



ИСКУССТВОВЕДЕНИЕ

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РУССКАЯ КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ТРАДИЦИЯ КАК ФАКТОР ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ ЭТЮДОВ С. М. ЛЯПУНОВА

В статье рассматривается, как знание различных факторов, влияющих на создание музыкальных произведений, коренным образом меняет и обогащает исполнительское прочтение. Анализируются два сочинения С. М. Ляпунова из его фортепианного цикла этюдов. Делается вывод, что предложенный исследовательский подход применим для изучения музыки широкого круга композиторов.

Ключевые слова: Ляпунов, фортепиано, этюды, интерпретация, русская культура, программная музыка, Лист.

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AWARENESS OF RUSSIAN CULTURAL TRADITION AS A FACTOR IN INTERPRETING SERGEI LYAPUNOV'S ÉTUDES

The music of Russian composer Sergei Mikhailovich Lyapunov (1859–1924), remains largely unknown today. Even his monumental cycle and best known work for piano, the *Douze études d'exécution transcendante*, Op. 11, continues to be neglected and misinterpreted in both academic writings and performances, being often cited merely for its historical significance. I contend that a basic reason for this lies in a lack of appreciation of the music's cultural essence, whereby it is regarded as a second-rate copy of Liszt's work of the same name. Certainly, Liszt had a profound effect on Lyapunov's compositional and pianistic techniques. Nevertheless, most of Lyapunov's études are very Russian in spirit and reveal that the composer was inspired by the rich cultural traditions in which he was deeply rooted.

In this study, I present some facts and sources that are generally unknown. By examining them, I uncover some of what these études are about. In particular, I focus on exploring programmatic references in two of the études that represent an enormous impact of Russian culture on Lyapunov. On this basis, I offer interpretive suggestions that add to the authenticity of a performance and its artistic effect.

I start with a cursory introduction to Lyapunov, his music, and the *Douze études*. I trace Liszt's influence and point out the other sources of inspiration on Lyapunov. I consider general and specific similarities between Lyapunov's studies and their Lisztian models and highlight another connection between the two composers: their common attraction to "program music".

I continue with investigation of an intriguing publication history of the Étude No. 3, *Carillon*. I explain the meaning of an enigmatic asterisk sign found in one of the editions, which points to the music's quoting of a major hymn of the Russian Orthodox Church. I demonstrate how awareness of this distinctive and meaningful reference can greatly influence the interpretation of *Carillon*.

Another example of how knowledge of cultural context enhances the interpretation of this music is furnished by the Étude No. 8, *Chant épique*. I show how features of this étude arise from the text of a Russian folk song that Lyapunov collected during his folk research expedition and quoted in this work. I had the great good fortune to find the original music and lyrics of this song in a rare 1899 book, *Songs of Russian People*. I offer my own translation of this poetic text.

In conclusion I emphasize that interpretation is insufficiently informed without taking into account the widest possible context, broadly understood; any programmatic or extra-musical elements behind a given composition; and, finally, the general cultural environment that surrounded the composer. In light of this, I suggest how the ways in which I have examined the *Douze études* could be applied not only to compositions by lesser-known Russian composers, but also to the celebrated pieces by the renowned masters.

Keywords: Lyapunov, piano, études, interpretation, Russian culture, program music, Liszt.

Sergei Mikhailovich Lyapunov (b. Yaroslavl, Nov. 18/30, 1859; d. Paris, Nov. 8, 1924) was a distinguished Russian composer, pianist, conductor, ethnomusicologist, editor, and pedagogue of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A younger contemporary of Tchaikovsky and Borodin, Lyapunov belonged to that category of composers who, during a time of rapid and immense changes in Western art music (set in motion by Debussy and Scriabin and continued by Schoenberg and Stravinsky, among others), rejected avant-garde trends of composition and remained faithful to the late Romantic tradition and to the aesthetic principles of the Russian classics.

Although Lyapunov's creative output encompasses nearly all of the leading musical genres of his time (with the exception of opera) and includes symphonic, choral, vocal, sacred, and chamber compositions, the principal medium for his artistic expression was the piano. More than half of his works were written for this instrument² and it is his piano compositions that continue to be regarded as being particularly attractive and among the composer's highest artistic achievements. The piano also plays a central role in his two piano concerti, in the *Rhapsody on Ukranian Themes* for piano and orchestra, as well as in the piano sextet and a number of songs.

