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**The musical and psychological portrait of  
Onegin's role — based on the title character  
from Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera Eugene  
Onegin.**

Doctoral dissertation written under the supervision  
of Dr. hab. Jolanta Janucik.

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**Supervisor's Statement for the Doctoral Dissertation**

I hereby declare that the present dissertation was prepared under my supervision and I affirm that it meets the requirements for submission in the doctoral procedure.

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## Abstract

Pyotr Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* is based on the poem of the same title by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. Premiered in 1879, it quickly became one of the composer's most popular works. Through vivid character portrayals, touching melodies, and brisk action, the opera reflects the complexity of human emotions. Tchaikovsky skillfully captured and conveyed emotional transformations and the inner world of the characters, securing *Eugene Onegin* a place in the pantheon of world operatic literature. The present study focuses on the opera and its literary prototype, with particular attention to an in-depth analysis of the musical and psychological aspects of Onegin's character—from the content of the libretto to the circumstances of the work's creation. The discussion of performance techniques and strategies is intended to enable a more refined vocal interpretation of Onegin's portrayal.

The text is divided into five chapters. Chapter One covers the circumstances of the creation and the characteristics of the opera composed by Tchaikovsky on Pushkin's text. Chapter Two presents an analysis of the opera's musical features, an outline of the plot, and the personality traits of the main characters. Chapter Three offers a deeper analysis of Onegin's musical image and his arias, taking into account the context of the libretto, musical structure, and the character's psychology. Chapter Four contains a detailed analysis of Onegin's entire baritone part. Chapter Five is devoted to the psychological aspects of the vocal and stage performance of Onegin's role. Chapter Six provides an analysis of the recordings made by the author of this study.

The aim of this work is to establish a theoretical foundation for a deeper understanding and shaping of Onegin's character and for the interpretive performance of his part, in order to support singers in acting and singing this role.

**Keywords:** Tchaikovsky; opera; *Eugene Onegin*; character creation; vocal analysis; psychological characterization; stage performance.

# Introduction

## Reasons for choosing this research topic

*Eugene Onegin* is a digressive poem<sup>1</sup> by Aleksandr Pushkin, published in 1833. Pushkin is regarded as a leading representative of Russian Romanticism; he was an outstanding figure of that movement, the creator of Russian realism, and one of the most respected writers of the first half of the nineteenth century. He is called “the sun of Russian poetry” and “the father of Russian literature.” Walter N. Vickery notes in his book *Pushkin: Death of a Poet* that “Pushkin had established himself as one of the most promising poets of Russia.”<sup>2</sup> *Eugene Onegin* ranks among the most important achievements of nineteenth-century Russian literature. Based on it, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky composed the three-act opera *Eugene Onegin*, which remains to this day one of the most frequently performed works in the Russian operatic repertoire.

Despite considerable interest in this work among musicologists and literary scholars, analyses of *Eugene Onegin* focus chiefly on formal structures and aesthetic aspects. Far less frequently are there in-depth studies of the characters from psychological and typological perspectives, or of the opera’s stage interpretations.

While preparing the role of the opera’s protagonist, the author of the present study perceived the need for a deeper psychological analysis of this character. Practical experience related to performing excerpts from the opera not only enabled a fuller understanding of the work’s narrative and musical structure, but also revealed the author’s personal affinities with Onegin—both in terms of character and in ways of perceiving reality. These observations became the impetus for undertaking the present research.

In the course of analyzing the operatic characters of *Eugene Onegin*, the author developed a growing interest in Russian musical culture, with particular emphasis on the works of Pyotr Tchaikovsky. This phenomenon constitutes an important interpretive context,

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<sup>1</sup> Poemat dygresyjny to forma narracyjna, w której fabuła jest wielokrotnie przerywana przez osobiste komentarze autora, refleksje filozoficzne, literackie odniesienia i obserwacje społeczne. w Eugeniuszu Onieginie Aleksander Puszkina wykorzystuje tę formę, by połączyć historię bohatera z rozbudowaną warstwą autotematyczną i krytyczną refleksją nad epoką, literaturą oraz samym procesem twórczym. Dzięki temu dzieło zyskuje wielowymiarowy charakter – łącząc cechy powieści, liryki i eseju.

<sup>2</sup> Vickery, Walter Neil, *Puszkina. Śmierć poety*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968, s. 9-10.

enabling a deeper reading of the opera from both a musicological and a psychological–cultural perspective.

## **State of Research in China and Worldwide**

An analysis of the protagonist’s psychological dynamics, the process of shaping his stage image, and the influence of these factors on facial expression, stage movement, and interactions with other characters is crucial to role creation—both in *Eugene Onegin* and in other operas. Yet this issue is rarely explored in depth. The aim of the present study is therefore to fill this research gap by conducting a musical and psychological analysis of Onegin’s emotional states and, on this basis, indicating possibilities for staging interpretations of leading operatic roles.

Scholarly literature devoted to Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s opera encompasses both historiographic and analytical studies as well as publications on stage interpretation of the work. Among theoretical texts, Song Xiaozhu’s article “Music in the Opera *Eugene Onegin*” merits attention; the author analyzes the opera’s musical characteristics against the background of Tchaikovsky’s Pushkin-inspired oeuvre. The focus is on the function of selected musical means employed by Tchaikovsky—choral sections, stylized dances (waltz, polonaise, Scottish dance, mazur), and the specifics of orchestration—showing their role in building the opera’s dramaturgy and shaping the work’s stylistic idiom.<sup>3</sup>

Among performance-oriented studies, it is worth mentioning the work by Jiang Baolong and Liao Shasha, “**Analysis of Scenes and Performance Interpretation of Onegin’s Aria ‘Когда бы жизнь домашним кругом’ [Kogda by zhizn’ domashnim krugom] from the Opera *Eugene Onegin*.**” The authors provide a detailed analysis of the performance practice of this aria, emphasizing that artistic quality is shaped by a range of factors: the musical layer, vocal timbre, expression, set design, and acting. Only a comprehensive approach to these elements makes it possible to create a fully realized, artistically coherent stage portrayal.

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<sup>3</sup> Song Xiaozhu, *Muzyka w operze Eugeniusz Oniegin*, Music World, 2009, nr 3, s. 61–62.

Another important item is Lin Tao's article, "**Lyricism and Its Expression in the Opera *Eugene Onegin***," in which the author analyzes the work's orchestration and agogics, drawing on his own experience as a performing musician. He notes Tchaikovsky's use of the traditional wind ensemble and the limiting of percussion to timpani, which underscores the music's lyrical character. According to Lin Tao, the key is to capture tempo changes—the conductor must control tempo and phrasing to convey the full expressiveness of Tchaikovsky's music. The author's personal observations are a valuable source of practical guidance for performers.

In the article by Bao Yi titled "The Image of the 'Superfluous Man' Onegin in the Opera *Eugene Onegin*," published in the journal *Essay Hundred Houses (New Language Worksheets)*, the author undertakes a detailed analysis of Onegin's psychological and social construction, interpreting it within the context of the Russian archetype of the "superfluous man." Bao points to the complexity of the hero's inner contradictions and to the ways in which the musical and dramatic means in Tchaikovsky's opera reinforce the literary image of this character, deepening the reflection on his alienation and moral crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Among more practice-oriented studies, it is worth mentioning the article by Jiang Baolong and Liao Shasha, "Analysis of Scenes and Performance Interpretation of Onegin's Aria 'If I Liked Domestic Life' from the Opera *Eugene Onegin*," in which the authors focus on a detailed discussion of issues related to the performance practice of this aria. The researchers note that the smoothness of the sound during singing should closely correspond to the course of the melodic line. They also emphasize that, when performing with accompaniment from various instrumental parts, the vocalist should shape emotional expression, linguistic intonation, and stage gesture in accordance with the meaning of the words. According to their findings, achieving the optimal artistic effect in stage performance requires the integration of all components of the work—voice and music, lyrical conception, artistic expression, set design, and acting. Only the harmonious cooperation of these elements makes it possible, in performance practice, to attain full artistic expression and to lend the stage characters authenticity and psychological depth.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bao Yi, *Wizerunek postaci „osoby zbędnej” – Oniegina w operze „Eugeniusz Oniegin”*, Sto Szkół Prozy, 2017, nr 7, s. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Jiang Baolong, Liao Shasha, *Analiza scen i interpretacji wykonawczej arii Oniegina „Gdybym lubił życie rodzinne” z opery „Eugeniusz Oniegin”*, Popular Literature and Art, 2017, nr 21.

Also noteworthy is Lin Tao's article, "Lyricism and the Performance of *Eugene Onegin*," published in the *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music*, which offers a detailed analysis of the opera's orchestration and the issue of tempo control. Drawing on his own experience and artistic reflections, the author notes that Pyotr Tchaikovsky employs a traditional orchestra with double winds in *Eugene Onegin*, while limiting the percussion section to timpani only—an approach that, as Lin observes, underscores the music's lyrical character. From a performance standpoint, the researcher emphasizes the conductor's role: by controlling tempo and attending to key interpretive elements, the conductor shapes the work's lyricism. According to Lin, accurately capturing tempo changes is the fundamental condition for a convincing interpretation of Tchaikovsky's music. Lin also shares valuable insights from performance practice that can serve as important guidance for vocal interpretation and the shaping of musical expression.<sup>6</sup>

A valuable source is also the anthology edited by Alexander Poznansky, *The Complete Tchaikovsky: A Creative Life in Letters*, which comprises the composer's correspondence and documents both his creative output and private life. This collection reveals not only Tchaikovsky's artistic craft but also his rich inner world and the emotional context of his work.<sup>7</sup>

Yuri Lotman, in his monograph devoted to *Eugene Onegin*, conducts a detailed analysis of Pushkin's work from a structuralist perspective. Lotman's research reveals the multilayered nature of the literary text, its cultural and literary significance, and the timeless character of this classic of Russian literature.<sup>8</sup>

## Research Objectives

The aim of this study is a comprehensive analysis of Onegin's musical image by juxtaposing his literary prototype in Aleksandr Pushkin's poem with an analysis of the musical structure of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's operatic libretto. The work adopts a multi-faceted

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<sup>6</sup> Lin Tao, *Liryzm i jego ekspresja w operze Eugeniusz Oniegin*, *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music*, 2011, nr 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Wydanie kompletne Czajkowskiego: dzieła i listy*, red. Aleksander Poznański, Yale University Press, New Haven 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Jurij Łotman, *Struktura „Eugeniusza Oniegina”*, Moskwa: Iskustwo, 1981.

approach—from literature to music, from artistic interpretation to vocal technique, from stage presentation to the expression of emotion. Setting these perspectives side by side is intended not only to reveal sources of inspiration and features of Tchaikovsky's style, but also to deepen the understanding of Onegin's characterology. In addition, the study may serve as practical support for performers, offering guidance on conveying the emotional depth of the role with precision.

One important objective is to investigate how performers can draw on their own personal interpretation in the process of stage creation. In this context, a case-study method is employed, focusing on the analysis of vocal performance and stage acting in *Eugene Onegin*.

A further step in the research is the analysis of audience reactions and opinions. Careful consideration of their remarks makes it possible to identify potential interpretive shortcomings and implement necessary adjustments. Continuous adaptation of performance means based on reception analysis enables the systematic optimization of stage practice.

The ultimate goal of the study is to narrow the gap between theoretical research and performance practice. A commitment to rigor, objectivity, and authenticity in data analysis is intended not only to enhance understanding of the work under discussion, but also to develop effective interpretive strategies—thereby contributing to the advancement of operatic performance practice, particularly in the realms of vocal and acting expression.

# Chapter 1. Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Opera *Eugene Onegin*

## 1.1. Creative Background and Characteristics of *Eugene Onegin*

The libretto of *Eugene Onegin* is based on Aleksandr Pushkin's poem of the same title, regarded as one of the greatest works of Russian literature and pivotal in shaping the cultural identity of nineteenth-century Russia. The Romantic poet's original work attempts a realistic portrayal of the social panorama of his time, with particular emphasis on the aristocratic milieu. Through the protagonist's love story, the opera reveals not only the existential emptiness of the nobility but also the characters' complex moral dilemmas and inner turmoil.

Caryl Emerson points out that Pushkin's work—beyond its philosophical and psychological aspects—also reflects the profound social and cultural transformations taking place in the Russian Empire, which Pyotr Tchaikovsky also witnessed. Reflection on the dynamic development of Russian society finds expression throughout the composer's oeuvre, influencing both his choice of subjects and the vivid, emotional character of his works.<sup>9</sup>

Tchaikovsky's musical output developed not only under the influence of contemporary artistic circles—particularly the representatives of the so-called Russian national school—but also under Western European traditions. Stuart Campbell, in his book *Russians on Russian Music, 1880–1917* (often rendered in Polish as *Rosjanie w muzyce rosyjskiej: 1880–1917*), observes:

While composing the opera *Eugene Onegin*, Tchaikovsky sought to combine Russian musical elements with Western operatic form. Influenced by the musical nationalism movement and Western traditions, he aimed to create a new style of musical expression.<sup>10</sup>

This aspiration was manifested in the harmonious fusion of elements of the national musical idiom with Western principles of operatic dramaturgy, enabling the composer to develop an original artistic language that combined respect for tradition with an innovative approach to form and expression.

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<sup>9</sup> Caryl Emerson, „*Eugeniusz Oniegin*” *Puszkina w rosyjskiej krytyce literackiej*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Campbell, *Russians on Russian Music, 1880–1917*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, s. 23.

