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Musical characteristics added by Musorgsky in the second version of his *Boris Godunov* (1872) differed significantly from those of the original version of this opera (1869). These subsequent changes to the second version represent Musorgsky's mature style. Discussion of previous research along with original analyses of songs composed by Musorgsky provide evidence that the musical progression towards lyricism that was first observed in the version of *Boris Godunov* was reflected later in his song composition. This dissertation compares songs composed in the 1860s, which contain the use of declamatory text setting technique to the more lyrical style in each song in the latter songs that were composed after the revision of *Boris Godunov*. The paper includes detailed analyses of the most notable song cycle that represents Musorgsky's mature style, *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*, 1875-1877).

THE EVOLUTION OF LYRICISM IN MODEST MUSORGSKY'S
COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AS EVIDENCED
IN *SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH*

by

Hyun-Jong Lee

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Approved by

Committee Chair

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This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Modest Petrovich Musorgsky (1839-1881) is considered one of the greatest Russian Nationalism composers of the nineteenth century. His masterpieces, such as *Boris Godunov*, contributed to the development of contemporary music in the 20th century. Vocal music was the most important vehicle for Musorgsky to express his belief that art and music were a means of communication. The time constraints of his composing along with his battle with alcoholism and mental illness prevented Musorgsky from being a prolific composer; nevertheless, he was able to complete sixty-six songs throughout his life interspersed with his attempts to compose operas. Musorgsky's songs are particularly valuable assets in studying the changes and progress made in his compositional and text-setting styles. First, Musorgsky was relatively prolific at composing and completing his songs, unlike his operas which, aside from *Boris Godunov* (1869, 1872) remained unfinished at the time of his death. Second, judging from the subtitles given by Musorgsky himself, such as *a musical story*, *an etude in folk style*, *an attempt at recitative*,¹ his songs must have been effective devices for experimenting with new text setting techniques. Finally, because he composed songs throughout his lifetime, it is easier to observe the changes in his compositional style: the changes in subject matter, poetry selections, and text setting techniques. The subject of Musorgsky's songs

¹ *The Leaves Rustled Sadly, A Musical Story* (1859), *Little Kalistrat, Etude in Folk Style* (1864), *The Outcast, An attempt at a recitative* (1865).

shifted clearly from the texts that describe social matters in a realistic manner to those that focus on internal psychological drama. The lyrical melodic treatment that emerged after his experience with the revised *Boris Godunov* in 1872 and text collaborations with Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1848-1912) is observed in Musorgsky's two song cycles composed from 1874 through 1877.

Statement of Problem

Although there exists a great body of song composition by Musorgsky, very little has been written about his songs. Musorgsky is largely known as the most innovative opera composer in the nineteenth century and the majority of studies referring to Musorgsky's vocal music are about his operas, especially *Boris Godunov*, the only opera that Musorgsky ever completed. *Boris Godunov* is not only considered one of the greatest achievements in the history of nineteenth century opera, it also represents a personal success for the composer. Two versions of *Boris Godunov* were completed by Musorgsky, whereas his other operas were often neglected once his interest migrated to another project. Musorgsky is most often associated with musical realism and declamatory text setting technique, which was evidenced in this monumental work. The musical realism Musorgsky achieved in *Boris Godunov* was introduced in his songs that predated this opera. The second version of *Boris Godunov* preserved its realistic characteristics and also presented a greater lyricism in arias. There exists a small but important body of song literature that reflects this more lyrical style; however, in addition to the paucity of previous studies regarding Musorgsky's songs, there is also an over-emphasis of the declamatory text settings in these analyses.

Hypothesis

Given the unprecedented success of *Boris Godunov* that Musorgsky experienced, one could consider the possibility that he was motivated to recycle many technical aspects of *Boris Godunov*, such as a lyrical melodic treatment. Therefore, it is possible that the songs composed after the opera could have been greatly influenced by it. In this paper, I theorize that the text setting technique of Musorgsky songs was influenced by his operas. Songs composed prior to *Boris Godunov* reflect the more declamatory style of musical realism, and those composed after the opera reflect his more lyrical style. The most significant of these works is his last song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti (Songs and Dances of Death, 1875-1877)*.

Review of Related Literature

Previous studies that primarily focused on Musorgsky's operas have established that his lyricism increased as his work progressed through time. Calvocoressi explains the relationship between Musorgsky's musical style and Russian folk music, discussing the influence of modal scales and the rhythms of folk music in great detail.² Calvocoressi also claims that the initial version of *Boris Godunov* was closer to Musorgsky's original style, and was therefore superior to the revision. It was characterized by the use of modal scales, frequent changes in rhythm, irregular meters, and his unsystematic treatment of harmony, all of which were closely related to Russian folk music. These characteristics were most

² M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956).

abundant in the first version of *Boris Godunov*.³ In contrast, Robert William Oldani has defended the second version in his doctoral dissertation, suggesting that the revised version is more significant historically. After all, it was this latter version of the opera that became well-known. The value of the second version is clear since it represented Musorgsky's belief in the need for changes. The revision by Musorgsky was made voluntarily, even though there was external pressure that demanded alteration of his original work.⁴ Maureen Ann Carr is another scholar who has analyzed the harmonic structure of *Boris Godunov*, including the libretto in Russian with its English translation, both the 1869 and 1872 versions.⁵ Based on her analyses, Carr confirms that the second version indeed presents more lyrical melodies and the tonal structure is clearer than the first version.

References to Musorgsky's songs are mostly focused on their declamatory text setting, which reflects aspects of realism. Andrew Criddle Fox has analyzed and discussed the composer's musical style in his song compositions, particularly the evolution towards characteristics that have become associated with impressionism.⁶

The characteristics of the music that were added by Musorgsky in the second version of *Boris Godunov* differ significantly from those of the original

³ M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956), 234-301.

⁴ Robert William Oldani, "New Perspectives on Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*" (University of Michigan, 1978).

⁵ Maureen Ann Carr, "Keys and Modes, Functions and Progression in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1972).

⁶ Andrew Criddle Fox, "Evolution of Style in the Songs of Modest Mussorgsky" (Florida State University, 1974).

version of the opera, and these changes in the revised version characterize Musorgsky's mature style. The songs written during the 1860s featured subject matter that depicted the life of Russian peasants and a compositional style that included aspects of musical realism, such as the use of folk music and declamatory text settings that enhanced the natural intonation of speech. In contrast, Musorgsky's final song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti (Songs and Dances of Death)* exhibited elements of growing lyricism.

By combining previous research with my own analyses of the songs composed by Musorgsky, I propose to study his musical progression towards lyricism, as observed both in the opera *Boris Godunov* and in his song compositions. For the purpose of this study, the analyses focus on selected songs composed in the 1860s that contain aspects of realism, and on four songs from the particularly notable song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti (Songs and Dances of Death)* that represents Musorgsky's mature style.

CHAPTER II

MODEST PETROVICH MUSORGSKY

Nationalism in Russian music originated from a need to establish a true identity for its music, which had been under the influence of western countries for many years. Musorgsky was a member of *moguchya kuchka*, The Mighty Handful, a group of five Russian composers who represented Russian Nationalism in the 19th century.⁷ These self-educated composers were the pioneers of Russian Nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. They studied Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857) and Alexander Dargomizhsky (1813-1869), precursors of Russian Nationalism who incorporated folk-oriented melodies, whole-tone scales, and modal scales into their works. Nationalism in music is defined by an interest in folklores and a pride in nation and culture. Melodies directly quoted from folk songs and modes that are frequently used in traditional Russian music are the important features that can be encountered in the works of Nationalist composers.

Musorgsky's music reflects these characteristics of Nationalism. One of the most influential Russian music scholars, M. D. Calvocoressi, pointed out the relationship of Musorgsky's music to the modal scales and rhythms of Russian folk music. Calvocoressi claimed that the distinctive characteristics of Musorgsky's music, for example, the use of the whole-tone scale, church modes, triads with added tones, unresolved dissonances,

⁷ Alexander Borodin (1833-1887), Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), César Cui (1835-1918), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) and Musorgsky.

melodic tritones, irregular phrasing and meter, and avoidance of the leading tone, were influenced by Russian folk music. The new and bold harmonies were developed and extended not from the traditional school of harmony, but from the modal scales found in Russian folk songs.⁸ Musorgsky, however, seldom used materials directly quoted from folksongs.

To establish a true identity for Russian music, Musorgsky thought using the materials from folksongs was not sufficient. It turned out that realism, a literature movement that prevailed in Russia in the 1850s and 1860s was a perfect partner for Musorgsky to establish an identity of Russian music and to develop his own techniques. Musorgsky's musical realism was in alignment with the realism that dominated Russian literature from 1845 to 1905. As the realist writers considered reality superior to any forms of art, Musorgsky believed that musical elements, such as melody, harmonic progression, rhythm, should not overpower the words that describe reality. His mission in creating vocal music was the reproduction of the musical sounds of not only the nuances of the emotions but more importantly, the nuances of human speech. Musorgsky believed that in order to express reality in music, the language must speak of a real event and cannot be subordinated to the form of the music. Realist writers and poets emancipated themselves from unreal, unnatural description. Art became nothing but a means of describing absolute reality. Similarly from Musorgsky's perspective, music existed only when it did not overshadow a language that described a real event. In composing vocal music, Musorgsky tried to capture the original nuances and the exact accent of Russian

⁸ M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956), 234-301.

speech. As a result, rhythms are highly irregular, and the vocal line lacks melodic contour. The tonal and harmonic structures of the compositions are completely free. His lack of musical education has been held responsible for the non-systematic harmony and highly irregular rhythms found in his compositions. However, these characteristics, which were at the time criticized and regarded as a result of ignorance, have now become common practice for modern composers. Due to mental illness and alcoholism throughout life, many of Musorgsky's important compositions remained unfinished at the time of his death. Yet Musorgsky's music has been reevaluated since his death as the most innovative and influential Russian music of the nineteenth century.

