

WIGMORE HALL

Thursday 28 September 2023

6.00pm Rachmaninov Song Series Pre-Concert Talk

Songs by Sergey Rachmaninov, his colleagues and followers form the basis for a new series at Wigmore Hall co-curated by Iain Burnside and Philip Ross Bullock. Join Philip for an introduction to this evening's first installment of the series.

7.30pm

Anush Hovhannisyán soprano
Jasurbek Khaydarov bass
Iain Burnside piano

Nikolay Myaskovsky (1881-1950) Moon and mist
Serenade
Spiders
Contradictions
Pain
Dust

Anatoly Alexandrov (1888-1982) Evening twilight
When I met you for the first time
In the spring, the poplar changes its leaves
When they say to me 'Alexandria'

Mikhail Fabianovich Gnesin (1883-1957) Insomnia

Interval



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Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)	Arion Op. 34 No. 5
	Morning Op. 4 No. 2
	I came to her Op. 14 No. 4
Yuliya Veysberg (1880-1942)	Song Op. 1 No. 1
Sergey Rachmaninov	A dream Op. 8 No. 5
	Were you hiccougging, Natasha?
Maximilian Steinberg (1883-1946)	Woodland grass Op. 6 No. 1
Sergey Rachmaninov	Fate Op. 21 No. 1
	In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1
	To her Op. 38 No. 2
	The ratcatcher Op. 38 No. 4
	Christ is risen Op. 26 No. 6
	Discord Op. 34 No. 13
	Letter to K.S. Stanislavsky

The 80 or so songs that Rachmaninov wrote between 1890 and 1917 so dominate the repertoire that other important composers remain unknown, even in Russia itself. This series celebrates Rachmaninov's genius by putting him in dialogue with his equally gifted contemporaries, many of whose songs are likely being performed at Wigmore Hall for the first time. The songs of Russia's so-called 'Silver Age' deserve to be as familiar as the early 20th-century German Lied or French *mélodie*, and audiences will encounter a remarkable body of poetry, as well as much original and imaginative music.

When **Rachmaninov** graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in 1892, he was very much seen as the heir to Tchaikovsky. That is certainly the impression given by his early songs, in which he was often drawn to the same poets, and sometimes even the same texts, as the older composer. Musically, many of his songs of the 1890s – his *4 Romances* Op. 4 (1893), *6 Romances* Op. 8 (1893) and *12 Romances* Op. 14 (1896) – pay homage to Tchaikovsky's love of melody, his fondness for lyric landscapes, and subtle exploration of human emotion. Although there were some who criticised the seeming conservatism of Rachmaninov's literary and musical preferences, he proved to be open to new sources of inspiration. In 1897, he met the great bass Fyodor Chaliapin, who helped him unlock a more dramatic approach to musical narrative. The following year, composer and singer worked together on the score of *Boris Godunov*, and in the *12 Romances* Op. 21 (1902) and the *15 Romances* Op. 26 (1906), one can hear just how much he had learned from Musorgsky's declamatory approach to musical speech.

New ideas came from the world of literature too. In 1912, Rachmaninov received a letter from a young poet, Marietta Shaginian, who admired his music but decried what she saw as his poor taste in literature. Although Rachmaninov never quite reconciled himself with the more experimental verses of the Russian modernists, he nonetheless set a number of poems proposed by Shaginian in his *14 Romances* Op. 34 (1912-15), and his *6 Poems* Op. 38 (1916) mark his greatest engagement with the literature of the day. They also remind us that despite Stravinsky's acid description of Rachmaninov as 'a six-and-a-half-foot scowl', he had an impish sense of good humour.

Rachmaninov's career – like those of his friends and near contemporaries, Medtner and Skryabin – was intimately linked with Moscow. Traditionally, the city's reputation has been that of a more conservative, more authentically 'Russian' older sibling to that younger, more outward-looking and more iconoclastic upstart, St Petersburg (founded by Peter the Great in 1703 and capital of the Russian Empire until 1918). In the first decades of the 20th Century, St Petersburg became a crucible for artistic innovation. It was at the city's 'Evenings of Contemporary Music', for instance, that both Prokofiev and Stravinsky made their debuts.

Another regular at these soirées was **Myaskovsky**, then a student at the St Petersburg Conservatory, and in December 1908 he made his debut with a number of settings of the poetry of Zinaida Gippius. Gippius was one of the leading representatives of Russian symbolism, and the publication of her first volume of poetry in autumn 1903 was one of the most widely discussed literary events of the era. Hostile critics disparaged her as a 'narcissistic decadent' and dismissed her poems as 'buffoonery bordering on indecent mockery', but more perceptive readers welcomed her tersely brooding, introspective verse. For those more familiar with Myaskovsky's 27 symphonies (all but three written during the Soviet era), his settings of Gippius might come as something of a surprise. Stark, stunned and stupefied, they capture the obsessive and uncanny horror of Gippius's poetry, as well as the ominous atmosphere of the *fin de siècle*.

