

TWO RUSSIAN NATIONALISTIC IDIOMS IN THE  
COMPOSITION OF *ROMANSI*: A GRADUATE LECTURE RECITAL  
LINDSAY NUESCA, MEZZO-SOPRANO

By

LINDSAY NUESCA

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A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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Summary of Performance Option in Lieu of Thesis  
Presented to the College of Fine Arts of the University of Florida  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
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August 2012

Chair: Dr. Elizabeth Graham  
Member: Dr. Anthony Offerle  
Member: Dr. Jennifer Thomas  
Member: Dr. Alexander Burak  
Major: Music

The lecture and recital explain and illustrate the appropriation of certain musical devices as constructions of nationalist culture in the *romansi*, or art songs, of Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Modeste Musorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Russians have struggled to establish a national identity and culture throughout their history. But in nineteenth-century Russia, the Francophile aristocracy, offended by Napoleon's Russian offensive, was propelled into creating a unique collection of literature, music, and intellectualizing directed toward discovering and assimilating their Russian roots. Consequently, the nineteenth century witnessed the first full flowering of nationalist rhetoric and culture in Russia. Marina Frolova-Walker has identified two deliberately crafted paradigms of Russian nationalism in Art—literary nationalism and musical nationalism. Late nineteenth-century composers combined literary and musical nationalistic idioms in song, where literature and music merge.

The genesis of nationalism, the evolution of the concept of nationalism in Russia, four key events from Russian history, Russian nationalist intellectuals (individuals who spearheaded

the cultivation of national culture in Russia), and exoticism in music are discussed leading into the two constructions of nationalism, a literary construction and a musical construction. Literary nationalism is more commonly known and relies on melancholy and tragedy as its main characteristics. Musical nationalism draws on folk celebration materials and embodies hope in the future. Russian *romansi* occupy a unique place in nationalistic culture. Music and literature combine to form a dual voiced medium that uses elements of both constructions to create a more complete picture of what is ‘Russian.’

These three composers each took a very different approach to the same problem of establishing a national culture. Musorgsky explored two very different styles before his death cut short his creativity. Tchaikovsky sought to inject something Russian into the existing European canon. Rimsky-Korsakov illustrates the life of one who lived in extremes, first embracing the limits of musical nationalism, and then rejecting those premises, though not escaping them. Ultimately, Russian nationalism was a movement by and for the nineteenth-century Francophile Russian elite, constructed to grant themselves a new identity. *Romansi* combine the intimacy of singing with expressions of identity, exercising all the tools of both the literary convention of melancholy and the musical convention that includes folk celebratory materials. The Kuchkist composers and Tchaikovsky used nationalist tools and European tools to differing extents, but for the same ends: to create *Russian* culture.

## BIOGRAPHY

Lindsay Johnson Nuesca was born and raised in Idaho Falls, ID. She began voice lessons in high school and attended Ricks College for an AA in Voice, completing her BA in Vocal Performance at the University of Florida in 2005. She then taught choir and drama before moving to Siberia as a missionary in 2006. Upon returning to Gainesville in 2008, Lindsay spent three semesters in post-baccalaureate Russian studies before starting her MM in Vocal Performance with a Secondary Concentration in Music History and Literature. She specializes in the *romansi*, or art songs, of the major Russian composers, and is dedicated to increasing the popularity and accessibility of Russian art song in both her performance and academic futures.

Lindsay is a mezzo-soprano currently preparing to sing the role of Third Lady in the Operafestival di Roma's 2012 production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. She was most recently seen in the title role of Gustav Holst's *Savitri* and as the Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Other roles include Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, Queen Jezebel in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, La Maestra delle Novizie in *Suor Angelica* by Giacomo Puccini, Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* by Leonard Bernstein, and Just Jeanette in *Too Many Sopranos* by Edwin Penhorwood.

Lindsay's path to a career in music began when her father insisted she take choir in junior high school. Since then, she has had the opportunity to sing with the Choral Arts Society of Washington under Norman Scribner, performing in conjunction with the National Symphony Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin. She participated in the 2002 Opening Ceremonies of the Paralympics with the Utah State University Choir, and was a soloist for the USU choir and symphonic band at the College Band Directors National Association convention in Reno. As part of the University of Florida Chamber Singers, she has sung with the Louisiana Philharmonic, the San Diego Symphony, and the Kronos Quartet Choir.

Lindsay and her husband Jonathan live in Gainesville, Florida.

*College of Fine Arts School of Music*

Presents

**Two Russian Nationalistic Idioms in the Composition of *Romansi*:  
A Graduate Lecture Recital**

Lindsay Nuesca, Mezzo-Soprano

*Assisted by:*

Katherine Plympton, Piano

Saturday, 14 April, 2012  
5:30 PM  
Music Building, Room 101

**BIOGRAPHY**

Mezzo-soprano Lindsay Nuesca is currently preparing an appearance as alto soloist in Clausen's *A New Creation* and has been awarded the role of Third Lady in the Operafestival di Roma's July production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. She was most recently seen in the title role of Gustav Holst's *Savitri*, as the Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and as alto soloist for the Gainesville Civic Chorus's *Messiah*. Other roles include Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*, La Maestra delle Novizie in *Suor Angelica* by Giacomo Puccini, Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* by Leonard Bernstein, and Just Jeanette in *Too Many Sopranos*.

Ms. Nuesca discovered her love for Russian music as a missionary in Siberia, and is passionate about increasing the popularity and accessibility of Russian art song as she finishes a Master's degree in vocal performance with a concentration in music history at the University of Florida.

**PROGRAM**

From the Song Cycle, "*Youthful Years*":

- 2. The Merry Hour – A drinking song
- 1. Where are You, Little Star?
- 1a. Where are You, Little Star? (second orchestral version)
- 13a. Night – Fantasia (second version)

Modeste Musorgsky

(1839-1881)

Captivated by the Rose, the Nightingale... [Op. 2 No. 2]

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Louder the Lark's Singing Seems [Op. 43 No. 2]

(1844-1908)

In the Dark Grove, the Nightingale Fell Silent [Op. 4 No. 3]

Whispering, Timid Breathing [Op. 42 No. 1]

My Genius, My Angel, My Friend [song without opus]  
On this Moonlit Night [Op. 73 No. 3]  
If Only I had Known [Op. 47 No. 1]  
None But the Lonely Heart [Op. 6 No. 6]

Pyotr Tchaikovsky  
(1840-1893)

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*This recital is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Secondary Concentration in Music History and Literature.*

*Ms. Nuesca is in the vocal studio of Dr. Elizabeth Graham.*

### RECITAL HANDOUT

Every Russian, listening to this or that piece of music,  
has more than once had a chance to say:

"Ah, this is something Russian!"  
—Vladimir Odoevsky

Regarding Russian national character, we think that contradictoriness is its dominant feature.