Like the composers of many eras who consider music a medium of communication, a communication with the people, Musorgsky sought to write music that could establish a rapport with the Russian people. To do this, he often emphasized that art should reflect human speech. In a letter to Ludmila Shestakova (1816-1906) regarding the characters in his opera, *Zhenit'ba* (*The Marriage*, 1868). Musorgsky described his goals:

This is what I would like. 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 sounds of human speech, as the external manifestations of thought and feeling must, without exaggeration or violence, become true, accurate music, but artistic, highly artistic.⁹

⁹ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Musorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 111-12.

By reproducing the nuances of human speech in the form of music, Musorgsky believed real art could be created and that genuine speech could be conveyed, unaltered by musical form. Musorgsky's mission to compose real Russian music, music as a reproduction of speech, led him to Russian peasant speech, the speech of the common people, which is full of emotion – rough, rather untrained and untouched emotion that the composer appreciated. A true spoken language that expresses more than words, it reaches the innermost feelings and the soul; it draws close to the truth, and is therefore real. Russian peasant speech certainly influenced Musorgsky's musical language and his subject matter. His obsession with real speech and real life as it is lived appears to have influenced Musorgsky's free style of writing. This is evident in his use of multi-functional harmonies or non-functional harmonies, indicative of his belief that events in real life cannot be contained in a certain form, nor resolved in the same manner. Because Musorgsky used the daily speech of the people to express realism and to elicit the rawness of the material, his music was often considered unpolished by his contemporaries, even by his supporters and friends. The Balakirev circle found young Musorgsky interesting for his keen sense of the literary point of view and his originality of thought, but they certainly did not agree with his harmonic idioms, forms, or techniques in general. In a letter to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908), César Cui (1835-1918) commented on Musorgsky's style: "...Modinka presented some sort of musical monstrosity to us, supposedly a trio to his scherzo, a huge, awkward monstrosity. Here are some church chants of endless length and the usual Modinkian pedaling and so

forth, all this is unclear, strange, awkward and by no means a trio...”¹⁰ To Musorgsky, what is real, what is true, cannot be manipulated; no matter how ugly it is, it should be revealed as it is. After Musorgsky became less influenced by Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), who taught him compositional form, he became more true to himself by developing his own musical language and by being true to the people of Russia. By the time he composed *Zhenit'ba* (*The Marriage*); he had grown closer and closer to the idea of musical realism. The realism in Musorgsky's music, which was expressed through unpleasant sound, such as nontraditional harmonic progression, and the lack of contouring melodic treatment, was neither accessible nor appreciated in his lifetime. Vladimir Stasov's (1824-1906) concern is rather harshly expressed in a letter to Balakirev: "...To me, Musorgsky seems a perfect idiot. I believe if he were left without tutelage, if he were suddenly to removed from the sphere where you (Balakirev) held him by force, and he were set free to follow his own wishes and his own tastes, he would soon be overrun with weeds like all the rest. There's nothing inside him...”¹¹ Even when Musorgsky was under the guidance of Balakirev, he never seemed to be fully understood. Balakirev recollected his own frustration in his memoir;

Since I had not been trained in music theory, I could not teach Musorgsky harmony...but I could explain the form of composition. With that in mind, we played Beethoven's symphonies and many pieces by Schumann, Schubert, and Glinka...concentrating on the analysis of form...His first work did not escape my critical hand. Thus, I helped him and explained orchestration to him, when he was composing the B flat scherzo...Since I was unable to explain the principles of voice leading to him, i.e., harmony,

¹⁰ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson eds., *The Musorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 46.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

I simply made corrections here and there when I felt something was amiss.
And such was the situation up to the time he composed *Boris*.¹²

Through his composition, Musorgsky sought an absolute independence of Russian music from foreign elements, which included form and harmony. Until the nineteenth century, music in Russia was governed heavily by Western thought – Italian, French, and later German. The first Russian composer who was recognized as a pioneer of Russian music, Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), was trained in Germany.¹³ The St. Petersburg Conservatory, the first conservatory established in Russia, was founded in 1862 by Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894), a German pianist and composer. Even after the conservatory was founded in Russia, Russian musicians were trained in European standards. The music created by Western-influenced composers in Russia, even though it was written in Russian, was not quite Russian enough for Musorgsky. It seemed to be impossible for Musorgsky to accept the idea that true Russian music could be produced when created by composers who were trained with foreign concepts and terms. The mission of Musorgsky's music was to liberate Russia from the influence of Western music. To composers who were trained in Western countries, or even self-taught composers who adopted Western musical idioms, Musorgsky's musical language would ironically sound too foreign. Russian music needed a new identity, and it was Musorgsky who was willing to stand at the forefront of that music. The true innovation attempted by Musorgsky in order to liberate Russian music from Western influences was not recognized as a positive

¹² Alexandra Orlova, eds., *Musorgsky Remembered*, trans. Véronique Zaytzeff, and Frederick Morrison (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31.

¹³ Mikhail Zetlin, *The Five: The Evolution of the Russian School of Music* (New York: International Universities Press, INC, 1959), 28-29.

contribution by composers who had grown accustomed to the existing sound. That which Musorgsky tried to achieve in his music was rejected in his lifetime. His ideas and conception of new music were not welcomed by his contemporaries in Russia; however, Musorgsky established himself as an innovator in Russian music history. His new harmonies influenced many composers, including Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and many twentieth century composers throughout the East and West.

The Mighty Handful, a group of self-educated composers, opted to use materials that would represent Russia, such as Russian characters and musical sources borrowed from folk songs. The music of The Mighty Handful was characterized by an emphasis on literary tradition and an interest in folklore. Musorgsky also turned to the music he had listened to for years during his childhood, Russian folk music, to fulfill his wish to be a complete Russian composer of the people. No composers of the Mighty Handful, however, attempted as dramatic a shift as Musorgsky did. The presence of folk music is a prominent feature of Musorgsky's composition, even though he seldom quoted actual folk tunes.

Russian folk music is fundamentally modal.¹⁴ Certain qualities and color in Russian folk tunes influenced Musorgsky's technique and style. He certainly was not the only Russian composer who borrowed a folk tune as musical material for his compositions; however, his harmonic language clearly suggested a new path. In 1856, Musorgsky was introduced to Dargomizhsky, who had an established career as a composer by mid-century. The experimental use of harmony in *Kamenny gost* (*The Stone*

¹⁴ M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956), 236.

Guest) by Dargomizhsky is known to have influenced Musorgsky greatly.¹⁵

Dargomizhsky's use of new harmonic idioms such as the use of a whole-tone scale in *Kamenny gost* (*The Stone Guest*) establishes him as a predecessor of Musorgsky.¹⁶ The use of harmony borrowed from Russian folk music is not a characteristic that we encounter only in Musorgsky's music, as mentioned earlier. This leads to the question, what did Musorgsky do wrong to be blamed by his peers? Why was his logical idea of composing Russian music that was based on Russian speech using Russian folk tunes judged so harshly? One could blame Musorgsky's total ignorance regarding so called "school" harmony, his lack of formal education in composing. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), who is known as a 'formally trained' composer, expressed his thoughts on the 'untrained' amateur Musorgsky in a letter to Madame von Meck:

With regard to Musorgsky, as you justly remark, he is 'used up.' His gifts are perhaps the most remarkable of all (*The Five*), but his nature is narrow, and he has no aspirations towards self-perfection. He has been too easily led astray by the absurd theories of his set and the belief in his own genius. Besides, his nature is not of the finest quality; he likes what is coarse, unpolished, and ugly. He is the exact opposite of the distinguished and elegant Cui.¹⁷

To the perfectly trained ears of Tchaikovsky, chromatic alterations may have been interpreted as totally aimless; however, they were used for their color and not for the sake of a harmonic progression that resolves in a proper manner. The important features of

¹⁵ Gerald E. H. Abraham, *On Russian Music* (New York: Books for Libraries, A Division of Arno Press, Inc. 1980), 263.

¹⁶ M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956).

¹⁷ Victor L. Seroff, *The Mighty Five: The Cradle of Russian National Music* (New York: Allen, Towne & Heath, Inc, 1948), 207.

Musorgsky's music (abrupt modulations, non-functional harmonies, cadences, and the extreme variety of its meters and rhythms) are very close to what can be found in the native music of Russia.¹⁸ Musorgsky preferred frequent changes of time signature or combinations of time signature in order to faithfully capture the rhythms of speech. He also took an innovative stance toward dissonance. The dissonant chords often continue without correct resolution. The frequent use of the lowered second scale degree, sharpened fifth, or lowered sixth was obviously rooted in the modal scale of Russian folk music.¹⁹ This use of the chromatically altered chord, which is commonly found in Musorgsky's music, can function in various ways. Gerald E. H. Abraham has made the point that Musorgsky's tonal and modal schemes may be impossible to define safely in terms of actual theory.²⁰ These features of Musorgsky's works certainly would rank him as an innovative musician, while he was being criticized as an amateur at the same time. Tchaikovsky stated that Musorgsky, "...with all his ugliness, speaks a new idiom. Beautiful it may not be, but it is new." Musorgsky was continually adapting and learning from folk songs. It was the very foundation of his art.