## ***1.2. Analysis of the Libretto of the Opera Eugene Onegin***

The libretto of the opera *Eugene Onegin* by Konstantin Shilovsky, prepared in collaboration with Pyotr Tchaikovsky, is based on Aleksandr Pushkin's poem of the same title. This poem—regarded as one of the finest works of Russian Romanticism—combines novelistic narration with lyricism and philosophical reflection, while simultaneously offering a panoramic portrait of Russian society in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The operatic adaptation remains highly faithful to the original—not only in the arrangement of scenes but also in linguistic style—which sets *Onegin* apart from other operas of the period.

The main dramatic axis of the libretto centers on the characters of Tatiana and Onegin. Tatiana, a young provincial girl, undergoes an inner emotional awakening as she falls in love with the newcomer from the city. Her famous letter, the focal point of Act I, is both an expression of romantic openness and the first moment in which the libretto reveals the heroine's psychological depth. In his correspondence with his brother Modest, Tchaikovsky wrote that this scene inspired him to create the opera: "I experience that letter as if I were writing it myself; the music practically composes itself."<sup>12</sup> Tatiana's aria (the letter scene) reveals not only romantic ecstasy but also inner turmoil and an emotional maturity beyond her years.

In contrast stands the figure of Eugene Onegin—an aristocrat weary of life, whose emotional coldness and cynicism lead to dramatic events. His rejection of Tatiana's love and the subsequent conflict with Lensky—ending in a duel and the friend's death—constitute a turning point in the libretto, both narratively and emotionally. The libretto's structure clearly organizes these events, dividing them into three acts: youthful feelings, confrontation, and maturity. Each act contains both solo numbers (arias, monologues) and ensemble pieces (duets, choral scenes), with an emphasis on introspection and the characters' psychological development.

In the opera's finale the roles are reversed: Tatiana—now a general's wife and a lady of St. Petersburg society—rejects Onegin's love, remaining faithful to her duty and her marriage.

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<sup>11</sup> Aleksandr Siergiejewicz Puszkina, *Eugene Onegin: a Novel in Verse*, tłum. Vladimir Nabokov, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

<sup>12</sup> Cyt. za: A. Brown, *Tchaikovsky: The Man and His Music*, London: Faber & Faber, 2007.

This scene marks the culmination of the characters' psychological maturation—both Tatiana's and Onegin's, who only now realizes the value of the feeling he once scorned. The libretto ends with his dramatic monologue, leaving the hero in a state of existential turmoil and solitude.

Against the backdrop of contemporary operatic works, *Eugene Onegin* stands out for the literary quality of its libretto. Tchaikovsky and Shilovsky abandoned many solutions typical of nineteenth-century opera (e.g., a sensational finale, an extensive political conflict) in favor of intimacy and a focus on human relationships. Caryl Emerson emphasizes that *Onegin* is an opera “without action”—its essence lies not so much in plot development as in the characters' deep introspection and an analysis of their moral choices. In this context, the libretto serves not only a narrative function but also a psychological one—it enables a penetrating interpretation of the characters' emotions and motivations.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to its literary aspects, attention should be paid to the libretto's musical-dramatic function. Individual scenes—such as the duel, Tatiana's letter, and the final encounter—are structured to allow for maximum vocal and orchestral expression. The choral parts, though relatively few, serve to underscore the social context and contrast with the intimacy of the solo scenes. Thus, the libretto of *Eugene Onegin* is not only a vehicle for literary content but also an important tool for shaping the opera's dramaturgical and emotional construction.

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<sup>13</sup> Caryl Emerson, „*Eugeniusz Oniegin*” *Puszkina w rosyjskiej krytyce literackiej*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

## **Chapter 2. Musical Analysis of the Opera *Eugene Onegin***

### **2.1. Musical Characteristics of *Eugene Onegin***

The musical character of *Eugene Onegin* reflects Pyotr Tchaikovsky's unique compositional style and his deep understanding of the Russian musical tradition. The opera is distinguished by Tchaikovsky's characteristic melodic charm, marked by lyricism and subtle expression, which allows the emotions and inner experiences of the characters to be conveyed faithfully. The melodies not only captivate with their beauty but are also closely tied to the narrative, especially to key moments in the plot, thereby intensifying dramatic tension and emotional conflict. In this way, the musical motifs become easily recognizable and highly evocative.

Within the opera, Tchaikovsky created numerous striking lyrical themes that are not only sonically appealing but also precisely convey the characters' emotional shifts and the depth of their feelings. A case in point is Tatiana's letter scene, in which her sincere, yearning love for Onegin is portrayed through a delicate, innocent melody that superbly illustrates her inner emotional world.

Throughout the work, Tchaikovsky links musical motifs with the characters' traits and emotional development with great precision, attesting to his high compositional skill and artistic depth. In *Eugene Onegin*, the music not only enchants with its melodiousness but, above all, co-creates the plot and the psychological portrait of the characters, enriching the opera with dramaturgy and expression. This close integration of music and narrative is manifest above all in several key aspects:

***Table 1: Analysis of Key Musical Features in the Opera Eugene Onegin.***

| Musical Characteristics                         | Description   |
|---|---|
| Music as an Expression of Character Psychology. | Pyotr Tchaikovsky uses music to express his characters' inner emotional and psychological states. For example, Tatiana's solo aria in the letter scene features a soft, lyrical melodic line that conveys her longing, uncertainty, and desire for love. By contrast, Onegin's motif is marked by calm and reflectiveness, illustrating his loneliness and the remorse born of his life choices.                                    |
| Interaction of Music with the Narrative         | Music plays a key role in shaping and advancing the dramatic action, especially at pivotal moments such as the letter scene, the duel, and the final confrontation. It is not merely a backdrop; it actively deepens emotional conflicts and the dramaturgy, enabling the audience to engage more fully with the characters' psychological and emotional nuances and with the atmosphere of events.                                 |
| Dramatization of the Melody                     | Tchaikovsky employs a range of compositional techniques—changes in melodic contour, rhythmic modulations, and harmonic contrasts—to intensify dramatic tension at key moments in the opera. For example, the duel scene demonstrates the use of these devices to build an atmosphere of unease and inevitability, heightening the sense of impending tragedy.   |
| Orchestration and Instrumentation               | The composer selects the instrumentation with precision to reinforce the dramaturgy of individual scenes. For example, in the duel scene he employs sharp, dynamic orchestral phrases that underscore the tension and dread of the moment, creating an atmosphere of strain and impending catastrophe. Orchestration thus serves not merely to complement but above all to intensify the work's emotional and narrative expression. |

### **2.1.1. The Role of Recitative**

In *Eugene Onegin*, Pyotr Tchaikovsky makes extensive use of recitative, which not only enables a smooth flow of the narrative but also allows for a deepened psychological characterization of the characters. As a result, the work is marked by strong expressiveness as well as a realistic tone. By imitating the rhythm and intonation of natural speech, the recitative links the musical layer with the text, making interactions between the characters more authentic and fluid. It is also a key dramaturgical element, as it lends clarity to the dialogues and energizes the development of the action.

The use of recitative allows Tchaikovsky to render the characters' emotions and inner states with precision. It makes it possible to show subtle emotional nuances, thereby enriching the psychological portraits of the characters and heightening the drama of the work. An example is the conversation scene between Tatiana and Onegin, in which the recitative not only reflects the verbal exchange between the characters but also reveals their inner tensions and hidden emotions. This manner of storytelling enables the audience to understand the characters' motivations more deeply, giving them greater multidimensionality.

A good example of recitative as a vehicle for emotion and dramatic tension is Tatiana's letter-writing scene. In this sequence, the recitative passes seamlessly into more lyrical sections, reflecting the heroine's shifting mental states—from uncertainty and hesitation, through romantic exaltation, to desperate candor. Tchaikovsky skillfully uses musical phrasing to underscore Tatiana's inner monologue, so that the viewer not only understands her feelings but virtually shares them. Here the vocal and instrumental layers work in perfect concert, giving the scene psychological depth and dramatic force that would be difficult to achieve with spoken text alone.

### **2.1.2. Orchestration**

Tchaikovsky masterfully exploited the orchestra's resources to shape emotion and atmosphere, which attests both to his outstanding compositional craft and his exceptional artistic sensitivity. By drawing on the varied timbres of individual instruments, he was able to render the characters' diverse emotional states with precision. The lyricism of the delicate

melodies in the string quintet contrasts with the powerful sonority of the brass, which underscores the vehemence and drama of the scenes.

Colorful orchestration enables Tchaikovsky to bind the musical layer closely to the narrative. A telling example is Tatiana's letter scene, where the warm hue of the strings combined with the subtle sound of the woodwinds creates an atmosphere of introspection and romantic rapture. In this way, the composer conveys the heroine's inner turmoil and her longing for love. In moments of tension and conflict, by contrast, he reaches for sharper sonorities—high string registers and piercing brass—that heighten the dramaturgy of the scenes and intensify the emotional strain.

Tchaikovsky not only introduced innovative solutions within traditional orchestration, but also made full use of the orchestra's potential to magnify the opera's dramatic impact. This is especially evident at key moments of the work, such as the duel scene and the final confrontation, where the use of a large orchestra emphasizes the mounting dramatic tension.

The orchestra in *Eugene Onegin* consists of the classic complement of symphonic instruments: strings; woodwinds (flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons); brass (horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba); percussion (including timpani and cymbals); and harp. Such a rich instrumental palette affords Tchaikovsky immense coloristic possibilities, which he employs with precision and dramaturgical sensitivity. Varied combinations of sonorities—from chamber-like dialogues between woodwinds and strings to full orchestral tutti—support the characters' emotional development and complement the vocal layer. The instrumentation is thus not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the narrative, inscribed directly in the dramatic course of events and co-creating the work's psychological depth.

Moreover, the composer demonstrated an exceptional ability to shape instrumental dialogues—the interactions among the orchestra's sections not only enrich the musical texture, but also lend greater depth to the relationships between characters and reveal their emotional transformations.

Such a meticulously constructed instrumental layer makes the music not only a vehicle for emotional expression, but also an integral element of the dramatic narrative. Thanks to this, Tchaikovsky achieved exceptional emotional depth in the opera, strengthening its dramaturgical dimension and confirming his extraordinary compositional talent.

## 2.2. Analysis of the Opera's Main Characters

The libretto places strong emphasis on the characters' psychological dimension, illustrating their traits and experiences through specific musical motifs. The table below aligns the sonic layer with each character's feelings.

In his book *“Eugene Onegin”: A Novel in Verse: Commentary*, Vladimir Nabokov offers an in-depth analysis of the complex emotional issues in Pushkin's work, especially Onegin's negative attitude toward marriage: “My heart has cooled; it has closed itself to love...”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *„Eugene Onegin”: A Novel in Verse: Commentary* (Vol. 2), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021, s. 470–487.

**Table 1: Analysis of Key Musical Features in the Opera Eugene Onegin.**

| Character            | Character Traits and Development   | Character and Plot  | Musical Motif and Expression  |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Onegin</b>        | From a cool, detached stance and sense of self-sufficiency to an emotional awakening. Initially full of pride and arrogance, he rejects Tatiana's love. As the plot unfolds, he becomes aware of his inner emptiness and feels deep remorse for past decisions. The duel with Lensky intensifies his moral and psychological crisis, forcing him to confront his conscience. | As a "superfluous man," he embodies the complexity of human emotions and serves as a critique of nineteenth-century Russian society, highlighting his social maladjustment. | The music reflects his emotional fluctuations and inner conflicts. A complex musical layer reveals his suffering and psychological transformations. |
| <b>Tatiana</b>       | From a romantic, sensitive girl to a mature woman of firm moral resolve. After Onegin's rejection she becomes a self-aware aristocrat. She refuses Onegin despite her former feelings, guided by principle and loyalty to her husband.   | A symbol of inner transformation and of the woman's role in society.  | The music conveys her spiritual transformation—emotionally rich, complex, and highly expressive—showing her inner struggle and maturity.            |
| <b>Leński</b>        | A romantic, idealistic poet—full of dreams and emotional sensitivity. His conflict with Onegin ends tragically in the duel.  | A symbol of the conflict between ideals and reality; his fate reveals the tragedy of the individual in collision with social norms.   | A lyrical, delicate motif underscores his sensitivity and inner turmoil—a strong contrast to the other characters.                                  |
| <b>Olga</b>          | Carefree, cheerful, and sociable—the opposite of the introverted Tatiana; Lensky's fiancée. Her character brings lightness and vivacity.   | Introduces contrast and dynamism into relationships; her character accelerates the course of events.  | Light, cheerful music highlights her character and complements the opera's emotional spectrum.  |
| <b>Książę Gremin</b> | Mature, composed, and rational—the symbol of aristocratic stability. His relationship with Tatiana is based on respect and prudence.   | Contrasts with Onegin's emotionality and Lensky's idealism; he represents stability and the social norms of the era.  | A calm, steady motif conveys his balanced nature, strengthening the dramaturgy and the contrasts among the characters.                              |

## **Chapter 3. Onegin's Musical Image and the Analysis of the Aria *Если б я был на месте вас... [Esli by ya byl na meste vas...] from Act I of Eugene Onegin***

### **3.1. Onegin as an Example of the “Superfluous Man”**

The figure of Eugene Onegin is a classic example of the so-called “superfluous man”—a literary archetype characteristic of nineteenth-century Russian literature. The superfluous man is an educated and intelligent individual, yet passive, adrift, and incapable of action or engagement in social or moral matters. He often feels disillusioned with the world, against which he cannot take a stand nor fully adapt.

