

UDC 78

THE UNITY OF MUSIC AND TEXT IN GLINKA'S ROMANCES

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Abstract:

Glinka's compositional approach is seen in the unity of his compositional ideas and techniques with the Western components of music, which the composer learns from his time spent in Europe. Glinka's creative output generated a significant effect on Russian composers that succeeded him. One of Glinka's significant musical compositional outputs is the unique understanding of romance as a genre that defines the unity among music and text. The era of Pushkin and Zhukovsky plays an essential role in shaping the innovative Russian musical style, and Glinka is the first prominent composer to work closely with such poets and other representatives of the Russian Golden Age. This article deals with four of Glinka's romances set to text by Pushkin and Zhukovsky – "The Poor Singer," "Sing Not, Thou Beauty, in My Presence," "The Night Review," and "Where is Our Rose." This study focuses on the connections between theory and literature in romances while presenting Glinka's literary interpretation within his music.

Keywords: Analysis; Glinka; Pushkin; romance; Zhukovsky.

1. Introduction

Being the first influential Russian composer, Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka (1804-1857) holds an important place in the history of Russian art as an initiator of shaping and formulating the style of his country's national music. Glinka's compositional output began in the early part of the nineteenth century, revealed through his continued enthusiasm for music, particularly the piano, violin, and composition. Russian national artistic effects on Glinka are evident in his works, just as his influence on other Russian culture and traditions, seen in the music of composers of further generations. For instance, church music was one of such influences. Glinka regularly attended church with his grandmother in the Smolensk region – the oblast, known for its established sacred musical tradition, where the composer was born and lived throughout his childhood [1].

Religious associations link musicology and performance on numerous occasions when working with Russian music, yet Glinka's compositional output spans beyond connections with musical spirituality. One of the significant events to initialize Glinka's remarkable career is his relocation to St. Petersburg in 1817 to attend the St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute. It was here that Glinka met prominent figures in other artistic fields, most notably in literature. Glinka finished his education in 1822. While known in Russia, his name does not become prominent in international circles until the 1830s – the time during which St. Petersburg was not on par with other major European cities when providing musical educational facilities, such as conservatories [2]. Glinka's artistic links between poetry and music are of much prominence when analyzing his compositions, style, and artistic processes. Glinka's interests in the vocal repertoire are evident in small-scale works, such as romances, and large-scale masterpieces, such as operas. Understanding music and text and its connotation within the interdisciplinary context is how Glinka defines and characterizes his vocal oeuvre.

This research focuses on the connections between theory and literature in four of Glinka's romances set to the text of Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) and Vasily Zhukovsky (1783-1852). This article stresses Glinka's reciprocities with Russian poetry of Golden Age representatives and analyzes the specifics of literary elements found in music. One of Glinka's significant musical developments and

traditions is the genre of Russian romance – an art song composed for voice with piano accompaniment. While Glinka's compositional output marks the beginning of the process of Russian classical music expansion, this period likewise accentuates the apex of Russia's Golden Age. This research examines the following four romances: *The Poor Singer* [Rus: *Бедный Певец*] (1826), *Sing Not, Thou Beauty, in My Presence* [Rus: *Не Пои, Красавица, При Мне*] (1828), *The Night Review* [Rus: *Ночной Смотр*] (1836), and *Where is Our Rose* [Rus: *Где Наша Роза*] (1837), all set to texts of Pushkin and Zhukovsky.

Glinka's Russian romances are historically vital in Russian music for three reasons. First, Glinka is the first prominent composer to work closely with the representatives of the Russian Golden Age, as the composer met both Pushkin and Zhukovsky in St. Petersburg during his tenure in the city. Second, the development of the Russian romance genre links with Glinka's affiliation and association with Russian literature, as seen in the symbolic comprehension of text in Glinka's romances. Third, the tradition of Russian romances continued after Glinka, more prevalently seen in works of Russian composers in the post-Glinka era. For instance, the evolution of the Russian romance carries through into Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's oeuvre, who composed a total of twenty-two romances in his early period that includes opp. 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8.

2. Romances and Glinka's Stylistic Innovations

Glinka stayed in St. Petersburg after completing his education and began to focus heavily on teaching and performance. The composer likewise found time for traveling throughout the country, gaining a broader perspective of various regions of the Russian empire and its artistic values, all of which are seen in his compositional approach. While the myriad sources of influences and inspirations outline the inventive nature of Glinka's works, one of the prominent locations favored by the composer was the Caucasus region. At the same time, Glinka's interests lay in Western European music. The knowledge attained while in Russia was enough for the composer to expand his compositional expertise and focus on artistic expansion into Western European styles. In 1830, Glinka traveled to Europe, spending time in Italy, Austria, and Germany, while meeting Hector Berlioz, Felix Mendelssohn, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, and other influential names of the time, before returning to Russia in 1834.

