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**Revision of the Orchestral and Vocal Works
of Modest Musorgsky by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.
Part I. The Publication History and Legal Aspects
of Musorgsky's Works Edited by Rimsky-Korsakov**



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Abstract. The revision of Modest Musorgsky's orchestral and vocal works by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov has not been the subject of research yet. The present article is the first attempt to explore this aspect of the work of the Russian classical composer. This article is divided into three parts. The first part, focusing on the history of publications and legal aspects of publishing Musorgsky's works as edited by Rimsky-Korsakov, is published in this issue of the journal. The second and third parts that examine the revision of the orchestral works and song cycles of Musorgsky by Rimsky-Korsakov will appear in subsequent issues. This study was undertaken in connection with preparations for the publication of the *Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works* at the State Institute for Art Studies. The article examines Rimsky-Korsakov's relationship with brothers Vladimir and Dmitry Stasov, the publisher Vasily Bessel, as well as the publication of Musorgsky's vocal works and orchestral scores as edited by Rimsky-Korsakov in 1882–1908, indicating their differences from the original versions.

Keywords: Modest Musorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Vasily Bessel, Vladimir Stasov, song cycles, *The Nursery*, *Sunless*, *Songs and Dances of Death*, orchestral works, *March*, *Scherzo* in B-flat major, *Intermezzo*, *Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works*

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Источниковедение

Научная статья

**Н. А. Римский-Корсаков в работе над оркестровыми
и вокальными сочинениями М. П. Мусоргского.
Часть I. История публикаций и юридические аспекты
издания сочинений Мусоргского
в редакции Римского-Корсакова**

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Аннотация. Работа Н. А. Римского-Корсакова над оркестровыми и вокальными сочинениями М. П. Мусоргского еще не становилась предметом научного изучения. Представленная статья — первый опыт такого исследования. Она делится на три части. Первая часть, посвященная истории и юридическим аспектам издания сочинений Мусоргского в редакциях Римского-Корсакова, публикуется в настоящем номере журнала. Вторая и третья части, в которых рассматривается редакторская работа Римского-Корсакова над оркестровыми сочинениями Мусоргского и его вокальными циклами, выйдет в следующих выпусках.

Изучение предпринято в связи с подготовкой к изданию Полного академического собрания сочинений Мусоргского в Государственном институте искусствознания. В статье рассмотрены взаимоотношения Римского-Корсакова с братьями Владимиром и Дмитрием Стасовыми, издателем В. В. Бесселем, публикации вокальных произведений и оркестровых партитур Мусоргского в редакциях Римского-Корсакова в 1882–1908 гг., выявлены их отличия от авторских версий.

Ключевые слова: М. П. Мусоргский, Н. А. Римский-Корсаков, В. В. Бессель, В. В. Стасов, вокальные циклы, «Детская», «Без солнца», «Песни и пляски смерти», оркестровые сочинения, «Марш», «Скерцо (B-dur)», «Интермеццо», Полное академическое собрание сочинений М. П. Мусоргского

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Для цитирования: Тетерина Н. И., Александрова В. А., Левашев И. Е. Н. А. Римский-Корсаков в работе над оркестровыми и вокальными сочинениями М. П. Мусоргского. Часть I. История публикаций и юридические аспекты издания сочинений Мусоргского в редакции Римского-Корсакова // Современные проблемы музыкознания. Т. 9, № 3. С. 61–89. <https://doi.org/10.56620/2587-9731-2025-3-061-089>

Introduction

The revision of Modest Musorgsky's (1839–1881) orchestral and vocal works by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) constitutes a substantial and significant part of his creative legacy. For the history of musical culture, the most important works that introduced Musorgsky to the world were his operas *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* (*The Khovansky Affair*) — abridged, re-instrumented, and effectively rewritten by Rimsky-Korsakov. In addition to these, the musical material of the following works was revised: four orchestral opuses (*Night on Bald Mountain*, *Intermezzo in modo classico*, *Scherzo*, and march *The Capture of Kars*), three major choral works (*Oedipus in Athens*, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, and *Jesus Navin*), three song cycles (*The Nursery*, *Sunless*, *Songs and Dances of Death*), the piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*, numerous romances, and the unfinished opera *Marriage*. It can be said that after his death, Rimsky-Korsakov left behind almost a complete collection of revised works of Musorgsky that reflected his own vision of the legacy of his deceased friend and colleague.¹

The work of Rimsky-Korsakov was a pioneering endeavor, laying the methodological foundation for the next generation of music editors who continued to work on Musorgsky's pieces (Vyacheslav Karatygin, César Cui, Anatoly Lyadov, Alexander Glazunov, and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov). Rimsky-Korsakov edited Musorgsky's compositions from the time of the composer's death in 1881 until his own death in 1908. According to Evgeny Levashev, Rimsky-Korsakov did “a tremendous amount of selfless work covering a period of almost thirty years of his life and dozens of full and piano scores in virtually all musical genres to which Musorgsky's works belonged” [2, p. 41]. Starting with the completion of unfinished compositions, Rimsky-Korsakov primarily thought about his role as a publisher and, in a sense, even as a pioneer

¹ The topic of Rimsky-Korsakov's editorial work was first addressed by Vladimir Skuratovsky (1963–2016) in his thesis, which was defended in 1988 at the Moscow Conservatory. An expanded version of the introduction to the thesis was published in *Mnozhestvennost' nauchnykh kontseptsij v muzykoznanii* [*The Multiplicity of Scientific Concepts in Musicology*]. See [1].

of the late composer's music. He wrote that "an edition for performance, for practical and artistic purposes, was required"² [3, p. 252].

Initially, Rimsky-Korsakov made virtually no changes to the works published during Musorgsky's lifetime, probably finding it impossible to oppose the composer's will, which was clearly expressed in the printed material. Subsequently, he gradually changed his attitude, allowing for greater creative freedom. The most striking example is the editing of *Boris Godunov*. After the opera was removed from the repertoire of the Mariinsky Theatre, Rimsky-Korsakov created his own abridged version, publishing a piano score in 1896³ and a full score in 1898.⁴ For the works that Musorgsky completed but never published during his lifetime, Rimsky-Korsakov initially adopted a more liberal approach, changing the form and orchestration and making lots of changes to all elements of the music: harmony, melody, dynamics, texture, rhythm, phrasing, and tempo, thus becoming a co-composer, i.e., he proceeded in the same way as with his own compositions [4].

