Words and Music in Russian Culture

BORIS GASPAROV

Five Operas and a Symphony

RUSSIAN LITERATURE AND THOUGHT

Gary Saul Morson, Series Editor

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To C.

Melodies without the subject meaning are to me like butterflies or beautiful flamboyant birds that burst into the open air before our eyes, making us ever chase them and want to grasp them; the melody, however, soars in the heaven like a spirit, evoking the best in ourselves by challenging us to follow it.
—Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Learning*

Papageno (*pointing ruefully at the lock on his mouth*). Hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm.

Tamino. The poor fellow may be telling about his punishment, that his speech is gone.

Papageno. Hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm.

Tamino. I can do nothing but pity you, for it's not in my power to help.

Papageno. Hm hm hm hm—

Tamino. I can do nothing—

Papageno. —hm hm hm hm—

Tamino. —but pity you—

Papageno. —hm hm hm hm—

Tamino. —for it's not in my power to help.

Papageno. Hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm hm.
—Mozart-Schikaneder, *The Magic Flute*

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Introduction: In the Shadow of Literature

Ein Tauber, der sähe, und ein Blinder, der hörte, wer hätte mehr von der Oper? Jener bei der französischen, dieser unstreitig bei der italienischen.

A deaf man watching, or a blind man listening—which one would get more from an opera? The former from a French one, the latter, indisputably, from an Italian.

—Johann Gottfried Herder, *Über die Oper*

Russian music has a characteristic sound. A reasonably experienced listener instantly recognizes the distinct "Russianness" in a piece of Russian art music, from Yevstignei Fomin's *Land Coachmen at the Post Station* (1787) to Sofia Gubaidulina's *De profundis* for bayan (1978); the few exceptions only confirm the rule, since they are obviously deliberate. The same can be said of Russian traditional folk and modern popular songs, as well as of the liturgical singing of the Russian Orthodox Church. The phenomenon is not unlike one's being able to recognize a "Mediterranean landscape," whether it is actually situated in Greece, in the Caucasus, or in California. True, the elements of the Russian musical landscape prove to be as elusive as they are tangible. Not only do all the features of melody, harmony, rhythm, and instrumentation that we are ready to recognize as generically Russian belong to European musical

culture at large, but some of them were consciously borrowed by Russians from various Western musical cultures (Italian and German, in most cases), although the borrowed material underwent adaptation when transplanted onto Russian musical soil. And yet the pronounced Russianness of the musical voice is inseparable from its universal emotional appeal. There is something cozily expressive in this music; it seems to be always striving to reach out to its listeners, to appeal to them directly, even when it falls into a cantankerous or sarcastically subversive mood.

There is a price to be paid for this aural comfort. The listener's response tends to be direct and unreflective, in line with the perceived nature of this musical voice. Broader intellectual issues concerning the place of Russian music of different epochs vis-à-vis aesthetic and philosophical trends in Russian and Western culture at large, therefore, are, if not totally superfluous, at least not as pressing as, say, in the case of German musical classicism, romanticism, and modernism. Russian music, no matter the genre and aesthetic provenance, assumes a collective image whose very wholeness signifies an implicit exclusion from the rest of the aesthetic world. In this sense, the fortunes of Russian music have been different not only from those of any major Western European national musical tradition but from Russian literature as well. For us Tolstoy is, first and foremost, "the writer" in a universal sense, a towering presence in the realm of nineteenth-century psychological prose. Schubert, for all the poignantly national character of his music, stands in our perception first of all as the key figure in the transition from the classical to the romantic style. But when one considers Musorgsky or Chaikovsky, the "Russian" Stravinsky or Shostakovich, awareness of his identity as a Russian composer serves as the primary identification mark. Consider the habitual dissection of Stravinsky's musical self into "Russian" and "non-Russian" halves or the beaten path of discussions about which of the nineteenth-century Russian composers was more or less Russian. In Richard Taruskin's succinct formulation, "Verdi and Wagner are heroic individuals. Russians are a group."[1]

Fiercely promoted by the ideologues of the Russian school in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, hammered on by the cultural policy of "official nationality" of the Soviet period, and diligently emulated by many Western musical critics in the past, the idea of the collective identity of Russian music has established itself as both a formidable intellectual tradition and a sheer listening habit. One can see its consequences in the gap that exists between technical studies of the language of this music, on one hand, and interpretive criticism dedicated to works by Russian composers, on the other.

A wealth of studies by Russian musicologists describe in great detail the elements of musical language that constitute the peculiar features of Russian

musical sonority.[2] Such studies typically emphasize indigenous idiosyncrasy, downplaying Western parallels to or the Western origin of many features perceived as trademarks of Russian musical style. While contributing to an understanding of the concrete parameters of musical texture typical of this musical tradition, these works, in a more general way, perpetuate the myth of musical Russianness as some magic substance flowing from folk music directly to all the composers of the land. No wonder that in spite of the high level of technical sophistication of many such works, they rarely surface in the context of Western studies of Russian music.

At the same time, one can note a certain predilection of music critics and the public, in Russia and in the West, to become mesmerized by the human features of a composer if the composer in question is Russian. This is not to say, of course, that a composer's personality, worldview, and life circumstances are irrelevant for understanding his music. But there is something particularly annoying in the remarkable persistence with which discourse about Russian music gravitates toward the mind-set "menschliches, allzumenschliches" — the attitude whose proponents Osip Brik once characterized as "maniacs passionately seeking the answer to the question, 'Was Pushkin a smoker?' "[3] This is the other side of the preoccupation with the expressive qualities of Russian musical sonority at the expense of broader issues of genre, discourse, and historical ramification. The perceptual gap left by the ghettoization of Russian music that sets it apart from music per se — "music" without a modifier — tends to be filled by personal and ideological trivia rather than aesthetic and historical analysis.

The time has passed (one hopes) when Beethoven's deafness or Mozart's angelically subhuman infantilism — or Dostoevsky's epilepsy or Tolstoy's family trouble, for that matter — served as a comprehensive frame into which the entire oeuvre could be fit. But what comes to mind when one remembers Russian composers is the Musorgsky of Repin's portrait — a disturbed genius in the throes of the lethal drunkenness that consumes his life and his work; Chaikovsky the repentant homosexual, his hyperemotional music pouring out from the somber depths of his soul, his whole path as an artist inextricably enmeshed in dark rumors about the circumstances of his death;[4] Shostakovich the lifetime dissident and victim of Stalinist persecution — or Shostakovich the conformist *and* the victim of persecution — a composer whose music has become virtually inaccessible as an aesthetic phenomenon, thanks to everybody's burning desire to decipher what it is "really" about; or the grandeur and eccentricity of all those charming and outrageous Russian émigré musicians. Looking at Repin's portrait of Musorgsky from a more sober perspective, one could see in it a sign of the painter's precocious tilting toward expressionism

(posing, typically for Russian art of that time, as an unrelenting realism) rather than an iconic depiction of the composer's personality and work. If we had a picture of Schumann in the depths of his affliction, chances are small that we would seek in it an elucidation of his musical style. Schoenberg, Béla Bartók, and Richard Strauss were as deeply affected, each in his own way, by the political turmoils of the 1930s and 1940s as was Shostakovich; Puccini hailed the advent of Mussolini in the same superficial way as Stravinsky. But in the case of Western composers these circumstances do not grow so large in our eyes as to obstruct our view of their oeuvre (or do so only rarely); the Russians are less fortunate.

Much has been done recently to confront this peculiar situation and to address Russian music as an aesthetic phenomenon the way one addresses any major European musical or literary tradition, including, in the latter case, the Russian one. Richard Taruskin, in spite of some polemical excesses in his writing, deserves the lion's share of credit for this effort. In his *Defining Russia Musically* Taruskin exposed many features of musical style that had been perceived as characteristically Russian since the second half of the nineteenth century as products of musical cross-pollination. According to Taruskin, for such composers as Glinka and Chaikovsky as well as for Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, the relation between Russian and non-Russian musical elements remained as fluid as the relation between German and Italian was for Bach or Mozart. In another book Taruskin built a bridge between the two aspects of Stravinsky by showing the persistent features of musical discourse that underlay the composer's oeuvre, whether it sounded Russian or not.[5] One can also cite recent works about Musorgsky,[6] Chaikovsky,[7] and Shostakovich[8] in which these composers have been discussed in the context of the broader cultural and aesthetic trends of their times. Another welcome development in this direction was the appearance of studies showing Wagner's overpowering presence in Russian culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — crucial evidence of Russian musicians' involvement, their frequent protestations notwithstanding, in an intense aesthetic dialogue with their Western counterparts.[9]

These pioneering works, most of which have appeared in the past decade, have made it possible to address the question of the peculiarity of the Russian musical tradition in broader historical and aesthetic terms and to approach Russian music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an integral part of the European aesthetic process. The very difficulty with which studies of Russian music shift their focus away from the emphasis on its anthropologically peculiar attire, however, constitutes an interesting phenomenon in itself. The question is not whether this music has a characteristic

tone—it does; it is, rather, why in this case the tone has become such an overpowering issue, capable of overshadowing consideration of the different aesthetic trends, ideological concerns, and cultural environments that Russian composers reflected and to which they responded in their art.

One can see a certain paradox in the position that music holds in the national cultural consciousness and in everyday life. On one hand, the nation is very musical. One has only to remember the innumerable touching scenes in Russian literature and films in which characters swoon to the sounds of music, mostly that of an indigenous provenance—a peasant song, a church chorus, piano playing, the voice of a diva.[10] On the other, when pressing philosophical, social, psychological, or aesthetic problems are raised, music usually takes a back seat not only to literature but, at least in the twentieth century, also to the visual arts. When one thinks of such phenomena in the cultural history of the past two centuries as efforts by Romantic and neo-Romantic writers, philosophers, and historians to grasp the essence of the national character and to define the messianic "Russian idea," the advent on Russian soil of major aesthetic trends such as Romanticism, realism, symbolism, and the avant-garde, the quest for the social answerability of art, the critique of the rationalism and individualism of Western epistemology and ethical thought raised by Russian philosophers, and the reflection of this critique in the works of Russian writers and painters, Russian literature, literary criticism, and avant-garde painting come forward as the primary aesthetic vehicles through which those ideas and concerns were articulated. Russian music took part in every important cultural trend, but it was a part whose intellectual and aesthetic underpinnings had already been shaped by literature. Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* was received with enthusiasm as a musical proclamation of Russian "nationality" *(narodnost)* that responded to the ideas developed by writers, literary critics, and philosophers during the preceding decade. The uncompromising quest for realism in music, proclaimed by Dargomyzhsky in the 1850s and ardently followed by the young Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov in the 1860s, was clearly derived from Belinsky's definition of the natural school in the 1840s and the subsequent affirmation of the superiority of reality over art by Chernyshevsky. At the time of their appearance, Stravinsky's "Russian" ballets attained more worldwide fame than the works of any contemporary Russian avant-garde writer or artist (with the possible exception of Kandinsky); yet Stravinsky's role in shaping Russian modernist culture was minor compared with that of Viacheslav Ivanov, Andrei Bely, Velimir Khlebnikov, Viktor Shklovsky, or Kazimir Malevich.

There was one major exception to this trend: Scriabin. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the cult of Scriabin reached truly messianic

proportions, comparable to the cults of Pushkin and Tolstoy. In his article "Scriabin and the Spirit of the Revolution," ostensibly finished one day before the October revolution (if one believes the date of writing, given as October 24, 1917), Ivanov portrayed Scriabin's death in 1915 as an apocalyptic event, an omen that portended a rupture in the history of the world.[11] This phenomenon, however, typical of the neo-Romantic revival of the cult of the spirit of music by the Russian symbolists, was doomed to remain, in the larger historical perspective, an isolated episode. By the 1920s avant-garde literature and literary theory resumed their intellectual leadership, summoning painting and cinema as their principal allies. While fully retaining its ability to elicit an overwhelming emotional response (one need only remember the reception of Shostakovich's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies), music retreated once again from Scriabin's claim that it was the defining spiritual force and resumed its habitual role as the expressive voice.

One feature of Russian music that reflects its dependence on literature is the remarkable persistence with which opera composers relied on works of the national literary pantheon for their subjects. In the nineteenth century at least, this trend set Russian opera apart from that of other nations. Of course, many Western operas from this period drew their subject matter from famous works of literature, but typically, composers chose works from a national literature other than their own, written in a different language. Rossini and Verdi took inspiration from Shakespeare, Schiller, and Alexander Dumas *fils*; Gounod and Massenet followed Goethe; Beethoven's *Fidelio* used the drama by J. N. Bouilly; Wagner relied on early mythology and medieval novels rather than on modern literature. Even in such cases as Bizet's *Carmen* and Massenet's *Manon,* the literary original, although belonging to the same national tradition, was a work in prose, which meant that its text was thoroughly transformed in the libretto. I am not aware of any significant Western European opera prior to Debussy's *Pelleas et Mélisande* and Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* that not only adopted the plot and characters of a well-known work of literature but derived the libretto directly from its text. The latter practice, however, was typical for Russian composers, who unhesitantly used classical works of national literature as the basis for their music. Pushkin in particular, in his established symbolic role as the ultimate embodiment of the national spirit, was ubiquitous in the operatic canon, represented by Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila,* Dargomyzhsky's *Mermaid* and *The Stone Guest,* Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov,* Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin, Mazeppa,* and *The Queen of Spades,* Cui's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus,* Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Tale of Tsar Saltan, Mozart and Salieri,* and *The Golden Cockerel,* Rakhmaninov's *Aleko* and *The Covetous Knight,* Nápravník's *Dubrovsky,* Lourié's *A Feast in Time*

of Plague and *Blackamoor of Peter the Great,* and Stravinsky's *Mavra*. Gogol is a not-so-distant second, with Musorgsky's *Marriage* and *The Fair of Sorochintsy,* Chaikovsky's *Cherevichki,* Shostakovich's *The Nose* and the fragment *The Gamblers,* and Shchedrin's *Dead Souls*. Lermontov is represented by A. Rubinstein's *Demon* and Ostrovsky by Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* and Serov's *The Power of Evil*. Most of the literary-operatic projects of the nineteenth century were based on narrative poems and dramas in verse, which allowed direct use of the text. The principle of textual faithfulness to the original was affirmed in Musorgsky's radical experiment in *Marriage,* which used Gogol's prose intact, a highly unusual case for the time. In the twentieth century, when prosaic discourse became more common in opera, the way was opened for major nineteenth-century Russian novelists to be lavishly represented on the operatic stage including Tolstoy in Prokofiev's *War and Peace,* Turgenev in Ippolitov-Ivanov's *Asya,* Dostoevsky in Prokofiev's *The Gambler,* Leskov in Shchedrin's *The Enchanted Wanderer* and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk,*[12] and Lermontov in Anatoly Aleksandrov's *Bela,* all of them permeated with direct borrowings from the literary prototype.

This practice received a theoretical affirmation in the doctrine of musical realism put forth in the 1850s by Dargomyzhsky, who challenged music to cast off the artificiality of invented melodies and to pursue "truthfulness" of expression by following the genuine intonations of speech. His efforts to abolish conventional melodies in favor of a continual recitative-like musical declamation were not very far from Wagner's contemporary reform of musical drama — or, for that matter, from Vincenzo Galilei's encouragement of "noble abstention from melody," which catalyzed transformation of the vocal concerts of the *Camerata* into a vocal presentation of dramatic action — the *opera* — in early seventeenth-century Florence. What was curious in Dargomyzhsky's reasoning was the absolute authority granted to the word. His famous maxim — "I want the sound to express the word; I want truth" — has been endlessly repeated by Russian and Soviet champions of the realist aesthetic without any consideration of the peculiarity of this unhesitating identification of truth with the word. What was more curious was Dargomyzhsky's decision to affirm his views by writing an opera after Pushkin's *The Stone Guest* without altering or omitting a single one of the poet's words. Pushkin's romantic drama in verse, featuring the highly stylized story of Don Juan and wrought in literary and musical allusions (a close kin to contemporary works for the theater by Alfred de Musset), may strike an outside observer as an unlikely vehicle for the uncompromising pursuit of reality in music. Yet neither Dargomyzhsky nor his enthusiastic followers in the next generation took notice of this seeming contradiction. His principles and their embodiment in his opera were

championed by V. V. Stasov and embraced by the young Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov as examples for their own early operatic projects. After the composers eventually drifted away—in fact, very far away—from the 1860s ideal of musical faithfulness to the truth, they continued to exhibit at least a token loyalty to the Dargomyzhsky-Stasov line. After all, Dargomyzhsky only followed the lead of such champions of realism among literary critics as Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, who, in their disquisitions about the primacy of reality over art, invariably resorted to images taken from literature when they needed an example of the hallowed reality they championed. Critics did not see any irony in treating the familiar literary characters and situations or aphoristic lines of poetry that their memory obediently offered to them as representations of the reality whose cherished model they admonished the writers and artists to follow.

The dependence, both ideological and textual, of Russian music on national literature and literary consciousness gave rise to a peculiar tradition of bemoaning the "desecration" of literary classics by composers. This tradition, which persisted from Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* to Stravinsky's, Shostakovich's, and Prokofiev's ventures onto literary terrain, survived all changes of taste and ideology. Even operas that virtually superseded their literary prototype in the national cultural memory, such as *Boris Godunov* and *Eugene Onegin,* drew acid remarks from critics and the public for their treatment of their literary originals. One can notice a peculiar pattern of widespread elation surrounding a major composer's decision to write music after a classic—as was the case, for example, with Glinka's Pushkin project—followed by the inevitable groans about the disfigurement of that classic when it appeared in its new operatic attire. Typical are complaints about subtleties of the original being lost or its coherence destroyed; rare are attempts to assess what the music of such an opera might add to our perception of the meaning of the work.[13]

Russia was not the only nation whose cultural self-consciousness was dominated by verbal discourse in general and its refined form, belles lettres, in particular. Perhaps a more powerful case of such dominance can be found in France, the home of the term "logocentrism," whose influence on Russian literature and literary language was overwhelming at the time when Russian belles lettres assimilated the patterns and genres of modern Western culture. Russian logocentrism is peculiar in that it coexists with the singularly strong emotional response enjoyed by indigenous music. In a nation accustomed to looking at its writers with expectations of messianic proportions, music turns out to be the phenomenon that was truly inextricable from everyday life. From the cozy domesticity of popular songs to the sublime emanations of national spirit in its operatic and symphonic masterpieces, Russian music offers perhaps the most

immediate expression and affirmation of that national spirit. In this capacity, music invades literature, making familiar verses and characters inseparable from their musical doubles. Yet in a symbolic but by no means less powerful way music occupies a subservient, derivative position vis-à-vis the word.

With a few exceptions, cited above, one can speak of a certain literary bias in approaches to Russian culture. It has become a well-established habit to look at the writers of a certain epoch, their works, and their reception by contemporaries for clues concerning new trends, problems, and ideas that occupied the society at large in that epoch. Music is rarely considered to be a major factor. Its role is often confined to that of a voice whose texture may add certain emotional overtones to the cultural message carried by literature and literary criticism. Attempts to view music as a formative cultural force, to show cultural trends and patterns in the characteristic features of the music, are still rare. Again, in this regard one must cite Taruskin, whose analysis of the national features of Stravinsky's and Scriabin's music on a level deeper than that of its sound points in this direction.[14] Still, the relation between the voice of Russian music and its message, in a broader historical and aesthetic sense, remains a problem that is wide open for investigation.

The exploration of this problem and of the impact it may have on the interpretation of individual musical works by Russian composers is the principal task of this book. I am convinced that, when viewed in this broader context, music can offer a unique testimony about its time, from its aesthetic and intellectual trends to its political tides and generational psychological shifts. This book tries to present a multidimensional panorama of Russian culture at different historical moments, viewed through the lens of national music. By the same token, a well-known musical work, when placed in a broad historical context, reveals fresh, sometimes unexpected aspects of its meaning; the interpretation of the music and the study of Russian cultural history become intertwined.

By means of this strategy the very dependence of Russian music on literature can become a useful heuristic tool. It is intriguing to explore the displacements that occur when a major work of literature or historiography — such as Pushkin's oeuvre or Sergei Solovyov's monumental survey of Russian history — becomes the subject of an opera written twenty to sixty years later by a composer belonging to a different generation and cultural stratum. The effect goes beyond that of genre transposition;[15] it transports a national classic into a different epoch, giving it a second life under totally different historical, aesthetic, and psychological circumstances. Familiar situations and characters, firmly entrenched in the national memory, receive a new meaning in the new context. Sometimes the message carried by the music develops in a dialogue

with its literary prototype; sometimes it clashes with or supersedes it. These shifts in the meaning can tell us as much about the epoch to which the original narrative belonged as about the time of its operatic reincarnation.

I have chosen to focus on six well-known works of Russian music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila,* Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and *Boris Godunov,* Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades,* and Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony. Each work serves as a vantage point for a tableau reflecting a certain moment in Russian history: the building of the empire and growth of national consciousness in the time of Nicholas I (the 1830s and 1840s), the age of realism and populism (the 1860s and 1870s) and the religious and metaphysical reaction against them in the late 1870s, the advent of modernism (the 1890s), and the beginning of the epoch of high Stalinism (the early 1930s). Together, these snapshots add up to a coherent story of ideological and aesthetic trends as they evolved over more than a century, from Pushkin's time to the rise of the totalitarian mentality and aesthetic in the 1930s.

I

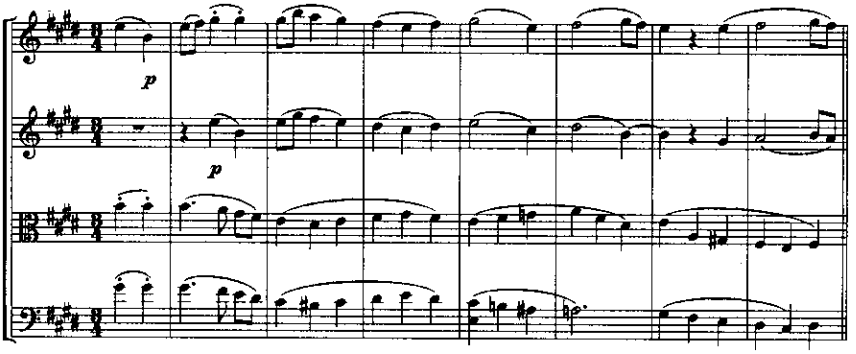
Sound and Discourse: On Russian National Musical Style

An old Russian folk song is like water held back by a dam. It looks as if it were still and were no longer flowing, but in its depth it is ceaselessly rushing through the sluice gates and the stillness of its surface is deceptive. By every possible means, by repetitions and similes, the song slows down the gradual unfolding of its theme. Then at some point it reveals itself and astounds us.

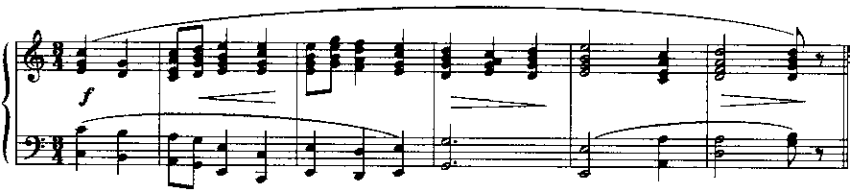
—Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*

The Russian folk melody "Glory" became popular in the nineteenth century, not least because of Beethoven's use of it in one of the Rasoumoffsky quartets; it appears in op. 59, no. 2 in the middle part of the scherzo, marked in the score as "thème russe" (example 1.1a). The theme was subsequently used by Rimsky-Korsakov as the leitmotif of Tsar Ivan the Terrible in *The Maiden of Pskov* and *The Tsar's Bride* and, most famously, by Musorgsky in the coronation scene of *Boris Godunov*. In Beethoven's and Musorgsky's works the theme appears as a chorale as well as in a contrapuntal elaboration. Let us compare the chorale harmonization given to the theme by Musorgsky (example 1.1b).

Beethoven and Musorgsky expand on the three principal functions of European harmony—tonic, dominant, and subdominant, based, respectively, on



1.1a. "Glory" (Beethoven, Quartet op. 59, no. 2, third movement)



1.1b. "Glory" (Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* Prologue)

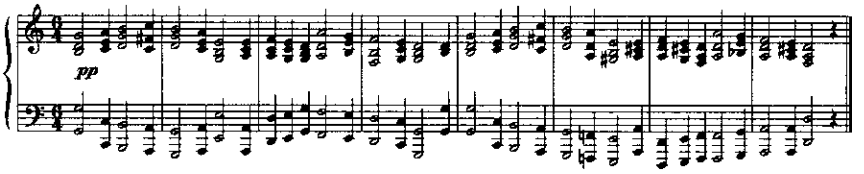
steps I, V, and IV of the seven-note scale — by using chords build on peripheral steps. Beethoven uses a VI triad and Musorgsky uses II, III, and VI triads. Although any of these peripheral chords can appear in a Bach-style chorale, their sheer weight, particularly in the case of Musorgsky, exceeds the norms of harmonic style of European music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Beethoven reduces this peculiarity by using chromatic gestures that form secondary dominants to peripheral chords. The tension created by a secondary dominant resolves into a peripheral triad in the same way in which the principal dominant is resolved into the tonic; for instance, the chromaticized chord (with b-sharp) of the VII functions as dominant for the VI. When the scope of harmonies within the tonality expands, it happens by the affirmation of the fundamental dominant-tonic antinomy. Expanding tonality from within by applying its fundamental principle to more and more extenuated subsidiaries was the road of development taken by European composers throughout the nineteenth century. The level of expansion of tonality reached in this way by Wagner was such that it permitted him to maintain harmonic suspense virtually throughout an entire act of an opera by introducing another secondary dominant each time the resolution into the tonic is expected, before reaching the ultimate resolution.

Musorgsky's treatment of the theme is strategically different. He introduces peripheral chords bluntly, without preparation. They function as self-sufficient, independent members of the tonality whose appearance, like the appearances of the tonic and the dominant, is not beset by any special conditions. Establishing all peripheral chords on an equal footing with the principal functions results in decentralization of the tonality. Harmonic hierarchy is transformed into a harmonic family. A chord built on any step of the scale can appear after and be resolved into—or simply followed by—every other member of the family; each can freely assume a derivative form such as a sixth chord or a seventh chord.

The effect is that of a somewhat amorphous looseness. The coherence of musical form underwritten by the fundamental principle of the dominant-tonic relationship gives way to an improvisatory vagueness of direction in which the musical phrase coalesces. It undermines the "teleological" treatment of tonality according to which its development, no matter how far-reaching, is strategically directed toward resolution in the final cadence. The appearance of the tonic becomes anticlimactic—it is just one chord among the many that can follow and be followed by any of the family members; it can assume the shape of a seventh chord, sometimes even in the final position, as easily as a chord built on another step. The standard V–I cadence that signposts all conjunctions between segments of the musical form in Western music becomes no more than a transient episode, almost an accident. In the minor mode, the importance of the dominant-tonic sequence is further undermined by the prevalent use of the natural dominant instead of the harmonic one, thus removing the leading tone, which has the strongest gravitational pull toward the tonic.

The weakening of the tonic's reigning position, together with the fact that the scales of a major and its relative minor tonality (for example, C major and A minor) become identical owing to the use of the natural VII in the minor, produces a characteristic feature of Russian harmonic style: the so-called alternating tonality (*tonal'naia peremennost'*). Music can inconspicuously shift from the major to the minor and vice versa, without any modulating device that would make such a shift definitive. In fact, one can hardly say in which tonality one finds oneself at any given point. There is no proper cadence, no difference in the scale and the repertory of the chords between the two relative tonalities, so one can tell major from minor only by the relative weight, at a certain point, of chords that can be interpreted as the dominant and the tonic of either of the alternatives—a precarious balance indeed. Sometimes the tonal alternation involves more than two tonalities. A good example is the famous song "About the Tatar Captivity" (*Pro tatarskii polon*), which Rimsky-Korsakov harmonized in his collection of Russian folk tunes (following Balakirev's initiative)[1] and later used as the leitmotif of the Tatar invasion in *The*



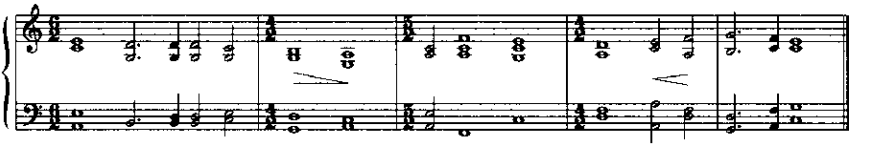
1.2. "About the Tatar Captivity" (from Rimsky-Korsakov, *A Hundred Russian Folk Songs*)

Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh. Its theme perpetually wanders between G major, E minor, C major, and D minor; it can be tipped into any one of these by slight changes in harmonization (example 1.2).

Although Russian music predominantly uses the seven-note scale, the principle of alternating tonality links it with Far Eastern music based on pentatonic scales. A pentatonic melody also fluctuates effortlessly between what sounds to the European ear like major and minor.[2]

The first impression given by the Russian chorale in comparison with the German one is that of serene simplicity. The flexibility of conjunctions between chords and the absence, or at least the great reduction, of harmonic tensions and functional hierarchy come at the expense of excluding the chromaticisms and thus limiting the repertory of chords to those built on the diatonic steps. In this sense, the Russian chorale recalls the pre-tonal (modal) harmony of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries except for the extensive appearance of triads in inverted positions (six-three or six-four chords) and the free use of seventh chords based on all steps except the dominant seventh, which is avoided. This analogy inspired early champions of the reintroduction of the traditional Russian style into church singing in the second quarter of the nineteenth century after the thorough Europeanization it had undergone in the previous hundred years.[3] In the 1830s Nikolai Potulov and others began composing church music in what they perceived as the Russian equivalent of Palestrina's style, which consisted exclusively of the triads of all steps of the diatonic scale, freely combined with each other (example 1.3).

Potulov's challenge to the Westernized stylistic canon established by Dmitry Bortniansky was greeted with enthusiasm by such a sensitive musical connoisseur as Prince Vladimir Odoevsky.[4] Glinka's only attempt to write church music based on a traditional chant, "Let My Prayer Arise," also made use of this exquisite if limited musical language. The free distribution of the basic chords, however, constituted only one aspect of what at that time began to be conceptualized as the Russian harmonic style. The freedom with which the chords could join each other, the lack of definitive expectations for what was to follow, made it possible for chords to go astray, reaching areas outside the



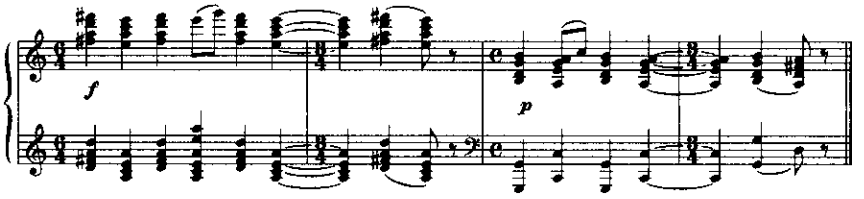
1.3. Potulov, "Praise the Lord in Heaven"

initial diatonic scale. Adjoining chords could glide from one scale to another with the same lack of restrictions that characterized their combinations within one scale. This could be achieved the more naturally in that all traditional modal scales were treated as interchangeable; at any moment, what began in the alternating Ionian-Aeolian mode could slip into Dorian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Phrygian, or some mixture thereof. Such freedom allowed striking harmonic conjunctions to be presented point-blank, without any preparation employing secondary dominants. This is what happens in the development of Musorgsky's "Glory." After its initial serenely diatonic exposition, a segment of the chant appears in a modified form that features a conjunction of A minor and D major; repeated leaps between the tonalities whose tonics are separated by the interval of a tritone proceed with a remarkable nonchalance, without losing the effect of diatonic transparency (example 1.4).

In the introduction to *Khovanshchina,* Musorgsky takes an exquisitely simple theme through variations that feature, successively, the tonalities of E major / C-sharp minor, D major, F-sharp / C-sharp minor, F-sharp major, and G-sharp major—all joined to each other with few or no means of transition.

Another development prompted by volatile conjunctions and conflations of different tonalities consisted in creating exotic artificial scales. Glinka's introduction of the whole-tone scale as early as the late 1830s (Blackamoor's march in *Ruslan and Ludmila*), Rimsky-Korsakov's fondness for the octatonic "tone-semitone" scale (sometimes identified by his name), Musorgsky's use of a hyper-Phrygian scale with a lowered IV (later favored by Shostakovich), and Scriabin's "Promethean chord" and the new scale system it implied,[5] followed by extensive experiments in scale-building by Nikolai Roslavets in the late 1910s, can be cited as the most conspicuous signposts along this road. A broadly acknowledged product of this development was the domain of exotic sonorities signifying the supernatural and the sublime—the characteristic sound of fairytale Russianness.

The freedom of harmonic conjunctions exceeded not only the boundaries of a single scale but the very concept of the chord as usually understood. Freely evolving voices often give rise to nonchordal combinations that appear

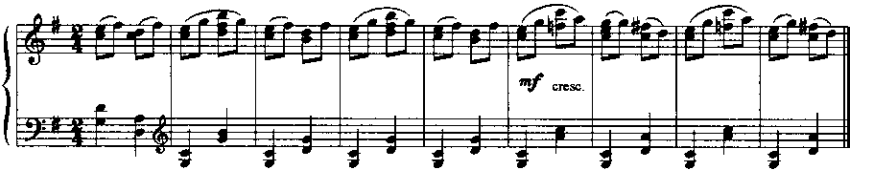


1.4. Musorgsky, "Glory" (middle section)

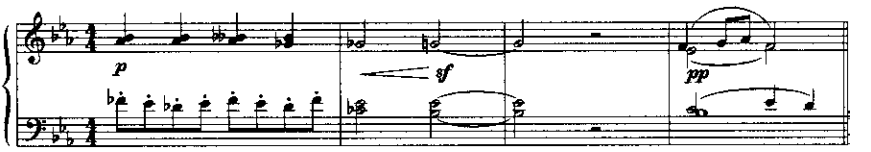
alongside standard triads and seventh chords.[6] Although in conventional harmony such combinations are allowed as transient states between two full chords, composers such as Musorgsky do not hesitate to use them as independent units alongside normal chords. The phenomenon of freely evolving voices proceeding together in a loosely coordinated manner is known as heterophony—something in between simple monophonic melody and polyphony. It is widely known among East Asian musical cultures[7] (another instance of the Russian–East Asian connection, whose consequences are explored in Chapter 7). Unlike suspensions in normative harmony, which are expected to be resolved into the regular chord that has been suspended, heterophonic nonchordal combinations are free to come and go: they can be followed by the standard resolution, by another nonchordal combination, or by an unrelated chord. The crucial factor seems to be the smoothness of the movement of the voices, not the conventionality of the resulting harmonies.[8] This smoothness, however, does not observe the rules of good voice-leading of standard harmony—it easily admits, for instance, parallel fifths or chromatic cross-relations between different voices in adjoining chords; these were the features of Musorgsky's writing that Rimsky-Korsakov strove to correct, perceiving them as the errors of someone lacking formal training.

Musorgsky was the most radical of the nineteenth-century composers in his use of these techniques. Let us consider, for example, a passage from the duet between Feodor and the nanny in act 2 of *Boris Godunov* in which diverse six-four chords, seemingly representing vestiges of G and C major, follow one another freely (example 1.5a) and a brief phrase that comes somewhat later in the same scene that, if analyzed under the auspices of standard harmony, looks, at least in the beginning, like a patchwork of disparate tonalities and nonchordal combinations eventually coming to a cadence in E-flat major (example 1.5b).

Musorgsky was not exceptional in this regard, however. Chaikovsky once chastised an inexperienced composer for his excessive concern for the integrity of each chord: "[in your score, there are] always chords, chords, and chords,



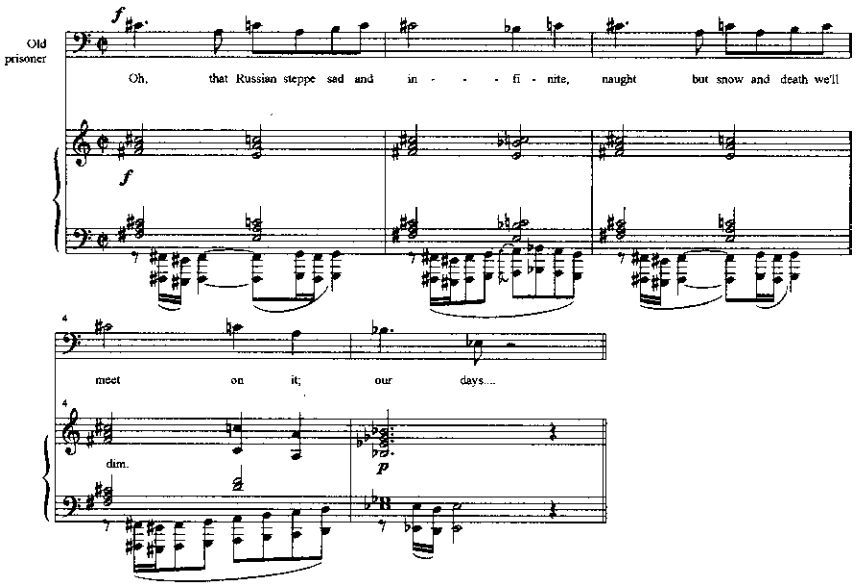
1.5a. Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* act 2



1.5b. Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* act 2

and besides, mostly the so-called *accords plaques* [chords in root position]. No unisons, no two-voiced counterpoints appear, even as an exception."[9] Coming from a composer who was often blamed for being insufficiently "Russian" and whom one cannot suspect of any sympathy for Musorgsky's style, this statement testifies to the universality of this trend.

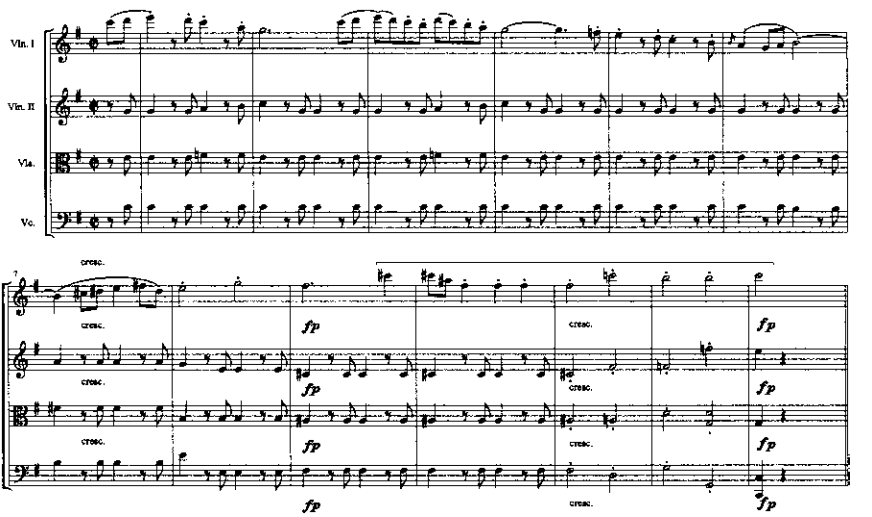
Wagner's "Tristan" chord, whose hypertension resolves into a lesser tension rather than into a consonance, a device that could postpone the final resolution almost indefinitely, was viewed by the modernist aesthetic and ideology as the foremost symbol of the "crisis" of classical harmony, a musical counterpart of the Nietzschean crisis of traditional values.[10] The Russian chorale, however, with its potential for dissolving tonal and chordal integrities, could be seen as an alternative path into modernity. It undermined the conventional musical order not by increasing tensions but by dissolving them. The strategies of expanding and eventually exploding the tonality — by making the inner logic of harmonic conjunctions increasingly complicated until the whole underlying order became thoroughly transformed or, by contrast, by loosening this logic to the point of total irrelevancy — ran on parallel courses in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both the Musorgskian tangential relation to classical harmony and the Wagnerian technique of exploding it from within had far-reaching potential that allowed them to be adopted by different strains of the musical avant-garde. If the principle of the Tristan chord led to the expressionist style of Richard Strauss and the early Schoenberg and, ultimately, to the development of atonal music,[11] then the inheritance of the Russian chorale can be seen in the loosening of harmonic functions by Debussy, in the extending of tonal harmonies by Shostakovich, and perhaps



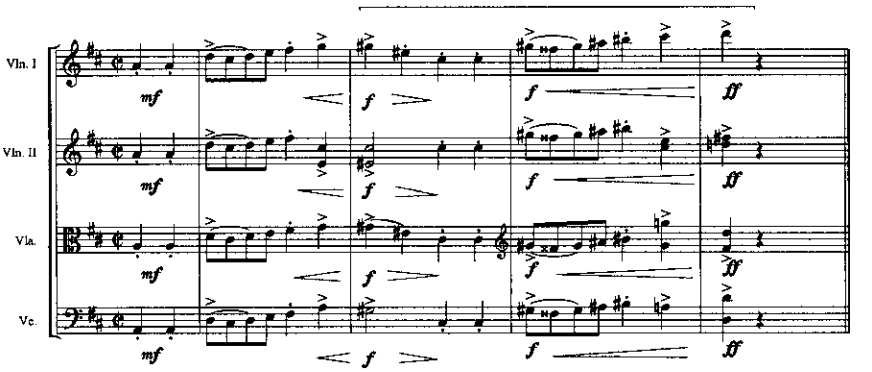
1.6. Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, final scene

most radically in the tonal bricolage of Stravinsky's bitonality. Shostakovich in particular was able to employ the most radical harmonic conjunctions while retaining a clear continuity with nineteenth-century musical language. The chorus of convicts in the final scene of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* accommodates daring harmonic effects into a musical discourse bearing unmistakable marks of kinship with Musorgsky. In particular, one is reminded of another scene involving departure to Siberia: that of Prince Golitsyn in *Khovanshchina* (act 4, scene 2), in which the melody, persisting on the tones of two minor triads, and ostinatos in the bass sound like a diatonic prototype of Shostakovich's music (example 1.6).

We have seen that Beethoven's treatment of the *thème russe* largely conformed to conventional harmony or at least softened the theme's idiosyncratic harmonic potential. I think, however, that Beethoven had become aware of this potential and its far-reaching implications. Evidence for this can be seen in another movement of the same work: its finale. Although its main theme has nothing specifically Russian in it, its treatment strikingly resembles certain pages of twentieth-century Russian music, particularly Prokofiev's harmonic style. Having started in exuberant C major, the theme moves on to the B major seventh chord, as if preparing to modulate to E minor; then, however, without reaching E minor, it "straightens" itself up by the abrupt introduction of the



1.7a. Beethoven, Quartet op. 59, no. 2, fourth movement



1.7b. Prokofiev, *Symphonie classique,* Gavotte

dominant to C, which plunges it (with parallel fifths in the viola and the cello) back into the main tonality (example 1.7a).

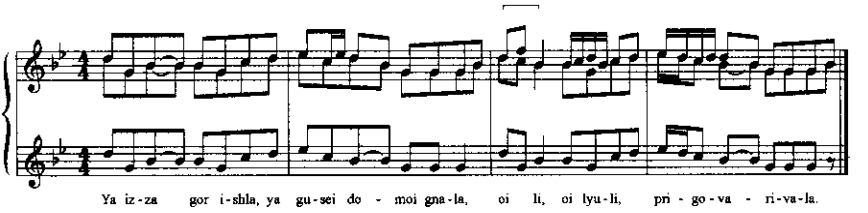
Compare this with a similar passage—a deceptively simple beginning in D major turning into C-sharp major via enharmonic modulation, then abruptly slipping back with a deliberate bluntness—in the third movement (the gavotte) of Prokofiev's *Symphonie classique* (example 1.7b).

To be sure, Beethoven, along with Mozart, was fond of making the most exquisite harmonic effects look like the blunders of an inept musician who corrects himself with a comic clumsiness after losing his way. Yet in other

examples of such tonal "slips," the return to the right course usually proceeds through a hasty but logical modulation. In his "Russian" quartet, however, Beethoven seems to treat tonal shifts more abruptly, with a deliberate carelessness. The effect of rough exuberance, well suited to the spirit brought to the composition by the *thème russe,* presaged what later became known as one of the trademarks of the Russian national style.

How genuinely Russian was this style, anyway? From a strictly historical point of view, the answer is rather complicated. As I have already mentioned, the traditional style of Russian liturgical singing underwent a thorough transformation in the second half of the eighteenth century, bringing it into conformity with the norms of European classical harmony. In a similar vein, when the first collection of Russian folk songs appeared in print in 1790, the songs were given conventional harmonizations by "Ivan" (Jan Bohumir or Johann Gottfried) Pratsch, a Czech musician.[12] Yet the tradition of heterophonic singing persisted in oral performance not only of folk songs by peasants but of the liturgy. The seventeenth-century Russian "partesny" style of church singing (divided into parts in the manner of a chorale) survived, particularly in provincial churches. In the early nineteenth century church authorities tried to curb these traditional practices by issuing instructions that admonished the church's regents to use only printed books of chants.[13] I personally experienced the stylistic duality of Russian church singing a few years ago while attending the liturgy in Arzamas, a town to the south of Nizhny Novgorod whose skyline, in spite of the devastation of Soviet times, is still dominated by magnificent eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century churches and monasteries. The liturgy proceeded as an antiphon between a chorus and a duet of female voices, both parties taking turns performing every musical number. The chorus sang crisply in a style reminiscent of the eighteenth-century masterpieces of European church music, while the female duet, whose characteristically howling vocal timbre vividly recalled the tradition of peasant women's singing, seconded each tune in the style of folksong heterophony.

That the Russian nationalist musical idiom forged by Balakirev in his famous harmonizations of Russian folk songs (1866)[14] was, as Taruskin claimed, "Balakirev's personal invention" and that "it is instantly recognizable to us today as generically 'Russian' thanks to its thorough assimilation into the later compositional practice"[15] needs some qualification. The epitome of the national style offered by these harmonizations was "instantly recognizable" as such not only to later generations but to his contemporaries as well because it emulated—admittedly, in a stylized form adapted to the resources of Western art music—musical scales, features of harmony, voice-leading, rhythm, and strophic organization that were deeply ingrained in Russian folk music (peasant music in



1.8. "I Have Come from the Hills" (from A. Listopadov, *Songs of the Don Cossacks*)

particular) and (perhaps even more important) church singing.[16] These features were as indispensable for Russian art music as features of the Lutheran chorale were for German music.

By the early twentieth century, when the notion of the Russian style had become prevalent both as a musical pattern and as an ideological concept, attempts were made to create genuine transcriptions of traditional folk and church singing. The prime example of such work in the domain of musical folklore is Alexandr Listopadov's monumental collection *Songs of the Don Cossacks* (in five volumes).[17] As for church music, one can cite transcriptions of traditional singing in the Kievo-Pechersky Monastery made by the monastery's regent, hieromonk Nafanail, and the church composers L. Malashkin and A. Fateev. These efforts revealed, perhaps too predictably, the prevalence of heterophonic style over conventional harmony in both these types of music. For instance, Listopadov's transcript of the song "I Have Come from the Hills" features the singers' occasional slips into quartal harmony (example 1.8).

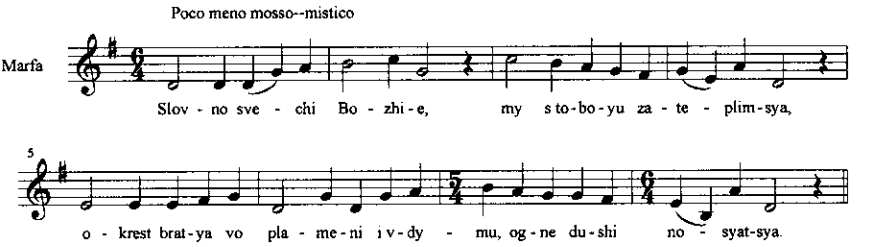
The most genuine transcription is genuine only according to the standards — and expectations — of its time. Moreover, the efforts of Russian composers from Glinka to Prokofiev to create a national style in art music necessarily came about as a result of negotiations between traditional features of that style — real or perceived — and existing conditions of European musical language. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the "Russian style" in art music was not merely a nationalist invention. Its relation to the tradition of national folk and church music was perhaps not as direct as its champions would have liked to claim, but it was still quite tangible.

At any rate, it seems a matter of secondary importance to question the indigenous genuineness of the sound of Russian art music, whose character had been gradually shaped through most of the nineteenth century and had become a universally acknowledged phenomenon in world music by the century's end. More important is the fact that those features were not confined to certain properties of musical language employed by Russian composers. A close link existed between this "Russian" musical voice and a broader message

of national ideology, metaphysical and ethical foundations, and aesthetic taste that was put forth by the Russian literature, literary criticism, and philosophy of the time. It is worthwhile, therefore, to take a closer look at the potential philosophical and aesthetic implications of some characteristic features of this musical style.

Let us begin by taking another glance at the Russian chorale. The features that distinguish it from its Western counterparts can be characterized as precocity in the guise of retardation. They can easily be taken as archaic, pre-modern, underdeveloped: not a fully formalized cadence in sight, nor a firmly established idea of tonality, let alone its orderly expansion via chromatic secondary dominants. The harmony of the Russian chorale seems to be bogged down in the early seventeenth century, unwilling or unable to make a decisive move into modern times. Yet a radically different perception of the same phenomenon is also possible. By loosening the hierarchical relations between harmonic functions, it offered an alternative path into the modernist future—a path by no means less far-reaching than that taken by Western music of the late nineteenth century under the auspices of classical harmony. Some of the boldest avant-garde experiments lay along the road opened by the nationally marked features of Russian art music of the previous century. Moreover, what had begun as a nationalist musical idiom had, by the twentieth century, turned into a mode of thinking that gained universal importance in the culture of musical modernism. The technique of using folkloric material as a vehicle for such departures was employed by all nineteenth-century Russian composers. Musorgsky's heterophonic collages of quasi-chordal clusters, Rimsky-Korsakov's invented scales, Chaikovsky's incorporation, on an unprecedented scale, of the trivia of quotidian music-making into the most elevated genres of instrumental music—all presaged, and in some cases directly inspired, not only Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Scriabin, and Shostakovich but also Debussy, Ravel, Bartók, and Mahler.

What has been said about the peculiar place of the Russian chorale on the road of musical progress can also be said about such larger issues of musical discourse as the way of structuring musical phrases and putting them together into the larger whole of a musical form. Again, what one can see in this regard in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian music could be taken as a sign of underdevelopment or a lack of skill. The loose, semi-improvisational flow of melody and harmony proves unconducive to a well-structured form, in the conventional sense of that notion. A musical phrase whose development is directed by free juxtapositions of chords rather than by orderly connections between harmonic functions often lacks symmetry and a definite shape. The



1.9. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 3

contrast between strong and weak beats loses its importance because it is not supported by a pronounced shift of harmonic tensions. This opens the way to occasional expansions or contractions of the prevalent meter; a phrase that began in $\frac{3}{4}$ time can inconspicuously slip into $\frac{2}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{4}$, then return to $\frac{3}{4}$; $\frac{6}{4}$ meter alternates freely with $\frac{5}{4}$, and so on (example 1.9).

Asymmetrical rhythmical structures of $\frac{5}{4}$ or $\frac{7}{4}$ proliferate, a tradition beginning with the chorus "You mysterious, rapturous Lel" in Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* and culminating in the final chorus, "Thou art the light and force, o god Yarilo," in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden,* with its $\frac{11}{4}$ meter.

The free-flowing character of a single phrase, often not ending in a definite cadence, makes it more difficult to bind one phrase with another to form a larger structure. Instead of forming a closed binary relationship with its symmetrical counterpart, as typically happens in the classical period, the musical theme tends to evolve through a number of repetitions, in stanzalike fashion. This technique results in a discourse replete with static reiterations whose frescolike "epic" quality was widely exploited in symphonic and chamber compositions of the St. Petersburg school. One can cite as major examples of this style Borodin's symphonies, symphonic poems, and quartets or the finale of Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* ("The Bogatyr Gate in the Principate City of Kiev").

Chaikovsky offered another version of this technique by reiterating his themes on different scale levels in the manner of harmonic sequences. This device was common in nineteenth-century music in general, of course. But the sheer volume of its use, and, more important, the way it often served as the principal means of symphonic development made it a signature of Chaikovsky's symphonic style.

By the same token, when musical phrases are asymmetrically shaped it is difficult to perform their analytical dissection into shorter motifs. Instead of dissolving into motivic atoms that can be rearranged in a variety of combinations, as usually happens in the development of a German symphony, a typical

Russian theme reappears again and again, often with each new appearance slightly differing from the previous one. The overall impression conveyed by this technique is that of an episodic musical narrative lacking in intensity. A Russian symphony, concerto, or piece of chamber music sounds like a perpetual scherzo, so to speak—a succession of episodes rather than a coherently constructed edifice of musical form.

These characteristic features of the discourse of Russian instrumental music may, once again, be taken as a sign that it could not quite keep up with the strict standards of the trade. One is reminded of the slowness with which Russian music emerged from the sphere of semi-amateurish domestic music-making—an inheritance that even such composers as Chaikovsky and Stravinsky seemed to carry over into their musical style. Russian music appears to suffer from an incurable malaise due to the lack of a firm architectonic foundation. Far from being impeccably cut, its formal attire often reveals clumsy seams and exposed threads. Adorno reacted to the structural laxity and perpetual reiterations of a typical Russian musical piece with utter contempt; referring specifically to Chaikovsky with his endless sequences, he dubbed his manner a way of "making a short story long."[18] For Adorno, this was the crucial dividing line between the true art—that of Schoenberg—and the fake one, that of Stravinsky, the former striving toward the absolute heights of sublime order, the latter pandering to the populist taste for helter-skelter. Chaikovsky himself was willing to acknowledge his perceived deficiency in this regard, albeit in a way that, beneath its apparent humility, showed little repentance: "As to your most humble servant, he has suffered all his life from the awareness that he lacks capabilities in the domain of form in general. I have struggled hard with this organic deficiency and can say with some pride that I have achieved significant results, but still, I am to die without having written anything perfect in regard to form. There are numberless *remplissages* in my music; *la ficelle* in the seams is always noticeable to an experienced eye, and nothing can be done about it."[19]

This penchant for the episodic organization of musical discourse gave leeway to genres whose episodic character was fundamental to their very nature. Chaikovsky almost single-handedly returned ballet to the domain of serious music after it had been pushed out of it by the romantics. The same, to a large extent, can be said of his symphonic suites. In fact, his symphonies, with their striking parade of everyday musical genres, look suspiciously like suites, and when one listens to the many reiterations of a dancelike or songlike theme in his symphonies, one can attribute their prominence, if one chooses, to Chaikovsky's reputation as a ballet composer.

So far we have discussed features of instrumental music. It was there, particularly in the genres based on the sonata form, that the principle of seamless unity of composition enjoyed absolute dominance under the auspices of the classical style. The emergence of Wagner's music drama signified the extension of this principle into the domain of musical theater, hitherto not held to the structural standards of "pure" music. Once again, Russian music showed a reluctance or inability to move decisively in the same direction.

This seemed the more striking in that mid-nineteenth-century Russian composers felt the need for the radical reform of operatic conventions no less acutely than Wagner did. Their initial impulse, led by Dargomyzhsky and championed by Stasov, was, as we have seen, to abolish the routine division of the opera into separate musical numbers and to produce a continual discourse based on recitativelike declamation—a pattern that ostensibly followed the shape of real-life speech but in fact tried to emulate literary narrative. Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, however, after early experiments along this line, eventually fell back into traditional operatic discourse based on separate numbers, their incessant professions of musical realism and populism notwithstanding. Even in the early version of *Boris Godunov* (1869), rejected by the theater for its radical departure from operatic conventions, Musorgsky did not hesitate to insert episodes that did not have any direct bearing on the action, for example, nursery rhymes performed by Tsarevich Feodor and the nanny and Varlaam's song about the conquest of Kazan. With the addition, in the final version (1873), of the "Polish" act, replete with choruses and dances, and the Kromy forest scene, the weight of the episodic material grew dramatically. Musorgsky's next opera, *Khovanshchina,* composed as Wagnerian drama was conquering the musical world, in fact fell deeper into the operatic tradition (one might say routine)—at least in its external appearance. Most of its arias and choruses are shaped as distinct musical entities; moreover, many have a stanzaic structure, with several stanzas (seven in one instance) simply following one after another, with only slight variation. The impression of dramaturgical stasis is further reinforced by extended potpourris that interrupt the action—programs of songs and dances performed, ostensibly for the entertainment of characters on stage, by musketeers, peasants, and Oriental slave girls. A similar trend toward epically unhurried, freely interrupted musical narrative can be seen in Rimsky-Korsakov's operas of the 1890s and 1900s, particularly *The Snow Maiden, Sadko,* and *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*. As for Chaikovsky, for all his differences with the St. Petersburg school, he shared with it a penchant for distinct operatic numbers and embedded episodes; one of these episodes—the pastorale in the

Mozartean style in *The Queen of Spades* — baffled many listeners, critics, and stage directors because of the apparent superfluity of this neoclassical island in the sea of the opera's feverishly emotional music.

A typical Russian opera evolves as a series of loosely connected tableaux, now picturesquely static, now jumping into a new situation over a number of presumed events. Chaikovsky's refusal to call his *Eugene Onegin* an opera, giving it the subtitle *Lyrical Scenes* instead, reflects the composer's awareness of that trend. Most Russian operas could in a similar sense be called historical, epic, or fairytale scenes. In this regard, they stood apart not only from Wagner's concept of the organically united music drama but also from the dramaturgical energy of Verdi or Bizet, not to mention Mozart. Complaints about the episodic looseness and discontinuity of the plot, about its being at the same time too elliptical and overloaded with embedded episodes, became an almost routine way of greeting the appearance of a new Russian opera, from Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* to Prokofiev's *War and Peace*.

Yet there is another possible way of looking at the perceived discontinuities and superfluities of such narratives. Although often lacking in external dramatic movement, they foreground the introspective, implicit, psychological underpinnings of their actions. The gaps between scenes do not allow the listener to follow the characters as they move from one situation to the next, from an action to its direct consequence. Moreover, it often can be presumed that the listeners are familiar with the plot and the characters beforehand, because they are drawn from a famous work of national literature or from well-known historical events. Instead of a coherent account of the actions, the audience is given a series of snapshots of the characters, each taken in a new set of circumstances caused by events that took place largely offstage. The listeners' attention is focused not so much on the events, which are presumed to be self-evident, as on shifts in the characters' state of mind and on overall changes in their personality caused by those events — the inner changes. What happened between the prologue to *Boris Godunov,* in which the main character appears somber, apprehensive, yet possessing truly regal dignity and power, and the second act, in which we see Boris as a crushed, bitter man, easy prey for his enemies and, above all, his own self-destructive thoughts? An answer to this question can be inferred from the previous tableaux: Pimen's invective reflecting the popular attitude toward Boris, Grigory's adventurist personality, Boris's political and personal misfortunes. Yet all this information is given to us in a series of disjointed snapshots taken at different points in time and from different points of view. The listener has to reconstruct the chain of events implied by these snapshots and the influence they may have had on Boris's state of mind and behavior. The same applies to the psychological development of Onegin,

whose result we see in the last act of Chaikovsky's opera. From what occurs onstage, we learn very little about what happened between the duel and Onegin's appearance at the St. Petersburg ball or about how he took Lensky's death. And yet it becomes evident, from the way Onegin reintroduces himself in his opening monologue at the ball, that he has changed. Onegin's musical portrait at this point is that of a desperate, weary person; gone is the cool confidence of his deportment in the conversation with Tatiana after her letter and in the duel scene. What happens to *this* Onegin—his precipitous falling in love and a desperate attempt to return to the past—comes as no surprise.

The embedded songs, dances, and theatrical and concertlike performances that litter Russian operas, to the chagrin of those who would like to see them be more dramatically effective, contribute to the general trend of reducing the weight of the outward actions and shifting the emphasis to the introspective element. To understand the inner logic of those seeming discontinuities, one has to focus attention on what is silently implied—on the psychological drama triggered by a concertlike presentation. It is not only the audience of the opera that listens to the interpolated concert; the characters onstage are listening to it, too. One can often notice an intricate connection between the melody of a song performed at such a concert and the hero's leitmotif or between the plot of the pantomime played onstage and the situation in which the heroes, who are present as spectators, find themselves. Similarity between the tune of a song or a dance and the leitmotif of the hero who is listening suggests a resonance evoked in the hero's soul by that seemingly irrelevant tune; the voice of the music performed for entertainment reaches the hero as a secret omen reminding him of his troubles, portending calamities to come, prompting him to take certain steps. Sometimes we can understand the hero's subsequent actions only in light of the impressions that must have triggered his behavior. It is up to the listeners to take notice of thematic threads that connect the embedded performance with the hero's inner world and to draw conclusions about the impact those invisible connections might have on the hero's subsequent behavior.

Such an implicit way of developing the dramatic narrative constituted a point at which Russian opera departed from the trend, seen in mid- and late-nineteenth-century German, Italian, and French operas, of making them into fully developed dramas. Wagner, Verdi, Bizet, and later Puccini, Richard Strauss, and Berg cast aside operatic routine, whose signature was the preponderance of embedded numbers and little care for the congruity of the plot, and strove for unity and dynamism of the dramatic action. Whenever an embedded number appears, its presence must be clearly motivated, its impact on the character's thoughts and behavior made explicit. When Tristan listens to the

shepherd's pipe, he does not keep his emotional reaction to himself, leaving the listener to infer the thoughts that might be triggered in him by the ancient tune. His reaction — what the sound of the pipe reminds him of, what it signifies — is articulated in his monologue, which accompanies the tune. But when the chiming of the clock in Boris's chamber pushes the hero overboard emotionally, so that he suddenly sees an apparition of the slaughtered tsarevich, no explanation is given as to why this colorful but apparently superfluous detail of Boris's domestic life might cause such a reaction (the presence of a clock with bells in Boris's chamber was noted by historians as a sign of the tsar's cautious Westernizing inclinations).[20] A possible answer lies in the resemblance between the tritone-based tune of the clock's bells and the ringing of the bells that greeted Boris's coronation at the beginning of the opera. This unexpected resemblance may strike Boris, in his disturbed state of mind, as an omen, a secret voice of fate reminding him of the child whose murder paved his way to the throne. This hidden voice increases the weight of the news about the appearance of a pretender — news that, by itself, in purely political and military terms, is not very significant — to enormous proportions, sealing the outcome of the future struggle before it has begun.

The ambivalence of events, caused by this emphasis on the implicit and the introspective, sometimes receives no final resolution at all. It is left to the audience to muse about the meaning of what they have seen and heard. Is Boris worried about the appearance of the pretender, or does he secretly rejoice at the thought that the murder in fact might never happen? Are Hermann's actions motivated by love, or is he a disturbed character chasing the phantoms of his imagination? Is the self-conflagration of Dosifei's flock in the finale of *Khovanshchina* a triumph of their faith or of Marfa's vengeance on her lover? Is the apotheosis that Fevronia experiences when she sees herself entering the heavenly city of Kitezh and reuniting with her bridegroom merely the hallucination of someone dying of hunger and cold in the empty forest? Whatever answers we would like to give to these questions, they have to rely on elusive echoes, lurking similarities, and silent implications, rather than explicit causal links. The contours of the plot remain volatile, ready to shift with every new afterthought, as if they were composed of ethereal connections rather than solid narrative substance. The unfinished *Turandot* lacks exactly what Puccini did not write — the final love scene. But what is missing from the unfinished *Khovanshchina* — perhaps a turn that would have radically reshaped our perspective on the whole?

The inconclusiveness of meaning and the psychological intensity characteristic of nineteenth-century Russian opera are inseparable from its oft-noted deficiency in regard to strict dramaturgical logic and dynamism of action.

These features resemble those of the nineteenth-century Russian novel, whose glaring omissions (as in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*), capricious changes of the narrative voice (Gogol, Dostoevsky), and lengthy authorial expostulations that interrupt the story (Tolstoy) make novelistic discourse heterogeneous and discontinuous—features that could be perceived as grave deficiencies in the age of positivism.

The imperatives of the total structural unity of musical form, with its coherent overall plan, the unbroken logic of tonal development, and the penchant for intricately organized symmetries, seemed the indisputable postulates of composition until the turn of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth, they overruled such fundamental principle of the Romantic aesthetic as fragmentariness. Unlike literature, in which such authors as Hoffmann, Byron, and Pushkin (and before them Coleridge, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis) strove to break the sequentiality of narrative discourse, a romantic musical arabesque presented an artful compositional unity only posing as a patchwork of fragments. In such pieces as Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* or Schumann's *Carnaval,* the underlying interconnectedness of all the musical material is all the more pronounced because of the kaleidoscopic character of the narrative surface. Russian composers measured their own work against this perceived ideal of formal perfection—some professing a guilty conscience for their inability to attain that hallowed goal, others, like Musorgsky, adamantly rejecting it along with all formal technical schooling.

With the advent of modernism, however, the ideal of a perfect musical structure, in which not a single note could be added or subtracted, shared the fate of many truths believed to be absolute in the preceding century. Not only was its relative and transient value, its contingency on a particular intellectual and aesthetic frame of mind exposed, but many writers, painters, and composers visibly strove to overcome the weight of the habits and techniques borne by the tradition dominated by that ideal. Modernism—or at least a powerful strain within the modernist movement—rejected the principle of causality and the coherence of discourse, qualities it perceived as the inheritance of the determinism of the previous century. It also rejected a linear vision of progress according to which everything and everybody advances, more or less successfully, along the same road leading to the universal ideal. This strategic shift in aesthetic values led to the cultivation of deliberately awkward discourses roughly pasted together, replete with narrative incongruities and stylistic rough edges. Genres that were held in low esteem in the nineteenth century, such as the ballet and the suite, came into vogue. Populist genres of music and poetry, substandard speech, and less prestigious (on the nineteenth-century scale of values) manifestations of folklore invaded symphonies and ballets,

plays and novels. Contrary to the custom of the previous century, which required folkloric material to be well-groomed before entering the realm of art, modernist adaptations of popular art highlighted its shocking lack of polish and neglect of conventional standards of logic.

For Russian musicians, this new aesthetic paradigm was in fact the old paradigm that had flourished in national literature and music of the previous century. It comes as no surprise, then, that the most spectacular display of the new aesthetic principles in the early twentieth century was offered by Stravinsky in his "Russian" ballets as well as by Prokofiev's early piano sonatas and concertos.

In his book about Stravinsky Taruskin outlines three principles (or, one could say, three aspects of a single fundamental principle), all ingrained in the Russian musical tradition, that underlay Stravinsky's musical thinking regardless of the various concrete styles he would employ in different epochs of his creative life: *drobnost'* (fragmentariness), that is, treating a composition as a sum of adjacent sections rather than a manifestation of an overall grand design; *nepodvizhnost'* (stasis), the technique of making a musical piece grow incrementally, as if by the addition of links to a chain; and *uproshchenie* (reduction), a musical syntax that reduces the relations between sections of the composition to simple conjunctions.[21] *Petrushka, The Rite of Spring,* and *Les noces* exemplified these principles on an unprecedented scale. And they did so at the most opportune time, when the emerging world of European musical modernism was seeking ways of escaping the iron grip of the ideal of a seamless form. According to Taruskin, Stravinsky's achievement in the domain of musical form, attained in his Russian ballets and consistently upheld throughout his career, signified, and to a large extent effected, a cardinal change in the principles of composition and musical discourse, a change that can therefore be called a shift from the German to the Russian paradigm of thinking that affected a significant part of twentieth-century musical culture.

Like the seeming innovations of the Russian futurists (or *budetlyane,* "the futurniks," as they called themselves) in this period, Stravinsky's leap forward to twentieth-century musical aesthetics signified at the same time an adherence to the deepest layers of national cultural memory. What had been perceived as the formal inferiority, lack of polish, and awkwardness of the pre-modern (or at least not-quite-modern) mode of expression signified in the new context a breaking away from the structural determinism of the classical symphony and Wagnerian musical drama toward the open-endedness and heterogeneity of avant-garde discourse. One can see this trend in such early twentieth-century composers as Debussy, Ravel, Bartók, Ives, Satie, and Milhaud, who consciously moved from the organicism of classical and romantic musical forms

toward fragmentary and episodic discourses, often adopting populist and folkloric musical material.

To be sure, this trend represented only one strain in modernist culture. Another strain sought innovation by means of tightening structural principles, making the structural organization of a composition truly all-encompassing. Adorno's vision of Schoenberg and Stravinsky as antipodes reflected the conflict between concurrently evolving alternative trends in the modernist aesthetic. They could be viewed as roughly corresponding to what Bakhtin called the "centrifugal and centripetal" principle. In literary modernism, the latter was powerfully represented in works by such writers as Thomas Mann, James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, Marcel Proust, and Andrei Bely, who were inspired by the omni-connectedness and multifaceted unity of Bach's polyphonic compositions, Beethoven's symphonies, and Wagner's leitmotifs. Bely in his *Symphonies,* Huxley in *Point Counter Point,* and Thomas Mann in *Doctor Faustus* sought to directly emulate principles of musical structure in narrative writing—to achieve what Huxley called the "musicalization of fiction."[22]

Between the two world wars, and for some time after World War II, this trend seemed to be winning. It was also a time dominated by structural poetics and semiotics, analytical philosophy of language, and structural and generative linguistics. With the advent of the French poststructuralist revolution in philosophy of language, literary theory, and cultural studies, however, the aesthetic tide has turned once again towards heterogeneity of discourse, openness of meaning, multiplicity of narrative voices, and an emphasis on "marginal" and "substandard" material. Directly or via intermediary influences, Russian philosophy, literature, and art of the early twentieth century played an integral part in that process. In particular, Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism, theory of the novel, and philosophy of language proved natural presences in the intellectual landscape of postmodernism.[23]

About a hundred years ago Henry James took Tolstoy, and Russian writers in general, to task for what he perceived as the glaring imperfections of their novelistic discourse: the lack of unity of the narrative voice, the penchant for loading the story with unmotivated digressions and loose ends, and discrepancies between different versions of events appearing at different points in a narrative and left hanging in the air.[24] One can easily find reasons to complain about how deficient Dostoevsky or Tolstoy (or Dickens) is with regard to narrative technique and style—as opposed to, say, Flaubert or James—until one learns to appreciate how great these writers are, particularly in terms of narrative technique and style. The inconsistency of the authorial voice creates a stereoscopic, multidimensional view of the narrated events, as if they were observed from different points simultaneously; the unresolved discrepancies in

the story allow a degree of narrative freedom and openness, causing the reader to wonder what really happened.[25] In the context of the "postmodern condition," these features became trademarks of "prosaics" (as opposed to structurally oriented "poetics")—the aesthetic that emphasizes the free-flowing, multidirectional, unresolvable nature of a work of art.[26] The Russians' inability or unwillingness to catch up with the nineteenth-century train of progress made them honorary travelers—if not engineers—on the postmodern means of transportation. In this sense, the influence of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy on the twentieth-century novel can be argued as having been on a par with the influence of Musorgsky and Stravinsky on the narrative principles of twentieth-century music.

The broader philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic underpinnings of Russian literature of the past two centuries and Russian avant-garde painting have been widely recognized. As this chapter may suggest, the contribution by Russian music to fundamental problems of national metaphysical, ethical, and aesthetic self-consciousness was no less significant. The national musical style served as a vehicle for expressing the critique of rationalism, which became a trademark of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian philosophy, for pursuing the ethical and social ideal of balancing individuality and collectivity, as opposed to pure individualism, and for maintaining, in a way no less compelling than that of national literature, principles of heterogeneity and open-endedness as antidotes to the positivist and rationalist treatment of art. It can also be perceived as an icon of Russian cultural history, with its predisposition for attaining the most dazzling innovations by taking dizzying leaps forward while refusing to move along the mainstream of progress.

In order to approach Russian music from this broader perspective, one has to connect the peculiarities of the musical language, which give the music its recognizable sonority, with features of its discourse and principles of narrative strategy that connect this music with other expressions of national culture, such as literature, visual art, and philosophy. The principal task of the following chapters is to examine some major works of Russian music as an integral part of national cultural history—a vital component without which that history can never be completely understood.

2

Farewell to the Enchanted Garden: Pushkin, Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmila, *and Nicholas's Russia*

Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann created their immortal compositions exactly in the same fashion as a shoemaker makes his shoes, i.e., by working day by day, and mostly to order. Had Glinka been a shoemaker rather than a barin *[gentleman], he would have written fifteen operas instead of two (excellent as they are), and ten or so wonderful symphonies on top of that. I almost weep with frustration when I think what Glinka could have given to us had he not been born into the gentry milieu of the time before the liberation of serfs.*

—P. I. Chaikovsky to Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich, May 18, 1890

In the summer of 1840 Glinka let his friends know of his decision to leave St. Petersburg, ostensibly for good. As he wrote in his memoirs: "I wanted to leave Petersburg. I was not exactly ill but not exactly in good health either: my heart was heavy from all the disappointments, my mind preoccupied with vague gloomy thoughts."[1]

His disappointment with his career, personal life, and creative plans was the more bitter in that it stood in remarkable contrast to shining expectations that

had accompanied the première of his first opera, *A Life for the Tsar,* a little more than three years earlier, in November 1836. The opera's success had instantly propelled a shy, unremarkable-looking provincial with few career prospects, known heretofore only as a wonderful parlor musician, to the status of the Russian national composer. Nicholas I, quick as usual to set things into a permanent order, had prescribed that *A Life for the Tsar* would serve as the obligatory opening of every new season at the imperial opera house.[2] Glinka had received a prestigious assignment to the Court Capella. True, it was not as director, as he had hoped, but as a choir master under Prince Aleksei Lvov (the author of the new Russian anthem, "God Save the Tsar"). Still, in the beginning Glinka had clearly enjoyed his position and the emperor's personal attention. According to his own account, when he had made a trip to the Ukraine to recruit singers in the summer of 1838, his appearance in a provincial town had baffled local authorities, who had taken him for an important official from the capital with a covert mission—a situation reminiscent of Gogol's *Inspector General*.[3] Glinka's new stature and the benevolence of the emperor had been accompanied by social success. His young wife shone in high society, where the Glinkas had found themselves in great demand. Glinka had befriended the artistic elite of the capital; twenty years later, remembering in his memoir an evening at his home with Zhukovsky and Pushkin, he did not fail to mention how proud his mother had been to find him in such distinguished company. At one friendly gathering Glinka had performed his setting of Zhukovsky's new poem "At Twelve O'clock Midnight," which the poet had brought to him earlier the same day. At another, Pushkin, Viazemsky, Zhukovsky, and the renowned amateur musician Count M. Vielgorsky had improvised a collective jocular "canon" in Glinka's honor, for which Prince V. Odoevsky had written the music (with Glinka's help); each quatrain contained a pun on the composer's funny-sounding name (*glinka,* literally "little clay"). Vielgorsky had suggested in his stanza that this little clay had now turned into porcelain; Pushkin, that nobody would ever dream of treating this little clay like dirt.[4]

Alexander Shakhovskoy, the director of repertory of the imperial theaters, who had reigned for a quarter of a century in the Russian theatrical world as an author of comedies and administrator, had suggested Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila* as the subject for Glinka's next opera. Immediately Glinka had begun composing pieces for the future opera, without waiting for a libretto or even for any overall plan. He had expected to receive guidance from Pushkin himself in putting the opera together.[5] One evening, Glinka had listened avidly as Pushkin mused about the poem of his youth, whose publication in 1820 had brought him national fame; now, he would have written much in it differently.

That was not to happen; the time was the winter of 1837, and in a few weeks Pushkin would be mortally wounded in a duel. A year later, Glinka had found his own life plagued by disappointment, bitterness, and uncertainty. His marriage was falling apart, his wife pursuing a notorious love affair in high society. To be sure, Glinka was deeply involved in a love affair of his own—with Ekaterina Kern, the daughter of the Anna Kern whom Pushkin the man had relentlessly courted, cracked salacious jokes about, and had a cordial friendship with and whom Pushkin the poet had immortalized in one of his foremost lyrical poems, "To ***" ("I remember the wondrous moment"). Glinka's setting of this poem, composed in 1839 and addressed to Ekaterina Kern, has become a national icon perhaps more persistent in cultural memory then the poem itself, making it virtually impossible to recollect Pushkin's words without the sound of Glinka's music. This poetic side notwithstanding, Glinka's domestic life had been deteriorating into something downright ugly. In one conjugal confrontation he had acidly remarked to his wife that there was one thing in which he did not want to imitate Pushkin: he was not going to die for *her*. Instead, by the end of 1839, he had decided on divorce proceedings. Like Karenin a half-century later, he found his career and social position undermined by this move. He was virtually ostracized by society. Only in 1842, when Liszt visited Russia, was Glinka socially resuscitated; the public of the capital needed its foremost composer to parade before the famous guest.[6] As for the divorce process, it dragged on interminably, passing from one bureaucratic jurisdiction to another, making it impossible for Glinka to make any long-term plans. By the time he finally obtained the divorce in 1846,[7] he was thoroughly dispirited. In these circumstances, he found it increasingly difficult to keep up with his duties at the Capella, which led to the souring of his relations with Lvov.[8] In December 1839 he resigned from his post, ending his official career at the modest rank of collegiate assessor—still, two steps above Pushkin (and one above Akakii Akakievich).

Glinka's romance was not going well, either; his beloved was distraught, complaining, falling ill. She needed a prolonged stay in the south, for which a large sum of money was necessary. The income from Glinka's mother's estate in the Smolensk district, although not enormous, had been sufficient to support the Glinkas' life in the capital and his travels to Europe; now, feeling obliged to provide lavishly for his estranged wife, he found his circumstances severely limited. A Russian composer in the 1830s was in roughly the same position as a Russian writer when Pushkin began his career around 1820: neither could dream of supporting himself by his artistic profession. *A Life for the Tsar* had been accepted by the theater on condition that the author give up any financial claims to it. When Glinka, intoxicated by the success of its

première, described in a letter to his mother the "benefits" [*vygody*] brought by his triumph, they were, as itemized: (a) a diamond ring, a gift from the emperor, which he gave to his wife, (b) glory, and (c) hopes that his (since deceased) father's petition would come at last to a prompt and positive resolution.[9] The petition concerned reimbursement for taxes Glinka's father had been made to pay in the years of the war with Napoleon (1812–15), despite the fact that he had actually suffered great losses. Now, after decades' worth of appeals and the petitioner's death, Glinka was able to report triumphantly, only months after his opera's success, that some senators had suggested to him privately that he could consider his family's case all but resolved. Indeed, after a while the Senate made a positively disposed "presentation" of the case of Ivan Glinka to the State Council, upon which the council issued a positive "conclusion," which the emperor affirmed. After that, however, it took further years of wandering through various bureaucratic bodies before the happy ending, which came in 1841.

Worst of all, Glinka found his creative life also in disarray. To be sure, it was at this time that he produced some of his best songs, as well as some superb pieces for *Ruslan and Ludmila*: the Persian chorus, the Finn's ballade, Blackamoor's march (in an oriental mode), and Gorislava's cavatina in the style of the Russian art song (*romans*).[10] But nobody had any idea how these dispersed, stylistically heterogeneous pieces should come together and where they were going to fit in the opera.[11] Apparently, the same situation had occurred at an early stage of Glinka's work on *A Life for the Tsar.* According to V. Odoevsky's testimony, at that time Glinka had begun by composing some numbers without waiting for words, leaving it to a future librettist to adapt to his preexisting music.[12] But at that time, thanks to Zhukovsky, he was able to engage Baron Rosen, a competent if not brilliant poet and playwright, for this task. Rosen, with some help from Zhukovsky, succeeded in putting together a dramaturgically effective libretto. (Rosen's role in this matter, as well as his significance for literary life of the 1830s in general, was downplayed in Soviet times because of the ardent monarchism and piety of his writing[13]—features that made it necessary to rewrite the libretto of *A Life for the Tsar* to make it acceptable for the Soviet stage as *Ivan Susanin*).[14] Now, however, the prospects for a libretto remained dim. Glinka was worried about the chaotic manner of *Ruslan*'s progress; so were his friends.