Onegin's characterization reflects the multilayered and complex structure of Russian society in the first half of the nineteenth century. Vissarion Belinsky emphasized that Onegin is neither an average nor a typical figure of his time: “He was not born a genius, nor did he aspire to become a great man; rather, it was life's inertia and mediocrity that weighed him down.”<sup>15</sup>

In his translation of Pushkin's novel, the translator Zhi Liang notes: “Onegin comes from the aristocracy, lives in luxury, and at the same time is distinguished by high intelligence and education.”<sup>16</sup>

The hero adopts a critical stance toward reality, often resorting to cynicism and sarcasm. He is accompanied by inner apathy and an inability to actively oppose the evil around him. His actions are impulsive and selfish—the duel with his friend Lensky, undertaken not out of necessity but for trivial reasons, is a case in point. Although Onegin does not find his place in the aristocratic milieu to which he belongs, he remains passive, devoid of ambition and notable achievements.

Nor does he engage in any ideological activity, such as the struggle for the people's liberation undertaken by the Decembrists. Pushkin initially considered having his hero join them, but ultimately abandoned this thread, judging it incompatible with Onegin's inner

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<sup>15</sup> Sona Stephan Hoisington, Walter Arndt (tłum.), *Rosyjskie poglądy na „Eugeniusza Oniegina” Puszkina*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, s. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Puszkina, Aleksander, *Eugeniusz Oniegin*, tłum. Zhi Liang, Szanghaj 2020, s. 2.

nature. His attitude toward society is marked by pessimism and alienation—he perceives its flaws, yet makes no attempt to change reality.

Characters of this type are characterized by deep introspection and a tendency to reflect on their own existence. Their emotional lives are often marked by disappointment, and their love relationships end unhappily or remain unfulfilled. Onegin, though he harbored certain ideals, ultimately decided that the world was not conducive to realizing them—which leads him to passivity and social isolation.

### **3.2. Musical and Performance Analysis of Onegin’s Act I Aria “Если б я был на месте вас...” (*Esli b ya byl na meste vas...*)**

Onegin’s aria in Act I of *Eugene Onegin* plays a crucial dramaturgical role, revealing the protagonist’s worldview and his attitude toward feelings and human relationships. It is Onegin’s response to Tatiana’s sincere declaration of love in her letter—a moment when he could have reciprocated her feelings, yet instead he chooses a cool, moralizing refusal. By forgoing a showy aria in favor of stylized recitative and simple melody, Tchaikovsky deliberately underscores Onegin’s emotional distance. An analysis of this passage shows how the composer—through musical means such as rhythm, harmony, and phrasing—conveys the character’s psychological coldness while also leading us into his inner world, marked by restraint and detachment from love.

The orchestral introduction to Onegin’s aria consists of four measures in **Andante non tanto** (♩ = 80). The additional marking **largamente** suggests that the melody should be carried broadly and smoothly, with a clearly articulated structure. Onegin’s vocal part relies mainly on eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythms, and its phrasing—in conjunction with the text—takes on a speech-like (recitative) character. This manner of melodic writing emphasizes the hero’s cool, detached stance toward the emotions around him and his passive, introspective disposition.

The opening section of the recitative provides a musical characterization of the protagonist. The melodic line, rhythm, and dynamics—in close relation to the text—render Onegin’s distance and emotional indifference toward the surrounding world. The tonal

instability of this passage reflects the inner tensions and turbulent, though concealed, emotional states of the character. The orchestra accompanies with restraint—its accompaniment is based largely on block chords, imparting a stark and economical character to the whole. This texture not only reinforces Onegin’s cool, almost didactic tone, but also highlights the contrast between Tatiana’s emotional confession and his detached reply.

(Входит Онегин, Таям вскакивает, Онегин подходит к ней. Она опускает голову на грудь.)

**W** Andante non tanto (♩ = 60)

*f* (*largamente*)

Онегин (с достоинством, покойно и несколько холодно): 40

Вы мне пи - са - ли, не от - пи - рай - тесь. Я про -

-ча - ду - ши до - вер - чи - вой при - зна - нья, люб - ви не -

*p*

Przykład 1: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.134, t. 35-42.

In the later part of the recitative, the accompaniment becomes more varied. This change reflects Onegin's inner emotional hesitations, showing how previously suppressed feelings gradually reawaken. The thickening of the texture, however, quickly subsides, underscoring the fleeting nature of the protagonist's emotions.

After Tatiana's choked, tearful reply, Onegin's aria begins, written in an exceptionally rare mixed meter. Here the composer employs a 3/2 measure—three beats per bar with the half note as the basic rhythmic unit—within which a triplet-based 18/8 rhythm appears. Such a complex rhythmic structure gives the phrase a dynamic, slightly irregular character that highlights the protagonist's inner tension and emotional conflict.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. At the top, it is labeled 'Andante non troppo (♩. 80)\*' and 'Онегин'. The score consists of three staves: a vocal line in bass clef, a piano accompaniment in treble clef, and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The lyrics are written below the vocal line: 'Когда бы жизнью, маш. ним кру . гом и о . гра . ни . чить за . хо . тел,'. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and rests.

Przykład 2: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.136, t. 63-64.

The melody and rhythm in this passage are coherent and transparent, allowing the singer to convey the text clearly. The absence of overly complex rhythmic patterns favors natural phrasing, while longer note values deliberately emphasize important words or emotions. The harmonic layer rests primarily on the tones of the triad, yet the chord progression points to tonal modulations that enrich the piece with color and emotional depth.

The melodic line initially ascends, expressing mounting tension and emotion, and then descends—symbolizing Onegin's brief emotional agitation, which gradually subsides and leads back to his cool, detached tone. This musical gesture reflects his inner wavering and a

transitory moment of weakness, after which he once again adopts a posture of indifference and hauteur.

Although moved by Tatiana's letter, Onegin remains emotionally exhausted and weary of an aristocratic society full of pretence and empty conventions. His skepticism about the authenticity of feelings and the existence of true love means that, despite his inner turmoil, he cannot accept Tatiana's sincerity without reservation. Musically, from the second half of measure 48 onward, one can hear a distinct change in the melody that reflects Onegin's emotional intent—a moment when his feelings briefly break through the façade of distance.

Но вас хвалить я не хочу, Я за неё вам отплачу  
Признаньем, так же без искусства,  
Примите ж исповедь мою, Себя на суд Вам отдаю.

I have not come to praise you, madam,  
but I shall repay you with an equally frank confession.  
Hear my confession, madam, and then judge me as  
you will.

Przykład 3: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970,

akt I, s.135, t. 46-54.

This change introduces greater emotional depth, revealing the protagonist's momentary opening. In this section the accompaniment and melody complement each other, with the accompaniment helping to shape the melodic direction. This musical reinforcement further discloses Onegin's train of thought and his resolve in expressing his true feelings and intentions.

Onegin's aria has a distinctly lyrical character, making it ideal repertoire for a lyric baritone. To faithfully convey the meaning of the libretto, the singing should approximate natural speech intonation. This requires precise control of rhythm and vocal timbre so as to maintain a natural flow of phrasing and subtly render the emotions. A vocal approach based

on a high placement, close to speaking—light, clear, and free of excessive weight—is recommended. This keeps the sound free and natural.

It is important to maintain precise intonation and clarity in text articulation—the words should be delivered decisively and distinctly, without delay or blurring of the rhythm. The entire performance should be kept in an elegant, restrained style befitting Onegin’s demeanor. Such an interpretation allows the full meaning of the words, the hero’s emotions, and his inner tension to come through.

It is worth examining several key phrases in Onegin’s recitative and analyzing them in terms of the technical challenges they pose for the singer. Already at the outset there appears a phrase during which the performer must preserve exceptional smoothness, ensuring uninterrupted and free breathing. One should avoid overly abrupt emotional fluctuations in order to maintain the music’s flow, which is crucial.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal phrase. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, starting with a treble clef and a common time signature. The lyrics under this staff are "Я про -". The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, with lyrics "- чел ду - ши до - вер - чи - вой при - зва - нья, люб - ви не -". The bottom staff is another piano accompaniment in bass clef, with lyrics "- вни - мой на - ли - я - нья,-". The music is written in a recitative style with a steady, flowing rhythm.

Przykład 4: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.134, t. 40-43.

In the next phrase the emotions become exceptionally intense, so the body should remain relaxed and the resonating spaces kept wide open while singing. The breath must be full, and the tone should be produced smoothly and with strength, carried on the breath and with high placement so the phrase can be executed in a single span. At the same time, the throat must not be tightened—pressure on the throat would block the sound, preventing its free flow and making it difficult to maintain vocal fluidity.



мне ва-ша и-скрен-ность ми-ла! О-на в вол-не-нье при-ве-ла дав-но у-молк-нув-ши-е чув-ства.

Przykład 5: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.135, t. 44-48.

The final phrase marks a turning point in the performer’s artistic expression, so the emotions should be adjusted to the changes in the orchestral accompaniment. In this section it is important to use a decisive tone that underscores the firmness with which the singer intends to convey the forthcoming thoughts. In performance, it is worth adding a touch of arrogance—both in the emotional coloring and in facial expression—to highlight Onegin’s cool, detached, and haughty demeanor. This approach better conveys his character and his tendency to moralize. The phrases should be sung directly, because Onegin wishes to state plainly the reasons behind his rejection of Tatiana’s feelings. One should avoid overly drawn-out singing so as not to lose the clarity and meaning of the message the performer aims to deliver.



Но васхва-лить я не хо-чу, я за ме-е вам от-пла-чу при-зна-нием так-же без мо-кусства. При-ми-те же ис-пове-дь мо-ю, се-бя на-сви вам от-да-ю!

Przykład 6: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.135-136, t. 48-55.

Between Onegin’s recitative and aria there is a brief yet significant interjection by Tatiana: “Ah, God, what shame, what pain.” This utterance functions as an emotional counterpoint to Onegin’s cool, detached stance. In just a few words, Tatiana reveals the intensity of the suffering she experiences as a result of his rejection. Her reaction heightens

the scene's drama, exposing the emotional chasm between the characters. Immediately after this line an instrumental transition appears, serving as a dramaturgical and emotional bridge that leads smoothly into Onegin's aria. This instrumental link not only prepares the listener for a change of perspective, but also deepens the inner tension of the entire scene.

Татьяна

О бо - же! Как о - бид - но и как

суд наш от - да - м!

(опускается на скамью)

60

Т. больно!

riten.

*f* *p* *mf* *p*

Przykład 7: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.137, t. 55-62.

The variability of the melodic line and numerous intervallic leaps—especially the odd-numbered intervals (thirds, fifths)—reflect Tatiana's inner tension and the complexity of her emotions. The accompanying accompaniment, based on repeated octave leaps in the low register, creates a dark, heavy harmonic backdrop. This sonic combination deepens the impression of pain and loneliness resulting from Onegin's rejection. The instrumental layer stands in clear contrast to the emotional candor and lyricism of the vocal part.

The range of this passage in Tatiana's part lies mainly in the middle register (chest and passaggio), which is particularly comfortable technically for sopranos. This enables precise shaping of the phrase, free control over tempo flexibility and dynamics, and subtle coloristic differentiation. As a result, the performer can readily bring out the emotional richness of the scene and highlight the psychological depth of Tatiana's character without resorting to extreme means of expression.

The recitative preceding the aria is Onegin's direct response to Tatiana's emotional confession. Kept in an objective and detached tone, it relies on natural declamation and limited expressiveness, which conveys the hero's coolness and reserve. Onegin does not react emotionally—his utterance is marked from the outset by a clear attempt to maintain control and distance from the situation.

The transition to the aria occurs smoothly, through a brief instrumental link that does not so much change the mood as deepen the reflective tone and give what follows the character of an inner monologue. This aria is not an emotional outburst but a rational, almost didactic exposition. Onegin explains to Tatiana the motives for his conduct, portraying himself as a man disillusioned with life and incapable of true feeling. The shift from recitative to cantabile does not serve to intensify emotion, but to strengthen the intellectual thrust and the character's distance from Tatiana's Romantic exaltation.

Onegin's Act I aria in Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* has a distinctly two-part structure, arising not from formal rules but from the dramatic course of the scene and the character's profile. It is a bipartite construction corresponding to a change in rhetoric and expression—from calm detachment to sneering irony. Onegin undergoes no inner transformation here; on the contrary, he presents a consistent, cool stance toward love, which he treats as an illusion leading to disappointment and constraint.

The aria's melody remains generally restrained. Intervallic leaps occur rarely and are placed carefully at key textual moments, such as “нет, я не создан для блаженства” (*net, ya ne sozdan dlya blazhénstva*), giving them rhetorical force. The rhythm, especially in the middle section, becomes more animated and conveys Onegin's detachment and even sarcasm toward the ideal of Romantic love and family life.

From the very first measures of the aria one observes a balanced melodic line, conducted mainly *legato*, with moderate intervallic leaps, which allows the character's detachment and introspection to be expressed. The melody is not diffuse but focused and clear, reflecting Onegin's rational approach to the world and to his own emotions. The key and harmony remain stable, without major tensions, underscoring the hero's coolness and withdrawal.

The first section (measures 63–85) is kept at a calm tempo, with broad cantilena and balanced phrasing. Articulation is soft, the rhythm regular, and the melodic line gentle, without sharp contrasts. The music supports the tone of rational discourse—Onegin responds to Tatiana's letter in a measured and seemingly courteous manner. He does not reject her brutally but tries to justify his position. Although his words sound reasonable, one senses emotional distance and a feeling of superiority. This is not an empathetic dialogue, but a cool self-declaration, expressed through music marked by stasis and a lack of tension.