But St Petersburg has always had two faces, and alongside its Dostoevskyan gloom, it has been celebrated for its light, elegance and beauty. These were the aspects of the city that most drew Mikhail Kuzmin, who rejected symbolist abstraction in favour of what he called 'beautiful clarity'. Openly gay, Kuzmin refused to conceal his sexuality and celebrated every pleasure afforded by life in some of the most sensuous poetry written in Russian. For many, his masterpiece was the sequence of 'Alexandrian Songs' written between 1905-8. In masterful blank verse, Kuzmin hymned life in the Hellenic city of Alexandria with a mixture of luminous joy and exquisite nostalgia. Kuzmin was himself a musician and wrote music for a number of his poems, yet it fell to the Moscow composer **Anatoly Alexandrov** to find a musical language that truly captured every fleeting nuance of his words. Full of echoes of Debussy, Ravel and Skryabin, his settings embody the cosmopolitanism of early 20th-century Russian song. Remarkably, he would continue to set Kuzmin's poetry until as late as 1926, before Stalin's rise to power swept away the achievements of Russia's 'Silver Age'.

Amongst the new voices to emerge in the early 20th Century were a number of Jewish composers, many of whom were associated with Rimsky-Korsakov, who encouraged them to establish a school of Jewish music, just as he had done so much to establish a Russian national tradition in the 19th Century. **Mikhail Gnesin** – whose three sisters founded the Gnesin Academy in Moscow – tackled some of the most challenging contemporary poetry in songs of knotty complexity. Here, he captures the feverish, even hysterical undertow of Pushkin's famous meditation on a sleepless night. **Maximilian Steinberg** was married to Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter Nadezhda, and was long the object of Stravinsky's jealousy. **Yuliya Veysberg** married Rimsky's son, Andrei. Tragically, she perished in the Siege of Leningrad in March 1942. Just one year later, Rachmaninov died in Beverly Hills.

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Nikolay Myaskovsky (1881-1950)

From *On the Threshold Op. 4* (1904-8)

Zinaida Gippius

Moon and mist

Ozero dyshit tyoplym tumanom.	The lake exhales a warm mist,
On muten i nezhen, kak sladkii obman.	as turbid and tender as sweet deception.
Boretsya nebo s zemnym obmanom:	The sky wrestles with earthly deception:
Luna, ves do dna, prorezayet tuman.	the moon shines right through the mist.
Ya, kak i lyudi, dyshu tumanom.	I, like all people, breathe in the mist.
Mne blizok, mne sladok uyutnyi obman.	So near, so sweet to me is cosy deception.
Tolko dusha ne zhivoyt obmanom:	The soul alone cannot live by deception:
Ona, kak luna, pronitsayet tuman.	like the moon, the soul penetrates the mist.

Serenade

Iz lunnogo tumana Rozhdayutsya mechty. Puskai, moya Svetlana, Menya ne lyubish ty.	Out of the moonlit mist dreams are born. It may well be, my dear Svetlana, that you do not love me.
Pust budet robkii lepet Neulovimo tikh, Pust tainym budet trepet Nezvuchnykh strun moikh.	May my shy babble be imperceptibly quiet, may the quivering of my silent strings remain a secret.
Nagrady ne zhelaya, Dusha moya gorit. Moi golos, dorogaya, K tebe ne doletit.	Wishing no reward, my soul is aflame. My voice, my darling girl, will never reach you.
Ya schastya nenavizhu, Ya radost ne terplyu. O pust tebya ne vizhy, Tem glubzhe ya lyublyu.	Fortune I despise, joy I cannot bear. Even if I cannot see you, I love you all the more.
Da budet to, chto budet, Svetla pechal moya. S toboi nas Bog rassudit — I k Bogu blizhe ya.	What will be will be, my sorrow is radiant. God may judge us both — yet I am closer to God.
Ishchu moyu otradu V sebe — lyublyu tebya. I etu serenadu Slagayu dlya sebya.	I seek my comfort in myself — though 'tis you I love. And this my serenade I compose for myself.

Spiders

Ya v tesnoi kelye – v etom mire.	This world is like a narrow cell in which I dwell.
I kelya tesnaya nizka.	And the narrow cell bears down on me.
A v chetyryokh uglakh – chetyre Neutomimyykh pauka.	And in its four corners are four insatiable spiders.
Oni lovki, zhirny i gryazni, I vsyo pletut, pletut, pletut...	They are deft, fat and dirty, and all they do is spin and spin and spin...
I strashen ikh odnoobraznyi Nepreryvayushchiysya trud.	and terrifying is their monotonous, unceasing labour.
Oni chetyre pautiny V odnu, ogromnuyu, spleli. Glyazhu — shevelyatsya ikh spiny V zlovonno-sumrachnoi pyli.	They have spun their four webs into one vast web. I look – their backs quiver in the stinking, twilight dust.
Moi glaza — pod pautinoi. Ona sera, myagka, lipka. I rady radostyu zverinoi Chetyre tolstykh pauka.	My eyes are right beneath their web. It is grey, soft, sticky. And they rejoice in the joy of their beastliness those four fat spiders.
<h3>Contradictions from <i>Unseen Op. 5</i> (1905-8)</h3>	
Tikhiye okna, chyornye... Dozhdik idyot shyopotom... Mysli moi – nepokornye. Serdtse polno – ropotom. Padayut kapli zharkie, Robko, s mirnym lepetom. Mysli – takiye yarkiye... Serdtse polno – trepetom. Travy shepchutsya sonnye... Nezhnoi veyet skukoyu... Mysli moi – vozmushchyonnye, Serdtse gorit – mukoyu... I molchanye vecherneye, Sonnoye, otradnoye, Ranit yeshchyo bezmerneye Serdtse moyo zhadnoye...	Quiet windows, quiet and black... Drizzle falls, whispering... My thoughts are unruly. My heart is filled with grumbling. Hot tears fall, timidly, amidst the world's babbling. My thoughts are so bright... My heart is filled with quivering. The sleepy grass whispers... The air is filled with tender tedium... My thoughts are indignant, my heart burns with suffering... And the evening silence, sleepy, long-desired, wounds my greedy heart ever more immeasurably...

