

Nicolai
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

PIANO SOLOS

VOLUME I

FOR PIANO

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FOREWORD

N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov's compositions for piano are included in volume XLIX-A of his *Complete Works*.

The first section of the volume includes compositions for piano two hands.

The fugues and fughettsas were composed from May 1875 to January 1876. In *The Chronicle of my Musical Life*, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote: "In the spring of 1875 I had a number of fugues as well as rather tolerable canons written, and also tried my hand at *a cappella* choruses. We rented a summer house in Ostrovky on the Neva River, near Potiomkin's former estate, and soon moved there. The summer went somewhat monotonously. At Ostrovky I worked assiduously at counterpoint. From time to time I made trips to St. Petersburg and Cronstadt to review the Naval Bands and, aboard the steamer, wrote in my note-book, without tiring, various contrapuntal exercises and fragments. During that summer I composed, among other things, several successful piano fugues, published shortly after by Bessel..."¹

Out of all the fugues and fugettassas composed during the indicated period, only six fugues, op. 17, were published by V. Bessel in mid-1870's. The remaining fugues and fughettsas were published for the first time by Muzgiz in 1951 as: "N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov's Polyphonic Music Pieces (Fugues and Fughettsas) for Piano. Edited by K. S. Sorokin."

The manuscripts of all the fugues and fughettsas that are included in the present volume come from the notebook called "Contrapuntal Exercises," which is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov archive, No. 31). The first page of this notebook has the date "1873," which indicates the beginning of Rimsky-Korsakov's studies of harmony and counterpoint. In addition to the piano fugues, the notebook contains exercises in various types of counterpoint, fugues on themes from Richter's textbook and fugues for organ.

The present publication of the fugues and fughettsas, with the exception of the six fugues, op. 17, is based on the manuscripts from the above mentioned notebook. The six fugues, op. 17, were based on the edition published by V. Bessel and on the notebook manuscripts. In addition, manuscripts prepared for an intended later edition were used for fugues No. 1 (d-minor), No. 2 (F-Major), No. 3 (C-Major), and partially No. 6 (e-minor). These manuscripts are kept at the M. I. Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture.

"Valse," "Romance" and "Fugue," op. 15, were composed during 1875. In the *Chronicle of my Musical Life*, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote: "I have also published with Bessel my three small musical pieces, which I recently composed: 'Valse,' 'Romance' and 'Fugue' (c-sharp minor)..."² From these compositions only the manuscript of the fugue in c-sharp minor is preserved. The composer dated it: "June 27, 1875. Ostrovky." It is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov archive, No. 31). The present publication was based on V. Bessel's publication.

"Impromptu," "Novellette," "Scherzino" and "Etude," op. 11, were composed during 1876-1877. In *The Chronicle*, the composer wrote: "In the same season, I composed also four small pieces for piano which were published by Bitner: 'Impromptu, Novellette, Scherzino and Etude.'"³ Bitner's publication of these musical pieces is dated 1878. The location of the manuscripts is not known. The present publication is based on the Bitner publication.

"Six Variations on the Theme B-A-C-H." ("Valse," "Intermezzo," "Scherzo," "Nocturne," "Prelude" and "Fugue"), op. 10, were composed in 1878, according to the date on their first publication by Bitner. They were republished in 1890 by Beliaiev. The location of the manuscripts is not known. The present publication is based on the Beliaiev edition.

"Allegretto" was composed in 1895. The manuscript is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public

1. N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov. *The Complete Works. Literary Works and Correspondence*. (Moscow, 1955), v. I, p. 91.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

English Translation

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Library (archive of N. I. Abramychev, No. 103). It is written in single stave, in pencil, on two pages of the double sheet of writing paper. It is decorated with clef signs, accords, etc. At the end of the composition is written in N. I. Abramychev's hand: "Rimsky-Korsakov's manuscript at the Congress of Theoreticians, May 11, 1895." "Allegretto" is published here for the first time.