At measure 86 the marking *più mosso* appears, launching the second section of the aria (measures 86–108). The change of tempo brings a change in musical character: the rhythm becomes sharper and more varied, with syncopations and shorter note values; phrases are shorter, and articulation more *staccato*. The expression takes on an ironic, at times patronizing tone. Onegin moves to generalizations and sneering remarks about family life, which in his view inevitably leads to boredom and disappointment. Although the music becomes more dynamic, it does not express the hero's inner tension, but rather his growing impatience with Tatiana's emotionality. The irony heard in his voice is a defensive strategy: Onegin distances himself not only from Tatiana's feeling, but from the very idea of love itself.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. At the top, it is marked "Più mosso (♩ = 100) (с ускорением)". The score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line in bass clef and a piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The vocal line has the lyrics: "Меч - там и го - дам нет вра - та, ах, нет воз -". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic line in the left hand, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics: "- вра - та, не об - нов - лю ду - ши мо - ей!". The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures, including a dynamic marking of *[mf]* in the right hand.

Przykład 8: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.139, t. 86-89.

Psychologically, this aria does not depict the character’s development but his closure—his consistent rejection of intimacy, cool rationalization of feeling, and deepening alienation. Onegin speaks not out of hesitation but out of conviction, though not necessarily a profound one. There is more of a learned detachment than of genuine calm in his words.

The aria ends at measure 108 and contains no reprise of the opening material—the conclusion is a transformation of earlier motives, but not a return to an earlier state. Onegin finishes his statement with marked coldness, reaffirming his stance. At measure 113 the offstage chorus enters; it is no longer part of the aria but serves as an important dramatic counterpoint. Its presence symbolizes the voice of society, which Onegin can neither accept nor reject without inner tension. The contrast between his individual voice and the chorus’s collective utterance underscores his isolation and heightens the dramatic situation.

(Хор за сценой; никого не видно)

Ду . ши, кра . са . ши, ду . шев . ность . дру . жество ! Ры . царствуй . те . бя ,  
 бой , не вся . кий вас , как я , пой . маю , куда . то .

V. n1 *mf* *f* V. n1

*pp*

Przykład 9: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s.142, t. 113-117.

This aria is therefore not so much an emotional confession as an intellectual declaration of distance. Tchaikovsky's music subtly yet decisively sketches the protagonist's psychological portrait: a man enclosed in cynicism, alienated, and deprived of the capacity for true emotional commitment.

From a performance standpoint, the part demands precise control of phrasing and dynamics in order to convey both composure and subtle feeling. It is important to avoid excessive expressiveness and to maintain elegance in interpretation, while at the same time revealing the character's psychological conflict. Skillful use of legato, shifts in timbre, and varied articulation will allow for a fuller rendering of this multi-dimensional figure.

In sum, Onegin's Act I aria is a musical and psychological masterpiece by Tchaikovsky. The composer masterfully combines balanced harmony, a clear melodic line, and varied dynamics to present a multilayered portrait of the protagonist—cool and cynical, yet at the same time full of inner turmoil and melancholy. This section provides a foundation for the drama's further development and is key to understanding Onegin's motivations and character.

### 3.2.1. The Author's Experiences with Performing Onegin's Aria

The interpretation of the aria's incipit plays a fundamental role in the overall performance; hence proper breath preparation before the first phrase is of particular importance. During inhalation, the vocal apparatus should be kept in a state of complete relaxation, avoiding muscular tension that could disrupt the natural airflow and thereby adversely affect the smoothness and quality of the musical phrase.

In execution, special care must be taken to maintain precise rhythmic awareness, especially in view of the agogic marking *Andante non troppo*—indicating a moderate, unhurried tempo without any tendency to rush. Violating this character could undermine the intended expressive effect.

Another essential aspect is the manner of singing the initial pitch, which enters on a weak part of the bar. It should not be overly emphasized or dynamically intensified, which requires particular control of phonation and awareness of the metric structure. The entire musical text should be realized in a coherent, continuous manner, with unified phrasing and without unnecessary breath pauses that might compromise the integrity of the melodic line.

The emission of the first tone should be produced with a so-called high placement, which supports stable intonation, clarity of timbre, and carrying power. The melodic line should be led with maximum naturalness, lightness, and an internal logic of phrasing, resembling a smooth, uninterrupted stream—gently and evenly unfolding over time, like a subtle thread binding together the structure of the entire aria.

Such an interpretation demands not only technical proficiency but also a high level of performative awareness—the ability to sculpt phrases precisely, to differentiate expression with finesse, and to maintain complete sonic transparency. In turn, this makes it possible to reveal the full expressive and aesthetic potential of the work.

The next phrase of the aria should be performed analogously to the first, applying the same principles of vocal technique and interpretive approach. The crucial difference lies in how the initial note of this section is sung—it should be executed with slightly greater dynamic intensity than at the beginning of the first phrase. This allows for subtle tonal differentiation and introduces a gentle expressive contrast between the two phrases. Here as

well, preserving the fluidity and coherence of the melodic line—without interrupting the music’s natural flow—remains essential.

In measures 67–68 there appears a phrase that should be delivered with a distinctly resolute tone and a noble, elevated interpretive stance. Its purpose is to underscore the protagonist’s inner conviction that—if he had the choice—he would unhesitatingly choose Tatiana. This passage also functions as a kind of promise made to her, which lends it additional emotional and dramatic weight.

Particular attention should be paid to the emission of the first high note of this phrase—it should be produced with the voice fully open, projecting directly outward. One must avoid pulling the sound back into the articulatory tract, which could weaken its carrying power and expressive force.

The opening words of the aria present the hero’s hypothetical reflections on the institution of marriage, but in the phrase “Но я не создан для блаженства, Ему чужда душа моя” (*No ya ne sozdan dlya blazhenstva, Yemu chuzhda dusha moya*) a clear turning point occurs—a moment when the performer should reveal the character’s true emotions. The protagonist unequivocally states his attitude toward marriage: he perceives it as something alien, incompatible with his nature, leading him to reject the idea entirely.

On the performance plane, this phrase calls for a more restrained and subtle expression than the preceding lines. The emotions should be shown with greater reserve, which allows the singer to reflect the character’s inner disorientation in the context of a possible married life. At the same time, the performer should bring out the pessimism, resignation, and melancholic reflection that give this part of the aria a deep, introspective character.

In the phrase “Напрасны ваши совершенства, / Их не достоин вовсе я” (*Naprasny vashi sovershenstva, / Ikh ne dostoin vo vse ya*), Onegin reveals certain less sympathetic aspects of his personality, such as egocentrism, arrogance, and a pessimistic outlook on life. Yet this utterance also expresses his inner honesty—although it may wound others, Onegin places paramount value on direct and sincere expression of his own feelings.

From an interpretive standpoint, this phrase requires firmness in vocal emission and a strong, decisive tone that underscores the intensity of emotion and the character’s inner conviction. The key is for the singer to find a balance between technical precision and

psychological expression. Only then is it possible to convey the complexity of the hero's emotional state—his inner conflict, his distance from feeling, and at the same time his uncompromising candor—without losing authenticity or directness of communication.

In the aria's second segment, a tone of unease emerges, reflecting deep anxieties about the problems and challenges that may arise in the future. This anxiety stems from an awareness of the gravity of marriage—an understanding that it is not an impulsive decision, but a serious commitment to traverse life together. The aim of such expression is to draw Tatiana's attention to the responsibility that marriage entails, clearly emphasizing that life after the wedding means facing both joys and hardships together.

In a sense, this also functions as a warning, suggesting that the decision to marry should be made calmly and with objective reflection. At this point the text is marked *ritenuto*, which calls for singing with a more pronounced accent to underscore the gravity of the situation and the need for careful consideration of this decision. Such an interpretation requires not only technical precision but also deep understanding and the ability to communicate emotion effectively, thereby conveying the essence of the text.

0. сколько ни лю-бил бы нас, при-вык-нув, раз-люб-лю тот -  
- час. Су-ди-те же вы, ка-ки-е ро-зы  
нам за-го-то-вит Ги-ме-ней, и,  
ritenuto  
мо-жет быть, на мно-го дней!

Przykład 10: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 138-139, t. 77-85.

Particular attention should be paid to the climactic section of the aria (measures 86–97), marked *più mosso*, which indicates the need to accelerate the tempo and underscores its role

as the emotional and musical apex of the piece. In interpreting this passage, precise command of rhythm and tempo is crucial, as these provide the appropriate energy and expressiveness.

Especially important is the technique for executing the passage that includes the high notes, with particular emphasis on the top F. This note should not be sung too broadly, in order to avoid dispersion and loss of tonal focus. It is essential to use appropriate emission techniques that maintain clarity and concentration on these notes, while employing a covering technique to preserve warmth and control. In addition, the highest notes should be kept at maximum volume, while the lower ones should be suitably softened, which makes it possible to achieve dynamic balance between phrases. Such a strategy prevents the entire section from sounding overly aggressive and allows for the preservation of subtlety and musical harmony.



**Più mosso** (♩ = 100)  
(с увлечением)

Меч - там и го - дам нет вра - та, ах, нет вра - та,  
 - вра - та, не об - нов - лю ду - ши мо - ей!  
 Я вас люб - лю лю - бо - вью бра - та, лю - бо - вью  
 бра - та, иль, мо - жет быть, е - ще силь -  
 . ней! Иль, мо - жет быть... Иль, мо - жет быть, е - ще, е - ще силь -  
 . ней!\*)

Przykład 11: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 139-140, t. 86-97.

In the final section of the aria, the tempo should return to its original level and the expression of emotion should settle into a state of calm, while maintaining steady breath support. Especially when delivering the last words—“Illusions, illusions, always illusions!”—it is advisable to reduce the vocal dynamics appropriately to better convey the accompanying mood and emotion. The entire passage should be sung smoothly and without interruption, creating a coherent and natural expression. At the close, the tempo may be eased slightly, allowing the atmosphere to subside gradually and highlighting the concluding character of the piece. This approach not only enables a precise rendering of the aria’s emotional arc but also allows for a subtle and moving conclusion, reflecting the work’s depth and the performer’s sensitivity.

Приклад 12: П. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 140-141, t. 97-104.

Regarding emotional expression, the performer must deeply understand and convey Onegin’s views on love. Onegin no longer harbors any illusions or expectations about youth, feeling an inner lifelessness that cannot be revived. His feelings for Tatiana are not a traditional love between a man and a woman, but resemble a profound fraternal affection. Expressing these feelings requires a sincere and authentic approach, so that through singing the performer communicates Onegin’s true views and sensations regarding this relationship, revealing the complexity of his inner emotions and self-awareness.

### 3.3. Stylistic Features of Onegin's Aria

The opera *Eugene Onegin* is deeply Romantic, which is evident in its wealth of melody, the depth of its emotions, and the precise depiction of landscapes and the characters' feelings, all underscoring the Romantic spirit. The opera's structure and music rest on conflict and the psychological development of the characters, which gives the work a pronounced dramatic tension.

In Tchaikovsky's operas—especially in *Eugene Onegin*—elements of Russian folk music are deftly woven in, including folk melodies, characteristic rhythms, and the use of national instrumental color. This not only lends the work a rich local flavor but also strengthens its musical distinctiveness and deepens its emotional dimension.

Through the fusion of folk melodies and rhythms, *Eugene Onegin* reveals a unique Russian national style. Tchaikovsky is renowned for his beautiful, lyrical melodic writing, and in *Onegin* the numerous scenes and vocal numbers showcase his gift for melody. Through these melodies the composer probes the characters' complex emotions and inner states.

Through his vocal numbers, the character of Onegin reveals profound lyricism, laying bare his solitude, reflection, and regret. These numbers are not only charged with drama; they also vividly convey the characters' inner conflicts and self-reflection through music. At key moments in the opera—such as Onegin's conversation with Tatiana, his monologue, and the duel with Lensky—the music's dramatic tension reaches its peak, demonstrating Tchaikovsky's mastery in using music to drive the plot, build conflict between characters, and articulate emotional transitions. In this way the opera's drama is further intensified. At the same time, although Onegin's numbers focus primarily on the expression of emotion, Tchaikovsky skillfully interweaves elements of Russian folk music, such as folk melodies and rhythms. This makes the music more varied and enriches the work's portrayal of Russian society and culture. The texts and melodic direction of Onegin's numbers deeply reflect meditations on love, solitude, fate, and death, and also reveal the influence of Tchaikovsky's personal experiences and emotional world.

In *Onegin* Tchaikovsky displays his masterful orchestration, precisely rendering the characters' emotional changes and psychological states through varied instrumental combinations and shifts in timbre, thereby strengthening the tight bond between music,

character, and narrative development. His operatic works are typically marked by clear structure and rich musicality; through skillful use of melody, harmony, and rhythm, and precise handling of instrumental color, he enhances the integration of music and drama. At the same time, Tchaikovsky's operatic style—his deep understanding of literature, the traits of Romantic music, the incorporation of Russian national elements, the reflection of personal experience and emotion, and the meticulous crafting of dramaturgy and musical structure—collectively shaped and endowed his oeuvre with its distinctive character.

The orchestration in this aria is subtle and restrained. Tchaikovsky avoids a full orchestral sound—strings predominate, often playing with mutes (*con sordino*), which imparts a subdued, introspective character to the music. The woodwinds add color but never dominate; they remain in the service of the voice. Here the orchestra functions primarily as support and commentary, reinforcing the logic and emotional trajectory of Onegin's monologue without introducing dramatic climaxes.

The overall musical design of the aria underscores the character's psychological complexity. Onegin does not reject Tatiana in emotional agitation but with apparent calm, in an almost didactic tone. This mode of delivery—contained, balanced, rational—strengthens his image as a man who is cool, disillusioned with life, and incapable of deep feeling. The lack of overt drama in the music does not spring from indifference but from the character's conscious distance from the conventions of Romantic love. Though formally subdued, this aria carries enormous psychological and dramatic weight—it presents Onegin not as a straightforward antagonist, but as an inwardly complex, self-enclosed figure whose coldness is as authentic as it is tragic.

