



Игорь Стравинский

Подблюдные

для женского хора



Igor Stravinsky

Four Russian Peasant Songs

(Podbľiudniye)

for women's chorus



NOTES

“My profound emotion on reading the news of war [World War I], which aroused patriotic feelings and a sense of sadness at being so distant from my country, found some alleviation in the delight with which I steeped myself in Russian folk poems,” Stravinsky wrote in his autobiography. This fact was confirmed by Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft in their book *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents*:

Although domiciled on the shores of [Switzerland’s] Lake Geneva during the war, Stravinsky identified with the struggle of the Russian people, and his isolation from them made him more conscious than ever of his own Russian-ness. He immersed himself in [Russian] folk literature and—contrary to his own statements on the subject in later years—in [Russian] folk music.

Interest in folk music was not something new in Stravinsky’s musical evolution, however. *Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911) and *Le sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*, 1913) explored the world of Russian folklore, taking it into hitherto unseen musical venues and releasing its energy in all its breadth and fullness. Stravinsky crowned his “Russian musical revolution” with *Renard* (1916) and *Les noces* (*The Wedding*, 1923). These large-scale ground-breaking compositions are known and loved worldwide. However, his small compositions written during the same period—the four songs “Pribautki” for voice and piano (or ensemble), “Four Russian Peasant Songs” (“Podbliudnye”) for female chorus *a cappella*, “Cat’s Cradle Songs,” and “Four Russian Songs” for voice and piano (or ensemble)—are less known to the public. Yet all these songs deserve the closest attention, for they are veritable gems in which the essence of Stravinsky’s revolutionary musical thought, including his modal and rhythmic ideas, are concentrated as densely as a dwarf star’s matter.

“With these songs Stravinsky “destroyed the prerogatives of old-fashioned song and lazy ethnography,” wrote Russian composer and musicologist Boris Asafiev in his *A Book about Stravinsky*.

Among the most commonplace and mundane sources he found a music that was authentically Russian, and he gave it artistic shape without deforming or disguising its nature and origins. He declared the supremacy of mode as a free, independent principle, no longer obedient to the dictates of major and minor, which are suitable only for stylization and outmoded [harmonic] coloration.

Though Stravinsky quoted Russian folk songs in *Firebird*, *Petrushka* and even *The Rite of Spring* (in the latter he did not use songs in their complete form but educed from them laconic motives, primitive recurring formulas very characteristic of early Russian folk idioms), the themes of his songs are not borrowed, but are, rather, imitations of Russian folk music themes. “Stravinsky never mentions the source of his themes,” wrote Bela Bartok in his *Essays*.

Neither in his titles nor in footnotes does he ever allude to whether a theme of his is his own invention or whether it is taken over from folk music... Stravinsky apparently takes this course deliberately. He wants to demonstrate that it does not matter a jot whether a composer invents his own themes or uses themes from elsewhere. He has a right to use musical material taken from all sources. What he has judged suitable for his purpose has become through this very use his mental property... This much is certain, that if among the thematic material of Stravinsky’s there are some of his own invention (and who can doubt that there are), these are the most faithful and clever imitations of folk songs.

All this is true of the “Four Russian Peasant Songs” for female chorus *a cappella*, composed in 1914-1917 on Russian folk texts. The third one—“The Pike”—was written in December 1914; the fourth—“Fatso”—in January 1915; the first—“Near the Savior’s Church in Chigisy” in December 1916; and the second—“Ovsen” (the name derives from “prosinets,” an archaic Russian name for January)—in January 1917. In Russian these songs are called *podbliudniye* (“platter” or “saucer” songs) because of their connection with fortunetelling rituals practiced by peasants (and some aristocrats as well) during Yuletide (*sviatki*) celebrations. In the ritual young women tried to discern when they would get married, and whether wealth or misery awaited them in the future. The girls would put their rings, earrings, and hair ribbons onto a covered saucer, along with grain kernels and cinders. Then they sang the *podbliudniye* songs. With each song an object was plucked from the plate. Whatever the song’s text promised was interpreted as a prediction, although the melody’s character could also change the nature of the message. The messages, naturally, were wrapped into a rich metaphoric form.

Poet Alexander Pushkin describes such a fortunetelling ritual in his masterpiece, the novel in verse *Eugene Onegin* (Chapter 5, Stanza 8):

Tatyana looks with pulses racing
at sunken wax inside a bowl:
beyond a doubt, its wondrous tracing
foretells for her some wondrous role;
from dish of water, rings are shifted
in due succession; hers is lifted
and at the very self-same time

the girls sing out the ancient rhyme:
“The peasants there have wealth abounding,
the help up silver with a spade;
and those we sing for will be paid
in goods and fame!” But the sad sounding
ditty portends a loss...

