Title: Nineteenth-century Classical Music and St. Petersburg

Overview: This lesson is for students to:
• read one article related to 19th century St. Petersburg

Lesson Focus:
• English Language Arts Content Standard 1: Meaning and Communication “All students will read and comprehend general and technical material.”
• Benchmark #3 for middle school
• Benchmark #3 for high school

Materials:
• variety of articles on St. Petersburg for student reading (4 articles have been included). Teacher should also include additional reading material for their class.
• chart paper
• timer or clock

What to Do:
1. Rotating Review (Kagan Cooperative Learning Structure). Copies of articles are passed out to groups. Groups work best when they consist of 4-6 students for this activity. Each member of the group gets the same article.

2. Each group reads its article. Students take notes on the article. Allow appropriate time for reading and note taking.

3. Chart paper is posted around the room. At the top of each chart paper a topic is written. Topics correspond with the title of the various articles students are reading.

4. Teams stand by the chart paper with their topic.

5. Teams have 1-2 minutes to write down as many facts as they can on the topic.

6. Teams then rotate to the next topic. Teams have 2 minutes to read and briefly discuss what was written by another team. The team writes a question mark (?) if they disagree or have a question about a fact.

7. Teams have one additional minute to write any additional information on the topic.

8. Teams rotate to the next topic. Continue this process.
Introduction

(born Karevo, 21 March 1839; died St. Petersburg, 28 March 1881).

His mother gave him piano lessons, and at nine he played a Field concerto before an audience in his parents' house. In 1852 he entered the Guards' cadet school in St Petersburg. Although he had not studied harmony or composition, in 1856 he tried to write an opera; the same year he entered the Guards. In 1857 he met Dargomîzhsky and Cui, and through them Balakirev and Stasov. He persuaded Balakirev to give him lessons and composed songs and piano sonatas.

In 1858 Mussorgsky passed through a nervous or spiritual crisis and resigned his army commission. A visit to Moscow in 1859 fired his patriotic imagination and his compositional energies, but although his music began to enjoy public performances his nervous irritability was not entirely calmed. The emancipation of the serfs in March 1861 obliged him to spend most of the next two years helping manage the family estate; a symphony came to nothing and Stasov and Balakirev agreed that 'Mussorgsky is almost an idiot'. But he continued to compose and in 1863–6 worked on the libretto and music of an opera, *Salammbô*, which he never completed. At this time he served at the Ministry of Communications and lived in a commune with five other young men who ardently cultivated and exchanged advanced ideas about art, religion, philosophy and politics. Mussorgsky's private and public lives eventually came into conflict. In 1865 he underwent his first serious bout of dipsomania (probably as a reaction to his mother's death that year) and in 1867 he was dismissed from his post.
Mussorgsky spent summer 1867 at his brother's country house at Minkino, where he wrote, among other things, his first important orchestral work, *St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain*. On his return to St. Petersburg in the autumn Mussorgsky, like the other members of the Balakirev-Stasov circle (ironically dubbed the 'Mighty Handful'), became interested in Dargomîzhsky's experiments in operatic naturalism. Early in 1869 Mussorgsky re-entered government service and, in more settled conditions, was able to complete the original version of the opera *Boris Godunov*. This was rejected by the Mariinsky Theatre and Mussorgsky set about revising it. In 1872 the opera was again rejected, but excerpts were performed elsewhere and a vocal score published. The opera committee finally accepted the work and a successful production was mounted in February 1874.

Meanwhile Mussorgsky had begun work on another historical opera, *Khovanshchina*, at the same time gaining promotion at the ministry. Progress on the new opera was interrupted partly because of unsettled domestic circumstances, but mainly because heavy drinking left Mussorgsky incapable of sustained creative effort. But several other compositions belong to this period, including the song cycles *Sunless* and *Songs and Dances of Death* and the *Pictures at an Exhibition*, for piano, a brilliant and bold series inspired by a memorial exhibition of drawings by his friend Victor Hartmann. Ideas for a comic opera based on Gogol's *Sorochintsy Fair* also began to compete with work on *Khovanshchina*; both operas remained unfinished at Mussorgsky's death. During the earlier part of 1878 he seems to have led a more respectable life and his director at the ministry even allowed him leave for a three-month concert tour with the contralto Darya Leonova. After he was obliged to leave the government service in January 1880, Leonova helped provide him with employment and a home. It was to her that he turned on 23 February 1881 in a state of nervous excitement, saying that there was nothing left for him but to beg in the streets; he was suffering from alcoholic epilepsy. He was removed to hospital, where he died a month later.