Beginning in 1836, Glinka had felt increasingly attached to a friendly circle centered around Nestor Kukolnik, the author of tremendously successful dramas written in an effusive declamatory style. The most popular of them, *The Hand of Providence Saved the Fatherland* (1834), like *A Life for the Tsar,* took as its subject the struggle against the Polish invasion in the early seventeenth

century — a politically expedient topic in the aftermath of the Polish uprising of 1830–31 and its suppression. The all-male company that dwelled perpetually at Kukolnik's large apartment called itself *bratiya,* "the brotherhood," in a spirit both jocularly monastic and Rabelaisean.[15] Alternatively, it was called "the Committee" — an ironic self-reminder that for all the loftiness of their mind-set, they remained working bureaucrats after all, each with his official rank; Glinka occasionally joked that his music ought to be taken seriously, because it was the work of a collegiate assessor. The atmosphere at the circle's gatherings was as exalted as it was unpretentious, egalitarian, and sincere. Glinka remembered fondly how Kukolnik, who worshipped his music, would proclaim solemnly whenever they could not agree on something: "Misha, I cannot grant my consent to this. We'd better have a drink instead." Sacramental wine would appear — the cheapest obtainable, a far cry from the Lafitte and Cliquot that had accompanied the gatherings of Pushkin and his friends fifteen years earlier. This copious but undemanding drinking went hand in hand with animated conversations and poetic and musical buffoonery[16] alternating with moments of high artistic experience.[17] One moment, Glinka would perform his latest song (most often with lyrics by Kukolnik), to everyone's deep admiration; the next, he would join the others in the ritual chorus "*Charochki po stoliku pokhazhivayut*" ("Little vodka glasses are promenading around the table").

This kind of Romantic bohemian brotherhood, bearing in itself simultaneously features of both the *Burschen*'s gatherings and the amusements of petty bureaucrats, was not unlike the atmosphere that had surrounded Schubert in the 1820s. The time was the late 1830s, however, and the place was Nicholas's Russian Empire at the height of its power. Kukolnik and his friends exemplified the conflation of populism, Romantic exaltation, and ardent patriotism that was typical of the spiritual climate of that epoch. Aleksei Lvov's "God Save the Tsar," written in 1833 to Zhukovsky's words at the personal request of the emperor,[18] was emblematic of this mood, perhaps even more so than Glinka's first opera. Its sound, ponderously majestic, pious, and intimate at the same time — a mixture of pan-European *maestoso,* Orthodox liturgical singing, and a parlor *romans* — had replaced the semiofficial anthem of the previous forty years, the bravura polonaise "Let the Thunder of Victory Be Heard," by Juzef ("Osip Antonovich") Kozlowski, a Polish composer at Prince Potyomkin's court at the time of Catherine II. It was in this atmosphere that Pushkin and his friends, the survivors of the generation of the 1820s, found themselves pushed aside, estranged from the reading public and contemporary political life, mocked as "literary aristocrats" — the living shades of a glorious but vanished era. Kukolnik, another provincial with a funny name,

educated, like Gogol, in the Nezhin Lyceum, paid lip service to Pushkin's poetic genius but openly disliked what he viewed as Pushkin's aristocratic snobbishness and "gentlemanly" superficiality of education.[19]

At the height of his success, Glinka vacillated between the glamour of high society and the refined atmosphere of the artistic and intellectual elite, on one hand, and the friendly directness and simple-minded exaltation of the brotherhood, on the other. Now, with his world shrinking, he became a full-time member of the latter.[20] Fleeing his domestic troubles, he practically lived at Kukolnik's place. It was there that he composed and gave the first performances of many of his pieces for voice and piano; it was also there that he sought help with *Ruslan*.

According to Kukolnik, the "incoherence and fragmentariness of the separate scenes [of the opera] bothered everybody, including Misha."[21] At one noisy gathering (later Glinka could not remember the year), a poet of minuscule stature, Konstantin Bakhturin, to use Glinka's words, "took it upon himself to make a plan for the opera, and swept through the task in a quarter of an hour, with drunken courage, and, can you imagine: the opera was actually made according to that plan!"[22] As if in an afterthought, Glinka added: "Bakhturin instead of Pushkin! How could it happen?—I don't understand it myself." Another minor poet, Captain of the Guard Valerian Shirkov, provided much of the text of the libretto; some additional pieces were patched together from Pushkin's poem and some were contributed by Kukolnik, Glinka himself, and their friends Nikolai Markovich (a sometime historian, poet, and musician) and Mikhail ("Misha") Gedeonov, the son of the director of the imperial theaters. Much of this was done collectively, in a mood of frolicking camaraderie. Conceived this way, the literary part of the opera could claim, as Kukolnik joked, "six fathers" (there were in fact seven in total).

This was the company to whom Glinka announced, in the summer of 1840, his decision to leave the capital for an indefinite time. First, he wanted to accompany the Kerns, mother and daughter, on the first leg of their trip to the Ukraine, a trip for which he had given them all the money his mother could find. This made unattainable his own dream of making a fresh start by going abroad once again. All he could do was return to his birthplace in Novospasskoe, a remote place in a western region that Russia had taken from Poland in the second half of the seventeenth century, where he had spent the first thirteen years of his life. He braced himself for the prospect of living in seclusion in the sole company of his mother, loving but distraught about all the disarray in his life.

The brotherhood took the occasion solemnly. For the farewell evening, the Committee worked out an elaborate ceremonial order of festivities, which in-

cluded Glinka's own singing, performances by invited musicians, and a chorus singing a piece in Glinka's honor. During his stay with the brotherhood, Glinka had composed many songs with lyrics by Kukolnik. He now decided to publish them as a collection, under a title that reflected his mood at the moment: *Farewell to St. Petersburg*.[23] The concluding piece of the cycle, called "Farewell Song," was apparently written especially for this night. Its words reflected the occasion with a poignant intimacy:

> What about glory, my god of yore?
> Take back your laurel crown.
> Take it, it's made of thorns—down
> With your laudatory fetters. . . .
>
> There is a family that will never betray,
> The world of better thoughts and feelings!
> It is our circle, my good friends,
> Shrouded in heavenly inspiration.
>
> This family I'll never cease to love,
> Will not give up for childish dreams!
> For it I am singing my farewell song—
> And tear out the strings of my lyre.[24]

Glinka's absence from the capital did not last nearly as long as he and his friends had anticipated. After an emotional farewell he took leave of the Kerns and, on the way to his estate, he started feverishly composing his opera. Suddenly, the work was moving forward very fast. In a little more than a month, by the end of September 1840, Glinka was back in the city. Early in 1842, the score of *Ruslan and Ludmila* was offered to, and immediately accepted by, the theater director Alexander Gedeonov. It premièred, with mixed success, on November 27, 1842.

In spite of all the collective efforts to build its libretto—in a "potluck" mode, as Kukolnik once called it—or, rather, because of it, *Ruslan* never reached a satisfactory overall dramaturgical shape. In vain did Stasov later insist that Glinka's own account of the way the opera was put together did not do justice to his "inner" creative intentions, which, Stasov felt, must have been extremely thoughtful, meticulous, and fully consistent.[25] We remember that Glinka started his opera by composing a few exotically colored but narratively marginal pieces. This reflected his growing attraction to exoticism and variety, which seemed to override any concerns about the shape of the opera. Glinka needed a multitude of personages, places, and situations to satisfy his appetite for musical diversity. As the result, the opera became overburdened with many

diverse plot lines that could only be developed in long explanatory monologues and had to be resolved in haste as the end of the action neared.[26] Still, coherence of plot has never been among the virtues of any fairytale opera: one has only to remember *The Magic Flute*. *Ruslan*'s fragmentariness pales in comparison with the narrative follies of Weber's *Oberon*. But unlike the latter, its dramatic diffusiveness was further aggravated by the astounding diversity of its music.

The first sound of *A Life for the Tsar*—the opening oboe solo of the overture, played in the spirit of a slow (*protiazhnaia*) peasant song—proclaims the opera's nativist and patriotic musical image. But the overture to *Ruslan and Ludmila* contains hardly anything overtly Russian; Glinka himself once compared its sparkling *presto* to the overture to *Le nozze di Figaro,* "only done in a Russian fashion."[27] Ludmila's cavatina and Farlaf's rondo openly parade their kinship to Italian operatic genres, those of the coloratura and basso buffo aria. The intricate canon for four voices "What a wondrous moment," on a theme replete with contrasting intervals and capricious chromatic turns, if stripped of its "Oriental" orchestral accompaniment, recalls the polyphony of J. S. Bach—one could imagine it being performed on the organ; predictably, the contemporary public found its music boring, too "static."[28] All these acknowledged European musical genres cohabit with a broad variety of Oriental voices—some cast in the generic mold of fairytale exoticism, some more authentic and daring in musical language. Sometimes the mixture of contrasting musical topoi borders on the paradoxical, as in the aria of the Khazarian khan Ratmir in act 3, whose first part, rich in chromaticisms in harmony and rhythmical ostinatos, creates an atmosphere of the sultry languor of romantic orientalism,[29] whereas the second shifts unabashedly to a *tempo di valse*. Finally, there is an abundance of East European (rather than strictly Russian) musical voices: an unpretentious urban song (Ludmila's "Ah, my lot, my little lot" in act 4), a more sophisticated art song (Gorislava's "The voluptuous star of love" in act 3), and reminiscences of Ukrainian folklore (the chorus "Ah Ludmila, our light" in act 5, whose melody resembles that of the spring song—*vesnianka*—later used by Chaikovsky for the finale of his Piano Concerto no. 1). Last but not least, there are the "barbaric" unison sonorities and unusual $\frac{5}{4}$ rhythm of the chorus "You, the mysterious, exhilarating Lel," the first germ of what was later to become a flourishing tradition of musical "pictures of pagan Rus," from Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov to Stravinsky and Prokofiev.[30]

Such diversity, verging on potpourri flamboyance, was already in full view in *Farewell to St. Petersburg*. One could find among its twelve songs, all written between 1838 and 1840, a Venetian barcarolle, a bolero, a cavatina, a

fantasia, and a nocturne; the Crusades ("Virtus Antiqua") and the Song of Songs ("Jewish Song") also were represented, alongside the cozy sounds of Russian domestic music-making ("The Lark").[31] It was as if the composer felt the need to escape from the strictly nativist Russian musical image in which he had cast his first opera or, to be precise, in which the public perception of *A Life for the Tsar* had cast him.

As a matter of fact, what Glinka himself cherished in *A Life for the Tsar* was the contrast between two musical worlds: the Russian and the Polish. But the public remained cool to the second act, dealing with Poland, of which the composer was so proud.[32] Still fresh from the surge of patriotic feelings evoked by the Polish insurgency of 1830–31 and Russia's defiant confrontation with the rest of Europe over its suppression, the people turned a deaf ear to the splendor of mazurkas and polonaises. Thirty years later, Chaikovsky witnessed with disgust a performance of the opera in April 1866, only a few days after the assassination attempt on Tsar Aleksander II by Dmitry Karakozov. There were rumors that Poles were behind the attempt, and the public felt even less than usually disposed to watch a Russian hero being slaughtered by Poles on stage. In the final act, Ivan Susanin, bolstered by cheers from the audience, refused to be killed; instead, he grabbed a piece of scenery (in the capacity of the archetypal Russian *dubina*) and struck them all dead. The actors, bewildered at first, quickly succumbed to the general mood; the chorus launched into singing the national anthem. The public was raving; some made unflattering remarks to Chaikovsky, who remained frozen in his seat, clutching the score in his hands.[33] *A Life for the Tsar* was doomed to remain a patriotic icon, up to its Soviet reincarnation and beyond.

The move from an opera that exuded a spirit of nationality to a flamboyant fairytale musical panorama with orientalist ornamentation followed the path of Carl Maria von Weber from *Der Freischütz* to *Oberon*. There was no composer to whom Glinka was closer or of whom he was more jealous. In 1842, when Liszt visited Russia, his conversation with Glinka on hearing pieces from *Ruslan* inevitably turned to Weber. Glinka expessed his dissatisfaction with Weber's excessive use of the dominant seventh in root position, a remark later endlessly cited by adepts of the Russian school and their Soviet champions as a sign of the superiority of the Russian style; what was usually omitted was Liszt's reply, which Glinka clearly relished: "Vous êtes avec Weber comme deux rivaux qui courtisez la même femme."[34] Acknowledged as the national composer, Glinka embarked on a project that at first sight had little of the national about it. Its subject—a Western woman held in captivity in an Oriental harem, then eventually rescued and reunited with her lover—

followed a popular orientalist pattern widely known from Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Seraglio,* Rossini's *L'italienna in Algeria,* and, of course, *Oberon*. *Ruslan* apparently lacked both the soaring patriotic feeling and clear and convincing structure that distinguished Glinka's first opera.[35]

It may seem ironic, then, that the most ardent adepts of the nativist Russian style in music found their foremost ideal not in *A Life for the Tsar* but in *Ruslan and Ludmila,* whose Russian element, although not absent, was far from dominant in a sea of diverse voices, many of them distinctly Western. While critics of a more cosmopolitan orientation such as Odoevsky and Vielgorsky (and later Serov and Chaikovsky) came forward with more or less pronounced critical remarks concerning the opera's dramatic merits, Stasov and Cui proclaimed *Ruslan* to be Glinka's most "mature" creation and vehemently opposed all suggestions of its dramaturgical deficiency.[36]

Yet there was some inner logic in this seeming paradox. True, this was an opera whose heroine felt herself equally at ease with the sounds of the Italian operatic coloratura and Russian domestic music-making. Its musical world stretched from Finland to Persia, from the sultry terrain of the Thousand and One Nights to a Ukrainian village or Petersburgian suburb, from the unison stampede of "pagan Rus" to counterpoint of Bach, from the exotic passions of the Song of Songs to a ballroom vibrating with a waltz. Yet all of this did not signify an abandonment of the Russian national idea. On the contrary, it could be seen as carrying this idea to a more sublime level. Its departure from *A Life for the Tsar* symbolically reflected the path of Russia from the early seventeenth century, when the Romanov dynasty was founded, to the times of Catherine the Great and her grandchildren, from the people of Muscovy struggling for their national survival to a multiethnic empire assuming its role as a world power. Over the course of more than half a century, after Catherine's military, diplomatic, and cultural expansion was followed by Alexander's triumph over Napoleon, a process that culminated in Nicholas's superpower, which seemed to outweigh all Europe (a belief eventually shattered by the Crimean War), the level of patriotic intoxication with the "globalization" (to speak anachronistically) of the national image had been rising ever higher. Beginning with Karamzin, Russian historiographers painted a picture of Kievan Rus at the height of its glory in the ninth and tenth centuries as a world power: intimidating Constantinople, dominating the northern Balkans, spreading from the swamps of Lithuania to the steppes of the northern Caucasus, interacting with numerous peoples and languages. This legendary past, which faded away in the subsequent centuries, now seemed to reawaken in the new glories of the Russian Empire.

In 1831 the Russian suppression of the Polish insurrection caused an uproar

in the West that triggered an upsurge of national pride in Russia, a mood that found expression in a host of patriotic poems and dramas, Glinka's first opera among them. To the voices calling for an all-European war against Russia, Pushkin, in a poem titled "To Russia's Detractors," responded with proud defiance that if Europe tried to follow Napoleon's path once more, Russia would rise in all its might, "from the frozen rocks of Finland to the fiery Colchide, from the shaken Kremlin to the walls of immovable China," to meet the invader.[37]

In a less militant vein, the same spirit found expression in a vision of Russians embracing the whole world, making themselves at home with all cultures and all epochs, bringing together East and West, ancient past and modernity. Such a Romantic national consciousness needed a figure of absolute genius who could be seen as the embodiment of the national spirit. Pushkin was elevated to this symbolic role as the Russian counterpart of Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe beginning in the late 1820s, retained it in the 1830s, in spite of the decline of his quotidian literary fortunes, and was canonized as the ultimate national icon after his death. What has become the leading theme of the Romantic deification of Pushkin was his "universality," an ability to transport his muse into any land and epoch — the Chechen *aul,* the Gypsies' camp in Bessarabia, an abandoned harem in the Orient, the world of European knighthood, medieval Madrid, or ancient Rome, as well as Russia's contemporary urban and rural society and its historical and legendary past. In his seminal article "Something About the Character of Pushkin's Poetry" (1828), Ivan Kireevsky was the first to suggest that this trait of Pushkin's poetic personality reflects the essence of the Russian national character. According to Kireevsky, Pushkin is distinguished by "an ability to dissolve himself [literally, "to forget himself"'] in the surrounding phenomena and in the currently experienced moment. The same ability lies at the foundation of the Russian character: it is the source of all the virtues and all the shortcomings of the Russian people."[38]

A few years later Gogol expatiated on this theme in a more heavy-handed manner. Whatever the "shortcomings" of the present, they were not worth mentioning anymore, because Pushkin's universality allowed a glimpse of the sublime ideal to be reached in the future: "Pushkin is an extraordinary phenomenon, perhaps the unique emanation of the Russian spirit: he represents Russian man in his ultimate development, as he will appear, perhaps, in two hundred years."[39]

Belinsky, ordinarily always ready to refute whatever a Slavophile had to say on any subject, found himself in a full agreement with Kireevsky on this point. In his monumental chain of essays *The Oeuvre of Alexander Pushkin,* written on the occasion of the posthumous edition of Pushkin's works (1841), he

marveled at Pushkin's ability to feel himself as naturally in the shoes of a Spanish grandee as in those of a Russian nobleman, a Chechen patriarch, or a "little man" from a St. Petersburg suburb.[40]

The idea of Pushkin's "omnireceptiveness" (*vseotzyvchivost'*) and the image of Pushkin as an "omnihuman" being (*vsechelovek*) have become not only persistent themes of his national cult but symbols of national self-consciousness, in which a haughty messianism appeared hand in hand with a readiness to absorb the spiritual richness of the whole world and imperial triumphalism assumed an all-embracing posture. Pushkin himself, in the last years of his life, was not alien to this spirit. In his paraphrase of Horace's and Derzhavin's "The Monument" (1836) he predicted that his name would spread throughout "the whole great Rus" and be famed by all its peoples: Slavs, Finns, Tungusians, and Kalmyks. This vision of the great Rus, now expanded from the family of Slavdom to the remotest heathen tribes pronouncing the name of its national poet in a multitude of tongues, resonated with the patriotic exaltation of the 1830s. The ideal of omnihuman Russianness seemed to be acquiring tangible features in the reality of the empire; perhaps much less than two hundred years might be needed for its accomplishment. Russia seemed to be becoming the whole world, or the whole world seemed to be becoming Russian.

When in the early 1820s Pushkin had turned to the remote margins of the empire in his "southern poems," he had treated them in the vein of Romantic exoticism. A Russian in that world was an accident, an alien whose appearance disturbed its organic equilibrium; his past and future, his inner life and social problems had nothing to do with the exotic environment in which he found himself. But the Caucasus of ten or twenty years later, as depicted by Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Lermontov, is populated by Russians who have become its inhabitants as well as its conquerors. Lermontov's Maksim Maksimych, while remaining a typical Russian officer, bears the distinct imprint of his lifelong Caucasian experience; Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's Ammalat-Bek, while remaining an archetypal Caucasian militant, is transformed by an *education sentimentale,* Russian-style. A similar trend can be seen in Gogol's shift from the ornamental, frescolike depiction of the Ukraine in his early stories to pictures of the life of Mirgorod, whose inhabitants, while not losing their Ukrainian customs, essentially lead the lives of Russian landlords and officials.

One could see living examples of this imperial cosmopolitanism everywhere. The prolific critic and prose writer Senkovsky, the founder of the first successful mass literary magazine, *Library for Reading,* and a friend of Kukolnik, was a distinguished orientalist; his pen names, Baron Brambeus and Tiutiundzhi-Oglu, which he used in alternation with his real (transparently Polish) name, reflected the diversity of his interests and writing personas. Baron Rosen, a

Baltic German, spoke Russian with an accent, which did not preclude him from becoming a popular Russian playwright and the author of the libretto of the national opera. The same, of course, can be said of the Ukrainian Gogol, who liked to ask advice (which he then rarely followed) on matters of language, citing the provincial inadequacy of his Russian. Pushkin himself, of course, paraded as an interesting detail of his romantic image his African ancestry, while Zhukovsky chose not to make literary use of the fact that he was the illegitimate child of a Russian gentryman and a Turkish woman taken captive in a military campaign—which did not preclude him from growing up within the circle of the Moscovite aristocratic and intellectual elite and eventually becoming the tutor of the heir to the throne, the future Emperor Alexander II. Glinka was a true product of this cosmopolitan Russianness; he was fluent in French, German, Italian, and Spanish and knew some English and Persian. Although the written Russian of his *Memoirs* was wonderfully elegant, his Russian pronunciation retained some clumsy provincialisms;[41] on top of that, he rarely started a phrase in Russian without finishing it in French.

When the teenaged Pushkin was writing his erotically charged, sparklingly ironical fairytale pastiche in the late 1810s, he was little concerned with the national idea. But in the context of the mid-1830s, a poem whose narrative made free leaps from the prince's *terem* in ancient Kiev to a fictitious Finnish cave to generic Oriental enchanted gardens to a somber northern Russian landscape to the arid steppes and mountain ridges of the northern Caucasus to a voluptuous pastorale à la Boucher was liable to strike the vein of imperial "omnihumanity." Pushkin himself contributed to this rereading of his poem when he wrote a new poetic introduction for its second edition in 1828: a captivating tableau in the folkloric mode that put a native-soil frame around the multitude of its narrative voices.

The idea that a certified national composer would write an opera after Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila* held out the promise of a Russian opera in an imperial rather than a nativist sense. Taken in the context of Pushkin's later works, Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* projected to later generations an image of omni-Russianness as the sublime embodiment of the national idea. This was what made the opera so attractive to the later Russian school and in particular to such of its adepts and ideologues as Borodin, Stasov, and Cui. It suggested the possibility of a Russian style in an imperial sense, whose very Russianness consisted in its ability to accommodate Western musical languages, Oriental colors, and a multitude of Slavic and Eurasian voices, a style that would conquer the world by absorbing it. This image turned out to be equally appealing to the ideology and cultural mythologies of Soviet patriotism as it took shape in Stalin's time. It was not lost on the authors of the

film *Composer Glinka,* made in the early 1950s as part of the celebration of the composer's sesquicentennial. In it, Glinka is shown listening avidly to Pushkin, who (speaking almost exclusively in quotations from his own poetry) admonishes the composer to make a step forward from his first opera by writing another one that would show a Russia of "every tongue."

This is how *Ruslan and Ludmila* was seen by adherents of the subsequent national cultural tradition, or at least by a vociferous strain within it. This was also the aura that had surrounded Glinka at the time of his opera's inception in the mid-1830s. It may have given the composer the initial creative impulse under which he had written an array of dizzyingly diverse pieces for the future opera, as if testing the borders of its world of expanded Russianness. By the time the opera was finished, however, much had changed in Glinka's life and in the world around him. I believe that the final shape of *Ruslan,* as it emerged by the early 1840s, reflects those changes in a delicate but poignant way.

What initially alerted me to the necessity of taking another look at the opera was one thing *not* present in its overcrowded world: Pushkin's 1828 introduction, mentioned above: "There is a green oak-tree near the cove." This magnificent new portal to the poem's edifice altered its entire meaning, turning it from a pastiche into a literary elaboration of the national fairytale tradition whose very frolicking and jocular discontinuities now seemed akin to the spirit of Russian folkloric storytelling. It overshadowed the poem itself: few were interested in following its sophisticated literary jokes and narrative games; everybody remembered at least some of the introduction, notably the emblematic *Tam russkiy dukh, tam Rusyu pakhnet!* ("There the Russian spirit dwells! One can sense Rus in it!")

One can imagine the kind of music Glinka might have written to these words by way of an introduction to his opera. It could have provided a powerful framework for it as well, giving it a much-needed sense of unity. It also could have served as a message of sublime Russianness superscribed over the opera's diversity, thus ensuring that the Russian spirit, in its meandering quest for universality, did not lose its way after all. This would have been a perfect expression of this spirit, which flourished in the 1830s and had already crystallized in the cult of Pushkin. Yet Glinka did not write it. In this sense, at least, his opera reverted to Pushkin's original poem, backing away from the more majestic but also more static image it had acquired in the 1830s. In its own way, the opera made audible once again subtler overtones in the poem's meaning that did not agree at all with the ideal of imperial omnihumanity, for Pushkin's original *Ruslan,* written in 1818–20, when Alexandrine Russia, in the wake of its European campaign and at the helm of the Holy Alliance,

readily invited a comparison with Rome at the time of Augustus,[42] was in fact irreverently and hilariously anti-imperial.

Fairytale geography can be frivolous, even bizarre, its placement of various lands and peoples capricious; its Kiev, for example, may turn out to be situated on a coastline. Pushkin took advantage of this privilege of the genre to create a spatial paradox with stinging implications. He placed Blackamoor's castle, with its voluptuous southern Oriental aura, far to the *north* of Kiev. In his search for Ludmila, Ruslan chooses to go north, and as it turns out, chooses correctly. On his way, he meets a Finn—another indication of the locus to which he is heading. Mythological spatial thinking could easily place a magic tropical paradise in the far north: remember the idea of *ultima Thule* and "Green land." What makes Pushkin's different is his insistence on its paradoxical character. On awakening in the castle, Ludmila sees through a window a lifeless northern landscape, an empty land covered with snow:

> All is dead. The snowy plains
> Lie like bright carpets;
> The peaks of the gloomy mountains stand
> In their monotonous whiteness
> And drowse in eternal silence.
> No smoke over a roof is to be seen nearby,
> No traveler in the snows,
> And the ringing horn of the jolly hunt
> Does not trumpet in the deserted hills;
> Rarely, with a melancholy whistle,
> The blizzard rages in the open field,
> And at the edge of the hoary heavens
> The naked forest sways.[43]

Some details in this picture—the emptiness, the absence of the sun, the remote forest exposed to the wind—look like a preview of the opening lines of *The Bronze Horseman,* written fifteen years later. Ludmila then steps out into the castle's inner garden—and finds herself in a strikingly different environment:

> Before her toss and rustle
> Magnificent oak forests;
> Rows of palms and laurel groves,
> And files of fragrant myrtle,
> And the tops of proud cedars,
> And golden oranges
> Are reflected by the mirror of the waters.
> (ch. 2, lines 301–7)

One could say that the desolate exterior of Blackamoor's castle is consistent with its northern location, while its fairytale voluptuousness stands in contrast to and defies its natural ambiance.

There is no need to dwell on the image of St. Petersburg's miraculous rise over a desolate northern terrain.[44] A powerful metaphor of the empire that rose together with its capital, this image had been firmly set in the cultural mythology at least since the 1803 centennial of the city's founding. It was later finalized in the introduction to *The Bronze Horseman* (1833), which borrowed freely from the stock of metaphors accumulated by the earlier odic tradition.[45] There was, however, another fascinating source for the mythologized image of the city that turned out to be particularly important for Pushkin's first narrative poem. In the spring of 1791, Grigory Potyomkin, the prince of Taurida, gave a feast in honor of Catherine the Great on the occasion of the taking from the Turks of Izmail, a key stronghold in Bessarabia. The feast, which took place in Potyomkin's Taurida Palace in St. Petersburg, was unprecedented in scale and luxury. Derzhavin wrote several "hymns" for the occasion, which were set to music by Juzef Kozlowski; one of them, the tremendous polonaise "Let the Thunder of the Victory Be Heard," became the most popular piece of Russian celebratory music, virtually a national anthem.[46] (In 1794, when it was Warsaw's turn to be taken by Russian troops, Derzhavin wrote a new version of his hymn to the same meter: "Amidst the knelling and thunder, rejoice, O much-glorious Russian!" It was performed to Kozlowski's music. Meanwhile, the composer, who had returned to his native land, wrote a requiem on the death of Stanislaw Awgust Poniatowski, the last king of an independent Poland. Performed initially at the burial ceremony of the king in a St. Petersburg Catholic church in February 1798, it became the Polish national musical icon, while his polonaise continued to serve as the Russian one).[47]

After the feast celebrating the taking of Izmail, which took place on April 28, Potyomkin commissioned Derzhavin to immortalize it in an essay. Derzhavin's description of the feast, interspersed with poetry he wrote for the occasion, was published (despite Potyomkin's displeasure with it) as a booklet, first in 1792, then again in 1808. A man of the eighteenth century, Derzhavin, like Goethe in the second part of *Faust,* was fascinated by the triumph of art, industry, and wealth over adverse natural conditions.[48] From the outside, Potyomkin's palace was nothing more than a simple, stern-looking building. Once inside, however, one entered a hall that could hardly be called a mere hall, because it stretched like a vast, open landscape. One proceeded to the inner garden, where one found oneself in an enchanted realm of eternal spring that had nothing to do with St. Petersburg's April: "Fragrant forests are bur-

dened with gold- and ruby-colored pomegranates, citrons, oranges. . . . Everywhere spring reigns, and art competes with the delights of nature. The sweet-voiced singing of birds and pleasant scents, by turning the house into a kind of a heavenly abode or enchanted land, cause everyone to wonder rapturously: is this not Eden itself?"[49]

An "angelic singing, accompanied by a heavenly harmony," could be heard from above; the singers were hidden on an elevated platform, which added to the magical impression. The chorus addressed the heroine of the festivity: "This is the realm of pleasures . . . / Here the water, land, and air / Are breathing with your spirit."[50] When mealtime arrived, the scene instantly changed, again as can happen only in a fairy tale: suddenly one saw hundreds of tables over which "mountains of silver covered with treats have appeared." When the meal was ended, the tables vanished with the same supernatural speed.

One of the attributes of the garden's magic splendor was the variety of peoples of the world that could be found there. A theatrical pantomime represented an Oriental slave market crowded with people in all kinds of colorful national costumes; the only nation conspicuously absent was Russia—for, as Derzhavin notes, recent triumphs of arms made the sight of a Russian at a slave market a thing of the past.

Many years later in his *Memoirs* Glinka expressed the similar wonderment he experienced when, at the age of thirteen, he saw St. Petersburg for the first time: "When we entered our northern capital, the sight of enormous stately houses and streets made on me a magical impression, and the feeling of delight and wonderment stayed for a long, long time."[51]

The parallels with Ludmila's experience in the castle of Blackamoor, in both Pushkin's poem and Glinka's opera, are quite obvious. To make his hint even more transparent, Pushkin's narrator, with typical slyness, exclaims as if in an ultimate rapture that what Ludmila saw was superior even to what King Solomon or *the prince of Taurida* might have possessed.

In an earlier poem, "Remembrance of Tsarskoe Selo" (1814), the adolescent Pushkin had depicted the gardens of the tsars' summer residence as the "Elysium of the midnight land," his somewhat affected odic rapture intentionally echoing Derzhavin's poetic voice. A distant echo of this celebratory vision of the imperial Elysium in the far north sounds in the introduction to *The Bronze Horseman;* there, it tragically collides with the story of an inconspicuous hero who falls victim to the grand imperial design. But in *Ruslan,* the mood is different from those of both the earlier quasi-ode and the later Petersburg tale. Here the magic realm reveals itself as a paradox and, essentially, a fraud. The inanity of its pretensions to supernatural splendor is exposed by jocular hints at the all-too-familiar reality of the modern Russian capital and its

suburbs, a reality that allows itself to be glimpsed as if through the cracks in a bright screen. The desolate, wintry surroundings do not disappear completely: they can be seen from a window, making all the tropical luxury of the inner garden an artifice—a kind of Potyomkin village. The fact that Ruslan meets, of all people, a Finn has potentially comic implications; Finns, most of humble social stature (coachmen, milkmaids, and so on), were a fixture of St. Petersburg's environs, something one simply could not miss on the way to or from the capital (until they vanished after Stalin's purges). It is well known that Pushkin made fun of the pious mysticism of Zhukovsky's fairytale poem *Twelve Sleeping Maidens* by placing one of his own characters, Khan Ratmir, in an abode whose features transparently alluded to Zhukovsky's enigmatic monastery-castle; its inhabitants, the mystical maidens, come out to meet Ratmir in exotic costumes that look suspiciously uninhibited, as is their manner of greeting the guest, all of which makes one wonder what kind of establishment the lovesick Khan has in fact gotten himself into. In a sly exercise in double vision, the enchanted castle with its fairy inhabitants reveals itself as a metropolitan *maison de tolérance* richly decorated in an Oriental style.[52] Another detail cunningly links Oriental magic splendor with the realities of a modern metropolis: when Blackamoor's female servants tend Ludmila's "golden braid" with all their fairytale artfulness, the poem's narrator interposes with the cynical remark that their art is "not unknown in our days," a hint at the miracles produced by fashionable coiffeurs.

The most biting exposure of Blackamoor's false pretenses springs from his impotence—a theme on which the youthful poet dwells with relish. As the Finn explains with due solemnity to the worried Ruslan:

> He brings the stars down from the sky,
> He whistles, and the moon begins to tremble;
> But against the law of time
> His learning has no power.
> Jealous, anxious keeper
> Of the pitiless locks,
> He is nothing but the impotent tormenter
> Of his charming captive.
> He walks around her silently
> Cursing his cruel lot.
> (ch. 1, lines 283–92)

It is a convention of stories about beautiful captives in Oriental harems that they manage to preserve their purity one way or another—sometime by means of a girl's own resourcefulness, sometimes because of a noble streak in her captor's character. In his pastiche, Pushkin subverts this generic outcome by

giving it a comically naturalistic rationale. It is Blackamoor's *nemoshch* (literally, "lack of might") that turns his attempted rape of Ludmila into an outright farce. Blackamoor's powerlessness vis-à-vis the maiden in his captivity presages the inevitable collapse of his power at the hands of Ludmila's valiant suitor.

This was how the young (very young) Pushkin saw patriarchal authority in general: as the power of ugly and laughable old men who simply had no business with the beauty they claimed to possess. The young contender striving to overcome the impotent potentate can rest assured that the "sweet reward" (*sladostnaya nagrada*) would promptly be forthcoming. *Ruslan*'s mockery of the imperial myth was soon followed by a similar treatment of the heavenly realm in *The Gabrieliad* (1821), in which the young and beautiful archangel triumphs over both heavenly and infernal power in their contention for the "beautiful Jewess." In his adolescent political verses—for which he was eventually sent away from the capital in May 1820, before seeing his fairy tale in print—Pushkin prophesied the inevitable collapse of the tyranny in a lofty oratorical manner, with an overblown pathos. *Ruslan* and *The Gabrieliad* sent essentially the same message but presented it in the chatty, jocular, titillating manner that became a signature of Pushkin's style in the 1820s.

About fifteen years lay between the words "Rossiya vspryanet oto sna, / I na oblomkakh samovlastya / Napishut nashi imena," ("Russia will awaken from her sleep, / And on the ruins of the autocracy / Our names will be written," "To Chaadaev," c. 1819) and the no less famous "Krasuisya, grad Petrov, i stoi / Nekolebimo kak Rossiya!" ("Stay in your beauty, city of Peter, / Unshakable as Russia itself!" *The Bronze Horseman*). In Pushkin's later oeuvre, the story of the symbolic triangle—the obsolete authority, the beauty in its possession, and the young suitor—acquired a somber, fatalistic modality. The old possessor might still look lifeless, fossilized, mute, obviously not a good match for the beauty, the young contender still dynamic, valiant, desirable. Yet the outcome of their confrontation becomes dramatically different than in the early works: the seemingly superfluous and petrified authority suddenly comes to life and reclaims his possession; the contender is repelled and destroyed; the woman remains, in life or in death, unhappily but irrevocably in the power of the old one. Few of the major works Pushkin wrote after 1825 fail to offer one figuration or another of this scheme of fatalistic legitimism: the finale of *Eugene Onegin, The Stone Guest* (both 1830), *The Bronze Horseman, The Queen of Spades* (1833), and *Dubrovsky* (1834) all feature it.

In 1820, however, the world seemed wide open to the young and the enterprising. In one stroke, Ruslan cuts off Blackamoor's beard, the vestige of his power. His fake enchanted garden is demolished, Ludmila is liberated, and he

becomes nothing more than a grotesque, dwarfish figure accepted in this capacity at Prince Vladimir's court — another comic real-life detail reminding the reader of all the *araps* and dwarfs paraded around by posh households (a destiny that could easily have befallen Pushkin's great-grandfather had the tsar not taken note of his intelligence). Like Russia in Pushkin's political lyrics, Ludmila is awakened from her enchanted sleep to take her savior in her arms.

On *Ruslan*'s publication, many were delighted with its élan, some shocked by its frivolity, which was vertiginous by the standards of the time.[53] Later, in different circumstances and with the help of a more mature and somber Pushkin (who cut some of the most daring hints and added the majestic introduction), the poem assumed a more epic stance. Glinka might have seen it this way in the beginning; by the end, however, the message borne by his opera in some respects appeared closer to the original tenor of Pushkin's poem than to that of its successor.

Glinka's musical depiction of Blackamoor's realm is as filled with color and wonder as Pushkin's verses were. One can simply sit back and enjoy the ethereal, arabesque-like variations of the Persian chorus,[54] the rough unisons of the brass and the exquisite sounds of the *campanelli* in Blackamoor's march, and the diversity of rhythms and orchestral colors in the Arabian, Turkish, and Circassian dances, admiring all along the composer's inventiveness and the diversity of his musical palette. But then one has to ask oneself: What does all this splendor signify? What does it represent? The answer has to be the same as in Pushkin's poem: it represents an enchanted realm whose magic is evil and, at bottom, fraudulent. The invisible choruses are telling Ludmila, in beautiful heavenly voices, that everything here exists solely for the sake of serving and pleasing her (remember the invisible choruses singing paeans to Catherine at Potyomkin's feast). But their words are in fact poisonous: they are trying to deceive and seduce Ludmila, then to lull her into an enchanted sleep that will make her Blackamoor's prey: "Let mild sleep quiet the heart of the maiden — she will not escape Blackamoor's power then." Occasionally a somber harmony falls like a shadow over the radiant façade of the music, betraying the darkness lingering behind it. The ethnic dances are magnificent in color and variety, but one understands that they are performed by slaves from different lands (reminiscent of the slave market at Potyomkin's feast). The double vision with which the enchanted realm is presented in the opera is made manifest in the musical portrait of Blackamoor himself in his march. Its severe and colorful façade cannot hide the comic and ugly features that occasionally show through it. The ferocious sound of the brass opening is suddenly interrupted by the grotesque squeak of the piccolo. The "magic" middle part (its dancelike motion, accompanied by small bells, bringing to mind the chorus of slaves

enchanted by Papageno's magic bells: "Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schön") ends in F major, making the resumed brass unison, which begins with B, sound comically false.

Glinka's Ruslan, like Pushkin's, meets a Finn on the way to his destination in the north. According to Anna Kern's testimony, Glinka used an authentic Finnish tune for the Finn's ballade. In her memoirs Kern tells about an excursion in the early 1830s to the Imatra waterfalls northwest of St. Petersburg by a group of friends that included Glinka and herself. At one point, Glinka retired behind a barn with their Finnish coachman and asked him to repeat the song he had sung on their way there, which Glinka then wrote down.[55] This story was later habitually cited as testimony to the authenticity of the opera's multinational attire.[56] In this case, however, the very "authenticity"—the tune turning out to be the song of a Finnish coachman—contained an ironic potential similar to that borne by the real-life allusions in Pushkin's poem.

For all these parallels, I am far from saying that Glinka simply returned to the original sense of Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila*. One cannot simply return to something done by a different person, at a different age, at a different time. Neither Glinka nor his times could be as unabashedly antiauthoritarian, irreverent, or defiantly optimistic as Pushkin and his friends were in the early 1820s. Glinka toned down some of the poem's references to St. Petersburg's contemporary scenery; for instance, the dubious abode of the twelve maidens was turned in the opera into another magic realm, ruled by the evil sorceress Naina—a rather clumsy reduplication of the main narrative line that fatally slowed the opera's progress. Speaking generally, Glinka's music, although not devoid of irony, is too rich and colorful to become as biting as some of Pushkin's double entendres. In what seems an attempt to make the opera fully conform with an imperial attitude, Glinka wrote an epic prologue in which the legendary Kievan singer Boyan makes a prophesy about a wondrous city that will rise far in the north, in which a young poet will sing about Ruslan and Ludmila on his golden lyre. To be sure, Glinka cut this episode for the first performance; it was restored later.[57] At any rate, the prologue's majestic tableau ends on a strikingly melancholy note; the singer whose golden lyre will immortalize Ruslan and Ludmila has only a brief span of time to dwell on earth: all immortals belong in heaven. All epic magnificence and splendor placed at the beginning, at the end Boian's monologue leaves listeners with a feeling of irretrievable loss and abandonment.

Derzhavin marveled at the magnificence of the enchanted garden as a representation of the superhuman might of its sovereign. The young Pushkin mocked it as a fake, with exuberant malice, and envisioned its demise, only to

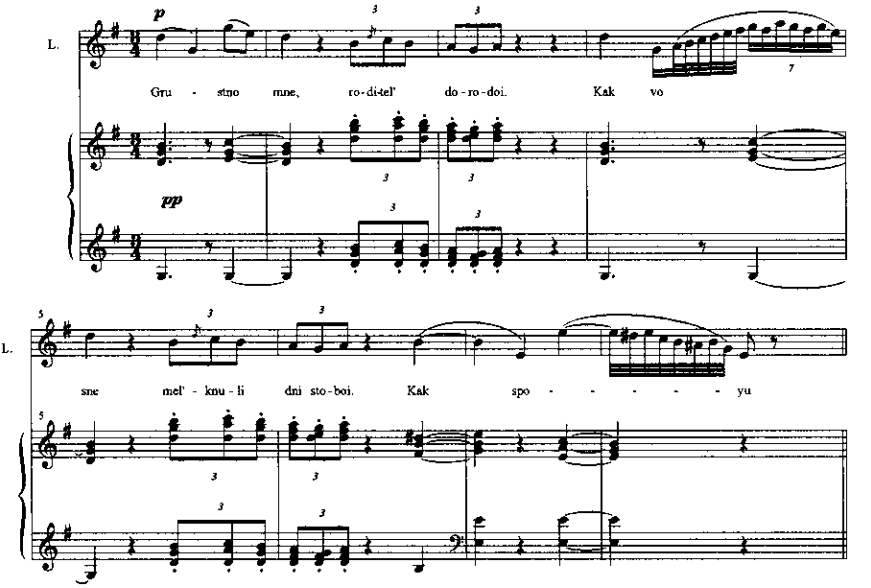
come to acknowledge its inexorable majesty later, with a mixture of awe and dismay; never having become a wholehearted admirer of imperial magic, he nevertheless grew deeply disenchanted with the validity of a valiant assault on its granite edifice. Glinka's message comes across as even more quiet, somber, and melancholy. He neither enters on a collision course like the young Pushkin nor submits himself to the inexorable like the mature one. Together with his heroes, he simply takes his leave of the shining flamboyance in whose portrayal he seemed to have invested all the resources of his musical palette.

We can now turn once again to Glinka's *Farewell to St. Petersburg,* a collection that marked a watershed between the initial stage of his work on the opera, at which an astonishing variety of scattered numbers had emerged, and the final stage, when he strove toward the consummation of his work. The cosmopolitan splendor of the collection can be seen as a symbolic musical portrayal of the imperial capital—the St. Petersburg to which the composer is now saying his farewell. This exhibition of almost superhuman versatility ends with the poignantly personal "Farewell Song." Glinka's earlier enchantment with glamour, to which the "Farewell Song" testifies, is gone. Like the heroes of *Ruslan and Ludmila,* he turns his back on its deceptive magnificence.

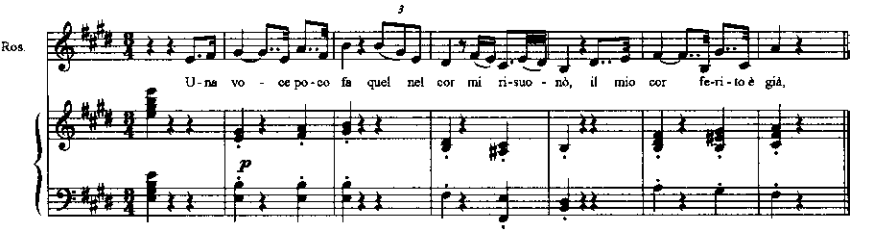
Here we come upon a crucial difference between Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila* and Glinka's. For Pushkin in 1820, the problem of saying farewell to the authority that had repulsed him simply did not exist. He was looking forward to the happy ending, when the evil magic would be dispelled, the beauty awakened and reunited with her true and rightful love. Neither the young couple nor the narrator and his reader bother to look back at the abandoned realm far in the north. It vanishes, or becomes irrelevant, leaving no traces on them and their lives. They simply resume their nuptial feast. At the end of the poem—as befits a fairy tale—we find them to be the same people they were at its beginning, and in the same position.

Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmila are profoundly different. In order to appreciate this difference, let us look first at how they are presented to us in the beginning of the opera. We meet with Ludmila in the first act as she sings a grand cavatina with the chorus. Like Rossini's Rosina before her, she is alternately pensive, exuberant, and sly. In fact, her part, rich in coloratura ornamentation, shows close resemblances to Rosina's cavatina (examples 2.1a and 2.1b).[58]

Only once does Ludmila depart from Italian operatic brilliance, in addressing Khan Ratmir, whereupon she effortlessly assumes sultry chromaticisms, in apparent mimicry of the addressee's character. Turning to another rejected contender, Farlaf, she reassumes her "Italian" voice—quite appropriately, because Farlaf himself has a typical basso buffo personality. The overall impres-



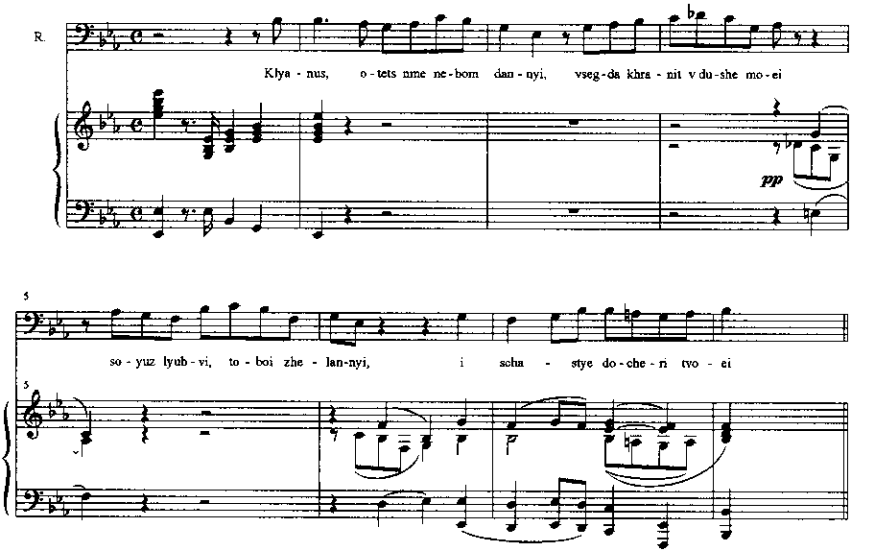
2.1a. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 1, Ludmila's cavatina



2.1b. Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia,* Rosina's cavatina

sion is that of elegance cultivated to the point of nonchalance. In a full display of her cosmopolitan versatility and courtly prowess, Ludmila is shown to us as a veritable princess. If she sings out her own personality, it is a personality thoroughly polished and conventionalized.[59] There is hardly anything specifically Russian in her singing, and by the same token, there is nothing truly intimate in it, nothing that would go beyond a brilliant figuration of established operatic discourse. This shining musical pastiche was in fact a true match to Pushkin's literary one. But it was not appreciated by the more ideologically minded public of the 1840s and later. Its coldness and artificiality put off even the most dedicated "Ruslanists."

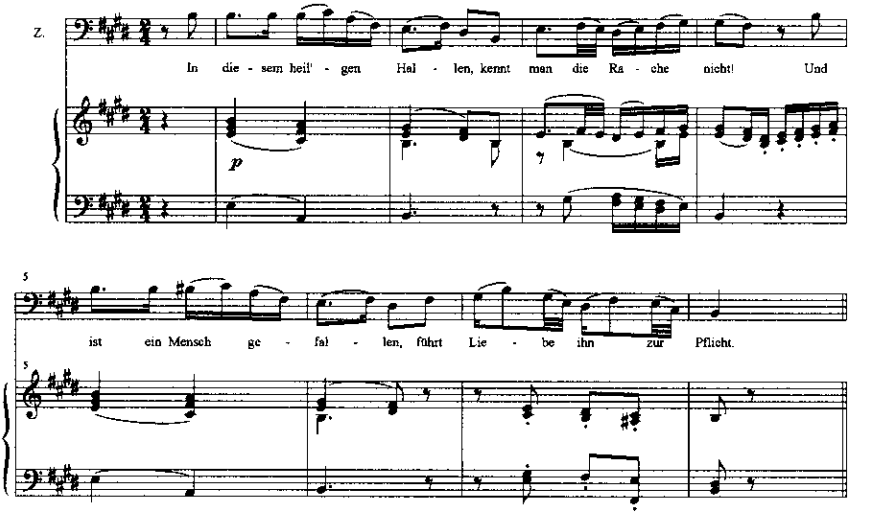
The subsequent exchange between the young couple and Ludmila's father



2.2a. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 1

proceeds in the predictable vein of an operatic peroration. Ludmila is appropriately gracious, Ruslan valiantly amorous, the Kievan prince (in the opera it is not Vladimir, the baptizer of Rus and a common hero of the folklore epos, but Svyatoslav, Vladimir's father: a moving back in time that justified "pagan" musical sonorities) benign and dignified. Again, we learn nothing about the principal male protagonist's personality beyond his thorough conformity with the operatic conventions of the "noble baritone"; his part in the family dialogue echoes inflections of Zarastro's aria "In diesen heil'gen Hallen" (examples 2.2a and 2.2b).

The scene culminates in a wonderful quintet in which all three sing together with Ratmir and Farlaf. As in Mozart's ensembles, the participants express conflicting sentiments—love, hope, envy, disappointment—each singing in a different way, according to his or her character; their characters, however, are drawn from the common operatic stock, Mozartean in its origin. After everyone unburdens his or her heart in this way, the festivities begin with Ratmir's exuberant "goblet aria" ("Fill to the brim the golden goblet"), another recognizable operatic entity. Then calamity arrives: Blackamoor puts everyone into a trance; an intricate four-voiced canon symbolically renders the effect of time magically stopped. On awakening, Ruslan, Ratmir, and Farlaf are gearing up for a rescue expedition to find the abducted princess, at which point Ratmir does not fail to offer a fiery cabaletta with the chorus ("O knights, let us gallop



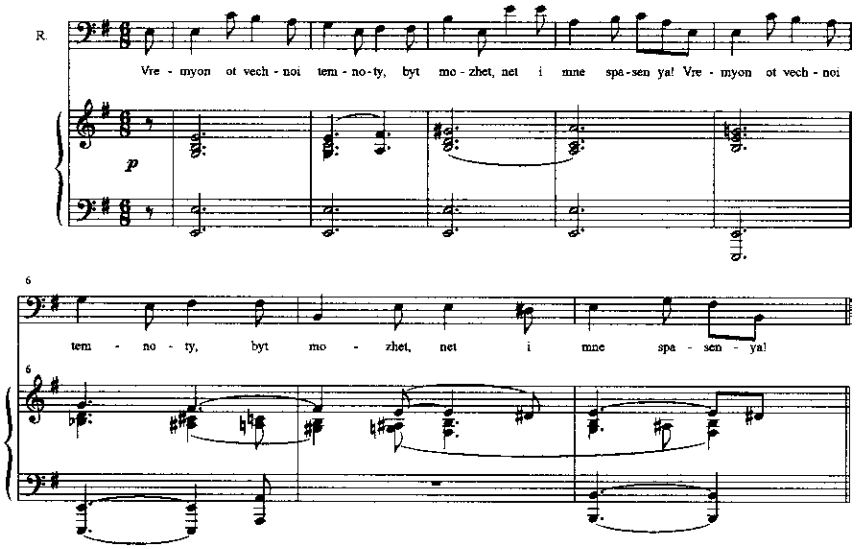
2.2b. Mozart, *The Magic Flute,* act 2

into the open field"). So far, all the protagonists fully embrace the conventional splendor of European opera.

Act 2 further expands this parade of established operatic genres and discourses. First, Ruslan meets the Finn and listens to his ballade, which begins with a "naïve" pastoral melody, then passes through a series of artful transformations capped by a bravura coda à la Mozart. Intoxicated by the evil sorceress Naina's promise of help, Farlaf sings his exuberant rondo, a typical buffo number. After that, we see Ruslan coming upon a battlefield of the past covered with the remains of fallen warriors.

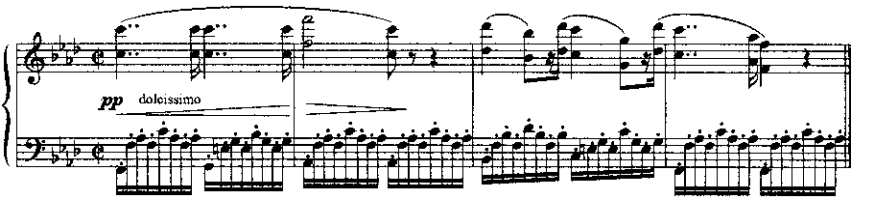
In the poem, this scene occasions a magnificent—and rare—lyrical moment. Suddenly, the poet abandons his usual detached, ironic narrative posture and renders Ruslan's meditations in an intimate voice, as if they were his own: "Why, field, have you fallen silent / And been grown over with the grass of oblivion? / Perhaps, there is no salvation for myself as well / From the eternal obscurity of time!" (Ch. 3, lines 184–87).

Glinka's Ruslan initially addresses the old battlefield with emotional but conventional remarks in the style of *recitativo accompagniato*. When, however, he reaches the words "eternal obscurity of time," the musical situation changes. We hear a voice that is not theatrical but intimate, not cosmopolitan but distinctly and familiarly Russian—the voice of the Russian *romans* (example 2.3).



2.3. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 2, Ruslan's aria

The genre of the Russian art song, principally intended for domestic music-making, has a rich and lengthy tradition; one can already see its distinctive features in songs by Vasily Titov, a prolific composer of church and quotidian music from the second half of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the genre did not become fully developed and widespread until the 1820s and 1830s. Its artistic register ranged from unpretentious anonymous songs, presumably originating in the suburbs, to works by talented amateur composers such as Aleksandr Alyabiev, Aleksandr Varlamov, Aleksandr Gurilev, and Nikolai Titov (a great-grandson of V. Titov), to Glinka's art songs. Its mood varied from sentimental to naive, from passionate to idyllic, from melancholy to exuberant.[60] Yet in all its social and situational incarnations, the romans retained some characteristic features that made it instantly recognizable. Among these one can cite the initial jump of the melody by a sixth followed by a gradual descent back to its base, an oft-repeated move in harmony from the tonic to the subdominant and back to the tonic, the prominence of the triad based on the natural seventh step in minor, arpeggio-like figurations in the accompaniment.[61] To be sure, most of those features stemmed from the late eighteenth-century European sentimental tradition, particularly the Italian.[62] When Verdi wanted to render a mood of northern melancholy in *Macbeth,* he came up with a somber-sounding intonation of a sentimental romance; the result—the lyrical theme in the scene of Lady



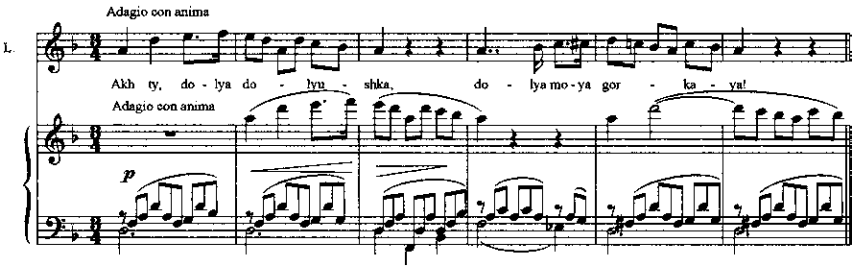
2.4. Verdi, *Macbeth,* Overture

Macbeth's madness—sounds strikingly Russian, thus demonstrating the thinness of the partition that divides the Russian popular song from its Italian counterpart (example 2.4).

Still, the Russian form presented a fusion of generic sentimental features with some nationalistic musical element, such as a relatively rare use of the dominant seventh or frequent shifts between a major and its relative minor. Their mixed origin notwithstanding, the sounds of the Russian romance exuded the spirit of Russianness coupled with that of domestic intimacy, something one feels oneself to be instantly and poignantly at home with. Carried away by a surge of feeling, Ruslan is suddenly transported from the operatic stage to this world of Russian domestic music-making, with its chronotope of a private home, an intimate company and cozy, spontaneous, sincere musical communication.

Ruslan's intimate moment does not last long. He is confident of the success of his mission. All he needs is a super-sword—a typical need of an operatic hero that prompts the subsequent grand aria, whose two themes, heroic and lyrical, are repeated twice, in different tonal relations, like the exposition and recapitulation of the sonata form. Once again, Ruslan is nothing but appropriately valiant and amorous—and fully operatic. It will take more suffering, doubts, and disappointment for the more intimate, nontheatrical, and characteristically Russian side of his personality to fully emerge.

A long time passes before we meet Ludmila again in act 4, in Blackamoor's castle. We see Ludmila lamenting her fate, while invisible angelic-sounding choruses attempt to soothe and distract her. Her way of expressing herself in this scene stands in striking contrast with her earlier persona. Occasionally she still produces a coloratura passage, a reminder of her courtly glamour. But in general her manner becomes much more simple, even simplistic. Ludmila's song "Ah, my lot, my little lot" resembles a Russian romans in its more popular incarnation. Its features are essentially the same as those of Ruslan's aria from act 2: a sixth framing the melody, a lingering subdominant in melody and harmony, and the prominent use of the tone of natural seventh, but it does not



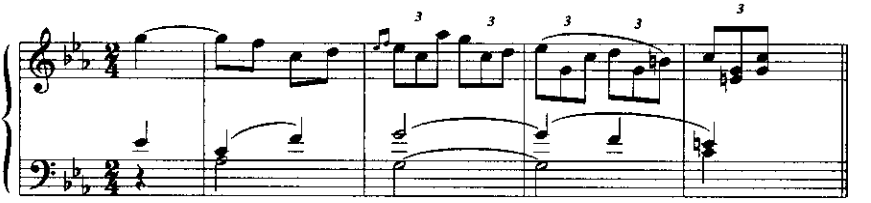
2.5. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 4, Ludmila's song

share the latter's sophistication; Ludmila's piece is more of a home-made subtype of the same genre, that of the lower middle-class urban song[63] or of its imitations by Glinka, such as "The Lark" from *Farewell to St. Petersburg*. With its accompanying violin solo, the aria sounds unabashedly sentimental (example 2.5).

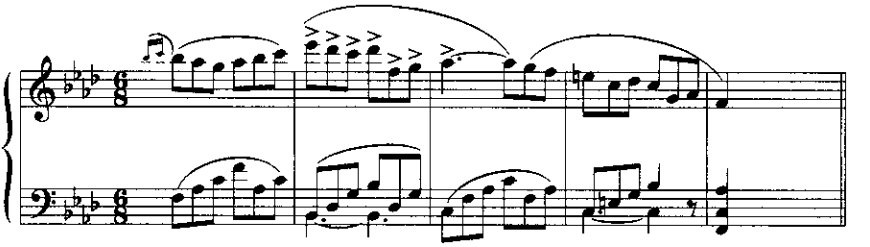
We hear a Russian woman—be it a princess or her maid—pouring out her heart through a quotidian but intimate musical medium. The effect is all the more striking because the musical world that surrounds Ludmila in her captivity resembles the vocal versatility of her past. The chorus "Don't lament, o beloved princess, make your lovely glance cheerful!" and the subsequent entertainment offered by Blackamoor are shining with color, artfully ornamental, spiced with sophisticated musical tricks.[64] The two musical worlds—cosmopolitan and theatrical on one hand, nativist and intimately "private" on the other, collide headlong. This constitutes a significant departure from Pushkin, whose Ludmila remained in this trying situation as charmingly capricious as ever: " 'I will not eat, I will not listen, / I'll die among your gardens!'— / She took thought, and began to eat."

Ruslan eventually arrives, vanquishes Blackamoor, and rushes to Ludmila's rescue. But instead of the anticipated triumph, he receives a terrible blow: Ludmila has sunk into an enchanted sleep and cannot be awakened. Ruslan is overcome with sorrow, jealousy, and despair. He addresses Ludmila with a song whose mood and musical language belong entirely to the domain of Glinka's romances and chamber music. Most vividly, it recalls the romance "The Doubt" (1839),[65] whose lyrics, by Kukolnik, with their mix of similar emotions, must have resounded with Glinka's personal feelings at the time. In addition, melancholic turns of the melody in the cadence repeat those in the piano nocturne "La séparation" (1839)—a memorial to Glinka's sad love affair (examples 2.6a and 2.6b).

When, after some further twists and turns of the plot, Ludmila is awakened



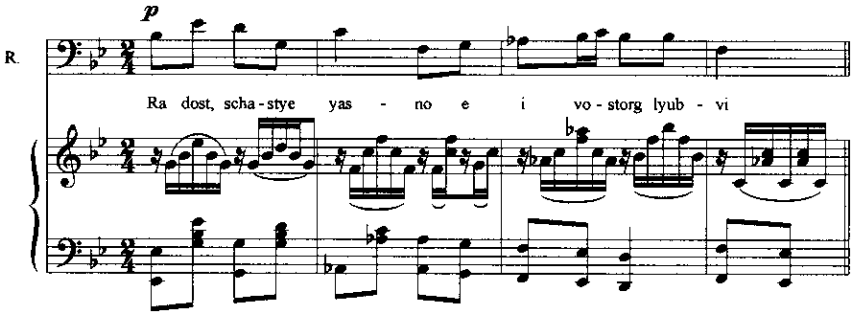
2.6a. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 4, Ruslan's song



2.6b. Glinka, Nocturne "La Séparation"

and reunited with her lover in act 5, we see the heroes in the familiar surroundings of Prince Svyatoslav's court in the same positions as at the beginning. Glinka's characters, however, are not the same. Ruslan's song to the awakening Ludmila, which she eventually joins, exemplifies the culture of the Russian romance. It begins with a serene succession of triads in the major, I–III–II–V, then shifts into the relative minor and dwells there for a while before returning to the dominant of the main tonality in an exhibition of *peremennost* (vacillation between a major and its relative minor) typical of the Russian musical language (example 2.7).

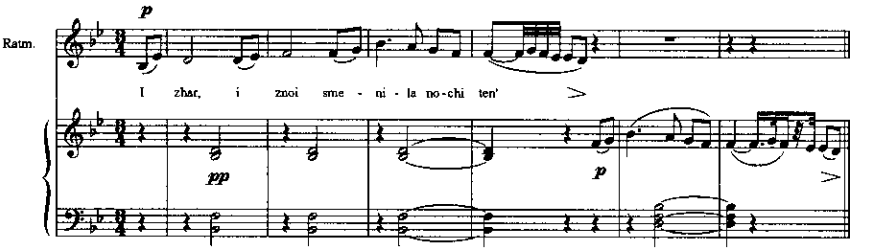
The musical story of Ruslan and Ludmila is seconded by that of another couple: Ratmir and Gorislava. The story of their love, the only part of the opera that does not correspond directly to the plot of Pushkin's poem, occupies most of the third act. From the point of view of dramatic efficiency, it looks clumsily superfluous. Instead of returning to the main heroine, of whom nothing had been heard since her abduction in act 1, or following Ruslan's mission, the opera's path is diverted to another magic realm of poisonous delights: Naina's. She commands some celestial-sounding choruses and ornate dance music of her own, trying to lure Ratmir and Ruslan into a trap. Another appearance by the virtuous Finn and a lot of unbearably static agitation is needed to rescue the knights and put them back on track. This narrative clumsiness, however, is redeemed by the message sent by the music as it follows



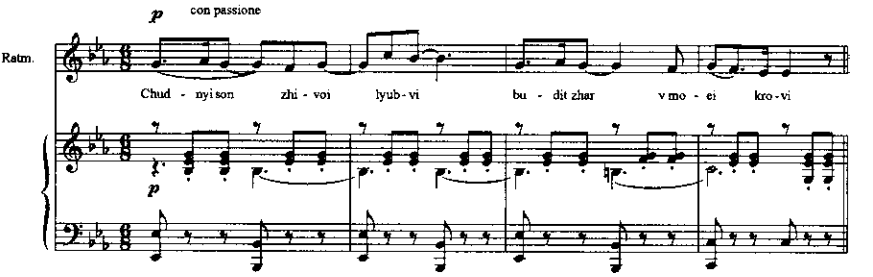
2.7. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 5, Ruslan and Ludmila's duet

the progress of Ratmir's and Gorislava's relations. Gorislava is straightforwardly characterized as "Russian" (rather than Kievan Rusian); she is another captive in a harem, that of Ratmir, which the khan had abandoned in his pursuit of Ludmila. Unlike Ludmila or any of her predecessors in this generic situation, however, Gorislava loves her captor. Her love makes her leave the harem and go searching for the khan. Without knowing it, both are now approaching the domain of Naina's sorceries.

Gorislava listens to the charming Persian chorus, not discerning its poisonous message, and is delighted: "How sweet are these sounds!" They remind her of her own love and make her sing: "Voluptuous star of love, you have been eclipsed forever." Her cavatina, with which she now musically introduces herself, is as different from Ludmila's as she is different from the glamorous Kievan princess of act 1. Gorislava's name, like those of the main heroes, has etymological significance. But whereas the meanings of Svyatoslav (literally, "praising or famous for holiness") and Ludmila's (literally, "delight of the people") are laudatory, as was common for the names of Kievan nobility, Gorislava's (literally, "praising or famous for sorrow") sounds more like a nickname hinting at her sorrowful fate, this being not unusual for people of less-than-princely origin. As her musical manners indicate, Gorislava, whatever her life before captivity, obviously did not belong to the shining Kievan court. Her origin from Russia, as opposed to Kievan Rus, most probably suggests provinciality. No wonder the sound of the Russian romance comes naturally to Gorislava's personality; it is hard to imagine anything more characteristic of the genre than her cavatina. Its middle part, however, is complicated by sharp chromatic moves in the melody, although eventually they come to a cadence typical for a romance. Does this reflect Gorislava's experience in the harem or her thoughts about the Khazarian khan? Does this Russian woman, like the Tver merchant Afanasy Nikitin in the fifteenth century, find it



2.8a. Glinka, *Ruslan and Ludmila,* act 3, Ratmir's aria, first part



2.8b. Ratmir's aria, second part, *tempo di valse*

impossible, after years spent in the Orient, to keep her native tongue completely separate from the exotic voice mixing into it? Such an inner transformation would be unthinkable in an adventurer-conqueror-wanderer from Pushkin's southern poems—his Prisoner of the Caucasus, his Aleko—no matter how long he dwelt in exotic terrain.

After Gorislava departs, the stage is given to Ratmir, who has also been attracted by Naina's choruses. His aria, "The shadow of the night has taken over after the heat of a sultry day," is true to his personality as we have come to know it from act 1. It is elaborately ornate, languid and passionate at the same time, exuding a spirit of refined exoticism. At first, Ratmir seems to be easy prey for Naina's maidens; he dreams of the sensuous repose that their singing promises. Eventually, however, the magic singing has the same effect on him as it did on Gorislava: it awakens his longing for a true (literally, "living") love. The change in Ratmir's mood is signaled by the second part of the aria, marked *tempo di valse*.

A conjunction of the pronounced orientalism of the first part and the animated waltz of the second seems bewildering at first glance (examples 2.8a and 2.8b).[66] It makes sense, however, in view of the general transition experienced by the main characters of the opera—from impersonal glamour,

through much suffering and disappointment, to unaffected and unpretentious intimacy. The emergence of a waltz in Ratmir's singing marks his arrival in the realm of domestic coziness and "living" feelings, which the ordinary Russian woman Gorislava had never abandoned and which Ruslan and Ludmila will also experience soon. From this point onward, Ratmir becomes an unambiguously positive personage: he abandons any claim to Ludmila, helps Ruslan, soothes him in a moment of despair, and rejoices at the leading couple's reunion. But most crucially, he reunites with Gorislava in a mutual love and heads home—not to an abandoned harem, as one is given to understand, but to a happy life with his newfound beloved. In his "romance" (so called in the score) in the beginning of act 5, "She is my life, she is my joy," Ratmir testifies to this inner transformation and his indebtedness to Gorislava for it. The music of Ratmir's romance, though easily recognizable as another manifestation of that genre, is a little more chromatically complicated than Ruslan's and Ludmila's romance-like singing. Having achieved spirited domesticity, the Khazarian khan does not cast off his exotic origin and temperament; it colors his participation in an intimate exchange with a slight exotic tinge.

The message sent by the music of the second half of the opera is clear. The fairytale story of Ludmila's abduction and rescue becomes the story of a psychological shift from the world of glamorous theatricality to the genuineness of private life and personal relations. It was the heroes' suffering that helped them find their way out of the dazzling empire of sounds, whether those of Naina's and Blackamoor's enchanted realms or their own earlier courtly performances. The two alternative modes of Pushkin's poem—the earlier one of sparkling cosmopolitan pastiche, and the later one of a majestic "spirit of Rus"—are the worlds Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmila have lived through and have eventually overcome. They have taken leave of the refined, versatile, shiningly elegant but impersonal world and entered one that is modest in musical means, unpretentiously sentimental, but in fact full of meaning because it carries within itself the possibility of direct and personal contact—something that is rarely achieved in an opera.

It is also a world that is unmistakably Russian, not in the grand sense of an imperial "national idea" but in the way of the cozy familiarity of the domestic household. Like any true communion, it does not preclude diversity; anyone can be accepted into its privatized space: a noble, a commoner, a non-Russian with visible traces of his exotic origins, a Russian attached to and affected by a life in an exotic space—anyone, that is, who shares the fundamental mode of communication exemplified by the music of the Russian *romans*.

We remember Glinka's rueful exclamation when he mused about the fate of *Ruslan*'s libretto: "Bakhturin instead of Pushkin!—how could it happen?"

We cannot know, of course, what the story would have been had Pushkin lived and agreed to collaborate with Glinka. But neither the Pushkin of 1820 nor the Pushkin of 1836 could have given the composer what he achieved within and together with the brotherhood in the cooperative fathering of the opera. Its unwieldy libretto was as far from anything that could conceivably have come from Pushkin's pen as the homely assemblage at Kukolnik's was from the rarefied atmosphere that seemed to accompany Pushkin naturally, never leaving him even in the most humble circumstances or most intimate moments.

Yet for all the obvious clumsiness of its narrative plot, Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* expressed by means of its music an inner dynamism of psychological development that Pushkin's poem lacked, or rather, had no need of. Pushkin is not concerned with his characters' "sentimental education"; instead, he chats breezily with his readers over the characters' heads. The opera begins with a similar attitude: with a conventional operatic eagerness, Ruslan, Ludmila, and Ratmir address the audience rather than each other. Step by step, slowly and falteringly, the listeners and the heroes approach each other, until they find themselves in a space intimately familiar to everybody, a space in which everyone can feel truly at home. Symbolically speaking, we see the opera's positive characters stepping down from the stage of the Imperial Theatre into a private living room. Perhaps one can find a parallel to this inner musical plot in Verdi's *La Traviata,* with its shift from the initial glamour of the ballroom to the unpretentious intimacy of the final duet.

In a broader sense, Glinka's opera signaled the advent of the 1840s—an epoch that turned out to be introspective, self-searching, withdrawn into a private space, creating a culture of tight friendly circles, each bearing the distinct flavor of a particular private household. Turgenev, Bakunin, and Dostoevsky, to name only a few, were its direct products; Tolstoy's views concerning history, and Musorgsky's, were profoundly affected by its spirit. The advent of the "people of the 1840s," with their shyness and dependence on personal attachments, their rejection of conformism by withdrawing into domestic coziness, signified a shift from the stage of imperial power to private space and direct human interaction. In one way or another, virtually all of the major achievements in Russian literature, music, and thought in the second half of the nineteenth century were due to this shift.

After attending one of the last rehearsals before the première of the opera, Senkovsky expressed his confidence in its unprecedented success: "From the very beginning, the performers were so struck by the exceptional beauty of this creation, the effect was so momentous, that the artists, overcome with enthusiasm,

put away their instruments in order to express their delight. . . . They could not find in the entire musical literature anything that could be compared with this wonderful, original, mighty music. . . . How much stronger the effect will be when *Ruslan* is heard with a full orchestra and singing!"[67]

Yet in reality *Ruslan*'s success, with the public and with critics, was far from the unqualified triumph of *A Life for the Tsar*. The opera was given more than thirty performances in the season of 1842–43, but except for the few first evenings, the theater was half-empty. The following season the opera was not renewed. An obvious reason for this was the inadequacy of the performances (which was appalling, according to some testimonies).[68] Much more complex in its musical language, *Ruslan* was simply beyond the technical abilities of the opera troupe.

The fate of the opera was sealed by a circumstance that Glinka, and indeed all music lovers, had initially greeted with enthusiasm: the opening in the capital of an Italian opera, which brought to the Russian stage world-class singers (most of them, it is true, already past their prime).[69] As a consequence, in 1846 the Russian troupe was moved to Moscow, which at that time (before the founding of N. Rubinstein's conservatory and the presence of Chaikovsky) was a musical backwater. Glinka hoped that the Italians would perform his operas; indeed, they were willing to expand their repertory with Russian music. These plans came to a sudden halt in 1848. The Italian theater staged an opera buffa by Feofilakt Tolstoy, a young amateur composer. After several performances, subscribers (who constituted the cream of society) complained that their subscription fees were being wasted on light-weight entertainments. Once again, the emperor was quick to straighten things out once and for all: by his "highest decree" (*Vysochayshee povelenie*), the Italian theater was thereafter forbidden to stage any opera by a Russian composer.[70]

For years to come, Glinka had to witness, with increasing bitterness, a public entirely taken with "Italian paroxysms" (*italyanobesie*),[71] Russian opera falling into full disarray, and the rapid fading of any chance to hear his own operas, especially the second one, in performances that would give their technically sophisticated music its due. Beginning in 1843, he found it increasingly difficult to endure staying at home for long. In this he joined a not-inconsiderable number of his compatriots who at that time found themselves compelled, one way or another, to turn their backs on Nicholas's Russia. Glinka spent most of the remaining years of his life abroad. In 1856, profoundly dejected, he theatrically spat on the Russian soil as he departed once again, making a vow never, ever to return to that "vile land." He had said farewells before, but this one turned out to be genuine. The following year, he fell ill and died in Berlin.[72] He was buried there, but several years later his sister

brought his remains back to Russia. In the 1950s, as part of the celebrations of Glinka, the Soviets erected a hideously pompous monument over his original gravesite in East Berlin.

After its first season, *Ruslan and Ludmila* returned to the St. Petersburg stage only in 1861. Once again, the production was both inadequate and unsuccessful. In 1867, Balakirev conducted *Ruslan* in Prague; this time, it was a triumph (one cannot help remembering the fortunes of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*). Balakirev repeated his production on a private stage in the Russian capital the following year, also to triumphal success. Finally, the opera was performed on the stage of the Mariinsky theater in 1871, with sets modeled on those of the Prague production.[73] From that moment, *Ruslan* became a staple of the Russian operatic repertory. Yet it has never achieved the degree of recognition worldwide that works by Musorgsky, Chaikovsky, and Borodin enjoy.

Even if it were given the best possible treatment, Glinka's *Ruslan* could not then and perhaps never will achieve the degree of success on the world's operatic stages that its author expected and its music deserves. With its crowd of characters, each with a highly demanding part, its multitude of disjointed episodes piling one upon another, and the excruciating slowness of its action coupled with the dazzling flamboyance of its musical colors, the opera as a dramatic whole poses overly taxing demands on both the theater and the audience. When its musical numbers are performed on their own, however, all their spark and elegance come to the fore.

This was what began happening to the opera even in Glinka's lifetime.[74] *Ruslan* became extremely popular, its influence on the further development of Russian music enormous, but its true triumph came in concert halls and in the domain of private music-making rather than on stage. Like its characters, the opera itself stepped down from the podium into a more personalized space to become a household presence.

A poignant moment in this transition was captured by Anna Kern in memoirs written late in her life: once, apparently in the 1850s, Glinka performed the Finn's ballade in a company that included Lev Pushkin, the younger brother of the poet, who long before had participated in the memorable excursion to Imatra. When Glinka reached the words "A heavy tear is dropping on my gray beard," the younger Pushkin, now quite old, burst into tears and embraced the composer, overcome by the memories that the music and the words evoked.[75]

The grandiose musical-theatrical spectacle was never a smashing success. But the personal voice that emerged from it has become a habitual presence, and its private message, if listened to, can still be distinctly heard.

3

Eugene Onegin in the Age of Realism

V tramvai saditsya nash Evgeniy.
O bednyi, milyi chelovek!
Ne znal takikh peredvizheniy
Ego neprosveshchyonnyi vek.
Sud'ba Evgeniya khranila:
Emu lish nogu otdavilo
I tolko raz, tolknuv v zhivot,
Emu skazali: "Idiot!"
On, vspomniv drevnie poryadki,
Reshil duelyu konchit spor,
Polez v karman . . . no kto-to spyor
Uzhe davno ego perchatki.
Za neimenyem takovykh
Smolchal Onegin i pritikh.

Evgeny gets into a tram. He is so gentle, poor man! His benighted age did not know such peregrinations. Fate was kind to Evgeny: he only got his foot smashed, and only once, with a shove in his belly, they called him "You idiot!" Remembering the manners of a bygone age, he sought to resolve the argument through a duel, and reached into his pocket . . .

but someone had long swiped his gloves. What could he do without them but hold his tongue and be quiet?

