

Invited lecture/Reflection

Music in the Life and Literary Works of Anton Pavlovich

Chekhov

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Abstract:

The purpose of the article is to present, with reference to a number of his stories and plays, the part played by music in Chekhov's works, which contain many borrowings from folk songs, Russian romances and classical music. The heroes of his works sing arias from operas, playing and singing the works of Russian and foreign composers. There are many extracts from the works of Tchaikovsky, with whom the writer enjoyed a relationship marked by mutual respect and friendship. Music in Chekhov's literary works embraces the whole of human life, covering a wide variety of emotions and situations described in many of the writer's works, which also include stories with purely musical titles. The article also briefly mentions some descriptions of Italy, a country much admired by the writer.

Keywords: Anton Pavlovich Chekhov;



1. Introduction

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904) was both a writer and a medical doctor, and medical doctors are repeatedly mentioned in his literary works, some of his heroes having characters similar to that of the writer himself. For example, the character of the medical doctor Samoylenko in the novella *The Duel*, who was “calm, extremely kind, soft-hearted and helpful”, giving people money and always standing up for the downtrodden, reminds one of Chekhov himself, who treated the sick free of charge during the cholera epidemic and, at his own expense, opened three schools, a post office and a telegraph service in his home village. He donated a library with more than two thousand books to his home town of Taganrog.

In his literary works Chekhov often mentions literature and music, his stories and plays embodying various references, quotations, parodies or influences from the works of other Russian and foreign writers, playwrights and poets. Sometimes these literary quotations also have a musical connotation, as the poets' verses were set to music by composers, or the literary works served as a template for the librettos of the operas referred to by Chekhov.

Chekhov's literary works frequently quote various Russian folk songs and ballads, as well as vocal and instrumental compositions by Russian and foreign composers. The lyrics and mood in these compositions often match what the literary characters are feeling or doing. Music is an important soundtrack to his plays. With music, he emphasizes the inner experience of his heroes, who often play music, go to concerts, talk about music or listen to it with pleasure.

2. Literary quotations in selected works of Chekhov

Examples from some of Chekhov's works where mention is made of Russian and foreign literature include the novellas *The Duel* and *The Story of an Unknown Man*, where Chekhov cites the Russian classics of Turgenev, Lermontov, Pushkin, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as well as the French writer Balzac (specifically his novel *Le Père Goriot*). In *The Story of an Unknown Man*, for example, the hero Orlov is a voracious reader, but other literary characters also have a formidable knowledge of nineteenth century Russian literature. These short stories by Chekhov contain several references to Russian classical works. His play *The Three Sisters*, for instance, mentions Gogol and Lermontov and the latter's poem 'The Sail'. In *Uncle Vanya*, he quotes Turgenev in relation to the romantic beauty of the environment: “Here you have the forests, the houses half in ruins that Turgenev writes of.” In the story that is sometimes defined as a novel, *The Shooting Party*, he also parodies excerpts from Ostrovsky's plays and tackles the subject of crime and the criminal, similar to Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

The duel in the novella of the same name reminds us of the duel in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, but in Chekhov no one dies. With this novella, Chekhov also responded to the controversies about the acceptability of the duel in modern times which filled the Russian press in the 1880s (Chekhov 1947, p. 331; in the foreword by M. Javornik). The literary character Laevsky remains alive after a happy turn of events and suddenly sees his previously miserable life in a new light. He is overwhelmed by the joy of life and decides to work harder from now on. This character, condemned to death, who survives by a lucky chance, is somewhat reminiscent of Dostoevsky's own life as referred to in *The Idiot*.

3. Music in the literary works of Chekhov

Music was present in Chekhov's life since childhood, as his father Pavel Chekhov taught his children to sing in a choir. They sang at home and also in the church, where he was the leader of the choir. Chekhov spent his childhood in Taganrog, where more than half of the residents were foreigners, mainly Italians, Greeks, English and Germans. They organized concerts in which European musicians played and Italian and Russian operas were performed (I quote from: Gudkova). In *Ionitch* he describes life in the provincial town of S., which resembles the writer's home town: “Visitors to the provincial town S. complained of the dreariness and monotony of life; the inhabitants of the town, as though defending themselves,



declared that it was very pleasant in S., that there was a library, a theatre, a club and that balls were sometimes held."

In the cemetery of the town of S., there was a monument in the form of a chapel with a little angel on the top, dedicated to a lady called Demetti, because "An Italian opera had once visited S. and one of the singers had died; she had been buried here, and this monument erected in her memory. No one in the town remembered her, but the lamp at the entrance reflected the moonlight, and looked as though it were burning."