Many of Mussorgsky's works were unfinished, and their editing and posthumous publication were mainly carried out by Rimsky-Korsakov, who to a greater or lesser degree 'corrected' what Mussorgsky had composed. *Boris Godunov*, in particular, was reshaped and repolished, with drastic cuts, wholesale rewriting and resoring, insertion of new music and transposition of scenes. It was only many years later that, with a return to the composer's original drafts, the true nature of his rough art could be properly understood, for Mussorgsky shared with some of the painters of his day a disdain for formal beauty, technical polish and other manifestations of 'art for art's sake'. His desire was to relate his art as closely as possible to life, especially that of the Russian masses, to nourish it on events and to employ it as a means for communicating human experience.

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http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/mussorgsky.html
Rimsky-Korsakov's music is exciting and moving. Although his orchestral pieces such as the Russian Easter Overture are more well-known, his operas are much more important. He did a great deal of work in making fantastical, mystical operas, which were previously uncommon in that genre of music. When Rimsky-Korsakov wrote an opera, he was not creating a drama, but musical fairy tales. His characters have been called "puppets," for they are more instrumental in the music, rather than vice versa. Opera allowed Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestral work to create a great variety of effects, such as fantasy, humor, and eroticism. Operas such as Snow Maiden were centered around a mysticism of the natural world.

List of Operas

Maid of Pskov (1868-72)  The Tsar's Bride (1898)
May Night (1878)  Tsar Salton (1899)
Snow Maiden (1880-81)  Servilia (1899-1900)
Mlada (1889-90)  Kaschei the Immortal (1901-02)
Christmas Eve (1894-95)  Pan Voevoda (1902-03)
Sadko (1894-96)  Kitezh (1903-04)
Mozart and Salieri (1897)  Le Coq d'Or (The Golden Cockerel) 1906-07

Brief Summaries and Sound Clips

Snow Maiden

The libretto of this fantastical tale was written by Rimsky-Korsakov himself. It is based on a play by Alexander Ostrovsky, which was originally taken from a Russian folk tale.
Plot: As winter is ending, the Snow Maiden asks Spring to let her stay a bit longer in the world. She is granted this request, only if she is innocent of love. If not, the sun's rays will kill her. A merchant, Mizguir falls in love with her, leaving his sweetheart. The Snow Maiden, in return falls in love with him, trying to keep this secret from the Sun, but fails. She disappears from the sun's rays, and Mizguir then drowns himself.

(Sound files are in RealAudio format. To download a player visit www.realaudio.com)

"The Dance of the Tumblers"

Sadko

Its premiere was January 7, 1898, in Moscow, and the libretto was written by Vladimir Ivanovich Belsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. It is considered the best of his fairy tale operas. The story comes from Russian legends. The main character, Sadko is an 11th century minstrel sent off by the merchants of Novgorod to find wealth for the city. His travels allow him to meet the Sea Princess, Volkhova. She falls in love with him, eventually they are married, but the morning after the marriage she is transformed into the Volkhova River. Sadko is found by his wife, Lyubava. The Volkhova River is the river which becomes the water route to the sea from the district of Novgorod, in fact bringing wealth to the area.