Pain from *Premonitions Op. 16* (1913-4)

Krasnym uglem tmu
cherchu,
Kolkim zhalom plot
lizhu,
Tugo, tugo zhgut
kruchu,
Gnu, lomayu i
vyazhu.

I trace the gloom with
red-hot coal,
I lick the flesh with a
barbed sting,
tightly, oh so tightly, I turn
the tourniquet,
bend it, break it, and tie it
again.

Shnurochkom ssuchu,
Styanu i smochu.
Igroi razbuzhu,
Igloi pronizhu.

I will twist the little cord,
tighten it and moisten it.
I'll stir you with a little game,
piercing you with a needle.

I ya takaya dobraya,
Vlyublyus – tak
prisosus.
Kak laskovaya kobra
ya,
Laskayas,
obovyus.

Such a kindly girl am I,
I'll fall for you, get under
your skin.
I am like an affectionate
cobra,
ready to enfold you in my
close embrace.

I opyat sozhmu,
somnu,
Vint medlitelno vvinchu,
Budu gryzt, poka khochu.
Ya verna – ne
obmanu.

And again I'll squeeze
and crush you,
slowly I'll turn the screw,
nibbling when I feel like it.
I am faithful and won't
deceive.

Ty ustal – ya otdokhnu,
Otoidu i podozhdu.
Ya verna, Lyubov
vernu,
Ya opyat k tebe pridu,
Ya igrat s toboi khochu,
Krasnym uglem zacherchu...

You're tired – so let me rest,
I'll go away and wait a while.
I am faithful and will
always return your love,
I'll come back to you again,
I want to play with you,
drawing with red-hot coal...

Dust from *On the Threshold Op. 4*

Zinaida Gippius

Moya dusha vo vlasti strakha
I gorkoi zhalosti
zemnoi.
Naprasno ya begu ot prakha –
Ya vsyudu s nim, i on so
mnoi.

My soul is gripped by fear
and by the bitter pity of
the earth.
In vain do I flee the dust –
I am everywhere with it,
and it with me.

Mne v ochi smotrit noch
nagaya,
Unylaya, kak tyomnyi den.

The naked night stares
into my eyes,
as melancholy as the day
is dark.

Lish tuchi, nizko
nabegaya,
Dayut yei myortvennyu ten.

Only the low clouds,
rushing by,
lend it a deathly shadow.

I veter, vstav na mig
edinyi,
Dozhdyom dozhnul – i v mig
ischez.
Volokna seroi
pautiny
Plyvut i tyanutsya s
nebes.

And the wind, roused for
a brief moment,
brings a gust of rain – and
then drops again.
The grey fibres of a
spider's web
float and waft from the
heavens.

Polzut, kak dni zemnykh
sobytii,
Odnobrazny i mutny.
No set iz etikh lyogkikh
nitei
Tyazhele smertnoi
peleny.

They slither like days of
happenings on earth,
monotonous and turbid.
But the net of these light
fibres
is heavier than the shroud
of death.

I v prakhe dushnom, v dyme
pylnom,
K poslednei gibeli spesha,
Naprasno v uzhasse
bessilnom
Okovy zhizni rvyot
dusha.

In the sultry dust, the
moted smoke,
hurrying to its final doom,
in vain, in impotent
horror,
the soul breaks apart the
chains of life.

A kapli tonkiye po kryshe
Yedva stuchat, kak v robkom
sne.
Molyu vas, kapli, tishe,
tishe ...
O, tishe plachte obo
mne!

And on the roof, tiny drops
barely knock, as in a timid
dream.
I beg you, drops – be
quiet, oh so quiet...
Quietly shed your tears
for me

Pause

Anatoly Alexandrov (1888-1982)

From the Alexandrian Songs of Mikhail Kuzmin (1915-29)

Mikhail Kuzmin

Evening twilight

Vechernii sumrak nad tyoplym morem,	The evening twilight over the warm sea,
Ogni mayakov na potemnevshem nebe,	the twinkling of lighthouses in the darkened sky,
Zapakh verbeny pri kontse pira,	the smell of verbena at the end of a feast,
Svezheye utro posle dolgikh bdenii,	the freshness of morning after long vigils,
Progulka v alleyakh vesennego sada,	a stroll in the alleys of a garden in spring,
Kriki i smekh kupayushchikhsya zhenshchin,	the shouts and laughter of women bathing,
Svyashchennye pavliny u khrama Yunony,	the sacred peacocks by Juno's temple,
Prodavtsy fialok, granat i limonov,	vendors of violets, pomegranates and lemons,
Vorkuyut golubi, svetit solntse,	doves coo, the sun shines,
Kogda uvizhu tebya, rodimiyi gorod!	when shall I see you, oh city of my birth!

