Musical Means in Mussorgsky’s *Songs and Dances of Death*: A Singer’s Study Guide

D.M.A. Document

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2017

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Abstract

Modest Mussorgsky’s song cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* is a series of four miniature dramatic scenes. The text was supplied by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov, who developed a keen relationship with the composer when they shared an apartment. A glance at Mussorgsky’s musical life and growth in the “Mighty Handful” circle helps us comprehend the evolution of his compositional style. At the peak of his musical maturity, the composer devoted himself to compositions in the realist, nationalist style. However, *Songs and Dances of Death* seems to have softened the edge of his style by incorporating lyricism, and possibly also impressionism and symbolism, into his works.

Mussorgsky’s music in *Songs and Dances of Death* is tonal but it does not adhere to a traditional Western music theoretical analysis. Therefore, the musical analysis presented is based on defining the terms *musical environment* and *musical energy* as they emerge from the compositional components, an approach that provides yet another dimension of musical understanding in works like Mussorgsky’s.

Russian diction is discussed in great detail along with a comprehensive summary of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) system for the Russian language.
In loving memory of Dorothy S. Pegg and Helen (Helenka) A. Churnega
Acknowledgments

Wholehearted gratitude is due to Dr. Robin Rice for being a devoted teacher, and to Prof. Edward Bak a tireless coach. Special thanks go to Dr. Alexander Burry, Prof. Katherine Rohrer, Chris Grossman and Emilie Kadish for their editorial assistance, and to Eugenia Vainberg for her Russian language tutorial. This was once an unreachable dream, but it came true today because of you all being there for me.
Vita

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1998..............................................Elizabeth Stobeckler Stevens Prize in Lieder
1999..............................................Irvin Bushman Memorial Prize in Vocal Artistry
1999..............................................Janiec Opera, Brevard Music Center
1999 to 2003 ..............................................................Cleveland Opera
2000........................................Artist Diploma, Vocal Performance, The Cleveland Institute of Music
Summer, 2002 .............................................................Intermezzo Summer Opera
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July, 2010........................................Vocal Recital, Taiwan National Recital Hall
August, 2011........................................Vocal Recital, Taiwan National Recital Hall
October, 2011......................................................Future Stars Recital, Carnegie Hall
May, 2013..............................................Vocal Recital, Taiwan National Recital Hall
May, 2015......................................................Vocal Recital, Taiwan National Recital Hall

Field of Study

Major Field: Music
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Inspired by his great passion for the Russian repertoire, the author cultivated a strong desire to study and perform Modest Mussorgsky’s *Songs and Dances of Death*. Preparation for the performance has been the culmination of study with emphasis on language, diction, and music style. Additionally, maturity with the acquisition of skills and technique has enabled the development of this project. The purpose of this document is to underscore all aspects of the study to enhance the performance of the song cycle.

Though historical facts and musical analyses are crucial, this document is not meant to be a work of musicological research, or a music theory study. By identifying compositional components under the definitions of *musical environment* and *musical energy*, it offers a different layer of understanding the music of *Songs and Dances of Death*. It also provides an alternative approach, since the music theory of Western tradition cannot be fully applied to Mussorgsky’s composition.

The dates stated in the document are based on the modern Western calendar, as that of Mussorgsky’s time would have been twelve days behind. The evolution of Mussorgsky’s song style is one of the focal points in this study. Mussorgsky composed sixty-six songs in his lifetime, including three song cycles.¹ There are ten revisions that

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co-exist with their originals. A glance into his songs at different points of his life is necessary to trace his different compositional styles. This is a study of “art song,” namely those songs intentionally composed for voice and piano. The analysis of Songs and Dances of Death is based on the vocal-piano scores, published by Muzgiz, Moscow in 1931 and International Music Company (in medium key), New York, in 1951. The orchestrated versions will not be included in the study as they were orchestrated or revised by other composers after Mussorgsky’s death.

The “Mighty Handful” circle was the main stream of Russian musical Nationalism that nurtured Mussorgsky’s musical life, and promoted his achievements, but, according to Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov who supplied texts for Mussorgsky’s Sunless and Songs and Dances of Death, might have also hindered his creativity. The relationship between the composer and the poet has aroused some speculation regarding Mussorgsky’s sexual orientation. This relationship might have influenced Mussorgsky’s compositional style.

As a guide for study and performance, it is important to include the discussion of Russian diction for singing. Though there are several International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) sources for Russian language available, one of the objectives of this document is to summarize a comprehensive IPA system offering singers a helpful reference.

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2 Ibid.
Chapter 2: The Making of the Composer

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (Модест Петрович Мусоргский, 1839-81) was born to a well-to-do family. His father, Piotr Alexeyevich Mussorgsky, though an illegitimate son of an officer of the Preobrazhensky Guards and a serf woman, was legitimized to inherit his father’s wealth. Piotr married Yulia Ivanovna Chirikova, a daughter of a landowner, and settled near Karevo, 250 miles south of Saint Petersburg. They gave birth to four sons— the first two tragically died young, leaving Modest and his older brother of three years, Filaret.

The Date of Birth

Dates in Mussorgsky’s time (Old Style, O.S.) were twelve days behind the Western calendar (New Style, N.S.). His date of birth was March 9 (O.S.) or March 21 (N.S.), 1839, as shown in the public record:

Entry in the aforementioned Toropets District Registry, under item no. 2: “Modest, born 9 March and christened 13 March. His parents, of the village of Kazhiva, are the retired landowner and Collegiate Secretary Pyotr Alexeev Musorsky and his lawful wife Yulia Ivanova, the daughter of Ivan Chirikov, the landowner and Governor’s Secretary; both are of the Orthodox faith…”

Mussorgsky, in his own autobiography, mistakenly recorded his birthday as March 16 (O.S.). Stasov used the same date for his obituary, which would also appear on Mussorgsky’s tombstone in Leningrad Cemetery.\(^6\)

Therefore, according to the Western calendar, Mussorgsky was born on March 21, 1839, and died on March 28, 1881.

**The Name**

Variations of the family name “Мусоргский” appear in different literature and documents. The origin of the name has caused confusion concerning spelling and pronunciation. In the fifteenth century, Mussorgsky’s ancestor Roman Vasilyevich Monastyryov was given the nickname “Musorga,” meaning “musician” in Church Slavonic.\(^7\) This is the origin of the family name. In the family documents, different spellings such as: “Musarkiy,” “Muserskiy,” “Muserskoy,” “Musirskoy,” “Musorskiy,” and “Musurskiy,” could be found. Among these, “Muerskiy” was used on Modest’s baptismal record.\(^8\) None of these names was spelled with the letter “g.” The young composer would sign his name as “Musorskiy” (Мусорский) in his correspondence to Miliy Balakirev up to 1858.\(^9\)

Modest lived with his brother Filaret in 1862-63 when he started signing his name with a “g”: “Musorgskiy” (Мусоргский). It was speculated that Filaret might have

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\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Brown, *Mussorgsky*, 1.
\(^9\) Leyda and Bertensson, *Mussorgsky Reader*, 4-6.
initiated the addition due to the embarrassing resemblance of the name’s root “musor,” in Russian “мусор” meaning “rubbish.” With the addition of “г” in the spelling, the accent of the name would shift from the first syllable to the second: “Músorgskiy” to “Musórgskiy.” Mussorgsky himself, however, would always pronounce it with the accent on the first syllable, the “true Russian way.”

The transliteration of the Cyrillic alphabet has also contributed to the multiple spelling possibilities of the family name as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cyrillic spelling</th>
<th>М</th>
<th>у</th>
<th>с</th>
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<th>р</th>
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<tr>
<td>Possible transliterations</td>
<td>М</td>
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Table 1. Spelling possibilities of the name

“Musorgsky” appears in most scholarly literature, while “Mussorgsky” has been adopted as the official spelling in library systems, including the Library of Congress, and in performing literature. Doubling the first “s” (-ss-) indicates that the consonant is voiceless [s], since a single intervocalic “s” is often pronounced as voiced [z] in many

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10 Brown, Musorgsky, 2.
11 Boris Ottokar Unbegaun, Russian Surnames (Moscow: Progress, 1989), 345.
12 Summarized by author.
Western European languages. The latter is applied to this document unless other spellings appear in the quotations.

**The Years of Youth**

Mussorgsky referred to himself in third person in the autobiographical note that he prepared for Hugo Riemann’s music dictionary: \(^{13}\)

… Under the direct influence of his nurse, he became familiar with Russian fairy tales. This acquaintance with the spirit of the folk-life was the main impulse of musical improvisations before he had learned even the elementary rules of piano-playing… His mother gave him his first piano lessons… His father, who worshiped music… entrusted his further musical education to Anton Herke in Petersburg…

His improvisational skills on the piano would later garner him popularity during his years in the Cadet School of the Guards (1852-56). However, the tradition of hazing and alcohol abuse in the Cadet School may well have led to Mussorgsky’s drinking problem later in life. \(^{14}\) Through Father Krusky, the religious instructor of the school, Mussorgsky “acquired a profound knowledge of the very essence of ancient Greek and Catholic church music.” \(^{15}\)

His father Piotr died in 1853; Mussorgsky’s emotional state regarding this death was not documented. In 1856, following the family tradition, he left the Cadet School and joined the Preobrazhensky Guards, where he was assigned as a duty officer to the second

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\(^{13}\) Leyda and Bertensson, *Mussorgsky Reader*, 416-17.


\(^{15}\) Leyda and Bertensson, *Mussorgsky Reader*, 417.
military hospital in St. Petersburg. There he became acquainted with the newly qualified doctor Alexander Borodin (1833-87).\textsuperscript{16}

Mussorgsky describes his initial encounters of the musical society in his autobiography.\textsuperscript{17}

…In the regiment, his comrade Vanlyarsky introduced Musorgksy to the genius [Alexander] Dargomyzhsky [1813-69]. In the home of Dargomyzhsky, Musorgksy became friendly with the prominent workers of musical art in Russia: C[ésar] Cui [1835-1918] and M[ily] Balakirev [1837-1910]. With the latter the young 19-year-old composer studied the whole history of the development of musical art--- with examples, with severe systematic analysis of all the most important musical creations by the composers of European art in their historical sequence, this study proceed during regular readings together of the musical works on two pianos...

Balakirev would become Mussorgsky’s sole guide in composition for the next five years, even as he admitted that, not being a theorist, he couldn’t teach Mussorgsky harmony. Instead, they analyzed form by playing, as piano duets, through Beethoven’s symphonies along with some Schumann, Schubert and Glinka.\textsuperscript{18}

**The Circle**

In 1858, Mussorgsky applied for a discharge from his army service, choosing to fully devote himself to composition. Borodin encountered Mussorgsky again in 1859, and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) became acquainted with him in 1860. Balakirev introduced Mussorgsky to the art and music critic Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906), and later (1866) through Stasov, Lyudmila Shestakova (1816-1906), sister of Mikhail Glinka

\textsuperscript{16} Brown, {	extit{Mussorgsky}}, 8.
\textsuperscript{17} Leyda and Bertensson, {	extit{Mussorgsky Reader}}, 417-18.
\textsuperscript{18} Brown, {	extit{Mussorgsky}}, 12-3.
(1804-57). The group of friends prospered under Stasov’s leadership, Balakirev’s compositional guidance and Shestakova’s sponsorship, as Mussorgsky recalled:\textsuperscript{19}

This closeness to a talented circle of musicians, regular discussions and the establishment of firm contacts with a wide circle of Russian scholars and writers… particularly stimulated the mental activity of the young composer [Mussorgsky] and gave it a serious, strictly scientific direction.

Musical soirées usually would take place at Shestakova’s house, where these composers’ works would be performed and discussed.\textsuperscript{20}

In May of 1867, Stasov wrote an article entitled “Mr. Balakirev’s Slavonic Concert,” a performance of works by Glinka, Dargomizhsky, Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, along with Liszt and Moniuszko.\textsuperscript{21}

… Mr. Balakirev’s concert consisted of pieces representing one or another Slavonic nationality…God grant that our Slavonic guests never forget today’s concert, and God grant that they may preserve forever the memory of how much poetry, feeling, talent and ability is possessed by the small but already powerful little heap [могучая кучка] of Russian musicians.

Immediately, the term “Могучая Кучка” (“Moguchaya Kuchka,” “Powerful Little Heap,” or “Mighty Handful”) was applied to this circle of friends. Rimsky-Korsakov, in his memoirs, refers to the group as “Balakirev’s circle” as well as “The Five:”\textsuperscript{22}

If we leave out the account of Lodyzhensky, who accomplished nothing, and Lyadov, who appeared later, Balakirev’s circle consisted of Balakirev, Cui, Mussorgsky, Borodin, and me (the French have retained the denomination of “Les Cinq” for us to this day).
“Mighty Handful” would become a source of mockery from the circle’s “enemies,” specifically those internationalist composers led by Anton Rubinstein (1829-94). They were conservatively trained in the West and formed the Russian Music Society in 1859. The internationalist composers were dedicated to cultivating traditional European compositional techniques and styles. Rubinstein would later found the St. Petersburg Conservatoire in 1862. Balakirev and his circle, on the other hand, considered themselves nationalists. They were proud self-taught amateurs, who claimed that their work was more authentically Russian as it expressed and represented their native heritage. “Balakirev saw Rubinstein as representing a mortal danger” to the soul of Russian music. He often made derogatory comments about music of the Western (German) “routine” for hindering a composer’s originality.

Besides the deeply rooted folklore influence, the Kuchka circle’s music displays a reliance on orientalism. Orientalism is in fact considered, even in the West, one of the best-known aspects of Russian national character. As a leader of the circle, Balakirev

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24 Brown, Mussorgsky, 381.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid, 27.
encouraged the use of eastern musical components to distinguish the nationalist Russian music from Western-oriented composition.\textsuperscript{30}

Another important element of the Kuchka circle’s composition was its adherence to realism. Under the influence of realist movements in art and literature, realism was introduced into music in the mid 19th century and flourished past the end of the century into the early 20th.\textsuperscript{31} Realism in music was first thought as a movement of rebellion rising up against social traditions and musical conventions\textsuperscript{32}. According to Carl Dahlhaus, realist music is anti-romanticism: it is descriptive, not expressive; it is direct and ugly; it is the idea of setting a prose text like a musical novel.\textsuperscript{33}

Glinka and Dargomizhsky were the pioneers who implemented the dogma of realism in Russian music, laying the foundation for the Kuchka circle.\textsuperscript{34}

It was Dargomizhsky, too, who formulated the credo of Russian realism embraced so wholeheartedly by Mussorgsky: “I want the note [music] to express the word, I want truth.”\textsuperscript{35}

Only about a decade later, Mussorgsky would reclaim the same statement.

Although the Kuchka circle had provided Mussorgsky with a nurturing milieu for the growth of his compositional skills, for all intents and purposes, he was essentially on his own by 1862. Borodin, who had barely joined the circle after the group’s high season,

\textsuperscript{30} Figes, \textit{Natasha’s Dance}, 391.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Brown, \textit{Mussorgsky}, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{35} Dahlhaus, \textit{Realism}, 73.
was establishing a reputable scientific career that would occupy him. Balakirev, having devoted much of himself to the newly founded Free Music School, also realized that he had no personal interest in Cui; on top of that, he sensed that Mussorgsky was musically becoming more independent and more incompatible. Rimsky-Korsakov would lose contact with the Kuchka members for an extended period of time due to his naval duty abroad. For Mussorgsky, only Stasov remained close.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{The Evolution of Mussorgsky’s Songs}

Songs composed before Mussorgsky’s time, including those of Alexander Alyabyev (1787-1851), Glinka, and Dargomizhsky, could be generally categorized into two types of composition: one was the sentimental “romance” (романс) influenced by bel canto, and the other was the “Russian song” (песня) influenced by folksong.\textsuperscript{37} While Mussorgsky inherited these traditions, he quickly he developed his own variety of styles. Among his first collection of seventeen early songs composed between 1857-66 and entitled “Years of Youth,” seven of them were noted as “romances,” three simply as “songs,” along with other labels, such as: “a musical tale,” “fantasia,” “a study in folk style,” “an experiment in recitative,” and even an aria from his unfinished opera \textit{Salambo} (\textit{Саламбо}, 1863-66).\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Brown, \textit{Musorgsky}, 43.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 36.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 36-7.
Mussorgsky’s earliest recorded song, dated April 30, 1857, was “Where Art Thou, Little Star?” (“Где ты, звёздочка?”) set to Nikolai Grekov’s text. The song, composed before Balakirev’s recruitment, has a highly melismatic and ornamented approach that greatly reflects the influence of folk culture. In fact, it is so folksong-like that Balakirev would later include it in his collection of Russian folksongs. Mussorgsky orchestrated the second version of the song, dated June 4, 1858. Although it was never published, this would mark his first experience in orchestration.