Act I- "Budit krasen den'v palavinu dn'a" (chorus, Sadko)

Act II- "Svet'at rasoju medv'anaju kosy tvai" (Sadko, Sea Princess, chorus)

The Golden Cockerel (Le Coq d'or)

This opera had its debut in Moscow, October 7, 1909. Its libretto is by Vladimir Ivanovich Belsky, and it is based on a work by Alexander Pushkin. The story line begins as King Dodon is going to war. He receives the Golden Cockerel as a gift from his astrologer because the bird has the ability to warn of danger. When it crows, there is some sort of danger. It crows twice, and needless to say, King Dodon finds his two sons and their armies dead on the battlefield. He then meets the Queen of Shemakha, who he brings back to his kingdom to marry. The astrologer asks as payment for the Golden Cockerel to take the Queen from King Dodon. The cockerel crows as a sign of danger, and danger comes to the astrologer, who is killed by King Dodon. As the opera comes to an end, the King is pecked by the Golden Cockerel, and dies. This was Rimsky-Korsakov's satire of Tsar Nicolas II's actions in the Russo-Japanese War.

"The Marriage Feast and Lamentable End of King Dodon"
Bibliography


www.geocities.com/Vienna/3606

Project Index    Rimsky-Korsakov Index    Rhodes College

http://www.patriciagray.net/Musichtmls/NatDocs/rkop.html
The St. Petersburg State Conservatory, the first public school of music in Russia was inaugurated on September 20th, 1862. The foundation of the Conservatory crowned the efforts of a group of progressive-minded musicians of the XIX century. It boasts Anton Rubinstein, Henrick Wieniawski, Karl Schubert, Gavriil Lomakin as founding members. By that time the distinctive features of Russian musical performance style had been developed by generations of Russian singers, pianists, conductors, string and wind players, who were competing successfully with their foreign colleagues in the Imperial and private opera companies, various ensembles, orchestras and choir. Musicians from Italy, Bohemia, and Germany would flock to Russia, and would, in most cases, settle there permanently. In the first half of the 19th century, St. Petersburg, on a par with Vienna, Paris, Prague, London and Berlin, began to attract the world-famous artists. Thus it was here that the first performance of Beethoven's Missa Solemnis was given in 1824, and subsequently a second performance of his Ninth Symphony was heard. Among the renowned guest performers who visited St. Petersburg were Liszt, Berlioz, Schumann and Wagner, to name but a few. It was from here that Beethoven received a commission to write string quartets and Verdi was commissioned to compose opera. Finally, it was in St. Petersburg that a remarkable school of composition arose which was to shape and develop, in the works of the great Russian national composers Dmitry Bortnyansky, Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Mikhail Glinka and their contemporaries, the distinguishing features of the style and idiom of Russian music. In the middle of the 19th century, in an atmosphere of social, cultural and political ferment and reforms, the new Imperial Music Society was founded which launched an extensive programme. One of the most important projects undertaken by the Society, which was active throughout Russia, was organization of conservatories in the country.

Russia’s first Conservatory was opened in St. Petersburg in 1862 and was headed by the outstanding pianist, composer and conductor Anton Rubinstein. The initial staff members were Henryk Wieniawski (violin), Theodor Leszetycki (piano), Anton Rubinstein (piano), Nikoly Zaremba (composition), Karl Schubert (cello), Gavril Lomakin (choral singing), and others. Although it had taken some time to get all the teaching staff vacancies filled and to perfect educations programmes, in 1865 the Conservatory gave the world the genius alumnus -- Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The period between 1870-1890 saw the ascendancy of the Conservatory when, with the advent of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (he joined the staff as a professor) and his disciples, exponents of the New Russian school of composition -- Anatoly Lyadov and Alexander Glazunov, the aesthetic ideals were finally formulated and realized in the Conservatory's educational programmes, thus forming the solid basis for the new generations of musicians. Homage to the genius of Rimsky-Korsakov was paid in 1944 when his centenary was marked and the Conservatory was named after him. The present building of the Conservatory dates back to the 1890s when the old theatre (called the Bolshoi) was pulled down to give place to a purpose-built Conservatory.
Another important period in the development of the Conservatory lay between the years 1905-1928, when it was headed by Glazunov. Having come into the office in 1905, this distinguished musician and remarkable man remained the heart and soul of the Conservatory, its professional and moral symbol for nearly a quarter of a century. The illustrious musicians, who were members of the professorial staff then, were Leopold Auer (violin); Nikolay Tcherepnin (conducting); Anatoly Lyadov, Alexander Glazunov and Maximilian Steinberg (composition); Anna Yessipova, Sergey Lyapunov and Leonid Nikolayev (piano). Many of their pupils won world acclaim. The legendary alumni are the composers Nikolay Myaskovsky, Sergey Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich; violinist Jascha Heifetz, Miron Polyakin, Efrem Zimbalist, Yuri Eidlin; pianists Samary Savshinsky, Nadezhda Golubovskaya, Vladimir Sofronitsky; conductors Nikolay Malko, Mikhail Klimov. All of them made an outstanding contribution to the world musical culture.