It seems unjust that Lyapunov's piano music remains largely unknown today. This is despite the fact that it was highly esteemed and widely performed during his life by such legendary artists as Josef Hofmann, Josef Lhévinne, Ferruccio Busoni, Ricardo Viñes, José Vianna da Motta, Konstantin Igumnov, and Vladimir Horowitz³. Even his monumental cycle and best known work for piano, the *Douze études d'exécution transcendante*, Op. 11 (1897–1905), hardly ever finds its way onto the modern concert stage, either in or outside of Russia, and is often cited merely for its historical significance.

Several reasons might account for the continuing neglect of Lyapunov's piano music. One possible explanation of what discourages pianists from approaching this étude cycle in particular is its tremendous technical and musical demands, which often surpass those set by Chopin and Liszt in their corresponding étude collections. However, I would suggest that a basic reason for the neglect lies in a lack of appreciation of the music's cultural significance, whereby it is regarded as a second-rate copy of Liszt's work of the same name. Certainly, Liszt had a profound effect on Lyapunov's compositional and pianistic techniques, as well as on his programmatic approach, as I point out below. Nevertheless, most of these études are very Russian in spirit, and consequently involve a great deal more than mere imitation of Liszt's style. One of the primary goals of the present essay is to demonstrate that Lyapunov was deeply rooted in the richest traditions of Russian culture. It is my hope, therefore, that a better understanding of the nature of Lyapunov's music will bring deserved attention to these exquisite masterpieces.

In this study, I present some facts and sources that are generally unknown. By examining them, I attempt to uncover some of what these études are about. In particular, a substantial part of my article is devoted to exploring programmatic references in two of the études that represent a tremendous influence of Russian cultural heritage on Lyapunov. I explain the meaning of an enigmatic asterisk sign found in one of the edition of *Carillon*, which points to the music's quoting of a major hymn of the Russian Orthodox Church. Also I show how features of *Chant épique* arise from the text of a Russian folk song that Lyapunov collected during his folk research expedition and quoted in this étude. On this basis, I provide interpretive and practical suggestions that can add to the authenticity of a performance and its artistic effect.

² Of the seventy-one works bearing *opus* numbers, thirty-five are original composition for solo piano. This number does not cover several works for solo piano without *opus* numbers, a few arrangements of Lyapunov's and other composer's works, and a number of unpublished piano compositions.

³ The respect that Lyapunov enjoyed during his life is also evident from the fact that his early Piano Concerto No. 1 in E-flat minor, Op. 4 (1890) won the renowned Belyaev Glinka Prize in 1904, along with such celebrated works as Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, Scriabin's Third and Fourth Piano Sonatas, Arensky's Piano Trio in D minor, and Taneyev's Symphony in C minor.

Liszt's Influence and Other Sources of Inspiration

Lyapunov's *Douze études d'exécution transcendante*, Op. 11 belong to the middle period of the composer's career and undoubtedly represent the summit of his artistic achievement. They were written in tribute to Franz Liszt, and more specifically as a corresponding set to the third version of his twelve transcendental studies bearing the same title: *Études d'exécution transcendante* (1852). While Liszt's études descend from the open to the flat keys (from C major and A minor to D-flat major and B-flat minor), Lyapunov's studies occupy the remaining tonalities: those in the sharp keys left out by Liszt, commencing with F-sharp major and D-sharp minor and finishing with G major and E minor. In addition, the final étude in Lyapunov's collection is entitled *Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt*, and is a monumental homage to the composer's favourite hero.

Along with the numerous general similarities between Lyapunov's studies and their Lisztian models, there are more specific parallels between some of the études in each of the sets, with a number of Lyapunov's studies having their equivalents in Liszt's. The most obvious and illustrious example of these correspondences is seen between Lyapunov's *Ronde des sylphes* (No. 11) and Liszt's *Feux follets* (No. 5). Here, the similarities seem to penetrate almost all the aspects of the music: the common time signature (2/4) and the initial dynamic marking of *piano*; commencement with the off beats and by the right hand alone, with the left hand joining in the middle of the second measure; the ascending chromatic run of thirty-second notes at the beginning; frequent employment of diminished-seventh harmonies; almost identical performance indications (*allegretto*, *leggierissimo*, *scherzando*, *dolce*, etc.); and technical concern with double notes and extremely difficult wide leaps. The more general representational matters relate to portraying the supernatural world of elusive spirits, which requires the most imaginative approach from a pianist in order to achieve a fleeting and weightless atmosphere; and the widest possible palette of tone colours to heighten the effect of miraculous harmonies and modulations and the impact of transparent and ethereal textures.