“Sadly Rustle the Leaves” (“Листья шумели уныло,” 1859, text by Alexei Koltsov) and “What Are Words of Love to You” (“Что вам слова любви?” 1860, text by A. Ammosov) both borrowed elements of German tradition; the latter was especially reminiscent of Schumann.

As a consequence of the Emancipation of the Serfs between 1861 and 1863, the family estate suffered greatly, and it may well be for this reason that Mussorgsky hardly composed anything during those years. “The problems he now had to confront were daunting. In the new social structure that had developed he observed the peasants with healthy respect.” Mussorgsky wrote to Balakirev on June 22, 1863.

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39 Ibid, 37.
40 Ibid.
41 Leyda and Bertsson, Musorgsky Reader, 426.
42 Brown, Musorgsky, 40-1.
43 Ibid, 43.
44 Ibid.
45 Orlova, Musorgsky’s Days and Works, 110.
… I can say one thing: the peasants are much more capable than the landowners in handling self-government. In their meetings they come straight to the point and, in their own way, discuss their interests sensibly.

The hardship of the Emancipation alerted Mussorgsky to the way everyday people lived, which could have planted a seed of realism in his future compositions.

“King Saul” ("Царь Саул," dated 1863, translated by Kozlov on Byron’s *Song of Saul before his Last Battle*) was considered a landmark: “A creation whose eruption into this world could hardly have been guessed from Musorgsky’s earlier songs, for all their variety and lively enterprise.” Its harmony displays the monarchic grandeur and legendary heroism similar to that of *Boris Godunov* that Mussorgsky was to compose some five years later.

Growing up on the rural estate, Mussorgsky absorbed folk culture from his childhood. As an “exile” during those years of Emancipation, he might have been inspired to infuse his folk life experience into his works. “Winds Blow, Wild Winds” ("Дуют ветры, ветры буйные," text by Koltsov, dated April 9, 1864), though labeled a “song,” possesses a modal quality that displays the influence of folk music. “Night” ("Ночь," text by Aleksandr Pushkin, dated April 22, 1864) was labeled a “romance-fantasia.” Its revision (1868-71) was labeled simply “fantasia.” The song shows Mussorgsky’s love for harmonic richness that creates one of the most haunting...

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid, 66.
49 Ibid, 68
atmospheres in the music. “Kalistratushka” (“Калистратушка,” text by Nikolay Nekrasov, dated June 3, 1864) is noted as an “etude in folk style,” indeed, “the relationship with a folk milieu is explicit and pervasive.”

The death of his mother in 1865 was a massive blow to Mussorgsky. Soon after, due to alcoholism, the composer fell seriously ill and was forced to move in with his brother Filaret, who had married. The exact date of the mother’s death was not documented, but Mussorgsky dedicated several of his works in her memory; some of them were conceivably composed before she died or soon after. “A Prayer” (“Молитва,” text by Mikhail Lermontov, dated February 14, 1865), influenced by Dargomizhsky’s “Still a Prayer” (1861), “is the more consistently flexible in declamation, harmonically more sophisticated and bolder in the quiet disquiet of his unresolved coda.” The song displays a hint of Orthodox church music. “Lullaby” (“Колыбельная песня,” September 17, 1865), text by Aleksandr Ostrovsky from The Voyevod, is a song characterized by weariness and gentleness. The score is marked with stage directions, which indicates it might have been composed for a production of Ostrovsky’s play The Voyevod.

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50 Brown, Musorgsky, 67.  
51 Ibid, 68.  
52 Ibid, 73-4.  
53 Ibid, 71.  
54 Ibid.  
55 Ibid, 69.  
56 Ibid, 70.  
57 Ibid.
“Outcast” (“Отверженная,” text by Ivan Goltz-Miller, dated June 17, 1865) was labeled as “an experiment in recitative.”58 Occasionally, Mussorgsky seemed to use song composition as an experimental tool for various purposes: this song came along as he was still trying to finish his first opera Salambo, as well as helping Dargomizhsky with his opera The Stone Guest.59 Although “Outcast” is successful in its declamatory style, there are still lyrical romances such as “Desire” (“Желание,” dated April 28, 1866). The text was translated by Mikhail Mikhailov from Heine’s “Ich wollt, meine Schmerzen ergössen.”60 This song recalls the German Lied tradition. Mussorgsky seemed to mimic Schumann with a lengthy postlude.61

1866 would mark Mussorgsky’s compositional maturity, as realism took root significantly in his music. For example, a few realist songs were set to words of Mussorgsky’s own. “Darling Savishna” (“Светик Савишна,” dated Spetember 14, 1866), subtitled “an imbecile’s song,” was considered as Mussorgsky’s very first realist song, in which “the new brand of dramatic monologue the words could be all-determining, and they might be the only means of decoding the music.”62 Then, there are “Ah, You Drunken Sot!” (“Ах Ты, пьяная тетеря!” dated October 4, 1866) and “The

58 Ibid, 71.
59 Ibid, 72.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid, 79.
Seminarist” (“Семинарист,” dated October 10, 1866). The imitation of “human speech” started to emerge through the declamation style in the vocal line.

The project of the opera Salambo was finally discarded. One of Mussorgsky’s major orchestral works, (St. John’s) Night on Bald Mountain (Ночь на лысой горе), was completed and dated July 5, 1867.

Mussorgsky started composing The Nursery (Детская) cycle (based on his own text) and The Marriage (Женитьба, an opera based on a play by Nikolai Gogol, 1809-52) almost at the same time in 1868. On May 8, he presented the first song of The Nursery, “With Nanny” (“С няней,” or “The Child”, the title he first gave), for the Kuchka circle. Dargomizhsky, whom Mussorgsky called “the great teacher of musical truth,” praised his work: “That’s outdone me!”

David Brown sought the transformation of Mussorgsky’s composition:

The result is a miniature, virtuoso dramatic monologue. Though it runs its course mostly to syllabically set crotchets, the phrases are designed… to ensure the singer can reflect every verbal inflection and tone… The harmony is rarely functional (though not undirected), being where necessary fragmented and dissonant to make it the closest of allies to the voice, whether concerned with atmosphere, emphasis, emotion, or mimicry. Equally novel is the compensatingly firm control of extensive stretches through a succession of “pivot pitches” to create phases of local stability… While lacking the unbroken presence of the true pedal, each pivot pitch becomes an unobtrusive anchorage for a stretch of music, and may (unlike a true pedal) exercise a strong, if not absolute control on the chords employed.

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63 Brown, Musorgsky, 80.
64 Ibid, 87.
65 Ibid, 104.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid, 104-5.
These would become the core principles of Mussorgsky’s mature compositional style.

In June of 1868 Mussorgsky began to work on Gogol’s *The Marriage*, which turned out to be his first realist opera. By this time, Mussorgsky was practicing the Kuchka’s dogma of musical realism in full force, as he wrote to Shestakova:68

… For my characters to speak on the stage, as living people speak, but besides this, for the character and power of intonation of the characters, supported by the orchestra, which forms a musical pattern of their speech, to achieve their aim directly, that is, my music must be an artistic reproduction of human speech in all its finest shades, that is, the sound of human speech, as the external manifestations of thought and feeling must, without exaggeration or violence, become true, accurate music, but artistic, highly artistic. That is the ideal toward which I strive (“Savishna,” “The Orphan,” “Yeremushka,” “The Child” [“With Nanny”])…

And then, to Rimsky-Korsakov on the same day, he said about the opera *The Marriage*:69

… I want to say that if the expression in sound of human thought and feeling in simple speech is truly produced by me in music, and this reproduction is musical and artistic, then the thing is in the bag… I have worked briskly--- as it happened, but brisk work tells on one: whatever speech I hear, no matter who is speaking (nor what he says) my mind is already working to find the musical statement for such speech…

Mussorgsky held the belief that only “human speech” could satisfy his artistic goal in his musical realism.

However, with so much hope and hard work being put into *The Marriage*, the project would finally peter out, as Mussorgsky picked up the idea of Alexander Pushkin’s *Boris Godunov* suggested by a professor friend Vladimir Nikolsky (1836-83) and

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69 Ibid, 113.
Shestakova.\textsuperscript{70} Using his own libretto, Mussorgsky finished and orchestrated the original version of \textit{Boris Godunov} in 1869 and submitted it to the Board of Directors of the Imperial Theaters the next year.\textsuperscript{71} It was rejected for an objection that it lacked “an important female role”--- according to Rimsky-Korsakov.\textsuperscript{72} Mussorgsky threw himself right back to work on the revision, not only to meet the requirement, but also to expand the opera to a grand scale.\textsuperscript{73} The revision was finally completed in 1872, and was granted its premier at the Marinsky Theater on February 8, 1874.\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Boris Godunov} would turn out to be Mussorgsky’s only completed opera, one that represented the peak of his compositional maturity.

In 1873, Mussorgsky befriended Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1848-1913). The two moved in together soon after.\textsuperscript{75} The death of Victor Hartmann (1834-73), an architect and artist, inspired Mussorgsky’s piano work \textit{Pictures at an Exhibition} (\textit{Картинки с выставки}, 1874) based on an exhibition of Hartmann’s artworks.\textsuperscript{76}

Mussorgsky addressed, in this 1880 autobiography, events of the past, current and future: \textsuperscript{77}

\begin{quote}
… The success of the opera [\textit{Boris Godunov}] was a complete triumph for its author. Following this opera there were planned, with the assistance of the critic Stasov,
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 418.
\textsuperscript{71} Brown, \textit{Musorgsky}, 368.
\textsuperscript{72} Rimsky-Korsakov, \textit{My Musical Life}, 109-10.
\textsuperscript{73} Taruskin, \textit{Musorgsky}, 250-1.
\textsuperscript{74} Brown, \textit{Musorgsky}, 130.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, 368.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 229-30.
\textsuperscript{77} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{Musorgsky Reader}, 418.
\end{footnotes}
Professors Nikolsky and Kostomarov, two more operas simultaneously: *Khovanshchina* and *The Fair at Sorochintzi*, based on Gogol. As a relaxation from this work there were composed the *Album Series* on the exhibition of the works of the genius architect Hartmann, *Danse macabre* (5 scenes) on a text by the author’s friend Count Golenishche-Kutuzov and several songs with text by Count Alexei Tolstoy…

By then, the five Tolstoy songs had been completed in 1877, and he had already finished the fourth song of *Songs and Dances of Death*. Apparently, he had planned a fifth one. The two operas, *Khovanshchina* and *The Fair at Sorochintzi*, were never finished.

Strangely there is no mention of his song cycle *Sunless* (Без солнца, 1874) in his autobiography. The texts of the cycle, provided by Golenishchev-Kutuzov, are lyrical. This directed Mussorgsky’s shift to a romantic style, as David Brown asserts:

*Sunless* is the most intimate, least demonstrative of Musorgsky’s major works. It is also the least realist, the most lyrical, preoccupied not with his subject’s real-world existence but with his inner life; the hero is no rough peasant or urchin type, but a romantic solitary of a familiar genre, enduring the suicidal pains of disappointment in love.

Andrew Fox even explores elements of impressionism in the composition:

The songs of the first half of the late period are Mussorgsky’s most distinctly impressionistic songs, principally because of the abandonment of the accentuate character of parlando and fold styles. Their increasing use of tonal ambiguity, parallelism, pedal notes and harmonies in cluster, whole-tone and added-son structures further contribute to the impressionistic character of these works. The two cycles, *Sunless* and *Songs and Dances of Death*, then, represent Mussorgsky’s furthest evolution into impressionism.

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79 Ibid, 243.
80 Ibid, 243.
81 Andrew Criddle Fox, “Evolution of Style in the Songs of Modest Mussorgsky,” PhD diss. (Florida State University, 2007), 133
Stasov was not happy with the cycle and would not approve most of the songs. He thought the cycle was weak, and a betrayal of the Kuchka circle’s teachings of realism.\textsuperscript{82}

Perhaps this is the reason behind Mussorgsky’s exclusion of \textit{Sunless} in his autobiography. He wanted to be remembered as a true Kuchka.\textsuperscript{83}

Mussorgsky cannot be classed with any existing group of musicians, either by the character of his compositions or by his musical views. The formula of his artistic \textit{profession de foi} may be explained by his view, as a composer, of the task of art: art is a means of communicating with people, not an aim in itself. This guiding principle has defined the whole of his creative activity. Proceeding from the conviction that human speech is strictly controlled by musical laws he considers the task of musical art to be the reproduction in musical sounds not merely of the mood of the feeling, but chiefly of the mood of human speech. Acknowledging that in the realm of art only artist-reformers such as Palestrina, Bach, Gluck, Beethoven, Berlioz and Liszt have created the laws of art, he considers these laws are not immutable but liable to change and progress, like the entire spiritual world of man.

These words sum up what Mussorgsky envisioned in his music. He composed music in various styles including romanticism, nationalism, impressionism and realism. However, he sought to make music communicate in the same fashion as “human speech.” He understood that he was setting a new standard in Russian music, and he wanted his name to be remembered along with those European composers whom he admired, as a reformer of Russian music.

\textsuperscript{82} Brown, \textit{Mussorgsky}, 249.
\textsuperscript{83} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{Mussorgsky Reader}, 419-20.
Chapter 3: The Making of the *Songs and Dances of Death*

Being mentally and physically distressed, Mussorgsky seemed to find consolation in his musical creation. James Walker notes: ⁸⁴

Confronting, among other things, the death of close friends and his own more frequent bouts with illness and alcoholism in the mid 1870s, Musorgsky, an impressionable and sensitive man, could hardly have avoided becoming more introspective about death and his own mortality. We can see this, if in no other way, in his choice of the texts, moods and settings for his songs and operatic scenes from this period.

Among these choices there emerges the creation of masterpieces such as *Pictures at an exhibition*, *Sunless*, and *Songs and Dances of Death* (*Песни и Пляски Смерти*). His roommate friend Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1848-1913) supplied texts for the latter two.

Stasov rightly claimed the credit for initiating the idea behind the project of *Songs and Dances of Death*: ⁸⁵

I was the one who had suggested the subject… Along with these four themes, I had suggested several others: the death of a stern, fanatic monk in his cell while the distant ringing of a bell is heard; a political exile on his way back home perishes at sea, which represents his homeland; the death of a young woman while dreaming about love and her last treasured ball. I had also suggested other themes. But Musorgsky, although very pleased with them, had no time to complete a song; he would just play excerpts for me and the others. Even the four songs he did complete, mentioned above, remained unpublished at that time.

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In Alexandra Orlova’s note to Stasov’s essay, there is a slightly different list in which “Great Lady” is listed as “Grand Gentleman”, and “Statesman” as “Dignitary.” Also, there are only eleven items listed, with “Monk” missing. However, Stasov, in a letter to Rimsky-Korsakov, did mention that “Monk” was to be the 4th song of the cycle: “… In his Danse macabre (three numbers of which you know) he has begun a 4th: ‘Monk’--- very good--- and is starting a 5th…”

Mussorgsky himself reported on his progress and his plan for the cycle to the poet after the first three songs had been completed in 1875.

My dear friend Arseni,
Our first installment of the Macabres is finished, for today the “Serenade” is written, which is why I did not show up at your dearest maman’s. I think you will agree on the simplest of titles, one worthy of our new album--- together we continue to overcome men with our albums: immodestly, but honorably. I have named the new child-album She. The first installment will be published (I hope) in this order: (1) “Cradle-Song,” (2) “Serenade” and (3) “Trepak.”

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86 Leyda and Bertensson, Musorgsky Reader, 297.
88 Leyda and Bertensson, Musorgsky Reader, 340.
89 Ibid, 297.
In fact, “Trepak” was the first to be composed although Mussorgsky intended it to be the third in the cycle. His intention in naming the cycle She (Ona) was apparently based on the subject matter---the theme of “Death” (“Смерть”), a feminine noun in Russian. At this time, the idea for “Field Marshal,” which was not on the original list of twelve, was still nowhere in sight until two years later. Apparently, Mussorgsky never had followed through with the theme of “Monk” or the others on the list until “Field Marshal” came along.