(transl. by Charles Johnson)

The first three of the “Four Russian Peasant Songs” predict wealth for the one to whom they are sung. The fourth song, in a grotesque and allegoric form, foretells poverty. As for the songs’ musical language, one should bear in mind that they are the product of a modern-day intellect. Stravinsky understands folk music as a live, pulsating, and intensely contemporary mode of expression, which is fully able to reflect the 20th-century world. Totally absent is even the smallest hint of a romantic “sacred trepidation” towards folk music; neither does one perceive even the remotest intention to idealize folklore, as was done in the 19th-century. As Paul Griffiths notes in his book *Stravinsky*, these songs are “futurist photographs of something ancient.”

In 1954 Stravinsky added an accompaniment of four French horns to the songs, also making minor metric and key changes. In this new version the songs were first performed in Los Angeles by Marilyn Horne with Robert Craft conducting.

In both the large and small compositions of his so-called “Russian period,” Stravinsky derived a new content and imagery from folklore, discovering new principles of musical reasoning that were previously unheard of. As Asafiev notes in his *Symphonic Etudes*, Stravinsky ranks alongside Glinka in terms imparting to Russian music both a renaissance and a new direction.

—Vadim Prokhorov



1. У Спаса в Чигисах

U Spása f Chigisáh

Near the Savior's Church in Chigisy

U, u Spása, u Spása f Chigisáh,
za Yaúzöyu...

Near the Savior's church in Chigisy
Across the Yauza River...

Zhívút muzhíkí bögátiye...

Slávna, slavná!

Glory! Glory!

Gřebút zólötö löpátañi...

Slávna, slavná!

Glory! Glory!

Chístö, chístö šeřebro, chístö šeřebro lukóshkañi...

Slávna, slavná!

Glory! Glory!

Slávna, slavná, slavná!

They gather up pure silver by the basketful...

Glory! Glory! Glory!

Igor Stravinsky

(original a cappella version of 1914–1917)

[Maestoso, ma con moto.] [♩ = 92–108]

[*mf*]

Soprano 1, 2

U, _____ u Spá - sa, _____ u Spá - sa _____ f Chi - gi - sáh, _____
Y, _____ y Спа - са, _____ y Спа - са _____ в Чи - ги - сах, _____

Alto 1, 2

5

za Ya - ú - zö - yu, _____ Sláv - na, slav - ná! Zhĩ - vút mu - zhĩ - kí bö -
за Я - у - зо - ю, _____ Слав - на, слав - на! Жи - вут му - жи - ки бо -

mf

9

gá - ti - ye, _____ Sláv - na, slav - ná! Gře - búť zó - lõ - tõ _____
 га - ты - е, _____ Слав - на, слав - на! Гře - бут зо - ло - то _____

mf

13

lõ - pá - ta - mĩ, _____ Sláv - na, slav - ná! Chí - stõ, _____
 ло - па - та - ми, _____ Слав - на, слав - на! Чи - сто, _____

16

chí - stõ še - ře - bró, _____ chí - stõ še - ře -
 чи - сто ce - pe - бро, _____ чи - сто ce - pe -

19

bró lu - kósh - ka - mĩ. _____ Sláv - na, slav - ná, slav - na! _____
 бро лу - кош - ка - ми. _____ Слав - на, слав - на, слав - н ! _____

2. ОВСЕНЬ

Ovšeň

Ofšeň, ofšeň, ofšeň!
 Ya teťerū gōñū,
 Ofšeň, ofšeň,
 pōlevúyu gōñū,
 Ofšeň, ofšeň, ofšeň!
 ōná pōd kust, a ya za hvost.
 Ofšeň!
 Mñe nachlá hvost. Ofšeň!
 Mñe nachlá hvost, an, děneg gorsť.
 Ofšeň! Ofšeň, ofšeň, ofšeň, ofšeň!

Ovsen

Ovsen, ovsen, ovsen!
 I'm hunting a black grouse...
 Ovsen, ovsen!
 I'm hunting a black field grouse...
 Ovsen, ovsen, ovsen!
 It hides under a bush, but I grab its tail...
 Ovsen!
 Its tail stuffed in my hand... Ovsen!
 Its tail stuffed in my hand a handful of money.
 Ovsen! Ovsen, ovsen, ovsen, ovsen!

[Non staccato.] [♩ = 168–184]

Soprano

The musical score for the Soprano and Alto parts of the song 'Ovsen' is shown. The Soprano part is in 5/8 time and the Alto part is in 3/8 time. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Of - šeň, of - šeň, of - šeň! Ya te - te - řū gō - ñū,
 Ов - сень, ов - сень, ов - сень! Я те - те - рю го - ню,

Alto

The musical score for the Soprano and Alto parts of the song 'Ovsen' is shown. The Soprano part is in 4/8 time and the Alto part is in 3/8 time. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Of - šeň, of - šeň, pō - ĩe - vú - yu gō - ñū,
 Ов - сень, ов - сень, по - ле - ву ю го - ню,

10

Of - šěň, of - šěň, of - šěň! _____ ō - ná pŏd kust, a ya za hvost.
 Ов - сень, ов - сень, ов - сень! _____ о - на под куст, а я за хвост.