In other cases, the similarities between the particular études are less radical and explicit, yet still readily recognizable (and evident even on a visual comparison of the scores). For example, the opening material of Lyapunov's *Carillon* (No. 3) has an evident textural resemblance to Liszt's *Harmonies du soir* (No. 11). Here, in both introductory sections, the low bass notes in the left hand are followed in a similar way by eighth-note chordal bell motives in the right hand in the middle register. The texture of Lyapunov's *Harpes éoliennes* (No. 9) is clearly inspired by Liszt's *Chasse-neige* (No. 12), since both studies incorporate continuous rapid tremolos, written as sixty-fourth notes, to portray the blowing of wind. The two studies also share compound time signatures (9/8 and 6/8 respectively), canonic treatment of themes, and the effect of juxtaposing quintuplets in one hand against sextuplets in the other. Lyapunov's *Nuit d'été* (No. 5) is closely related to Liszt's *Ricordanza* (No. 9) by virtue of having a similar structure and sharing an improvisatory nature and a lyrical atmosphere. It has been noted by many that Liszt's Étude in F minor (No. 10) served as a model for Lyapunov's *Tempête* (No. 6), particularly since the latter incorporates similar technical devices. Some writers also trace connections between *Idylle* (No. 7) and *Paysage* (No. 3), and between *Chant épique* (No. 8) and *Eroica* (No. 7), by Lyapunov and Liszt, respectively.

Another notable connection between Lyapunov and Liszt is their common attraction to "program music". The majority of Liszt's works are associated with programmatic or extra-musical subjects, and the representation of poetry or abstract ideas through music became central to the composer's conception. Liszt invented the term "program music" and defined a program as a "preface added to a piece of instrumental music, by means of which the composer intends to guard the listener against a wrong poetical interpretation, and to direct his attention to the poetical idea of the whole or to a particular part of it" [14]. Analogous to Liszt's studies, all études in Lyapunov's collection are examples of "program music". Each of them contains extra-musical and programmatic elements, bearing a depictive title in French⁴ evocative of the subject matter.

As I declared earlier, it would be unfair to restrict the compositional influences on Lyapunov to Liszt. One can also trace many other sources of inspiration, including Balakirev, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov,

⁴ Only two studies are supplied with the Russian translations under their French titles in the Zimmermann edition: *Carillon* (No. 3) and *Chant épique* (No. 8). See [9], vol. I, 16 and vol. III, 8.

Mussorgsky, Lyadov, Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Schumann, and Henselt. Moreover, Lyapunov's reverence for that central presence in Russian life, the belief system of the Russian Orthodox Church together with its various material and symbolic expressions (which is manifested through his employment of Russian Orthodox liturgical music and his references to Russian church bells); his very deep love of, and fascination with, ancient folk traditions; his finding inspiration in the best Russian poetry and other literary genres – all these elements profoundly affected Lyapunov's style and led directly to salient features in the *Douze études*.

Mysteries in the Publication History of *Carillon*

A striking example of apparent concealment of the facts for political reasons, one that relates directly to the subject of interpretation, is found in a 1947 Soviet edition of the transcendental etudes [11]. The score of the third étude has the following subtitles: “Étude III” and the Russian title “Трезвон” [11, p. 4], translated to both French and English as *Carillon*. In the Zimmermann edition of 1958⁵, however, the page preceding the music of *Carillon* is provided with a written program by Lyapunov himself, presented in four languages: Russian, French, German, and English [9, vol. I, p. 15]. The program describes the sounds of majestic church singing that alternates, and is later interspersed, with the triumphant ringing of church bells. I present the English text here: “In the distance is heard the ringing of a bell, across the measured strokes of which come the sounds of a hymn. The ringing grows louder and louder and the church-chimes blend with the sounds of the principal bell. The solemn tones of the hymn alternate with the sounds of the bells, ending in a general majestic choral effect interspersed with the deep sounds of the great bell” [9, vol. I, p. 15].

It goes without saying that if the composer decides to publish a program or an epigraph along with the score of a musical work⁶ or to provide some other guide to representation,⁷ such cues are essential to the work's meaning and its interpretation and cannot be ignored. It seems most likely that in the case of this étude, the Soviet editors omitted the program because of the politically unwelcome allusions to the Russian Orthodox Church and what they might be presumed to reveal about the religious views of the composer.

The mysteries of *Carillon* do not end with the omission of the program in the Soviet edition. This is evident from a simple comparison of the editions, which reveals another programmatic aspect that poses questions requiring more research, being as yet inadequately explained. In measure 38 of the Zimmermann edition, the marking *pesante* is followed by an enigmatic asterisk with a close parenthesis, which suggests the presence of an explanatory footnote (see Example 1).