The Text

Golenishchev-Kutuzov supplied the text for the song cycle Songs and Dances of Death; however, Mussorgsky would revise the words whenever he saw fit to satisfy his musical savor. This could have been the reason why the poems used here were not included in Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s notebooks. Even when printed in a separate volume of Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s poetry collection in 1878, they were significantly different from those Mussorgsky had used. Caryl Emerson provides a comprehensive comparison of the different verses between the two. In general, there are times when Mussorgsky would replace the past tense of the text with the present to indicate the scene happening in its real time; at other times, he revises the text using his own words. He

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90 Brown, Musorgsky, 289-90.
even deletes a number of stanzas if necessary, in order to intensify the dramatic effect in his musical setting.\textsuperscript{93}

It is easy to understand how this different view of the poetry came about.

Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s style came from a background of academic studies in classical and romantic poetry where he admired Pushkin and Lermontov,\textsuperscript{94} while Mussorgsky’s style had matured in the Kuchka circle where he pursued the truth of realism. For Golenishchev-Kutuzov, “it is lyrical, timeless and often pessimistic poetry with a strong interest in landscape.”\textsuperscript{95} For Mussorgksy, “the important distinction was this: romantic artists tended to focus on the emotions aroused in them, the artists, by subject matter; realists attempted to communicate the emotions of the subject directly, minimizing the role of the interpretive filter.”\textsuperscript{96} In this song cycle, Mussorgsky was very sensitive about the placement of the words and their musical treatments, constantly aware of how and by whom (both performer and audience) they would be experienced.\textsuperscript{97}

Golenishchev-Kutuzov, on the other hand, openly criticized the Kuchka circle in his reminiscences of Mussorgsky.\textsuperscript{98} In his opinion, in Mussorgsky’s realistic compositions, including the opera \textit{Boris Godunov}, “the absence of music and beauty was

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{96} Emerson, “Real Endings and Russian Death: Mussorgskij’s \textit{Pesni I Pljaski Smerti},” 199.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, 205.
utterly compensated for, in the eyes of his leaders, by the realism (or the comedy) of the content and by the ‘veracity in the sound.’ There was no end to their ecstasy when these compositions appeared.”99 Golenishchev-Kutuzov came to believe that the dogma of the Kuchka circle had, in fact, hindered Mussorgsky’s compositional creativity. Mussorgsky often had to revise his works many times in order to meet the Kuchka circle’s approval, as Golenishchev-Kutuzov remembered: “I must say that his first improvised version, in my opinion, was always better, more beautiful, and even richer than the later one in its harmonized and finished form.”100

By the time when Mussorgsky was working on Songs and Dances of Death, the Kuchka circle had come to the end of its era. Golenishchev-Kutuzov recalled: “Little by little his nature began to emerge and his creativity went on to that phase in its development which Mr. Stasov in his article called decadent, and which, in my opinion, was the beginning of a new and fruitful period of creativity.”101

Relationship between the Composer and the Poet

Golenishchev-Kutuzov, a descendent of Mikhail Illarionovich Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1745-1813), a field marshal “immortalized in Tolstoy’s War and Peace,”102 was eleven years younger than Mussorgsky. They had been introduced at one of the

100 Ibid, 86.
101 Ibid, 92.
Kuchka circle’s musical soirées in 1873. As the poet remembered: “Within a month, we were virtually inseparable; we confided our artistic projects to each other; we judged and criticized each other with a partiality that is only possible to inveterate flatterers or intimate friends. In short, we had become bosom friends.” In the fall of 1874, they shared a rented two-room apartment where their intimate relationship flourished.

Late 1875, Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s decision to depart due to his marriage was a big blow to Mussorgsky. As Rimsky-Korsakov’s marriage had distanced the relationship of the two composers earlier, Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s departure was even more devastating and may well have contributed even further to Mussorgsky’s drinking problem and declining health. Mussorgsky, in the words of Orlova, “considered that marriage had an adverse effect on creativity and thus, like Stasov, was indignant at the marriage of artists. However, he ultimately was reconciled with those of his friends who married, with Golenishchev-Kutuzov in particular.”

Golenishchev-Kutuzov was to return to St. Petersburg in 1879, and their routine visits resumed.

In spite of how he felt about the institution of marriage, Mussorgsky may well have viewed his relationship with Golenishchev-Kutuzov in a sense as a marital one. In his letters to the poet, he often referred to their artistic creations as their “children,” the

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104 Ibid, 84.
105 Russ, “Modeste Mussorgsky and Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov,” 244.
106 Ibid, 243.
107 Orlova, Mussorgsky’s Days and Works, 475.
song cycles *Sunless* and *Songs and Dances of Death* as their “child-albums,” as he wrote in 1875, apparently after Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s departure.¹⁰⁸

My dear friend Arseni, whatever happens, my own, we absolutely must meet, drag yourself along with your little children, “it is not for me to be a stranger--- it is nothing but the lure of loving hearts.” How much business, how much disgust and dissipation, and hopes--- great desires (terrible to utter!)--- and you, my own, you haven’t acted properly. What happened to you? Shall I open myself? All right--- listen: you are loved by me, with you I feel at ease; do not bow to the Prince of the Earth, but hold your head higher and remember: verily, is it so? This day Wednesday (December 10) we [children and I] await you--- when you will grant us your presence, and kindly bring your good offspring; how fond I am of talking with them.

Come when you wish: come, if you wish and we love you--- I repeat this.

Your, without any doubt,

Modeste Musorgsky.

His words displayed the outpouring of deep emotions and the intimacy he perceived to exist between the poet and himself.

A rough draft of a poem by Golenishchev-Kutuzov dated in 1876 was discovered and entitled “To M. P. Musorgsky” with these words:¹⁰⁹

Dear, by chance we met each other;
We stopped and called one another,
As strangers in the night, when the blizzard was raging,
When the whole world was covered with cold and darkness.
One path lay before us in the immense steppe,
And together we walked…I was young then.
You cheerfully went forward, already proud and restless,
I made my way in your footsteps… The years flashed by.

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¹⁰⁹ Orlova, *Musorgsky’s Days and Works*, 482.
There were also some fragments of sentences, individual lines and phrases, some crossed out.110

Results of profound thoughts…
You have shown cherished creations…
People… praise
Of an enthusiastic crowd… listened…
You were crowned with glory and reaped laurels,
And I observed from the crowd that you were admired
Of deeds for others you were my [?] appeared.
I have not lost you…
I knew the hour was coming…
You came back to me in my solitude…
<You remember the evening when we became friends>…
<And in peaceful silence>
It was in the last hour of the evening calm
<With passion I>
<They flew to us>
The visions flew together to me and we…
Then full of yearning, of doubts,
Then light-eyes, with a smile on our lips
I poured out dreams in careless verses,
And you clothed them in mysterious sounds
As in beautiful chasubles--- and sung by you
They sparkled with unexpected beauty.
It was… <But why awaken memories>

Adoration, admiration, and passionate feelings all seemed difficult, even for
Golenishchev-Kutuzov himself, to express in words without hesitation.

The real relationship between the two remained in speculation. The evidence
detected from their correspondences is subtle, though Michael Russ considered them

110 Ibid, 482-83.
strong enough to suggest “a homosexual or, at least, an unconsummated ‘homoerotic’ relationship.”

The Songs

*Songs and dances of Death* is not only a cycle of four songs but that of four miniature dramatic scenes on the themes of death: the death of a sick child (“Lullaby”), the death of a sick girl (“Serenade”), the death of a drunken peasant (“Trepak”), and the death of field soldiers (“Field Marshal”). Under Mussorgsky’s musical treatments, “all four songs are species of drama. The first becomes an explicit duologue, the second and third are largely monologues targeted on a present, though unheard, recipient. But the final song has more of the epic about it, culminating in a triumphal oration.” The dying characters are always voiceless in all four scenes.

“Lullaby” (“Колыбельная”), dated April 26, 1875, was dedicated to Anna Yakovlevna Vorobyeva-Petrova (1817-1901), a contralto from the Glinka era. She was well known for the roles Vania and Ratmir (from Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila*). She often performed Mussorgsky’s songs in her late career, especially “Lullaby,” as the dedicatee.

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114 Orlova, *Mussorgsky Remembered*, 18 and 156.
The scene describes the following, in Stasov’s own words: “Death snatches a sick child from her mother’s embrace.” This statement paints the sinister character of Death, while Mussorgsky seems to offer another interpretation. The Narrator’s introduction is followed by a dramatic dialogue between Death and the Mother.

Mussorgsky’s musical treatments in the dialogue contrast the characters in the depiction of their emotions and states of mind. The Mother’s lines, always agitated, anxious, “… desperate, breathless and tonally insecure--- show Musorgsky at his most maturely realist, each textual detail scrupulously observed.” Death, on the other hand, in responding to the Mother’s every emotional outburst, appears in a calm and tuneful lullaby amid harmonic warmth. It is this positive energy emerging from the character of Death that Mussorgsky is trying to convey---Death is here to offer the Mother a sincere consolation and to assure her of the Child’s peaceful rest.

Steven Walsh found the composition of “Lullaby” similar to that of a “ballad” of the Western musical tradition, even going so far as to compare it to Schubert’s “Erlkönig.” In David Brown’s view, however: “‘Lullaby’ proved to be Musorgsky’s last truly realist song, and its presentation of the drama through naked textual projection makes it the most harrowing of the present four. In the remaining three the emphasis

116 Brown, Musorgsky, 290.
shifts towards lyrical melody." Only the “lyrical melody” is made up of folk materials that Mussorgsky adapted, amounting to something not very far from the Kuchka circle’s realist doctrine.

“Серенада” (“Серенада”), dated May 23, 1875, was dedicated to Ludmila Ivanovna Glinka-Shestakova (1816-1906), sister of Mikhail Glinka. She was a devoted supporter of the Kuchka circle who hosted most of the circle’s musical soirées. Mussorgsky remained in a close, somehow intimate, relationship, referring to her as “my little dove” in his letters to her, and himself as “your Musinka.”

In a seductive dance rhythm, Death’s monologue is treated with a tuneful folksong-like melody. She (Death), as a knight approaching the sick young girl, tries to entice her love with a serenade. The triumph comes in the dramatic acclaim at the end: “Тый, мой (you are mine)!” Stasov had a different view on Death’s intention in the scene: “Death in the guise of a knight-troubadour strangles a beautiful young girl while singing a love song to her.”

James Stuart Campbell and James Walker both suggest a musical resemblance between “Серенада” and “Il vecchio castello” from Pictures at an Exhibition. Other than the compound triple meter and Mussorgsky’s habitual use of

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118 Brown, Musorgsky, 291.
119 Leyda and Bertensson, Musorgsky Reader, 432.
120 Brown, Musorgsky, 381.
121 Leyda and Bertensson, Musorgsky Reader.
122 Orlova, Musorgsky Remembered, 18.
123 Campbell, “Music as Text and Image: Musorgsky’s Songs and Dances of Death,” 416.
intervals of major-3\textsuperscript{rd} and minor-6\textsuperscript{th} in the melody, which are characteristic of Russian folk music, the suggestion of resemblance is possibly a matter of subjective preference.

Bennie Middaugh commented on the use of tonic and dominant pedals: \textsuperscript{125}

… it was obviously one of Mussorgsky’s favorite devices for preserving a strong tonic feeling in his harmonies without resorting to the conventional dominant and diminished seventh, or ‘leading tone,’ usages, which were trademarks of the Romantic school.

Middaugh also thought that “Serenade” is stylistically the most conventional of the four, reminding him most of Schumann and Liszt. \textsuperscript{126}

“Trepak” ("Тrepак"), dated March 1, 1875, was the first of the four in the cycle to be composed. It was dedicated to the well-known bass Osip Afanasyevich Petrov (1806-78), \textsuperscript{127} husband of Anna Yakovlevna Vorobyeva-Petrova. He created the leading bass roles in Glinka’s operas and others, including Varlaam in Mussorgsky’s \textit{Boris Godunov}. The singer offered great moral support to Mussorgsky\textsuperscript{128} and earned a nickname, “grandpa Petrov,”\textsuperscript{129} from the composer.

Trepak is a form of Russian folk dance in two-accented-beat rhythm. \textsuperscript{130} Stasov gave a gruesomely realist story of “Trepak:” “During a snowstorm, the Grim Reaper

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{The Musorgsky Reader}, 432.
\textsuperscript{128} Brown, \textit{Mussorgsky: His Life and Works}, 380.
\textsuperscript{129} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{The Musorgsky Reader}.
\textsuperscript{130} Middaugh, “Modest Mussorgsky’s Songs and Dances of Death,” 2.
meets an old drunken and hapless peasant in the forest and freezes him to death.” However, Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s text depicts Death as a character of playfulness and compassion. In reality, the peasant does die in the snowstorm, but in the poetry, the snowstorm is to be the festive invitation from Death inviting the drunken peasant to the dance, promising to make a fluffy bed and comforter for him with snowflakes to ensure his eternal rest. This is a perfect example of “realism versus romanticism.” Mussorgsky’s musical treatment of “Trepak” served as a bridge between the two different schools, enabling him to find a balance in expressing realism within the genre of lyricism/romanticism that would be acceptable to Stasov.

The most discussed topic among scholars is the adaption of the Gregorian chant “Dies Irae” (Figure 1) in “Trepak.”

![Figure 1. Gregorian chant "Dies Irae"](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/subscriber/article/img/grove/music/F921317)

The inspiration came from Liszt’s *Totentanz* (1849, revised in 1853 and 1859), subtitled “*Paraphrase on Dies Irae*.” Mussorgsky described his impressions in a letter to Stasov in July of 1873:133

… The mystical picture of the Dance of Death based on the liturgical theme of Dies Irae in the form of variations, could only have been born from the head of the courageous European Liszt (Serov didn’t understand this) and this courageous European proved the artistic relation between piano and orchestra particularly in the Dance of Death…

David Brown demonstrated in detail how Mussorgsky improvised on the melody of “Dies Irae” in the “Trepak.” He writes: “If thematic reordering is an element in ‘Lullaby,’ melodic evolution is fundamental to ‘Trepak.’”134 The song is constructed in a form where the theme repetitively returns either in the vocal line or in the piano, but every return is accompanied by a different variation. This could be Mussorgsky’s “form of variations” influenced by Liszt’s *Totentanz*. However, except for the first four notes of the chant, there doesn’t seem to be enough evidence to suggest that “Trepak” was improvised on the melody of “Dies Irae.” Brown’s analysis of how Mussorgsky might have adapted the fragments of “Dies Irae” appears a bit far-fetched. It is puzzling why so many scholars would follow the trend in agreeing on the adaption of “Dies Irae” in “Trepak.” That is another subject waiting for research.

“Field Marshal” (or “Commander-in-Chief,” “Полководец”), dated June 17, 1877, was rightly dedicated to Mussorgsky’s beloved Golenishchev-Kutuzov\textsuperscript{135} as a descendent of the great field marshal Mikhail Illarionovich Golenishchev-Kutuzov. Golenishchev-Kutuzov had originally named the poem “The Triumph of Death (Торжество Смерти).”\textsuperscript{136} It is understandable that Mussorgsky changed the title with the intention of the dedication.

“Death, portrayed as a general, destroys a whole crowd of people in the midst of the stormy riot of battle.” Again, Stasov stated the reality in his realist view. According to him: “This is a magnificent song, one of Musorgsky’s best works.”\textsuperscript{137} In Golenishchev-Kutuzov’s poetry, Death appears as the field marshal to console the dying soldiers, and to make peace with their souls after death. One can agree with Stasov that this is one of the most magnificent songs that Mussorgsky has ever written. It was composed for the tenor register while the previous three were written for bass/baritone. Mussorgsky expressed his satisfaction with the song to Golenishchev-Kutuzov in August of 1877:\textsuperscript{138}

… At L. I. Shestakova’s, Lodi twice sang your most marvelous “Field Marshal.” (I am obliged to report to Your Highness\textsuperscript{139} that everyone to whom I read it palpitates with rapture over the “Field Marshal”). You can’t possibly clearly imagine, dear friend, the amazing distinction of your scene when it is rendered by a tenor! You hear in it some transfixion, some inexorable, death-like love! To be more exact: death, coldly passionately in love with death, enjoys death. The novelty of its impression is heretofore

\textsuperscript{135} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{Mussorgsky Reader}, 432.
\textsuperscript{136} Walker, “Images of Death,” 244.
\textsuperscript{137} Stasov, “Recollection of Musorgsky,” 18.
\textsuperscript{138} Leyda and Bertensson, \textit{Mussorgsky Reader}, 361.
\textsuperscript{139} A nickname for Golenishchev-Kutuzov.
unheard! And with what talent P. A. Lodi was able to feel your wonderful scene!--- he is real artist-singer. Yes, after the war!…

At the time Russia was in the middle of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-8).¹⁴⁰ Piotr Alexeyevich Lodi was a young tenor who would join the Marinsky Theater in 1878. His father, also a tenor, had been a friend of Glinka.¹⁴¹

For a composition of war, Mussorgsky not only masterfully depicted the warfare in both aural and visual effects, but also adapted a war hymn for Death’s speech. Death’s monologue is based on the Polish revolutionary hymn “Z dymem pożarów (With the Smoke and Fires)” shown in Figure 2, first written by Józef Nikorowicz (1827-90) as a prayer-tune after the defeat of the Krakow uprising in 1846. In March of the same year, Nikorowicz visited poet Kornel Ujejski (1823-97), who wrote the words as soon as he heard the melody.¹⁴² The text of “Z dymem pożarów” describes exactly the same scenario as that of “Field Marshal.” On the battlefield, prayers and moans ascend to the heavens along with the smoke and the fire. Soldiers, wounded, dying and crying, plead for God’s appearance and redemption¹⁴³… In Mussorgsky’s “Field Marshal,” it is Death who appears and makes peace with the dead.

