

Konchakovna's Cavatina from Aleksandr Borodin's *Prince Igor*:

A Transcription & Arrangement for Piano Trio

by

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ABSTRACT

While Aleksandr Borodin enjoyed a varied career as a composer, he was a chemist by profession and made his living as such. Although his focus was primarily on academic life as a chemistry professor, his musical style still managed to evolve in remarkable ways: from a more Western-European style to the style of Russian nationalism of the late 19th century. While Borodin did compose early chamber works featuring the piano, during this stylistic shift, his chamber music output notably excluded the piano, as he switched his focus to string quartets. Additionally, he dedicated many of these later years to producing large-scale symphonic works and the opera *Prince Igor*.

The purpose of this project is to address a lost opportunity: There is sadly no chamber music in Borodin's mature style that features the piano. His masterpiece, *Prince Igor*, is the work of a mature composer, and *Konchakovna's Cavatina* from the opera's second act was chosen to serve as the basis for an arrangement for traditional piano trio: violin, cello, and piano. This aria for contralto is rare in that the themes and orchestration all are attributed to Borodin, while much of the rest of the opera was completed by other composers of the time.

I have created two arrangements of this scene: a literal transcription that maintains the integrity of the original composition, in which the vocal line of the aria is given primarily to the violin, while the orchestral parts are divided between the cello and the piano, and a second arrangement that alters much of the piece for compositional variety, in the spirit of other arrangers such as Franz Liszt or Jascha Heifetz. In the second version, there are creative interpolations, countermelodies, harmonies, and new figuration to fully utilize the qualities of a piano trio. This paper explains the methods used in the

creation of these arrangements, accompanied by examples from the score, and can serve as a model for other musicians who wish to create their own arrangements of pre-existing musical materials.

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CHAPTER 1

RELEVANT BACKGROUND

Aleksandr Borodin (1833-1887) was the illegitimate son of a prince and his mistress, and he enjoyed a comfortable childhood. He was educated at home, and early on, his mother arranged for piano lessons from a German musician called Pormann.¹ It was this instruction that would be the young Aleksandr's first introduction to a plethora of Western-European music.

The bulk of his interests during this time were four-hand arrangements of symphonies by Haydn, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. The household was particularly fond of the music of Mendelssohn,² a fact that becomes readily apparent in the earliest of Borodin's compositions, particularly his chamber works. His musical upbringing also included the occasional flute lesson, and he would later teach himself the basics of playing the cello. In 1847, he began to dabble in the art of composition, creating a few small works to play together among his close circle of friends.

Simultaneously, his interest in chemistry began to develop, which would lead to a passion that would overtake that of his musical interests. In 1850, the sixteen-year-old entered St. Petersburg's Medicinal-Surgical Academy.³ Though chemistry would become his lifelong career, Borodin continued playing chamber music for his own enjoyment,

¹ Robert W. Oldani, "Borodin, Aleksandr Porfiry'evich," *Grove Music Online*, 2001.

² Oldani, "Borodin."

³ Robert W. Oldani, "19th-Century St Petersburg," Arizona State University, October 18, 2016.

further exposing himself to other well-known composers of the time. At the encouragement of his friends and others who recognized his talent, he would try again to compose both original works and arrangements.⁴ A Trio in G minor for two violins and cello incorporates the Russian folksong *Chem tebya ya ogorchila* (“How I did grieve thee”). Perhaps as a foreshadowing of his later works, this composition was described by his childhood friend Mikhail Shchiglev as part German, part Glinka’s *Life for the Tsar*.⁵ For the better part of the nineteenth century, Mikhail Glinka’s contributions to Russian music were seen as the gold standard. Much like Glinka, the young Borodin saw the importance of the musical foundations laid in places like Italy, and also the inclusion of folk melodies as a way to make his music uniquely Russian. It would be some years later that he and others in his nationalistic circle would abandon many structures they deemed rigid and focus mainly on new forms that would enhance their own local traditions.

In 1856, Borodin graduated with exceptional distinction and accepted an assignment at the Second Military-Land Forces hospital.⁶ In a coincidence that arguably shaped the fate of his later musical career, he was assigned as a duty physician in the Preobrazhenskiy Regiment, where Modest Musorgsky had been assigned as an officer. It was during this time that Borodin had completed the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Medicine. Later, in 1859, he again encountered Musorgsky, who by now had resigned his post to totally dedicate himself to his musical ambitions.⁷

⁴ Oldani, “Borodin.”