During his entire life as a composer, Musorgsky was fiercely determined to portray the real life of the Russian people. His imaginative innovation refused to be tamed, even though others criticized his insensitivity and the lack of understanding of forms and rules in his composition. In fact, these had never been his interest. A mind contained in certain forms and governed by such rules could not, unfortunately,

¹⁸ M. D. Calvocoressi, *Modest Mussorgsky His Life and Works* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956), 237.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236-43.

²⁰ Gerald E. H. Abraham, *On Russian Music* (New York: Books for Libraries, A Division of Arno Press, Inc. 1980), 256.

understand Musorgsky's art in his lifetime.

CHAPTER III
SONGS BEFORE *BORIS GODUNOV*

1860s Realism and Populism

Musorgsky composed during the period of Russia's great reforms under the reign of Alexander II (1855-1881). Musorgsky's interest in people and peasant speech is aligned with the populist concept. In the 1860s, Populism, a politically radical movement, emerged in Russia after the Great reform failed. The Populists (*Narodniki*) were intellectual group of young, extremely liberal nationalist writers who idealized the peasantry, identified as "the people" (*Narod*). Opposed to tsarism, the populist believed in communal living and communal farming without private property. During this time, Musorgsky was deeply influenced by the populist concept; he gave up his own property, working as a low-rank civil service worker with minimum income, and even attempted communal living. He identified closely with the poor. The 1860s in Russia was an era not only of revolution and the reform of society, but also was an era of great literary achievement, the golden age of the novel in Russia. The realistic novel and poetry that started in the middle of the 1840s, now dominated Russian literature in the 1860s. Many realist writers were politically and socially active during the reign of Alexander II. Musorgsky's attraction to the ideas of the socially and politically active groups of this period is evident in the poetry selections he made for his song compositions. Populist

views are present in his works, even though there is no evidence that he actually was an active member of the any of these radical groups.

Following the failed emancipation of serfs in 1861, the Musorgsky family turned most of their private property over to the serf, leaving only the essential portion of the estate for the family. Musorgsky was quite proud of the fact that his family had been so generous to the lower class. Even as he juggled his passion for composing music and his poorly paid post as a low-rank civil service officer to make ends meet, he never expressed regret for the event in 1861. Musorgsky firmly believed in the concept of social compassion, which implies a complete empathy with others rather than pity for them. He identified closely with the poor as he suffered from financial tribulations and personal illness throughout his life, perhaps largely due to his alcoholism.

Musorgsky's populist beliefs expanded in the early 1860s with his attempt at communal living, a populist concept. In fact, his communal living experience turned out to be intellectually as well as musically productive years in his life. As an artist, this was a period when he immersed himself in Russian history and philosophy, especially in the works of populist writers. Among them, Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky (1828-1889) was the recognized leader of the radical youth generation and also the most influential writer at the time. Chernyshevsky believed that art was nothing but an adequate imitation of reality and was therefore always inferior to the reality it represented. This concept is detailed in his thesis, *The Esthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855).²¹ Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* was the most influential of the populist novels, a

²¹ D.S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature from its Beginning to 1900*, ed. Francis J. Whitfield (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 224-25.

frequent topic among Musorgsky and his roommates. Musorgsky, although not a populist, was profoundly influenced by this novel. He was led to ask himself what needed to be done to reproduce reality of life in the form of music. During this time, his critical thinking and independent ideas deepened. The radical change in his thinking is reflected in his choice of subject matter and his incorporation of the declamatory text setting techniques influenced by Dargomizhsky. An equal amount of Musorgsky's songs from this period feature his own poetry, along with the works of critical populist poets, such as Nekrasov, Shevchenko, Ostrovsky and Golts-Miller. The songs composed from 1864 to 1867 heavily relied on populist views, especially those of the individuals mistreated by society and their destitution. Some of the texts written by Musorgsky from 1866 to 1872 were clearly influenced by populist ideology as well. These texts along with those of the populist poets were useful tools for Musorgsky in expressing his affection for peasant and folk songs, the "true Russian life." Populists were true to their belief in peasants' rights. Often they believed in the glorification of the peasant's plight and in communal living, which was a necessary means to true reform in Russia. Creating music that depicts reality was Musorgsky's primary goal. The evidence in his songs of his interest in language, literature, and Russian peasantry as a subject corresponds to that of realist writers and populist poets.²²

Early Songs

Musorgsky songs are all finished works, unlike the majority of his operas.

²² Pushkin, Gogol, Nekrasov, Ostrovsky, Shevchenko.

Although Musorgsky produced only one finished opera in his lifetime,²³ he is primarily known as a reformer of opera. The innovative features of his opera often identified with the use of unresolved dissonances, cadential avoidance, omission of leading tones, use of whole-tone scales, triads with added tones, irregular phrasing, and frequent changes in

(Slowly)

Gde ti, zvyoz doch ³ - ka? Akh, gde ti,

(Dudka)

p

yas - na - ya? Il' zat - mi - la - sya tu - chey chyor - no - yu, tu - chey

chyor - no ³ - yu, tu - chey groz - no - yu?

mf *p* *p*

Figure 1. Measures 1-10 (*Where Art Thou, Little Star?*)

²³ *Khovanshchina* and *Sorochinskaya yamarka* (*The Fair at Sorochintsy*) were finished by Rimsky-Korsakov, after the composer's death.

meter. The critical thinking that resulted in innovative musical language found in Musorgsky's operas is expressed also in his composition of songs. Therefore, songs are the most valuable source to understand innovative musical elements and stylistic changes in Musorgsky's music.

Musorgsky's earliest songs do not represent any populist subject matter. Poetically and musically, they are not profound. Musorgsky was only seventeen when he composed one of these first songs, *Sel'skaya pesnya, Gde ti zvezdochka?* (*Rustic song, Where Art Thou, Little Star?*) It is well known for incorporating elements taken directly from Russian folk music (Figure 1). There are two versions, one for voice and piano (1857) and another for voice and orchestra (1858). The use of the Phrygian mode, which is frequently found in Russian folk music, is considered one of the song's most distinctive characteristics. The vocal melody oscillates simple and ornamental passages, which are prominent features of Russian folk melodies.

List'ya shumeli unilo (*The Leaves Rustled Sadly*, 1859) is one of his early songs in romance style from *Yuniye godi* (*Years of Youth*), the collection of 18 songs composed from 1857 to 1866. In this song, the simple vocal melody narrates the text while the accompaniment patterns are associated with atmosphere, such as the rustling of leaves at night. In measures 30-37 (Figure 2), the accompaniment shifts from triplets to eighth notes and the vocal line sings its quarter note declamation, where the speaker narrates "No one sobbed when they buried the coffin and everyone went away." The accompaniment pattern is disrupted once as the text describes earlier events.

Musical score for measures 29-37 of "The Leaves Rustled Sadly". The score is in a minor key (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line with Russian lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Ti - kho, bez pla - cha, za - ri - - - - li i u - da - - - li - lis' vsye proch'". The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *sfz*, *sf*, and *mf*.

Figure 2. Measures 29-37 (*The Leaves Rustled Sadly*).

Songs in the 1860s

The first version of *Kalistratushka* (*Little Kalistrat*), an “etude in folk style” was composed in 1864 (Figure 3). Musorgsky chose to set the populist text of Nikolay Alexeyevich Nekrasov (1821-1978). The poet’s greatest achievement is his realistic satire, *Who is Happy in Russia?*²⁴ In this work, each character represents a particular class rank in Russia and the characters confidently believe that the future of the people will be

²⁴ D.S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature from its Beginning to 1900*, ed. Francis J. Whitfield (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 238-43.

assisted by the help of the intelligentsia. The text of *Kalistratushka* (*Little Kalistrat*), its reference to the plight of the peasant, is rather cynical, compared to the happy ending of *Who is Happy in Russia?* The text recalls the prophecy of a mother's lullaby, a prediction of a happy, ideal life. The harsh reality turned out quite differently from the mother's hope. The text shifts to the reality of his life, which is nothing but misery.

ko - li - bel' mo - yu, ko - li - bel' ka - cha - yu - chi, ka -

cha - - - yu - - - chi: "Bu - desh'

(Calmly)

schast - - - liv, Ka - li - stra - - - tush - - - ka!

Figure 3. Measures 19-29 (*Little Kalistrat*).

This ironic duality in *Kalistratushka* (*Little Kalistrat*) is expressed through folk-like melody in the music provided by Musorgsky. The melodic line is simple and free in its rhythm. The phrases are often metrically free featuring a long vocal line followed by ornaments at the end. The suggestion of a rocking lullaby underlying the folk-like music that sounds almost too happy depicts the ironic duality in the text. The fantasy of the mother's prophetic lullaby contrasts to life's reality, which is represented sarcastically by cheerful folk-tunes.

His attempts to reproduce human speech and achieve musical realism in his unfinished opera *Zhenit'ba* (*The Marriage*, 1868) are much like the text setting technique in his songs that predate this opera. *Otverzhennaya* (*The Outcast*, 1865) is Musorgsky's

(Calmly) *mf*

Ne smo-tri na ne - yo ti, s pre - zre - n'yem,

mf

ol se - bya ye - yo proch' ne go - ni, luch - she du - shu ye - yo s so - zha -

Figure 4. Measures 1-9 (*The Outcast*).

setting of a text by a populist poet, Golts-Miller (Figure 4). He was highly influential in a political group called the “Will of the People.” This group, which mounted terrorist attacks upon the government, was responsible for the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. The song is declamatory and Musorgsky described it as “an experiment in recitative.”

