

# Linear Designs in Musorgsky's Music

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Already Musorgsky's earliest songs demonstrate the Russian composer's skill in setting up linear matrices. Thus *Where art thou* (1857)<sup>1</sup> outlines the vacillating modal centers of f<sup>#</sup> (tonic)–b–a–(b<sup>#</sup>)–c<sup>#</sup>–f<sup>#</sup>.




**Example 1:** Where art thou (1857)

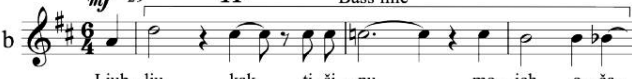
Particularly striking is the emphatic stress accorded the plagal b, or f<sup>#</sup>:iv, which twice resolves to the upper c<sup>#</sup>1 and is actually accented more decisively than the tonic itself.


Some subsequent songs from the early years, 1859–1863, develop analogous bass patterns into chaconne-like tetrachords. Already *Sadly rustled the leaves* (1859) highlights a descending, modally tinged bass line, b<sup>b</sup>–a<sup>b</sup>–g<sup>b</sup>–f–e<sup>b</sup>. The latter is extended downwardly to a more tonal D<sup>b</sup>-major (bass, measures 33–37) and transferred to the vocal line itself (39–45) in a manner reminiscent of Schumann's songs.<sup>2</sup> A similar tetrachordal stress is seen in the romance, *What are words of love* (1860), with its bass progression, d–c–b–b<sup>b</sup>–a. Here, too, this chaconne progression increasingly penetrates the upper regions of the piano's bass and the later episodes of the vocal line itself:

<sup>1</sup> This song was orchestrated by Musorgsky in 1858 and later reworked between 1864–1866. See Richard Taruskin, *Little Star: An Etude in the Folk Style*, in *Mussorgsky in Memoriam 1881–1981* (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1982), 57–84.

<sup>2</sup> On Schumann's stylistic influences on Musorgsky, see Nors S. Josephson, "Beethoven, Schumann und Wagner: stilistische Einflüsse deutscher Musik auf Mussorgskijs Schaffen," *Musicologica Olomucensia* 18 (2013): 47–64.

**[Agitato]**  
***f*** 15 Former bass line  
 a   
 O - stav' - tie ž mnie mieč - ty.

**[Meno mosso – con illusione]**  
***mf*** 29 ***pp*** Bass line  
 b   
 Liub - liu kak ti - ši - nu mo - ich o - ča -


Piano epilogue  
**[Meno mosso]**  
 Bass line  
 c   
 43 Bass: D


**Example 2:** Chaconne-type progressions in vocal and piano lines of *What are words of love* (1860)

In Musorgsky's later songs chromatically descending bass lines are occasionally inserted for special effect, as in the Koltsov setting, *I have many palaces and gardens* (1863). Here the poem's realistic theme – namely, the nobleman's wealth as opposed to his spiritual wretchedness – is portrayed by recurring descending bass progressions on  $g^\sharp$ – $g$ – $f^\sharp$  (or B-major:  $vi$ – $V$ ) in mm. 28–29, 34–36 and 41–43. Furthermore, Musorgsky also uses similar descending (and chromatically tinged) harmonic spirals in his later song cycles, *The Peepshow* (1870:  $E^b$ – $E$ – $D$ – $C$ – $E^b$ ) and *Sunless* (1874:  $D/E^b$ – $C$ – $B$ – $c^\sharp$ ).

In addition, several of Musorgsky's realistic songs from the years 1866–1867 utilize bass lines with developmental minor/major second intervals, beginning with the lively *Gopak* (August 31, 1866). This composition is centered on a static upper  $f^\sharp$  pedal with supporting chromatic lines that accentuate  $f^\sharp$ 's tritone, C:

Cf. his earlier *Kalistratushka* (1864):

a   
***F#*–pedal**

b   
***F#*–pedal**

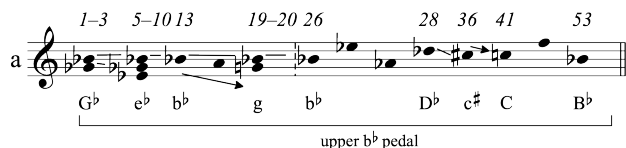
**Example 3:** *Gopak* (1866): Linear movements

*Gopak's* companion song, *The Seminarist* (September 27, 1866) likewise sets up two (!) pedals on F and its dominant C, with two superimposed minor second cells on  $a^b$ -g and  $c-d^b$  (later transmuted to  $c^!$ ). Likewise, *Darling Savishna* (September 2, 1866) presents a crystal-clear C-major alternating with a more modal c-minor. Here again, Musorgsky superimposes *parlando*-style second intervals on  $c-d-e$ ,  $g-a/a^b-b^b$  and  $g-a^b$ . A later, more advanced version of this static patter idiom is encountered in *The Ragamuffin* (December 19, 1867) with its second ostinatos on  $d-e$ ,  $f-g$  and  $a-b$ . These are later metamorphosized into more symphonic developments on  $A^b$  and  $c^\sharp$  – more distantly related keys that again (cf. *Gopak* and *The Seminarist*) stress the tritone and semitone intervals. A more static metamorphosis of these omnipresent minor second cells is encountered in *The He-Goat* (December 23, 1867). Here both the he-goat and the innocent young girl feature related vocal lines around  $c^\sharp-e-d/d^\sharp$ . Moreover, the piano accompaniment continually vacillates around the minor seconds,  $b^\sharp-c^\sharp$  (the goat) or  $e-f-f^\sharp-f$  (girl), so that she is almost seen as the former's mirror image. This impressive intervallic cohesion – one reminiscent of earlier classical masters – rivals that of *Darling Savishna* and must have endeared the work to Musorgsky's composer-friend Borodin, to whom the song is dedicated. These static minor seconds of *The He-Goat* are later further developed in *Night on Bald Mountain* and *Boris Godunov* ( $A-G^\sharp-B^b-G^\sharp$  motive) as well as *Chovanščina* (C-major chorus in Act I, mm. 657–715). Similar static designs over pentatonic, freely modal foundations had already appeared in Musorgsky's *Old Man's Song* (1863, after Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*), with its prominent harmonic polarities on  $E^b$ ,  $D^b$  and the plagal  $A^b$ . One is also reminded of the impressionistic piano composition *Duma (Revery)* of 1865 (after a theme by Loginov), with its suspenseful oscillations between  $E^b$ ,  $A^b$  and  $D^b$ .

In two further songs of April, 1868 – *Child's Song* and *With Nurse* – Musorgsky extends these static, semitonal dimensions. *Child's Song* sets up a recurring sixth chord on  $d-e-g^\sharp-b$  that is often transmuted into  $C^\sharp$ -sonorities over a bass semitone on  $d-c^\sharp$ .



