

# The Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works: Scholarly Problems and Practical Solutions

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**Abstract**—Edition of the Complete Works of Modest Mussorgsky was made twice in the XX century. None of the projects was completed. Scientific and methodological principles. Pavel Lamm is currently in need of serious adjustment. Music and verbal materials of the author's versions of "Boris Godunov" create an opportunity for the publication of seven versions of the opera. And musical materials of the editorial office of Nicolay Rimsky-Korsakov allow us to talk about three versions of his creative work, as well as several unknown orchestrations and concert numbers.

**Keywords**—*M. Mussorgsky; opera "Boris Godunov"; N. Rimsky-Korsakov; P. Lamm; Complete Works of Modest Mussorgsky*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, during the Soviet period, two attempts were made to publish Musorgsky's complete works, but neither of them was carried to completion.

The first attempt, under the scientific supervision by Pavel Aleksandrovich Lamm, was launched in 1928 with the "amalgamated" (or "composite") piano score of Boris Godunov and came to an end in 1939 with the publication of the "Written records of folk songs, sketches, and other materials".

In 1939, in his paper delivered at a conference organized by the Moscow Conservatoire on the occasion of Musorgsky's centenary, Lamm explained the situation as follows: "While still a conservatoire student, I set myself the task of becoming acquainted with Musorgsky's legacy in its totality and, if possible, in the original versions rather than in the arrangements made by editors. For this purpose, I embarked on compiling a special catalogue of Musorgsky's works, containing the necessary information about the time of their composition, the circumstances of their publication and performances, etc. I had to stop my work for some time because of the [First World] War. After the Great October Revolution of 1917, the "Narkom [Minister] of Musical Affairs" (to use his own self-description) Arthur Lourié took an interest in my work. At his suggestion, I compiled a plan of the academic edition of Musorgsky's complete works, with a detailed list of Musorgsky's compositions. Since my editorial work is based exclusively on primary sources

(autograph manuscripts and first editions, if they appeared in print during Musorgsky's lifetime and, hence, were reviewed by him personally), I set to register all these autographs in a special "autograph book". At the beginning of my work, I had only 80 autographs registered, while now their number is 426 [1].

This fact needs an additional explanation. Musorgsky died in 1881, and more than three decades had passed after his death until Lamm embarked on searching and exploring his autograph manuscripts. Many things had been forgotten; Musorgsky's personal fund in the collection of the Public Library still remained uninvestigated, and a good deal of materials were scattered among domestic private collections. And only thanks to Lamm's long and painstaking work on collecting and describing Musorgsky's manuscript materials kept in the Public Library and in numerous private collections, the number of manuscripts increased more than five times.

Having discovered a number of documents of great historic and musical importance, Lamm managed to realize in his project of the Complete Works his general scholarly idea: to unite all the excerpts of the author's music text of Boris Godunov within a single volume and edition. The idea to complement the author's versions with each other prevailed, resulting in some theoretical blunders and practical difficulties.

Collecting the scattered excerpts that ranged from separate portions of vocal parts to large fragments of piano score and full score, Lamm made a huge work. According to him, "though the number of various sketches, versions, and revisions, found among the opera's autograph manuscripts, was immense, in the "composite" edition this material could be arranged in an orderly whole only because Musorgsky himself had elaborated an extremely clear and logically substantiated plan of the whole opera" [2].

Here an important clarification is needed.

Between the early 1920s and 1927–28, when Lamm began working together with Boris Vladimirovich Asaf'yev on the edition of the author's full score, he had no doubts as regards the priorities in the process of reconstruction of music text. In other words, he did not ask himself, what had

to be taken as the starting point — the piano score or the full score.

At the beginning, Lamm undertook the reconstruction of the complete piano score, proceeding from the author's abridged piano score published in 1874 by V. V. Bessel. The question of the reconstruction of the author's full score was left until later.

