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Musical Terminology in 19th Century Russian Tutorial Translated Editions*

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Abstract. The object of research in the article is the formation of musical terminology in the Russian teaching of harmony of the second half of the 19th century. As the musical educational system was transitioning to the level of professionalism, during this period the role of music theory as an independent teaching discipline rose, moreover, harmony became the sphere most in demand. The tutorial theoretical literature of that time is presented both by original works and those translated from other languages. In the article, the musical terminology of popular European textbooks, such as those written by Ernst Friedrich Richter, Johann Lobe and Adolf Bernhard Marx in translation by Russian translators is examined, the problem range of their works is discussed, and the role of translators and editors in the formation of the Russian scholarly language is accentuated. Examination is made of the appearance and gradual rootedness of certain basic terms of the Russian teaching on harmony: *stroï* [*structure*], *lad* [*mode*] and *garmoniya* [*harmony*]. They acquire an academic status and, reflecting the specificity of the national nature of harmony, do not possess any Western analogues. In conclusion, the supposition is formulated of the possibility of including the analysis of Russian musical terminology into the context of the specificity of Russian music.

Keywords: 19th century Russian musical scholarship, harmony, musical-terminological apparatus, scholarly translation, Alexander S. Famintsyn, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky as a translator, the specificity of Russian musical terminology

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Introduction

Within the scope of the present article is one of the most significant periods in the history of Russian music scholarship, connected, in particular, with an intensive development of such an important sphere within it as the teaching of harmony. It spans the temporal framework from the second half of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. These years occurred in Russian history as the time of the “great reforms,” whereas it is customary to label the 1860s and the 1870s as the “golden age” of an entire set of musical disciplines. The new conditions that evolved during that period in the sphere of musical education were connected with the inauguration of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1862 and the Moscow Conservatory in 1866. The task that stood before these institutions, — that of bringing up musicians from their earliest years — had never been set in Russia prior to that time. The roles of the leaders of musical youth were taken up by outstanding performers and well-known music scholars. Along with Russian musicians, many of those from abroad — representatives of various national and performance schools — were actively encouraged to study playing instruments and singing, however the instruction of music theory was relayed solely to Russians, to those who had completed studies at the Russian conservatory. If any musicians from other countries found themselves in this category, they were only those for whom Russia had become their second homeland. Therein the special attitude towards music theory subjects was revealed as a means for communication, the language of which was supposed to be comprehensible for everybody. It was not accidentally that the teaching of elementary music theory began with coining Russian terms equivalent to those in other languages, in which Nikolai Grigoryevich

Rubinstein and Vladimir Fyodorovich Odoyevsky took part.

With the evolution of musical education to a professional level, music theory acquired the status of an autonomous tutorial discipline. Familiarization with theory by means of printed texts became the sole form of instruction for Russian society, while the publication of Russian textbooks and tutorial manuals on an entire set of theoretical disciplines satisfied the essential needs of the educational process. Both original works written in Russian and those translated from other languages were presented during this period, for the most part, by tutorial-theoretical literature that met the social demands of the public, which was in need not only of the development of scholarship proper, but, first of all, in its promotion and popularization.

The most self-sufficient branch of musical knowledge was harmony, which also turned out to be the theoretical sphere that, incidentally, was the most in demand by the public. The teaching of harmony of that time presents itself as one of the brightest achievements of Russian musical culture. Through the joint efforts of many musical pedagogues, an inimitable image of this significant sphere of Russian music theory arose. No wonder, particularly harmony was conducive to the development of the scholarly problem range and the processes of creativity in the context of musical terms. From the middle of the 19th century, Russian musicians have consciously activated the work on the creation of an apparatus of Russian musical terminology, which was enabled, in particular, by activities in the sphere of translation, as well.