## **Chapter 4. Analysis of Onegin's Baritone Part in the Opera**

### **4.1. Vocal Analysis of Recitatives, Duets, and Solo Numbers**

In certain passages of Onegin's part—such as the recitatives, duets, and arias—the character and psychology of the figure become particularly clear. The music and the manner of interpreting these sections convey his cynicism, emotional detachment, and inner turmoil. As a result, the listener gains deep insight into his motivations and conflicts, which shape his actions throughout the opera.

In Scene VI of Act I, the protagonist converses with Tatiana, and every word he speaks reveals a contemptuous attitude toward the world around him. The melodic line is set in 3/4 meter, which lends the entire melody stability and coherence while simultaneously reflecting his indifference and cynicism toward life. Onegin expresses complete lack of interest in and boredom with Tatiana's rural way of life, dismissing others' opinions and feelings with arrogance, focusing solely on himself, and showing utter indifference to everything that surrounds him.

**Листesso tempo**

Онегин (обращаясь к Татьяне с холодной утчивостью.)

Ска - жи - те мне, я ду - ма ю, бы - ва - ет вам пре -

0 . скуч - но здесь, в глу - шн, хо - тя пре - лест - ной, но да - ло - кой? Не

30 ду - ма ю, что б мно - го раз - вле - че - ний да - ло вам бы - ло.

Przykład 13: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Onegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970,

akt I, s. 64, t. 22-33.

In the later part of this scene, the repeated use of nearly identical melodic lines in the background underscores Onegin's mode of thinking. He often warns others against certain actions or points out that some behaviors are wrong, yet he rarely—indeed, almost never—offers concrete advice on how they should proceed. Such conduct clearly reflects the arrogance of his character.

A fundamental contradiction can be observed in his behavior and expression. They are dominated by coldness, detachment, lack of enthusiasm for life, disdain for others, and indifference to their feelings. Yet in some smaller musical passages, moments of kindness and compassion emerge. In the social context of the time, Onegin is therefore not an unequivocally negative figure—he is also capable of human sensitivity. Only those with a pure heart are able to perceive the good in others, which further deepens our understanding of the multidimensionality of his character.

As a result, the image of Onegin becomes more complex and ambiguous, and his figure—full of inner contradictions—grows more striking and compelling.

Татьяна

Онегин

Я чи - та - ю мно - го Прав - да, да - ет нам че - нье

40

бездну пи - щей для у - ма и сердца, но не всег - да си - деть нам мож - но

Татьяна

с кни - гой! Меч - та - ю и - ног - да, бро - дя по са - ду.



coldness, irony, and arrogance are particularly striking in the social setting, which further deepens his isolation and distance from others. When Onegin perceives the unfavorable opinions and cool attitude of the guests, he is seized by intense anger, an expression of his inner turmoil and the frustration stemming from being misunderstood. He misinterprets Lensky's invitation as an attempt to humiliate him and, in retaliation, decides to dance with Lensky's fiancée, hoping to provoke jealousy and goad his rival. This provocative behavior, combined with the tense atmosphere and the guests' negative judgments, becomes one of the key factors leading to the subsequent duel between Onegin and Lensky.



300 (В это время Ольга проходит мимо, за нею идет Ленский.)

Бу-ду у-ха-живать за Оль-гой, забе-шу е-го по-ряд-ком!

73 Ленский [mp] 310

Вы о-бе-ща-ли мне те-перь!

Вот о-на! Про-шу вас! (Ольга в недоумении)

*p espress.*

(Онегин с Ольгой танцуют.)

-шиб-ся, вер-но, ты!

*mp*

Przykład 15: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s. 155-156, t. 275-316.

In interpreting the aria from this scene, the singer's tone should remain restrained, avoiding excessive dynamic contrasts, since the essential aim is to reveal the hero's inner reflections and emotional transformations. This demands a high degree of precision and control over vocal production to fully convey Onegin's psychological complexity. Through

subtle modulation of dynamics, the performer should bring out his characteristic traits, internal conflicts, and ways of responding to social situations. Such an interpretation deepens the scene's dramatic dimension and enables a fuller understanding of the character.

Molto meno mosso (♩ = 144)

80

Онегин (протанцевавши тур с Ольгой, усаживает свою даму, потом, делая вид, что только что заметил

Ты не тан - цуешь, Лен - ский? Чайльд Га -

Ленский

Ленского, обращайтесь к нему!) Со мной?

роль - дом стоишь ка - ким - то! Что с тобой?

167 (p)

И. Ни - че - го. Лю - бу - юсь я то - бой, ка - кой ты

90

cresc.

Онегин

друг пре - крас - ный! Ка - ко - во? Не о - жи - дал при -

p

зна - нья и та - ко го! За что ты ду - ешь - ся?

Приклад 16: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s. 176-177, t. 77-99.

The prologue to Onegin and Lensky's duet, consisting of four measures, deftly alludes to the melodic motif from the previous scene, in which Lensky sings the aria *Molodost', molodost'* ("Youth, youth"). The composer employs thematic reminiscence here, enabling a smooth emotional transition between scenes and deepening the psychological portrait of Lensky.

With simple yet evocative means—such as a lowered register, minor key, and economical texture—Tchaikovsky creates an atmosphere of melancholy and tension. Short note values and suspended cadences further intensify the sense of unease and the hero's inner turmoil. This musical prologue not only underscores Lensky's tragic forebodings but also ushers the listener into the atmosphere of the impending conflict between the friends.

This device attests to Tchaikovsky's dramaturgical mastery: with just a few measures he can sketch the emotional weight of the entire scene and prepare the ground for the dramatic dialogue in the duet.

**Темпо I** (♩ = 108)  
(Онегин к Ленскому)

Что ж, на-чи-

**Ленский**  
(Зарецкий отходит с Гильо в сторону для переговоров об условиях дуэли.)

... нать? Нач-нем, по-жа-луй!

*f* *dim.* *p*



Przykład 17: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Oniegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s. 219-220, t. 34-40.

The duel scene unfolds in 3/2 meter and the key of E major. In the low register a recurring rhythmic pattern appears, functioning as a leitmotif. Its presence builds an atmosphere of tension and a heavy, tragic mood that pervades the entire scene. This motif conveys not only the drama and cruelty of dueling in that era but also seems symbolically to foreshadow the approaching death.

Onegin's singing is initially kept in a relatively gentle tone. After one measure Lensky joins, introducing a melancholy, deeply moving melody. This contrast highlights the emotional differences between the characters and intensifies the drama of their relationship. As the music progresses, the dynamics gradually increase—from quiet, restrained expression to a more intense sonority. This illustrates not only Onegin's passage from cool indifference to ever-stronger emotions, but also his inner awakening and the complexity of his feelings.

As the vocal line continues, the dynamics weaken again, bringing the listener back to reality. Onegin no longer sings of warm memories of friendship, but of the brutality of the present moment, which underscores the scene's tragic dimension. At this point a clear turn occurs: the music gathers strength once more, and the shifting dynamics bring into relief the fear, sorrow, and inner turmoil of the protagonists as they face the impending duel. This contrast reveals their conflicting emotions and the drama of a situation in which they must confront the inevitability of fate and their own humanity.

G (Ленский и Онегин стоят в ожидании, не глядя друг на друга.)

*L'istesso tempo*



Вра - ги! Дав - но ли друг от  
Вра. ги! Дав -

G *L'istesso tempo*



*pp*

*cresc.*



дру - га нас жа - жда кро - ви от - ве - ла? Дав - но ли мы ча - сы до -  
- но ли друг от дру - га нас жа - жда кро - ви от - ве - ла? Дав - но ли мы ча -

*simile*

*cresc.*



- су - га, тра - пе - зу, и мыс - ли, и де - ла де - ли - ли друж - но?"  
- сы до - су - га, тра - пе - зу, и мыс - ли, и де - ла де - ли - ли друж - но?"

50

Л. Мы не влюблены, врагам на следственном по добно.

О. Мы не влюблены, врагам на следственном по .

Л. мы друг для друга в тишине неготовим гибель хладнокровно.

О. добно, мы друг для друга в тишине неготовим гибель хладно .

Przykład 18: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970,

akt II, s. 220-222, t. 41-52.

In the subsequent measures of the duet, the musical dramaturgy builds gradually toward an emotional climax. The musical rhythm then eases slightly, and the dynamics gradually diminish. The use of interrogative form together with a fading musical phrase precisely conveys the hidden desire for reconciliation that lies deep in both protagonists' hearts. Despite this emotional openness, the tragic conclusion seems inevitable. The symbolic four resolute “нет” (*net*) herald the coming death—each one intensifies the tension and heightens the drama of the situation.

Harmonically, this sequence unfolds through a progression: from a diminished thirteenth chord, through the dominant and tonic, and back to the dominant. Each successive “нет” (*net*)

sounds ever more forceful, and the last is saturated with absolute determination and emotional weight. This passage vividly reveals the inner struggle and depth of feeling of the characters, plunged into a moment of despair and unavoidable parting.

In the duet, Onegin expresses deep regret and remorse over the impending duel and the irreversible changes that have occurred in his relationship with Lensky. Through their shared singing we hear not only the pain of a lost friendship, but also reflection on earlier misunderstandings and impulsive decisions. Although they were once close, now—because of wounded pride, ambiguous motives, and a lack of dialogue—they stand on opposite sides as enemies.

This duet strongly underscores the inner contradictions and emotional helplessness of both figures. Though neither desires this confrontation, the course of events has brought them to a dramatic point of no return. In their singing resound not only grief, but also the tragic sense of fate's inevitability.

Л. *poco ritenuto*  
 Ах! Не за-сме-ить-ся ль нам, по-ка не о-баг-ри-ла-ся ру-  
 О. *poco ritenuto*  
 .кров-но. Ах! Не за-сме-ить-ся ль нам, по-ка не о-баг-ри-ла-ся ру-  
*poco ritenuto*  
*p* *f* *pp*  
 Л. *dim.* *p* **Allegro non troppo** (♩ = 132)  
 -ка, не ра-дой-тись ли по-лю-бов-но? Нет! Нет!  
 О. *dim.* *p*  
 -ка, не ра-дой-тись ли по-лю-бов-но? Нет! Нет!  
**Allegro non troppo** (♩ = 132)  
 Л. 60  
 Нет! Нет!  
 О. Нет! Нет!  
 (Зарецкий и Гильо зарядили уже пистолеты и отмерили расстояние. *espress.*)  
*pp*

Przykład 19: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s.222, t. 53-62.

Approximately two years pass between Acts II and III of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. In Act II the duel takes place, in which Onegin kills Lensky. Act III unfolds in St. Petersburg, where Onegin returns after a long absence, living the life of a cosmopolitan and traveler. There he encounters Tatiana, who has married Prince Gremin. These two years are a time in which both Onegin and Tatiana change significantly—he falls into melancholy and disillusionment, while she matures and attains a new social standing.

At the beginning of Act III, immediately after Onegin enters, a recitative passage appears in which the protagonist, through an inner monologue, reveals his psychological and emotional world. Tchaikovsky deftly employs a series of agogic changes—from *L'istesso tempo*, through *Poco meno mosso*, *Andante* and *Adagio*, to *Più adagio*. These gradual shifts in tempo build mounting dramatic tension, leading the listener ever deeper into the character's intimate experience.

The tempo changes not only enrich the musical expression but also precisely mirror Onegin's inner psychological transformations. In his monologue one senses melancholy, confusion, anxiety, and a profound existential pain—all of which reflect a torn and solitary figure, bereft of purpose.

This passage forms a sharp contrast with the energetic, dazzling polonaise that precedes it. Juxtaposing these two sections not only underscores the drama of the situation but also highlights Onegin's deepening emotional transformation and his growing awareness of inner emptiness.

## № 20. СЦЕНА И АРИЯ КНЯЗЯ ГРЕМИНА

(Онегин стоит у стены направо, близко к авансцене.)

**L'istesso tempo**

[*mf*]

Онегин

И здесь мне скучно!  
Блеск и су - о -

**Poco meno**

O.

. та боль - шо - го све - та не ра - се - ют веч - ной, то - ни - тель - ной то -

(Подходит ближе к рампе.)

**Andante** (♩ = 72)

O.

. ски!  
У - бив на по - е - дин - ке дру - га, должн без це - ли, без тру -

10

Adagio (♩ = 112)

0 - дов до два-дцати ше-сти го-дов, то-мьсь без-дей-ствен-ен до-су-га, без

Piu adagio (♩ = 104)

0 служ-бы, без же-ны, без дел, се-бя за-нять я не су-мел!

*p poco cresc.*

0 Мной овладело беспокон-ство, о-хо-та к пе-ре-ме-не мест, весь-на ну-

-чи - толь - ко - о свой - отво,                      не - мно - гих доб - ро -

20 *cresc.*  
 - воля - ный крест!                      О - ста - нись и сво - и се - ло - нья, ле - со - в и нив

у - о - ди - но - нье, где о - кро - ва - влен - на - я    тень ко мне и - вля - лась ка - ждый день!

К

Я на - чал стран - стви - я без це - ли, до - ступ - ный чув - ству од - но -

му... и что ж? К не - сча - стью мо - е - му, и стран - стви - я мне на - до - е - ли!

Я воз - вра - тил - ся и по - пал, как Чац - кий, с ко - раб - ля на бал!

