

Eugene onegin comparison

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Eugene Onegin The transformation from a novel in verse to an opera

Although written in the early 1800s, Eugene Onegin, a novel in verse written by Alexander Pushkin, is still regarded as one of the most influential and beautifully written pieces of work to this day. As it shifted cultural norms, opened new discussions, gave way to new forms of writing, and introduced novel approaches that envisioned life in a different light, Eugene Onegin was revolutionary.

With its central theme revolving around the conflict between dreams and reality, the novel in verse caught the attention of readers all over the world, with over thirteen translations written. As well, other artists have adapted the work and interpreted it through their own art forms, including a ballet by John Cranko in 1965, and the famous opera by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, which opened in 1879.

Tchaikovsky's interpretation in particular gathered much success and worldwide recognition, arguably more than that of Pushkin's novel. While the characters and the storyline are mainly preserved, Pushkin's main characters - Lensky, Onegin, and Tatyana - become more multi-dimensional and relatable in Tchaikovsky's opera. Because he was an artist in the romanticism era, Tchaikovsky adds his own inspiration to the novel when changing it to an opera, creating many noticeable distinctions between the two.

Compared to the novel in verse, the operatic version of Eugene Onegin has various deviations due to Tchaikovsky's romanticism and character bias, which include changes in the duel scene, the increased favouritism of certain characters by Tchaikovsky, and the absence of a narrator. Throughout the

course of Pushkin's novel in verse, there are four main parts of the storyline that grab the attention of the reader and create the plot. One of the four scenes is a duel between Onegin and his best friend Vladimir Lensky, after Lensky caught Onegin flirting shamelessly with his fiancée.

This scene was considerably altered between both artworks, as there was a very strong difference in the portrayal of Onegin's guilt in the novel and in the opera. In Pushkin's novel Onegin is very remorseful and heartbroken after killing his best friend. The narrator notes: Deluged with instant cold, Onegin hastens to the youth, Looks, calls him... vainly: He is no more. The youthful bard Has met with an untimely end! ... In the ache of the heart's remorse, His hand squeezing the pistol, At Lensky Eugene looks. " well, what - he's dead," pronounced the neighbor [Zaretsky] Dead!...

With this dreadful interjection smitten, Onegin with a shudder walks hence and calls his men. In this piece, it is evident that Onegin is deeply conflicted with the crime he had committed. Dealing with the death of his friend, Onegin leaves town to find peace of mind. In the opera, however, Tchaikovsky leaves little time for Onegin's mourning. In the novel, Zaretsky, a friend of Lensky who attended the duel, is the first to speak after the fight finishes. Contrary to the novel, instead of Zaretsky being the first to speak of the death, it is Onegin who brusquely asks " Is he dead? In most stagings of this opera, Onegin simply walks to Lensky's body as if to double-check his passing. As scholar Julia Torgovitskaya states, " Because in an opera it would be difficult to convey a considerable length of time passing [i. e. for Onegin to mourn Lensky's death], Tchaikovsky allows the scene to end right after Lensky has fallen. " The result of this change of scene from the novel to the

opera is highly profound. In Pushkin's story, readers are able to sympathize with Onegin in understanding his regret.

Readers turn to Onegin and Tatyana's communion as the happy ending they yearn for in the face of Lensky's tragic death. In the opera, on the other hand, the audience begins to demonize Onegin, and there is a negative incline and desire for Onegin and Tatyana to be together. This single scene, being different between the two art forms, changes the entire mood of the story and the attitudes the audience would have towards its characters. The changes of certain scenes also come from Tchaikovsky's bias towards specific characters, which result in a different presentation of their personalities on stage.

Tchaikovsky, being an advocate of romanticism, presents the characters of Tatyana and Lensky in a more compassionate and sensitive manner. The opera differs from the novel as certain characters are viewed in a much stronger light, and their prominence has shifted. For instance, the character of Tatyana, a young, shy but passionate woman, was highly recognized and loved by Tchaikovsky. Due to this, the letter scene, where Tatyana spends an entire night writing and confessing her love for Onegin, was more emphasized and intimate, leaving the audience touched by Tatyana's courageousness.

With the addition of music, this scene was the longest and most complex solo section of the opera, further establishing the deep bond Tchaikovsky had for the character of Tatyana. After working on the writing of the letter scene, Tchaikovsky wrote " Being completely immersed in composition, I so thoroughly identified myself with the image of Tatyana that she became for

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me like a living person, together with everything that surrounded her. I loved Tatyana, and was furiously indignant with Onegin who seemed to me a cold, heartless fop. " With this magnetism, there was a shift in directive depiction between the main characters.

It is important to note that in this opera, much of Pushkin's text is cut out due to length (for it takes longer to sing a verse than utter written words or phrases), but the scenes with Tatyana and Lensky remained largely unchanged. For example, the night before the duel, Lensky writes to his wife a love letter pouring his heart out, knowing he is to die the next day. In the opera, Tchaikovsky has Lensky sing the contents of this letter in a heartfelt aria. Although it is very moving and beautiful, it is very far from Pushkin's character of Lensky.