However, the dominant scholarly attitude (conditioned by the editor's desire to "amalgamate" the extant versions) did not allow to explain a number of disagreements and illogicalities that were revealed in the process of editing. It turned out that the dates on the manuscripts did not agree with each other; the same excerpts could be found in different instrumentations; between the opera's piano score and full score, there were numerous discrepancies that could not be reconciled; finally, two full versions of the scene "In the Tower Chamber" ("In the Terem") were found, one of which was considerably longer than the other. Lamm paid due attention to all such inconsistencies, recorded them and presented different versions in public, but as a rule did not give any explanations. He was busy first of all with source studies, leaving "for the future" the problem of causes that brought to such a multitude of versions and discrepancies.

It seems, however, that this was not the sole point.

Lamm considered the whole multitude of autograph manuscripts of the piano score and full score of Boris Godunov as a single, integral musical monument, on which the composer worked between 1868 and 1872. In other words, Lamm was convinced that during that period Musorgsky was composing but one opera Boris Godunov, gradually enlarging it through the addition of new scenes, episodes, and shorter excerpts.

Lamm's edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works exerted a great and many-sided influence on the musical culture and drew a wide response both in Russia and abroad, both in scholarly and in artistic aspects. Without belittling the importance of Lamm's outstanding work, we cannot pass over its qualities that seem nowadays unsatisfactory from the point of view of both scholars and performers. The most important shortcoming consists in the arbitrary "amalgamation" of different versions of material — both musical and verbal. Another weak point was related to the belief that the pitch of the brass instruments that were in use during Musorgsky's lifetime might be easily replaced with the pitch of contemporary instruments (this resulted not only in the alteration of sound but also in the forced transference of notes to other registers, which was at variance with their function in the work's dramaturgy). Such revisions were caused by purely practical considerations, namely by the orientation on the Mariinsky Theatre orchestra of the 1927–28. In those times neither Asaf'yev, nor Lamm, nor else the conductor Vladimir Aleksandrovich Dranishnikov could imagine that in the future even the major firms would return to the fabrication of authentic wind instruments.

## II. MUSORGSKY'S COMPLETE WORKS EDITED BY E. LEVASHEV AND THE REASONS FOR HIS TERMINATION

Logically, the next stage of work on Musorgsky's legacy should have been the academic edition of his complete works in 32 volumes, planned for publication in 1980–2000. If only this project were realized, the Russian musical scholarship could be proud of the achieved results, and the attitude towards us in the world might improve considerably.

The edition's scholarly methods and principles were elaborated by its principal scientific editor, Professor Yevgeniy Mikhaylovich Levashev. They can be reduced to the following cardinal moments:

- Musorgsky's legacy had to be published in its entirety, from the large-scale works to the smallest sketches;
- any 'amalgamations' had to be rejected (in other words, different versions of any single work, from operas to songs and romances, had to be presented separately);
- the author's marks, instructions, phrasing slurs and, if specified by the composer himself, the free tonality (i.e. the absence of key signatures) had to be preserved in full;
- all the supplementary materials (the drafts and sketches of full scores and piano scores, the librettos) had to be published in the same volume as the work itself;
- the edition should have contained at least 26 works that either have never been published or appeared in abridged or simplified form;
- the edition should have contained Musorgsky's works also in Rimsky-Korsakov's editions and arrangements (this is especially important in cases when Musorgsky's works, intended for orchestra, have been preserved only in piano reduction);

This undertaking came to nothing more than a preliminary volume entitled "M. P. Musorgsky's Legacy" (published 1989) and two volumes of the full score of Boris Godunov's first version (published 1996). Explaining the reasons of the project's failure, we have to be as truthful as possible, though our explanation might sound unpleasant for some persons involved.

In the second half of the 1980s, the Soviet publishing house Muzika signed a contract with the major German publishing house Schott concerning the publication of the Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works in 32 volumes. The scientific group, formed at that time from Professor Levashëv's students and conservatoire disciples — V. Antipov, T. Antipova, I. Levashëva, R. Berchenko, S. Mart'ínova, A. Lebedeva, N. Teterina — was involved in the preparation of the full score of the first version of Boris Godunov. The young musicologists worked with photocopies of Musorgsky's autograph manuscripts, rewrote the score by hand, analyzed and restored the deleted excerpts, deciphered the notes that had been scraped out.