Example 1. Lyapunov, *Carillon*, Op. 11, No. 3, mm. 38–40 [9, vol. I, p. 19]

⁵ Julian Heinrich Zimmermann was the first to publish Lyapunov's études in Leipzig between 1900 and 1905.

⁶ For example, in Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* or Brahms's *Intermezzo* Op. 117, No. 1.

⁷ For example, in Liszt's *Sposalizio* and *Il Penseroso* the composer requested that both pieces be illustrated with the drawings of Raphael's painting *The Marriage of the Virgin* and Michelangelo's sculpture on the inner title page.

However, the corresponding footnote can be found neither at the bottom of the page nor anywhere else in the four volumes of this edition. Michael Burford is the only one who attempted to solve this mystery and did so only partially. He discovered that in the autograph, the asterisk was placed not at the second (m. 38), but at the first appearance of the chant-like theme (m. 7), after the identical performance indication, *pesante*. There, the asterisk has a corresponding footnote at the bottom of the page: “Mélodie de l’église orthodoxe russe” [4, p. 201]. Burford further pointed out that the Peters edition is the only one that did justice to the autograph by supplying the asterisk with the relevant footnote, still, however, not in measure 7 as originally indicated by Lyapunov but in measure 38. Burford explained that the reason for placing the asterisks in relation to the second appearance of the theme in both Zimmermann and Peters editions can be traced to the uncorrected proofs of the étude, where the asterisk with its footnote is deleted from measure 7 and inserted instead into measure 38 [4, p. 202].

Although worthy of attention, this confusion on the location of the asterisk and the omission of the footnote is not the most remarkable attribute of this publication history. What is striking is that in the 1947 Soviet edition, neither asterisk nor footnote is found, either in measure 7 or in measure 38 [11, p. 14, 17]. While Burford assumes that the omission of the footnote in the Zimmermann edition reflects carelessness on the part of the editor [4, p. 202], I am not convinced this is the case with the Soviet edition. Obviously, the editors knew what the asterisk meant (as it is very unlikely that they didn’t have access to the autograph) and purposely removed it and the footnote, in the same way as they omitted the entire program to this étude by the composer.

Not surprisingly, some Soviet musicologists (and following them, their Western colleagues) describe this theme using such vague words as, for example, “solemn melody of Russian origin” [16, p. 65] or “joyful Russian melody” [5, p. 13]. Banks gets more specific but still claims that the main theme is only “reminiscent of an Orthodox chant melody” [3, p. 98]. Burford went to considerable effort to identify the true source for this church hymn but unfortunately did not do so correctly, claiming that this theme is a setting of Psalms 135 and 136 [4, p. 143]. Only Onegina rightly identified the origin of this theme as one of the main Orthodox Church hymns, “O come, let us worship” [13, p. 144]. The words of this ancient chant, sung by the choir at every Divine Liturgy on Sundays and major feast days, are: “O come let us worship and fall down before Christ; O Son of God Who rose from the dead, save us who sing unto Thee: Alleluia” [17, p. 8]. While Lyapunov would have assumed that most Russians knew this hymn, he probably indicated the melody’s origin, in general terms, with a view toward Western consumption of the music. It is perhaps an indication of how successful the Soviet regime was in temporarily obliterating this central feature of Russian culture from the minds even of educated people, that musicians and scholars of the Soviet era could not immediately place it.

I believe that the knowledge of these words and their context can have a great impact on the interpretation of *Carillon*. Traditionally, the Orthodox Church does not use musical instruments for its services, and instead relies on chanting and choral a capella singing, since the human voice is seen as the most perfect instrument of praise. In the case of this étude, the main theme (in m. 7 and again in m. 38) evokes the singing of the male choir, mainly in four-part harmony. In view of this, it would be inappropriate, in performing these passages, to give prominence only to the top voice and to treat the other three voices as serving a subordinate, accompanying role. The same approach should also not be applied to the last statement of this theme, *Poco meno mosso* (mm. 99–107), which depicts the pious prayer now sung by a mixed choir and as if now heard coming from the church but afar (see Example 2).

In fact, performers of this étude often overemphasize the top voice in these places, thus depriving the music of the splendid resonance and richness associated with choral singing, and making it sound too pianistic. Instead, one should pay attention to all the voices, especially bringing out those that are moving either in parallel or contrary motion. That way, there is also no need for an exaggerated volume of sound. Note that Lyapunov indicates only *forte* in measure 38 and that *fortissimo* does not come until the victorious and majestic restatement of the main theme in measure 84, perhaps referring to the words “Who rose from the dead”. Even there, one should achieve a monumental and powerful effect without forcing the sound and resorting to unnecessary bodily tension, just as a choir, no matter how large, need never sound forced to create an impression of great strength. I would also like to point out that excessive body movements and virtuosic histrionics

Example 2. Lyapunov, *Carillon*, Op. 11, No. 3, mm. 98–107 [11, p. 22].