**Example 4:** *Child's Song* (1868) with its sixth chord and subsequent metamorphoses



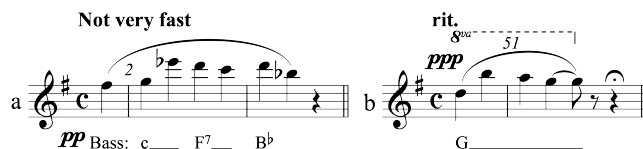
Further reduction:



**Example 5:** *With Nurse's* overall seventh interval

In *With Nurse* the tertial intervals between b<sup>b</sup>-g<sup>b</sup>/g-e<sup>b</sup> and the parallel passage, d<sup>b</sup>-b<sup>b</sup> are linked by smooth second intervals, b<sup>b</sup>-a-g in 13-19 and d<sup>b</sup>/c<sup>#</sup>-c-b<sup>b</sup> in 28-41/42-53.

Simultaneously with these modernistic techniques – germ cells comprised of minor seconds and thirds that are linked by linear basses – Musorgsky's mature songs of 1863–1868 also assimilate certain Romantic stylistic features, notably Berliozian motivic metamorphoses and Lisztian apotheoses. Already his symphonic romance, *But if I could meet thee again* (August 15, 1863) transforms the opening, rather Schumannesque motto (one thinks of *Dichterliebe*, no. 1):



**Example 6:** Climactic techniques in *But if I could meet thee again* (1863)

Even more Lisztian appears the final apotheosis in *King Saul*, mm. 76–84, as Saul awaits either victorious battle glory or heroic death:



**Example 7:** Apotheosis in *King Saul* (1863)

Of special interest is the evocative, coda-like close (in measures 54–65) of Musorgsky's *Prayer* (after Lermontov, dated February 2, 1865 and dedicated to his beloved mother). This fade-out ending expands the introductory measures 1–12 (loosely based on  $b^b$ -minor) and the transitional measures 35–37 (the latter founded on an oscillating D/E $^b$  chordal sequence) into a highly poetic prayer to protect the deceased:



**Example 8:** Slowly disintegrating coda in *Prayer* (1865)

Musorgsky's second expressive song from the year 1865 – the *Cradle Song* after Ostrovsky – is likewise dedicated to the memory of his mother. Here, too, the evocative coda in measures 42–58 – beginning on floating C $^b$  Neapolitan harmonies – transforms the introductory rocking figures into ascending and truly heavenly progressions:

**Example 9:** Closing heavenly progressions in *Cradle Song* (original version, 1865, piano)

Musorgsky's fine setting of Pushkin's ecstatically Romantic poem *Night* (initial version, 1864) is an excellent example of another favorite Musorgskian device – that of harmonic intensification. Here the last two sections provide cumulative

Neapolitan (or  $\flat$ II) progressions from (tonic)  $f^\sharp$ : I–V ( $C^\sharp$ -major) to the upper semitones on D and finally  $E^\flat$ . This modal E flat is eventually reinterpreted as  $d^\sharp$ , or  $f^\sharp$ 's submediant/relative minor:



**Example 10:** Cumulative, climactic semitonal layers in original version of *Night* (1864)

Together with these modernistic, semitonal techniques and Romantic apotheosis-syntheses, Musorgsky also developed new kinds of cyclical farge forms in his three operas from the 1860's. Already *Salambo* (1863–1866) displays an impressive modulatory groundplan based on circular fifths:

**Table 1:** Entire tonal structure of *Salambo* (1863–1866)

Act I	B ( $-F^\sharp/D^\sharp$ )
	A $\flat$ –G $\flat$ –A $\flat$ ( <i>War Song</i> )
Act II	E $\flat$ –B–A $\flat$ –D $\flat$ –F $^\sharp$ –B–f/F ( <i>Salambo's grand scena</i> )
Act III	b $\flat$ –e $\flat$ –f–E $\flat$ (C-meter $\text{♪ ♪ ♪ ♪}$ )–f $^\sharp$ ( <i>Salambo</i> )–e $\flat$ ( <i>:future Night on Bald Mountain</i> , middle episode)–f $^\sharp$
Act IV:i	f–b $\flat$ (Mato's aria)–e $\flat$ –a $\flat$ –D $\sharp$
	ii D $\flat$ –F $^\sharp$ –D $\flat$ ( <i>Salambo's death</i> )

**Act I**  
1 B

**Act II**  
79 13 34 72 151 237 366–367  
Salambo's scena Hymn to Tanita Angry crowd [Oedipus music]

**Act III**  
1 38 187 251 341+ 380, 504 482 504  
Storm March Future Night on Bald Mountain, middle episode

**Act IV, Scene 1**  
1 173 201 257 322–344  
Mato's aria (imprisoned) Four priests of Moloch: same march-like rhythms  $\text{♪ ♪ ♪ ♪}$  as III, 251

**Act IV, Scene 2**  
1 84

**Example 11:** *Salambo's* tonal structure

These interrelated tonal levels all outline a circular fifth spiral around  $D^\sharp / E^\flat - A^\flat - D^\flat$ . The eventual tonic  $D^\flat$  receives a subdominant  $F^\sharp$ -axis in Acts II, 151; III, 380+504 and IV: ii, 84–86. This  $F^\sharp$  is deflected downwardly to  $F^\natural$  at the dramatic close of Act II, which can also be heard as the mediant of  $D^\flat$ 's triad or even as a momentary tonal substitute for  $D^\flat$  itself.  $F$  is also employed as an introductory tragic storm key in III, 187 and for Mato's death imprisonment at the outset of IV. The other principal subsidiary key of  $B$ -major is used as a lyrically contrasting level in I and II, 13+237, where it can be heard as  $D^\flat : \flat VII$ , or a modal flatted seventh of the  $D^\flat$  tonic – related to the  $D^\flat 7$  harmonies so prevalent in II, 87–90+150.

In 1868 Musorgsky composed a one-act opera for four vocal soloists and piano accompaniment based on Gogol's play *The Marriage*. This work is notable for its vigorous speech rhythms and declamatory incisiveness, which directly presage those of Janáček's operas *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1924) and *From the House of the Dead* (1928). Once again, our Russian composer sets up a comprehensive pitch matrix, whose descending thirds on  $C - A/a - F - G - C$  recall Musorgsky's equally radical, declamatory song *With Nurse* of April, 1868:

**Table 2:** Third Spirals in *The Marriage* (1868)

Dramatic character	Scene	Keys	Comments
Podkoliosin	i and iv i, 22+120	$C$ (whole-tonish)/ $e$ and illusionary $D^\flat$	Static whole-tonish harmonies reflect on Podkoliosin's indolence; $D^\flat$ : imaginary marriage (match-maker has already come three months; darker suits imply wished-for higher status)
Stepan	i–ii+iv	$C$ -mixolydian+ $B^\flat$	Often undercuts Podkoliosin's pompous gestures
Fiokla	ii–iii	$A - a$	Her $A$ -tonality is actually part of Kochkarev's $F$ -orbit (she got him married!)
Kochkarev	iii–iv	$F$	His plagal support of Podkoliosin's $C$ -major reflects upon their friendship; compare parallel instances in Wagner's operas, such as Kurwenal–Tristan and Pogner–Walther