The objective set by Professor Levashëv consisted in restoring the theatrical and musical work, completed by Musorgsky in 1869 — the very work that was presented to the Committee of the Direction of Imperial Theatres and received six negative opinions of seven when it was discussed and voted by the Committee.

The preparatory work on the publication of the full score of the first version of Boris Godunov was carried out by Muzika and lasted more than seven years; the volumes were printed by a German firm. In the summer of 1996, two volumes in black hard cover were received from Germany and handed to Professor Levashev. The members of scientific editorial group also received free copies of the edition [3]. By all appearances, this was a good, though somewhat delayed beginning, which had to be promptly followed by the publication of next volumes.

However, the organizational and financial situation at the publishing house Muzika took an unfavourable turn. The house's directors resigned one after another; rumours were circulating about the rise and mysterious disappearance of some unknown foreign firms... Until 2006, the scientific editors knew next to nothing about these obscure circumstances. Professor Levashëv continued to direct the musicologists' efforts, and by the beginning of the year 2000 the following volumes had been prepared and submitted to the publishing house Muzika:

- the piano score of the first version of Boris Godunov (the music text had been edited and made up; the scholarly articles and textual-critical comments had been written);
- the orchestral works (all the music texts had been edited twice and made up; the scholarly articles and textual-critical comments had been written);
- the choral works (the work of scientific editors had been completed; the scholarly articles and textual-critical comments had been written, and the volume had been prepared for print);
- the romances and the vocal cycle “Years of Youth” (the work of scientific editors had been completed; the scholarly articles and textual-critical comments had been written, and the volume had been prepared for print);
- the opera Boris Godunov in N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov's edition (the work of scientific editors had been completed, the materials had been handed to the publishing house's editors and music typesetters).

None of these volumes has ever appeared in music stores either in our country or abroad.

Moreover, in 1996 the publishing house Schott sent to Russia 300 copies of the first two volumes of the Academic Edition to be distributed in our country. The copies came from Germany to Moscow and for a long time were kept at a warehouse; the publishing house Muzika did not take them out, and ultimately all the 300 copies were dispatched back to Germany! The scientific editors learnt about all this only

at the end of the year 2006. Several years ago, Schott broke the contract with Muzika concerning the publication of Musorgsky's Complete Works.<sup>1</sup>

### III. THE NEW MUSORGSKY'S COMPLETE WORKS EDITED BY E. LEVASHEV

However, the administration of the State Institute of Art Studies (Moscow) has more than once reminded the functionaries of the Ministry of Culture about the necessity to provide a financial support for the publication of Musorgsky's Complete Works in 27 volumes. Fortunately, in 2013 the Institute for the first time received funds for the preparation of the first volume of the Academic Edition of Musorgsky's Complete Works as a part of the Federal Target Programme “Culture of Russia”.

It is necessary to underline that this is a new 27-volume project, which has a new programme statement and is based on new scholarly approaches. Administratively, it has nothing in common with the failed alliance of Muzika and Schott.

As regards the further development of a scientific approach to the materials pertaining to Musorgsky's operas, it would be appropriate to emphasize that Professor Levashev and his group worked on the first version of Boris Godunov in the year of Musorgsky's 150th anniversary, while his 175th anniversary was celebrated a year ago. During these two decades and a half, the methodology of study and description improved, becoming broader and more profound.

Let us give several examples.

First, things have changed with regard to the study of the composer's creative biography. Now in a number of cases we can not only state that during a certain period Musorgsky worked on a specific composition, but also restore the course of the creative process in some detail. Let us show this on the example of Boris Godunov.

Though musicologists and performers are aware of the existence of the opera's two versions (1869 and 1874), few of them can imagine how complex and entangled is the general picture.

The opera goes, while talking about the opera's two versions, often put a question, which is quite logical from the point of view of the audience, though rather inappropriate in terms of art history: “which scene has to be used to conclude the performance — “The Death of Boris” or the “Kromi”?”