— Aleksandr Khazin, *Eugene Onegin's Return* (1945)[1]

When, in May 1877, Chaikovsky made the momentous decision to write an opera based on Pushkin's novel in verse, he was convinced from the very beginning that it would be unfit for, or unacceptable to, "big" opera houses. This "modest work," which he refused to call an opera, preferring the subtitle "Lyrical Scenes" instead,[2] was meant for small audiences and a private atmosphere. At the composer's insistence, *Eugene Onegin* was initially produced not by an opera house but by the Moscow Conservatory studio (1879). Only two years later, in 1881, was *Onegin* performed at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow; a St. Petersburg première had to wait until 1884. By that time, however, *Onegin* had already started its triumphant march through provincial opera houses, concert halls, and private living rooms. When the opera was not announced for the next season in St. Petersburg, Tsar Alexander III indicated his displeasure to the management.[3] Chaikovsky's eager expectations of major success for most of his other operas, such as *Vakula the Smith, The Maid of Orleans, Mazeppa,* and *The Enchantress,* had never been realized. It was *Eugene Onegin,* an opera written, as the composer emphasized, as a piece of intimate self-expression and in defiance of any expectation of large-scale success, that brought him national and world fame in the last years of his life. After Chaikovsky's death, the opera's popularity continued to grow, matching or superseding the fame of Pushkin's novel. In 1941 Boris Asafyev acknowledged, somewhat bemusedly: "I am afraid even to utter this, but I think that the ratio between those who have read the novel and heard the music of *Eugene Onegin* would come out not to the advantage of the novel: it would turn out that the listeners (many of whom, alas, never read the novel) have been more numerous."[4]

This is how the two *Onegin*s have remained in popular perception: Pushkin's novel, rarely reread after high school and surprisingly difficult when one actually tries to read it, known to many, like Dante's *Inferno,* mostly by a few catch phrases ("My uncle of most honest principles," "What has the coming day in store for me?" or "Onegin, I shall not conceal" — but sorry, this one is from the opera), and Chaikovsky's lyrical scenes, a true household item never far from the surface of one's memory. It takes a certain degree of literary sophistication to remember that Tatiana's husband remains unnamed in the novel; for the majority of readers he is General Gremin, as he is called in the opera.[5]

In a culture strongly dominated by literature, however, a rebuke to a

composer for the perceived literary deficiencies of his libretto becomes almost obligatory.[6] Even Musorgsky, whose stylistic sensitivity was very keen, was taken to task by N. N. Strakhov for vandalizing Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. As to the operatic *Onegin,* complaints about "sacrilege" could be heard almost from the beginning,[7] most famously from Turgenev in a letter to Tolstoy: "Undoubtedly remarkable music; particularly lyrical, melodious passages are good. But what a libretto!"[8] Even Chaikovsky's close friend and ally Hermann Laroche's highly positive review of the opera acknowledged, somewhat apologetically, a sense of the "violation" of Pushkin's poetry.[9] It has become, to quote Asafyev once again, "a fashion of sorts to defend Pushkin's novel from the composer's encroachment on it."[10]

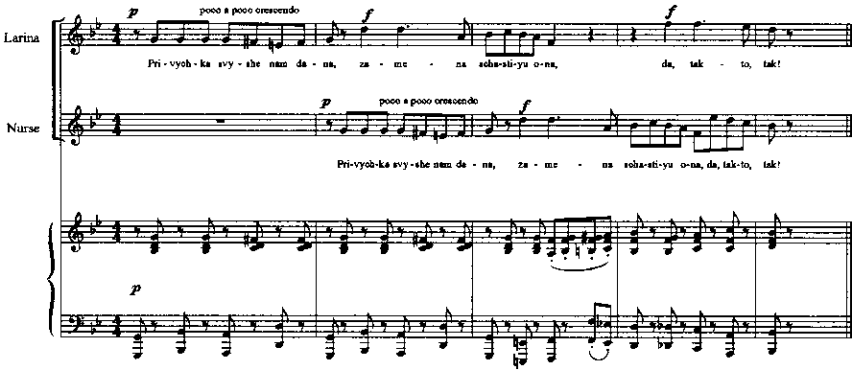
A frequently heard complaint was that Pushkin's creation lost in its operatic incarnation what was most precious and exciting about it: the author's delicate irony and ever-shifting tone,[11] his cat-and-mouse game with the reader (which the reader-mouse has to take pains to learn to enjoy). Pushkin's characters lack finitude, so much so that even after Lensky's death, the path that he might have followed had he stayed alive remains bifurcated: he might have become a genius whose name would have resounded through all ages and tongues, or he might have spent his life in his village eating and drinking and fighting boredom and gout. In the opera, some characters are unambiguously "good," and some others (first and foremost the title character) are unambiguously "bad." The novel ends on a whimsical, frustrating, ominous note: the nameless general whom Tatiana has married, his spurs clattering, suddenly appears in his wife's private chamber and sees Onegin there. What will come next? Another duel, perhaps? Are we heading toward an ending à la *Les liaisons dangereuses* (a novel Pushkin admired)?[12] What comes next is the author's announcement that he and his readers have had enough of Onegin—let us leave the hero at this "evil moment," congratulate each other with the end of a prolonged journey, and part as good friends (or rather, pals, the word with which Nabokov aptly translated Pushkin's casual *priyatel*); even this baffling declaration is then subverted, because the abruptly announced finale is followed by voluminous poetic sketches of Onegin's earlier wanderings through Russia, carelessly introduced by the author as poetic leftovers that he was reluctant to throw away yet could not fit into the main chapters. The opera's ending is as definitive as it is conventional: the hero is left alone after the heroine's high A in "Farewell forever!"; he makes his final exit with a trite remark: "Shame . . . anguish . . . oh, my pitiful lot!"[13] In the novel, Tatiana and Onegin part without any melodramatic gesture; indeed, as far as their social relations are concerned, they may well see each other again that very evening. The "farewell forever" is there as well, but it is expressed in an almost cryp-

tically inconspicuous way: it is pronounced in Byron's voice, as the epigraph to the last chapter: "Farewell, and if forever, / Then forever farewell!"

To be sure, *Onegin*'s libretto was not free from a typically operatic narrative clumsiness, particularly conspicuous when confronted with Pushkin's text. In the novel, the narrator often rather unceremoniously pushes his characters aside, feeling free to chat about them with the reader over the characters' heads, as it were. In the opera, the characters appropriate the narrator's witty, nonchalant, gossipy remarks about themselves, transposing them into the first person as expressions of their own thoughts and feelings. The result, from a purely literary point of view, is sometimes simply hilarious—for instance, when a poetic paraphrase of Chateaubriand's aphorism ("Habit is Heaven's gift: it is a substitute for happiness"),[14] which Pushkin cunningly passes to the reader as an aside in his presentation of old Larina, is sung as a duet by the simple-minded Larina and the illiterate nanny Filippyevna, or when the operatic Zaretsky uses Pushkin's scathing remark about him ("A practitioner and pedant in matters of the duel, / Enamoured of its method with all his heart, / He allowed a man to be slain not otherwise / Than according to the strict rules of the art") as his self-introduction.

It is permissible to ask, however, how valid it is to evaluate an opera from a purely literary point of view. There seems to be nothing particularly wrong with Chaikovsky's libretto until we begin to look at it with the task of defending Pushkin's novel in mind. Why, then, should such a cross-examination be done at all? Do not Pushkin's and Chaikovsky's masterpieces represent different artistic worlds, each defined by its own categories of genre and modes of expression? The necessity of viewing an opera's relation to its literary counterpart in more constructive terms than those of an authenticity test has been pointed out in some recent studies of nineteenth-century Russian opera.[15] Richard Taruskin has argued convincingly that the operatic *Onegin* by no means lacks such celebrated properties of Pushkin's work as irony and multilayered meaning: one need only look for these features in the opera's music rather than in the patches of Pushkin's text used in its libretto.[16] For instance, the comic effect of Larina's and Filippyevna's recitation of Chateaubriand's maxim is matched in the music by the hilarious tight canon into which they suddenly fall at that point (example 3.1). And the scene at large, with the older women's exuberant exchange artfully combined with Tatiana's and Olga's romantic duet, presents a wonderful tableau of domestic harmony, very much akin to spirited portrayals of estate life in contemporary literature.

And yet there is indeed something unique in the case of *Eugene Onegin*. When an opera is written in a language different from that of its literary counterpart, which was the case with many nineteenth-century operas set to



3.1. Chaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin,* scene 1

renowned works of literature, it becomes easier to keep the two works apart in one's perception. The same can be said of cases in which a literary narrative in prose is translated into an operatic discourse that is set, at least in large part, in verse—as in Bizet's *Carmen,* Massenet's *Manon,* or Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. The situation of Chaikovsky's *Onegin* was more challenging. Perhaps it is of no use to try to avoid comparison between the literary and the operatic *Onegin*s. The comparison arises inevitably and spontaneously as soon as Pushkin's familiar characters are heard singing his familiar verses, no matter how hard one may try to keep to the code of critical correctness. The very inevitability of the comparison, however, makes this situation an intriguing subject for historical analysis. Instead of arguing for the opera's right to its own aesthetic existence—which is obvious—or insisting that it must be removed from the novel's shadow—which is futile—it seems worthwhile to examine the meaning of the confrontation between the two works in view of historical, aesthetic, and personal circumstances that made this confrontation more intense and more significant than in a usual case of genre transposition. The right question to ask seems to be not how one masterpiece deviates from the other but what our perception of both may gain from seeing them in mutual reflection. I believe that the clash between the novel and the opera can tell us much about each of them, their creators, and their times.

The literary *Onegin* was written in the 1820s; its action takes place shortly before 1820.[17] Its author belonged to the traditional aristocratic culture that thrived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the end of that "Golden Age" having been signaled by the violent events of December 14, 1825. By the time Pushkin was finishing his work in 1830, he was already seen

by many as a relic of a past epoch. The opera's action ostensibly takes place at the same time as the novel's, although nothing in its libretto indicates unambiguously that this is the time of Alexander I rather than Alexander II. At any rate, the opera was written in the 1870s, in the Russia of the Great Reforms, by a composer who belonged to the generation of the professional intelligentsia of the 1860s. Pushkin's Onegin kept company with Benjamin Constant's Adolphe, Byron's Childe Harold, and some of Jane Austen's male protagonists; Chaikovsky's Onegin was a contemporary of the characters of *Anna Karenina* and Turgenev's novels, as well as Chernyshevsky's "new people."

Much in Pushkin's novel was remembered and admired by Chaikovsky's generation: vivid pictures of provincial life and high society, the heroine's noble sincerity, the figure of a naïve, idealist youth, and above all, animated, elegant, sparkling verses. Pushkin's verses had become a household phenomenon; people knew them by heart (often as songs, in a symbiosis with a tune); quoting some of his lines in conversation or in writing (often imprecisely) had become a way of life. But as far as serious social, psychological, and philosophical content was concerned, Pushkin, at least as the author of a narrative about contemporary life, was, in the eyes of the generation of the 1860s and 1870s, no match for such contemporary writers as Turgenev, Tolstoy, Goncharov, Dostoevsky, and Nekrasov. For all the vividness in the collective memory of particular lines and stanzas or whole scenes (like that of Lensky's death) from *Eugene Onegin,* the novel as a whole, in the sense in which the genre was understood in the age of high realism, simply did not hold. Its lack of a definitive moral and social message or any definitive outcome, the unreliability of its narrator (sometimes coming intimately close to his heroes, sometimes waving them off with an almost foppish nonchalance), its ability to evoke serious social questions while raising the reader's suspicions that the author might merely be making fun of these questions (and of him) were not only baffling but intellectually and morally alien to the readers of *War and Peace, Crime and Punishment,* and *Rudin.* Some of the situations in Pushkin's novel seemed remote and outdated: for instance, the stiff formality with which the hero treats the young woman who professes her love for him or the unwavering firmness with which the heroine eventually puts her duty above her passion, but above all, the duel in which the readers of *Fathers and Sons* could hardly see anything but a farce inexcusably allowed to turn into a tragedy. The character of the hero, with his Byronism, seemed almost as ineptly old-fashioned as Raisky in Goncharov's *The Ravine* or Pavel Petrovich in *Fathers and Sons*. A name had been coined for him, one that the original Onegin had not had: "superfluous man" (*lishniy chelovek*), after the title of Turgenev's 1856 novella *The Diary of a Superfluous Man*.

When César Cui, in a predictably dismissive review of Chaikovsky's new work, proclaimed its choice of subject "strange,"[18] he apparently had these considerations in mind. Yet the same concern was felt by some people who were close to Chaikovsky. One of them was Nadezhda von Meck, whose enthusiasm for the music of the opera was mixed with a rather low opinion of its subject. In his response to her criticisms, Chaikovsky sounded almost apologetic: "You are saying, dear friend, that in *Eugene Onegin* my musical embroidery is better than the fabric on which it is done. But I tell you that if my music to *Eugene Onegin* has the merit of being warm and poetic, it is because my feelings were warmed by the charm of the story. Generally speaking, I think that you are unjust when you acknowledge in Pushkin's text only the beauty of his verses."[19]

The project of an opera based on *Eugene Onegin* seemed burdened by a twofold handicap. On one hand, an opera so close to the contemporary world, whose characters' feelings and behavior could be recognized by the listeners as something close to their own, represented a drastic deviation from the habitual operatic domain of the fantastic, the exotic, and the historical. There were some precedents, notably Verdi's *La Traviata* (about whose "banality" Turgenev, as well as Chaikovsky, complained),[20] but they remained sufficiently defamiliarized for the Russian audience. On the other, Pushkin's *Onegin* seemed insufficient as a picture of modern life. The characters were too intimately familiar to listeners, making the jolting sensation they felt at witnessing their operatic reincarnation unavoidable; but at the same time, the characters did not seem wholesome enough to address the modern audience from the stage.

What, then, prompted Chaikovsky to embark on such an unusual project? After all, his previous operas—*The Voevoda, The Oprichnik,* and *Vakula the Smith*—had not shown any deviation from the established range of operatic subjects. Chaikovsky's search for a subject for a new opera throughout the fall of 1876 and the spring of 1877 initially proceeded along the same path. For some time he played with the idea of writing an opera after Shakespeare's *Othello;* at another point, fresh from the success of his symphonic piece *Francesca da Rimini,* he thought of writing an opera on the same subject. In early May 1877, he turned for help to his younger brother Modest, then twenty-seven years old and a beginning playwright. Modest (the future librettist of *The Queen of Spades*) promptly made a sketch of a libretto after Charles Nodier's romantic novella "Inès de Las Sierras." A couple of weeks later, he received the following reply: "My dear Modya, forgive me for not answering for so long. I was visiting Konstantin Shilovsky in the countryside, having a very pleasant time. Here is what I have to tell you about 'Inez.' She has not evoked in me the slightest desire to start working, which is a reliable sign that

this libretto does not contain in itself the seed of a good opera. . . . No, my dearest Modya, you are not good as a librettist, but thanks anyway for your good intention."[21]

The uncharacteristic bluntness of this verdict finds its explanation in the fact that by that time Chaikovsky was already completely taken by another idea. As we learn from the continuation of the letter, a few days earlier he had visited his friend the singer Elizaveta Lavrovskaya. The conversation revolved around possible subjects for an opera, various people suggesting (according to Chaikovsky) "the usual kind of nonsense," when suddenly the hostess remarked, "But how about taking *Onegin?*"

By Chaikovsky's own account, at first the idea seemed to him "bizarre." By the end of the day, however, he found himself captivated by it. He obtained a copy of Pushkin's text, not without some difficulty (apparently neither he nor his friends had the revered classic at hand), and spent a sleepless night selecting verses fit for the opera. The purpose of the subsequent visit to Shilovsky, an actor who had an estate near the city, was in fact to obtain help in putting the libretto together.

A personal motive lay behind the rather precipitous manner in which Chaikovsky was drawn to this project. Biographers have noted that the beginning of his work on *Onegin* coincided with the dramatic story of his marriage to Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova,[22] followed by a nervous breakdown, an event that radically changed his life. I feel quite reluctant to reinforce the unfortunately widespread habit of garnishing studies of Chaikovsky's oeuvre with melodramatic details from the composer's life—the phenomenon Alexander Poznansky called "the essentialist curse" of Chaikovsky studies.[23] As I hope to show, however, this personal background is indeed important for understanding what struck Chaikovsky in Pushkin's story and in what light it may have appeared to him at that particular moment.

Early in May Chaikovsky had received a letter from Milyukova containing a profession of love. In a somewhat apologetic letter to von Meck of 3 July 1877,[24] Chaikovsky pointed out that "the letter was written with such sincerity and such warmth" that he decided to answer it. (In fact, he had left Milyukova's first letter unanswered, but after she persisted and he inquired about her in the conservatory, he decided to respond.) He wrote to and then visited Milyukova, essentially with the purpose of making it clear to her that he could not feel toward her "anything but sympathy and gratitude for her love." Afterwards, however, he felt that, as a consequence of these actions, his relations with Milyukova had reached a point at which it became his duty to propose marriage. Chaikovsky's reasoning was that because he "had encouraged her by replying and making visits," he had no other choice. Even at that

point he continued his attempts to explain to her his unsuitability for married life: "I told her sincerely that I do not love her but in any case will remain her devoted and grateful friend[;] I described in detail my character, my irritability, unevenness of temperament, a habit of shunning people [*nelyudimstvo*] . . ." All of this was of no avail: she eagerly accepted the proposal Chaikovsky felt compelled to make. Afterwards, he tried to sweep away thoughts of the possible consequences of his move with a fatalistic *Pust budet, chto budet* ("What will be, will be").

These events coincided with Chaikovsky's decision to compose *Eugene Onegin* and with the work on its libretto that followed. Milyukova's letter arrived about May 8; Chaikovsky's two subsequent visits to her occurred on May 20 and 23, followed by the proposal on May 27.[25] The opera's fate was decided between these dates. The visit to Lavrovskaya occurred on May 13; by the following morning, Chaikovsky had already done preliminary work with Pushkin's text and immediately embarked for a three-day visit to Shilovsky's estate, where the libretto was essentially put together; on May 18, Chaikovsky described the new opera to his brother as a decided matter.

The meaning of this coincidence is quite obvious, because the story of Chaikovsky's encounter with his future wife, or rather, the way he perceived and described it,[26] showed remarkable parallels to certain situations in the novel. A man receives a love letter from a young woman. He feels deeply moved by it; however, possessing knowledge of life and aware of the inadequacy of his own character, he feels it his duty not to betray the trust with which the inexperienced woman has put her life into his hands. With the best intentions, the hero decides to explain himself to the heroine, to instruct and to warn her, for which personal contact is necessary. He therefore feels obliged to pay her a visit, or rather, cannot resist doing so, and one visit inevitably leads to another. Particularly telling are some textual coincidences between the novel and Chaikovsky's account of his situation. He describes how he was touched by the "sincerity and warmth" of the young woman's letter; on receiving Tania's epistle, Onegin is "vividly touched" by its "language of maidenly dreams" and feels himself plunged into a "sweet and sinless" reverie. Chaikovsky's reference to his way of shunning people echoes the words of Tatiana in her letter to Onegin: "*No govoryat, vy nelyudim*" ("But it is said that you shun people"). A few months earlier, in a letter to his sister Aleksandra Davydova, Chaikovsky had eloquently described his malaise of *khandra* (spleen), a romantic disease whose name had become fashionable since Pushkin's use of it in his description of Onegin in Chapter 1.[27]

Here, however, the story has reached the point at which Onegin and Chaikovsky parted ways. Onegin, considering the issue settled after his expostula-

tions to Tatiana at their rendezvous, felt no further obligation toward her. He even visited the Larins once again, with tragic consequences. Later, of course, he desperately regretted what he had done, but only because he had missed the chance for happiness that Tatiana's letter had offered. From the point of view of the contemporary behavioral code that he and Tatiana shared, his actions could elicit regret, frustration, and despair, but hardly a reproach. They looked different, however, in the eyes of a generation brought up on Turgenev's novels and Chernyshevsky's and Pisarev's "realist" moral code.

The question may arise: To what extent did Chaikovsky fit that generation? Born in 1840, he was approximately the age of Bazarov and Raskolnikov, as well as Chernyshevsky's Lopukhov and Kirsanov. Yet Chaikovsky's personality seems to have little in common with these characters and the values they represented. Chaikovsky's political views were conservative to the point of officiousness. He was utterly unsuited to the communal way of life to which Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov committed themselves in the 1860s, and he cringed at manifestations of the bluntly straightforward behavior that became a trademark of the "new people." (Among many things he disliked in Musorgsky was what he perceived as the latter's "coarseness").[28] In the 1880s Chaikovsky's personal closeness to the imperial court and the highest layer of the aristocracy made him almost a court composer in the eighteenth-century sense.[29]

I believe, however, that Chaikovsky's antipopulist squeamishness did not disqualify him from being a true man of the 1860s in a deeper sense than Bazarov's ostentatious posturing might suggest. After all, Bazarov and Chernyshevsky's "new people" represented only a radical fraction of a much broader social and psychological human type associated with the *zemstvos*—institutions of local self-government whose emergence in the wake of the reforms of 1861–62 became the main catalyst for manifold social, economic, and professional activity. What characterized the *zemstvo* intelligentsia—from local social workers, doctors, and schoolteachers to members of the urban professional elite—was, first and foremost, high professionalism. Labor, modesty, a deep sense of professional duty viewed as ethical obligation[30]—such were the psychological foundations of this type, which superseded all differences in occupation, social position, and personality. Within this broader type, a certain conventionality of social behavior, a natural respect for the authorities, an aversion to material misery and untidiness went hand in hand with a disdain for mendacity and opportunism. Such a combination, which one can clearly see in Chaikovsky, was more common among his generation, if less eye-catching, than the militant nonconformism of Bazarov's type. Ironically, if understandably, the Russian literature of that time was full of characters who

may have been eloquent in their exhortations to *dolg* (social duty) and labor but who remained essentially idle, if not outright parasitical, throughout the span of the story. Meanwhile, the innumerable "new people" who simply did their jobs day after day, exactly as Chaikovsky did his, first of all, did not present an exciting subject for fiction (remember Goncharov's Stolz; even Tolstoy's Levin would be thoroughly uninteresting without his suicidal impulses) and, second, were too much taken for granted to claim readers' attention.

Chaikovsky's compulsive work habits and strictly professional treatment of his vocation as a composer are well known. It is sufficient to recall his words about Glinka—that the latter would have been better off as composer had he been born a shoemaker rather than a *barin* because all great composers created their music exactly the way a shoemaker makes his shoes (a pronouncement that slyly combined the contemporary populist ethical judgment with a reference to Hans Sachs). Among the things Chaikovsky resented about the St. Petersburg school in general, and Musorgsky in particular, was what he perceived as their amateurish self-indulgence. When later Rimsky-Korsakov subjected himself to strict professional training, Chaikovsky expressed the highest admiration, even if the artistic fruits of Rimsky's labor still left him cold. He worshiped the author of *War and Peace* and was awed upon learning about Tolstoy's desire to get in touch with him. The contact, however, proved a disappointment: Tolstoy sent the composer some folk songs he had written down, thinking them worthy of being published or otherwise used. Chaikovsky's professional pride was offended by Tolstoy's dillettantish obliviousness to his own technical inadequacy; he responded dryly that Tolstoy's musical notation was too deficient to be of any use to a musician.[31]

Another trait Chaikovsky shared with many among his generational peers was a dislike of high society, which did not prevent him from enjoying patronage and recognition in this sphere. On seeing the initial chapters of *Anna Karenina* in a magazine, he felt overcome with disgust. Though later, after he had finished the entire novel, Chaikovsky acknowledged its importance, initially it seemed to him that the author was betraying his talent by turning to the petty world of high society. He angrily wrote to his brother: "You must be ashamed of your raptures about this banal trash decorated with an aura of profound psychological analysis. The hell with it, this psychological analysis, if in the final account one is left with the feeling of emptiness and pettiness, as if one had overheard a conversation between Alexandrine Dolgorukaya and Nik. Dm. Kondratyev about all those Kittys, Alines, and Lilys. What interest whatsoever can all those gallant subtleties have?!"[32]

Later, when Chaikovsky's popularity made him a coveted presence in the highest spheres, he never missed a chance to reassert his posture as an *intel-*

ligent disgusted and ashamed to find himself in such an environment: "Oh, the *sosyete!* [his sarcastic rendering of the word *societé* in Russian characters] what can be more horrifying, unbearable, and stupid!" On the following day: "I visited the Iskuls yesterday in the Russian embassy, with counts, princes, and diplomats among the guests, and I played cards an awful lot. God, I never thought I'd come to see days like this one!" French high society fares no better: on returning from a reception in his honor in Paris in the spring of 1888, Chaikovsky captured the event with a single terse remark in his diary: "Boredom. Marquises, Duchesses, Contesses [*markizy, diushessy, skuka*], and so forth."[33]

Chaikovsky's condemnation of what he saw as Onegin's reckless and immoral behavior stemmed from this attitude. It was unreserved and emphatic: "Onegin, that cold dandy, suffused through and through with worldly smugness." Later he wrote that a "bored society lion, out of boredom and petty irritation, involuntarily, through a fatal confluence of circumstances, takes the life of a youth whom he even loved." One can hear in these words the moral code and the pride of an intellectual of the 1860s; Chaikovsky's disdain for the "society lion's" actions and whole personality is akin to Bazarov's attitude toward Pavel Petrovich. In the face of such a mind-set, the example of Eugene Onegin may have played a fatal role in the sad story of Chaikovsky's marriage proposal. Parallels between his personal situation and that described in the novel may have worked as a catalyst both ways: while Milyukova's letter may have contributed to the sudden enthusiasm Chaikovsky felt at the prospect of writing an opera based on *Eugene Onegin,* these very parallels contained in themselves the prospect of becoming responsible for Onegin-like behavior—a terrifying prospect for a "man of the sixties" that locked Chaikovsky in to his resolve not to flinch from his duty. As he explained to von Meck: "I took too frivolously her initial profession of love, I shouldn't have responded to her. But having encouraged her love with my answers and visits, I had to do what I've done."[34]

The phrase with which Chaikovsky sealed his decision—*Pust budet, chto budet!* "What will be, will be!" is repeated almost verbatim by Tatiana in the opera, after she has decided to write her fatal letter: *Pust budet vse, chto byt dolzhno so mnoi!* "Let it all happen to me that has to happen!" (Needless to say, these clumsy words are not Pushkin's.) It was Tatiana and her world of passionate sincerity—the world the readers of Russian novels of the 1850s and 1860s were accustomed to identify with a whole gallery of their female characters—with which he felt reconciled by his decision.[35] Onegin the aristocratic fop might feel no obligation toward a young woman who offered him her trust and love; like a male character from a Jane Austen novel, he felt free

to disappear without further notice or reappear wearing an indifferent mien. For Chaikovsky and his milieu, such behavior looked ridiculously and repulsively outmoded.

Chaikovsky's feeling that it was his duty to marry Milyukova may have had yet another source rooted in the contemporary literary landscape. That epoch abounded in novels whose male protagonist strove to overcome his inertia and to launch himself into an action to which he felt himself called, be it the career of an artist, a journalist, or a revolutionary. He meets a heroine whose love becomes not only a stimulus but a test of his character and his vocation; if he shows himself capable of "true love," of overcoming all inner doubts and external obstacles, it will mean that he is capable of pursuing his calling as well, doubts and obstacles notwithstanding. Typically, our hero fails this test miserably, which eventually leads to his failure in his mission as well.[36] Inability to attract the love of the ideal heroine, or, having attracted it, to answer adequately her offer of love becomes the unambiguous indicator of the failure that condemns the hero to superfluity. Turgenev's novels and novellas of that time offered numerous variations on this generic pattern, which could also be seen in the writings of Herzen, Goncharov, Chernyshevsky, and Tolstoy. Chernyshevsky's famous article "The Russian at the Rendez-Vous" made explicit the symbolic content of this master plot, and his own diaries give compelling testimony to the essentially Romantic psychological dilemma of a (male) subject torn between the yearning for realization of what he believes to be his calling and a paralyzing feeling of inner deficiency. For the subject of this master plot, establishing a union with a woman (particularly if it has to be done against all odds) becomes a decisive step in his *Bildung,* a crucial test of his ability to experience genuine feelings, that is, to be a genuine person. Transplanted into the age of realism, this longing of the Romantic subject was interpreted as a need to break through one's egocentric subjectivity to "real life." The experience of love consummated in marital union symbolically certifies the hero as capable of attaining a marriage, so to speak, between his inner potential and its realization in day-to-day labor.[37]

In letters written in the fall of 1876 and the spring of 1877, Chaikovsky repeatedly voiced dissatisfaction with his lonely and disorderly way of life, which held him hostage to his "uneven temperament" and fits of khandra. To his sister Aleksandra, who confessed to not being immune to that malaise, either (later in her life she suffered from acute depressions), Chaikovsky responded that she had no grounds for complaint because she was surrounded by her family and could live a noble life dedicated to others, while he remained immersed in an egotistic emptiness: "Khandra, into which I have plunged due to the sad tone of your letter, is well known to me. . . . But I attribute my

khandra not merely to the weakness and sensitivity of my nerves, but to my circumstances as a bachelor, i.e., to the complete absence of selflessness in my life. . . . If I were obliterated from the face of earth today, it would be perhaps some loss for Russian music, but it certainly would not make anybody unhappy. . . . I work only for myself, care only about myself, pursue only my own well-being. This is very convenient, of course, but dry, deadly, narrow."[38]

All considerations of what Chaikovsky, in his confessional letter to von Meck, delicately referred to as his "inborn antipathy to marriage" aside, at that critical juncture he saw his bachelor state as a personal failure that condemned him to a "dry, deadly, narrow" existence. As literature taught his generation, such an existence must signify the ultimate failure: the inability to realize one's vocation.

The fact is that Chaikovsky, by that time in his mid-thirties and already a highly visible and respectable figure in the Russian musical world, remained far from certain about his inner worthiness as an artist. Throughout the 1870s, his orchestral compositions had brought him considerable and steadily increasing success, yet so far he had failed to achieve the decisive triumph that could finally resolve his self-doubts: the composition of a successful opera.

For most of the nineteenth century—until the social novel took over as the most important form of artistic expression—the stage held a particular appeal. Beethoven and Pushkin can serve as major examples of artists who, for all their achievements and all the tributes they received, felt frustrated by their inability to attain an unambiguous success in the theater. Unlike the previous century, which had attached the highest prestige to the epic, in the first half of the nineteenth century drama was considered to be the highest mode of verbal art—a "synthesis" (in the Hegelian sense) of the other two modes, the epic and the lyric.[39] It was this perspective that inspired Wagner to seek in music drama an ultimate *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Chaikovsky always wanted his music to have popular appeal; in this respect, he was the antipode of the figure of the lonely genius sanctified in Romantic (and later, modernist) cultural mythology. The role of symphonic composer, no matter how successful, was for him too abstract; he needed a more direct emotional contact with the audience. With each new opera, he eagerly awaited the establishment of such contact; each time, he was disappointed. His new opera would receive a lukewarm response, and he himself would soon cool to it, only to embark on a new project with renewed enthusiasm and expectations.

We can now see that reverberations between Chaikovsky's personal experience and the idea of making an opera from the story of Pushkin's heroes had more than an accidental set of mind behind them. Chaikovsky's triumph in the

critical situation of the rendezvous with the woman in love set him free from any association with Onegin and his innumerable siblings, the superfluous men afflicted by the syndrome of their egocentrism — khandra. His tormenting doubts concerning inner flaws in his personality that might prevent him from the full realization of his artistic vocation were now successfully, if purely symbolically, overcome.

The marriage immediately erupted into a catastrophe whose result was, for Chaikovsky, illness followed by a prolonged trip abroad and for his wife, the advancement of a nervous disorder that led eventually to her commitment in a mental asylum. All arrangements concerning the aftermath of the marriage had to be made by Chaikovsky's relatives, friends, colleagues in the conservatory, and benefactors. He never spoke to his wife again, and on the rare occasions when he spoke about her, he did so unkindly. All of this, however, does not change the meaning of the peculiar constellation of life experience and its literary pattern, of real events and an artistic idea that provided the background for the operatic reincarnation of *Eugene Onegin*. The opera thus conceived eventually became the cornerstone of Chaikovsky's fame. No matter what the plain reality of Chaikovsky's marriage became,[40] in symbolic terms it became the decisive step toward the consummation of his artistic self.

Owing to the extraordinary circumstances in which the idea to write this opera came to Chaikovsky, Pushkin's novel acquired in his eyes the dimensions of a real-life story. He himself lived through the situations and dilemmas experienced by its characters, measured his own behavior by a yardstick provided by their example, and developed personal feelings toward them as if they were real human beings, his own peers. In Chaikovsky's perception, writing music to *Eugene Onegin* stood apart from the routine experience of writing an opera on a conventional libretto; for the first time, he was writing an opera following not established conventions but "an irresistible inner impulse."[41] It was a bold and resolute step away from the conventional domain of the fantastic, exotic, and (pseudo-)historical. As he wrote to Taneev explaining his new work: "I would eagerly take on any opera in which there were human beings similar to myself, who would experience feelings that I also have experienced and can understand. . . . I am seeking an intimate but powerful drama whose conflict would be founded on situations that I myself have experienced."[42]

Verdi's *Aïda,* which he had heard in Italy during his year of convalescence, offered an opportune example of the artificial operatic world he had just resolutely abandoned for real people and their feelings: "I don't understand the feelings of an Egyptian princess, a pharaoh, and some frenzied Nubian. . . . I need to proceed without tsars, popular mutinies, gods, marches, in a word, without everything that constitutes the staples of the *grand opera*."[43]

(The prominence, in this negative list, of tsars and popular mutinies alongside marches and pharaohs makes Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* another transparent target of this diatribe; this was the opera about which Chaikovsky once wrote: "I send the trashy [*musorgskuyu:* a pun on the composer's name] music to the devil with all the eagerness in my heart; it is the most trite and vile travesty of music.")[44]

In the Russian cultural tradition of the nineteenth century, innovative artistic ideas and projects often appeared clad in the rhetoric of the denunciation of established "Western" artistic patterns. Ironically, whereas *Aïda* obligingly served Chaikovsky as the embodiment of grand opera's artificiality, Verdi's experience with writing *La Traviata* (1853)—the first operatic drama whose subject and characters were similar to those of contemporary life—actually had deep resonances with Chaikovsky's experience of a quarter century later, resonances of which he apparently remained unaware. Verdi attended the première of Alexander Dumas's *La Dame aux camélias* at the Vaudeville Theater in February 1852 together with his companion, the singer Giuseppina Strepponi. Traumatized by the reception that their union had received in his native town of Bussetto, where they had spent the previous summer together, Verdi saw some parallels with his own life in Dumas's drama.[45] Even before then he had thought of writing an opera on that subject, which he described as "simple but affecting"[46]—exactly as Chaikovsky would describe *Eugene Onegin* twenty-five years later. Verdi conceived his new work as "a chamber opera" (*opéra de chambre*) destined to stand apart from "the grand boutique" of the grand opera; he insisted that *La Traviata* was unsuited to a big opera house like Paris's Grand Opéra, with its tradition of grandiloquent histrionics. It is hard to say whether these amazing parallels were somehow perceived by Chaikovsky.[47] Nevertheless, they are not entirely coincidental, if one considers the ideological and artistic atmosphere of the time dominated by the advent of realist art. Both composers felt inspired after an encounter with a literary work that evoked deep resonances with their feelings and personal experience of the moment—the highest attestation for a work of art in the age of high realism. This concurrence of personal and artistic impressions turned out to be a mighty catalyst that allowed both composers to denounce—if only for the occasion—the conventional and histrionic aspects of their art that had no direct rapport with real life. Instead, each would write an opera whose verisimilitude would be attested by its ability to appeal to listeners' feelings intimately and directly, a precious quality that would render them unsuitable for "the grand boutique" of big opera houses. Also common to both was their ironic but predictable outcome: an opera destined to shun the big stage achieve widespread and lasting success.

By the time Verdi wrote *La Traviata,* he had already experienced several undisputed triumphs with his previous operas. For Chaikovsky, the move from "the boutique" to an "artless" story, as he called *Eugene Onegin,* constituted the decisive step in his full self-realization as an opera composer, and more broadly, as an artist and human being. Chaikovsky's behavior while preparing *Eugene Onegin* for the stage was remarkably different from what it had been with each of his previous operas. Instead of supplicating a big opera house, he saw to it that *Onegin* was first put on by students of the Moscow Conservatory "as if in a private fashion, *en petit comité*."[48] Subsequently, he adamantly refused to request that any theater take his *Onegin;* on the contrary, he was prepared to consent to its production only if "humbly asked," so that he could dictate the way it would be staged and sung. Contrary to common wisdom, Chaikovsky wished the score to be published before the theatrical première, because he was convinced that the opera's destiny would be decided not in a theater but among the public at large, "from below, not from above";[49] it is remarkable how right he proved to be.[50]

A persistent motif in Chaikovsky's letters of that time is the need to follow his own inner impulses rather than to try to comply with outwardly imposed conditions. In this respect, an anecdotal situation he described in a letter to his brother Anatoly about a Moscow acquaintance whom he tried to avoid seeing in Italy is telling. When his ploy for escaping from the undesirable visit was exposed, he felt awkward but insisted nevertheless: "Generally speaking, I have decided to throw away all these courtesies, urbanities, mandatory compliance with the forms of social life, if they annoy me. Enough have I twisted myself! It is time to spend the rest of my days as I want, without succumbing to the tyranny of social relations."[51] (But Chaikovsky being Chaikovsky, he added to this declaration of personal independence: "That said, I am going to write a nice letter to Azanchevsky [the person whom he had tried to avoid] and tell him the whole truth").

Most of the work on the opera was done after the nervous crisis caused by Chaikovsky's marriage.[52] He received a year's paid leave from the conservatory, which he spent abroad, mostly in Italy, where the score for *Onegin* was written. As his leave was coming to an end, Chaikovsky found it impossible to resume his position at the conservatory. It was at this critical point that von Meck's offer of yearly support, which would enable him to live the life of a free artist, providentially came. He accepted her support with a dignified confidence of his worthiness of it: "I am happy that my life has such firm supports as your friendship, the love of my brothers, and the understanding of my ability to perfect myself in my vocation. If circumstances are benign, and today

I wish to believe that they will be, I may be able to leave a lasting memory behind me. I hope this is not self-flattery but a justified assessment of my abilities."[53]

Pushkin's and Byron's generation saw in the ambiguity of relations between *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit* an inexhaustible source of creative sport: sometimes frolicking, sometimes dangerous, always ingenious and exhilarating. As for intellectuals of the 1860s, what they discerned in their own lives and what they received from contemporary literature was, if not completely indistinguishable, at least seen in mutual reflection, as if in a double mirror. Chaikovsky's story was characteristic of a time when art longed to attain reality, whereas reality was often, if not always, perceived through a lens provided by art. By virtue of becoming to Chaikovsky a real-life story, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* acquired for him the dimensions of a realist narrative. When he defended the novel from the view, common among his generation, that Pushkin's creation might be a wonderful piece of poetry but a light weight on the scale of realist literature, he did so by emphasizing its "artless plot, . . . simple, humane feelings and situations,"[54] that is, its ability to resonate with everyone's everyday experience. He sounds almost like Chekhov when he tries to convince von Meck that Tatiana's love for Onegin and the duel presented worthy artistic subjects: "All this is, if you wish, simple, even quotidian, but the simple and quotidian excludes neither poetry nor drama."[55]

Eugene Onegin was conceived as an opera that would fit the mold of the Russian realist novel of the 1850s and 1860s. As far as its situations and characters were concerned, they looked as if they had been drawn directly from Turgenev, Tolstoy, or Goncharov.[56] The initial scene in the garden, the admirable directness with which Tatiana (like some of Turgenev's heroines) addresses the man she loves, the humorous depiction of a provincial ball and the cold magnificence of a high-society gathering, the dilemma of passion and marital vows—all of this directly responded to common experience, if not from one's own life, then certainly from contemporary literature.

The first scene exposes its realistic attire in a most striking way. Characteristically, Chaikovsky envisioned this scene clearly from the very beginning. In the letter to Modest written May 18, 1877, in which he expresses for the first time his intention to write *Onegin,* he describes the scene in detail: "As the curtain rises, old Larina and the nanny are making jam, remembering old times. . . . Singing can be heard from the house. It is Tatiana and Olga singing a duet after Zhukovsky's poem to the accompaniment of a harp. . . . Suddenly a door-boy [*kazachok,* literally "little cossack," after the habit of dressing

door-boys in cossack uniforms] announces: "Guests coming!" Everybody is in turmoil. Enter Eugene and Lensky. A ceremony of introduction and entertainment (cranberry water). . . . The old women leave to prepare the supper. The young folks set out for a walk in pairs. . . . Tatiana feels shy in the beginning, then falls in love."[57]

How many initial scenes in Russian novels of this period could be described in similar terms? Of the possible devices for setting in motion the wheels of the novel's plot, the friendly gathering or arrival of a guest was a favorite of Russian novelists of the time. A new (male) party appears in a domestic scene, and a conversation follows that will have far-reaching consequences for the heroes' relations: Turgenev's *Rudin, On the Eve,* and *Fathers and Sons,* Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* and Dostoevsky's *Idiot* come to mind as renowned examples.

To be sure, the scene of Onegin's visit to the Larins corresponded to the one in Pushkin's novel. But there, it is written in a particularly wry, deliberately alienated manner. Save for the cranberry water—a comic detail that gives Onegin a pretext to make a foppish remark to Lensky on their way back: "I wonder if cranberry water will do me harm"—we never learn how the visit proceeded. As Caryl Emerson noted, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* "is a lonely place."[58] Direct and intimate dialogues between the novel's heroes are all but nonexistent. Instead, Pushkin's readers, like those of Jane Austen, are presented with disjointed trivialities, between the cracks of which they may catch a glimpse of or intuit what actually happened. Half a century later, writers treated the quotidian as containing reality in itself rather than obfuscating it. In the early twentieth century, some writers (notably Chekhov) regained the ability to convey things by omission, to show inner commotion by exhibiting static external postures. But the mid-nineteenth-century novel was profoundly different in this respect: its characters spoke out; they impressed each other directly with words and actions, not with what was left implied.

Chaikovsky's *Onegin* departs in this respect from Pushkin's and sides with its literary contemporaries. We see a characteristic female household—the old ladies preparing jam, the young ones singing a duet—set in motion by the arrival of male guests. All the ingredients of such an encounter are present on stage: the turmoil experienced by young and old, each one for her own reasons; a somewhat awkward initial exchange; a walk in the garden before supper; and the ensuing conversations, in which the men express themselves in sentimental or caustic effusions, while the women either listen in silence—a sign of Tatiana-like depth of character—or make brief coquettish remarks expressing mock incomprehension of their suitors' amorous discourse, in the case of an Olga-like ingénue. Looking at some of the dialogue in the opera's

first scene, one feels that with some adjustment of the word order to change the text from a vaguely rhythmical diction to prose, they could be taken as quotations from a hitherto unknown Russian novel:

> LENSKY. Mesdames, I took the liberty of bringing a friend with me. Allow me to introduce him: Onegin, my neighbor.
>
> ONEGIN. Happy to make your acquaintance.
>
> LARINA. Naturally, we are glad to see you. Please take a seat. Here are my daughters.
>
> ONEGIN. Very pleased to meet you.
>
> LARINA. Let's go inside—or perhaps you would prefer to enjoy the fresh air? Please make yourself comfortable: we are neighbors, so there is no need to stand on ceremony.
>
> LENSKY. It is delightful here! I love this garden, intimate and shadowy. One feels so cozy in it!
>
> LARINA. Wonderful! I'll go arrange things, and you, please entertain our guests—I'll be done in a minute.

The realist setting has immediate consequences for the opera's characters. In the novel, no clue is given that could explain the "elective affinity" felt by the main heroes toward each other: not a word, not a glance. In the opera, Onegin conquers Tatiana by declaiming sarcastic lines about his "uncle of most honorable principles" (with which the novel actually begins) in the ostentatiously subversive fashion of Rudin, Bazarov, or Raisky. Lest listeners not appreciate the indelible impression these words make on Tatiana, the scene concludes with the old nanny naïvely observing that the "new *barin*" has apparently caught the eye of her "little dove" (the orchestra, playing Tatiana's lyrical leitmotif, concurs).

But it is first and foremost musically that the opera makes manifest its adherence to the fundamental principles of the realist style. During the 1860s, young members of the "Mighty Little Heap," inspired by realist trends in literature, Dargomyzhsky's example of striving for truth in music, and Stasov's critical exhortations, proclaimed the development of a realist style in opera to be their principal goal. This goal was to be sought by abolishing traditional operatic numbers and "artificially" created melodies, replacing them with continuous recitatives whose vocal line would imitate the intonational curves of everyday speech as closely as possible. Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Maiden of Pskov,* Musorgsky's unfinished *Marriage* (after Gogol's unadulterated text), and, to a large extent, the first version of *Boris Godunov* were written more or less strictly following this principle. Later, however, both Rimsky-Korsakov and Musorgsky abandoned this doctrinaire stance and reverted to traditional operatic structure, with its core of extended arias and choruses.

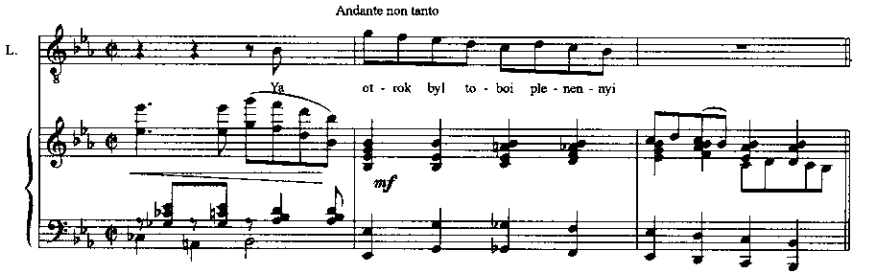
Chaikovsky never deviated from the traditional operatic shape, which was one of the grounds for the scorn with which his work was treated by the more radical members of the St. Petersburg school. *Eugene Onegin* was no exception in this regard. To be sure, the opera featured fine recitatives, some of them containing an intricate interplay between the vocal line and implied speech intonation. A fine example of the latter is a dialogue between Onegin and Tatiana during their encounter at the ball in act 3, scene 1: Tatiana uses calm and extremely plain intonations whose very choice of tonality — C and G major — reflects their utter conventionality; Onegin replies with abrupt, rhythmically impulsive and tonally unstable remarks that, while betraying his stifled anxiety, at the same time hew to the habitual nonchalant speech pattern of a society lion. Such moments of intonational verisimilitude notwithstanding, the opera largely proceeds as a chain of well-shaped musical numbers. Even a sequence of remarks in a recitative exchange often adds up to a consistent melodic line, thus constituting an implicit number with a clear cadence at the end. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in *Onegin* Chaikovsky found a new way of adopting the realist style in music that, although not so obvious as that of the imitation of speech, perhaps evoked deeper resonances with the contemporary psychological novel.

Taken together, *Onegin*'s numerous arias, ensembles, choruses, and dances fall into two categories. On one hand, some numbers are explicitly recognizable as representations of quotidian musical genres. Each of these genres evokes a tangible social situation in which it would occur in everyday life. Such are, first of all, the dances in the two ball scenes: the waltz and mazurka at the Larins' in the second act and the polonaise and ecossaise at the ball in the third act. The three peasant choruses represent such established genres of peasant music-making as the "slow song" (*protyazhnaya*), a song accompanying dancing (*plyasovaya*), and the "maidens' song" (*devichya*). Tatiana's and Olga's opening duet (its words taken not from Zhukovsky, as Chaikovsky had originally intended, but from the early Pushkin elegy "Poor singer") represents drawing-room music-making. Another example of this socio-musical mode is Triquet's valedictory musical address to Tatiana on the occasion of her saint's name-day. Even such a popular representation of real-life music as the sound of a shepherd's flute (played, as usual, by the oboe) doesn't fail to appear.

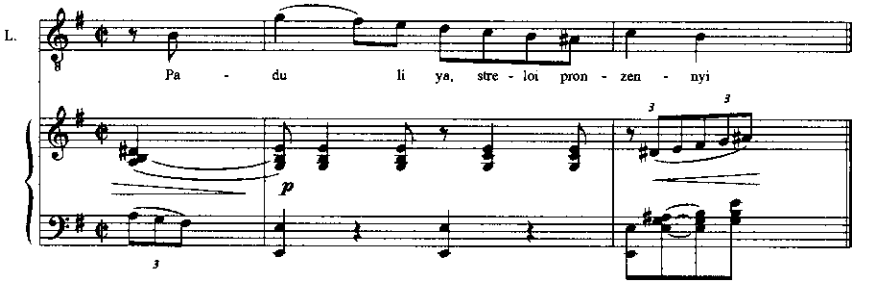
Quotidian musical genres are often employed in opera, in a more or less stylized form. What made the case of *Onegin* unusual was the closeness of the situations on stage indicated by such music to real life. These numbers offered enriched but still clearly recognizable audible components of life situations familiar to all. Together, they created a tangible social space in which the

opera's characters acted and expressed themselves. Chaikovsky resented the triumphal march in *Aïda* because it was not related to an actual, rather than a purely fictional, situation. Its magnificent sound, expressive as it was in the capacity of a generic march, did not evoke any of the concrete, socially identifiable circumstances under which such a march could be expected to be heard. Unlike Verdi's march, the waltz in *Onegin*'s second act and polonaise in the third offered musical discourses that were culturally and socially predicated. The difference in their sound reflected the difference between a provincial gathering, with its exuberant clumsiness, and the glittering but cold magnificence of a St. Petersburg ball.[59] Just as vividly, Triquet's couplets evoked the familiar figure of a French teacher, with his broken Russian and ludicrous mannerisms; not only did his verses feature a bizarre mixture of French and Russian (itself a well-developed genre in the school folklore of the time),[60] but his music also sounded distinctly non-Russian. Innumerable shepherds have played their flutes before and after the one to whom Tatiana listened after writing her letter. But that one went beyond the generic pastoral voice: it presented itself as a recognizable detail of a recognizable landscape, evoking a tangible picture of a morning on a Russian estate. Judging by its sound, one could guess that the Larins' estate was probably situated in the Ukraine or southern Russia—a region Chaikovsky often visited as the guest of his sister and brother-in-law, the Davydovs—rather than among the northern landscapes typical of the novel (which in their turn reflected Pushkin's experience of exile in the northwestern corner of the country). The sumptuous garden to which Lensky refers in the first scene of the opera—but not in the novel—reinforces the impression of a southern ambiance, more akin to the Davydovs' Kamenka than Pushkin's Mikhailovskoe.

On the other hand, many of the solos and ensembles sung by the major characters do not comply at all with quotidian musical genres. Often they follow an established operatic pattern, as do, for example, Lensky's and Gremin's "grand arias" with their triple structure. In other cases, they are more complex and unusual in form, as is Tatiana's solo in the letter-writing scene, which consists of several episodes ingeniously connected to each other. Unlike Glinka's *Ruslan,* in which, as we have seen, the sound of the *romans* gradually took over the world of traditional operatic genres, *Eugene Onegin* is distanced from the genre and musical discourse of everyday music, as far as the interactions between its major characters are concerned. Even Lensky's elegy ("Whither have you gone, golden days of my spring?"), whose homemade poetic quality made Pushkin's narrator chuckle, is clad in the musical attire of a fully developed operatic aria, far from a household composition.



3.2. Chaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin,* scene 1, Lensky's arioso



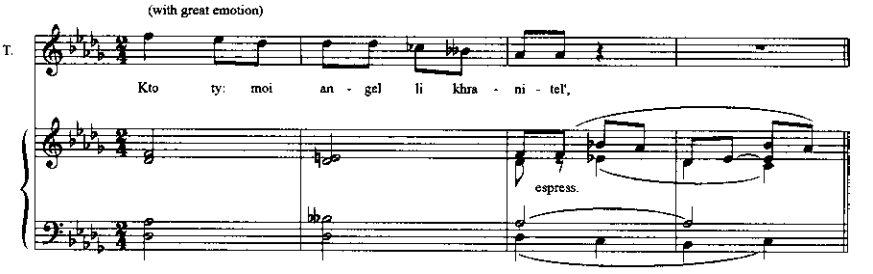
3.3. Chaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin,* scene 5, Lensky's aria

Behind these conventional operatic appearances, however, lies an intense psychological analysis whose primary instruments are the leitmotifs belonging to different characters and situations and their interaction over the course of the evolution of the musical narrative. Let us consider only one example of this analytical employment of the opera's recurrent themes.

In the first scene, during the two couples' walk in the garden, Lensky addresses Olga with a very brief exuberant arioso. In this seemingly transient episode a motif emerges that is to become one of the thematic signposts of the opera. The motif is constituted by an upward leap of a sixth, from the fifth to the third step, followed by a gradual descent to the initial tone — which in itself is a much-used intonational cliché of the Russian *romans,* although the arioso as a whole does not adhere to this genre (example 3.2).

This motif will be echoed in Lensky's aria in the duel scene, where it will appear in minor, its vocal line subtly but dramatically transformed: the exuberant leap of a sixth is gone, and a moaning chromatic figure appears at the end; it sounds like a funereal echo of the earlier expression of happiness (example 3.3).

Before this, the motif is adopted by Tatiana in her letter scene. Is it the



3.4. Chaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin,* scene 2, Tatiana's letter

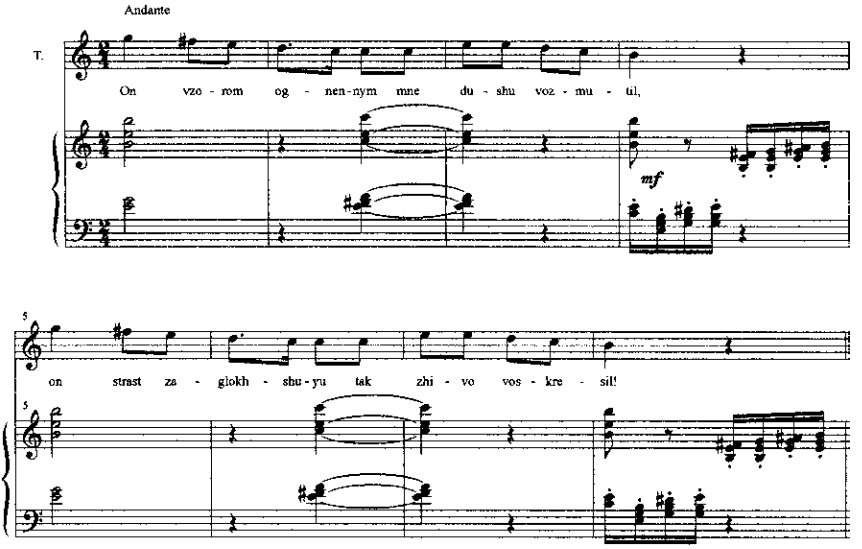
memory of Lensky's arioso, the foremost expression of happy love, that directs her pen? The motif accompanies the words Tatiana addresses to Eugene: "Who are you? My guardian angel, or a fiendish seducer?" Once again, it becomes transformed in accordance with the meaning of the situation: the mystical subtext of Tatiana's words is rendered in the harmony by the minor VI chord in the major tonality—a common device for expressing the magical and supernatural in contemporary music (example 3.4).

Like Lensky in the scene of the duel, Tatiana is to experience later a situation that will provoke the transposition of the same motif into the minor. It comes in the concluding scene of the opera, in the monologue in which Tatiana laments Onegin's reappearance in her life. She refers to Onegin as an "implacable ghost" whose "fiery glance" has "resurrected" her passion, thus recalling, albeit in a quite different mood, the mystical undertones of her letter (example 3.5).

In following all the vicissitudes of Lensky's leitmotif, the listeners catch a glimpse of the heroes' inner worlds: their feelings, secret hopes, and lamenting remembrances, the unexpressed thoughts underlying their interaction.[61]

We can now say that the discourse of Chaikovsky's opera evolves in a dual mode. Its genre music creates a realist ambiance in which the opera's actions take place, while the presentation of its major characters and their interactions amounts to psychological analysis by musical means. The opera's musical ambiance is vividly pictorial; it is associated with everyday musical experiences involving concrete situations and social modes. Its psychological aspect, on the contrary, is represented by music that is introspective and analytical rather than representational—music that appeals to the listener's ability to remember, to follow clues, and to draw conclusions, rather than to form instant reactions grounded in his everyday musical experience.

Such dualism was highly typical of the mid-nineteenth-century novel, from Dickens and Balzac to Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. On one hand, it



3.5. Chaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin,* scene 7, Tatiana's lament

offered to its readers tangible descriptions of the external circumstances in which its characters lived and acted; on the other, it gave them access to the invisible and immaterial world of the characters' thoughts and feelings. This dualism reflected the split between external material and social conditions and a person's inner spiritual world, between what one was and what one hoped for or dreamed of, what one did and said and what one felt while doing and saying it. This split constituted perhaps the deepest foundation and the broadest common denominator for the nineteenth-century psychological novel. Pre-Romantic and early Romantic writers were the first to emphasize the difference between the life of the soul and external appearances, but they did so by pushing the latter into the deep background, almost to the point of oblivion. Sterne's *Sentimental Journey,* Goethe's *Werther,* and Novalis's *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* are preoccupied with the inner worlds of their principal characters almost to the exclusion of the external conditions of their lives; even the rare glimpses of the outside world offered to the reader are strongly colored by the protagonists' subjective perceptions. The principal achievement of the realist novel was to present the objective and subjective worlds as balanced counterparts. The evolution of such a novel's plot was determined neither by the heroes' feelings nor by outward conditions exclusively but by the interaction between inner impulses and external circumstances, the former now challenging and disrupting, now succumbing to the latter.

On the level of the novel's discourse, this dualism showed itself in the double strategy of the narrative. On one hand, it contained detailed depictions of the ambiance: streets would be precisely indicated, buildings described in great detail, inside and out, the heroes' appearance depicted; prompted by such descriptions, the reader would be able either to project a picture in his mind based on similar real-life experiences or recognize actual scenes such as a street in Paris or St. Petersburg. On the other, the heroes' self-presentation, accompanied by analytic commentaries by the narrator, drew the reader into the intangible realm of their inner world. From the point of view of narrative technique, these two strategies employed different means: the former was aimed at recognition, the latter at understanding; the former appealed to the generically characteristic, the latter to individualization and analytical juxtapositions. Whenever an external detail was presented to a reader, be it a view of a street, a picture hanging in a drawing-room, or the name of the firm from which the hero bought his tail-coat, it worked as an indicator of a generically familiar ambiance. The marginal personages who belonged, together with various objects, to the narrative's ambiance were often presented in the same way as costumes or interiors. They spoke in stylistically marked phrases that instantly placed them within a certain social space: an innkeeper spoke like a generic innkeeper, a valet like a valet, a peasant like a peasant. The principal characters, however, spoke so as to fully express themselves as individuals.

Few nineteenth-century operas fit into this mold of the contemporary novel in such a profound way as does *Eugene Onegin* (perhaps *Carmen,* an opera Chaikovsky admired, offers another example). This cannot, however, be said about the Pushkin novel. Like Goethe, Byron, and Constant, Pushkin appears to have an ambiguous relationship to the rising tides of realist psychological prose. If from time to time he assumes the posture of a typical nineteenth-century omniscient objective narrator, it is only to repudiate it the next moment, either by claiming personal involvement with his personages (trying to teach Onegin to distinguish iamb from trochee, rereading Tatiana's letter in awe) or, on the contrary, by hinting that all of this is nothing more than a practical joke whose likely victim is the reader.

Characteristically, most of monologues by means of which the opera's characters express themselves, although taken from Pushkin's text, do not belong to them in the novel. They are spoken by the narrator, leaving the reader at liberty to guess whether they reflect the characters' personalities or the narrator's penchant for witty paradoxes. In the opera, many pronouncements by Pushkin's narrator are shifted from the third person to the first, becoming direct speech—an alteration of dubious stylistic merit that made more sensitive readers complain about "sacrilege," but in fact, a necessary one, for it

allowed Pushkin's heroes to speak up, expressing themselves directly, as the heroes of a psychological novel were supposed to do.

For the first production of his opera, Chaikovsky insisted that the sets and costumes be made authentic with respect to Pushkin's epoch, which at that time was an unusual demand even for a drama. Every effort was made to meet this goal, yet the lack of experience in pursuing it made numerous anachronisms unavoidable. The actor playing Triquet wore a beard, a strange fashion statement for a French émigré early in the nineteenth century. The officers at Larina's ball paraded the same uniforms of the regiments of the guard as did the officers at the high-society scene in St. Petersburg; the high rank suggested by their sumptuous epaulettes appeared comically incompatible with their young faces.[62]

But it hardly mattered what kind of costumes the characters wore. The ways in which the characters in Chaikovsky's "Lyrical Scenes" behaved and talked, expressed themselves, and addressed each other unambiguously indicated a world inhabited by the composer's contemporaries or by characters from contemporary literature. By the same token, this signified a split with the world of Pushkin and his heroes.

The contrast between the novel's evasiveness and the opera's directness signified more than the impossibility of keeping up with Pushkin's dizzyingly elliptical manner of expression once his characters acquired physical dimensions on stage. It reflected a profound difference between two worlds separated by forty or fifty years—a difference the more striking in that it was inconspicuous, owing to the commonality of language and many details of everyday life. To be sure, Pushkin's generation—and characters—spoke a language that was considerably different from that used by people of the 1860s. But the difference lay more in what was perceived, implied, or referred to than in any actual choice of words and turns of phrase, and it was further obfuscated by the domestication of Pushkin's verses in everyone's memory. For those who knew the way of life on an estate in the 1850s or even in the 1860s, in the wake of the abolition of serfdom, it hardly looked different from life on an estate in the early part of the century: they saw the same caring old nanny, the same picturesque peasants, the same domestic music- and poetry-making, the same little excitements of neighborly visits, the same atmosphere of vague romantic expectation surrounding all the young people within a small circle of the neighborhood. As I have already mentioned, beginning in the late 1860s, Chaikovsky used to spend summers with his sister Aleksandra and her husband Lev Davydov on their estate Kamenka in the Ukraine. In the early 1820s that same Kamenka belonged to Pushkin's friends the brothers Vasily and

Aleksandr Davydov and was frequented by Pushkin during his years in Kishinev (1821–23). It was there that he read the first stanzas of *Eugene Onegin* to a tight circle of friends, many of whom (including V. Davydov) were soon to vanish into Siberian exile—a memorable event to which the poet referred emotionally in the concluding stanzas of his novel seven years later.[63] Fashions had changed since then, to be sure; but otherwise, Pushkin's and Chaikovsky's Kamenka, or the households of Larina and Lasunskaya (from Turgenev's *Rudin*), looked largely the same.

But were they really? When Pushkin returned to Kishinev after another protracted stay in Kamenka, he carried his world with him. His largely nominal position as a petty official in a local chancellery, the squalor and poverty of the scenery around him, were nothing more to him than raw material for playful epigrams. What really mattered was the small and to a large extent homogeneous milieu to which he belonged: that of a highly sophisticated and almost completely hermetic gentry culture. Any member of that milieu, whether a real person or a literary character, retained in whatever physical surroundings he might find himself an invisible environment of self-evident behavioral codes, imperative ethical values, unquestioned social skills and educational acquisitions. Much was silently implied; much could be understood with a fleeting hint, a single glance, a seemingly trivial remark. This hermetic environment imposed stiff restrictions on behavior and manner of expression on those who belonged to it: there were too many shared presumptions from which one simply could not depart without a major rupture. These conditions further highlighted a culture of ellipses, in which one could and should make one's way mostly by manipulating silent implications. Such is the world reflected in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* or in the novels of Jane Austen. To understand the behavior of their characters—what they did and did not do, what they said and did not say—to read the pauses between two seemingly trivial remarks, one has to project the scant evidence available from the given description of a scene onto the social and psychological presumptions that underlay its barren surface.

As far as Russia was concerned, this virtual world of presumptions and implications began to crumble after December 14, 1825. As early as the turn of the 1830s, Pushkin and his companions found themselves dealing with people of a different make whom they did not quite understand and who could not or would not understand them. By the time of Chaikovsky and his generation, Pushkin's "Golden Age," as people began calling it sometime in the 1860s,[64] was long gone. Whenever Chaikovsky returned from Kamenka, he plunged into the world of the Moscow Conservatory and Moscow cultural life—a world inhabited by people of various ethnic, social, and educational

backgrounds. Those people had to seek common ground by direct interaction rather than silent implications. They had to speak out, to act deliberately, to state their beliefs and their goals. This is the world that determined both the subject matter and the discourse of Turgenev's or Dostoevsky's novels. It is also the world that stood behind the characters and situations of the operatic *Eugene Onegin.*

In the world of Pushkin and his characters, Tatiana's decision to write a love letter to Onegin was not only highly unusual but hardly reasonable. Jane Austen's heroines, no matter how desperately in need of contact with the man they loved, would never have contemplated such a move, above all because it was useless: its very extravagance would inevitably cause it to fail. Whether Tatiana was initially so naïve that she did not realize this or whether she resorted to this extraordinary means deliberately in order to communicate to Onegin the degree of her desperation, the reader—Pushkin's contemporary—had to understand that this was an event of catastrophic proportions. Pushkin never balked at baffling his readers with an unexpected turn in his narrative; here, however, he felt it necessary to rise in Tatiana's defense, arguing, in an afterword to her letter, that her unconventional sincerity indeed signified a character beyond the ordinary rather than an ordinary foolishness or wickedness. He did so not out of prudishness, which he did not have, but because there was a real danger of misunderstanding. The novel could easily slip into an all-too-familiar literary terrain, creating the expectation that Tatiana would turn out merely another example of the spirited but imprudent heroine whose inevitable literary destiny was to perish—a type that resounded with numerous eighteenth-century female characters, from Manon and Richardson's Clarissa to Wilhelm Meister's beloved, Louise.

The conditions of the world inhabited by Turgenev's or Goncharov's characters were quite different. Here the heroine did not hesitate to communicate her love to the man she had chosen. The move still involved great risks, but it was exactly the heroine's ability and willingness to take those risks that revealed her spiritual vigor. Turgenev's Natalia in *Rudin* and Elena in *On the Eve,* Goncharov's Olga in *Oblomov* and Liza in *The Ravine,* Dostoevsky's Aglaia in *Idiot,* and Tolstoy's Natasha in *War and Peace* clearly follow Tatiana's example, but their motives and the consequences of their actions are as different from Tatiana's as hers were different from those of the literary heroines from the previous century in whose roles she imagined herself. In the world of the mid-nineteenth century—at least, in its literary projection—Tatiana's behavior looked courageous but not self-destructive, bold but not extravagant.

For Pushkin's contemporary readers, it should have said a lot about Onegin's

character that he proved able to understand the true nature of Tatiana's letter and did not succumb to the ready stereotype that the narrator felt it necessary to disclaim. In her place and time, Tatiana's behavior made her vulnerable to something worse than losing her honor: a shrug or ridicule. Somehow Onegin sensed that the case was neither banal nor ridiculous and found it necessary to offer an admonition: "Learn to master yourself!" His shock treatment was commensurate with Tatiana's shocking behavior. Certainly, Onegin took a smug satisfaction from his exercise in pedagogy. But it is difficult to imagine how he should or could have behaved otherwise under the circumstances — at least, at that point. How was he, a person whose role models were Childe Harold and Adolphe, supposed to react to a letter clad in eighteenth-century sentimentality, a letter that challenged him to clarify whether he was the guardian angel or fiendish seducer of the sender? Perhaps, had the tragic subsequent events not separated them irrevocably, the heroes' ways might still have led them to each other, as happens eventually, after all the vicissitudes of misunderstanding and separation, with Austen's protagonists. Or perhaps it was Tatiana's ability to comprehend Onegin's character better after she had seen his abandoned home that made her give up any hope for happiness and opened the way to her marriage.

Fifty years later, readers would see no reason whatsoever why Onegin could not answer Tatiana's call for love with, at the very least, more sympathy. And what kind of person must he have been not to have fallen in love immediately on receiving such a letter? (The letter's eighteenth-centuryish clang, so unbearably outmoded to the ear of a refined contemporary of Pushkin, signified nothing but freshness of feeling for the generation of the 1860s). The explanation for this strange mishap was not hard to find. Its cause must have been the same thing that made Rudin or Oblomov fail in similar situations: the hero's inner flaw, his "superfluity."

According to a symbolic code well known to the readers of *Rudin* and *The Ravine,* the integrity of the heroine's character means that her passion for the subject she has chosen, however unworthy, may subside only after she has shown her readiness to sacrifice herself on behalf of her love. That Pushkin showed Tatiana growing from the original naïveté, fed by sentimentalist stereotypes, to a remarkable maturity that enabled her not only to master herself but fully understand Onegin's character, went against the grain of all contemporary literary conventions for treating a female character. Perhaps for the first time a woman was shown not as an organically wholesome creature but as a developing person. This unexpected turn proved frustrating not only to the novel's hero but to a large part of the public, particularly a few decades later, when the art of appreciating what a novel's character did *not* say and did

not do was largely lost owing to the explicit nature of realist discourse. Already for Belinsky, less than a decade later, it became a point of some bewilderment that Pushkin's Tatiana, after the lesson given to her by Onegin, proves too good a disciple in the art of mastering herself. In his 1841 article Belinsky reproached Tatiana for showing an uncharacteristic smugness in the final scene: how could she reject the hero so unequivocally, in such a self-possessed manner?[65] Chaikovsky's initial plan was to amend this situation. In the concluding scene of the first version of the opera—the one that was staged in 1879—Tatiana, after a moral struggle, falls into Eugene's arms à la Liza from *The Ravine;*[66] at that crucial moment, the husband appears, Tatiana regains her self-possession after her momentary weakness, and Onegin flees the scene in despair. Only after protests from a public shocked to see the most revered heroine of all Russian literature corrupted on stage (if only for a fleeting moment)[67] did Chaikovsky amend the final scene, removing the husband (whose aria in the preceding scene became an isolated episode as a result) and making Tatiana adhere to the novel's script.

As for Onegin, his moral bankruptcy, signified by his failure at the rendezvous in the garden, becomes evident immediately after that crucial event, in the following scene of the ball at the Larins'. His appearance at the feast, aggravated by his inviting Tatiana to dance, looks downright reckless and cruel, not only causing unnecessary pain to Tatiana but giving fresh fuel to the gossip around them (chorus: "Look, look, they are dancing, the *pigeons!*"). Frustrated and bored, he provokes a quarrel with Lensky that ends with a near-fistfight and an ostentatious challenge to a duel. Except for the comic inadequacy of the situation, in which one publicly proposes and the other publicly accepts a duel (the duel being officially considered a crime in Pushkin's time, such publicity would mean, if anything, a cowardly scheme to avoid one by provoking the authorities to interfere), Onegin's behavior in the opera looks outwardly the same as in the novel. But its hidden, or rather, self-evident and therefore not articulated motives looked different in the novel's world. Onegin's two visits to the Larins have made it virtually impossible for him not to accept the invitation to the celebration of Tatiana's name day. In the narrow world of the gentry neighborhood, his failure to appear at the feast would be certain to cause a small scandal, opening the way to all kinds of gossip and conjecture. (Remember the effect of Mr. Bingley's interrupting his visits in *Pride and Prejudice*). Onegin could not do this precisely because he was not as coldly indifferent to Tatiana as his lecture might suggest to later generations of readers. It was the feeling of being caught in a trap, of having no other choice than to expose himself to all the horrors of a provincial festivity and to a thoroughly embarrassing situation vis-à-vis Tatiana, that caused

Onegin's irritation and triggered his defensive foppishness. He did not anticipate, of course, that what awaited him the next day was an envoy from Lensky with a challenge to duel.

In his devastating review of the opera Cui pointed to the duel scene as particularly damning evidence of the "strangeness" of its subject. According to Cui, the scene left a "comic" impression because the characters were put in a situation so senseless that they literally could not figure out what they were doing on stage.[68] Viewed through Bazarov's lens, the scene became absurdist theater. Chaikovsky, although he defended the dramatic value of the situation, did so only because of the compassion it evoked for the young poet slain; he found "profoundly touching" the death of "a highly gifted youth due to a fatal collision with the claims of the societal notion of honor." Chaikovsky's sympathy is entirely on the side of Lensky, whose "high gifts" he never places in doubt (unlike Pushkin, for whom Lensky's poetic vocation remained a question mark).[69] Lensky's aria, on the text of the elegy he wrote the night before the duel, constitutes perhaps the highest lyrical moment in the opera. Its theme, recalling Lensky's own love arioso from the first scene, seems to flow directly from the poet's heart. Pushkin, however, had crammed Lensky's verses with the clichés of elegiac poetry and followed them with an ironic remark: "Thus he wrote, vaguely and languidly—which is what we call Romanticism, although I don't see here anything Romantic whatsoever."[70] By the same token, in the opera's duel Onegin is cast as an utterly antipathetic figure. In the novel, after Lensky is killed, the narrator's first thought is about Onegin's remorse and sorrow. Onegin looks silently at the dead body on the snow; a small but eloquent detail suggests the length of this mournful pause: when Zaretsky remarks at last, "Well, he is dead," and puts Lensky's body on the sleigh, the body is already "frozen." In the opera, Onegin asks curtly after his shot: "Is he dead?"—to which Zaretsky replies: "He is dead." The music of the scene's conclusion repeats in multiple echoes the theme of Lensky's aria, leaving Onegin completely out of this overflowing lament. (The music bears a remarkable similarity to the conclusion of the second act of *Tristan and Isolde*—also in D minor—after Tristan is mortally wounded by Melot; particularly striking in both scenes is the concluding mournful phrase of the horn, after all the agitated voices have subsided. This similarity may well have been purely accidental; after all, it was only December 1882 when Chaikovsky, according to his own words, "at last" had a chance to hear Wagner's opera, which he found excruciatingly boring.[71] But issues of influence aside, this similarity underlines the tragic, heroically mournful aura of the musical picture of Lensky's death).

The tragically unintentional character of Lensky' death at the hand of his

friend is so obvious that readers, not to say listeners, do not seem to have felt any need to inquire further: Why, after all, did Lensky have to die? How did it happen? When Pushkin was Lensky's age, during his three years in St. Petersburg late in the second decade of the nineteenth century, he proved to be very fast at challenging people or provoking them to challenge him. As a result, he was involved in a number of duels. In all those affairs, not only he was not killed or wounded, but it seems safe to say that his life was never in a serious danger.[72] Tragic and cruel duels did happen, but rarely within the circle of artists, intellectuals, and dilettantes to which Pushkin belonged. (When a bit later Pushkin got involved in a really serious duel, with an army major in Kishinev, his friends were horrified; fortunately, the duel was postponed, and later avoided, owing to a blizzard that prevented the participants from reaching the site).[73] Typically, after a challenge was sent, the intermediaries would make every effort to reconcile the prospective duelists; they all were friends, after all, or at least did not have a serious cause for enmity. Sometimes the adversaries came to a reconciliation without ever going to the field; sometimes they were allowed to assume a ritual fighting posture with regard to each other before calling the affair off.

Pushkin's duel in 1818 with the poet Vilgelm Kyukhelbeker, his classmate at the Lyceum and a dear friend, can serve as a case in point. Kyukhelbeker's notorious physical awkwardness and clumsy sentimentality made him a constant target of friendly banter. A particularly biting epigram improvised by Pushkin so enraged him that he called his friend out to a duel. With his usual heavy-handed emotionality, Kyukhelbeker refused attempts to diffuse the confrontation. The parties met on the outskirts of the city for a fight. The adversaries assumed fighting positions, pistols in hand. Kyukhelbeker, famous for his ineptitude in martial matters, began to take aim. According to one account, Pushkin shouted to his second, Anton Delvig, another poet, their classmate, and mutual friend: "Come stand by me: when Kyukhlia starts shooting, this is going to be the only safe place around!" Kyukhelbeker lowered his pistol; Pushkin threw his in the air and rushed to embrace him.[74] No poet died that morning. (Six years later, in 1824, Kyukhelbeker wrote an influential article containing scathing criticism of the clichés of elegiac poetry, including Pushkin's. The shadow of his remarks stands invisibly behind Lensky's desk as he is writing his "obscure and vague" elegy, those epithets themselves borrowed from Kyukhelbeker's verdict. By that time—it was the novel's sixth chapter, written in 1827—Kyukhelbeker, whose clumsy figure had been very visible in Senate Square on December 14, 1825, was in Siberia, one of those to whom the novel was addressed at the beginning but who never saw its conclusion).

This happy resolution of the conflict between friends was possible because

they were surrounded by people interested in seeing it resolved. None of those present would misunderstand Pushkin's behavior, let alone spread malicious gossip as to how he avoided taking Kyukhelbeker's shot. In the case of Onegin and Lensky, however, there was one thing that went terribly wrong: Lensky's choice of second.

Pushkin's spare narrative often becomes downright elliptical when he deals with second-tier personages. Virtually all that we learn about Tatiana's husband, for example, comes from Tatiana's own remark on seeing him for the first time: "Who? That fat general?"; Onegin's uncle conveniently lies in his coffin by the time of the hero's arrival, which absolves the narrator from accounting for their previous relationship—in particular, from following up Onegin's opening remark about the means by which his uncle "caused himself to be respected." Yet in presenting to the readers Zaretsky, Lensky's second, Pushkin spares neither narrative space nor complexity. If one needs an illustration of the progress attained by our times, the narrator remarks wryly, here it is: a thoroughly rotten character, a scoundrel, a coward (a scandalous story follows of how he fell into the hands of the French during the campaign of 1813) turned into a peaceful landlord, a "bachelor head of a family," and "even an honest man." Zaretsky is "not stupid," and Eugene, though under no illusions about his character, used to enjoy his company. Zaretsky relishes in his role as keeper of the dueling code, which he uses, in the name of "the strict rules of the art," to prevent those whose duels he managed from avoiding risking their lives; he draws a secret pleasure from observing how they behave in sight of a pistol's muzzle. It is his reputation as the "authority" in the matter that apparently makes the fatally naïve Lensky turn to him for help. From the first moment of Zaretsky's appearance, Onegin understands that any escape from a bloody confrontation has become impossible. Indeed, as we later see, Zaretsky does not make so much as a token attempt to reconcile the adversaries, which after all is his obligation, if only implicit (as everything was implicit in the unwritten code of the Russian duel).

Under the circumstances, there was little Onegin or any of his contemporaries could have done. Hidden in plain view, however, is the fact that he did try to do something, and did it quite desperately. He appears at the duel scene with his valet, Mr. Guillot, whom he introduces as his second. This is certainly a gross violation of the rules. The seconds were considered the equal partners of the adversaries; they shared full legal responsibility for the event and sometimes even confronted each other in a double duel. To present his valet to Zaretsky as his counterpart and make the two negotiate the conditions of the duel was a mortal insult to Zaretsky that put him in a laughable position. Lest Zaretsky think that this insult was unintentional—Onegin did not

know anybody in the neighborhood to ask to be his second, after all — Onegin punctuated the situation with seemingly nonchalant but in fact carefully chosen words:

> "My second? — Eugene said, —
> Here he is: my friend, Mr. Guillot.
> I do not foresee any objection
> To my introduction.
> He may be not a famous person,
> But at least you can be sure that he is an honest fellow."
> Zaretsky bit his lip,
> Onegin asked Lensky:
> "Well, shall we begin?" — "Perhaps,"
> Vladimir said, and they walked
> Beyond the mill. While at some distance
> Our Zaretsky and the *honest fellow*
> Have begun the important conversation,
> The enemies remained in place, their eyes lowered.[75]

The story is told so fast, in verses so fluid, that it is hard to pause and think about what we have actually been told, to appreciate every intonation, gesture, and silence. It is especially difficult for a reader who is convinced from the beginning that a person of real integrity — not a superfluous man — would simply have apologized, embraced Lensky, his friend, and called the whole stupid thing off, just as he should have taken Tatiana in his arms with tears of joy instead of delivering a cold sermon. Meanwhile, Onegin's introduction of his valet as one who can be recommended at the very least by his honesty contains a deliberate and transparent insult to Zaretsky, an insult accompanied by a threatening gesture: "I don't foresee any objection" — that is, if you have any objection, go ahead and raise it. With all his experience, Zaretsky has no illusions as to how deeply he has been humiliated; his lip-biting reflects his anger and indecision. Had anyone else capable of appreciating what had just happened been present at the scene, Zaretsky would hardly have had any choice but to acknowledge the insult and demand satisfaction. An open confrontation with Zaretsky would have disrupted the proceedings of the current duel, checking the inexorable progression of events. With this, Onegin would not have avoided danger to himself — quite the contrary, Zaretsky being potentially a more dangerous adversary than Lensky — but might have avoided killing his only friend or being killed by him. It was once again Lensky's inexperience — the same fatal naïveté that made Tatiana write her letter — that prevented this from happening. As Zaretsky rightly calculated, to be insulted in Lensky's presence was the same as not to have had any witnesses

at all. A thoroughly dishonorable character, he preferred to swallow the insult and be reduced to acting as the counterpart of a valet rather than risk an open confrontation. Onegin's desperate attempt proved futile. We can sense the length of the pause after which he utters his cautious, "Well, shall we begin?" Lensky notices nothing; in a few moments, he will be dead.

Fifty years later, duels could still take place in life as well as in novels. But the conditions under which participants had to act, the degree of freedom with which they could express their feelings about the situation, the possibility of cutting across established behavioral codes, were quite different from those experienced by the inhabitants of Pushkin's world. To the audience of Chaikovsky's opera, the scene of Onegin's and Lensky's duel looked identical to what they remembered (more or less) from the novel; the familiar characters were on stage, the words they were singing taken almost entirely from Pushkin's text. Yet this outward similarity obfuscated an underlying difference. Chaikovsky's music made explicit the emotional prism through which his generation saw the scene in the famous novel: unreserved sympathy for Lensky, an ironic but marginal sketch of Zaretsky — another curious social type — and resolute alienation from Onegin for his inability to do and say what a person of integrity should.