¹⁴³ Ibid.
Scholars have been curious about the reason behind the Polish hymn introduced in “Field Marshal.” To imply the current Russo-Turkish War by linking it to the Polish revolution would be “significant as a symbol of defeat.”\textsuperscript{145} While that was hardly something Mussorgsky would attempt, James Stuart Campbell seems to have figured out some of the possibilities:\textsuperscript{146}

The most probable explanation is that he used this music, firstly, since it was a march, and thus suitable for a review of troops, and secondly, for those who knew something of its specific associations, to represent in general terms mankind’s foolish and chronic thirst for conflict; it is indeed conceivable that he meant to express an anti-revolutionary view, as revolution is one form of conflict.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Emerson, “Real Endings and Russian Death,” 210.
\textsuperscript{146} Campbell, “Music as Text and Image,” 416.
As Mussorgsky himself had been a victim of the Emancipation in 1861, Campbell’s speculation is reasonable.

In his later years, as the Kuchka circle gradually dispersed, Mussorgsky seems to have distanced himself from its rigid teachings, especially during the time when he was with Golenishchev-Kutuzov.\textsuperscript{147} He had disliked compositions and composers associated with the Western/European tradition, yet he adopted the forms that had been well established in the West for his \textit{Songs and Dances of Death}: a lullaby, a serenade, a dance and a march.\textsuperscript{148} However, on the whole, with the hybridization of realism and romanticism, the song cycle still retains its nationalist integrity. Many factors may have contributed to the change in Mussorgsky: health issues, drinking problems, death of friends and, perhaps most significantly, the state of his relationship with Golenishchev-Kutuzov. Though the composer and the poet came from two different backgrounds, the loving relationship helped both to reach a compromise in their artistic values.

\textsuperscript{147} Walsh, \textit{Mussorgsky and His Circle}, 328-40.
\textsuperscript{148} Campbell, “Music as Text and Image,” 414.
Chapter 4: Analysis and Interpretation

Two terms, *musical environment* and *musical energy*, will be applied in exploring the musical components. When a composer uses certain musical elements or motifs in depicting a scene, be they the sound of the wind, or the bright light of the blue sky, these are referred to as *musical environment*. This often happens in the introductory section where the composer may try to preset the scene for the rest of the song. Especially when there is a character of a narrator involved, the text in his vocal line usually helps to identify the elements of *musical environment*.

Composers may also employ musical materials in expressing a character’s emotional state, for example: rage, grief, or happiness. These are defined as *musical energy*. The expression markings on the score, such as “*tranquillo*” and “*agitato*,” are usually good indications of the character’s *musical energy*. The words in the character’s vocal line can also help with its identification.

The analytical approach of *musical environment* and *musical energy* is based on the individual’s interpretational concept, and can be different from one person to the next. There is no idiomatic musical treatment that can precisely define either term, whether it is a tremolo, chord quality, ascending or descending scale. However, when the composer’s intention is clear, the components of *musical environment* enhance the interpretation of the character’s outer surrounding that can be materialized (visualized) in the musical
depiction, as opposed to those of musical energy, which enhance the interpretation of the character’s inner feelings that is abstract in expression of emotions. There certainly exist grey areas between the two. In many cases, musical environment and musical energy even share the same musical materials. For instance, the introduction section of “Field Marshal” displays passages that can be interpreted as either, or both the musical environment of the battlefield and the musical energy of the warfare (or soldiers). The interpreter, impressed by the musical elements, then will make choices based on his concepts of “inner vs. outer” and “abstract vs. materialized,” etc.

While Mussorgsky’s music in Songs and Dances of Death does not adhere to a traditional Western music theoretical analysis, the analytical approach of “musical environment vs. musical energy” offers a practical way to help a performer define the musical components in visualizing a scenario as it provides another dimension of musical understanding.

**Editions and Orchestrations**

The song cycle Songs and Dances of Death was originally composed for voice and piano. There might have been an intention of orchestration in Mussorgsky’s mind, but there was no documentation to support the idea. The cycle was published posthumously, despite a possible deal with the publisher Josif Jurgenson in 1877.149

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149 Leyda and Bertensson, Musorgsky Reader, 357.

The performing edition can be easily acquired in the form of the individual print of the cycle that was published by International Music Company, New York, in 1951, featuring Russian text with English adaption by Marion Farquhar (1879-1965). This edition was published in multiple keys for high, medium and low voice registers. While cited as the original version edited by Pavel Lamm, it does contain a few misprints. Table 2 shows the distribution of range and tessitura in every song and in different keys. A much earlier edition, edited by Rimsky-Korsakov, was published by Bessel in 1882, and later with French and German translations in 1908. However, Rimsky-Korsakov’s revision was so substantial that he basically distorted Mussorgsky’s intentions in many passages. This edition has been pretty much abandoned nowadays for its inauthenticity.

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150 Ibid, 425.
Table 2. Ranges in different keys published by International Music Co.\

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>High Range / Tessitura</th>
<th>Medium Range / Tessitura</th>
<th>Low Range / Tessitura</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lullaby</td>
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<td>Serenade</td>
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<td>Trepak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Marshal</td>
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Shortly after Mussorgsky’s death in 1881, Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936) and Rimsky-Korsakov devoted themselves to working on orchestration: Glazunov orchestrated “Trepak” and “Lullaby,” and Rimsky-Korsakov “Serenade” and “Field Marshal.” This version was published in 1882. The order of the songs was rearranged chronologically according to the compositional dates in this orchestration, which would start with “Trepak” instead of “Lullaby.”

155 Ibid.
In 1962, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-75) orchestrated the cycle, based on Lamm’s critical edition, in dedication to the great Russian soprano Galina Vishnevskaya (1926-2012). This version, published in 1966 in Moscow, would become the current standard orchestration.

A newer orchestration was completed by Ramon Lazkano (b. 1968) in 1994, and premiered by Dmitri Hvorostovsky (b. 1962) in July of the same year.

“Lullaby” (“Колыбельная”)

The first song of the cycle is written in a through-composed style with reprises of Death’s lullaby (Example 5). Although the key signature indicates that the song is in A minor, it never settles down in a key center. The conversation between the Mother and Death travels through the key areas of F♯ minor, C♯ major, A major, and A minor. Even though there is no trace of traditional harmonic tonality, the music itself is tonal. All key areas, except C♯ major (Death’s entrance in m. 16, Example 4), share a common tone: pitch A, the tone of death.

The opening introduction, marked lento doloroso, seems to be a random arrangement of chromatic 8th notes that are simply doubled an octave down in the bass. In fact, Mussorgsky carefully arranges these pitches, in F♯ minor, by means of appoggiaturas, escape tones, double neighbor tones, descending and ascending scales, as

156 Ibid, 86.
157 Reily, Music of Mussorgsky, 31.
158 Barton, “Modeste Mussorgsky’s Songs and Dances of Death,” 86.
159 Ibid, 87.
if he were drawing the flickering motion of a burning candle, as later suggested in the text. These are the candle motifs (Example 1) that preset the musical environment for the whole song.

Example 1. Opening candle motif

The stagnant progression of this musical environment is interrupted by a sforzando on an interval of a distant major-3rd (D₄-F₅#), indicating a surprise that might have been the startling of the sick child. It might have also implied the approach of Death, giving that the knock on the door later on interrupts Her (Death’s) footsteps in a similar fashion (in double octave A₃-C₅#) at the end of Her entrance (Example 4).

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The vocal line enters (m. 5) in the Narrator’s voice, but it is the *musical energy* of the sick child in the piano with the sighing gestures of descending half tones (Example 2): D to C♯ on the left hand and A to G♯ on the right. This is followed by a long silence on an 8th-note rest with a fermata. Mussorgsky could have left out the fermata, which could have also weakened the *musical energy*.

![Example 2. Child's musical energy](image)

When the text indicates that the candle is dimming away, the piano plays a scale descending from high to low (m. 10). The *musical environment* continues with the candle burning dimly low in the piano left-hand, and the cradle-rocking chords in the right-hand (Example 3). Up to this moment, except for the short-lived *musical energy* of the sick

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child in the opening vocal line, it has been the musical environment that serves the purpose of the Narrator’s introduction.

Example 3. Measures 9-15\footnote{Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 6-7.}

Within the remainder of the song, there will only be musical energy shifting between Death (A major key) and the Mother (F\# minor key) as they exchange words during their dialogue. The musical energy for Death is assigned molto tranquillo, lento
funesto, and allargando, for the Mother agitato and agitato pathetico. Death tries numerous ways to offer consolation, while the Mother shows her anguish in agitato, and agitato only.

Example 4. Death's entrance and Mother's reaction\textsuperscript{163}

At Her first approach, Death tiptoes carefully (осторожно), with pianissimo in molto tranquillo, on every 8\textsuperscript{th}-note alternating with an 8\textsuperscript{th}-rest, and stops at a surprising

\textsuperscript{163} Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 7.
knock (стук), marked sforzando (Example 4). The musical markings--- a mezza voce on the word “осторожно (cautiously),” and a crescendo hairpin on “сердобыльная (compassionate).” These contrasting vocal gestures suggest “tone painting” on those words. The musical energy then abruptly shifts to agitato as the Mother’s anxiety is displayed in the piano’s tremolo. The anxiety hangs onto an unresolved A dominant 7\textsuperscript{th} chord.

Death first speaks with a deadly tone, in lento funesto. Each announcement is followed by the striking of a tolling bell (m. 22, m. 25, and m. 27), again, on the pitch A\textsubscript{3}, doubled in an octave above, struck in sforzando. Death’s musical energy takes a twist into a series of danceable triplets, which lead to a cantabile “Слаще тебя а спойо (I will sing sweeter than you),” in the key of A major. These triplets eventually evolve into the reprises of Death’s lullaby (Example 5).

Silence is often a tool to increase tension in the drama, and Mussorgsky uses it efficiently here. Immediately following Death’s cantabile there is nothing but silence as the Mother gasps the word “тише (quiet)” in pianissimo (m. 33), without the piano. The Mother’s musical energy of agitato pathetico then returns to the piano’s tremolo, in the key of F\# minor, the relative minor to Death’s A major.

Then, for the first time, Death’s lullaby is heard in Her musical energy, first lento funesto, then allargando (Example 5). The melody of the lullaby is constructed with two pitch groups: A-F\#-F\#-A-E-F-E (lento funesto), and A-D\#-D\#-A-D-A-C (allargando) with
a fermata in between. The first group has actually been heard once already in Death’s opening speech (m.22): “Полно пугаться, мой друг (don’t be frightened, my friend).” In the piano part, interesting effects are being achieved beneath the melody. In the first group, Death takes the Mother’s F♯ minor key and turns it into Her own A major. In the second, with the tone of death (the pitch A) cast in the outer voices, the inner voices strike with three descending chords: B major, B♭ major, and A minor. Mussorgsky meant to cast the death in A minor, the original key signature indicated.

Example 5. Death's lullaby

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164 Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 9.
In the Mother’s second response, again marked *agitato* with tremolo in the piano, her desperation soars to the highest pitch of F# (m.40) on “замолчи (be silent).” Death answers with a different kind of *musical energy: tranquillo*, offering Her lullaby in the same peaceful fashion. While the Mother’s *musical energy* is always associated with a tremolo in the piano, this time, the third response, her *agitato* turns into a *con dolore*, marked *pianissimo*, after she curses Death with explicit words: “Прочь ты, проклятая! (Away, you damned one!)” with two *sforzandi*. Her F# minor starts to break down here as she realizes the inevitable pain of losing her child/joy (радость мою), in A minor. As in m. 33, the treatment of silence in mm. 45-46 creates a dramatic tension, but this time the *musical energy* belongs to Death who now attempts another lullaby. “Нет (No)” (m.45) should be sung in tempo here with a sense of interruption.

In making her last plea, the Mother returns to tremolos in the piano (m. 48). This time these tremolos ascend to a very high register with agony in the right-hand, then hopelessly drop back to the left at last. Death utters “Видишь (Look)!” with a new *musical energy: lento tranquillo*, when all is silent, followed Her last lullaby reprise. Instead of hanging onto the pitch C as before, the final note of the lullaby falls on a deadly low A, which sums up the dramatic scene with a perfect authentic cadence in A minor.
“Serenade” (“Серенада”)

Unlike “Lullaby”, which is achieved by the Narrator’s introduction followed by a conversation between the Death and the Mother (who is not the dying one), the remaining songs consist of only Death’s monologues preceded by the Narrator’s introductions.

In contrast to Mussorgsky’s unorthodox compositional style, “Serenade” has a formal structure: introduction-A-A’-B-A-codetta. The introduction opens with a pitch B in the piano doubled in an octave with a fermata (Example 6). The pitch continues in the left-hand and even drops down to low B₁ with a motif that may symbolize the tolling bell, as it is played rhythmically throughout the section even when the left hand is doubling the vocal melody. While these tolling bell motifs are part of the musical environment, they could also be interpreted as the musical energy of the dying Maiden with “поникнув головкой (with head drooping)” back and forth.

For the right-hand of the piano, Mussorgsky devises sequences of 16th notes for the entire 33 measures of the introduction, as if trying to paint the musical environment of “ночь голубая (night of blue sky)” and “трепетный сумрак весны (trembling dusk of spring).” These are tremolos in slow motion, especially in the early part of the section (mm.1-8), they shift between two sets of intervals: a major-6th and a tritone (Example 6). The two intervals share a common tone which evolves into a pedal tone. The sound resulting from alternating the major-6th and the tritone pictures a musical environment of chill, and uncertainty. Oddly enough, the two intervals are also important elements.
contributing to the vocal melody of the Introduction, such as: a tritone on the word “волшебная (magical)” in m. 2 and a major-6th on “поникнув (drooping)” in m. 11.

Example 6. Opening musical environment and Maiden's musical energy

Despite the key signature of A minor, the introduction is in the key of E minor even though it starts with its dominant (B dominant 7th). This adds confusion to the uncertainty of the musical environment.

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165 Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 12.
However, the true moment of A minor does appear at “Сон не смыкает блестящие очи, жизнь к наслажденью зовёт (Sleep does not shut her shining eyes, life calls for pleasure)” (mm. 18-26). The melody hops via an interval major-6th to the highest pitch F₅, and gradually descends to the lowest pitch C₄, which depicts the musical energy of the Maiden as her living power is fading away. This melody is mostly doubled in the left-hand of the piano. Death’s musical energy soon takes over, with the return of the tolling bells in the bass. “Смерть серенаду поёт (The Death sings a serenade)” seems to pronounce the Maiden’s death in a seductive tone in the vocal line that simply hangs onto one single pitch A₄♭.

Example 7. Opening of the serenade, section A

\[\text{Example 7. Opening of the serenade, section A}^{166}\]

\[^{166}\text{Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 15.}\]
The Maiden’s death is cast in the in the E♭ minor key. The serenade, as marked, is in the style of *alla breve*\(^\text{167}\) which, by definition, indicates that the music is played in cut time with a fast tempo, though the time signature here is still 6/8. The marriage of the dance-like rhythm (\(\downarrow \downarrow\)) in 6/8 and the strong 2-beat rhythm of *alla breve*, combined with the folksong-like melody, gives the serenade a heroic quality, almost like a majestic procession. It could very well be a funeral march of the dying Maiden that Mussorgsky had in mind.

![Example 8. Maiden's heartbeats and shift of the musical energy\(^\text{168}\)](image)

Death, “смерть,” being a feminine noun, is a female figure in Russian tradition, but She takes on a masculine role when She calls Herself a “рыцарь неведомый”

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\(^{168}\) Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 15.
(mysterious Knight)” in the A section (mm.34-50). The musical energy belongs to Death until the Maiden’s entry in m. 46 (Example 8), where the dance rhythm changes into single pitches in the left-hand of the piano--- the Maiden’s heartbeats are heard beating weakly. The key of $E_b$ major shines with the dwindling sign of revival until Death strikes a sforzando in $E_b$ minor (m. 50), and brings Her (Death’s) musical energy back in of section $A'$.