In addition to this general tonal outline, Musorgsky devotes many subtle details to the dramatic interrelationships between his four characters. In particular, his main character of Podkoliosin is often linked tonally to his friend Kochkarev's subdominant  $F$ -major. Already scene i often presents Podkoliosin's indolent theme in  $f$ -minor, as in mm. 118–119 and again in 176–178 (when he complains about the irksome marriage preparations). Likewise, the match-maker Fiokla

often fuses Kochkarev's F-tonality with her own third-related A-major/minor, as at her entry in scene ii, measures 1–3 and again at the outset of her dowry narrative in ii, 36–48 (A–F modulation). It will be noted, of course, that Fiokla also acted as match-maker to Kochkarev himself, who is unhappily married and frequently reacts angrily to her. In scene iv, 39–69 Musorgsky also manages to modulate Kochkarev's vision of a voluptuous beauty from Fiokla's A-major via Musorgskian circle-of-fifths back to D–G–C–F. This progression eventually affects a tonal reprise of Podkoliosin's/ Kochkarev's opening C- and F-major.

In his operatic masterpiece *Boris Godunov* (1868–1872) Musorgsky sets up a recurring circular cycle – one familiar from *Salambo* – around C<sup>#</sup>–F<sup>#</sup>–A<sup>b</sup>–c<sup>#</sup> that is especially prevalent in the prologue, scene i and Act IV, scene i (: Boris' death). These three pitch centers may be viewed as a kind of Classical progression from tonic to subdominant and dominant. Indeed, the final plagal resolution from F<sup>#</sup> to C<sup>#</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> in both scenes is markedly similar.

A comparable c<sup>#</sup>–f<sup>#</sup> axis is also evident at the close of Act I, scene i, with the final monks' chorus in f<sup>#</sup>-minor, mm. 355–365 and Grigorij's emphatic pronouncement that Boris will not escape God's judgment. Much the same is true of Varlaam's *Kazan* song (as Dargomyzhsky quote!) in Act I, scene ii (stated in c<sup>#</sup> and f<sup>#</sup> minor, respectively). A complementary progression around A<sup>b</sup>–D<sup>b</sup> is also introduced for Pimen's narrative of the past Czars, notably the account of Feodor's mystical passing in Act I, mm. 224–232. In the Inn Scene C<sup>#</sup> is also sporadically employed when the police-officer tares at Vaarlam ("... pristol'no smotriš ...", 370–375) and finally at the dramatic moment when Grigorij/ Dimitrij jumps through the window to safety in mm. 474–475. In both instances C<sup>#</sup> appears to radiate a higher power that is related to the subliminal D<sup>b</sup>/C<sup>#</sup> tonal foundation.

In turn, the dominant key of A flat is frequently buttressed by its own secondary minor dominant of e<sup>b</sup>, as in the prologue, scene i, during Ščelkalov's half-cadence on E<sup>b</sup>, 218–226, preceding the pilgrims' A<sup>b</sup> chanting in 227–284. An analogous progression on E<sup>b</sup>–A<sup>b</sup> is also present in the ensuing Coronation Scene, 122–131, when Boris implores God to grant him spiritual and political guidance. In addition, e<sup>b</sup>-minor is especially significant in the (Kremlin) Act II for the nurse's *Gnat Song* and Boris' hallucination, thus helping to set up the final, fateful circle-of-fifths around e<sup>b</sup>–a<sup>b</sup>/A<sup>b</sup>–C<sup>#</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> in Boris' death scene (Act IV).<sup>3</sup> The fact that E<sup>b</sup> is normally notated as e<sup>b</sup>-minor lends the following A<sup>b</sup> a wavering

<sup>3</sup> The central importance of the two keys, E flat and A flat is also discussed in Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 244–245 (see figure 9.2).



modal quality (with an implied  $G^b$ , or  $A^b{:}^b$  VII) that directly strengthens the final plagal cadences on  $f^\sharp - C^\sharp/D^b$  in scene i (prologue) and IV:i.

In this connection it is noteworthy that the initial (1869) version of the Kremlin Act II also emphatically links the enharmonic  $g^\sharp$  (ab) minor cadences of the interior measures 132–133f. to the fifths-related progressions on  $C^\sharp/F^\sharp$ , as in 140–143, 178–182, 189–197 (children's motive) and 200–205. Moreover, analogous circular progressions around  $c^\sharp - g^\sharp/f^\sharp$  punctuate the closing Act II scene (original version) in 344–456 (ending on  $g^\sharp$ ). In contrast, the final Act II version offsets its principal axis on  $e^b - a^b$  with milder, song-like passages, as the parrot song in 512f. and the tale of the murdered Dimitrij in 742f. on  $f^\sharp/F^\sharp$ . The latter are plagally linked to the eventual tonic  $D^b/C^\sharp$ . In order to integrate these dramatic, lyrical interludes within the final Act II structure, Musorgsky inserts repeated semitonal thrusts from  $G$  to  $A^b$ , as at the close of the  $G$ -major dance song coupled with Boris' agitated entry in measures 316/317. Similarly, Xenia's flowing  $G$ -major music in 334 is later transposed to  $A^b$  at 406f. In like vein, the rising passages from  $(C-)D$  to  $E^b$  in 621–643 finally attain the more stable  $E^b$  in 635–639 and 683: a progression already forecast in Act I:ii, 118–120+394–395.

Boris' death scene in Act IV:i – which is based on the main climaxes in *Salambo* IV:<sup>4</sup> – summarizes many of these intervallic tendencies. Musorgsky here sets up a basic matrix around  $e^b - a^b - D^b - d^\sharp$  (*Šuiskij*)/ $e^b - a^b - c$  (Boris' summons)– $\underline{D}$  (Pimen's tale)– $e^b - A^b$  (cf. Xenia's music from Act II)– $D^b$ . Musorgsky's incorporation of the Coronation Scene's oscillating seventh/sixth chords plus the reiterative minor third intonations from the prologue, scene one lend this impressive concluding scene an aura of dramatic inevitability.

In contrast, the two “peoples” scenes in Acts I:ii and IV (St. Basil/Kromy) stress the higher Neapolitan degrees of  $d$ -minor and  $a$ -minor, recalling the conflicting  $C/D^b$  planes in *Marriage*. Here, too, *Boris*' upper Neapolitan degrees of  $A$  and  $D$  – representing the Russian people – are inherently unstable, eventually resolving to the more emphatic, “aristocratic” and spiritual realms of  $D^b/C^\sharp$ , notably at the close of I:i, beginning of I:ii and the end of IV:i.