It is notable that after years of borrowing texts from populist poets, Musorgsky

f ————— *mf* *f* ————— *mf*
 Ba - rin moy, mi - len'kiy, ba - rin moy dob - ren'kiy,
sf *f* *p* *f* *p*
p ————— *pp* *f* ————— *p*
 szhal' - sya nad bed - nen'-kim gor - kim, bez - dom - nim si - ro - toch-koy. Ba - ri-nush - ka!
p ————— *pp* *sf* ————— *p*
mf ————— *mf* —————
 Kho - lo - dom, go - - lo - dom gre - yus', korm - lyu - sya ya:

Figure 5. Measures 1-16 (*The Orphan*).

began to provide his own texts and continued to do so from 1866 to 1872 until he met Golenishchev-Kutuzov in 1873. In one of Musorgksy' first poems (Figure 5), *Sirotk* (*The Orphan*, 1868), he conveys the predicament of an abandoned child in society. Both the words and music present pure realism; the words are set in a free recitative-like vocal line and the text is explicit about the child's suffering. Almost without accent or breath, the starving orphan begs with a monotonous voice. He suffers from his environmental circumstances, physical cold, starvation and the cruelty of other people. The reality becomes more gruesome when the orphan confronts the inhumanity of people. The song begins with a single chord followed by a rest as the orphan hesitates to speak. The vocal line enters with the simple rhythmic pattern of a half note followed by two quarter notes, and this prevails throughout the piece. The opening pattern momentarily breaks when an accented vocal line enters in measures 27-29 when the orphan is confronted by the cruelty of people (Figure 6). The abrupt ending with a sustained dominant chord suggests

za ston go - lod - n'ly moy pod - chu-yut. V cha - shehu l' dre - mu - chu - yu

Figure 6. Measures 27-31 (*The Orphan*).

that the people did not help the beggar child at all. The song ends with the unresolved chord, while the vocal line continues, as the orphan continues to beg. The orphan's voice

weakens at the end, *ff* to *p* (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Measures 52-56 (*The Orphan*).

Another representative example of Musorgsky’s declamatory style is found in *Seminarist* (*The Seminarian*, 1867). The text was written by the composer and portrays a theological novice hopelessly daydreaming about his true love, Styosha, the daughter of the priest, while he practiced a Latin recitation. This song was banned by the Committee on Internal Censorship.²⁵ Musorgsky wrote to Stasov;

Being extremely fearful (as you know) of the little sins of my cookery, it may be that I should never have decided to print, within my life time, the damned “Seminarist”... he’s not allowed to be sold, on account of the Seminarist’s concluding statement, that he “was tempted by the devil in the temple of God.” Judge for yourself, what is there objectionable in this? Nearly every day before the altar of the Most High do the priests beat up the deacons with crosses and the holy chalice, and filled with the Holy Spirit, they run ashamedly into each other’s “manes”; isn’t that a “temptation of devil?”...²⁶

Even as a composer of a banned song, Musorgsky did not appear to be fearful. In fact he said,

²⁵ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Musorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 151.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 151-52.

Heretofore the censor let musicians be; the ban (on “The Seminarist”) shows that from being “nightingales, leafy forests, lovers shining in the moonlight” musicians have become members of human societies, and if they should ban all of me, I would not cease to peck at the stone, as long as I had strength...²⁷

With *Seminarist* (*The Seminarian*) text, Musorgsky was able to explore his implementation of musical realism, which is represented by extreme declamatory text setting (Figure 8). Musorgsky interrupts Latin practice with the seminarian’s personal preoccupations. The Latin practice is characterized by the on-going eighth-note rhythmic pattern that pervades most of the song, and this pattern evokes the sound of chanting. The

M. Mussorgsky
(Not too quickly) *p*

Pa - nis, pis - cis cri - nis, fi - nis, ig - nis, la - pis, pul - vis, ci - nis...

f Akh, ti, go - re, - mo - yo go - - - re! *mf*

mf

²⁷ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Mussorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 151-52.

Figure 8. Measures 1-9 (*The Seminarian*).

seminarian's true interest, his personal preoccupations, is reflected in the folk-oriented music. The alteration between monotonous chanting and folk-like melody expresses the reality versus imagination in the text.

The songs written by Musorgsky in the 'Populist' era (1864-1872) represent the period in which the declamatory text setting was commonly used. This was evident in Musorgsky's music where he relied on realism to musically express true Russian life, the plight of the peasants. His keen interest in spoken Russian resulted in verbatim text setting technique that would follow the exact pattern in Russian language. After 1872, Musorgsky achieved a more internal reflection of his psyche, turning his interest to his own internal turmoil rather than the human condition and concurrent political interest.

CHAPTER IV

SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH

1870s After *Boris Godunov*

In 1870s, political and social movement of populism, and realism in novels and poetry were the main current in Russia. However, Musorgsky turned his interest to internal reflection of the psyche rather than the human condition and concurrent political issues. Poetically, with the new source of poetry, collaboration with Golenishchev-Kutuzov, and musically, through the composer's final changes to his monumental work *Boris Godunov*, he achieved originality and the strength to evolve.

After spending years dealing with populist ideas during the 1860s, Musorgsky began investigating a new technique in text setting that resulted in more lyricism. This happened in the four year period between the completion of the first version of *Boris Godunov* in 1869 and its revision in 1872. During this time, Musorgsky became preoccupied with revision and the perfection of the opera. The rejection of his original *Boris Godunov* (1869) by the Committee of Marynsky Theatre was a humbling experience for the composer and it motivated Musorgsky to voluntarily make some changes to his opera.

The first version of *Boris Godunov* was divided into four parts and contained seven scenes that relied heavily on choruses and ensembles. It was rejected by the Committee for performance due to a lack of arias and the absence of any prima donna

role. Many have argued that changes in the second version did not reflect the composer's intentions, but they had to be made to please the Committee so that *Boris Godunov* could be performed on the stage. However, Robert William Oldani points out that the revision was indeed made voluntarily and the changes in the second version represent Musorgsky's compositional style as well. The close examination of the changes Musorgsky undertook in the second version is crucial to understanding how *Boris Godunov* influenced Western music of the early twentieth century.²⁸ Oldani defended the value of the second version against those who believed only the first version reflected Musorgsky's compositional style. Oldani claimed that *Boris Godunov* influenced Western music between 1895 and 1915; this must have been through the publication of the piano-vocal score of 1874 by Musorgsky, less likely through the 1869 version that could not be performed until 1928.²⁹ Therefore, it is the second version that made Musorgsky the most influential opera composer in the nineteenth century. Any attempt to understand Musorgsky's music through only its declamatory style would be incomplete. Musorgsky never completely abandoned "musical realism" by emulating real phenomena, such as how people really speak. Hence, the declamatory text setting techniques were a valuable asset to his music. However, there is certainly more to understand about his music as a process. Musorgsky seemed always to be writing something new. Golenishchev-Kutuzov recalled that even on Musorgsky's deathbed:

Musorgsky told about his desire to start something important, something

²⁸ Robert William Oldani, "New Perspectives on Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*" (University of Michigan, 1978).

²⁹ Ibid.

prominent. “I would like to do something totally new, something that I have not touched before...” Unfortunately, Musorgsky’s wish never came true due to his death in 1881.³⁰

The evolution towards new compositional style was due to his insatiable intellectual curiosity, which was always pulling him to the next interest or subject. At the end of January 1874, Musorgsky was finally able to present to the public the completed work, *Boris Godunov*. The premier was a great success. Musorgsky successfully conveyed the techniques of musical realism through this opera while showing great improvement in his treatment of melody. The music was more tonal, in contrast to the modal characteristics of the first version.³¹ Furthermore, the opera now had more arias. The changes were not embraced by those who expected an ‘original’ Musorgsky sound, which was represented by the extreme verbatim text setting.

By 1872, he had already begun working on *Khovanshchina* and *Sorochinskaya yarmarka* (*The Fair at Sorochintsy*), although he never finished them. While *Boris Godunov* is still appreciated for its distinctly realistic characteristics, the two unfinished operas lean more toward lyricism. It is obvious from these two operas that Musorgsky’s musical language sought the more lyric quality that there had been hints of in his revision of *Boris Godunov*. The completion of *Boris Godunov* and its successful public debut, along with the criticism of his colleagues, compelled Musorgsky to a prolific musical output. A year after the death of his close friend and a painter Viktor Hartmann (1834-1873), Musorgsky composed *Kartinki s vistavki* (*Pictures at an Exhibition*, 1874), a

³⁰ Alexandra Orlova, eds., *Musorgsky Remembered*, trans. Véronique Zaytzeff and Frederick Morrison (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 81-99.

³¹ Oldani, Emerson, and Carr.

highly pictorial work for piano to commemorate Hartmann. He also produced two song cycles, *Bez solntsa* (*Without Sun*, 1874), and *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*, 1875-1877).

Musorgsky was paying attention to psychological drama when he chose Pushkin's play for *Boris Godunov*. Although the story of the opera was indeed based on historical facts, it primarily focused on an in-depth representation of Tsar Boris' inner conflict surrounding the death of Dmitry. In his song composition, Musorgsky's focus on social matters and history became more blurred as he went through a shift from populist concepts to the ideas of his friend Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1848-1913). Golenishchev-Kutuzov had been enthusiastic about radical populist thoughts in the 1860s and supported the democratic movement before the great reforms.³² However, he did not uphold the radical movements of the 1860s for long. His ideas took another turn and he decided to revive the classical style. In the history of Russian literature, Golenishchev-Kutuzov is known as a poet who was favored by Musorgsky. He is not viewed as one of the greatest Russian poets, perhaps even far from it. His poems concerning the subject matter of death and destruction were considered to be his most promising and his works portraying 'death' were the ones Musorgsky chose to set.³³ Golenishchev-Kutuzov had become close to Musorgsky by the time he finished the second version of *Boris Godunov*. Soon they shared the same house. Musorgsky was very fond of this young poet, encouraged his talent and introduced Golenishchev-Kutuzov to his social circle.