Glinka devoted a significant amount of time studying the compositional styles of Western composers. For instance, Glinka considered Italy as "the treasure house of the classics" – a source of ideas and inspiration. One of Glinka's fascinations was the vocal style of *bel canto*, traces of which are seen in his operatic vocal works. Glinka provided just as much attention to his studies in other musical genres, including orchestral music, solo music, and vocal music with accompaniment. The apogee of Glinka's career is reflected in the composer's attempt to amalgamate Western and Russian elements of composition. Glinka's compositional approach is seen in the unity and integration of his innovative thoughts and techniques, as well as components that the composer learns in Europe. By combining multiple elements, Glinka shaped his distinct compositional language. It is important to note that while Glinka proved to be a prolific composer, he produced one well-known significant non-musical work. Glinka wrote *Memoirs* [Rus: *Записки*], in which the composer talks about his life, his views on art, and thoughts on his compositions and influences [3]. The *Memoirs* provide the composer's insights into various elements shaping and influencing Glinka's compositional production. The *Memoirs* hold vital keys to understanding who Glinka was as a person and as a musician. Glinka composed music in various musical genres, but his time spent in Europe greatly affected his compositional approach to vocal music. Although there has been substantial research on Glinka's operatic works, such as *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) and *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1842), not much emphasis is placed on his smaller-scale vocal compositions.

3. Analysis

The romance is a vocal and instrumental setting of poetry, containing folk elements and characteristics of lyricism [4]. For Russian composers, romance allows one to define the meaning of poetry through their harmonic language. The romance genre allowed Russian composers to musically express the historical and cultural elements of poetry through voice and accompaniment. While simple in form, Russian romance carries complex literary denotations, all entangled in the composer's harmonic structure [5]. In *The Poor Singer*, Zhukovsky portrays an unhappy character, seen from the dark and melancholy setting. The poet describes a person who says his final farewells to the authentic world – the world in which he lives, the world with which he is unhappy, the world that has caused him a great deal of suffering. The theme of the poem is death – the only way out of agony and misery. An instance of this occurs in the twelfth and thirteenth lines [6].

*Могила, верный путь к покою!
Когда же будет взят тобою*

[Eng: *The grave, the true way towards calmness*]
[Eng: *When will I finally be taken?*]

The image shows a musical score for the romance 'The Poor Singer' by Glinka, measures 7-12. The score is in G major and 2/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics in Russian and English. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with arpeggiated chords and a left hand with a fragmentary melody. A box highlights a C major chord in the piano accompaniment at measure 11.

Figure 1: *The Poor Singer* by Glinka, mm. 7-12

Zhukovsky represents death as a way of escaping sadness and misery; the poet asks a question from the main character's perspective, desiring to know the time when death will finally arrive. In his *Memoirs*, Glinka favors Zhukovsky's forlorn poetry since such works allow the poet to emphasize the character's feelings, worries, and emotions, which provide the reader with the ability to interpret these feelings and allow the reader to enter the character's world. This is seen in the lyrical and gloomy yet melodic vocal line, supported by the arpeggiated accompanimental structure by the pianist throughout the romance. The left hand plays the fragmentary melody found in the bass of the piano accompaniment along with the partial or complete arpeggiation patterns of the right hand. Glinka introduces the C major chord in m. 11, abruptly altering the romance mood, as seen in Figure 1 [7].

The song swiftly returns to the minor tonality, as the vocalist sings out the following line:

Я счастья ждал — мечтаю конец; Погибло все...
[Eng: *I was awaiting happiness – it's the end of my dreams; Everything has died...*]

In *The Poor Singer*, Glinka's musical interpretation shows how the composer stays close to the meaning of the text. Glinka attempted to create a similar mood in his composition, as Zhukovsky did in his poem. In this romance, Glinka "draws a musical portrait of the poem's setting, emphasizing on the elements of songfulness and lyricism" [5].

Sing Not, Thou Beauty, in My Presence is the most evident collaboration between Pushkin and Glinka not only in their artistic output but likewise in their personal lives. In 1828, Pushkin dedicated the poem *Sing Not, Thou Enchantress, in My Presence* to a young woman taking vocal lessons from Glinka [3]. The poem draws on a stalemate between the poet's affection for the poet's dedicatee and Natalia Goncharova, whom Pushkin later marries [8].

The image shows three systems of musical notation for the song 'Sing Not, Thou Beauty, in My Presence'. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics include 'p' (piano) and 'pp' (pianissimo). The lyrics are written in Russian and are repeated in the first and fourth systems. The first system starts with 'Не пой, красавица, при мне ты не снес Гру-зи-' and the fourth system ends with '-и печаль-ной: на-по-ми-на-ют мне о-не дру-гую жизнь и бе-рег даль-ний, бе-рег даль-'. The piano accompaniment features a steady rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line.