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 led to a break in the continuity of musical development; many composers and musicians emigrated. Those who stayed in Russia were in for another ordeal during World War II, when some professors and students were suffering in besieged Leningrad while others were evacuated to Central Asia. In 1938-1977, with some short intermissions, the Conservatory was headed by Pavel Serebryakov, a brilliant Soviet pianist. The Conservatory saw a revival of the fame of old traditions. In the 1950s, for instance, the violinists Mikhail Vaiman and Boris Gutnikov won several international competitions. In the 1950s - 1960s, graduates of the Conservatory included the world-famous singers Yelena Obraztsova, Yevgeny Nesterenko, Vladimir Atlantov and celebrated conductors, Vladislav Chernushenko, Dmitry Kitayenko, Yuri Temirkanov, Alexander Dmitriev, Maris Yansons. In the 1970s, educated at the Conservatory were the pianist Grigory Sokolov and Pavel Yegorov, the conductor Valery Gergiev, and many others who now represent the Russian performing art. The end of the period was marked by great achievements at major competitions both in this country and abroad. The winners of national and international prizes have been taught by professors now active at the Conservatory, viz. Tatyana Kravchenko (piano), Viktor Sumerkin (trombone), Gleb Nikitin (flute), Anatoly Nikitin (cello). From 1979, Rector of the St.Petersburg Conservatory is Vladislav Chernushenko, one of the celebrated conductors, who is also Artistic Director of Russia's oldest musical institution, the St.Petersburg Academic Capella (the former Imperial Court Capella).

Loyal to the traditions of its founders and numerous generations of progressive musicians of the home-land, the Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory in St.Petersburg is striving to lofty professional ideals and active propaganda of the world musical culture.
Piotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

Introduction

(born Kamsko-Votkinsk, 7 May 1840; died St. Petersburg, 6 November 1893).

His father was a mine inspector. He started piano studies at five and soon showed remarkable gifts; his childhood was also affected by an abnormal sensitivity. At ten he was sent to the School of Jurisprudence at St. Petersburg, where the family lived for some time. His parting from his mother was painful; further, she died when he was 14 - an event that may have stimulated him to compose. At 19 he took a post at the Ministry of Justice, where he remained for four years despite a long journey to western Europe and increasing involvement in music. In 1863 he entered the Conservatory, also undertaking private teaching. Three years later he moved to Moscow with a professorship of harmony at the new conservatory. Little of his music so far had pleased the conservative musical establishment or the more nationalist group, but his First Symphony had a good public reception when heard in Moscow in 1868.

Rather less successful was his first opera, The Voyevoda, given at the Bol'shoy in Moscow in 1869; Tchaikovsky later abandoned it and re-used material from it in his next, The Oprichnik. A
severe critic was Balakirev, who suggested that he write a work on *Romeo and Juliet*: this was
the Fantasy-Overture, several times rewritten to meet Balakirev's criticisms; Tchaikovsky's
tendency to juxtapose blocks of material rather than provide organic transitions serves better in
this programmatic piece than in a symphony as each theme stands for a character in the drama.
Its expressive, well-defined themes and their vigorous treatment produced the first of his works
in the regular repertory.