In recent years, the historical formation of the musical terminological lexicon has become an object of intensive scholarly interest. Among the research works coming the closest to the theme of our article, mention must be made of publications of Inga

Alexandrovna Presnyakova, which span an extensive problem range of Russian music theory literature of the “period before the opening of the conservatoires” (from the late 18th to the early 19th century). [1; 2; 3] When analyzing the peculiarities of scholarly translation, the author notes that, in particular, the translators of the first German musical treatises complained about the poverty and scarcity of the lingual means of expression, about the absence of a tradition of scholarly narration in Russian (for more detail about this, see: [3]). However, during the course of a rather brief period of time, this problem lost its acuteness: particularly, from the middle of the 19th century, not only an impressive bulk of scholarly literature in Russian, but also translations of the most significant theoretical works by Ernst Friedrich Richter, Adolf Bernhard Marx, Ludwig Bussler, Hugo Riemann and other music theorists were published.

Presenting in itself a mobile phenomenon, stipulated by many circumstances of “time and place,” the terminology translated into Russian from other languages, naturally, has become an object for scholarly reflections. The necessity of its discussion in professional circles has been stimulated by such inherent features of the term as polyvalence, synonymy, metaphoricity, in some cases — untranslatability, etc. Particularly terminology frequently demonstrates an intersection point, and at times, a clash of diverse viewpoints, scholarly perceptions and meanings. For this reason, discussion of musical scholarship in all of the diversity of its directions presents a sphere of constant attention of the academic community (the latest representative gathering of musicologists devoted to the issues of terminology, — namely, the Fourth International Congress of the Society of Music Theory — took place in October 2019 in Kazan [4]).

Ernst Richter’s “Harmony Textbook” in Translation of Alexander Famintsyn

Let us analyze the appearance and the fixation in the scholarly language of certain basic terms, which appeared during the process of translation of foreign source. The terminology pertaining to the sphere of harmony appears, first of all, in connection with the translations of tutorial theory literature. The leading pedagogues of the St. Petersburg Conservatory — Nikolai Ivanovich Zarembo, who had studied with Marx in Berlin, and Yuly Ivanovich Johannsen, who had received his musical education at the Leipzig Conservatory, where he studied with Mendelssohn and Richter, — used German textbooks in their harmony courses.

Ernst Friedrich Eduard Richter (1808–1879), a German composer and musicologist, a professor at the Leipzig Conservatory, is primarily known as the author of textbooks and tutorial manuals virtually of all the music theory disciplines: analysis of musical forms, harmony, fugue and counterpoint. In his works, each tutorial course is highlighted from the overall teaching of musical composition and is endowed with its own independent significance. This approach determined in many ways the development of European musical education in the 19th century. It is not accidental that in Russia, too, one of the most basic textbooks in musical instruction turned out to be Richter’s *Lehrbuch der Harmonie* [*Harmony Textbook*], the methodological notions of which corresponded in full measure to the plan of the practical courses on harmony accepted at that time. Initially published in Germany in 1853, this book appeared in Russian translation in 1868. The methodological attraction and popularity of this textbook cannot overshadow its other implicit value: the considerate attitude on the part of the translator to the language of the original text, connected with a search for new terms for explanation of conceptions,

where, according to his words, “the old terms turned out to be imprecise, unsatisfactory.”¹

The translator of the book, Alexander Sergeevich Famintsyn (1841–1896), who possessed a brilliant knowledge of the German language, himself studied music theory subjects with Ernst Richter and Moritz Hauptmann, having been a visiting student in Leipzig during the years 1862–1864. Having returned to Russia and having set about teaching at the St. Petersburg Conservatory as a professor of music history and musical aesthetics, he translated into Russian an entire set of German textbooks written by different music theorists, including all the main works of his teacher.

For the first time in the genre of translated tutorial literature, there appears an extensive introduction “From the Translator,” indicating at the goals of the translation: “1) to aid the replenishment of the great vacuity in our musical literature, 2) to establish in printed form, as much as it is possible, the hitherto still very tenuous musical theoretical terminology in Russian.”² And even though the formulization of terminology is not placed in the position of the main goal of the translation, a steadfast attention to scholarly language proper expressed with such definiteness is in itself a remarkable fact. The translator’s terminological preferences are clearly formulated in the introduction and are connected with the search of Russian equivalents for the German definitions of certain important concepts of harmony. Thereby, the translator suggests as synonyms to the already well-known translations to the German terms *Trugschluss* (interrupted cadence) and *Wechselnoten* (changeable notes) the following word combinations: *false*