#### Major Sources:

- Marina Frolova-Walker, author of *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin*. London: Yale University Press, 2007. USSR-born, graduate of the Moscow Conservatoire. Senior lecturer in music at University of Cambridge, fellow of Clare College.
  - Two constructions of Russian nationalism in Art, literary and musical
  - Literary is based on melancholy
  - Musical is based on folk celebration materials
- Benjamin Curtis, Ph.D., author of *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. New York: Cambria Press, 2008. Assistant Professor in the Humanities, Seattle University's Matteo Ricci College.
  - Genesis of nationalism as a concept
  - Nineteenth-century nationalism based on fallacies of primordialism, fixation on folk-tunes, an obsession with stylistics, the role of the nationalist composer as a conduit for immutable national identity, and the reception of music.
- Ralph Locke, author of *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Professor of Musicology at Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.
  - Five binarisms: then/now, self/other, nearness/distance, the real/the fictive, and musical/extramusical signs and indicators

#### Important names:

- Balakirev, Mily (1837-1910). Amateur composer and pedagogue, leader of the Kuchka, founder of Free Russian School [of music]. Was a chemist by trade.
- Bonaparte, Napoleon (1769-1821). Emperor of France, invaded Russia in 1812.
- Chaadayev, Pyotr (1794-1856). Nationalist Intellectual, Philosopher, Westernizer. Author of incendiary 1829 "First Philosophical Letter." Was subsequently declared insane, put on house arrest, and deprived of most liberties and freedoms. Hence he named his second treatise, "Apologia of a Madman."

- Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich (1860-1904). Author and Playwright, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Uncle Vanya*, various short stories. Russian Nationalist Intellectual.
- Diaghilev, Sergei (1872-1929). Russian choreographer, well-known for his collaboration with Stravinsky on *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and others.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich (1821-1881). Author, *Crime & Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and others. Russian Nationalist Intellectual.
- Glinka, Mikhail Ivanovich (1804-1857). Composer, Considered father of Russian Music.
- Golyenishchev-Kutuzov, Count Arseniy Arkadyevich (1848-1913). Friend and roommate of Musorgsky, encouraged the composer's lyricism. His memoir was published in the Soviet era, offering a more complete understanding of Musorgsky's life and works, but was discounted due to the state dogma of nationalism that surrounded Stasov's account.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von (1744-1803). *Volksgeist*
- Khans. Leaders of the Mongols, ruled Russia 1237-1480.
- Kireyevsky, Ivan (1806-1856), and Alexei Khomyakov (1804-1860). Published founding documents of Slavophilism in 1845.
- Mighty Kuchka. Commonly known as the Mighty Five: Mily Balakirev, leader; Borodin, Cui, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, members.
  - Often called **Kuchkists**.
- Musorgsky, Modeste Petrovich (1839-1881). Secret Lyricist
- Peter the Great (1682-1725). Tsar of Russia. Forced modernization and Westernization of Russia
  - Pre-Petrine Russia: Russia before the reign of Peter. Used often in discussing the purity of Russian folk sources before Western elements entered high culture.
- Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai Andreyevich (1844-1908). Master of Compromise
- Rubinstein, Anton Grigoryevich (1829-1894). Composer, Director of St. Petersburg Conservatory, Conductor. Was Tchaikovsky's boss.
- Stasov, Vladimir (1824-1906). Music critic closely associated with the Kuchka. Coined their moniker and was relentless in promoting the realist-populist works of Musorgsky after the composer's death.
- Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich (1850-1893). Practical Nationalist.
- Tolstoy, Lev Nikolayevich (1828-1910). Author, *War & Peace*, and many others. Russian Nationalist Intellectual.
- Vladimir, Prince (958-1015). Forced the conversion of Russia to Byzantine Christianity in 988. Was sainted for this.

### Glossary

- *Bogatiri* – heroes of epic poems. Ilya Muromets, Dobrynia Nikitych, and Alyosha Popovich were the heroes of Kievan Russia.
- *Bylini* – epic poems, comparable to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Passed by oral tradition.
- Declamatory style – using only one note for one syllable
- Melisma – attaching more than one note to a sung syllable
- Nationalist intellectuals – politically minded members of the elite who concern themselves with creating a culture to unite disparate peoples.
- Plagal – do – fa or fa – do movement, especially in a cadence
- Primordialism – the fallacious belief that “nations are eternal, omnipresent, and objectively real . . . in a people’s consciousness.”
- *Protyazhnaya* – long slow folk songs of ancient Russia with elaborate melodies, generally melancholy in nature.

## Timeline of Important Events

- 1910 - balakirev dies
- 1908 - rimsky-korsakov dies
- 1907 - diaghilev takes music to paris
- 1897 - timid breathing, louder the lark's singing
- 1893 - tchaikovsky dies
- 1893 - on this moonlit night
- 1881 - musorgsky dies
- 1880 - if only i had known
- 1871 - rimsky-korsakov begins professorship at st. petersburg conservatory
- 1869, dec - none but the lonely heart
- 1868-71 - night
- 1866 - in the dark grove
- 1865-66 - captivated by the rose
- 1860s - heyday of the mighty five
- 1858 - merry hour and little star, version 2
- 1857, dec - musorgsky meets balakirev
- 1857, apr - little star, version 1
- 1855-60 - my genius, my angel my friend
- 1845 - slavophile documents published
- 1844 - rimsky-korsakov born
- 1842 - glinka's *ruslan and lyudmilla*
- 1840 - tchaikovsky born
- 1840s - national consciousness becomes nationalism
- 1839 - musorgsky born
- 1837 - balakirev born
- 1836 - glinka's *a life for the tsar*
- 1829 - chadaayev's first philosophical letter
- 1812 - napoleon invades, great patriotic war
- 1804 - glinka born
- 1682-1725 - reign of peter the great
- 1237-1480 - invasion and domination of the mongols (khans)
- 988 - prince vladimir forces baptism of russia

## TRANSLITERATIONS AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF RUSSIAN ROMANCES

1. Musorgsky – From the song cycle *Youthful Years*: 2. The Merry Hour, A Drinking Song.

Dajte bokali! Dajte vina!	Give us glasses, give us wine!
Radost' mgnoven'e; pejte do dna!	Joy is but an instant; bottoms up!
Gromkie pesni gryan'te, druz'ya!	Burst forth in to loud songs, friends!
Pust' nas vesyolykh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!
Ninye piruyem yunost' na chas,	Now we celebrate with feasting because youth is fleeting,
Ninche vesyol'ye, radost' u nas!	Now we are happy, we have joy!
Zavtra, shto budyet- znayu l', druz'ya?	Tomorrow, what will be- do I know, friends?
Pust' nas vesyolikh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!
Pust' nas vesyolikh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!
Dajte bokali! Dajte vina!	Give us glasses, give us wine!
Radost' mgnoven'ye; pejte do dna!	Joy is but an instant; bottoms up!
Gromkiye pesni gryan'te, druz'ya!	Burst forth in to loud songs, friends!
Pust' nas vesyolikh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!
Shumno, razgul'no pojte, druz'ya!	Loudly, with abandon, sing, friends!
Lejte v bokaly bol'she vina!	Pour in the glasses more wine!
Nu te zh, vsye razom vyp'yem do dna!	Come on guys, all together down the hatch!
Pust' nas vesyelykh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!
Dajte zh bokali, dajte vina!	Give us glasses, give us wine!
Radost'- mgnoven'ye; pejte do dna!	Joy is but an instant; bottoms up!
Gromkie pesni gryan'te, druz'ya!	Burst forth in to loud songs, friends!
Pust' nas vesyolikh vidit zarya!	Let the dawn see us in high spirits!