14

Of - šěň! _____ Mňe na - chlá hvost. Of - šěň! _____
 Ов - сень! _____ Мне на - чла хвост. Ов - сень! _____

17

Mňe na - chlá hvost, an, ě - ěg goršř. Of - šěň! _____
 Мне на - чла хвост, ан, де - нег горсть. Ов - сень! _____

20

Of - šěň, of - šěň, of - šěň, _____ of - šěň! _____
 Ов - сень, ов - сень, ов - сень, _____ ов - сень! _____



3. Щука

Shchúka

Shchúka shla iz Novagórōda...
Sláva!
Ōna hvost vólōklá iz Ĕlaóžera...
Sláva!
Kak u shchúki cheshúyki šerēbřrāniye...
Sláva!
Shto šerēbřrāniye, pōžólōchenniye...
Sláva!
Kak u shchúki sříná zhémchugom splētena...
Sláva!
Kak gólōfka u shchúki uñízannaya...
Sláva!
A na mēstō glaz dōrogóy almáz...
Sláva!

The Pike

A pike came from Novgorod...
Glory!
It dragged its tail from the White Lake...
Glory!
Its scales are of silver...
Glory!
They are gilded with gold...
Glory!
Its back is braided with pearls...
Glory!
Its head is studded with pearls...
Glory!
And in place of its eyes are precious diamonds...
Glory!

[Pesante.] [♩ = 96–104]

3 Soli

Shchú - ka shla iz No - va - gó - rō - da.
Щу - ка шла из Но - ва - го - ро - да.

Soprano

Coro

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

Alto

4

Ō - na hvost vŏ - lŏk - lá iz Ěe - la - ó - že - ra. Kak u
О - на хвост во - лок - ла из бе - ла - о - зе - ра. Как у

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

8

shchú - ki che - shúy - ki še - řé - bŕĭa - nĭ - ye.
шу - ки че - шуй - ки се - ре - бря - ны - е.

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

11

Shto še - řé - bŕĭa - nĭ - ye, pŏ - zŏ - ló - chen - nĭ - ye.
Что се - ре - бря - ны - е, по - зо - ло - чен - ны - е.

14

Kak u shchú - ki sři - ná zhém - chu - gom spě - ě - ná.
Как у щу - ки спи - на жем - чу - гом спле - те - на.

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

18

Kak gŏ - lóf - ka u shchú - ki u - ěí - zan - na - ya.
Как го - лов - ка у щу - ки у - ни - зан - на - я.

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

22

A na ěés - tŏ glaz dŏ - ro - gŏy al - máz.
А на мес - то глаз до - ро - гоѳ ал - маз.

Slá - va!
Сла - ва!

4. Пузище

Púžishche

Uzh, kak v'ishlō Púžishche na řépishche.
Sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva!

V'ñeshlō Pužishche ōšmínu fshey.
Sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva!

Ōšmínu fshey, pol ōšmíni bloh.
Sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva, sláva!

Fatso

Fatso ventured out into the turnip patch...
Glory, glory, glory, glory, glory!

Out of Fatso burst out a pound of lice.
Glory, glory, glory, glory, glory!

A pound of lice and a half-pound of fleas.
Glory, glory, glory, glory, glory!

Risoluto. [♩ = 84-96]
Solo [*f*]

Soprano

Uzh, kak v'ish - lō Pú - (u) - ži - shche na řé - pi - shche.
Уж, как выш - ло Пу - (у) - зи - ще на ре - пи - ще.

Alto

4 [*f*]
Tutti

Uzh, kak v'ish - lō, v'ish - lō... uzh, kak v'ish - lō
Уж, как выш - ло, выш - ло... уж, как выш - ло

7

Pú - ži - shche, uzh, kak v'ish - lõ, v'ish - lõ Pú - ži -
 Пу - зи - ще, уж, как выш - ло, выш - ло Пу - зи -

10

shche na ře - pi - shche. Slá - va, slá - va, slá - va, slá - va, slá - va!
 ще на ре - пи - ще. Сла - ва, сла - ва, сла - ва, сла - ва, сла - ва!

13 Solo

V'í - (i) - ñe - slõ — Pu - (u) - ži - shche õ - šmí - nu fshey.
 Вы - (ы) - не - сло — Пу - (у) - зи - ще о - сьми - ну вшей.

16 Tutti

V'í - ñe - slõ, v'í - ñe - slõ, v'í - ñe - slõ Pú - ži - shche,
 Вы - не - сло, вы - не - сло, вы - не - сло Пу - зи - ще,

20

v'í - ñe - slõ, v'í - ñe - slõ Pú - ži - shche õ - šmí - nu — fshey.
 вы - не - сло, вы - не - сло Пу - зи - ще о - сьми - ну — вшей.