When I met you for the first time

Kogda ya tebya v pervyi raz vstretil,	When I met you for the first time
Ne pomnit bednaya pamyat:	my feeble memory cannot recall:
Utrom li to bylo, dnyom li,	was it in the morning or the afternoon,
Vecherom ili pozdnei nochyu.	in the evening or late at night?
Tolko pomnyu blednovatyte shchyoki,	All I can recall are pallid cheeks,
Serye glaza pod tyomnymi brovyami	grey eyes beneath dark brows,
I sinii vorot u smugloi shei,	and the blue collar around your swarthy neck,
I kazhetsya mne, chto ya videl eto v rannem detstve,	and it seems as though I saw this in early childhood,
Khot i starshe tebya ya mnogim.	even though I am so much older than you.

In the spring, the poplar changes its leaves

Vesnoyu listya menyayet topol,	In the spring the poplar changes its leaves,
Vesnoi vozvrashchayetsya Adonis	in the spring Adonis returns

Iz tsarstva myortvykh...	from the kingdom of the dead...
Ty zhe vesnoi kuda uyezhayesh, moya radost?	So where do you go in the spring, my joy?

Vesnoyu vse poyedut katatsya	In the spring everybody will go sailing
Po moryu il po sadam v predmestyakh	on the sea or race swift horses
Na bystrykh konyakh ...	through parks on the city's edge...
A mne s kem katakasya v lyokoi lodke?	but who is left to sail with me in a darting skiff?

Vesnoi vse nadenut naryadnye platya,	In the spring everybody will put on their finery,
Poidut poparno v luga s tsvetami sobirat fialki...	couples will head to the flower meadows to gather violets...
A mne, chto zh, doma sidet prikazhesh?	yet will you really order me to stay at home?

When they say to me 'Alexandria'

Kogda mne govoryat: 'Aleksandriya',	When they say to me: 'Alexandria',
Ya vizhu belye steny doma,	I see the white walls of a house,
Nebolshoi sad s gryadkoi levkoyev,	a little garden with its patch of scented stocks,
Blednoye solntse osennego vechera,	the pale sun of an autumn evening,
I slyshy zvuki dalyokikh fleit.	and I hear the sounds of far-off flutes.

Kogda mne govoryat: 'Aleksandriya',	When they say to me: 'Alexandria',
Ya vizhu zvyozdy nad stikhayushchim gorodom,	I see stars above the city as it falls silent,
Pyanykh matrosov v tyomnykh kvartalakh,	drunken sailors in its shady quarters,
Tantsovshchitsu, plyashushchuyu 'osu',	a dancing girl performing 'the wasp',
I slyshu zvuk tamburina i kriki ssory.	and I hear the sound of a tambourine and the cries of a quarrel.

Kogda mne govoryat: 'Aleksandriya',	When they say to me: 'Alexandria',
Ya vizhu bledno-bagrovyyi zakat nad zelyonym morem,	I see the pale-crimson dusk over the green sea,
Mokhnatyte migayushchiye zvyozdy	the twinkling of dishevelled stars
I svetlye serye glaza pod gustymi brovyami,	and bright grey eyes beneath thick brows,
Kotorye ya vizhu i togda,	which I see even when
Kogda ne govoryat mne: 'Aleksandriya'.	they do not say to me: 'Alexandria'.

Pause

Mikhail Fabianovich Gnesin (1883-1957)

Insomnia Op. 3 No. 1

(1908)

Alexander Pushkin

Mne ne spitsya, net ognya; Vsyudu mrak i son dokuchnyi. Khod chasov lish odnozvuzhnyi Razdayotsya bliz menya, Parki babye lepetanye, Spyashchei nochi trepetanye, Zhizni myshya begotnya... Shto trevozhish ty menya? Chto ty znachish, skuchnyi shyopot? Ukorizna, ili ropot Mnoi utrachenogo dnaya? Ot menya chego ty khochesh? Ty zovyosh ili prorochish? Ya ponyat tebya khochu, Smysla ya v tebe ishchu...	'Tis dark and I cannot sleep; all around is gloom and tedious slumber. Monotonously, a clock ticks somewhere nearby, fate, prattling like an old crone, night, quivering as it sleeps, life, scurrying like a mouse... Why do you bother me? What is the meaning of this dull whisper? Is it a reproach, or at least some grumble at the day I've wasted? What is that you want from me? Do you summon me? Or is this some prophecy? I wish I could understand you, I seek some meaning in you...
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Interval

Sergey Rachmaninov (1873-1943)

Arion Op. 34 No. 5 (1912)