The musicologists, relying on Lamm's definitions — “preliminary version” (1869) and “principal version” (1874) — usually consider most of the intermediate versions as historically transient stages between the initial and the final points.

And yet, the possibility of a more detailed interpretation of the author's versions of Boris Godunov, largely differing

<sup>1</sup> These circumstances were related to Ye. M. Levashev and N. I. Teterina by several Schott employees (B. Pfau, Dr. T. Sertl, H. Doll) during their visits to Moscow in 2006–2008.

from Lamm's views, has been predetermined by the very process of Musorgsky's work on the opera that lasted six years from 1868 to 1874.

It must be said that Lamm knew at least one intermediate version of the opera. But in the mid-1920s he could only point to the existence of such a version without finding an appropriate scholarly explanation. Consequently, he left this fact without any comments and even did not mention the year when this intermediary version was composed [4].

Only in the late 1980s the Russian musicologist Valentin Antipov, while compiling an annotated catalogue of Musorgsky's works based on his autograph manuscripts and other primary sources, presented a methodological evidence that the process of Musorgsky's work on Boris Godunov has to be divided into seven stages corresponding to seven dramaturgically self-sufficient specimens of the operatic genre [5].

One of the author's seven versions is identical with the so-called 'first version', completed in December 1869 (the date of completion is specified in the manuscript full score), while the remaining six versions were written between 1871 and 1874, i.e. between the refusal of the Direction of Imperial Theatres to accept Boris Godunov for stage performance (February 1871) and the publication of the opera's piano score by V. V. Bessel's firm shortly after its première at the Mariinsky Theatre (spring 1874).

In the universally accepted typology, these six versions of 1871–74 have been indiscriminately labeled as "second version" — though there is no documental evidence, either direct or indirect, that the composer himself considered them as subdivisions of a single version.

Thus, only due to a serious archival work and the publication of the catalogue of Musorgsky's manuscripts compiled by V. Antipov it has become clear that under the influence of various factors — such as, for instance, the formal requirements of the repertoire committee of Imperial Theatres, the prohibitions imposed by church and secular censorship, the recommendations of the composer's friends, and the immanent evolution of the author's conception — Musorgsky between 1868 and 1874 seven times put a psychological "finis" after his opera.

Any of the seven dramaturgical versions of Boris Godunov is finished and self-sufficient; any can be staged without slightest alterations in the extant music materials. In terms of Musorgsky's philosophy of history, each of them is a realization of his different views on the problem of interpretation of the events of the Russian history of the late 16th and early 17th century.

In terms of textual criticism and operatic dramaturgy, the criteria of differentiation between the author's versions can be additionally specified taking into account the changes in Musorgsky's conception of the work as a theatrical performance. In all, his conception changed seven times. The changes involved (1) enlargements and abridgements of musical material; (2) important alterations of the whole compositional plan, up to the elimination of certain scenes; (3) mergings or separations of scenes; (4) changes in their

order; (4) partial or radical re-orchestration of a number of fragments.

Besides, for the sake of a more vivid representation of historical symbolism Musorgsky more than once changed the place of action. For instance, in one of the last scenes he transferred the people's revolt from the village Sokol'niki on Dnieper to the environs of the more remote village Kromi on the eponymous river. Such a decision, naturally, supposed other scenic entourage, providing additional options for theatre directors and set designers.

Let us give one more example. In the opera's later versions, Musorgsky without objections relocated the scene of Boris's death from the interior of the Saint Porch of the "Saviour Golden Grille" church at Kremlin (which was initially planned to serve as the place of action) to the Hall of Facets (Granovitaya Palata; with the sets of a recent staging of Pushkin's tragedy).

Further, let us pay attention to some significant details related to Boris Godunov in Rimsky-Korsakov's version.

The historical significance of Rimsky-Korsakov's work is defined by its world-wide popularity, as well as by the specific situation of the early 20th century, when Musorgsky's genius opera became known in Europe and during the next quarter a century was performed only in Rimsky-Korsakov's version.