³² Alexandra Orlova, eds., *Musorgsky Remembered*, trans. Véronique Zaytzeff and Frederick Morrison (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), Preface.

³³ D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature from Its Beginning to 1900*, ed. Francis J. Whitfield (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 361.

Musorgsky wrote to Stasov in June 1873;

Since Pushkin and Lermontov, I have not encountered what I find in Kutuzov: this is no manufactured poet, like Nekrasov...In Kutuzov, almost everywhere, sincerity springs up, almost everywhere one can sniff the freshness of a good, warm morning, all with a superb technique, inborn in him...our young poet (and he is very young) was not inspired by social motives, that is, he didn't follow the fashion and ape, like a marmoset, the grimaces of Mr. Nekrasov, but hammered into verse those thoughts which occupied him, and those longings which belong to his artistic nature...³⁴

During the period of creativeness after the success of *Boris Godunov*, Musorgsky composed two song cycles in collaboration with Golenishchev-Kutuzov. By this time, Musorgsky had departed firmly from the influence of populist thought. He turned to internal psychological drama and the moods of the soul instead in *Bez solntsa* (*Without Sun*). The text deals with the subject matter of rejected love and loneliness. This was perhaps a reflection of Musorgsky's own suffering. He set the poetry without any alterations or repetition, in strong contrast with his treatment of Golenishchev-Kutuzov's poetry for the song cycle *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*) in which he undertook several alternations for musical and dramatic purposes.³⁵ Musorgsky's personal experience, such as the death of his close friend, Hartmann, seemed to contribute to the change in subject matters, particularly, his interest in a theme of death. Musorgsky also chose to set the theme of death in *Zabytyi* (*Forgotten*, 1874). This text by Golenishchev-Kutuzov portrays a most gruesome scene; a soldier, who dies in battle,

³⁴ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Musorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 217.

³⁵ Michael Russ, "Be Bored": Reading a Mussorgsky Song," *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer, 1996): 28.

fighting in a strange land, is left alone on the ground. As the soldier is dying alone in the field, the wife of the soldier, back home in Russia promises her son that his father will return soon. This horrific verse was inspired by a painting of the celebrated war artist Vasily Vereshchagin (1844-1904), which depicted scenes from the Russian campaign in Turkestan.³⁶ The song was dedicated to the painter with whom Musorgsky later became acquainted. Musorgsky wrote in a letter to Golenishchev-Kutuzov in 1879,

Forgotten, its text and its music touched him (Vereshchagin) to the soul, and even more deeply; he said that in places he was overtaken by a nervous emotion.³⁷

Musorgsky's monumental treatment of the theme of death was presented in his last song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*). The texts of the four songs chosen for this cycle were based on poems written by Golenishchev-Kutuzov that described the deaths of people from many walks of life---the deaths of a rich man, a proletarian, a grand lady, a high official, the tsar, a young girl, a peasant, a monk, a child, a merchant, a priest, and a poet.³⁸ Musorgsky chose to set music to only four of these examples. In this cycle, texts and music were combined to draw a picture of death with a human personality, not simply as an abstract thought or a fearful image. Golenishchev-Kutuzov portrayed death as a redeemer to miserable human beings, unfortunate souls. Whereas the death in *Zabytyi* (*Forgotten*) is a portrayal of nothing but a gruesome reality, in *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*) death was used as a means of

³⁶ Caryl Emerson, *The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120.

³⁷ Jay Leyda and Sergei Bertensson, eds., *The Musorgsky Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1947), 399.

³⁸ Caryl Emerson, *The Life of Musorgsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125.

resolving or consoling a world of harsh reality. The last three songs in this cycle are constructed on an introduction and the monologue of Death. The first song, “Lullaby,” differs in construction only in the second part. A dialogue between Death and the dying child’s mother takes place instead of the monologue of Death (Table 1).

Table 1. Formal Outline of *Songs and Dances of Death*.

	Introduction	Death’s Monologue
“Lullaby”	mm. 1-21	mm. 22-end
“Serenade”	1-33	34-end
“Trepak”	1-20	21-end
“The Field Marshal”	1-60	61-end

“Lullaby”

In the first song “Kolibel’naya” (“Lullaby,” April 14, 1875), the introduction (mm. 1-21) establishes the dramatic setting. The opening ominous eighth-note melody in the accompaniment confirms the tonality of the song, F sharp minor, introducing the fifth and leading tone of the key (Figure 9). The scene with the moaning child and a flickering candle is portrayed over this eighth-note accompaniment pattern. This ominous pattern becomes thicker when the text portrays the mother’s sleepless night. The E sharp in measure 14, a leading tone of F sharp minor, is not resolved immediately creating an unsettled feeling. An eighth note followed by an eighth rest in the accompaniment from measure 15 to 19, depicts the cautiously approaching Death with its thin texture. Death knocks with the pounding A major chord at measure 19 (Figure 10). This A chord is

Lento doloroso

pp *f*

Sto - net re - byo - nok. Sve -

Figure 9. Measures 1-7 (*Lullaby*).

poco ritard. **Moderato tranquillo**

bi - la - sya snom. Ra - nim ra - nyo - khon' - ko

pp *f* *agitato*

a mezza voce

v dver' o - sto - rozh - no smert' ser - do - bol' - na - ya stuk! Vsdrog - nu - la'

Figure 10. Measures 14-19 (*Lullaby*).

used as a recurring musical device symbolizing Death throughout the song. *Tremolo* piano accompaniment and seventh chords without resolutions continue as the mother looks around in alarm. B sharp and E sharp are heard throughout the introduction, suggesting F sharp minor tonality (Table 2). The introduction sets the mood of the poetry

Table 2. Formal Outline of “Lullaby.”

Introduction	Death’s Lullaby vs. Mother’s Cry
mm. 1-21, F [#] minor	mm. 22-end, F [#] minor

and more importantly, it presents musical devices that are associated with the characters in the second part of the song. *Molto tranquillo* and the A pedal tone of Death’s lullaby motive, contrasting with *tremolo* and seventh chords without resolution of the dying baby’s Mother are established as reminiscent musical devices in the introduction of the song. The second section of the song consists of a dialogue between Death and the mother (Table 3). A contrast between the seductive voice of Death (*Lento funesto*) and the anxious voice of the mother (*Agitato pathetico*) is successfully conveyed in this section (Figure 11). There is a recurring Lullaby motive of Death, a more melodic and

Table 3. Contrasting Features of Death Theme and Mother.

Death	Mother
Molto tranquillo Lento funesto	Tremolo Agitato pathetico
‘A’ pedal tone	Seventh chords without resolution Chromatic bass line
‘Lullaby’ motive	Recitative-like vocal line

Lento funesto

Pol- no pu- gat'- sya, moy drug! Bled- no- ye ut- ro uzh smo- trit v o- kosh- ko.

Pla- cha, tos- ku- ya, lyu-bya, tī u- to- mi- las'. Vzdrem

Ni- ko nem- nozh- ko, ya Po- si- zhu za te- bya.

u- go- no- nit' tī di- tya ne su- me la,

The image shows a musical score for two systems of music. The first system (measures 22-25) is marked *cantabile rallentando e* and *pp*. The vocal line features triplets and the lyrics "Sla- shche te- bya ya spo- yu." and "“Ti- she! Re- byo- nok moy". The piano accompaniment has a chromatic bass line and a tremolo in the right hand. The second system (measures 26-35) is marked *Agitato pathetico* and *pp*. The vocal line has the lyrics "Me- chet- sya, b' yot- sya du- shu ter- za yet mo". The piano accompaniment continues with a chromatic bass line and tremolo in both hands.

Figure 11. Measures 22-35 (*Lullaby*).

lyrical vocal line, and a strong sense of an F sharp minor tonality with the persistent A pedal tone throughout the second section. In contrast, the agitated mother’s voice is depicted in a recitative-like vocal line, a chromatic bass line in the accompaniment, and a *tremolo* in the left hand of the piano. Mother begs Death to stop singing in mm. 48-50. A succession of seventh chords without resolution continues. The *tremolo* accompaniment pattern appears in both the right hand and the left hand of the piano as the mother seeks Death’s mercy. From the A major chord at the end of her begging, one can hear that Death is near. The song ends with its Lullaby motive. The F sharp minor chord through an A common tone gradually shifts to the final A minor chord. The long rest at the end of the song implies that the breathless dialogue between Death and the

mother finally passed away (Figure 12).

Agitato
con dolore

"Sshal' - sya pozh - di do - pe - vat', khot' mgno - ve - n'ye,

Lento *tranquillo*

strash - nu - yu pes - nyu tvo - yu! "Vi - dish,

rallentando

us - nul on pod ti - kho - ye pe - n'ye. Ba - yush - ki, ba - yu, ba - yu."

Figure 12. Measures 48-54 (*Lullaby*).