2. Musorgsky – From the song cycle *Youthful Years*: 1. Where are you little star? Version one.

Gde ti, zvyozdochka? Ahk, gde ti, yasnaya?	Where are you, little star? O, where are you, bright one?
Il' zatmilasya tuchej chyornoyu,	Have you (star) become overcast with a black cloud?
Tuchej chyornoyu, tuchej groznoyu?	A black cloud, an ominous cloud?
Gde ti, devitsa, gde ti krasnaya?	Where are you, maiden, where are you beautiful?
Il' pokinula druga milovo?	Or have you abandoned your tender friend?
Drug a milovo nenaglyadnovo?	Your tender beloved friend?
Tucha chyornaya skrila zvyozdochku,	A black storm cloud eclipsed the star,
Zemla khladnaya vzyala devitsu.	The cold earth took the maiden.

3. Musorgsky – From the song cycle *Youthful Years*: 1a. Where are you little star? Version two.

Gde ti, zvyozdochka? Ahk, gde ti, yasnaya?	Where are you, little star? O, where are you, bright one?
Il' zatmilasya tuchej chyornoyu, tuchej mrachnoyu.	Have you (star) become overcast with a black cloud, a dismal cloud.
Gde ty, devitsa, gde ty krasnaya?	Where are you, maiden, where are you beautiful?
Il' pokinula druga milovo?	Or have you abandoned your tender friend?
I ya s goryesti, solyutoj toski,	And I out of grief, because of this overwhelming anguish,
Pojdu vo pole, pole chistoye;	Will go in the field, the wide open field;
Ne uvizhuli yasnoj zvyozdochki,	On the off chance of seeing the bright star,
Nepovstrehuli krasnoj devitsy, krasnoj devitsy.	In the hope that maybe I'll see the fair maiden.
Tucha chyornaya skrila zvyozdochku,	A black storm cloud eclipsed the star,
Zemlya khladnaya vzyala devitsu.	The cold earth took the maiden.

4. Musorgsky – From the song cycle *Youthful Years*: 13a. Night – Fantasia (second version)

Tvoj obraz laskovij tak poln ocharovan'ya	Your image endearing so full of charm,
Tak manit k sebye, tak obol'shchaet,	How it lures me to itself, how it seduces,
Trevozha son moj tikhij v chas polnochibezmolvnoj...	Disturbing my quiet dream at silent midnight...

I mnitsa, shepchesh' ti.	And it seems, you whisper.
Tvoi slova, slivayas' I zhurcha chistoj strujkoj,	Your words, merging and murmuring like a little stream,
Nado mnoyu v nochnoj tishi igrayut,	Above me in the quiet night, your words are playing,
Polni lyubvi, polni otradi,	Full of love, full of delight,
Polni vsej sily char volshebnoj negi i zabven'ya	Full of the power of the spells of the magic bliss and oblivion
Vo t'me nochnoj, v polnochnij chas,	In the darkness of night, in the midnight hour,
Tvoi glaza blistayut predo mnoj.	Your eyes shine before me.
Mnye... mnye ulibayutsa, i zvuki, zvuki slishu ya:	To me... to me they smile, and the sounds, the sounds I hear:
Moj drug, moj nezhnij drug!	My love, my tender love!
Lyublyu tebya, tvoya, tvoya.	I love you, I'm yours, I'm yours.

##### 5. Rimsky-Korsakov – Captivated by the Rose, the Nightingale...

Plenivshis' rozoj, solovej	Captivated by the rose, the nightingale
i den' i noch' poyot nad nyej;	Both day and night sings to her;
No roza molcha pyesnyam vnemlyet...	But the rose, mute, listens to the song...
Na lire tak pevets inoj	On a lyre some young lover in this way
Poyot dlya devi molodoj;	Sings for a young maiden;
A deva milaya ne znayet,	But the fair maiden doesn't know,
Komu poyot i otchego	For whom he is singing or why
Pechal'ni pesni tak yego.	His song is so sad.

##### 6. Rimsky-Korsakov – Louder the Lark's Singing Seems

Zvonche zhavaronka pen'ye,	Louder the lark's singing seems,
Yarche veshniye tsveti,	The spring flowers are brighter,
Serdzhe polno vdokhnoven'ya,	The heart is full of hope,
Nebo polno krasoti.	The heaven is full of beauty.
Razorvav toski okovi,	Having torn asunder the fetters of anguish,
Tsepi poshliye razbiv,	The hated chains having smashed,

Nabegayet zhizni novoj	A celebratory surge
Torzhestvuyushchij priliv,	Of a new life begins to engulf,
i zvuchit svezho i yuno	And sounds fresh and young
Novikh sil moguchij stroj,	The way the new powerful forces are tuned,
Kak natyanutiye struni	Like taut strings
Mezhdu nebom i zemlyoj,	Between heaven and earth,
Kak natyautiye struni	Like taut strings
Mezhdu nebom i zemyoj.	Between heaven and earth.

#### 7. Rimsky-Korsakov – In the Dark Grove, the Nightingale Fell Silent...

V tyomnoj roshche zamolk solovej,	In the dark grove, fell silent the nightingale,
Prokatilas' po nebu zvyezda;	The star moved across the sky;
Mesyats smotrit skvoz' chashchu vetvej,	The moon watches through the thicket of the branches,
Zazhigayet rosu na trave.	Ignites the dew on the grass.
Kak pri mesyatse krotok i tikh	How in the moonlight meek and quiet
U tebya milij ocherk litsa!	You have a tender contour of your face!
Etu noch', polnij gryoz zolotikh	This night, full of golden dreams
Ya b prodlil bez kontsa, bez kontsa!	I would prolong without end, without end!

#### 8. Rimsky-Korsakov – Whispering, Timid Breathing

Shyopot, robkoye dikhan'ye.	Whispering, timid breathing.
Treli solov'ya.	Warbling of the nightingale.
Serebro i kolikhan'ye	The silver and rippling
Sonnogo ruch'ya.	Of a dreamy babbling brook.
Svet nochnoj.	Light of the night.
Nochniye teni,	Nighttime shadows,
Teni bez kontsa.	Shadows without end.
Ryd volshebnikh izmenenij	A series of magical transformations
Milogo litsa.	Of the beloved face.