Legal Aspects of Publishing Musorgsky's Works
Edited by Rimsky-Korsakov

Attempts to ascertain the role of Stasov brothers — Vladimir Vasilievich and Dmitry Vasilievich, — Rimsky-Korsakov, and Vasily Bessel⁵ in the publication and republication of Musorgsky's orchestral scores and vocal compositions spanning a quarter of a century, from 1882 to 1908, are doomed to almost complete failure, as little documented evidence of their long-term collaboration remains.

² Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1926). *Letopis' moej muzykal'noj zhizni* [*My Musical Life*] (A. N. Rimsky-Korsakov, Ed.). Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo. Muzykal'nyj sektor, p. 252.

³ Musorgsky, M. P. (1896). *Boris Godunov. Narodnaya muzykal'naya drama v 4-kh dejstviyakh s prologom (po Pushkinu i Karamzinu) M. P. Musorgskogo* [*A National Musical Drama in Four Acts with a Prologue (after Pushkin and Karamzin) by M. P. Musorgsky*]. Arrangement for piano and voices (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov, arrang., instrum., foreword). W. Bessel and C^o.

⁴ Musorgsky, M. P. [1898]. *Boris Godunov. Narodnaya muzykal'naya drama v 4-kh dejstviyakh s prologom (po Pushkinu i Karamzinu) M. P. Musorgskogo*. Full score for orchestra (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov, arrang., instrum.), W. Bessel and C^o.

⁵ Vasily V. Bessel (1843–1907), a Russian music publisher.

The first written evidence, which is often cited and undisputed (though unverified), of Rimsky-Korsakov's decision to edit Musorgsky's music is attributed to Ilya Tyumenev (1855–1927), who was present at the composer's funeral on March 18, 1881, at the Tikhvin Cemetery.⁶ Noteworthy is that three of the above-mentioned individuals — Vladimir Stasov, Dmitry Stasov, and Rimsky-Korsakov — were actively involved in organizing Musorgsky's funeral and attended the burial ceremony. According to Tyumenev:

Passing through the crowd after the service [...] Nikolai Andreevich, who was discreet and even secretive about the prospective musical contributions, told Stasov in a deliberately loud voice (probably by prior agreement) that he would revise and edit everything left behind by the deceased and that he would complete and publish as many pieces as possible, starting with *Khovanshchina*. For musicians, this was worth more than a large number of speeches.⁷

The context of Tyumenev's memoirs suggests that Rimsky-Korsakov's words cannot be considered random, spontaneous, or caused by painful experiences: they were carefully considered in advance and, most likely, either agreed upon with Vladimir Stasov or became a public reaction to certain preliminary private conversations about the fate of Musorgsky's musical legacy. In any case, on the day of the funeral, it was Rimsky-Korsakov who publicly assumed the responsibility to be Musorgsky's musical executor.

Nothing is known about what happened during the following year. The currently available sources describing the work of Rimsky-Korsakov on Musorgsky's orchestral opuses and song cycles provide no information.⁸ Only at the end of April 1882, a letter was discovered from the composer to his student, Moscow music critic Semyon Kruglikov (1851–1910), which came as a surprise since he had only shared news about *Khovanshchina* with him.

⁶ Presently, the Necropolis of the Masters of Art.

⁷ Tyumenev, I. F. (1959). *Poslednij put' Musorgskogo (iz vospominanij)* [Final journey of Musorgsky (from memoirs)]. *Sovetskaya Muzyka*, 7(248), 92. See also [5].

⁸ In the case of *Khovanshchina*, conversely, Rimsky-Korsakov's correspondence contains sufficient information to reconstruct the chronology of revisions during those months [6, pp. 365–366].

In a letter dated April 25, among other news, it is mentioned in passing: “I am preparing Musorgsky’s *Songs and Dances of Death* for publication; they will be published by Bessel in the summer.”⁹

This is the starting point from which further events should be considered. In May, Rimsky-Korsakov’s correspondence with Vladimir Stasov becomes more frequent. In particular, on May 25, on the eve of his departure for the village of Stelyovo, Rimsky-Korsakov, not finding Stasov at the Public Library, wrote him a note in which Rimsky-Korsakov mentioned *Songs and Dances of Death*: “I have brought you [...] four ‘dances of death’ ready for printing [...] once you have settled matters with Bessel, give him the ‘dances’ to be printed.”¹⁰ The very next day, Stasov hastily replies, expressing his regret that the meeting did not take place:

I wanted to discuss with you Musorgsky’s affairs and the draft contract with Bessel, which I had rewritten after my brother Dmitry’s review and intended to read to you.¹¹ He made no particular comments, only advising that whenever you give Bessel the finished original version, as a precaution, you should always get a receipt from him indicating the month and date, so that he would not try to claim later on that, say, an original was handed over to him too late and he, therefore, did not have time to print it when he should have. But my brother also agrees with me that it would not hurt, just in case, to safeguard ourselves and to state in the contract that if Bessel fails to fulfill his obligations

⁹ Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1981). *Perepiska s S. N. Kruglikovym: Pis'ma 1879–1895 gg.* [Correspondence with S. N. Kruglikov: Letters (1879–1895)]. In Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* [The Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence]. (8 Vols., Vol. 8-A.). Muzyka, p. 87.

¹⁰ Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1963). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* [The Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence] (8 Vols., Vol. 5). Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe Izdatel'stvo, p. 375.

¹¹ The role of Dmitry Stasov (1828–1918) has been extensively studied from the perspective of jurisprudence and the development of the legal profession in Russia. However, we believe that his activities in the field of protecting the copyrights of Russian composers (Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Mikhail Glinka, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky) and his efforts to establish professional concert venues and educational institutions (Imperial Russian Musical Society and St. Petersburg Conservatory) are not sufficiently reported. See [7].