⁵ Oldani, “Borodin.”

⁶ Oldani, “Borodin.”

⁷ Oldani, “Borodin.”

Beginning in 1860, Borodin would find himself traveling often for the purposes of his scientific research. Remarkably, he managed to find enough time to produce, at least in part, such compositions as the Piano Trio in D major (unfinished), the String Sextet in D minor (only two movements), and the Piano Quintet in C minor (complete). His affinity for chamber music continued to nurture his musical output during what would otherwise be a time wholly devoted to science.

By 1864, Borodin had established himself as chair of chemistry at the Medical-Surgical Academy.⁸ He lived in St. Petersburg the rest of his life, where he gained a foothold in the local music scene, becoming ever more entrenched in his affection for the influential composers of the time: Robert Schumann, Chopin, and Wagner. Opera would continue to rouse his interest, along with that of his comrades, and by the end of the decade, he had become rather invested in an adaptation of the 12th-century epic *The Lay of Igor's Host*.⁹ In 1869, he began his largest undertaking based on this source material: the opera *Prince Igor*.

Aleksandr Borodin was last to join Mily Balakirev's musical circle. The pair met at a musical evening hosted by a colleague at his surgical academy, and they quickly came to know each other. By this time, the other members of this group were César Cui, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Borodin's acquaintance Modest Musorgsky. Over the years, Balakirev had given many compositional assignments to the self-ascribed "Sunday composer," and by doing so, greatly altered Borodin's own personal choices for

⁸ Richard Taruskin, "Alexander Porfiry'evich Borodin," *Grove Music Online*, 2002.

⁹ Taruskin, "Borodin."

instrumentation.¹⁰ The scale of these works was grand by comparison to what Borodin had composed earlier in his life. Now, his focus shifted to symphonic works and, of course, opera. Because of this dedication to such enormous projects, along with his everyday teaching duties, his progress slowed.¹¹ After a few years, there was not much to show for his efforts besides a symphony that had taken years to complete and a handful of songs.

Though he began working his way through *Prince Igor* in 1869, he had given up many times until 1874, when he seriously returned to this project.¹² It would remain largely unfinished by his death in 1887, but the opera was an important continuation (albeit jagged) of his compositional output. The consensus of the *Moguchaya kuchka* (the Mighty Handful), specifically César Cui, was that the only worthy form of opera was that of *opéra dialogué*, a form in which the vocal lines retained the constant flow of speech, rather than familiar themes organized into arias.¹³ Borodin considered himself a melodist, perhaps due to his affinity for the music of Italy, and often rebuffed this idea by writing sections that contained melodious tunes and lush harmonies.¹⁴ These examples exhibit his original interest in forms used by Western composers most readily. Though he may have been swayed by his peers in some ways, Borodin ably and consistently produced melodies that were not simply through-composed. His interests may have changed

¹⁰ Oldani, “19th-Century St Petersburg.”

¹¹ Oldani, “Borodin.”

¹² Oldani, “Borodin.”

¹³ Oldani, “19th-Century St Petersburg.”

¹⁴ Taruskin, “Borodin.”

slightly to larger compositions, but he adapted his original methods to fit these larger works. What began as chamber duos, trios, and quintets evolved into symphonies and opera that preserved the traits of the budding young composer, whose love for Mendelssohn was never completely quashed.

CHAPTER 2
EVOLUTION OF STYLE, AS SEEN THROUGH BORODIN'S PIANO CHAMBER
MUSIC

Borodin's change in compositional style took place rather rapidly. The shift is most notable in 1860. Until then, Borodin's compositional experiments bore little fruit, though this constant practice allowed him to become formidable at his craft. He began work on his Piano Trio in D major in 1850 and ended in 1860, with the last movement either lost or nonexistent. It was this three-movement chamber work that spurred the original idea for the focus of this project.