V dimnikh tuchkakh purpur rozi,	In smoky clouds deep red of the rose,
Otblesk yantarya,	Gleam of amber,
i lobzaniya,	And of kissing,
i slyozi i zarya, zarya!	And tears and dawn, dawn!

9. Tchaikovsky – My genius, my angel, my friend.

Nye zdes' li ti lyogkoyu ten'yu,	Are you not here as a gossamer shadow,
Moj genij, moj angel, moj drug,	My genius, my angel, my friend,
Beseduesh' tikho so mnouy	Do you not converse quietly with me
I tikho letaesh' vokrug?	And quietly hover all around?
I robkim darish' vdokhnoven'yem,	And give timid inspiration,
I sladkij vrachuyesh' nedug,	And doctor the sweet ailment,
I tikhim darish' snoviden'yem,	And give quiet dreams,
Moj genij, moj angel, moj drug...	My genius, my angel, my friend...
Moj genij! Moj angel! Moj drug!	My genius! my angel! my friend!

10. Tchaikovsky – On this moonlit night

V etu lunnuyu noch',	On this moonlit night
V etu lunnuyu noch',	On this moonlit night
V etot mig blagodatnij svidan'ya,	In this blessed meeting
O, moj drug,	All my love
Ya nye v silakh lyubvi prevozmoch'	I have no power to overcome love
Uderzhat' ya nye v silakh priznan'ya!	I have no power to refrain from a declaration of love
V serebre chut' kolishetsya ozera glad'...	The silver surface of the lake ripples a little
Naklonyas' zasheptalisya ivi...	The Willows having bowed themselves and having begun to whisper...
No bessilni slova!	Words are powerless!
Kak tebye peredat'	How to you to convey
Istomlyonnogo serdtsa porivi?	The yearnings of an exhausted heart?
Noch' ne zhdyot, noch' letit...	Night doesn't wait, night flies...

Zakatilas' luna...	The moon sets...
Zaalelo v tainstvennoj dali...	Reddening in the mysterious distance...
Dorogaya, prosti!	My dear, forgive me!
Snova zhizni volna	Again the wave of life
Nam nesyat den' toski i pechali!	To us brings a day of anguish and deep sadness!

### 11. Tchaikovsky – If only I had known

Kabi znala ya, kabi vedala,	If only I had known, If only I knew
Nye smotryela by iz okoshechka	I would not have watched from the window
Ya na molodtsa razudalogo,	I [would not have watched] the dashing, bold young man
Kak on yekhal po nashej ulitse,	How he rode down our street,
Nabekren' zalomivshi murmolku,	Wearing his hat at a rakish angle,
Kak likhogo konya bulanogo,	How of the dashing sorrel horse,
Zvonkonogogo, dolgogrivogo	Loud-stepped, long-maned
Suprotiv okon na dibi vzdimal!	Outside my window on his hind legs reared!
Kabi znala ya, kabi vedala,	If only I had known, if only I knew,
Dlya nego bi ya nye ryadilasya,	For him I would not have dressed up,
S zolotoj kajmoj lantu aluyu	With crimson ribbon fringed in golden thread
V kosu dlinuyu nye vplyetala by,	Into a long braid I would not have plaited my hair,
Rano do svetu nye vstavala by,	Early in the morning I would not have risen,
Za okolitsu nye speshila by,	Beyond the outskirts I would not have rushed,
V rosye nozhen'ki nye mochila by,	My tender young feet I would not have moistened,
Na prosyolok tot nye glyadela by,	Down the country road on the outskirts I would not have gazed,
Nye proyedet li tem prosyolkom on,	To see if he would pass this country road,
Na rukye derzha pyostra sokola?	On his arm holding a motley falcon?
Kabi znala ya, kabi vedala!	If only I had known, if only I knew!
Kabi znala ya, kabi vedala,	If only I had known, if only I knew,
Nye sidyela by pozdnim vecherom,	I would not have sat late at night,

Prigoryunivshis' na zavalinye,	Feeling sad on the mound outside the house,
Na zavalinye, bliz kolodezya,	On the mound, near the well,
Podzhidayuchi, dagadayuchi,	Waiting, guessing,
Ne pridyot li on, nenaglyadnij moj,	Whether he'll come, my beloved,
Ne pridyot li on, nenaglyadnij moj!	Whether he'll come, my beloved,
Akh! Nye pridyot li on, nenaglyadnij moj,	Ah! Whether he'll come, my beloved,
Napoit' konya studyenoj vodoj!	To water his horse in the pool of refreshing water!
Kabi znala ya, kabi vedala!	If only I had known, if only I knew!
Kabi znala ya! Kabi vedala! Akh!	If only I had known! If only I knew! Akh!

## 12. Tchaikovsky – None but the lonely heart

Nyet, tol'ko tot, kto znal svidan'ya zhazhdu,	No, only he, who has known the thirst of anticipating a lover's meeting,
Pojmyot, kak ya stradal i kak ya strazhdu.	Understands, how I suffered and how I suffer.
Glyazhu ya vdal'... nyet sil, tusknyeyet oko...	I look into the distance... I have no strength, my eye is growing dime...
Akh, kto menya lyubil I znal -- dalyoko!	Ah, who loved and knew me - is so far away!
Akh, tol'ko tot, kto znal svidan'ya zhazhdu,	Ah, only he, who has known the thirst of anticipating a lover's meeting,
Pojmyot, kak ya stradal i kak ya strazhdu.	Understands, how I suffered and how I suffer.
Pojmyot, kak ya stradal i kak ya strazhdu.	Understands, how I suffered and how I suffer.
Vsya grud' gorit... kto znal svidan'ya zhazhdu,	My whole chest burns... He, who has known the thirst of anticipating a lover's meeting,
Pojmyot, kak ya stradal i kak ya strazhdu.	Understands, how I suffered and how I suffer.

## LECTURE

### Two Russian Nationalistic Idioms in the Composition of *Romansi*

#### Introduction

Who, and what, is Russian? Russian national character embodies the essence of east and west, yet persistently struggles to reconcile the two within its borders and culture. In nineteenth-century Russia, Napoleon's invasion catalyzed an identity crisis among the Francophile aristocracy that produced waves of literature, music, and intellectualizing which continue to polarize to the present day. Consequently, the nineteenth century witnessed the first full flowering of nationalist rhetoric and culture in Russia. Marina Frolova-Walker has identified two deliberately crafted paradigms of Russian nationalism in Art—literary nationalism and musical nationalism. Late nineteenth-century composers combined literary and musical nationalistic idioms in song, where literature and music merge. Tonight's songs were chosen based on recommendation by Russian opera singer Olga Ionova, and then narrowed down through analysis and suitability to my voice.