If the final version of the Kremlin Act II still generally upholds its basic matrix on  $B^b - E^b - A^b$ , the same is true of the later Polish Act III (composed in 1871). The latter's prevalent third cycles on  $\underline{G}$  (Polish girls' chorus)– $\underline{e}/\underline{E}-\underline{F}$  (scene one) and  $\underline{E}^b - \underline{G} - C - \underline{E}^b$  (scene two) recall the beginning of Act II (in both versions!), notably the gracious dance songs in  $e^b - G$  and Xenia's  $G$ -major music. One is also reminded of the hostess' opening music in  $D$ - and  $G$ -major at the outset of I:ii and Dimitrij's mock-innocent pronouncement *Ja gramotnyi* (in  $G-A$ ) at the

<sup>4</sup> The *Salambo* quotations in *Boris Godunov* are conveniently summarized in David Brown, *Musorgsky: His Life and Works* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), 64–65.

close of I:ii, 400–401. In this fashion Musorgsky effectively integrates his new scenes of the final *Boris* into the work's total compositional fabric.

We have seen that *Boris Godunov* represents a kind of neo-Classical milestone within his overall output. This is especially true of the severe, compelling architectural correspondence between the prologue, Act II and death scene in Act IV. While many of these formal symmetries derive from their related prototypes in the earlier opera *Salambo* (especially the latter's Act IV:i+ii), *Boris* blends these stylistic recalls with Schumannesque intonations and Berliozian transformations to achieve a masterful musical balance. An analogous cyclical, neo-Classical unity is also achieved in his contemporary song cycle, *The Nursery* (1868–1870), whose five songs outline a similar fifths progression around  $B^b$ – $F$ – $A^b$ . Moreover, our composer sets up systematic structural pairs between the scherzo-like nos. 2+3 (in  $F$ ) and the slow epilogue of nos. 4+5 (in  $A^b$ , with similar fifth/sixth chords). In this connection one should also mention his delightful piano composition *The Seamstress* from early 1871: a skillful essay in miniature sonata form that evokes memories of Chopin's "Minute" Waltz.

Musorgsky's ever-increasing concern for classical symmetry and structural balance reaches its peak in his piano masterpiece, *Pictures from an Exhibition* (1874). Here the Russian composer sets up fifth spirals around  $F$ – $B^b$ – $e^b$ – $A^b/g^\sharp$ – $B$  that are freely reiterated in nos. 5–10, there with the key scheme,  $F$ – $B$  flat (opening *Promenade* repeated)– $E$  flat (nos. 7+10)– $b$ – $C$ – $E$  flat. Like *Nursery*, *Pictures* also utilizes contrasting dichotomies. Thus fast, scherzo-like dance movements (such as the related nos. 3+7) are followed by slow, meditative and atmospheric pieces (nos. 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10). Not surprisingly, Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930):i (m. 26f.) and iii (24–30) were likely inspired by the rising basses at the outset of Musorgsky's no. 4 and 9 ( $F^\sharp$ – $G$ – $A^b$ – $A$ – $B^b$ – $c$ ).

The same is true of Musorgsky's imitation of the pealing Russian church bells in no. 10, mm. 107–110, which Stravinsky freely echoes in his closing coda at rehearsal no. 22.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that Stravinsky makes further use of other Musorgsky works from the year 1874, namely *Sunless*:iii (:beginning of *Le Rossignol*) and the orchestral introduction to *Sorochintsy Fair* (:outset of *Le sacre du printemps*).

Musorgsky's other major cyclical work from the year 1874 – his song cycle *Sunless* – originally comprised seven songs, of which the ballad *Forgotten* was the

<sup>5</sup> The reader is also referred to Michael Russ' valuable source study, *Musorgsky: Pictures at an Exhibition* (Cambridge, Cambridge Music Handbooks, 1992), 69, where the author compares Musorgsky's pitch structures with Debussy's and Stravinsky's. Compare also Russ' excellent discussion of *Pictures'* tonal organization, 32–34 and his detailed treatment of the semitonal conflict between  $G$  and  $F$ -sharp, 70–75.

third piece, following *In the Crowd*.<sup>6</sup> Like *The Nursery*, Musorgsky pairs his songs 1+2 and (original) 3+4 (*An End at Last to Senseless Day*). In nos. 1+2 the overall harmonic groundplan proceeds as follows:

No. 1: 1, 6, 18 2 3, 16 4, 5, 10 6, 9 5, 10, 14-15 11  
No. 2: 2, 3 1, 8, 10 2, 11 3-6, 8, 12 7 9 10

**Example 12:** Intervallic correspondences between *Sunless* i and ii

Similarly, nos. 3+4 share prominent, oscillating third intervals that portray the mother's rocking figure (original no. 3) and youthful passion, respectively:

18 **[Alla marcia – sostenuto, ma non troppo]**  
Piano  
a   
*pp*

17 **[Moderato assai]**  
b   
*pp*

**Example 13:** Cyclical third sequences in *Sunless*: 3+4 (1874)

Once again, we find both Stravinsky (*Le Rossignol*) and Debussy (*Nocturnes*) quoting this seminal figure from *Sunless*. Tonally speaking, *Forgotten's* e<sup>b</sup>-tonality may be linked to the shade's E<sup>b</sup>'s in nos. 1+2, and recurs as a dark d<sup>#</sup>-minor "death" chord in no. 6 (*Elegy*), m. 45. These subtle, oblique links between *Sunless's* songs reach their culminating point in the final nos. 5–7, whose harmonic cycles accentuate the fifth-related tonics of B, G<sup>#</sup>, f<sup>#</sup> and C<sup>#</sup>.<sup>7</sup> Here, too, the omnipresent death theme assumes universal, cosmic overtones. Not surprisingly, then that

<sup>a</sup> Alexandra Orlova, *Musorgsky's Days and Works: A Biography in Documents* (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1983), 422–423 mentions that Musorgsky's original *Sunless* manuscript in the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg (F. 502, ed.chr.72) numbers the final song nos. 1–5 as 2–6 and supplies no. 1 with a question mark. It would appear that the final no. 6 (*On the River*) was only added at a later date. It should also be noted that the final no. 2 originally had the note “No. 3. Žabyty!” – a reference to the original inclusion of the song *Forgotten* in the *Sunless* cycle. See also Evgenij Levašev (ed.), *Nasledie M. P. Musorgskovo sbornik materialov* (Moscow, Muzyka, 1989), 100–101.

<sup>7</sup> A contrary viewpoint is argued by Petra Weber-Bockholdt in *Die Lieder Mussorgskijs* (München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1982), 187, where the author states that each of *Sunless*' songs is an independent

Musorgsky's own future fate becomes increasingly interwoven with these larger concerns. Consequently, the composer even quotes from his own autobiographical song *Epitaph* (also 1874) in *Sunless*, nos. 1+6 (*Elegy*).