Belinsky was the first to see in Pushkin's novel in verse "an encyclopedia of Russian life," that is, to look at it through the filter of social and psychological expectations formed by the French, and later the Russian, social novel. With the advent of the major novels of the period 1850–1880, the differences in psychological and aesthetic values underlying Pushkin's narrative receded into the background in the public's perception. The shape of the opera reflected this displacement and at the same time made it more focused and, in a way, irrevocable. Complaints arose about the occasional mishandling of Pushkin's text, but the opera's musical narrative struck a profound resonance with a public brought up on psychological novels and socially charged literary criticism. The opera made *Eugene Onegin* contemporary with the generation of the 1860s and 1870s, not only in its own eyes but for later generations as well. Its heroes' feelings and behavior became inscribed in the experience and rules of conduct of postreform society. Pushkin's sparkling narrative, his irony, his charmingly unstable relations with his characters and readers might still be understood and admired, especially after the collapse of the positivist aesthetic and the advent of modernism. But certain social and psychological conditions under which Pushkin's heroes acted, inner motivations about which they had to remain silent, presumptions that they did not need to explain because they were too evident, have faded away. Certainly, Chaikovsky's opera was not the

only reason for that, but it has played a powerful role in this process. With the memorable emotional landscape created by its music, which for subsequent generations would become inseparable from Pushkin's verses, Onegin's fate was all but sealed. His world—and that of his creator—hidden beneath stiff surfaces, artfully orchestrated nonchalance, and dizzying omissions, was to be looked on and judged by readers and listeners accustomed to believe in what they saw, to listen to words rather than silences, to follow a tangible chain of events rather than pursue ethereal threads of what might, or should, or could not have happened.

4

Khovanshchina*: A Musical Drama, Russian-Style (Wagner and Musorgsky)*

The most delicate traits in the nature of a human being and the human masses, an obnoxious poking into these unexplored domains and their conquest—such is the true vocation of an artist.

—Musorgsky to V. V. Stasov

In the summer of 1872, barely a month after he had finished extensive revisions of *Boris Godunov* for its expected production at the Mariinsky Theater, Musorgsky conceived another historical opera or, as he called it, "people's musical drama." Once again, its subject was drawn from the tumultuous history of seventeenth-century Russia, this time closer to the century's end. In a letter to his mentor Vladimir Stasov, Musorgsky reported gathering materials for his new project into a notebook on whose cover he had written a word he had apparently coined himself: *Khovanshchina* (literally, "Khovanskyism").

The way Musorgsky proceeded with his new project was idiosyncratic even by his standards. *Khovanshchina* never had a libretto in the conventional sense, that is, an established text serving as the basis for the music. Although, judging from his letters, Musorgsky perceived the major characters and general contours of the opera's plot fairly clearly almost from the beginning, he composed verbal monologues and dialogues alongside the music, in a kind of patchwork. As a result, *Khovanshchina*'s plot never achieved full stability, let

alone coherence. Various pieces continued to be added and cut; scenes expanded, contracted, and changed their order throughout the nearly ten-year-long process of the opera's composition. Versions continued to pile one upon another in palimpsest fashion until the composer's death in March 1881. In the 1960s a clean copy of the libretto was found; it was written in Musorgsky's fine handwriting, which was that of a professional copyist (the job he was forced to hold for most of his adult life), apparently at a very late stage of his work on the opera—in late 1879 or 1880. (The very fact that the libretto in its entirety was written for the first time after most of the opera had been composed is characteristic.) The changes in the opera's shape, particularly in its final act, that it suggested were so radical that to recognize them as the composer's "last will" would mean in effect to disfigure the opera as we now know it.[1] Moreover, we have no way of knowing whether this text indeed represented how Musorgsky envisioned his opera when he was gearing up for its completion or whether it was merely his assessment of what had been done before starting work on the last scene.

As for the music, Musorgsky composed it at the piano, in nonsequential chunks. For years he had been playing pieces from his opera to various audiences before committing them to paper, each time semi-improvising, introducing new variants.[2] For instance, he composed one of the opera's most beautiful moments, Marfa's "Hallelujah," sung to her lover in front of the pyre, at the very beginning of his work on the opera and performed it a number of times, even in concert, but never set it down in its final shape, so that it had to be written down after his death. The only sign that this creative process might have some inner coherence was the remarkable integrity with which Musorgsky resisted all attempts by his admirers to direct it or speed it up. In order to perform the painstaking task of fitting different pieces of the opera together, he once responded to Stasov's impatient exhortation, one must proceed as the proverb says: measure seven times, cut once. The situation was not unlike that of Gogol frustrating his cheerleaders' eager expectations of progress on *Dead Souls* in the 1840s—partly because of his diminished creative will, but partly also because he felt overwhelmed by his own design.[3] As for Musorgsky, whatever his inner reasons for this procrastination, there were also outward obstacles to his progress: his desperate financial situation, declining health, increasing feelings of loneliness and dejection, and, as a result and at the same time a cause of all of that, his gradual slide into heavy drinking.

Unlike Musorgsky's other operatic projects, complete and incomplete—*Salammbô, The Marriage, The Fair at Sorochintsy,* and of course, *Boris Godunov*—*Khovanshchina* did not follow any literary prototype for its musical narrative.[4] Judging from the composer's own account of his historical research

at the early stage of conceiving his musical drama, one might assume that he adopted as its narrative backbone a chain of events drawn directly from historiographical surveys and primary sources; this assumption, however, does not hold up on closer examination.

Khovanshchina's plot takes as its historical basis a succession of violent events stretching through the last two decades of the seventeenth century. Prominent among these was the struggle for power that followed the death of Tsar Fyodor Alekseevich in May 1682 and ended with the decisive victory of his younger half-brother, Pyotr Alekseevich, in the summer of 1698, after a long chain of bloody outbursts. The years of political turmoil were punctuated by and intertwined with a thirty-year history of religious dissent: the Old Believers' fight against the liturgical reform instituted by the Church Council of 1666–67, which culminated in a wave of self-immolations in the 1690s. The matter was further complicated by the diversity of the sources with which Musorgsky was fascinated. Some of them belonged, as he put it, to the "deep water" (*glyb*') of cultural heritage and were highly idiosyncratic. They referred to different albeit related events and reflected divergent points of view, sometimes with bizarre polemical excesses. One document, a rabid denunciation of the "Teut" (that is, the "Teuton"—an allusion to Tsar Peter's "German" ways) coming from an Old Believers' circle,[5] whose discovery Musorgsky reported to Stasov with delight[6]—portrayed Peter as the devil incarnate; another—*A Concise Description of the Blessed Deeds of the Great Souverain, Emperor Peter the Great, the All-Russian Autocrat, Collected Through the Unworthy Labor of the Most Minuscule Slave Petr Krekshin, a Gentryman from Great Novgorod*,[7] a work saturated with populist cultural mythology[8]—put the infernal flame in the mouth of Peter's opponents while investing the tsar, with the same unhesitant literalness, with the halo of Christ the Savior. According to his dutiful report to Stasov, he also used Avvakum's autohagiography, whose narrative jumps from one point in time to another following free thematic associations; the memoirs of Silvestr Medvedev, one of the best minds of the epoch, who for a long time walked a tightrope between the warring factions until he was denounced as a supporter of Princess Sophia and beheaded in 1691;[9] and some other sources.[10]

What Musorgsky did *not* report to Stasov—perhaps to avoid a rebuke for using such a conservative source—was his extensive study of the monumental *History of Russia Since Most Ancient Times* by Sergei Solovyev, particularly volumes 11–14, dedicated to the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich and Fyodor Alekseevich and the regency of Sophia (first published in 1861–64 and reprinted in 1870–71).[11] Like Musorgsky, Solovyev absorbed into his narrative a multitude of diverse sources. With overwhelming power, he forged their

clashing opinions and cacophonous voices into a coherent narrative whose underlying message was the inexorable ascendance of the Russian state.

An examination of Solovyev's account against the backdrop of Musorgsky's libretto reveals a fascinating picture. Musorgsky quoted at length many documents cited by Solovyev, for example, Sophia's intimate letter to Golitsyn, the announcement of the lynching of "enemies of the state" by the *streltsy* (musketeers, literally, "archers," the elite force of the pre-Petrine army), and the anonymous denunciation (attributed in the opera to Shaklovity) of Prince Khovansky's secret plans to make his son Andrei the tsar. He even incorporated verbatim some phrases from Solovyev's narrative, for instance, the historian's casual remark about the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich, during which the boyars would prefer to sit under the table during a regal feast if they were not to be seated at what they perceived to be their rightful place, which symbolically reflected their place in the *mestnichestvo* (the established hierarchy of noble families, literally, the "attachment to the (one's) place").[12]

The extent to which Musorgsky used Solovyev's authoritative account (albeit tacitly) while highlighting his study of various populist and dissident sources (most of which actually left few traces in his libretto) offers an intriguing glimpse of the composer's inner world, particularly in the last decade of his life: the silent evolution of his woldview and new influences that remained hidden behind the ornate exuberance of his epistolary style and a habitual 1860s-era populist pose — both always ready to be paraded before the "Generalissimus" (as he called Stasov).

But the way Musorgsky used it was far from sequential. He drew from his source at will, taking individual phrases, situations, and figures from different chapters, often unrelated to the events *Khovanshchina* addresses. For instance, Podyachy's remark about the streltsy — "Ne lyudi, zveri, sushchie zveri"! ("They are not people but beasts, veritable beasts!") — was apparently drawn from testimony about Stepan Razin and his brigands (c. 1670).[13] Strelets Kuzka, whom we see in the beginning of the opera guarding the signpost with the list of the executed, recalls the historical figure of the strelets Kuzma Nogaev, who indeed played a prominent role in a mutiny — not that of 1682, however, but that of 1662, whose cause had nothing to do with the interregnum or the old faith; it was caused by hyperinflation that had been triggered by the government's decision to cover its war debts by issuing copper money in lieu of gold. According to Solovyev, Kuzma Nogaev instigated the crowd to rush to Lubyanka Square to see the denunciations posted there and forced a *podyachy* (a scribe-lawyer, member of a profession that proliferated at the time) to read them aloud — the events vividly resembling act 1 of the opera.[14] As for the mutiny of 1682, it featured the historical figure of the monk Sergy,

who exhorted Prince Khovansky and his troops to defend the old faith. Many of Sergy's remarks were used for the part of Dosifei in the opera, in particular, the poignant "*Podvignemsya*"! (meaning simultaneously "Let us gear ourselves for a feat of glory" and "Let us take on martyrdom") with which Dosifei exhorts his flock to ascend to the pyre.[15] The name "Dosifei" is not a pure fiction, either: there was another monk named Dosifei among the 1682 insurgents who distinguished himself in a dispute with the defenders of "the new books" (the edited Gospel and liturgy), an event obliquely referred to in the Old Believers' triumphant procession in act 2. A third component of the character of Dosifei fell outside of Solovyev's history; it was Prince Myshetsky, author of the frenzied tale about the Antichrist's imminent advent, "Teut and Godard," which Musorgsky quoted in one of Dosifei's monologues.[16] In order to reconcile all the conflicting identities of his Dosifei—militant monk, spiritual authority, and retrograde aristocrat—Musorgsky had to resort to the clumsy ploy of Dosifei's confession of his true identity as Prince Myshetsky, who had long ago given up his title and all worldly advantages. (In this point, as in many others, one feels the composer's personal proximity to Dosifei: the latter's story of how he "had buried" his aristocratic past might allude to Musorgsky's own situation after the reform of 1861, which—partly owing to his reluctance and inability to defend his interests—wiped out all his financial security as a member of the landed gentry.)[17]

The way Musorgsky dissected, conflated, and rearranged historical data in making his libretto sometimes recalls the transformation of musical motifs in the development of a symphony. This method of verbal composition may have been stimulating, even necessary, for developing the musical infrastructure of an opera that features, as we shall see, an extremely delicate and complex web of leitmotifs. From a purely narrative point of view, however, it has led to a horrendous mix-up of the historical events to which the opera alludes, and this in turn has resulted in numerous inconsistencies in its narrative content and, above all, in its ultimate inconclusiveness.

In order to demonstrate the extent to which Musorgsky transformed the historical data in weaving them into his narrative, I offer a chronological chart of the events directly or indirectly reflected in the opera:

> *1662:* The government of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich decides to issue copper money in lieu of gold as a remedy for a severe debt incurred after thirty years of war with Poland. The result is disastrous hyperinflation. A mutiny caused by rumors that someone had nailed up a sheet of paper on Lubyanka Square with the names of the makers of "thieves' money" starts in Moscow. The crowd, led by the strelets Kuzma, gathers at the square and forces a *podyachy* to read the paper but eventually disperses.

1666–67: An ecumenical council in Moscow, called by Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, approves the reform of liturgical books and the church service. (Among the most important changes are the definition of Christ as "born, not created" instead of "born, and not created" in the Creed; repeating "Halleluiah" three times instead of twice; and a different way of crossing oneself.) A sizable minority do not accept the changes and continues to use the old books. The outcome of the conflict between the mainstream church and the Old Believers, as they called themselves, or "schismatics" [*raskolniki*], as they were called officially, will not become clear until almost the end of the century.

Late 1660s: The Old Believers attempt to reverse the reform. After one of the disputes between defenders of the old and the new books, the former make a triumphant procession through Moscow, carrying their books and chanting: "We have vanquished, have shamed, have outdisputed, and have outquarreled the heresy!"

1676: Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich dies. His elder son Fyodor, then fifteen years old, ascends the throne. Fyodor's elder sister Sophia becomes the actual ruler. Aleksei's second wife and her son Peter (then four years old) are sent into exile.

1680 to early 1690s: The Old Believers undergo severe persecution. Their head, Archpriest Avvakum, is burned at the stake; churches and old books are destroyed. Some of their communities, in view of imminent desecration by what they perceive as the forces of the Antichrist, prefer self-immolation.

January 1682: At Prince Golitsyn's initiative, Tsar Fyodor summons an "extraordinary council" that decides to end the system of seniority (*mestnichestvo*) once and for all, proclaiming it a product of "the fiendishly malicious sower of weeds, the devil of the universe."

May 1682: Fyodor dies. His younger brother from Aleksei's first marriage, Ivan, was apparently mentally retarded. In view of this, the Boyar Duma decides to crown Peter as the next in succession. The musketeers, however, acting on behalf of Sophia, ravage the Kremlin, kill some of Peter's relatives, and force the patriarch to proclaim the co-reign of two tsars: Ivan and Peter, in that order. Sophia retains her position of power. The Old Believers try to use the occasion to advance their case but are eventually refuted by Sophia and the patriarch.

September 1682: Prince Ivan Khovansky, the commander of the musketeers, instigates another mutiny, this time on his own behalf, with vague plans to install his son Andrei on the throne. The mutiny is promptly suppressed, Khovansky arrested and executed, his son killed. Sophia pardons the musketeers and makes Shaklovity their new commander.

1680s: Peter, in a tentative exile in Preobrazhenskoe, a village near Moscow, starts what he calls "mock regiments" (*poteshnye polki*), to which young teenagers, his peers, are recruited. By the late 1680s, the two mock regi-

ments, Preobrazhensky and Semyonovsky, trained after the Western model, have grown into a formidable military force.

Early 1689: Prince Golitsyn leads Russian troops in a dangerous campaign against the Crimean khan. Sophia sends him a letter full of worries and passionate love (quoted almost in full in act 2 of the opera).

September 1689: Sophia tries to use the musketeers under Shaklovity's command in a mutiny aimed at deposing Peter. The mutiny is crushed by Peter's forces. Shaklovity, arrested in Izmailovo, testifies under torture against Sophia and her favorite Prince Golitsyn. Shaklovity is executed, Sophia is sent to the New Monastery of the Holy Virgin (*Novodevichy*) in Moscow, and Golitsyn is exiled. Peter assumes full power.

The summer of 1698: The streltsy make a last attempt to rise on behalf of Sophia, causing Peter to cut short his trip to Europe. The mutiny is defeated before his return.

September–October 1698: The musketeers are investigated (the principal instrument being torture) and executed. Hundreds are led in chains to the public squares of Moscow and summarily dispatched. Several of the principal organizers of the mutiny, suspected of direct connections to Sophia, are hanged directly in front of the windows of her chamber in the monastery and left there for six months. This bloody event marks the end of the traditional Russian army.

Comparing this chart with the opera's plot, one can observe numerous contradictions and discontinuities in the latter. What appears in the opera as a single event under the ornate name of *Khovanshchina* in fact consisted of four consecutive waves of bloody outbursts stretching for more than sixteen years, whose goals were in some cases diametrically opposed to one another. One, in May 1682, led by Ivan Khovansky, was aimed at preventing Peter's succession to the throne and securing Sophia's power as regent; this, by the way, is the only episode in the power struggle in which the Old Believers took an active part, although even then they were refuted by the victorious Sophia, who decisively took the side of the patriarch. Another, in September of the same year, was again led by Khovansky, but his aim this time was to depose Sophia and make his son Andrei the tsar—an event that one might call "Khovanshchina" in the proper sense and that ended in the death of both Ivan and his son. The third event was Sophia's failed attempt in September 1689 to use musketeers, now under Shaklovity, against the growing power of the seventeen-year-old Peter, which resulted, among other things, in the exile of Sophia's favorite, Golitsyn. Finally, there was the last attempt to overthrow Peter in the summer of 1698, ending in a mass execution of the musketeers on Red Square.

All these events have been fused together in *Khovanshchina* into a tale of seemingly endless and aimless turmoil.[18] To cite only one example of this

technique of fusion in Musorgsky's plot: in the fall of 1682, Khovansky's musketeers, who had threatened Sophia's government, were pardoned by her after the execution of their commander; in 1698, the musketeers, this time supporting Sophia against Peter, were led to the squares of Moscow in chains and there summarily executed. By an operatic tour de force, Musorgsky has his musketeers—whose goals and loyalties look so vague that their behavior can be satisfactorily explained only by the perpetual hangover in which they find themselves onstage[19]—led to Red Square in chains (as in 1698) but then summarily pardoned rather than executed (as in 1682), by Peter rather than Sophia, while Khovansky is killed (as in 1682), Golitsyn is sent to exile (as in 1689), and the Old Believers ascend to the pyre, the last situation reflecting a chain of immolations, unrelated to the musketeers' mutinies, in the early 1690s. The operatic Shaklovity secretly writes a denunciation of Khovansky, then announces to Khovansky and Golitsyn that it has been posted in Izmailovo. The historical Shaklovity, the new commander of the musketeers, was arrested in Izmailovo in 1689 and, under torture, wrote a lengthy denunciation—not of Khovansky, who by that time had been dead for seven years, but of Golitsyn.

The opera's historical time moves back, forth, and sideways in the same hectic fashion in which the process of its composition evolved over the last ten years of Musorgsky's life. Compared with *Boris Godunov*'s stable plot and sound historical chronology, these features of the "people's drama" might easily suggest a diminishment in Musorgsky's ability, if not to produce superb pieces of music, at least to shape them into a coherent and accomplished whole. Stasov believed that the project had definitely gone astray; this was the time when Musorgsky had reacted to Stasov's advice with increasing reticence and on many occasions disappointed his mentor by decisions that took the opera, in the latter's view, in a "wrong" direction.[20] Such an impression, first ruefully conceded by Stasov in his impassioned account of the deceased composer's life,[21] has been reinforced by *Khovanshchina*'s well-meaning editors. When Rimsky-Korsakov in the 1880s and later other composers and producers (most prominent among them Stravinsky and Diaghilev in 1913 and Shostakovich in 1958) were working on Musorgsky's text in order to make possible its production on the stage, they held that it was necessary, in addition to writing down the remaining scenes of the last act and producing an orchestral score, to make some revisions in the author's piano score—above all, to build a "convincing" (that is, not so thoroughly destructive) finale. For the latter purpose, Rimsky-Korsakov had Peter's Preobrazhensky regiment march on stage after the Old Believers perished in flames (using music from act 4 for the march). Shostakovich went further in his editorial optimism, capping the opera with a repetition of its serene introduction, "Dawn Over the Moscow

River"—a transparent hint at the dawn that is to rise over the land after all the troubles of the past.[22] Thus "completed," the finale resembles a painting by Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid in which the artists put together, according to a questionnaire, everything that people like to see on canvas: George Washington walking along a lakeshore, a small herd of deer, playing children, plentiful hills and trees, and the shining morning sun. Only Stravinsky allowed the opera to end according to Musorgsky's sketches, that is, with the chorale with which Old Believers ascend to the pyre, yet he made many revisions elsewhere in the score.[23] All these alterations suggest the inability of Musorgsky's creation to stand on its own two feet. The extreme liberality with which various composers and opera companies labored over the piano score has been at least partly responsible for the impression that, as Richard Taruskin puts it with characteristic bluntness, "*Khovanshchina* was left a torso at the time of Musorgsky's untimely death from alcoholism."[24]

Meanwhile, for all the discontinuity and excruciating slowness of the process, the composition of the piano score was almost completed by the time of Musorgsky's death. At last count, there was a complete piano-vocal score for four and a half acts, plus sketches for the remaining scenes of act 5, the last of them featuring the Old Believers' chant in A-flat minor. Of course, we have no way of knowing in what shape the opera would eventually have emerged had Musorgsky lived through *Khovanshchina*'s rejection by the Mariinsky Theater (which did not fail to follow in 1883) and the subsequent struggle to produce it, a process resembling what had happened to *Boris* in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Nevertheless, it is my conviction that *Khovanshchina*'s existing text, as it was put on paper by Musorgsky's hand, gives sufficient grounds for approaching it from the perspective of what the composer achieved rather than of what we have been left with by his death. I am aware that turning a work's incoherence into polyphonic richness and its loose ends into open-endedness has become an all-too-predictable feat of poststructuralist criticism; still, it seems worthwhile to consider the indeterminacy of *Khovanshchina*'s text and message as an inherent property—as we are accustomed to treating many classics, from Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* to Musil's *Man Without Qualities* or Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*—rather than to scrutinize it against the backdrop of our expectations of what it might or should have been like.

In the same period in which Musorgsky struggled, to the increasing dismay of his friends, with his second historical opera, Lev Tolstoy was struggling, much to his own dismay, with his second major novel. At one point he asked with frustration why it should be so difficult to write a story about a *barynya* (gentlewoman) having an affair with an officer. Eventually Tolstoy did manage

to finish his work, although it plunged him into a deep spiritual and artistic crisis from which he never fully recovered. In 1876, his work on *Anna Karenina* nearly completed, he eloquently described in the famous letter to Nikolai Strakhov what he had tried so hard to achieve: "In everything, almost everything that I have been writing I was guided by a need to connect all thoughts related to each other; but each of those thoughts, when expressed separately, loses its significance, becomes terribly trivialized outside of the links [*stsepleniya*] to which it belongs."[25]

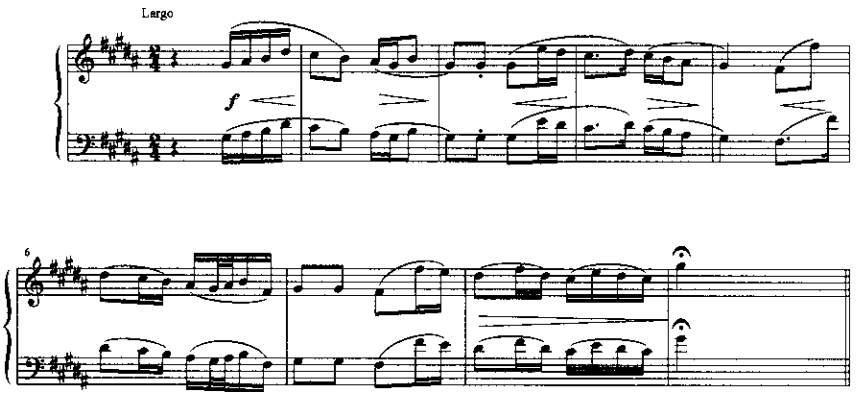
Tolstoy's description of his creative process can serve as a universal definition of the leitmotif principle of building a narrative, whether literary or musical. While telling his story in a sequential fashion, event by event, the author is wrapping it in an invisible web of associations, similarities, and cross-references grounded in interconnections between recurring motifs. These "ethereal paths"—to use Pasternak's metaphor (which he borrowed from Goethe), inspired by Tolstoy's writing—permeate the narrative in all directions, connecting each point in the story with many others in incalculably manifold ways. As a result, the story outgrows itself, overflowing the frame of the narrated chain of events. It gives to its message an indeterminacy of meaning that may become a source of delight and frustration for everyone dealing with it. Had Tolstoy died, say, before putting a couple of dozen of the last pages of part eight on paper, the temptation to ascribe the irresolution of the novel's message to its incompleteness would have been great. Perhaps, based on our experience with *War and Peace,* we would have felt that what was missing was a conclusion, an epilogue, in which the author would carry out the promise of moral judgment suggested by his epigraph: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" (Rom. 12:19). As things stand now, however, we have hardly any choice but to acknowledge an inconclusiveness of meaning as the novel's inherent property: Who is to be punished? Who repaid for one's suffering? Does the epigraph reinforce our human judgment of the novel's characters by God's authority, or on the contrary, does it undermine any human verdict by relegating the right to judge to God? It is precisely this quality that made *Anna Karenina* one of the most important antecedents of the twentieth-century novel.

This is also how the Wagnerian music drama is built. Its focus shifts from the external events of the plot to recurrences and transformations of musical leitmotifs. The "ethereal paths" of thematic correspondences underlie every situation presented onstage. While following the protagonists' actions and words, we simultaneously have access, via leitmotifs, to what they remember, think, and feel. For a listener following the inner drama of evolving leitmotifs, they serve as a conduit into an obscure Tristanesque realm of the soul hidden from the daylit world of outward actions.

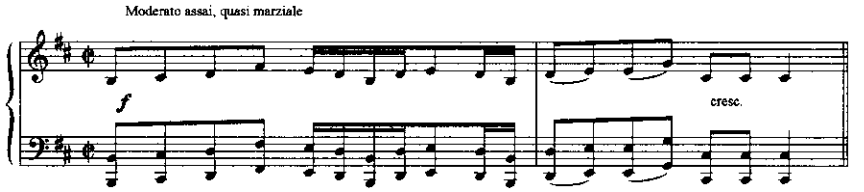
The prevalence of the introspective element is not achieved without a price. A narrative in which an inner logic of thoughts and intentions competes with and sometimes overrules an outward logic of words and actions has to rely on the listener's ability to take note of and make inferences from a network of thematic correspondences, some quite transparent, other vague and subtle, through which the inner aspect of the drama manifests itself. For a listener not prepared to make an intense spiritual investment in the process of following the drama's inner motivations, its outward shape may appear ponderous, overburdened with superfluous details, or simply boring. Such was indeed the early reaction of many to *Der Ring des Nibelungen* or *Tristan und Isolde*. After some initial controversy, however, the principles of the Wagnerian musical drama were internalized by a large mass of listeners and musicians and have become a given aesthetic fact. For all the later vicissitudes of Wagner's fortunes, it seems fair to say that this process had been accomplished by the 1890s. Likewise, Tolstoy's novels, condemned by Henry James as shapeless monsters for their alleged lack of economy and narrative coherence,[26] have successfully claimed their own place in the realm of nineteenth-century European literature.

This never happened to *Khovanshchina*. Even in Russia, Musorgsky's last musical drama, though not suffering from a lack of attention, has remained overshadowed by the more robust *Boris Godunov*. Taken piece by piece, *Khovanshchina*'s music was much appreciated, but the drama as a whole has mostly earned tentative and hesitant praise. Besides the obvious impediments, such as its incompleteness, there exists, perhaps, a deeper reason for the relative uncertainty of its position in musical history. It lies in the opera's extreme aesthetic subtlety, I would even say secretiveness, compared with the more explicit artistic message offered by *Boris* or with the Wagnerian music dramas. I do believe that the excruciating care with which Musorgsky fit its different pieces together, trying them out again and again, making endless alterations before committing them to paper, was not futile. It reflected a creative process guided by implicit cross-references and correspondences more than by conventional narrative guidelines. What emerges beyond *Khovanshchina*'s clumsy and inconclusive plot is an extraordinarily rich and intricate web of interrelated leitmotifs. Their ethereal yet symbolically charged presence is so pervasive that they literally overcome the opera's narrative with ambiguous hints, implicit tensions, and wrenching dilemmas destined never to come to a terminal resolution.

Let us begin our examination of the opera's motifs with the scene in Khovansky's chamber (act 4, scene 1). It consists of a long chain of songs and dances



4.1a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 4, scene 1, peasant women's chorus

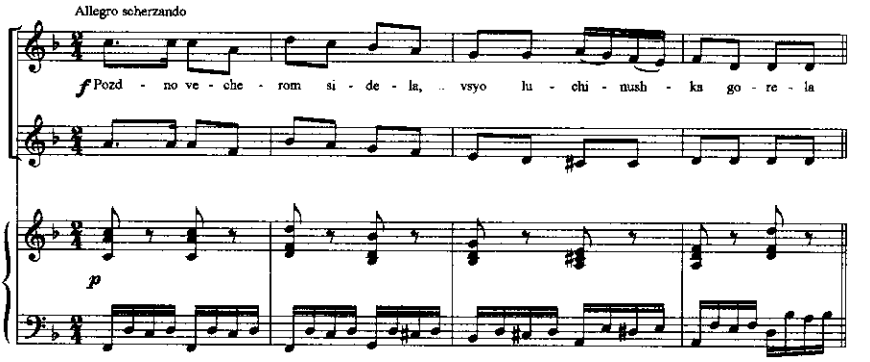


4.1b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 1, Prince Khovansky's theme

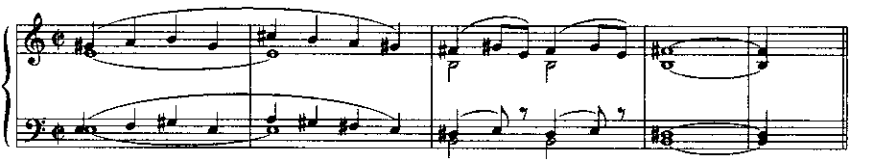
performed by Khovansky's domestics, at the end of which, abruptly and with little attempt at dramatic plausibility, comes Khovansky's assassination. All of this smacks of the operatic routine of using the thinnest pretext to offer a potpourri of inserted numbers, to the detriment of the dramatic development. Let us, however, take a closer look at the invisible drama evolving in this outwardly static scene.

Khovansky's peasant women start their program with the song "On a Little Meadow by the River." Its nondescript words are coupled with music vividly recalling the leitmotif of Khovansky and his musketeers (examples 4.1a and 4.1b).

What might this unexpected connection mean? One possible interpretation is that it gives us access to Khovansky's state of mind. While the prince tries to distract himself with his servants' concert, he cannot cast off thoughts of his past might and present woes; no wonder the song rings in his ears—and in ours—as a reminder of his abandoned army. This makes understandable the angry outburst with which he greets the singers: "Stop this howling! You are wailing as if over a corpse!" The women promptly switch to a boisterous song about a maiden and her little militiaman (*gaiduchyok*) (example 4.2).



4.2. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 4, scene 1, peasant women's second chorus



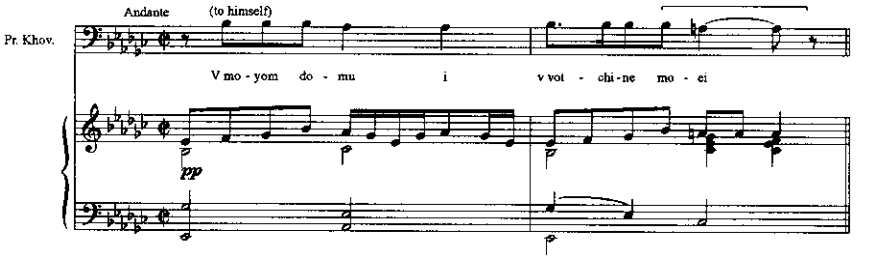
4.3. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 3, Preobrazhensky march

Unfortunately, this song could only worsen Khovansky's irritation, for its theme sounds provocatively similar to the march of the Preobrazhensky regiment, which exemplifies all the present woes of the hapless prince (example 4.3).

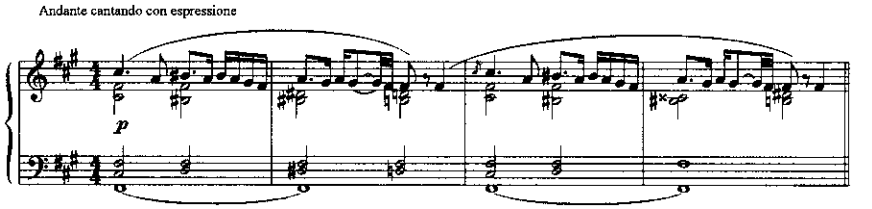
Frustrated with these mishaps, Khovansky dismisses, rather foolishly, the warning about impending danger conveyed to him by Prince Golitsyn's envoy. Khovansky's feigned disbelief on receiving the message is rendered by a chromatic distortion of his leitmotif (example 4.4).

Utterly distraught, Khovansky resorts to the ultimate means of comfort: his Persian slave girls. But the very first measures of the music accompanying their dancing emerge pregnant with an ominous allusion. One can discern in the generic oriental chromaticism of the tune an echo of Khovansky's own chromatically exacerbated refusal to acknowledge the danger threatening him — as if his own words now resounded in his mind, haunting him while he drinks his mead and tries to concentrate on the dancers (example 4.5).

At last, Shaklovity, Khovansky's secret nemesis, arrives at the scene, ostensibly with an invitation to Khovansky to attend the "Great Council" and regain his preeminent position. Basking in his imagined triumph, he advances, defenseless, toward the assassins waiting at his doorstep.



4.4. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 4, scene 1



4.5. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 4, scene 1, Persian women's dance

Musorgsky took the words and musical themes of both choruses from the collection of folk songs published by Yuly N. Melgunov.[27] The collection appeared in the summer of 1879,[28] meaning that Musorgsky got access to it only at a very late stage of his work on the opera. Yet he selected the borrowed musical material in such a way that it reverberated with already created music[29]—proving his claim of taking measurements seven times before cutting once.

As a character in the drama, Prince Khovansky elicits little sympathy from the audience. Yet at the point when his fate is decided, we are invited to follow his mind from within, to look at the development of the drama through his eyes.[30] If approached from this perspective, the seemingly stagnant scene acquires dynamism, becomes in fact throbbing with dramatic tension. Having followed, by means of thematic interconnections, Khovansky's frustrations, premonitions, and vain attempts at self-deception, we no longer see his murder amid his own household as dramatically implausible. His unwillingness to acknowledge his situation makes palpable the meaning of Dosifei's later remark that Khovansky brought his destruction on himself.

Parallels between this scene and many situations in Wagner's operas are evident. Consider, for example, the first confrontation between Tristan and Isolde, in which they assume the conventional postures of a deferential vassal and an angered sovereign, while a tense flow of leitmotifs in the orchestra

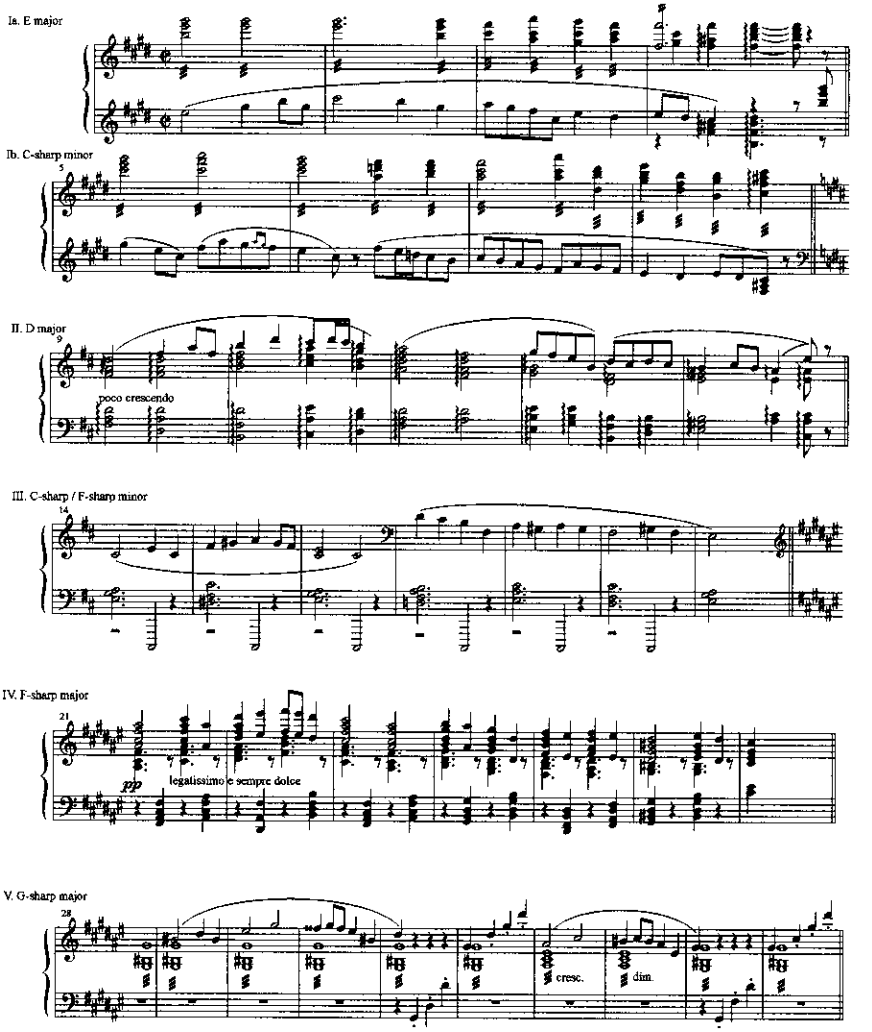
reveals the real meaning behind their seemingly trivial remarks; or the outwardly innocent conversations between Siegfried and Mime whose hidden meaning and emotional undercurrents are exposed by leitmotifs. But there is an important difference between Wagner's and Musorgsky's use of motifs that reflects their concepts of the musical drama. In order to appreciate this difference, we must observe in some detail how each composer builds the leitmotifs and their correspondences.

A Wagnerian leitmotif typically receives a definite, clearly identifiable shape at its first appearance. The theme of the ring in the *Rheingold,* the theme of longing in *Tristan,* and the theme of the Grail in *Parsifal* come to mind as typical examples. As a result, a hierarchical relation can be perceived between the original motif and all instances of its recurrence in the musical narrative. All can be related to the theme's primary form and meaning, which looms over the opera's progress as the original cause, the *Ursprung*. What was hidden in the depths of the hero's soul will eventually come to light; what was anticipated or prophesied will happen. Guided by the keys provided by leitmotifs as we have learned them at their exposition, we follow the drama's progress to its ultimate resolution. The very fluidity of the Wagnerian musical form, which defied all conventional divisions between the numbers, created the need for a definitive terminal stop toward which the music flows with relentless determination. The mystical longing of the Tristan chord eventually—after hours of suspense—finds its ultimate resolution in the final C-flat major triad that by the same token signifies the ultimate resolution of the opera's narrative.

The contrast with Musorgsky's leitmotifs can be seen in the orchestral introduction to *Khovanshchina* with the programmatic title "Dawn over the Moscow River." It consists of five variations of the principal theme. Except the middle one, all the variations are so similar in texture and general mood that they look more like stanzas of a song than variations. Together with the songlike character of the theme and the diatonic harmony, this gives the impression of a beautiful but somewhat static and passive simplicity.

Yet this simplicity is deceptive. On looking at the theme more intently, one notices that it never repeats itself precisely. Each new appearance brings changes in pace. The changes are very subtle; you can easily be lured into believing that what you are listening to are plain repetitions of the same melody. Yet incremental changes never cease to accumulate, superseding the obvious symmetries of the stanzas (examples 4.6 and 4.7).[31]

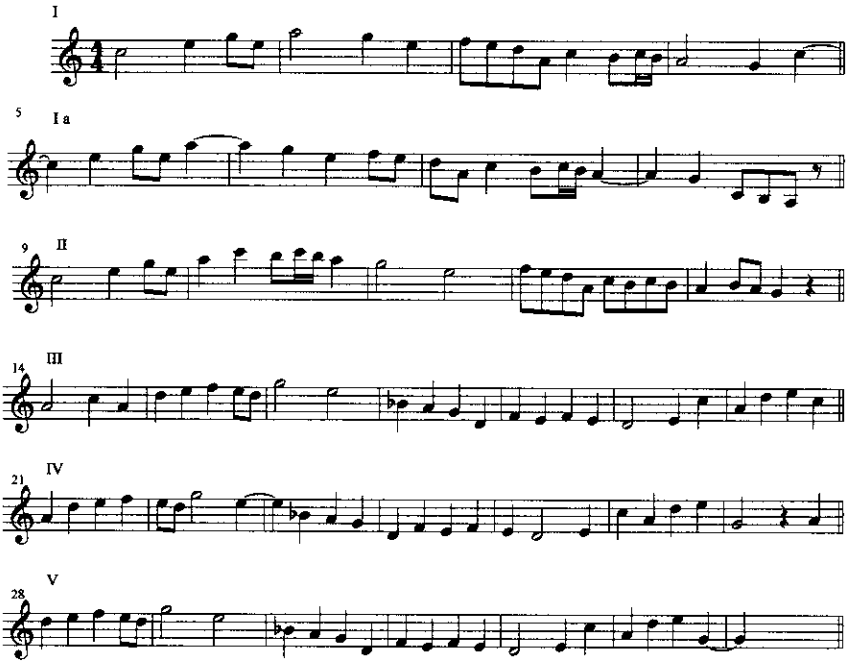
If we ask ourselves afterwards what the theme of this piece is, no definitive answer can be given. All the slightly different variations become conflated into a collective image whose outlines are blurred and elusive, in spite of the seeming clarity of the melody.[32] What we deal with is not a theme with variations



4.6. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* introduction: variations on the theme

but a community of versions. The theme never emerges from this community in an individuated shape that could be taken as its principal form.

This manner of thematic development is deeply rooted in Russian musical folklore and traditional religious singing—the so-called *znamenny rospev* (literally, "marked chant," so called because its outline was fixed in a special notation).[33] It is habitual for performers of a folk song never to repeat its melody precisely, while retaining its general outline. Neither the singers nor



4.7. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* introduction (schematic presentation)

the listeners can say for sure which version is going to emerge next, nor do they feel any need to do so; yet the presence of a familiar melody is unmistakable. In the same vein, when several singers are singing together, they produce closely related but not identical melodic lines, so that their voices sporadically come apart and reunite again in an ever-changing pattern. The resulting texture presents neither monody nor harmony. The upper voice and all the others, whenever they break apart, do not present the "melody" and its "support"; rather, they create the melody collectively, by means of a community of versions.

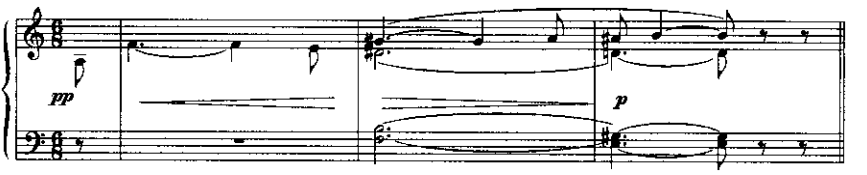
To use another of Pasternak's metaphors, a Russian folk song recalls a slowly flowing river: it does not have a firm riverbed, its banks are eroded, and its course is changing imperceptibly all the time. The same can be said about the so-called *vavilony* ("figurations," literally, "Towers of Babel") by which singers of the *znamenny* chant expanded its theme into a communion of concurring melodic lines.[34] Musorgsky explicitly pointed to this source of his musical aesthetic in his autobiographical note when he wrote of the "intimate understanding" of medieval church singing he acquired in his adolescence.[35]

The manner of thematic development rooted in these traditions encourages stanzaic repetitions as a way of developing musical discourse, because it is in a

chain of stanzas that the theme acquires its community of versions most inconspicuously.[36] The musical form built in this manner may appear quaint; it shuns the dynamic fluidity that is a trademark of Wagnerian musical discourse.[37] On the level of harmony, music of this kind shows a preference for diatonic modes and triads, loosely juxtaposed with each other, over chromaticisms with their sharp functional gravitations. The lack of a strong tonal center encourages free juxtapositions of tonalities, even ones that are fairly remote from each other, rather than their connection by modulations.[38]

These features are evident in the opera's introduction. The relations among its five stanzas vaguely recall sonata form, with the two first stanzas, contrasted by tonality, posing as an "exposition," a more fluid middle part serving as a "development," and two final stanzas, whose relations are symmetrical to those in the initial couple, as a "recapitulation." The overall tonal plan of this quasi-sonata is, however, extremely complicated. It consists of the following chain of tonalities: E major to C-sharp minor to D major to C-sharp minor / F-sharp minor, to F-sharp major, and finally to G-sharp major. The coupled stanzas in the initial and the concluding parts of the piece are both juxtaposed by a tonal shift on a second: downwards in the "exposition," upwards in the "recapitulation." In conventional sonata form, the first and the second theme (or the first and second appearances of the same theme, in the case of a monothematic exposition) typically have the tonal relation of the tonic and the dominant or (fairly often in Beethoven and afterwards) as the tonic and the median; a relation by a second would be unusual. Even more unusual is the "recapitulation." Although it is linked to the "exposition" by the mirrorlike symmetry of tonal relations between its two stanzas, the result is far from the tonal reconciliation expected in sonata form. In fact, the second stanzas in the "exposition" and the "recapitulation" find themselves in an extremely sharp relation to each other: a tritone. A daring musical construction emerges from a triadic transparency of harmony that makes loose tonal juxtapositions sound natural and quite inconspicuous.

Musical discourse of this type proceeds as a sequence of adjacent segments — be it of individual chords or whole stanzas — a process whose very looseness bestows on it a semi-improvisatory freedom. In this regard, it is opposed to the conventional functional harmony whose progress is directed by an alternation of tensions and their resolutions and to the conventional musical form that moves deliberately toward the final cadence, no matter how many intermittent turns it takes on its way. Such a determined path does not exist in the strategy that is dominant in *Khovanshchina:* its diatonic harmony allows any triad and any tonality to be followed by practically any other, and its form evolves at



4.8. Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*, introduction

many instances through an accumulation of repeated stanzas whose number, if not totally free of any structural constraints, is never fully predictable.

Both Wagner and Musorgsky strove to overcome the excessive predictability of conventional functional harmony; however, they did it by moving in opposite directions. Wagner's solution was that of deferring the resolution of harmonic tensions.[39] This technique greatly increased the room to maneuver between the cadences that punctuated the division lines between segments of the musical form. To a great—albeit not infinite—extent, music acquired the ability to evolve continuously through never-resolved tensions. An emblematic manifestation of this principle is the famous Tristan chord: a sharp dissonance that, after several palliative resolutions, reaches a final destination—not the tonic but a dominant seventh chord (which remains unresolved). The Tristan chord has become a symbol of music's movement out of "classical" values toward the tensions and confrontations of modernist aesthetics (example 4.8).

Musorgsky's way of overcoming the determinism of functional harmony was, on the contrary, to reduce the tensions and thus loosen functional ties. The music of *Khovanshchina* acquires its freedom from established patterns by posing as unstructured and rhapsodic. Externally, this strategy seems to cry out for an editor who would feel it his duty to give it a more finished shape; internally, it just as easily turns into a self-defeating enterprise for the composer who would try to finish his work while not compromising on its lack of finitude. Speaking in broader terms, Musorgsky's strategy seems akin to the contemporary attempts of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to break loose from overly straightforward causal links between events in a novel's plot—to create what Saul Morson calls "sideshadowing," that is, alternative possible explanations that run on parallel courses as the novel evolves.[40]

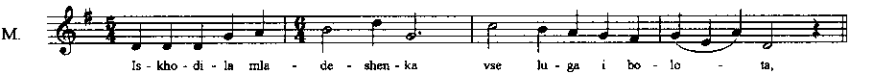
Note that in his Grail operas Wagner demonstrated thematic technique that was somewhat similar to that developed by Musorgsky in *Khovanshchina,* at least as far as the mystical leitmotif was concerned. The introductions to *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* proceed by means of stanzaic reiterations of the

principal theme, its appearance slightly modified with every new stanza. This formal device corresponds to a nontensional harmony built almost exclusively on juxtapositions of diatonic triads. The effect is particularly striking in *Parsifal,* in which it is perceived against a background of the preceding music dramas. A suggestive parallel between *Parsifal* and *Khovanshchina* consists in the climactic mystical transcendence attained in their finales, all the horror of the raging fire in the latter notwithstanding.[41] (We do not know, by the way, how Musorgsky intended his finale to sound: all we have from the composer is a mystically serene chorale theme; all the orchestral pyrotechnics have been added to it by various editors.)[42] In both cases, the mystical connotation called for an archaic-sounding, diatonic-oriented musical language. Both composers demonstrated this development in the 1870s, after a prolonged emphasis, in their previous oeuvre, on harmonic and formal innovations aimed at attaining the utmost expressiveness of musical language.

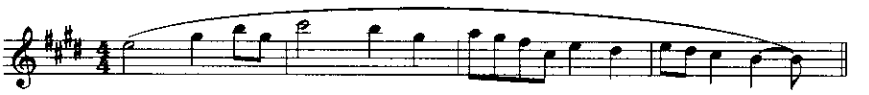
Outwardly, *Khovanshchina* constitutes a retreat to a more conventional musical language after the extremely daring experimentation of *Boris*.[43] Its harmonies are predominantly diatonic, with only rare examples of the expressive dissonant splashes that abounded in the previous opera; its arias and choruses predominantly employ the simplest periodic structures, in contrast with the continual monologues and sharply confrontational choral dialogues that characterized *Boris*.[44] This made *Khovanshchina* less appealing to the musical culture of the next century, with its preference for the avant-garde. Yet on the subtler but at the same time more fundamental level of thematic development, *Khovanshchina* presents a move toward an extremely sophisticated and original concept of musical drama.

Much has been written about the formal features of Musorgsky's musical style, such as the character of thematic variations and the treatment of mode and tonality in their relation to folklore and medieval church singing. This kind of analysis has, however, been aimed predominantly at short pieces such as art songs or operatic numbers rather than at an extended form. What is most important for us is the impact that the use of those techniques had on the shape of Musorgskian musical drama as a whole and on *Khovanshchina* in particular.

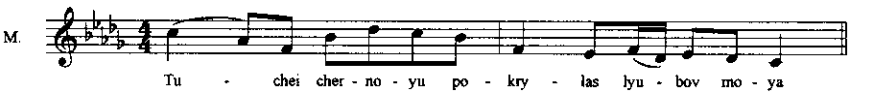
Let us return to "Dawn over the Moscow River" once again. As we have seen, despite the eroded contours of its theme, it retains a distinct character; in fact, it is easy to overlook the fact that its recurrences are never exactly the same. The mode in which the theme evolves is communal rather than individuated. It presents itself not as a theme proper but as a somewhat indeterminate *thematic zone,* within which all its versions are accommodated. Such a technique presents a marked contrast with the sharp outlining of a theme at its



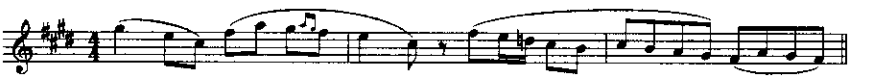
4.9a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 3, Marfa's song



4.9b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* introduction (variation I)



4.10a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 5, Marfa's "amorous funeral chant"

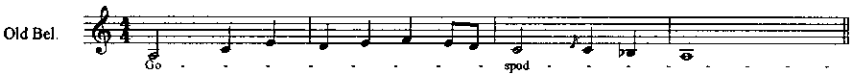


4.10b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* introduction (variation Ia)

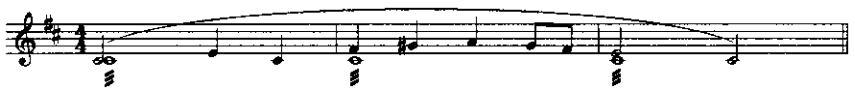
initial exposition, typical both of Western instrumental music and the Wagnerian leitmotif. (*Boris Godunov,* while already showing elements of Musorgsky's later style, was closer to the conventional principle of thematic development: both the musical shape and the meaning of its recurrent themes, most notably the Dimitry leitmotif, are exposed unequivocally at their first appearance.)

Virtually every theme in *Khovanshchina* presents itself as a communal thematic zone. The fluid nature of each zone easily allows different thematic zones to intersect with and overflow into each other. Although each theme, taken as a whole, preserves its recognizable character, some members of one community of thematic variants may resemble some members of another. Out of this rapprochement comes the feeling that the two themes are related. The process evolves not by similarity but by contiguity—not by derivation but by overlap.

For instance, different versions of the introduction's theme resemble some other themes in the opera. The initial phrase of its first stanza is recalled in Marfa's song from act 3, itself consisting of six subtly varied stanzas (examples 4.9a and 4.9b). The second phrase of the same stanza of the introduction is similar to the amorous funeral chant that Marfa sings in the finale (examples 4.10a and 4.10b).



4.11a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 5, final chorale



4. 11b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* introduction (variation III)

The second stanza resembles one of the versions of the Old Believers' militant singing from act 3. The fourth stanza resonates with Shaklovity's aria, also from act 3. Finally, the third stanza shows thematic contiguity with the Old Believers' final chant (examples 4.11a and 4.11b).

The elevation of the technique of the folk song and church chant into the constructive principle of a musical drama had a profound impact on the drama's form and meaning. As far as the musical form was concerned, this meant that a web of leitmotifs, however dense, did not interfere with the traditional concept of an opera as a set of distinct, symmetrically shaped numbers. On the contrary: the simplest stanzaic structure gave the best opportunities for an inconspicuous expansion of the zone of each theme, thus opening paths to its rapprochement with other themes.

The combination of a static external musical form, replete with reiterations of periodically structured stanzas, and an extreme fluidity of the process of manifold intersections and cross-pollinations of its themes is paradoxical. The Wagnerian drama is governed by the inner logic of its leitmotifs, which supersedes and dissolves the traditional string of separate numbers. The Musorgskian drama, however, does not let its leitmotifs run the show because they need to be developed within songlike structures. The necessity of developing thematic contiguities between subsequent episodes makes it virtually impossible to compose music to a prefabricated libretto. The opera's plot has to grow incrementally, together with the web of its thematic links. This paradox condemned the composer to incessant attempts to fit different numbers of the opera one to another, so that both the totality of the thematic correspondences and their incremental character, grounded in stanzaic reiterations, could be preserved, a task for which a final solution has never been and perhaps could never be achieved.

Even more dramatic were the consequences of this peculiar technique for the meaning of Musorgsky's musical drama. The prevalence of songlike structures in *Khovanshchina* meant that there was not, and could not be, a sharp

contrast between the singing voice and the orchestra. Typically, the piano part concurs rather than competes with the singing, adding more variants of the same theme.[45] This means that there is no clear polarization between the external and internal aspects of the drama like that signified by Wagner's use of the voices and the orchestra. *Khovanshchina*'s thematic correspondences imply a hidden meaning; their presence in each episode suggests that there must be more to that episode than is outwardly expressed. Yet what they are hinting at—whether the characters' secret thoughts, the hidden mystical meaning of the story, or simply some additional circumstances we are not yet aware of—remains undetermined. The resolution of arising ambiguities is ever postponed. Subsequent episodes may bring new constellations of the same motifs, which, however, create new ambiguities and pose new dilemmas—until in the end we discover that there is no definitive conclusion. The opera was left unfinished. According to one legend, its forty-two-year-old creator died with Berlioz' *Treatise on Orchestration* in his hand, according to another, because of a bottle of vodka he had managed to smuggle into his hospital ward the night before. For all the fortuitousness of such an outcome, something belonging to the very core of this work invites its unfinished character.

We have taken a long detour from the scene in Khovansky's chamber. Let us return to it, bearing in mind the general design of Musorgsky's musical drama. As we have already seen, thematic allusions built into the embedded numbers open up a picture of Khovansky's mind: remembrances of his past glory, bitter memories of the marching tune of Peter's troops, and thoughts of imminent danger creep into his mind in spite of himself.

At the same time, these allusions open alternative avenues of interpretation, haunting the listeners with contradictory possibilities. Did the tunes sung and played by Khovansky's slaves sound provocative only to him, owing to his state of mind, or was the choice of those tunes by his domestics triggered by their secret anticipation of what was coming, in the manner of a Freudian slip of the tongue? Perhaps they had already been bribed or intimidated into compliance by Shaklovity—how else, after all, could he appear in Khovansky's private chamber unannounced, followed by the assassins? With the singing of "Glory," they (according to the direction in the score) escort the prince to the door while holding him up by his arms—thus precluding the slightest chance of his escaping the fatal blow. Is this gesture merely an externalization of Khovansky's shedding of all his inner defenses, or is it a deliberate arrangement by which he is literally led to the slaughter? We are left with no resolution except Shaklovity's roaring laughter, with which the scene abruptly ends.

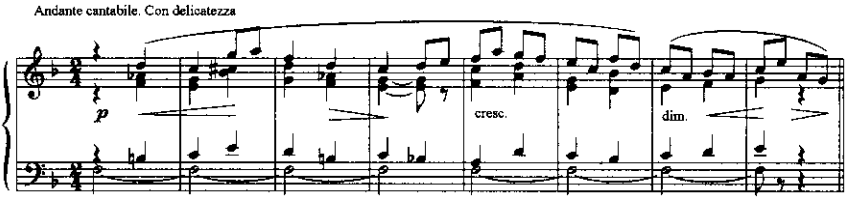
Furthermore, the scene's thematic texture can be interpreted not only as an

expression of Khovansky's and his domestics' hidden thoughts but also as a secret voice of Fate by which the prince's doom is pronounced and therefore sealed (as happened earlier with Golitsyn). Does Khovansky's refusal to heed the voices that haunt him throughout the scene amount to his unwillingness to acknowledge Fate, which can be understood as the real cause of his demise? Or on the contrary, is his defenselessness, so manifestly foolish to an outside observer, a sign that he did hear that secret voice and decided to meet his end face to face, amid the sounds of his past glory? Perhaps this is what he meant by his somewhat vague aside: "The Lithuanian folk has awakened! Rise, Khovansky, you also must wake up!" (Khovansky counted his lineage from Gediminus, the all-powerful medieval ruler of Lithuania.) The historical Khovansky, on learning of his death sentence, "tearfully pleaded" with Sophia for his life (according to one source). The operatic Khovansky, however, may prove not so hapless after all; or rather, he is and is not hapless at the same time.

Whatever questions the thematic outline of the scene may evoke in a listener, they are never to receive a definitive answer. We will never know for sure what *did* happen in Khovansky's chamber in the way that we eventually learn, together with King Mark and Kurvenal, about the hidden tale of love and the death wish that stand behind Tristan's betrayal of his sovereign, or about Wotan's secret schemes, aimed at circumventing his fate, whose realization in fact precipitates his demise. Is Khovansky duped by Shaklovity, or does he triumph over him by willingly accepting death, thus ending his humiliation and redeeming his "children," the musketeers? Neither subsequent actions nor subsequent thematic development resolves these dilemmas. The audience remains as much in the dark about the hidden causes as the opera's characters or, for that matter, as the real hero of Musorgsky's "people's drama"—the Russian people of the late seventeenth century.

Another character in the opera who is supposed to attract little sympathy is Golitsyn. Musorgsky's scornful attitude toward the half-Europeanized prince is evident from the beginning of the scene in Golitsyn's chamber (act 2), which is described in the introductory remark as having "an interior in a mixed taste" (*obstanovka v smeshannom vkuse*), that is, traditional Muscovite and European. The prince's behavior reflects his "mixed taste" as well: he is equally preoccupied with grand political plans and fearful superstitions, dividing his time between a sophisticated diplomatic discussion with a Lutheran pastor and a session of sorcery with Marfa. The idea of the prince's mixed character is reinforced by the introductory music of act 2, which strikingly resembles the melodic and harmonic style of Chaikovsky's romances (example 4.12).[46]

Musorgsky's and Chaikovsky's disdain for each other's music and person-



4.12. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 2, introduction

ality was fully reciprocal. A key to the Chaikovsky connection in this scene is provided by the scornful nickname by which the former repeatedly called the latter in his letters: "Sadyk-pasha."[47] It referred to Chaikovsky's namesake, the Polish writer Michal Czajkowski, who emigrated to Turkey and there converted to Islam, adopting the name Sadyk-pasha, a striking example of a mixed taste. Czajkowski/Sadyk-pasha added injury to this insult by assuming command of the squadron of Polish volunteers in the allied army in the Crimean War.

Khovansky, by the way, also did not escape a sarcastic allusion aimed at another prominent actor in the contemporary Russian music scene. Invited by Golitsyn to take a seat, he refuses to do so, complaining that he and his peers lost their places in the hierarchy (*mesta*) owing to Golitsyn's policy of abolition of the order of seniority. Khovansky's barbed remark echoes A. V. Serov's complaint that he was not granted a permanent seat in the Mariinsky Theater, for which he was derided in Musorgsky's musical lampoon *Rayok*: "Offer a chair to the genius, promptly! The genius has no place to sit down!"

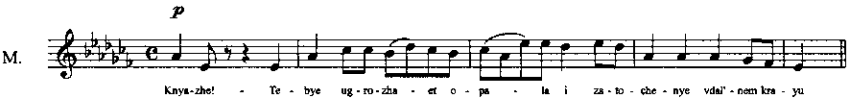
Golitsyn is haunted by dark premonitions. His fears are soon confirmed by Marfa's soothsaying. Later we learn that what happens to Golitsyn is exactly what Marfa predicted: the imposition of disgrace and exile. The scene of his "sad departure" (act 4, scene 2) is clad in the music of her soothsaying, thus reiterating the fulfillment of the "will of the fate" that she has revealed. A prophecy followed by its inevitable fulfillment is by no means an unusual thing to find in an opera. Once a prophecy is pronounced, we can rest assured that, following the laws of operatic causality, it will come true before the end. *Carmen, Rigoletto, Macbeth,* even *Parsifal* come to mind, not to speak of the "prophecy" in the prologue to *Ruslan and Ludmila,* in which the Kievan singer Boian has a remarkably penetrating vision of a splendid city and its wonderful poet to arise far to the north many centuries later. Often the pattern is complicated by our realization that it was the hero's own actions, provoked by the prophecy, that have brought destruction on him. Perhaps the most prolonged and winding road by which the hero arrives at his demise by trying

to thwart it was built in *The Ring of the Nibelung,* in which the schemes that Wotan devises to circumvent Erda's prophecy keep up the suspense through four evenings, almost until the very end.

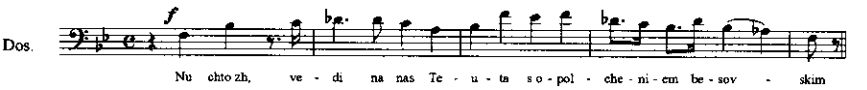
In *Khovanshchina,* not only does the causal relation between the prophecy and its fulfillment remains ambiguous but the very nature of the prophecy and the prophetess is cast in doubt. We have some ground for asking: What happened, after all, in Golitsyn's chamber? The supernatural forces predicting his destruction never appear on stage, never speak with their own voice. The superstitious prince learns Fate's verdict from Marfa. Her pronouncement comes at the crucial moment when Golitsyn must decide whether to join the anti-Petrine conspiracy—the decision on which his fate indeed depends. The words strike a terrible blow that has the fatal impact on Golitsyn's subsequent behavior.

Shaken by Marfa's sinister predictions, Golitsyn meets Khovansky, who has just arrived at their prearranged meeting. In his state of utter dejection, he sees in Khovansky the embodiment of the dark forces of the past that threaten him with destruction. This state of mind inevitably leads to a cantankerous exchange between him and Khovansky, dooming the purpose of the meeting from the outset. Dosifei tries in vain to introduce a sense of purpose into their discussion: in his agitated mood, Golitsyn greets Dosifei's vision of the old customs with the same scorn as he does Khovansky's. The meeting is falling apart, which in effect means that its participants have sealed their fate. Moreover, Golitsyn makes an almost insane blunder that worsens the situation even further: he impulsively orders Marfa's murder. Marfa, of course, not only manages to defend herself against the assassin but delivers him to Peter's soldiers. She then returns to Golitsyn's house to tell this story, in the presence of Dosifei and Khovansky, as if in complete ignorance of its cause and consequences—a scandal of truly Dostoevskian dimensions.[48] Shaklovity arrives on Marfa's heels, bringing the crushing news of Khovansky's denunciation (whose secret author he is), just published in Izmailovo, and becoming an eyewitness to the would-be conspirators' meeting. A single prolonged note in the lower register, sounding while all the participants remain immobilized by bewilderment, ends the scene in a way that is a musical equivalent of the "mute scene" in the finale of Gogol's *Inspector General*.[49]

Before the soothsaying takes place, Golitsyn vacillates between bold plans and doubts, self-confidence and fear; afterwards, he succumbs to despair: "Everything has perished like dust!" Marfa's words literally haunt him throughout the subsequent meeting. When Dosifei admonishes him—"Go ahead, lead Teut's army against us! promote all those refreshments and dancing, to please



4.13a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 2, Marfa's soothsaying



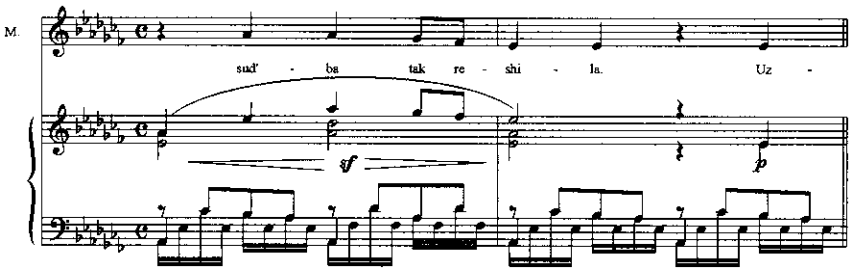
4.13b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 2, Dosifei's admonition

the devil!" — the melodic line of his remark repeats almost exactly the theme of the soothsaying (examples 4.13a and 4.13b).

We can interpret this similarity as an implicit indication that Dosifei's words ring in Golitsyn's ears as an echo of Marfa's prophecy. Thus provoked, he heatedly returns the rebuke (in the manner of "say-it-about-yourself") using the same tune. The voice of his ostensible fate now speaks through his own mouth; we see Golitsyn crushed in his mind before the fatal blow of his exile falls on him.

As with Khovansky's death, the scene in Golitsyn's chamber allows for its simultaneous interpretation on three different levels: the mystical, the psychological, and the political. Did the soothsaying indeed reveal Golitsyn's inescapable fate, or was it decided by the very fact of his succumbing to the temptation of the sorcery? Did Marfa's prophecy wreak destruction on Golitsyn by psychologically crushing him and making him act foolishly or by summoning evil spirits that dimmed his mind and led him toward his end? In other words, should we attune our perception of this scene to a nineteenth-century psychological novel, a mythological epic, or a classical tragedy? The answer should remain as ambiguous as in the case of Dostoevsky's *The Demons*.

The ambiguity of the soothsaying scene turns out to be especially ominous when we examine more closely the role played in it by the opera's main heroine, Marfa. In order to appreciate the hidden potentials of the scene's meaning, we must return to Dosifei's rebuke of Golitsyn for his promotion of "hedonism and dancing" (*prokhlady* — literally, "refreshments" — *i tantsy*) that are pleasing to the devil. These words were drawn directly from the gem of Musorgsky's historical sources: *Teut and Godard* by Prince Myshetsky, whom Musorgsky cited with relish in a letter to Stasov. Myshetsky added to these two evils a third one, however, perhaps the worst: "So also to us has Lucifer dispatched his cohorts — to snare and draw us to great lust, and in particular



4.14. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina*, Marfa's soothsaying: the theme of Fate

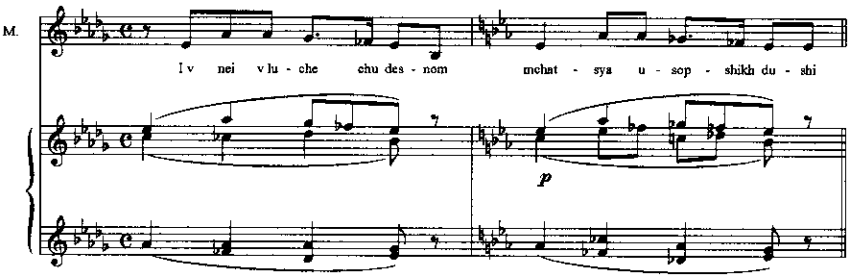
to pride, drunkenness, to *hedonism* [*prokhlady*] *and dancing*. He also dispatched accursed women—an all-knowing witch, fortune-teller, and a female *seer* [*ved'ma, vorozheya i* gadka]."[50]

This last point is omitted from the speech of the operatic Myshetsky-Dosifei—and its absence is the more conspicuous in that the *gadka* and her soothsaying stand at the center point of act 2. The reason is obvious: throughout the opera, Dosifei invariably expresses his fondness for and trust in Marfa. It is interesting, though, to examine what Marfa has said to Golitsyn: not only the words but the music and its relation to her other musical pronouncements, which may reveal her secret thoughts and designs.

Marfa's soothsaying monologue is punctuated by an expressive refrain whose meaning apparently points to the inexorable decision of fate (example 4.14).

This motif has already surfaced in Marfa's voice, in act 1, in the scene between Marfa, Andrei, and Emma. Incensed by Andrei's betrayal of her love, Marfa threatens to denounce him to the Old Believers for his "involvement with the Lutheran faith"—a threat that evokes a genuine fear in the young prince. Eventually, however, she takes her threat back by hinting that she "has prepared another fate" for Andrei and herself. Suddenly falling into a reverie, she envisions a heavenly abode toward which the souls of the newly dead are rushing in a "wondrous ray"; it is at this moment that the motif that later recurs as the voice of Golitsyn's fate appears for the first time (example 4.15).

Andrei Khovansky is not capable of comprehending this reverie, nor has he time to muse about it: the scene is suddenly interrupted by the shouts of a crowd, followed by his father's appearance. We as listeners may be distracted as well by the subsequent dramatic confrontation between the father and the son. If we follow the invisible thread that stretches from this scene to the soothsaying, however, we have to ask ourselves about its possible implications. If Marfa's agenda from the beginning has been to attain martyrdom together



4.15. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 1, Marfa

with her unfaithful lover, thus both purifying and punishing him, then Golitsyn's political plans, aimed at building a coalition against Peter, posed a major impediment. For the martyrdom to be accomplished, there would have to be a complete defeat. Had the meeting between Golitsyn, Dosifei, and Khovansky succeeded, Marfa's vision would have become all but irrelevant.

Whatever supernatural power Marfa might possess, her shrewdness in obtaining intelligence about the most secret matters is demonstrated repeatedly in the opera. This theme is so important for Musorgsky that at one point he suggested to Stasov that he was going to make his Marfa a scion of an aristocratic family in order to make more plausible the ease with which she moves in the highest spheres. Stasov was enraged: on top of Dosifei's confessing to being a former prince, this would make virtually every protagonist of the opera a scion of the nobility—what kind of "people's drama" was this supposed to be?[51] Musorgsky backed away from the idea, yet he did not diminish Marfa's stance vis-à-vis the powerful. If anything, Dosifei's confidences should have made it easy for her to learn about the planned meeting at Golitsyn's. Her seemingly innocent remark to the latter about the multitude of agents swarming around his household sounds like a hint indicating that she understands what is in the air. It is also her knowledge of the cause of the prince's worry that prompts her to offer—ever so carefully—to tell his fortune.[52] If examined against the implicit background of her secret insight into the situation, Marfa's and Golitsyn's initial dialogue reveals tense undercurrents:

> MARFA. One gets into your place, my Prince, as if into an ambush: your agents are just roaming about.
>
> GOLITSYN. This is a time of secret deceptions, a time of betrayal and self-interest. The future is covered by a hazy veil: one trembles about every moment of one's vain life.
>
> MARFA. Perhaps one should tell your fortune, my prince? Ask the will of the secret forces who possess the earth, my prince?

GOLITSYN. How?
MARFA. Ask them to bring a little water.
GOLITSYN *(to a servant)*. Bring some water . . . to drink. Now go!

The soothsaying then proceeds, and Golitsyn's fate is pronounced, to the same tune with which Marfa had announced to her former lover her vision of *his* fate. The aftermath of the soothsaying, culminating in Marfa's dramatic reappearance, has advanced that vision greatly.

When people accuse Marfa of having relations with the devil, of being a witch or a werewolf, Dosifei always takes her side, admonishing her accusers that it is they who are possessed by evil spirits. He relies on her to perform crucial duties that she never fails to accomplish. Marfa takes Emma into hiding, saving her from the young Khovansky's clutches and him from the Lutheran temptation, obtains intelligence about the decisions of the Great Council to destroy the Old Believers, and makes sure that Andrei Khovansky will join the skete in the martyrdom for which they all are destined. How she manages to do all of this remains as much a mystery as her ability to pop out on stage at critical moments, bringing in her wake a figure of authority, a trick she performs on Andrei in act 1 and on Golitsyn and his party in the finale of act 2.

Dosifei calls Marfa his "beloved child" (*chado vozlyublennoe*). In this, as in many other details, the composer himself shows an affinity to his main character: in one of his letters to Stasov he called Marfa "our beloved schismatic" (*raskolnitsa, nami vozlyublennaya*). Marfa's passionate temperament, strong will, and fearlessness cannot fail to inspire admiration. Like Kundri, however, she also has a dark and enigmatic side; it is that side that strikes the eye of less savory characters in the opera, such as Andrei Khovansky, Golitsyn, and Susanna. Are they simply unable to see in Marfa what Dosifei does, or are their fear and hatred toward her perhaps not completely unfounded, and is Dosifei at fault for being too trusting? Like many other dilemmas concerning the opera's characters and actions, this one is left hanging in the air.

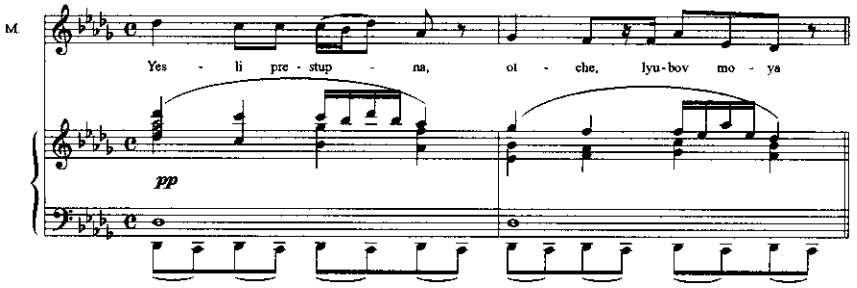
Marfa's skill at manipulation is quite obvious in her dealings with Andrei Khovansky and Golitsyn. The scene with the fanatical old nun Susanna in act 3 may suggest that she manipulates Dosifei as well. Susanna stalks Marfa as she sings about her passion for Andrei. At first, Marfa tries to placate the agitated woman with a hypocritical expression of piety whose inner falsity is underscored, once again, by its conspicuous proximity to Chaikovsky's style—in particular, to the theme of Tatiana's rueful meditation in the final scene of *Eugene Onegin*.[53] Yet she cannot refrain from a sardonic aside that Susanna overhears. Incensed, Susanna threatens Marfa with denunciation—not an insignificant threat, judging by how scared Andrei was in act 1 when

Marfa threatened to denounce *him* for getting involved with the Lutheran faith. Marfa's response proves to be remarkably ingenious and effective. Instead of trying to defuse the confrontation, she addresses Susanna with a striking tale of the passionate nights she spent with her lover, provoking the old woman, quite predictably, into a fit of rage. By the time Dosifei enters the scene, Susanna is reduced to a frenzied incoherence. Marfa takes full advantage of the situation: to Dosifei's inquiry she calmly responds that "her sincere and unaffected speech has made Mother Susanna inflamed with fury." Instead of a denunciation of Marfa, the situation ends in the severe admonition and banishment of Susanna by Dosifei. Musorgsky gleefully commented, "Marfa makes a fool of Susanna in front of Dosifei, so that he exorcises the devil from her and . . . sends her home."[54]

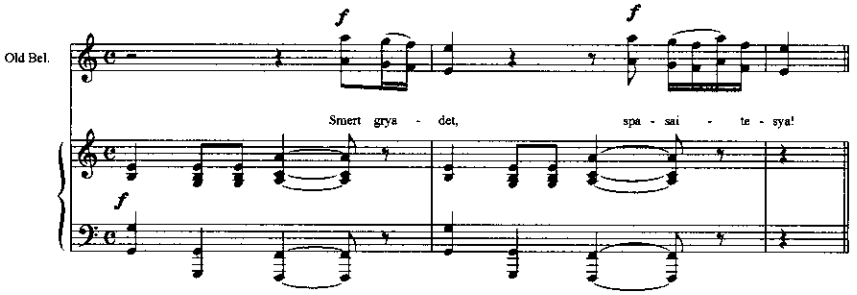
The sublime and dark sides of Wagner's Kundri are clearly separated; eventually the listener has a complete understanding of the causes and the nature of her split personality. Marfa's nature and role in the development of the drama remain ambiguous and unresolved until the end. Who is she: an evil *gadka* or "our beloved schismatic"? Prince Andrei's nemesis, whose dark sorcery causes all his misfortunes, as he claims, or Dosifei's only steadfast supporter, a person of superior vision and will? The opera's most beautiful tunes are bestowed on Marfa in her professions of rejected love; they do not fail to evoke the listeners' (and Dosifei's) deep sympathy. Yet one can sense a dark side in the dense chromatic sequences and occasionally extreme flat keys of Marfa's passionate outpourings; at one point in act 1 she reaches a Phrygian G-flat minor, a key with ten flats. The words with which she describes her passion and suffering persistently refer to the image of a flame tormenting her, an image conforming both to the standard metaphor of the flame of passion (which is how Dosifei takes it) and to Susanna's frenzied vision of Marfa engulfed in infernal flames.

Marfa sees in self-immolation (in Andrei's company) the only way to attain redemption from the "horrible torture" of her love. What she actually seeks is not the return of Andrei's love but the purification of them both in the sacred flames. As early as act 1, at her first appearance on stage, she proclaims to her unfaithful lover the end that she "has set up" for him (see example 4.15). Again, it is impossible to tell whether Marfa, as a soothsayer, knows from the beginning the decision of fate or brings it upon herself, and everyone else, by the force of her vision and will.

The pyre remains on Marfa's mind all the time, and she misses no opportunity to advance toward it. In act 3, after getting rid of Susanna, Marfa raises the issue with Dosifei for the first time, exulting in a vision of herself and Prince Andrei burning "like God's candles" amid the holy brotherhood. At this point Dosifei is not prepared to come along; his reply sounds almost like



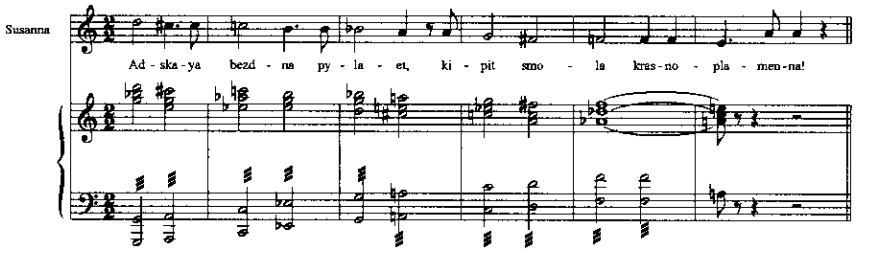
4.16a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 3, Marfa's plea



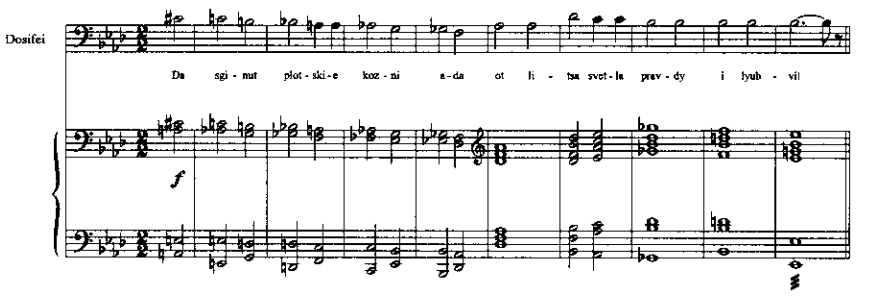
4.16b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 5, Old Believers

a plea: "To burn ourselves is a horrible affair! this is not a good time for it, my dove." It will take the catastrophes that befall Khovansky and Golitsyn for Dosifei to come to the fatal decision at last. The news that finally triggers it is Marfa's intelligence about the Great Council's decision to destroy the community of the Old Believers "without mercy or regret" (act 4, scene 2). Having solemnly announced that "now the time has come to assume the crown of eternal glory in fire and flame," Dosifei leaves for the skete. He has not heard Marfa repeating his words with ecstatic joy; he has not seen the musketeers spectacularly led to their execution — but then no less spectacularly pardoned. The listener, however, may ask: If the violent streltsy have been granted mercy, could not the Old Believers expect mercy as well? What, after all, *has* the Great Council decided, and how did Marfa know about it? (As a historical fact no such Great Council ever took place.) Dosifei never questions Marfa's words; nor does it Prince Andrei, whom Marfa allows to witness the streltsy's staged execution but not their final absolution and who, as a result, submits entirely to her will.