#### The Genesis of Nationalism

Nationalist intellectuals—politically minded people of the intelligentsia—fashion the culture around which people unite. International historian Benjamin Curtis calls them “political entrepreneurs”: nationalist intellectuals imagine the community, and then propagate their ideas among the populace. They are “concerned specifically with promoting *the nation’s culture*.<sup>1</sup> Nationalist composers create national culture, which is essential to the creation of a nation. According to twentieth-century philosopher Ernest Gellner, “people are loyal ‘not to a monarch

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation building in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008), 21, italics in original.

or a land or a faith . . . but to a culture.”<sup>2</sup> National culture grants *identity*. Curtis emphasizes, “The higher [art] forms . . . were presumed to be better at enlightenment . . . than . . . folk songs or dances.”<sup>3</sup>

Nineteenth century nationalists relied on a primordialist theory of the nation drawing from the work of eighteenth-century writers like Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). The primordialist belief that “nations are eternal, omnipresent, and objectively real . . . in a people’s consciousness,”<sup>4</sup> merges with Herder’s idea of the *Volksgeist*: “the immutable national identity of a people . . . finds expression through music.”<sup>5</sup> While primordialism cannot be proven empirically, it dominated the consciousness and theories of nineteenth-century nationalists. In addition, “a fixation on folk tunes, an obsession with stylistics, the role of the nationalist composer, and the reception of music”<sup>6</sup> defined the keys of nineteenth-century Russian ideals surrounding national culture creation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia—Background**

Marina Frolova-Walker divides Russian nationalism in music from nationalism in literature which promoted the idea of the tragic “Russian soul” and its incarnations in the music of Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rubinstein, and others. The characteristics of a ‘true Russian’, as constructed in literature, were five-fold: 1) formless and unkempt, 2) gloomy, 3) crudely realistic, 4) morbid and hysterical, and 5) mystical.<sup>8</sup> However, the Mighty Kuchka, (commonly known as the Mighty Five) presented a nationalist style which abandoned literary conceptions of the tragic Russian soul in favor of music that drew upon multiple folk song genres to create a

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<sup>2</sup> Ernest Gellner, as quoted in Curtis, *Music Makes*, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Curtis, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Curtis, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Curtis, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Curtis, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Frolova-Walker, 1.

sound that was far more festive than gloomy. It was exotic, brilliant, and focused on the Slavophile notion of an idealized pre-Petrine Russian purity rather than reality.<sup>9</sup> Four critical points in Russian history reveal the difference between the literary and Kuchkist conceptions of the Russian soul.

### **Lessons from Russian History**

In 988, Prince Vladimir formally adopted Byzantine Christianity as the official religion of Russia, and forced the ‘conversion’ of all citizens; “it gave the Kievan prince and state a stronger ideological basis, urging the unity of the country and at the same time emphasizing its links with Byzantium and with the Christian world as a whole.”<sup>10</sup> After the Great Schism in 1054, Russia’s loyalty to the Eastern Church contributed to its isolation from and suspicion of Europe. But “it brought . . . a powerful impetus to the development of a national culture.”<sup>11</sup>

The Mongols, led by the Khans, conquered and ruled Russia from 1237 until 1480. The Khans levied intensely oppressive taxes, isolating Russia from both Byzantium and Europe, impoverishing the people to the point of cultural regression.<sup>12</sup> But once they conquered the Russians, the Mongols never proceeded into the rest of Europe. During this long period of domination, Russia suffered and regressed while Europe progressed; from this condition sprouted the shoots of Russia’s messiah complex, in which simple Russia saved the rest of the world and the future by sacrificing herself.

Peter the Great (1682-1725) forcibly modernized and Westernized every aspect of Russian life, from the calendar to the clothing style, from commerce to the military. For a hundred years the Petrine reforms held sway, and by the end of the eighteenth century, the

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<sup>9</sup> Frolova-Walker, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Riasanovsky, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Riasanovsky, 68.

aristocracy had adopted all things French, so that many could not even speak their native language.<sup>13</sup> When Napoleon Bonaparte invaded in 1812, the Francophile aristocracy felt the deepest betrayal, suddenly rejecting all things French and their own adopted identity, seeking to find the “foundation of Russian national identity . . . exclusively . . . in Russian language and literature”<sup>14</sup> that they might learn to be Russians. They began to imagine themselves brothers with the peasants, who had supposedly never been sullied by outside influences. However self-deceptive, their opposition to the West and its accompanying inward search for identity laid the groundwork for a fresh look at Self and ‘Other’ which bears the seeds of nationalist identity to the present day.

### Russian Nationalist Intellectuals

The search for Russian national identity polarized the intelligentsia into two major factions, the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. Pyotr Chaadayev’s “First Philosophical Letter,” written in 1829, can be called the first treatise of a Westernizer. He disparages Russia to a point that even modern readers are offended by “the questions it raises about Russia’s relationship to the West [which] remain no less relevant today than they were in Chaadayev’s time.”<sup>15</sup> He completely discounts the Russian idea of their backwards superiority, and claims, in Frolova-Walker’s words, “even those perceived national characteristics which *were* undoubtedly positive actually arose from Russia’s deficiencies.”<sup>16</sup> The backlash was ruthless. His subsequent “Apologia of a Madman” became notorious because he described “Russia as a country without a history, with no identity and no influence on the world.”<sup>17</sup> Further, he claimed that instead of a pure Russian culture existing before Peter the Great, there was NO culture before Peter the

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<sup>13</sup> Riasanovsky, 197-222.

<sup>14</sup> Frolova-Walker, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Frolova-Walker, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Frolova-Walker, 7, *italics in original*.

<sup>17</sup> Frolova-Walker, 8.

Great, and that their geographical location set them apart from Europe, apart from the East, leaving them only to be “simply just a northern country, and on the basis of our ideas as much as that of our climates.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1845 Ivan Kireyevsky and Alexei Khomyakov published the founding documents of Slavophilism. The Slavophiles first protested against Westernization, including any kind of cultural absorption, and second, they actively sought to define Russia’s identity and role in the larger world. It is not until the 1840s that the rhetoric surrounding the idea of national consciousness becomes nationalism, because it was not until the 1840s that “the construction of the Russian national character . . . was motivated by economic and political factors, and in turn had its own political consequences.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Concerning Exoticism**

Russia, as previously stated, embodies East and West, or ‘Other’ and ‘Self,’ or ‘Exotic’ and ‘Familiar,’ and must incorporate both to be genuine. However, their hybrid nature places them on the periphery of Western music. The issue facing such “culturally marginal” nationalist composers is how to present their unique cultural idioms without being stuck in “a double bind”: “Without the native costume, a ‘peripheral’ composer would never achieve even secondary canonical rank, but with it he could never achieve more.”<sup>20</sup> Ralph Locke advocates a broader definition of exoticism that neatly embodies the crux of the Russian identity dilemma. Who is ‘Other’ and who is ‘Self’? The Russian-born, French-trained, nineteenth-century-Russian aristocracy found themselves to be distinctly ‘Other’ in every way; they were not Russians, they were not French, they did not belong to the past, but they were out of place in the present. And so they turned to the “imagined other” in which their exotic conglomeration of traits becomes

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<sup>18</sup> As quoted by Frolova-Walker, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Frolova-Walker, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ralph Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 77-78.

normatively Russian: “We . . . set up a screen of human believability—anchored by concrete references to a place that really exists (or once existed)—on which we can then project our wildest scenarios, however atypical they may be of, or even how impossible they would be in, the real location in question.”<sup>21</sup> Locke is referring to dramatic staged works, but the concept applies to the real life identity dilemma of nineteenth-century Russian aristocrats, and hinges on the will of the creator, which in this case is the composer.