[*mf*] [*p*] *Attacca subito*

Przykład 20: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s. 236-239, t. 1-28.

When, at the ball, Onegin sees Tatiana again, he exclaims in astonishment: “It’s impossible that it’s her! Impossible! From that distant village?” His previous image of her is completely transformed. Onegin cannot believe that this graceful, distinguished woman is the same Tatiana who once harbored feelings for him.

In the score the accompaniment is marked *Poco più forte*, signaling a rise in emotional tension—from delicate sounds gradually intensifying. In the piano part, especially in the low registers, triplets appear, perfectly conveying Onegin’s surprise and uncertainty.

The image shows two systems of a musical score for Onegin's aria. The first system is for Onegin, starting with the name 'Онегин' and the dynamic marking '[p]'. The vocal line is in bass clef with lyrics: 'Ужель Та-тья-на? Точ-но... нет!.. Как! Из глу-'. The piano accompaniment features triplets in the left hand. The second system starts at measure 20, marked with a box containing '20'. The vocal line continues with lyrics: '-ши степ.ных се-ле-ний? Не мо-жет быть! Не мо-жет быть!'. The piano accompaniment is marked '[poco più f]' and continues with triplets in the left hand.

И как про - ста, как ве - ли - ча - ва, как не - бреж - на!... Ца -

(Татьяна обращается)

Татьяна (к хору)  
[P]

- ри - цей ка - жет - ся о - на! Ска - жи - те, кто э - то... там с жу - жем? Не ра - а - гля.

к окружающим, указывая взглядом на Онегина, к которому подошел князь Грешин.)

Przykład 21: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt II, s. 244-245, t. 13-28.

At the beginning of Act III, after the polonaise, a calm orchestral introduction follows, serving as a musical prologue to Onegin's aria. The plot unfolds here through a sequential structure accompanied by a delicate accompaniment marked *piano* and *dolce*. The recurring, gentle motif smoothly leads the listener into the mood of the protagonist's impending monologue.

At this moment Tatiana, escorted by Prince Gremin, leaves the stage, and the guests who had been dancing gradually fade into the shadows, becoming a silent, withdrawn presence. The stage lighting focuses exclusively on Onegin, emphasizing his solitude and symbolizing a shift from the external reality of the ball to his inner, reflective world. This moment acts as a trigger for memories and emotions, preparing the ground for the emotionally complex aria that follows directly after it.

## Allegro moderato (♩ = 112)

Татьяна (к Грешину)

И давно? Друг мой, у - ста - ла я!

Се - го - дня.

## Allegro moderato (♩ = 112)

*p dolce*

(Татьяна, опираясь на руку Грешина, уходит, отвечая на поклоны; Онегин следит за ней глазами.)

30

*cresc.*

Przykład 22: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 258, t. 21-33.

After the prologue there follows a short aria based on Onegin's personal, inner narration, beginning at a tempo of *Allegro moderato*. The melodic line is kept calm, without pronounced leaps or dynamic contrasts, creating an introspective atmosphere—as if the protagonist were asking himself questions and answering them in turn.

In the score, markings such as *crescendo poco a poco* and *accelerando* appear gradually, leading to *Allegro giusto*. These agogic and dynamic indications reflect the mounting emotional tension, which culminates in the aria's final phase. The tempo accelerates



0. *cresc. poco a poco*

- гал в сми - рен - ной до - ле? У - же - ли то о - на бы.ла,

*cresc. un poco* *acceler.*

так рав.но - душ - на, так сме.ла! Но что со мной?

260

50 Allegro giusto (♩. 172)

0. Я как во сне! Что ше. вель. ну. лось в глу. би.

*pp*

0. - не ду. ши хо. лод. ной и ле. нн. вой? До. са. да, су. ет. ность,

*cresc.*

Przykład 23: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 258-260, t. 34-57.

The climactic section of the piece, expressed through a series of emotional rhetorical questions, reflects Onegin's joy at the sudden awakening of love. This moment embodies his inner breakthrough and profound emotional change. The music gradually rises to a high F marked *fortissimo*, underscoring the intensity and vehemence of his feelings. At the same time, the accompaniment becomes denser and more continuous than before, and the flowing sixteenth-note figurations, present throughout the first part, enhance the dynamism and fluidity of the vocal line, lending the passage greater emotional depth and richness.

After reaching the highest pitches, the accompaniment drops sharply, preparing the ground for the next, lyrical section of the aria. This musical shaping not only foreshadows a deepening and strengthening of the coming melody's lyrical character, but also gives the singer time to adjust and prepare for the forthcoming vivid, emotional phrase. Performing this passage requires full technical and emotional commitment from the singer to convey both the tension of the climax and the subtle expressiveness of the subsequent section.

In the *Allegro moderato – Allegro vivace* section, the singing takes on an immense emotional charge, like a boy experiencing true love for the first time. The *Allegro moderato* tempo symbolizes Onegin's inner transformation—he is now ready to follow his feeling, regardless of any obstacles. Repeated melodic motives emphasize his desire and strong faith in love.

As the small aria moves into its second part, the marking *Poco animando* (gradual acceleration) appears, making the singing more dynamic and swollen with emotion. The melodic sequences increasingly reveal Onegin's mental state—his excitement and inner instability. As the vocal line reaches its apex, musical tension rises through the repetition of the libretto's words. A particularly important moment occurs when the marking *ritenuto* (a sudden slowing of tempo) appears—the tempo suddenly slackens, preparing the listener for two subsequent high notes. The melody then ascends, unfolding freely, and finally returns to the tonic in B-flat major.

## Allegro moderato (♩ = 120)

0.  *mf*  
 . и не - нья нет, влюб - лен я, влюб - лен, как

60   
 маль - чик, пол - ный стра - сти ю - ной! Пу - скай по -

0.   
 . гиб - ну я, но пре - жде я во - сле -

0.   
 . пиль - ной на - де - жде вку - шу вол -

0

- шеб - ный яд                      жр -                      ла -                      ний,                      у -

*mf*

*Poco animando*

0

- пьюсь не -                      сбы -                      точ -                      ной меч -                      той!..                      Вез -                      де,                      вез -

70

0

- де                      он пре -                      до мной,                      об -                      раз же -

*ritenuto*

0

- лан -                      ный,                      до -                      ро -                      гой,                      вез -                      де,                      вез -                      де он пре -                      до мно -

**Allegro vivace** (♩ = 160)  
(Убегает.)

Przykład 24: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 261-263, t. 58-83.

In the section of the duet between Onegin and Tatiana, there is a modulation from D-flat major to F major while maintaining 3/2 meter. The tempo marking *Adagio con moto* suggests a calm yet animated character—akin to a gentle *andante*. Here Onegin's singing radiates passion and longing, marked by sincerity, and the melodic line remains fluid and cohesive. The music is cast in a delicate, subtle style.

As the passage unfolds, the emotional tensions become increasingly pronounced and the delivery gains intensity. The vocal line gradually rises, creating a *crescendo*—in both dynamics and expression—until it reaches the highest note, F, which forms the climactic point of the entire section.

At this moment the score indicates *Poco più animato*, pointing to a slight quickening of the tempo. The music takes on new intensity, reflecting Onegin's inner conflict and his burning desire for an emotional response from Tatiana. After this climax the tension gradually subsides and the passage softens—the closing part, marked *ritenuto* (sudden slowing), employs repeated eighth notes, gently bringing this scene—so full of emotional rises and falls—to a close.

This entire musical trajectory not only reveals the depth of Onegin's inner transformations but also testifies to the composer's mastery in portraying emotion and fluid musical transitions.

230  
string. molto

T. *Онегин*  
- зни.тель.ну.ю честь?

Adagio con moto (♩ = 63)  
(со страстью, с большим чувством)

0. - жель, у.жель в мо.льбе мо.ей сми.рен.ной у.ви.дит ваш хо.лод.ный  
взор за.те.и хит.ро.сти пре.  
240  
- зрен.ной? Ме.ня тер.за.ет ваш у.кор! Ког.да б вы  
277  
зна.ли, как у.жа.с.но то.мечь.ся жа.ждо.ю люб.ви,  
cresc.  
тер.петь, и ра.зу.мом все.час.но сми.рять вол.не.ни.е в кро.  
Poco più animato  
- ни, же.лать об.нять у вас ко.ле.ни и, ва.ры.  
- дав у ва.ших ног, на.лить мо.ль.бы, при.знать.я,  
ritenuto 250 Andante (♩ = 72)  
0. пе.ни, всё, всё, что вы.ра.зить бы мог!

Przykład 25: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy, partia wokalna),  
Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 275-278, t. 228-250.

In the next section of the duet, the melody takes the form of an alternating dialogue, marked by exceptional smoothness and continuity, creating the impression of an authentic conversation between the characters. The marking *mp* (*mezzo piano*, moderately soft) in the score requires the performer to maintain precise dynamic control in order to preserve balance and subtlety throughout the entire phrase.

In interpretation, special attention should be paid to delicacy and sensitivity in handling dynamics, so as to build an atmosphere full of emotion, intimacy, and mutual understanding. This musical dialogue becomes not merely an exchange of words, but a profound, almost spiritual communication between two kindred souls.

*riten.*  
Татьяна

*[p]*

*Allegio, quasi Largo* (♩ = 58)

Ах! Сча.стье бы.ло так воз.можно, так

260

279

*[mp]*

близ.ко, так близ.ко! Сча.стье бы.ло так воз.

Онегин

*mp* *f*

Ах! Сча.стье бы.ло так воз.

T. - МОЖ - но, ТАК БЛИЗ - ко, ТАК БЛИЗ - ко, БЛИЗ - .  
 O. - МОЖ - но, ТАК БЛИЗ - ко, ТАК БЛИЗ - ко, БЛИЗ - .

T. - ко! Но судь-ба мо-я уж ре-ше-на, и без-воз- .  
 O. - ко!

L'istesso tempo  
 L'istesso tempo

Приклад 26: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 278-279, t. 256-266.

In the next section of Onegin's part, the composer employs the technique of repetition, preserving a melodic and accompaniment structure similar to the opening portion of the vocal line. Through this device, emotions gradually accumulate while using the same musical material—each successive iteration of the melody carries ever deeper and fuller feeling.

Although the melody is repeated, the composer introduces subtle changes that reveal different emotional facets of the theme. These slight modifications not only enrich the artistic expression but also reinforce the coherence of the entire piece.

The use of repetition in this context is not merely a formal device—it underscores its crucial role in deepening the listener's emotional experience and intensifying the music's

expressive power. This is an example of the deliberate use of recurrence as a tool for building dramaturgy and emotional depth.

Adagio con moto (♩ = 63)  
(как можно выразительнее)

0. Нет! По-ми-нут.но ви-деть вас, по-всю-ду сле-до-вать за

The first system of the musical score features a vocal line in the bass clef and a piano accompaniment in the grand staff. The vocal line begins with a fermata on the first measure, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

281

0. ва - ми, у - лыб - ку уст, дви-жень-е,

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a fermata on the first measure and then continues with eighth notes. The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note pattern. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#).

0. взгляд до-вать выоб-ле-ны-ми гла-за-ми, вы-нять вам

280

The third system starts with a boxed measure number '280'. The vocal line has a fermata on the first measure. The piano accompaniment includes a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#).

0. дол - го, по-ни-мать ду-шой всё ва-ше со-вершен - ство.

The fourth system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a fermata on the first measure. The piano accompaniment includes a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) marking. The key signature changes to one sharp (F#).

(Постепенно воодушевляясь, падает снова на колени и схватывает ее руку.)

*cresc.*

пред на - ми в страст - ных му - ках за - ми - рать.

*pp cresc.*

*f* Poco più animato

блед - неть и гас - нуть: вот бла - жен - ство,

вот од - на меч - та мо - я, од - но бла - жен -

ство!

Приклад 27: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Oniegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 280-283, t. 275-289.

The next section of Onegin's vocal part is preceded by an eight-measure prologue in 2/4 meter, marked *Allegro moderato* (moderately fast tempo). This rhythm lends the music a compact, dynamic structure, effectively building an atmosphere of tension and inner conflict. The musical texture serves a dual role—it not only introduces Onegin's forthcoming singing but also accompanies it as an accompaniment, heightening the sense of emotional strain and inner pressure in his interpretation.



Przykład 28: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 285, t. 319-326.

In the scene of Onegin's courtship of Tatiana, his passionate declarations stand in sharp contrast to the earlier stance of cool arrogance and didactic tone he adopted when rejecting her letter. This dramatic shift reveals the hero's profound transformation and creates a clear emotional contrast. Although Onegin's melodic line does not show large fluctuations, his singing is suffused with intense emotion. Combined with the compact, dynamic texture of the accompaniment, the whole effectively conveys his urgent, almost desperate desire to win Tatiana's love.

Онегин (с чувством, порывисто, страстно, становясь возле нее на колени)

[*p*]

330

0, не го - ни, ме - ня ты лю - бишь, и не о -

0.

- став - лю и те - бя, ты жизнь сво - ю на -

0.

. прасно сгу - бишь, то во - ля не - ба: ты мо - я! [*p*] Вся жизнь тво -

340

0.

- я бы - ла на - ло - гом со - е - ди - не - ни - я со мной! И

0. знай: те - бе я по - слан бо - гом, до гро - ба я хра - ни - тель

*cresc.*

350

0. твой! Не мо - жешь ты ме - ня от - ри - нуть,

0. ты для ме - ня долж - на по - ки - нуть по - сты - лый

*p cresc.*

360

riten.

0. дом и шум - ный свет, те - бе дру - гой до - ро - ги

288

**Andante molto mosso** (♩ = 80)

**S** Татьяна (встан)

***ff con tutta forza***

О . не . . . . . гни!