Piano Trio in D Major

Borodin's love of Mendelssohn is evident in the movements we are fortunate enough to have. The opening movement *Allegro con brio* is quirky, lighthearted, and punctuated by rapid movements and articulations in each instrument. Though not nearly as difficult or virtuosic, the writing for the piano recalls Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in D minor, from 1839. Surely Borodin would have been aware of this famous trio, and much of this first movement is treated similarly in terms of the lyrical melodies present in the strings, while the piano has rapid figuration and constant eighth notes. Both pieces can be a test of endurance for the pianist, while the string parts tend to have long melodic lines, often in unison.

A great deal of this movement is characterized by busy accompanimental passages in the piano, while the strings create the sustained, lyrical melodies. Often these passages include alternating eighth notes in octaves (a written-out tremolo of sorts) or arpeggios. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, we might encounter cello writing that clings to the vestiges of its origins in early piano trios such as those by Haydn, in which the cello exclusively doubles the left hand of the piano. Instead of reinforcing the left-hand notes in the piano, the cello in Borodin's trio is mostly an independent part. In fact, it is commonly in unison with the violin, though at times only rhythmically—a texture that is another similarity with Mendelssohn's approach.) Additionally, the cello introduces the first theme of this opening movement, as Mendelssohn did in his trio. I would argue each instrument is treated equally, as each gets its own turn to bring out both the thematic and accompanimental material. Though the piece weaves through different keys and moods throughout the movement, the liveliness is consistent with fast eighth notes and no tempo changes. The movement comes to an exciting end after a flurry of arpeggios in the piano (see Figure 1).

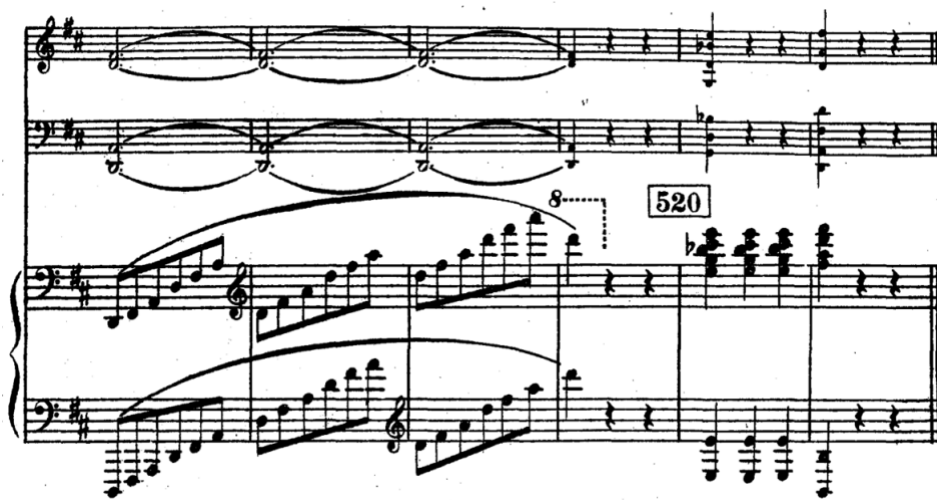


Figure 1. A. Borodin, Piano Trio in D major, I: Ending.

The lyrical second movement, *Romance*, with a tempo indicated as *Andante*, contains a lengthy sixteen-bar introduction of the main theme by the piano alone, that is then taken over by both strings, a structure that is extremely similar to Mendelssohn's second movement (see Figures 2.1 & 2.2).

II. ПОМАHC

The musical score for the piano introduction of the second movement of Borodin's Piano Trio in D major is shown. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked *Andante* and *p* (piano). The tempo is indicated as *Andante* and the dynamics as *p*. The second system is marked *cantabile espressivo*. The music is in D major and 3/4 time. The piano introduction is a sixteen-bar piece.

Figure 2.1. A. Borodin, Piano Trio in D major, II: Excerpt of Piano Introduction.

The musical score for the piano introduction of the second movement of Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in D minor is shown. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked *Andante con moto tranquillo*. The tempo is indicated as *Andante con moto tranquillo*. The second system is marked *Andante con moto tranquillo* and *p* (piano). The tempo is indicated as *Andante con moto tranquillo* and the dynamics as *p*. The music is in D minor and 3/4 time. The piano introduction is a sixteen-bar piece.