"Serenade"

Death disguised as a knight sings a "Serenada" ("Serenade," May 11, 1875) to a young maiden under the window of her room. The introduction of the second song in *Songs and Dances of Death* describes a warm, magical spring night. The opening begins

with a dominant of E minor, the tonal center of the introduction. Sixteenth-note prolongations in the right hand of the piano with a B pedal tone in the bass consist of seventh and ninth chords. All these harmonic progressions suggest the mysterious atmosphere. From mm. 10-26, the text describes “Sleep does not tempt her shining eyes, for she feels driven to experience life to the fullest.” The lyrical vocal line is doubled in the bass in this section. This pattern disappears as the scene shifts from the dying maiden’s room to underneath the window where Death silently awaits and sings a serenade. The transitional section takes place in mm. 31-33. B flat pedal tones progress to an E flat in the bass, and the V-I in E flat minor of the next section (Figure 13). The E flat minor is the tonal center of Death’s monologue except for a brief modulation to its

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, measures 31-33, is marked 'rall.' and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'smert' se - re - na - - - du po - yot.' The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with sixteenth-note chords and a left hand with a B-flat pedal point. The second system, measures 34-37, is marked 'L'istesso tempo alla breve' and features a vocal line with the lyrics '"V mra - ke ne - vol - li, su - ro - - - voy i tes - noy,'. The piano accompaniment has a 'p' dynamic and includes 'sf' markings.

Figure 13. Measures 31-37 (*Serenade*).

relative major in the first part of section B. The brief G flat major section portrays a strong contrast of colors in the sensuous text; “The azure gleam of your sapphire-blue eyes is brighter than a radiant flame” (Table 4). G flat major arpeggiated triads in m. 62

Table 4. Formal Outline of “Serenade.”

Introduction	Death’s Serenade					
	A	A’	B		A	Coda
E minor	E ^b minor	E ^b minor	G ^b major	E ^b minor	E ^b minor	E ^b minor
mm. 1-33	34-50	51-62	63-72	73-81	82-98	99-end

prepare for the G flat major in section B. (mm.63-72) G flat pedal tones in the bass throughout the beginning part of section B offer a strong feeling of tonality in this new

The musical score for measures 63-72 of "Serenade" is presented in two systems. The top system shows the vocal line and the beginning of the piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Pri - - - stal' - n glaz go - lu - bo - ye - si - ya - n'ye,". The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line with G-flat pedal tones and arpeggiated triads in the right hand. The bottom system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with the lyrics "yar - - - che ne - bes i - og - nya." The tempo and mood are marked as *p poco capricioso*.

Figure 14. Measures 63-72 (*Serenade*).

key (Figure 14). The rest of the B section is in the key of E flat minor. An augmented triad built on the G flat pedal tone in measure 77 intensifies a very sensuous text, “Your breath, hotter than the midday sun, you have seduced me!” The progression of B flat common tones (V of E flat) in the bass, to the E flat (Tonic) confirms the tonality of E flat minor for the returning A section. A passionate serenade turns into Death’s tender

Ne - - - zhen tvoy stan, _____ u - po - i - te - len tre - pet. O, za - du -

shu ya te - bra v krepkikh ob' - yat' - yakb; lyu - bov - nity moy le - pet slu - shay...

mol - chi... Ti mo - ya!"

Figure 15. Measures 99-112 (*Serenade*).

voice, as he delicately suffocates the young maiden in the coda section (Figure 15). Death whispers in her ear “Be quiet!” and at that moment, the quarter-eighth note *serenade* rhythm in the bass stops. The song ends with Death’s triumphant statement.

“Trepak”

In the third song of the cycle, “Trepak” (“Trepak,” February 17, 1857) a stormy winter in Russia is portrayed. The victim of Death here is a drunken peasant who has lost his way in a harsh snow storm. Death attempts to entice the old drunken peasant by dancing the *trepak* with him. The reminiscent musical device, both in the vocal line and the accompaniment, is derived from the *Dies irae* (Figure 16). The *Dies irae* theme recurs



Figure 16-a *Dies irae* and Figure 16-b “Trepak”.

in variations with different textures. Melodic variations, phrase extensions and varied

Table 5. Formal Outline of “Trepak.”

Introduction	Death’s Dance		
mm. 1-20	mm.21-38	mm. 39-52	mm. 53-end
	Death’s seduction	Storm	Death of the drunken peasant
D minor			

accompaniment pattern are established, all in the key of D minor (Table 5). The *tremolo* in the right hand of the piano over the fragment of *Dies irae* (Figure 17) describes the scene of a blizzard howling at night in the forest in the very beginning of the introduction.

Lento assai, Tranquillo

Les da po - ly - ni, bez - lyu - d'ye kru - gom.

V'yu - - - ga i pla - chet, i sto - net; chu - yet - sya, bud - to

Figure 17. Measures 1-6 (*Trepak*).

The accompaniment pattern changes on one occasion, when Death is spotted. The bass establishes a tonal center of D minor with fragments from the *Dies irae* (Figure 18). The *Dies irae* theme occurs in the vocal melody as well as the accompaniment throughout the song with different textures. The variations in the theme and accompaniment pattern are established through dominant-tonic pedal tones in the key of D minor. The accompaniment develops into a thicker texture (Figure 19), as Death dances and sings in

Poco a poco più mosso

ro - to kho - ro - kit Glyad, tak i est!

V tem - no - - - te mu - zhi - ka

p *pp*

Figure 18. Measures 10-14 (*Trepak*).

p'ya - nen' - kim plya - shet vdvo - yom tre - pa - ka.

mp

poco rallent.

na u - kho pesn' na - pe - va - - - - - yet

Figure 19. Measures 17-20 (*Trepak*).

mm. 17-18. The right hand of the piano sings the theme with a chromatically descending inner voice (D-C sharp-C natural-B-B flat). Dominant-tonic pedal in the bass firmly establishes the tonal center of D minor. Death's monologue is divided into three parts and determined by both the poetic content and musical elements. The *Dies irae* theme in the vocal line and the accompaniment persists in the first part of the monologue (Figure 20).

Allegretto moderato e pesante

"Okh, mu - zhi zhok, sta - ri - chok u - bo - goy, p'yan na - pil - sya, po - plel - sya do - ro - goy;

Figure 20. Measures 21-24 (*Trepak*).

The music of the second part of the monologue effectively illustrates the ruthless storm;

Fluff up his bedding, you snowstorm-swan
 Hey, winds sing him a merry song!
 Spin a yarn to last the whole night through,
 to put our sotted friend to sleep.
 And you, woods, skies, and storm-clouds,
 Darkness, wind and flying snow!
 Weave him a snowy shroud as soft as down.
 I will cover the old one with it as I would a child.

Dramatic changes in the accompaniment pattern, such as chromatic descending scales, sixteenth-note prolongation, and a chromatic triplet bass in the accompaniment all depict a stormy night in the forest where the old peasant is dying (Figure 21 a-c).

f
 Gey, na - chi - nay, za - pe -
f
 7 9 7 7 10
 vay, po - - - - god - - - - ka!
sf
 7 10 6 7

Figure 21-a. Measures 39-40 (*Trepak*).

mf
 Skaz - - - ku da ta - - - ku - - - yu,
p
 chtob vsyu noch' tya - - - ny - - - las''

Figure 21-b. Measures 43-44 (*Trepak*).

Figure 21-c. Measures 51-54 (*Trepak*).

The persistent use of a flat II in this section suggests the half step movement in the *Dies irae* melody. The miserable, drunken peasant is saved by Death in the final section. Death consoles him with a sweet voice. The theme in the accompaniment continuously interrupts the seductive voice of Death (Figure 22). The song ends with III-v-i chords,

piu mosso *rall.*
 Zhok, mu- zhi- zhok schast- li- viy,
piu mosso
mf sf
a tempo *piu mosso* *rall.*
 le- to pri- shol, ras- tsve- lo!
pp *piu mosso* *rall.*
mf sf

Figure 22. Measures 57-62 (*Trepak*).

in all of which the third is omitted, suggesting a feeling of emptiness (Figure 23).

piu mosso *rall.*
p
p
a tempo
pp

Figure 23. Measures 71-74 (*Trepak*).

“The Field Marshal”

The melodic theme in the beginning of the song “Polkovodets” (“The Field Marshal,” June 5, 1877) is based on a Russian chant from the service for the dead, *So svyatymi upokoy* (*Repose, Rest with the Saints*) (Figure 24-a). The main musical material

for Death's monologue is borrowed from the Polish hymn *Z dymem pożarów* (*With the smoke of fires*) (Figure 24-b).³⁹ The final song of the cycle deals with death of the masses rather than individual. The ascending eighth note triplets arrives the tonic of E flat minor

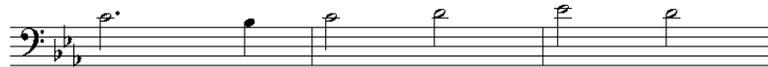


Figure 24-a. Introduction (*The Field Marshal*).



Figure 24-b. Death Theme (*The Field Marshal*).

in measure 3. Gruesome scenes are portrayed both in the vocal melody adapted from *Repose, Rest with the Saints* (Figure 25). An introduction describes armies destroying each other during a war. The running eighth-note triplets and a group of accented figures that move up and down by octave in the accompaniment portray fierce motion of the battlefield. Clashing dissonances in the introduction graphically depict men struggling ferociously. As night falls on the battleground, only the moans of wounded soldiers disturb the silence. Death arrives at the end of the E flat minor section of the introduction (Figure 26). The A major chord on the word *smert* (Death) prepares the modulation to the A minor section of the introduction. Contrasting with the previous songs in the cycle in

³⁹ James Stuart Campbell, "Music as Text and Image: Musorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death*," *Musik als Text*, (1998): 416.

