarding the fourth movement in this quote, is that against this backdrop of the crushing reality of fate, Tchaikovsky feels there is nothing to be gained by playing out the crisis of this movement; therefore no development is needed. Here again I would label this form as a type 1 sonata. Brown ends this chapter dramatically by stating that Tchaikovsky was dead nine days after the premiere.<sup>31</sup>

Brown’s comments leave behind a similar impression to that of earlier authors describing Tchaikovsky’s music. On the one hand, Brown seems enamored of Tchaikovsky and his musical skill; on the other hand Brown cannot seem to resist jumping to conclusions about flaws, or making subtle digs at his sexuality, something he does throughout the four-volume set. Of course, Brown sets up his analysis of the Sixth Symphony to support his hypothesis that Tchaikovsky committed suicide rather than died of cholera. In so doing, is it not possible that his bias leads him away from important formal constructions? In any case, Brown is unique among the scholars discussed before and after him for the sheer volume of his work on Tchaikovsky, and the corresponding amount of contradictions implicit in the writing. As previously stated, no Tchaikovsky writer who has come after has been able to avoid the shadow left by the author, and Henry Zajackowski, also British, is no exception.

Henry Zajackowski<sup>32</sup> is a British musicologist and Tchaikovsky scholar. His many publications include articles in *The Music Review* and *The Musical Times* as well as two books: *Tchaikovsky’s Musical Style* and *An Introduction to Tchaikovsky’s Operas*.

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<sup>31</sup> Brown, 421-459. [quoted passage on page 458]

<sup>32</sup> From this point on any scholars mentioned are still living and active and I will not provide dates for their lives, but for their writing.

Zajaczkowski is still alive and an active writer. I will address his relevant writing over a few decades in the same section for the sake of clarity. Of note is an article titled *The Function of Obsessive Elements in Tchaikovsky's Style*. In this article Zajaczkowski discusses Tchaikovsky's Piano Sonata in G Major, op. 37, and his Second and Fourth Symphonies. Zajaczkowski terms Tchaikovsky's use of repeated transpositions of melodic and motivic material as the obsessive elements he wishes to discuss, saying "The most widely misunderstood... technical device in all Tchaikovsky's music is undoubtedly the incessant use of block transposition in the development sections of his sonata structures."<sup>33</sup> Although Zajaczkowski seeks to defend this technique as used by Tchaikovsky, it is still puzzling to me. The use of sequencing and the transposition of themes and motives, the techniques which Zajaczkowski terms as "obsessive," are well-worn developmental techniques which date to the seventeenth century.

Zajaczkowski continues his discussion of the Fourth Symphony's form in another 1984 article *Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony*. The article focuses on showing the many manifestations of the opening fate motive over the other three movements of the work. Zajaczkowski shows how the tonality of the symphony, what others would call its tonal structure or narrative, really provides the expressive current underpinning entire symphony. He maintains that Tchaikovsky first begins to show himself as an expert of symphonic writing in this symphony and remarks in the first paragraph that "the occasional resemblances between material in the movements of the third symphony seem to be fortuitous, resulting from simple stylistic congruity." It is only worth noting this

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<sup>33</sup> Henry Zajaczkowski, "The Function of Obsessive Elements in Tchaikovsky's Style" in *The Music Review*, 41, no. 1, (1982): 25-30.

because Zajaczkowski seems to read far into thematic unity in the Fourth Symphony but dismisses that same cohesion as accidental in earlier works.<sup>34</sup>

Continuing with the Fourth Symphony, Susan McCleary, author of *Feminine Endings*, also dissects the first movement, which appears in the chapter titled “Sexual Politics in Classical Music.” McCleary provides the most interpretive analysis in sonata form that has yet appeared. She categorizes all themes and the tonal structure for the entire first movement of the Fourth and renders them all through a gendered lens. McCleary makes a compelling argument for a reading of the fate motive as a masculine oppressive energy which the more feminine primary and secondary themes seek to overcome but are ultimately unsuccessful. Although this style of analysis defers from the more generally accepted Sonata Theory interpretations, it is a fascinating interpretation which goes far toward changing the tone of discussion around Tchaikovsky’s music and life.<sup>35</sup>

As the twentieth century nears a close, analytical writing about Tchaikovsky increased in complexity. Joseph Kraus, currently professor of music theory at Florida State University, has written copiously about Tchaikovsky and is currently writing a highly anticipated book about Tchaikovsky’s formal structures. Kraus’s work is heavily informed by Heinrich Schenker’s analytical techniques and is generally an insightful and serious study of the music at hand. His earlier writing “Tonal Plan and Narrative Plot in Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 5 in E Minor” is a discussion of just that. Kraus goes through the entire symphony in detail and discusses the trajectory of tonal centers and

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Zajaczkowski, “Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony” in *The Music Review*, 45, no. 3-4, (1984): 264-276.

<sup>35</sup> Susan McCleary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 69-79.

their relation to the narrative of the symphony. He lays out the narrative in general terms and leaves specific details to the listener. Kraus lays out the internal conflict of the symphony as being between the key centers of E and D, and the narrative flowing from the way those tonal centers interact.<sup>36</sup> Although Kraus's article does address the layout of the first movement in sonata terms, his article is more focused on the tonal trajectory of the symphony as a whole, rather than the form of the first movement. The article does not include aspects of sexuality or gender, making it a rarity amongst the authors discussed thus far.

Kraus's other writing appears in a collection titled: *The Nineteenth Century Symphony*. Kraus opens the article with discussions of the single letter in which Tchaikovsky discusses his failings of form. The use of this letter, a document which refers to Tchaikovsky's use of form in the Manfred Symphony rather than an all-encompassing discussion of his forms, is common when discussing the form of Tchaikovsky's music. Kraus also cites the music critic Harman Laroche as commenting on this apparent weakness of Tchaikovsky's. Although the letter from Tchaikovsky, to Nadezhda von Meck and regarding the Fourth Symphony, is speaking to a later work, whereas Laroche's observations pertain to the first and second symphonies, Kraus seems to be making the argument that Tchaikovsky's journey through the symphony was an attempt to reconcile his Russian heritage with a Germanic symphonic tradition. He argues that the pinnacle of this fusion is the Fifth and Sixth symphonies.

One of Kraus's observations in relation to the first symphony is more far-reaching than it first seems. He relates Tchaikovsky's emphasis of the subdominant or plagal in his

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph C. Kraus, "Tonal Plan and Narrative Plot in Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 5 in E Minor" in *Music Theory Spectrum*, 13, no. 1: 21-47.

melodic writing to Russian folk music; which has a similar emphasis on the subdominant.<sup>37</sup> Kraus mentions this in relation Tchaikovsky's First Symphony; This technique, however, is utilized by Tchaikovsky in every symphony which we will discuss as well. Tchaikovsky uses plagal motion in the primary themes of the Fourth and Fifth Symphony, and the entire opening gambit of the Sixth Symphony rests on the subdominant of B minor.

The main body of Kraus's chapter in the *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony* is an overview of all of Tchaikovsky's symphonies. I will focus on his discussion of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth. Of the Fourth Symphony Kraus comments on the opening motif, comparing the material, similarly to David Brown, to Siegfried's horn call in the Ring Cycle. He also makes note of the chain of modulations in minor thirds which underpins the structure of this movement. Kraus's comments on the Fifth symphony reflect his 1991 article that we have already discussed. His discussion of the sixth symphony is brief and focuses on the motivic nature of the first theme and an apparent inclusion of a Russian Orthodox Chant quote in the movement.<sup>38</sup>

Kraus concludes his article with this interesting statement, which relates the legacy of Tchaikovsky to the public conception of the composer as a tragic homosexual figure. "We need to put aside the myths surrounding Tchaikovsky the man and acknowledge Tchaikovsky the symphonic composer—an individual who succeeded in resolving the conflicts between his need for emotional self-expression, his Germanic training, and his Russian roots."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph C. Kraus, "Tchaikovsky" in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 301.

<sup>38</sup> Kraus, 311-23.

<sup>39</sup> Kraus, 323.



The music Theorist Timothy Jackson writes unapologetically about Tchaikovsky's music. Jackson is a professor of Music at the University of North Texas and authored the Cambridge Music Handbook: *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)*. Additionally, Jackson is the author of the article *Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Tchaikovsky*. In the article, published in 1995, Jackson discusses several of Tchaikovsky's works including the symphonies, but also his overtures including Romeo and Juliet and The Tempest. Jackson employs Schenkerian analysis to show Tchaikovsky's frequent use of modulations to the tritone and relates this back to what he terms as Tchaikovsky's "homosexual problem." To be clear, Jackson is stating that Tchaikovsky felt his homosexuality was a problem, Jackson himself has no issue with it. Jackson's relation of the tritone to homosexuality comes by way of viewing the tritone as a musical "other" correlated with the societal other of queerness. The argument and paper are fascinating.<sup>40</sup>

Jackson's Cambridge handbook to the Sixth Symphony is a type of general history of Tchaikovsky's life at that time and discusses sexuality in Tchaikovsky's life and in the symphony, the reception of the work, its secret program and genesis, and furnishes a lengthy chapter on the form and tonal progression of the work. Of note is that Jackson analyses the first movement as having a truncated recapitulation, meaning that the primary theme does not appear in the recap, and that the symphony breaks with traditional macro-symphonic form. By this Jackson means that it does not follow the typical schema for a four-movement symphony in that it ends with a slow movement. Jackson, like McCleary, makes the case that sexuality and gender can be a positive, rather

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<sup>40</sup>Timothy L. Jackson, "Aspects of Sexuality and Structure in the Later Symphonies of Tchaikovsky" in *Music Analysis* 14, no. 1 (1995): 3-25.

than a negative, lens through which to examine Tchaikovsky's music. Both scholars take the view that when Tchaikovsky's melodies are weak, by which I mean that they have some rhythmic or harmonic instability,<sup>41</sup> this is both deliberate, and with the utmost necessity to the structure and narrative of the movement. While other theorists perceive this instability or ambiguity of themes, they are quick to attach it to their biases regarding Tchaikovsky's sexuality, rather than follow its trajectory through the movement.<sup>42</sup>

Jackson's comments regarding the form of the Sixth Symphony have extended far into the literature. The author Stephen Downes discusses Jackson's analysis, along with Henry Zajackowski's, in his book *Music and Decadence in European Modernism*. Downes relates these analyses to us in the chapter "Pessimism and Nihilism." He attempts to show that Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is an example of excess which arose due to cultural pessimism. He relates the symphony back to other works which he views as connected; mainly works which also hold the name "Pathétique."<sup>43</sup> Downes's work is demonstrative of a new trend in which authors use previous analyses of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, which had its heyday in the nineties, to furnish unique viewpoints on music of the nineteenth century in a broader scope. Another author to do so includes Marina Ritzarev, who also includes several examples of possible J.S. Bach quotations in the Sixth Symphony, in her text *Tchaikovsky's Pathétique and Russian Culture*.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The primary theme and secondary themes from the 4<sup>th</sup> symphony, the secondary theme zones from the 5<sup>th</sup> symphony, and the secondary theme from the 6<sup>th</sup> symphony are all representative of this.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy Jackson, *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Downes, *Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 77-82.