(for example, to print scores while having already printed profitable vocal pieces), he will lose the rights to what has already been printed, or, at least, the same rights will be transferred to another publisher, meaning he will have competition.¹²

The context of these messages is explained in detail by Anastasia Lyapunova in her comments:

Stasov conducted negotiations with Vasily Bessel on the publication of Musorgsky's works, whose editing and preparation for printing after the author's death were undertaken by Rimsky-Korsakov. Vladimir Stasov (with the help of his brother Dmitry Stasov) drafted the contract between Rimsky-Korsakov and Bessel. Several drafts of this agreement were preserved in the archive of Stasov.¹³ One of them was written in pencil by Rimsky-Korsakov himself and is, evidently, the very first draft. The second [draft] was written by Stasov and revised by Rimsky-Korsakov. The third and final draft was written by Stasov, taking the corrections made by Rimsky-Korsakov into account, and amended by Bessel.¹⁴

Two and a half weeks later, Stasov informed Rimsky-Korsakov that he had given Bessel *Songs and Dances of Death*:

Today I invited Bessel [...] and gave him all four *Dances of Death* to be printed. He was very pleased and said that the engraving of metal plates would start that day, as the engravers had no other work at that moment. He added that in two weeks' time everything would be engraved, and it would be great if he could receive the rest of Musorgsky's works at the same time.¹⁵

On the same day, the contract between Rimsky-Korsakov and Bessel was finalized. Below are only general provisions and those that are relevant to the publication of orchestral scores and song cycles.

¹² Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1963). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* [The Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence] (8 Vols., Vol. 5). Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal'noe Izdatel'stvo, pp. 377–378.

¹³ Here, Lyapunova evidently refers to the family archive of the House of Stasov (f. 294) at the Institute of Russian Literature (the Pushkin House). Unfortunately, she does not provide the archiving numbers of these documents.

¹⁴ Rimsky-Korsakov, N. A. (1963). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* [The Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence] (8 Vols., Vol. 5). Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal'noe Izdatel'stvo, pp. 376.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 381.

We, the undersigned, agree to the following terms:

I, Bessel, acquire the full ownership rights of all works by the late Modest Musorgsky, which have not been sold to anyone yet and currently belong to Privy Councilor T. I. Filippov according to the deed of gift, with the obligation to publish them within the time frame specified below. These works include [...] four romances entitled *Songs and Dances of Death*; [...] the romance *Ride on a Hobby Horse* (continuation of *The Nursery*); [...] works for orchestra: *Intermezzo* (Scherzo), *Scherzo* (B-flat major); *Night on Bald Mountain*; *Turkish March* (Alla turca) [...]

I, Bessel, undertake to publish the above-mentioned compositions [...] by May 1885, specifically the orchestral compositions in full scores and four-hand adaptation, as well as the works for voice and piano in their original form.

[...] I, Rimsky-Korsakov, undertake to gradually deliver the above-mentioned works by Modest Musorgsky (prepared by me for publication) to Mr. Bessel by May 1883: the orchestral works [...] in score form [...] and the works for voice and piano in their original form. I, Rimsky-Korsakov, undertake to deliver all these works to Mr. Bessel one after another, at intervals of no more than one month.¹⁶

The final version of the contract was signed by Bessel on July 1, which we learn from another letter from Stasov: “I signed our contract, which I rewrote myself, as you wished, with all the new details.”¹⁷

Publishing Concept and Main Sheet Music Series

In the summer of 1882, the music publishing company of Bessel began engraving music in order to publish the material that had not been published during Musorgsky’s lifetime and to republish previously printed materials. Nothing stood in Bessel’s way at that time to implement his ambitious plans, specifically to concentrate the entire legacy of the composer in his hands. At that time, he also conceived two series: *Romances and Songs by Modest Musorgsky* and *Works for Orchestra by Modest Musorgsky*. The participation of Rimsky-Korsakov in their planning and preparation can be assumed only hypothetically, since no reliable information has been found to date.

The vocal collection, whose first editions appeared in mid-1882, included 21 romances and three cycles:

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 376.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 386.

1. *Child's song.*
2. *The Orphan.*
3. *Cradle Song.*
4. *The Magpie.*
5. *The Ragamuffin.*
6. *King Saul.*
7. *Sleep, Son of Peasants.*
8. *Night.*
9. *The Classicist.*
10. *The Gallery.*
11. *Not Like Thunder from Heaven.*
12. *Softly the Spirit Flew up to Heaven.*
13. *Pride.*
14. *Is Spinning Man's Work?*
15. *It Scatters and Breaks.*
16. *The Vision.*
17. *A Garden Blooms by the Don.*
18. *The Dnieper.*
19. *Song of the Flea from Goethe's Faust.*
20. *Little Kalistrat.*
21. *The Wanderer.*

Sunless: a collection of poems by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov.

1. *Within Four Walls.*
2. *You Did not Recognize Me in the Crowd.*
3. *The Useless, Noisy Day has Ended.*
4. *Be Bored.*
5. *Elegy.*
6. *On the River.*

The Nursery: episodes from the life of children

1. *With Nanny.*
2. *In the Corner.*
3. *The Beetle.*
4. *With the Doll.*
5. *At Bedtime.*
6. *Ride on a Hobby Horse.*
7. *The Cat Sailor.*

Songs and Dances of Death: poems by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov.

1. *Trepak*.
2. *Lullaby*.
3. *Serenade*.
4. *The Field Marshal*.

The music plates for the first ten romances, the song cycle *Sunless*, and five songs from *The Nursery* remained unchanged, i.e., in the same form and with the same numbers as during Musorgsky's lifetime. Romances Nos. 11 to 21, *Songs and Dances of Death*, and the last two songs in *The Nursery* (Nos. 6 and 7) were edited and prepared for publication by Rimsky-Korsakov after the composer's death. For the first time, they were published posthumously, which was clarified on the cover: "All posthumous works were published under the editorship of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov." (*Illustration 1*)

As specified in the contract with Bessel, Rimsky-Korsakov edited and prepared for publication two unpublished songs by Musorgsky, *Ride on a Hobby Horse* and *The Cat Sailor*, which were part of the unfinished song cycle *At the Dacha*. However, for some reason, even then, they were considered to be a continuation and expansion of *The Nursery* cycle. Although it remains unclear who arbitrarily added these songs to *The Nursery*, seven songs, rather than five, were ultimately entitled *The Nursery*, which was contrary to Musorgsky's creative will. It is this expanded editor's and publisher's version that firmly established itself in history, replacing the original.