Under the same structural plan, section $A'$ is a cut-and-paste arrangement from section $A$ that not only allows the text to flow in a speech-like manner, but also displays its continuity and intensity in the musical energy of Death. Although the two sections are planned out almost identically, the arrangement redefines the character: Death in section $A$ is a proud knight, while in section $A'$ She (Death) is eagerly attracted to the beauty of the dying Maiden. The musical marking of diminuendo on “щёки румяны (rosy cheeks)” suggests word-painting, which helps Death’s characterization in section $A'$.

The first part of section $B$ (mm. 63-72) relates a continuous battle of the two musical energies. Whereas in section $A$ and $A'$ it was the Maiden in $E_b$ major against the Death in $E_b$ minor, here, in section $B$ the level of intensity is raised to $F#$ major against $F#$ minor. As the Maiden struggles to stay awake in $F#$ major, Death (the vocal line) comes along in $F#$ minor to lull her to sleep. The Maiden’s heartbeats become increasingly visible, as the pitch $F#$ becomes a pedal tone in the bass.
The abrupt change of key signatures, from E♭ minor to F♯ major (six flats to six sharps), seems significant. However, F♯ major is enharmonically equal to G♭ major, which is the relative major to E♭ minor. In other words, Mussorgsky could have kept the six flats on the staff instead. He might have had the intention of disguising the musical energy as Death tries a different tactic to allure the Maiden. The vocal line sings the most seductive melody that is marked as poco capriccioso (freakish).

Example 9. Musical energy of pianississimo

The second part of section B (mm. 73-81), interrupted by a flash of the theme from section A for two measures in the piano, continues with the freakish melody steering the musical energy back to E♭ minor in preparation for the recapitulation of section A. The musical energy in the piano, marked pianississimo (mm. 80-81, Example 9),

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169 Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 17.
diminishes to only intermittent trembling in the left-hand and hidden descending pitches in the right-hand, while Death sings a seductive melody: “Ты обольстила меня (you have seduced me).” Then, after the sforzando followed by a subito piano, for the first and the only time, the dance rhythm, even the heartbeat, comes to a stop. All is silence---the death of the Maiden is inevitable. Mussorgsky displays the whole panorama of drama and tension within these three short measures of music.

The proud and majestic section A makes its triumphant return, announcing: “Час упоенья настал (the hour of rapture has arrived),” which is followed by the codetta. The materials of the codetta are evolved from those of section B. The vocal melody exhibits the same freakish style as Death claims the Maiden’s final breath: “О, задушу я тебя в крепких объятьях (oh, I will suffocate you in my strong embraces).” In the piano, the Maiden’s heartbeats (♩♩♩♩) are now gradually weakening on a low pitch E₂♭ in the left-hand, as her musical energy dwindles in the descending chords in the right-hand. Everything then freezes in a long silence after Death utters: “Молчи (hush)!”. The song ends dramatically with Death’s fatal declaration: “Ты моя (you are mine)!”—with a fortissimo and a sforzando on the E♭ minor chord. Mussorgsky made sure the song ends in the minor key since he could have applied a borrowed E♭ major chord instead. Hence, this “Serenade” is more of a lament for the Maiden’s tragic death than the triumphant conquest of Death. This also keeps Death’s musical energy consistent in the E♭ minor key.
“Trepak” (“Трепак”)

“Trepak” is written in a quasi-rondo form: introduction-A-B-A-A’-C-A’-A-B’-coda and remains in the D minor key throughout. The main theme keeps coming back, but the piano accompaniment alters every time the theme returns. One can also consider “Trepak” a form of theme and variations, as scholars agree that the composition might have been influenced by Liszt’s Totentanz. Mussorgsky utilizes the function of Neapolitan sixth (N6) chord in various places for the purpose of dramatizing or characterizing the song.

Example 10. Opening measures of “Trepak”

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170 Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 20.
The introduction, marked “lento assai, tranquillo,” opens with three chords in the piano, one for each measure: F major, A major and F# minor (Example 10). These are open chords with only intervals of perfect 4th and 5th. The missing 3rd is filled in from the vocal line. The aural sense of the open space creates a musical environment that matches the text: “Лес, да поляны, безлюдье кругом”—forest, field, no one around, out in the open wild. The so-called “Dies Irae” motif murmuring in the bass seems to foretell the Drunkard’s death.

After a long silence, the musical environment continues as the tremolos in the piano stir up the “вьюга (blizzard)” in the distance. At the same time the theme of “Trepak” can be heard in the Narrator’s vocal line.

Example 11. Trepak motif\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{171} Mussorgsky, \textit{Songs and Dances of Death} (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 22.
It is the *musical energy* of Death who approaches the Drunkard in footsteps of dance rhythm (mm. 12-16). The tempo, marked “*poco a poco piú mosso,*” gradually builds up speed to an actual Trepak tempo in mm. 17-18 where the Trepak motif is introduced in the piano: a traditional Trepak rhythm (♩♩♩♩) on a neighboring tone with a descending half-tone scale (Example 11). The motif also serves as the *musical energy* for the duo who dance the Trepak as a pair (“с пьяненьким пляшет вдвоём трепака”), and will return later in the *coda.*

As the dance starts, Death begins Her monologue. The Trepak motif now evolves into a full theme in section $A$ with the motif of the neighboring tone and descending scale as well as the syncopated rhythm in the left-hand of the piano (Example 12).

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**Example 12. Trepak theme**

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172 Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 22.
The musical energy belongs to Death, and is marked as “allegretto moderato e pesante,” not in a hurry but vigorous. The vocal melody has a danceable folksong quality.

In section B, the syncopated rhythm moves to the right-hand of the piano, and the vocal line shifts to the higher register as Death calls on the storm to carry away the Drunkard. An N\textsuperscript{6} chord is inserted in each of m. 27 and m. 28 (Example 13) adding even more folk characteristics to the music.

Example 13. Neapolitan sixth chords in section B\textsuperscript{173}

Section A (mm. 29-32) makes its first reprise but poco meno mosso and the time signature is adjusted to inflect the text. In the piano, the right-hand moves up an octave and adds a grace note on each descending chord, while the left-hand, in the opposite direction, plays ascending arpeggio scales. The reprise of section A displays a certain

\textsuperscript{173} Mussorgsky, Songs and Dances of Death (New York: International Music Company, 1951), 19.
playfulness in the *musical energy* of Death as She takes pity on the Drunkard and calls him “родимый (dear one).”

Section A’ (mm. 33-38) is characterized by a modified vocal melody that maintains the same dance and syncopated rhythm in the piano with Death speaking of the most ironically bone-chilling event in a tender *pianissimo* tone: “Я тебя, голубчик мой, снежком согрею (I will warm you up with snow, my darling).”

Example 14. *Musical environment* of the storm

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174 Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 22.
The piano takes a drastic turn in section C. There is no more Trepak theme and rhythm, other than groups of descending 16\textsuperscript{th} or 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes that paint a *musical environment* as Death stirs up a storm. Although the Trepak theme does not appear here, the grouping of the 16\textsuperscript{th} or 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes is based on the Trepak motif: each group starts with a neighboring tone followed by a descending half-tone scale. No matter how the notes are grouped, the first note in each group falls on a harmonic note of the chord on the beat (Example 14). Again, Mussorgsky applies the N\textsuperscript{6} chords (m. 39 and m. 41) in the dramatic section.

The \(A'\) section returns in both the vocal line and the right-hand of the piano with an N\textsuperscript{6} chord, while the left-hand continues to paint the *musical environment* with the 16\textsuperscript{th}-note chromatic scales as the storm rolls away. The scene finally reduces to the pulses of the Drunkard that can be heard in the descending triplets, *poco a poco a tempo* and *diminuendo*.

In the final recapitulation of sections \(A\) and \(B'\), there is no more Trepak motif in the piano though section \(B'\) maintains the syncopated rhythm. The vocal line of section \(B'\) is modified from that of section \(B\), and is now sung in the lower register and a softer tone. Throughout these two sections, the left-hand of the piano simply continues to play the triplets on repeated pitches that seem to indicate the Drunkard’s vital signs, the pulses. Occasionally bursts of 16\textsuperscript{th} notes, descending or ascending, interrupt the rhythm (mm. 50, 55 and 56), until the pulses gradually come to a stop (m.57) on a *fermata* over the bar.
All is peaceful and calm in *andante tranquillo* in the *coda* section. In the piano, the rocking figure of 16\(^{th}\) notes in the left-hand suggests a lullaby, as if Death were lulling the Drunkard into a peaceful sleep. The haunting melody in the right hand of the piano is reminiscent of a folksong. This is the song that the text in m. 67 is referring to: “Песенка несётся (A song rings forth)” sung by the peasants working on the harvest field (mm. 63-66): “Над нивой солнышко смеётся, да серпы гуляют (On the field the sun is smiling, and the sickles are strolling).”

Death’s vocal line, echoing the piano’s melody as in a duet, is abruptly interrupted twice by the Trepak motif, the exact m. 18 (Example 11), on a *sforzando* with *più mosso* followed by *rallentando*. These interruptions are meant to suggest the *musical energy* of the Drunkard in his final twitches who still wishes to dance the Trepak even at moment of his death.

The same motif continues to twitch in the postlude (Example 15) after the lullaby duet, but the 16\(^{th}\) notes in the left hand are now descending (m. 69 and m.71) and end on the “head-drop” gesture of a perfect 4\(^{th}\) interval drop on the lowest pitches, D\(_2\) to A\(_1\) (m. 70 and m. 72). In between, a short reprise of the peasants’ melody seems to awaken the Drunkard one last time (m. 70).

The final three chords echo the opening with exactly the same open chords (missing the 3\(^{rd}\)), but the last chord brings the music to a close in D minor, though it could be D major as well since the 3\(^{rd}\) is missing, suggesting that Mussorgsky might have
left it up to the interpreter to decide. Three chords, finally, bring the scene back to the opening *musical environment*: an open field, with no one around.

Example 15. Postlude of "Trepak"\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{175} Mussorgsky, *Songs and Dances of Death* (Moscow: Muzgiz, 1931), 29.
“Field Marshal” (“Полководец”)\textsuperscript{176}

Mussorgsky concludes the song cycle with a display of the elements of \textit{musical environment} and \textit{musical energy} in the most depictive and dramatic ways, though the formal structure is fairly simple. The Narrator’s introduction, in the form of \textit{through-composed} style, takes up more than a half of the length of the whole song. Death’s monologue, a funeral march, based on the melody of Józef Nikorowicz’s Polish hymn “Z dymem pożarów,” is written in a \textit{modified-strophic} form.

There are three sections in the Narrator’s introduction. The first (mm. 1 to 26) is a vivid \textit{musical environment}, a depiction of the battlefield, that is clearly marked “\textit{Vivo, alla guerra} (lively, at war).” Triples in the piano form the foundation of the \textit{musical environment}. Right at the beginning, the battle rumbles as the triplets make a rapid chromatic ascent. The weapons and armor clash and crash on heavy chords with \textit{sforzando}. In mm. 10 and 11, the chromatic triplets strongly suggest rivers running with blood: “\textit{И реки красные текут.}” Another element of the \textit{musical environment} in this section is the “skipping sequence” (Example 16)--- the skipping rhythm in the right-hand skips in octaves up and down the keyboard while the pitches $A^\flat$ and $G$ rumble steadily in the low bass. This is followed by a descending chromatic scale in triplets and accented chords. These sequences depict the hardship of the battle and the falling of the soldiers.

The Narrator’s vocal line is a speech-like melody that soars to high pitches as the

\textsuperscript{176} The song was originally composed for tenor in $E^\flat$ minor-D minor key. For the performance study purpose, the score in the transposed key for baritone, C minor-B minor, will be used for the analysis.
emotion builds. The effect, with the *musical environment* happening in the piano, is to convey the *musical energy* of the battlefield.

Example 16. Skipping sequence\(^{177}\)

The second section turns into *moderato assai*. In contrast to the first section, the *musical energy* of the dying soldiers lingers here in the sustaining chords of the piano.

The descending scale reappears in mm. 29-30 as the soldiers disperse in the darkness ("Дружны в мраке разошлись."). This is followed by a full measure and a half of silence on “Всё стихло (all is silent).” Here the marking of pianissimo, as well as the “sighing gesture” on “Стенанья (groaning)” in mm. 33-34 (Example 17), suggest word-painting.

Example 17. "Sighing" gesture

Suddenly, the skipping rhythm returns in the piano, but in a reversed direction (example 18)---the footsteps of the horse that Death is riding are heard in the musical energy of “grave, marziale” in mm. 36-40. Her arrival is announced by three chords with sforzando that end up in F# major (mm. 40-41). The word “смерть (death)” is sung on the pitch F#, the pitch of death.

---

The musical energy now shifts to that of the dying soldiers in Andantino alla Marcia in the new key of F♯ minor for the third section of the Narrator’s introduction. The rhythm of a marching drum is heard in the piano (mm. 42-49) while the vocal line continues on the lifeless pitch F♯. This passage foreshadows the funeral march, the theme of the Polish hymn, as well as the song title “Полководец,” which is first introduced in the following measures (mm. 50-51, Example 19).

Example 19. Song title in the text and the theme of Polish hymn

---

The musical energy shifts back to Death astride the horse as it hops onto the hill on the ascending pitches that are interrupted by 8th-note rests (m. 54): “На холм поднявшись (ascending to the hilltop).” A crescendo leads up to the moment when a D dominant 7th chord cuts through the air in sforzando-subito piano as Death “оглянулась (looked around).” Immediately everything seems frozen in time with the vocal line “остановилась (stopped)” marked a mezza voce, the piano remaining silent. Then the piano softly breaks through with a D minor chord until Death “улыбнулась (smiled)” with dolce and turns to a pianississimo E dominant 9th chord, which ends on an F# major chord in preparation for Death’s speech, the funeral march, in the B minor key. The grace notes attached to the either end of the latter two chords suggest Death’s laughter (Example 20). The three rhyming verbs: оглянулась (looked), остановилась (stopped), and улыбнулась (smiled) quietly but dramatically depict Death’s appearance.

---

Example 20. Death’s laughter

---

As the tone of death, the pitch $F_2\#$, is cast in the bass as the pedal tone\(^{181}\), the Narrator announces the arrival of the Death with his voice soars to the highest fatal pitch $F_5\#$, on the word “роковой (fatal)” (m. 60).

Example 21. Insertion of $N^6$ and $Gr^{+6}$ chords\(^{182}\)

In addition to the musical marking, “*tempo di marcia, grave, pomposo,*” the fact that Death’s monologue is based on the melody of the Polish revolutionary hymn makes it clear that Mussorgsky intended it to be a march--- perhaps a funeral march, to conclude the song cycle. Reasonably, he would write it in a *modified-strophic* style as the hymn is a strophic song by nature. The original hymn is in a form $A-A-B-A$, but Mussorgsky

\(^{181}\) In the International Music Co. edition, there is a misprint in the spelling of the second chord (in the right-hand of the piano) in m. 59. It should be spelled as F-natural, G-natural, and D-natural.

simplified it to $A-B$ two parts in each strophe. He also applied an $N^6$ chord and a German Augmented $6^{th}$ chord ($Gr^{+6}$) in part $A$ of every strophe (Example 21). These two chords not only characterize the tragedy but also underscore the martial quality in the *musical energy*.

The funeral march begins with a chord progression in the piano that evolves in martial drumming rhythm. Though the haunting melody recurs again and again, the piano reflects a different rhythm in every strophe. One can even sense the rhythm of Ravel’s *Boléro* in mm.73-74 (Example 22) though there is no indication of Mussorgsky’s influence.

Example 22. Boléro-like rhythm\(^{183}\)

As the musical energy briefly shifts to *poco meno mosso* (mm. 77-80) on “Годы незримо пройдут за годами, в людях исчезнет и память о вас” (Years will invisibly pass, even the memory of you will vanish among people),” the rocking figure on the tonic B in the left-hand of the piano suggests a lullaby for the dead souls. From here on, only part A of the melody recurs, either in the vocal line or in the piano, till the end.

Example 23. Cradle-rocking figure

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Example 24. Trampling dance steps\textsuperscript{185}

When Death tramples on the graves with a heavy dance, the \textit{musical energy} turns to \textit{meno mosso} again (mm. 85-90). Every dance step, stamping on the fatal pitch F\# , is reinforced by the tonic B in the left-hand of the piano. “Я притопчу (I will trample)” is specially marked with accents in both-hands of the piano, which suggests word-painting. Then the piano drops down even deeper by an octave symbolizing that the bones of the dead soldiers are now deeply buried under the ground. The final verdict is pronounced with \textit{fortissimo in allargando} (mm.91-93) in the similar chord progression just as in the beginning of the funeral march.