<sup>44</sup> Marina Ritzarev, *Tchaikovsky's Pathétique and Russian Culture*, (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2014).

Although many of these writers have praised Tchaikovsky, the reader has no doubt noticed a strange dichotomy that shows in the writing and analysis. Many of these writers espouse two contrasting views of Tchaikovsky simultaneously. At one moment they praise his music for its effect and beauty, and the next they decry its formal weakness in areas like counterpoint and thematic development.

The word weakness, the reader will have noticed, is continually present in my discussion of these critics, and in their analysis of music. The word implies an embodied trait of being unable to rise to a physical or mental challenge, that is why it is so appropriate to discuss both Tchaikovsky's themes and these critics view of his work. At many moments in his Fourth, Fifth and Sixth symphonies Tchaikovsky crafts melodies which *do* have an inherent weakness to them; This trait manifests itself in static and inverted harmonic motion, themes that are constructed from a series of sequences, rhythmic placement of melodic and harmonic cadences, and of course an inability to achieve a perfect authentic cadence. While many of the critics and analysts we have discussed do perceive this weakness, what they often fail to recognize, in their eagerness to attribute this weakness to Tchaikovsky's femininity or sexuality, is that its ambiguity is a deliberate aspect of composition and the narrative and structural potential to the movement or symphony as a whole.

This relationship between composers and critics is a familiar trope to those musicians who have their origins outside the German tradition of classical music. Although musicologists have addressed some of these issues in critical reception histories, I believe these insidious patterns have generally been ignored in terms of musical analysis. By analyzing the large-scale symphonic forms of Tchaikovsky in the

chapters that follow I offer a view that allows the relative perceived strength or weakness of themes to be viewed in relation to the whole, rather through a negative gendered lens, or possibly through a positive one.

## Chapter 2:

### The Fourth Symphony

Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony opens with a dramatic military fanfare in French horns and bassoons. This motif, which recurs many times throughout the symphony is often labeled as a representation of no less than fate itself. An interpretation that this fate motif crashes into sonata space, discombobulating the trajectory of the form, is common among theorists.<sup>45</sup> Whether or not this interpretation is accurate, however, is just one of the many questions I intend to investigate within this study of the Fourth Symphony. In this chapter I examine the formal layout of this symphony, including what type of sonata form it is, the strength of the essential closures, and the narrative arch of the movement, specifically in relation to what Byron Almen describes as *discursive strategies*.

In addition to my analysis of this work, using sonata theory, I intend to compare my work to Susan McClary's from *Feminine Endings*, in which she presents a gendered analysis of this movement to make observations about the inherent negativity implied when labeling formal zones as 'feminine.' Interestingly, McClary's analysis also flirts with concepts which Almen would describe as epiphany, emergence, and synthesis. These are narrative strategies, or templates, which he presents in *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. Almen presents these strategies in relation to the comic and the tragic archetypes. In each case the tragic archetype is avoided by the successful employment of one of these strategies. An epiphany strategy is represented by a sudden solution to a narrative problem via an outside source. The strategy of emergence involves a

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<sup>45</sup> Some notable examples which we will examine in chapter 1 include David Brown and Rosa Newmarch.

transgressive element slowly gaining rhetorical strength until it is able to influence the trajectory of the narrative. The discursive strategy of synthesis involves a combination of two elements for the successful completion of a narrative goal. These discursive strategies work well for a comedic narrative archetype; likewise their potential for failure also reveals their application to the tragic archetype. I have included a table of my entire analysis at the end of this chapter for convenience.

The beginning of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony is now so familiar that it is difficult to hear the fate motif as anything other than an ominous peal from the horns. A closer examination of this section, however, reveals ambiguities that would have been apparent on a first hearing of the work. Figure 2.1 shows the opening bars of the symphony, the first presentation of the fate motif.

**Figure 2.1:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 1-7



Although the overall key is of course F minor, the first two bars of this theme sound only the mediant of this tonic chord, presenting an aural situation similar to the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. In both symphonies the listener may be entirely unaware of what key or even mode the symphony is in due to a lack of context. It is only in the third bar that Tchaikovsky clearly articulates the mode of f minor.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, *Fourth Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in Full Score* (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1979), 5.

The ambiguity of this theme, rather than decreasing its level of influence on the symphony, only increases its power to influence events. McClary describes it as being androcentric, hegemonic, and resistant to reason.<sup>47</sup> Tchaikovsky himself describes the theme as something which is “Invincible... you will never overcome it. You can only reconcile yourself to it, and languish fruitlessly.”<sup>48</sup> The power inherent in this tonal ambiguity comes from the implication that, to fate, our whims or desires are entirely without meaning. Fate allows its plans to unfold no matter what objections we place in its path.

It is against this backdrop that Tchaikovsky’s sonata form unfolds. Difficulties of nomenclature arise when discussing this section in terms of Sonata Theory, however. Hepokoski and Darcy explicitly mention the fourth symphony in a section describing an *Introduction-Coda Frame*. They describe this frame as a “Striking deformation of normative practice... in which material from the introduction returns as all or part of the coda.”<sup>49</sup> In my opinion, applying this description to the Fourth Symphony presents difficulties. The slow introduction and the coda are both considered to be what Hepokoski and Darcy would term as *paragenetic spaces*. These are spaces which exist outside of the space of sonata form. In an eighteenth-century sonata it would be highly unusual for material from the sonata form to appear in any of these paragenetic spaces. In general terms, material from a slow introduction should not appear again within the sonata proper and likewise the coda is not based on material from the slow introduction.

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<sup>47</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 70-71.

<sup>48</sup> McClary, 71.

<sup>49</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 304.

Tchaikovsky, however, pushes the boundaries of and defies even the labels of slow introduction and coda in all the symphonies I examine in this document.

This opening fate section is also in dialogue with another concept of Hepokoski and Darcy's, that of the P0 module. A P0 module is one which precedes the primary theme and "seems preparatory to a more decisive module that follows."<sup>50</sup> Although this is generally an aberrant sonata process, the P0 module returns in both the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, making it a more normative option specifically for Tchaikovsky. Although the nature of this section discourages strict labeling, this trait of muddying the waters of what is and is not a slow introduction is present in all the symphonies examined in this document.

Interestingly, commenters on this symphony often frame this opening through an operatic lens. McClary herself likens this militaristic opening to opening of the opera *Carmen*. McClary feels comfortable overlaying the trajectory of this symphony to the entirety of the opera, in fact, basing this on the fact that Tchaikovsky had recently seen the opera before composition.<sup>51</sup> The prolific Tchaikovsky biographer David Brown also dissects this theme by comparing it to operas which Tchaikovsky had recently seen, in this case the Ring Cycle. Brown dissects the fate motif and makes the claim that it is a combination of several of Wagner's leitmotifs. Although the relative merits of this argument are debatable, the thread which links the fate motif to Wagner's leitmotifs is the operatic sense of drama and narrative that each weave through their respective works.

For now, we turn our attention to an examination of the primary theme which opens the sonata form of this movement. McClary describes this P material perfectly:

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<sup>50</sup> Hepokoski, 72.

<sup>51</sup> McClary, 69-70.



“...in contrast to the more typical ‘heroic’ opening theme, this appoggiatura-laden, limping theme is hypersensitive, vulnerable, indecisive.”<sup>52</sup>

**Figure 2.2:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 27-32

27 **Moderato con anima** (♩ = In movimento di Valse)

Hrn. 2 in F

*p*

Viol.1 **Moderato con anima** (♩ = In movimento di Valse)

*p espr.*

Viol.2

*p*

Vla.

*p*

Vc.

*p espr.*

Kb.

*p*

*poco cresc.*

*poco cresc.*

*poco cresc.*

*poco cresc.*

*poco cresc.*

*poco cresc.*

**Moderato con anima** (♩ = In movimento di Valse)

53

Tchaikovsky creates this embodied limping effect by the strong implications of a waltz topic in the melody, which he juxtaposes with emphasis on metrically weak areas. The chord placements on the second and fourth eighth notes of each bar are visible in figure 2.2 beginning in measure 28. In addition to the instability this creates, the placements of tonic f minor chords in these metrically weak areas also shows the tenuous position our P theme has on the tonic.

In a typical narrative trajectory in a minor-mode sonata, the P theme, which usually represents the initial state of the narrative, is presented as metrically and harmonically strong. The inherent instability of Tchaikovsky’s P theme encourages us, as listeners, to expect a positive outcome for this sonata. This is because the ideal trajectory

<sup>52</sup> McCleary, 71.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, *Fourth Fifth and Sixth Symphonies in Full Score* (Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1979), 8.

for a minor-mode sonata is one in which the secondary theme can cadence in the major mode in the sonata's recapitulation. A P theme which is harmonically and rhythmically unstable encourages us to expect this outcome, communicating that its own grasp of the tonic is tenuous at best. In the historiography chapter of analysis regarding these symphonies, I posit that this thematic instability may have encouraged some listeners to speculate that Tchaikovsky's sexuality or perceived femininity lead to the creation of *weak* thematic zones, their biases then preventing them from viewing these themes in relation to the larger form as a whole.