Rimsky-Korsakov made significant changes to the structure of *Songs and Dances of Death*, changing the order of the songs. Starting with *Lullaby*, Musorgsky intended to finish with *The Field Marshal*. In Rimsky-Korsakov's version, *Trepak* was put first, followed by *Lullaby* and *Serenade*. As the final culminating piece of the cycle, *The Field Marshal* was left in its place.

Musorgsky	Rimsky-Korsakov
1. <i>Lullaby</i>	1. <i>Trepak</i>
2. <i>Serenade</i>	2. <i>Lullaby</i>
3. <i>Trepak</i>	3. <i>Serenade</i>
4. <i>The Field Marshal</i>	4. <i>The Field Marshal</i>



Illustration 1. Cover for the series *Romances and Songs* by Modest Musorgsky engraved in 1882 by the publishing firm W. Bessel and C^o

The series *Works for Orchestra by Modest Musorgsky*, started by Bessel in 1883, included three scores published for the first time — *Scherzo*, *Intermezzo*, and *March* — with a brief note: “edited by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.” The fact that the orchestral works are also published posthumously is indicated by Bessel at the top of the cover in French: “Oeuvres Posthumes de M. Moussorgsky.” (*Illustration 2*)

In the second half of the 1890s, a series of orchestral works edited by Rimsky-Korsakov began to be published, including numerous revisions and reorchestrations of compositions that only partially belonged to the composer. The works of “pseudo-Musorgsky” were, essentially, reworkings of the original musical material by other composers: for example, a fantasy for orchestra *Night on Bald Mountain* (also known as *A Night on the Bare Mountain*), the orchestral suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and the Introduction and Polonaise from the opera *Boris Godunov*. These “latest” editions proved to be popular and became commercially very successful.

In the table of contents on the cover (*Illustration 3*) of the score, the *Scherzo* and *Intermezzo* were written in Latin: No. 1. *Scherzo* (B-flat major); No. 2. *Intermezzo* (B minor). The name of the next piece — No. 3. *Marche turque* (A-flat major) — was changed: from “March” in the 1883 edition to “Turkish March” with a clear reference either to the *Turkish March* from *The Ruins of Athens* by Ludwig van Beethoven or to *Rondo alla turca* from the piano sonata KV 331 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Two orchestral pieces were added from the opera *Khovanshchina*: No. 7 (Introduction de l’opéra *Chowantchina*) and No. 9 (Entr’acte de l’opéra *Chowantchina*) instrumented by Rimsky-Korsakov. Noteworthy is that these opuses were not considered by Musorgsky to be separate concert pieces. Not to mention the orchestral suite from *Khovanshchina*, which did not exist at all, but which was offered by Bessel under number 10: *Suite: Introduction, Entr’acte et Danses persanes de l’opéra Chowantchina*.

The title No. 8. *Tableaux musicaux. Suite* was misleading, as Musorgsky did not compose this orchestral work. In fact, Bessel published eight pieces from the piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* orchestrated by Mikhail Tushmalov (1861–1896), a violinist and composer who was a student of Rimsky-Korsakov. The involvement of his teacher in the writing of the score still remains unclear.

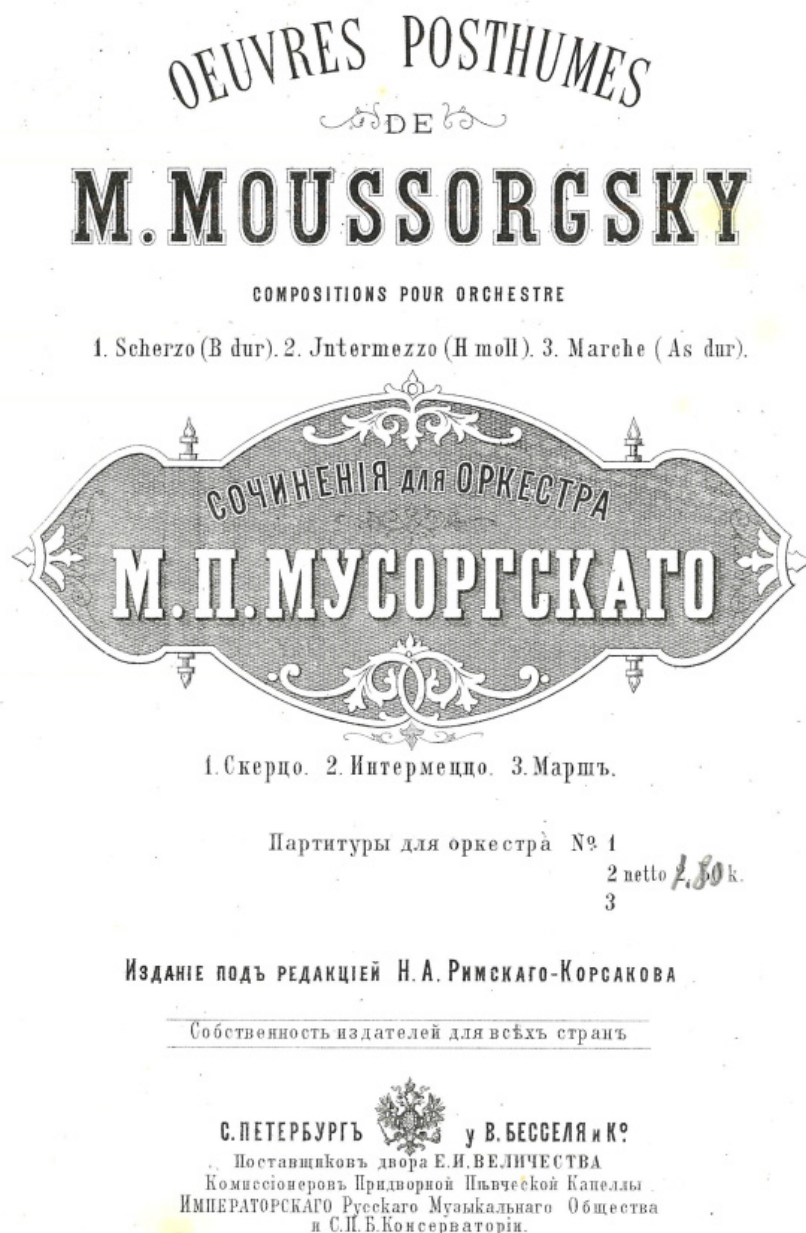


Illustration 2. Cover for the series Works for Orchestra by Modest Musorgsky engraved in 1883 by the publishing firm W. Bessel and Co

