

PETER TCHAIKOVSKY

“Peter and Music”

By Carole L. Cooney

Setting: The living room, the library and Peter’s bedroom in the Tchaikovsky home

Characters:

Narrator

Fanny Durbach, the governess

Sasha, Peter’s baby sister

Peter

Narrator: When Mr. Tchaikovsky finished his business in St. Petersburg, he decided to buy a huge music maker called an orchestrion. It was like a barrel-organ with many different instruments inside such as drums, cymbals, horns, an organ and a piano. When it was played, it sounded like an orchestra. Peter was delighted with the many classical pieces the orchestrion played especially the music of Mozart .

Fanny: Sasha, where is Peter?

Sasha: He’s in the living room listening to the orchestrion.

Fanny: Please, run to him and tell him it is time for reading. Ach! He is spending too much time with that noisy music maker!

Sasha: Yes, Fanny. (calling) Peter, Peter. Fanny wants you in the library. It is time for reading.

Peter: But Sasha, I’m listening to the music of the great Mozart. I can’t stop because his melodies are so beautiful.

Fanny: (calling) Peter! I can hear you. Come at once!

Peter: (upset) Yes, Fanny.

Narrator: Day after day, Peter could be found listening to the orchestrion and then he would rush to the piano to pick out the melodies.

Fanny: Ach! Sasha! What is that tap – tap – tapping noise I hear?

Sasha: That’s just Peter pretending he’s playing Mozart’s music. Yesterday, I saw him walking down the hall drumming his fingers on the walls from side to side. Isn’t he funny?

Fanny: NO! It isn’t funny, Sasha! (calling loudly) Peter! Come in here at once! You are driving yourself crazy!

Narrator: Peter roamed from the hallway into the library tap, tap, tapping until he reached a nearby window pane. When he heard Fanny scolding him, he was so nervous that his hand crashed through the glass and was cut badly.

Fanny: Ach! Little Peter, look what you have done. Come up to your bedroom and let me bandage up your hand. Peter, Peter, you must stop this constant drumming or else you will get sick.

Narrator: But Peter's love of music grew and grew. His father loved inviting guests to come to his home for an evening concert. One evening, after two lively Chopin pieces were played, Peter immediately ran to the piano and repeated the music from memory. He was merely six years old and was complimented as being a "promising" musician. But on another concert night things turned out quite differently. After the concert, Peter dashed out of the room.

Fanny: (whispering) Peter! Where are you going?

Peter: (crying) Upstairs. Just leave me alone.

Sasha: Fanny, why doesn't Peter come downstairs? Do you think he is sick?

Fanny: Ach! Sasha, you are such a good little sister. Yes, you are right. I will find out what is happening with little Peter.

Narrator: Fanny looked in Peter's room. There was Peter sprawled on his bed hysterically crying.

Fanny: Peter, why the tears? What has happened to make you cry so?

Peter: Fanny, "Oh the music, the music! Save me from it, Fanny, save me... It's here – inside here. (He hits his forehead) And it won't leave me in peace."

Fanny: Ah... Peter, you are such a sensitive little boy. You must stop all music for a little while until you feel better. Tomorrow we shall read about the country you love the best – our Russia.

Peter: Oh yes, Fanny! I love Russia! Learning more about my country will make me very happy.

Narrator: And so it was. As Peter grew up, his love of Russia was expressed in his music. And when we hear Peter's music we hear the sounds of Russia.