The assumption, by the listener, that the initial condition of the primary theme will be easily overturned is strengthened by the end of the P theme: shown in figure 2.3. Measures 48-50 in figure 2.3 show the beginnings of a cadential 6/4 gesture with the expectation of a tonic cadence. Tchaikovsky subverts this expectation, however, by interjecting a first inversion tonic chord on the downbeat of measure 50, before moving into a dominant chord. This chord finally cadences, after all of P's energy has completely evaporated, on the third beat of measure 52. Although this is a PAC, in that the motion from dominant to tonic is present in the bass, and the soprano voice also sounds the tonic, it is a PAC of profound weakness and even ambiguity. The tonic presented is not even a chord; having no mediant or fifth present at all.

**Figure 2.3:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 48-52

The musical score for measures 48-52 of Symphony 4, mvt. 1, is presented in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section, including Flutes 1 and 2, Clarinet in B-flat, Bassoon 1 and 2, Horns 2 and 4, Trumpets 1 and 2, and Trombones, plays a melodic line. The string section, including Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Kontrabaß, provides a harmonic accompaniment. The score is marked with a 'B' at the beginning of the section and a 'B' at the end of the section.

Tchaikovsky follows this with a TR zone that begins with a comparable low level of energy, but quickly gains momentum. Although the primary goal of TR is to modulate into the key of S, or at least clear a path for the entry of S, this TR seems unable to do either. Figure 2.4, wherein only the winds are visible, shows the end of this TR section. After around fifty bars of attempts at modulation, TR finally gets stuck on an attempt at a half cadence in the tonic of f minor, violently alternating between a tonic chord and German 6 chord which should lead us into a dominant. Although the hammer blows this section creates are one of the classic signals that the medial caesura is approaching, the S theme that emerges in measure 104 seems almost premature in its arrival. Emerging out

<sup>54</sup> Tchaikovsky, 10.

of this non-cadential zone without the first module reaching a cadence or modulation. An S theme appearing so unexpectedly flirts with Almen's concept of the Epiphany strategy. In this strategy problems are solved by a sudden snap fix which seemingly comes out of left field.<sup>55</sup> This effect is visible in bars 104 and 105 of figure 2.4 in the clarinet voice.

**Figure 2.4:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 100-105

The S theme, which springs out of the detritus created by P and TR, attempts to proceed in A-flat major. This key area creates and reinforces Hepokoski and Darcy's concept of the structure of promise, which I mentioned in the introduction. We the listeners, upon hearing this major theme, feel hopeful that this S may be able to cast off the minor-mode which opened the symphony. A closer examination of this theme reveals that it is not quite the savior we expect. The harmony repeatedly moves through cadential 6/4 gestures without ever actually cadencing in the tonic. After only a few bars of this major-mode, the lilting A-flat major theme has collapsed into itself and now sounds in the parallel A-flat minor.

<sup>55</sup> Almen, 188.

<sup>56</sup> Tchaikovsky, 18.

Although initially the S theme in major, which I will now call S1.1, appears to be unrelated to the minor S1.2 which follows, they share a similar vapid effect. McClary describes this new theme as “sultry, seductive, and slinky.”<sup>57</sup> Although the elements which create this seductive effect are sounded in the winds, namely the descending lines of sixteenth notes which appear in all registers, the meat of this theme is presented in the cello, moving through alternated descending intervals of a third which never seem to lead anywhere productive, as lust so rarely does.

Although S1.2 initially appears more viable than S1.1, it becomes clear we are no closer to reaching any kind of EEC moment in this thematic area. At this moment in the symphony, perhaps in response to the failure of an epiphany, Tchaikovsky attempts a different discursive strategy, that of *synthesis*. Figure 2.5 shows the first attempt Tchaikovsky makes at this discursive strategy. The original ‘goal-oriented’ energy of the P theme is entirely absent, and the theme sounds quietly tamed by the apparent seductive power of S1.2.

Almen describes synthesis as a discursive strategy used to complete a comic narrative archetype. He describes it as a “trajectory in which two previously distinct and/or opposed musical elements ultimately combine or coexist to form an inseparable semantic unit.”<sup>58</sup> If synthesis can be used to successfully complete a comedic archetype, the possibility of an attempted and failed synthesis would conversely create a tragic archetype.

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<sup>57</sup> McCleary, 71.

<sup>58</sup> Almen, 207.

**Figure 2.5:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 133-136

133

Ben sostenuto il tempo precedente

1. Fl.

2. Fl.

Ob.1

Klar. 2 in B

Fag.1

Pk. in F, H, Fis

Viol.1

Viol.2

Vla.

Vc.

Kb.

Ben sostenuto il tempo precedente

Ben sostenuto il tempo precedente

59

In the Fourth Symphony our “distinct musical elements” are the P theme and S1.2; their attempts at synthesis in figure 2.5 give us hope for a comedic narrative. The key area of this attempted synthesis is B minor adds a level of ambiguity to the narrative. In relation to the original S1.2 key of A-flat minor, however, this is the major mediant, an enharmonically respelled C-flat major. In relation to the tonic of f minor and the P theme, however, we are now as far from our initial goal as it is possible to be, a tritone. Although the bass in this section continually repeats the motion of I-V-I, the melodic elements seem entirely unable to cadence on top of this strong bass. Tchaikovsky ultimately reduces this harmonic motion into stagnation over a tonic pedal. A Tonic pedal, if occurring after a strong cadence, might be a signpost of strength, but here it only serves

<sup>59</sup> Tchaikovsky, 22.

as a further indicator of the failure of these two elements to combine with each other, now cemented by the stalwart nature of the bass voice.

After an increase in rank of the initial P theme and an increase of energy, Tchaikovsky attempts yet another rescue mission with a new S zone. S2 enters after new hammer blows and a kind of obscured medial caesura create a structure called a *tri-modular block*. As I explained briefly in the introduction, this device, although highly deformational for many composers (such as Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven) is actually one of Tchaikovsky's normative devices<sup>60</sup> and we will examine its occurrence again in symphonies Five and Six. At this point in the progression of the exposition there have been no attempts for an EEC, but finally in S2 one appears.

There are two such attempts at an EEC that occur within this second S module. The first appears in measures 176 and 177. Aurally this is the strongest candidate for an EEC, and this is where I consider the failure of the exposition to occur. Although this section does contain a type of cadence, all the harmonic action occurs over that same tonic pedal from before, thereby completely preventing any chance of the strong dominant tonic bass motion needed for a PAC. Tchaikovsky's second attempt at a cadence does not occur per se, but rather, is hinted at.

This occurs in measure 193, shown in figure 2.6. Here Tchaikovsky interrupts a potential cadence in B major with an interjection of the original fate motif. In this form, this motif is anything but ambiguous. It occurs again on the mediant of a tonic minor chord, but this time it is heard over the tonic and therefore sounds securely in the minor-mode from the outset.

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<sup>60</sup> The composer Franz Schubert is another notable example of a composer who often makes use of the tri-modular block. Interestingly he shares a queer identifier with Tchaikovsky.

Figure 2.6: Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 192-198

This moment shows the inherent problems with Tchaikovsky's attempts at thematic synthesis in the exposition. We, as listeners, perhaps shackled by our conditioned responses to sonata forms, and particularly the layout of their themes, identify P1 as our main antagonist. In this symphony, however, P is only a weakened underling, a vassal, so to speak, of fate itself presented in the opening P0 module. This makes the primary antagonist of this movement P0, making the S themes' attempts to synthesize with P seem doomed from the start.

This interruption of the opening P0 material, now in B minor, is also the opening of the second and final rotation in this sonata form. As I stated in the introduction, Tchaikovsky's use of this uncommon sonata type, a type 2, though highly deformational for other composers, is a normative step for him, and we will see the same structure again in the Sixth Symphony. Hepokoski and Darcy make much of this type of sonata in

<sup>61</sup> Tchaikovsky, 32.



Chapter 17 of their book. A type 2 sonata is similar to a type one in that it contains only two rotations of the initial expository material, P, TR, S and C. However, unlike a type 1, or indeed even types 3-5, a type 2 sonata does not actually have a recapitulation. In Hepokoski and Darcy's words, a type 2 sonata has "developmental spaces grafted onto tonal resolutions."<sup>62</sup>

This type of sonata was previously confused with such terms as reverse recapitulations, or labeled as mirror forms, and indeed in chapter 1 of this text we reviewed some authors such as David Brown and Timothy Jackson who considered these as viable terms for description of these sonatas. In the past, musicologists and theorist have considered this sonata type as a 'weak' option. This is simply not the case any more than a sonata rondo option, a type 4, is *stronger* than the option of a type 3 sonata (the more familiar, exposition, development, recapitulation layout).<sup>63</sup>

The developmental rotation of the Fourth symphony begins, very clearly, with P0 material. This reoccurrence of the opening material is, in my opinion, the strongest reason to not consider it an introduction zone. To be considered as an introduction, one of the necessary qualities is that the material *not* repeat again within sonata space. This is not the case with the material which opens this symphony. As we move through this second rotation, the P theme and TR continue much as they did within the expository rotation, albeit with much more developmental rhetoric such as sequences and modulations. It is near the end of TR in this rotation that we approach the material which opens this paper. Here we have come through a journey attempting a synthesis between P and S, only to have our hopes dashed once more by the ultimate antagonist of this narrative, fate

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<sup>62</sup> Hepokoski, 354.

<sup>63</sup> Hepokoski, 353-87.

itself. While in the exposition P seemed to lose energy and will as it continued, this interjection of fate bolsters the primary theme with renewed energy. While in the exposition P and TR seemed to get stuck on themselves, they now grow stronger both dynamically and rhythmically, with the strings emphasizing the themes with repeated sixteenth notes on the same rhythmic values as the initial presentation of the theme, as shown in figure 2.7. Also, in this example note the emerging pedal on A. This is a typical developmental device that often signals the end of that rotation, an extended dominant pedal. In this moment, however, that A is not a dominant to any key area to which we would hope to return, namely something centered on F, but rather a dominant to D minor; it is in that key which Tchaikovsky begins the process of approaching tonal closure.