*The Oprichnik* won some success at St. Petersburg in 1874, by when Tchaikovsky had won
acclaim with his *Second Symphony* (which incorporates Ukrainian folk tunes); he had also
composed two string quartets (the first the source of the famous Andante cantabile), most of his
next opera, *Vakula the Smith*, and of his *First Piano Concerto*, where contrasts of the heroic and
the lyrical, between soloist and orchestra, clearly fired him. Originally intended for Nikolay
Rubinstein, the head of Moscow Conservatory, who had much encouraged Tchaikovsky, it was
dedicated to Hans von Bülow (who gave its premiere, in Boston) when Rubinstein rejected it as
ill-composed and unplayable (he later recanted and became a distinguished interpreter of it). In
1875 came the carefully written *Third Symphony* and *Swan Lake*, commissioned by Moscow
Opera. The next year a journey west took in Bizet's *Carmen* in Paris, a cure at Vichy and the first
complete *Ring* at Bayreuth; although deeply depressed when he reached home - he could not
accept his homosexuality - he wrote the fantasia *Francesca da Rimini* and (an escape into the
18th century) the *Rococo Variations* for cello and orchestra. *Vakula*, which had won a
competition, had its premiere that autumn. At the end of the year he was contacted by a wealthy
widow, Nadezhda von Meck, who admired his music and was eager to give him financial
security; they corresponded intimately for 14 years but never met.

Tchaikovsky, however, saw marriage as a possible solution to his sexual problems; and when
contacted by a young woman who admired his music he offered (after first rejecting her)
immediate marriage. It was a disaster: he escaped from her almost at once, in a state of nervous
collapse, attempted suicide and went abroad. This was however the time of two of his greatest
works, the *Fourth Symphony* and *Eugene Onegin*. The symphony embodies a 'fate' motif that
recurs at various points, clarifying the structure; the first movement is one of Tchaikovsky's most
individual with its hesitant, melancholy waltz-like main theme and its ingenious and appealing
combination of this with the secondary ideas; there is a lyrical, intermezzo-like second
movement and an ingenious third in which pizzicato strings play a main role, while the finale is
impassioned if loose and melodramatic, with a folk theme pressed into service as second subject.
*Eugene Onegin*, after Pushkin, tells of a girl's rejected approach to a man who fascinates her (the
parallel with Tchaikovsky's situation is obvious) and his later remorse: the heroine Tatyana is
warmly and appealingly drawn, and Onegin's hauteur is deftly conveyed too, all against a rural
Russian setting which incorporates spectacular ball scenes, an ironic background to the private
tragedies. The brilliant *Violin Concerto* also comes from the late 1870s.

The period 1878-84, however, represents a creative trough. He resigned from the conservatory
and, tortured by his sexuality, could produce no music of real emotional force (the Piano Trio,
written on Rubinstein's death, is a single exception). He spent some time abroad. But in 1884,
stimulated by Balakirev, he produced his *Manfred symphony*, after Byron. He continued to travel
widely, and conduct; and he was much honoured. In 1888 the *Fifth Symphony*, similar in plan to
the Fourth (though the motto theme is heard in each movement), was finished. A note of hysteria
in the finale was recognized by Tchaikovsky himself. The next three years saw the composition of two ballets, the finely characterized *Sleeping Beauty* and the more decorative *Nutcracker*, and the opera *The Queen of Spades*, with its ingenious atmospheric use of Rococo music (it is set in Catherine the Great's Russia) within a work of high emotional tension. Its theatrical qualities ensured its success when given at St. Petersburg in late 1890. The next year Tchaikovsky visited the USA; in 1892 he heard Mahler conduct *Eugene Onegin* at Hamburg. In 1893 he worked on his *Sixth Symphony*, to a plan - the first movement was to be concerned with activity and passion; the second, love; the third, disappointment; and the finale, death. It is a profoundly pessimistic work, formally unorthodox, with the finale haunted by descending melodic ideas clothed in anguished harmonies. It was performed on 28 October. He died nine days later: traditionally, and officially, of cholera, but recently verbal evidence has been put forward that he underwent a 'trial' from a court of honour from his old school regarding his sexual behaviour and it was decreed that he commit suicide. Which version is true must remain uncertain.

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