"Prelude" was probably composed in 1896. The manuscript comes from a notebook which is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (archive of Rimsky-Korsakov, No. 21). Rimsky-Korsakov wrote on the top of the first page of the notebook: "Sketches, Fugues, Themes and Others." At the end of the "Prelude" is the date: "August 29." From its place in the notebook, we can date it to 1896. The "Prelude" is published here for the first time.

"Prelude-Impromptu" and "Mazurka," op. 38, were composed in connection with the 25th jubilee celebrating the founding of the Bessel publishing firm (1869-1894) and the firm's printing of music (1871-1896). A collection of compositions for piano was published for the jubilee and entitled on the cover: "A la mémoire de Jubilé 1869-1894. Album russe. Recueil de pièces pour piano: 1. Artsibushev, N. : Mazurka, 2. Cui, César: Impromptu-caprice. 3. Glazunov, A.: Barcarolle. 4. Liadov, Liadov, A.: Prélude-Impromptu. 6. Sokolov, N.: Prélude." On the title page, after the jubilee dates of publishing and music printing is the note: "The printing of music in memory of the firm's anniversary. Jubilee Album by Russian composers." Then follow the names of the compositions and the composers' signatures. Later (in 1897?), Rimsky-Korsakov's "Mazurka" was added to the collection under No. 5a. The location of both his manuscripts is not known. The present publication is based on the jubilee collection published by V. Bessel and on the proof-sheets of the "Mazurka" with the composer's corrections, kept at the M. I. Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture.

"Variations on a Russian Theme" is a collective composition by: N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov, A. A. Winkler, F. M. Blumenfeld, N. A. Sokolov, I. I. Withtol, A. K. Liadov (two variations), and A. K. Glazunov. They were composed during the period from November 1899 to January 1900. The "Variations" were published by M. Beliaiev in 1900 under the title: "Variations sur un thème russe tiré du recueil populaire d'Abramitscheff." The song "Malenky malchishechko" [tiny little boy] from N. Abramychev's "Collection of Russian Folk Songs" served as a theme for the variations. The complete manuscript is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (M. P. Beliaiev archive, No. 0/Za-zh). Some of the manuscripts were dated by their composers: the theme and the first variation (by Rimsky-Korsakov): "December 7, 1899;" the second variation (by Winkler): "November 7, 1899;" the fifth variation (by Withtol): "January 19, 1900;" the seventh variation (by Liadov): "December 11, 1899;" the eighth variation (by Glazunov): "December, 1899." Only the pages composed by Rimsky-Korsakov, the theme and the first variation, are printed in the present publication, which is based on M. Beliaiev edition. The song "The Tiny Little Boy" from N. I. Abramychev's collection and two piano harmonizations of this song made by Rimsky-Korsakov are placed in the Appendix of this volume. The manuscript of the piano harmonizations of this song is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. I. Abramychev archive, No. 104). The harmonization is written on a quarter of a music paper sheet; one harmonization on each side of the sheet. There is no title. N. I. Abramychev wrote at the end: "Manuscript by Rimsky-Korsakov, 1900, St. Petersburg." Note that this manuscript is of an earlier date than the theme and the first variation.

"Pesenka" [Little Song] was composed by Rimsky-Korsakov in 1901 for the collection in memory of I. K. Aivazovsky. On the cover and on the title page of the published collection is the date "1903," which is the date when the collection was published (the censor's permit is dated: "October 24, 1902. St. Petersburg."). At the end of "Pesenka" is a facsimile of Rimsky-Korsakov's signature and the date "1901." "Pesenka" was reprinted in the literary-music album *Artsunker* [Tears] in the Armenian language (1907. St. Petersburg. By Iegishe Bagdasarian and Zabela Berberian). The album was published to benefit the hunger-stricken Armenians. The location of the "Pesenka" manuscript is not known. The present publication is based on the edition of the Collection to the memory of I. K. Aivazovsky.