(*or deceptive*) *cadence* and *embellishing notes* — words that were able to entrench themselves for a lengthy period of time in Russian original tutorial literature. However, a new verbal “ascertainment” was enforced on the basic conception of Tonart. Instead of the ambiguous, commonly used appellation of *ton* [tone], the translator chose the indication *stroï* [structure], and simultaneously “separates” it from the term *lad* [mode]. The latter is conceived as the equivalent to the German word *Kirchentonart*, which, according to Famintsyn’s thought, fitted the indication of the medieval (church) modes.

The dissociation of these terms and the concepts standing behind them is subsequently confirmed for the first time by the terminology of many Russian music theory guidebooks. And not only them. On the pages of Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Letopis’ moei muzykal’noi zhizni* [My Musical Life] we read: “The early modes, just as when I was composing “May Night,” <...> continued to intrigue me in “The Snow Maiden”... (the so-called Dorian, Phrygian and Mixolydian modes). Certain sections, such as, for instance, the song about the beaver with the dance of the Landless Peasant are written with transpositions into various tunings and various modes.” [5, p. 260] As it is known, particularly the term *stroï* [structure] actively functions as a basic term in the “Textbook on Harmony” written by the composer in 1884. Thereby, the author of the translation, trying to “feel” the definition of the polyvalent foreign term, virtually “creates” his own term, having successfully chosen a word from the Russian language.

¹ Richter E. F. *Uchebnik garmonii* [Manual of Harmony]. Trans. from the 6th edition of 1866 by A. Famintsyn. St. Petersburg: Karl Rikker, 1868. P. VI.

² Ibid.

The term *stroï* [structure] is subsequently widely used in Russian tutorial literature as an absolutely self-sufficient term (in the works of Nikolai Mikhailovich Ladukhin, Mikhail Mikhailovich Ippolitov-Ivanov, Nikolai Feopemptovich Solovyov), as well as with synonymic words *ton* [tone] and *tonal'nost'* [tonality]. A long life was prepared for the term *stroï* [structure] up until the 1920s, and only then was it transferred to the passive supply of terminology. Nonetheless, in the “Theoretical Course of Harmony” of Georgy Lvovich Catoire (1925), it continues to be used alongside the term *tonal'nost'* [tonality]. However, a different meaning of their parallel usage becomes more substantial, which may be defined as “seeming synonymy,” since, after all, it is referred to conceptions that are essentially different from each other, which by that time had received their concise definitions in theory and taken a different position in the hierarchy of the tonal system. As far as the term *lad* [mode] is concerned, this most important category was comprehended in the second half of the 19th century only at its “preliminary” level analysis, in a practical sense, and, having received its Russian name, the term had remained for a long time without any serious substantiation. The tendency of that time was to assert its meaning, relying on the already known synonymic words: *gamma* [scale], *zvukoryad* [set of pitches], *ton* [tone], *nakloneniye* [resolution], *stroï* [structure]. Another tendency is connected with the “authorial” rendition of the word, which frequently plays a greater role than its direct translation.

Let us turn, once again, to the definition given by the translator, for which we shall transfer ourselves several decades ahead, addressing ourselves to the Russian translation of Riemann’s

Musical Dictionary (1901). This may seem strange, but the article devoted to the term *lad* [mode] appears here as a supplementary article, while its author, Yuly Dmitrievich Engel does not even cite the German equivalent of the word at all. Defining *lad* [mode] as “concordance” and “order” accretes with additional information, seeming to “justify” the appearance of this to a certain extent metaphorical definition in a strict academic reference publication: “This purely Russian word, unfortunately, has not acquired in Russian musical terminology any precisely definite meaning belonging solely to it and irreplaceable with any other word, ... it presumes a general scheme of construction of a (diatonic) set of pitches, rather than any particular case of applying this scheme.”³ It must be noted that the present-day stage of development of musicology — in Russia, as well as in other countries — provides a multitude of diverse and, at times, contradictory approaches to elucidating the issue of the *lad* [mode].