\textsuperscript{185} Mussorgsky, \textit{Songs and Dances of Death} (New York: International Music Company, 1951), 34.
**Songs and Dances of Death** is a song cycle consisting of four miniature dramatic scenes with four different themes of death. Each theme has its assigned symbolic pitch, “the tone of death.” In “Lullaby,” tolling bells are heard striking on the pitch A. In “Serenade,” the Maiden’s final heartbeats stop on the pitch E♭. In “Trepak,” the pedal tone on the pitch D rocks the final lullaby for the Drunkard’s eternal rest. In “Field Marshal,” Death arrives at the battlefield on the pitch F♯₅ (A₅ in the original key) and declares another triumphant F♯₅ over the soldiers’ death. These pitches become the tonal center, not necessarily the key center but related, in their respective songs.
Kenneth Griffiths points out: “Although there are various Russian dialects, ‘stage Russian’ derives from the Moscow dialect and this has been the norm for Russian actors and singers since the revolution of 1917.” Russian language is characterized by Natalia Challis as “relaxed articulation,” “uneven distribution of muscular energy in speech,” and “smooth transition from consonant to vowel.” Although, as in many other languages, spoken Russian is different from sung Russian, Challis thinks both can work together:

Russian vocalism is closely related to the rhythmic and melodic aspect of Russian speech. The musical quality of Russian speech, observable in the rise and fall of the voice level, is not dependent on word stress, but on rhythmic articulation and grammatical composition.

For a non-Russian native performer, basic knowledge of Russian language is essential, though a comprehensive International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) system can come in handy.

The adoption of IPA greatly enhances a singer’s ability to sing repertoire in different languages. However, IPA rules do not provide a precise measurement but are merely helpful tools for pronunciation.

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186 This chapter is intended for those who have had basic knowledge of IPA and Russian language.
189 Ibid, 2.
The IPA for Russian is modified according to the characteristics of the language. There are certain fixed pronunciation rules just as in other languages. Also there are rules implemented to identify the nature of the Russian sound. While unique sounds to a language may not be clearly translated into IPA, singers may also have to make adjustments in forming the sound of certain vowels or consonants, depending on his/her native tongue and speech habits.

**Consonant Palatalization**

Consonant palatalization is one of the distinct characteristics of Russian language. A palatalized consonant is called a “soft consonant.” A non-palatalized consonant is called a “hard consonant.” Laurence Richter explains palatalization:\footnote{Laurence R. Richter, *Mussorgsky’s Complete Song Texts* (Geneseo: Leyerle Publications, 2002), xi.}

It is the releasing of a consonant in the palate, accomplished by arching the tongue up into the palate and “squeezing” the consonant sound down from above. The place of consonantal palatalization is precisely where the vowel [i] is located in the oral cavity. Palatalization is therefore also characterized as “i-coloring” of the consonant.

Natalia Challis has a similar idea\footnote{Challis, *The Singer’s Rachmaninoff*, 17-8.} while Anton Belov goes further in identifying the difference between the hard and soft consonants:\footnote{Anton Belov, *The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology: Twenty Arias for Baritone* (Geneseo: Leyerle Publications, 2005), 155.}

In the production of the hard forms of these consonants, the tip of the tongue is pressed against or brought close to the lower teeth, while the middle of the tongue lies flat in the position of the phonetic [a]. To produce their soft equivalents, the middle of the tongue rises toward the front of the hard palate in the position of the phonetic [i].
In other words, a soft consonant (i.e. [pʲ]) is formed by pronouncing its hard counterpart (i.e. [p]) in the [i] or [j] position of the tongue. (In this IPA system, a soft consonant is symbolized with a superscript [j] to its hard counterpart consonant.) Lack of clarity by mistaking [ts] for [tʲ] and [dz] for [dʲ], or simply adding a j-glide in between the soft consonant and a vowel can drastically change the meaning of a word, and even diminish the intelligibility of the language.

Every hard consonant has its soft counterpart, except that ж, ъ and ш are always hard, and that ч and щ are always soft.

Russian vowels also have their counterparts: hard and soft. Belov identifies them as “non-palatalizing” and “palatalizing” vowels by their function.\(^{193}\) Hard vowels function normally as they would in other languages. The function of soft vowels is to palatalize the preceding consonant. Table 3 differentiates the quality of the vowels in their Cyrillic alphabets IPA symbols.

In the same word, a soft consonant, usually palatalized by a soft vowel, has a function of assimilation that will palatalize its preceding consonant (i.e. пляски [pʲlʲ 'asʲkʲi]). However, consonants л, г, к, п and х are never palatalized by their following soft consonants (i.e. крецко [krʲ 'erka]).

\(^{193}\) Ibid, 158.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard: (upper/lower)</th>
<th>А/а</th>
<th>Э/э</th>
<th>Ы/ы</th>
<th>О/о</th>
<th>У/у</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>[u]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft: (upper/lower)</td>
<td>Я/я</td>
<td>Е/е</td>
<td>И/и</td>
<td>Ё/ё</td>
<td>Ю/ю</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>[ja]</td>
<td>[jɛ]</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>[jo]</td>
<td>[ju]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Russian vowels with IPA

**Assimilation**

Assimilation happens, as rules applied, when a vowel or a consonant changes its sound quality due to certain functions of its following consonant or vowel. All assimilations are indicated by [‿] in between the IPA symbols.

*Vowel Assimilation*

In vowels, “closed [e] occurs in Russian only before a palatalized consonant or a front vowel [i] or [e]. Elsewhere only open [ɛ] occurs.” This can happen whether it is in the same word or between the words (only when the singer opts out the pause between the words). When e ([ɛ] or [jɛ]) is followed by a soft vowel or a soft consonant, it will be assimilated becoming [ɛ] or [je] (i.e. смерть [sʲmʲ'ɛrʲtʲ]; голубое сияние [ɡalub'ojɛ_sʲi'janʲje], however, голубое [ɡalub'ojɛ]).

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194 Belov, The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology, 158.
195 Richter, Mussorgsky’s Complete Song Texts, xiii.
196 Ibid.
Also, when [i] is followed by a hard consonant (especially ж, щ and ш which are always hard), it will be assimilated becoming [i] (i.e. жизнь [ʐɪznʲ]; плачет и стонет [pl'atʃet i st'onʲet]). 197

**Consonant Assimilation**

Consonants, both soft and hard, can be voiced and voiceless in Russian as in all languages. All final consonant, as in German, is voiceless in Russian whether it is soft (followed by a soft sign “ь”) or hard (i.e. над [nat]; глядь [glʲatʲ]). Table 4 identifies voiced and voiceless consonants in their Cyrillic alphabets and IPA symbols.

![Image](image.png)

**Table 4. Russian consonants with IPA** 198

198 Ibid, 17.
A voiceless (or voiced) consonant, followed by a voiced (or voiceless) consonant, will be assimilated and become voiced (or voiceless). When two or more consonants are pronounced together without pause in Russian—whether within the same syllable, over syllable boundaries, or even over word boundaries—they must all be voiced, or they must all be voiceless.

Therefore, consonant assimilation can happen within the same word as well as in between two words, while consonant palatalization can only happen within the same word (i.e. встарь [f'ʃt'arʲ]; буты [but_ə]; ветерок да снежок [vʲetʲ'ərək da sʲnʲ'εk]).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A / a (hard) | [a] | • stressed  
• unstressed (vowel reduction) | • свеча [svʲe'tʃ'a] (candle)  
• сумрак [s'umrək] (dusk) |
| [a] | • after or before [L] | • плача [pL'atʃ'a] (weeping)  
pала [p'ala] (fell) |

The dark [a] happens under the influence of hard [L] due to the anticipation or lingering-effect of its tongue position. It is more distinguishable in spoken

199 Ibid, 17.
200 Richter, Mussorgsky’s Complete Song Texts, xiii.
201 Created by author, partially based on Belov’s “The Sounds of Russian” from The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology.
### Vowel IPA Position Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian. It is often helpful and successful to approach the dark [ɑ] as if it is an open [œ].</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Я / я (soft)</td>
<td>[ja]</td>
<td>• initial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a vowel, a soft (ь) or hard sign (ъ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ярче ['jartʃɛ] (brighter)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• явились [javʲi'ILas] (appeared)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• сия́не [si 'janje] (radiance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• тоску́я [task'uja] (grieving)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>• after a consonant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• пля́ски [pʲas'ki] songs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Я serves as reflexive suffixes such as: -ть́ся [tsa], -ѓться [tsa] and -лс́я [Lsa], it becomes a hard vowel [a]. The preceding consonants т [t], с [s] and я [L] are not palatalized.²⁰²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Э / э (hard)</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>• always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• это ['eta] (this)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Е / e (soft)</td>
<td>[jɛ]</td>
<td>• initial and followed by a hard consonant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a vowel and followed by a hard consonant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a soft (ь) or hard sign (ъ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• езда ['jezda]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• мерца́ет [mʲerts'ajɛt] (flickers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• объ́хала [ab'jexaLa] (circled)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Е / e</td>
<td>[je]</td>
<td>and followed by a hard consonant or final</td>
<td>безлюдье [bʲezlʲ'udʲje] (solitude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• initial and followed by a soft consonant or a soft vowel</td>
<td>• есть ['jes'υ] (there is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a vowel and followed by a soft consonant (vowel assimilation)</td>
<td>• голубое сиянье [gaLib'oje_s̯i'janje] (blue radiance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a soft (ь) or hard sign (ъ) and followed by a soft consonant (vowel assimilation)</td>
<td>• объехала [ab'jexəLa] (circled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e]</td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a consonant and before a hard consonant or final</td>
<td>• ветерок [vʲit'erok] (wind)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>в тишине [vʲiʃinʲ'ɛ] (in silence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e]</td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a consonant and before a soft consonant</td>
<td>• смерть [sʲmi'грʲɪ] (death)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>свеча [sʲvʲet'jə] (candle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When [e] is in a pre-tonic (unstressed) position, the vowel may be reduced to [i], especially in:

- **pronouns**: меня [mʲi'nʲ'a]; тебя [tʲibʲ'ja]
- **suffixes**: -ему [-⁽j⁾mʲ'u]; -ego [-⁽j⁾v'o]
- **prefix**: пере- [pʲerʲ-]
- **adverb**: ещё [jʲ'o]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ы /ы</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>• always preceded by a hard consonant</td>
<td>• мирный [miˈrʲɪnʲ] (peaceful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(hard)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>смькает [smʲˈkajt] (closes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>И /и</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[i] is a distinctive Russian sound that doesn’t exist in other languages. It is “a modified form of [i], a forward unrounded tongue vowel. The tip of the tongue is on or close to the bottom teeth. The front of the tongue is in the position of [i], the back of the tongue is moved slightly forward.” 203 “Russians sometimes pronounce this vowel with a slight rounding assimilation ([ˈwʲi]), but only after labials ([b], [p], [v], [f], [m]).” 204 The assimilation happens only because of lip movement of the labial consonants. Singer must avoid the tendency of making it a diphthong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(soft)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• all positions except when following a hard consonant</td>
<td>песни [pʲˈesʲnʲi] (songs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>И /и</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>• after ж, ш, or ю (the always-hard consonants)</td>
<td>в тиши́не [fʲˈtilʲnʲˈe] (in silence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• following a hard consonant in the previous word (vowel assimilation)</td>
<td>жизнь [ˈzʲiʐnʲ] (life)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>плачет и стонет [pʲətʃʲˈetʲ ʃtˈonʲet] (weeps and moans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>О /о</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>• stressed</td>
<td>стонет [stˈonʲet] (moans)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

203 Belov, The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology, 151.
204 Richter, Mussorgsky’s Complete Song Texts, xi. Instead of IPA, Richter adapted a transliteration system that is familiar to all international scholars of Slavic languages. In this book, he used [y] in place of [i].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>О / o (hard)</td>
<td>[о]</td>
<td></td>
<td>пришло [pʲɪʂˈlɔ] (has come)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Russian [о] has a slight glide of [w] sound, such as [ʷо]. The intention of transcribing it as [о] here is not to impress singers with a diphthong [wɔ] as in “wolf,” while the slight [w] glide gives it a closed vowel quality. ²⁰⁵

| [а] | • pre-tonic | • сердобольная [sʲerdəbˈolnaja] (compassionate) |
|     |            | хорошо [xəɾajʼo] (good)                  |

| [э] | • post-tonic and other unstressed positions (vowel reduction) | • будто [bʼutə] (as if) |
|     |                                                               | хорошо [xəɾajʼo] (good) |
|     |                                                               | серенадой [sʲerənʼadəj] (with-serenade) |

The vowel reduction obviously takes place in spoken Russian. For singers, [а] is usually denoted in IPA instead of [э], expect in the word endings (unstressed) such as:

- ой [эй] — тесно́й [tʼesnəj] (of-confined)
- ом [эм] — под оконком [pad akʼofkəm] (under-window)

| Ё / ё (soft) | [jo] | • initial | • ёлка [ʼjoLka] (Christmas tree) |
|             |      | • after a vowel | • моё [maʼjo] (my) |

²⁰⁵ Different transcriptions of о can be found among other IPA systems, such as: [э], [оʰ] or [эʰ].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ё / ё</td>
<td>[jo]</td>
<td>• after a soft (ь) or hard sign (ь)</td>
<td>• бьётся [bʲˈjoتسa] (beating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>подъём [padˈjom] (lifting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ё (soft)</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>• after a consonant</td>
<td>• шёпот [ʃʼopɐt] (whisper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ё</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ё appears only in a stressed position, although the dieresis is often omitted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>У / у</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>• always</td>
<td>• тускло [tʼuskLɐ] (dimly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• кругом [krugʼom] (around)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ю / ю</td>
<td>[ju]</td>
<td>• initial</td>
<td>• юность [ˈjunastʼ] (youth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a vowel</td>
<td>• летают [letʼajut] (fly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• after a soft (ь) or hard sign (ь)</td>
<td>• вьога [vʼjʊɡa] (blizzard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>• after a consonant</td>
<td>• любя [lubʼa] (loving)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IPA Rules for Consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Б / б</td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• бой [bʼoj] (combat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a hard sign (ь)</td>
<td>• объехала [abʼjɛxaLa] (circled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant in the same word</td>
<td>• брони [brʼonʼi] (armor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonant</td>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Б / б (voiced)</td>
<td>hard [b]</td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiced consonant of the next word, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• чтоб дан(^{208}) [ʃto_dan] (that it is given)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>• final • final and followed by a voiceless consonant, or в, л, м, н, р, of the next word • before a voiceless hard consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• чтоб [ʃtop] (so-that) • чтоб пьянчуте [ʃtop p_an_tʃ'ug_ɛ] (so that the drunkard…) чтоб никогда [ʃtop n_ikag_d_a] (so that never…) • обточить [ap_tat_ʃ_it_v] (grind)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft [b_]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel • before a soft sign (ь) followed by a vowel • before a voiced soft consonant</td>
<td>• лебёдка [leb_otka] (swan) • бьются [b_jutsa] (struggle) • бледное [b_l_d_n_aj_ɛ] (pale)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[p_]</td>
<td>• final with a soft sign (ь) • before a voiceless soft consonant</td>
<td>• скорбь [sk_or_p_] (sorrow) • голубки [gaLup_k_i_] (doves)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{208}\)Belov, *The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology*, 159.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Б / б</td>
<td>soft [p']</td>
<td>consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• пожди [pɐzdʲ'i] (hold off)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard [p]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• плача [pL'atʃa] (weeping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р</td>
<td>• карп жареный[^209] [k'arbʲ'arʲ'ɛnij] (fried carp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soft [p']</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel</td>
<td>• песни [pʲ'esnʲi] (songs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a soft sign (Ъ)</td>
<td>• пьян [pʲ'jan] (drunk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a soft consonant</td>
<td>• пляски [pʲ'aski] (dances)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В / в</td>
<td>hard [v]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• вы [vi] (you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant in the same word</td>
<td>• вздрогнула [vzdr'ognuLa] (gased)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^209] Ibid, 162.
<table>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>В / в (voiced)</td>
<td>hard [v]</td>
<td>next word, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• здоро́вь [zdar'of] (well)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>• final</td>
<td>• встальь [f_st'anj] (arise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiceless consonant, or в, л, м, н, р, of the next word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless hard consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft</td>
<td>[vʲ]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel</td>
<td>• ви́дьшь [vi'diʃ'] (you see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a soft sign (ь) followed by a vowel</td>
<td>• въю́га [vi'ju'ga] (blizzard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced soft consonant</td>
<td>• взбей-ка [vi'zbi'ejka] (fluff-up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[fʲ]</td>
<td>• final with a soft sign (ь)</td>
<td>• вновь [vn'of'] (again)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless soft consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• все [fʃ'sɛ] (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>в темноте [fʃ_těmnatʃ'ɛ] (in-darkness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consonant</td>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>В / в (voiced)</td>
<td>silent(^{210})</td>
<td>• first в in the consonant cluster: «вств»</td>
<td>• чувства [tʃj'ustva] (feeling)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preposition в is pronounced as a part of the word that follows.\(^{211}\) The rules of palatalization and consonant assimilation also apply.