Vivo-alla guerra

Gro - kho - - - - chet

bit - va, ble - - - - shchut

bro - - - - ni, o - ru - - - d'ya med - ni - ye re -

vut, be - gut pol - - - ki, ne - sut - - - sya

Figure 25. Measures 1-8 (*The Field Marshal*).

which the story developed in the dialogue or monologue once Death was introduced, the

Grave. Marziale

da o - za - re - na lu - no - yu, na bo - ye - vom svoym ko - ne, ko -
 stey sver - ka - ya be - liz - no - yu, ya - vi - las' smert'.

Figure 26. Measures 36-41 (*The Field Marshal*).

observation of Death takes place before the monologue begins in “The Field Marshal” (Table 6). The skeletal chord accompaniment and recitative-like vocal melody in the A

Table 6. Formal Outline of “The Field Marshal”.

Introduction		Death’s march
E ^b minor	A minor	D minor
mm. 1-41	mm. 42-60	mm. 61-end
Russian chant Battlefield scene	Recitative-like vocal line Skeletal chord accompaniment	Polish hymn Death’s marching theme

Death’s arrival
On A major chord

ff **A tempo Pomposo**

Ya ne za - bu - du! I grom - ko nad va — mi pir bu - du pra - vit' v po -

mf **Meno mosso**

lu - noch - niy chas! — Plyas - koy, tya - zhyo - lo - yu, zem - lyu si - ru - yu

mf **poco a poco rall.**

ya pri - top - chu, chto - b sen' gro - bo - vu - yu ko - sti po - ki - nut' vo

ff **allargando**

vek ne mog - li, chtob ni - kog - da vam ne vstat' — iz zem - li!"

Figure 27. Measures 81-93 (*The Field Marshal*).

minor section describes Death slowly wandering the battlefield where dying soldiers are moaning. The voice of Death strongly reverberates in the Polish hymn in march rhythm. The theme of Death continues to emerge with its variation. The dominant-tonic pedal in mm. 85-90 substantiates the D minor tonality of the final section. The triumphant melodic line in the final section continues almost without rest until the end as Death conquered the battle (Figure 27).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The development of lyricism, a shift from extreme realism to more lyrical treatment of melodies, is evident in Musorgsky's songs composed after the revision of *Boris Godunov*. The lyrical melodies and tonal structures in *Boris Godunov*, which were enhanced through the revision, represent Musorgsky's mature style. A comparison of Musorgsky's final song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti (Songs and Dances of Death)* to his songs composed before *Boris Godunov* provides evidence that the stylistic changes transferred into his song writing.

This particular song cycle features characteristics directly influenced by *Boris Godunov*. A firm tonal center is established in each of the songs, and the melodic lines derive from a motive. These variations are also far more lyrical than songs composed in the 1860s. The songs prior to *Boris Godunov* reflect Musorgsky's obsession with the verbatim text setting of Dargomizhsky's *Kamenny gost (The Stone Guest)*, and the influence of the literary movement of realism and more politically radical populism. His interest in Russian folk music and language resulted in the use of modal characteristics and vocal line that lacked melodic contour.

These realist characteristics were challenged when Musorgsky was asked to revise the first version of *Boris Godunov* for its performance. The successful outcome of the new version, reinforced with its tonal construction and lyrical arias, motivated

Musorgsky to experiment with a new aspect of music that was different from his previous works. This motivation coincided with his discovery of the more individual, less social literary style of Golenishchev-Kutuzov, and recitative-like vocal lines became less prominent.

Musorgsky had distanced himself from realist poetry by the time he collaborated with Golenishchev-Kutuzov for his two song cycles. In particular, the texts that were chosen for his last song cycle, *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and Dances of Death*), effectively illustrated the relationship between human and anthropomorphic depictions of death. Although not as profound as the psychological drama in *Boris Godunov*, it is clear that Musorgsky's interest shifted away from extreme realism. In place of the modal characteristics of Russian folk songs, all four songs of *Pesni i plyaski smerti* (*Songs and dances of Death*), exhibit a distinct tonal structure. The contouring melodies replace pitched recitative based on Russian speech patterns. Motives in each of the songs follow the rhythmic patterns of other artistic genres as suggested by the titles, lullaby, serenade, Russian dance, and the march. The development of lyricism that emerged in the second version of *Boris Godunov* also appeared in Musorgsky's last song cycle, both as an expression of personal emotion in the text, and as melodic contour in the music.

The development of lyricism does not mean that Musorgsky suddenly abandoned declamatory text-setting technique, nor did he concede the 'language' in favor of tonal and lyrical melody. Musorgsky continued to seek the balance between music and language to produce a genuine nationalist style for Russian music. It is true that the majority of Musorgsky's songs were written in declamatory text-setting technique since

his untimely death prevented him from fulfilling his desire to create something totally new as he would call it, 'intelligently justified melody.' However, the acknowledgement of the changes in his later work holds a key to appreciation of his music as a process, and more importantly, to understanding Musorgsky as a musician.

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APPENDIX A. LIST OF SONGS AND OPERAS

OPERAS	YEAR	SONGS
	1857	1. Where Art Thou, Little Star? (Grekov)
	1858	2. Meines Herzens Sehnsucht (anon.) 3. Tell Me Why (anon.) 4. The Joyous Hour (Koltsov)
	1859	5. The Leaves Rustled Sadly (Pleshcheyev)
	1860	6. What Are Words of Love to You? (Ammonsov)
<i>Salammbô</i> (1863-66) incomplete	1863	7. I Have Many Towers and Gardens (Koltsov) 8. The Old Man's Song (Goethe) 9. King Saul (Byron, trans. Kozlov) 10. If Only I Could Meet Thee Again (Kurochkin)
	1864	11. The Winds Blow, the Wild Winds (Koltsov) 12. Kalistratushka (Nekrasov) 13. Night (Pushkin) 14. The Songs of Balearets (Musorgsky, from <i>Salammbô</i>)
	1865	15. Prayer (Lermontov) 16. The Outcast (Golts-Miller) 17. Cradle Song (Ostrovsky)
	1866	18. Malyutka (Pleshcheyev) 19. Desire (Heine, trans. Mey) 20. Gopak (Shevchenko) 21. From My Tears (Heine, trans. Mikhaylov) 22. Darling Savishna (Musorgsky) 23. You Drunken Sot! (Musorgsky) 24. The Seminarian (Musorgsky)
	1867	25. Yarema's Song (Shevchenko, lost) On the Dnieper, surviving version, 1879 26. Hebrew Song (Mey) 27. The Magpie (Pushkin) 28. Gathering Mushrooms (Mey) 29. The Feast (Koltsov) 30. The Ragamuffin (Musorgsky) 31. A Garden Blooms by the Don (Koltsov)

		32. The Goat (Musorgsky) 33. The Classicist (Musorgsky)
<i>Zhenit'ba (The Marriage, Act I), incomplete</i>		
	1868	34. The Orphan (Musorgsky) 35. Eryomushka's Lullaby (Nekrasov) 36. Child's Song (Mey) 37. With Nurse (Musorgsky, from <i>The Nursery</i> , no. 1)
<i>Boris Godunov, the First version</i>	1869	
	1870	38. In the Corner (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 2) 39. The Beetle (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 3) 40. With the Doll (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 4) 41. Going to Sleep (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 5) 42. The Peepshow (Musorgsky)
	1871	43. Evening Song (Pleshcheyev)
<i>Boris Godunov, the Second version Khovanshchina 1872-1880, incomplete</i>	1872	44. The Cat Sailor (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 6) 45. On the Hobby Horse (<i>The Nursery</i> , no. 7)
<i>Boris Godunov, Vocal score Boris Godunov, Premier (Feb. 8, St Petersburg) Sorochinskaya yamarka (The Fair at Sorochintsy) 1874-1880, incomplete</i>	1874	46. Within Four Walls (Golenishchev-Kutuzov, from <i>Without Sun</i> , no. 1) 47. You Did Not Recognize Me in the Crowd (<i>Without Sun</i> , no. 2) 48. The Idle, Noisy Day Is Ended (<i>Without Sun</i> , no. 3) 49. Be Bored (<i>Without Sun</i> , no. 4) 50. Elegy (<i>Without Sun</i> , no. 5) 51. On the River (<i>Without Sun</i> , no. 6) 52. Forgotten (Golenishchev-Kutuzov)
	1875	53. Trepak (Golenishchev-Kutuzov, from <i>Songs and Dances of Death</i> , no. 3) 54. Lullaby (<i>Songs and Dances of Death</i> , no. 1) 55. Serenade (<i>Songs and Dances of Death</i> , no. 2) 56. The Misunderstood One (Musorgsky)

	1876	57. The Sphinx (Musorgsky)
	1877	58. It Did Not Strike Like a Thunder from Heaven (Tolstoy) 59. Softly the Spirit Flew to Heaven (Tolstoy) 60. Pride (Tolstoy) 61. Is Spinning Man's Work? (Tolstoy) 62. It Gathers and Disappears (Tolstoy) 63. The Vision (Golenishchev-Kutuzov) 64. The Field Marshal (<i>Songs and Dances of Death</i> , no. 4)
	1878	65. The Wanderer (Rückert, trans. Pleshcheyev)
	1879	66. Mephistopheles' Song in Auerbach's Tavern (Goethe, trans. Strugovshchikov)

APPENDIX B. TRANSLATIONS

Where Art Thou, Little Star?