Should the final immolation, then, be understood as Marfa's triumph? She is basking in the glory of the fulfillment of her exalted vision, addressing her



4.17a. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 3, Susanna



4.17b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 5, Dosifei

terrified former lover with a mixture of passionate love song and funeral chant. The entire flock of Old Believers seems to assume her voice; their agitated cries of "Death is coming! Save your soul! The enemy is close! Take courage!" musically echo Marfa's earlier ecstatic plea to Dosifei to extinguish her flesh so that her soul will be saved (examples 4.16a and 4.16b).

There may be another side to this finale, however. The question of the nature and location of the enemy from whom one tries in despair to save oneself in flames should in the final analysis remain as unresolved for the listener as it perhaps was for Dosifei and his flock. Once again, the thematic fabric of the scene suggests hidden subtexts that differ dramatically from what can be seen at the surface.

In act 3 Susanna, in her rage, had seen the flames of the inferno and the hordes of demons behind Marfa's back; Dosifei also seemed to sense the presence of "legions of demons" at the scene, although he attributes their appearance to Susanna's fit. Yet in the final scene, when Dosifei proclaims their immolation as the ultimate defense against the infernal scheme, he uses Susanna's tune (examples 4.17a and 4.17b).

Does Dosifei's adoption of Susanna's tune mean that he has finally concurred with her vision of demons surrounding Marfa, so that the very decision

to accept martyrdom stems from his realization of his exposure to and powerlessness against the infernal forces? Has he at last fully understood the compelling desire of his "beloved daughter" to purify herself in flames and realized that this was the only hope for her and for all of them? Whose goal has been achieved at the final pyre? Which has triumphed—an evil scheme or its repudiation by "truth and love"? And who represents good, and who evil in this struggle? Any unambiguous answer to these questions (such as those that the opera's editors tried so hard to impose on it) would be, to use Tolstoy's words, a "terrible trivialization."

Despite of all of the whimsical and sometimes incongruous contaminations of historical events in its plot, *Khovanshchina* remains profoundly true to the spirit of the epoch it depicted. It shows a world ravaged by thirty years of religious and moral turmoil, which resulted in the overwhelming terror of anticipation of the imminent advent of the Antichrist and the apocalyptic end of the world.[55] For those who saw in the liturgical reform of 1667 the work of Satan, evil forces lurked in every corner; the Church, the holy books, the words of prayers themselves—everything was contaminated, everything was beclouded by the suspicion of being Satan's ploy. It was that feeling of being entrapped and overwhelmed by pervasive and ubiquitous evil—exemplified most graphically by the young tsar and his army—that made people seek the ultimate purification in fire.[56]

The atmosphere of paranoia and ambiguity blown up to a mythic scale in Musorgsky's opera acts on the audience with a power resembling that of another great artistic achievement of the same decade—Dostoevsky's *The Demons*. In fact, it is conceivable that *Khovanshchina* was directly influenced by Dostoevsky.

The clues linking Musorgsky and Dostoevsky are sparse. Dostoevsky never mentioned either the composer or his music. The only evidence is circumstantial; it comes from N. Strakhov, who, in 1874, after the opera's première, wrote three letters to the journal *Grazhdanin* addressed to its chief editor, Dostoevsky (to which, however, Dostoevsky did not evince any reaction). In these letters Strakhov gave a rather sour assessment of Musorgsky's *Boris*. He complained about the "free if not unceremonious treatment" Pushkin received in the opera and admonished the composer for depicting the people as "coarse, drunk, oppressed and feeble-willed."[57] The latter complaint, however, might be addressed as well to the way Dostoevsky depicted post-reform reality in *Diary of a Writer,* entries from which were published in the same magazine. As for Musorgsky, he never mentioned Dostoevsky's works, yet he included him in the list of prominent contemporary cultural figures in his autobiographical

notes. In February 1881, in the wake of Dostoevsky's death and just a few days before his own terminal illness struck, Musorgsky attended a meeting in Dostoevsky's memory, contributing to it with his trademark—a funeral knell improvised at the piano. A possible link between the two might be found in Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov, Musorgsky's intimate friend of many years,[58] who also had numerous contacts with Dostoevsky. In May 1880 Dostoevsky attended a meeting of the Slavic Charitable Society at Golenishchev-Kutuzov's home, where he was elected to represent the society at the festivities dedicated to the opening of the Pushkin monument in Moscow—the occasion at which he delivered his famous "Pushkin speech." Golenishchev also attended the Moscow festivities and later in the same year participated together with Dostoevsky in a literary meeting in St. Petersburg dedicated to Pushkin.[59]

Golenishchev was known for his conservative ideology—so much so that his extreme closeness to the composer had to be downplayed by Stasov, not to mention by Musorgsky's Soviet biographers. I have a feeling that Musorgsky's views, in the 1870s at any rate, were in fact far from the populist mold in which Stasov and others persisted in putting him, followed all too readily (although not without some grumbling about Musorgsky's excessive pessimism) by scholars in the Soviet period. For instance, though he wrote a satirical song after Nekrasov's lyrics ("Yeremushka's Lullaby") in the 1860s, Musorgsky later (in his autobiographical sketch of 1880) expressed his distaste for Nekrasov and "civic bards" (*grazhdanskie piity*). Although the composer rarely confronted others' views of himself directly, we have seen the remarkable degree of evasiveness in his later reactions to Stasov's mentoring. One senses the uneasiness with which Stasov and people of similar convictions approached the last years of Musorgsky's life and work—an uneasiness that it seems too easy to ascribe solely to his supposed alcoholism. The following pronouncement by I. Lapshin is characteristic: "While in the domains of philosophy and politics Musorgsky was an antipode to Dostoevsky, he nevertheless sensed [*chuyal*] in him a restless spirit akin to his own, and apparently, held him in high esteem as an artist."[60]

Musorgsky never mentioned Dostoevsky in his reports to Stasov on the progress of the "people's drama," just as he never mentioned Solovyev among his historical sources, but it is hard to imagine under the circumstances that he was not familiar with Dostoevsky's writing.[61] *The Demons* was published serially in *Russian Messenger* throughout 1871, while the idea for his new opera came to Musorgsky in the summer of 1872. The question of a possible direct influence has only marginal significance, however; more important is the spiritual kinship of the two works. Both authors drew their narrative from documented events; both, however, treated their sources rather liberally. Their

aim was not a chronicle but an exploration of individuals and a nation exposed to, contaminated with, and struggling against evil. Both apparently felt, although perhaps for different reasons, that the epoch of the 1870s was precisely the time for such an exploration.

The word "Khovanshchina" appeared for the first time in Musorgsky's letter to Stasov of July 13, 1872. A large part of the letter is dedicated to the depiction of a scene he had just witnessed. The new law of general military conscription had recently been adopted; Musorgsky had observed the awkward exercises of the newborn armed forces in a suburb of what he called "Sat-Piterburkh" (substituting the satanic "Sat" for the holy "Sanct" and evoking the Dutch pronunciation of the city's name popular in Petrine times). He twisted the suburb's name, Pargolovo, into "Pärgala," a liberal rendition of the Finnish *perkele* or *perkelä* "the devil," a popular Finnish curse familiar to every Petersburg dweller. Musorgsky referred to the whole scene as a "children's camp" in which "innocent angels" played with toy muskets (for which he used the archaic word *fuzei*—another reminder of Petrine times), preparing themselves for the task of "enforcing Malthus' theory." This description clearly alludes to Peter's mock regiments and their exercises. "Even the roosters are crowing marches—something is up," Musorgsky proclaims with mock solemnity. (One is reminded of the "cockcrow," as he called it, mixed with the sound of trumpets, in the beginning of "The Dawn over the Moscow River").

What emerges from all these typically Musorgskian puns, hilarious wordplay, and juxtapositions of ideas is an atmosphere saturated with the presence of demonic forces. They lurk everywhere in this whirlwind of images, names, and tongues. It was in this context that the name "Khovanshchina" was coined. We have become used to the strange word as the opera's title, a linguistic fait accompli needing neither justification nor explanation anymore. But what did this word suggest, after all? As we have seen, the events concerning Khovansky's mutiny and fall constitute only a fraction of the opera's historical background, and in the opera itself, Khovansky and his destiny played an important but not the central role. In the Soviet era, this derivational pattern became particularly popular for expressing ideological repudiation (we can recall *pilatovshchina*—"Pilateism"—with which Master is accused in Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*). When, however, I attune my language perception to that of the nineteenth century, the first thing that comes to mind is an association with such words as *chertovshchina, besovshchina*, and *dyavolshchina,* all meaning "devil's (or demons') work." Even the word *pugachevshchina,* referring to mutiny of Pugachev in the 1770s, originally suggested something not simply bad but hellishly bad, a catastrophic eruption of infernal forces.

I believe that the original connotations of Musorgsky's title agreed with the

original spirit of the word *pugachevshchina* in a strict and concrete sense. As a matter of fact, in the late 1870s the composer briefly entertained the idea of writing another opera under the title *Pugachevshchina*.[62] "Khovanshchina" suggested a world permeated by erupting demonic forces. Marfa's sorcery, Andrei's broken oath, Shaklovity's ominous ubiquity, Podyachy's scribbling, Golitsyn's superstitious phobias, the Lutheran pastor's intrigues, Susanna's furious contortions, the musketeers' and their commander's violent frenzies and drunken revelries, and, of course, the marching Preobrazhentsy — the presence of evil is overwhelming, the diversity of its appearances inexhaustible. Dosifei watches the world falling apart around him and feels utter despair — much as Musorgsky himself looked on in dismay as the world of the "Mighty Little Heap" and its lofty ideals crumbled in the 1870s.[63] But whether Dosifei eventually succeeds in withstanding evil or succumbs to it, whether he has led his flock out of the contaminated world or lost his way like everybody else and perished, taking his cause with him, remains a dilemma whose resolution fades away with the sounds of the final A-flat minor chorale. The same, in a way, can be said of Musorgsky and his mission of creating "the people's musical drama." But the very elusiveness of that mission has made it open to the future.

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Dostoevsky's later novels signified a departure from the spiritual and artistic world of the 1850s and 1860s, which was dominated, at least in the minds of the contemporary Russian public, by Turgenev's novels. Their foundation, both ideological and aesthetic, was the explicit social interaction, an open contest of characters, intentions, and ideological beliefs, expressed through the dialogue. The period from 1860 to 1870 was an epoch of volcanic outbursts of creative energy, grandiose projects, and expanding horizons of historical, moral, and aesthetic vision. It was the time in which *War and Peace, Crime and Punishment,* and *Boris Godunov* sprang to life; the first three parts of Wagner's tetralogy also come to mind in this connection, alongside *Die Meistersinger* and *Tristan und Isolde*. The decade that followed turned out to be quite different: a time of introspection, inner crises, the disturbing elusiveness of right answers, of deep dissatisfaction and worry. This change was not, however, as the earlier era's most obdurate champions would complain, a mere degeneration, a falling-off from the glory days of the 1860s. The abysses, introspective insights, and tragic ambiguities that characterized 1870s thinking contained the seeds of the moral and aesthetic quests of the turn of the twentieth century. To a modern listener, *Khovanshchina*'s enigmatically beautiful dawn that turns into a conflagration suggests, more than anything else, the dawns and eruptions of the century that was to come, in the same way as did contemporary works by Wagner and Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

5

Lost in a Symbolist City: Multiple Chronotopes in Chaikovsky's The Queen of Spades

A talented writer (unfortunately, as it turned out, afflicted by a mental disease) appeared in Germany who began preaching that compassion is a lowly feeling unworthy of a person with self-respect, and that morality is useful only for those who have a slavish nature.

—Vladimir Solovyov

When Brahms's First Symphony appeared in 1876, critics and the public dubbed it "Beethoven's Tenth." Expectations of the advent of a new Beethoven were running as high in the German-speaking world, as were expectations of a new Gogol in Russia (nobody waited for a new Pushkin or a new Goethe: national cultural piety is fed by expectations of a new messiah but worships only one God). The music of the symphony itself provoked this catchy label: it was permeated by reminiscences of Beethoven's symphonies in general and his Ninth in particular. Especially poignant was the chorale that opened the last movement of Brahms's symphony: its theme transparently alluded to the chorale of the "Ode to Joy." ("Any ass can see that," Brahms replied irritably when the similarity was pointed out to him.) About twenty years later, Mahler opened the finale of his Third Symphony with another chorale that resembled with equal transparency those of Brahms and Beethoven. For the turn-of-the-century listener, Mahler's finale offered a vision of continual evolution of the

Viennese symphonic universe in the sense of a Bergsonian "duration." Its sound opened a perspective into the depths of time—from modernity back to the mid-nineteenth century, to the advent of Romanticism, and perhaps further. For even Beethoven's Ninth did not hold as the terminal point of this allusional arcade: its theme was itself a product of a multitude of sources,[1] perhaps the most spectacular being the duet of Pamina and Papageno from *The Magic Flute,* with its message of the universal peace and joy brought by the magic power of art.

Such regressions were quite typical of a fin-de-siècle culture captivated by the Nietzschean idea of "eternal returns." These could be seen and heard in numerous works of literature, music, and visual arts belonging to various national strains of the rising culture of modernism.[2] Perhaps nowhere was this reminiscent environment so keenly felt and richly expressed as in two imperial capitals: Vienna and St. Petersburg. One could name other cities whose historical and cultural past stretched farther back in time, yet it was these two that emanated a peculiar spiritual atmosphere in which virtually every culturally significant gesture came out surrounded, one could say overwhelmed, by pervasive reminiscences and multiple echoes. Entangled in a web of symbolically charged correspondences, fin-de-siècle Vienna and St. Petersburg emerged as symbolist cities par excellence. For Vienna, the principal material out of which this web had been woven was sound—Mozart's singspielen, Beethoven's symphonies, Schubert's lieder, and Johann Strauss's waltzes. For Petersburg, it was mostly images—monuments, buildings, streets, embankments—and their reflection in literature, from the odes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries glorifying a neoclassic splendor that had risen miraculously over desolate swamps,[3] to Pushkin's marriage of that vision with madness and hallucination in *The Bronze Horseman,* to Gogol's demonization of the phantomlike city in *Nevsky Prospect,* to Dostoevsky's Petersburg—"the most abstract and premeditated city on earth."[4]

The allusive stock of the symbolist city had been growing in a self-perpetuating fashion until, by the turn of the twentieth century, it began to be felt as a crushing burden. Saddled with pervasive memories, every event, thought, and artifact came to be seen as something that had "always already" been there. The wall between inner vision prompted by memories and physical reality wore increasingly thin. One could not be certain whether what one saw was actually there in plain view or was merely a mental game, an echo of an echo. Consequently, one could not be certain about one's own self as well. The inner world of a person dissolved into mutually incompatible images, postures, actions, each provoked by ubiquitous precedents. The sum of those incoherent parts turned out to be a "man without qualities," a disoriented

neurotic self incapable of comprehending how and for what purpose he ended up in the place in which he finds himself. Not only individual consciousness but even the imposing imperial façade showed signs of dissolution, its granite edifices and brass fanfares turning into semiotic phantoms. This was the atmosphere in which the antipositivist philosophical revolution and modernist aesthetic explosion thrived alongside personal neuroses and political dementia.[5] Andrei Bely's *Petersburg,* written on the eve of and in anticipation of the crash of the Russian Empire, and Joseph Roth's *Radetzky March* and Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities,* both written in the wake of the breakdown of the Hapsburg world, registered the workings of this semiotic vortex—an increasing sense of the fictitiousness of the world out of which personal and social collapse emerged with the imminence of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades,* conceived, written, and staged in 1890, stood chronologically at the beginning of that epoch; a few years remained before Nietzsche would become a universal presence in the European cultural world, the first wave of "decadents" would appear on the Russian, English, and German literary scenes (following the French lead), Mahler would write his "Resurrection" Symphony, and Scriabin his *Poème d'extase*. The author of the opera seemed to be firmly anchored in nineteenth-century aesthetics and worldviews; it would be hard to imagine him embracing Nietzsche, Freud, Bely, or Scriabin had he lived a few years more to witness their rise. Yet I agree with the critics who have pointed out the symbolist and expressionist traits in *The Queen of Spades*.[6] Like Pushkin before him and Bely after, Chaikovsky, an outsider drawn into the capital's social and artistic milieu at a later stage of his career, produced a quintessentially Petersburgian tale that absorbed into itself and powerfully contributed to the peculiar spirit of a symbolist city.

Soon after the triumph of *Eugene Onegin,* Chaikovsky wrote another opera on a subject by Pushkin: *Mazeppa,* after the poem *Poltava* (1883). Like Pushkin's poem in its time, it did not have much success (undeservedly so, as its recent revival by Valery Gergiev can attest). For some time in the late 1880s, Chaikovsky considered another Pushkin subject: *The Captain's Daughter*.[7] Finally, he rejected this project, in terms that once again revealed his antipathy to anything that might remotely resemble the Musorgskian "people's drama": "But the most important impediment . . . is Pugachev, *pugachevshchina,* Berda, and all those Khlopushas, Chikas etc. [names of Pugachev's commanders]. I feel myself powerless to render them artistically by means of music. It may be a feasible task, but not for me."[8] (The word *pugachevshchina,* underlined in the letter, probably alludes to Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina,* first staged in 1886).

When in 1886 Modest Chaikovsky suggested *The Queen of Spades* as a possible subject for an opera, his brother was not impressed. It is not difficult to see why Pushkin's whimsical tale, with its dry, anecdotal narrative tone, devoid of any expression of empathy for its characters, could alienate a composer whose appreciation of *Eugene Onegin* and *Poltava* was based primarily on the "reality" of their depiction of human passions.[9] Nevertheless, Modest began work on a libretto at the request of a minor composer, Nikolai Klenovsky—"a certain [*nekto*] Klenovsky," as Pyotr Chaikovsky referred to him in his later account of the affair.[10] Meanwhile, inspired by fresh musical impressions received during his concert tour of Paris in 1889, Chaikovsky decided to write a "French opera," *La Courtisane,* on a libretto by Louis Gallé. He never began work on it, however. What he did compose in the same year was a "French ballet": *The Sleeping Beauty,* after Charles Perrault's fairy tale; the ballet's première took place in St. Petersburg in January 1890.

By that time, it had become clear that Klenovsky was unable to produce music for *The Queen of Spades*. In December 1889 the Imperial Theater turned to Chaikovsky, and this time, he suddenly agreed. Unlike the stormy atmosphere that surrounded the inception of *Eugene Onegin,* his reasons for taking *The Queen of Spades* could not have been more dispassionate. The theater wanted the opera for the following season, which meant that it needed a score by the beginning of the summer. Instead of discouraging the composer, this unreasonably short notice turned out to be an incentive for him to take on the project. Chaikovsky always emphasized the professional, craftsmanlike side of his art; he liked to do commissioned works, to labor under the pressure of a deadline.[11] Having found himself between large projects after the staging of *The Sleeping Beauty,* he felt the need for a new one that he could take with him for a prolonged stay abroad—one of the flights from everyday relationships and social obligations that he undertook periodically. The offer from the theater came just in time. The businesslike way in which Chaikovsky acknowledged his decision to write *The Queen of Spades* does not contain the remotest hint of the passionate spirit of his future creation. One cannot find a single expression indicating the composer's excitement about the plot and the characters—the mood with which he usually embarked on a new opera. He merely stated matter-of-factly: "I have a strong desire to work, and if I succeed in finding good accommodations somewhere in a cozy place abroad, I think that I will be able to fulfill my task, and submit to the Directorate a piano score by May; then during the summer I will do the orchestration."[12]

In late January Chaikovsky settled in Florence, a city that he found totally uninspiring, provincial, and boring. He confessed that the visual arts did not mean for him nearly as much as literature; when he finally ventured into the

Uffizzi Gallery, he spent the entire time there in a deserted hall that featured portraits of various historical figures; he was amused to find among them a certain Prince Ivan Chemodanov, the ambassador from Muscovy to the court of the Medici.[13] Yet the accommodations were convenient, and he would not have been able to get something as good on such short notice in a more attractive place such as Rome. Despite his continuing complaints about what he considered its total lack of amusements with which to distract oneself after a day's labor, Chaikovsky remained in Florence until his composition was completed. (Later, however, he commemorated the city by giving his next opus, the string sextet, the subtitle *Souvenir de Florence*.)

The way the composition proceeded contributed to this atmosphere of dispassionate professionalism. Modest's libretto needed considerable rewriting to meet the composer's and the theater's demands. All Chaikovsky took with him to Florence was the text of the first scene; the following scenes were to be sent one by one through the mail. Soon Chaikovsky found himself composing with such speed that it put pressure on his brother. Each time the composer neared the completion of another scene, he had to worry about the arrival of the next one; on some occasions, he had to produce pieces of the text on his own before help from Modest arrived. This manner of creation—piece by piece in a straightforward progression, in a feverish race against time—recalled the serial fashion in which Dostoevsky wrote his novels, submitting them to a magazine chapter by chapter, never having time to look beyond the next deadline.[14]

The theater wanted an interlude with singing and a pantomime in the ball scene, and Chaikovsky could not have been more easily persuaded; his stated policy was to keep the theater people happy so that they would be motivated to succeed when staging the opera.[15] Because Modest needed more time to select the text for the interlude, he sent the next scene, set in the countess's chamber, first—the only instance in which the process of composition deviated from the linear progression of the plot.

While writing an opera, Chaikovsky usually developed personal feelings toward his characters, thinking intensely about them as human beings whom he would or would not like—proceeding by the Stanislavsky method, so to speak. This time, there was hardly time for that. However daring the initial plan had looked, Chaikovsky overfulfilled it: the draft of the piano score was finished by the beginning of March. He even had to answer the worries of some who suspected that a work completed in such a short time had to be lightweight.[16] During the forty days he had spent composing, he could barely speak of anything but speeding up the arrival of the next portion of the text and discussing a few technical details with Modest. Under these circum-

stances, the only outlet he could find for his need for empathy with the opera's characters was to identify his Hermann with the designated creator of the role, the famous St. Petersburg tenor Nikolai Figner. Chaikovsky's own account of this emotional transposition was tinged with mild irony:

> Florence, 3 March 1890
>
> I finished the opera three hours ago and immediately sent Zakhar out with a telegram to you. As to the very ending of the opera, I composed it yesterday, before dinner, and when I reached Hermann's death and the concluding chorus, I felt such pity for Hermann that suddenly I began weeping. The weeping continued and turned into a little hysterical fit of a very pleasant nature: i.e., it was terribly sweet to weep. Afterwards I realized why it happened (since I had never experienced such mourning for a character, and tried to understand why I wanted to cry so much). It turns out that Hermann was for me not merely a pretext for writing this or that music but a real, living person, and moreover, a person with whom I felt a strong sympathy. Since I felt sympathy for Figner, and since I always envisioned my Hermann as Figner—I took all his misfortunes to heart.[17]

The most immediate misfortune of poor Figner (besides his stormy relationship with his wife, the famous soprano Medea Mej Figner, who sang Liza at the first performance) consisted in his having fallen from a horse and broken his shoulder. When Chaikovsky brought the score to Russia later in the summer, he repeatedly visited Figner at his estate, where the singer remained confined—which did not, however, diminish the enthusiasm with which he studied the new score. It is notable that while composing Chaikovsky had expressed a very personal worry about Figner, who would have to sing arduously in every one of the seven scenes;[18] he thought of alleviating his fate by abolishing the scene at the Winter Canal but found it impossible. (When, however, Figner pleaded with the composer to lower his last aria by a whole step, complaining that it would be impossible to sing so high at the end of such a strenuous part, Chaikovsky complied reluctantly but expressed his chagrin so many times afterwards that eventually the singer decided to perform the original version.)

On a more serious note, one can find some points at which Chaikovsky might feel a deep compassion toward his hero, if not identify with him. The operatic Hermann's words (from his duet with Eletsky in the first scene) about the grief he felt "in his afflicted soul" might have resonated with a composer who many years earlier had tried to convey to "his best friend" (von Meck) "everything, everything that occurs in my strange, afflicted soul."[19] If Chaikovsky was not as passionate a gambler as his hero (and Pushkin), he nevertheless used to spend time at the gaming tables, and he complained about it

bitterly. Hermann's love, so sublimely passionate when he did not dare to approach his beloved or even to learn her name, so disastrous after he broke the spell, might also have found a parallel in the composer's mind.

In this sense, the atmosphere of apparent estrangement from which *The Queen of Spades* emerged was as revealing for the character of the new opera as Chaikovsky's extraordinary personal involvement was for *Eugene Onegin*. With the latter, the composer sought, and found, a direct rapport with the life experience and ethical values of his contemporaries — the people of the 1860s. The incoherent passions, contradictory desires, and blinding preoccupations reigning in the former presaged the intoxicating dawn of the approaching century. The psychological atmosphere projected by *The Queen of Spades* turned out to be strikingly close to the overexalted world of early modernism — and as remote from the original spirit of the generation of the 1860s as from that of Pushkin's tale.

There is no need to follow in detail the differences between Pushkin's story and Modest Chaikovsky's libretto. Once again, Pushkin's dry, elliptic, evasive manner has vanished in the operatic transposition, giving way to a gasping eagerness. Pushkin's Liza, a poor orphan who seizes on Hermann's advances as a chance to escape her humiliating dependence on the countess, has in the opera turned into the countess's granddaughter, who throws away a brilliant engagement with Prince Eletsky because of her overwhelming passion for an enigmatic stranger; Pushkin's Hermann, obsessed with the idea of becoming rich and seeing in his intrigue with Liza nothing but a pathway to his goal, is transformed into an exalted lover who seeks money only as the means to "flee from people" together with the object of his adoration. In the few terse sentences that conclude his story, Pushkin relates his heroes' fates: Liza (or Lizaveta Ivanovna, as she is called in the tale) marries a decent and well-to-do young man and now in her turn has taken an orphan into her household; Hermann spends the rest of his days in the madhouse, repeating nonstop the names of the fateful three cards. In the opera, Liza succumbs to the inevitable fate of an operatic heroine by throwing herself into the Winter Canal, and Hermann reciprocates by stabbing himself with a dagger (or shooting himself, depending on the taste of the stage director).[20] Although some of Pushkin's dialogue was used in recitatives and various other literary sources were rather ingeniously incorporated into the opera's narrative (mostly at the composer's suggestion), its backbone consisted of verses written by Modest Chaikovsky and in a few instances by Pyotr Chaikovsky himself, at whose occasional banalities (in lines such as "Forgive me, heavenly creature, for having disturbed your repose") one cannot help wincing. All of this offers an easy invita-

tion either to smirk at the kitsch or to sigh over another desecration of another of Pushkin's venerable creations.

But it is essentially futile to judge a libretto as a purely literary text, without the meaning the music brings out in it. Had Modest Chaikovsky reworked Pushkin's story for the theater, the text he produced would have looked embarrassingly banal, maudlin, and overwrought in its narrative and stylistic incoherence. Yet together with the music, its overblown sentimentality turns into expressionist emotional hyperbole, its characters' thorough detachment from everyday logic indicates passions reaching the point of insanity, and its apparent inability to make narrative ends meet results in a broken, disoriented, profoundly disturbed picture of the world. In this sense, it is fair to say that the libretto serves its purpose quite effectively—the composer's repeated praise for his brother was not vain praise. This combined effect made an indelible imprint on the way Pushkin's story was coopted into the somber imagery of the "St. Petersburg myth." Quite a few literary works of the early twentieth century—notably Bely's *Petersburg*—seem to have been invaded by the images and situations of Chaikovsky's—rather than Pushkin's—*Queen of Spades*.

One deviation of the libretto from its literary original had consequences that proved crucial for the meaning of the opera: the shift of the implied time of the narrative. Pushkin's story was written in 1833–34 and evidently takes place at about that time. Each chapter is garnished with an epigraph taken from fleeting contemporary sources: a conversation, a letter, a private joke, a poetic impromptu. Real or fictitious, these references create an atmosphere of spontaneity;[21] as far as Pushkin's implied audience was concerned, the story might have been told at a social gathering—perhaps over supper after card game—as a piece of "table-talk," the mixture of gossip and anecdotes for which Pushkin developed a taste in his later years. In the vein of the numerical hints and implicit calculations typical of the mock-cabbalistic mode of his narrative, Pushkin offers a hidden chronological signpost in the story: a casual remark made near the beginning stating that the countess "strictly followed the fashions of the seventies, and proceeded with her toilette as laboriously and meticulously as sixty years ago" (Chapter 2).

The opera's setting is most obviously indicated by references to the reign of Catherine II. At the opening of scene 1, "the most wise Tsarina" is hailed by boys marching with toy guns, and in scene 3, her arrival is announced at the end of the ball. In fact, one can deduce to the day the hypothetical date on which that ball occurred. The excited guests greet the approaching empress with the famous polonaise "Glory to thee, Catherine, our tender mother," with lyrics written by Derzhavin and music by Kozlowski, written on the

occasion of a feast given by Potyomkin in Catherine's honor. We have seen that Derzhavin's famous description of that feast left its imprint on both Pushkin's and Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila*.[22] Traces of the same source can be found in the ball scene in *The Queen of Spades* as well. For instance, the commotion caused by Catherine's late arrival, depicted by Derzhavin, closely resembles what happens in the opera. As in the opera, the original feast featured bonfires (*uveselitelnye ogni*) and, of course, a pantomime.[23] The feast took place on April 28, 1791. Chaikovsky seems to have taken it for granted that the opera's actions occur in April; in a letter to Modest he raised doubts about Liza's phrase comparing the dark secret of her passion with the darkness of the night: "What do you think, is it all right that in April Liza, addressing the night, says 'It is as dark as you' [*ona mrachna kak ty*]? Do dark nights happen in Petersburg?"[24] Even without this specific reference, it is safe to say that the opera is set in the early 1790s (Catherine died in 1796). Moreover, the time of the countess's youth is pushed back from the 1770s, the time of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, to the time of Louis XV and Madame Pompadour, that is, the 1740s and 1750s. It is Madame Pompadour, who presided over the court of Louis XV beginning in 1745, whom the countess mentions in her reminiscences in the scene in her chamber.

The making of the opera happened so quickly that it is hard to trace its creative history. An obvious if superficial reason for the time shift was the theater's desire to have an interlude with singing and a pantomime, for which an eighteenth-century ball would provide an appropriate stylistic frame. Introducing into scene 3 the pastorale "The Sincerity of a Shepherdess" by the minor eighteenth-century poet Pyotr Karabanov (which the composer selected from two possibilities proposed by the librettist), with its charmingly clumsy, archaic-sounding verses, gave Chaikovsky the opportunity to write a pastiche in the Mozartean style, akin to his fourth orchestral suite, the "Mozartiana" (1887)—with the introductory chorus of shepherds resembling Zerlina's and Masetto's duet with the chorus of peasants from the first act of *Don Giovanni* and the duet of Prilepa ("The Attractive One") and Milovzor ("Tender Looks") echoing the duet of Zerlina and Don Giovanni.[25] By seizing this opportunity, however, the authors of the opera committed themselves to pushing the narrative time of Pushkin's tale back by about forty years.

There are some signs of vacillation over this temporal design in the libretto, which may indicate that the deviation from Pushkin's chronology was not decided on from the beginning. In the second scene, Liza and Polina sing two pieces in the genre of the sentimental *romans* with lyrics by Zhukovsky and Batyushkov—an allusional leap that places the action in the following century. Although the poems were written in the first decade of the nineteenth

century, one could easily picture a domestic gathering in the 1830s or later at which they would be performed as songs. When the countess reminisces about her youth in scene 4, her memories produce a glaring inconsistency: the song she ostensibly sang for Madame Pompadour (who died in 1764) is taken from a French opera of the following decade—*Richard le coeur de lion* by André Modeste Gretri (1773)—a reference that would have been exactly right for Pushkin's chronology but not the opera's.

At a later stage Chaikovsky made his own alterations in the libretto in order to reinforce and make more explicit the references to the 1790s. The ball scene originally ended with Hermann's fatal exclamation: "It is not me, it is fate that wishes it, and I'll learn the three cards!" The composer felt it necessary to add, by way of conclusion, the announcement of Catherine's arrival and the polonaise; he himself drafted the excited exclamations of the guests (later edited by the librettist) and incorporated Derzhavin's famous verses. Later, when working on scene 7, Chaikovsky again took the initiative in adding Derzhavin's song "If only lovely maidens could fly like birds," to be sung by Tomsky. As he acknowledged in a letter to Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich, he disliked Derzhavin in general and found the frivolous jocosity of the stanzas disgustingly vulgar, but he wanted to include them precisely because their crudeness conveyed the spirit of their time.[26] In fact, Derzhavin's verses could be considered close kin to E. Schikaneder's "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja"—the couplets Papageno sings at his entrance.

No matter how explicitly the opera deployed signs indicating the 1790s, its story as a whole could not be arbitrarily shifted back by almost half a century. Many of its situations, characters, and discourses resisted that shift. As a result, the story presented in the opera appeared clad in temporal implausibilities and anachronisms. In spite of the reference to "the most wise Tsarina" in the opening scene in the Summer Garden, its overall composition unmistakably indicated realities of the nineteenth century and their literary reflections. The way in which different waves of promenading people proceed one after another in scene 1—first children with their nurses and governesses, than a masculine company, to be eventually joined by the ladies—corresponded to and probably was inspired by the opening pages of Gogol's *Nevsky Prospect* (written the same year as Pushkin's tale, in 1834). As I have already mentioned, scene 2, at Liza's, refers to the nineteenth century by virtue of the romances sung there. Even more displaced is scene 6, in which Liza awaits Hermann at the Winter Canal at midnight (another idea proposed by the theater's director, Vsevolozhsky, alongside the eighteen-century pastorale).[27] In the Petersburg of Bely's novel, that is, at the turn of the twentieth century, Sofia Petrovna Likhutina lingers at this spot late at night, imagining herself as

the operatic Liza and Nikolai Apollonovich as Hermann; but it is hard to picture a young woman from the upper crust of the nobility (as Liza is in the opera) walking alone to the Winter Canal at that hour, even for the express purpose of throwing herself into it, in the Petersburg of Pushkin's time, let alone of the eighteenth century. The circumstances of Liza's death could hardly look more anachronistic had she thrown herself under a train.[28]

More important time shifts become apparent if we consider the opera's characters, their actions, and their manner of speaking. They bear the definite imprint of the nineteenth century—indeed, more of the latter part of it than of Pushkin's time. Let us consider only one example. Prince Eletsky, Liza's fiancé, approaches her at the ball in order to profess to her the noble selflessness of his love. He loves her beyond measure but does not want to limit the freedom of her heart; if need be, he is prepared to disappear from her life, to suppress his jealousy; his dream is to become not merely a loving husband, "a servant occasionally used," but her friend and support. Chaikovsky wrote the text of Eletsky's aria himself, having sent it to Modest for approval after the music was already composed. We hear in it the voice of a progressive intellectual of the 1860s and 1870s, a relative of Chernyshevsky's "new people," Stolz from Goncharov's *Oblomov,* or Bersenev from Turgenev's *On the Eve*—someone who is a little plain, perhaps, but impeccably decent. This Eletsky has obviously read Chatsky's contemptuous line decrying "a boyish husband, his wife's servant, one of her pages." Meanwhile, the scene is presumably taking place at the feast in 1791; in a few minutes, Eletsky, Liza, and other guests will be treated to "The Sincerity of a Shepherdess."

Most displaced of all, of course, is the main character of the opera. As Liza envisions Hermann before she actually meets him—a demonic nocturnal figure, menacing and irresistibly attractive at the same time—he exudes the typical aura of a romantic hero. Later, however, as we become more and more acquainted with the actual Hermann, his Tristanesque features become fused with those of Raskolnikov in a self-annihilating symbiosis that betrays the decadent world of incoherent obsessions and perpetual disturbances—the world of the heroes of *Ivanov, The Black Monk,* or *The Duel* (Chaikovsky became an admirer of Chekhov in the late 1880s). Not only are his passions blown out of proportion and beyond his control, but they seem to be purely reactive. He thrusts himself headlong in all possible directions at the first provocation, so that his endeavors eventually negate each other. A glance from afar at a "heavenly creature" plunges Hermann into a trance of amorous veneration so sublime that he does not want to learn her name—no earthly name exists by which one could call her. On hearing that the creature is engaged to Prince Eletsky, he vows to "wrest" her from the prince by any

means. The possibility of becoming rich by employing the demonic three cards plunges him into the pursuit of their secret, first with a view to attaining the object of his adoration but eventually to the exclusion of anything but the secret itself. Once he is certain that the secret is his he can think of nothing but the shine of "the piles of gold" that now all belong to him. When he reaches the green table and tastes his first winnings, however, the enormous sum is all but forgotten: it is the game itself, the gambling with one's fate and life that he idolizes in his last aria. Increasingly cut off from reality by this maddening chase after clashing phantoms, Hermann eventually collapses, destroying everybody around him in the process.

It is striking to see how vividly the operatic Hermann reflects the perceived malaise of the fin de siècle. When in the last scene he places himself, in his "goblet aria," on the yonder side of good and evil, proclaiming them to be nothing but dreams, declaring labor and honesty merely fairy tales for females, he defies, in the fog of his madness, everything held sacrosanct by Chaikovsky's generation. At the same time, and by the same token, he offers a striking preview of the Nietzschean characters soon to mushroom in works of literature in Russia and elsewhere. Chaikovsky had a good reason to weep over "poor Hermann" and his misfortune.

A small detail betrays the futility of the operatic Hermann's pretense of being a man of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. In Pushkin's tale the hero is called "Ghermann," with a double "n"; in the opera, he has become "Gherman" (the difference lost in English translation). "Ghermann" is a direct transliteration of the authentic German name Hermann. Indeed, it is said of the literary Hermann that he was the son of a russified German immigrant; when he needs to produce a love letter for Lizaveta Ivanovna, he takes it "word for word" from "a German novel" — *Werther,* perhaps? (Pushkin adds slyly that because Lizaveta Ivanovna did not know German she remained quite satisfied with the epistle.) Such a partly russified German was a common presence in Pushkin's time. In the second half of the century, however, the process of adaptation had come further, affecting names, among other matters. The original Hermann or Ghermann has lost the second "n" (as all German names ending in "-mann" turned out in Russian: Shuman, Gofman, and so on) and become a conventional Russian first name. One of Chaikovsky's closest friends, the composer and critic known in the West as Hermann Laroche, was in fact called Gherman Aleksandrovich Larosh. If only by virtue of his name, the operatic Gherman had to be his and Chaikovsky's contemporary at the very least.

Chaikovsky's music matches these temporal swings. As early as 1878 he had expressed his delight with "Shakespearean anachronisms" in Alfed de Musset's

dramas.[29] The music of *The Queen of Spades* embodies the same principle. When scene 2 climaxes in the love duet, its music reaches expressionist heights comparable with those of the love duet in the second act of *Tristan und Isolde*. The next scene starts with the Mozartean sounds of the introductory chorus celebrating the ball. The break between the two scenes notwithstanding, the effect of this sharp and unexpected shift of the musical chronotope is dizzying. The same can be said about the juxtaposition, throughout the ball scene, of the sounds of the pastorale, Eletsky's aria — written, true to his character, in a bona fide mid-nineteenth-century operatic style (for which Germont's aria from act 2 of *La Traviata* may serve as a close analogy) — and episodes of Hermann's ravings, whose chopped phrasing, shifting tonalities, and lugubrious orchestration keep pace with the musical discourse of *Götterdämmerung*. In this context, Chaikovsky's musical retrogression into the eighteenth century seems to be pointing, paradoxically, ahead in time; it presages the avant-garde fascination with classicist imitations spiced with stylistic shifts and twists — the world of Richard Strauss and Prokofiev, Ravel and Stravinsky.

In the libretto, the shifting temporal layers might at first seem to be inadvertent. The music, however, bestowed symbolic meaning on its narrative anachronisms. Its obvious stylistic diversity constituted something more significant than merely a response to different narrative chronotopes showing up at different moments in the opera. By using motifs that recur through all the layers of time, Chaikovsky made them reverberate with and echo each other. The musical discourse never jumps into a new temporal environment without retaining traces of others from earlier in the story or anticipating those that are to emerge later. Translated into this heterogeneous and yet continuous musical discourse, the story acquires *stereoscopic temporality,* as if it were happening in different historical epochs and stylistic environments simultaneously.[30] The various incarnations mirror one another, leaving the listener — rather like the characters — transfixed by all the elusive correspondences. When Hermann, as a "man of the nineties," like Wozzeck or a Chekhov hero shrouded in his obsessions and oppressed by taunting voices, lingers at a late eighteenth-century feast, or when he offers his Nietzschean goblet aria a few minutes after Tomsky delivers his quintessentially eighteenth-century double entendre about lovely maidens flying like birds, one can be reminded of the prince from *The Sleeping Beauty* as he crosses the halls of an enchanted castle plunged to a century-long sleep, seeing its glorious inhabitants dressed in the latest fashions of a hundred years ago.

The operatic Hermann appears to be lost in time amid the incongruous landscapes of a city that seems to share his predicament. In fact, all the principal characters in the opera — Hermann, Liza, and the countess — behave as if they were trapped in this maze of temporal mirrors. It is their implied ability to

remember and recognize, or rather, their inability to escape from the prison of contradictory images and voices invading their memories, that makes what happens on stage happen. The very irrationality of the drama's proceedings, the bizarre inconsequentiality of the heroes' actions and reactions, seems due to the fact that everything occurs in a world projected by their confused consciousness. Let us trace some pathways in this temporal house of mirrors.

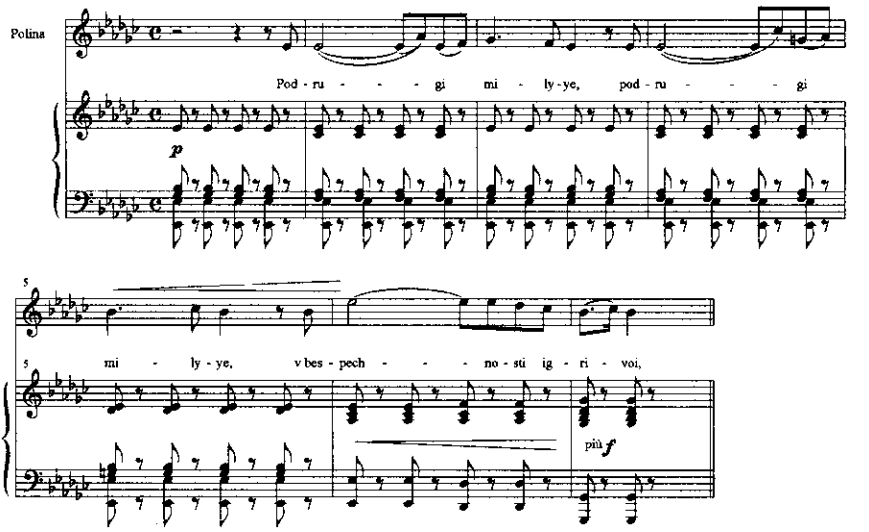
The Fate of a Shepherdess

In scene 2, Polina, at the request of her and Liza's friends, performs what she calls Liza's "favorite romance." It is based on a short poem of Batiushkov's from 1810. Although Batiushkov's works were not set to music as frequently as Pushkin's or Zhukovsky's, stylistically it represents the same strain of early nineteenth-century Russian poetry, easily adaptable for domestic music-making. The dramatic situation can be seen as typical for a private gathering sometime in the second quarter of that century. The music Chaikovsky wrote for this piece also does not deviate from the refined but relatively simple style of an art song of Glinka's time — an extension of the *romans*.

One feature of this seemingly undisturbed scene offers a clue to the characters' future development: the choice of the poem. Its title (not mentioned in the opera) is "An Inscription on the Grave of a Shepherdess." The poem artfully translates the imagery of the mid-eighteenth-century pastorale into the mood of the early nineteenth-century elegy. Its heroine's lot was to be an early grave instead of the timeless joy of the pastoral Arcadia that she had expected to be her destiny:

Podrugi milye! s bespechnostyu igrivoi
Pod plyasovoi napev vy rezvites v lugakh.
I ya kak vy zhila v Arkadii schastlivoi;
I ya na utre dnei v sikh roshchakh i polyakh
  Minutny radosti vkusila.
Lyubov v mechtakh zlatykh mne schastie sulila;
No chto zh dostalos mne v six radostnykh mestakh? —
    Mogila!

Lovely companions, with a careless playfulness
You frolic in the meadows, to a dancing tune.
Like you, I also lived in happy Arcadia,
Also in the morn of my days, amidst those woodlands and fields,
  Tasted fleeting joys.
Love, in my golden dreams, offered me happiness;
Yet what has befallen me in those joyful sites? —
    The grave![31]

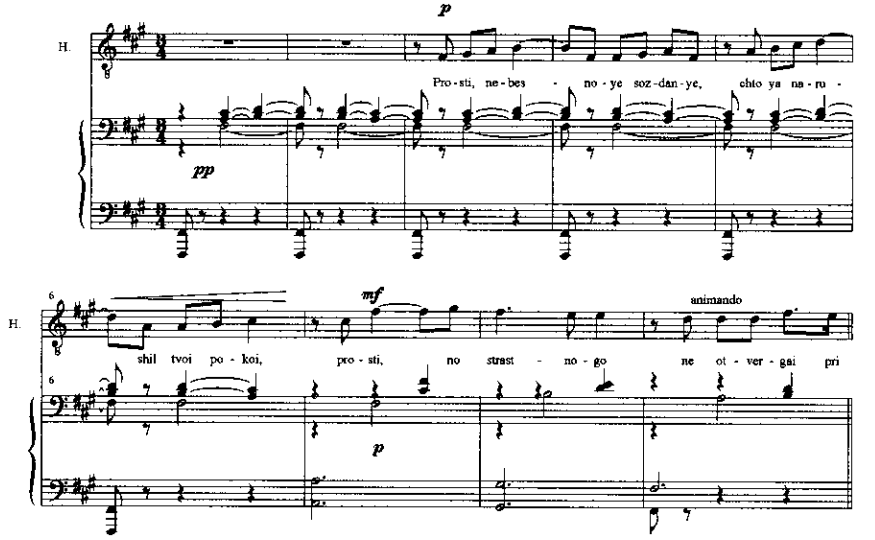


5.1a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 1, scene 2, Polina's romance

Perhaps this sad fate befell the shepherdess because she was born into the wrong age. The time of Boucher is gone; one glanced at a tableau from the rococo age only to become more keenly aware of one's own elegiac melancholy.[32] In the opera's world of polytemporality, however, the age of rococo and the age of the elegy occur side by side.

Like a heroine from the age of melancholy, Liza is inclined to see her destiny through the prism of the elegy. Like Tatiana in an early part of *Eugene Onegin,* she is ready to perish for the sake of her passion for a virtual stranger whom she cloaks in a romantic mantle of her own making. When, later in the scene, Hermann appears, we listen to his passionate plea—which to an unengaged listener might sound like relentless emotional blackmail—through the screen of Liza's perception. Hermann's aria "Forgive me, heavenly creature" destroys Liza's last attempts to resist his appeal—she cannot hold back tears of compassion because his singing echoes the tune of the romance sung by Polina just minutes earlier. Hermann's plea seems to be the reflection of the thoughts evoked in Liza by Polina's singing; his voice sounds to her like the voice of her elegiac destiny as prophesied by her favorite romance (examples 5.1a and 5.1b).

In the next scene, at the ball, Polina will sing and Liza will listen to an eighteenth-century pastorale whose heroine, another shepherdess, is totally oblivious of the elegiac future. Before this performance starts, Liza silently

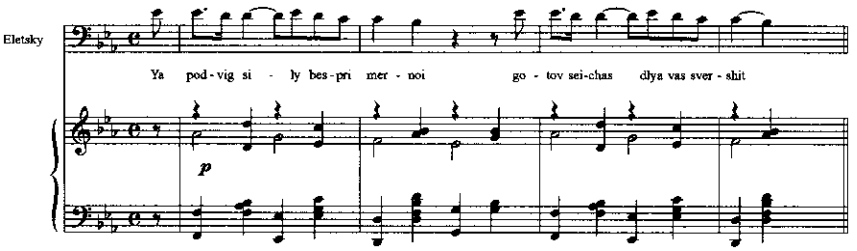


5.1b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 1, scene 2, Hermann's aria

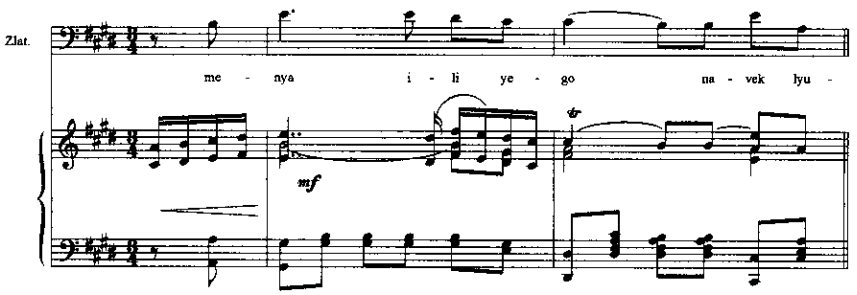
conveys to her suitor, Prince Eletsky, the message of the futility of his entreaties. By rejecting a glamorous suitor and showing her readiness to give herself to the one she has chosen, Liza casts herself in the role of the pastorale's Prilepa, who unhesitantly rejects Zlatogor ("Mountain of gold"), with all his promises of luxury, and embraces an idyll in a hut with her beloved Milovzor ("Tender looks"). Some turns in Zlatogor's failed seduction of Prilepa echo Eletsky's aria. Once again, we listen to the suitors' voices from Liza's point of view; her memory of her recent encounter with Eletsky echoes in her mind as she listen to the scene between Zlatogor and Prilepa (examples 5.2a and 5.2b).

This happy change of mood, caused by the shift in the chronotope, does not, however, push the elegiac shepherdess and her destiny completely into oblivion. A trace of her voice reappears for a moment, like a faint cloud amid the scenes of rococo happiness. A characteristic melodic turn occurs in Polina's romance just before its conclusion on the word "grave"—a long, gradual descent spanning a tenth. A similar descent (this time, a ninth) can be heard in the part of Milovzor (sung by Polina; examples 5.3a and 5.3b). (Pyotr Chaikovsky made it clear to Modest that Milovzor is to be sung by Polina but that Prilepa by no means could be performed by Liza—for good reason: Liza is supposed to be among the listeners.[33]

Liza and Polina are both remembering the previous evening; its romantic melancholy, restlessness, and passions reverberate in the air amid the naïvely



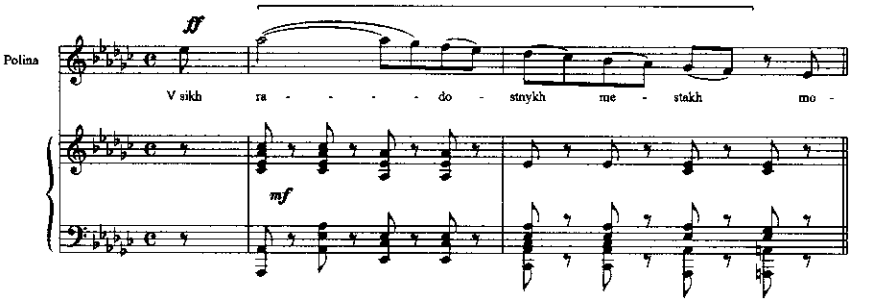
5.2a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, Eletsky's aria



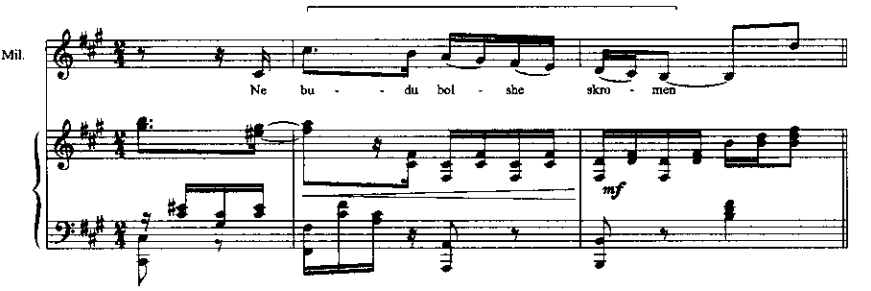
5.2b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, pastorale (Zlatogor's entrance)

cloudless world of "The Sincerity of a Shepherdess." By virtue of conflicting associations, Liza's mind is transported simultaneously into idyll and elegy—the world of the happy Prilepa joining her beloved after rejecting "Mountain of gold" and of the sad shepherdess destined for an early grave instead of the joy of love. At this point, Liza is not sure what is going to befall her, or rather, whose lot she is to choose. She is heading in both directions simultaneously—the best recipe for self-destruction.

The dilemma returns, in yet another temporal incarnation, in scene 6, when Liza, waiting for Hermann, sings out her woes. The words of her lament (written by the composer), as well as the music, are typical of the nineteenth-century popular urban song in a quasi-folkloric style. In fact, the tune reflects that of her favorite romance, albeit in a simplified fashion. The refined melancholy of Batiushkov's shepherdess gives way to a populist musical expression of the woes of love. Innumerable songs of different levels of sophistication, from Glinka's "Don't disturb me vainly with the return of your tenderness" to Aleksandr Varlamov's "A little gray dove is moaning," paraded their naïve poetic images of nature and abundant minor subdominant harmonies in every household. Alexander Blok listened avidly as they were performed by gypsy choruses; Smerdyakov delighted the chambermaids in his neighborhood by



5.3a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 1, scene 2, Polina's romance (ending)



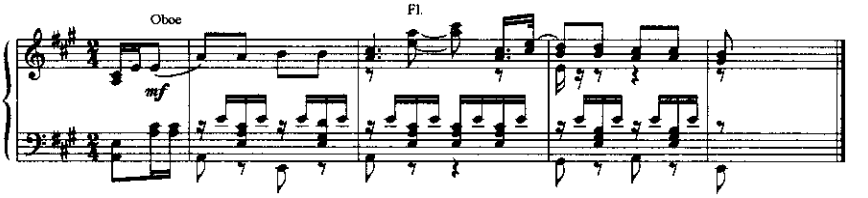
5.3b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, pastorale (Polina as Milovzor)

singing, a guitar in hand, "I am attached to my beloved by an invincible force."[34] Liza's deportment at this point is that of a contemporary of the opera's original audience—a young woman expressing her real worries and woes in a simple but touching song.

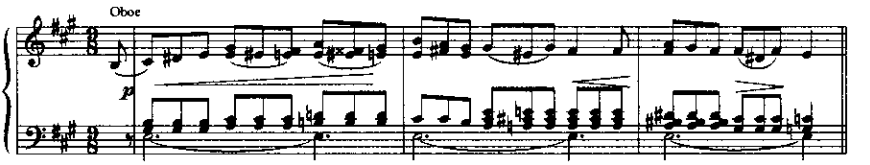
Hermann appears after all, dispelling Liza's forebodings, if only for a moment. A short love duet follows. Through all its chromatic transient notes, polyphonic clashes of voices, and feverish waltz rhythms, one can discern a simple melodic backbone that comes straight from the duet of Prilepa and Milovzor. Both duets end with a *ritornello* played by the oboe; this time, however, the somber low register of the instrument and the rushing tempo make it a mocking echo of the pastorale (examples 5.4a and 5.4b).

Before the final catastrophe becomes imminent, one can catch once more, in Liza's lament, the characteristic descending melodic figure—a simultaneous echo of the pastorale and the elegy (example 5.5).

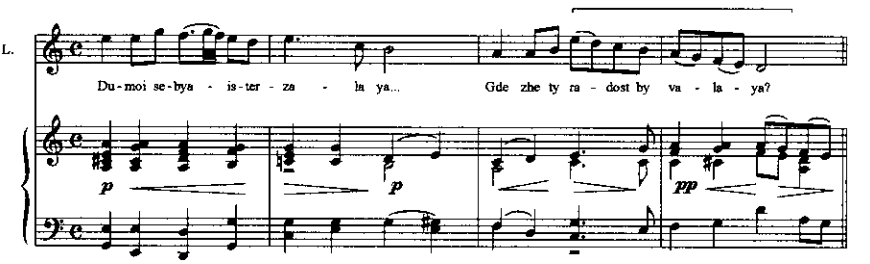
Now in full possession of her late-nineteenth-century self, a strong-willed woman who has called the man she loves to a decisive rendezvous on a deserted embankment (not the "obedient slave" she had declared herself to be



5.4a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, pastorale (Prilepa and Milovzor)



5.4b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades*, act 3, scene 6, Liza and Hermann



5.5. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 3, scene 6, Liza's song

within another chronotope, after listening to the pastorale), Liza still cannot determine which kind of shepherdess she is destined or chooses to be.

The Lover

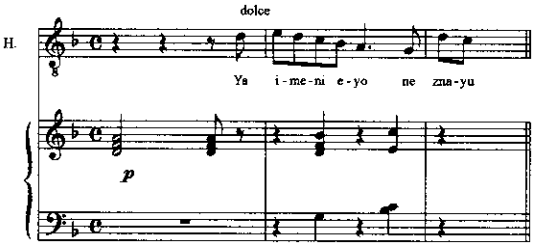
It is not for nothing that Hermann proves to be such a good match to Liza in their frenzied echo of Prilepa's and Milovzor's duet in scene 6: he, too, has been listening to the pastorale. The announcement of the spectacle by the majordomo, followed by the radiant sounds of its orchestral introduction, catches him in the midst of his troubled thoughts, a situation similar to that of Wozzeck listening to cheery tunes in the beer hall. When the duet comes, one may notice that this pastiche of "Là ci darem' la mano" is not as perfect as one might expect. Underneath the shining Mozartean surface of the vocal line

followed by the idyllic invocations of the flute and the oboe, one can occasionally discern the discordant voices of the bassoon and the clarinet in a low register, whose clumsy darkness weighs down the simulated lightness of the piece. These troubling voices, coming as if from the piece's underside, can easily be overlooked—the more easily in that conductors tend to play them down, sweeping under the rug, so to speak, these awkward deviations from "good" Mozartean stylization. Their presence is crucial, however, for our understanding of the significance of the duet, and of the pastorale as a whole, in the development of the drama; for their voices echo the lugubrious sound of the winds that accompanied the monologues sung by Hermann at the ball. When, following his disparate daydreaming about Liza and the three cards, he exclaims in despair, "I am a madman, a madman!" his words are accompanied by a prolonged bassoon-clarinet duet in the low register. It is this voice—the voice of Hermann's thoughts—whose traces bestow an uncharacteristic somberness on the pastorale.

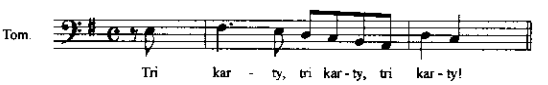
The listener is invited to view "The Sincerity of a Shepherdess" in a way that is reminiscent of the play-within-a-play in *Hamlet:* in both cases, a comically old-fashioned performance makes only more striking the hidden thoughts with which the drama's characters burden it. The presence of such hidden thoughts in the pastorale is reflected in the music: Liza hears an echo of the elegiac shepherdess creeping into Polina's singing of Milovzor's part; Hermann perceives the idyll through the dark glass of his longings and worries. Both find in the story of the sincere shepherdess something that echoes their own thoughts. Indeed, Hermann's mind at this point is preoccupied with a shepherdess of his own whom he has to convince of the purity of his motives and of whom he eagerly expects sincerity. This woman—the *Venus moscovite* of Madame Pompadour's court with her secret of the three cards—indeed has impeccable credentials of the rococo age.

Who is Hermann in love with? In scene 1 of the opera, singing to a tune that is to become the leitmotif of his love, he proclaims to Tomsky that he does not know the name of his beloved because he does not want to call her by any earthly name. A little later, when Prince Tomsky tells his companions the anecdote about how the old countess obtained the secret of the three cards and received the prophecy about her death at the hand of an ardent lover who will try to wring it from her, on the words "three cards, three cards, three cards" he slips into a tune whose melodic line replicates exactly—albeit under the disguise of a drastically different rhythm—Hermann's earlier profession of love (examples 5.6a and 5.6b).

Again, the reason for this coincidence may be that we are listening to



5.6a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 1, scene 1, Hermann's arioso



5.6b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 1, scene 1, Tomsky's ballade

Tomsky's ballade through Hermann's ears. His hidden thoughts—the instant connection he has made between the story he is listening to and his passion—affect the music of Tomsky's tale, resulting in an uncanny resemblance between the theme of the three cards and the love leitmotif. When we reach the scene at the ball, we witness the same motif running on a parallel course in Hermann's increasingly incoherent monologues and in the taunting remarks of the gamblers. In the next scene, in the countess's chamber, the convergence of the two versions of the motif—Hermann's and Tomsky's—reaches its completion. It is impossible to tell which one is actually being sounded when Hermann, in the role of the morbid ardent lover prophesied in Tomsky's anecdote, confronts the countess; at this point nobody, least of all Hermann, can tell unambiguously who the object of his passion is.

This double musical perspective gives peculiar meaning to Herrmann's refusal to name his beloved—was it indeed due to the unearthly nature of his feelings, or was it due to uncertainty as to her identity? A fine detail in scene 1 reveals this ambiguity. After Eletsky accepts his friends' congratulations on his engagement, he is asked: "Who is your bride?" At this very moment the countess and Liza appear together in the park, so Eletsky replies by simply pointing out: "Here she is!" He is obviously referring to Liza, yet the orchestra seconds his remark with the lugubrious leitmotif of the countess played by the clarinet. Apparently, even at this moment Hermann's attention is attracted to the

countess, who reciprocates by asking Tomsky about Hermann and expressing her fear of him.[35] No wonder, then, that Tomsky's ballade later draws a fatal connection in Hermann's consciousness between his love and the demonic secret.

As I have mentioned, of all the characters in the opera it is Hermann who most definitely belongs to the "twilight age" of the late 1880s or early 1890s. At the same time, however, he retains intense relations with the world of the eighteenth century. Desperately he tries to enter the circle of lovely shades from Arcadia, to bare his ardent heart to his shepherdess and to plead with her to be once again as naïvely sincere, as artlessly obliging as she was to the happy lovers of her rococo past.

Prilepa, the shepherdess from the pastorale, does have her own secret, although it amounts to nothing more than her longing for Milovzor. At the opening of the idyll she sings, "My dear little friend, the beloved little shepherd who makes me sigh and to whom I want to reveal my passion, alas! did not come to the dancing place." From the beginning she presents herself as most-willing to reveal her secret—it is only Milovzor's failure to come see her that prevents her for a time from making her confession. When he does appear and in turn bares his heart, Prilepa happily reciprocates. Liza feels inspired by the trusting sincerity of Prilepa; she gives Hermann the key from the countess's chamber and succumbs to his bizarre wish to come there that evening: she is his slave; whatever he wants will happen. But Hermann falls under the spell of the pastorale as well. His vision of his chosen shepherdess becomes blurred amid suggestive images from the age of Arcadia interspersed with demonic, taunting voices.

In the following scene, while Hermann waits behind a curtain in the countess's chamber, he hears her singing a French aria from the age of her youth. The words of the song seem to be directed to him: "Je crains de lui parler la nuit, j'écoute trop tout ce qu'il dit. Il me dit 'Je vous aime,' et je sens malgré moi. Je sens mon coeur, qui bat, qui bat, je ne sais pas pourquoi!" They echo the words with which Prilepa and Milovzor expressed the tumult of their feelings: "I don't know, don't know, don't know why." Prompted by these secret messages that spring from his own confused memories, Hermann-Milovzor rushes forward, bares his heart in a passionate plea ("If only you have ever known the feeling of love"), and demands from the countess the thing Prilepa was so artlessly willing to grant to her lover: "Reveal [your secret] to me!"

In the end, the old shepherdess seems to fulfill the promise of sincerity implied by her image. When, having obtained the confession of her ghost, Hermann reaches Liza at the Winter Canal, his romantic love is completely

superseded by the rococo image now firmly imprinted in his mind. Ironically, his last words to Liza — "Leave me alone! Who are you? I don't know you!" — echo his first ones: "I don't know her name, and don't want to learn it."

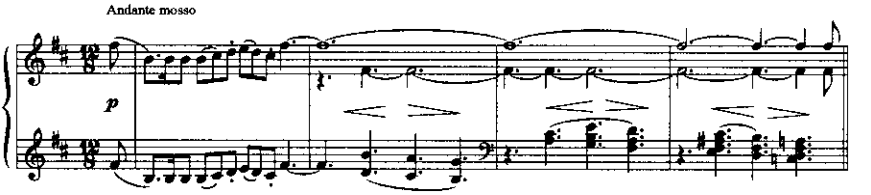
The Three Cards

The overture to the opera begins with a musical phrase, played by the winds in unison, that later resurfaces in scene 1 in Tomsky's ballade on the words "Once in Versailles *au jeu de la reine*." It is followed by a sequence of chords in the strings, proceeding along a descending melodic line. The sequence comprises three consecutive segments, each consisting of three chords — a musical pattern wrought in "magic" numerical symbolism (example 5.7a).

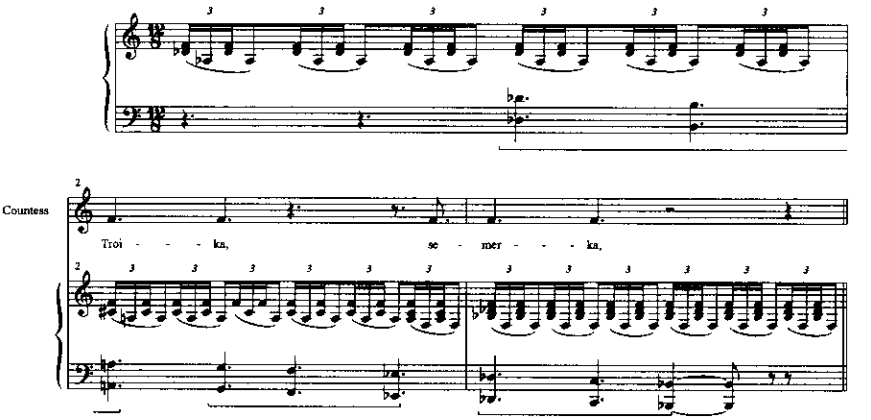
The message implied by this opening is clear. It refers to the story's earliest point, from which everything follows — the countess's gambling at the court of Madame Pompadour and the emergence of the secret of the three cards. The ternary pattern also reemerges in Tomsky's ballade, on the key words "Three cards, three cards, three cards." Its melody, however, is different from that of the ternary figure in the overture: it repeats, albeit with different accentuation, the melodic line of Hermann's profession of love. The theme will recur each time Hermann thinks of Liza or of the three cards — or both simultaneously. We understand that this is not the theme of the three cards proper — rather, it is Hermann's thought about them. The secret of the cards remains locked up — it is only the listeners, and not yet the hero, who heard its "magic" ternary theme in the overture. Hermann's turn to be exposed to this theme comes later, in scene 5, when the ghost of the countess names the cards to him. At this point, the triple descending figure, which in the overture proceeded along a plain minor scale, appears transformed into a whole-tone scale — a patent harmonic means for expressing the supernatural and sinister (example 5.7b).

Unlike the actions that comprise the body of the opera, in which the characters speak for themselves, the overture is addressed directly to the opera's listeners, over the heads of its protagonists; it poses as a meta-message about the meaning of the drama that is inaccessible to its participants. When in scene 5 Hermann receives the countess's revelation, he is not aware of the melancholy incarnation in which the theme of the three cards appeared in the overture. What, then, does he hear in her message?

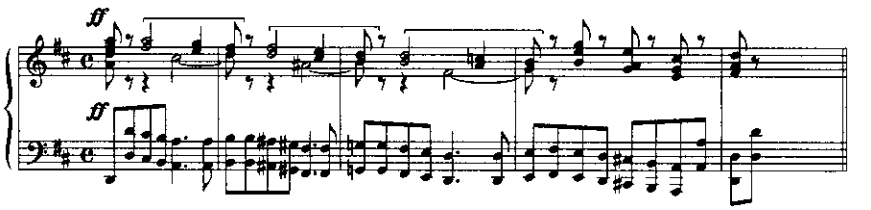
It the ball scene, as we have noted, the tumult in Hermann's mind does not cause him to turn a deaf ear to the boisterous sounds of the festivity; rather, what he hears is distorted by his obsessions. In the grip of his idée fixe, he finds plenty of material with which to feed it in the flamboyant chaos of sounds at the ball. It is not only his fellow gamblers who taunt him; in a way, he perceives



5.7a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* Overture

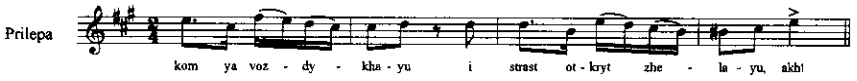


5.7b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 3, scene 5, the ghost of the countess

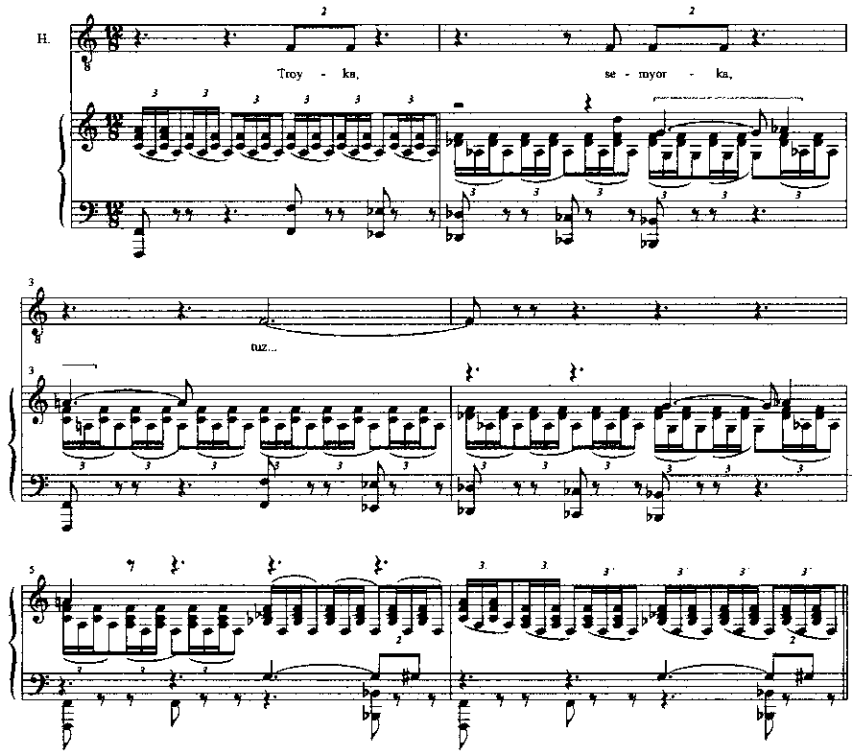


5.8. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, chorus of guests

everything that happens as a secret message—suggestive, challenging—addressed to him personally. When the chorus of guests proclaims exuberantly, "Cast aside, cast aside your occupations!" a typically Mozartean ternary harmonic pattern may have registered in Hermann's memory (example 5.8). Another typically Mozartean turn of a phrase that may have fueled Hermann's imagination appears in the duet of Prilepa and Milovzor. It consists of a simple ascending figure: three tones in a major scale moving up from the second step



5.9a. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 2, scene 3, pastorale (Prilepa's entrance)



5.9b. Chaikovsky, *The Queen of Spades,* act 3, scene 5, Hermann

to the second step raised a half-step, to the third; the motif appears on Prilepa's key words "and [to whom I] want to reveal my passion" (example 5.9a).

As a result, when Hermann confronts the ghost of the countess, her message comes to him in recognizable form. Her singing, with its ternary sequential pattern, sounds to his ears like an echo of the exuberant exhortation to cast aside one's cares and to give oneself to the feeling of joy that he heard at the feast. As Hermann is repeating in a trance the names of the three cards, the orchestra seconds him with an insistent repetition of the ascending melodic figure echoing Prilepa's pledge of sincerity (example 5.9b).

The paranoid connection between the sounds of the feast and the idea of the

three cards that emerges in Hermann's mind offers a subliminal musical plot that underlies the seemingly static and superfluous scene of the pastorale. What emerges from beneath the surface of the pastiche strikingly resembles modernist narrative techniques; one may recall the scene in Bely's *Petersburg* in which Dudkin assembles the splinters of overheard trivial remarks to form a secret message about what preoccupies him at the moment—the planned terrorist act against Senator Ableukhov. Likewise, the musical narrative in which pervasive echoes of ternary motifs pop up under various circumstances, however irrelevant, creates a rendition of Hermann's obsession.

This musical-psychological insight strikingly resembles the way Hermann's state of mind is described in Pushkin's tale. Pushkin's Hermann, preoccupied with the three cards, discerns them in any object on which his glance happens to fall, just as Chaikovsky's Hermann catches them in every sound he hears: "Trey, seven, ace—the threesome haunted him and was perpetually on his lips. Seeing a young girl, he would say: 'How shapely! Just like a trey of hearts.' If anybody asked him what time it was, he would answer, 'Five to the seven.' Every portly man reminded him of an ace. The trey, the seven, and the ace hounded him even in his dreams, taking on every imaginable form: the trey blossomed before him like a great luxuriant flower; the seven appeared as a Gothic gate, and the ace assumed the shape of an enormous spider."[36]

When the secret of the cards is finally revealed to Hermann, in both the book and the opera, it appears clothed in the aura of its foreshadowings, which now look to the hero like fulfilled prophecies. Armed with a battery of signs reiterating the sincerity of the shepherdess, he can now follow the invitation of the chorus in the ball to cast aside all his cares. Full of the boisterous sounds of the feast, transformed in his head into a dreadful cacophony, he rushes to the Winter Canal to perform his own duet with Liza, a frenzied echo of Prilepa and Milovzor—only to realize in the end that he is simply wasting his time: this is *not* his shepherdess.

The audience, but not Hermann, heard the simple sounds of the opening of the overture in which the seed of the whole drama was laid bare. When one juxtaposes the minor triads of the overture with their transformations, first into the shining Mozartean major of the guests' chorus and afterwards into a string of "magic" modulations along the whole-tone scale, one realizes why at its first appearance the theme sounded so sad, almost weeping: it was conveying the sense of mourning for poor Hermann and his delusions.

A few years ago, I heard an interview with Luigi Menotti in which he expressed his delight with *The Queen of Spades,* noting perceptively its closeness to modernity. He did not like the pastorale, however: he found it disruptive to

the development of the drama and artificial as a stylization. He advises cutting this "superfluous" segment in order to make the whole more appealing to a modern audience. Half a century earlier, Meyerhold had also found the pastorale, or, rather, the explicit reference to the eighteenth century it contained, troubling. In his famous and controversial setting of Chaikovsky's opera (1935), he shifted its action to the early nineteenth century, restoring it to the time of Pushkin's story. For this purpose he needed to rewrite parts of the libretto—a common practice in Soviet productions of classical operas in the 1930s, by no means limited to Gorodetsky's *Ivan Susanin*.[37]

I do not want to judge productions I have never seen. But as must be evident from the analysis above, to my mind the pastorale stands at the epicenter of the opera's musical-dramatic conception. It constitutes a cross-point for all the veins of psychological development reflected in the leitmotifs. (Imagine a production of *Hamlet* in which the play *The Murder of Gonzago* was omitted for the sake of concision and stylistic coherence.) The problem with the pastorale is that unless one perceives all the hidden psychological tremors it both absorbs into itself and spreads throughout the opera, it does look like a superfluous ornament, a routine operatic interlude. Its innocent appearance does not invite the listener to examine it carefully.

It is easy to understand what a neoclassical pastiche might mean in, say, Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*—but in Chaikovsky . . . in 1890 . . . in a work whose musical language, although by no means simplistic or retrograde, hardly qualifies as *Zukunftmusik*? So early is the date of this daring artistic achievement, from such an unexpected quarter (given Chaikovsky's reputation for conventionality verging on banality) does it come, that it takes no small effort to begin to notice what is there in plain view: namely, that the operatic *Queen of Spades* in effect presages the montage technique of avant-garde literature, music, and cinema and that its use of this technique results in a portrayal of its hero's fragmented consciousness and of the world falling apart along with the hero's mind—a psychological and aesthetic phenomenon that was soon to become the central trope of the modernist world.

The opera's Hermann represented a new type of hero typical of the early twentieth century—a "man without qualities" whose mind is attuned to different, mutually incompatible wavelengths and falls apart as a result. He himself cannot give an account of who he is: an eighteenth-century seducer, an early nineteenth-century Byronic figure, a Tristanesque character for whom love means death (his own as well as his beloved's, of course), a Dostoevskian killer with an obsessive idea, or a Chekhovian man of the age of twilight afflicted by a deep spiritual malaise. The hero's obsessions and eventual madness correspond to the maddeningly elusive suggestiveness of the world that

surrounds him. One cannot say whether the world looks this way because it is seen through Hermann's eyes or whether the ambiguity of its allusive appearances caused the collapse of Hermann's (and Liza's) consciousness.

Once again, I want to return to Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*. Written a quarter of a century later, it strikingly resembles Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in its portrayal of the characters' actions and the city's scenery as if projected against a confused assortment of backdrops of various periods among which its heroes lose their way and eventually their minds. Moreover, it does so by consciously employing the imagery of Chaikovsky's opera.

Sofia Petrovna Likhutina, the heroine of *Petersburg,* has a remarkable ability to mix up names, images, and sites. She casts her lover, Nikolai Apollonovich, in an incongruous theatrical image of Hermann composed of a patchwork of moments from the opera. She awaits her Hermann at the Winter Canal with Chaikovsky's "ta-tam-tam-tam, ta-ta-tam-tam-tam" (a rendition of the rhythm of the orchestral introduction to this scene) pounding in her ears. Nikolai Apollonovich does appear clad in theatrical attire, but it turns out to be far from the Byronic image created by Sofia Petrovna's confused imagination: he is cloaked in the mantle and mask of a commedia dell'arte pagliaccio. To make the displacement of the chronotope even worse, he slips on the bridge and falls, exposing his very modern striped trousers. This mixture of overblown romantic postures, neoclassical theatricality, and unpicturesque modernity stood at the core of the dramatic tension in the opera; now, Bely turns it into a hilarious parody: "Sofia Petrovna Likhutina did not regard the Winter Canal as any prosaic spot where one could permit oneself to do what he had permitted himself. Not for nothing had she sighed, again and again, at the strains of *The Queen of Spades*. Yes, yes: her situation had something in common with Liza's (what it had in common, she could not have said). And it went without saying that she had dreamed of seeing Nikolai Apollonovich here as Hermann. Hermann? Hermann had acted like, like. . . . He had not torn the mask from his face in a heroic, tragic gesture. He had not said, in a hollow, sinking voice: 'I love you.' And he had not shot himself."[38]

The novel explicitly adopts the symbolic landscapes of the opera, which by that time had been firmly imprinted in readers' memory. Flashbacks to the characters, images, and situations of Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* became an integral part of the city's polytemporal symbolism. The opera's expressionist ravings found their place in the gallery of reverberating images from which the symbolic attire of turn-of-the century Petersburg was made—alongside the fog of the primordial swamps, the image of Peter the founder with his carpenter's hammer, his petrified equestrian monument, the odes and

polonaises of the age of Catherine, Pushkin's "Petersburgian tale" with its apocalyptic symbolism clad in neoclassical dress, Gogol's, Odoevsky's, the early Dostoevsky's nocturnal visions of the city and its people, and finally, the murky alleys and dark attics of the late nineteenth-century industrial city of the mature Dostoevsky's novels. The operatic reincarnation of the city proved to be a crucial step in shaping what Vladimir Toporov called the "Petersburgian text"[39] within the culture of Russian modernism.[40]

By the beginning of the modernist period, the feeling of symbolic density of the city had become pervasive. The protagonists of Blok's and Mikhail Kuzmin's poems, Zinaida Gippius's tales, and of course, Bely's novel found themselves haunted by shades and echoes from the past posing as their doubles and threatening to take over their thoughts and lives. The Muscovite Boris Pasternak might ask, by way of a nonchalant poetic aside, "Exactly what millennium is it out there, my dear?" For someone surrounded by Petersburg's temporal mirrors, the time period in question was a century or two rather than a millennium, but the consequences of that uncertainty were ominously tangible. A street or a square with a monument in it, a white night or a sunset over the river, a dark staircase or a mis-en-scène in a living room refused to be just what it was; one could hear voices or glimpse ghostly images lurking in the background. The atmosphere was intoxicating and paranoid, revelatory and saturated with self-fulfilling prophecies of imminent calamity. The sounds of Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* had become an overture to the symbolist drama of an imperial city on the road to its collapse.

