

History of Music Classic/Romantic

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Music in Russia

Russia before Peter the Great



Russia after Peter the Great



Mikhail Glinka (1804-57)



- Born into a noble family in Novospasskoye, (Smolensk district)
- Civil service (Board of Communications) from 1824-28)
- Leaves for Italy in 1830
 - studies counterpoint in Milan
 - meets Bellini, Donazetti, Berlioz, Mendelssohn
 - writes credible imitations of Italian opera
- Moves to Germany
 - studies counterpoint and harmony with Siegfried Dehn
- Returns to Russia 1834, marries Maria Petrovna Ivanova, divorces in 1839

Kamarinskaya(1848)

Commodo

Musical score for the Commodo section of Kamarinskaya. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It features a melodic line with various note heads and stems. The bottom staff contains lyrics in Russian: "Iz - za gor, gor vi - so - kikh gor". Three brackets labeled 'x', 'y', and 'z' are positioned above the notes in the top staff, corresponding to the words "gor", "vi", and "so" respectively.

Allegro moderato

Musical score for the Allegro moderato section of Kamarinskaya. The score consists of two staves. Both staves are in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp. The top staff features a continuous series of eighth-note pairs. The bottom staff also features eighth-note pairs, with asterisks (*) placed above specific notes in the first four measures. The music concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the second measure.

Mily Balakirev (1836–1910)



- Born in Nizhniy Novgorod, 21 Dec 1836.
- Patronized by Aleksander Ul'ibishev, a member of the local nobility who introduces him to Glinka in St Petersburg in 1855.
- 1855 makes acquaintance with the critic Vladimir Stasov, Alexander Serov and other notable figures.
- Sets about establishing a 'Russian' school of composition in opposition to Rubenstein's westernising mission.
- Gathers around him a group of young composers – the Mighty Handful: Mussorgsky, Borodin, Cui, Rimsky-Korsakov

Balakirev: Overture on Three Russian Themes (1858)

Theme I

a.

Musical score for Theme I, section a. The music is in 3/8 time, key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The vocal line consists of two staves of music with lyrics in Russian below them. The lyrics are: "Chto ne be - la - ya be - ryo - za kze - mle klo - nit - sya." followed by a repeat sign and "ne shel - ko - va - ya tra - va pri - klo - nya - et - sya." The first staff begins with a quarter note rest, followed by eighth notes. The second staff begins with a quarter note, followed by eighth notes.

Theme II

a.

Musical score for Theme II, section a. The music is in 2/4 time, key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The vocal line consists of two staves of music with lyrics in Russian below them. The lyrics are: "Vo po - le be - ryo - za sto - ya - la, vo po - le ku - drya - va - ya sto - ya - la," followed by a repeat sign and "lyu - li, lyu - li, sto - ya - la, lyu - li, lyu - li, sto - ya - la." The first staff begins with a quarter note, followed by eighth notes. The second staff begins with a quarter note, followed by eighth notes.

Theme III

a.

Musical score for Theme III, section a. The music is in 2/4 time, key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The vocal line consists of two staves of music with lyrics in Russian below them. The lyrics are: "Ya ve - chor mla - da, vo pi - ru bi - la," followed by a repeat sign and "vo pi - ru bi - la, vo be - se - dash - ke." The first staff begins with a quarter note, followed by eighth notes. The second staff begins with a quarter note, followed by eighth notes.

Alexander Varlamov: Krasniiy sarafan

Umerenno skoro (Allegro moderato)

mp
N.B.
N.B.

Ne shey tī mne, ma - tush - ka, kras - nīy sa - ra - fan,

N.B.
N.B.

ne vkhō - di, ro - di - ma - ya, po - pu - stu - viz" - yan.

Fourth romance of Tatyana's 'letter scene'

(f) Letter scene, introduction to fourth romance

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff begins with a dynamic of *p* *espress.*. It features a treble clef, a key signature of four flats, and a 2/4 time signature. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, with some quarter notes. Measure 1 ends with a fermata over the first note. Measures 2-3 show a continuation of the melodic line with various dynamics and harmonic changes. Measure 4 begins with a forte dynamic. The bottom staff continues the melody, with a dynamic of *p* followed by a measure with a fermata over the first note. Measures 5-6 show further development of the melody. The score concludes with a dynamic of *p* and the text "etc." at the end of the page.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)



- Born into a wealthy aristocratic family with a large estate 400km south of St Petersburg.
- Follows a typical aristocratic career path and in 1856 joins in the Preobrazhensky Regiment.
- 1856–7 introduced to Dargomizhsky and through him meets Cui, Balakirev and Stasov.
- 1858 resigns from the regiment to devote himself full-time to composition under Balakirev's guidance.
- Emancipation of the serfs in 1861 impoverished his family/forced to join the civil service taking a job in the Central Engineering Authority