The will of the composer can be divined through a process that extends beyond the limited scope of formalist analysis, because “the too-common assumption is that somehow the pitches and rhythms in a piece will convey to a listener all the necessary data or messages, whether s/he is or is not familiar with the work’s social and cultural contexts.”<sup>22</sup> Understanding the context of music is essential. The context includes musical signs (notes, rhythms, harmonies) *and* extramusical signs (Locke uses the word “premise”), which includes poetry, title, sound, performance, and mood indicators. Premise also includes the composer’s motivation for writing, the social norms of his time, and his compositional philosophy.

### **Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia—Literature**

Turning then to the two different constructions of nationalism in Art, the construction of national character in literature was effectively disseminated, cementing the Russian essence, or soul, in the annals of prose. Its foundation can be gathered under the umbrella of a strict rejection of everything in the West:

Western rationality, creative energy and industriousness were so grossly misshapen in the distorting mirrors of caricature that they began to appear pathological, while the proposed Russian negations - intuition, contemplation and underachievement - were offered as the essentials of a healthy culture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Locke, 69.

<sup>22</sup> Locke, 83.

<sup>23</sup> Frolova-Walker, 12.

By virtue of this demand for a strict purge of all things Western in their culture, Russians essentially threw the baby out with the bathwater, yet managed to make it seem, thanks to Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov, that the baby was evil, the mother right in purging herself of such a child. The resulting national personality exalts Russia's ignorance, mysticism, and (admirably) communal peasantry into a messianic complex wherein virtuous, young, fresh Russia would unite and save all other peoples and nations.<sup>24</sup> However, any minor study of Russian history will uncover a bloody trail of cruelty in contrast to the idea of a meek, peaceful, and benevolent people, a contradiction that they embraced as a part of their greatness:

Russia is the most anarchic, yet also the most bureaucratic of states; it is the least chauvinistic and yet the most nationalistic; it is a nation both submissive and arrogant; it enjoys great freedom of spirit, and great oppression. . . . It is the opposition between West and East, the two worlds which messianic Russia would bring together and reconcile.<sup>25</sup>

### Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia—Glinka and the Mighty Kuchka

In the first half of the nineteenth century, primordialist nationalist intellectuals established melancholy *protazhnaya*, “long, slow [folk] songs with elaborate melodies,”<sup>26</sup> as the remaining font of pre-Petrine cultural purity. They were incorporated into art song and opera to soothe the conscience of the Russian nobleman who had shared a culture with the invading French. It was in this atmosphere that Glinka composed a Russian nationalistic opera, *A Life for the Tsar*:

[Glinka’s] use of the Russian romance style at the crucial points of the opera . . . confirm[s] his belief in Russian melancholy. **Contemporary audiences made no distinction between folksong adaptations and salon romance**,<sup>27</sup> and so they perceived the opera as homogeneous in style and sorrowful in overall mood. . . . Most of Glinka’s

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<sup>24</sup> Frolova-Walker, 17.

<sup>25</sup> N.A. Berdyayev, in his 1918 collection of essays, *The Destiny of Russia*, from *Sud’ba Rossii* (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel’, 1990), as summarized in Frolova-Walker, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Frolova-Walker, 30.

<sup>27</sup> This would indicate that salon *romansi* are a reflection of the literary nationalistic trope, and that they are specifically for the edification of the gentry, despite evidence that the peasantry had access to and incorporated salon *romans* lyrics or melodies into their own mediums; there is no evidence suggesting that the gentry were actively propagating any kind of music among the peasantry, only procuring it.

contemporaries agreed that *A Life for the Tsar* successfully encapsulated the notion of musical Russianness current at that time.<sup>28</sup>

Glinka's next opera, *Ruslan and Ludmilla* (1842), replaced the *protiyazhnaya* and its melancholy with fantasy and oriental elements, fairy-tales and bylini (epic poems) with their heroes, the bogatiri; Glinka opted for this different version of the idealized innocence of pre-Petrine Russia, still reflecting the Slavophile fantasy of a pure Russian cultural source, but omitting the use of *protiyazhnaya*, which by the 1840s were considered to be contaminated. For musical material, he drew instead on ritual songs and dances, which "were considered (speculatively) to be in the oldest cultural stratum."<sup>29</sup>

The Kuchkists took *Ruslan* as a point of departure for their nationalist efforts,<sup>30</sup> but the genre had limited expressivity; "the new Russian style . . . was best suited to static tableaux."<sup>31</sup> The Kuchka therefore fell back on European idioms for greater expressivity in their music, even though their basic ideals still stemmed from a rejection of the West. They also reached to the East:

[Vladimir] Stasov and [Mily] Balakirev both believed that the Russians shared a common ancestor with the peoples of the East. This is crucial to our understanding of Balakirev, and to some extent the other members of the Kuchka . . . Balakirev did not see the Oriental style as means for representing a separate, alien people, an Other, in current parlance, but as an essential component of musical Russianness; . . . the easiest way to assert a distinct, non-European identity.<sup>32</sup> . . . His thinking was not dominated by Orientalist binary oppositions.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the advocacy of the Kuchkists, it was not until choreographer Sergei Diaghilev took the music to Paris in 1907 that their music received international attention, near or past the end of the lives of the Five. Primordialism and folk-songs provided ample inspiration, supplying

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<sup>28</sup> Frolova-Walker, 41-42, bold emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Frolova-Walker, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Frolova-Walker, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Frolova-Walker, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Frolova-Walker, 153.

<sup>33</sup> Frolova-Walker, 154.

Russia and her composers with an effective ideology and lasting material—stuck somewhere between truth and fantasy, reality and illusion, Western structure and Eastern exoticism—even if the result was a marginalization of Russian music and her composers.

### **Modeste Musorgsky's Secret Lyricism**

Modeste Musorgsky, a distinct follower in the Mighty Kuchka, led a double life. His friends and colleagues were polarized over his compositional strengths, with Count Arseniy Golenishchev-Kutuzov and Rimsky-Korsakov supporting his lyricism, and Stasov and Balakirev pushing him towards the stark realism for which he is typically known.<sup>34</sup> After Musorgsky's death, Stasov relentlessly promoted Musorgsky's populist works, and is the sole reason for the survival of any of his music. However, Musorgsky's lyrical works declined without similar advocacy.<sup>35</sup> Tonight's selections are all from his first song cycle, *Youthful Years*, a collection of lyrical songs written over a period of fourteen years.