6

A Testimony: Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony and the End of Romantic Narrative

349 February 34. D. Mth
No, I don't have the strength to take any more. Lord! What are they doing to me! They pour cold water on my head! *They won't listen to me, they don't see me, won't hear me. What have I done to them? What are they torturing me for? What do they want from me, wretch that I am? What can I give them? I have nothing. I have no strength, I can't take their tortures, my head is burning, and everything is swimming before my eyes. Save me! Take me! Give me three horses as swift as a whirlwind! Get in, coachman; ring, my little bell; dash on, horses, and take me from this world. Further, further till I can't see anything, anything. . . . Is that my house which looks blue in the distance? Is my mother sitting by the window? Mother, have your wretched son! Shed a tear at his aching head! See how they are torturing him! Take your wretched orphan to your breast! There's nowhere for him on earth! They're persecuting him! Mother! Take pity on your sick child! . . . And do you know that the Bey of Algiers has a pimple right under his nose?*

— Gogol, "Diary of a Madman"

Shostakovich finished his Fourth Symphony in the fall of 1936, soon after the official denunciation of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.[1] In the increasingly ominous atmosphere, amid the flood of denunciations and criticism of his

music that followed, the composer eventually decided to withdraw his new symphony from rehearsal (or so the official story, never disclaimed by the composer, went; in fact, it was the administration of the Union of Soviet Composers that made this decision in his name).[2] Its première had to wait twenty-five years, until 1961.[3] Nevertheless, it was the Fourth Symphony, more clearly than any other Shostakovich work of that time, that marked a watershed in his development as a composer. It can be seen as the conclusion of his early period—about ten years' worth of work marked by a radical avant-garde style and bold experimentation with genres and musical forms. By the same token, the Fourth opened a distinct new trend in Shostakovich's symphonic writing. The chronological boundaries of this middle period, which comprised the Fourth symphony (1936) to the Tenth (1953), roughly coincided with the epoch of "high Stalinism." The first in this line was written at the time of Shostakovich's first personal experience with the social and psychological climate of the time of terror; the last was finished a few months after Stalin's death. It is fair to say that this group of symphonies—with the possible exception of the suitelike, jocular Ninth—stands together as a musical narrative representing a coherent historical epoch. It is not surprising, then, that they all share certain features of musical form by which they can be distinguished both from the early symphonies, written in the 1920s, and from the late programmatic symphonies, from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth. Whereas Shostakovich's Second and Third symphonies (1927 and 1932, respectively) had radically departed from the traditional form (the Second was not even called a symphony at first), almost all those of the Stalin era clearly returned to the tradition of what can be called "grand" symphonies—the tradition founded by Haydn and Mozart in their late symphonies, fully developed by Beethoven, and evolving throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the works of Schubert, Berlioz, Brahms, Chaikovsky, Dvořák, Bruckner, Mahler, Sibelius, and Scriabin.[4] Shostakovich's grand symphonies fit that genre in many respects, from the extensive shape and orchestral volume to many features of musical form, among them the preponderance of the first movement, in which the traditional features of the so-called sonata or symphonic allegro, however modified, are still easily recognizable. The first movements of Shostakovich's symphonies of the middle period in general, and of the Fourth Symphony in particular, are the focus of this chapter.

Among the great artists of the 1930s and 1940s, Shostakovich remains perhaps the most controversial or enigmatic. The composer never shied away from repeating the most insipid platitudes of official Soviet rhetoric when speaking about his own music or broader aesthetic and ideological issues. At the same time, evidence is increasingly coming to light of a merciless sharpness

of observation and acerbic wit shown by Shostakovich in his private behavior, carefully hidden from any "unfitting" observers, even some who were close to the composer. His music is thick with dramatic tensions and oratorical pathos, which characterize the symphonies in particular. Even when there is no explicit program (which is the case with all the symphonies of his middle period), their narrative intensity is almost overwhelming.[5] The listener is overcome by the distinct feeling that the music is striving to tell him something, to communicate directly. The meaning of this message, however, depends to a large extent on our understanding of who is speaking: is it Shostakovich the "Soviet patriot" depicting the tragic cataclysms of his time in the mode of a heroic catharsis or Shostakovich the lifelong dissident garnishing his symphonic frescoes with piercing anti-Soviet allusions? Are we listening to solemn tragic incantations à la Beethoven's *Eroica* or cries of horror? The more contradictory the evidence about the composer's personality, the stronger the desire to dig out the "right" Shostakovich, and by the same token, the right meaning of the musical signals he was sending us. The unfortunate debacle concerning the publication of *Testimony* by Solomon Volkov[6] — ostensibly a transcript of his private conversations with Shostakovich, some parts of which, however, were exposed by critics as fake[7] — exacerbated the problem to the utmost degree. The community of Shostakovich scholars and lovers of music at large is sharply divided over the dilemma: Do the obvious deficiencies of Volkov's publication mean that it cannot be used for any serious purpose and that its portrayal of the "underground" Shostakovich should be totally disregarded, or can it still be taken into account somehow (but how?), especially in view of emerging new evidence corroborating its presentation of the composer's private voice?[8]

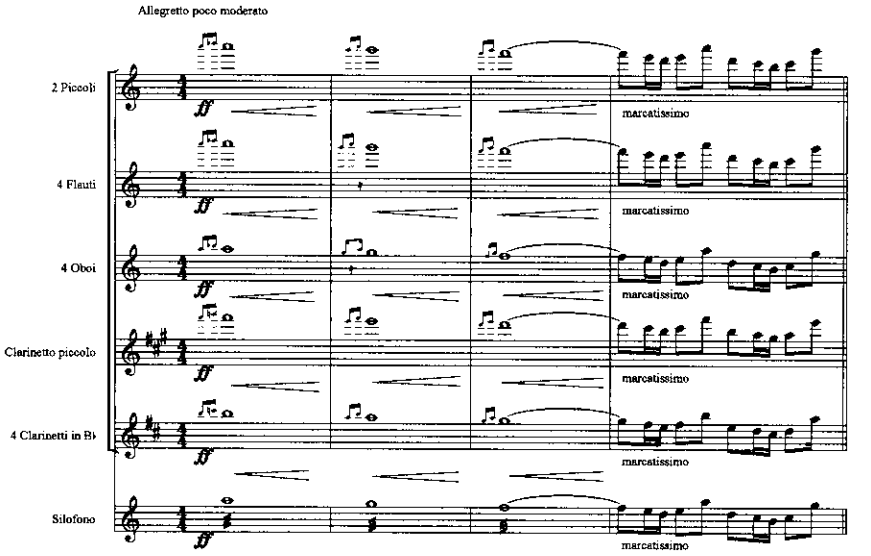
As a result of this controversy, Shostakovich's music has become entangled in a Manichaean dual perspective, which often reduces its interpretation to a simple choice of labeling it either pro- or anti-Soviet. Examples of "dissident" readings of Shostakovich, some of them straightforward to the point of vulgarity, have recently been multiplying at an ominous rate. Richard Taruskin is quite right when he condemns such a vulgarization.[9] His polemic reaction against it, however, has led him to the opposite extreme: he accuses Shostakovich of being (prior the debacle with his opera, at least) an avant-garde standard-bearer for the inhumanity of the Stalinist state. Taruskin interprets *Lady Macbeth* as a musical parable extolling the liquidation of the kulaks in the time of collectivization. Katerina Izmailova's highly sympathetic musical characterization, despite her murders of her father-in-law and husband, both merchants, is seen by the critic as a musical license to commit violence against the class enemy[10] — an interpretation hardly more tasteful than the one that would envision Katerina as (childless) Mother Russia raped, cruelly used, and

abandoned to perish by a member of the proletarian class, the prototypical dastardly Bolshevik Sergei.[11]

Shostakovich can be considered one of the primary victims of the self-righteous moral judgment that gained such popularity in the 1990s as a method of aesthetic criticism. One can only hope that the whirlwind of conflicting "testimonies" by and about the composer, along with their vehement refutations and reaffirmations, will subside in the future. Having no desire to involve myself in this process, I nevertheless take the liberty of pointing to one thing that Shostakovich never said, in contradistinction to the many things that he ostensibly did say. Whatever the validity of his public and private utterances, no one, to my knowledge, claims to have heard him use the shrill words of a public denunciation similar to those that were addressed to him by so many critics on so many occasions. He might occasionally sign a collective denunciation, joining a crowd of his colleagues (or rather, not protesting when his name appeared in print, alongside many others, sometimes without his having been asked); but he never engaged in ideological witch-hunting on his own initiative—a popular and profitable sport that proliferated in Stalin's time and is not altogether unfamiliar in modern Western criticism. Whatever officious insipidities or subversive buffooneries might have come from Shostakovich's mouth, denunciatory discourses aimed at unmasking the hidden ideological villainy were not among them. When, after a period in which he had been pushed to the brink of extinction, he rose once again in official favor—as happened more than once during his career—he never used his regained stature to get even with those who had been demanding his head.

I believe that in order to escape the vicious duality in which Shostakovich's image is entangled, one has to resist the communicative allure of his music, the seeming immediacy with which it calls for the listener's response and understanding.[12] Many ties connect his middle symphonies—in the affirmative and the subversive vein—with the life experience, ideology, and aesthetic sensibilities of the time of high Stalinism. But it is the aesthetic nature of Shostakovich's musical discourse and narrative rather than its emotional modality that can tell us about the place his music occupies in the world it reflects. My intention is to examine Shostakovich's symphonies from a perspective that has become prevalent, and extremely productive, in recent studies of the socialist realist novel and the culture of high Stalinism: as an aesthetic and intellectual phenomenon in their own right that emerged in a particular epoch, rather than as a reflection of or a reaction to extraneous ideological pressures and totalitarian coercion.[13]

The Fourth Symphony opens with a shrill signal—something recalling an alarm clock or a factory siren whose piercing sound proclaims the beginning



6.1. Shostakovich, Fourth Symphony, beginning

of a new day of labor. The whistling sound is rendered by wind instruments playing in unison in the upper register, followed by the rattle of the xylophone (example 6.1).

This sharp start features a popular motif that came into vogue in music and literature in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The sudden beginning of a new day by a factory siren, train whistle, or alarm clock's clanging has supplanted the traditional serenity of Romantic dawns. It stands as an emblem of urbanism and industrialization, exuding the spirit of activity and productive labor and exhorting the awakened subject to rush forward toward the challenges of the day ahead. One of the most extreme avant-garde pieces of the young Shostakovich—his Second Symphony, *To October: A Symphonic Dedication,* written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October revolution—used the real-life sound of a factory whistle; it came as the climax of the development, leading into the final apotheosis—the chorus singing the exhortational lyrics of the popular "Komsomol poet" Aleksandr Bezymensky.

Another of Shostakovich's early works that conveyed the same motif, albeit verbally, was his famous "Song About the Counter-Plan" (that is, the corrected, more ambitious work plan with which laboring masses all over the country "spontaneously" responded to the assignments sent out by the central planning authority) from the film *The Counter-Plan* (*Vstrechnyi,* directed by Sergei Yutkevich, 1932). It became a veritable musical emblem of Soviet industrialization. (As late as the 1970s, it was used as the theme music for

"Workers' Radio-Gazette" — an officious broadcast reporting various achievements on the industrial front.) The song exuded a spirit of explosive energy and optimism. It featured a young worker teasingly addressing his female comrade-in-arms: "Don't sleep, wake up, curly head: / with the tolling of its factory bells, / the country is arising in glory to meet the coming day!"[14] (The author of the lyrics, another Komsomol poet, Boris Kornilov, perished in the purges a few years later; several decades later his wife, the poet Olga Berggolts, the transparent prototype of the "curly head" in the song, wrote an emotional account of the radiant beginnings of their life and the ordeals that followed).

A similar motif appears in the opening of Valentin Kataev's *Time, Forward!* (1932), one of the founding prototypes of the "production" subgenre of the socialist realist novel. (Its close counterpart in the contemporary American literature was *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, a fiercely pro-capitalist Soviet émigré). Like the film *The Counter-Plan,* Kataev's novel depicts the heroic efforts of the whole nation (eventually crowned with success) to fulfill the first five-year plan (1929–33) in four years.

The novel begins with Chapter 2 — an improvement in the literary production line that, by skipping a conventional opening, saved narrative time. It starts as follows:

> I.
>
> The first chapter is omitted for the time being.
>
> II.
>
> The alarm clock rattled like a tin of bonbons. The alarm clock was cheap, painted, brown, of Soviet manufacture.
>
> Half-past six.
>
> The clock was accurate, but Margulies did not depend on it. He was not asleep. He always rose at six and always was ahead of time. (3)[15]

Margulies, a young engineer at one of the grandiose construction sites of the first five-year plan, has every reason to race with time. The previous evening he had learned that his colleagues at a plant in Kharkov had set a new world record: they had produced 306 allotments of concrete during an eight-hour shift; Margulies' team's best result so far had been 206. The novel describes one day in the life of Margulies and his companions — workers, foremen, scientists, journalists, his girlfriend-to-be Shura — spent in a frantic attempt to beat Kharkov. At the end of the day, they have produced 426 allotments of concrete. Completely exhausted, their clothes and the skin on their hands torn to shreds, not having eaten, washed, or reached the toilet all day long, they have still to spend a good part of the night extinguishing a fire set by a saboteur. The last thing Margulies overhears shortly before the dawn, half asleep in Shura's arms, is the latest dispatch about a new record that has just been set in

Cheliabinsk: 504 allotments of concrete. Until the new morning and its alarm clock, then. Ironically, the relentless race with time goes in a perfect circle.

Kataev's heroes performed their feats amid a lot of physical hardship (often quite unnecessary), a hectic environment, and danger. But they seem to have accepted these adverse conditions as the natural habitat of the new era of industrialization and collectivity, something not to be reflected on, let alone protested against. Kataev persistently compares the construction site to a battlefield, which makes all the grim and oppressive moments experienced by his characters seem appropriate or even natural. When a young worker's hand is severely injured in an accident, it is presented matter-of-factly: a comrade is wounded, he is given first aid and promptly taken away (time is precious), and is never seen again. Time continues to fly, leaving little opportunity for dwelling on the past. The only follow-up to this episode is a cursory exchange between Shura and Margulies:

> "What did they say at the hospital?" Margulies asked.
> Shura shrugged her shoulders.
> "Will they cut his hand off?"
> "They don't know yet."
> "It was all so stupid." (318)

In the same vein, the deliberate shrillness and discordant sound of avant-garde music conveyed a mood of complete acceptance or even celebration of the harsh urban or industrial environment. This trait was by no means confined to Soviet avant-garde aesthetics. A composition for orchestra whose cacophonous clash of voices and deafening crescendos re-created the sounds and rhythms of the approaching technological era was a device that had gained considerable popularity since the end of the first decade of the century. It was eagerly embraced by the musical branch of the Italian Futurists. Luigi Russolo (a painter and amateur musician) advocated "noise" as the new medium of music and tried, rather naïvely, to realize his theory in compositions with such suggestive titles as "Awakening of a City" (*Risveglio di una Città*), which used the sounds of altered musical instruments alongside "natural" urban noises.[16] Perhaps the most famous example of this genre was Honegger's *Pacific 231,* a piece that re-created, by conventional and unconventional orchestral means, the sounds of a speeding transcontinental train.[17] Shostakovich's Second and Third Symphonies came from the same mold.

Another archetypal feature of the avant-garde aesthetic was the creation of a compartmentalized form that sharply departed from and perhaps deliberately destroyed the literary and musical narrative principles of the nineteenth century, characteristic of which was an uninterrupted development throughout the whole piece, be it a novel or a symphony. The novels of that period

achieved a unity of form that would have been unthinkable for earlier examples of the genre, such as the picaresque or the eighteenth-century epistolary or travel novel. The same might be said of the nineteenth-century symphony vis-à-vis the *concerti grossi* and suites of the previous century.

The twentieth century witnessed many attempts to overcome this legacy. Emphasizing the piecemeal became a staple of avant-garde art emphatically expressed by Stravinsky,[18] Ravel, Bartók, the young Prokofiev, and, of course, the young Shostakovich. Experiments with literary form in the early part of the century, notably by Bely, Musil, and Joyce, also proceeded along this path.

What distinguished the Fourth and all subsequent Stalin-era symphonies by Shostakovich within this general trend was their profound affinity in rhetorical means to the Romantic and early modernist grand symphonies, especially those by Mahler and Chaikovsky.[19] It was precisely this inner kinship, however, that made Shostakovich's departure from the aesthetic and spiritual world projected by grand symphonies particularly dramatic and poignantly revealing. The Fourth abandoned the more traditional avant-garde mold of a relatively short, programmatically oriented orchestral piece to which Shostakovich's two preceding symphonies belonged. Instead, it incorporated the relentless industrial sound and episodic development of its musical narrative into a symphonic allegro form with an extensive thematic development, which provided a narrative frame typical for the first movement of a traditional grand symphony. This unusual combination of futurist sonorities and traditional large-scale drama was in a sense more devastating in its effect for the fundamental narrative principles of the previous century than the boldest avant-garde experiments of the preceding two decades.

Let us observe briefly how the musical narrative of the Fourth Symphony's first movement proceeds; by the musical narrative I mean the dramatic tensions between successive episodes posing as a chain of musical events, similarly to the chain of events and the tensions between them that constitute a literary narrative.

The sounds of the symphony's opening pages, following the initial awakening theme, once again evoke in the mind images of industrial clatter and the relentless rhythms of labor. But this familiar topos now emerges in a different mood. Four years divide the new work from the victorious cacophony of the Third Symphony and the innocent exuberance of "Song About the Counter-Plan." When, a year later, the composer exculpated himself with his Fifth Symphony, one of his newly emerging official admirers, in a convenient ellipsis, described the composer's experience of 1936 as a time when he "went through a lot in his life and thoughts" (*mnogoe perezhil i peredumal*).[20] Although when Shostakovich began his Fourth Symphony he could not have

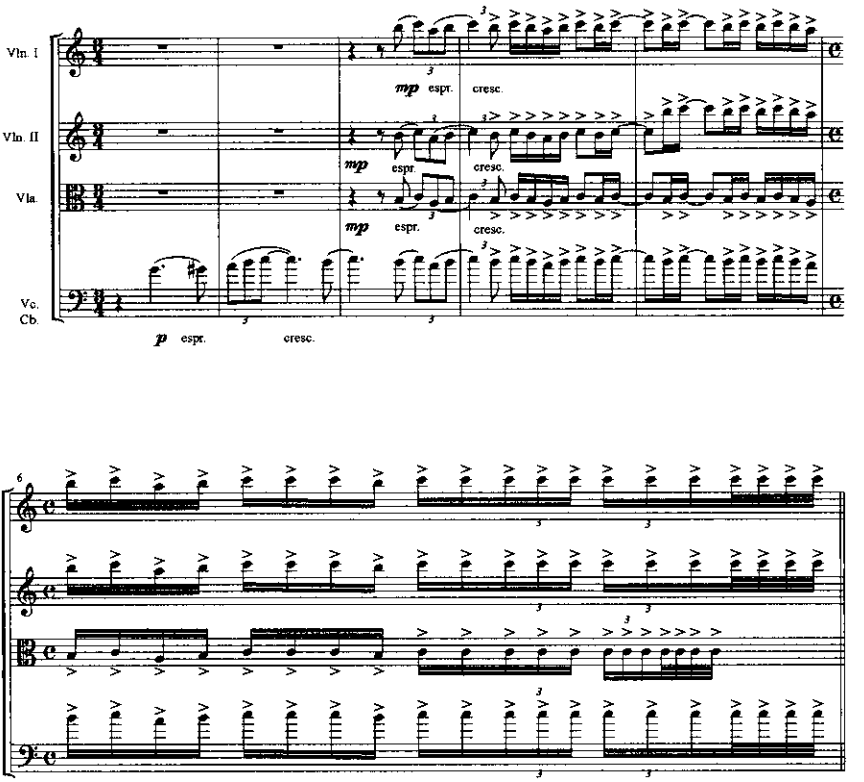
anticipated the crushing blow that would soon befall him, the change of mood compared with earlier compositions is remarkable. The unabashed if somewhat hectic optimism of the late 1920s and early 1930s has given way to a somber and sometimes downright ominous tone. If we imagine the musical narrator of the Fourth—the implied lyrical persona whose impressions and reactions are reflected in its contrasting episodes—he appears to be someone who has become aware of the horrifying character of the world he is living in, as if suddenly awakened to its brutality and violence. All the discords of the avant-garde discourse suddenly lose their narcotic effect, laying bare their oppressive and menacing side.

The symphony's initial theme—which serves as the main theme of a loosely shaped symphonic allegro—rushes forward in a mechanically persistent rhythm with ever-increasing intensity. New voices pile one onto another, the volume swells, and the register rises almost without respite, eventually reaching piercing heights and deafening lows. The growing tension climaxes in a march whose relentless pace sounds even more horrifying than the frantic cacophony from which it emerged. Throughout the whole extensive exposition of the main theme, as well as in all subsequent episodes in the allegro's development and recapitulation when it reappears, it never abandons either its compulsive rhythmical pace or its menacing aggressiveness.

The second theme employs an entirely different mood and musical language. Suddenly the music becomes muted, its pace slow and vague almost to the point of drowsiness. Solo instruments take turns with lengthy monologues, until a new relentless race, fiercer and more extensive than the previous one, erupts, only to give way eventually to another segment of eerie stasis.

One such episode, which follows a second exposition of the main theme, begins, deceptively, on an emotional note, with an ascending phrase of tremulous strings. The expectation of a lyrical outburst becomes all the more intense when one realizes that the phrase quotes a poignantly lyrical passage from Chaikovsky's *Capriccio Italien*. But the would-be lyrical breakthrough gets stuck at the very beginning; the strings repeat their phrase again and again, with ever-increasing speed, until it erupts into another fit of manic cacophony (example 6.2). Then, without any interlude, the music virtually sinks into a stupor. A slow solo by the bassoon is followed by violas and cellos in unison, then first and second violins, then the bass clarinet, punctuated throughout by barely audible pizzicatos in the strings and the dreamlike chords of the harp. Once again, the whole protracted segment never deviates from its extremely slow pace, subdued dynamic, and dreamy, somnolent sonorities (example 6.3).

Throughout the first movement, the music vacillates between these two

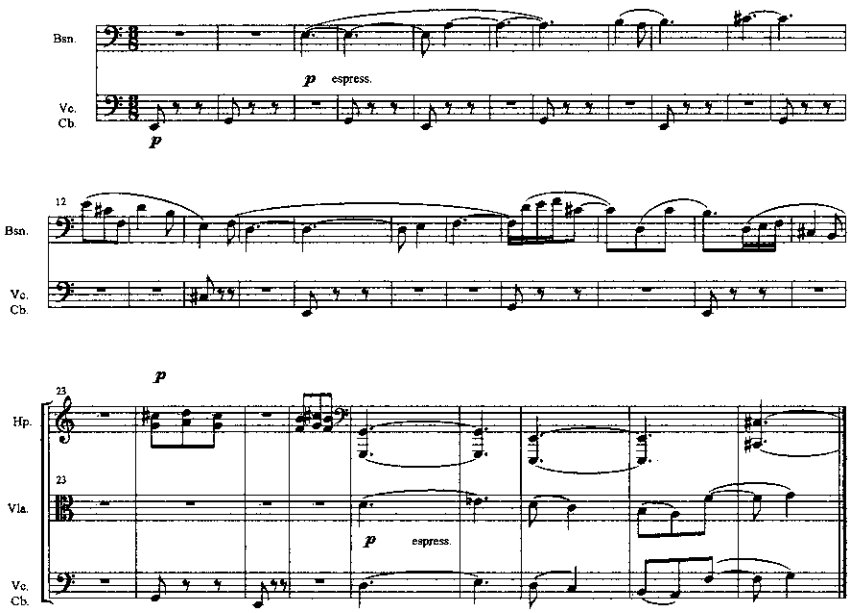


6.2. Shostakovich, Fourth Symphony (quasi-Chaikovsky)

modes, which, for all the apparent polarity of their mood and texture, resemble each other in their respective homogeneity. The movement proceeds as a chain of sustained episodes, each consistent in character and markedly distinct from the ones that precede and follow it.

A contrast between a more dynamic and extroverted main theme and a quieter lyrical second theme is typical for the allegro movement of classical and Romantic grand symphonies. And yet the musical narrative of Shostakovich's symphonic allegro, in spite of this outward similarity to the traditional form, departs from its underlying principles in a broader sense. While proceeding largely according to the same formal categories that would shape a symphony by Mahler or Scriabin, the musical narrative of the Fourth undermines the fundamental philosophical and psychological premises that underpinned the symphonic and literary traditions of the previous century.

Highly characteristic of that tradition was a narrative technique that rarely allowed prolonged spans of music that was homogenous in mood and texture



6.3. Shostakovich, Fourth Symphony, second theme

—at least, not in the first movement, and certainly not in its development. A lengthy build-up to a roaring fortissimo could appear in the scherzo of a symphony; a sustained cantilena by a solo instrument could take place in a slow movement. But the trademark of the first movement was a dynamism and volatility of musical discourse that rendered sustained homogenous episodes virtually impossible. This feature corresponded well to the allegro's function as the dramatic core of the symphony. Its music evolved through continual shifts of texture, volume, and intensity. Each single episode appeared transient, almost precarious, its borders invaded, its mood undermined by contradictory voices, struggling, colliding, chasing each other in a never-ceasing commotion. A beautiful cantilena by the first violins could be punctuated by a worrisome ostinato in the basses that eventually pushed its way into the foreground, disrupting the lyrical monologue; confessional exclamations in the strings might be haunted by the dry-sounding echoes of the winds; a blasting juggernaut in the brass would suddenly appear on a collision course with the rejoicing (or lamenting) voices of the strings, and so on. Innumerable examples of such and similar rhetorical devices can be found in symphonic scores from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, and Berlioz to Brahms, Bruckner, Chaikovsky, and Mahler.[21]

This point may be illustrated by a few well-known examples. At the beginning

of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony (1803), the main theme, throughout its exposition, is far from sounding unequivocally "heroic." Instead, it passes through a complicated and contradictory development, in which different moods and voices interact and struggle to get the upper hand, each prevailing and then receding momentarily to give way to a competing voice. An initial upbeat introduction of the theme by the cellos is interrupted by interrogatory phrases by the violins. The violins, in turn, yield to a pastoral-sounding echo of the theme played by the winds. Several short remarks from different orchestral groups follow, as if the theme were unsure what character to assume. These hesitant replies are underscored by a succession of chords that become increasingly more assertive until they come to the foreground, finally erupting into the full climax of the initial theme. But even at this point, the theme's heroic simplicity is not allowed to reign supreme; while its diatonic contour is emphatically proclaimed by the brass, it is punctuated and soon overcome by the frantic exclamations of the strings. The heroic mood dissipates as quickly as it had erupted, giving way to the second theme. It evolves as a dialogue involving the flute, horn, oboe, and violins; although pastoral in its general character, the second theme, owing to fast changes of voice and register, proceeds as an intricate and ever-changing interplay of different moods and colors. In its entirety this perpetual whirlwind takes barely one and a half minutes.

Another example belongs to a different epoch and different national tradition yet retains some salient features of the kind of discourse that could be observed in the *Eroica*. It is the main theme of the first movement of Chaikovsky's Fourth Symphony (1878). The theme begins as a mournful lyrical monologue. The orchestral color (first violins), the slow tempo, the uneven, sobbing rhythm, the subdued dynamic, the long descending motion of the melody punctuated by sudden moaning rises—every musical means seems to have come together to create this image. One dissonant element is present, however: the dancelike rhythmical punctuation of mournful phrases performed by the lower strings. Barely noticeable at the beginning, they become more persistent with each new phrase. A clear contest between the monologue and the dancelike movement evolves: the more frantic the former becomes, the more compulsive the latter. Both voices quickly gain in dynamics and pitch to the point where their competition becomes unbearable. Then it erupts, as if in a breakdown, in several frantic *tutti* chords, followed by an exclamatory concluding reply from the first violins. The implied subject of this symphonic narrative is never left alone with his mournful thoughts. He does not present a statuesque figure like Rodin's *Thinker*. Instead, we witness and become part of his inner struggle, contradictions, frustrations, and shifting moods.

This feature of the musical narrative in a traditional symphonic allegro

had profound symbolic value. Its transient states and conflicting voices corresponded to the character of the spiritual and emotional life of a person as it became the focus of the nineteenth-century psychological novel—the phenomenon that Herzen aptly called the "dialectic of the soul." The inner life of a subject projected by a symphony by Beethoven, Berlioz, Chaikovsky, or Mahler was similar to that of the hero of a Romantic or realist psychological novel, from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister and Constant's Adolphe to Flaubert's Emma Bovary or Tolstoy's Pierre Bezukhov. This does not mean, of course, that the content of a musical narrative could be compared with the situations and characters of a psychological novel. It is hardly worth arguing that any attempt to reconstruct the implicit "plot" of a symphony and its "character" or "characters," in a manner resembling those of a novel, is essentially futile. Perhaps, in the case of a symphony, we should speak of its subjectivity rather than its subject, that is, of a dynamic of changing emotional states and modes of expression that does not coalesce into any congruent character or chain of events. Given all these necessary reservations, however, it seems safe to say that as far as the depiction of the human mind and heart is concerned, there are some parallels between the way this fundamental task was pursued in the nineteenth-century symphony and the psychological novel.[22] In both cases, the emphasis was on the contradictory and volatile nature of individual consciousness, on its unceasing conflicts with itself and with the world around it.

The heroes and heroines of nineteenth-century novels experienced constant yet ever-changing tensions between the free flow of their thoughts and emotions and the fixed character of their position in the world—between what Hegel has called "the poetry of heart" and "the prose of social relations." This tension between the subjective and the objective, between a social drama and the psychological landscapes evolving in the souls of its protagonists, can be seen as perhaps the most fundamental common denominator of nineteenth-century aesthetics, literary and musical. While following the plot of a novel that evolves according to the laws of social causality, the reader at the same time gains access to the minds of the protagonists, whose ferment defies the laws of consistency or causality. A protagonist might be compelled to act in a certain way while experiencing contradictory emotions; the reader, on the other hand, construes the whole picture as a result of the interaction between the objective and the subjective. Unlike his numerous predecessors in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adventure novels, Wilhelm Meister's experiences are punctuated by his conflicting thoughts and feelings, ever-changing hopes, memories, suspicions, desires, fears, joys and regrets. This gives the novel a fluidity lacking in a traditional picaresque or adventure narrative. Similarly, Madame Bovary's adulteries do not appear as a succession of

episodes glued together in the manner of the Decameron because they interact with the vicissitudes of her inner life.

Nineteenth-century music largely accords with this fundamental aesthetic principle. Perhaps the most obvious parallel with literary discourse can be seen in Wagner's music dramas, whose characters typically convey the nature of their acts in singing while the orchestra reveals the often contradicting states of each character's soul. Yet even in the nineteenth-century symphony, at first glance the most subjective of all genres, a similar duality can be observed. The objective world enters the symphonic narrative by means of allusions to various musical genres that suggest tangible social situations: a march, a dance, a folk song, a chorale. Penetrating into and mixing with the lyrical voices, these glimpses of outward reality produced tensions similar to those in a psychological novel or musical drama. The whirlwind of voices of a symphonic allegro renders the volatile nature of the inner life with an unprecedented degree of "polyphonic" (in the Bakhtinian sense) tension and dynamic contradictions. This tradition was carried on into first decades of twentieth century in the symphonic oeuvre of such composers as Mahler, Scriabin, Ives, and Sibelius. Shostakovich's First Symphony (1925), written during his student years at the Petrograd Conservatory to instant international acclaim, brilliantly continued and explored the same tradition.

This principle of presenting subjectivity in musical or literary works of the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries may be termed the "Romantic narrative," because it reflects a new concept of the subject that was introduced by Romanticism. The subject of Romantic art, expounded on in theoretical works by Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, and Schelling and incarnated in such characters of cardinal importance as Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, Byron's Childe Harold, Constant's Adolphe, and Lermontov's Pechorin, becomes acutely aware of his lack of organic wholeness. His inner world, itself torn apart by contradictory feelings and thoughts, remains in an insoluble conflict with the world around him. No matter how he struggles, he can never become a whole man, happily in possession of himself and living in unquestioned harmony with "objective" existence. This malaise, however, turns into a creative impulse, because it is his longing for harmony that drives the Romantic subject's inner struggles and outward actions. In this respect, at least, realism—the denunciations of its Romantic precursors notwithstanding—can be seen as a continuation of the romantic infatuation with and longing for "real life."

As far as its sophisticated infrastructure of motifs, complexity of form, and intricacy of texture are concerned, Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony can be viewed as a resumption of the great tradition of the grand symphony. These outward musical features, however, stand in stark contrast to the choppy compartmentalization of its narrative, which forms a chain of successive epi-

sodes, each dominated by a single modality, be it a frantic race or somnolent repose. Each of its "industrial" crescendos evolves in an unwaveringly progressive fashion; no distraction causes it to swerve from its course for a moment; no contradictory signals impede the pace of this musical juggernaut. All of Shostakovich's dazzling inventiveness in finding ever-new sound effects, all his formidable command of contrapuntal technique and instrumentation are invested in enhancing the relentlessly progressive pace of such episodes.[23] As for the contrasting static episodes, one can marvel, once again, at the ingenuity with which Shostakovich creates extended segments of music with the scantiest of means without falling into monotony, despite the exceeding length and slow pace of his drowsy instrumental solos. Had he abandoned the form of the symphonic allegro altogether as he did in his Second and Third Symphonies or as Stravinsky did in his ballets in the second decade of the twentieth century, the piecemeal nature of his narrative would not appear so striking. Here, however, within the traditional frame of a symphonic drama, such a violation of its fundamental narrative premises has profound psychological and aesthetic implications.

The subject projected by the musical narrative of the Fourth Symphony differs radically from his predecessors from novels and symphonies written in a more humane age. He seems to be capable of only one emotion or thought at a time. If he possesses a soul it must be one devoid of Romantic dialectic. He has lost the duality of the inner and outer world that was the principal human condition under which the nineteenth-century narrative operated. The protagonist of the new narrative can be alternately horrified or pacified, frantic or dreamy, hyperactive or lost in thought, but these states never meet, collide, or interact. The landscape of his soul assumes the laws of the outer world: its different domains each occupy a distinct place in space and time, and they come and go in turns.[24] There is no longer any inconsistency or incompatibility between the subjective and the objective worlds. This means, in effect, the end of the inner world of a person as it was portrayed by the art of the previous century. Because the inner state of mind assumes the same successive character as the outer phenomena, the former inevitably becomes merely a reflection of and reaction to the latter.

In this sense, the world of Shostakovich's symphony corresponds in remarkable ways with the world projected by the socialist realist novel, whose appearance at the beginning of the 1930s also signified a return, after two decades of avant-garde experimentation, to many of the rhetorical means of a grand novel of the previous century. The positive heroes of the socialist realist novel—the Chumalovs, Korchagins, and Margulieses—show a wide range of emotions, from enthusiasm to grief and from anger to childish playfulness. If simply listed as a catalogue, the ingredients of which their inner life is composed

appear no less rich and diverse than those that constituted the character of the hero of a nineteenth-century novel. What distinguishes the new hero from the old one is the fact that his different inner states, however varied, rarely concur or struggle with each other. At any given moment, our hero is the whole man, his state of mind entirely focused on the moment he lives in or on the task ahead.

Typically, it appears to be the prerogative of a negative hero, that living shadow of the past, to be burdened with memories, torn apart by doubts, and lost in conflicting thoughts and emotions. In Kataev's *Time, Forward!* this type is represented by Nalbandov, the construction site's chief engineer—a brilliant, well-educated person and an Old Bolshevik. Now, however, he is unable to catch up to Margulies and his friends and is becoming an obstacle to their leap forward. When speaking with American visitors (a task that inevitably falls to him as, apparently, the only person at the gigantic construction site who speaks a foreign language), Nalbandov seems to be excited by his own rhetoric about the uninhibited pace of the progress of the new socialist science: it will eventually attain the speed of light and overcome mortality, he asserts emphatically. (Apparently, Nalbandov still remembers Nikolai Fedorov's and Aleksandr Bogdanov's mystical-technological utopias of the 1900s, dubious baggage in 1932; the only reading that interests Margulies is the latest issue of a scientific magazine: he cannot wait for it to arrive by mail, and has to call Moscow to find out what it contains.) Yet at the same time Nalbandov has to concede in his mind that his opponents may be right to be skeptical:

> "You are a poet," said Mr. Ray Roupe, smiling.
>
> "No, I am an engineer—a Bolshevik," Nalbandov replied roughly. "We shall attain the speed of light and we shall become immortal!"
>
> "If your poor, earthly human heart can bear it," Mr. Ray Roupe said with a religious sigh, clasping his hands on his stomach and glancing covertly at Nalbandov.
>
> He is right, Nalbandov thought to himself, but he said:
>
> "It will bear it. You may be sure of that." (159)

This contradiction between a remembered past enthusiasm and present doubts, between what is said and what is thought, would be typical for the hero of a nineteenth-century novel but becomes the trademark of a negative character in the new narrative.

Positive heroes are free from Pechorin's or Adolphe's disease. After their record has been set (if only for a few hours), Margulies and Shura engage in the following dialogue:

> "Have you any children, David?" she suddenly asked, earnestly.
>
> "No. As a matter of fact, I haven't even a wife."
>
> "And haven't you ever had one?"

"Well, why not? Certainly I've had one."
"Where is she now?"
Margulies waved his arm.
"In a word, I had one, and now I haven't any."
"Aren't you ever lonely?"
"At times."
He pressed his head against her cool round arm and tickled her with the stubble of his unshaven cheek. They walked into the shadow of the warehouse and kissed tenderly. (319–320)

(Lest the reader suspect that they are tempted to move into the warehouse then, he is duly informed that a watchman stands guard.) This is all we and the heroine learn about Margulies's past life. Time rushes forward and forward only, and both heroes are concerned solely with the next dawn. For the time being, they await, with serene composure, the moment the commissary will open (for some reason, the commissary maintains very sparse and inconvenient working hours, which creates many jocular moments throughout the novel concerning our heroes' repeated failed attempts to obtain food). But the imminent announcement of the newest world record in the production of concrete is sure to launch them into another frantic cycle, a magnified replica of the day they have just lived through.

Margulies's ex-wife has disappeared into the past and cannot occupy his mind anymore. His deputy, Korneyev, has a more immediate psychological conflict to resolve. The woman he loves, who abandoned her husband, child, and Moscow apartment to live with him, can no longer endure the hardships of life at the construction site, which are aggravated by the fact that she almost never sees Korneyev—all his promises to spend time with her are inevitably thwarted by another urgent event that keeps him at work. Finally, she sends him a note threatening to leave that very evening if he does not come to see her. With preparations for the record-setting on his mind, and the note in his pocket, Korneyev makes sporadic attempts to pay attention to his personal problem. He fails, however, not for want of love or concern, but simply because at the moment his mind is otherwise engaged.

Korneyev, dropping his eyes, looked at the wheels of the flat car that flashed by. It reminded him that something unpleasant had happened recently. Something untoward had happened this morning. That unpleasant thing had not been yet disposed of and it would have to be faced.
But he was no longer thinking about it. . . .
He remembered something strange and unpleasant. But what?
Yes! Quite right! Klava! She was going away. She had to go home. Perhaps he could still patch things up.
But how untimely the whole thing was! (65)

Who says the hero of a socialist realist novel is schematic and unidimensional? As we see, he is capable of a full range of thoughts and emotions. The only thing he seems not to be capable of is experiencing them simultaneously. When Korneyev recalls Klava, a moment is lost in the race for the new record; the next moment, however, his concentration returning, Klava vanishes from his thoughts. The peculiar world of the socialist realist novel and its positive hero is characterized, first and foremost, by the almost perfect compartmentalization of the hero's mind—a trait that had far-reaching consequences for reshaping the psychological and social premises of literary narrative. In fact, it turned out to be a far more revolutionary literary device than the presumed schematic or ritualistic uniformity of thought and action that is often perceived as the distinctive feature of this style.

No matter how much struggle, pain, and sacrifice is portrayed in a socialist realist novel of the 1930s, its world is a very happy one indeed. However hectic the circumstances in which its heroes find themselves, their infantile lack of memory allows them to enjoy an undisturbed wholeness of self, be it total happiness or total suffering, at every given moment. Hence the effortlessness with which they shift from excruciating pain to small pleasures, from crushing fatigue to a renewed burst of energy, from the tragic to the jocose. These shifts may seem abrupt to an observer, yet they appear natural under the compartmentalized conditions of human consciousness projected by the narrative.

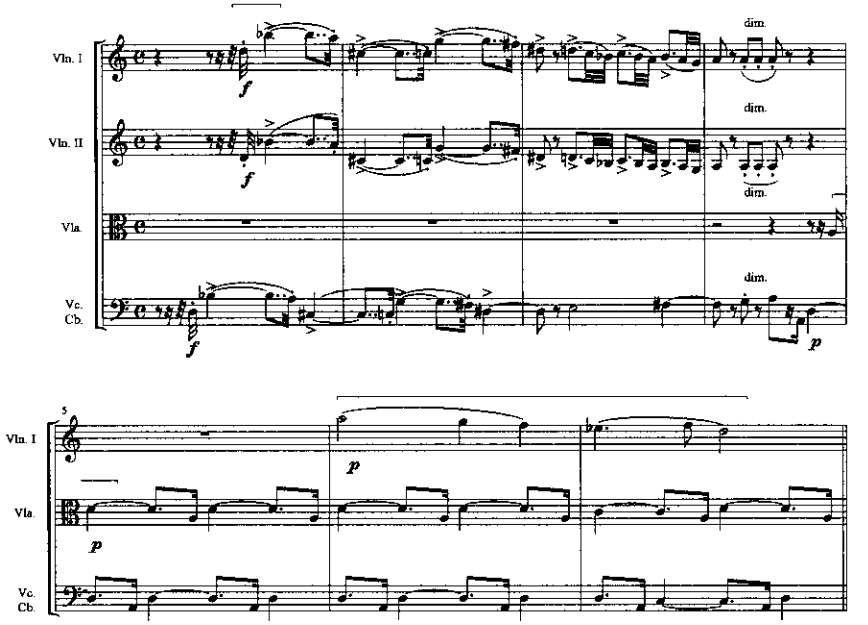
In Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony, the shining world of the late 1920s and early 1930s has crumbled like a dream on a rude and sudden awakening. What had sounded and looked like an exhilarating mode of existence, festive and bursting with energy, becomes a menacing cacophony. Perhaps the closest literary analogy to this effect can be found in Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit,* another lugubrious travesty of the frenzy of industrial construction. The subject of Shostakovich's symphonic narrative awakens to the existential horror of the world into which he finds himself plunged and is now overcome with terror and agony. His terror is the more acute because of his inability to emancipate his inner self from the world that oppresses it. Having lost the radiant wholeness that guaranteed harmony with the world, Shostakovich's lyrical subject does not regain the consciousness of the nineteenth-century Romantic subject. His mode of existence is purely reactive. When left alone for a while by the forces that torment him, he slips into a state of torpor, in which he lingers until the next jolt. All that his inner world is capable of producing is a chain of successive fits of pain and escapes from it into an introspective dreamland.

The Fourth Symphony highlights a paradox concerning the nature of a

new artistic trend that had gradually begun to emerge in the late 1920s and was officially proclaimed in 1934: the all-encompassing doctrine of Soviet art under the name of socialist realism. Its conservative and perhaps retrograde aesthetic orientation was quite obvious, especially when contrasted with the dominant artistic practices of the preceding two decades. The return to traditional literary and musical forms, the simplification of artistic language, the drive toward representational objectivity and stylized verisimilitude appeared to be a partial restoration of nineteenth-century realism, which only recently had seemed to have been irrevocably abandoned. At the same time, the formulaic, ritualistic character of the new art evoked precedents from a yet more distant past: eighteenth-century neoclassicism,[25] the aesthetic of folklore, and medieval literature.[26] This great leap backward was clearly caused by the outward pressures exerted by an increasingly intrusive state and its official ideology.

The Fourth Symphony, together with other major works Shostakovich wrote in the mid-1930s (notably *Lady Macbeth*), showed an affinity with the nascent socialist realist novel in spite of obvious differences in tone and in the fate that befell them at the time.[27] While seemingly turning away from the most flamboyant features of avant-garde aesthetic radicalism in favor of more traditional forms and discourses, they damaged the spiritual fabric of the Old World more profoundly and more disturbingly than all the spectacular escapades of the earlier waves of modernism ever could. What could be seen, from an avant-garde perspective, as a regression was in fact an innovation so radical that it appeared to have reached a point of no return.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it took a quarter of the century for this symphonic testimony to be heard. The period from late 1936 and early 1937 was perhaps the most difficult time of Shostakovich's life. He was showered with severe reprimands and menacing criticism without respite. Amid the first wave of mass arrests and executions, he had every reason to expect himself and his family to perish at any moment. These were the conditions under which he composed his next symphony. From its first performance in November 1937, the Fifth Symphony earned universal acclaim, instantly catapulting the composer from pariah status into the world of Soviet musical officialdom. The authorities accepted the Fifth as the expression of a catharsis in the wake of a difficult experience, a sentiment well in tune with the doctrine of reeducation and rehabilitation that served as the spiritual accompaniment to the mass terror. A large part of the public saw in it a poignant depiction of the sufferings of the time. To use associations from contemporary literature, one might say that the official interpretation made the Fifth a musical counterpart of the



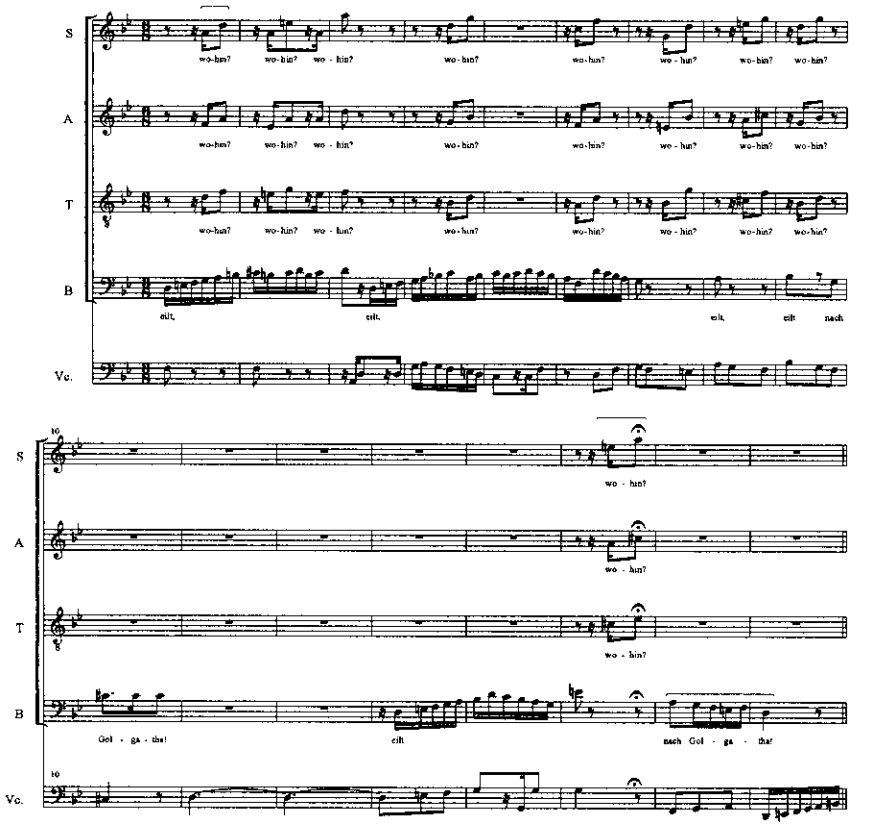
6.4. Shostakovich, Fifth Symphony, beginning

tragic (yet, in the broader historical perspective, optimistic) finale of Sholokhov's *The Quiet Don,* while the listeners who wept at its première in a terrorized Leningrad perceived it as akin to Akhmatova's *Requiem.*

At first glance, the Fourth and the Fifth stood as far apart in their narrative modes as in their fortunes. Instead of the world of reactive contrasts that underlay the narrative of the former, the narrative voice assumed by the latter was that of an intense introspection. It seemed far from the purely reactive, haunted spiritual world projected by its predecessor. The vast and broadly developed exposition of the Fifth Symphony never swerves from the course of a meditation. Its tensely lyrical first theme and dreamlike second theme evolve as an uninterrupted inner monologue.

The Fifth opens with emphatic interrogative phrases in the strings, setting the tone of passionate soul-searching. They gradually recede into the background, giving way to the grievous first theme (example 6.4).

Later in his career, Shostakovich showed a remarkable propensity for interspersing his compositions with transparent musical quotations. The opening of the Fifth Symphony offers an early example of this technique, although at the time the composer may have hoped that no one would recognize it. The passage cited in example 6.4 consists of two principal ingredients: a solo voice



6.5. Bach, *St. John Passion*

descending from the fifth step to the tonic in D minor and ascending exclamations in the background. Both components can be seen, in a virtually identical shape, in the aria for bass with chorus (in the same key) from J. S. Bach's *St. John Passion*.[28] The aria serves as a musical commentary on Christ's path to Golgotha. At its climactic point, the soloist exhorts everyone to come along; the chorus of female voices replies with bewildered exclamations: "Whither? Whither?"—to which the soloist gravely replies: "To Golgotha" (example 6.5).

By alluding to Bach, the lyrical subject of the symphony assumes the *imitatio Christi* posture—typical for an artist of the Romantic era—in his mournful meditation. This was written by a composer who not only "went through a lot in his life and thoughts" but had grown capable of reflecting on his experience.

After an extensive exposition, entirely immersed in the meditative mood,

the scene changes abruptly with the beginning of the development. The development of the Fifth is extremely close, in sonority and projected mood, to the "industrial" segments of the Fourth Symphony: the same relentlessly mounting volume and climbing register, the same hysteria of increasingly chaotic voices climaxing in a menacing march, the same inexorable rhythmical pace throughout. The symphony's leading theme appears here ominously transformed, aggressive, chopped into pieces. Having reached an almost unbearable level of intensity, the infernal-sounding race is suddenly stopped by an oratorical exclamation in the strings with which the recapitulation begins. The main theme returns in its lyrical, confessional aura, to which an oratorical pathos is now added. Played by the strings in unison fortissimo, it vibrates with protest and indignation. Gradually, the music quiets down, ending up in the enchanted stasis of the coda.

The emotional "plot" underlying this musical narrative—from the mourning at Golgotha to the eruption of a cacophonous inferno to the protest and, eventually, dreamy reconciliation with the inner self—is quite transparent, perhaps too transparent for a symphony.[29] Shostakovich's new symphonic narrator possesses an intense inner life; the very pain inflicted on him confirms his humanity, because he responds to it with meditation and mourning, not Pavlovian reactive impulses.

What remains unchanged, however, is the compartmentalization of the symphonic form, and with it, the spiritual world conveyed by its musical discourse. The lyrical inner self and tragic outer experience never become involved in an interaction of any kind. Whenever one appears, the other is instantly rendered mute. When the inferno erupts in the development, it obliterates all traces of the narrator's meditative self, expressed so eloquently and so extensively in the exposition; all his lyrical themes are taken away from him and appropriated by the voices of evil; not a single note is left in which we could recognize the narrator's own voice. When finally, in the recapitulation, he resumes his monologue with the whole force of pathos, the inferno disappears as abruptly as it had broken out. In this sense, we may conclude that the subject of the narrative of the Fifth Symphony still lacks the dialectic of the soul. There is no struggle, no tension, no dilemma concerning his inner self. All the dialectic contrariness is delegated—in full agreement with the ideological and aesthetic premises of socialist realism—to an externalized struggle between the good of the hero's world and the evil of outer forces, whatever they may be.

For all his confessional pathos, the subject of the Fifth Symphony remains as alien to inner dilemmas as both Kataev's happy protagonists and the tormented subject of the Fourth Symphony had been. The subject continues to

live in a world that is based on an outer opposition of the good "I" (or "we") and the evil "they." The content of that "us" and "them" can vary, depending on what the composer or the listener appears ready to imply, but the way these two poles oppose each other has not moved far from the shining world of the first five-year plan. In the final account, the world of the Fifth Symphony turns out to be, ironically, as hermetically integral, and by the same token as distorted, as the world of the early socialist realist novel. The enchanted land entered by the narrator of the allegro remains, at the end of his spiritual pilgrimage, the twilight world of quiet with which the hero of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (written at about the same time) is rewarded—or to which he is condemned.

The Fifth Symphony set a structural pattern that was largely emulated in Shostakovich's subsequent grand symphonies. In the Seventh, the so-called Leningrad Symphony (1941), the forces of good and evil, of poignant spirituality and soulless menace, are separated in the same clear-cut binary fashion as in the Fifth. Again, each is confined to its own segment or segments in the first movement: the former to the exposition and recapitulation, the latter to the development. The externalization of the conflict appears even more unequivocal than in the Fifth, to the point of insipidity: the "good" refers unabashedly to memories of happy Soviet life before the war, and the "evil" alludes as transparently (via musical quotation) to the Nazi invasion. The polarization of conflicting musical elements is straightforward to such a degree that it would be hard to find a precedent for it in the 150-year tradition of grand symphonies. Perhaps Chaikovsky's programmatic *1812 Overture* could be an analogy, or better, the fictitious musical piece "The Franco-Prussian War" described in Dostoevsky's *The Demons*—an aesthetic product of the demonic "new people" whose assault on the human spirit the novel strives to unmask and to counter. Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, written two years later, amid the devastation of the war, returned to the less tangible, more existential treatment of evil that was featured in the Fifth. In fact, the first movement of the Eighth can be seen as a structural calque of the first movement of the Fifth, with the introspective exposition and the infernal frenzy of the development becoming even more expansive and sharply polarized.

The Tenth Symphony is the last in this sequence. Once again, its exposition and recapitulation follow the blueprint according to which its predecessors, from the Fifth to the Eighth, were written: the same predominantly somber mood, occasionally lightened by dreamy excursions, the same slow pace and meditative tone sustained throughout a segment. The symphony's development, however, is more diverse in the character of participating voices and emotional modality. The worlds of the meditating self and the outward evil do

not merely take turns in successive episodes but partly overlap, occasionally engaging each other. In this sense, the Tenth, if it did not fully regain the tradition of grand symphonies from which the Fourth had departed, at least it came closer to it. This, however, marked the end of an evolutionary path portending a new beginning. Starting with his Eleventh, *The Year 1905* (1956), Shostakovich turned to a different symphonic concept. All of the five symphonies that followed are explicitly programmatic; their musical narrative often evolves as a collage of musical quotations; their mode of expression is more objective, frescolike.[30] The lyrical epicenter of the composer's creative self has shifted into the realm of chamber music; it is hardly a coincidence that of the fifteen quartets written by Shostakovich, thirteen were composed in the postwar period, ten of them after the Tenth Symphony.

Shostakovich developed as composer within the aesthetic and psychological environment of the Soviet and European avant-garde of the 1920s. What distinguished him was his profound affinity for the rhetorical means and psychological world of the grand symphony, particularly that of late Romantic provenance, best represented by Chaikovsky, Bruckner, and Mahler. This side of his creative personality emerged under the terrible pressures of the Stalinism of the mid-1930s. Shostakovich's nostalgia for a more humane world rendered the abyss that separated it from the spiritual realm and the mode of life of the 1930s particularly dramatic and poignantly revealing. The symphonies he composed in this era are an eloquent testimony to the scale of the catastrophe that befell the human spirit.

7

"Popolo di Pekino": Musorgsky's Muscovy in Early Twentieth-Century Europe

Everything there flows in reverse order. Ivanov becomes some sort of Japanese: Vonavi.

—Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*

Giacomo Puccini's last opera, written (but left unfinished) amid the tumults of the early 1920s—the destruction of the old world order sealed by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, the boisterous cultural atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties, the nascence of Russian communism and Italian fascism—showed a significant transformation of his style.[1] It is true that for critics who like to station themselves at an imaginary blackboard to chalk down every triad a twentieth-century composer allowed to slip into his score, *Turandot* still fell short of the standards of "modern music."[2] Viewed from a somewhat broader aesthetic perspective, however, it exuded the spirit of modernity—or, to be precise, of that volatile decade and a half from the beginning of the Great War in 1914 to all the great crashes and breaks of 1929. One need only compare Puccini's *Turandot* (1920–24) with its close predecessor—the neoclassical *Turandot* by Ferruccio Busoni (1917).[3] Puccini's opera, like Busoni's, half-mockingly adopts features of the commedia dell'arte that served as its literary prototype. Its neoclassical theatricality, however, appeared side by side with a rough naturalistic rendition of traditional

operatic topoi — a device that could be seen as a trademark of the avant-garde aesthetic of the period from 1910 to 1930. *Turandot*'s exotic setting was a sharp departure from the voluptuous languor in which the Oriental element had been clad by the Romantic tradition. This newly emerging Orient revealed an ominous, ruthless, cruelly mocking side. When in act 2 Ping muses, "O China, O China, now startled and aghast, restless, how serenely you once drowsed, proud of your seventy thousand centuries!" this conventional nostalgia falls on the ears of the contemporary audience as a keen allusion to modern political realities — in particular, the Chinese revolution of 1910 followed by decades of virtually uninterrupted turmoil. Such a fusion of stylized exoticism and stark literalness of meaning could be matched with Bertold Brecht's *chinoiserie* (*The Good Person of Szechuan*) rather than the Art Nouveau aesthetics from which Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904) had sprung.

Puccini's Peking crowd has lost the benign lack of individuation with which conventional operatic masses pose themselves behind principal characters in so many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century operas. Instead of expressing themselves collectively in a festive chorale, an innocent peasant song, or a martial exhortation, the people in the crowd in act 1 split into many parties, each with its own character, mood, and agenda, each spitting, at the others and at the authorities, cynical, ominously intoxicated, abrupt remarks. This is how the folkloric and populist element was treated in works representing the aesthetic cutting edge of the epoch, such as Alexander Blok's *The Twelve,* Stravinsky's *Petrouchka,* and, a little later, Brecht's theatrical works. Speaking of the opera proper, there was one powerful precedent; although created in the previous century, it became widely known in Europe only several decades later, and by the first two decades of the twentieth century it had grown into a tangible presence in the culture of European modernism. I mean, of course, Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.[4]

Some nineteenth-century writers proved capable of rendering the dynamic of a crowd: its volatility of mood, now docile, now violent, now compassionate, now mocking, its split personality whose violently fragmented image recalls the sight of a window shattered by a rock. Some scenes from Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* Flaubert's depiction in *Sentimental Education* of the mob ravaging the Tuileries in 1848, and the prologue to Schiller's Wallenstein trilogy (*Wallenstein's Camp*) come to mind, alongside the coronation scene in Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. But among nineteenth-century composers only Musorgsky — at least, I am not aware of another example — took a closer look at the crowd amassing at the back of the operatic stage. If Mozart was the first to make soloists sing in ensemble but not in accord, each expressing simultaneously his or her feelings and intentions, Musorgsky should be credited with extending

this principle to the anonymous voices of the crowd. In the early twentieth century, amid rising tides of violent populism, both social and aesthetic, his early example appeared prophetic, or at any rate inspirational.[5] Understandably, it was followed, first, by other Russian composers: Rimsky-Korsakov in his portrayal of rowdy Little Kitezh (*The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh,* 1906), and Stravinsky in the fair scenes in *Petrouchka* (1911).

It took more time to transplant this innovative dramatic design to the Western theater. By the time of his work on *Pelléas and Mélisande,* Debussy had obviously been affected by Musorgsky's harmonic style; when *Pelléas* was staged in 1903, critics were so blunt in pointing out its similarity to *Boris,* some mockingly suggesting that Boris must have been Pelléas' grandfather, that Debussy's sympathizers, and the composer himself, felt the need to disclaim Musorgsky's influence. Yet that influence, however real, did not extend beyond the musical language proper;[6] few resemblances could be spotted between Debussy's and Musorgsky's dramatic narrative. It was Puccini's *Turandot* that introduced a Musorgskian unruly crowd to the Western musical drama.

Apparently, Puccini became acquainted with the score of *Boris Godunov* late in his life, just about the time he began working on *Turandot*.[7] He had been prepared for that encounter, however, by his previous personal and musical experience. In the second decade of the century he had attended performances of Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* and *Le Sacre du printemps*. His immediate reaction to the latter was benignly ambiguous: "Sheer cacophony but strange and not without a certain talent. But all in all, it is the stuff of a madman!"[8] This was akin to many earlier pronouncements made about Musorgsky's music, both in Russia and in the West; when Pierre Lalo defended Debussy from accusations of similarity to Musorgsky, he did so by contrasting the refined orderliness of Debussy's style with Musorgskian chaos.[9] Yet Puccini, together with Debussy, was among those who defended *The Rite of Spring* against the mass of hostile critics.[10] In this period Puccini befriended Stravinsky and had many conversations with him, whose topics must have included Russian music. In the end, as many of Puccini's biographers pointed out, Stravinsky's ballets left marked traces in the score of *Turandot*.[11] Another intermediary between the two composers was Debussy, whom Puccini held in the highest esteem all his life and whose harmonic innovations (the use of diatonic modes, the emancipation of triads based on the peripheral steps of the scale, the legitimization of parallel fifths), inspired at least in part by the Russian example, had either influenced or run parallel with harmonic features of Puccini's operas of the turn of the century, from *Manon* to *Madama Butterfly*.[12]

The resemblances between the opening scenes of *Turandot* and *Boris Godunov* are pervasive. Both operas begin with a monologue by an official who

speaks to the crowd. In *Boris,* it is a police official (*pristav*) who coerces the crowd into singing the rehearsed plea to Boris to accept the crown; in *Turandot,* it is a mandarin who announces the law of the three enigmas: "Popolo di Pekino, le legge è questo." In both cases, the crowd responds by bursting into a cacophony of conflicting voices expessing awe, anger, bewilderment, amusement, compassion, mockery, and impatience. Like a hydra, the crowd cannot find any agreement among its different voices, its collective disposition changing with each remark from one of its hundred heads.

"Mitiukh, hey, Mitiukh, what is this we are yelling about?" "Well, how should I know?" Mitiukh replies complacently; a whiff of officious pomposity (underscored with a trumpet fanfare in the orchestra) comes from a nearby company: "We are going to enthrone the Tsar in Rus!" Then a female voice: "Oh, trouble! my voice is gone entirely; dear neighbor, sweet dove, do you have some water left?" "Just look at this *boyarynya,*" the sweet dove retorts, with some third female party adding acidly: "You did more yelling than anyone else, get your own water!" "You women, stop this babbling!" comes a rebuke from a male, provoking a barrage of women's replies: "And you, who are you to teach us! — Are we stuck with another *pristav* here?" They are interrupted by a taunting male voice whose remark "Oy, you witches, don't go berserk!" drowns in men's roaring laughter pierced by the salvos of women's curses.

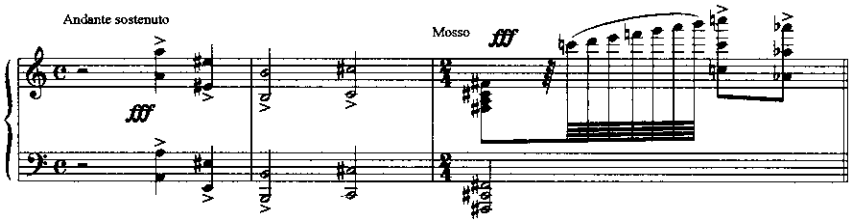
This is how it goes in *Boris*. In *Turandot,* the people of Peking greet the announcement of the terrifying law with an overwhelmed "Ach!" then, on learning that the execution of another victim is near, explode in shouts of anticipation, impatience, and cruel joy: "Death! hoorah, death! We want the butcher! Hurry, hurry! To the block! Death!" Their shouts collide with the guards' yelping: "Back, you dogs!" The guards are pushing back relentlessly, causing moans of pain from all sides: "Oh, you cruel. . . . For heaven's sake stop! Oh, my mother! Ach, my children!" After a lyrical respite, when Calaf finds his father and Liù in the crowd, nearly trampled, the crowd comes to the foreground once again. Its grief is forgotten: now it is excited by the appearance of the team of executioners whose ominous exhortations — "Oil it, grind it, let the blade shine, the job is ever pressing" — are echoed in scattered remarks by the enthusiastic masses. Suddenly a taunting mood takes possession of the people: they exhort the unfortunate suitors of Turandot with mocking tenderness ("O sweet lovers, advance, come forth!"), while the executioners continue their menacing incantation. Someone casts a musing look at the sky: "Why is the moon so late?" (the execution being expected to begin at moonrise); now all heads turn toward the sky, all voices compete in inventive improvised addresses to the moon, whose mock nocturnal serenity is charged

with bloodthirsty double entendres: "O severed head! O one drained of blood! O silent one—come! show up in the sky! O you haggard lover of the dead!" When the prince of Persia, the victim, finally appears, the crowd, instantly captivated by his youth and beauty, shifts into yet another mood, joining voices in pleas for mercy.

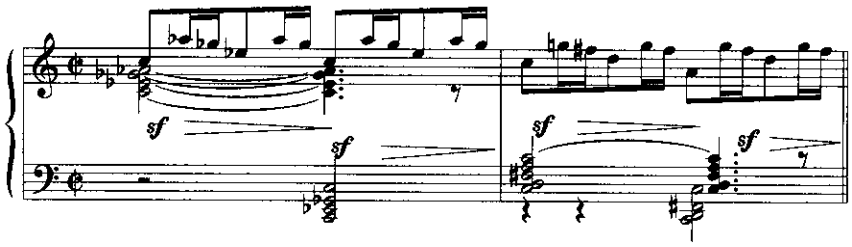
Listening to these scenes, one may be reminded of Don Giovanni's feast, at the end of the first act, when the seven principal actors are all on stage, expressing their conflicting agendas in abrupt remarks that come one after another with a machine-gun rapidity, while three orchestral bands are simultaneously playing three dances, in different meters. In Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* however, we know who the individual characters are and where they stand with respect to each other; in Musorgsky's and Puccini's operas conflicting voices come from anonymous small parties or individuals in the crowd of whom we know nothing—they pop out for a moment over the surface, make their sharply characteristic remark, and disappear forever, engulfed by the next wave. The resulting tension is almost difficult to bear. Imagine the prisoners in *Fidelio* being brutally pushed and yelled at by the guards while singing their paean to the free breeze, with curses and moans of pain interspersed with their spirited chorale; or the triumphal singing of the crowd of Egyptians greeting the victorious return of Radamès punctuated by voices cracking cynical jokes, complaining about the heat, hawking snacks and water—this would have made those famous crowd scenes commensurate with the dynamism of Musorgsky's portrayal of the Muscovites or Puccini's people of Peking.

The similarity between the two crowd scenes has been noted more than once in the critical literature;[13] some critics have categorized the two works as "choral operas." This feature definitely set *Turandot* apart from the way Puccini had treated the chorus in his earlier oeuvre.[14] The associations between *Boris Godunov* and *Turandot* extend far beyond similarities in their treatment of the crowd, however. The very sound of Puccini's music in many instances echoes Musorgsky, and more broadly, certain general features of Russian music.

The opening strike of the gong followed by the treble of the xylophone in *Turandot* bears an uncanny resemblance to the beginning of the coronation scene in *Boris*. There, the start of the celebration is also proclaimed by the striking of a gong (in this context representing the bass bell) followed by treble voices. The kinship between the famous "execution motif" with which *Turandot* begins and many themes by nineteenth-century Russian composers based on whole-tone scales and tritones has also been noted by various critics; in fact, the execution motif can be seen as Musorgsky's "bell chords" stretched into a melodic progression (examples 7.1a and 7.1b).



7.1a. Puccini, *Turandot,* beginning

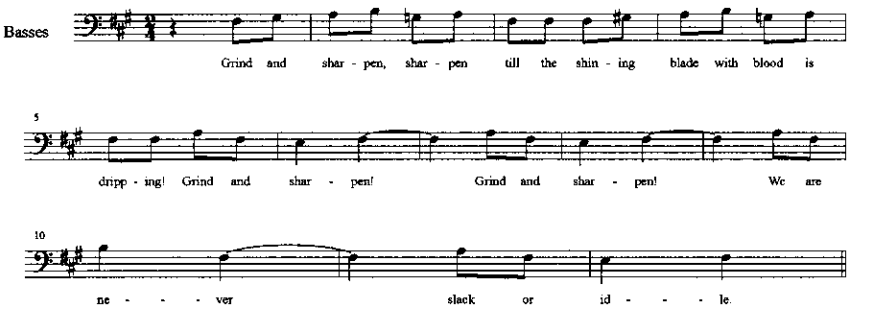


7.1b. Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* coronation scene

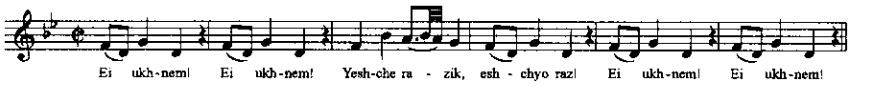
The accumulated effect of these resemblances is as if Red Square in the late sixteenth century had been reincarnated as a square in medieval Peking; all that was required for such a transformation in *Turandot* was the addition of a few characteristically Chinese sonoric effects such as the xylophone.

Later in the same scene, the listener may be struck by the distinctly "Russian" sound of the executioners' singing. Its harmony—a chain of sixths chords roughly punctuated by the pulsating tonic and dominant in the bass—vividly recalls Musorgsky's harmonic style.[15] Although the Musorgskian element is quite distinct, I would like to point out another possible source, or at least a curious parallel: the refrain "Heave ho!" (*Ei, ukhnem!*) of the Russian folk song "The Little Cudgel" (*Dubinushka*), widely popularized at the time by Shaliapin (examples 7.2a and 7.2b).

The theme of the song—the call to fellow laborers to exert themselves in a concerted, strenuous effort—closely fits the tenor of the executioners' sinister exhortation.[16] Moreover, in the context of Russian revolutions—first in 1905, then in and after 1917—this labor song, with its ominously pushing rhythm, was interpreted as an emblem of the awakening masses whose thrust is aimed at the edifice of the old order. The song's violent energy, vibrant with brutal sexual allusions ("We've torn apart the birch tree! We've torn apart the fluffy one!"), appealed to avant-garde aesthetic sensibilities by offering a stark new vision of the folkloric element instead of the previous docile one. It was in that



7.2a. Puccini, *Turandot,* act 1, the executioners' tune

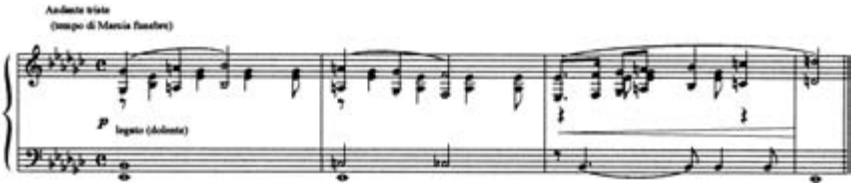


7.2b. "The Little Cudgel" (*Dubinushka*)

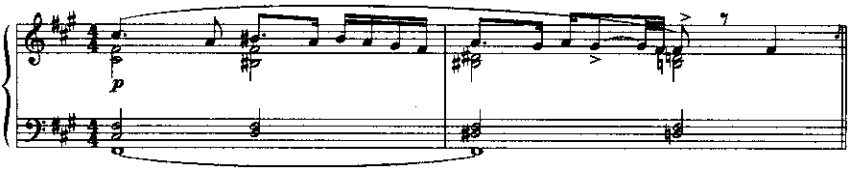
context, and with those political and aesthetic implications, that Shaliapin repeatedly performed the song, in concert halls and in the squares, to wide acclaim.[17] After he left Soviet Russia in 1921, his singing of "The Little Cudgel" could be heard in Europe. In the summer of 1917, Stravinsky, inspired by the fall of the monarchy in the February revolution, wrote a tentative anthem for the tentative Russian Republic ("Hymne à la nouvelle Russie") using the theme of the glorious *Dubinushka*.[18] It seems likely that Puccini might have been familiar with Shaliapin's performance of the song, its paraphrase by Stravinsky, or both. Even if the parallel was purely accidental, it is remarkable how closely Puccini came to the Russian populist avant-garde idiom in rendering the mixture of brutal vitality and exuberant menace that characterized his *popolo di Pekino*.

The young Persian prince on his way to beheading is portrayed by a generic Middle Eastern theme. Its languorous chromaticism is akin to that found in many musical portraits of sensuous Oriental characters in Glinka's, Borodin's, Balakirev's, and Rimsky-Korsakov's music. But the closest analogy comes once again from Musorgsky, whose "Dances of the Persian Women" from *Khovanshchina* offer a similar contradiction between a voluptuously colorful melody and harmony and a somber overall mood (examples 7.3a and 7.3b).[19]

Again, it is safer to speak of a parallel in meaning and musical language than of a direct intertextual connection. Like Musorgsky's Muscovy, Puccini's Peking includes the traditional "Oriental" element, to peculiar effect. It appears to be languishing in captivity, clouded in melancholy, its exquisite but



7.3a. Puccini, *Turandot,* act 1, music of the Persian prince



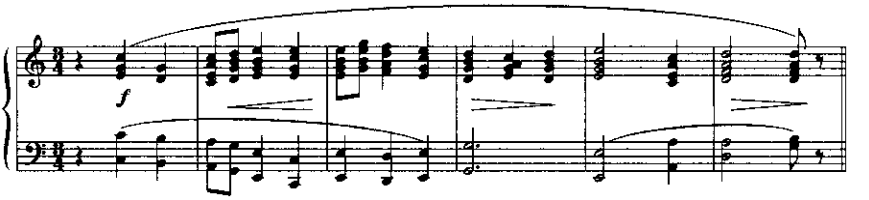
7.3b. Musorgsky, *Khovanshchina,* act 4, dance of the Persian women

vulnerable exoticism making the world around it look yet more rough and violent by contrast.

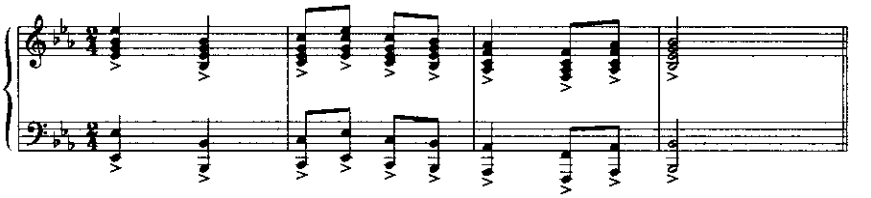
Another interesting parallel between *Boris Godunov* and *Turandot* appears in act 2 of the latter, in the ceremonial march and chorus of the crowd greeting the emperor with "Glory!" Sounding akin to Musorgsky's "Glory," in the coronation scene, it is distinguished from its Russian cousin only by slightly more pronounced Far Eastern features (examples 7.4a and 7.4b).

The resemblance between the two melodies is obvious; more important, however, are similarities in harmony. In Chapter 1 I discussed the style of harmonization reflected in the preceding examples, which I called the "Russian chorale." Its backbone consists of triads based on all the steps of a major or natural minor scale freely combined with each other. As can be seen in examples 7.4a and 7.4b, both composers avoided chromaticism and dominant seventh chords in root position in a manner highly characteristic of this diatonic style. Both used loose chains of triads or seventh chords built on various steps of the diatonic scale, with such typical progressions as V–III–VI–II or V–VI–III.

As is well known, in his "Glory!" Musorgsky used an authentic folk tune. Puccini's "Glory" was also based on an authentic theme: the Chinese melody used for ceremonial court occasions, which he had learned from a Chinese music box belonging to his friend Baron Fassini, the former ambassador to China.[20] Puccini followed the original almost exactly,[21] although some other "Chinese" themes in *Turandot* are apparently Puccini's own inventions, or at least do not have a clear authentic source. At first glance, this makes the



7.4a. Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* "Glory"



7.4b. Puccini, *Turandot,* "Glory"

Musorgskian, or more broadly, "Russian" sound of his "Glory" a paradox. In order to explain it, we have to take a retrospective look at the time when Russian and East Asian sound images began to intersect in Western perception.

When, after the première of *Pelléas and Mélisande* in 1903, Debussy responded angrily to suggestions of his dependence on Musorgsky's harmony and orchestration, he pointed to the fact that during his stay in Russia in the early 1880s he had never heard a word about the Russian composer: "Nobody ever uttered his name. It was in France that I later came to learn about Musorgsky's music."[22] Because it was Nadezhda von Meck who employed Debussy as her house pianist in 1881, the chances of his having heard about Musorgsky in that stronghold of the Chaikovsky cult were indeed slim. But another reason for this neglect might be that at the time Musorgsky's music was hardly capable of attracting Debussy's attention. The young Debussy was spellbound by Wagner; he made regular "pilgrimages" (to use his own word) to Bayreuth. The same could be said, to a large extent, about the French musical scene in general in the early 1880s.[23] Attention to the unusual sonorities offered by the Slavs began to increase near the end of the decade, partly spurred by the publication in Paris of Cézar Cui's *La musique en Russie* (1880), an extremely partisan survey that promoted the particular vision of Russian music espoused by the St. Petersburg school. When Chaikovsky came to Paris in the spring of 1888 — the first major composer from Russia to make a live appearance before the

Parisian public—the critics were prepared for "exotic impressions." To their disappointment, Chaikovsky, whose style showed a particular affinity for the French musical tradition,[24] proved to be "a composer not so much Russian as one would like to expect"[25]—a verdict that echoed the pronouncements on his music made in Russia by such adepts of radical musical nationalism as Balakirev, Stasov, and Cui. In their striving for emancipation from the German musical model, the French looked with sympathy on the "great temerity" and "mighty originality" of "the great Slavs: Borodin, Cui, Rimsky, Liadoff" (Musorgky did not make this list, apparently because Cui, who disliked him and his music, had pushed him into the shadows in his portrait of music in Russia). Chaikovsky's music, though acknowledged to be of high quality, did not meet these expectations: as one reviewer stated, "the German in his works dominates and absorbs the Slav."[26] As Modest Chaikovsky commented bitterly, the critics had apparently expected of a Russian composer something resembling "Dahomeyan music" (demonstrations of which were taking place in Paris at that time, to great acclaim).[27] Anecdotal as this parallel looks, there was some truth in it. At the time Modest was writing his comment (1900), the notion of Russian music adopted by the French was completely dominated by the idea of something exuding barbaric freshness and vitality—a trend that laid the groundwork for the furor caused in the second decade of the century by Diaghilev's *Ballet russe* and Stravinsky's music.