Chekhov's works contain many appreciative words about music, which for Chekhov is the joy of life; he also compares sounds from nature to music. In the novella *Ariadne* he writes: "When I am nailed up in my coffin I believe I shall still dream of those early mornings, you know, when the sun hurts your eyes: or the wonderful spring evenings when the nightingales and the landrails call from the garden and beyond, and sounds of the harmonica float across from the village, while they play the piano indoors and the stream babbles . . . when there is such music, in fact, that one wants at the same time to cry and to sing aloud."

Irina, the youngest sister in *The Three Sisters*, dreams of love and compares her soul to a precious piano: "My soul is like an expensive piano which is locked and the key lost."

Music from Verdi's operas was played in the homes of Taganrog. The writer's father, Pavel Chekhov, also loved music and organized private and public performances given by the family choir. Even members of the working class sang tunes from operas on the streets. As a young man, Chekhov went to symphony concerts and performances of operas and operettas. In his home town, he also heard the works of Tchaikovsky.

4. The meeting of Chekhov and Tchaikovsky

Chekhov and Tchaikovsky met in 1888. The first step was taken by the composer Tchaikovsky, who was twenty years older than Chekhov. Tchaikovsky read a lot and immediately spotted Chekhov's exceptional talent as a writer. In 1887, he read a short story by Chekhov in one of the newspapers that impressed him so much that he wrote a letter to the author and sent it to the newspaper's editorial office, though for some reason Chekhov never received it. Tchaikovsky also expressed his great enthusiasm for Chekhov's talent in a letter to his brother Modest, and the following year Chekhov visited the home of the poet Alexei Pleshcheev in St. Petersburg, where he became acquainted with the composer's brother. The next day (14 December 1888) he invited him to his house for breakfast, where Pyotr Ilyich was also present. The composer and the writer, who greatly appreciated each other's work, made a tremendous impression on each other when they met in person. The following year, Tchaikovsky visited Chekhov at his home in Moscow, and they exchanged several more letters that and the following year. Chekhov's acquaintance with the great composer was reflected in several of his works, which contain references to Tchaikovsky's compositions. Chekhov dedicated to Tchaikovsky a selection of stories that were published in 1890. The composer and the writer planned to create an opera based on Lermontov's works (the title of the opera was intended to be 'Bela', after the first part of Lermontov's novel *A Hero of Our Time*). Unfortunately, this project never came to fruition, as Chekhov went to Sakhalin in 1890, while Tchaikovsky left for Italy, dying three years later (I quote from www.tchaikovskyhome.ru and www.antonchehov.ru).

Chekhov often refers to Tchaikovsky's music in his works. In *The Story of an Unknown Man*, for instance, the literary hero attended Thursday evenings at the house of the host Orlov. He was the son of a general, had long fingers like a pianist's, and there was something reminiscent of a musical virtuoso in his whole body. Chekhov wrote that such figures play the first violin in orchestras, but in fact "He played a little on the piano. Sometimes he would sit down at the piano, play a chord or two, and begin singing softly: "What does the coming day bring to me?" The piece mentioned is Lensky's aria from Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*. This melody, which reappears in the story, relates to the unpredictable future of the main character, a revolutionary. In the story a man named Gruzin plays two more compositions by Tchaikovsky and a piece by Saint-Saëns, 'The Swan'.



In the one-act comedy *Jubilee*, Tatiana Alekseevna relates how a sailor, a chance random companion on the train, when he was told her name, sings: "Onegin, I can't conceal it, I love Tatiana madly!", an aria from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

Tchaikovsky's music can also be found in the novella *My Life*. The heroine Masha sings the song 'Night': "She had a fine, mellow, powerful voice; and while she sang I felt as though I were eating a ripe, sweet, fragrant melon. She ended, the audience applauded, and she smiled, very much pleased, making play with her eyes, turning over the music, smoothing her skirts, like a bird that has at last broken out of its cage and preens its wings in freedom."

'Night' is a piece for voice and piano set to verse by Yakov Petrovich Polonsky (1819-98), a Russian poet who strove to continue the romantic poetic tradition of Alexander Pushkin. A Slovene romantic poet, Anton Aškerc, announced the news of his death in the 'Ljubljanski zvon' newspaper and described him as a famous Russian poet, like Majkov, Fet and Belinsky, who was "one of the epigones of the Pushkins" (Aškerc, 1898).

