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A TCHAIKOVSKY/GEORGE ELIOT OPERA THAT NEVER HAPPENED

The Tchaikovsky Museum at Klin in Moscow in Russia had, amongst the composer's papers, a manuscript of fragments of a scenario for an opera on the theme of 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story', the second story in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

Tchaikovsky modestly mentions this in his biography, stating that at first he proposed an opera based on 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton', the first story in *Scenes* but was drawn instead to another of the stories, 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story'. The composer's friend, the music critic G. A. Larosh, mentions in his memoirs that for some weeks before his death Tchaikovsky talked about the theme of a new opera. The previous summer Tchaikovsky had read, in a French translation, *Scenes of Clerical Life*. He loved George Eliot's novels, starting with *The Mill on the Floss* in the last years of his life. He particularly appreciated the pathos of 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story', which is set in the eighteenth century, and thought the subject was splendidly suitable for adaptation as an opera.

Sadly, nothing came of what might have been something very special.