Figure 2: *Sing Not, Thou Beauty, in My Presence* by Glinka, mm. 1-11.

In his setting of poetry, Glinka used two types of phrases to depict and define the poem's mood musically. As per Figure 2, each phrase is reinstated, creating a binary form [7]. The first phrase is seen in mm. 1-4 and mm. 13-16, while the second phrase is seen in mm. 6-12 and mm. 18-24. Glinka's repetitive approach to composing this work is similar to what Pushkin does in his poem in two ways. First, the poem's opening stanza is seen in its identical form as the final (the fourth) stanza. Second, Pushkin emphasized the word "напоминают" Eng: [remind of], which is seen three times in the sixteen lines of the text; Pushkin is reminded of the appealing voice of the young lady. It is also significant to note that a short tonicization occurs in the second phrase at mm. 7-8 and mm. 9-10, where V/vi (D⁷ chord) is resolved into vi as Glinka moves towards the G-minor tonality. Furthermore, the alto line contains a chromatic descend from pitch F towards pitch D in mm. 1-2 and mm. 3-4.

The Night Review is an example of Zhukovsky's approach to heroism. The poem provides traces of march-like structure with stride-like phrasing. This is the longest of the four poems discussed in this article, containing forty-eight lines. The rhythm of the text is shaped by the dreadful and fearful plot, as dead soldiers arise from their graves. The tragic character that the poetry carries emerges very

gradually. The poem is divided into three parts of twelve lines each; the second line of every group conveys an identical message. By “them,” the author refers to the dead, who are arising from their graves.

Line 2: <i>Из гроба встает барабанищик</i>	[Eng: <i>The drummer arises from the grave</i>]
Line 14: <i>Выходит трубач из могилы</i>	[Eng: <i>The trumpet player arises from the grave</i>]
Line 26: <i>Из гроба встает полководец</i>	[Eng: <i>The commander arises from the grave</i>]
Line 38: <i>Потом он в кружок собирает</i>	[Eng: <i>He continues to align them in circle</i>]

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Tempo di marcia ♩ = 100

В де - над - цать ча - сов по но - чам из

гро - ба вста - ет ба - ра - бан - щик; и хо - дит он в зад и впе - ред, и

Figure 3: *The Night Review*, Glinka, mm. 1-7.

Throughout the poem, Zhukovsky gradually presents the reader with new characters, opening new identities, who have been dead in the past. Glinka was able to translate Zhukovsky’s march-like approach in his setting of the poem. The composer achieved it through a rhythmic drive towards the ends of each phrase, found in the vocalist’s line by utilization of triplets. An instance of this can be traced in mm. 1-7 in Figure 3, which includes a short introduction and the first two phrases of the song.

Where is Our Rose is Pushkin’s attempt to combine and associate one’s happiness with age. In Pushkin’s prose, flowers are exceedingly symbolic; roses, depending on their state and their use in the Russian language, contain several interpretations of such symbolism. There are over 200 different types of flowers that contain unique representations in Russian poetry [9, 10]. For Pushkin, in addition to creating various methods of poetic comparison, the idea behind using flowers as a symbol created the opportunity to depict the sense of poetic realism in his works. Pushkin uses the “withered rose” [Rus: увялая роза] to define the end of youthfulness. For Pushkin, the sense of being young brings cheerfulness and good spirit, something that progressively gets lost as one gets older. It is essential to note Pushkin’s thoughtfulness, as the poet himself never reached the older stages of his life; he died in a duel at the age of thirty-seven [11].

4. Conclusion

Russian musical heritage holds a vital role in the history of Western classical music, incorporating various genres and musical styles. The romance is an example of such a genre with extensive musical growth and development. Glinka's output in the romance genre is a significant musical achievement that combines Russian music and poetry. Glinka's association with Russian literature is evident, and the poetic influence is seen in his ability to interpret it in his works. Other developed artistic fields allowed Glinka to create a unique compositional style that would serve as the base of Russian national music. Glinka's time spent in St. Petersburg between 1817 and 1830 allowed for many artistic opportunities and significant collaborations, as evident in his Russian romances.

Pushkin's and Zhukovsky's contributions to the Russian Golden Age literature significantly affected what Glinka did for music in Russia. Just as poets, writers, and painters did in their respective fields, Glinka successfully expressed the elements of Russian culture, tradition, and art in his music. Russian romance opened up on the richness and the principles of the Russian soul, and Glinka's ability to understand the lives of ordinary Russian people is what allowed him to create short vocal works filled with numerous traits, all associated with Russian literature. The unique characterization of Glinka's romances lies in the fact that every musical element, no matter how small it is, has a larger purpose in one's interpretation of the vocal work. Similar to how Pushkin began a new epoch in Russian literature, Glinka instigated a new Russian chapter to Western classical music.

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