5. Operas and operettas

Chekhov's works also include mention of various operas such as "Rigoletto, The Huguenots and La Traviata!" in the novella *The Nervous Breakdown*. *The Huguenots* (*Les Huguenots*) is an opera by the German Romantic composer Giacomo Meyerbeer which he wrote for the Paris Opera.

The medical doctor in the novella *Three Years* is "a wretched, greasy miser, a sort of operatic Gaspard from "Les Cloches de Corneville," an operetta by the French composer Robert Planquett.

In the short dramatic monologue *On the Harmful Effects of Tobacco*, the narrator is a man whose wife runs a music school and a school for women. The protagonist sings the beginning of an aria, but he can't remember the origin: "But some of you, I'm sure, would rather hear a ballad, or a symphony, some aria" ... He sings. "We shall not shrink in the heart of battle: Forward, be strong." According to the Russian original (http://sunny-genre.narod.ru/books/yankovsky_1937/3-7.htm) it appears to be a choral aria from the operetta *Le petit Faust* by the composer Hervé (the pseudonym of Louis-Auguste Florimond Ronger, who wrote over 100 operettas (Kennedy and Bourne 1996, p. 335), a parody of Berlioz's opera of the same name. The libretto of this operetta, dating from 1869, was quite popular at the time and was translated into Russian shortly after its creation by Vasilij Kurochkin (1831-75), a journalist, poet and translator.

6. Russian folk songs and ballads

In *The Shooting Party*, which is sometimes described as Chekhov's only novel and was not translated into Slovenian until 2022, a gypsy choir performs under the direction of a choirmaster who accompanies him on the balalaika. The choir sings Russian gypsy ballads. Performances by gypsy singers were very frequent and popular at parties of the aristocracy. Even in the middle of the nineteenth century, these choirs were extremely widespread. Their repertoire also included Russian romances, the texts of which they wrote themselves and in Russian; they could also use the texts of Russian poets (I quote from: Čeredničenko).

As Chekhov says in relation to the ballad 'Nights of madness, nights of gladness', the words of the song are very romantic and exaggerated: "I began to dress and describe to the doctor what I had lately experienced of "Nights of madness, nights of gladness", which are so delightful and sentimental in the songs and so unsightly in reality." "Nothing acts more irritatingly, more titillatingly on my nerves than such rapid transitions. I trembled with rapture, and embracing Tina with one arm and waving the balalaika in the air with the other hand, I sang "Nights of madness " to the end."



Typical features of Russian romances include a strophic form, an instrumental introduction with a guitar, a more frequent minor tonality and frequent rhythms of a minuet, siciliano and waltz (I quote from: Čeredičenko). Three songs sung by gypsies are quoted in *The Shooting Party*: 'Akh Moskva, Moskva, Moskva, white-stoned Moskva', which is a song to a text by Count Vladimir Aleksandrovich Sollogub (1813-82); a Russian folk song 'Down the Volga' and the ballad 'Nights of madness, nights of gladness'. According to the Russian critical edition of Chekhov's story, 'Nights of madness, nights of gladness' is an inaccurate quote from Alexei Nikolayevich Apukhtin's poem from 1876, which was set to music by Tchaikovsky and other composers. Apukhtin (1841-93) was a close friend of Tchaikovsky and also dedicated some songs to him. In the 1880s, however, the text became the basis for a popular gypsy ballad, which appeared in various musical adaptations.

The Russian folk song 'Lutchina' is mentioned in *Ionitch*: "In the town gardens close by a band was playing and a choir was singing "Lutchina", the song being sung by the choir expressing sentiments not to be found in the novel, only in real life."

7. Music in the parks

Chekhov also mentions the music played in pavilions in the parks. In story *Ariadne*, for instance: "A military band, only just arrived from Fiume, with glittering brass instruments, sauntered by to the bandstand - they began playing."

What Chekhov wrote about Abbazzia (Opatija in Croatia) is interesting: "Have you ever been to Abbazzia? It's a filthy little Slav town with only one street, which stinks, and in which one can't walk after rain without galoshes. I had read so much and always with such intense feeling about this earthly paradise [...]. There is a calm bay there full of steamers and boats with coloured sails. From there I could see Fiume and the distant islands covered with lilac mist, and it would have been picturesque if the view over the bay had not been hemmed in by the hotels and their annexes - buildings in an absurd, trivial style of architecture, with which the whole of that green shore has been covered by greedy moneygrubbers, so that for the most part you see nothing in this little paradise but windows, terraces, and little squares with tables and waiters' black coats. There is a park such as you find now in every watering-place abroad. And the dark, motionless, silent foliage of the palms, and the bright yellow sand in the avenue, and the bright green seats, and the glitter of the braying military horns - all this sickened me in ten minutes!"