Alexander Pushkin

Nas bylo mnogo na chelne; Inye parus napryagali, Drugiye druzhno upirali V glub moshchny vyosly. V tishine Na rul sklonyas, nash kormshchik umnyi V molchanye pravil gruznyi chyoln; A ya bezpechnoi very poln Plovtam ya pel... V drug lono voln Izmyal s nalyotu vikhor shumnyi... Pogib i kormshchik i plovets!	There were many of us in the boat: some kept the sail taut, others in unison dipped powerful oars into the deep. In the silence, leaning on the tiller, our skilled helmsman silently steered the laden vessel; and I, - full of carefree trust, - sang to the oarsman... Suddenly the cradle of the waves was sundered by a roaring whirlwind... The helmsman perished, and all the crew!
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Lish ya, tainstvennyi pevets, Na bereg vibroshen grozoyu. Ya gimny prezhniye poyu, I rizu vlazhnuyu moyu Sushu na solntse pod skaloyu.	I alone, the mysterious singer, cast ashore by the storm, I sing my former hymns, and dry out my damp garment in the sun under a cliff.
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Morning Op. 4 No. 2 (?1891-2)

M Yanov

'Lyublyu tebya! Shepnula dnyu zarya I, nebo obkhvativ, zardelas ot priznanya, I solntsa luch, prirodu ozarya, S ulybkoi posylal ey zhguchiye lobzanya. A den, kak by yeshchyo doveraya Osushchestvleniyu svoikh zavetnykh gryoz, Spuskalsya na zemlyu, s ulybkoi utiraya Blestevshiye vokrug ryady almaznykh slyoz.	'I love you! whispered dawn to the day and, embracing the sky, blushed from the confession, and a ray of sunlight, smiling, lit up nature, sending burning kisses to the dawn. But day, not yet believing that his cherished dreams had come true, descended to the earth with a smile that wiped away the rows of diamond tears shining all around...
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I came to her Op. 14 No. 4 (1896)

Aleksey Vasil'yevich Koltsov

Ya byl u nei; ona skazala: „Lyublyu tebya, moi milyi drug!“ No etu tainu ot podrug Khranit mne strogo zaveshchala. Ya byl u nei, na prelest zlata Klyalas menya ne promenyat; Ko mne lish strastiyu pylat, Menya lyubit, lyubit, kak brata. Ya byl u nei; ya vechno budu S yeyo dushoi dushoyu zhit. Puskai ona mne izmenit, No ya izmennikom ne budu.	I came to her, and she told me: 'I love you, my dear friend! But made me take a solemn vow to keep this secret from her girlfriends. I came to her, and she swore not to forsake me for the lure of gold; to burn with passion for me alone, to love me, to love me, like a brother. I came to her, and will forever live with her in my heart. Let her betray me if she will, I will never be a traitor.
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Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Yuliya Veysberg (1880-1942)

Song Op. 1 No. 1 (pub. 1911)

Mariya Koponitsksaya

Oi, poshla b ya zhit na vole, Slovno vikhr, chto svishchet v pole, Svishchet v pole, vyotyasa ptitsej, Gonit tuchi verenitsej V rokovuyu dal: – Tolko serdtsu zhal Toi nivj, Gde nad rechkoj plachut ivy, Gde rodnye kosti tleyut I kolosya mirno zreyut, Tolko serdtsu zhal.	Oh, if only I could go and live in freedom, like the blizzard that whistles in the open field, that whistles in the field, circling like a bird, chasing the clouds in a procession into the fateful distance: – But my heart would grieve for that cornfield where willows weep by a little brook, where familiar bones waste away and ears of corn peacefully ripen, oh how my heart would grieve.
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Oi, poshla by ya v put dalyokij, Kak idut vesnoi potoki, Kak plyvut rechnye vody – I spletayut khorovody I blestyat, kak stal. Tolko serdtsu zhal Toi khaty, Gde razrossya dub kosmatyi, Gde sverkayet sad rosoyu, Gde luga zvenyat kosoyu, Tolko serdtsu zhal.	Oh, if only I could go far away from here, just like the floods in spring, just like the river waters – dancing their merry way, and glinting like steel. But my heart would grieve for that little cottage, where a shaggy oak tree grows, where a garden glistens in the dew, where meadows ring with the sound of scythes, oh how my heart would grieve.
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Oi, poshla b ya khot za more Razognat nemoye gore, V sumrak noch besprosvetnoi Ponesla by klad zavetnyi, Ponesla pechal. Tolko serdtsu zhal Orlyonka, Shto v stepi klokochet zvonko, Shto nad lesom ptitsu gonit, Molodye peya ronit, – Tolko serdtsu zhal...	Oh, if only I head beyond the sea, there to dispel my mute sorrow, into the darkness of the sombre night I would carry my secret treasure, I would carry my sadness. But my heart would grieve for that little eaglet, which croons so sonorously in the steppe, which hunts a bird deep in the wood, scattering its young feathers there, – oh how my heart would grieve.
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Sergey Rachmaninov

A dream Op. 8 No. 5 (1893)

Aleksey Pleshcheyev, after Heinrich Heine

I u menya byl krai rodnoj; Prekrasen on! Tam yel kachalas nado mnoi... No to byl son!	I too had a native land; so beautiful! A fir tree swayed above me there ... but it was a dream!
Semya družei zhiva byla. So vsekhn storon Zvuchali mne lyubvi slovo... No to byl son!	My family were living friends and all around me words of love were spoken ... but it was a dream!