**Figure 2.7:** Symphony 4, mvt. 1, mm. 282-285

Whereas in the exposition our initial S theme sprang into being full of hope in A-flat major, the recap holds no such promises. It precedes directly to d minor and skips entirely S1.1 from the exposition. This d minor section gives way to the synthesis which Tchaikovsky first attempted in the exposition, as we hear alternating versions of the S

<sup>64</sup> Tchaikovsky, 45.

and P themes with each other, now finally, in F major. Rather than give way to the triumphant nature of S2 and the tri-modular block, however, this music allows the P theme to overwhelm S both in initial character and in mode. Similarly to the moments before the tonal failures of the exposition our themes are stuck again above a tonic pedal which is ultimately blasted apart by the re-entry of the fate motif.

In the decisive moments of the coda, Tchaikovsky reveals the ultimate synthesis that triumphs over this movement: that of the military topoi and sound of the fate motif, with the rhythmic profile of the P theme. This synthesis of P with fate represents not only the obliteration of the positive outcome of P and S synthesis, but also the ultimate realization of the tragic archetype in which Fate, the initial condition, not only succeeds in its aims, but also completely absorbs the transgressive elements arrayed against it, emerging stronger than ever.

In the first movement of the Fourth Symphony I have drawn attention to many distinct elements. Perhaps the most noteworthy descriptors, however, come from McClary's analysis and her use of language in relation to these themes. She points out the inherent structural problems that characterize the primary theme, and the perceived sensuous and feminine nature of the secondary themes. McClary points out the inherent negativity generally associated with identifying a theme as feminine, and even does some script-flipping when she points out the negativities inherent in the P theme which are, in the parlance of today, more associated with *toxic masculinity*. Near the end of this chapter McClary deals this final blow, "These pieces themselves suggest that no one wins within

the strictures of organizing gender and sexuality.”<sup>65</sup> Naturally this extends to those critics and analysts who, in the past, were unduly dismissive of Tchaikovsky’s music.

The perception of these themes as weak or gendered is not, however, a new concept, as McClary well knows. As was apparent in the summary of previously discussed analytical writings, the misconception that these perceived flaws contribute to a flawed sonata form, which is then correlated to Tchaikovsky’s own apparent flaws of femininity or homosexuality, is common. These biases regarding Tchaikovsky obscure the possibility that when these themes are blocked by static harmonies, made unstable by disjointed rhythmic patterns, or reduced to endless, almost violent, repetitions, they are intentionally so, and these characterizations of thematic and harmonic instability contribute to an overall narrative which subverts our expectations at every turn. For me, this subversion and redirection of expectations is the very basis of strong emotional and intellectual responses to music.

**Table 2.1:** Analysis of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony: Movement 1

Rotation 1 - Type II Sonata

| Formal Division                          | Key  | Features  |
|--|--|---|
| Primary Theme Zero<br>Module<br>mm. 1-26 | Initially ambiguous, ending<br>with half cadence in F<br>minor | -Militaristic<br>-Initially horns and<br>bassoons, gains in<br>instrumental forces<br>-Final cadence not a chord<br>but octave C                    |
| Primary Theme<br>mm. 27-52               | F minor  | -Rhythmically offset<br>melody and harmony, both<br>from each other and from<br>the time signature<br>-PAC in m. 52, again not a<br>chord, octave F |

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<sup>65</sup> McCleary, 79.

|  |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Transition<br>mm. 53-103<br>No complete cadence at<br>medial caesura | F minor                               | -Slow energy gain from P's<br>cadence<br>Repeated use of the<br>cadential second inversion<br>and Gr6 chord not followed<br>by cadence   |
| Secondary Theme 1.1<br>mm. 104-115                                   | A-flat major                          | -Based on P material<br>-Unable to cadence in A-<br>flat major<br>-Discursive strategy of<br>epiphany  |
| Secondary Theme 1.2<br>mm. 116-155                                   | A-flat minor modulating to<br>B major | -New theme overlapping<br>the previous material<br>-Discursive strategy of<br>synthesis, attempts at<br>'seduction' of P theme.<br>-Bass motion from F# to B<br>repeated, but no<br>corresponding cadence. |
| Secondary Theme 2<br>mm. 156-176                                     | B major                               | -Militaristic, in dialogue<br>with P0 and P<br>-EEC offset by tonic pedal<br>between measure 176 and<br>177  |
| Closing Zone   | B major                               | -C as S aftermath, however,<br>appears P based as S2 is<br>also in dialogue with P<br>-Over a tonic pedal  |

#### Rotation 2 – Type II Sonata

| <b>Formal Division</b>  | <b>Key</b>   | <b>Features</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| Primary Theme -<br>functioning as<br>development<br>mm. 193-294 | No strong modulations,<br>eventually reaches half<br>cadence in D minor over<br>dominant pedal | -opens with the return of<br>the P0 module<br>-In a type II sonata the<br>development and recaps are<br>merged, often with P<br>functioning similarly to a<br>development and S as the<br>recap. This section is<br>primarily based on P<br>material |
| Secondary Theme 1.2<br>functioning as recap<br>mm. 294-329      | D minor modulating to F<br>major   | -S1.1 omitted from rotation<br>2<br>-Again, attempted synthesis<br>between S1.2 and P  |

|  |                              |   |
|--|------------------------------|---|
|  |                              | -Repeated motion in bass from dominant to tonic, but no strong cadence  |
| Secondary Theme 2<br>mm. 329-348   | F major (flashes of F minor) | -Similarly militaristic and reliant on P material<br>-No tonic pedal in this iteration<br>-The ESC is now subverted by the insertion of additional chords between dominant and tonic, V-IV-I6-i6-I (corresponding with mm. 344-348) |
| Closing Zone<br>mm. 348-354  | F major                      | -C as S aftermath, however, appears P based as S2 is also in dialogue with P  |
| Coda<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Section mm. 355-380<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Section mm. 381-422 | D-flat major to F minor      | -1 <sup>st</sup> section, dream state, presents similar to a hymn in Major VI of symphony<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> section, aggressive use of material from P0 module, similarly militaristic<br>-Reality returns                         |

### **Chapter 3:**

#### **The Fifth Symphony**

In chapter 2 of this document I emphasized Tchaikovsky's normative choices for the trajectory of a sonata, and also cataloged some of the intentional instability or ambiguity in his thematic writing, which may have allowed critics to project a generalized homophobia onto the music, in analyzing the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. In this chapter I intend to do the same with the first movement of the Fifth Symphony. I will show analyses regarding the primary, transition, secondary and closing zones and discuss the relative ambiguities they present related to the critiques which I covered in chapter 1.

Speaking logistically, Tchaikovsky's sonata forms tend to follow a standard trajectory in his Fourth through Sixth Symphonies. They all begin with material which is in dialogue with the slow introduction. Their primary themes all include elements of harmonic or rhythmic instability (or both). The secondary theme zones of each symphony are in dialogue with a tri-modular block. Each expresses structural cadences with imperfect authentic cadences. The symphonies also include a coda that comments on and utilizes elements of the form which preceded it. Perhaps most importantly, at a surface level, each may first appear to be examples of sonata success, but closer examinations reveal they do not successfully reach tonal closure and are therefore examples of sonata failure.

Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony, which is also Tchaikovsky's most normative in many ways, includes all of these characteristics. The overall layout of this sonata form, in

contrast to Symphonies Four and Six that are type II, is that of a type III sonata. A type III sonata is one in which there are three clearly articulated rotations: the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation. This type of sonata is what is referred to when using the term *Sonata-Allegro* form. Within this type III sonata, however, there are some notable deformations. As in Chapter 2, I have included a table of my complete analysis at the end of this chapter.

These begin with the slow introduction. In both Four and Six, Tchaikovsky begins his symphonies with material that is similar to a slow introduction in tone, but that I would label as a P0 module, considering that it returns within the sonata form itself. The material which opens the Fifth Symphony, however, does not return within the first movement at any point. This allows for the clear label of slow introduction.

If we consider that material does not return in the movement as a stipulation for labeling that material as a slow introduction, then the Fifth Symphony meets that criteria. While the material does not return in the first movement, it does return in every subsequent movement of the symphony. This puts it in dialogue with the fourth symphony, whose introductory fate motif has a similar quality.

Following the slow introduction, sounded by clarinets and strings, the P theme is heard played by bassoon and clarinet and accompanied by strings, shown in figure 3.1. Generally the theme and its accompaniment are more rhythmically stable than the material which opens the Fourth Symphony. The harmony, however, is decidedly less cohesive; it emphasizes plagal motion and does not reach a cadence. This trait of Tchaikovsky's to emphasize the plagal was discussed by the theorist Joseph Kraus in *The Nineteenth-Century Symphony*, he related it to Tchaikovsky's use of Slavic folk songs.



**Figure 3.1:** Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 38-45

38 **Allegro con anima** (♩ = 104)

Klar. I I. Solo

Fag. I I. Solo

Viol. I *ppp*

Viol. II *ppp*

Viola *ppp*

Vcll. *ppp*

Kb. *ppp*

56

As the theme continues in figure 3.2, the reader will notice that not only is a cadence not reached, but the P theme actually begins flirting with a modulation to the major mediant. The harmonic analysis in 3.2 shows the repetition of this theme attempting to modulate to G major several times before finally ending on a half cadence in E minor in measure 57. The primary theme does not comprise a strong start in terms of modality. The harmonic stasis created by the plagal motion in E minor, followed by attempts to modulate to G major, and finally the half cadence on the dominant chord in second inversion contribute to this theme's instability. Rosa Newmarch, in her biography which I discussed in Chapter 1, refers to this symphony as being "wrought of little." Although it is my belief that the knowledge of Tchaikovsky's sexuality influenced her opinions, it may have been the tonal and harmonic ambiguity present in this theme and her inability to view it as deliberate which caused her to express these opinions.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Tchaikovsky, 150.

<sup>67</sup> Rosa Newmarch, *Tchaikovsky: His Life and Works* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 305-6.

<sup>68</sup> Tchaikovsky, 151.

53

A further commonality between the P themes in the Fourth and the Fifth symphony is how each teases the listener by lulling us into the sense that the initial conditions they impose will be relatively easy to overturn. In the fourth symphony the weak harmony and taciturn rhythm of the P theme's melody made it seem as if its grasp on the minor-mode was tenuous at best. Here in the Fifth Symphony we are, if anything, even more hopeful of the potential for change as this theme openly moves toward the desired major mediant key.