Another prominent quotation in *Sunless* occurs at the outset of no. 7 (*On the River*), mm. 1–7, where Musorgsky directly draws on Chopin's C-sharp *Nocturne*, op. 27 no. 1. Moreover, the disintegrative features of *On the River* must also have appealed to Debussy, whose *La Mer*: i, mm. 35–36 and *Iberia*: ii, 112–123 display similar harmonies based on  $D^{b7}$  and  $A^7$  (:enharmonic augmented sixth of  $D^b/C^\sharp$ ). *On the River* may also have impacted the ending of Tchaikovsky's *Sixth (Pathétique) Symphony*: iv (1893), whose final fade-out measures – like Musorgsky's – oscillate between a tonic b-minor and a supertonic seventh sonority:



**Example 14:** Parallels between Tchaikovsky (a) and Musorgsky (b)

As a parallel resolution, *On the River*'s frequent modal refrains on  $C^\sharp$ ,  $A^7$ ,  $F^7$  and again  $C^\sharp$  are eventually dissolved in the closing Phrygian cadence on  $D-C^\sharp$  in mm. 48–49. This conclusive progression may reflect upon the previous D-emphasis of nos. 1+2 and the stormy parts of no. 6 (*Elegy*), mm. 20–24+31f. One is also reminded of the musically related song *Epitaph* (also composed in 1874), which modulates from e flat-minor down to an unresolved ending on D, as well as Borodin's *First Symphony* (1869) with its semitonal scaffold on  $E^b-D-D^b$ . Finally, *On the River* frequently causes its refrains to disintegrate in favor of arpeggiated figurations (as in mm. 34–37) that already forecast the symphonic introductions to *Chovanščina*, Acts I and V (1873–1874).

Musorgsky's national folk drama, *Chovanščina* was also begun during the *Sunless* period, namely, 1873 for the initial sections of Acts I, III and V. Moreover, its seminal Act I was completed during the fall of 1874 and early months of 1875, immediately after terminating the *Sunless* cycle on August 25, 1874. Indeed, *Sunless*' wavering, quasi-impressionistic harmonies and oblique relationships in many respects forecast *Chovanščina*'s Act I. Like the funereal  $D^\sharp$  fanfares in

---

entity («auf sich selbst bezogen»). To be sure, she also admits that the final songs nos. 1 and 6 (*On the River*) share similar pedals on D (no. 1) and C-sharp (final no. 6).

*Sunless' Elegy*, mm. 44–48, *Chovanščina's* Act I bell and strel'tsy fanfares in c<sup>#</sup> and f<sup>#</sup> provide for a loose kind of cyclical unity:<sup>8</sup>

Example 15 shows five musical staves (a-e) representing fanfares from *Chovanščina's* Act I. Staff a is marked [Andante tranquillo] and Bass: C#. Staff b is marked [Moderato, non troppo lento]. Staff c is marked [Moderato assai, non troppo agitato]. Staff d is marked [Più mosso. Energico]. Staff e is marked Meno mosso, mistico. The score includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings like *ff* and *p*.

**Example 15:** *Chovanščina's* Act I fanfares

In addition to these fanfare refrains, Musorgsky is careful to remind the listener of the fundamental C<sup>#</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> tonality at two central points in Act I: a) the scrivener's reading of the pillar's inscription in 587f. and b) Marfa's elegiac, D<sup>b</sup><sup>7</sup>-based ariosos in 876f. and 930f., with their nostalgic echoes of *Sunless' On the River*.

The A-major/a-minor connecting third link between F<sup>#</sup> and C<sup>#</sup> is especially evident in *Ex. 15b, c* and *e*. Furthermore, **A** is very prevalent in the scrivener's and strel'tsy's music at the outset of Act I. It also extensively fluctuates with its lower diatonic neighbours **G** and **F** during the folkish choral scenes. In particular, **G** is conspicuously present in the people's asides in Act I, mm. 288–295 and 446–452, as well as Emma's love scene with Andrej Chovanskij. Together with the C-major welcoming chorus for Ivan Chovanskij (m. 658f.) and Kuz'ka's biting barbs with his fellow strel'tsy (146–162), this lighter G/C realm injects a temporary brighter pitch sphere in sharp contrast to the prevailing, darker c<sup>#</sup>/f<sup>#</sup> matrix. Of special interest are the carefully positioned f-minor episodes in *Chovanščina's* Act I, which can be heard as a temporarily tonicized mediant/submediant of D<sup>b</sup> or A:

<sup>8</sup> The structural importance of C<sup>#</sup> and F<sup>#</sup> is already evident in Act I's Prelude, middle episodes in mm. 34f. and 50f. See Jurij Cholopov, *Musorgskij kak kompozitor XX veka*, in *M. P. Musorgskij i muzyka XX veka*, ed. G. L. Golovinskij (Moscow, Muzyka, 1990), 76–77.

**Table 3:** Somber, recurring f-minor episodes in *Chovanščina's* Act I

Nos.	Measures	Description
1	274	Šaklovityj's denunciation
2	386	Šaklovityj: <i>We now live concealed, but shall reappear</i> (with expressive turn to F-major in 388)
2	612+621; 634–657	Scrivener reads lists of executed people; Muscovite people's chorus laments Russia's fate
4	775	Ivan Chovanskij's command: "Strel'tsy!"
5	922–926	Andrej Chovanskij threatens Marfa with a knife

Since F-minor is the relative minor of A<sup>b</sup>-major, it can also function as a kind of pivot harmony back to the fifth cycle on A<sup>b</sup>–E<sup>b</sup>–D<sup>b</sup>–C<sup>♯</sup>, as after no. 4 (m. 776f.). In addition, Musorgsky frequently employs motivic variants of the Act I introduction's opening theme m. 5f. (e<sup>2</sup>–g<sup>♯2</sup>–b<sup>2</sup>–g<sup>♯2</sup>–c<sup>♯3</sup>, with its prominent sixth on e<sup>2</sup>–c<sup>♯3</sup>), notably in *Table 3's* nos. 2–5 and so injects a kind of heightened Neapolitan (F vs. initial E-major of mm. 1–6) flavor for the entire Act I.

In contrast, *Chovanščina's* chamber-like Act II presents a more static, self-contained musico-dramatic entity. Its fundamental d/D-tonality concludes Golitsyn's monologues in mm. 109–142+373–395 and also represents the central key of the concluding mm. 709–838. D typically modulates to the aristocratic keys of F, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup> and A<sup>b</sup> for the pastor's scene and ensuing princes' quarrels: a parallel progression to the final tonal thrusts towards E<sup>b</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> at the close of Act I, mm. 776–806, 867–895, 927–949 and 1005–1042.

Marfa's two G-major scenes in Act II function as a kind of harmonic sub-dominant to Golitsyn's d/D key. Moreover, they also echo Emma's G-tonality in Act I. Significantly, her G-key also tends to modulate towards E<sup>b</sup> and a<sup>b</sup>-minor, thus mirroring the princes' tonal movements at the end of Act II. Musorgsky's concern for overall tonal-motivic unity is also seen in the fact that Act II begins with a F-major triad that resolves the closing F<sup>♯</sup>–A–C–E sonority at the end of Act I. This aura of a fresh beginning in Act II is also underlined by Golitsyn's opening melody (d<sup>2</sup>–c<sup>2</sup>–g<sup>2</sup>–a<sup>2</sup>–f<sup>2</sup>–d<sup>2</sup>–c<sup>2</sup> etc.) that appears to echo the opening *Promenade* from *Pictures*, and thus provides another significant link to Musorgsky's past.