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system consists of a piano (treble clef) and bass (bass clef) staff. The tempo is marked 'Poco meno mosso' and the dynamics include a forte 'f' marking. The second system also consists of piano and bass staves, with the tempo marked 'ritenuto assai' and dynamics including 'più p'.

would be completely out of place in the performance of this étude, bearing in mind the evocation of prayer and the seriousness of the text. Similarly, excessive *rubato* and frequent changes of tempi, often heard on recordings, are inappropriate for this music. An overly Romantic approach to singing, involving ostentatious affectations, is simply absent from worship in the Orthodox Church.

I think that the best way to summarize my own interpretive conclusions is to provide the recollections of the composer's daughter, Anastasiya Lyapunova, concerning the performance manner of her father, especially since they relate directly to the interpretation of *Carillon* and run along lines parallel to those of my observations. These words are not direct quotations from Lyapunova but are as paraphrased in Onegina's dissertation: "According to the recollections of A. S. Lyapunova, the performance of her father was distinguished by the absence of external effects and convulsive tension, even in the most technically difficult places, by the attention to all details of the composition, and by the fullness and power of the sound. Outstanding in this regard was the composer's interpretation of the étude *Carillon*, which Lyapunov performed with majestic simplicity. The bass sounds combined with the small bells struck their rhythm precisely and evenly, without any fuss. In the final *Grandioso* the tension was also absent, which to a large extent was compensated by the power inherent in the music itself" [13, p. 162–163].

Chant épique and Lyapunov's Folk Expedition

Another example of how a program enhances the interpretation of the music is found in one of the grand-est études of the series, No. 8, *Chant épique*. This time, the existence of the program is not explicit since it does not appear in the score. I believe I have discovered one, but only as a result of research. The programmatic aspect in this étude also has a very different origin, being derived from Lyapunov's fascination with collecting folk music. According to Anastasiya Lyapunova, her father loved Russian folk songs from his childhood and regarded them as a very rich source of musical creativity [12, p. 91].

In 1893 Lyapunov became a member of the Imperial Russian Geographic Society. In the same year the Society commissioned him, together with Fyodor Mikhailovich Istomin to collect ancient Russian folk songs from the regions of Vologda, Vyatka, and Kostroma, to the north-east of Moscow. While Lyapunov was in charge of the musical part of their journey, Istomin was responsible for writing down the texts and making notes on the customs associated with the folk singing. The expedition was productive, returning with 265 folk songs, 165 of which were published by the Society in 1899 as the *Songs of Russian People* [7]. Besides gathering folk songs, Lyapunov was also very interested in discovering rare examples of folk instrumental music. He penned several examples of church bells, one of the shepherd's pipe tunes he heard, and a few

melodies played on *gusli* and other rare Russian folk instruments. This 1893 expedition had enormous impact on Lyapunov's creativity, and since that time, as Anastasiya Lyapunova has reported, a folk element entered securely into her father's musical language, permeating not only his piano compositions but also his vocal and symphonic works [12, p. 92].

Chant épique is based on one of the folk songs, *Iz za lesu-tu, da lesu temnova* ("Out of the Woods, Dark Woods") from the *Songs of Russian People*. While most scholars provide the name of this song in connection to this étude, none of them cites this book in a bibliography, and as a result, none of them presents the text. I had the great good fortune to find this rare book and to study it in detail. Its 165 songs represent a variety of important Russian ancient song genres, including wedding, love, family, dance, ritual, funeral, epic, soldiers', thieves', and prisoners' songs, as well as spirituals and Christmas carols.

The folk song, "Out of the Woods, Dark Woods", appears under the general category of so called "drawn out" or "prolonged" songs (*prot'yazhnaya pesnya*), a type of melismatic peasant song, which usually begins on a decorated fifth of the scale and descends to the tonic. This song also falls into a second subcategory, that of a recruits' and soldiers' songs. I present the beginning of this song as it appears in the *Songs of Russian People* (see Example 3).

Example 3. The Folk Song "Out of the Woods, Dark Woods" [7, p. 249]

Изъ за лѣсу-ту, да лѣсу темнова

♩ = 80

Изъ за лѣ - су ту Да лѣ - су те -

Занѣвъ.