The transition that follows this half cadence proceeds normatively until the approach of the medial caesura. Here TR concludes by modulating to the minor dominant of the symphony, B minor, and opening a medial caesura on a half cadence in that key. The caesura-fill which follows is unusual for Tchaikovsky only because it is so short, it comprises roughly half a measure. This is in contrast to Four and Six; which include longer extended solo passages for cello and bass sections.

Figure 3.3 shows the MC and the caesura fill, boxed in the first measure, and a harmonic analysis of the beginning of the first S theme. This theme, which I label S1.1 is in the weakest possible position if we are hoping for an outcome in the recapitulation which will allow for a major-mode recap of this theme. Hepokoski and Darcy describe the dominant minor trajectory for a minor-mode sonata as a second level default (a term they use to indicate that although the choice is normative enough to be common, it has a higher level of markedness than a first level default). They describe this as being distinct from the more general second level default available to a composer and as “a doggedly negative tonal choice.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Hepokoski, 315.

**Figure 3.3:** Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 115-119

The musical score shows five staves of music. A box highlights measures 115-117. The dynamics are marked as *mf*, *ffp*, *molto espr.*, *f*, and *p*. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The harmonic analysis below the staves is: B minor: V, V, vii4/3 i6, i, V4/2, V.

70

Fully aware of the inherently negative position this initial secondary theme has placed us in, Tchaikovsky transitions again to a second medial caesura in the tonal area of D major. This tri-modular block is a commonality shared between the Fourth and Sixth symphonies as well. Although the normative option for this second S zone would be the global mediant, G major, Tchaikovsky instead moves us to the mediant of the initial S, placing us in D major. As I discussed in Chapter 1 of this document, the theorist Joseph Kraus views this conflict between tonal centers of E and D to be the primary structure of the narrative behind this symphony.<sup>71</sup> There is certainly a strong rationale to Kraus's argument, but I would propose the conflict is between major and minor modalities, and between the tonal centers of E and B, of which D major is only a facet.

<sup>70</sup> Tchaikovsky, 161.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph C. Kraus, "Tonal Plan and Narrative Plot in Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 5 in E Minor" in *Music Theory Spectrum*, 13, no. 1: 21-47.

Figure 3.4: Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 170-174

**Molto più tranquillo** (♩ = 92)

**Molto più tranquillo** (♩ = 92)  
*molto cantabile ed espr.*

*molto cantabile ed espr.*

*sempre pizz.*

I V4/3 I6 vi6 V6/5 V I

72

The second S zone contains both an S2.1 and an S2.2, and both themes are pastoral in nature. The initial S2.1 includes raucous winds rhythmically repeating chords, calling to mind a peasant dance, while S2.2 offers up the more idyllic pastoral associated with the final movement of Beethoven's Sixth symphony, a transcendent lilting melody. Figure 3.4 shows S2.2 which is more melodic in nature than S2.1 and also takes us to an attempted tonal closure. Although this theme is certainly more harmonically stable than either the P theme or S1.1, it has a rhythmic displacement which almost suggests that it is

<sup>72</sup> Tchaikovsky, 164.

in a different time signature from the accompaniment. Notice how the double bass, cello, and viola all emphasize the meter of 6/8, but that the melody in the violins and the countermelody in the winds all suggest a displaced 3/4-time signature. Here again we find a certain level of ambiguity that, if viewed as accidental, may lead to a negative interpretation. Viewed as an intentional choice, however, it allows for a wondrously ambiguous interpretation.

Hepokoski and Darcy's concept of the tri-modular block, which does apply here, is new terminology, but not a new idea. Heinrich Schenker's concept of a nested structure can be similarly applied to this space. A nested structure is a smaller formal construction which exists inside of a larger one. In the Sixth Symphony we will examine an insertion of a rounded binary structure within the exposition. In the Fifth symphony I believe something much more dramatic may be happening. If we remove the initial S1.1 theme and its movement into S2.1 and S2.2 from the sonata as a whole and view it separately, what we would intuitively assume is that we were looking at the exposition to a sonata form.<sup>73</sup> I believe the structure nested within this sonata is itself in the form of a typical sonata exposition in the minor-mode; moving from B minor into the normative major mediant of D major. But what does this imply for the narrative of the larger sonata form?

Here we come to the relative success or failure of the exposition to reach a successful EEC. In the exposition there are two such candidates: one which I would argue occurs within the nested structure and, in my opinion, marks the end of that space, and one which occurs in what I consider to be the main body of the sonata form. The first of these two candidates occur in measure 185 and 186. Although the motion in the bass is

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<sup>73</sup> The entire secondary theme sections occur from measure 116-298.

present and the tonic is in the highest voice, two factors lead me to believe that this is not a good candidate for a true EEC. The first is that this cadence occurs within the nested structure itself and therefore, in my opinion, represents an idealized, longed for representation of the narrative. In other words, this nested structure represents the narrative outcomes that are most desired by us, the listeners. Second is that although this cadence is initially a PAC, the violins' entrance and transformation of this theme into a rising sequence, on the mediant F-sharp and occurs only one eighth note after the tonic, substantially weakening the cadence both aurally and harmonically.

The cadence which occurs at the end of the, for lack of a better word, *real* exposition occurs at measure 197 and 198 and is shown in figure 3.5. The EEC moment, which appears boxed in both the winds and the strings in this figure, occurs after a four-bar dominant pedal, but is an IAC rather than the more desirable PAC. This second EEC candidate, although it indicates sonata failure, is a more desirable choice not only because of the powerful dynamic and thick orchestration, both markers of the EEC, but because it is followed by material which differs from the S zone which precedes it. The closing zone that follows slowly retreats until we eventually modulate back into the minor-mode for the development.



**Figure 3.5:** Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 191-198

191 *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Fl. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Ob. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Klar. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Fag. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Hr. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Trp. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Pos. I, II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Pos. III, Tuba *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Pk. *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Viol. I *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Viol. II *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Viola *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Vcll. *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

Kb. *f cres.* *al* **Tempo I (♩ = 104)**

V - - - - - I

74

So far in the exposition of this symphony we have followed P and its tonal and modal instability, the flirtation with G major and the repetitive plagal motions. We followed TR as it modulated into the most negative normative tonal choice available, that of B minor. From here Tchaikovsky has, recognizing the impossibility of a positive

<sup>74</sup> Tchaikovsky, 166.



outcome, created a new S space in the mediant of B minor: D major. Although an essential expositional cadence is reached in the form of an IAC, ultimately the exposition has been a sonata and narrative failure. The recapitulation is more heavily burdened with the responsibility of tonal closure and we as listeners do not have much hope for a romantic, positive outcome.

These expectations of negativity are, wonderfully, pushed to the farthest levels of ambiguity possible by Tchaikovsky. When the P theme first returns in the recap it is voiced more sparingly than in the introduction, with only bassoon and low strings, originally creating a sense of desolation. This negative perception, however, is abruptly shifted when Tchaikovsky actually cadences and modulates into G major. Following the cadence in G major the woodwinds enter in joyously and, in contrast to the exposition, in their upper registers creating a brighter and more positive sound shown in figure 3.6.

This transformation, surely evidence that we are on stronger tonal footing, is quickly subverted by the transition, which sinks back into the opening maneuvers from the symphony with plagal motion and a modulation back to E minor. The most startling evidence of the profoundly dark situation we find ourselves in is the recapitulated S1.1. Whereas in the exposition this was in the minor dominant, the theme now appears in C-sharp major. But how is this key related to the overall tonic of E minor?

**Figure 3.6:** Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 323-329

323

Klar. I  
Klar. II

Fag. I  
Fag. II

Viol. I  
Viol. II

Viola

Viol. Kb.

E minor: 16/4 iv iv V I iv DM:V7 I

75

To achieve a positive outcome for our S theme and ESC, the secondary theme would have to appear and successfully cadence in E major. I believe this C-sharp minor is a completely collapsed version of this choice. This is highly deformational for the recapitulation of a sonata, but not at all out of the ordinary for Tchaikovsky, who, as we saw in the fourth symphony, often plays with the third relationship to subvert expectations.

The most narratively important choice of this symphony follows the C-sharp minor section. As in the exposition, Tchaikovsky reopens S space with a second medial caesura and recapitulates S2.1 and S2.2 from the exposition. Following the patterns of the exposition, these themes appear in the major mediant of the original S theme. As in the exposition, I believe that Tchaikovsky is opening this tri-modular block to show the potential positive outcomes that the material of this sonata was tragically unable to achieve. The ESC occurs in the exact same manner as the exposition with two potential candidates; what follows however, is a return to reality.

<sup>75</sup> Tchaikovsky, 180.

The ESC is followed by the closing zone, but here the material is made of the pastoral horn or bagpipe pedals of S2.1. Far from tearing open a space to create a new zone, the material now appears quieter and far weaker than before, even flashing from major to minor.

**Figure 3.7:** Symphony 5, mvt. 1, mm. 471-479

The musical score for Figure 3.7 shows the transition from E Major to E minor. The horns (Klar. I, II, Hr. III, IV) play a descending pedal point. The violins (Viol. I, II) play a descending melodic line. The viola, cello, and double bass (Vcll., Kb.) play a descending bass line. The score is marked with dynamics: *mf*, *p*, and *p*. The key signature changes from E Major to E minor. The score is numbered 471 to 479. The page number 76 is at the bottom right.

Figure 3.7 shows the moment where this previously triumphant material shifts to a darker minor mode. Tchaikovsky marks the horns down a dynamic level at each iteration until they are playing piano. Meanwhile the E major chord collapses in on itself to the minor.

This material leads into a coda that is based on the material from the primary theme. This repetition of the P theme creates an eerie effect which creates the illusion of yet another rotation. I believe, however, that Tchaikovsky is using this coda space to comment on what the preceding sonata failed to accomplish. It is only in this coda, which is technically outside of sonata space, that Tchaikovsky places a successful PAC that also coincides with the ending of a melodic phrase. It is as if Tchaikovsky himself is

<sup>76</sup> Tchaikovsky, 195.

lamenting the tragic outcome of the sonata by demonstrating what was possible, a PAC in E minor, and pointing out the heroic lengths to which his themes have gone to attempt to avoid such an ending.