*Chovanščina's* Act III returns even more emphatically to the principal pitch matrices and motivic gestures of Act I: a cyclical structure reminiscent of *Boris'* prologue and Act IV's death scene. Just as Act II begins with a harmonic resolution (in F-major) of Act I's close (in a-minor, with additional bass F<sup>♯</sup>), the

outset of Act III recalls the concluding Old Believers' music from Act II (again in D, but now endowed with a darker underpinning in b-minor). This elegant musico-dramatic link then serves to recall Act I's prelude, which returns as a folk song metamorphosis in the shape of Marfa's song (*There went a maiden*) and also during the subsequent G-major strel'tsy chorus:

**[Andante tranquillo]**

5  
a

**[Moderato]**  
 229 *mf*  
 Scrivener:  
  
 Po u - ria - du po u - kla - du ...

**[Allegretto mosso]**  
 112 *mf*  
 Susanna:  
  
 Tiaž - kij, nie - is - ku - pi - myj griech!

17A Scrivener and Susanna

**[Moderato, non troppo lento]**  
 106 *mf*  
  
 Kuz'ka: Po - doj - du, po - doj - du, pod I - van - go - rod ...

**[Allegro scherzando]**  
 651 *mf*  
  
 Kuz'ka: Och, mnje nie - vmo-go - tu, och, vot, vot so - vsem pri-pie-šil;

17B Kuz'ka's music in Acts I and III

**[Andantino mosso]**  
 290 *p*  
  
 Tenors: Ku - ma, ku - ma, ku - ma u - vi - da - la,

**[Allegro scherzando]**  
 676 *mf*  
  
 Kuz'ka: Za - vo - di - las' v za - ko - ul - kach, gdie - to v tiem-nych pie - rie - ul - kach, ...

17C Folk numbers in Acts I and III

**Example 17:** Cyclical links between Acts I and III

Likewise, the total tonal organization of Act III returns to the C<sup>#</sup>–F<sup>#</sup> matrix of Act I, since the opening dialogue between Susanna and Marfa gravitates around Marfa's D<sup>b</sup> key (cf. mm. 199–202+385–388, as she kneels for forgiveness before Dosifej) and Susanna-Dosifej's F<sup>#</sup>. Moreover, Kuz'ka's F<sup>#</sup>-minor



song-chorus in 676–771 continues the Old Believers' F<sup>♯</sup>-emphasis and the tragic impact of this particular key. Frequently f<sup>♯</sup> is converted into an enharmonic g<sup>b</sup> over a supporting e<sup>b</sup>, as during Marfa's ariosos in mm. 191–194+377–380; Saklovityj's aria (405–478), the scrivener's excited entry in 777–814 plus the strel'tsy's final choruses in 871–928. Viewed as a totality, we observe that E<sup>b</sup> (:V of the opera's eventual tonic A<sup>b</sup>) grows increasingly strong during the first three acts, beginning with the E<sup>b</sup> choruses towards the end of Act I (mm. 784–806 and 943–949) and the burgeoning E<sup>b</sup> stress during the aristocratic scenes of Act II.

If the tonal organization of Act III is particularly meticulous, its motivic layout is equally masterful. We have already seen that Susanna's and Kuz'ka' melodies frequently echo central Act I themes. Yet Musorgsky is also keenly aware of the spiritual kinship between Marfa (:the main symbol of Russia's salvation) and her surrounding cast of characters. In this connection we should also mention her graceful, lyrical theme from Act II, 276–277 (composed in 1875, but based on an earlier draft from 1870), which is – somewhat surprisingly – again employed for her rival Susanna's questioning “Al’ja slaba na razum stala?” in Act III (original 1873 version), mm. 229–230:

**[Moderato]**  
Marfa (II, 276–277)

276 *p*

a Bass: G C G E

**[Moderato assai, poco meno mosso]**  
Susanna (III, 229–230)

229 *mf*

b Al' ja sla - ba na ra - zum sta - la? ...

**Example 18:** Susanna's employment of Marfa's Act II melody

This process of tonal and motivic consolidation is intensified in the two scenes of Act IV, whose overall harmonic movements may be summarized as follows:

**IV, Scene One**

1 42 71 106 126+ 160+ 288 447 462-492

306 318 192

I. Ch. Girls I. Ch. refuses to take servant's warning seriously (music from III, 930f.) I. Ch.

**IV, Scene Two**

493 571 584 605-671 680-725 726-820

(:Marfa, II, 348-369) Dosifej (from III, 350) +Marfa Marfa +Andrej Strel'tsy Preobraženy +Marfa

**Example 19:** Basic harmonic layout in Act IV

The fundamental tonal progressions appear to be centered on  $g^{\sharp}-e^{\flat}-f^{\sharp}/g-f-g$  for scene 1 and  $e^{\flat}-f^{\sharp}-A^{\flat}$  for scene 2. In addition, the entire Act IV is enclosed by interlocking references to the opera's final tonic  $g^{\sharp}/a^{\flat}$ . Likewise, the intervening episodes in both scenes consistently stress  $e^{\flat}$ -minor and  $f^{\sharp}$ -minor, or  $a^{\flat}$ :  $v-bvii$ . One is again reminded of the preceding Act III, where  $e^{\flat}-f^{\sharp}$ -minor progressions were central linear highlights. Moreover, the contrasting diatonic realms of C-major (Ivan Chovanskij, mm. 42f.+447f.; Dosifej, 571) and F (peasant girls, 71-94)/D-d (Marfa-Andrej dialogue, 605f.) are familiar features from the opening Marfa-Dosifej scene in Act III. As in Act III, Musorgsky also motivically amalgamates the bell music from Act I's prelude, mm. 37-43 – quoted later by Marfa in II, 773-776 – with key themes in Act IV. As a result the composer successfully crafts an imposing, climactic act that recapitulates many earlier Marfa scenes from Acts I and III.

**I [Andante tranquillo]**

37 *f*

Bass: C $^{\sharp}$  C $^{\sharp}$  C $^{\sharp}$

**IV [Allegro scherzando]**

71 *f*

Pozd - no ve - če - rom si - die - la, vsio ...

**IV [Allegro marziale con fuoco]**

734 *f*

**Example 20:** Bell music (Prelude, Act I): metamorphoses and recapitulations

In the closing Act V Musorgsky creates an even more large-scale arch form that again refers back to mm. 1–17 of Act I's instrumental introduction. Already Act V's symphonic prelude directly quotes from Act I, mm. 1–2 and also I, 801– 805:

I Andante tranquillo

a <sup>1</sup> *pp*

I [Andantino, alla marcia, non troppo allegro]  
(carattere russo)

b <sup>801</sup> *mf*

I V Andante tranquillo

c *pp*

I [Andante tranquillo]

d <sup>14</sup> *pp*

V [Andante]

e <sup>198</sup> *mf*

Marfa: Sni - los' mnie, bud'- to by, iz - mie - na liub - vi tvo- ej,...