OEUVRES POSTHUMES
DE
M. MOUSSORGSKÿ
pour l'orchestre

М. МУСОРГСКИЙ

СОЧИНЕНИЯ ДЛЯ ОРКЕСТРА
ИНСТРУМЕНТОВАННЫЯ Н. А. РИМСКИМЪ-КОРСАКОВЫМЪ

	Partition	Parties	Piano à 4-mains
N° 1. Scherzo. (B-dur).	net. — 75 c	net. 1.35 c	— 85 c
	M. 1.70	M. 3.40	M. 2.-
2. Intermezzo. (H-moll).	1.80 c	" 2.Rbl.	1.35 c
	M. 5.-	M. 5.-	M. 3.-
3. Marche turque. (As-dur).	1.20 c	" 1.75 c	1.15 c
	M. 2.60	M. 4.75	M. 2.50.
4. Danses persanes de l'opéra „Chowantchina“.	" 2.Rbl	" 2.60 c	1.25 c
	M. 4.50	M. 6.50	M. 3.-
5. Une nuit sur le mont chauve. Fantaisie.	2.50 c	" 4.50 c	2.75 c
	M. 6.-	M. 12	M. 6.-
6. Introduction et polonaise de l'opéra „Boris Godounoff“.	" 2.Rbl	" 3.25 c	1.25 c
	M. 5.-	M. 8.15	M. 2.50
7. Introduction de l'opéra „Chowantchina“.	" — 60 c	" 1.50	
	M. 1.50	M. 3.-	M.
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Illustration 3. Cover for the series Modest Musorgsky. Works for Orchestra instrumented by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, engraved in the late 1890s by the publishing firm W. Bessel and C^o

From the second half of the 1890s, Bessel started providing a reference to the Leipzig printing house of *Breitkopf & Härtel* (Germany's oldest publishing house) on the cover page. According to Felix Purtoy, he established "commission-based relationships with a number of leading European firms. In 1888, a relevant agreement was signed with *Breitkopf & Härtel* (Leipzig) and *Adolph Fürstner* (Berlin)" [8, p. 473]. In 1902, the operas *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*, orchestral works, the piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and the song cycle *The Nursery* were included in the catalog of *Breitkopf & Härtel* and began to be distributed in European countries and the United States.¹⁸

*Musorgsky's Song Cycles as Edited by Rimsky-Korsakov
in 1900–1908*

At the beginning of the century, the series of vocal compositions was expanded and new editions were published, partly due to the fact that Bessel's publishing house entered the European market. In 1900, *The Nursery* cycle, which includes seven pieces, was re-engraved, and a new censorship permit was granted on July 5, 1900.¹⁹ The score was typeset in a freer manner than in the edition published during the composer's lifetime, but the characteristic frame and vignettes on each page were preserved. The text was corrected for punctuation; the titles of each piece were printed in Russian and French; French text was added to the lyrics (*Illustration 4*).

The cover for *The Nursery*, designed in 1872 by the artist Ilya Repin, was slightly changed to include the name of the translator: *Paroles françaises de Michel Delines*, i.e., French lyrics by Michel Delines — writer, publicist, and translator Mikhail Ashkinazi (1851–1914), who worked under the pseudonym Michel Delines. The composer's name is engraved in French: *Musique de M. Moussorgsky* (*Illustration 5*).

¹⁸ *Verzeichnis des Musikalienverlages von Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig. Vollständig bis Ende 1902*. (1902). Breitkopf & Härtel, pp. 704–705.

¹⁹ Moussorgsky, M. (1900). *Enfantines: Sept mélodies piano et chant, musique et poesie de M. Moussorgsky*. W. Bessel & C^{ie}. [Depôt unique pour la France et la Belgique chez E. Frommont à Paris (Rue d'Anjou, 40)]. The dissemination of music by Russian composers abroad in the last decades of the 19th century contributed to the establishment of the authority of publishing houses [9].

48

пальцамъ такъ больно, ма-ма. Ма-ма! вотъ въ самыхъ кончикахъ, вотъ тутъ, такъ
Oh, que j'ai mal et que je souffre! I - ci, les ongles me font si mal;

но-етъ, но-етъ такъ.... Нѣтъ! ка-ковъ коготъ, ма-ма....
ils me brûlent, oh! Mais, ce chat, quel brigand, ma-ma,

ad libit. parlando

Vivo.

a?
dis!

sf p f sf

Дозв. Ценз. С. п. б. 5 Июля 1900 г. 135 б Лит. В. Вессель и К. Троиц. ул. № 24.

Illustration 4. The last page of *The Nursery* with the date of the censor's approval