Piano compositions three and four hands are included in the second section of this volume.

"Fugue in C-Major" for piano four hands is the arrangement of Rimsky-Korsakov's Fugue for piano two hands, which Rimsky-Korsakov composed May 4, 1875 (see p. 3 of this volume). The manuscript of the arrangement has the same date and is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov archive, No. 31). The arrangement is published for the first time.

“Variations on Misha’s Theme” was composed by Rimsky-Korsakov on a theme written by his oldest son Misha. The manuscript has the following date: “December 5” (there is no year). The manuscript is kept at the State Scientific-Research Institute of Theater, Music and Film (collection A. Section 1, No. 13a). The unpublished memoirs of M. N. Rimsky-Korsakov [the son] are also kept there. In these memoirs, there is the following information about the “Variations:” “When I was probably 5 or 6 years old [1878 or 1879], I sang a quite harmonious theme of my own invention, which N. A. [Rimsky-Korsakov] wrote down and harmonized on one page a sweet little composition for piano four hands.” The “Variations” are published here for the first time.

“‘Joke’ Quadrille” is a collective composition by various composers: N. V. Artsibushev, I. I. Wihtol, A. K. Liadov, N. A. Sokolov, A. K. Glazunov, N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov (the names appear in the sequence corresponding to the order of the six figures of the Quadrille). The quadrille was published by M. Beliaiev in 1891. The complete manuscript is kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov Shchedrin State Public Library (M. P. Beliaiev archive, No. c/2a-e). Several of the manuscripts are dated. On A. K. Liadov’s manuscript is: “March 9, 1890, at 9:30 P.M.,” on N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov’s manuscript is: “March 9, 1890. St. Petersburg.” In the present publication the quadrille is published in its entirety, based on the Beliaiev edition.

“Paraphrases,” – 24 variations (with a Finale) and 15 musical pieces on an unchanged theme – are included in the third section of this volume. They were composed by various composers: A. P. Borodin, Ts. A. Cui, A. K. Liadov and N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov in 1878. In *The Chronicle*, Rimsky-Korsakov wrote in detail the history of their creation: “Late in the spring of that year [1878], Borodin, Cui and I engaged in a joint composition of a peculiar nature. Liadov also joined us. Here is what it was. Some years ago, Borodin, in fun, had composed a most charming and odd polka on the following motif:



Repeated over and over again, this motif was intended, so to speak, for some one who was unable to play piano, while the accompaniment called for a real pianist. I remember that I was the first to conceive the idea of composing, jointly with Borodin, a series of variations and musical pieces on this constant and unchanging theme. I induced Cui and Liadov to join the work. I recall that at first Borodin showed hostility to this idea, preferring to publish only his own polka, but soon he joined us. First we set to write several variations and then separate musical pieces. I recollect, by the way, Cui’s astonishment, when I brought him my fugue on B-A-C-H, with the accompaniment of the above motif. Without disclosing the ‘secret,’ I played through the fugue on B-A-C-H without the motif. Cui, of course, did not warm to my composition. Then I asked him to play the motif; at the same time I played the fugue. Cui could not get over his amazement.

“By the time we left the city for the summer, we had accumulated many musical-pieces on this motif. I had even too many of them, and later some of them were not included in our collection, such as; sonatina, the chorale ‘Eine feste Burg,’ the recitative alla J. S. Bach, etc. A few musical pieces of this collection, named ‘Paraphrases’ and christened ‘Táti-Táti’ by V. V. Stasov, were written in the summer of 1878, and some during the following season. In 1880, the ‘Paraphrases’ were given for publication to Rater (the firm of Bitner) and he published them. The ‘Paraphrases’ delighted Liszt so much that he added a short transition of his own on the same motif and wrote us a flattering letter about them. In due course, V. V. Stasov published this letter.