**Example 21:** Act I Prelude's influence on Act V

Moreover, the closing Old Believers' chant in V, 290–308 is derived from I's prelude, 37–39:

<sup>37</sup> [Andante tranquillo]

a *f*

[Largo]

b <sup>292</sup> *f*

...moj, za - ščit - nik i po - kro - vi - tiel',...

**Example 22:** Bell theme (I, 37) and related Old Believers' chant (V, 290–308, Sopranos)

If the outer parts of Act V are variations of I's introduction, the closing Act I chorus in a-minor, 1076–1092 is also expanded in V, 112–157, thus producing another multiple arch-like formal spiral. Harmonically speaking, Act V's general movement from d–a–d–g<sup>#</sup> (Andrej)–D/D<sup>b</sup> (Marfa)–E<sup>b</sup> (Dosifej and love duet)–a<sup>b</sup> (final Old Believers' chorus) also recalls Act II's progression from D to E<sup>b</sup>/a<sup>b</sup> (Marfa's divination).

Viewed as a totality, *Chovanščina*'s formal structure recalls that of *Boris Godunov*, in that the final love duet and immolation scenes of Act V – like Boris' death monologue – present a comprehensive cyclical summary of the central Act I episodes. Moreover, these are set in motion by Marfa's expressive ariosos in Acts III:i (original version, 1873) and IV (cf. Boris' climactic solos in *Boris II*). Both works also utilize semitonal Neapolitan contrasts such as D/C sharp (*Boris I*:i+ii) or D/E<sup>b</sup> (*Chovanščina II*, beginning and middle of Act V), although *Chovanščina*'s are more directional in scope. Indeed, *Chovanščina*'s harmonic layout is somewhat more classical in style in that the final tonic A<sup>b</sup> receives a clear subdominant underpinning in the Act I prelude and also Marfa's music in the middle of Act V, 208–211. In addition, A<sup>b</sup>'s subdominant C<sup>#</sup>/D<sup>b</sup> consistently gives way to A<sup>b</sup>'s even more emphatic dominant E<sup>b</sup> at the close of Acts II, III and V. In this manner Musorgsky eventually overcomes the tonal instability and oscillations of Act I.

Simultaneously with *Chovanščina*, Musorgsky composed a comic opera, *Sorochintsy Fair* (1874–1881, after Gogol's famous short story). Once again, the beginning of Act I's prelude, mm. 1–23 virtually predetermines the subsequent harmonic organization of the entire opera.

The musical notation shows a sequence of chords on a single staff, with measure numbers 1–6, 7–8, 9–10, 11–12, 13–14, 15–16, 17, and 19–23 indicated above. The chords are G, A, C<sup>#</sup>, F<sup>#</sup>, A, D, and G. Below the staff, the corresponding act and measure numbers are listed: cf. I, 252–267, 304–308; I, 75–78, 309–311, 651–713, 768–776, 836, 858–866, 880–903; I, 88–92, 111–136, 324–366; and I, 41–70.

Measure	Chord	Act/Measure
1–6	G	cf. I, 252–267, 304–308
7–8	A	I, 75–78, 309–311, 651–713, 768–776, 836, 858–866, 880–903
9–10	C <sup>#</sup>	
11–12	F <sup>#</sup>	
13–14	A	I, 88–92, 111–136, 324–366
15–16	D	
17	G	I, 41–70
19–23	G	

**Example 23:** Prelude to *Sorochintsy Fair* (1874, orchestrated 1876, ed. Josephson; reduction) and other related parts of opera

The C<sup>♯</sup> (G:<sup>♯</sup>IV) correspondence between measures (Act I:) 11–12f. and 879f. is further underlined by close motivic relationships – a melodic complex that later recurs in Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps*:

**[Andante grazioso]**

**Example 24:** *Sorochintsy Fair's* Prelude and related Act I close

Musorgsky's clear usage of fifths/thirds cycles in Act I even conjures up Classical sonata form, in particular the opening progressions on G–D/F<sup>♯</sup>–A/C<sup>♯</sup>. They also recall his earlier opera *Salambo* (1863–1866). In *Sorochintsy Fair* the G-major recapitulations of I, 1–23 in I, 252–267 and 304–308 prepare for the final cyclical, arch-like recall of 11–12 in 879f. Moreover, Musorgsky's employment of the older *Night on Bald Mountain* music in 466–903 (on D/C<sup>♯</sup>) also ties in with the semitonal fluctuation between D and C<sup>♯</sup> in Act I's prelude.

Act II is smoothly linked to Act I's C<sup>♯</sup> ending through its introductory circle-of-fifths passage in mm. 1–37 (in the keys of F<sup>♯</sup>–B). Indeed, the entire Act II subsequently progresses via rondo-like refrains (cf. mm. 25–37, in B-major) down to Cherevik's favorite keys of E (267–279), D/G (293–308f.) and C<sup>♯</sup> (350–403). It will be noted that Chivrrja's expressive *ariosos* in 339–403 also highlight the climactic C<sup>♯</sup>. As might be expected, the ensuing masterly dialogue between Chivrrja and her lover Afanasij Ivanyč again repeats the identical (!) circle-of-fifths progression on D<sup>b</sup>–F<sup>♯</sup>–B–E (E is often linked to Afanasij – like Cherevik's earlier E emphasis!)–A (associated with Chivrrja; cf. the earlier mm. 169–176 +193–199)–C<sup>♯</sup> (727–762) for the final expressive climax.

The closing parts of Act II again oscillate between d/D–a/A–B/D for the godfather's freely strophic song and E for the choral setting of the Ukrainian folksong *Du, du* (1015–1061), plus the related e-minor for the choral *Ty bedu* (1177–1202). The final keys of F<sup>♯</sup> for the *Tale of the Red Jacket* and e<sup>b</sup>-minor for the closing pandemonium inject effective moments of harmonic instability on G:<sup>♯</sup>VII and G:<sup>b</sup>VI that will again be encountered in Act III:

**Example 25:** Tonal layout of Act III, *Sorochintsy Fair* (ed. Josephson)

In many respects Musorgsky's song cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* (1875–1877) represents his crowning achievement. He composed the first three numbers in early 1875,<sup>9</sup> arranging them in the order, 1. *Cradle Song* (April 14), *Serenade* (May 11) and *Trepak* (February 17). Musorgsky himself labelled these three songs as “the first installment of the *Macabres*” in his letter to his poet- friend Goleniščev-Kutuzov of May 11, 1875. Yet his earlier letter to Liubov Karmalina of April 20, 1875 already mentions a *fourth* song in preparation. Moreover, Stasov refers to two additional sketched songs for this cycle in his letter of July 17, 1876 to Rimsky-Korsakov: *Monk* and *Anika the Warrior and Death*. The final fourth song – *Field-Marshal* – was eventually completed on June 5, 1877. In addition, Goleniščev-Kutuzov drafted a list of *twelve* projected songs for *Songs and Dances of Death*.