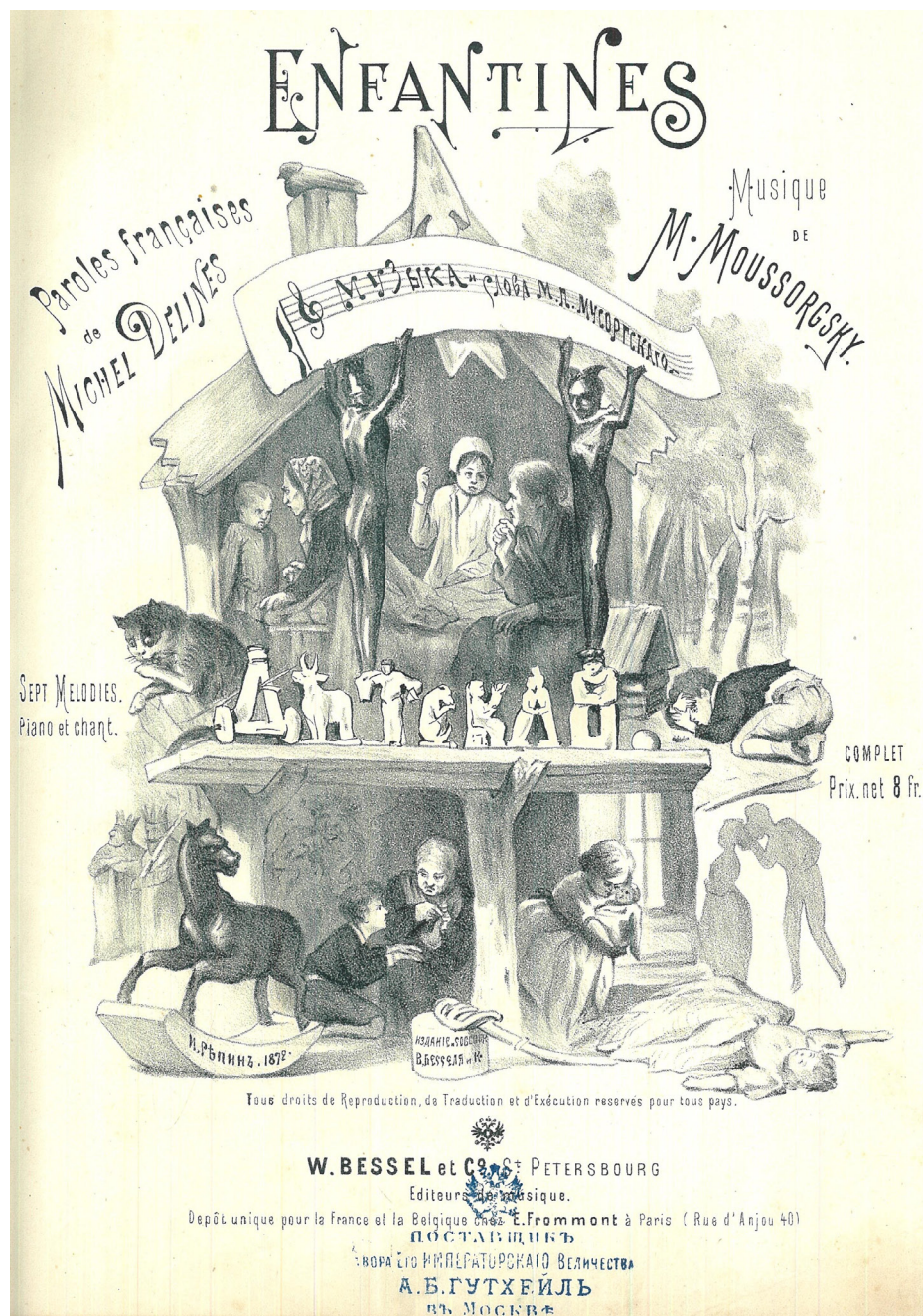


Illustration 5. Cover for Musorgsky's song cycle *The Nursery* with French lyrics intended to be sold in France and Belgium. The name of the translator is specified on the upper left side of the page: "Paroles françaises de Michel Delibes"

In the 1900 edition, the song cycle appeared under a new title in French — *Enfantines* — which indicated considerable liberties taken by the publisher. The fact is that *The Nursery* obviously implied a special room in which most of the action of the five songs took place. In this case, the accurate translation would be the French *chambre des enfants*. However, the plural form of the adjective *Enfantines* can be understood as “children’s songs,” “children’s music,” or “children’s notebook.” It is precisely these, not the most accurate meanings, that are conveyed by the title *Enfantines*. The publication did not include the name of the editor. Rimsky-Korsakov was not named on the cover, nor was he mentioned on the cover pages for the songs *Ride on a Hobby Horse* and *The Cat Sailor*, whose score he had prepared for publication.

The next publication of Musorgsky’s vocal compositions by Bessel dates back to 1908. It was intended not only for Russian and French but also for German musicians. The series had only a French title: *M. Moussorgsky. Oeuvres vocales. Mélodies et Scènes lyriques a une voix avec accompagnement de piano. Nouvelle édition. Rédigés par N. Rimsky-Korsakow*, i.e., *Modest Musorgsky. Vocal Compositions. Romances and Opera Scenes for Voice with Piano Accompaniment. New Edition. Edited by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov* (Illustration 6).

The total number of vocal works remained the same, i.e., 21 romances and three song cycles, as in the 1882 publication. The French verb *rédigier* used by Bessel to describe the nature of Rimsky-Korsakov’s work has no accurate and unambiguous translation into Russian. Depending on the context, it can be understood as both “to edit” and “to write,” which may have been done deliberately in order to provide a general description of Rimsky-Korsakov’s work or to indicate certain copyright subtleties.

The editing and publishing innovations of the 1908 publication, produced jointly by Russian and German firms and intended for European and American musicians, were as follows:

- the music plates were newly engraved;
- Rimsky-Korsakov revised all of Musorgsky’s vocal compositions included in this edition, not just those published posthumously;
- the cover page for the publication listing Musorgsky’s vocal compositions published by Bessel exists only in French;