In Pushkin's work, instead of praising Lensky for his poetic nature and optimism, the narrator indicates that his romantic idealism stands as the result of his lack of world experience and naivete: He did his best to hold back the cynical comments that came to his lips, reflecting to himself, ' It's stupid for me to spoil his momentary bliss - it'll vanish soon enough without my help. Meanwhile let him live on the belief that the world's a perfect place. Youth is a kind of fever, and we must forgive the young their fire and their delirium.

Although the narrator in Pushkin's novel ridiculed this youthful euphoria, Tchaikovsky encourages and emphasizes the tenderness radiating from Lensky. Thus, there is a considerable amount of romanticism added to both plot and character in Tchaikovsky's opera in comparison to Pushkin's novel. Finally, the most controversial deviation of the opera from the novel in verse <https://assignbuster.com/eugene-onegin-comparison/>

is the absence of a narrator. This results in a critical difference between the two art forms, as the narrator's input, digressions and lessons are not present in the opera, thereby changing the story's defining attributes.

In the novel, the narrator serves many roles, one being a voice of sarcasm and ridicule towards the characters, showing them the irony in which they live their lives. When reading the novel, readers were unsure of whether to be sympathetic to some characters, for it was possible that the narrator would interrupt with sarcasm or mockery revealing that the characters were undeserving of compassion. In the opera, the role of the narrator is removed, resulting in a more straightforward version of Pushkin's tale, where the characters clearly either deserve sympathy in their troubles or do not.

In the novel, there was no need for characters to introduce themselves, due to the presence of a narrator, but in the opera, there are characters that have to introduce themselves to the audience. This happens, for instance, in the dueling scene (scene 5) where Zaretsky introduces himself: I am a pedant where the class duel is concerned, And I am naturally methodical. I do not allow a man to be stretched out Any old way... In this scene, Zaretsky has to speak of himself to Onegin before the duel, explaining who he is and why he is there.

This is completely different from the novel, where the narrator explains everything without awkward dialogue: Zaretsky, once a reprobate, Gambler-in-chief, an intimate And sage of inns, a philanderer; Kind and sober, now, instead, Father of many, still unwed... Many scholars, such as Richard Taruskin, argue that in this opera, " the music, quite simply, is the narrator. From the very first sung notes... the music acts as a very busy and detached

mediator of situations and feelings. " This can be seen through the different musical pieces that play for each character, which in turn contribute to the audience's interpretation of the character.

For instance, Tatyana received the most colourful and lyrically driven music, while Onegin sings less memorable lines with simpler orchestral accompaniment. Although, one should note that the musical accompaniment of the characters' actions are also biased, as the music that plays is the music that reflects how Tchaikovsky views them. Tchaikovsky, in one way, creates a new narrator by deciding how the characters will appeal to the audience, using music as his tool. For example, Tchaikovsky views Onegin as incapable of having genuine feelings, and so the music attributed to him is less inspired than that attributed to Lensky.

In addition, the narrator in Pushkin's novel constantly interrupts the progression of the novel, which creates a storyline where two things occur simultaneously. In the opera this effect is achieved in a less destructive manner, because as novelists must arrange things in a sequential order, " musicians can simultaneously present and comment without recourse to digression. " When an event or conversation is happening on its own, it can be accompanied by music that tells a different story; consequently, two conversations can take place at the same time.

The music plays, in this way, a role similar to a narrator, as it feeds information to the reader as events unfold, and gives insight on the situations through melodic remedies. Therefore, in the transition from novel in verse to opera, Tchaikovsky dropped the character of the narrator, and used music as a tool of explaining the story. In conclusion, the conversion of

Eugene Onegin from a novel in verse to an opera includes many various deviations from the overall plot and character emphasis in the story. With Tchaikovsky's affinity and bond with the characters of Tatyana and Lensky, he portrays Onegin as demonic and insignificant.

With this affinity, he manipulates the original storyline with romanticism to fool the audience into sympathizing with Tatyana and Lensky, whereas Pushkin's narrator is notorious for ridiculed them. Furthermore, Tchaikovsky takes advantage of the absence of a narrator, and uses music's capacity for emotional influence to further implement his bias for Tatyana, Lensky and Onegin. The narrator in Pushkin's novel serves as a source of information to provide the readers with context concerning the setting, characters and story line where as Tchaikovsky uses character dialogue to provide such information.

Overall the changes between Pushkin's Eugene Onegin and Tchaikovsky's operatic telling of the story were controversial but allowed for two different expressions of the same story. These deviations can be attributed to Tchaikovsky's affinity for romanticism and his preference for Tatyanna and Lensky in comparison to his strong dislike for Onegin. Nevertheless, both versions of Eugene Onegin are still regarded as powerful pieces of artwork. Despite their differences, however, both tales leaves their audiences craving for answers to their questions: what happens next? Bibliography Brown, David.

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