This symphony, as I have shown in my analysis of the Fourth Symphony and will show in the Sixth, contains many of the devices which Tchaikovsky deploys as strategies in crafting a sonata. These choices, which would be deformational for another composer, involve the use of slow introduction or, more commonly for Tchaikovsky, P0 modules. Primary themes which are inherently unstable, whether it be rhythmically, harmonically, melodically, or a combination of all of the above. He employs multiple medial caesuras to create tri-modular blocks, and generally ends the sonata with a coda which is always based on material from the sonata proper, whether that is P material as in the Fourth and Fifth, or S material as in the Sixth Symphony. These choices, which enhance the sense of ambiguity in formal and thematic construction, has caused many of the theorists and critics, which I examined in chapter 1, to criticize Tchaikovsky for what they interpreted as failings, but which I hope I have shown are ultimately exactly the opposite.

**Table 2.1:** Analysis of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony: Movement 1

Exposition – Type III Sonata

| Formal Division               | Key     | Features  |
|-------------------------------|---------|---|
| Slow Introduction<br>mm. 1-37 | E minor | Harmonic motion from tonic to subdominant pervasive   |
| Primary Theme<br>mm. 38-56    | E minor | -Harmonically stagnant, plagal motion throughout<br>-Hints at modulation to G major but fails<br>-Weak cadence, V4/3 – I, however, F-sharp in the bass again seems to hint at |

|   |                      |   |
|---|----------------------|---|
|   |                      | G major before descending to E  |
| Transition<br>mm. 57-115<br>Medial Caesura – Half<br>Cadence<br>mm. 115 | Modulates to B minor | -Energy gain in woodwinds, continues to strengthen<br>-Based on P Material  |
| Secondary Theme 1<br>mm. 116-151<br>Medial Caesura 2 m. 152             | B minor              | -Predominantly half cadences<br>-The reality of the sonata form   |
| Secondary Theme 2.1<br>mm. 152-169                                      | D major              | -Drone in woodwinds, comparable to bagpipes, pastoral<br>-Dream state   |
| Secondary Theme 2.2<br>mm.170-197<br>EEC m. 197-8                       | D major              | -Rhythmically weak<br>-Bass voice emphasizes 6/8, melodic voices imply 3/4 time<br>ESC is an imperfect authentic cadence with an A in the soprano voice, expository failure |
| Closing Zone<br>mm. 198-213   | D major              | -Based on material from S2.1<br>-Slowly transforms into minor mode  |

### Development

Although primarily based on material from the primary theme, the development is fully rotational and includes material from both S1 and S2.1. Interestingly, this section does not close on a dominant pedal, a normative option for the development and one Tchaikovsky implements in both the Fourth and Sixth symphonies, but rather closes on the secondary dominant of the Neapolitan in E minor, before the recapitulation in measure 321.

### Recapitulation – Type III Sonata

| Formal Division              | Key                           | Features   |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Primary Theme<br>mm. 321-335 | E minor, modulates to G major | -Initially sounded in clarinet and bassoon, now only played by the bassoon, making it more desolate in character<br>-Now fully modulates to G major with a PAC in that key |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Transition<br>mm. 336-371<br>Medial Caesura<br>m. 371 #VIHCMC        | Reverts to B minor,<br>modulates into C-sharp<br>minor | -Based on P material<br>-Although the P theme<br>cadenced in G major the<br>transition collapses into B<br>minor instantly before<br>modulating to C-sharp<br>minor                                   |
| Secondary Theme 1<br>mm. 372-408<br>Medial Caesura 2<br>m. 409 IHCMC | C-sharp minor, modulates<br>to E major                 | -The recap secondary<br>theme begins a tritone<br>away from the initially<br>desirable goal of G major<br>-As in the exposition there<br>are primarily half cadences                                  |
| Secondary Theme 2.1<br>mm. 409-426                                   | E major  | -Woodwind drones,<br>pastoral effect<br>-Again the relative ease of<br>transitioning into this mode<br>implies that we are in a<br>dream state, that the 'real'<br>sonata is back in C-sharp<br>minor |
| Secondary Theme 2.2<br>mm. 427-455<br>ESC as IAC<br>m. 455           | E major  | -This theme again presents<br>with rhythmic dissonance<br>-ESC also an IAC  |
| Closing Zone<br>mm. 455-486  | E major, modulates to E<br>minor                       | -C as S aftermath<br>-Initially triumphant in E<br>major, C begins to weaken<br>almost immediately and<br>begins flashing the material<br>from S2.1 in E minor  |
| Coda<br>mm. 487-542  | E minor  | -P based coda in E minor<br>-Initially full orchestra, the<br>coda slowly loses players<br>until only bassoon, timpani,<br>and low strings  |

## Chapter 4:

### The Sixth Symphony

*It is music to gorge on, shameless in its sensuousness and splendor. And it was no accident that such music was conceived by a warped neurotic, shy and tortured.*<sup>77</sup>

– Edward Lockspieser

That the music of Tchaikovsky is the music of the degenerate is a view which was commonly held by the critics and theorists that I discussed in Chapter 1; Lockspieser's commentary is a representation of that belief. In the chapters discussing Tchaikovsky's Fourth and Fifth Symphony, I have shown a correlation between the purposeful instability of some of the formal elements in these symphonies, and the perception of those qualities as inherent flaws or weakness of skill. It is the perception of Tchaikovsky as a feminine character, and the negativity which was then (and often still) also associated with the feminine, that created these biases and then prevented a broader view of the entirety of these symphonic forms. This is no less true in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. In this chapter I will examine the layout of the sonata form of the first movement, the success or failure of the essential cadences, and the intentional instability of thematic elements.

As a brief reminder to the reader, the use of the terms success or failure when referring to sonata forms should not be correlated to the strength or weakness of the composer. Nothing would be easier than for any composer to simply place the tonic in both the soprano and the bass. In terms of Sonata Theory, success or failure refer to the teleological outcome of the sonata as a whole. The choice, by the composer, to create a

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<sup>77</sup> Richard Taruskin. *On Russian Music* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2009), 83.

successful or failed structure is both a deliberate and, often, highly expressive choice. Here again I have also included a table of my analysis at the end of the chapter.

Although some examples of theorists analyzing this symphony without negative gender biases do exist in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, many more examples of the opposite are at hand. This is a particularly acute problem in terms of large-scale formal analysis of these works. While many simply dismissed the form of Tchaikovsky's works as ineffective, others who have taken Tchaikovsky's music seriously have, I believe, misinterpreted the form. Many theorists, including Timothy Jackson and David Brown, have stated that the Sixth Symphony has a truncated recapitulation.<sup>78</sup> However, when one applies James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's sonata theory to the work, the yields are not only fascinating, but also redemptive of Tchaikovsky's treatment in the past century. Careful analysis of the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 will reveal what Hepokoski terms as a Type 2 sonata, and that the symphony is an example of sonata failure. Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony belongs in the same category of sonata type as his Fourth.

As discussed in chapter 2 and defined by Hepokoski and Darcy in their book *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* a Type 2 sonata contains two rotations in which the second rotation begins developmental space and includes a tonal resolution.<sup>79</sup> Generally, the S and C zones function similarly to a recapitulation by reaching a tonal closure. The terms development and recapitulation, however, are less appropriate for this type of sonata than

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<sup>78</sup> Timothy Jackson, *Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>79</sup> Hepokoski, 353.



the simple nomenclature of second rotation, which is the term I will use for the remainder of this chapter.

The first rotation of this symphony begins with another deformation of normative practice which is common for Tchaikovsky, a P0 module. The zero module, shown in figure 4.1, is the seed of what will become the primary theme. This zone has often been termed a slow introduction, but similarly to the Fourth and Fifth symphony, this section functions more as the genesis of the entire movement. Also of note is the starting point of this module that begins over a pedal E2 in the string bass before chromatically descending to a B1. Typically a slow introduction would focus around the dominant of the global tonic; however this P0 module focuses around the sub-dominant before reaching an attempt at a half cadence in first inversion at the end of this section. In figure 4.2 we can see how the P0 module develops.

**Figure 4.1:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 1-6 Bassoon



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The P0 module may more comfortably be called a motif that sequences up to a cadence rather than a more traditional melody. When P itself does appear, in figure 4.2, it is repetitive and harmonically unstable. The primary theme zone never cadences, but rather joins with the transition material in a P TR merge. All of these characteristics of P separately would indicate an initial state which is tenuous at best; when taken as a whole, however, these qualities seem downright untenable. This quality of the music, which I

<sup>80</sup> Tchaikovsky, 313.

have commented on in the Fourth and Fifth symphonies, is a further element which causes many commentators, such as Lockspieser, Huneke to describe the music or the form as weak, and thereby miss the teleological impact of the whole.

**Figure 4.2:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 19-23 strings



One of the unifying elements of Tchaikovsky's expository plans that links the Sixth symphony to that of the Fourth and Fifth is an attempted tri-modular block. As the reader will remember, a tri-modular block is an exposition that includes three, rather than two, sections and generally has two medial caesuras. Although the tri-modular block is a normative option for Tchaikovsky, this exposition can only be said to be in dialogue with the concept. Tchaikovsky follows the initial iteration of S1.1, which fails to successfully create a PAC, with material which I term S1.2. Although there is a second MC in measure 129, it is followed by a reiteration of S1.1 (shown in figures 4.3-4.5). A normative tri-modular block would have new thematic material after the second MC. This section is therefore also in dialogue with a nested structure, a Schenker's concept which describes a small formal structure such as a binary form, within a larger form such

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<sup>81</sup> Tchaikovsky, 314.

as a sonata form. The nested structure is used to great effect in the Fifth Symphony as discussed in chapter 3.

Narratively, the implications created by a second opening force on the form of the symphony, the second medial caesura, create an expectation of a new secondary theme. When one considers the Sixth Symphony in comparison to both Four and Five, this expectation is heightened. Knowing this, what is communicated by Tchaikovsky's restatement of the original theme, which was already unsuccessful? In my opinion, there is an element of a poetic definition of madness: taking the same steps and expecting a different outcome. The reentrance of the secondary theme with greater instrumental forces gives the theme a new level of gravitas, but ultimately the same end result is reached.