(N. Grekov)

Where are you, my little star?
Ah, where are you, my shining one?
Or have you been covered by a black cloud,
By a black cloud
A threatening cloud?

Where are you, maiden,
Where are you, my beautiful one?
Or have you abandoned your dear friend?
Your dear, sweet friend?

The black cloud concealed the little star,
The cold earth took the maiden.

The Leaves Rustled Sadly

A Musical Story (A. Pleshchev)

The leaves rustled sadly
In the oak grove one night;

A coffin was lowered into a grave,
A coffin, lit by the moon,
A coffin, lit by the moon.

No one sobbed when they buried it silently
And everyone went away,
Leaning over the grave,
Only the leaves rustled sadly all night.

Little Kalistrat

Etude in Folk Style (N. Nekrasov)

My mother used to sing to me,
Rocking my cradle,
Rocking my cradle,
Rocking:

“You will be happy, Kalistratushka!
You will live well, humming
You will live well.

And by God’s will has come true
My mother’s prediction,
By God’s will has come true
My mother’s prediction,
My mother’s prediction:

“There is no one happier,
No one more handsome,
No one better dressed
Than Kalistratushka!
There ‘s no one better dressed than Kalistratushka!”

I wash myself with water from the spring
I comb the hair with my five fingers;
I await the harvest
From an unplowed garden
Await the harvest
From an unplowed garden,
An unplowed field!

But my wife works
To do the laundry for the naked, naked kids,
She adorns herself more than her husband
Wears double-soled bast sandals
Wears double-soled bast sandals.

Yes, you will be happy,
Kalistratushka,
Yes, you will live, humming!

The Outcast

An attempt at a recitative (Golts-Miller)

Do not look at her with contempt,
Do not drive her away,
Rather look into her soul with compassion
And warm glance with concern.

Look how many tempests by cruel fate she has survived.

How much, how much young strength has died in her,
Without a trace in endless struggle.
For in this hardened soul
And in this poisoned blood,
Believe that love could still emerge...

But never to be loved,
Hearing everywhere only curses,
To meet everywhere gazes full of contempt,
And not to fall, not to fall,
When malicious embraces
Offer nothing more than debauchery? ...

Do not look at her with contempt,
Do not drive her away;
Rather look into her soul with compassion
And warm glance with concern.

The Seminarian
(M. Musorgsky)

Panis, piscis, crinis, finis, ignis, lapis, pulvis, cinis...
Ah, you woe, my woe?
Orbis, amnis et canalis, orbis, amnis et canalis.
What a scolding the priest gave me so:
On the back of head and neck
He gave me a blessing
Orbis, amnis et canalis, orbis, amnis et canalis.
And with his holy right hand
Deprived me of memory.
Orbis amnis et canalis...
Deprived me of memory.
Sanguis, unguis et canalis. Sanguis et canalis...

Fascis, axis, funis, ensis, fustis, vectis, vermis, mentis,
Father Semyon has such a noble daughter:
Fustis, vectis, vermis, mentis...
Cheeks like the color of poppies,
The eyes languishing and a breast of a swan,
It stirred under her blouse.

Fascis, axis, funis, ensis, fustis, vectis, vermis, mentis...
Ah, you Styosha, my Styosha,

I would kiss you all over,
Firmly, so firmly
I would press you to my heart!

Postis, follies, cucumis, atque, pollis, atque, pollis, postis, follies, cucumis, cucumis...
And the other day at service for most holy, and most saintly
And glorious Mitrodora,
Sentis, caulis, atque pollis, atque pollis.
I was chanting verse six from the antiphon,
Orbis, amnis et canalis, et canalis.
But I kept looking and winking
At the left choir loft.
Sanguis, unguis, et canalis, orbis, amnis, et canalis...
That devil of a priest saw it all,
Wrote me down in his little book,
Fascis, axis, funis, ensis, fustis, vectis, vermis, mensis...
And the Reverend Father blessed
Me three times on the cheeks,
And pounded with all his might
Latin into my head with his pointer stick.
Orbis, amnis et canalis, et canalis, sanguis, unguis et annalis, et annalis.
So that's how I taste fruits of love
In the Lord's temple.
Orbis, amnis et annalis, sanguis, unguis, et canalis, et canalis, et canalis.

The Orphan

(M. Musorgsky)

Dear Sir,
Kind Sir,
Have pity on a poor,
Miserable, homeless little orphan.
Kind Sir!
Hunger feeds me and cold warms me;
Storms and blizzards at night, I protect myself.
Abuse, blows, terrors, and threats
Are the rewards good people give me
For my hungry moaning.

If I seek refuge from people in the dense forest,
Nagging hunger
Drives me out from the forest.
I have no more strength left,

I want something to drink and eat.
Dear Sir,
Kind Sir,
Dying of hunger is terrible,
My blood becomes freeze from the cold.
Have pity on a poor soul, Kind Sir
Have pity on a miserable little orphan...

SONGS AND DANCES OF DEATH (Golenishchev-Kutuzov)

1. Lullaby

The child is moaning.
The candle, burning down,
Flickering, dim light all around.
All night long, rocking the cradle,
Mother has not had a wink of sleep.
At early in the morning, at the door cautiously
Came the knocking of heart-rending death.

Mother gasped and looked around in terror...
“Do not be frightened, my friend!
Pale moaning is already peaking through
The little window.
Crying, grieving, loving,
You have grown weary.
Doze off now for a little while, I will keep watch for you.

You could not calm the child;
I will sing more sweetly than you”
“Quiet! My child is restless and struggling,
He is tearing my soul!”

“Well, he will soon be soothed with me
Hush-a-bye, hush, hush.”
“His cheeks are pale, his breathing weak...
So please be quiet, I beg you!”

“It’s a good sign: the suffering will stop.
Hush-a-bye, hush, hush.”
“Away with you, cursed one!
With your affections

You will destroy my joy.”

“No, a peaceful sleep
Will I bring to the infant.
Hush-a-bye, hush, hush.”
“Have mercy, if only for a moment,
Stop singing your terrible song!”

“You see, he fell asleep to the quiet singing.
Hush-a-bye, hush, hush.”

2. Serenade

Magical bliss, the pale blue night,
The trembling twilight of spring...

The sick maiden listens, bowing her head...
To the whispering of the nocturnal silence.
Sleep does not cover her shining eyes,
Life summons her to pleasure;

Under the window in the silence of the night
Death sings her a serenade:

“In the gloom of captivity, harsh and oppressive,
Your youthfulness withers away;
I, the knight with miraculous powers,
I will free you.

Arise and look at yourself:
Your transparent visage
Glow with beauty,
Your cheeks flushed
A long wavy braid entwined
Your body as if surrounded by a cloud,

The azure gleam of your staring eyes
Is brighter than the heavens fire.
Your breath is like a heat of noonday, you have seduced me.
You have been captivated by my serenade,
Your whispering voice summoned the knight.

The knight has come for his final reward

The hour of capture has arrived.
Your body is sweet, your trembling intoxicating.

Oh, I will suffocate you on my fast embraces;
Hear my murmuring of love...
Be still...
You are mine!”

3. Trepak

Forest and meadows, desolate all around.
The blizzard does howl and moan;

It seems almost as if in the darkness of night,
A blizzard weeps and moans,
The blizzard is burying someone.
Look, so it is!

In the darkness death embraces and caresses a peasant,
With the drunken peasant it's dancing a trepak.
And it sings this song into his ear:

“Okh, little peasant, miserable old man,
You are drunk and lost your way on the road;
But the storm, that witch, came up became playful,
It has driven aimlessly from the field into the deep forest.

Exhausted by grief, sadness and poverty,
Lie down, nestle down, and fall asleep, dear friend!

I will warm you up with snow, my friend!
I will play a great game all around you.

Fluff up the bed, you snowstorm swan!
Hey, start in and sing, now, weather!
Sing a fairy tale that will last the whole night long,
So that this drunken one will fall asleep to it.

Oh, you, forest, skies, and clouds,
Darkness, wind and flying snow,
Weave a shroud, a snowy, downy shroud;
I will cover the old man with it like a child.
Sleep, my dear friend, happy little peasant,

The summer has come, everything's in bloom!

The sun is smiling over the field,
The scythes are roaming
Song is heard, the doves are flying..."

4. The Field Marshal

The battle thunders, the armor flashes,
The bronze weapons roar,
The troops run, the horses gallop,
And rivers of blood flow.

Noon blazes, men are struggling!

The sun has set, and the battle is stronger!

The dusk fades, but the enemies fight on
Fiercer and eviler than ever!

And the night fell on the field of battle,
The legions dispersed in the darkness...

All grew quiet, and in the nighttime fog
Groans rose to the heaven.

Then lit by the moon, on its battle steed,
The white bones glistening, death appeared.

And in the silence, hearing the cries and prayers,
Full of proud satisfaction,
Like a captain,
Death circles around the field of battle.

Having climbed a hill, he looked around,
Stopped, smiled...
And over the battle plain that fateful voice was heard:

"The battle is over!
I have conquered all!

Before me you have all submitted, warriors!
Life made you enemies, but I made peace!

Arise like comrade for inspection, corpses!
Pass by in a solemn march,
I wish to count my troops.
Lay your bones down into the earth,
Sweetly to rest from life in the ground!

The Years after years pass by so quickly,
People will no longer remember you.
But I will not forget! Loudly above you
And I will conduct a feast at midnight!

I will stomp on the earth in a heavy dance,
So that the shade of tomb will never
Be cast off by your bones,
So that you will never rise from the earth!"

TRANSLATION BY LAURENCE R. RICHTER