Many of Musorgsky's works survive in multiple versions. The first version of "Where are you, little star?" was composed in 1857 just months before his acquaintance with Balakirev.<sup>36</sup> Version one is earthy, evoking "the folk". The melismatic vocal line in f# minor evokes the image of a wailing mourner. The piano exploits mediant and plagal harmonies, anticipating Kuchkist compositional philosophy. The opening theme anticipates the rhythm of the vocal line, employing a flattened seventh scale degree and the melodic minor scale played on a dudka, a folk reed pipe. The pre-Kuchka Musorgsky already had wonderful compositional intuition. In contrast, the second version is a new-student-Musorgsky's bland first attempt at orchestration. The opening theme is homogenized rhythmically, melodically, and instrumentally, using triplets

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Taruskin, "Who Speaks for Musorgsky?," in *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993), 3-37.

<sup>35</sup> Taruskin, "Who Speaks," 11-13.

<sup>36</sup> Alexandra Orlova, *Musorgsky's Days and Works: A Biography in Documents*, trans. and ed. by Roy J. Guenther (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 60, 61, 66.

instead of the varied rhythms of the first, removing the use of melodic minor, and changing the instrument to English horn:

Figure 1. Little Star, Version one, opening theme for dudka:



Figure 2. Little Star, Version two, opening theme for English horn:



The vocal line is similarly homogenized with triplet melismas, attenuating the mourning, but moving closer to the declamatory style his realist works would be known for. Additionally, the following melodic adjustment is awkward, changing a smooth melody to an unsupported, modulating, jaunting arpeggiation:

Figure 3. Little Star, Version One



Figure 4. Little Star, Version two



The piano maintains the use of mediant and plagal harmonies, but version two interjects a verse in first person into the center of the song, further disrupting the mournful feeling. It seems an attempt to inject a moment of despairing hope, in the musical nationalist tradition, but fails.

The second song in the cycle was composed shortly after Musorgsky's introduction into the Kuchka. "The Merry Hour" falls squarely in the musical nationalist tradition, employing a

peasant drinking song as a celebration of youth, friendship, and brotherhood. It illustrates an early version of the Kuchkist compositional philosophy, in that it uses dominant-tonic and subdominant-tonic relationships almost equally instead of relying primarily on the plagal relationship.

“Night,” in its second version, is an ethereal phantasm, delicate and trembling, encasing Mussorgsky’s reworking of Pushkin’s poem in tremolos and constant movement, abounding in plagal and chromatic harmonies, hovering between keys of close and distant relation. He introduces the flattened seventh scale degree, Neapolitan sixths, and ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords. It is no wonder Debussy found inspiration in Musorgsky’s works.<sup>37</sup> The singer’s bliss in the vision of her absent lover, reflected in the vocal line and accompaniment, is nearly delirious, and plays into a mature demonstration of the musical nationalist tradition. However, this song is a masterful blend of musical and literary idioms: behind the effusive delight, the Russian text carries the heartbreak implication that she is delusional; her love is gone, and either by death or choice, the vision is all she has.

### **Pyotr Tchaikovsky’s Practical Nationalism**

Tchaikovsky might seem an odd addition to a paper on musical nationalism. Tchaikovsky was concerned with creating uniquely Russian music, but took a more pragmatic approach, working from a base of European techniques. In spite of the popular notion that Tchaikovsky and the Five were musical nemeses, in the late 1860s and early 70s Balakirev tutored young Tchaikovsky by correspondence. Balakirev’s influence can be seen in his many of his works.<sup>38</sup> Still, Tchaikovsky’s nationalist philosophy diverged from that of the Kuchka. In a letter to Sergei Taneyev, he writes:

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<sup>37</sup> Taruskin, “Who Speaks,” 13.

<sup>38</sup> Edward Garden, “The Influence of Balakirev on Tchaikovsky.” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 107 (1980 - 1981), under article title, pp. 86-100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/766117> (accessed March 3, 2012).

I don't altogether understand . . . how you isolate Russian music from European music. . . . I value highly the richness of material which the . . . *masses* create, but . . . you have to go a painfully long way to get away from Europe. . . . European music is in my view a treasure-house to which every nation contributes . . . for the general good. . . . We cannot get away from the European garden, for . . . our seed . . . [fell] upon ground cultivated before us by the Europeans; . . . I would like to see . . . Russian music . . . stand on its own feet and . . . infuse a *fresh spirit* into music.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout his life, Tchaikovsky composed songs either for his own enjoyment or for money,<sup>40</sup> but it is unrealistic to discount contemporary philosophies in his song composition. His earliest surviving *romans*, "My Genius, My Angel, My Friend," predates his association with Balakirev by almost a decade, and fits neatly into the literary conception of Russian nationalism. He was only seventeen when he set the hushed query of a poem by Afanasy Fet, a schoolmate.<sup>41</sup> Its c minor conveys a mournfully plaintive quality underlining the message that the muse figure brings inspiration as well as relief from mortal heartache. The steady heartbeat chords that underline the melody undulate between a c minor triad and a d half-diminished seventh chord for most of the song, adding to the feeling that the muse is hovering on beating wings like a guardian angel.

Figure 5. My Genius...

A musical score for three voices: soprano, bassoon, and piano. The soprano part consists of a single melodic line in soprano clef. The bassoon part provides harmonic support with sustained notes. The piano part is represented by a staff with vertical stems indicating harmonic chords. The lyrics are written below the soprano staff: "zdes' li ti lyog\_ko\_yu tye \_ \_ nyu moj". The score is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat.

<sup>39</sup> Alexandra Orlova. *Tchaikovsky: A Self-Portrait*, trans. R. M. Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 204-6, italics in original.

<sup>40</sup> Orlova, self-portrait, 111, 401, and Richard D. Sylvester, *Tchaikovsky's Complete Songs: A Companion with Texts and Translations* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>41</sup> Sylvester, 1-2.

Next, “None but the Lonely Heart,” composed in 1869, was disparaged by Balakirev. This is typical of the early relationship between Balakirev and Tchaikovsky, which

reveals that Balakirev is the master, fearlessly criticizing, urging Tchaikovsky to give of his best, upbraiding him for banality, adjuring him to be more self-critical; but at all times having faith in him, giving him a feeling that he had the capacity to write music of first-class quality.<sup>42</sup>

This song illustrates just how early in his development that Tchaikovsky, under the heavy hand of Balakirev, formed his own philosophies of nationalism and composition, embracing the subtleties of the Russian language and the practices of the Romantic period in creating brilliant vocal lines and harmonic tension to rend the Russian heart-strings. Here, the first climax avoids the tonic so that the moment of silence before the voice re-enters for the coda steals the breath:

Figure 6. None But the Lonely Heart.