The success or failure of the expositional rotation is the second S1.1 and its failure to reach a fully functional EEC. The following three figures show the entire S zone in its second appearance.

**Figure 4.3:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 130-133

The musical score for Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 130-133, is presented for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The tempo is marked *Andante* (♩ = 69). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score includes various dynamics and articulations, such as *senza sordini* (without mutes), *sempre p* (always piano), and *p* (piano). A box highlights a specific section of the score, likely the S zone mentioned in the text.

Figure 4.4: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 134-138



Figure 4.5: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 139-144



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In terms of a tonal layout, this S has the same trajectory and, similarly, should be on its way to a successful EEC. The key is D major, or the global III, which creates the structure of promise. This is a structure which promises that by the end of our journey through sonata space the composer will lead us to an essential closure in the tonic major-mode. Careful observation, however, reveals ill omens in this S theme. While the general shape of P moves sequentially upwards, this melody seems to lilt downward. In addition to the initial gesture, marked in figure 4.3 with a vertical line, the ends of all these phrases fall downward to their cadences, marked in boxes in all figures of S. This is

<sup>82</sup> Figures 4.3-4.5: Tchaikovsky, 328-330.

auspicious because the moment that should produce the EEC in figure 4.5, the boxed portion, is not a PAC, which the EEC requires for success, but rather an IAC.

Additionally, an eighth rest offsets the bass note D from landing on the principal beat. Although an IAC may, in some cases, be regarded as an acceptable type of EEC, the repeated nature of the dotted quarter and eighth note figures which always slump downward rather than rising upward, is indicative of at least a partial, if not a complete expositional failure. If the melody only moved upward it could reach the tonic with the same number of rhythmic steps. Secondary themes attempting to create structural cadences with IACs is also a normative choice for Tchaikovsky and occurs in both the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies as well. Later we will examine the essential structural closure and see if S can remedy this situation in rotation 2.

Following this material and a brief closing zone<sup>83</sup> Tchaikovsky reintroduces the P material in the second rotation. Generally in a sonata form the listener expects the development to begin in the same key and mode as S. Tchaikovsky, however, sees fit to present the material in D minor, rather than major, an audible retraction of the mood created by the secondary theme.

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<sup>83</sup> I label this closing zone as S-aftermath.

Figure 4.6: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 167-171

Figure 4.6 displays a musical score for measures 167-171 of Symphony 6, mvt. 1. The score includes staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Kontrabaß. A boxed portion in the Violin 1 staff highlights the return of the P material, marked 'sul G' and 'feroce'.

Figure 4.7: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 172-175

Figure 4.7 displays a musical score for measures 172-175 of Symphony 6, mvt. 1. The score includes staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Kontrabaß. Boxed portions in the Violin 1, Viola, and Violoncello staves highlight the return of the P material, marked 'feroce'.

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The boxed portions in figures 4.6 and 4.7 show the P material as it returns. It is difficult to ascertain the key as there are few establishing cadences, but the modality has certainly shifted to minor and there appears to be an initial focus around D. In these figures you may also see how the melodic shape of the P material continues to move sequentially upward.

Tchaikovsky's treatment of this P material functions developmentally. In the exposition there is no clear separation between the primary and transitional material; the

<sup>84</sup> Tchaikovsky, 333-334.

two form a P=>TR merge, and likewise in the development the sequences, modulation and other developmental rhetoric still focus around the opening motif. There are two areas of interest in the development which we shall examine here.

**Figure 4.8:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 229-233

Figure 4.8 shows the P material close to the ending of the first half of rotation 2. In this section, rather than rising up as it has in the past, P appears to be stuck in place. This is particularly unusual because where it is caught is closely related to B-flat minor. The accompaniment in this section is a B-flat minor chord in second inversion. We would hope to come across a V chord to end the tension created by this harmony. Instead Tchaikovsky wrenches us out of this tonal area and through a series of sequences which steadily increase in instrumental forces until nearly the full orchestra has P material and erupts into a devastating F-sharp minor.

This section, which immediately precedes the return of S material, is the most emotionally devastating in the entire movement. Perhaps as a sort of trial by fire Tchaikovsky does end this section of the second rotation on a dominant pedal which allows for the return of the S theme. Although a dominant pedal is the normative choice to end this section, A new dissonance is sounded on the other side of this divide.

<sup>85</sup> Tchaikovsky, 346.

Figure 4.9: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 305-308

In the first box of figure 4.9, Tchaikovsky uses three against four in a chromatic scale moving upward to create a sense of rising out of the ether, which is immediately followed by the S theme. These notes are rhythmically dissonant with each other but not tonally dissonant. Unlike the expository S, however, this is both in B major and appears an octave higher. This combined with rhythmic dissonance which begins the zone, creates a sense of unreality. Further ahead in S we can see that now, although the theme itself still seems unable to reach upward, the material makes a concerted effort to reach new heights. The final box of figure 4.9 shows the chromatic scale which appears in nearly all strings and woodwinds. Throughout figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11 the reader can observe (also boxed) that the S material is in a similar predicament to that of the exposition, namely that its cadences continue to fall in a downward direction.

<sup>86</sup> Tchaikovsky, 358.



Figure 4.10: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 309-313

Figure 4.11: Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 314-319

The essential secondary closure (hereafter referred to as the ESC) is set to occur in bar 317, shown boxed in figure 4.11. In the exposition Tchaikovsky offset the tonic bass with an eighth rest, but here that issue is resolved. The cadence, however, remains an IAC due to the descending melodic line. Because of the repetition of this falling gesture, S creates an unfulfilled effect, compounded by the dreamy state of its register and repetition, which the coda further amplifies.

<sup>87</sup> Tchaikovsky, 358-360.

Figure 4.12 shows the beginning of the coda. In this section first the brass and then the woodwinds make two attempts, through the same rhythmic gesture as the final moments of S to reach upward. They are, however, both unsuccessful. Although they do move melodically upward, the final note they reach is still not the tonic. Boxes surround these gestures in the figures. In both cases in the brass (seen in both figure 4.12 and ending in figure 4.13) gesture terminates on the third of a B major triad, a D-sharp. The woodwinds then follow with their own attempt to reach upward; however, they too fall short and, in both cases, end with a D-sharp in the soprano.

**Figure 4.12:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 333-338

The musical score for Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 333-338, shows the beginning of the coda. The top system includes staves for 1. in F Hrn., 3 & 4. in F Trp. 1, 2 in B, A. T., Pos., B., and Pk. The bottom system includes staves for Viol. 1, Viol. 2, Vla., Vc., and Kb. The tempo changes from 'quasi adagio' to 'Andante mosso (♩. 80)'. The brass and woodwinds make two attempts to reach upward, with boxes highlighting these gestures. The score includes dynamic markings like pppp, pp, and cantabile.

**Figure 4.13:** Symphony 6, mvt. 1, mm. 339-345

The effect of the coda combined with the IAC and falling gesture in S, as well as the overall turbulence of the P material coupled with the fact that there are no PACs in the entire movement, lead me to perceive this symphony again as an example of sonata failure. Even though the movement ends in B major, this movement is indicative of an overall tragic narrative archetype in which the protagonist S is unable to completely change the dreadful initial state laid out by P. In terms of Byron Almen's theory of narrativity, the interesting facet of this symphony, especially when compared to the fourth, is that we as listeners are not primed to experience a subversion of our expectations. In the Fourth Symphony Tchaikovsky set many aural clues in place that increase the probability of a comedic archetype.

<sup>88</sup> Tchaikovsky, 362-363.

In the Sixth Symphony, however, we are not primed to expect a positive outcome and, if anything, expect the tragedy to unfold before us. While in the Fourth Tchaikovsky made use of the discursive strategy of synthesis, which ultimately failed, this symphony contains no attempt at any strategy which might allow for some course correction. When viewed in reverse, the opening of the Sixth Symphony's P0 module, with its sequential motif and harmonically weak cadence, sounds as the opening of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where the audience is informed of the ultimate end of the play from the opening.

In this Symphony, as in the others we have examined, Tchaikovsky sets in motion deliberately unstable primary and secondary zones that, over the course of the piece, enhance the overall telos of these symphonic sonatas. Again, these inherently unstable themes, viewed as lacking by critics and evidence of Tchaikovsky's sexuality manifesting in the music, may have contributed to the negative scholarship of Tchaikovsky's works as a whole.

**Table 4.1:** Analysis of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony: Movement I

Rotation 1 – Type II Sonata

| Formal Divisions                                       | Key                  | Features  |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Primary Theme Zero<br>Module<br>mm. 1-18               | B minor              | -First cell of P theme<br>-sequential<br>Harmonic motion from iv-i                        |
| Primary Theme<br>m. 19-P-TR merge                      | B minor              | -Expands on opening cell of P0<br>-More rhythmically active<br>-Does not reach cadence    |
| Transition<br>P-TR merge-80<br>Medial Caesura<br>m. 80 | Modulates to D major | -No clear beginning to the transition<br>-Sequential motion for modulation<br>-No cadence |

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|---|---------|---|
| Caesura Fill<br>mm. 80-88   | D major | -Caesura fill creates a kind of pedal on A, but also includes but D and B, implying the presence of both keys   |
| Secondary Theme 1.1<br>mm. 89-100                                     | D major | -Sparse instrumentation, low dynamic initial presentation of theme<br>-Harmonically static, most often heard over a tonic pedal<br>-Repeatedly cadences with the fifth in the soprano voice                             |
| Secondary Theme 1.2<br>mm. 101-129<br>Medial Caesura 2<br>m. 130      | D major | -New theme, more harmonically active, much more tonic to dominant motion with secondary dominants of A major<br>-In comparison to S1.1, sounds almost playful and light   |
| Secondary Theme 1.1<br>mm. 130-142<br>EEC as IAC in D major<br>m. 142 | D major | -Large instrumental force<br>-Escalates to fortissimo dynamic<br>-Bass line offset from downbeats by an eighth rest<br>-IAC in m. 142 is the EEC both rhythmically offset and A in soprano voice<br>-Expository failure |
| Closing Zone  | D major | -C as S aftermath<br>-over a tonic pedal  |