Comparing the time spent by Rimsky-Korsakov working on the edition of Musorgsky's works, we come to the conclusion that the editorial work on almost the whole of Musorgsky's legacy took him around ten years (mainly in the 1880s), while to Boris Godunov alone he devoted twice as much time: from December 1888 to June 1908.

An objective, source-based overview of Rimsky-Korsakov's work on Boris Godunov, is not only of a purely academic interest; such an overview is indispensable inasmuch as it helps to solve practical problems related to the publication of the opera's full score. The problems in question involve a well-founded source-critical systematization of materials, a reasonable differentiation between principal and auxiliary texts and, especially, the clarification of the following point: did Rimsky-Korsakov prepare several editions of Boris Godunov or his music materials suggest that there was only one edition?

Our scholarly work brought us to the conclusion that Rimsky-Korsakov produced a single edition of Boris Godunov in three dramaturgical versions: the abridged one of 1896, the full one of 1904, and the enlarged one of 1908.

Besides, Rimsky-Korsakov was categorically against any rearrangements of scenes within the opera. He expressed his viewpoint in a rather declarative manner in a letter intended for publication: "[...] in the published version of my edition this scene ["In the Environs of Kromi"], according to the author's initial conception, is placed [...] after the scene of Boris's death, since I am absolutely sure that after the scene of Boris's death any other scene in Musorgsky's opera is unthinkable" [6].



Finally, Rimsky-Korsakov regarded as inconceivable the idea of introducing into his edition the scene “By St Basil’s Cathedral”. This is attested by the argumentation of Aleksandr Glazunov, who refused in written form to orchestrate this scene for the 1927 production at the Bolshoy Theatre, Moscow.

Rimsky-Korsakov’s huge work has an exceptional artistic value; its outcome, apart from the full score of the resulting enlarged version of Boris Godunov, includes a number of supplementary materials, also of a great historical and artistic importance. They are associated mainly with different versions of orchestration and with modifications of the music’s functional purpose.

The additional materials are intended primarily for different versions of the opera’s stage performance:

- five scenes (“The courtyard of the Novodevichy Convent, “Coronation of Boris Godunov as Tsar, “A cell in the Chudov Monastery in the Moscow Kremlin”, “Marina Mnizhek’s dressing-room”, and “Scene by the fountain in the Mnizheks’ castle”) are scored for an augmented orchestra – with triple woodwinds (including English horn, bass clarinet, and double-bassoon);
- two numbers from the “Polish” act with Marina Mnizhek’s part written for dramatic soprano rather than for contralto: “Marina’s Aria” (a tone higher) and the “Duet of Marina and the Pretender” (a semitone higher);
- fourteen additional numbers, intended for concert performance. Eleven of these are for solo voices and for choir: “Chorus of Pilgrims”, “Song of the Tavern-Keeper”, “Varlaam’s Song”, “Song about the Gnat”, “The Lash Game”, “Boris’s Aria”, “Chorus of the Sandomierz Girls”, “Marina’s Aria”, “Polonaise” (with choir), “Duet of Marina and the Pretender”, “Pimen’s Narrative”. Three numbers are purely orchestral: the “Chimes” from the “Coronation Scene” for a reduced orchestra (with three flutes and other woodwinds in twos); the “Chimes” from the “Coronation Scene” for an enlarged orchestra (with triple woodwinds, two harps and additional brass instruments: two cornets and contralto trumpet); the “Introduction and Polonaise” for large orchestra (with triple woodwinds and two cornets).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

A question may arise: why the previous project of Musorgsky’s Complete Works was estimated at 32 volumes, while now the number of volumes is reduced to 27?

Let us state categorically: this has nothing to do with a reduction of material.

During the last 25 years, the scholarly work continued without interruption, and the methodology of the edition was being improved. New methods of presentation of music texts have been elaborated, which are more convenient for visual perception and allow to optimize the distribution of the

material among the volumes. As a result, Musorgsky’s orchestral works in original versions and in Rimsky-Korsakov’s editions now can be issued in a single volume. The same principle can be used in the volumes with choral and chamber vocal works. Hopefully, this will make the edition more convenient to use for both the performers and the scholars.

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