Once again, Musorgsky unifies his entire cycle through purely musical means. If d-minor is the overall tonic (especially in nos. 3+4), its major mediant f♯ and dominant a are the main focal points in no. 1 (*Cradle Song*) and its Neapolitan bII degree e♭-minor provides for an expressive lyrical contrast in no. 2 (*Serenade*). In nos. 1–3 the tonal resolutions in the symphonic epilogues evoke a comprehensive recall of the initial piano introductions:

<sup>9</sup> Orlova, *Musorgsky's*, 431 states that Musorgsky's poet-friend Goleniščev-Kutuzov already made a note in his sketchbook on November 22, 1874 of *Dances of Death: Scenes from Russian Life* (preserved in the State Central Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow with the sigla coll.143, inv.1, no.139:58).

**Table 4:** Symphonic epilogue-recapitulations in nos. 1–3 of *Songs and Dances of Death*

Piece No.	Introduction	Epilogue	Comments
1	1–27	43–54	Piano's chromatic soprano lines in 48–49 recall those in 2 <sub>3-4</sub>
1	25–26	43–45	Mother's affective appoggiaturas in 43–45 echo 25–26
2	27–33	96–112	Initial diminished sevenths finally return in coda, 96–112
3	1–20	58–74	<i>Dies iræ</i> quote is transformed as peasant falls asleep and dies

Of special note here are Musorgsky's extensive quotation techniques. Thus No. 1 draws on Beethoven's *Great Fugue* op. 133, no. 3 on Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*: V (*Dies iræ*) and no. 4 on the Polish revolutionary hymn, *Z dymem pożarów*:

Cradle Song  
***Lento doloroso***  
 a 

***pp***  
 Trepak  
***Lento assai: tranquillo***  
 b 

***pp***  
 Field-Marshal:  
**[Tempo di marcia. Grave. Pomposo]**  
 69 

Mar-shem tor-zest-ven-nym mi - mo proj-di - te, ...

**Example 26:** Quotations in *Songs and Dances of Death*

Musorgsky employs these citations as intervallic germ cells, or abstract foundations that he freely inverts (as in I, 38–39; III, 58–59) or develops symphonically (IV, 42–93): a forecast of Stravinsky's later serial-intervallic works as *In memoriam Dylan Thomas* (1954).

In summary, Musorgsky's art can be characterized as highly innovative in several respects. To begin with, his textures typically incorporate chromatic bass

lines that penetrate the inner voices in Schumann's vein. We already encounter this phenomenon in the early songs *Sadly Rustled the Leaves* (1859) and *What Are Words of Love* (1860): two lyrical masterpieces penned when the composer was barely twenty years old.

This kind of freely evolving texture eventually develops into expansive formal structures with climactic codas, as in the songs, *I have many palaces and gardens* (1863), *Prayer* (1865) and *Cradle Song* (also 1865). The latter two are especially notable for their wavering, oscillating Neapolitan ( $\flat$ II) fluctuations.

Musorgsky's realistic songs from the years 1866–1868 are characterized by ostinato rhythms and second intervals, which again penetrate the inner voices as well, as in *Gopak*, *Darling Savishna* and *The He-Goat*. In a larger sense, these stylistic features may be viewed as precursors of the symphonic tone poem *Night on Bald Mountain* (1867) and the famous choral ostinati in his later operas *Boris Godunov* (1868–1872) and *Chovanščina* (1873–1880), which inspired numerous passages in Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913) and *Oedipus Rex* (1927).

Concurrently, Musorgsky's three early operas *Salambo* (1863–1866), *The Marriage* (1868, with completed Act I) and *Boris Godunov* (1868–1872) begin to utilize cyclical circles-of-fifths as modulatory pillars (compare keys of  $A^b-E^b-F^\sharp/F-D^b$  in *Salambo* or  $c^\sharp-b^b-E^b-A^b-D/D^b$  in *Boris*). These two parallel works are again characterized by sharp minor second clashes (cf. the realistic songs of 1866–1868) to bring out dramatic dualisms. A convenient example would be the  $F^\sharp$  worship of the goddess Tanita as opposed to the Libyan incursion (in  $F$ ) into Tanita's sacred abode. Similarly, one might quote Boris' metaphysical realms (centered on  $D^b/C^\sharp$ ) vs. the people's everyday sphere of  $D$ .

In the 1870's Musorgsky's style (as in the song cycle, *The Nursery*, 1868–1870) begins to incorporate milder, more neo-Classical idioms with triadic harmonies and third relationships: a more traditional style that Stravinsky emulated in many of his middle-period works from 1919–1952. In his two central masterpieces *Chovanščina*, Acts I and III (1873+1873–1876), as well as *Sunless* (1874) our composer starts to work with impressionistic sound-worlds and multifaceted, oblique pitch relationships based on seventh and sixth sonorities. This is the modernistic Musorgsky closest to Debussy's idioms and many early Stravinsky works that directly appropriate Musorgsky's 1874 music, such as *Rossignol*, *Sacre* and *Symphony of Psalms*. Not surprisingly, Stravinsky in his later years (1960's) even contemplated orchestrating Musorgsky's *Sunless* cycle.

The final chapter in Musorgsky's creative evolution may be seen in the late song-cycle *Songs and Dances of Death* (1875+1877) and Act IV of *Chovanščina* (1876–1880). In these compositions the Russian composer smoothly amalgamates modernistic quotation techniques (such as the Beethoven and Berlioz



citations in *Songs and Dances of Death*, or the two marches quoted in *Songs and Dances of Death* no. 4 and *Chovanščina* Act IV:ii) with intervallic and contrapuntal techniques culled from traditional Western music. Simultaneously, Musorgsky also incorporates the climactic metamorphosis techniques from his earlier 1860's styles and the variation idioms employed in *Boris Godunov*.

## **Linear Designs in Musorgsky's Music**

### **Abstract**

The study presents a structural analysis of Modest Petrovich Musorgsky's output. The songs are studied in detail as well as the extensive musical dramatic works. The findings of Musorgsky's compositional style are given in the context of wider contemporary musical tendencies.

## **Linearita v díle Modesta Petroviče Musorgského**

### **Abstrakt**

Studie představuje strukturální analýzu děl Modesta Petroviče Musorgského. Zkoumány jsou písně, ale také rozsáhlá hudebně dramatická díla. Poznatky o skladatelově kompozičním rukopisu jsou dávány do kontextu širších dobových stylových tendencí.

### **Keywords**

Russian music; Modest Petrovich Musorgsky; songs; opera; analysis

### **Klíčová slova**

ruská hudba; Modest Petrovič Musorgskij; písně; opera; analýza

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