- мно-ва, Да лѣ - су те -
Да го - ры кру -

- мно-ва, Изъ за го - ры то Да
- ты - я, Да не бѣ-ла-я зо - рень-ка

го - ры кру - ты - я
За - ни - ма - ла - ся,

Although it was a challenge to translate this poetic nineteenth-century Russian text into English, I offer my own translation in Appendix. It is interesting to note that Lyapunov retained the song's original tonality of F-sharp minor, writing *Chant épique* in the same key. The first time that the melody of this folk song is quoted in the étude is in measures 41–46 (see Example 4). Please compare this example to the previous one to see that these six measures of the étude almost literally follow the first six measures of the song, the only exception being that the first measure in the étude is complete while in the song it consists of only the two quarter notes.

Example 4. Lyapunov, *Chant épique*, Op. 11, No. 8, mm. 38–49 [11, p. 65–66]

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The key signature is F-sharp minor (three sharps). The first system begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic marking and a tempo instruction *pp ma poco marcato*. The notation consists of a right-hand melody and a left-hand accompaniment of broken staccato octaves. The second system continues the melodic and accompanimental lines. The third system shows the continuation of the piece, with a *p* dynamic marking appearing in the first measure of the system.

Taking into account the song's melody and the fact that almost all statements of this theme in the étude retain its original contour, I would like to offer one piece of practical advice. Consider the presentation of the theme in measures 71–76, which is comprised of broken staccato octaves in the left hand and continuous sixteenth-note movement divided between both hands. Although there are no extra stems to identify the melody more clearly, it is essential to bring it out. Therefore, it is decidedly not that one should emphasize every first sixteenth note played by the left hand's thumb, and only those notes. There are three instances in which the thumb of the right hand must also be brought out, as though it had an imaginary eighth-note stem: on the second sixteenth note of the first beat in measure 72 (D4) and on the second sixteenth note of both the third and fourth beats in measure 75 (C-sharp 4 and A3). That way, the melody becomes clearly audible instead of being lost among the accompanimental layers.

Some scholars deem *Chant épique* to be less successful than the other studies, criticizing it for its length (about eight minutes) and a lack of thematic development that allegedly renders it static [1, p. 105]. Even Lyapunov's teacher, Karl Klindworth, to whom the composer sent a copy of the cycle's second edition for his assessment, while generally admiring the achieved result, had the following criticism to make: "Pianistically the work is both effective and original. But I would have preferred the form to be more compact; the more over-extended the form becomes the more it becomes apparent that the melodic content does not demand it. This deficiency was particularly noticeable to me in 'Bylina' ('Chant épique') where the theme of 6 bars is tiresomely rephrased through 19 pages" (cit. in [4, p. 253]).

While not denying Lyapunov's tendency to exaggerate formal proportions and a predilection for unhurried thematic development in some of his large-scale works (for example, his Sonata in F minor, Op. 27), I believe that this leisurely and cumulative approach is totally appropriate and even necessary in the case of this étude. First, as one can see, the text of this song itself is rather long, especially considering the fact that every second line has to be repeated. In addition, the poetic narrative unfolds in a very unhurried manner, thus creating a feeling of suspense and uncertainty. For example, after hearing the initial two strophes: "out of the woods dark woods", and "out of the mountain steep mountain", one cannot predict what is about to happen. Even after reading the third and fourth strophes, "it was not the white dawn that appeared," and "it was not the red sun that rose", one still cannot comprehend the song's meaning, or even guess at it. Moreover, from the melodic point of view, we again see this slow moving development, since the setting is usually melismatic (hence "drawn out" song). Thus, for example, the word forest extends over one and a half measures, and the word dark, over two and a half measures (see Example 3). In light of this, I do not consider Lyapunov's numerous repetitions of short fragments of the song in augmentation (introduction, mm. 1–40) to be redundant and unnecessary in any way. Quite the opposite, they seem to correspond exactly with the suspense projected by the song's words. I believe that it is the task of a performer to create this feeling of uncertainty. Moreover, I do not feel any sense of monotony or lack of musical process in this introductory section, precisely because none of these short fragments (or for that matter, any of the future statements of the theme) is literally repeated. Compare measures 1–3, 11–13, 20–21, 23–24, 26, and 35–38 to notice that there are changes in dynamics and articulation, and variation by way of fragmentation and diminution, all of which contribute to achieving the effect of soldiers slowly approaching from the depths of the forest. Once again, I am convinced that it is up to the performer of this étude to pay attention to all these little differences and, by never repeating similar passages in exactly the same way, to produce the desired effect. Even the first two motives (mm. 1–3 and 11–13), although identical, contain slight changes in dynamics, *poco sf* and *sf*, respectively, and one should definitely convey these differences in the performance.

