

# The Flying Frenchman



Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture," which commemorates the anniversary of Russia's defense of its motherland against Napoleon's invading army, is famous for its climactic volley of cannon fire. In the original score, Tchaikovsky substituted 16 Frenchmen for the cannonballs because, after 70 years, he still harbored a grudge against France. At the work's premiere in Moscow in 1882, Tchaikovsky himself played the cannons, but he was only able to fire off one francophone before an irate mayor of Paris and his city council—who were in attendance—stormed the stage and stopped the performance. Philippe Pringler, the star-crossed projectile, is now but an obscure footnote found in only two music history books. (Cf. *l'homme Français volants*.)