In the novella *Anna on the Neck*, Anna hears music being played by a band and becomes suddenly overwhelmed with joy. She sings a tune played by the orchestra, and the music soon helps her mood to improve.

8. Music in the everyday life of the heroes of Chekhov's stories

In the novel *Three Years*, music is an important element in the description of the provincial town where the story takes place: "There were gardens all along the lane, and a row of lime-trees growing by the fence cast a broad patch of shadow in the moonlight, so that the gate and the fences were completely plunged in darkness on one side, from which came the sounds of women whispering, smothered laughter, and someone playing softly on a balalaika. There was a fragrance of lime-flowers and of hay."

Music can contribute to create a happy mood and fill a person with optimism: "The bands are playing so gaily, so bravely, and one does so want to live!" we read in *The Three Sisters*. Music is also associated with memory. A song or a melody can bring back memories of past times, as in *Ionitch*, where a song is reminiscent of carefree young years. The provincial doctor, Dmitry Ionitch Startsev, sings "Before I'd drunk the tears from life's goblet...", this is an 'Elegy' based on the poetry of Anton Delvig (1798-1831), Pushkin's classmate at the lyceum in Tsarskoye Selo, whose works were set to music by Aljabljev and Glinka, among others. The music was written by Mihail Yakovliev (1798-1868), a friend of Pushkin and a composer and singer. Chekhov associates music and singing with a happy, joyful mood.



The hero of the story once walked home from a restaurant and sang all the way *"Thy voice to me so languid and caressing..."* These are the opening verses of Pushkin's poem 'Night', set to music by various Russian composers, such as Anton Rubinstein, Modest Mussorgsky and Alexander Grechaninov.

In Chekhov, many of the characters play, sing or just adore music. The heroine in *Ionitch* loves music and art, to which she wants to dedicate her life; she plays the piano and is preparing to study at the conservatory, although her talent is modest. She aspires to become an artist and seeks fame, success and freedom, something she never achieves.

Music can also be a topic of conversations between Chekhov's heroes. Thus, in the novel *Three Years* a friend of one rich family, named Laptiev, was a lawyer and a devoted lover of art. *"He neither sang nor played any musical instrument, and had absolutely no ear for music, but he attended all the symphony and philharmonic concerts, arranged concerts for charitable objects and sought the company of singers."*

In the novella *Tedious Story*, too, characters talk about music. A knowledge of music is also part of a general education: *"Gnekker and the girls talk of fugues and counter-fugues; singers and pianists, Bach and Brahms, and my wife, frightened of being suspected of musical ignorance, smiles sympathetically and murmurs: "Wonderful.... Is it possible? ... Why? ..."* Chekhov notes that not everyone understands music: *"In this town absolutely nobody understands music, not a soul except myself."* For the literary hero in the novella *The Story of an Unknown Man* also, *"Everything abstract, everything belonging to the domain of thought and feeling was to him boring and incomprehensible, like music to one who has no ear."*

In Chekhov's stories, a man hears music already in his cradle, when his nurse sings to him. Nannies and governesses were important in the lives of Russian people, so they also played a prominent role in literature. For example, in *Three Sisters*, one of the characters is the eighty-year-old nurse Anfisa, who in the second act of the drama sings a lullaby offstage.

Music also accompanies a deceased person on his last journey. Olga, one of the three sisters in the drama of the same name, remembers how at the funeral of her father *"there was music and they fired a volley in the cemetery. He was a general in command of a brigade but there were few people present."*

In the novella *Nervous Breakdown*, Chekhov even talks of music being played in brothels: *"Seeing two rows of houses with brightly lit windows and wide-open doors, and hearing gay strains of pianos and violins, sounds which floated out from every door and mingled in a strange chaos, as though an unseen orchestra were tuning up in the darkness above the roofs, Vassilyev was surprised."*