нет!

**S** **Andante molto mosso** (♩ = 80)

*f*

Przykład 29: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 286-288, t. 327-363.

In the final part of the opera, the composer—by gradually slowing the tempo—gives the performer of Onegin’s role space to display precise control of emotion and the ability to align expression with the character’s inner state. The increased interpretive freedom allows for a deeper immersion into the character’s psyche. The climactic moment is the highest note in the entire work, which demands from the singer not only impeccable technique but also a powerful, emotionally saturated sound.

This mode of musical expression not only underscores Onegin’s tragic fate but also becomes the opera’s emotional apex. It presents both a technical and an artistic challenge—requiring complete commitment to the character’s complex emotions and highlighting the dramatic nature of the finale.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system features a vocal line in the upper staff with the lyrics "По-вор!.. То-ска!.. О жалкий кре- бий" and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The tempo is marked "riten." and the dynamic is "[mf]". The second system is marked "Vivace (♩ = 144) (Убегает.)" and includes a tempo change box with the number "400". The vocal line in this system contains the words "мой!" and "Занавес". The piano accompaniment is characterized by dense triplet patterns in both hands.

Przykład 30: P. Czajkowski, *Eugeniusz Oniegin* (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt III, s. 292, t. 394-404.

Onegin's part is marked by a wealth of emotion and profound psychological expression. The composer skillfully combines technical challenges with subtle interpretive nuances, allowing the performer to reveal the character's inner transformation—from cool arrogance to passionate, despair-filled feelings. Recurrent motifs and dynamic tempo changes build the dramaturgy, emphasizing the gradual rise of tension and the intensity of Onegin's experience. The entire role is a masterful example of using music to express complex emotions and the protagonist's tragic nature.

## 4.2. Personal Performance Experiences

While preparing the role of Eugene Onegin in Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, I identified mastery of the Russian language as the most significant interpretive challenge. It was my first encounter with this language in stage practice. My previous vocal experience was based mainly on the Italian and German repertoire, whose phonetic, rhythmic, and emotional specificities were familiar to me. In the case of Russian, it became necessary to develop a new working method that would allow me to quickly and effectively master the key aspects of vocalization.

To this end, I worked with a native speaker who corrected my pronunciation and indicated the proper placement of logical accents. Analysis showed that the Russian phonetic system is exceptionally extensive and includes 36 consonants, among them hard–soft pairs, which creates additional difficulties in singing. In my first attempts, excessive focus on consonants resulted in a fragmented sound and a loss of phrasing fluency. Only when I shifted the emphasis of my work to vowels—according to the principle of *bel canto*, in which vowels carry color, power, and expression—was I able to maintain consistent resonance and clarity of delivery. Consonants, though they must be articulated precisely, should serve as short, transparent links that do not disrupt the continuity of the tone. Complementing this principle is logical accentuation, which gives the text intelligibility and a natural emotional dynamic.

The rule I developed—concentration on vowels, light articulation of consonants, and precise logical accents—became the basis for further work on the role and enabled me to capture the specificity of Russian sonority in the context of operatic singing.

A practical test of the effectiveness of this method was the performance of the aria “Вы мне писали” (*Vy mne pisali*) on March 15, 2021, during the event *Musical Faces of Asia in Europe* at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music. Analysis of this performance made it possible to single out three essential preparation elements: (1) correct phonetics and text accentuation; (2) maintenance of coherent vocal phrasing; and (3) precise synchronization with the piano accompaniment. The audience's reaction confirmed the effectiveness of the adopted approach. The conclusion drawn from this stage of work was to establish a hierarchy of actions: the foundation of interpretation is pronunciation and the logic of the text, followed by the shaping of timbre, and only then stage gesture and facial expression, which must remain in a strict relationship with the music and the meaning of the words.

In the psychological interpretation of this aria, I focused on the moment when Onegin rejects Tatiana's feelings. I based my own performance on a restrained, detached stance that reveals the hero's emotional coldness. Any fleeting emotional fluctuations were treated as subordinate to the character's overriding goal—to maintain distance and avoid deepening the relationship.

The next stage of work was the performance of the duet with Tatiana in the finale of Act III, which took place on July 21, 2021, in the PSM Auditorium in Nowy Sącz with soprano Aleksandra Wittchen. Preparation included analysis of the text, precise identification of semantic content and emotional turning points, and the development of a coherent logic to their progression. An important task was also to link vocal means (control of timbre, breath, dynamics, and tempo) with stage actions that had to highlight the characters' psychological transformations. The public performance confirmed that the adopted working method allows for a balance between technical correctness and emotional credibility.

I further developed this experience in subsequent collaboration with soprano Justyna Samborska. In June 2024, in the "Dworek na Brzozowej" concert hall, we presented the final duet from Act III of the opera. Her extensive stage experience and distinctive timbre in the upper register created the conditions for a deeper interpretation. This collaboration highlighted the importance of three factors—vocal technique, understanding of the role, and stage expression—which must be honed in parallel and combined into a coherent whole.

The recording process in which we took part further confirmed that studio recording requires a different approach than stage performance. The lack of direct audience feedback is replaced by intense focus on details: intonation, rhythm, shared phrasing, and maintaining vocal balance. In practice, this means consciously shaping the voice so that stage gesture and eye contact are replaced by subtle nuances of sound.

The analysis of working on the role of Eugene Onegin leads to the general conclusion that the interpretive process in Russian should be based on a clearly defined order of operations: first, one must build the phonetic and logical foundation of the text; next, ensure the coherence of the vocal sound; and only then enrich the interpretation with stage and facial means. Systematic application of this method guarantees not only linguistic correctness but

also musical coherence and emotional credibility, which are essential for a complete realization of the character in Tchaikovsky's opera.

Before undertaking a precise and penetrating interpretation of all the recitative passages, duets, and baritone arias in *Eugene Onegin*, it is necessary to gain a thorough understanding of Onegin's character, his emotional expression, and the mental-emotional context that shapes his actions and relationships. As the opera's protagonist, Onegin is a figure of extraordinary psychological complexity, probing deeply into human nature. His portrait aligns with the artistic aspirations of the Romantic era—an age steeped in conflicting feelings, solitude, and a longing for authenticity in love and in life.

Onegin hails from the Russian aristocracy and at first appears cold, arrogant, and indifferent to the world. His attitude toward life—especially country life—is marked by distance and a lack of engagement with others. As a literary archetype of the “superfluous man,” he embodies a sense of bewilderment in the search for life's meaning and a profound feeling of loneliness and alienation. Onegin's inner conflict is a clash between the desire for an authentic life and the inability to form lasting bonds. His emotional expression is multilayered and full of contradictions—from cool detachment, through inner turmoil, to moments of intense passion. His difficulty in openly expressing his feelings only deepens his emotional isolation. Confronted with Tatiana's love, he initially reacts coolly and rejects her, arguing that he is incapable of sincere commitment and that a relationship would bring only suffering. This reflects his fear of emotional closeness and his inner emptiness. He struggles with a longing for love and a simultaneous fear of its consequences, which intensifies his inner division and solitude.

Onegin's emotional evolution is a key motif of the opera. Initially egocentric and aloof, he begins to reflect on himself, his choices, and his life. His rejection of Tatiana gradually turns into regret and a sense of loss, leading to painful self-reflection. When he meets Tatiana again—now the wife of another man—he realizes the depth of his feelings and the price he has paid for his indifference. This transformation—from youthful pride to mature reflection—reveals a true understanding of love and an awareness of his own mistakes.

The performer of Onegin in Tchaikovsky's opera must understand his inner struggle between tradition and personal desires. The conflict between the longing for intimacy and the fear of commitment—and the later regret over a lost opportunity—reflects universal human dilemmas. This tension between egotism and the need for connection, individualism and social expectations, makes Onegin a multidimensional and deeply human character.

To convey this complexity, the performer must employ appropriate timbre and dynamic shifts in the singing—from cool, detached tones to phrases filled with passion and remorse. Control of dynamics—from delicate, hushed moments to intense, powerful lines—is crucial for expressing the character's emotional tension and inner conflict. The interpretation requires deep emotional identification with the role, uniting vocal technique with emotional expression to reveal the richness of Onegin's inner world.

As has been aptly stated: "If music is the art of emotion, then singing devoid of emotion cannot be considered true vocal art."<sup>17</sup> This idea underscores that Onegin's parts, saturated with drama, demand complete emotional authenticity from the performer.

As a character with a strong dramatic charge, Onegin often appears at the plot's climactic moments, full of tension and sudden turns. The performer must convey these emotional peaks skillfully, revealing the character's psychological evolution and conflicts. Every phrase should be imbued with intensity, and the interpretation must be authentic and moving.

Moreover, because Onegin is deeply rooted in the Russian historical and cultural context, the singer should be mindful of the social and spiritual background. Understanding the Russian soul, the realities of the era, and Romanticism enriches the interpretation, lending it authenticity and depth, and enabling a more compelling communication of the hero's emotions.

Performing Onegin's role is a multi-dimensional artistic challenge that requires the singer to combine impeccable technique, emotional sensitivity, and artistic intuition. Only such an approach makes it possible to create a complete, affecting interpretation that conveys the character's complex inner world and touches the audience's hearts.

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<sup>17</sup> Liu Yang, *Ekspresja emocjonalna w śpiewie*, „Art View”, 2020 (33): s. 27–28.

## **Chapter 5. The Psychological Aspect of Staging Onegin's Role**

### **5.1. Onegin's Thoughts and Feelings**

The character of Onegin undergoes a profound transformation—from dismissing love, through remorse, to arriving at a full understanding of it. His story is a reflection on love, loneliness, and the human condition, and Onegin himself is distinguished by a wealth of emotion and the complexity of his inner world. At first, he displays indifference and arrogance toward Tatiana's declaration of love, treating her feelings with disdain. However, after killing his friend Lensky, he sinks into a deep sense of guilt and confusion, which intensifies his loneliness and forces him to reflect on his own conduct and his attitude toward feeling.

As the plot develops and he meets Tatiana again, Onegin's heart fills with regret, and he becomes aware of his earlier recklessness and indifference. This experience leads him to a mature, deeper understanding of love. He seeks the meaning of life while simultaneously struggling with loneliness and disorientation. By the end of the opera, Onegin faces an irreparable emotional chasm separating him from Tatiana, moving toward a tragic conclusion. All that remains to him is a profound reflection on his choices and the unpredictability of fate.

### **5.2. The Baritone Role of Onegin in Stage Art**

To understand and properly interpret the stage creation of the baritone role of Onegin in *Eugene Onegin*, it is essential to grasp the nature of stage art. Stage art is a form of artistic expression in which actors on stage present a story, emotions, and thoughts, employing drama, music, dance, and visual elements. Its aim is to create a complete audiovisual experience that enables the audience to live through the narrative and emotions presented.

For the role of Onegin, the artist must use body language, voice, movement, and other stage means—such as set design, lighting, and costumes—to convey fully the creator's intent, the plot, and the character in a defined space. Crafting this complex figure requires a high level of creativity, commitment, and technical skill.

The vocal interpretation of Onegin demands excellent control of the voice and rich expressiveness, enabling the subtle communication of complex emotions through changes in

timbre, rhythm, melody, and dynamics. On the psychological level, the actor must delve deeply into the hero's inner world and reveal his emotional transformation—from careless pride to remorse and reflection. Through body language and facial expression, the actor conveys what remains unspoken.

Moreover, Onegin's role contains rich dramatic elements that require flexibility and the ability to adapt to the changing stage action. Through gestures, manner of movement, and interactions with other characters, the actor reveals Onegin's multidimensionality, his inner conflict, and his shifting social relationships.

Equally crucial is close collaboration with set design, costumes, and lighting, which amplify the character's expression. In addition, understanding the socio-cultural context of nineteenth-century Russia allows a more faithful rendering of the hero's behavior and emotions, deepening his credibility on stage.

In sum, portraying Onegin requires not only advanced vocal and acting skills but also an in-depth analysis of character, emotion, and historical-cultural background. By combining precise vocal work, expressive movement, and visual elements, the actor creates on stage a vivid, complex, and unforgettable portrait of this exceptional figure.

## **Chapter 6. Analysis of Recordings of Onegin's Role**

While recording the full repertoire of Onegin's role, I selected the most representative excerpts for detailed description and analysis. The aim of this chapter is to conduct an in-depth examination of the recorded excerpts—scenes, solo arias, and duets—included on the CD.

### **6.1. Quartet – Scene from Act I (CD 1)**

The first recording of this piece was a great challenge for me. Although the excerpt lasts only about two minutes, it required excellent collaboration among the four singers. During rehearsals we practiced the parts in duets—soprano with alto, then tenor with baritone—and subsequently combined all four voices. This allowed the ensemble members to sense balance issues more clearly and make precise adjustments, which proved highly effective.

In the recording the parts were performed by: Justyna Samborska—soprano (Tatiana), Zuzanna Nalewajek—mezzo-soprano (Olga), Zihao Mai—tenor (Lensky), and Fucai Li—baritone (Onegin). The appropriate selection of performers and the blending of timbres were crucial to the final result.

When working on the quartet, it is extremely important to maintain balance among the voices and coherence in musical expression. Properly balancing the parts prevents any one voice from overwhelming the others. The entire piece opens with the baritone, who begins the phrase on a weak part of the bar. In performing the first phrase, the opening should be sung with curiosity and lightness. The middle voices fill out the harmony, while the melodic line should stand out moderately in terms of volume.

The four-part texture is generally light and transparent, creating a pleasant, unforced atmosphere. In performance, none of the parts should sound overly delayed or heavy—the music should flow smoothly, without excessive lingering.