в земле [vʲ_zemlʲ 'e] (in the ground)

в путь\(^{212}\) [p'ut] (hit the road)

| Ф / ф (voiceless) | hard [f] | • before a hard vowel • final | • фонтан\(^{213}\) [fant'an] (fountain) |
|                   | soft [f] | • before a soft vowel • before a soft consonant | • фея\(^{214}\) [fʲ'eja] (fairy) |

| Г / г (voiced) | hard [g] | • before a hard vowel • before a voiced hard consonant in the same word • final and followed by a voiced consonant of the next word, except: в, л, | • годы [ɡ'odi] (years) • громко [ɡ'rømka] (loudly) • мог дать\(^{215}\) [mog dü'at] (could give) |


\(^{211}\) Ibid.

\(^{212}\) Ibid.


\(^{214}\) Ibid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Г/г (voiced)</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | [k] | • final | • ляг [lak] (lie-down)  
• мог [mok] (could) |
| | [x] | • before к or ч  
• in the word Бог | • легче [lʲextʃe] (easier)  
• Бог [box] (God) |
| | [y] | • in suffixes: -его, -ого | • гордого [g'ordava] (proud) |
| | soft | [gʲ] | • before и or е only | • враги [vragʲ 'i] (enemies) |
| Г is not palatalized before a soft consonant: | | | | оглянулась [agl'an'ul'asi] (looked about) |
| К/к (voiceless) | hard | [k] | • before a hard vowel  
• before a voiceless consonant or в, л, м, н, р |
| | | | • копе [kanʲ 'e] (on-horse)  
• крепко [krʲ 'epka] (deep) |
| | [g] | • before a voiced hard consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation) | • ветерок да снежок  
[vʲetʲ'er^og_da sʲnʲez'ok] (wind and snow) |
| | soft | [kʲ] | • before и or е only | • реки [rʲ'eki] (rivers) |

216 Ibid, 160.  
217 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>К / к (voiceless)</td>
<td>soft [kʲ]</td>
<td>• before и or е only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>в мра́ке [v mr'akʲ] (in the dark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The preposition к is pronounced as a part of the word that follows. The rules of palatalization and consonant assimilation also apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>к небу [k_nʲ 'ebu] (to heaven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>not palatalized before a soft consonant:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>крепко [krʲ 'epka] (deep)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>книга [knʲ 'iga] (book)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Д / д (voiced)</td>
<td>hard [d]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• доброе [d'obrajʲ] (good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant in the same word</td>
<td>• дру́жны [druʒ'ini] (armies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiced consonant of the next word, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• го́род зелёный [g'oradjʲ 'elʲ 'onij] (green town)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>• final</td>
<td>• над [nat] (above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiceless consonant, or</td>
<td>• над равнино́й [nat ravnʲ 'inoj] (over the valley)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Д / д</td>
<td>hard [t]</td>
<td>б, л, м, н, р, of the next word</td>
<td>бу́дто [but̪_t̪a] (as if)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless hard consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soft [dʲ]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel, before a soft sign (ь)</td>
<td>дитя [dʲ _i̯'a] (child)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced soft consonant</td>
<td>безлю́дье [bʲɛzʲ _ud̪_je] (no-people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• in consonant clusters: -дн-, -дц-</td>
<td>в дверь [vʲ _dʲ _vʲ 'erʲ] (at the door)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>• final with a soft sign (ь)</td>
<td>гля́дь [gʲatʲ] (look)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless soft consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>подтекст 219 [patʲ _tekst] (implication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silent</td>
<td></td>
<td>• in consonant clusters: -дн-, -дц-</td>
<td>звёздный [zʲ_ _i̯'oznʲ] (starry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>сердце [sʲ _'ertsʲ] (heart)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prepositions под, над, and перед are pronounced as a part of the word that follows. 220 The rules of palatalization and consonant assimilation also apply.

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220 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Д / д (voiced)</td>
<td></td>
<td>над вами [nad_v'am'i] (above you)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>под столом [pat_stal'om] (under the table)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>перед тем как [per'et‿t'iem kak] (before)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Т / т (voiceless)</td>
<td>hard [т]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• ты [ti] (you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless hard consonant or hard в, л, м, н, р</td>
<td>• битва [bi'itva] (battle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• final</td>
<td>• обнимает [a'bniim'ajet] (embraces)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soft [ѵ]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel</td>
<td>• отдыхать [ad_dix'at] (rest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a soft sign (Ь)</td>
<td>• грохоть битва [grax'otjed_b'i 'itva] (the battle roars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless soft consonant or soft в, л, м, н, р</td>
<td>• тянулась [t'an'uLas'i] (lasted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• есть [jes't] (there is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• трепак [trep'ak] (trepak)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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222 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Т / т (voiceless)</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>[dʲ]</td>
<td>• before a voiced soft consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silent</td>
<td>• in the consonant cluster: -стн-</td>
<td>• страстный [str'asnij] (passionate)</td>
<td>• счастливый [ʃ¹ːs¹ʃivij] (happy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• радостный [r'adasnij] (joyful)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>З / з (voiced)</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant in the same word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiced consonant of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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224 Ibid, 162.
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<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>З / з</td>
<td>hard [z]</td>
<td>next word, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>• final</td>
<td>• final and followed by a voiceless consonant, or в, л, м, н, р, of the next word</td>
<td>• глаз [gLɑs] (of-eyes) • без сожаленья 225 [bʲeɕ_sаzaɬ] 'enija] (without regret) • сказку [sk'as_ku] (fairytales)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft [zʲ]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel</td>
<td>• before a soft sign (ь) followed by a vowel</td>
<td>• земля [zʲ 'emɪlə] (earth) • незримо [nʲezɾʲɪˈma] (invisibly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[sʲ]</td>
<td>• final with a soft sign (ь)</td>
<td>• before a voiceless soft consonant (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• слезь 226 [sʲesʲ] (get off) • из песни 227 [iʂʲ_pʲesˈnʲi] (from the song)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

226 Ibid.
227 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>З / з</td>
<td></td>
<td>assimilation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The prepositions из and без are pronounced as a part of the word that follows. The rules of palatalization and consonant assimilation also apply. *Note: the special assimilation on the initials ж and щ of the following words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>из земли [из^zʲ 'em^zʲ'i] (from the ground)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>без тебя изъ [bʲes^zʲ 'tʲiba] (without you)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*без жизни [bʲe^zʲ'zʲizni] (without life)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*без шапки [bʲe^zʲ'fap'kʲ'i] (without a hat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>С / с</td>
<td></td>
<td>hard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>• before a hard vowel</td>
<td>• сон [son] (sleep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• before a voiceless hard consonant or hard в, л, м, н, р</td>
<td>• склонилось [skLan^i 'Las^i] (inclined)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• final</td>
<td>• лес [lʲes] (forest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• (see the vowel Я)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant)</td>
<td>• сгубишь [z^g'yubij'] (destroy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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228 Belov, *The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology*, 161..
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>С / с (voiceless)</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>[sʲ]</td>
<td>• before a soft vowel&lt;br&gt;• before a soft sign (ь)&lt;br&gt;• before a voiceless soft consonant or soft в, л, м, н, р&lt;br&gt;• всё [ф̩_s̩о] (all)&lt;br&gt;• огланилайс [агл'ан'уЛас] (look around)&lt;br&gt;• стенань [стен'ан'я] (groans)&lt;br&gt;• сверкая [свер'к'я] (gleaming)&lt;br&gt;• сделать [сдэ́лать] (make)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[zʲ]</td>
<td>before a voiced soft consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• с пьяньым [с̱̝ пъя́ньым] (with the drunkard)&lt;br&gt;• с поля [с̱̝ поля] (from-field)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>[L]</td>
<td>• all positions except below&lt;br&gt;• слаще [с̱̝ ла́ще] (sweeter)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preposition с is pronounced as a part of the word that follows. The rules of palatalization and consonant assimilation also apply.

- с пьяньым [с̱̝ пъя́ньым] (with the drunkard)
- с поля [с̱̝ поля] (from-field)

Belov describes the production of hard [L]:

The tip of the tongue touches the tip of the upper teeth; the center of the tongue is slightly lowered... the tip of the tongue must be almost as far forward as in the production of the English th sound, as in the word that.

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233 Ibid, 155.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Л / л (voiced) | | | Griffiths has a slightly different idea about hard [L]:
| | | | Regardless of where the tip of the tongue may be, this consonant is produced by elevating the back of the tongue… that causes the “dark” almost “guttural” sound and the position of the front of the tongue has little influence on its accuracy. |
| soft | [l] | • before a soft vowel or soft sign (ь) | • колыбельку [kəLʲɨbʲ'elʲ ku] (cradle) |
| silent | | • in the word солнце | • солнце [s'ontse] (sun) |
| Л is not palatalized before a soft consonant: | | | полки [pəl'kʲ'i] (regiments) |
| M / м (voiced) | hard | [m] | • all positions except below | • мужичок [muʒ'_iʃ'ok] (little-peasant) |
| | soft | [mʲ] | • before a soft vowel, soft consonant or soft sign (ь) | • метель [mʲ'elʲ] (storm) |
| | | | | • внёмет [vʲ'nʲemʲ'et] (heed) |
| N / н (voiced) | hard | [n] | • all positions except below | • мирный сон [mʲ'ir njʲ 'son] (peaceful sleep) |
| | soft | [nʲ] | • before a soft vowel, soft consonant or soft sign (ь) | • нега [nʲ'egə] (bliss) |
| | | | | • дыханье [dix'anʲe] (breath) |
| P / r (voiceless) | hard | [r] | • all positions except below | • рыцарь [rʲitsapʲ] (knight) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Р / р (voiceless)</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>[ɬ]</td>
<td>before a soft vowel or soft sign (ь) • пришёл [pɐʃʲˈɬ oL] (came)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>П is not palatalized before a soft consonant. прикорни [pʲɪkɐnʲˈi] (nestle-down)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Х / х (voiceless)</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>• in all positions except before и and е • грохочет [ɡraxˈoʃet] (roars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• before a voiced hard consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation) • пристальных глаз [pʲɪnʲˈɪstal ɬ ɑz] (of staring eyes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɬ] is the “voiced form of [x] similar to ɡ in Spanish diga. In standard Russian it occurs only as a result of consonant assimilation as a voiced form of the letter x. In certain Russian dialects, however, this sound replaces the sound [ɡ].”235</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>• before и and е • хитрый237 [xʲɪtrʲɪj] (tricky)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X is not palatalized before a soft consonant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Always hard consonants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ж / ж (voiced)</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>[ʒ]</td>
<td>• all positions except below • тревожнo [ˈtɾʲɪvəʒɲo] (anxiously)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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236 Belov uses [ç] instead. 
237 Ibid, 163.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ж / ж (voiced) | [ʃ] | • final  
| | | • final and followed by a voiceless consonant, or  
| | | в, л, м, н, р, of the next word  
| | | • before a voiceless consonant (consonant assimilation)  
| | | • уж [uʃ] (already)  
| | | • уж смотрит [uʃˈsmotrʲit] (already looks)  
| | | • немно жко [nʲmnˈoʃka] (awhile)  
| Ц / ц (voiceless) | [ts] | • all positions except below  
| | | • целую [tsˈɛLuju] (entire)  
| | | • расцветло [rastsvʲɪLˈo] (bloomed)  
| | [dz] | • before a voiced consonant, except: в, л, м, н, р (consonant assimilation)  
| | | • конце года [kɐnʲˈɛdɐ] (end of the year)  
| III / ш (voiceless) | [ʃ] | • all positions except below  
| | | • тише [tʲˈiʃə] (quiet)  
| | | • щёпот [ʃʲˈopat] (whisper)  
| | [ʒ] | • before a voiced consonant, except: в, л, р (consonant assimilation)  
| | | • ваш дом [vəʂˈdom] (your home)  

238 Belov, The 19th Century Russian Operatic Anthology, 163.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Consonant</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ш / Š</td>
<td>[ʒ]</td>
<td>м, н, р (consonant assimilation)</td>
<td>• наш Бог(^ {239}) [naʒ_box] (our God)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ / Š</td>
<td>[ʃʲː]</td>
<td>• always</td>
<td>• щёки [ʃʲː'oki] (cheeks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ч / Ч</td>
<td>[tʃ]</td>
<td>• all positions except below</td>
<td>• ночь [n'otʃ] (night) молч [məLtʃˈi] (hush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ / Š</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>• in the words: что, скучно</td>
<td>• чтоб [ʃtop] (so that) что [ʃto] (what) скучно [sk'צʃna] (boring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щ / Š</td>
<td>[ʃ:]</td>
<td>• always</td>
<td>• щёки [ʃː'oki] (cheeks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In old Russian (pre-revolution), Ш is pronounced as [ʃ^j tf].

### Consonants combination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>зж, см</td>
<td>[ʒ]</td>
<td>• in the root of a word</td>
<td>• сжальсь [ʒal'sa] (have mercy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>см</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>• in the root of a word</td>
<td>• смиять [ʃib'at] (knock down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>см</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>• in the root of a word</td>
<td>• исчезнет [ʃʲː'eznʲɛt] (vanish)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{239}\) Ibid.  
\(^{240}\) Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonant</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Й / й | [j] | • always after a vowel (diphthong)  
• initial in some words of non-Russian origin. | • уймётся [ujimʲ 'otsə] (be soothed)  
• Нью Йорк [nʲu j'ork] (New York) |

**Other elements**

| Ь | soft sign | It indicates that the preceding consonant is palatalized (softened), “and the j-glide in the following palatalizing vowel letter must be articulated.” |

| ъ | hard sign | It indicates that the preceding consonant is not palatalized, and “the j-glide in the following palatalizing vowel letter must be articulated.” |

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242 Ibid.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Mussorgsky is widely considered the most original of the Kuchka circle.\textsuperscript{243} He would seem to have been greatly indebted to Balakirev for his instruction in the early years, but it was Mussorgsky’s individuality that earned the recognition of the “Mighty Five” in the history of Russian music.\textsuperscript{244}

In tracing the evolution of his songs in the early years, one discovers the influence of Glinka’s romances and folk songs. There were also songs resembling German Lieder such as “Desire.” The maturity of his compositional style shines through those works of realism and nationalism around the era of his opera \textit{Boris Godunov}. His goal was to make his music speak, to communicate like “human speech.” Among his realist songs, for example, “Darling Savishna” and “Ah, You Drunken Sot,” he set his own words in the manner of natural speech, by following the rhythm and inflections inherent in the text. As result, these songs are highly syllabic in declamatory style and often lack lyrical melody.\textsuperscript{245}

In pursuing “truth” in his music, Mussorgsky chose not to completely forsake lyricism. His close relationship with Golenishchev-Kutuzov may have even softened his embrace of the teachings of the Kuchka circle. The poet provided words for the two song

\textsuperscript{243} J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, \textit{A History of Western Music}, 8th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 715.
\textsuperscript{244} Golenishchev-Kutuzov, "Reminiscences of Mussorgsky," 93.
\textsuperscript{245} J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, \textit{A History of Western Music}, 716.
cycles: *Sunless* and *Songs and Dances of Deaths*. The *Sunless* cycle shows the intimate side of Mussorgsky with his ultimate lyricism.

*Songs and Dances of Death* is a hybridization of realism, nationalism, and lyricism. Mussorgsky’s music also hints at elements of impressionism and even symbolism developing in this four-song cycle of dramatic death themes. The theme of “Death” itself is symbolic; Mussorgsky even assigned a specified pitch in each song to symbolize it. “Lullaby” is the perfect example as a realist song. Mussorgsky’s idea of “human speech” displays in the dialogue between Death and the Mother of the dying child. The folksong-like melody in “Serenade” is the composer’s nationalism at work, while still reflecting the compositional structure of Western musical tradition that Mussorgsky had once objected to. The composer’s lyricism is best shown in “Trepak,” especially in the haunting melody of the ending lullaby, the duet between voice and piano. The depiction of the battlefield in “Field Marshal” is more of an impressionist work that might have impressed Debussy as much as had *Boris Godunov*. The adoption of the Polish revolutionary hymn was another way to express the composer’s nationalism through its subject of the war and the folk quality in the music.

