

music floated across from the park's orchestra, and not far away was a children's playground with my favourite – the carousel.

One evening I was allowed to go to the opera and see my father on stage for the first time. He was singing the title role in Tschaikowsky's "Eugene Onegin". The usherette led me to my seat in the full auditorium and I watched my father on the stage. In the opera, there is a pistol duel and Eugene Onegin is hit and falls to the floor. As I watched I thought it was for real and began to scream. I had to be removed from the auditorium and taken to my father backstage, and here I discovered a whole new magical world. I watched the scenery being lifted and dropped and the huge gaslights reflecting the dust. It was an enchanting moment I never forgot.

My father decided it was time for me to learn the violin and found a teacher for me. I was placed on a chair and taught the first finger position. I managed to twist my finger in such a way that I dropped the violin to the floor. A similar fate befell a second violin. Things did not improve when I was given a cello. You see, I had always felt drawn to the piano and was forever tinkling on it, whenever I could. It wasn't long before I was able to create a little tune and soon I was playing chords and harmonies. I called my very first composition "Scherzo". Thus, my father was won over to the pianoforte – he even called me his little Mozart.

One morning I remember being half-awake and hearing a Russian military