This was neither the first nor the last time the French would embark on a search for a refreshing otherness, seeking in it an antidote to the stifling dominant tradition. To cite recent examples, one can recall the discovery of Bakhtin by French intellectuals in the late 1960s, on one hand,[28] and a trip to China by a group including Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva in 1973, on the other.[29] Both events proved instrumental for French semioticians and philosophers of language in their effort to cast aside the determinism of Saussurean-Jakobsonian structural linguistics and poetics and to embrace the discontinuity of discourse and "dialogic" openness of meaning. For French scholars, Bakhtin's principles of heteroglossia, dialogic collectivism, and carnivalesque subversion and the inspirational impulses coming from the Chinese cultural revolution coincided insofar as they both offered escape from the compulsive rationalist order of the Western cultural paradigm.[30] In a similar vein but much earlier, Germaine de Staël's *On Germany* (1810) had offered a means to break away from the discredited rationalist beliefs and neoclassical tastes of the previous century by exposing the French public to the nebulous and unpolished but daring and profound spiritual world of the northern Germanic people.

Viewed from the perspective of the French Enlightenment, early nineteenth-century Germany might seem remote and obscure if not exotic. By the end of

the century, however, it was the pervasive influence of German music in general, and Wagner in particular, that seemed to make impossible any alternative method of development; in order to be able to cast off its awesome weight, one needed an infusion of fresh experience. The latter was found, and eagerly embraced, in sonorities coming from exotic domains—the Slavs, on one hand,[31] the Dahomeyans or, more generally, non-European musical cultures, on the other. By the same token, Morocco, Tunisia, and Tahiti became sources of fresh artistic inspiration for the French Impressionist painters.

It was in this context that Debussy began his study of Musorgsky. In 1889 he borrowed a copy of the score of *Boris Godunov,* apparently the only one then available in France, from Saint-Saëns, who had brought it back from his concert tour of Russia but did not find in it much worth looking at. Debussy did not get very far at that point, either.[32] The focusing of his interest in Musorgsky came a little later, as he embarked on the writing of *Pelléas and Mélisande*. In 1893 Debussy undertook a detailed study of the score of *Boris Godunov* and *The Nursery* together with Ernest Chausson, who by that time had become a champion of Musorgsky's music.[33]

Debussy's rapprochement with Russian music coincided with another event that left a deep and lasting impression on him. During the World's Fair in Paris in 1889, the Dutch pavilion presented performances by traditional Javanese musicians featuring the gamelan (an orchestra comprising a rich assortment of percussion instruments). Debussy was struck by the sound of the gamelan music, totally alien to European ears yet highly elaborate and exquisitely complex. His enthusiasm had not faded many years later. As he wrote to a friend in 1895: "Well, my poor old boy, remember the Javanese music that comprised all kinds of nuances, some of which one cannot even find a name for, amidst which the tonic and the dominant have become nothing more than vain phantoms, to be used by small and foolish children."[34] As late as 1913 he asserted in his article "On Taste": "Javanese music employs a counterpoint compared to which that of Palestrina is nothing but child's play."[35]

The coincidence of Debussy's intense interest in Musorgsky and gamelan music had more significant ground than simply a penchant for the exotic. For all the apparent difference in sound, East Asian and Russian music contained pertinent common features of harmony, voice leading, and musical form.

The gamelan music offered a rich example of pentatonic and diatonic modes that rendered the functions of the tonic and the dominant all but irrelevant. Indeed, the absence of the interval of a half-step in a pentatonic scale takes away the effect of the strong gravitation of the dominant toward the tonic, that backbone of European-style functional harmony. A similar avoidance of strong tensions was characteristic of the Russian chorale, though it used seven-

tone scales, as a result of the preponderance of peripheral chords at the expense of the dominant-tonic progression, and of the use of the natural minor. Often fluctuations between the major and its relative natural minor — that is, a pair of scales with identical sets of tones but different tonics — further undermined the relevance of the latter, making it a matter of slight and transient emphasis. To use Debussy's expression, the functions of the dominant and the tonic, together with the contrast between tension and stability they represent, became little more than "phantoms."[36] Another prominent feature that Javanese music shared with Russian folk song was the employment of heterophony — the technique of free variations of the same melody evolving simultaneously in different voices. It was this ever-reconfiguring web of intertwining voices that caused Debussy to declare Palestrina's law-abiding, and therefore more predictable, polyphony to be "child's play" in comparison. One can also mention such devices, equally conspicuous in gamelan music and in Musorgsky's scores, as the proliferation of ostinatos, static pedals extended over large segments of music, and occasional moments of bitonality. Above all, the two musics shared the principle of building an extended musical form as a chain of loosely juxtaposed variations whose open-endedness denied the imperative of all-encompassing structural unity.

It would be tempting to attribute these similarities to a genetic relationship, however remote, between Russia and the East Asian world, a perspective that would view the Russian folk song as the westernmost offspring of the Chinese musical stock whose underlying presence is felt throughout East and Southeast Asia. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to point out that the structural similarities between Russian and Javanese musical language, whatever their origin, were quite tangible, and moreover, their implicit symbolic value was such as to fulfill Debussy's quest for a new musical language.

The task Debussy faced as he embarked on writing *Pelléas* was the "dewagnerization" of the musical drama.[37] Wagner had gone to extraordinary lengths in pursuing the principle of the continuity of artistic form. A whole Wagnerian musical drama or cycle of dramas evolves as a continuum of never-ceasing tensions. As heard most acutely in *Tristan,* the gravitation of the dominant toward its tonic becomes a pervasive and almost never-fulfilled longing. Its dramatic fabric recalls the dynamic of Dostoevskian scandal scenes in which each new explosive turn of events leads to a more volcanic and tense one. The harmonic style became increasingly chromatic, making the basic seven-tone scale more a noumenal hint than an actual presence. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the spirit of Wagnerian music received full crystallization in Ernst Kurth's thesis, derived from his observation of the Tristan chord (the one introduced in the famous "motif of longing"), that as far as the essence of

music is concerned, sounds are all but irrelevant: it is the tension between chord A and chord B that matters, rather than those sound complexes as such.[38] The underlying principles of Wagnerian harmony received full realization in the complete emancipation of dissonance and explicit abandonment of the seven-tone scale by various strains of the musical avant-garde. From within this trend, Russian music was often looked on with condescension if not contempt for its perceived lack of tension and apparent inability to create a continuous form—features that, according to Adorno and some of his less illustrious followers, indicated a middle-brow populism alien to the rarefied atmosphere of genuine "modern art."

This was the background against which Debussy strove to create an alternative concept of the musical drama underscored by alternative principles of musical language. In *Pelléas* we see deliberate stasis, cultivated vagueness, and carefully built discontinuities, punctuated by moments of explosive concentration. The drama's underlying logic is that of Mallarmé's poetry rather than Dostoevsky's novels. This new dramatic dynamism rested on harmonic language that eschewed continual tensions. As Frédérick Goldbeck perceptively remarked: "Debussy . . . emancipated not dissonance (that had already been done by Beethoven, Haydn, Rameau, Bach, Monteverdi and Gesualdo) but consonance, which needed it far more. For in the hands of the Romantics it had become a momentary interlude, precariously placed, and boding no good, between two strenuous phases of dynamic development. Debussy restored it to its proper status, using it ironically as 'modernistic archaism,' and made it the basis of his static style, proceeding not by development, but by juxtaposition."[39]

Such were the artistic goals in whose pursuit Debussy was helped by the principles of diatonic harmony and heterophonic variation that he had discovered in non-European and Russian music. Embracing those principles allowed the French composer to overcome the Wagnerian longing for an all-encompassing unity and create a new freedom of discontinuity. The sounds of gamelan music, however, could not be directly adopted by a European composer, no matter how inspired he was by them; the differences in musical hardware, if nothing else, were too great. On the other hand, Russian art music offered a compromise between musical otherness and the established environment of sounds in which Europeans lived. Some diatonic passages in Debussy indeed sound strikingly Russian. The connection, however, amounted to something more than merely the similarities in harmony and orchestration that were immediately spotted by critics; in a more profound way, it was the underlying principle of discontinuity and the open-ended juxtpositions of consecutive segments of music that connected *Pelléas and Mélisande* with the Russian—and particularly the Musorgskian—version of the musical drama.

The issue involved in these elective affinities was that of escaping from the general line that pointed forward from the outgoing century's values of musical language and form, dominated by German music and epitomized in the Wagnerian music drama, toward what was soon to become the main road of musical modernism: shaped by the New Viennese school, canonized by Adorno, victimized by the totalitarian regimes and rejected by the bourgeois public (two crucial entries in the résumé of a twentieth-century artist), and finally made virtually mandatory in the 1950s and 1960s. The "French-Russian alliance" in music that seemed to have been taking shape in the 1890s and early 1900s offered one of the alternative routes to modernism that emerged tentatively at the turn of the century, only to be cut off, and for a while almost obliterated from memory, in the harsher times to come.

Like Debussy, Puccini sought a way to modernize a musical language—in his case, that of the nineteenth-century Italian opera—without subjecting it to "wagnerization." In the domain of harmony, his solution was, like Debussy's, the liberation of consonance, that is, a broad employment of chords based on the peripheral steps of the diatonic scale, the activization of the natural and Dorian minor, and the free use of parallel fifths.[40] The employment of these tensionless devices corresponded to a musical form built as a chain of episodes. Although this path reflected Puccini's own predilections, it was directly influenced by Debussy's example.

For all the obvious differences between them, Debussy and Puccini represented a larger common trend that could be loosely defined as "impressionist,"[41] in contradistinction to the expressionist trend predominant in Germany at the time (whose foremost representatives were Mahler and Richard Strauss). Both composers looked to the East for alternative musical impressions. What became a signature of the impressionist sonority was music with a whiff of Far Eastern exoticism: music of sparse texture, static predisposition, and loose shape whose narrative was defined by moments of climactic concentration rather than constant tension. Transplantation of non-European musical values into the European musical environment proceeded by way of compromise that often resulted in a consciously employed or implicit "Russian touch."[42] Indeed, if one ignores for a moment Puccini's lush, typically Italian melodies and takes a closer look at some of the diatonic passages in his operas of the turn of the century, one can find a similarity with Debussy—and, by the same token, a kinship, however unintended in Puccini's case at the time, with the Russian diatonic style. These were the seeds of the development that came into full fruition in *Turandot*. This common referential background, however, underscores the difference in the way it was used by each of the two composers.

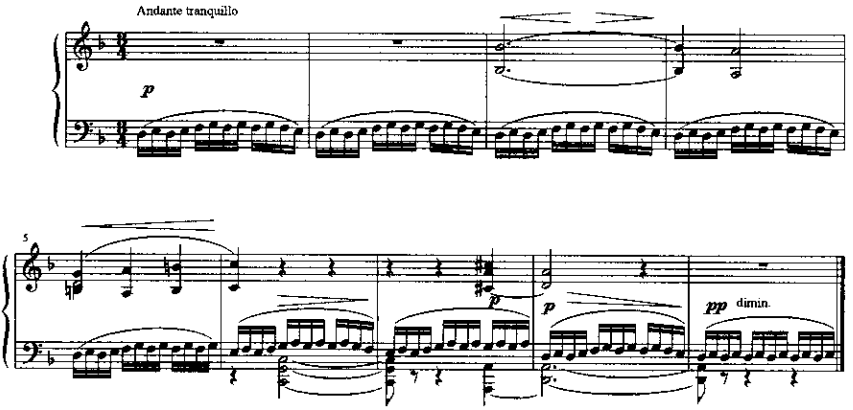
For all the rapport Debussy may have established with the world of sounds coming from Russia and East Asia, this element entered his scores anonymously, without an explicit reference. As far as the sounds of his music were concerned, his "Maiden with the Flaxen Hair" could serve as a musical illustration of Blok's "The Maiden Sang in the Church Choir," "The Drowned Cathedral" might refer to the city of Kitezh, and the "Minstrels" would easily find a common language with Russian *skomorokhi* and their musical incarnations in the scores of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov—yet they stood apart from these or similar potential references. Even in his *Children's Corner,* a composition obviously inspired by Musorgsky's *The Nursery,* a work he admired, Debussy's dolls preferred to dance to the sounds of a cake-walk rather than a Musorgskian *gopak* or Stravinskian *russkaya.*

As for Puccini, he was willing to embrace the Eastern touch not merely as a source of fresh sonorities but as an explicit cultural topos. The emergence of diatonic harmony in *Manon Lescaut* (1896), *La Bohème* (1898), and *Tosca* (1902) culminated in *Madama Butterfly* (1904), an opera that exploited these features for the express purpose of building a stylized portrayal of the Far East.[43] The "Russian effect," the natural result of a compromise between exotic sounds and Western principles of musical language, became evident in Puccini's scores later, at the time of his acquaintance with Stravinsky.

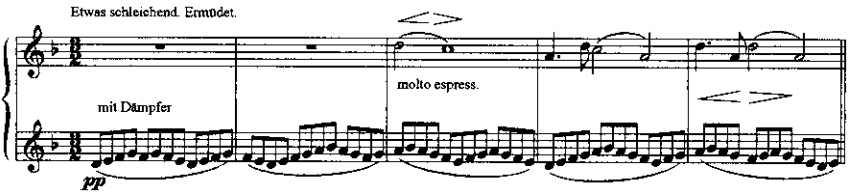
Another major composer should be given credit for being the first to realize the rich symbolic potential of the emerging symbiosis of Russian and Far Eastern musical images. Gustav Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908) stands apart from the rest of his symphonies in many respects. With the exception of the first movement, it proceeds as a succession of stanzaic or loosely declamatory pieces that in a genuinely German symphony would have made an episode at best. The more relaxed musical shape of the symphony is in keeping with its Chinese element, proclaimed by the use of medieval Chinese verses and rarefied "Chinese" sonorities—pentatonic and diatonic scales, conspicuous parallel fifths, and the extensive use of percussion.

Mahler never showed a great appreciation of Debussy, let alone Puccini (as a music director in Vienna, he avoided programming Puccini's operas, to the latter's consternation). The emergence of a new narrative voice, in which the passionate Romantic subjectivity of his previous oeuvre seemed to soften if not entirely vanish, and the search for a musical language by which this new voice could be expressed, were apparently the result of Mahler's spontaneous development—perhaps a consequence of the grave personal crises of the preceding two years—more than of any external influence. It is the more remarkable, then, that his new aesthetic and psychological sensibility manifested itself as a turn toward the East.

In his critical portrait of Mahler, Adorno suggested that *Das Lied von der*



7.5a. Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov,* act 1 (Pimen)



7.5b. Mahler, *Das Lied von der Erde,* second movement

Erde signified Mahler's rapprochement with the Slavic world, specifically, with Musorgsky and Janáček.[44] He referred to this phenomenon in philosophical rather than concrete musical terms, pointing to the dissolution of individuality into an anonymous collective consciousness as a characteristic feature of *Das Lied* — a feature habitually associated with the nations to the east of the Vistula.[45] We can appreciate the perceptiveness of Adorno's remark, though, if we consider its implication, namely, that the musical expression of the Chinese topos in a work by a Western composer went hand in hand with a spiritual rapprochement with the Slavic world. Indeed, textual evidence in Mahler's score suggests that the symbiosis of the Russian and Far Eastern imagery found in *Das Lied* is a tangible and deliberate representation.

The second movement, "The Lonely One in the Autumn," features a mezzo-soprano. The singing is preceded by an extended instrumental introduction — a slow, contemplative theme in the flutes and oboes, accompanied by the violas' monotonous yet exquisitely nuanced background motion. This music unmistakably evokes the memory of another orchestral introduction to a vocal monologue: that of Pimen writing his chronicle, "One more tale, the last," at the opening of act 1 of *Boris Godunov* (examples 7.5a and 7.5b).

The resemblance of the purely musical features of the two pieces—the orchestration, the timbres, the somber "autumnal" tone[46]—is matched by the virtual identity of the *mis-en-scène* represented in each: the lonely figure of a man (although the piece is sung by a woman in the symphony, its subject, as suggested by the words, is male) sitting by a lamp in modest and secluded surroundings, thinking aloud about the flow of time; all is quiet and empty now around him; only his memories are still alive with feeling and movement. The presence of a definite intertextual connection can hardly be doubted.[47] For a listener who perceives this connection the scenes in Musorgsky's opera and Mahler's symphony become superimposed one upon the other if not merged entirely: Pimen, in his projection of the sensibilities of the age of Art Nouveau, with its penchant for *chinoiserie,* has a Chinese cast to his features, while his counterpart in medieval China takes on a resemblance to the reclusive monk from sixteenth-century Muscovy. This intertextual fusion of a Russian and a Chinese image in Mahler's symphony represented an early example of what would soon become a mighty trend.

Although the comparison of the two countries was a habitual figure of speech throughout the nineteenth century, primarily among Russians, always ready to use it to deplore Russia's immobility and seclusion from the rest of the world, it had never developed beyond the occasional metaphor. It was only at the turn of the twentieth century that this rhetorical cliché began to receive a more tangible meaning. Stimulated by the rise of political, economic, and aesthetic interest in the Far East that was precipitated by the Russo-Japanese War, the image of Russia's subliminal East Asian element, now chafing under the thin European veneer of the previous two centuries, gained broad circulation among modernist artists and thinkers, with far-reaching ideological and aesthetic consequences. By the second decade of the century this trend emerged as a powerful "Eurasian" movement in Russian philosophy, literature, and art. After the catastrophic disappearance of the Russian Empire, seen by many as the end of the two-hundred-year St. Petersburg detour in the path of national history, it became fully crystallized among émigré thinkers as the Eurasian ideology.

According to this concept the enormous stretch of land extending from the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains in the West to the Pacific shore and the Japanese islands in the East, and from the northern coast to the almost uninterrupted chain of mountain ridges in the south, was a continent in its own right: neither Europe nor Asia but Eurasia. Its geographic homogeneity as a gigantic basin of largely uninterrupted flat land (if one steps over the modest Ural Mountains) was seen as the natural base for its common historical and cultural destiny. The very ease with which the Mongolian conquest had rolled

westward over the whole continent in the thirteenth century and with which the Russian conquest had largely repeated that feat in the reverse direction three and a half centuries later demonstrated the readiness of this terrain to be united as a single entity under a single power.

The response this vision evoked in the cultural consciousness was twofold. One side of it was fear, because one could see how easily St. Petersburg–era Russia could be engulfed once more by the numberless hordes that seemed ready to emerge once again from the vast depth of Eurasia. Grigory Danilevsky, the author of popular historical novels about the war with Napoleon and the Pugachev rebellion (not to be confused with the thinker Nikolai Danilevsky), struck this new apocalyptic vein in a science fiction novella titled *Life a Hundred Years Later* (1868), based on a plot device that would become awfully banal later in the twentieth century but was used here perhaps for the first time: a tourist agency offers tours of the future via their newly invented time machine. Before entering the machine, the agency's clerk supplies the novel's hero with Chinese clothes, to his utter bewilderment. On arriving in the year 1968, however, he realizes how wise this measure was, for he soon learns that the Chinese, their population having grown steadily at a relentless rate, have spread over all the earth, engulfing first Russia and then the rest of the world, making the whole planet a unified Chinese-dominated kingdom. Although the hero comes to appreciate the wisdom of many arrangements in this world order, they still look bizarre to his sensibilities as a European traveler; he is happy when his adventure comes to an end.[48]

At the opposite extremity of the emotional spectrum stood glowing pictures of Russia joining the Eurasian masses in their drive toward the West. This school of thought envisioned throngs of barbarians emerging from the East to engulf the aging Western world, afflicted with the malaise of rationalism and individualism (as it was all too eager to portray itself), and to build on its ruins a new civilization, infusing it with the fresh vitality of people whose mass consciousness was alien to the idea of the cerebral, egotistical bourgeois self. Blok's poem "The Scythians," written in the winter of 1918, expressed a feeling of intoxication about the rise of the barbaric element that promised the rejuvenation of the old world by means of its destruction—even if the lyrical subject of the poem himself was to become its victim. Visions of the arising Eurasian element were often tinged with the sentiment aptly described by the Russian word *zloradstvo* (literally, "vicious joy") or the German *Schadenfreude*. A mixed feeling of resignation and elation was captured in Vladimir Solovyev's poem "Pan-Mongolism" (1894), which stood as an early inspirational point for the new trend: "Pan-Mongolism—even though the name is bizarre, / It caresses my ear."

As it happened, some of most vocal Russian Eurasianists became prominent figures on the Western cultural scene: Nicholas Roerich, Stravinsky, Prince Nicholas Trubetzkoy, Roman Jakobson, Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky. Trubetzkoy and Jakobson, soon to become leading theoretical linguists in the West, developed the elaborate concept of Eurasian linguistic unity, a *Sprachbund* comprising several linguistic families whose fundamental common features emerged from their continual contact within the Eurasian basin. Jakobson demonstrated this principle—not without some powerful bending of the linguistic data—by comparing the phonological structures of the languages of the Eastern Slavs, the Finns, the Turks, the Mongolians, and the Japanese.[49] Trubetzkoy, in his book *Europe and Humanity* (1921), laid out the foundations of the Eurasian philosophy of history that soon became an important intellectual and political movement among Russian emigrés.[50] For our discussion it is particularly important to note that the Eurasian idea deeply affected Stravinsky beginning about 1910. His *Le Sacre du printemps* stood as a vocal homage to the quest for barbaric collectivity and the stark spiritual freshness of primordial times.[51]

It may seem ironic, but the Eurasianist ideas, in spite of their anti-European thrust, found some resonance in the West. Or perhaps it was not ironic after all, for what the West looked for in Russia was the otherness attested to by its kinship with East Asia. Apocalyptic prophesies about the imminent collapse of the old civilization and its principal product, individual consciousness, most notorious among them Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1917), stood as the counterpoint to the "Scythian" sado-masochist exhortations heard from Russia.[52] In the next decade, they gave way to a variety of images, whose modes ranged from the cruelly graphic to the exhortational, of the risen masses, oblivious of individuation, marching towards a new world, to wipe the individualist Faustian hero (together with his female counterpart, the eternal feminine) out of relevance, or physical existence. Many saw tangible features of this new world emerging in the Soviet Union of the 1920s.

The high visibility of the emerging social and psychological phenomena was matched by the high visibility of early Soviet avant-garde art. The combination of a daring aesthetic thrust into the future, on one hand, and the elemental freshness of a nascent non-European civilization determined to wipe out the spiritual malaise of Western bourgeois society, on the other, cast a fascinating light over Soviet life and art in this period. When Walter Benjamin made his pilgrimage to Moscow in 1928, one among many Western intellectuals and artists to do so, he felt fascinated with the antlike throngs of Muscovites bursting with an energy and optimism hitherto unknown either to the oppressed masses or to the self-reflecting individual of the old world. A man of

that old world, Benjamin felt unable to cast off the baggage of his bourgeois nature and to dissolve himself in the upcoming wave, yet he felt elated at the sight of its approach, for the benefit of future generations if not for his own.[53]

Another German, Heinrich Vogeler, who had started his career at the turn of the century as a symbolist painter closely associated with Rilke, responded to his impressions from visits to the Soviet Union with festive canvases featuring, in the manner of a cubist collage, a sea of faceless heads over enormous squares, portraits of Lenin with pronounced Mongoloid features soaring above, and a very yellow sun sending its very yellow rays over the exotic towers of the Kremlin and the pagodalike Mausoleum. In a similar vein, Bertold Brecht was obviously influenced by experiments in the Soviet theater and cinema. During his visit to Moscow in 1935 Brecht, together with his Russian colleagues, attended performances by the famous actor of the traditional Chinese theater, Mei Lan-fang, and his company. He responded to this event by formulating the aesthetic principle of alienation (*Verfremdung*). Alienated art, whose impersonal, purely performative character signified its emancipation from all vestiges of romantic subjectivity, appeared experimental and archaic, esoterically stylized and graphically literal at the same time.[54] Brecht's Verfremdung was nothing but a hybrid of the inspirational example of the Chinese theater and one of the major ideas of Russian formalism: Viktor Shklovsky's "defamiliarization" (*ostranenie*).

A common theme of this mosaic of ideas, images, and events streaming from Russia to the West and from the postwar West to the Soviet Union was the vision of Russia wrapped in a Eurasian aura, stretching toward Siberia and China rather than striving to belong to the Western world. This new frame undermined not only the memory of the post-Petrine Russian Empire but the traditional image of the Far East as well. Gone was the exquisite serenity of Art Nouveau's China and Japan, along with solemn visions of traditional Russian collectivity (*sobornost*). These were supplanted by a world of barbaric vitality and explosive tumult. A touch of primordial archaism remained, but now it looked like a reference to the future. For better or for worse, the ferment coming from the Eurasian world posed a fundamental challenge to traditional Western aesthetic and spiritual values, calling for their radical revision if not their demolition.

The most obvious personal channel through which the Eurasian spirit could reach Puccini was his relation with Stravinsky. When one speaks of so widespread and multifaceted a trend, however, it is hardly possible or necessary to point out exactly when and how. In the wake of World War I and the Russian revolution, the awareness of a rising tide of history threatening—

or promising—to engulf the world of traditional individualist and humanist values was simply in the air. In order to become engaged with this trend, one could be inspired by Spengler or D'Annunzio, Mikhail Larionov or Otto Dix, Brecht or Eisenstein, Stravinsky or the early Bartók—or simply follow one's own instincts. It was from that pool of images and ideas that the mixed Chinese-Muscovite features of *Turandot* emerged.

I have discussed how the Russian element—particularly as related to *Boris Godunov*—appeared in Puccini's opera conflated with authentic or stylized Chinese features. What we can now see is the meaning this fusion represented in the context of the time. To a listener who is aware of *Boris* (a listener one could count on in European musical capitals of the 1920s), the opening scene of Puccini's opera transported Musorgsky's Muscovy across Eurasia to its opposite extreme, turning the crowd of Muscovites into the people of Peking. The resulting effect was more than just a curiosity, a mere reflection of the fact that from a Western point of view (including that of Western-oriented Russians) Muscovy never looked very different from China. Merged with Musorgsky's Muscovy, the traditional Oriental exoticism turned into something qualitatively different, namely, the Eurasian element—aggressive, turbulent, ominous, manifestly different but the more fascinating for it. It lost its comforting remoteness; instead, it roughly intruded on the premises of the traditional lyric opera, challenging its fundamental assumptions—not only the aesthetic but also the psychological and ethical.

In *Turandot,* as in *Boris Godunov* before it, the rowdy crowd of people behaved differently from conventional operatic masses, be they the subjects of Zarastro's realm, knights of the Grail, Spanish contrabandists, or a party of bohemian Parisians. Instead of receding into the passive role of background supporter, the crowd took an active part, competing with individual characters for a role in the development of events.[55] In *Boris* it is the rebellious masses who decide the outcome of the confrontation between Tsar Boris and the impostor, as becomes plain in the final scene of the opera, in the camp near Kromy. In *Turandot,* it is not the impotent emperor but the ominous crowd that prevents the princess from reneging on her vow after Calaf's victory. The populist element looked like a hitherto unknown species, a multimouthed conglomeration whose split personality defied the habitual opposition between individual and collective, active and passive, dynamic and static, strong-willed and conformist, or, to translate these oppositions into categories of the Romantic cultural typology, between "Western" subjectivism and "Oriental" vegetative organicism. Many Romantic and post-Romantic thinkers and artists dreamed of finding a way to synthesize these opposing elements, yet it never occurred to them that one day their visions might come to life in *this*

fashion. It took the Russian and Chinese revolutions, coupled with the Old World's deep loss of heart in the wake of World War I, to bring to life this starkly literal realization of an old Romantic dream.

Turandot features two almost equally important female lyrical characters, a rare phenomenon in the Italian opera. The virtuous Liù assumes the traditional sacrificial role, glowingly embracing her cruel fate for the sake of her love. She is more than simply tortured and murdered (a fate she is entitled to by the hereditary right of the operatic heroine), however—she is blatantly disposed of, rudely elbowed aside from the familiar road toward the cathartic triumph that awaited the traditional prima donna, in death more often than in life. It is Turandot, strong-willed, full of contradictions, possessed by a demonic idée fixe—all traditional attributes of a male Romantic hero—who in the end is to be crowned with the all-resolving bliss of love. The time of Ophelia and Gretchen had passed; now it was Lady Macbeth's turn for an apotheosis. (Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* [1934] comes to mind, of course, as a similar example of this catastrophic redefinition of the eternal feminine.)

With the customary world of organic Oriental complacency, the unanimous masses, and the ready-to-be-sacrificed eternal feminine suddenly conceding their cathartic credentials to the realm of willful activity, mind-boggling cruelty, and vengeful mockery, the old Romantic hero, whose never-satisfied Faustian individualism used to thrive against the background of the passively organic element, seemed to be in deep trouble. Calaf, this nominally Tatar prince (no more tangibly Tatar than Pamino was Japanese), is in fact a traditional Western hero who, having found himself in a new world, appears to have lost his way. The synthesis-through-love toward which he strives and at which he arrives in the end contains a self-annihilating contradiction because it is achieved over the body of Liù, the quintessential lyrical heroine. In fact, Calaf is doing to Liù what Captain Pinkerton had done to Butterfly before him, but he does so while trying not to lose the credentials of the traditional lyrical hero. Imagine Radamès letting Aïda perish because he has found a perfect match in Amneris after all. This is what in fact turns out to be—intentionally or not—*Turandot*'s outcome.

A simple explanation for this mishap is that Puccini, having realized that Turandot was not going to assume the mantle of the lyrical heroine until the last scene, felt the need for this crucial musical and dramatic element to be present at an earlier stage of the opera; hence the invention of the character of Liù (who did not exist in the plays of Gozzi and Schiller) and the necessity of disposing of her in the end as a consequence.[56] But as often happens in the

creative process, even miscalculations and inadvertent side effects may work as unexpected catalysts of meaning. *Turandot* was written when the vision of a world centered around a Faustian hero whose loneliness and longings personified the restlessness of the human spirit had been profoundly undermined. Confronted with a presumably passive element that starts to act and to talk back, sometimes in the most shocking way, instead of waiting to be awakened by his will, the hero loses the assurance that all his strivings, even his follies and defeat, have an ultimate redeeming value. Puccini's last opera accommodated this changing psychological and ethical landscape to the point of no return, a point at which its traditional finale — the triumph of love achieved by the lovers whether in life or in death — became in effect hollow. Had Calaf followed Liù in death, or at least been left completely defeated and disconsolate — had all the conflicting desires, hatreds, and struggles that moved the drama forward suddenly been broken down in a mournful catharsis — *Turandot* would have attained a conventional operatic finale. Indeed, its shadow appears to be within reach for a moment in act 3, when all parties — the hero, the formidable Turandot, the masses — become momentarily unified in a surge of mourning and compassion after the shadow heroine's death. But we have already seen what these masses are like . . . how many disagreeing minds they possess . . . how easily they can be swayed from compassion to mockery to hatred to jubilation. And indeed, at the very next moment they join Calaf and Turandot to partake in their apotheosis. The moment when the mourning voices fall silent and the heroes begin their triumphant love duet acts as a fault line between the established operatic world and its subversion. The line is the more dramatic in that it was drawn by the composer's death.

We will never know whether Puccini would have been able to step over that fault and carry his opera to its paradoxical apotheosis had he not died from rapidly progressing cancer at the end of 1924. All we know is that he had *not* achieved that consummation, as Gogol had never succeeded in leading his Chichikov through purgatory to a moral paradise. We also know that the composer hesitated and procrastinated a great deal over the finale and was never satisfied with its shape in the libretto.[57] Perhaps it would be best to leave the opera as it was left by its author, ending with the somber scene of mourning for Liù — as Toscanini famously did at *Turandot*'s première on April 25, 1926 — instead of attaching to it a musically indifferent and dramatically unconvincing conclusion.[58] Nobody would dream of writing a "proper" ending and tacking it onto Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron;* the abrupt way in which it ends, almost in the middle of a phrase, becomes extremely effective once we accept it as an aesthetic fact. But for *Turandot,* with its author's reputation for

conventionality — or for Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina,* with its author's reputation for sloppiness — who would take it upon himself to persuade the public to go without dessert?

Puccini hardly meant to be subversive, of course. From what we know of his plans, his people of Peking, alias Muscovites, prepare to retreat to conventional unanimity in the end; the main heroine has proved capable of being blissfully defeated by love, after all; Ping, Pang, and Pong suddenly forget their ambiguous playfulness and join the general jubilation, like so many jesters before them. Yet the organism of the opera, once infected with the Eurasian virus, could not recover by a single stroke of will. The traditional world that had been centered around the hero's spiritual wanderings and the heroine's never-wavering readiness to be sacrificed had, if not collapsed, at least been profoundly embarrassed. In this sense, *Turandot* makes good company for such contemporary works as Blok's "The Scythians," Brecht's drama, or Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* — in short, for the works that most profoundly conveyed the collapse of traditional roles and hierarchies in the years of turmoil. By contrast, *Moses und Aron* looks, ironically, more traditional in its quintessentially Romantic treatment of the relation between the main character's heroic loneliness and the masses' faceless inertia.

Epilogue

"Prima la musica, dopo le parole": Musical Genealogy of a National Anthem

Ich kenne die Weise, ich kenne den Text,
Ich kenn' auch die Herren Verfasser;
Ich weiß, sie tranken heimlich Wein
Und predigten öffentlich Wasser.

I am familiar with the tune, I am familiar with the words,
And even with those gentlemen the authors.
I know they drank wine secretly
And preached water publicly.

—Heinrich Heine, *Germany: A Winter Fairy Tale*

During the first twenty-five years of its existence, the Soviet Union did not have a national anthem. The very idea recalled the insignia of the past that had been obliterated by the revolution. The need to have music for ceremonial occasions was satisfied by the "Internationale" (music by Paul Degeiter, words by Eugène Pottier), originally written in 1871 to celebrate the creation of the Second Socialist International and now adopted, in Russian translation (by Arkady Kots, 1902) and with the requisite correction of tenses ("This *is* our last and decisive battle" instead of "This will be . . ."), as the anthem of the Bolshevik Party. The patently Western sound of its music, whose strictly

functional harmony, clear cadences, and marchlike rhythm brought to mind the "Marseillaise" or "The Star-Spangled Banner," was apparently felt as an advantage rather than a handicap. It symbolized internationalist solidarity and served as proof against any association with liturgical singing, which a more characteristically Russian tune could easily evoke.

This musical idiom was very much in vogue as a general pattern of early Soviet popular music. Uncompromisingly upbeat and impeccably international-sounding tunes—now following in the footsteps of the "Internationale" or the "Marseillaise," now echoing the sounds coming from Hollywood—proliferated throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. Among their composers were some who had been brought up in the avant-garde tradition such as Shostakovich, who created the immensely popular "Song About the Counter-Plan" (1932), or Nikolai Roslavets, who wrote "Anthem of the Soviet Worker-Peasant Militia" in 1926.

Meanwhile, a new mood arose little by little as the 1930s rolled on. Late in the decade, many of the turbulent ideological and aesthetic currents of the prior two decades were blocked or dried out or both. The call of the day was not the battle cry but the harmony of the new collectivity. The "Stalin constitution" of December 1936 proclaimed the birth of a state without classes and internal class struggle—a harmonious union of many nations, a society built on the principles of unity and mutual cooperation. Never mind that this proclamation was followed by a terror in which uncounted millions perished. The very arbitrariness of the mass terror reflected the new organic nature of the state, whose acceptance or rejection of individual human morsels reminded one of the digestive process more than the purposeful struggle against class enemies.

In 1926, Vladimir Mayakovsky, referring to the utopian aspirations of his LEF ("Left Front of Art"), the postrevolutionary offspring of the Futurism of 1910–1920, stated uncompromisingly: "My—eto LEF, bez isteriki—my. / Po chertezham, delovito i sukho / Stroim zavrtashnii mir" ("We are the LEF, the ones who are not hysterical. In a dry, businesslike manner, according to our blueprints, we are building the world of tomorrow").[1] A decade later, in 1935 (five years after Mayakovsky committed suicide), Osip Mandelshtam, from his exile in Voronezh, wrote about his experience of reeducation: "No kak v kolkhoz idet edinolichnik, / Ia v mir vkhozhu, i liudi khoroshi" ("As a peasant, formerly a private landowner, enters the kolkhoz—so enter I the world [or the community: the meaning is deliberately ambiguous], feeling the goodness of the people").[2] The two poems reflect emblematically the difference between the decades to which each belonged—a difference in external circumstances as well as in the prevalent mood.[3]

This was also a state in which the national element, scorned and pushed into the background in the early years after the revolution, now thrived. True, official doctrine still held that all national differences would eventually wither away and a homogeneous communist nation would emerge, speaking a united communist language (an unprecedentedly rich communicative tool, since it would develop by a conflation of all socialist languages). But this synthesis was going to happen as a result of the "mutual enrichment" of existing nations rather than their revolutionary rebuilding. Instead of following a universal internationalist blueprint, nations' march toward the communist future was now envisioned as the process of organic regeneration, to which each nation would contribute—perhaps on a larger or smaller scale, commensurate with its administratively acknowledged stature.

Beginning in the mid-1930s, festive celebrations of the cultures of the various nations of the Soviet Union, held in Moscow, became regular occurrences. Epic poets were duly discovered in many exotic nations, the most renowned among them the Kazakh Dzhambul Dzhabaev and the Lezgin Suleiman Stalsky (whose steely pen-name echoed that of Stalin-Dzhugashvili). Their encomiums of Comrade Stalin, the brotherly Union, and the eldest among its brothers, the Russian nation, clad in flamboyant Oriental metaphors, would become known to everyone in Russian translation. (Whether the originals ever existed, and if so, what they might be like, were not questions to be asked.) National operas and ballets emerged in each republic of the Union and eventually in most of the autonomous republics (but not, to my knowledge, in autonomous regions and national districts, that is, administrative divisions of a lower order representing the smallest among the nations). They were based on ethnic narrative and musical folklore and written by ethnically correct composers, with anonymous professional help if needed. (In the 1960s, I took class in Flemish counterpoint with Professor Henryk—or Genrikh Ilyich—Litinski in the Moscow Gnesin Academy of Music. An able specialist in this esoteric field and a Polish Jew by origin, he proudly carried the titles of Distinguished Artist of the Yakutian and Tatar Autonomous Republics. Litinski had "collaborated" with the Yakut composer Mark Zhirkov in creating the first national opera, *Nurgun Bootur, the Valiant,* in 1947, and the first national ballet, *The Wildflower*.)[4] The typical narrative of a socialist realist novel or movie included a colorful character of ethnic origin—Ukrainian, Georgian, Gypsy, Armenian, Tatar, or Jew—triumphantly marching into socialism while not losing some amiable national idiosyncrasies: a hot temperament, an enthusiasm for spicy food, musical talent. Throughout the narrative such a personage would be shown gradually "maturing" under the guidance of an immaculately correct but somewhat unprepossessing Russian leader, whose

heretofore bland existence would in turn gain a new warmth from this contact with the warm-blooded ethnic element.

This festive and hearty world needed tunes different from the heroic sounds of the past that had exhorted the masses to gear up for future or present battles. The new musical mold ought to retain epic breadth yet infuse it with warmth; it also needed a native-soil touch that would associate it with the land and its people. This spiritual demand yielded a hearty supply of musical goods. The second half of the 1930s witnessed the proliferation of tunes, many of them written for a chorus, that sprang from the Russian liturgical and operatic choral tradition, now clad in the populist attire of a mass song. Their solemnity, tinged with lyrical melancholy, was not altogether devoid of attraction; it might even appear comforting after the aesthetic hardships and compulsively upbeat mood of the previous two decades.[5] One need only compare the brisk pace of Isaak Dunaevsky's "One's Heart Is Lightened by a Merry Song," the lead tune in the film *The Merry Fellows* (*Veselye rebyata,* 1934), with the slightly melancholic magnificence of "Vast Is My Native Land" by the same author—the lead tune of another film, *The Circus,* produced two years later.

The new strain of the mass song employed *romans*-like melodic turns, diatonic harmony, and a slow, quietly flowing rhythm. Its kinship with nineteenth-century Russian operatic choruses—and, by the same token, church singing—was evident. After all, many of the leading song composers and choirmasters of the time—such as Mitrofan Pyatnitsky, Sergei Evseev, Vladimir Zakharov, Pavel Chesnokov, Aleksandr Aleksandrov, Aleksandr Sveshnikov, and Serafim Tulikov—emerged from a background that involved working with folk or church music. Ivan Dzerzhinsky (no relation to the founder of the "Extraordinary Committee," best known by its later name, KGB), a musically illiterate self-made composer, elevated (with the help of anonymous "editors") this now-resurrected musical mold to the status of opera. His excruciatingly primitive *The Quiet Don,* after Sholokhov's epopee (1936), could be seen as a grotesque replay of what Glinka had accomplished in *A Life for the Tsar* exactly a century earlier; once again, it made the populist national musical voice sound in the opera theater, in an appeal to the ideological and aesthetic sensibilities of the rulers of the state and the cultural elite.

In fact, the whole shift to a new mood from the previous one emblematized in the "Internationale" echoed the events of the previous century, when the exuberant, immaculately Western polonaise from Catherine the Great's time, "Let the Thunder of Victory Be Heard," gave way as the national musical emblem to "God Save the Tsar" (1842), a solemn, pious, intimately Russian tune. A century later, the time had come once again to create an appropriate musical emblem that would encompass the paradigmatic shift from the

struggle to the accomplishment—from the international, unabashedly militant, and exuberantly victorious to the nativistic, solemn, and organically all-embracing.

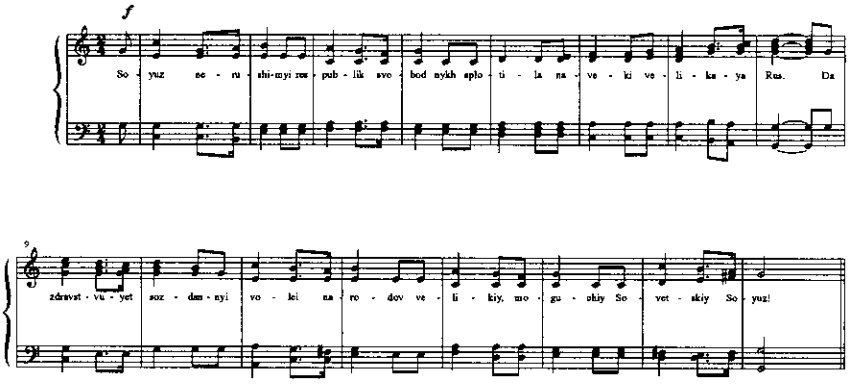
But the markedly Russian traditional aura in which many songs of the new breed were wrapped, comforting as it was, could not simply be carried onto the all-Union plane to serve as a musical umbrella over the whole land of the Stalin constitution. The harmonious union of brotherly nations, under the guidance of the elder brother, needed a musical emblem whose sound would be Russian and not Russian at the same time, one in which the Russian element would be hinted at rather than proclaimed, while dissolving—yet not entirely—in a broader epic synthesis. Tall as such a musical order might seem, the most successful songwriters of the second half of the 1930s showed their ability to meet it. One would begin with Russian-style diatonic harmony but crown it with an elaborate authentic cadence; would employ intonations traditionally associated with Russian song—a jump up to a sixth, a step-by-step descent from the tonic backed by a diatonic succession of triads—only to make the melody triumphantly proceed in the end along the tones of the dominant seventh, a proven cliché of the all-European *maestoso*.

The composer who achieved perhaps the highest degree of official if not popular success in this line was Aleksandr Aleksandrov, the founder of the Ensemble of Song and Dance of the Red (later Soviet) Army. In his adolescence in the 1890s, his excellent voice and musicality had gained him a place in the boys' choir of the Court Capella—a venerable institution of liturgical music whose first director had been Prince Lvov, the author of the anthem "God Save the Tsar," and whose first musical supervisor had been Glinka. In 1905, Aleksandrov became the regent of the archpriest's choir in Tver, a job he held for more than a decade. He combined his services in church music with his studies, first in St. Petersburg and later at the Moscow Conservatory, from which he graduated in 1913 as composer, choirmaster, and singer (for the latter, he studied under an Italian professor, Antonio Mazetti). Back in Tver, he organized performances of scenes from Russian and Western operas, Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* among them, in which he himself occasionally sang tenor parts. After the revolution, Aleksandrov taught choral conducting at the Moscow Conservatory and actively participated in the theatrical life of the capital; for years he worked as music director in the highly experimental Chamber Theater and later became the choirmaster in the newly organized Nemirovich-Danchenko musical theater, whose specialty was the promotion of modern operas, as well as daring productions of pieces from the traditional repertory.[6]

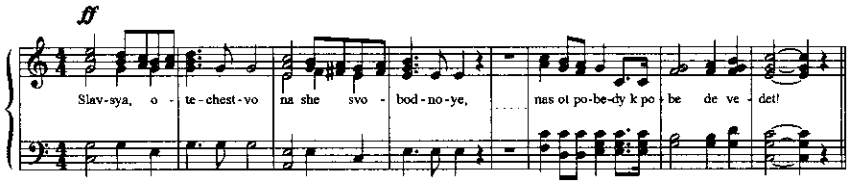
Having founded his ensemble in 1928, Aleksandrov created numerous songs for its repertory written in a Russian (quasi)-folkloric choral idiom: dancelike,

lyrical, jocular. Early in its existence, the fate of the ensemble remained in suspense; the idea of resurrecting the choral mood of the past, let alone doing so under the auspices of the Red Army, had powerful detractors. Little by little, however, the ensemble's immaculate artistry and simple, comfortingly traditional musical message won it popular and, more important, official support. The more the ensemble turned into an officially approved musical power, the more changes one could observe in the topoi and the tone of Aleksandrov's compositions. A steady flow of songs in a ceremonial, exhortational mood, aimed at the loftiest targets, appeared from 1935 to 1945, including "Lenin's Holy Banner," "Song About Stalin," "Cantata About Stalin," "Song About the Soviet Union," and "Meeting with the Leader." Aleksandrov's climactic moment as composer came in 1941 with the war song "Rise, Vast Country," which won a universal and quite spontaneous popularity. Yet his anthemlike songs from the 1930s were also known reasonably well at the time. One of them, "Anthem of the Party of Bolsheviks" (1939), gained Stalin's personal approval. When in 1943, in the wake of first Soviet successes in the war, Stalin introduced the idea of creating an official national anthem, this song emerged as one of the principal contenders.

Little is known about how the anthem competition proceeded and how the final selection was made, besides the fact that the decision clearly had to be made by Stalin personally. Official Soviet historiography maintained a veil of silence over the event. In spite of the considerable popularity of "Anthem of the Party of Bolsheviks" in the years preceding the competition, it has proved extremely difficult to find not only the song itself but any mention of it in postwar publications.[7] Apparently, it was felt that pointing to a particular song as the source of the anthem would somehow diminish the larger-than-life solemnity of the occasion. Solomon Volkov's *Testimony,* a book whose claim to be an English-language rendition of Shostakovich's oral memoirs is rejected by some and accepted by others with equal passion, contains a few pages of sarcastic description of the anthem competition, in which Shostakovich himself apparently was a finalist.[8] How far one can rely on the veracity of this testimony, which never appeared in Russian, is hard to tell.[9] At one point, according to Volkov's narrative, Stalin ordered Shostakovich and Khachaturian to combine their entries into a collective product. (It seems plausible, judging by the authorship of the eventual anthem's lyrics, that Stalin might have favored collective authorship by poets and composers of diverse ethnic identity—perhaps even more specifically, an Oriental element grafted onto a Russian stem). After much commedia dell'arte–style upheaval in which the destiny of the new anthem (and perhaps of its would-be creators) was kept in suspense, the decision came down in favor of Aleksandrov's "Anthem of the Party of Bolsheviks." With minor alterations, it became the national anthem



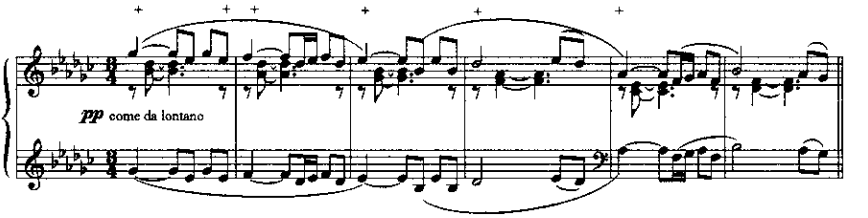
E.1. Anthem of the Soviet Union (with the original words)



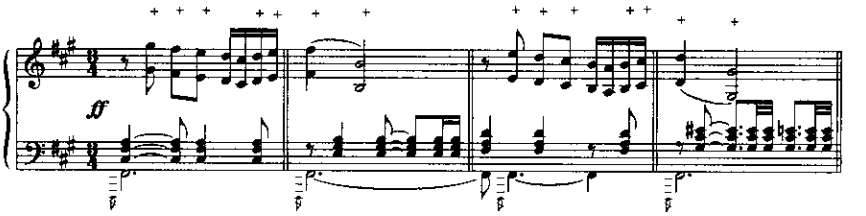
E.2. Anthem of the Soviet Union, refrain

(instantly and completely disappearing from the repertory as an ordinary song). The music received new lyrics written by Sergei Mikhalkov and Garold El-Registan, which began with a bold oxymoron: "The unbreakable Union of free Republics, / Built to last forever by the great Rus." The Soviet people heard their new anthem for the first time on the eve of the new year of 1944.

Whatever the reasons for selecting Aleksandrov's tune—ideological, aesthetic, or purely personal—considered as a final product, it seems to have possessed a perfect balance between the native and the universal, the spirit of the people and the glory of the state. The musical incarnation of this complex, delicately nuanced meaning featured a mix of the Russian choral tradition and conventional hymnic solemnity. An initial warm wave of diatonic triads in the style of the Russian chorale—I–III–IV–I_6–II_6—gives way to a conventionally jubilant ascendance of the melody over the tones of a dominant ninth chord. After that, another diatonic wave—a characteristic jump from the fifth tone to the third, a shift into the relative minor—is followed by a conventionally European modulation into the tonality of the dominant (example E.1). The refrain returns to the diatonic mode once again, only to end on a thunderous cadence (example E.2).



E.3. Puccini, *Madama Butterfly,* "Un bel dì vedremo"



E.4. Puccini, *Turandot*, Calaf's theme

A curious though at first glance baffling feature of this musical synthesis of great Rus and the free yet unbreakable union of nations is its resemblance to some well-known tunes by Puccini. The melody and harmony of the beginning of the anthem follow the beginning of the famous "Un bel dì vedremo" from *Madama Butterfly* (example E.3).

There are similarities between tunes by different composers that are, to all appearances, purely coincidental. The shadowy presence of Puccini in the anthem's musical fabric is, however, further reinforced by the refrain. Its beginning, on the words "Glory to our free Fatherland," just as closely resembles Calaf's theme from *Turandot* (example E.4).

I am in no way suggesting that Aleksandrov plagiarized Puccini or that he followed him unconsciously, although the vague similarity to popular operatic tunes may have played a role in the success of his creation.[10] The fact of the matter was that the recipe according to which the anthem was created came amazingly close to the synthesizing musical idiom by which Puccini rendered the Far Eastern element. As we have seen, Puccini's solution consisted of introducing an exotic touch yet making it conform with the fundamental sonorities of Western music. An important aspect of his solution lay in adopting a Eurasian diatonic style in which Far Eastern musical material, the Russian operatic tradition, and Italian melody appeared fused together. The resulting phenomenon sounded epically distant and lyrical, exotic and sugges-

tive at once.[11] He had briefly explored its potential for officious organicism in 1922, when he wrote "Hymn to Rome" in celebration of Mussolini's coming to power (it served as the semiofficial anthem in fascist Italy).

Now the year was 1943. The turbulence of the period from 1910 to 1930, from which the Eurasian ideology and aesthetic had risen, had subsided long before, giving way to events as turbulent but quite different in spirit. The lives of those who had been instrumental in shaping this aesthetic or who had greeted it with enthusiasm were affected in a stark way by this historical shift. Prince Trubetzkoy, the founder of the Eurasian movement and a professor of Slavic languages in Vienna, paid a price after the *Anschluss* for his vocal opposition to anti-Semitism, which had been embraced by the right wing of his movement; the Nazis made a devastating search of his apartment, after which he had a heart attack and soon died. Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky, inspired by the vision of the Eurasian mission of the Soviet Union, returned there, eventually to be executed. Another left-wing Eurasianist, Tsvetaeva's husband Sergei Efron, became a Soviet agent and after participating in a political kidnapping in Paris fled to the Soviet Union, where he was promptly arrested and shot; Tsvetaeva followed him there, only to learn about his destiny on her arrival, and in the summer of 1941, soon after the beginning of the war, hung herself. Walter Benjamin also committed suicide after an unsuccessful attempt to flee occupied France. After Hitler came to power, the painter Heinrich Vogeler, a close associate of Rilke in the 1900s and an active member of the left-wing movement in the 1920s, emigrated to the Soviet Union, where he was severely rebuked for his avant-garde renditions of enthusiastic masses, an aesthetic residue of the past epoch; when the war began, he was sent to a village in Kazakhstan, where he died, apparently of hunger. Many of the protagonists of our earlier story—Stravinsky, Jakobson, Brecht—found refuge in America. Listening to the all-embracing solemnity of the Anthem of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, one could hardly be in a mood to trace the ideological and aesthetic vicissitudes of the early part of the century that resounded in it like a distant echo.

Stalin's reputation as a music critic was severely undermined by the infamous article "This Is Chaos, Not Music," whose very title seemed to invite a smirk at its patent naïveté (provided one could afford to smirk). Yet in retrospect one has to give his choice of anthem its due. Aleksandrov's tune sounded Russian in an enlarged and sublimated way—one is tempted to say it sounded Eurasian. Musorgsky's Muscovites, transformed into the people of Peking on the early twentieth-century European musical scene, now returned home in a new ecumenical garb whose particular ethnic features remained tangible yet elusive. Distilled through Italian operatic exoticism, Russia's nineteenth-

century musical voice appeared as emotionally appealing as ever yet safely purified from any association with what constituted its spiritual core—liturgical singing and authentic folk song. One could hardly think of a more apt symbol for the new incarnation of Great Rus, once again at the head of an unbreakable Eurasian union.

The crux of the matter in selecting the new anthem was obviously the tune, not the words. Mikhalkov's and El-Registan's indifferently bombastic lyrics were written to fit the music. Their fortunes were quite different from those of Aleksandrov's creation. After Stalin's death, the words, which contained such compromising lines as "Stalin has raised us to be true to the people," had to be removed. For a while, the familiar tune became mute—retreated, as it were, to the primordial element of music; on ceremonial occasions, it was simply played by an orchestra. In Brezhnev's time, Mikhalkov reworked the banished text in a haphazard fashion, making it acceptable for the new times: now it featured "the Party" instead of "Stalin." After 1991, an effort was made to get rid of the all-too-familiar musical emblem altogether. Glinka's "Triumphal Song," introduced as the official anthem of the Russian Federation, did not survive, however; its complex bravura found no resonance among the masses. After a brief respite the familiar tune returned once again, sponsored as the new anthem by President Vladimir Putin—a move that apparently met with popular approval, in spite of the vocal criticism coming from highbrow circles.[12] Once again, the patriarchal Sergei Mikhalkov, at that time in his late eighties, adjusted the lyrics to the demands of the moment. Its draft version featured the "soaring Russian eagle" (a striking image if one remembers a peculiar attribute of this ornithological species—its possession of two heads),[13] the "tricolored banner," and the spirited refrain "Glory to thee, motherland! The Lord is over thee!" That, apparently, proved to be too much of a swing. When the anthem was officially approved (once again, near New Year's Eve—December 29, 2000), its new imperial-religious attire was trimmed to a more moderate shape that was supposed to exude a cozily domestic feel. It is now all about "Russia, our beloved land," whose "forests and fields" stretch from the southern seas to the polar region, a spatial magnificence that causes the lyrical subject of the anthem to exclaim in rapture: "There is only one land like you, our native land protected by God!"

The words come and go, succumbing to ever-changing circumstances, and yet the music remains unshakable in its unarticulated but palpable message.

Notes

The notes contain many references to Russian-language sources. One technical problem concerns transliteration of proper names. All references to works in Cyrillic use the transliteration system of the Library of Congress because that is the form in which the works appear in the catalogues. The Library of Congress system is somewhat different from that used in many English-language books, including this one, whose primary goal is to convey at least approximately how Russian words are pronounced. For instance, the Russian word for "song" is rendered in the text as "pesnya," whereas in the notes it appears as "pesnia." The situation is further complicated by the fact that there are certain conventions in English for spelling names of well-known Russian authors that deviate from strict transliteration, for example, the conventional "Mayakovsky" as opposed to the Library of Congress's "Maiakovskii." Additional differences arise because of variant subconventions for some names: Tchaikovsky, Chaikovsky, and (German) Tschaikowsky; Mussorgsky, Musorgsky, and (French) Moussorgsky. The version used in a given source must be preserved in references to that source. As a result, in the notes the same name may appear in as many as four different versions.

In the text, this book uses the "reader-friendly" transliteration system for common words, and conventional spelling is preserved for personal names wherever applicable. In the notes, all transliterations are according to the Library of Congress system; references to works in the roman alphabet follow the orthography of the originals.

Another problem concerns references to works published during the Soviet era. Although it is usual to include publishers' names in notes, I strongly believe that as far as Soviet central publishing houses are concerned, this convention does not make sense.

Using their names would perpetuate the myth that they were normal publishing enterprises when in fact, as anyone who has dealt with them knows, they were nothing but different departments of the state publishing system—a system that strictly prohibited (and sometimes punished with prison terms) any unauthorized publication outside it. This was the system to which we owe the word "samizdat" (a parody literally meaning "Self-Publishing House"), used as a "citation" to works that were distributed underground in typewritten copies, as well as "tamizdat" ("There Publishing House"), a reference to works published abroad at the author's own risk (something I had done in my time, with fairly modest troubles). The names of the official publishers thus contain no useful bibliographical information because they are completely predictable. Virtually all musical works were published by Sovetskii kompozitor and Gosmuzizdat (later called Muzgiz and still later Muzyka). The distribution of publications between the two was essentially a bureaucratic matter: the former published works about Soviet music, the latter, all the rest.

For these reasons I have omitted mention of Soviet centralized publishing houses for works published between the early 1930s and 1992. (After 1991, state publishing houses must be cited because they continue to function alongside independent, private houses.) I also made exceptions for the few publications from the Soviet era issued by universities, because they represented a certain degree of decentralization.

Introduction: In the Shadow of Literature

1. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xvi.

2. To name only a few: V. O. Berkov, *Garmoniia Glinki* (Moscow, 1948); A. D. Kastal'skii, *Osobennosti narodno-russkoi muzykal'noi sistemy* (Moscow, 1961); L. Khristiansen, *Ladovaia intonatsionnost' russkoi narodnoi pesni* (Moscow, 1976); V. N. Kholopova, *Russkaia muzykal'naia ritmika* (Moscow, 1983); G. L. Golovinskii, *Musorgskii i fol'klor* (Moscow: Muzuka, 1994); E. B. Trembovel'skii, *Stil' Musorgskogo* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1999).

3. O. Brik, "T.n. 'formal'nyi metod' " ["The So-Called 'Formal Method' "], *LEF: Zhurnal levogo fronta iskusstv,* no. 1 (1923): 213–15.

4. A thrilling conspiracy theory offered in 1981 by Aleksandra Orlova and David Brown, according to which Chaikovsky was ordered (possibly by the emperor himself) to take poison to prevent scandalous publicity concerning a homosexual affair ("Tchaikovsky: The Last Chapter," *Music and Letters* 62, no. 2 [1981]: 125–45), caused a heated but largely speculative discussion in the West, fueled by the mesmerized silence in the Soviet press. Its sober assessment, based on the unimpeded study of documents, has become possible only recently. See in particular N. O. Blinov, *Posledniaia bolezn' i smert' Chaikovskogo,* ed. and with commentary by V. Sokolov (Moscow: Muzyka, 1994).

5. Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

6. Caryl Emerson, *The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

7. *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). See also two essays on Chaikovsky in Taruskin's *Defining Russia Musically*.

8. Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

9. A. A. Gozenpud, *Rikhard Wagner i russkaia kul'tura: Issledovanie* (Leningrad, 1990); Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

10. Julie A. Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

11. Viacheslav I. Ivanov, "Skriabin i dukh revoliutsii," in *Sobranie sochinenii,* 3:190–93 (Brussels: Foyer oriental chrétien, 1987).

12. A more precise translation of the title of the opera (as well as Leskov's novella) would be *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. The conventional English title misses a small but not insignificant point, namely, that the action takes place in an extremely obscure location somewhere in the Mtsensk district for which even the district center may seem almost a metropolis. The "town" in Leskov's story is never mentioned by name; it is only said that the Izmailovs settled there after they had moved from someplace named Tuskar. The extreme obscurity of the locus of the story gives a whimsical touch to the name of Lady Macbeth in its title.

13. Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

14. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions,* vol 1 (see especially the introduction and chap. 12); Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* chap. 12.

15. Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

Chapter 1: Sound and Discourse

1. N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov, *100 chants nationaux russes recueillis et harmonisés par N. Rimsky-Korsakov* (St. Petersburg: W. Bessel, [1877]).

2. On the kinship between the pentatonic and the Russian folk diatonic scales, see Gustaw William Meyer, *Tonale Verhältnisse und Melodiestruktur im Ostslawischen Volkslied* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1956), 12–13.

3. In a letter to N. von Meck (July 6, 1880) Chaikovsky sharply criticized the use of the dominant seventh in Orthodox church music. This chord, he said, makes it sound "like a music box. . . . There is nothing more anti-musical and less appropriate to the Orthodox church than this banal chord introduced in the last century by messrs. Galuppi, Sarti, and Bortnyansky." Modest Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Algoritm, 1997), 2:338.

4. Vladimir Morosan, introduction to *One Thousand Years of Russian Church Music*, vol. 1, *Monuments of Russian Sacred music* (Washington, DC: Musica Russica, 1991), liii.

5. Richard Taruskin, "Scriabin and the Superhuman: A Millennial Essay," in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 356–59.

6. A. N. Sokhor, "O prirode i vyrazitel'nykh vozmozhnostiakh diatoniki," in *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* 4 (1965): 183–84.

7. Rüdiger Schumacher, "Heterophonie," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996), 4:279.

8. Meyer observes that in Russian folk-oriented art music the free shift of tonality often goes hand in hand with the repetition of the same motif in the melody, which makes a sharp tonal juxtaposition almost imperceptible (*Tonale Verhältnisse,* 45).

9. P. I. Chaikovsky to A. N. Alferaki, 20 July 1888, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska*, ed. by B. V. Asaf'ev, 17 vols. (Moscow, 1959–1971), 14:489.

10. Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners* Tristan (Berlin: M. Hesse, 1923); Martin Vogel, *Der Tristan-Akkord und die Krise der modernen Harnonie-Lehre* (Düsseldorf: Im Verlag der Gesellschaft zur Förderung der systematischen Musikwissenschaft, 1962).

11. Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (New York: Continuum, 1994), chap. 1. See also the detailed technical discussion of this transition in Filipp Gershkovich, "Tonal'nye istoki shenbergovskoi dodekafonii," in Gershkovich, *O muzyke: Stat'i, Zametki, Pis'ma, Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1991), 13–44.

12. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), chap. 1.

13. Morosan, introduction, liii.

14. M. Balakirev, *Recueil de chants populaires russes* (St. Petersburg, 1866; reprint, Leipzig: M. Belaïeff, 1895).

15. Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* 133.

16. Compare Meyer's assertion that "the East Slavic folk song developed through intimate contacts [*in enger Anlehnung*] with Church singing" (*Tonale Verhältnisse,* 36).

17. A. M. Listopadov, *Pesni donskikh kazakov* (Moscow, 1949–54).

18. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music,* 194.

19. P. I. Chaikovsky to the Great Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich, 21 September 1888, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 14:542.

20. S. F. Platonov, *Moskva i Zapad* (Berlin: Obelisk, 1926), 39–42.

21. Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1:951–65.

22. "The musicalization of fiction. Not in the symbolist way, by subordinating sense to sound. (*Pleuvent les bleus baisers des astres taciturnes*. Mere glossolalia.) But on a large scale, in the construction. Meditate on Beethoven." Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 301.

23. Mathew Roberts, "Poetics, Hermeneutics, Dialogics: Bakhtin and Paul de Man," in *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges,* ed. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 115–134.

24. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel,* ed. R. P. Blackamoor (New York: Scribner, 1934), 84.

25. Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pt. 2.

26. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

Chapter 2: Farewell to the Enchanted Garden

1. M. I. Glinka, *Zapiski,* ed. A. N. Rimskii-Korsakov (Moscow: Academia, 1930), 151.

2. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 38.

3. N. V. Kukolnik, *Diary,* cited in Glinka, *Zapiski,* 469.

4. *Kanon, slova Pushkina, Zhukovskogo, kniazia Viazemskogo i gr. Viel'gorskogo, muzyka kn. V. F. Odoevskogo i M. I. Glinki* (St. Petersburg, 1836). Quoted in Glinka, *Zapiski,* 244–45.

5. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 194.

6. Ibid., 264.

7. A decision by the Holy Synod issued in May 1846 announced the dissolution of the marriage and gave permission for Glinka, as the "innocent party," to enter into a second marriage should he want to. His wife, who was rumored to have married her lover secretly without waiting for the divorce, fared much worse: the Synod's decision forbade her ever to remarry and subjected her to a seven-year period of penance. B. L. Modzalevskii, "K biografii Glinki," *Muzykal'naia letopis'* 2 (1923): 40–60.

8. Much has been made in Soviet historiography of Glinka's sufferings in his subservient position under Lvov. Glinka himself is wonderfully unprepossessing when he speaks about the matter: "During my illness [in 1839], Lvov paid a visit and admonished me about my neglect of my duties, which he did in a most polite, even friendly manner. I kept silent, but after my recovery I showed up with my singers even more rarely than before." Glinka, *Zapiski,* 224.

9. M. I. Glinka to E. A. Glinka, 11 December 1836, in M. I. Glinka, *Literaturnoe nasledie,* ed. V. M. Bogdanov-Berezovskii (Moscow, 1953), 2:97–100.

10. V. V. Stasov, *Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka* (Moscow, 1953), 125. According to Stasov, Glinka had a chance to hear the Persian chorus and Blackamoor's march performed soon after their composition, during his trip to the Ukraine in the summer of 1838, when he visited the estate of Grigory Tarnovsky, who had his own serf orchestra and chorus.

11. Kukolnik noted in his diary: "I knew that Misha had not told the truth when he stated that he was not going to write the opera. His Muse is demanding it from him and he is writing but in a somewhat strange manner: without a libretto or a plan, which exists only in his head, and even there, fragmentarily." Cited in Glinka, *Zapiski,* 472.

The authenticity of Kukolnik's diary has been challenged by B. S. Shteinpress, "Dnevnik Nestora Kukol'nika kak istochnik biografii Glinki," in *M. I. Glinka: Issledovaniia i materialy,* ed. A. V. Ossovskii (Leningrad, 1950). According to Shteinpress, the diary was in fact a fabrication by Kukolnik's nephew, Ivan Puzyrevsky, who was motivated by a contemporary political agenda in publishing it after the writer's death (*Baian,* nos. 9–16, 1889). There is some textological evidence to support the argument that the diary was edited and possibly altered by the publisher. The total dismissal of the document seems in its turn suspicious, however, given the utter venom with which Soviet scholars treated Kukolnik and the ardent desire, amid all the pomp of sesquicentennial celebrations in the late years of Stalin's regime, to "cleanse" the composer of this association.

12. V. F. Odoevskii, "Prilozhenie k biografii M. I. Glinki (pis'mo k V. V. Stasovu)," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 166–69.

K. A. Kuznetsov, *Glinka i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow: Gosizdat, muz. sektor, 1926), 50, argues that Glinka's treatment of the word was opposite to that of Schubert: the former composed music first, then looked for words to fit, whereas the latter "made his musical genius to serve Goethe."

13. For a later reassessment of the value of Rosen's libretto, see V. A. Vasina-Grossman, "K istorii libretto *Ivana Susanina* Glinki," in *Stilevye osobennosti russkoi muzyki XIX–XX vekov: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov,* ed. M. K. Mikhailov (Leningrad: Leningrad Conservatory, 1983): 17–23.

14. The libretto was rewritten between 1937 and1944 by Sergei Gorodetsky, "a scandalously pliant poet," according to Thomas P. Hodge ("Susanin, Two Glinkas, and Ryleev: History-Making in *A Life for the Tsar,*" in *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature, and Society,* ed. Andrew B. Wachtel [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998]: 4), who probably followed in his assessment Nadezhda Mandelshtam's venomous remarks about "the false Acmeist" in her memoirs. It is worth noting, though, that Gorodetsky, his later fortunes notwithstanding, showed himself at the beginning of his career in the second decade of the twentieth century as a brilliant avant-garde poet.

Ivan Susanin was in fact the working title of the opera; after a while, Glinka and his friend Nestor Kukolnik arrived at the title *A Death for the Tsar.* The subsequent change was made at the personal suggestion of Nicholas, who noted that "he who gives his life for the Tsar never dies." Vasina-Grossman, "K istorii libretto," 17–23.

15. Glinka remembered with fondness—even if by the time of his *Memoirs* he felt distanced from his earlier friendships in Russia—his feeling of "heartfelt freedom amidst the kind, endearing and talented brotherhood, as we called the company that had begun gathering at Kukolnik's since 1835 or 1836 and later grew into a sincere, kind and friendly family" (Glinka, *Zapiski,* 228).

16. "Nestor Kukolnik sometimes composed for us stanzas *de circonstances;* we improvised music for them together, or I would compose it, then rehearse and conduct the chorus" (ibid., 232).

17. The most significant creative figures to frequent the circle besides Kukolnik and Glinka were the journalist and writer Senkovsky and the painter Bryullov. Both the jocular and the exalted aspects of the gatherings tended toward a Romantic synthesis of different arts, a trait that may have influenced the richly decorative side of *Ruslan and Ludmila*. See Kuznetsov, *Glinka i ego sovremenniki,* 44–47.

18. See the recent edition, with extensive biographical commentary: A. F. L'vov and V. A. Zhukovskii, *Bozhe, tsaria khrani!* (Moscow: Brovkina, 1998).

19. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 487.

20. Characteristic is the testimony of Count Vielgorsky, cited by a memoirist: "This is a man with enormous talent (said Vielgorsky), I would even say, a genius, but his character is somewhat capricious. In the past, he visited me frequently; I was very fond of him, and still am. But it has been almost three years since, after his divorce, he became entangled with a gang of wild bon vivants who keep him from getting in touch with good society." Iu. K. Arnol'd, "Iz vospominanii," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 219.

21. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 487–88.

22. Ibid., 223. Glinka suggests that this episode happened in the winter of 1838, "or perhaps 1837." In his diary Kukolnik concurs with Glinka's account but places it in November 1839: "On a drunken spree, Bakhturin put together a plan for *Ruslan and Ludmila,* and quite successfully—Misha is content: so much the better" (ibid., 472).

23. *Proshchanie s Peterburgom: Romansy i pesni; Slova N. V. Kukol'nika, muzyka M. I. Glinki* (St. Petersburg: Odeon, 1840).

24. Serov, who was present at the occasion as a young man, gives the following account of his impression of this piece: "It was a *pièce d'occasion* of a sort, i.e., a vivid reflection of that circle; even the words, in spite of a certain affectation and melodramatic tone (still fashionable at the time), had much of the genuine in them." A. N. Serov, "Vospominaniia o Mikhaile Ivanoviche Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 80.

25. "There never was a composer who took more care about the libretto in all its details, from the largest to most minuscule, and never had any composer left less room for any caprices of his librettist's taste" (introduction to Glinka's correspondence with K. Shirkov, *Russkaia starina* [February 1872]), 302. Stasov's assertion was echoed in some later studies. Konstantin Chernov cites a detailed plan of the opera that Glinka submitted to Kukolnik for his approbation in 1838 as evidence that the composer grasped the overall shape of his opera quite early on. *Ruslan i Liudmila M. I. Glinki: Estetiko-tematicheskii razbor* (Moscow: P. Iurgenson, 1908), 8–10. The final shape of the libretto deviated from this early plan in many ways, however: some personages and whole scenes were omitted, and others appeared in their place. The full text of the early plan was published in Glinka, *Literaturnoe nasledie,* 1:315–340.

26. In a mandatory positive assessment of this feature of the opera, one dissertation cites the "exceptional richness of narrative functions" (in a Proppian sense) represented in its plot: T. V. Nilova, *Tipologiia stsenicheskikh situatsii v russkoi klassicheskoi opere: Metodika morfologicheskogo analiza,* autoreferat of the candidate diss. (Moscow Conservatory, 1993), 16–17.

27. A. M. Serov, "Vospominaniia o Mikhaile Ivanoviche Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 88.

28. See the following characteristic exchange in response to Glinka's playing Bach: "I tried to focus on listening: there were some harmonic chords, but very monotonous. 'What have you been playing?'—I asked Glinka when he finished.—'Bach's fugues.'—'Oo!!'—Next day the same; I listen with the utmost attention. The third, the fourth day, every day it is the same. I was bored to the utmost. 'Your Bach is an extremely boring gentleman'—I said to Glinka.—'Mon cher, s'est par ce que vous êtes un ignorant dans l'art musical.' " P. A. Stepanov, "Vospominaniia o M. I. Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 58.

29. According to Taruskin, the general mood and certain musical features of this piece stand at the inception of a rich operatic and symphonic tradition of the musical portrayal of the peculiar voluptuous laziness captured by the Russian word *nega* (*Defining Russia Musically,* 165–85).

30. B. V. Asaf'ev called *Ruslan and Ludmila* "the alpha and omega of Russian opera," a macrocosm containing in itself every thinkable venue to be explored by the subsequent tradition. *Simfonicheskie etiudy* (Leningrad, 1970), 19.

31. Stasov was the first to spot a close connection between Glinka's progress with his opera and the composition of the song cycle: "One of the most important goals of the future opera was the conflation of the most diverse elements: different nationalities, different human types and characters; the romances from *Farewell to St. Petersburg* accordingly presented subjects grounded in types, characters, faces that were most variegated, even opposite to each other. One encounters there Italian, Spanish, Mauritanian, knightly, and contemporary subjects; ones that are tender, gracious, passionate, pensive, comical" (*Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka,* 154).

32. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 154.

33. P. I. Chaikovsky to L. V. Davydov and A. I. Davydova, April 8, 1866, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska* (Moscow, 1959), 5:106–7.

34. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 283–84.

35. Chaikovsky summarized this perception when he voiced his agreement with Serov that "*A Life for the Tsar* is an opera, and an excellent one, while *Ruslan* is a collection of charming illustrations to Pushkin's naive poem" ("Vozobnovlenie *Ruslana i Liudmily,*" *Russkie vedomosti,* 17 September 1872, cited in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Muzykal'no-kriticheskie stat'i* [Moscow, 1953], 53). This more sober judgment on both the opera and Pushkin's poem, with which Chaikovsky pointedly countered the fanatical enthusiasm of the "Ruslanists" (i.e., members of the Balakirev-Stasov circle), went well with the general tastes of the age of realism.

36. Richard Taruskin, *Opera and Drama in Russia as Preached and Practiced in the 1860s* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), 11–21.

37. A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 2nd ed (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1995), 3:270.

38. I. V. Kireevsky, "Nechto o kharaktere poezii Pushkina," in Kireevskii, *Sochineniia* (Moscow: Moscow University, 1911): 1:12.

39. N. V. Gogol, "Neskol'ko slov o Pushkine," in his *Arabeski* (1835). Cited in *Sochineniia N. V. Gogolia,* ed. N. S. Tikhonravov (St. Petersburg: A. F. Marks, 1900), 9:227.

40. V. G. Belinsky, "Sochineniia Aleksandra Pushkina," in Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Academy of Science, 1955), 7:352.

41. "Altogether, he spoke a number of languages very well, later even Spanish; but was never able to cleanse his Russian completely of Smolensk vernacular; for instance, he would say: *bushmak, samyvar, pumada* etc." (rather than standard Rusian *bashmak,* "boot," *samovar, pomada,* "pomade"): Stepanov, "Vospominaniia o M. I. Glinke," 59.

42. On this motif in the rhetoric of the second decade of the century see B. M. Gasparov, *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* (Vienna: Wiener slawistischer Almanach, 1992), 100–106.

43. *Ruslan i Liudmila,* in A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 2nd ed. (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1994), vol. 4, ch. 2, lines 278–90 (pp. 30–31). Further references appear in the text.

44. As often happens, the myth reflects reality, if at all, only in a modified and stylized form. As has been shown in a richly documented recent study, a sizable Swedish city and port practically at the site of St. Peterburg had existed as early as the first half of the

seventeenth century: Bengt Jangfeldt, *Svenska vägar till S:t Petersburg: Kapitel ur historien om svenskarna vid Nevans stränder* (Stockholm: Wahlström and Widstrand, 1998).

45. L. V. Pumpianskii, "*Mednyi vsadnik* i poeticheskaia traditsiia XVIII veka," in *Pushkin: Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii* 4–5 (1939), 91–124. See also Gasparov, *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina,* 291–96.

46. On the symbolism of this celebration and its political subtexts see Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 1:143–46; Andrei Zorin, "Poslednii proekt Potemkina: Prazdnik 28 aprelia 1791 g. i ego politicheskaia emblematika," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* no. 43 (2000): 113–36.

47. A recent book dedicated to Kozlowski's life and work is A. M. Sokolova, *Kompozitor Osip Antonovich Kozlovskii* (Moscow: Kotran, 1997).

48. Elena A. Pogosian, "Traditsionnaia odicheskaia frazeologiia v tvorchestve Derzhavina," in *Lotmanovskii sbornik,* ed. E. V. Permiakov (Moscow: Its-Garant, 1997), 2:456–67.

49. G. R. Derzhavin, "Opisanie torzhestva, byvshego po sluchaiu vziatiia goroda Izmaila v dome General-Fel'dmarshala Kniazia Potemkina-Tavricheskogo, bliz Konnoi Gvardii, v prisutstvii Imperatritsy Ekateriny II, 1791 Aprelia 28," in Derzhavin, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg: A. Smirdin, 1831), 4:48.

50. Derzhavin, "Opisanie torzhestva," 56.

51. Glinka, *Zapiski*, 39.

52. B. V. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin,* 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1990), 1:293–97. There is a tradition of exaggerating the importance of an ideological polemic as the motivation for Pushkin's travesty of Zhukovsky's poem. I am inclined to take it more as a friendly joke typical of the circle to which both poets belonged. After all, Pushkin's avid patronage, on his graduation from the Lyceum, of the capital's bordellos as a counterpoint to his creative process was a common source of friendly banter in which Pushkin himself took no small part.

53. Pushkin was particularly wounded by a stern admonition from I. I. Dmitriev, a patriarch of the Karamzinian school, by which he considered himself unconditionally accepted. Dmitriev's verdict was that "after the first few words, the book must needs fall from the hands of any good mother." See Iu. M. Lotman, *Roman A. S. Pushkina "Evgenii Onegin": Kommentarii,* reprinted in Iu. M. Lotman, *Pushkin* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 1995), 705–8.

54. The Persian chorus exemplified what seemed to be Glinka's artistic invention: a set of variations in which the melody remains constant while the harmony changes with each stanza—a reversal of the classical principle of variations (the form is known as "Glinka's variations" in the Russian musicological tradition). It gives the stanzas a peculiar arabesque character that fits well into their general fairytale aura. On "Glinka's variations" see V. O. Berkov, *Garmoniia Glinki* (Moscow, 1948), 209.

55. A. P. Kern, "Vospominanie o M. I. Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 153.

56. No actual Finnish source for this melody has been found. My former student Sanna Turoma suggested that it sounds more Karelian than Finnish—that is, closer to the Russian folkloric idiom.

57. Note that whereas Glinka lamented other cuts that he had to make for the 1842 staging of the opera, he acknowledged the "impropriety" of this episode. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 272. Whether he meant only the political impropriety of the virtual deification of Pushkin onstage (something that later generations would see as normal) or had other reservations concerning this episode, which is very slow and static, in not clear.

58. As early as 1827, Glinka participated in an amateur troupe in St. Petersburg consisting of young men and women of the gentry that put together some operas and concert performances. One of them was *Il barbiere di Siviglia,* in which Glinka sang Figaro. It was performed at the estate of Countess Stroganova, who rewarded the actors with lavish hospitality. Glinka, *Zapiski,* 90.