Figure 2.2. F. Mendelssohn, Piano Trio in D minor, II: Excerpt of Piano Introduction.

As the movement progresses and increases in intensity, the piano part features a more florid passage with constant 32nd-note arpeggios in the right hand in the middle section. While extremely difficult to play, this part is purely an accompanimental section, and fortunately, some of the musical burden is taken away by the long melodic lines of the unison strings. The return of the A section features a new texture, with the piano given the melody, accompanied by gentle *pizzicato* in the strings. Another Mendelssohnian texture follows, with the strings singing in octaves, while the piano plays gentle arpeggiated chordal *staccati*. This texture closes the movement almost whimsically, with a final delicate piano chordal arpeggio, *pizzicato* markings for the strings, and a unison E for all parts.

The structure and title of the third movement clearly suggest the existence of a fourth and final movement. It is a traditional minuet and trio with the marking *Tempo di minuetto*, typically placed third in a four-movement chamber work when the second movement contains a slow tempo. Arguably the least complicated movement in the piece, it makes for a disappointing end to this trio. The ending marked *Fine* is a quiet unison D in the piano and cello, giving the piece a feeling of incompleteness (see Figure 3). This movement would have made an excellent transition to a finale, as it is a charming contrast to the lyricism of the second movement.



Figure 3. A. Borodin, Piano Trio in D major, III: *Fine*.

Piano Quintet in C Minor

Aleksandr Borodin's early triumph in composition would be his Piano Quintet, composed in 1862. Between 1850 and 1862 there was a dramatic shift in Borodin's tone and style. The Piano Trio is wholly Germanic, bearing the specific influence of Mendelssohn, with little to no indications of Russian influence such as folk songs. While the writing in the trio shows definite understanding of instrumental composition, the quintet contains elements of a mature composer that was, until that point, self-taught. The quintet for two violins, viola, cello, and piano is organized into three movements with a brooding atmosphere, due not only to the minor key. The outer movements are not fast or celebratory in any way, with mostly contemplative themes introduced by the piano and reinforced by the strings. Even the second movement *Scherzo* is in a minor key, and although quicker in pace, ends hollowly with open Cs in the piano and quiet plucked

chords in the strings. When comparing the quintet to the trio, the opening movement of the trio is the only movement that ends triumphantly and optimistically.

The quintet boasts independent and varied instrumental writing, a remarkable feat considering the short amount of time it took to compose the entire work. The piano plays a vital role as introducer of themes—very different from the accompanimental nature of the earlier piano trio—and these themes are then passed around in turn for each instrument. Much of the darker material that takes shape in the quintet can be thought of as a gateway into the Russian style the Mighty Handful emphasized. At times, the music is somber, reminiscent of tolling bells that often permeate the Russian sound. Borodin manages to make these moments lyrical, a trait he never truly abandoned. This lyricism is evident in bar 24 of the first movement, where the piano introduces the second theme in E-flat major, marked *cantabile e legato*. Its lyrical nature calls back to the second movement of the trio, while continuing at the much faster tempo of the beginning of the movement. Structured similarly to the second movement of the trio, the piano part contains a solo passage with the melody in the top of the right hand and sixteenth notes beneath. This movement that began in C minor ends unusually with a V-I cadence in A minor (see Figure 4) to wrap up the journey through a number of key areas, while at the same time transitioning into the key area of the second movement.



Figure 4. A. Borodin, Piano Quintet in C minor, I: Ending.

The theme of the second movement *scherzo* is reused often and in a variety of ways. Introduced by the viola, it consists of alternating eighth and sixteenth note passages in A minor. Though quicker in pace, the movement is by no means raucous throughout. Often the theme is highlighted through its presentation in one solo instrument, with sparse accompaniment underneath.

The transition to the Trio section of the movement is disguised by the repetitive nature of this theme. The Trio retains the rhythmic qualities found in the main part of the movement, with slower, more contemplative sections inserted at times. Again, the piano part is given a lengthy solo passage, further evidence of its importance to the composer (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. A. Borodin, Piano Trio in C minor, II: Trio.

There is a restatement of the original theme, and the movement ends quietly with sustained octaves in the piano emphasizing C major while the pizzicato strings fill in the chords.