“Balakirev showed great hostility towards the ‘Paraphrases;’ he was indignant at us for engaging in such nonsense; and for even printing and showing them off. We had asked Mussorgsky to take part in our joint composition; he had even tried and composed a gallop of some kind and played to us what he had composed at Liudmila Ivanovna [Shestakova’s]. But he had swerved from our original play and had changed the motif, and thus it did not fit. We called his attention to this. He replied that he had no intention of overworking his brains; therefore, his participation in our joint composition came to nothing.”⁴

This detailed story requires commentary. “Paraphrases” were published in 1879, and not in 1880, as Rimsky-Korsakov wrote. Liszt’s letter, in response to receiving a copy of the first publication of the “Paraphrases,” was dated “June 15, 1879. Weimar.” V. V. Stasov’s article “A letter from Liszt” was published in the newspaper

4. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Voice, No. 277, October 7, 1897, Liszt's "short transition of his own," mentioned by Rimsky-Korsakov, composed as a prelude to the first of the 14 musical pieces of the collection to Borodin's "Polka," was published in the second publication of the "Paraphrases," in the form of a facsimile. It was dated: "Weimar, 28 Juillet 80."

The "Paraphrases" were published for the first time by A. Bitner. The cover was an original one, corresponding to the music inside it: "Paraphrases. 24 variations and 14 musical pieces for piano on an unchanged known theme:



It is dedicated to little pianists, who are able to play the theme with one finger of each hand. By the composers: Aleksandr Borodin, Tsezar Cui, Anatoly Liadov and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, 1878." Beliaiev's second edition, of 1893, differs from Bitner's first publication. It also includes, in addition to the prelude by Liszt, "Mazurkas" by Borodin and "Bigarrures" by N. Shcherbachev. Thus, the second publication included, not counting Rimsky-Korsakov's compositions, four musical pieces by Borodin ("Polka," "Funeral March," "Requiem," "Muzurka"), four musical pieces by Liadov ("Valse," "Gallop," "Giga," "Procession"), one musical piece by Cui ("Valse") and one by Shcherbachev ("Bigarrures").

The location of the manuscript for the "Paraphrases" is not known. In the present publication, which is based on the second publication of 1893, the variations are given in their entirety, but from the musical pieces only those composed by Rimsky-Korsakov are presented. The sketches and variations written by Cui and Liadov, which were not included in the collection and which are kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov archive, No. 123a-g, and Ts. A. Cui archive, No. 56) and Rimsky-Korsakov's "musical" letter to Liadov with the music of the variations for the "Paraphrases" are placed in the Appendix. The "Musical" letter (a post-card), kept at the M. Ie. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov archive, No. 223a),⁵ has the date written by the composer "Monday," without year and day; on the postage cancellation stamp is "May 16, 1878." The letter thus dates from Monday, May 15, 1878.

All obvious mistakes in the manuscripts and editions published during the composer's life-time were corrected without explanations. The changes related to the distribution of the music on the musical pages were made without explanations. These changes, which were made for the purpose of greater ease of performance, concerned almost exclusively the polyphonic compositions, and among these mainly those fugues and fughetas which were not prepared for publication during the composer's life-time. The most significant differences between the manuscripts and publications, and also the composer's variants, are placed in the Footnotes. The editors' additions are placed in square brackets.

Translated by Dr. Olga Browning

5. The letter was published for the first time in the magazine *Contemporary Music*, in 1916, No. 7, p. 37.

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FOUR-VOICED FUGUE (C-MAJOR)

Allegro moderato

The first system of the fugue consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/2. The music begins with a whole note chord in the right hand and a whole note chord in the left hand. The right hand then plays a series of eighth notes, while the left hand remains mostly stationary.

The second system continues the fugue. The right hand plays a more active eighth-note pattern, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and some eighth-note accompaniment.

The third system features a more complex texture. The right hand has a melodic line with some slurs, and the left hand has a more active eighth-note accompaniment.

The fourth system shows the fugue continuing with intricate counterpoint between the two hands, featuring various rhythmic patterns and accidentals.