

ROMEO AND JULIET OVERTURE-FANTASY – PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Below are some interpretive ideas for Tchaikovsky's beloved masterpiece. These ideas are based on having conducted and taught this piece many times, and are mostly practical suggestions for performance.

Bar 1 - Intonation in the opening chorale is difficult; note that the second clarinet part is lower than the first bassoon and above the second bassoon

Bar 5 - Poco piu' forte can be interpreted differently by each player; perhaps mf

Bar 11 – crescendo in cello/bass is possible, but must be agreed upon; same for violins in bar 15, second half note

Bar 12 – quality of accent; pressure, left hand, sharp accent? Add accent to viola

Bar 12 - Starting here, the conductor may prefer to do certain passages in 2

Bar 15 – small lift between phrases

Bar 19 – add breath in cello/bass between the two half notes

Bar 21 – cello sounds octave lower if in treble clef

Bar 21 – bring out suspensions in flutes and clarinets

Bar 27 – cello: crescendo with the other instruments as they do at bar 67, instead of diminuendo

Bar 28 – intonation; voicing with low English horn and high clarinet

Bar 30-33 and Bars 34-37 – group in 4 bars with no breath

Bar 30 – not too soft so that bar 34 can be very soft

Bar 32 - p dynamic for the harp, Bar 36 - pp dynamic for the harp to agree with the rest of the players

Bar 38 – bows down for violins; violin 1 play on the A string

Bar 41 – marcato in woodwinds, but also sustained

Bar 45 – no breath, flutes take a quick catch breath after first beat of bar 46

Bar 50 – intonation; clarinet 1 and English horn have the third of the C major chord

Bar 52 – same comments as earlier phrase

Bar 57 – add accent to viola

Bar 61 - bring out suspensions in strings

Bar 70 – not too softly, so that bar 74 can be quieter still

Bar 70 - violin 1, play A and C on the A string

Bar 78 – I conduct here in 2

Bar 82 – more intense

Bar 88 - third horn can add crescendo, or perhaps mf crescendo

Bar 90 – not too fast for the 16th notes in the strings

Bars 90, 92, and 94 – horn 3 and 4, breathe after each whole note

Bar 96 – gradually diminuendo for the timpani

Note that in some scores, starting with bar 100, the bar numbers are off by one bar

Bar 98 – piano espressivo

Bar 102 – pianissimo, in contrast to bar 98

Bar 108 – all upbows for 4 bars

Bar 112 – the conductor should decide whether to make a difference when the “strife” theme starts with a quarter note, and when it starts with an eighth note (see bar 159)

Bar 112 – I like to suggest some direction to the phrase, always leading slightly to the second bar

Bar 115 – strings, except first violins, secco eighth note

Bar 118 – lead to 119; bar 119, lead to bar 120

Bar 122 – clipped or full eighth note must be established for strings and woodwinds

Bar 123 – bad page turn for first violins

Bar 124 – g string for first violin

Bar 125 - bad page turn for second violins

Bar 126 – perhaps forte for second violins for security

Bar 126 – I prefer a slightly tenuto eighth note for the cello/bass and answering woodwinds

Bar 143 – possible crescendo on the fourth beat for this bar, and each of the next 4 bars

Bar 151 – same direction to phrases as suggested earlier

Bar 163 – winds lead to bar 164

Bar 164 – be sure that the syncopation lines up with the melody

Bar 164 – bring out the melody, with the accompaniment playing noticeably softer, but very rhythmically

Bar 165 - oboes' second and third notes should be tied

Bar 176 – I have the cello/bass play for expressively starting here. I also suggest a somewhat unusual bowing that works well for me – two upbows in bar 177 and bar 179, played expressively, and into the string

Bar 183 – horns slight crescendo into bar 184

Bar 184 - in 2, horns lean slightly on the half note, short quarter

Bar 184 – arrival points of the phrase for me are bar 186 and bar 190, second beat

Bar 192 - harp doesn't have a dynamic; perhaps mf diminuendo

Bar 193 – this passage must be handled with care to maximize the expression and intent. Be sure that the violins are well balanced and well in tune. Echo is possible in bar 199. I suggest not being overly literal with the pianissimo if the sound is weak and /or timid