Following a short two-bar introduction, the strings ground us back in C minor to introduce the third and final movement. The piano again states a theme, contemplative and slow for a finale, followed by chordal statements in all instruments. This movement contains thick writing for the piano, evolving into quick triplets not long after the start. There is evidence again of Borodin's lyricism, particularly at letter H (see Figure 6), where the cello introduces a beautiful eight-bar theme that the piano then takes over.

33

141 **H**

p cantabile

H

fp

Figure 6. A. Borodin, Piano Quintet in C minor, III: Letter H.

This repeated emphasis on long, melodic writing was at odds with his fellow members of the Mighty Handful, particularly in respect to their operatic writing, which favored speechlike melodic fragments. Borodin demonstrates his expertise and creativity with lyricism in this quintet that will culminate in his melodic techniques in *Prince Igor*, exemplified in *Konchakovna's Cavatina*.

The triplets return for much of the rest of the movement, and the ending is a lengthy, vigorous coda emphasizing C major. Surprisingly, the work ends quietly with a C major chord sustained by the strings with no piano involvement at all (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. A. Borodin, Piano Quintet in C minor, III: Ending.

The piano part is written with tremendous skill and is extremely idiomatic. Sadly, this is where much of Borodin’s piano writing comes to an abrupt halt. Under the guidance of Mily Balakirev, Borodin continued writing songs with piano—an acceptable form of composition for the Mighty Handful—but these often go unnoticed. Some of these songs included a part for the cello, an instrument in which Borodin continued to show keen interest. The remainder of his chamber music is only for strings.

The quintet can be viewed as a steppingstone of sorts regarding style: What came before was rooted in more Western-European traditions, while what came after was wholly based on acceptable forms used by his Russian contemporaries. I would argue this quintet shows a composer at his prime, composing works for instrumentation chosen without outside influence. In a short time, he had found a voice that, though still partially rooted in his love for Mendelssohn, had evolved into a new, unique style.

CHAPTER 3

KONCHAKOVNA'S CAVATINA

Importance of Opera

As a continuation of the operatic tradition created and embraced by Mikhail Glinka, Borodin and his contemporaries focused the subjects of their operas on Russian history, particularly concerning the tsars and their usual turbulent lives. In fact, they became obsessed with it. The Mighty Handful often worked in tandem, with the main example being Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. Many different versions of this opera exist, most commonly not in the composer's original form. Later composers, including Dmitri Shostakovich, would also have a hand in its alternate editions as late as 1940. Borodin's *Prince Igor* was no exception to this practice. Unfinished at his death, the parts conceived and orchestrated by him remain some of his finest work. The opera is difficult to perform due to the many different versions that exist. Borodin himself realized his writing had become stagnant, partly because he wrote the libretto and the music at the same time. A large bulk of the third act was composed entirely by Aleksandr Glazunov, who also reconstructed the overture.

There are, however, important elements that Borodin saw to fruition. For the purposes of this project, *Konchakovna's Cavatina* was chosen as a basis for an arrangement into a piano trio. Another notable choice could have been the well-known *Polovtsian Dances*, though that excerpt has already seen many different arrangements. *Konchakovna's Cavatina* was written and orchestrated by Borodin alone and serves as a

great example of his interest in lyrical, long-lined melodic vocal writing, as opposed to writing based on speech patterns his colleagues preferred. A musical representation of exotic foreigners used by all members of the Mighty Handful is also evident: They are exemplified by rampant chromaticism, ornamentation, and melismas, portrayed in stark contrast to Russian folk elements. This tradition that began with Glinka was embraced and used often by Borodin and his friends.

Part of the goal of this project is to reflect Borodin's development into his mature Russian style in a work of piano chamber music. *Konchakovna's Cavatina* proves the most fitting option for an arrangement. As was mentioned, it is one of the few sections of his opera *Prince Igor* that was fully realized by Borodin, and not created, enhanced, or altered by another composer. It is a reasonable length for a standalone performance, and its structure and melodic material is fitting for a piano trio. Borodin's tendency towards more melodic passages is readily apparent in this aria, and its range for a contralto voice is also appropriate for a string instrument.