To return to Richter’s *Harmony Textbook*, it must be noted that its appearance in Russian signified something more grand than a common attempt of translating a popular European edition. With the help of this translation, a successful “transplantation” onto Russian soil took place of terminological words and combinations that have enriched the professional lexis in which there was such a great need on the part of Russian scholarship.

**François-Auguste Gevaert's
Treatise on Instrumentation
and Johann Lobe's *Catechism of Music*
in Translation by Pyotr Tchaikovsky**

The 1860s were signified by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s attention to translating two musical pedagogical works that were popular

³ Riman G. *Muzykal'nyi slovar'* [Riemann H. *Music Dictionary*]. Trans. from the 5th German edition by Yu. Engel. Moscow: P. Jurgenson, 1901. P. 723.

in Europe. Tchaikovsky turned to the first of them — François-Auguste Gevaert's *Treatise on Instrumentation (Traité général d'instrumentation, 1863)* — while he was still a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, in 1865. The translation from French was carried out by him at the instruction of Anton Grigoryevich Rubinstein, about which the young composer writes to his sister Alexandra Ilyinichna Davydova: “Rubinstein is very pleased that I was able to complete the work; he is only asking me to consult with some philologist about the terms.” [6, p. 83] Apparently, after having consulted with somebody about the terminology, Tchaikovsky did not limit himself simply to translating Gevaert's book, having also provided it with annotations (frequently, critical ones), and terminological corrections. Gevaert's *Treatise* in Tchaikovsky's translation, published by Pyotr Jurgenson in 1866, was introduced as a tutorial manual at the St. Petersburg and the Moscow Conservatoires and for many years was the generally accepted book for instructing orchestration.

The translation of the other work fulfilled the musical needs of the broadest circles of musicians, both professionals and amateurs. It is known that Tchaikovsky taught an “elementary course” of music theory for a short period of time, having been a beginning faculty member at the Moscow Conservatory (for more detail about this, see: [7]). The absence of tutorial literature in Russian on this subject, most likely, impelled the composer to begin work on the translation of the famous German textbook. Johann Lobe's *Catechism of Music (Katechismus der Musik, 1851)* was translated by Tchaikovsky in 1869 from the 8th German edition and published the following year. The exclusive popularity of this reference book is testified by the fact that every three or four years it was republished, and after Tchaikovsky's death it was

supplemented, according to the latest German editions, although the name of the translator of the supplemental parts of the book was not indicated. As the result of Tchaikovsky's translation, in the Russian harmonic lexis a new accentuation appeared in the interpretation of the concept of the term *garmoniya* [*harmony*], defined as “the simultaneous appearance of several tones creating various types of *sozvuchiya* [*concordances*],” [6, p. 380] and of the term *akkord* [*chord*] as “the combination of several tones struck simultaneously, following the known laws.” [Ibid., p. 443] It may be presumed that it was particularly during the process of translation that the essential attributes of this concept have been strengthened in the composer's consciousness, subsequently described in his own textbook. The definition of harmony given there as the “combination of simultaneously heard musical sounds” also includes in itself the definition of an isolated case of the latter — an individual “harmonic combination” on the basis of the concordance of sounds, which becomes the essential feature of the conception of the *akkord* [*chord*]. Among the terms connected with the definition of modulation, in Tchaikovsky's textbook there appear the Russian analogies of *perekhod* [*transition*] and *uklonenie* [*deviation*], as well as the term *tonal'nost'* [*tonality*] in a synonymic set with *lad* [*mode*] and *naklonenie* [*resolution*].