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)



- Becomes influenced by Nikolay Chernyshevsky's doctrine of artistic realism – art should be truthful and educate the people.
- 1866 – Composes the first of his so-called realist songs – *Svetik Savishna*
- 1867-68 gradually distances himself from Balakirev and draws closer to the Dargomizhsky circle
- 1868 – Composes a single act of The Marriage abandoning it latter that year to begin work on Boris Godunov

He [Mussorgsky] was standing once by the window when he was impressed by a commotion taking place before his eyes. An unhappy idiot (*yurodiviy*) was declaring his love to a young peasant girl who had attracted him; he was pleading with her, though ashamed of his ugliness and his miserable condition; he himself understood that he could have nothing in the world -- least of all the happiness of love. Mussorgsky was deeply affected; the type and the scene were firmly imprinted on his soul; in a flash there occurred to him the peculiar forms and sounds for the embodiment of the images that were agitating him'

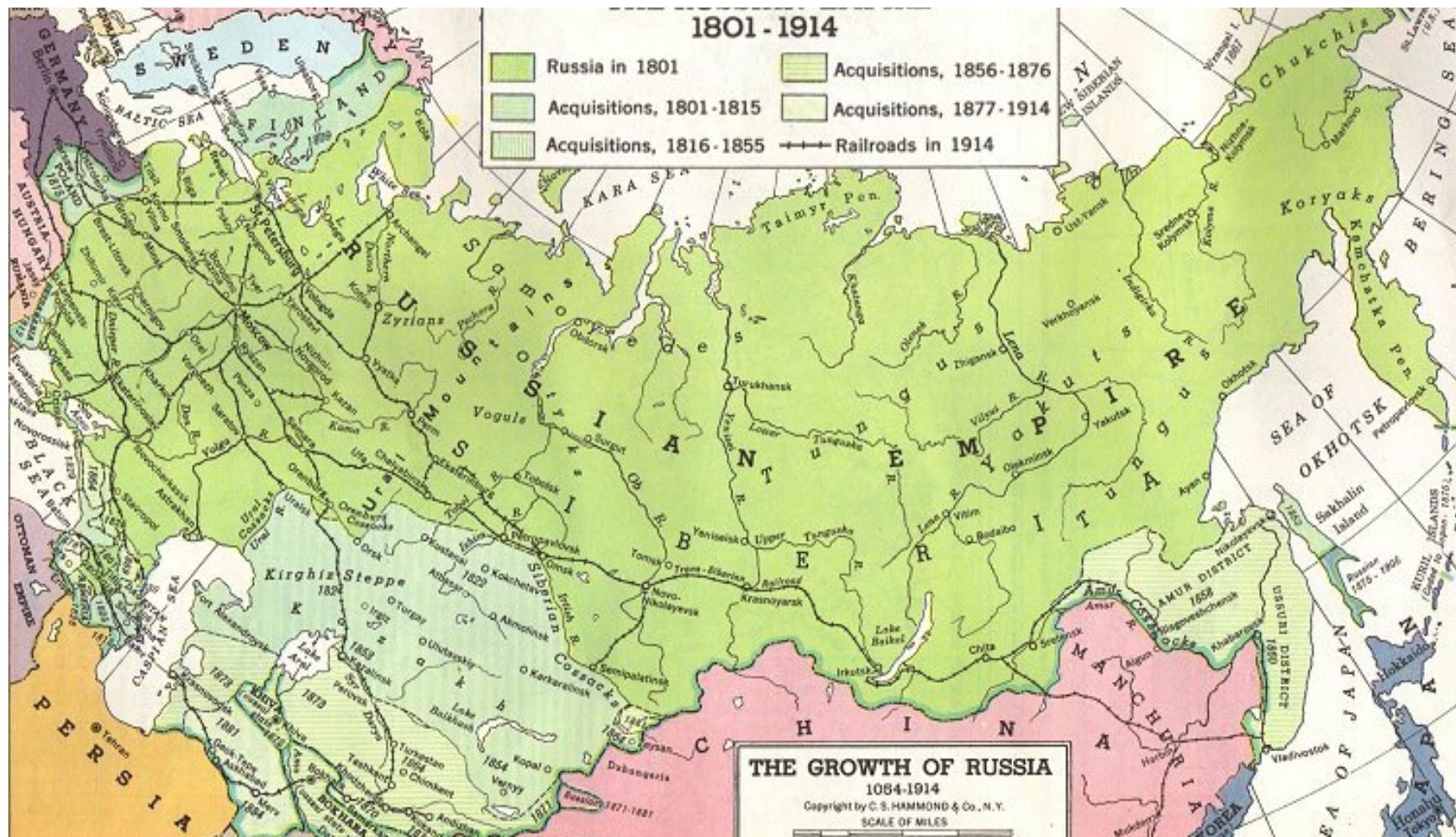


Here's what I would like. That my characters speak on stage as living people speak, but so that the character and force of their intonation, supported by the orchestra which is the musical background for their speech, hit the target head-on; that is, my music must be an artistic reproduction of human speech in all its most subtle windings. (Mussorgsky to Lyudmila Shestakova, 30 July/11 August 1868)