At concerts and at the opera, people meet, so these events, as they still are today, are places where social life takes place. In the novella *The Lady with the Dog*, only two characters appear: Anna Sergeevna and Gurov. Their meeting, after their acquaintance in Yalta, takes place in the theatre with a musical accompaniment. During the performance, Gurov thinks of Anna Sergeevna: *"she was his grief, his joy, his only happiness, and he longed for her; and through the noise of the bad orchestra with its tenth-rate fiddles, he thought how dear she was to him. He thought and dreamed."* They meet during the intermission of the spectacle. Their meeting is accompanied by the sounds of an orchestra: *"The fiddles and flutes began to play and suddenly it seemed to them as though all the people in the lodges were looking at them."* They feel as if they are being watched from all the lodges. Then she gets up and hurries towards the exit, while Gurov thinks: *"Oh, Lord! Why all these men and that beastly orchestra?" "The Cross of God! What are these people, this orchestra for..."*

In *Three Years*, the meeting with the hero's former love, who was a pianist and music teacher, takes place during a break at a symphony concert: *"On a Saturday in November Anton Rubinstein was conducting in a symphony concert."* A Ninth Symphony was also on the programme, but the author does not indicate whose. This musician, named Polina Nikolaevna Rassudina, is said to have studied at Guerrier's school and at the conservatory, and now she was teaching music and playing in quartets.



In the novel *Three Years*, singers sang at great length during the solemn prayer ceremony for the presentation of the bride to her father-in-law.

In *The Shooting Party*, in addition to gypsy choirs, Chekhov writes about the music in the church that accompanies the wedding ceremony: *"In the church itself there was also singing. . . . They sang sweetly, with feeling, and with the enthusiasm for which our Little Russian singers are so celebrated when they feel themselves the heroes of the moment, and that all eyes are bent upon them."*

Chekhov also wrote some stories about musicians: *Romance with a Double Bass*, *Rothschild's Violin*, *The Chorus Girl*, *Choristers*, *The Dance Pianist*.

9. Music in Chekhov's dramas

In Chekhov's last drama, *The Cherry Orchard* – really an inadequate translation of the play's title, which in the original is *The Marasca Orchard* (Вишнёвый сад) – sound and music play an important role. The first sound motif appears at the end of the first act, where *"In the distance, the other side of the orchard, a shepherd is playing his pipe."* The symbolism of a shepherd with a flute is linked to an idyllic romantic landscape. This idyll is now "in the distance"; it is no longer in the garden, as the property with the garden is to be sold and the trees will be cut down.

There are several musical elements in the next three acts. The entire second act is accompanied by singing and guitar playing. The merchant Epihodov always plays *"the same sad song on his guitar"*, a romance by Vasily Chuevski set to music by Alexandre Dubuque, a Russian pianist and composer of French origin who studied with the famous Irish pianist, composer and pedagogue John Field, who worked in St. Petersburg (Wikipedia). This we find out from the verses *"What is this noisy earth to me, What matter friends and foes?" I do like playing on the mandolin!"*

The third act of the drama takes place in the hall, where dances are held and there is a Jewish orchestra consisting of four violins, a flute and a double bass. The music in Chekhov's stories is also often present in the context of celebrations, as an accompaniment to dances and parties. One lady in this scene sings the lezginka, a Caucasian folk dance of the Lezgins, a predominantly Muslim people from the North Caucasus (Wikipedia). The orchestra plays all the time, and the didascalial also states when the music stops. The second time it happens is during the monologue by the merchant Lopakhin, who has bought the estate with its orchard of morello cherry trees: *"You can hear the orchestra tuning up"*, and the hero exclaims: *"Eh, musicians, play, I want to hear you! [...] Come and look at Ermolai Lopakhin laying his axe to the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here.... Play on, music! [The band plays.] "Bandsmen, play nicely! Go on, do just as I want you to!"*

Sound also plays an important role in the conclusion of the drama, as it symbolizes dying, the death of everything that previously existed; only silence remains. *"It is quiet. Then the sound of an axe against the trees is heard in the silence, sad and solitary."* Such a sound appears already in the second act as a harbinger of the coming disaster. This sound is "like a breaking string"; the instrument can then no longer play and the song is finished, the drama ending with these words: *"The distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a breaking string, dying away sadly. Silence follows it, and only the sound is heard, some way away in the orchard, of the axe falling on the trees."*

Music also accompanies the action in other Chekhov dramas and novellas. In *The Three Sisters*, behind the stage and on it, different music can be heard: brother Andrei is playing the violin; street music: *"Somebody is heard playing a concertina outside in the street"*; soft singing and guitar playing in the hall; the baron is playing a waltz; people sing a Russian folk song *"Oh my house, my house, my new-built house"*; we can hear the nanny singing; *"a concertina is being played in the street. The nurse sings."*; Vershinin, the man who bought the estate, sings Gremin's aria from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, *"The power of love all ages know, From its assaults great good does grow"*; *"The Maiden's Prayer"* is being played on a piano



in the house." This is a work by Tekla Badarzewska-Baranowska, a Polish romantic composer very popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, which was also mentioned in the works of many different writers. (Maiorova 2014) "*Somewhere a harp and violin are being played*"; "*two wandering musicians, a man and a girl, are playing on a violin and a harp*"; "*a march is played off; they all listen*"; an army doctor is reading a newspaper, singing softly; at the end of the play, behind the stage the band plays, after which "*the music grows softer and softer*".