**Adolf Bernhard Marx's
General Music Textbook
in Translation by Alexander Famintsyn**

The 1870s passed under the sign of the further steadfast attention on the part of Russian musicians towards serious works by authors from other countries. In the musical-pedagogical literature indispensable on the first steps of professional instruction, as before, of special value were the textbooks that generalized the basic spheres of music scholarship,

or guidebooks of “encyclopedic” character. Among the textbooks from other countries geared for an intermediary level of musical education, of undoubtedly high standing were the works of German musicologist Adolf Bernhard Marx (1795–1866), in particular, his popular book *General Music Textbook* (*Allgemeine Musiklehre*, 1839). Information about the first not very successful attempt of translating the German original text undertaken in 1848 by Moscow-based music teacher Vikenty Lemokh may be found in the publication of Alexei Alexeyevich Stepanov. Emphasizing the positive side of what was achieved, he notes that a comparison of the texts of the original and its translation testifies to the fact that the latter is merely “...a synoptic retelling of the German original text, an editorial remaking and abridgement of a large-scale, ‘fundamental’ tutorial book.” [8, p. 184] Famintsyn’s translation made from one of the posthumous German editions was published for the first time in St. Petersburg in 1872, and subsequently was republished twice more with corrections and rectifications. The third publication in Moscow in 1893 is distinguished by that level of accuracy and academic scrupulosity characterizing all of the translations by this author, and in this case, also the editor of the publication.

The numerous editorial digressions, the extensive footnotes, the abundant referential apparatus — all of these become in this translation indications of a genuinely scholarly approach to the original text. In addition to the supplemental information testifying of the translator’s ample erudition, the “accompanying” editorial text reflects the vagaries concerning the terminological clarity of the basic concepts of harmony, in comparison with the translation

of Richter’s *Harmony Textbook* undertaken four years prior. Famintsyn becomes permanently convinced of the rightness of the term *stroï* [*structure*] found by him and suggests “in connection with the systematic quality of the terminology” to complement it with the terms *rod* [*category*] and *vid* [*genus*], “...which are distinguished by their simplicity and precisely expressing the generic relationship of our 24 scales to major and minor.”⁴

The translations into Russian of Lobe’s *Catechism of Music* and Marx’s *General Music Textbook* were not merely endowed with an immense educational significance. By the example of these “encyclopedic” editions, later there would also appear the analogous Russian editions: in 1896, the *Kratkoe rukovodstvo k teorii muzyki. Elementarnaya teoriya muzyki, garmoniya, kontrapunkt, formy instrumental'noi i vokal'noi muzyki* [*A Concise Manual of Music Theory. Elementary Music Theory, Harmony, Counterpoint, Forms of Instrumental and Vocal Music*] by Livery Sakketi, and one year after that — *Kratkaya entsiklopediya teorii muzyki* [*A Concise Encyclopedia of Music Theory*] by Nikolai Ladukhin.

Conclusion

To summarize, it is proper to contemplate yet another vector in the study of the history of the music theory lexicon in Russian. An analysis of the translated literature indicates at the possibility of incorporating Russian terminology into the context of a more general issue — the ascertainment of the specificity of Russian music and, in particular, of Russian harmony.

To what degree is terminology generally capable of expressing a national mentality? In all appearances, in regard to the period

⁴ Marx A. B. *Vseobshchii uchebnik muzyki* [*General Music Textbook*]. Trans. from the 9th German edition by A. S. Famintsyn. 3rd revised edition. Moscow: P. Jurgenson, 1893. P. 68.

of the formation of Russian terminology, it is possible to state this with certainty. In the history of harmony, the second half of the 19th century became the time when scholarship with a remarkable synchronicity “kept apace” with compositional practice, managing to fixate in its general features the stylistic “portrait of the time” — the style of writing of the Classical-Romantic tradition. Let us express the presumption that in the questions of the search and elaboration of the terminology by Russian music theorists (who frequently were also composers), it was not possible not to consider the specificity of the national nature of harmony. A sort of “reflected light” of this specificity, which

determined the particularities of the Russian school, the national thinking and language, was indeed present in such terms as *lad* [mode], *stroï* [structure], and *sozvuchie* [concordance], which acquired an academic status and had no analogies in the West.

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin labeled translators as “the post-horses of enlightenment.” It is difficult to argue with the classic and to search for a more precise definition for people whose mission is not only the elevation of the overall literacy during the course of adapting texts from other languages, but, in the outcome, — also the development of their native language, including for the purposes of scholarship.

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