This étude poses another interpretive problem for the performer, one that deserves a brief commentary. In the introductory section (mm. 1–40), and later at the return of the main theme (beginning in m. 165), the short fragments of the folk song's melody are interspersed with arpeggiated figures marked *armonioso imitante salterio* (appearing in m. 4). This indication has challenged several scholars. Thus, Chernyshev defined these arpeggios as being harp-like [5, p. 22], while both Banks and Kaiserman suggested that the music of these passages should remind one of the bard who accompanies his singing on a psaltery [3, p. 89]. Only Shifman and Burford have rightly pointed out that Lyapunov, in this passage, is imitating the effect of *gusli*⁸, the oldest Russian plucked keyboard instrument of the psaltery family [15, p. 133; 4, p. 89].

While most performers find, in one way or another, the piano sound appropriate for illustrating bells, flute, piccolo, and shepherd's pipe (imitated in études Nos. 3, 4, and 7), it seems that the indication *armonioso*

⁸ According to some scholars, *gusli* may have come to Russia from Byzantium by the year 1000. This instrument is considered to be a symbol of Russia's musical culture and used to play a major role in the life of every Russian, being loved by the Tzars, nobility, and peasants alike. *Gusli* was the principal instrument of the *skomorokhi*, the professional wandering minstrels. It was also used by professional bards as well as by peasant storytellers, who accompanied their sung or spoken epic heroic poems (*bylinas*) on this instrument.

imitante salterio is generally misinterpreted not only in writings, but also in performances. Pianists too often overemphasize the highest voice (and/or the lowest notes) in these arpeggiated passages, treating them harmonically or chordally. By losing the presence and clarity of the inner voices, they make these passages sound too pianistic and sometimes even achieve a quasi-impressionistic effect. Without claiming to be an expert on the performance practice of *gusli*, I will nevertheless offer some practical suggestions on how to achieve the closest approximation to the sound of this folk instrument on the piano. Since the *gusli* is a plucked instrument, every note should be treated with equal value, and played with a more or less similar attack. I would suggest not playing these arpeggiated figures with relaxed fingers and, as a result, combining the eight notes into one gesture. Rather, I would urge the performer to treat them more melodically and to employ a precise attack on each of the eight notes. Quite a challenging task, considering that in some cases Lyapunov asks us to execute them with a *piano* or *pianissimo* dynamic, and also with the pedal being held for some time (implied by the long pedal tones in the bass). I also mention that despite the fact that *gusli* (when played solo) is a rather quiet instrument, it nevertheless has a certain brightness of tone and at times even a ringing sound. As such, these passages should not be played too quietly (perhaps, with the exception of mm. 169–173 and 177–181, where Lyapunov indicates *pianissimo*), but rather in such a way as to create an effect of resonance and to allow the overtones to spread in the air. Consider the episode in measures 85–89, in which, I believe, Lyapunov evokes the effect of an entire ensemble of *gusli* players. Although marked *piano*, Lyapunov adds the additional indication, *ma sonore*. I contend that one should apply the same performance directive to measure 4, also marked *piano*, and even more so to corresponding passages, which follow and in which the dynamic level rises. That way, these figures will not sound bleak and pale, but will rather acquire a certain resonance, brightness, and liveliness, namely, those characteristics typically associated with the *gusli*.

I also want to consider a question first raised in an article by Richard Davis: “What was the significance of devising the last bar [of *Chant épique*] as a modification of the last bar of Balakirev’s piano Fantasy on themes from Glinka’s opera, *A life for the Tsar*?” [6, p. 194]. The last measures of both works are indeed very similar, since they contain only rests for the duration of the entire measure, with the marking of *fermata* in the case of Lyapunov’s étude. However, there are countless examples in the piano literature in which the final measure contains only silence. But this fact has absolutely no significance. What Davis had surely meant is that at least the last eight measures of Lyapunov’s étude bear a striking resemblance to the material in the final eight measures of Balakirev’s *Fantasy*, a piece that was written as early as 1855 but revised in 1899, just a few years before the completion of this etude [11, p. 81; 2, p. 29].