Were you hiccoughing, Natasha? (1899)

Pyotr Vyazemsky

Net! Ne umerla moya muza, milaya Natasha. Posvyashchayu tebe moi novyi romans.	No! My muse has not died, dear Natasha. I dedicate my new song to you.
Ikalos li tebe, Natasha, Kogda shampanskoye ya pil Razlichnykh vkusov, svoystv i vidov, Razlichnykh vozrastov i sil?	Were you hiccoughing, Natasha, while I was drinking champagne of various tastes, characteristics, and kinds, of varied vintages and strengths?
Kogda v voronezhskikh podvalakh Ya zhadno pominal tebya, Lyubya Natashu, poetessu Da i shampanskoye lyubya?	When in the cellars of Voronezh I was thinking about you so ardently, loving Natasha, my poetess, and loving the champagne too?
Zdes byot kastalskii klyuch, pitaya Nebasnoslovnouy struyoi; Poeziya zdes veshch ruchnaya; Pyat frankov dai i pei, i poi!	Here flows a Castalian spring, that inspires not like the fabled stream; here poetry comes in wine by the glass; pay your five francs, then drink and sing!

Maximilian Steinberg (1883-1946)

Woodland grass Op. 6 No. 1 (1907)

Konstantin Balmont

Ya lyublyu lesnye travy Aromatnye, Potselui i zabavy, Nevozvratnye. Kolokolnye prizyvy, Otdalyonnye, Na ruchyom usnuvshim ivy, Polusonnye. Ochertanye lits melknuvshikh, Neizvestnye, Teni skazok obmanuvshikh, Bestelesnye. Vsyo, shto manit i obmanit Nas zagadkoyu, I naveki serdtse ranit Tainoi sladkoyo.	Woodland grass is so dear to me, aromatic woodland grass, as are kisses and playful pastimes, never to return again. The calling of far-off bells, far-off bells, weeping willows by the sleeping brook, weeping willows, half asleep. Features of faces, flashing by, unfamiliar faces, shades of disingenuous fairy tales, incorporeal shades. All that lures us, all that deceives us by its mystery, wounding our hearts forever with its sweet secret.
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Sergey Rachmaninov

Fate Op. 21 No. 1 (1902)

Aleksey Apukhtin

S svoei pokhodnoyu klyukoy, S svoimi mrachnymi ochami Sudba, kak groznyi chasovoi, Povsyudu sleduyet za nami. Bedoi litso yyo grozit, Ona v ugrozakh posedela, Ona uzh mnogikh odolela, I vsyo stuchit, i vsyo stuchit: Stuk, stuk, stuk!... Polno, drug, Bros za schastyem gonyatsya! Stuk, stuk, stuk!...	With her walking crutch, with her somber gaze, fate, like a grim sentinel, pursues us wherever we go. Her face spells trouble, her hair is white from dire threats, she's already vanquished many, and she keeps on tapping, keeps on tapping: Tap, tap tap... Time's up, friend, give up chasing after happiness! Tap, tap tap...
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Bednyak sovsem obzhilsya s nei: Ruka s rukoi oni gulyayut, Sbirayut vmeste khleb s polei, V nagradu vmeste golodayut. Den tselyi dozhd ygo kropit, Po vecheram laskayet vyuga, A nochyu s gorya da s ispuga Sudba skvoz son ymu stuchit: Stuk, stuk, stuk!... Glyan-ka, drug, Kak drugiyе pozhivayut! Stuk, stuk, stuk!... Drugiyе prazdnovat soshlis Bogatstvo, molodost i slavu. Ikh pesni radostno neslis, Vino smenilos im v zabavu: Davno uzh pir u nikh shumit. No smolkli vdruk bledneya gosti... Rukoi drozhashcheyu ot zlosti, Sudba v okoshko k nim stuchit: Stuk, stuk, stuk!... Novyi drug K vam prishyol, gotovte mesto! Stuk, stuk, stuk!... No yest zhe schastye na zemle! Odnazhdy, polnyi ozhidanya, S vostorgom yunym na chele, Prishyol schastlivets na svidanye. Yeshchyo odin on, vsyo molchit, Zarya za roshchei potukhayet, I solovei uzh zatikhayet A serdtse byostsya i stuchit:	A poor man's learned to live with Fate: the two of them walk hand in hand, together they harvest grain from the fields, together they go hungry as their reward. Rain pelts him all day long, his evening comfort is whirling snow, and at night, in his grief and fear, fate comes knocking in his dreams: Tap, tap tap... Take a look, friend, how other people live! Tap, tap tap... Others gather to celebrate riches, youth and fame. Merrily their songs ring out, they pour wine for their pleasure; the noisy feast has lasted long, when suddenly the guests fall silent, turn pale... trembling with malice, the hand of Fate knocks at their window: Tap, tap tap... A new friend has come to the feast, set a place for her! Tap, tap tap... But there is happiness on earth! One day, full of anticipation, with youthful rapture on his face, a lucky lad's come to meet his sweetheart. He's still alone, all is silent, twilight darkens behind the grove, the nightingale finishes its song, his heart is beating, pounding:
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Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible.