59. This was apparently the reason Chaikovsky considered Ludmila's cavatina among the few "relatively weak" pieces in the opera. Chaikovskii, "Vozobnovlenie *Ruslana i Liudmily,*" 56.

60. S. I. Volova counts the following subgenres of the popular romance: "sentimental," "folkloric," "elegiac," "hussar," "coachman [*yamshchitsky*]," "cruelly passionate [*zhestoky*]," "Gypsy," "landscape [*peizazhnyi*]." In spite of its overt classificatory incongruity, this description covers the most popular subtypes of the genre fairly well. Volova, "*Russkii romans XVIII—pervoi poloviny XIX v. Genezis. Tipologiia. Poetika,*" autoreferat of the candidate diss. (Moscow Conservatory, 1995).

61. An exemplary decription of the genre's musical language and its genesis is given in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* chap. 1.

62. Ibid. Taruskin cites Pamina's aria in D minor as a particularly prominent—and influential—example whose proximity to the romance's typical intonations is remarkable.

63. A. Finagin describes the expansion of the urban quotidian romance in all strata of Russian society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the peasant world, the romance eventually prevailed over what Finagin calls "artistic" (i.e., traditional) forms of peasant musical folklore. Finagin, "O vzaimootnoshenii khudozhestvennoi i bytovoi pesni," *De musica: Institut istorii iskusstv. Vremennik otdela muzyki* 3 (1927), 54–61.

64. Berlioz, who conducted excerpts from *Ruslan* at a concert in Paris in 1843, described the style of Glinka's second opera in terms that uncannily resound with what Kireevsky had written about Pushkin about twenty years earlier: "Glinka's talent is distinguished by an unusual flexibility and diversity; his style—and this is a rare advantage—transforms itself according to the composer's will, to adapt to the requirements and the character of the subject he is dealing with. It can become simple, even naive, without slipping into banality." "Michel Glinka," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 352.

65. Serov captures the musical spirit of this romance well when he says that its "fluid, malleable, expressive melody" presented "a conflation of a sort of Italian tender voluptuousness [*nega*] with purely Slavic dismay, languor, dreariness." Serov, "Vospominaniia o Mikhaile Ivanoviche Glinke," 69.

66. Glinka was well aware of this paradox. Arnol'd remembers a conversation he held with the composer after he played several freshly composed numbers, including Ratmir's aria. When he tried to mask his bewilderment with effusive praise of the first part of the aria, "Mikhail Ivanovich looked at me inquisitively and said, with a rather odd smile,

'But why have you said nothing about the rondo [i.e., the section marked *tempo di valse*]?' His sharp looks and that sly smile embarrassed me." After having heard a somewhat forced praise of the piece, Glinka responded: "Ce morceau sent trop le style italien et le rythme valsiforme vous choque; n'est-il pas ça? . . . Celon le sens rigoureux de l'esthétique musicale vous avez peut-être raison; mais vous verrez que ce sera justement ce morceau là, qui de tout mon opéra plaira le mieux à notre publique." Arnol'd, "Iz vospominanii," 218.

67. O. I. Senkovskii, "Muzykal'nye novosti," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 341.

68. See, e.g., A. N. Rimskii-Korsakov, "K istorii pervoi postanovki *Ruslana i Liudmily,*" in *Muzykal'naia letopis': Stat'i i materialy,* ed. Rimskii-Korsakov (Petrograd: Mysl', 1923), 2:69–79, who, on reconstructing details of the opera's first season, comes to the same conclusion.

69. In his *Memoirs,* Glinka still vividly remembers his delight at his first encounter with a world-class Italian opera troupe when he spent a season in Milan in 1831; his unreserved raptures of the past, however, are tempered by more sober later reflection: "The performance seemed to me just magic. . . . I was sunk in raptures, the more so since at that time I was not yet indifferent to *virtuosité,* as I am now." Glinka, *Zapiski,* 108.

70. Glinka could not refrain from some personal bitterness concerning Tolstoy and his ill-fated *Il birichino di Parigi*. In his lengthy apologetic response, Tolstoy cited his own embarrassment at the emperor's decision, which struck him like a thunderbolt. F. M. Tolstoi, "Po povodu *Zapisok* M. I. Glinki," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 112–13. Zheleznov gives a curious alternative account, based on a conversation he once had with the composer. Glinka told him that the Italians had already begun preparing *A Life for the Tsar* for performance. At a rehearsal, the singer Frezzolini, who sang Antonida, added to her score an "Italian fioritura." When Glinka protested that "this is not Italian music," she flatly refused to go on. M. I. Zheleznov, "Vospominaniia o M. I. Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 265.

71. For a broader picture of the history of the Italian opera in St. Petersburg and the ensuing love-hate relationship between the Russian national musical consciousness and musical "italianomania," see Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* chap. 10.

72. If one is to believe the testimony of Kukolnik (who was too eager to blame Glinka's death on the indifference of his German surroundings), the immediate cause of his death strikingly resembles that of Gogol in 1852: "Glinka has died from starvation. For two weeks, he could not eat anything." N. V. Kukol'nik, "Iz moix zadushevnykh putevykh zapisok," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 317.

73. V. G. Val'ter, *Opera Mikhaila Ivanovicha Glinki "Ruslan i Liudmila"* (St. Petersburg: Prosveshchenie, 1903), 58–59.

74. V. V. Stasov, "Ruslan i Liudmila M. I. Glinki," *Ezhegodnik Imperatorskikh teatrov, 1891–92* (1893): 343.

75. Anna Kern, "Vospominanie o M. I. Glinke," in *Glinka v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov,* ed. A. A. Orlova (Moscow, 1955), 153.

Chapter 3: Eugene Onegin in the Age of Realism

1. The stanza quoted in the epigraph has been immortalized by A. A. Zhdanov in his infamous "report" on the magazines *The Star* and *Leningrad* (1948), whose more widely known targets were Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko. See *The Central Committee Resolution and Zhdanov's Speech on the Zhurnals* Zvezda *and* Leningrad, bilingual edition (Royal Oak, MI: Strathcona, 1978), 22.

2. P. I. Chaikovsky to S. I. Taneev, January 2, 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska,* ed. B. V. Asaf'ef, 17 vols. (Moscow, 1959–71), 9:21.

3. In 1886 Chaikovsky expressed hopes that the tsar would order the production in St. Petersburg of *The Embroidered Shoes,* the new version of his early opera *Vakula the Smith,* as he had in the case of *Onegin*. P. I. Chaikovsky to E. K. Pavlovskaya, 25 July 1886, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 13:415.

4. "*Evgenii Onegin,* liricheskie stseny Chaikovskogo: Opyt intonatsionnogo analiza stilia i muzykal'noi dramaturgii," in B. V. Asaf'ev, *O muzyke Chaikovskogo* (Leningrad, 1972), 76. Likewise, Alexander Blok acknowledged "Chaikovsky's victory over Pushkin" in the public's perception of *Eugene Onegin*. Cited in Arkadii Klimovitsky, "Tchaikovsky and the Russian 'Silver Age,' " in *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearny (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 323–24.

5. In 1926, responding to a particularly severe attack on formalism by proponents of the "sociological method," Victor Shklovsky quoted sarcastically a sample of the scholarship of one of his critics: "But what is Pushkin nowadays anyway? I would like to quote from L. Voitolovsky's *History of 19th- and 20th-Century Russian Literature* ⟨*Pt. 1: Pushkin — Dostoevsky*⟩ (Moscow — Leningrad: GIZ, 1926: 23): — This is literature of the gentry, reflecting everyday life and mores of the gentry estate of those times up to tiniest details. Onegin, Lensky, Hermann, Pr. Eletsky, Tomsky, Gremin . . . in these characters Pushkin shows . . . — ⟨etc.⟩. For the renowned scholar Voitolovsky's information, the types listed by him are in fact roles for the tenor and the baritone in operas, as becomes evident from the fact of his mentioning Gremin (Tatiana's husband? — "Love reigns over all ages"?) who (Gremin) cannot be found in Pushkin. This is hardly a good method — to study Russian literature (sociologically) according to operas." Viktor Shklovskii, "V zashchitu sotsiologicheskogo metoda," cited in "Materialy disputa 'Marksizm i Formal'nyi metod,' 6 marta 1927," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie,* no. 50 (2001): 265.

6. Note Aleksei Parin's calling Russia "a literary-centric country." *Khozhdenie v nevidimyi grad: Paradigmy russkoi klassicheskoi opery* (Moscow: Agraf, 1999), 362.

7. M. I. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo: Genii v iskusstve,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Algoritm, 1977), 2:232.

8. I. S. Turgenev to L. N. Tolstoy, 15 November 1878. I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Pis'ma,* vol. 12 / 1 (Moscow, 1966), 383–84.

9. "In *Eugene Onegin* music of the 1870s is clipped [*pristyognuta*] to poetry of the 1820s." G. A. Larosh, *Izbrannye stat'i* (Leningrad, 1975), 2:223.

10. Asaf'ev, *O muzyke Chaikovskogo,* 77.

11. Particularly memorable is Hugh McLean's witty remark that Chaikovsky's opera

presents the familiar scenery of the novel, only lacking the "spiritual air conditioner" of Pushkin's irony. "The tone(s) of *Eugene Onegin,*" *California Slavic Studies* 6 (1971): 15.

12. During his exile in Mikhailovskoe (1824–26), Pushkin and a company of younger people — Aleksei Vul'f and his sisters Anna and Evpraksiya — were engaged in an elaborate courtoise game in which they assumed roles transparently reminiscent of Laclos' heroes. Pushkin was posing as the cynical Valmont; like the latter, he sometimes found it difficult to retain a coolly disengaged mien. See L. I. Vol'pert, *Pushkin i psikhologicheskaia traditsiia vo frantsuzskoi literature* (Tallinn: Eesti raamat, 1980), ch. 1.

13. As Caryl Emerson remarked, the suspense and irresolution of Pushkin's finale might have inspired Musorgsky — but not Chaikovsky. "Tchaikovsky's Tatiana," in *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearny (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 219.

14. In a note to his novel, Pushkin quotes Chateaubriand's *René* as his source: "Si j'avais encore la folie de croire au bonheur, je le chercherais dans l'habitude." A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 2nd ed. (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1995), 6:192.

15. Caryl Emerson, using Bakhtin's theory of genre, has shown shifts in narrative modalities involved in different versions of *Boris Godunov,* from Karamzin's history to Pushkin's drama to Musorgsky's opera. *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

16. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 53–55.

17. For an elaborate description of the novel's timetable see Iu. M. Lotman's *Roman A. S. Pushkina* Evgenii Onegin: *Kommentarii,* 2nd ed., in Lotman, *Pushkin* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 1995), 480–84.

18. Tsezar Kiui, "Muzykal'nye zametki: 'Evgenii Onegin,' liricheskie stseny g. Chaikovskogo," *Nedelia* no. 45 (4 November 1884).

19. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 28 September 1883, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 3 vols. (Moscow, 1934–36), 3:227. Chaikovsky responded to von Meck's repeated insistence that his music is "infinitely better than the [novel's] plot." On an earlier occasion, she had even professed her vintage 1860s disdain for Pushkin: "I am Pisarev's partisan and Chernyshevsky's admirer; from this, you can infer my view on Pushkin." N. von Meck to P. I. Chaikovsky, 26 June 1877, ibid., 1:24.

20. Turgenev mentioned Verdi's opera in his *On the Eve:* "In theater, an opera by Verdi was performed, a rather banal [*dovolno poshlaya*] opera, to say the truth, but the one that has already roamed through all European scenes and is well known to us the Russians — *La Traviata*." In 1864 Turgenev briefly entertained the idea of writing a libretto on a contemporary subject after his *Rudin* for Anton Rubinstein; it never came to fruition. I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (Moscow: 1964), 8:153.

21. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 18 May 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:134–35.

22. For a balanced discussion of both the subject itself and scholarly literature on it see Truman Bullard, "Tschaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin:* Tatiana and Lensky, the Third Couple," in *Tchaikovsky and His Contemporaries,* ed. Alexandar Mihailovic (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 9–165. Bullard mentions probably the earliest work in which

this parallel was drawn: Gerald Abraham, "Eugene Onegin and Tchaikovsky's Marriage," in his *On Russian Music* (London: William Reeves, 1939).

23. Aleksander Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered," in *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearny (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.

24. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 3 July 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 1:25.

25. Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered," 24.

26. Bullard correctly notes that Chaikovsky, "with extraordinary self-consciousness and honesty, began immediately to draw parallels in his correspondence between his situation and Onegin's." "Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin,*" 157.

27. P. I. Chaikovsky to A. Davydova, 8 November 1876, in P. I. Chaikovsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:85.

28. "This is someone of a base nature, with penchant for the rough, crude, unpolished." P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 24 December 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 1:136.

29. Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* 268–70.

30. Laurie Manchester describes in detail the ethical and psychological ramifications of one important division of this new social type—that of *popovichi,* that is, sons of Orthodox priests who chose to become members of the professional intelligentsia instead of following their fathers' vocation. Manchester, *Secular Ascetics: The Mentality of Orthodox Clergymen's Sons in Late Imperial Russia* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995).

31. See their correspondence of December 1876 in M. Tchaikovsky, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 1:493–95.

32. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 9 September 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:173.

33. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 26 February and 27 February 1881, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 10:51–52; the diary notation is from P. I. Chaikovskii, *Dnevniki* (Moscow: Nash dom, 2000), 193.

34. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 16 December 1877, 28 September 1883, 3 July 1877, all in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* at 1:24, 3:227, and 1:27, respectively.

35. Chaikovsky's symbolic identification with Tatiana rather than Onegin in his attitude toward his marriage agrees with Caryl Emerson's observation that "the entire opera is in fact told from her [Tatiana's] point of view." "Pushkin into Tchaikovsky: Caustic Novel, Sentimental Opera," *Opera Guide* no. 38, *Eugene Onegin* (1987), 7.

36. Clark M. Troy, *Courting Clio: Allegorical Love Narrative and the Novels of Turgenev* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999).

37. Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988): 83–91.

38. P. I. Chaikovsky to A. I. Davydova, 8 November 1876, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:85.

39. An argument of this kind was ubiquitous in Russian journalism in the 1830s. See V. G. Belinskii, "Razdelenie poezii na rody i vidy," in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Academy of Science, 1954), 5:7–67.

40. A long-standing tradition of exculpating Chaikovsky and blaming his wife for all that happened has been challenged recently. Some authors, quite predictably, arrive at the complete reversal of the roles. Valerii Sokolov, *Antonina Chaikovskaia: Istoriia zabytoi zhizni* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1994). A balanced account of the story is given in Poznansky, "Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered."

41. P. I. Chaikovsky to S. I. Taneev, 2 January 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 7:21.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 7:22.

44. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 29 October 1874, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 1:422. For the relationship between Chaikovsky and Musorgsky see G. L. Golovinskii, *Musorgskii i Chaikovskii: Opyt sravnitel'noi kharakteristiki* (Moscow: Indrik, 2001).

45. See Antoine Livio's preface to Alexandre Dumas (*fils*), *La Dame aux camélias* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1983): 7–14; Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 203–7.

46. G. Verdi to S. Cammarano, 9 April 1851, in *Letters of Giuseppe Verdi,* ed. Charles Osborne (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 80. Verdi initially intended Cammarano to be his librettist.

47. Chaikovsky's assessment of *La Traviata* was contradictory. On one occasion, he expressed his indignation to Anton Arensky for the latter's choice of the subject for his programmatic symphonic piece *Marguerite Gautier*—"Such a choice was understandable in Verdi who sought to titillate nerves of the public at the time of the artistic decadence"—but not in a young, well-educated Russian composer. P. I. Chaikovsky to A. S. Arensky, 2 April 1887, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 14:79–80. On another, however, he placed *La Traviata* with his favorite contemporary opera: "Why do you like some moments in *La Traviata*? Why you *have* to love *Carmen*? It is because one feels beauty and force in these characters, beneath the crude surface." P. I. Chaikovsky to E. K. Pavlovskaya, 12 April 1885, in ibid., 13:64.

48. P. I. Chaikovsky to S. I. Taneev, 2 January 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 7:22.

49. P. I. Chaikovsky to P. I. Iurgenson, 4 February 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 7: 97.

50. Iurgenson loyally published the piano score in 1878, prior to the première. It was sold out instantly.

51. P. I. Chaikovsky to A. Chaikovsky, 2 February 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 7:91.

52. Poznansky suggests that Chaikovsky's nervous breakdown, whose results were separation from his wife and the leave of absence, might in fact have been faked ("Tchaikovsky: A Life Reconsidered," 25).

53. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 1 February 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 1:195.

54. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. G. Rubinstein, 27 October 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:206.

55. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 28 September 1883, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 3:227.

56. According to Aleksandra Shol'p, the opera "has become the first Russian musical novel reflecting contemporary social ideology. . . . Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* can be viewed as a natural extension of contemporary prose; in essence, it belongs to Turgenev's novelistic genre, i.e., the genre developed after Turgenev's prose." "*Evgenii Onegin Chaikovskogo: Ocherki* (Leningrad, 1982): 21–22.

57. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 18 May 1877, P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 6:135.

58. Emerson, "Tchaikovsky's Tatiana," 217.

59. Compare Taruskin's observation about the significance of the polonaise as a manifestation of the "imperial style" in Chaikovsky's symphonies and operas: *Defining Russia Musically,* 276–86.

60. This phenomenon has left traces in cultural memory owing to numerous parodies—from a modestly anonymous "Regardez ma chère sestritsa quel joli idyot garçon" (which I heard from my grandmother) to the renowned three-volume opus by I. P. Miatlev, *Sensatsii i zamechaniia gospozhi Kurdiukovoi danletranzhe* (St. Petersburg: Journal de Saint-Petersbourg, 1840–44).

61. The close kinship between Lensky's and Tatiana's leitmotifs confirms Bullard's suggestion that Tatiana and Lensky form an implicit couple in the opera, since Chaikovsky found both of their respective partners grossly inadequate for an amorous partnership ("Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin,*" 160–61).

62. M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 2:375.

63. Chaikovsky's brother-in-law, Lev Vasilyevich Davydov, was the son of Vasily Lvovich Davydov, a Decembrist and Pushkin's friend. His mother followed her husband to exile in Siberia. When she returned thirty years later, the family estate was returned to her. During the 1860s and 1870s the Davydovs worked hard to restore the devastated estate. In a letter to von Meck of 19 April 1884, Chaikovsky speaks of the elder Davydova—"vigorous, strong, full of life"—and her stories about Pushkin's visits to Kamenka. M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 2:553.

64. As far as I know, this expression was introduced by Pyotr Vyazemsky, Pushkin's contemporary and, by the 1860s, a lonely survivor of the literary world of the early part of the century, in his poem "Once there was the Golden Age of idealist literature" [*Literatury idealnoi / Byl vek kogda-to zolotoi*] (1866). Vyazemsky uses this image in contrast to the contemporary literary age; he refuses to acknowledge the latter as "Iron," calling it "Animal" instead (punning on the Russian *zheleznyi,* "iron," and *zhivotnyi,* "animal").

65. Commenting on Tatiana's famous line "I was given to the other," Belinsky wrote indignantly: "Exactly—was given rather than gave myself. Faithful forever—to whom and in what? Faithfulness to relationships which are nothing but corruption of feelings and feminine chastity . . . is immoral to the utmost." "Sochineniia Aleksandra Pushkina," in V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1955), 7:501. In his famous "Pushkin speech" in 1880, Dostoevsky responded to Belinsky (and his followers, who constituted a majority of his audience) by extolling the moral and religious principles that made Tatiana remain "faithful to the old general." Dostoevsky's speech might have influ-

enced Chaikovsky's decision to alter the opera's finale after the first staging in 1879. A. A. Gozenpud, *Dostoevskii i muzykal'no-teatral'noe iskusstvo* (Leningrad, 1981), 167. In vain did Pushkin scholars point out repeatedly that Tatiana's husband is not an old man: he is Onegin's friend, perhaps a few years his elder. During the campaign of 1812–13, the rank of general could be attained at a very early age — sometimes in one's late twenties. Nevertheless, beginning with the Bolshoi Theater production of 1881, the operatic General Gremin has been consistently presented as an old man — possibly, under the spell cast by Dostoevsky.

66. E. S. Chernaia remarks, somewhat naïvely, that Tatiana "could also be his [Chaikovsky's] contemporary"; moreover, the features that one could observe in Tatiana for the first time became "even more pronounced" in heroines of Turgenev, Nekrasov, and Tolstoy. Because of that, Chaikovsky's Tatiana, unlike Pushkin's, "could not so passively subject herself" to her fate. "*Evgenii Onegin" Pushkina i Chaikovskogo* (Moscow, 1960), 22, 40.

67. As Laroche noted, unhappily, in his review, the operatic Tatiana "with five minutes of kisses and embraces practically overthrew her famous 'I am given to the other, and will be faithful to him forever.' " M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 2:232.

68. Kiui, "Muzykal'nye zametki."

69. Turgenev once confessed in a conversation that after the opera Lensky's character gained in value for him, "as if it had grown, had become something of more significance than in Pushkin." N. D. Kashkin, *Izbrannye stat'i o P. I. Chaikovskom* (Moscow, 1954), 46. A. Shol'p suggests that Chaikovsky's Lensky shapes up into an idealist of the 1830s and 1840s. *Evgenii Onegin Chaikovskogo,* 31.

70. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin,* ch. 6, st. xxiii, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6:126.

71. "Never ever have I experienced such boredom as in *Tristan and Isolde*. It is the most tedious and inane drag [*kanitel*], without movement, without life, absolutely unable to make the listeners interested and to evoke an empathy towards the personages. By all evidence, the public, although it was the German one, also was bored, yet after every act it exploded with the thunderous applause. I am at loss how to explain this — probably by a partiotic solidarity with an artist who dedicated all his life to poetisation of Germanism." P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 31 December 1882, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 2:485.

72. "Pushkin has duels daily; thank God, they are not lethal, the fighters always remain unharmed." E. A. Karamzina to P. A. Vyazemsky, 23 March 1820, *Starina i novizna* 1 (1897): 98.

73. P. I. Bartenev, "Pushkin v iuzhnoi Rossii," in V. V. Veresaev, *Pushkin v zhizni: Sistematicheskii svod podlinnykh svidetel'stv sovremennikov* (Moscow: Academia, 1932), 1:120–21. A trace of this providential blizzard can be found, more than a decade later, in "Blizzard," in *Belkin's Tales,* where the snowstorm prevents elopement.

74. N. A. Markevich, "Vospominaniia N. A. Markevicha o vstrechakh s Kiukhel'bekerom v 1817–1820 gg.," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow: Academy of Science, 1954): 59,508. In another account, Pushkin took Kyukhelbeker's shot — the latter missed, of course — then said: "Enough of this foolishness, my dear. Let's go have tea." Still another

story suggests that both pistols were charged with cranberries instead of bullets. See Veresaev, *Pushkin v zhizni,* 1:74. Common to all these versions, regardless of their veracity, is the atmosphere of friendly bantering surrounding the affair.

75. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin,* ch. 6, st. xxvii, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6:128.

Chapter 4: Khovanshchina

1. M. S. Pekelis, "Dva avtografa," *Sovetskaia muzyka* no. 9 (1965). The document is published in full in M. P. Musorgskii, *Literaturnoe nasledie,* ed. Pekelis (Moscow, 1972), 2:129–48.

2. According to O. I. Zakharova, Musorgsky composed his songs "orally," at the piano: "to have composed absolutely did not mean for him to have written." "O tvorcheskom protsesse M. P. Musorgskogo (na primere romansov)," in *Protsessy muzykal'nogo tvorchestva* 2 (Rossiiskaia Muzykal'naia Akademiia imeni Gnesinykh, *Sbornik trudov,* 130 [1997]): 106. The piling-up of intermediary versions often presents textological and chronological problems (ibid., 108–10). See the brilliant analysis of such a problem concerning one of Musorgsky's early songs in Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chap. 1.

3. Interesting parallels between Musorgsky and Gogol have been drawn by Caryl Emerson, *The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): xiv–xvi.

4. As Caryl Emerson points out, however, even *Boris Godunov*'s relation to its literary prototype was far from simple. The Kromy scene in particular, which concluded the second version of the opera, had no direct correspondence in Pushkin's play. It is patched together from a variety of sources, much in the way *Khovanshchina*'s libretto is composed. "Musorgsky's Libretti on Historical Themes: From the Two *Borises* to *Khovanshchina,*" in *Reading Opera,* ed. Arthur Groos and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 238.

5. This document is published in N. S. Tikhonravov, *Pamiatniki otrechennoi russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1863; repr., The Hague: Mouton, 1970).

6. "Some days ago I plunged into the very depth and found the following pearl" (an extensive quotation follows describing the circumstances of the birth of the Antichrist in Russia, with transparent allusions to Peter). M. Musorgsky to V. Stasov, 13 July 1772, in *The Mussorgsky Reader: A Life of Modeste Petrovich Mussorgsky in Letters and Documents,* ed. Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertenson (New York: Norton, 1947): 189–90.

7. This work is published in *Zapiski Russkikh liudei: Sobytiia vremen Petra Velikogo,* ed. N. Sakharov (St. Petersburg, 1841).

8. M. B. Pliukhanova, *Siuzhety i simvoly Moskovskogo tsarstva* (St. Petersburg: Akropol, 1995).

9. This work is published in Sakharov, *Zapiski Russkikh liudei.*

10. R. K. Shirinian, in *Evoliutsiia opernogo tvorchestva Musorgskogo* (Moscow, 1973), points to scores of small details that Musorgsky could have picked up from various minor sources. According to Shirinian, besides the various texts published in *Zapiski Russkikh liudei* Musorgsky used several modern historiographical accounts,

such as P. Shchebal'skii's *The Rule of Tsarina Sophia* (1856). She does not mention S. Solovyev's history, which, as we shall see, served as a major source for Musorgsky.

11. The only mention Musorgsky makes of Solovyev to Stasov, in the letter of 6 September 1873, has much more casual character than Musorgsky's discussion of his other ostensible sources: "I am rereading Soloviev, to become acquainted with this epoch . . . I absorb it and more than enjoy it." Leyda and Bertenson, *Mussorgsky Reader,* 251.

12. S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen,* vol. 13, republished in Solov'ev, *Sochineniia v 18 knigakh* (Moscow: Golos, 1988–98), bk. 7, 59.

13. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii,* vol. 11, in Solov'ev, *Sochineniia v 18 knigakh,* bk. 6, 313.

14. Ibid., bk. 6, 187.

15. Ibid., bk. 7, 269.

16. See the discussion of other possible prototypes of the operatic Dosifei, including Archpriest Avvacum, in E. Frid, *Proshedshee, nastoiashchee i budushchee v* Khovanshchine *Musorgskogo* (Leningrad, 1974): 164–78.

17. Emerson, *Life of Musorgsky,* 38–40.

18. "My God, what a plot is this! No logic and coherence whatsoever." N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov to S. N. Kruglikov, in I. Shlifshtein, *Musorgskii: Khudozhnik, Vremia, Sud'ba* (Moscow, 1975), 258.

19. As a matter of fact, episodes of the musketeers' drinking abound in Solovyev's historical account; virtually every political confrontation ends with an order (from whichever party has prevailed) to give out vodka to the streltsy.

20. M.-D. Calvocoressi, in his widely known biography of Musorgsky, expresses the conviction that had the composer carried his opera to completion, he would have realized Stasov's plan. *Khovanshchina* would have been "tout à fait différent" from the way we know it: "plus complex encore, plus pittoresque, plus bigarrée que *Boris Godunov.*" *Moussorgsky,* 2nd ed. (Paris: Alcan, 1911): 209, 212. S. I. Shlifshtein, however, contests Stasov's assertion that the opera "fell apart" after 1875. He points out that it was precisely after 1876 that Musorgsky added certain key scenes, such as the musketeers' procession to execution and their plea with Khovansky. Shlifshtein, *Musorgskii,* 260.

21. "Under the influence of failing health and a shattered organism, his talent began to subside and also, apparently, to be changed. His compositions were becoming vague, pretentious, sometimes even incoherent and tasteless." *Modest Petrovich Musorgskii,* quoted in V. V. Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow, 1952), 2:211. N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov's verdict was as harsh: "The year 1874 [the year of *Boris*'s première] can be considered the beginning . . . of Musorgsky's decline, which continued gradually until the day of his death." *Letopis' moei muzykal'noi zhizni,* 7th ed. (Moscow, 1955), 86.

22. In his article "Russian Folk, Russian People," written in the atmosphere of the upsurging of official Russian patriotism in the wake of the victory in World War II (but not published at that time), Asafyev sternly rebukes Musorgsky for his pessimism, citing Borodin as a positive counterexample: Musorgsky's work depicts nothing but mutiny; he does not see the people who "with their labor and blood were creating a great state." Asafyev softens somewhat only in view of "Dawn over the Moscow River." He takes the piece as evidence that the composer "has already mastered [*ovladel*] the idea of unification under the state, which he expressed in the image of the dawn," yet he "perhaps did not have time or strength enough to carry the meaning of this theme to its full completion,

beyond the trumpets of Peter's mock regiments." The article was published in an incomplete, much softened form in *Sovetskaia muzyka* no. 1 (1959); I quote it after Shlifshtein, who uses the article's manuscript: *Musorgskii,* 240–41.

23. See in detail the story of the Stravinsky-Diaghilev production: I. Vershinina, "Musorgskii i Stravinskii (o diagilevskoi postanovke *Khovanshchiny*)," in *M. P. Musorgskii i muzyka dvadtsatogo veka,* ed. G. L. Golovinskii (Moscow, 1990); Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), ch. 14.

24. Taruskin, *Musorgsky,* 318.

25. L. N. Tolstoy to N. N. Strakhov, 23 August and 26 August 1876, in L. N. Tolstoi, *Sobranie sochinenii v 22 tomakh* (Moscow, 1984), 17:784.

26. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel,* ed. R. P. Blackamoor (New York: Scribner, 1934), 84. James's and other nineteenth-century Western views of Tolstoy's narrative have been analyzed by Robert Belknap, "Rossiia XIX veka v zerkale romannogo siuzheta," in *Kazan, Moscow, Petersburg: Multiple Faces of Russian Empire,* ed. C. Evtuhov, B. Gasparov, and M. Von Hagen (Moscow: Its-Garant, 1997), 213–31.

27. Iu. N. Mel'gunov, *Russkie pesni neposredstvenno s golosov naroda zapisannye,* vol. 1 (Moscow, 1879).

28. The censor's permission for its publication was issued on May 31. M. S. Pekelis, "Musorgskii—pisatel'-dramaturg," in *M. S. Musorgskii: Literaturnoe nasledie* (Moscow, 1972), 2:32.

29. Frid (*Proshedshee, nastoiashchee i budushchee,* 142) notes the similarity between the chorus and Khovansky's leitmotif. The author thinks, though, that Musorgsky's reason for establishing such a similarity was a purely formal one: he wanted to provide a link between the embedded choral number and the rest of the opera.

30. Frid notes Musorgsky's ability to create multiple perspectives for situations in the opera by constantly shifting from an outward to an inward perspective. *Proshedshee, nastoiashchee i budushchee,* 261–62.

31. V. Karatygin gives an eloquent description of the melodic development in the introduction: "The theme becomes transformed in its most basic linear outline to such an extent that one could speak of two, three or more different themes, had one not been absolutely convinced by one's intuition of the organic unity of their musical nature. . . . At almost every appearance, the theme turns out to be somewhat different. These alterations are not sufficient for our musical instinct to acknowledge presence of several themes, yet they are too extensive to acknowledge in them one and the same static, precisely outlined theme. It lives, it evolves." "*Khovanshchina* i ee avtory," in *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917), 5–6:200–201.

32. Evgenii Trembovelskii, in a thoughtful analysis of Musorgskian principles of melody and harmony, describes this phenomenon as gradual expansion of the scale (*popolnenie zvukoryada*): having begun very sparsely, the theme gradually occupies, by means of incremental variations, an ever more complex set of tones: *Stil' Musorgskogo: Lad. Garmoniia. Sklad* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1999), chap. 4. According to A. Sokhor, such gradual expansion may eventually reach a level of high complexity, encompassing up to a twelve-tone set. "O pridode vyrazitel'nykh vozmozhnostei diatoniki," in *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* (Leningrad, 1965), 4:175.

33. G. L. Golovinskii, *Musorgskii i fol'klor* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1994), esp. chap. 3; G. L. Golovinskii and A. Konotop, "Musorgskii i drevnerusskaia pevcheskaia traditsiia," *Muzykal'naia akademiia* no. 1 (1993): 203–6.

34. Karatygin ("*Khovanshchina* i ee avtory," 215) describes the free variability created by the *vavilony* as hypophony, i.e., a musical texture that is neither monodic nor polyphonic in the strict sense.

35. As M. D. Sabinina notes, what Musorgsky would have heard was the modern church singing shaped in the late eighteenth century (primarily by Dmitry Bortniansky) as a conflation of the Russian and the Western musical idioms. How much the composer could have known about the authentic medieval tradition remains an open question. "K razviazke dramy sovesti v *Borise Godunove,*" *Muzykal'naia akademiia* no. 1 (1993): 193–96. The composer speaks not so much of his listening experience, however, as of the learning he received from the school priest, Father Krupsky. Moreover, he claims to have "deeply penetrated into the very essence" not only of Greek but of Catholic church music as well (in the French version of his autobiographical sketch, he also added "luthérienne-protestante"). "Avtobiograficheskaia zametka M. P. Musorgskogo," with notes by V. Karenin, *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917), 5–6:5–14.

36. S. S. Skrebkov has aptly called this type "strophic variation": *Khudozhestvennye printsipy muzykal'nykh stilei* (Moscow, 1973), 109.

37. As Charles Rosen notes, Wagner "rejected the convention of repeating everything four or five times mainly because the musical forms which required repetition were obsolete by his time." Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: Norton, 1972): 165–66.

38. Trembovel'skii (*Stil' Musorgskogo,* ch. 9) calls this phenomenon the "principle of unitonality": by freely gliding from one tonality to another, the theme in its development treats a conglomeration of tonalities, no matter how remote, as one super-tonality. On the roots of this treatment of tonalities in Russian folklore, see A. Iusfin, "Nekotorye voprosy izucheniia melodicheskikh ladov narodnoi muzyki," in *Problemy lada,* ed. K. I. Iuzhak (Moscow, 1972), 142. On this kind of tonality in traditional religious chant, see N. S. Seregina, "O ladovom i kompozitsionnom stroenii pesnopenii znamennogo raspeva," in *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* (Leningrad, 1977), 14:65–77. Paradoxically, this phenomenon, which in Musorgsky and in the folk tradition is achieved on the basis of simple diatonic sonorities, appears to be closely related to Stravinsky's polytonality, i.e., simultaneous tonal juxtapositions with sharp dissonant effects.

39. Before Wagner's time this strategy was employed by Schumann. At least, that is how Rosen (*Classical Style,* 452) describes Schumann's breaking away from "the classical style": "Unlike any classical work, Schumann's *Fantasy* neither starts from a point of stability, nor reaches it until the last possible moment."

40. Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

41. Caryl Emerson emphasizes the transcendent meaning of the final scene: "Apocalypse Then, Now, and (For Us) Never: Reflections on Mussorgsky's Other Historical Opera," in *Khovanshchina: The Khovansky Affair,* ed. J. Batchelor and N. John (London: Calder, 1994), 7–20.

42. G. L. Golovinskii and M. D. Sabinina point out that the finales of all four completed acts of the opera are quiet: "a dying away rather than a conclusion." This might very well be a blueprint for the end of the last act as well. *Modest Petrovich Musorgskii* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1998), 634–35.

43. In Karatygin's opinion, prior to Rimsky-Korsakov's editing *Khovanshchina*'s musical texture looked so "impoverished" that "one does not always see such banality [*ubogost*] even in the old-fashioned Italians." Later, however, he is more magnanimous: "The primitivism of *Khovanshchina*'s texture arose not solely and not always from Musorgsky's lack of the skills needed for writing complex music" because it fit the opera's epic style as a "religious-political tragedy" ("*Khovanshchina* i ee avtory," 193–94).

44. A. Rimsky-Korsakov expressed in strong terms the opinion that had become conventional in the circle that included Stasov and N. Rimsky-Korsakov: that Musorgsky's creative abilities faded away after reaching a climax (however imperfect) in *Boris:* "It is the tragedy of self-taught geniuses [*genialnykh samorodkov*] that they do not know a broad development and inner renewal of their talents . . . their light is dazzlingly bright, but its source is fragile." "*Boris Godunov* M. P. Musorgskogo," in *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917), 5–6:167. Calvocoressi's account of Musorgsky's life was written with great sympathy and in fact was aimed at enhancing the composer's reputation (particularly in the West). Yet he cannot hide some disappointment concerning *Khovanshchina* after having said so much about the innovations of *Boris*. Compared with the latter, *Khovanshchina* "est par bien de points plus conforme aus traditions du théâtre lyrique. . . . Ce qui frappe tout d'abord, ce sont la relative régularité des rythmes, des coups mélodiques, des periodes. . . . Les motifs mélodiques sont parfois formés de simples combinations des notes de l'accord parfait" (*Moussorgsky,* 209, 222). This attitude can be seen in modern works as well. For instance, Shirinian points out that *Khovanshchina*'s melodic style is "altogether song-like." She is surprised, however, by the fact that the composer, in his use of the folk song, ignored one of its most "interesting" musical characteristics — a fluid, asymmetrical rhythm — resorting to simple symmetrical structures instead (*Evoliutsiia opernogo tvorchestva Musorgskogo,* 105–8). As a result, this opera "has nothing resembling the dynamic musical characterizations" of *Boris* (ibid., 118).

45. A. Rimsky-Korsakov noted that the vocal melody and the accompaniment neither compete not concur with each other but often present complementary versions that together amount to the fully developed theme ("*Boris Godunov* Musorgskogo," 154).

46. Frid remarks that the scene's opening music has "even a certain poetic element in it"; her apparent surprise is caused by the fact that otherwise Golitsyn's character has little of the poetic or the sympathetic in it (*Proshedshee, nastoiashchee i budushchee,* 146). The author does not note the Chaikovsky connection, which bestows a sarcastic undertone to this "poetic" music.

47. "Sadyk-pasha was half dozing, dreaming of Turkish sweetmeats. . . . [N]oticing in Sadyk-pasha an unmistakable (serious) tendency to become leaven, I awaited fermentation. — Well, the leaven fermented after the 'parrot' [song,] fermented, and bubbles began to burst with a dull, lazy and unpleasant sound. From the sum of sounds (there weren't many) of bursting bubbles, I gathered: '. . . a powerful one (you know who), but dispersed powers . . .' The powerful one thanked Sadyk-pasha and no more." M. Musorgsky to V. Stasov, 26 December 1872 in Leyda and Bertenson, *Mussorgsky Reader,* 201.

48. B. V. Asaf'ev noted that Musorgsky's way of "creating a culmination by bringing his characters together in a tight knot of encounters" was akin to Dostoevsky's finales (*Izbrannye trudy,* 3:124).

49. In support of his argument that the composer left merely the "torso" of an opera, Taruskin cites, in addition to the obviously incomplete act 5, the finale of act 2 (*Musorgsky,* 319–21). True, Musorgsky never formally marked the end of act 2 in his score, and at some point he talked about his plans to end it with a quintet. This quintet, however, never materialized—either because it proved to be beyond the composer's technical means, as Taruskin alleges, or because he thought better of it after introducing the mute scene. Whatever Musorgsky's unrealized intentions and unresolved hesitations might be, the existing ending is musically and dramatically very effective.

50. M. Musorgsky to V. Stasov, 13 July 1972, in Leyda and Bertenson, *Mussorgsky Reader,* 190 (emphasis in original).

51. "All that you've planned for the dissentress . . . is *excellent,* but what devil pushes you to make her—a Princess?!! The entire opera will finally consist so exclusively of princes and princesses that it will be a chronicle of princely *spawn!!* Golitsyn—a Prince, Khovansky senior—a Prince, Khov. junior—a Prince, you plan Dosifei as the former Prince Myshetsky, the dissentress as the Princess Sitskaia. What is this finally to be, *an opera of princes,* while I thought you were planning an opera of the *people.*" V. Stasov to M. Musorgsky, 15 August 1873, in Leyda and Bertenson, *Mussorgsky Reader,* 244, emphasis in original.

52. Apparently, Musorgsky at first intended to show more explicitly that Marfa is only making a fool of Golitsyn (see Frid, *Proshedshee, nastoiashchee i budushchee,* 225). Here, as in many other instances, his work was developing greater ambiguity.

53. The final draft of the piano score of act 3 bears the date May 29, 1880. It is hard to tell whether Musorgsky had actually heard Chaikovsky's opera (or some pieces from it) by that time or whether this similarity arises coincidentally as the result of an ironic imitation of Chaikovsky's style.

54. M. Musorgky to V. Stasov, 6 September 1873, in M. P. Musorgskii, *Pis'ma i dokumenty,* ed. A. N. Rimskii-Korsakov (Moscow, 1932), 281. This was Musorgsky's answer to Stasov's angry rebuke of him for turning his "people's drama" into an "opera of princes." In view of this admonition, Musorgsky is obviously eager to demonstrate to the Generalissimus his heroine's antiauthoritarian credentials.

55. Emerson ("Musorgsky's Libretti," 250, 256–64) argues that *Khovanshchina*'s portrayal of history is consistently done from the Old Believers' standpoint. The very atemporality of the opera's plot, its disregard for empirical causalities, and its penchant for fusing together different layers of time, reflect the apocalyptic consciousness that dominated the Old Believers' world.

56. A striking account of self-immolations by the Old Believers is given in I. F. Filipov, *Istoriia Vygovskoi staroobriadcheskoi pustyni* (St. Petersburg: D. Kozhanchikov, 1862), a book Musorgsky must have known.

57. N. N. Strakhov, "Boris Godunov na stsene," in Strakhov, *Zametki o Pushkine i drugikh poetakh* (Kiev: V. Chokolov, 1897), 79–104 (for the letters); A. A. Gozenpud, *Dostoevskii i muzykal'no-teatral'noe iskusstvo* (Leningrad, 1981), 169–70.

58. Musorgsky's and Golenishchev's relationship was so close that sometimes the possibility of a sexual intimacy is suggested (Taruskin, *Musorgsky).* In any event, this

relationship played a very major role in the last ten years of the composer's life. For most of the seventies, he and Golenishchev lived together; Musorgsky was obviously shaken when his friend moved out after his marriage. Golenishchev, a minor poet, provided lyrics for most of Musorgsky's mature songs, some of which (notably the cycle "Without the Son") apparently were written after the composer's design.

59. I am grateful to Sergei V. Belov of St. Petersburg for this information. More on the subject can be learned from *Letopis' Zhizni Dostoevskogo,* ed. Belov (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii Proekt, 1999), 3:409.

60. "Modest Petrovich Musorgskii," *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917), 5–6:107.

61. "One never encounters any mention of Dostoevsky in Mussorgsky's letters; meanwhile, there is a lot in his work that suggests that Mussorgsky read Dostoevsky, and did so with attention." L. A. Zhuikova-Minenko, "Tragicheskoe i komicheskoe v tvorchestve M. P. Musorgskogo," in *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* 14 (Leningrad, 1975): 50.

62. I. Lapshin, "M. P. Musorgskii," in *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917), 5–6:57. See also Stasov's testimony: "We had many conversations on this subject; traces of the project can be also seen in our correspondence" ("Perov i Musorgskii," in Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia,* 2:151).

63. "The mighty [little] heap have degenerated into soulless traitors" (M. Musorgsky to V. Stasov, 19–20 October 1875, in Leyda and Bertenson, *Mussorgsky Reader,* 312). The immediate cause of these words was the extremely harsh review of *Boris* by Cézar Cui. Yet in an autobiographical fragment written in about 1880, Musorgsky confirmed his estranged position by asserting that he "does not belong to any of the existing circles, either due to the character of his composition, or due to his views on music."

Chapter 5: Lost in a Symbolist City

1. Esteban Buch, *La neuvième de Beethoven: Une histoire politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

2. Boris Gasparov, introduction to *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1–18.

3. The new Russian capital rose not exactly on swamps but, rather, on the ruins of an older Swedish city largely destroyed by military action in 1702. See Bengt Jangfeldt, *Svenska vägar till S:t Petersburg* (Stockholm, 1998), pt. 1.

4. F. M. Doestevskii, *Zapiski iz podpol'ia,* in Dostoevskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v piatnadtsati tomakh* (Leningrad, 1989), 4:455. The "Petersburg myth" has become one of the favorite topics in Russian cultural studies of the past two decades. Particularly representative of this trend are several collective scholarly enterprises such as *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 18: *Semiotika goroda i gorodskoi kul'tury: Peterburg* (Tartu, 1984) (Acta et commentationes universitatis Tartuensis 664); *Metafizika Peterburga* (Petersburg: Morev, 1995); and *Muzykal'naia akademiia* nos. 4–5 (1995).

5. Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

6. Arkadii Klimovitsky, "Tchaikovsky and the Russian 'Silver Age,' " in *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 319–32.

7. He wrote to von Meck on April 24, 1888: "I have been thinking occasionally, and

still do, about an opera on the subject of *The Captain's Daughter.*" P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk* (Moscow: Academia, 1936), 3:529.

8. P. I. Chaikovsky to Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich, 30 May 1888, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska* (Moscow, 1974), 14:442.

9. M. Chaikovsky apparently shared his brother's attitude when he claimed afterwards that he "gave an opportunity to Pyotr Ilyich Chaikovsky to do what he has done with this work, charming but lightweight, compared with *The Captain's Daughter, Eugene Onegin,* and *Boris Godunov"* (M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo*, 3:347).

10. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 17 December 1889, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 3: 589.

11. To his publisher, Pyotr Iurgenson, Chaikovsky wrote almost apologetically, at the beginning of his work on the opera: "I want to perform an incredible trick: to write an opera for the next season. . . . To tell the truth, I like working in haste, when people are waiting and hurry me up." P. I. Chaikovsky to P. Iurgenson, 22 January 1880, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:305.

12. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 17 December 1889, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 3:590.

13. "*Ivan, princhipe Chemodanov, ambashiatore Moskovita*." P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 26 March 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:323.

14. Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

15. He wrote to his brother, "Do your best to regale him [the director, Vsevolozhsky]. One needs, as far as possible, to regale everyone there, so that they would do their best afterwards." P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 12 February 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:312.

16. "Laroche wrote to me that he and Nápravník [the musical director of the Mariinsky Theater] are grumbling that I have done it so fast. How can they fail to comprehend that working fast is my fundamental trait?! I cannot work otherwise than speedily. But the speed does not mean at all that the opera has been written haphazardly." P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 3 March 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:319.

17. Ibid.

18. "What can one think up so that poor Figner will not get a role beyond his endurance? . . . I am afraid the poor soul [*bednyaga,* the word with which Tomsky calls Hermann in the opera] simply does not have enough strength to endure it." P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 6 February 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:311.

19. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 20 December 1877, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 1:130.

20. For a witty account of the generic fate of the operatic heroine, see Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

21. Denis Davydov recognized with delight an anecdote he had told Pushkin many

years earlier in the epigraph to Chapter 2 of the tale. He wrote to Pushkin, "Jesus! What a devilish memory! God only knows when I told you in passing about my riposte to M. A. Naryshkina concerning *les suivantes qui sont plus fraîches,* and you made it the epigraph, word for word, for one of the sections of the Queen of Spades. Can you imagine my surprise, nay delight to live in your memory, Pushkin's memory! . . . My heart has been filled with joy, as happens when one receives a note from the woman one loves." D. Davydov to A. Pushkin, 4 April 1834, in A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1996), 15:123.

22. For more details related to that feast and Derzhavin's account of it see Chapter 1.

23. "This was the signal for the theatrical performance. The host most humbly invited to it his distinguished visitors and also invited other guests. The curtain was raised. Dancers including male and female villagers stepped forward. . . . In the outside garden, very spacious and beautiful, bonfires [*weselitelnye ogni*] were set up." "Opisanie torzhestva, byvshego po sluchaiu vziatiia goroda Izmaila v dome General-Feldmarshala Kniazia Potemkina-Tavricheskogo, bliz Konnoi Gvardii, v prisutstvii Imperatritsy Ekateriny II, 1791 Aprelia 28," in G. R. Derzhavin, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg: A. Smirdin, 1831), 4:44, 52.

24. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 20 February 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:316.

25. Chaikovsky was aware that Karabanov's pastorale was written on occasion of yet another festivity, at the house of Prince Naryshkin (in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:343); it was published in 1786. This reference potentially pushes the opera's time even further back, to the late 1780s, but its general temporal design remains the same.

26. "Tomsky's song is written after Derzhavin's lyrics; this song was fashionable in the end of the last century. Like everything else that emanated from the pen of the notorious Gavriil Romanovich, it is devoid of any attractiveness . . . one cannot help wondering at the anodyne stupidity of the principal thought and clumsiness of the form. I took this song as a characteristic episode in the scene depicting the mores of the end of the century." P. I. Chaikovsky to Grand Prince Konstantin Konstantinovich, 3 August 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:344.

27. Aleksei Parin, *Khozhdenie v nevidimyi grad. Paradigmy russkoi klassicheskoi opery* (Moscow: Agraf, 1999), 349.

28. Andrei Bely indicates this difference between the time of the operatic Liza and that of his heroine: "Is it a shadow of Liza? No, this is not Liza, this is—nothing remarkable, just a Petersburg lady." Bely, *Petersburg,* trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 34.

29. P. I. Chaikovsky to N. von Meck, 16–17 August 1878, in P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon Mekk,* 1:411.

30. See the perceptive observations regarding the opera's polytemporality in Parin, *Khozhdenie v nevidimyi grad,* 339–41; I. D. Glikman, *Meierkhol'd i muzykal'nyi teatr* (Leningrad, 1987), 287–91.

31. I quote from the opera's libretto, which deviates slightly from Batiushkov's poem. The differences (*v lugakh,* "'in the meadows," instead of the original *v poliakh,* "in the fields," *radostnykh,* "joyful," instead of *prekrasnykh,* "beautiful") are essentially without consequence for the general meaning of the poem. In fact, such small inaccuracies in quo-

tation were typical of the nineteenth century. This widespread cultural habit is artfully parodied in Bely's *Petersburg,* whose every chapter begins with an epigraph from Pushkin—virtually all of them cited imprecisely, sometimes with a comic shift in tone and meaning.

32. When I presented this chapter as a paper at Harvard University, my colleagues justly pointed out to me that the image of a grave can be present in a neoclassical pastorale as well. The crucial difference signifying the transition to the world of the Romantic elegy in Batiushkov consists in the fact that the situation is presented from the point of view of the dead shepherdess, not her joyful companions surrounding her grave, as happens in neoclassical tableaux. Hence the shift of the tense into the elegiac past: "I lived in happy Arcadia" instead of present tense of the classical "Et in Arcadia ego."

33. P. I. Chaikovsky to M. Chaikovsky, 12 February 1890, in M. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:313.

34. A. Finagin, "O vzaimootnoshenii khudozhestvennoi i bytovoi pesni," *De musica: Institut istorii iskusstv; Vremennik otdela muzyki* (1927), 3:54–61, shows how the urban popular song spread across all the classes of Russian society, gradually pushing the peasant folk song into the background.

35. Parin (*Khozhdenie v nevidimyi grad,* 328) notes that Hermann's subsequent declaration, "She will be mine!" (*Ona moeyu budet!*) sounds ambiguous: " 'She' means here—the mystery of the three cards [the Russian *taina,* "mystery," is of the feminine grammatical gender], and the flourishing beauty of Liza, and the horrible old Countess who is awaiting all her life her third lover."

36. Alexander Pushkin, *Complete Prose Fiction,* ed. and trans. Paul Debreczeny (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 230.

37. V. E. Meierkhol'd, *Pikovaia dama: Zamysel, Voploshchenie, Sud'ba; Materialy i dokumenty* (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 1994).

38. Bely, *Petersburg,* 86.

39. The term was coined by V. N. Toporov: "Peterburg i peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury," in his *Mif. Ritual. Simvol. Obraz: Issledovaniia v oblasti mifopoetiki* (Moscow: Progress, 1995): 259–367.

40. Parin (*Khozhdenie v nevidimyi grad,* 317–18) cites evidence of the overwhelming impression that Chaikovsky's opera made on the would-be leaders of the first wave of Russian modernism. For instance, Alexandre Benois wrote in his memoirs: "I anticipated as it were the music of *The Queen of Spades,* with its magic evocation of shadows. . . . *The Queen of Spades* literally made me insane, turned for a time being into a visionary of a sort, awoke my dormant intuitive understanding of the past." On the influence of the opera's aesthetics on the world of art, see Arkadii Klimovitsky, "Tchaikovsky and the Russian 'Silver Age,' " in *Tchaikovsky and His World,* ed. Leslie Kearny (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 319–32.

Chapter 6: A Testimony

1. " 'This Is Chaos, Not Music': On the Opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (*Pravda,* 28 Jan. 1936)," in *Newly Translated Source Documents,* by Jonathan Walker and Marina Frolova-Walker (materials for the symposium *Music and Dictatorship: Russia Under Stalin,* Carnegie Hall, 22 February 2003). According to Taruskin, at least the

third movement of the symphony must have been written "postdenunciation." Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): 493.

2. I. D. Glikman, ed., *Pis'ma k drugu: Pis'ma D. D. Shostakovicha k I. D. Glikmanu* (Moscow: DSCH, 1993), 12–13; Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 95. According to another version, the rehearsals were visited by representatives of the "authorities" who then "advised" the composer to withdraw his work from performance: L. V. Mikheeva, *Zhizn' Dmitriia Shostakovicha* (Moscow: Terra, 1997), 196–97.

3. When the Leningrad performance was canceled, the conductor, Aleksandr Gauk, took the score to Moscow with the hope of being able to perform it there. In December 1936 the Fourth Symphony was played on piano in four hands in Moscow for a small circle of musicians. During the war, Gauk's archive, which included the only copy of the symphony, was lost; in 1961, the preserved orchestral parts were used to restore the score: S. M. Khentova, *Shostakovich: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Leningrad, 1985), 1:439.

4. As early as 1931, in an article titled "From Marx to Our Days" (*Sovetskoe iskusstvo,* 15 February 1931), Shostakovich announced his intention to write a "grand" symphonic poem with the same title that would give a musical picture of history of the revolutionary movement in Russia and worldwide; like many other officially announced plans, this one never came to fruition, yet the composer's drift toward grand symphonic forms proved to be genuine. G. A. Orlov, *Simfonii Shostakovicha* (Leningrad, 1962), 57.

5. Critics noted the proximity of the instrumental style in his symphonies to vocal music, from operatic arias and recitatives to popular and art songs: B. V. Asaf'ev, "Shostakovich," *Moskovskaia gosudarstvennaia filarmoniia,* October 1945; L. V. Danilevich, "Simfonizm D. Shostakovicha i iskusstvo teatra," in *D. Shostakovich: Stat'i i materialy* (Moscow, 1976), 165–74. According to Danilevich, this feature is expressed most emphatically in the Fourth Symphony. E. V. Nazaikinskii ("Shostakovich i khudozhestvennye tendentsii v muzyke XX veka," in *Internationales Dmitri-Schostakowitsch-Symposium, Köln 1985* [Regensburg, 1986], 439–53) emphasizes "theatricality" as a trademark of the composer's symphonic narrative.

6. *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by Solomon Volkov* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

7. Laurel Fay, "Shostakovich versus Volkov: Whose *Testimony?*" *Russian Review* 39, no. 4 (October 1980): 484–93; Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* 472.

8. Allan B. Ho and Dmitri Feofanov, *Shostakovich Reconsidered* (London: Toccata, 1998). The volume features, alongside valuable documentary evidence, an extremely partisan defense of Volkov's book and attacks on its detractors.

9. See in particular his critique of Ian McDonald's *The New Shostakovich* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990) in *Defining Russia Musically,* 480–81.

10. "It remains a profoundly inhumane work of art. Its technique of dehumanizing victims is the perennial method of those who would perpetrate and justify genocide, whether of kulaks in the Ukraine, Jews in Greater Germany, or aborigines in Tasmania. So, one must admit, if ever an opera deserved to be banned it was this one, and matters are not changed by the fact that its actual ban was for wrong and hateful reasons" (Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically,* 509).

11. Compare another collectivization-minded interpretation of the opera that stands in perfect symmetry with Taruskin's: "This is a tragedy of the collectivisation and the famine in the 1930s, of extermination of peasantry, of the mother moist earth going crazy, of emancipation and execution of the woman whose soul and all thoughts got confused because of her being seduced by Sergei, the criminal." G. D. Gachev, "V zhanre filosofskikh variatsii," *Sovetskaia muzyka* no. 9 (1989): 35–36.

12. I cannot agree more with the following remark by G. A. Orlov: "His inner world is hidden from the others' glances. . . . We are used to judge Shostakovich as a person . . . on the ground of his compositions, or rather, of their trite perception that became habitual." "Simfonizm Shostakovicha na perelome," in *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* (Leningrad, 1971), 10:7.

13. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Irina Gutkin, *The Cultural Origins of Socialist Realist Aesthetic* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999); Boris Gasparov, "Development or Rebuilding: Views of Academician T. D. Lysenko in the Context of the Late Avant-Garde (Late 1929s–1930s)," in *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment,* ed. John Bowlt and Olga Matich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 133–50.

14. In keeping with contemporary tastes, the music for the film used some real-life sonorities as well, such as the bells of the bikes—another variation of the alarm-clock motif.

15. Kataev's novel is quoted in Valintin Kataev, *Time, Forward!* trans. Charles Malamuth (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995). Page numbers are indicated in the text in parentheses.

16. Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises* (New York: Pentagon Press, 1986).

17. *Pacific 231* was performed in Moscow and Leningrad in 1926. Aleksanr Mosolov responded to it with a symphonic piece titled *A Factory* (*Zavod*), which in turn was played in Paris. See Iu. V. Keldysh, "Rossiia i Zapad: Vzaimodeistvie muzykal'nykh kul'tur," in *Russkaia muzyka i XX vek,* ed. M. G. Aranovskii (Moscow, 1997), 25–57.

18. As Richard Taruskin has shown, Stravinsky's efforts to make his musical narrative of patchwork—inconsequential and episodic—led to the liberation of twentieth-century musical language from the German principles of compositional determinism that dominated music of nineteenth century. Moreover, in doing so, Stravinsky highlighted certain features of musical language that were characteristic of the Russian musical tradition in general. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1:951–65.

19. As Laurel Fay remarks: "The Fourth Symphony revealed Shostakovich's active, if maverick, engagement with the post-Beethoven symphonic tradition, especially with the music of Mahler. It is in the scope and scale, above all, where the shadow of Mahler looms largest" (*Shostakovich,* 93). Shostakovich's adherence to the Bruckner—Mahler symphonic tradition is highlighted in several articles in *Internationales Dmitri-Schostakowitsch-Symposium* . . . : M. Druskin, "Nemetskaia traditsiia v simfoniiakh Shostakovicha," 280–91; L.-W. Hesse, "Schostakowitsch und Mahler," 327–35.

20. M. M. Gromov, "Zametki slushatelia," *Sovetskaia muzyka* no. 3 (1939): 29. Note

that the same formula was used by Shostakovich himself in a letter to A. M. Balanchivadze: "I thank you, during this time I went through a lot in my life and thoughts" (see Fay, *Shostakovich,* 92). Whether Gromov cited Shostakovich's private letter (which does not seem likely, unless he was given access to official archives where that letter might be perlustrated and copied) or whether both simply adhere to the conventional formula of repentance, the coincidence seems remarkable.

21. V. A. Tsukkerman (*Vyrazitel'nye sredstva liriki Chaikovskogo* [Moscow, 1971]) developed a theory of the "wave-like" character of thematic development in nineteenth-century symphonies. According to Tsukkerman, because musical form in that epoch was largely based on harmony, the melody was given freedom to evolve in never-ceasing motion. Tsukkerman sees the climax of this feature in Chaikovsky's symphonic style.

22. Adorno particularly emphasized the similarity of Mahler's symphonies to the aesthetic of the psychological novel. Theodor Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), chap. 4.

23. This proceeding by a succession of prolonged homogeneous episodes in lieu of the traditional symphonic development was noted by many critics as a trademark of the form of Shostakovich's grand symphonies. See L. N. Berezovchuk, "Stilevye vzaimodeistviia v tvorchestve D. Shostakovicha kak sposob voploshcheniia konflikta," *Voprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* 15 (1977): 108; M. D. Sabinina, *Shostakovich—simfonist: Dramaturgiia, estetika, stil'* (Moscow, 1976), 100; R. G. Kolen'ko, *Instrumental'nyi dialog i ego znachenie v muzyke D. D. Shostakovicha,* autoreferat of the candidate diss. (Leningrad, 1979).

24. Taruskin describes the Fourth symphony's constant vacillation between "the extremes . . . of inwardness and extroversion" as the sign of its new subjectivity—the one devoid, in the words of Nadezhda Mandelshtam, of any "interest in the human fate of the individual" (*Defining Russia Musically,* 493).

25. A. D. Siniavskii, *Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realizm* (Paris: Syntaxis, 1988).

26. Clark, *Soviet Novel.*

27. In the spring of 1935, near the beginning of his work on Fourth Symphony, Shostakovich delivered a public report on "the state of Soviet symphonism" (*Sovetskaia muzyka* no. 5 [1935]) in which he claimed that Soviet music was trailing behind literature and exhorted composers to follow the example of Gorky (who was officially proclaimed the standard-bearer of socialist realism). See Khentova, *Shostakovich,* 419–20.

28. L. A. Mazel notes the similarity of the first theme of the Fifth Symphony to Bach's musical language without indicating any direct allusion: "Glavnaia tema Piatoi simfonii Shostakovicha i ee istoricheskie sviazi," in Mazel', *Etiudy o Shostakoviche* (Moscow, 1986), 82–113.

29. Mandelshtam, then in exile in Voronezh, greeted these features of the Fifth Symphony with scorn: "Shostakovich is [like] Leonid Andreev. His Fifth symphony is thundering here. It tries to scare, tediously—like the polka of [Andreev's] *The life of the man.* I don't accept it. There is no thought [in it]; no mathematics; no goodness. Even if this is an art, I do not accept it." O. Mandelshtam to B. S. Kuzin, 10 March 1938, in O. Mandel'shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1974), 4:199–200.

30. Compare a similar assessment of a watershed in Shostakovich's symphonic style in G. A. Orlov, "Simfonizm Shostakovicha na perelome," 16. On the other hand, M. G.

Aranovskii sees continuity between the symphonies of the composer's middle and late periods. "Problemy zhanra v vokal'no-instrumental'nykh simfoniiakh Shostakovicha," in *Voprosy teoruu i estetiki muzyki* (Leningrad, 1973): 1261–96.

Chapter 7: "Popolo di Pekino"

1. *Turandot*'s advanced harmony and innovative musical dramaturgy have been discussed by many scholars. See, e.g., Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 460; Robert Aubaniac, *L'énigmatique* Turandot *de Puccini* (Paris: Edisud, 1995), 128, 167–68; Peter Kopfmacher, *Exotismus in Giacomo Puccinis "Turandot"* (Cologne: Dohr, 1993); Roman Vlad, "Puccini, Schoenberg and Stravinsky," in *Giacomo Puccini: L'uomo, il musicista, il panorama europeo* (Lucca: Libertà musicale italiana, 1997), 547–80; Wolfgang Volpers, *Giacomo Puccini's* Turandot: *Untersuchungen zum Text und zur musikalischen Dramaturgie* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1994).

2. Typical of this attitude is William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's* Turandot: *The End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). According to the authors, Puccini "victimized Stravinsky in his bitonal harmonizations" (11). While admitting that *Turandot*'s exoticism assumed "a level of sophistication far beyond that of the usual superficial exoticism of neo-colonialist Europe," they add condescendingly: "though Puccini is hardly likely to have been consciously aware of it" (99).

3. See the detailed comparison of the two operas in Kii-Ming Lo, Turandot *auf die Opernbühne* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

4. After Diaghilev's "Russian season" in Paris in 1908, *Boris Godunov* marched around the globe: in 1909, it was staged at La Scala and in Buenos Aires, in 1911, in Stockholm, London, and Rome, and in 1913, in New York. Only Germany lagged somewhat in recognition of Musorgsky's opera. Iu. V. Keldysh, "Rossiia i Zapad: Vzaimodeistvie muzykal'nykh kul'tur," in *Russkaia muzyka i XX vek: Russkoe muzykal'noe iskusstvo v istorii khudozhestvennoi kul'tury XX veka,* ed. M. G. Aranovskii (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institut isskusstvoznaniia, 1997): 25–57.

5. Although Nikolai Strakhov, in his review of Musorgsky's opera in Dostoevsky's *Grazhdanin* (1874), charged that "the people in his depiction are coarse, drunken, oppressed and vicious" (138), by the early twentieth century the volatility of mass scenes in *Boris* was recognized as a major achievement. According to A. Rimskii-Korsakov, "Musorgsky's people are, more than anything, a crowd whose short-lived consensus quickly dissipates into separate voices." "*Boris Godunov* M. P. Musorgskogo," *Muzykal'nyi sovremennik* 5–6 (Petrograd: R. Golika and A. Vil'borg, 1917): 108–67.

6. Lalo argued that "*Pelléas* et *Boris* ont en commun quelques suites d'accord et quelques sonorités d'orchestre, c'est tout." Claude Debussy, *Correspondence, 1884–1918,* ed. François Lesure (Paris, 1993), 239.

7. Although O. E. Levasheva's assertion that Puccini "was an enthusiastic fan [*goriachii poklonnik*] of Musorgsky" and that the latter was "one of Puccini's favorite composers" (*Puchchini i ego sovremenniki* [Moscow, 1980], 42, 508) can be considered an exaggeration, many authors, Russian and Western alike, point to Puccini's familiarity with *Boris* by the time of the composition of *Turandot*. I have not seen concrete evidence

of how and when this might have happened. Dieter Schickling, in his comprehensive biography of Puccini, makes an interesting point: although Puccini diligently collected and studied the scores of his contemporaries, such as Debussy, Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, and Schoenberg, he showed little interest in nineteenth-century music; he rarely even mentioned Verdi, let alone Mozart or Berlioz—perhaps because those sources were too obvious for him. Schickling concludes that Puccini must have learned about Musorgsky through Stravinsky and Debussy. [*Schickling Giacomo Puccini: Biographie* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1989): 397].

8. Quoted in Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography,* 3rd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992), 186.

9. "Chez Debussy la musique est ordonnée avec autant d'harmonieus refinement que *Boris* est plein de désordre et de chaos." Debussy, *Correspondence,* 239, n. 59.

10. Schickling, *Giacomo Puccini,* 280.

11. See Girardi, *Puccini,* 442. Having itemized points of kinship in harmony between Stravinsky ballets of 1910–1920 and *Turandot,* Schickling admits the same point, but with a characteristic slight condescension: "im übrigem markt man, wie gut Puccini Stravinskys frühe Partituren studiert haben muß" (*Giacomo Puccini,* 382).

12. For details about Debussy's influence on Puccini see Carner, *Puccini,* 287–88.

13. See, e.g., Carner, *Puccini;* Ashbrook and Powers, *Puccini's* Turandot; Levasheva, *Puchchini i ego sovremenniki;* B. M. Iarustovskii, *Ocherki po dramaturgii opery XX v* (Moscow, 1980), 1:222; Wiaroslaw Sandelewski, *Puccini* (Cracow, 1963).

14. According to Volpers (*Giacomo Puccini's* Turandot, 147), in 1904 Puccini had insisted on a limited role for the chorus as a support for the lyrical element; by the time of *Turandot,* however, the composer had apparently departed from that position.

15. Carner (*Puccini,* 257) has also noted the similarity of its melody to Musorgsky's song "Gopak."

16. The similarity is noted by L. V. Danilevich, *Dzhakomo Puchchini* (Moscow, 1969), 427–28, who, however, considers it "unconscious" or "accidental." Levasheva, *Puchchini i ego sovremenniki,* 407–8, commented that Puccini used laborers' exclamations ("Hey-ho! Hey, once more!") in *Il Tabarro,* the first of his triptych of short operas, in 1917. She notes the resemblance of the exclamations to Musorgsky's style but misses an obvious kinship with *Dubinushka.*

17. See his own account in *Stranitsy iz moei zhizni.* F. I. Shaliapin, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow, 1957), 1:222.

18. Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2:1183–89.

19. This similarity has been noted in Levasheva, *Puchchini i ego sovremenniki,* 494.

20. Kii-Ming Lo, "*Turandot,*" 325–36.

21. Carner, *Puccini,* 522–23.

22. Debussy, *Correspondence,* 239.

23. Chaikovsky wrote about his impressions of the Paris musical scene in 1889: "I have made acquaintance with a multitude of young French composers who are all terrific Wagnerians. . . . But this Wagnerism does not suit the French!" Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *Letters to His Family: An Autobiography,* trans. Galina von Meck (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 422.

24. Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 229.

25. Quotations from the French press are cited in M. I. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo* (Moscow: Algoritm, 1997), 3: 209–10.

26. "L'allemande dans son oeuvre domine le slave et l'absorbe" (ibid.).

27. Ibid.

28. Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in *Desire in Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64–91.

29. Julia Kristeva, *Des Chinoises* (Paris: Édition des femmes, 1974); Roland Barthes, *Alors la Chine?* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1975).

30. "Je pense q'une des fonctions, sinon la fonction la plus importante, de la Révolution chinoise aujourd'hui est de fair passer cette brèche ('il y a des autres') dans nos conceptions universalistes de l'Homme ou de l'Histoire." Kristeva, *Des Chinoises,* 14.

31. As a reviewer of Chaikovsky's concerts wrote rapturously in *Le Figaro:* "On dit aujourd'hui: 'Grattez le Russe, vous trouverez un Français!' On ajoute volontiers: 'Grattez le Français, vous trouverez le Russe!' . . . La France avait deja fait avec ses lettres et ses arts le conquête de la Russie, voila que la Russie avec ses arts et ses lettres conquert à son tour la France!" M. I. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo,* 3:203.

32. According to one account (by Robert Godet), the score remained at his piano for a while opened to the same page—the chorus of Polish maidens in the second act. Marcel Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60–61.

33. Ibid., 63.

34. *Correspondence de Claude Debussy et Pierre Louis (1893–1904),* ed. Henri Borgeaud (Paris: J. Corti, 1945): 41.

35. Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits,* ed. F. Lezure (Paris: Gallimard, 1971): 223.

36. On the technique of shifting tonalities in Debussy and its Far Eastern sources see Aubaniac, *L'énigmatique* Turandot, 167–68. Ashbrook and Powers (*Puccini's* Turandot, 100) note the same feature, which they describe as a "metabolic" technique of modulation, in Puccini's score.

37. Dietschy, *Portrait of Claude Debussy,* 62.

38. Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners Tristan,* 2nd ed. (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1968).

39. Frédéric Goldbeck, "Twentieth-Century Composers and Tradition," in *Twentieth-century Music,* ed. Rollo H. Myers (London: Calder & Boyars, 1968): 26.

40. Western and Russian scholars offer an extensive analysis of these features in Debussy's harmony and their relation to or kinship with Far Eastern and Russian music. See, e.g., Jürgen Arndt, *Der Einfluß der javanischen gamelan-Musik auf Kompositionen von Claude Debussy* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994); Andreas Liess, "Claude Debussy: Blick auf Gestalt und Werk," *Musica* 16, no. 4 (1962): 181–84; L. Sabaneev, *Klod Debiussi* (Moscow: Rabotnik prosveshcheniia, 1922); Z. I. Gliadeshkina, *O garmonii Debiussi (k probleme funktsional'nosti),* autoreferat of the candidate diss. (Leningrad Conservatory, 1971).

41. Aubaniac, *L'énigmatique* Turandot, 167–68.

42. Some Russian critics note the role of Russian musical language as an intermediary

between Western and Oriental music: Sabaneev, *Klod Debiussi,* 23; N. Dimitriadi, "Nekotorye stilevye osobennosti russkoi muzyki o Vostoke," in *Vprosy teorii i estetiki muzyki* (Leningrad, 1974), 13:106–25.

43. Kopfmacher emphasizes the stylized nature of Puccini's exoticism (*Exotismus in Giacomo Puccinis* Turandot, 68). According to M. Gardner, in Puccini's style "exotic and impessionistic elements are so closely knit together that a clear separation of one from another is often impossible." "The Exotic Element in Puccini," *Musical Quarterly* 22, no.1 (January 1936): 55.

44. "In diesem Moment mag Mahler mit dem slavischen Osten als einen Vorbürgerlichen, noch nicht durchaus Individuierten wesentlich sich berühren." Theodor Adorno, *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), 104–5.

45. Compare the assertion in Gustaw William Meyer, *Tonale Verhältnisse und Melodiestruktur im Ostslawischen Volkslied* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1956), that the musical language of the East Slavic folk song, in particular its use of pentatonic, reflects "a tangible distancing from everything personal" (9).

46. Shaliapin once chastised a stage designer for providing lush vegetation in the background in this scene: "How could they fail to realize that this is a quinessentially *wintery* music?" *Maska i dusha,* in Shaliapin, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo,* 1:312.

47. As a supplement to his study of intertextuality in Mahler, Henry-Louis de la Grange has offered a long (but far from exhaustive) list of musical allusions and quotations featured in Mahler's works. The list includes the connection with *Boris Godunov* that I am discussing. However, the author does not comment on the reason for this and other intertextual connections, limiting his work to the description of formal conditions of musical intertextuality. "Music About Music in Mahler: Reminiscences, Allusions, or Quotations?", in *Mahler Studies,* ed. Stephen E. Helfing (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161.

48. G. P. Danilevskii, "Zhizn' cherez sto let," in Danilevskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Terra, 1995), 9:125–51.

49. Roman Jakobson, *K xarakteristike evraziiskogo iazykovogo soiuza* (Paris: Izdanie Evraziitsev, 1931).

50. Nicholas Riasanovsky, "The Emergence of Eurasianism," *California Slavic Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 4:39–72; Boris Gasparov, "The Ideological Principles of Prague School Phonology," in *Language, Poetry, and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s; Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij* (Amsterdam: Mouton, 1987), 49–78.

51. See Taruskin, *Stravinsky,* vol 2., ch. 15.

52. In 1922 Sabaneev asserted the Russian influence on Debussy in terms characteristic for Russian and Western perceptions of the refreshing barbarianism coming from the East: "An aging culture is instinctively attracted by barbaric, free, untamed blood capable of renewing its organism. . . . It was Musorgsky, and almost certainly *Boris,* that work of a genius . . . that worked for him [Debussy] as a life-saving grafting of a fresh shoot which, having merged with centuries-old Romance culture, yielded a wonderful flower of his creations." *Klod Debiussi,* 8–9.

53. Walter Benjamin, *Moscow Diary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

54. Bertold Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1964), 91–100.

55. Aubaniac calls the phenomenon of a crowd promoted to a full dramatic role "le personnage-foule" (*L'énigmatique* Turandot, 128).

56. According to Girardi (*Puccini,* 468), creating a fully developed lyrical part for a second soprano "represents a fundamental point of transition from one poetics to another."

57. Carner, *Puccini*; Girardi, *Puccini,* 483.

58. After the composer's death, the conclusion of the opera was commissioned to Franco Alfano, whose own exotic opera, *La leggenda di Sakùntala,* had been a recent success. The music produced by Alfano differed considerably from both Puccini's general style and the sketches for the final scene that he had left (Puccini's sketches were published in full by Jürgen Maehder, "Studien zum Fragmentcharacter von Giacomo Puccinis *Turandot,*" *Analitica musicologica* 22 [1984]: 297–379)—so much so that Alfani's finale was shortened almost to a third of its size for the performance, in order to make the discrepancy less striking; this in turn made the dramatic resolution of the opera's plot too abrupt and unconvincing. In 1982 the "full" version of the opera (that is, containing the whole text by Alfani) was performed in London and elsewhere; it now competes with the more conventional abridged version. The story curiously resembles that of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*. See the detailed account in Girardi, *Puccini,* 478–87.

Epilogue: "Prima la musica, poi le parole"

1. "Pis'mo pisatelia Vladimira Vladimirovicha Maiakovskogo pisateliu Alekseiu Maksimovichu Gor'komu," in V. V. Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh* (Moscow, 1958), 7:209.

2. "Stansy," in O. Mandel'shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow: Art-biznes-tsentr, 1994), 3:95.

3. Boris Gasparov, "Development or Rebuilding: Views of Academician T. D. Lysenko in the Context of the Late Avant-Garde," in *Laboratory of Dreams: The Russian Avant-Garde and Cultural Experiment,* ed. J. Bowlt and O. Matich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 133–50. For an exploration of how the spirit of the Stalinist late 1930s was reflected in architecture, see Vladimir Papernyi, *Ku'tura dva* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996).

4. Sigrid Neef, *Handbuch der russischen und sowjetischen Oper* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1989), 31. More details are given in L. K. Potapova, *Kompozitory i muzykovedy Respubliki Sakha (Iakutiia)* (Yakutsk, 1994).

5. Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), described the general mood of elation that greeted the advent of the Stalinist 1930s after all the turbulence and confrontations of the first postrevolutionary decade (see especially his conclusion).

6. Two books from the 1940s, published in the wake of Aleksandrov's authorship of the national anthem of the Soviet Union, present his career in a hagiographic mode: V. Kruzhkov, *Gimn Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow, 1944), and G. A. Polianovsky, *A. V. Aleksandrov* (Moscow, 1948).

7. The first sparse description that I have found of the song that served as the anthem's source appeared as late as 1988: E. L. Volkova, *Pesennoe tvorchestvo A. V. Aleksandrova* (Moscow, 1988).

8. *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich as Related to and Edited by*

Solomon Volkov (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 198–205. Curiously, Volkov's index piles together the two Aleksandrovs: Aleksandr, the composer, and Grigory, the director of popular movies in the 1930s. In the book's narrative both are called simply "Aleksandrov," without the first name. This error by the editor may indicate that the book does follow an oral narrative after all.

9. Even if *Testimony* is Volkov's loose compilation—as to all appearances it is—I consider its total banishment from scholarly reference for which many serious musicologists have called to be a polemical excess. If one approaches *Testimony* as Volkov's account of his conversations with Shostakovich rather than direct transcription of Shostakovich's oral narrative, one can treat it as no more and no less reliable than any set of memoirs.

10. In the 1920s and early 1930s, *Turandot* enjoyed broad recognition in the Soviet Union. Its première took place in 1926, soon after the first La Scala performance, at the Moscow Free Theater; in the following five or six years, the opera was staged in Baku, Sverdlovsk, Tbilisi, Odessa, Kharkov, and Kiev, as well as in the Moscow by the Experimental Theater (an affiliate of the Bolshoi). After that, it disappeared from the operatic repertory until 1959. *Madama Butterfly,* of course, has consistently belonged to the core repertory. See L. V. Danilevich, *Dzhakomo Puchchini* (Moscow, 1969), 423–24; B. S. Shteinpress, *Opernye prem'ery dvadtsatogo veka, 1901–40* (Moscow, 1983).

11. Isaak Dunaevsky, one of the most talented and popular songwriters of Stalin's time, whose career featured a marked shift from boisterous early tunes to more tempered, warmly lyrical and solemn ones, once aknowledged his indebtedness, unconscious though it was, to Puccini. When an interlocutor pointed out to him an uncanny similarity between one of his late songs, "Fly, doves, fly" (1951), and the music accompanying the heroine's first appearance in act 1 of *Madama Butterfly,* he responded with bemusement: "It seems you are right, but this is completely unintentional": G. Nazarian, "V besede s I. Dunaevskim," in *Isaak Osipovich Dunaevskii* (Moscow, 1961), 93.

12. See the collection of essays *Za Glinku! Protiv vozvrata k sovetskomu gimnu* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2000).

13. In 1823 Pushkin wrote to his brother Lev: "The two-headed eagle is the emblem of Byzantium; it meant the division of the Empire into the Western and Eastern halves—as to ourselves, it means nothing." A. S. Pushkin, *Polnie sobranie sochinenii,* 2d ed. (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 1996), 11:54.

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