#### Rotation 2 – Type II Sonata

| Formal Division   | Key  | Features  |
|---|--|---|
| Transition  | D minor  | -Brief transition to P material<br>-Very sudden change to the mood of the second rotation, in sharp contrast to the S theme |
| Primary Theme-<br>Functioning as development<br>mm. 171-304 | No strong key area, eventually modulates to B major, terminating in a half cadence in that key | -Based entirely on P material<br>-Although not strictly the material of P0, this area                                       |

|   |         |   |
|---|---------|---|
|   |         | <p>does embrace more of the sequential motion used in P0 than the more expanded P1</p> <p>-M. 267, dominant pedal signaling close of this section.</p> <p>-Although no tempo change is noted, the rhythmic values used in this section are elongated and create the effect of halving the tempo</p>   |
| <p>Secondary Theme 1.1<br/>mm. 305-317<br/>ESC as IAC in B major<br/>m. 317</p> | B major | <p>-Begins with rhythmic dissonance, 3 against 4 chromatic scale in low strings</p> <p>-Initially quite soft, the orchestra increases in dynamic and wrenches the theme upward an octave with chromatic scales in quick bursts</p> <p>-Ultimately this theme suffers from the same issues as the exposition and is unable to successfully cadence</p> |
| <p>Closing Zone<br/>mm. 317-334</p>   | B major | <p>-C as S aftermath</p> <p>-Driven by solo clarinet</p> <p>-Repeats gesture from S theme which failed to cadence several times</p>   |
| <p>Coda<br/>mm. 335-354</p>   | B major | <p>-Desolate major</p> <p>-First brass then woodwinds attempt to create a cadence in this paragenetic space, but both groups fail</p> <p>-Sounded after a repeatedly descending B major scale, creates an effect similar to a tonic pedal</p>   |

## Conclusion

In this document I attempted to meet two overarching goals. First, I wanted to provide analyses of Tchaikovsky's music using Sonata Theory which would allow for a more nuanced interpretation of the symphonies. Second, I wanted to relate my analyses to critical analysis of the past and attempt to expose negative biases against Tchaikovsky and reveal what aspects of ambiguity in the music at hand might have allowed some to express these negative views.

In the first chapter I surveyed the various music critics and analysts who have discussed Tchaikovsky's use of form in his Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Symphonies. While such a survey could never be fully complete the material presented provides a comprehensive scope of critical commentary regarding Tchaikovsky's work. In this survey I began by discussing the writings of Richard Taruskin in his book *On Russian Music*, and Malcolm Brown's writings which appeared in the collection *Queer Episodes*. Both Taruskin and Brown have extensively catalogued the reception history of Tchaikovsky's music and, in my opinion, proved that negative biases influenced the reception of this music.

In my own survey I collected writings which specifically related to the formal analysis of Tchaikovsky's music. This means that, not only was the pool of writing much smaller, but it also included a wider array of sources including music critics and academic authors. In the data I found two groups of writers. The first was shortly after Tchaikovsky's death and extending into the 1950's. This group often, though not always, was negative about Tchaikovsky's compositional skill in formal construction. In this

category are writers such as Rosa Newmarch, Edward Lockspieser, Martin Cooper, and Gerald Abraham, many of whom will praise Tchaikovsky's music in one sentence, and then provide a list of his apparent faults in the next.

Following this group of authors, a new cadre arises after the centenary of Tchaikovsky's death. This group is made up of analysts such as Susan McCleary, Joseph Kraus, and Timothy Jackson. All provide informative and thoughtful analysis of this music, and in the case of McCleary and Jackson even address the effects of femininity and sexuality on Tchaikovsky's music and his critical reception. Between these two groups of authors is one of the most prolific writers on Tchaikovsky, the musicologist David Brown.

Brown is, more than anyone in this survey, indicative of how changing societal perceptions of the queer community and feminism have positively influenced the reception of Tchaikovsky's music. In Brown's original four-part biography of the composer he often blatantly discusses the evil of Tchaikovsky's own sexuality. In his more recent 1993 book *Tchaikovsky Remembered*, however, Brown discusses his prior and updated perceptions of Tchaikovsky at the time of his original writing; views that Tchaikovsky was an unskilled composer who was *lucky* in his creation of tunes and emotional climaxes, and that he was a neurotic and guilt-ridden homosexual. Brown then goes on to say how wrong he was to express both of these ideas. Brown's changing perceptions of Tchaikovsky represent, I believe, a corresponding positive shift in views towards the queer and the female. Although this shift is by no means finished, especially



as regards feminism, I believe Brown's transforming opinions indicate the beginnings of change.<sup>89</sup>

In regard to Tchaikovsky's symphonies, I will not rehash every analytical moment again. I intend, rather, to discuss the similarities which tie each work together. The first, and most pervasive commonality in these works is Tchaikovsky's treatment of Essential Structural Cadences. In all these symphonies each structural cadence is an IAC rather than the more common PAC. Some view the IAC as an acceptable alternative to the PAC in a nineteenth-century sonata. I view the pervasive use of this cadence, however, as Tchaikovsky indicating to us that his sonatas are as close to sonata success as it is possible to be, while still falling short of that goal by, essentially, one note. The narrative impact of these near-misses is to escalate the drama inherent in the form. The stress inherent in the large-scale harmony of a symphonic movement from the dominant to the tonic finds only partial fulfillment in these cadences; but in this case a partial fulfillment only increases the tension within in the movement.

A second characteristic of Tchaikovsky's sonata forms is the implementation of the tri-modular block. He uses this three-section exposition in Symphonies Four and Five, and in Symphony Six he heavily suggests the idea, opening a second medial caesura but repeating the initial S theme rather than new material. This strategy has meaningful narrative implications. The use of a second S theme implies an inherently weak or flawed initial S theme. The new secondary theme is an attempt to remedy a situation which is unlikely to allow for structural cadences. In an eighteenth-century sonata, these second S themes nearly always reach a tonal closure. In all of these symphonies the failure to reach

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<sup>89</sup> David Brown *Tchaikovsky Remembered* (London, Faber & Faber: 1993), ix.

structural cadence is repeated in all modules of the S theme. I believe Tchaikovsky often opens these new S spaces to comment on the futility of ever being able to surmount fate. These spaces open to show us the way that, in a rosier version of reality, the insurmountable problems arrayed against us could be overcome.

Connected to the concept of Tchaikovsky's secondary theme being unable to rise to the task of the sonata form, is his construction of Primary Themes. In each of these three symphonies Tchaikovsky's initial P themes all present as flawed or weak in various ways. In the Fourth Symphony there is a rhythmic ambiguity that creates a kind of lurching momentum. This is heightened by a kind of static harmony which has the effect of arresting motion. In the Fifth Symphony the P theme presents as being tonally unstable. Its harmonic motion in E minor is from the tonic to the subdominant, and before it has even cadenced it flirts with a modulation in G major. In the Sixth Symphony the theme is presented less as a melody, and more as a series of sequences. Although much of this document has been focused on the drama inherent to large scale forms, these themes provide an excellent example of Tchaikovsky's formal strategies in miniature. Each theme contains elements that would allow for successful resolutions, but inevitably they are sabotaged from within by rhythmic weakness in the Fourth Symphony, harmonic and tonal weakness, in the Fifth Symphony, and melodic weakness in the Sixth Symphony.

Although this deliberately flawed set of primary themes allows for the creation of breathtaking symphonies, there is also a fascinating narrative implication. As listeners we expect, in a minor-mode sonata, to be faced with a strong and insurmountable initial condition. The P themes in these symphonies, however, present the opposite. They each present an initial condition which we are led to believe will be easy to overturn. This has

the effect of heightening our expectations for a comedic outcome, making the tragic sonata failure all the more powerful.

Tchaikovsky also uses the paragenetic space to great effect in all of these symphonies. Although only the Fifth Symphony contains a true slow introduction, each makes use of a coda. Tying all of these codas together is their reliance on material from the sonata and the commentary they make on the narrative of the movement which precedes them. In the Fourth Symphony the coda is tied to the militaristic Fate motif which opens the movement, commenting on the ultimate inability of the sonata to stand against the tides of fate. In the Fifth Symphony the coda is a return to the original crushing minor of the primary theme, first in full orchestra and then slowly receding to only a few musicians. And in the Sixth Symphony the coda is heard in what Hepokoski and Darcy term as a desolate or pathetic major.<sup>90</sup> This section repeats the inability of the secondary theme to reach a satisfying cadence over and over, lamenting the sonata's ultimate failure.

The commonality among all of these specifics, and a narrative trajectory is that in each of these symphonies, Tchaikovsky creates a set of expectations in which we, as listeners, are cued to expect a comedic outcome. He then subverts these expectations with two reveals: first that the initial condition is stronger and more stable than it first appeared, second by creating a system in which the S themes come as close as possible to sonata success while still missing the mark. The narrative effect of all these elements is that of raging against the machine. We know from Tchaikovsky's own writing that he was drawn to the idea of fate and the struggle against it. Each of these symphonies

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<sup>90</sup> Hepokoski, 308.

encapsulates the poetic ideal of struggling against one's own fate, ultimately failing, and finally accepting that failure.

I believe that, in the past, these moments of sonata failure and the flawed construction of themes was viewed as an excuse to denigrate Tchaikovsky's music. I hope my analysis allows for the view that these flawed sections and sonata failures are not only deliberate, but instrumental in creating works of art which would otherwise foster little interest.

It is my sincere hope that my analyses of Tchaikovsky's Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies will be redemptive of Tchaikovsky's skillful treatment of form. It is my belief that, in the past, analysts brought the biases of their own time to bear on Tchaikovsky's music, biases against sections of society including Slavs, the queer community, and women. An argument can be made, fairly easily, that I am allowing my own positive biases for these communities and other societally *othered* groups to color my own analysis. This is almost certainly true. Art does not exist in a vacuum and society always brings its conscious and unconscious preconceptions to bear on current and past cultural artifacts. I hope, however, that it is clear that my goal is to enhance the experience of listening to, and performing this beautiful music, rather than to convince someone that it is inherently flawed.

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