Stuk, stuk, stuk, Milyi drug, Ty pridyosh li na svidanye? Stuk, stuk, stuk!...	Tap, tap tap... Dearest friend, will you come to meet me? Tap, tap tap...
No vot idyot ona, i vmig Lyubov, trevoga, ozhidanye, Blazhenstvo – vsyo slilos u nikh V odno bezumnoye lobzanye!	But here she comes, and in one instant love, alarm, anticipation, bliss – all flowed together for them into one mad kiss!
Nemaya noch na nikh glyadit, Vsyo nebo zalito ognyami, A kto-to tikho za kustami Klyukoi dokuchnoyu stuchit:	Mute night watches them, the whole sky is filled with lights, when someone softly behind a bush taps with her intrusive crutch:
Stuk, stuk, stuk!... Saryi drug k vam prishyol, Dovolno schastya! Stuk, stuk, stuk!...	Tap, tap tap... An old friend has come to see you, enough of happiness! Tap, tap tap...

Pause

In my garden at night Op. 38 No. 1 (1916)

Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok, after Avetik Isahakian

Nochyu v sadu u menya Plachet plakuchaya iva, I bezuteshna ona Ivushka, grustnaya iva.	At night in my garden a weeping willow weeps, and nothing will console her, sad willow, sad willow tree.
Ranneye utro blesnyot – Nezhnaya devushka-zorka Ivushke, plachushchey gorko, Slyozy kudryami sotryot.	With morning's first light – dawn, tender maiden, from the willow, weeping bitterly, will wipe away the tears with her tresses.

To her Op. 38 No. 2 (1916)

Andrei Bely

Travy odety Perlami. Gde-to privety Grustnye Slyshu – privety Milaya...	The grasses are adorned in pearls. Somewhere greetings sorrowful I hear, – greetings dear ...
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Milaya, gde ty – Milaya!...	Dear one, where are you, – dear one! ...
Vechera svety Yasnye, – Vechera svety Krasnye... Ruki vozdety: Zhdu tebya...	Lights of the evening are visible, – lights of the evening are beautiful ... Arms uplifted: I wait for you ...
Milaya, gde ty – Milaya?...	Dear one, where are you, – dear one? ...
Ruki vozdety: Zhdu tebj V struyakh Lety, Smytuyu Blednymi Lety Struyami...	Arms uplifted: I wait for you in streams of Lethe [you are] washed away by Lethe's pale streams ...
Milaya, gde ty – Milaya?...	Dear one, where are you, – dear one? ...

The ratcatcher Op. 38 No. 4 (1916)

Valery Bryusov

Ya na dudochke igrayu, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, I na dudochke igrayu, Chi-to dushi veselya.	I play upon my little pipe, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, I play and play my little pipe, making merry many a soul.
Ya idu vdol tikhoi rechki, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Dremlyut tikhiya ovechki, Krotko zyblyutsya polya.	I walk along the quiet stream, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, gentle lambs are dozing, softly the fields are waving.
Spite, ovtsi i barashki, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Za lugami krasnoy kashki Stroino vstali topolya.	Sleep away, sheep and rams, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, beyond meadows of red clover, shapely poplars rise.
Malyi domik tam taitsya, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Miloj devushke prisnitsya, Shto yei dushu ot dal ya.	A little house is hidden there, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, a darling girl will have a dream that I gave my soul to her.
I na nezhnym zov svireli, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Vyidet slovno k svetloj tseli, Cherez sad, cherez polya.	And to the tender call of a flute, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, she'll come to keep a rendezvous, through the woods, through the fields.

I v lesu pod dubom tyomnym, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Budet zhdat v bredu istomnom, V chas, kogda usnyot zemlya.	And in the forest under a dark oak, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, she'll wait in a daze, delirious, for the hour when the earth sleeps.
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Vstrechu gostyu doroguyu, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Vplot do utra zatseluyu, Serditse laskoi utolya.	I will meet my dear guest, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, cover her till dawn with kisses, slake my heart's desire for caresses.
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I, smenivshis s nei kolechkom, Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya, Otpushchu yeyo k ovechkam, V sad, gde stroiny topolya.	Then, exchanging rings with her, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la, I'll let her join the lambs, in the garden with the shapely poplars.
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Tra-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya-lya!	Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!
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Christ is risen Op. 26 No. 6 (1906)