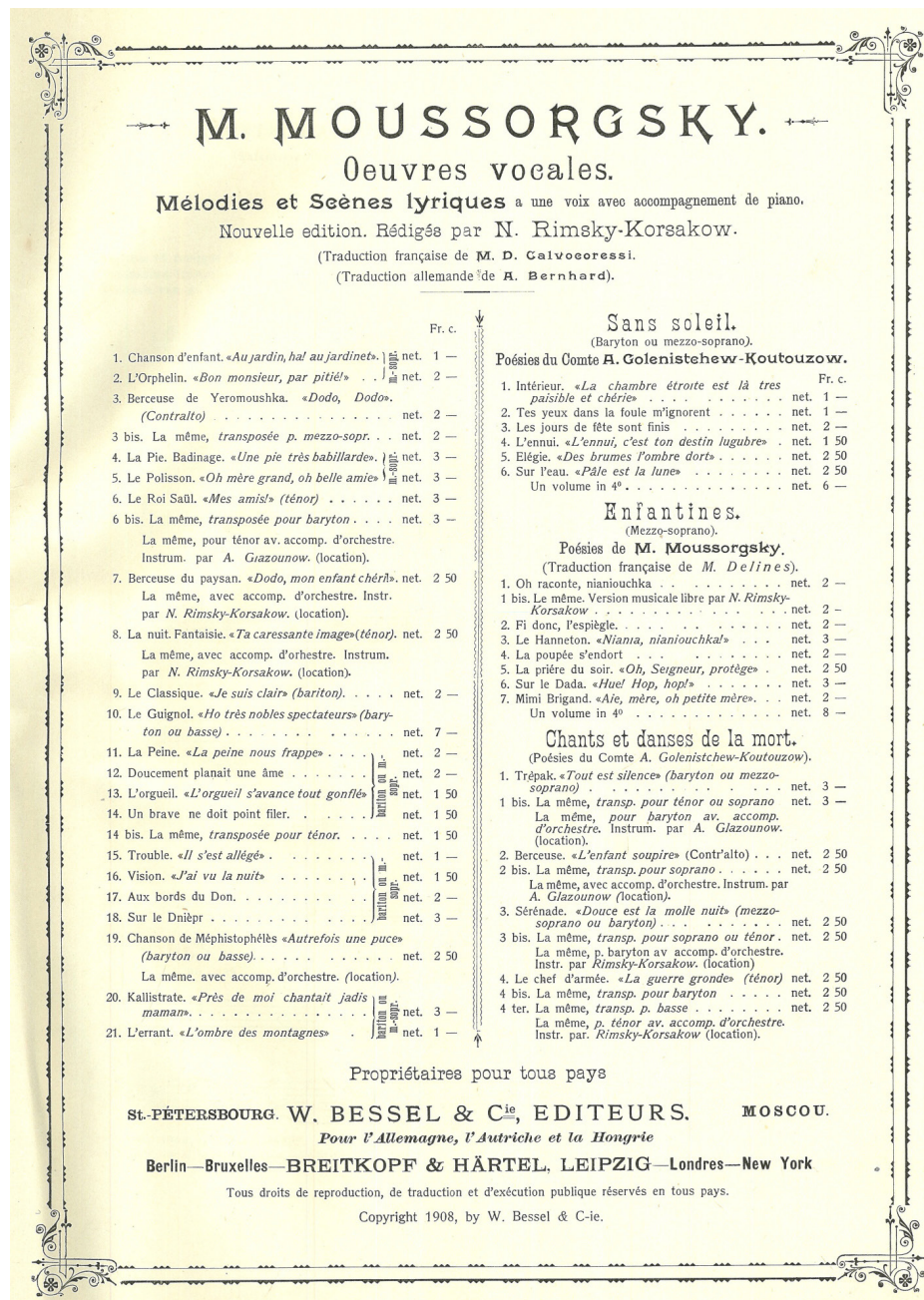


Illustration 6. M. Moussorgsky. Oeuvres vocales. Mélodies et Scènes lyriques à une voix avec accompagnement de piano. Nouvelle édition. Rédigés par N. Rimsky-Korsakow. Cover for the 1908 edition

- the title of each song and the author of the lyrics are given in three languages: French, German, and Russian;

- the lyrics are also engraved in three languages: French (top line), German (middle line), and Russian (bottom line). Most of the French translations were specially made for this edition by Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi²⁰ only in *The Nursery*, the texts by Delines (from the previous publication) were kept. The German translations were made by the musicologist and composer August Bernhard.²¹

To *The Nursery*, Rimsky-Korsakov added a “1bis” version, composing back in 1897 what he described as a free musical interpretation of the romance, which was not published until 1908. For *Songs and Dances of Death*, Rimsky-Korsakov created, either on his own initiative or at Bessel’s suggestion, several transposed versions of each piece, intended for different types of singing voices. Additional versions are denoted by Latin ordinal numbers: “bis” (second) and “ter” (third). Musorgsky did not specify for which type of voice (soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, or bass) each romance was intended; however, the ranges of vocal parts suggest that he did not expect the cycle to be performed by a single singer from beginning to end. With the additions made by Rimsky-Korsakov, it became possible for a single person to perform the entire cycle. For example, for *Trepak* the versions are specified on the cover: No. 1 — for medium voice (baritone or mezzo-soprano); No. 1bis — for high voice (tenor or soprano); No. 1ter — for low voice (bass or contralto).

It is known that Rimsky-Korsakov saw Bessel’s edition about a month before his death on June 8 (21), 1908, as evidenced by Vasily Yastrebtsev’s diary entry on May 6, 1908: “During my visit to the house of Rimsky-Korsakov, I was looking through the new edition of Musorgsky’s romances (with French lyrics) at the study and saw that the romance with nanny from *The Nursery* was available in two

²⁰ Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi (1877–1944), a French-British music critic, musicologist, and translator.

²¹ August Bernhard (1852–1908), Russian musicologist, translator, composer, and educator. Director of the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in 1897–1905.

versions: in its original form and under the same number with the note ‘bis’ in Rimsky-Korsakov’s free musical interpretation.”²²

The 1908 publication was the final, most complete, and most accurate version for both Rimsky-Korsakov and the music publishing company of Bessel.

Vasily Bessel died in 1907. After his death, the publishing house was inherited by his younger brother Ivan and his two sons, Vasily and Alexander [10]. In 1917, they emigrated to Belgrade, then moved to London, and later to Paris. Purtov provides information about the existence of six volumes of unpublished correspondence between two music publishers (W. Bessel and C^o. and *Breitkopf & Härtel*) in the Saxon State Archives in Leipzig, covering the period from 1910 to December 1935. The first one and a half volumes are devoted to the business contacts between the two publishing houses until December 1913. They address issues such as the publication of works by Russian composers, the protection of copyrights to their works that are held by the publisher, the staging of operas by Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov in Europe and the United States, and the receipt of a share of the profits from opera performances in various theaters [8, pp. 473–474].

The website of *Breitkopf & Härtel* currently offers sheet music for Musorgsky’s works as edited by Rimsky-Korsakov. Of the orchestral works, the scores of *Scherzo* in B-flat major²³ and *Night on Bald Mountain* as arranged by Rimsky-Korsakov are advertised²⁴ (*Illustration 7*).

The domestic segment of the market for sheet music publications by major publishing houses — *Musyka*, *Kompozitor*, *Kompozitor • Sankt-Peterburg*, *MPI (Music Production International) • Auto Graf* — offers no works by Musorgsky as edited by Rimsky-Korsakov. However, numerous editions by W. Bessel and C^o. can be found in sufficient quantities and good condition in library collections — Printed Music and Sound Recordings

²² Yastrebtsev, V. V. (1960). *Nikolaj Andreevich Rimskij-Korsakov. Vospominaniya V. V. Yastrebtseva* [Nikolai A. Rimsky-Korsakov. *Memoirs of V. V. Yastrebtsev*]. (2 Vols., Vol. 2: 1898–1908). Gosudarstvennoe muzykal’noe izdatel’sтво, p. 515.