“If only I had known” makes use of the melancholy of the Russian literary idiom in its choice of poem by Aleksei Tolstoy; with characteristic dramatic flair, Tchaikovsky illustrates a peasant girl’s terrible heartbreak, culminating in her sobs. Again he uses an unstable undulation between minor and diminished harmonies a whole step apart to underscore the girl’s increasingly agitated declamatory vocal line:

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<sup>42</sup> Garden, 87.

Figure 7. If Only I Had Known



The poetic evocation of the folk and a plagal final cadence also place this song firmly in the musical nationalist tradition.

“On this moonlit night” is a delightful blend of idioms, but leans toward the musical idiom in its choice of poem by a minor Russian poet, declamatory vocal line, and effusive character. The fast rhythms and escalating lines paint a picture of a lover’s ecstatic relief at spending coveted moments in the moonlight:

Figure 8. On This Moonlit Night



Yet, in literary fashion, the good is always tinged with some degree of heartache, “as the day promises more ‘longing and sorrow.’”<sup>43</sup> This song also provides a precedent for Rimsky-Korsakov’s two later songs on tonight’s program, and demonstrates progressive late nineteenth-century harmonic practices with extensive use of non-functional seventh chords of all types.

<sup>43</sup> Sylvester, 275

Tchaikovsky marched to the beat of his own drum, but his Russian soul also yearned for the answer to the burning question, “What is Russian?”

### Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s Compromise

Rimsky-Korsakov is my favorite composer of the Kuchkists, somehow embodying Russia in his unwitting position as a bridge between the Kuchka and Tchaikovsky—the bridge between intuition and education. Balakirev began teaching Rimsky-Korsakov in 1861 or 62. His first songs were composed to imitate and please his mentor. He was an intuitive composer and composed extensively despite the interference of his paying profession as a sailor in Russia’s navy.<sup>44</sup>

After a decade of Balakirev’s tutelage, Rimsky-Korsakov accepted a teaching position at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. In his memoir, he admits to being inadequate to the task of a professional teaching position, having never studied theory at all.<sup>45</sup> His professional ignorance spurred him to study harmony and counterpoint in earnest, using, among other resources, Tchaikovsky’s textbook on harmony. He confessed, "I sat down so poorly informed that I found myself acquiring systematic knowledge even in elementary theory."<sup>46</sup> He eventually rejected the premises of the Kuchka in favor of Tchaikovsky’s more practical nationalism.

Rimsky-Korsakov presented “Captivated by the Rose” to Balakirev, who approved of the song, but “rewrote the whole thing in his own hand,” and the rewritten version was published under Rimsky-Korsakov’s name.<sup>47</sup> It is unclear how much of the published version was from Rimsky-Korsakov’s pen. This song illustrates some of the most characteristic devices from the Kuchka’s musical nationalistic toolkit: simple accompaniment, deference to the structure of the

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<sup>44</sup> Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov, *My Musical Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. J. A. Joffe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 22.

<sup>45</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov, 117.

<sup>46</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov, 68.

poetry, a declamatory setting, and Balakirev's standard 'oriental' melodic and rhythmic devices. This use of augmented second and 16<sup>th</sup> note rhythm evokes an Arabian scene, reinforced by the song's subtitle, Eastern Song:

Figure 9. Captivated by the Rose.



The unaccompanied vocal line matches the accents of the Russian words with strong beats while continuing with Arabian melodic traits, exoticising the characters in the poem, a nightingale and a rose, who seem foreign in an Arabian landscape. The closing F# major chord lends a little hope that the sad song of the nightingale will be answered by the rose somehow, subverting the melancholy of the literary nationalist idiom.

The song, "In the Dark Grove, the Nightingale Fell Silent," employs a similar 16<sup>th</sup> note rhythm to that used in "Captivated by the Rose," as well as harmonies in augmented second relationship, but robs them of their context, and therefore their exotic imagery:

Figure 10. In the Dark Grove.



The use of exotic elements in neutral contexts is characteristic of the musical nationalist idiom and taken from Balakirev's compositions, who used such devices until "he ceased to perceive [them]" as exotic.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the rhythm is transformed into a mirror of a clumsy, yet sincere young suitor who, with his youthful jitters, step-step-step-trip-tumbles over tree roots as he jabbers. His theme is alternated with a slightly nervous, syncopated rhythm that reflects the blossoming, yet inexperienced, fair maiden:

Figure 11. In the Dark Grove.



The young maiden's rhythm appears only between the young man's lines, illustrating her silent, shy smile. This is one of few songs that employ only the musical nationalist idiom.

"Whispering, Timid Breathing," and "Louder the Lark's Singing Seems," both composed in 1897, reflect Rimsky-Korsakov's 'enlightened' rejection of Kuchkist principles and a mastery of his formal education. These songs employ more involved accompaniments and sweeping, dramatic vocal lines. Both brief songs have unexpected endings that seem, if not awkward, then at least unsophisticated, giving an impression of a backward nod to folk song—and subsequently, primordialism.

"Whispering, Timid Breathing," while embracing the formal education he had now mastered, also shows that he had not fully rejected the principles of the Kuchka, even if he disparaged them, by using chords built on the flattened seventh scale degree, a poem by a minor

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<sup>48</sup> Frolova-Walker, 153.

Russian poet, and embracing a celebratory demeanor. The accompaniment resembles Tchaikovsky's "On this Moonlit Night" in subject and quick ascending lines:

Figure 12. Whispering, Timid Breathing.



"Louder the Lark's Singing" is included here to illustrate that Rimsky-Korsakov, like Tchaikovsky, while unable to completely abandon the Russian musical nationalist idiom, was actively turning to Europe and seeking advanced compositional devices. In the following measure, he combines functional V7-i movement in the right hand and vocal line with an arpeggiated major III chord in the left hand, effecting use of mediant-related keys, as composers like Wolf and Strauss did:

Figure 13. Louder the Lark's Singing.



## Conclusion

These three composers each took a very different approach to the same problem of establishing a national culture. Musorgsky explored two very different styles before his death cut

short his creativity. Tchaikovsky sought to inject something Russian into the existing European canon. Rimsky-Korsakov illustrates the life of one who lived in extremes, first embracing the limits of musical nationalism, and then rejecting those premises, though not escaping them. Ultimately, Russian nationalism was a movement by and for the nineteenth-century Francophile Russian elite, constructed to grant themselves a new identity. *Romansi* combine the intimacy of singing with expressions of identity, exercising all the tools of both the literary convention of melancholy and the musical convention that includes folk celebratory materials. The Kuchkist composers and Tchaikovsky used nationalist tools and European tools to differing extents, but for the same ends: to create *Russian* culture.

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