Bar 193 – violas perhaps can play with a slight accent or pulsation to help establish the rhythm

Bar 207 - add crescendo to bass pizzicato

Bar 212 – to strengthen the beginning of the scale, it would be possible to have the English horn play written E, F#, G# an octave lower than the flute, and then pass it off to the oboe

Bar 213 – I have the horn player emphasize the first note, and lift slightly after the second note to produce a sighing effect

Bar 213 – breathing places need to be established for the flutes and oboes. I recommend breathing every four bars, i.e. bar 216, 220, 224, 228, 233 (the exception), 238

Bar 253 – English horn, espressivo

Bar 260 – I have the clarinets play somewhat louder, since the English horn and bassoon are in extreme low registers, which are hard to control

Bar 270 – I would suggest cueing the violas, as their entrance is in the middle of the phrase, and perhaps not a place that they would expect to play

Bar 273 – I have the strings start ppp at the tip, and delay the crescendo until bar 276

Bar 273 - cello, bass; add arco

Bar 279 – note that there is no diminuendo here, but that the similar phrase at bar 301 does have a diminuendo

Bar 280 – if the second violins can play this passage in position, starting on the d string, I find the sound more conducive to the mood

Bar 285 – ensemble between strings and brass/woodwinds must be given attention

Bar 285 – first trumpet must be careful to transpose correctly

Bar 302 – similar issues for the sequence of the phrase at bar 285

Bar 319 - Flutes' half note should read A flat and C flat

Bar 325 – bringing out and acknowledging fourth horn will make his or her day

Bar 332 and Bar 334 – possible to add tuba to the cello/bass

Bar 335 – staggering the breathing for the trumpets, or a catch breath after bar 338 are possible

Bar 343 – possible crescendo to bar 345

Bar 345 – see earlier comments at bar 143

Bar 356 – it seems to make more sense for the cymbals to play after an eighth rest rather than a quarter rest

Bar 367 – agitato in the violins, perhaps accenting each bow change to bring out the tension in the Juliet theme

Bar 367 - Place "dolce espressivo" in oboes and first clarinet here instead of at 370

Bar 387 – if the tempo is too fast, then the triplets may not be as effective, as the strings need to make a lot of sound

Bar 396 – I do a diminuendo here, with a gradual crescendo to bar 411. I take a little time into bar 411

Bar 419 – I suggest jete' bowing for the violins and violas

Bar 423 – E flat first violins I believe is correct, matching the augmented 2nd in bar 428

Bar 424 – I have the first violins vibrate on the eighth note, not clipped

Bar 427 – F natural for first flute

Bar 429 – horns, forte espressivo, not fortissimo

Bar 429 – strings, a bit less than f I think is more effective

Bar 434 – I have the brass and timpani start quieter than mf

Bar 437 – I have everyone play a slight diminuendo so that the woodwinds can be heard

Bar 449 – I suggest an accent on each staccato 16th note

Bar 452 – violins and violas, crescendo to bar 454

Bar 457 – same suggestions on the sequence of the phrase

Bar 459 – viola: fourth note is E natural

Bar 467 – often a problem for rushing. I suggest all non-melodic players to start softer and crescendo to the end of bar 471

Bar 468 – bass: first note is E natural

Bar 469 – bass: first note is F#

Bar 481 – I go slower with two downbows, then a space and very distinct eighth note

Bar 483 – long and gradual diminuendo

Bar 486 – g string for first violins, cello second note is a D sharp

Bar 490 – cellos, d string for the G, bar 491, g string for the G

Bar 494 – be sure that all the thirds are well in tune, horn 2, English horn, clarinet 1

Bar 498 – no breath until here

Bar 499 - I push ever so slightly, then relax in the next bar; also at bar 502

Bar 505 – sustain in forte

Bar 505 - first oboe note is G natural

Bar 507 - second oboe is wrongly marked A# in part

Bar 510 - woodwinds and horns, connect to this down beat before breathing

Bar 517 - I take just a slight allargando

Bar 519 - I suggest short 8ths and 16ths, and full value quarter notes

Bar 522 - 2 bows, long fermata