²³ Musorgskij, M. P. (n.d.). *Scherzo in Bb major*. Breitkopf & Härtel. <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/4871/scherzo-in-bb-major>

²⁴ Musorgskij, M. P. (n.d.). *A Night on the Bare Mountain*. Breitkopf & Härtel. <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/4863/a-night-on-the-bare-mountain>

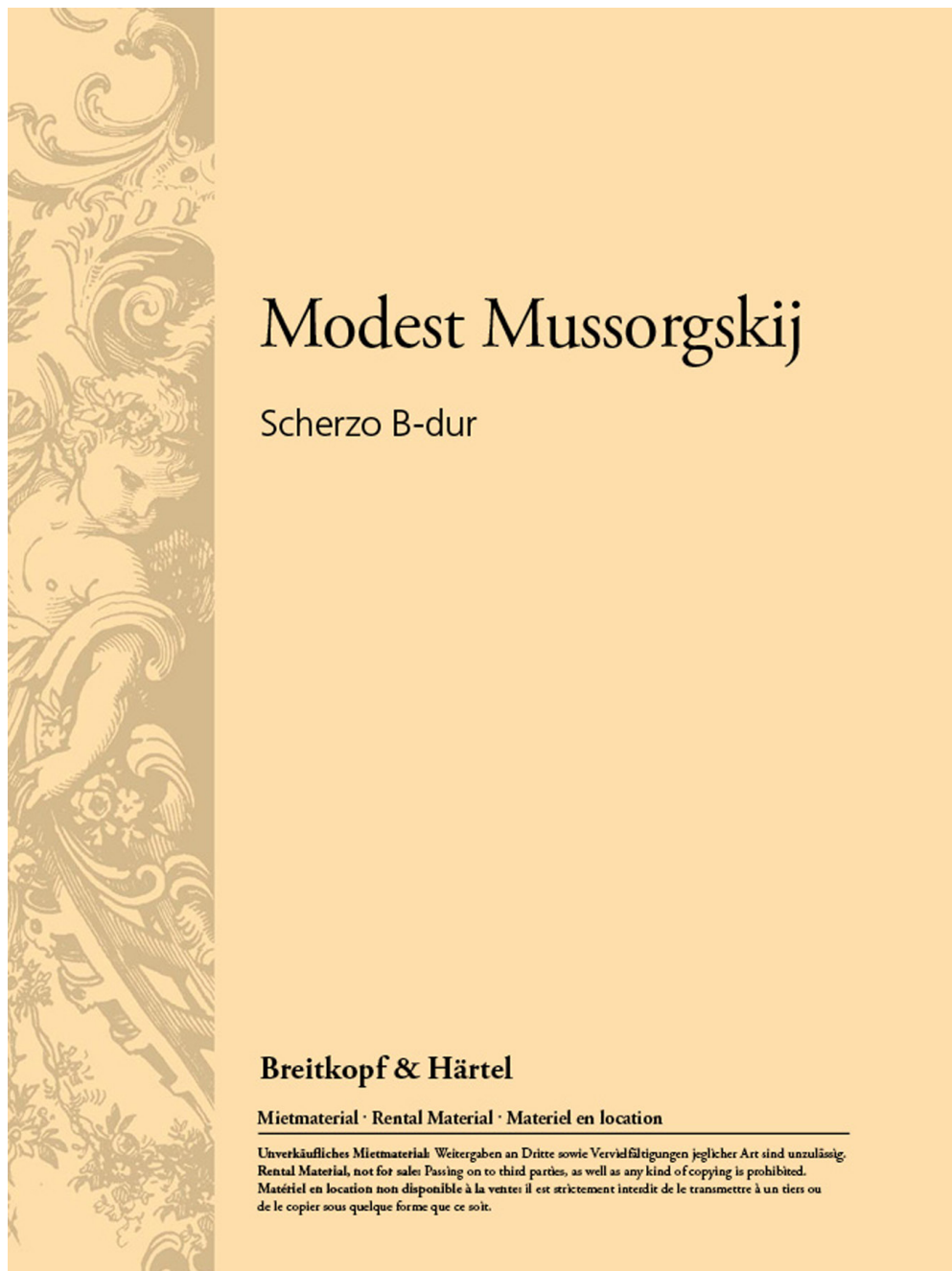


Illustration 7. Modest Musorgsky. Scherzo in B major as arranged by Rimsky-Korsakov [orchestral score] on the website of Breitkopf & Härtel

of the Russian State Library (Moscow) and Printed Music and Recorded Sound of the National Library of Russia (St. Petersburg).

Conclusion

It is well known that a wide range of performers and listeners in Russia, Europe, and America first became acquainted with Musorgsky's compositions through Rimsky-Korsakov's editions rather than their original form. For over 40 years (1882–1928), only Rimsky-Korsakov's editions of symphonic opuses and song cycles were used in concert practice [11].

However, after Pavel Lamm²⁵ published his versions of vocal compositions as part of *Complete Works by Modest Musorgsky* (1927–1939), interest in Rimsky-Korsakov's editions gradually declined, and they were performed less frequently in concert halls. Just as musicians rediscovered forgotten or completely unknown versions of Musorgsky's works around the turn of the 1920s–30s, the vocal editions of Rimsky-Korsakov currently need to be rediscovered [12].

An academic publication of Musorgsky's orchestral and vocal works as revised by Rimsky-Korsakov, which are textually verified against surviving manuscripts and the edition published by Bessel, will be carried out as part of a research and publication project by the State Institute for Art Studies (*Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works*). The editions by Rimsky-Korsakov, a great musician and outstanding practitioner, along with the original works, will become available for study and performance to professional musicians, teachers, students, and music lovers.

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²⁵ Pavel A. Lamm (1882–1951), a musicologist, pianist, expert in source studies, textual analyst, and the chief science editor of *Complete Works by Modest Musorgsky* (1927–1939), which was never completed.

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