Expansion of the Russian Empire

- 1864: Beginning of Russian military campaigns in Central Asia.
- 1865: Russian army captured Tashkent.
- 1867: Conquered areas of Central Asia incorporated into the Russian Empire and Russian Turkestan.
- 1868: Khanate of Kokand becomes a Russian vassal state.
- 1873: Emirate of Bukhara and Khanate of Khiva become Russian protectorates
Narodnik rebellion begins.
- 1876: Khanate of Kokand incorporated into Russian Empire.
- 1877-78: Russo-Turkish War. Russia gains territory in the Caucuses. Several Slavic states declare independence.

Expansion of the Russian Empire





Alexandr Borodin (1833-87)



- Born in St Petersburg in 1833 / illegitimate son of Prince Luka Gedianov
- Throughout his life combined a highly successful career as a chemist with composition as a hobby.
- Total output is small, due to constant demands on his time. Most famous works include:
 - 2 String Quartets
 - 2 Symphonies (a third unfinished)
 - *In the Steppes of Central Asia* (Orchestral)
 - Prince Igor – perhaps the most celebrated example of Russian orientalism

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)



- Studied at the newly opened St Petersburg Conservatory, graduating in 1865.
- Because of his conservatory training Tchaikovsky is often characterised as 'Western' in contrast to the Mighty Handful.
- However Tchaikovsky's music displays plenty of examples of folk music and other Russian traits in terms of form and orchestration.
- Symphonies display a highly distinctive approach to sonata form:
 - prioritisation of melody
 - block form
 - transitions tend to be short and perfunctory

Theories surrounding the Symphony

- The most plausible cause of Tchaikovsky's death is cholera contracted from drinking a glass of un-boiled water.
 - accounts from his brother Modest
 - St. Petersburg was in the midst of a cholera epidemic
 - symptoms consistent with victims of cholera
- Highly dubious theories on the death of Tchaikovsky.
 - Tchaikovsky committed suicide as a result of a personal crisis precipitated by his love for his nephew Vladimir 'Bob' Davidov.
 - Tchaikovsky was ordered by a 'court of honor' composed of *alumni* from the School of Jurisprudence to commit suicide by drinking poison as a result of the above homosexual union.
 - Tchaikovsky was ordered to commit suicide on the direct orders of the Tsar

Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique': Structure

- First Movement: (B minor, sonata form)
 - slow introduction: introduces ascending stepwise melody in the bassoons with descending chromatic lines in the double basses. Scales feature throughout the symphony as a 'background' unifying device
 - first subject area (B minor): initial motive driven on by constant semi-quaver rhythmic motion. Descending scales answered by ascending arpeggios.
 - transition: typically short and perfunctory, sole function is to supply a dominant pedal to the second subject.
 - second subject (D major): classical Tchaikovskian 'romance' melody. Intensely lyrical and expressive. Seems to have little in common with the first subject but for the 'background' scales and arpeggios which follow the first statement with their directions now reversed.
 - development: rising sequences interrupted by a blistering descending scale from the trumpets. Chant from the Russian Orthodox Requiem. Two more tutti climaxes followed by an extended standing on the dominant as the music recedes.

recapitulation: first theme omitted in favor of the second subject now in the key of B major and embellished with rising scales
coda: closing theme in brass and woodwind once again accompanied by descending scales in the strings

Second Movement: (ternary, D major)

5/4 time, often described as a 'limping waltz' the lighter outer sections are undercut by the more sombre B section in B minor

Third Movement (sonata form minus development, G major)
an orchestral tour de force showcasing Tchaikovsky's virtuosic abilities climaxes driven largely by repetition and sequences though drawing on the Kamarinskaya model of constantly changing the orchestration in the 'background' appears to resemble the triumphant finale to the symphony

Fourth Movement (ternary, B minor)

impassioned composite melody fragmented amongst the string section concludes by fading away in B minor

Prescribed Listening

Mikhail Glinka: *Kamarinskaya*

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky: Symphony No 6 in B minor
'Pathétique' (first movement)

Recommneded reading

Norton History of Western Music (9th edition): pp. 673-674, pp. 706-714, pp. 744-747. Similar material in other editions

Taruskin: *Music in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 230-250, 386-410, pp. 463-478, pp. 617-639.

Oxford Music Online: various entries on specific Russian composers