Moreover, both works share the tonality of F-sharp minor and incorporate a number of Lisztian techniques (most notably bravura passages, tremolos, and octaves). What is the more telling, however, is that both compositions conclude in the parallel key of F-sharp major. In the case of the étude, Chernyshev understands this change to major as typical of the *bylina* genre⁹, saying that the coda “becomes a patriotic dance in celebration of victory over the invaders and the traditional happy ending to the *Bylina*” [5, p. 23]. In the case of Balakirev’s *Fantasy*, one must turn to the libretto of Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar* to learn that, in the epilogue on the stage, the crowd of people celebrate the triumph of the new Tzar by proclaiming glory to him and to Susanin’s heroic memory. After I acquainted myself with the words of the song collected by Lyapunov, the answer to Davis’s question became clear to me. Just as is the case with the libretto of Glinka’s opera and, by association, with Balakirev’s *Fantasy*, the lyrics of the song also refer to the Russian Tzar, and Lyapunov’s use of this song as the basis for *Chant épique* reflected his patriotic and monarchistic worldview. Had Lyapu-

⁹ *Bylina* is the Russian title of *Chant épique* and appears underneath the French title in the Zimmermann edition since there is no adequate translation of this word to any language, *Chant épique* being only an approximate translation. *Bylina* is a traditional Russian epic heroic poem, traced by some historians as far back as the tenth century. Typically, *bylinas* depicted a heroic struggle of Russian people against various invaders and their mighty deeds and heroic victories.

nov chosen to hint at the program for this étude (e. g. by naming the song, or providing its initial lines or the entire text in the score), that would have undoubtedly aggravated the Soviet authorities. Had they suspected any reference to the Tzar in connection with the music of this étude, they would surely have removed the program as they did in the case of *Carillon*, and just as they changed the words of Glinka's opera and its original title, *A Life for a Tsar*, to the more general and disguised title, *Ivan Susanin*.

* * *

I cannot stress enough that interpretation is insufficiently informed when one does not take into account the widest possible context – consideration of the composer's biography; his cultural, political, philosophical, social, and religious views; any programmatic or extra-musical elements behind a given composition; and, finally, the general cultural environment that surrounded the composer, which may be one of absorption in a vast national heritage. I believe, then, that the ways in which I have examined the *Douze études* by Lyapunov could and should be applied not only to obscure compositions by lesser-known composers, but also to very prominent works by, for example, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and Stravinsky. How much this approach might illuminate the content of such popular work as Stravinsky's *Three Movements from the Ballet "Petrouchka"*! How much more meaning the interpretation of this work would acquire if the performer were to realize that Stravinsky uses two Russian folk songs in the third movement of that work, each with more than a nod to its lyrics, as well as imitating some Russian folk instruments! But this is a subject deserving a separate essay.

In conclusion, while it is true that Lyapunov's music did not have an explicit, or any sort of determining, influence on future generations of Russian composers, his attitude to ambitious music, which was that it should reflect the basic sources and preoccupations of its cultural context, broadly understood, is common to most of the major Russian composers of his time, and is a major reason for the depth of conviction with which they composed, and for the evident success they had. Moreover, realizing this and drawing the appropriate insights therefrom should provide the musical community with an avenue for the more sympathetic consideration that I hope many fine Russian composers from the end of the long nineteenth century, and others similarly neglected, will enjoy in the future.

Appendix. Translation of the Folk Song *Iz za lesu-tu, da lesu temnova*¹⁰

Out of the Woods, Dark Woods

Out of the woods	Behind the crest
Dark woods.	The White Tzar leads,
Out of the mountain,	And after Himself he leads
Steep mountain.	His mighty legions,
It was not the white dawn	His forces,
That appeared,	And not small ones.
It was not the red sun	Not small forces
That rose.	But forty-three regiments.
There appeared rather	Forty-three regiments,
The Tzar's crest.	Dense with soldiers.
The crest of the Tzar	All the soldiers
Of the Emperor.	Who are new recruits.

¹⁰ My own translation from nineteenth-century Russian into English is as literal as possible and does not capture the song's original flow, charm, and rhythm.

In front march
 All the volunteers,
 And behind lag
 All the conscripts.
 And the volunteers
 Burst out with songs,
 And the conscripts
 Cried tearfully.
 Then spoke
 The White Tzar:
 “Do not cry,
 My dear soldiers.
 When the morning comes I will
 Present you gifts.

And I will not grant you rubles,
 Or *poltinas*¹¹,
 But six *arshins*¹²
 Of the dark blue cloth.
 Of the dark blue cloth,
 And of the precious, dark red one!”
 Then they raised their voices
 All the soldiers:
 “Let us sew then
 A great coat for everyone,
 And out of the leftovers
 We’ll sew caps for everyone,
 And out of the clippings
 We’ll sew gloves for everyone!”

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¹¹ *Poltina* was a Russian Imperial silver coin, it was equal to the one half of the Russian ruble – 50 kopecks.

¹² *Arshin* is an old Russian measurement unit of length equaling to 28 inches or 71 centimeters.