10. Memories of Italy

Like other Russian writers, such as Turgenev and Gogol, Chekhov travelled to Italy, including Venice, and was fascinated by the beauty of this country.

In the story *Ariadne*, the title character wants to travel to Italy, and the narrator's father "*began telling us at length about Italy, how splendid it was there, the exquisite scenery, the museums.*"

In *The Story of an Unknown Man*, the hero Gruzin remembers Turgenev's *Three Encounters* and the passage when, late in the evening, the protagonist hears the song 'Vieni pensando a me segretamente'. With this, he is ironizing Turgenev's heroes, who are helped in their heroic roles by noble and honest girls who accompany them to the end of the world to serve their ideas.

In *The Story of an Unknown Man*, the first-person narrator, an "unknown man" (named Vladimir Ivanich), who suffers from tuberculosis, goes to Venice (just like the sick Insarov and Elena in Turgenev's story *On the Eve*), except that in Chekhov's story the hero is accompanying a deceived woman. Chekhov enthusiastically writes also about the beauty of Venice through the eyes of a hero observing the city from a balcony. The sight of a sunlit city by the sea infuses the hero with new strength: "*The sunshine and the breeze from the sea caressed and fondled my sick body. I looked down at the familiar gondolas, which glide with feminine grace smoothly and majestically as though they were alive, and felt all the luxury of this original, fascinating civilisation. There was a smell of the sea. Someone was playing a stringed instrument and two voices were singing. How delightful it was.*"

Even in the evening, the maritime panorama is accompanied by music in the background: "*Not far from us in a gondola, hung with coloured lanterns reflected in the water, there were people singing. The sounds of guitars, of violins, of mandolins, of men's and women's voices, were audible in the dark.*" The lively, vibrant atmosphere of an evening in Venice is in complete contrast to the emotional state of the female protagonist: "[...] *around her the gondolas, the lights, the music, the song with its vigorous passionate cry of "Jam-mo! Jam-mo!" — what contrasts in life!*" The melody mentioned is the well-known Neapolitan 'Funiculì, funiculà', written by Luigi Denza in 1880 to a text by Peppino Turco on the occasion of the opening of the funicular railway to Mount Vesuvius (Wikipedia).

Conclusion

In the works of Chekhov, music accompanies a person from the cradle to the grave. In childhood, nurses play an important role, singing lullabies (*The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters*). A band accompanies a person on his last journey (at the beginning of *The Three Sisters*). Music is present at all important moments in life, such as weddings, when they sing in church (*The Shooting Party*). Music accompanies people in their everyday life. With a quote from a song or composition, Chekhov completes his description of the emotional state of his heroes: when they are happy, they sing (like Ionitch in the story of the same name), express sadness (in *The Cherry Orchard*, Epikhodov always plays "the same sad song on the guitar"); music emphasizes dullness (as in *Ariadne*, in a boring city where nothing happens, the band always plays the same, monotonous tune), or, on the contrary, music helps to put people in a good mood (*Anna on the Neck*). Music evokes the memory of past, happy years (*Ionitch*). The presence of an orchestra is an indispensable part of parties and



dances, when the heroes dance quadrilles, waltzes and other dances. Street music and musicians in parks are also mentioned several times. Even the heroes themselves play a musical instrument, such as the piano, guitar or violin, and sing. They discuss music and attend concerts and opera performances (*The Lady with the Dog*). In Chekhov's dramas, music accompanies the action on stage. By the use of sound, the writer vividly foretells disaster, the decline of Russian noble families, the sale of estates and the beginning of a new era (the dying sound "as if a string were being broken" in *The Cherry Orchard*).

In Chekhov's work, we find many quotations of verses from folk songs and Russian ballads, as well as titles of compositions of classical music. There are many references to the compositions of Tchaikovsky, whom the writer also met personally, and the two artists were connected by admiration for each other's work. Chekhov's work, however, even comprises stories with purely musical titles.

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