In studying and performing the cycle of *Songs and Dances of Death*, one of the tasks that a singer has to overcome is the Russian language, especially non-native speakers. Basic knowledge of the language is a necessity, while a comprehensive IPA

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system can be helpful. Besides the summarized IPA rules, one should also observe the following:

- Consonant palatalization is one of the distinct characteristics of Russian language.
- The function of soft vowels (e.g. я, е, и, ё, ю) is to palatalize the preceding consonant.
- A palatalized consonant, also known as a “soft” consonant, palatalizes (softens) the preceding consonant in the same word, with the exception of л, г, к, р and х.
- Each soft consonant/vowel has its hard counterpart, but, among the consonants ж, з and ш are always hard, and ч and щ are always soft.
- Assimilation is also an important feature of the language. For consonants, the palatalization may only occur within the same word, while the assimilation can happen within the same word as well as between two different words.

To perform Mussorgsky’s song cycle Songs and Dances of Death in its full potential brings the performers the greatest satisfaction in the growth of their musicality. It is the author’s sincere hope that this study will complete as a comprehensive reference that can be helpful for those who wish to study and perform the cycle.
References


Appendix: Text and Translation

Text by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov; modified words (in red) by Moest Mussorgsky\textsuperscript{247}
Translation and IPA transcription by author.

Колыбельная [kalib'el'naja] / Lullaby

Стонет ребёнок,
[st'on'et ri'eb'onak]  
moans  child  
A child moans,

Свеча, нагорая,
[s'vʲet'ʃ'a naɡar'aja]  
candle  burning  
A candle, burning down,

Тускло мерцает кругом.
[t'uskLa merts'ajet kruɡ'om]  
dimly  twinkles  around  
Dimly flickers around.

Целую ночь колыбельку качая,
[t's'eLuju ʃ'otʃ' kaLib'el'ku ʃ'aja]  
whole  night  cradle  rocking  
All night rocking the cradle,

Мать не забылась сном.
[matʲ nʲe zab'iLaʃa sn'om]  
mother  not  forgot-herself  in-sleep  
The mother has not forgotten so in sleep.

Ранним-ранёхонько в дверь осторожно,
[r'anʲim ranʲ'oxan'ka vʲ_ dlʲ'erʲ astar'oʒna]  
bright-early  at  door  carefully  
Early in the morning, on the door, cautiously,

Смерть сердюбльная стук!
[smi̞r̩t̩ s̤erd̃əbol̩naja st̤uk]
dearth compassionate knocks
Compassionate Death knocks!

Вздрежнула мать, оглянулась тревожно...
[vzdr̩'ognuLa m'at̩' agl̩'an'ul̩as̩' t̤r̩'ev̩'o'za]
shuddered mother looked-around anxiously
The mother shuddered, looked around anxiously...

«Полно пугаться, мой друг!
[p'olLa puɡ'atsa m'oj dr'uk]
don’t be-frightened my friend
"Don’t be frightened, my friend!

Бледное утро уж смотрит в окошко.
[bɫ̩'ednaje 'utra us̩' sm'ot̩r̩it v̩_ak'of ka]
pale morning already looks in window
The pale morning already looks into the window.

Плача, тоскуя, любя,
[pL̩'at̩'a task'uja lub̩'a]
weeping grieving loving
Weeping, grieving, loving,

Ты утомилась.
[ti utam'ìL̩asì]
you tired-yourself
You have tired yourself out.

Вздремни-ка немножко,
[v̩z̩dr̩'em̩'nì 'ika n̩cmn'of̩_ka]
take a nap a little
Nap a little,

Я посижу за тебя.
[ja pasiʒ'uz̩ za t̤ib̩'a]
I sit for you
I will sit for you.
Угомонить ты дитя не сумела;
You have failed to calm the child;

Слаще тебя я спою.
I will sing sweeter than you.

«Тише! Ребёнок мой мечется, бьётся, душу терзает мою!»
Hush! My child, tossing, struggling, tears up my soul.

«Ну, да со мною он скоро уймётся.
Well, with me he will soon quiet down.

Баюшки, баю, баю.
Lullaby, bye, bye.

«Щёчки бледнеют, слабеет дыхание...»
His little cheeks are growing pale, breath weakens...

Да замолчи-же, молю!
Just be silent, I beg!

«Добро знамене: стихнет страданье,»
That is a good sign: his suffering is dying away,
Баюшки, баю, баю."
[b'ajuʃk'i  b'aju ba'ju]
Lullaby, bye, bye.”

«Прочь ты, проклятая!
[pr'otʃ ti prakl'atają]
away you accursed
“Away, you accursed one!

Лаской своею сгубишь ты радость мою.»
[L'askəj sva'jeju z_g'ubij ti r'adas'ti ma'ju]
with-tenderness your destroy you joy my
You destroy my joy with your tenderness.”

«Нет, мирный сон я младенцу навею;
[nʲet mʲ'ir niŋ son ja mLadʲ'entsu navj'ęju]
no peaceful sleep I youngster cast
“No, I will cast over the youngster with a peaceful sleep;

Баюшки, баю, баю."
[b'ajuʃk'i  b'aju ba'ju]
Lullaby, bye, bye.”

«Сжалься, пожди допевать хоть мгновенье,
[ʒː'al/sa pazdi'i dap'ev'atʲ xoʃ mqaν'ęnje]
have-mercy wait finish-singing at-least moment
“Have mercy, hold off, at least for a moment, with finishing

Страшную песню твою!»
[str'afnuju pʲ' esnju tvə'ju]
terrible song your
Your terrible song!”

«Видишь, Уснул он под тихое пенье.
[vʲ'iˈdiʃj usnul on pat_tiˈixaje_pʲ' enje]
see fell-asleep he with peaceful singing
“You see, he has fallen asleep with the peaceful singing.

Баюшки, баю, баю.»
[b'ajuʃk'i  b'aju ba'ju]
Lullaby, bye, bye.”
Серенада [sərən'ədə] / Serenade

Нега волшебная, ночь голубая,
[ɲə'ɛŋə vaLʃ'ɛbnaja nɔdʒ gaLub'aja]
bliss magical night blue
A magical bliss, the night of blue sky,

Трепетный сумрак весны...
[trʲ'epʲetnij s'umrak vʲesn'i]
trembling dusk of-spring
Trembling dusk of spring...

Внёсмет, поникнув головкой, больная,
[vnʲ'emsʲet pан'iknuv gaLof_kaj baln'aja]
listens-to with-drooping head sick-girl
A sick girl, with her head drooping, listens to

Шёпот ночной тишины.
[j'opat natʃ'nɔj tʃin'i]
whisper of-night silent
The whisper of the silent night.

Сон не смывает блестящие очи,
[son nʲ'ɛ smik'ajed_bliʃtʃ'afʲej otʃ'i]
sleep not shut shining eyes
Sleep does not shut her shining eyes,

Жизнь к наслажденью зовёт;
[ʒ'iznʲ k nasLaʒdʲ'enju zavʲ ot]
life for pleasure calls
Life calls for pleasure;

А под оконком в молчании полночи,
[a pat ak'ɔʃ kəm v_maltf'anjii paLntʃ'i]
and under window in silence of-midnight
And under the window in the silence of midnight,
Любовь серенаду поёт:
[si'me'tələ sərənədə pa'jət]
Death serenade sings

Death sings a serenade:

«В мраке неволи, суровой и тесной,
[v'mərə'kələ nəv'olı sərə'ovəj i tʃəsna]}
in darkness of-captivity harsh and confined
“In the darkness of captivity, harsh and confined,

Молодость выветрива:
[m'oLədəstɨ vən'et_tvə'ja]
youth fades your
Your youth fades away;

Рыцарь неведомый, силой чудесной освобожу я тебя.
[r'itsər nəv'e'dəmiʃ sə'Ləj tʃudəsnaʃəvəsəbəʃ'ua ja tib'ə]
Knight mysterious with-power wondrous free I you
As a mysterious knight, I will free you with a wondrous power.

Встань, посмотри на себя: красотою лиц твой прозрачный блестит,
[fstan pəsmat'irɨ nə sib'ə krasə'ojə lik tvoj prazətʃiʃəŋ bʲ̂ esət]}
arise look at your-self translucent face your with-beauty shines
Arise, look at yourself: your translucent face shines with beauty.

Щёки румяны, волнистой косой стан твой как тучей обвит.
[jə'okɨ rum'ani vəLəj'tʃəʊəʃən tvoj kak t'utʃəj abvəj'it]}
cheeks rosy with-wavy tresses figure your as with-clouds entwined
The rosy cheeks, and your figure entwined with the wavy tresses like clouds.

Пристальных глаз голубое сиянье,
[priʃəlstələgəlLBub'ojə si'ʃanje]}
of-gazing eyes blue radiance
The blue radiance of your gazing eyes,

Ярче небес и огня;
[jar'ʃə_nəbəʃ'əsɨ agn'ə]
brighter than-sky and flame
Brighter than the sky and the flame.
With your breath blows like the midday heat...

You have seduced me.

Your hearing is captivated by my serenade,

The knight has come for the last reward:

The hour of rapture has arrived.

Your body is soft, its trembling is intoxicating.

O, I will suffocate you in my strong embraces;
Listen, my murmuring of love... hush...

You are mine!”

Out in the forest and the field, no one around;

A blizzard cries and moans,

It feels, as if in the darkness of night, the evil storm is burying someone.

Look, so there it is!

In the darkness Death embraces and caresses a peasant,
С пьяеньким пляшет вдвоём трепак, на ухо песнь напевает:
[siˈpiˈjan’enkim plˈajet vdblˈom trespakˈa nˈaˈuxa ˈpiesnˈ napievˈajet]
with drunkard dances in-pair trepak into ear song sings
Death, with the drunken one dances the trepak as a pair, and sings a song into his ear.

«Ох, мужичок, старичок убогий,
[ox muʒˈitˈok stapˈitˈok ubˈogaj]
oh little-peasant little-old-man poor
“Oh, little peasant, poor little old man,

Пьянь напился, поплёлся дорогой;
[pˈjan napiLsˈapapliˈosa darˈogaj]
drunk drank-self dragged-self on-road
Who drank till drunk, dragging on the road;

А метель-то ведьма поднялась взыграла,
[a meˈetˈelˈta vˈedma padˈnaLazˈvziɡˈalɔ]
but storm witch arose leaped
But the storm witch arose and leaped,

С поля в лес дремучий невзначай загнала.
[sˈpolˈa vˈlez dˈremˈutʃij nˈeznatzˈaj zagnˈaLɔ]
from field to forest deep casually drove
Who has casually driven you from the field deep into the forest.

Горем, тоской, да нуждой томимый,
[gˈorʲem taskˈoj da nuʒˈdøj tamˈimij]
with-grief sorrow and hardship tormented
You are tormented by grief, sorrow and hardship,

Ляг, прикормни, да усни, родимый!
[lak prʲikarnʲˈi da usˈnˈi radˈimij]
lie-down nestle and sleep dear
Lie down, nestle and sleep, dear!

Я тебя, голубчик мой, снежком согрею,
[ja tʰibˈa gałˈup_tʃik moj sˈnɛʃˈk om saqɾˈɛju]
I you darling my with-snow warm
I will warm you up, my darling, with the lovely snow,
Вкруг тебя великую игру затею.

I will design a great game around you.

Взбей-ка постель, ты метель, лебёдка!

Fluff up the bed, you storm swan!

Гей, начинай, запевай, погодка!

Hey, weather, start singing!

Сказку, да такую, чтоб всю ночь тянулась,

Sing such a fairytale, so that it would last the whole night,

Чтоб пьянчуге крепко под неё заснулось.

So that the drunkard would fall asleep fast under it!

Ой, вы леса, небеса, да тучи,

Oh, you forests, skies and clouds

Темь, ветерок, да снежок летучий,

Darkness, wind and snow flying.

Свейтесь пеленою, снежной, пуховою,

Coil up like a shroud of downy snow,
Ею, как младенца, старичка прикрою.

With it, I will cover up the little old man, as if he was a child.

Спий, мой дружок, мужичок счастливый,

Sleep, my little friend, happy little peasant,

Лето пришло, расцвело!

Summer has come, and blossomed!

Над нивой солнышко смеётся, да серпы гуляют

On the field the sun is smiling, and the sickles are strolling.

Песенка несётся, голубки летают...

The song is heard, the doves are flying...

Полководец / Field Marshal

Грохочет битва, блещут брони,

The battle rumbles, the armor shines,

Орудья медные ревут,

Copper cannons roar,
Бегут полки, несутся кони
[бɛɡ'ut paLk'i n'єs'utsa k'on'i]
rung regiments rush horses
The regiments are running, the horses are rushing

И реки красные текут.
[i rʲ'ɛki kr'asniJe tʲ'єk'ut]
and river red flow
And bloody rivers are flowing.

Пыляет полдень, люди бьются;
[pʲ'Lu'jet p'oLd'en' l'udʲi bʲ'jutsa]
burns midday people struggle
The midday is burning, people are struggling.

Склонилось солнце, бои сильней!
[skLʲ'iLsʲ'iLnsʲ'єnz boj sʲ'bn'ej]
descended sun battle stronger
The sun has descended, but that battle grows stronger!

Закат бледнеет, но дерутся враги всё яростней и злей!
[zak'ad bʲ'ledn'ej et no dʲ'er'utsa vrᵃq'iy tʲ'so 'jaras'tnej i zʲ'lj'ej]
dusk grows-pale but fight-on enemies all more-fiercely and more-devilishly
The dusk grows pale, but the enemies fight on more fiercely and devilishly than ever.

И пала ночь на поле брани.
[i pʲ'aLa noʃ' na p'olʲ'ebra'ɲi]
and fell night on field of-battle
And night has fallen on the battlefield.

Дружины в мраке разошлись...  
[druʒ'iɲi v m'rakʲ'є razʃ'ib's]
armies in darkness dispersed
The armies have dispersed in the dark...

Всё стихло, и в ночном тумане
[fʲ'so sʲ'ixLa i v_natʃ'ɪnom tʊm'anʲ]
all quiet and in of-night mist
All has become quiet, and in mist of the night
The groans have ascended to the sky.

Then, lit by the moonlight, on her battle horse with her bones shining with white,

Death appeared!

And in the silence,

Hearing the morns and prayers,

Full of proud satisfaction,

Like a field marshal, she circled around the battle place.
And her fatal voice swept over the battlefield:

"The battle is over! I have conquered all of you!"

You all, fighters, have yielded before me!

Life has challenged you, but I have brought you peace!

You all, fallen ones, will stand up together for inspection!

In solemn march you will pass before me,

I want to count my army.

Afterwards you will lay your bones in the earth,
Сладко от жизни в земле отдыхать!

sL'at_ka ad_žizni_vžeml'ě ad_dix'at fancifully from life in the ground repose

It is sweet to repose away from life in the ground!

Годы незримо пройдут за годами,

g'odi n'ezir'i ma prajd'ut za gđ'am'i years invisibly pass after years

Years will invisibly pass after years,

В людях исчезнет и память о вас.

vi'li'udax iz'eznet_i p'am'at a vas among people vanish even memory of you

Even the memory of you will vanish among people.

Я не забуду! И громко над вами

ja n'ě zab'udu i gr'omka nat v'am'i I not forget and loudly above you

I will not forget! And loudly above you

Пир буду править в полуночный час!

pir b'udu pravit' f_pal'umorjat'ʃas feast will conduct at midnight hour

I want to conduct a feast at the midnight hour!

Пляской, тяжелово землю сырую я притопчу,

pl'askaj tąj'sroju z'i eml'y u sîruju ja pr'itapt'ʃu

with-dance heavy on-ground wet I trample

With a heavy dance on the wet ground I will trample,

Чтобы сень гробовую кости покинуть вовек не могли,

jt'obi s'en' grabav'uju k'osti paki'inut vavl'ek n'ě maql'i
do-that shelter of-grave bones depart forever not could

So that in the shelter of grave bones could never depart.

Чтоб никогда вам не встать из земли!»

jt'op n'ikaqjd'a vam n'ě f_st'at iz'zi'eml'i

so-that never you not arise from earth

So that you will never again arise from the earth!”