Dmitry Merezhkovsky

'Khristos voskres!' – poyut vo khrame; No grustno mne... dusha molchit. Mir polon krovyu i slezami, I etot gimn pred altaryami Tak oskorbitelno zvuchit.	'Christ is risen!' – they sing in church; but I am sad...my soul is mute. The world is soaked in blood and tears, and this hymn sung before the altar sounds so insulting and unjust.
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Kogda b On byl mezh nas i videl, Chego dostig nash slavnyi vek, Kak brata brat vozenavidel, Kak opozoren chelovek,	If He were among us and could see what our glorious age has wrought, how brother looks on brother in hatred, how man has fallen in disgrace,
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I esli b zdes, v blestyashchem khrame 'Khristos voskres' On uslykhal, Kakimi b gorkimi slezami, Pered tolpoi On zarydal!	and here among us, in this glittering church, if He heard the words 'Christ has risen,' what a bitter flood of tears he would shed before the crowd!
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Discord Op. 34 No. 13 (1912)

Yakov Polonsky

Pust po vole sudeb ya rasstalas s toboi, Pust drugoi obladayet moyei krasotoi!	Never mind that fate has parted us, and another man possesses my beauty!
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Iz obyatii ygo, iz nochnoi dukhoti, Unoshus ya dalyoko na krylyakh mechty. Vizhu snova nash staryi, zapushchyonnyi sad: Otrazhyonnyi v prude potukhayet zakat, Pakhnet lipovym tsvetom v prokhlade allei; Za prudom, gde-to v roshche, urchit solovei... Ya steklyanuyu dver otvorila, drozhu, Ya iz mraka v tainstvennyi sumrak glyazhu... Chul tam khrustnula vetka, ne ty li shagnul?! Vstrepenulasya ptichka, ne ty li spugnul?! Ya prislushivayus, ya muchitelno zhdu, Ya na shelest shagov tvoikh tikho idu – Kholodit moi chleny to strast to ispug – Eto ty menya za ruku vzyal, milyi drug!? Eto ty ostorozhno tak obnyal menya, Eto tvoi potselui – potselui bez ognya! S bolyu v trepetnom serdtse, s volnenyem v krovi, Ty ne smeyesh otdatsya bezumstvam lyubvi, I, vnimaya recham blagorodnym tvoim, Ya ne smeyu dat volyu vlechenyam svoim, I drozhu, i shepchu tebe: milyi ty moi! Pust vladeyet on zhalkoi moyei krasotoi! Iz obyatii ygo, iz nochoi dukhoty, Ya opyat uletayu na krylyakh mечty, V etot sad, v etu tem, vot na etu skamyu, Gde v pervye podslushal ty dushu moyu... Ya dushoyu slivayus s tvoyeyu dushoi, Pust vladeyet on zhalkoi moyei krasotoi!	From his embraces, in the stifling night, I am carried far away on wings of dream. I see again our garden, old and overgrown: the setting sun reflected in the pond; the air smells of blossoms in the cool linden alleys; past the pond, in the grove, a nightingale is warbling ... I open the glass door, trembling, in darkness I gaze into the mysterious shadows, Hark! a stick cracked, was that you taking a step?! A bird flew up - was it you who startled it? I listen intently in an agony of expectation, I tiptoe toward the rustle of your footsteps, my limbs shiver with passion and fright, is it you taking my hand, my darling!? Is this cautious embrace you, is this kiss yours - a kiss without fire! With pain in your trembling heart, with excitement in your blood, you don't dare to surrender to mad flights of love, and, listening to your noble words, I dare not give vent to my own feelings, and I tremble, and whisper to you: darling of mine! So what if he possesses my poor beauty! From his embraces, in the stifling night, I am carried away again on wings of dream, to this garden, this darkness, this bench, where you first listened secretly to my soul ... And again I merge my soul with yours - so what if he possesses my poor beauty!
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Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Letter to K.S. Stanislavsky (1908)

Sergey Rachmaninov

Dorogoi Konstantin
Sergeyevich!

Dear Konstantin
Sergeevich,

Ya pozdravlyayu Vas
ot chistoi dushi, ot
vsego serdtsa! Za eti
desyat' let Vy shli
vsyo vperyod i Vperjod,
i na etom puti vy
nashli 'Sinyuyu ptitsu!'
Ona vasha luchshaya
pobeda! Teper ya
ochen sozhaleyuu, shto
ya ne v Moskve, shto
ya ne mogu, vmeste
so vsemi, Vas chestvovat,
Vam khlopat, krichat
Vam na vse lady:
'Bravo, bravo, bravo!'
I zhelat Vam mnogaya
leta, mnogaya leta,
mnogaya, mnogaya
leta! Proshu Vas peredat
vsei truppe moi privet,
moi dushevnyi
privet.

I congratulate you in all
sincerity, with all my
heart! For these ten
years you have moved
ever forward, forward
and forward, and on the
way you found 'The
Blue Bird'! It is your
greatest triumph!
Today I'm very sorry
that I'm not in Moscow,
that I can't join with all
the others to honour
you, to applaud you, to
shout to you in all
registers: 'Bravo, bravo,
bravo!' And to wish you
many more years, many
years, many, many
years! Please convey to
the whole company my
greetings, my heartfelt
greetings.

Vash
Sergei Rakhmaninov.
Dresden, 14 oktyabrya 1908
g.
Postskriptum: Zhena moya
mne vtorit.

Yours,
Sergey Rachmaninov.
Dresden, 14 October
1908.
Postscript: My wife
seconds me in this.