In the four-part texture, I noticed that each phrase begins with an anacrusis. This is not accidental but a deliberate compositional choice arising from the relationships among the individual voices and the musical continuity. At the same time, such a construction prevents “part collisions”—the pickup functions as a kind of connector that binds all the voices together, avoiding breaks and fractures in the overall sonority.

Despite the phrase beginning on a weak part of the bar, the dynamic marking is *forte*. This means the phrase should nevertheless be performed with a fairly decisive character.

Круг - ла, красна ли - цом о -  
 - на, как э - та глу - па - я лу - на на э - том глу - пом,  
 глу - пом не - бо - скло - не!

Przykład 32: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Oniegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 59-60, t. 41-49.

The second phrase also begins on a weak beat, with the initial note marked *forte*. Though its text and melody are nearly the same as the first, the composer adds more notes and a denser rhythm, so it should be sung slightly louder and more resolutely.

Круг - ла, крас - на ли -  
 - цом о - на, как э - та глу - па - я лу - на на э - том глу - пом не - бо -  
 - скло - не!

Przykład 33: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Oniegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 60-61, t. 50-54.

In the concluding phrase of the quartet, Onegin's vocal entry now begins on the strong beat. At this point he must actively join the other three parts so the final phrase sounds fuller and affirms the cadence. The final *ritenuto* indicates a slowing—preparing the ensemble for the ending; all four voices must finish simultaneously, with a clean, unified close.

## **6.2. Recording of the Aria *If I Liked Domestic Life* (CD 2)**

In the previous chapters, I carried out a systematic analysis of the musical language, formal structure, and character references in Onegin's aria titled *If I Liked Domestic Life*. To overcome the technical difficulties of this aria during recording and to render the intended artistic effect precisely, I decided to focus on selected, harder-to-master phrases. I will subject them to detailed examination from various angles, such as vocal technique (e.g., breath and timbre control), vocal balance (e.g., coordination with the accompaniment), and appropriately matched emotional expression.

The tempo marking *Andante non troppo* (calmly, not too fast) indicates that one should not rush while singing. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain full continuity of the melodic line—each note should connect smoothly with the next, without sudden breaks. In addition, the rhythm of the Russian text must be emphasized so that the phrase has a free character reminiscent of a “calm march,” and is performed with restraint and the tranquil mood appropriate to Onegin.

Second, the initial pitch of the phrase's first syllable is quite high for a baritone and begins on a weak beat. It must therefore not be heavily accented—it should be delivered gently. A deliberate, subtle attack and delicate dynamic control will help avoid harshness and preserve the softness of the phrase. This manner of execution underscores Onegin's distance and restraint toward emotion.

Andante non troppo (♩ = 80)\*

Онегин

Ког-да бы жизнь до- маш- ним кру - гом я о - гра- ни- чить за - хо- тел,

ког- да б мне быть от - цом, су - пружом при- ят- ный жре- бий по - ве - лел,

Przykład 34: P. Czajkowski, Eugeniusz Oniegin (wyciąg fortepianowy), Wydawnictwo Sovietskie, Moskwa 1970, akt I, s. 136-137, t.63-66.

Singing these lines well requires solid vocal technique: maintaining a high resonance placement, which ensures a stable, clear timbre in the middle and upper registers, and proper breath support—long and precisely controlled—so the phrase can flow without needing an extra breath mid-stream. Only then can the composer’s intention be realized: through coherent, elegant singing, the qualities of Onegin’s character—hidden beneath a rational exterior—emerge, making the phrase both musically beautiful and true to the hero’s personality.

During the recording of the final phrase, I kept the notated tempo: from measure 97 to the beginning of 100 I restored the exact original tempo, as indicated by *Tempo I*. The melodic line in this section is compact—with a small range and numerous repetitions—which makes it quite cohesive. Consequently, I did not insert additional breaths but sang the phrase in a single breath, guided by the sense of the text. This yielded a natural, flowing linguistic effect, and the mood remained simple and sincere, without breaks in emotional continuity caused by technical maneuvers.

In the closing section, the repeated word “dream” is not a simple repetition—it should be sung with a gradual build. Here I control the volume precisely: I do not increase it excessively,

while maintaining a soft yet expressive tone. I moved the final note up an octave from the score to strengthen its emotional impact and make the ending more memorable for listeners. Since the preceding phrases lay mainly in the middle and lower registers, raising the last note by an octave introduced additional registral contrast.

When I sing in public, I try to apply the same principle—even in the studio one must think about the listeners' experience and aim to create the impression of a stage performance. I believe that the loudness and clarity of the octave-raised final note draw listeners' attention at the end, preventing the emotional monotony of a quiet close. This approach also aligns with the performance tradition of this passage.

### **6.3. The Ball Scene – Act II, Scene 1 (CD 3)**

While recording the ball scene and the quarrel between Onegin and Lensky, the gentle register of Onegin's part in this scene suited me perfectly. The phrases fit comfortably within my vocal range. I did not have to worry about technical execution, so I could sing each note with a full, resonant sound with ease. Freed from the constraints of vocal technique, I could focus entirely on emotional expression, which allowed me to become completely immersed in the performance.

### **6.4. Onegin's Guilt and Remorse (CD 4)**

At Tatiana's name-day party (during the dancing), the conflict between Onegin and Lensky definitively tears their friendship apart. After this event, Onegin is consumed by remorse—he finally realizes how impulsive and thoughtless his behavior was in deliberately insulting Lensky's fiancée just to hurt his friend. A powerful sense of guilt accompanies this realization.

The score shows that the principal register here is the middle register; therefore, the singing should rely on a full, rich sound in the middle–low range, avoiding the brightness characteristic of high notes. At the same time, the melodic features suggest that remorse

should not be expressed through climactic loud notes—instead, it is better to use delicate, gradual dynamic changes to convey precisely the fluctuations of emotion in Onegin’s heart.

## **6.5. The Duet before the Duel between Onegin and Lensky (CD 5)**

In this scene both characters—Lensky and Onegin—sing in canon at the interval of a third. They sing the same words, conveying a mixture of anger and the desire for reconciliation. Although the text is identical, their emotions differ: in Lensky one hears an outburst of grief and the bitterness of betrayal, whereas in Onegin there is passive acceptance of fate.

For this reason, Onegin’s part in this number should be subdued and restrained, not explosive with anger. His singing should not sound like shouted accusations, but rather like a statement of fact—requiring control of the voice and an emphasis on the character’s authenticity.

The simultaneous entry of the voices at the end symbolizes Onegin’s resolve—he no longer delays but faces Lensky directly, underscoring the inevitability of the impending duel. The initial counterpoint gives way to a unison, synchronized *nota contra notam* progression, which gradually builds musical tension.

When recording the final section of this duet as Onegin, I focused on changing the vocal timbre: I replaced the light, airy quality of the first part with a full, dense, cool sound. With moderate chest resonance I achieved a low, metallic hue. This color underscores Onegin’s determination to face the ultimate challenge without stripping away his underlying restraint.

Regarding breath, this time I emphasized a deep inhalation—diaphragmatic, reaching down into the abdomen—to gather a larger supply of air. During exhalation I maintained an even, calm airflow, avoiding tremors and breaks in the singing caused by emotional agitation. As a result, each note fell like a firm “decision,” aligning with Onegin’s psychological shift from passive acceptance of fate to making active choices.

## **6.6. Onegin’s Monologue (CD 6)**

At the reception Onegin is left alone with his thoughts, burdened by guilt and feeling a profound emptiness in life. Therefore, in performing this section I wove in a subtle note of

renunciation of his profligate past and uncertainty about the future. Vocally, the technique should be based on chest resonance—the timbre ought to be dark and full, and bright, head-dominant sounds should be reduced. I kept the breath shallow and even, avoiding full, deep inhalations. I deliberately preserved a slightly “breathy” quality to the voice—it conveys inner frailty and emptiness. In narration I more often ended phrases with sigh-like cadences, which heightened the impression of being overwhelmed and sorrowful.

## **6.7. Excerpt from the Second Aria in Act III (CD 7)**

The marking *Allegro moderato* indicates a moderate allegro, which aptly reflects Onegin’s mounting excitement upon seeing Tatiana again. In the recorded excerpt I aimed to show surprise interwoven with excitement: the emotions were to be stronger, the breath deeper, the volume slightly greater, and the timbre brighter—all to convey the inner agitation provoked by the contrast between viewing Tatiana as a “springtime girl writing letters” and, later, a “prosperous lady.”

The emotions in this aria stand in clear contrast to Onegin’s stance in Act I: earlier he was a condescending “preacher,” armed with cold rationality, aristocratic arrogance, and detachment. Now he is completely exposed—his voice filled with an urgent longing for love. No more excuses like “I’m not made for marriage”; this time the truly beating heart is allowed to sound.

During the recording I focused on changing the vocal color: I gave it a bright, strong tone and abandoned entirely the matte, detached color of Act I. I moderately opened the resonance space, which added a penetrating yet subtle quality—ideal for Onegin’s rising emotions. I took a much deeper breath than in Act I, down into the abdomen, to gather more air; on the exhale I tried to maintain an even, flexible stream—without tremor or breaks caused by emotional surge—to sustain a clean, free tone.

When delivering the final high note of this aria (Act III), I clearly differentiated its execution from the high notes in Act I. The high notes in Act I I sang with a relatively cool, compact color—I deliberately reduced resonance and thickened the voice’s ring to match Onegin’s condescending posture. In Act III, however, I shaped the high notes so that the resonance was bright and transparent: I tried to maintain high placement and a moderate

mouth opening, which gave the sound warmth and ring. In this way I conveyed Onegin's sincere longing for love.

## 6.8. Onegin and Tatiana's Duet from Act III (CD 8)

In the finale of Act III of *Eugene Onegin* I aim to reveal Onegin's dramatic psychological transformation through singing and musical expression. Act III "belongs to Onegin"—it marks his downfall and poses his greatest vocal challenge.

Fully aware of the emotional intensity, I treated this recording as the climax of the entire opera. On stage I strive to convey this transformation completely: Onegin's initial indifference and self-assurance finally give way to pleading sorrow. In preparing this excerpt, I first focused on the character's profile.

In the opening phrases of the duet, I therefore maintained a barrier of coolness: I sang Onegin's lines with a certain reserve, keeping the intonation pure and the timbre clearly defined. I was meticulous about *legato*, joining tones carefully so that his utterance sounded composed and noble. I also used a slight dissonant edge in the middle register to underline distance and hauteur (for example on the words "I was a lieutenant, All Brothers..."), adding weight in the second half of the phrase to mark the onset of inner conflict. Gradually—as the scene unfolds—my interpretation grew increasingly emotional. By the end of the duet, when Onegin begins to beg Tatiana for love, I shifted the vocal color to something warmer and tremulous. In these phrases I increased the vibrato and subtly broadened the phrasing to give the music its proper character. I supported this with a dynamic swell from *piano* to *forte* to express Onegin's mounting desperation. At such moments I deliberately highlighted the final syllables of key words, using *crescendi* and *decrecendi* in crucial measures.

Breath technique was crucial for me—firm support ensured control over the long melodic lines and allowed the phrase to flow freely. Tchaikovsky built breath points into Onegin's part, so I planned breathing drills to ensure I could always return to a sufficient air reserve. I also paid attention to the specifics of Russian vocal production: in line with the Russian vocal school, I sought a setup in which the voice resonates deeply "from the chest," not only in the facial resonators.

In recording the duet I also took care with conversational phrasing: working with Tatiana, I listened to her line and let it complement my own. In the shared passages I aimed for a complementary blend—adjusting intensity so that baritone and soprano supported one another. I used delicate coloristic nuances to emphasize the contrast between Onegin’s growing helplessness and Tatiana’s calm tone. For example, when Tatiana stresses the reply “So much justice,” I reduced my intensity so as not to overshadow her soprano, while maintaining precise intonation and steady tempo. The ultimate result was a gradual build of emotion—from austere control to fervent pleading—which I considered key to eliciting the audience’s compassion for the hero. For this reason, every choice—of color, phrasing, or dynamics—served that goal: to gradually reveal the human tragedy of the character.

## Conclusions and Further Research Perspectives

A successful portrayal of Onegin in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* is a challenge for both singer and actor, requiring a deep understanding of the character and full emotional commitment. It is the combination of technical precision with insightful psychological interpretation that enables a faithful rendering of this complex figure on stage. To depict Onegin realistically, it is essential to make comprehensive use of analysis of the literary original and the operatic libretto, as well as to understand the plot background, character traits, and the hero's inner transformations. Only such a holistic approach makes it possible to create a vivid and authentic portrait that forms the basis of a successful interpretation.

Onegin—indifferent, self-contradictory, and overbearing—exists on the margins of society, yet reveals his complicated inner world through singing. His nobility, innovative thinking, and honesty toward others should be expressed subtly in the vocal interpretation. The analysis of the character cannot be limited to surface actions; it requires a profound penetration of the hero's psyche, which makes it possible to achieve precision and emotional depth in performance.

Moreover, personal emotional engagement is a key factor in the successful interpretation of Onegin. Deeply experiencing the role in performance creates an emotional bond between singer and character, allowing unique, personal experience to emerge and enriching the artistic message. Authenticity and flexibility of vocal technique are the foundations for creating a living, moving image of a character whose music can touch listeners and leave a lasting impression.

In addition to honing technique, the singer should cultivate an individual artistic identity. Through systematic practice, combining personal performance qualities with technical skills, expanding experience, and improving familiarity with languages and the cultural contexts of operas in foreign languages, one can continually broaden musical possibilities and artistic expression.

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