In the opera, Konchakovna is the daughter of the Khan Konchak, and the solo passages are rife with embellishment. The aria acts as a continuation of the Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens at the beginning of Act 2, where the maidens sing of love's similarity to a flower that droops in the sun but is revived at night. Konchakovna expands upon this theme, joining the chorus and expressing the hope that her own lover will join her soon. The maidens have small interjections as a chorus throughout the aria.

Short Synopsis of Prince Igor & Translation of Konchakovna's Cavatina

Prologue. In the year 1185, Prince Igor is to embark on an expedition against the Cumans. The people sing the chorus “Glory to the beautiful Sun,” which is followed by a solar eclipse. Igor’s wife takes this eclipse as a bad omen, urging him to stay. Igor, bound by his honor, leaves her in the care of her brother, Prince Galitsky. As the expedition sets out, the people again sing a chorus, “Glory to the multitude of stars.”

Act I. Much more praise is sung, this time by Galitsky’s followers. He sings of the conditions of the young woman he has abducted, insisting she now lives carefree without needing to work. The prince’s followers declare Galitsky the Prince of Putivl. Later, Yaroslavna, Igor’s wife, laments that she has not yet heard from him or his compatriots. *Yaroslavna’s Arioso* tells of sleepless nights, worrying and yearning for when Igor was by her side. A nurse then informs her of the abducted woman and places the blame on Galitsky, who is now causing mayhem in Putivl. Yaroslavna confronts Galitsky, who promises to return the girl but will take another in her place.

A group of boyars then tells Yaroslavna that Igor’s army has been annihilated by Khan Gzak and are now on their way to Putivl. Igor has been captured, and the nobility is in disarray. Galitsky now demands that a new prince be chosen, as he puts forth his own name. The boyars refuse this notion, but all is interrupted by the ensuing battle.

Act 2. The Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens begins the second act. The maidens sing of love, comparing it to a flower that droops in the heat but comes back to life at night. Konchakovna, Khan Konchak’s daughter, then sings her aria:

*Daylight fades
Let us end our songs and dancing!
The night spreads its cloak of darkness.
Night, fall faster.
Envelop me in fog
And mist hide me, clothe me.
The time of our tryst has come.*

*Maidens: Soon night will fall,
Not far off is the hour of love,
The sweet hour of love!*

*Konchakovna: Will my beloved come to me?
Does he not feel that I have long waited for him here?
Where are you, my beloved?
Answer me! Where are you?
I'm waiting for you, my love!*

The Russian prisoners thank Konchakovna and the maidens for feeding them. Igor's son, Vladimir, now sings of his love (Konchakovna), hoping she will join him. The two then meet and sing together of their desire to marry. They flee when they hear Igor coming, and Konchak then offers him freedom if he promises never to wage war on him again. The act ends with the famous Polovtsian Dances, singing of Konchak's glory.

Act 3. In the Polovtsian camp, Konchak sings, celebrating his victory at Putivl and asserts that they will soon have captured all of Russia. At first reluctant, Igor plots an escape from the camp, having secured horses for the way out. As he flees by himself, Konchakovna sounds the alarm, and Konchak agrees to let her and Vladimir marry.

Act 4. As Yaroslavna laments the defeat of Igor's forces, she spots Igor riding in on his horse. There is much celebrating, and the act concludes with all joining in to welcome Igor back triumphantly.

Arranging the Aria for Piano Trio

I have created two arrangements of this aria for piano trio: First, a transcription was created with little alteration of texture, except for a few notes here and there due to the instrumentation. Second, this transcription was then changed throughout, making special use of each instrument. This second arrangement contains creative interpolations, counter melodies, harmonies, and new figuration to fully utilize the qualities of a piano trio. These versions and the choices that were made in their creation will be discussed in detail. Both versions are the same length as the original scene, 81 bars of music. Additionally, scores for these new versions are included in the appendix of this paper.

In version 1, much of Konchakovna's melodic line is assigned to the violin, with a few exceptions. The range and contour of the contralto melody fit this instrument generally well. Much of the cello writing adheres to the cello part of the original score, again with some exceptions. Though the cello mostly plays a supportive role, it does at times have moments marked *solo* in the original score, and therefore has a prominent voice much like the cello's treatment in Borodin's *Trio* and *Quintet*. The creation of the piano part proved to be the most inventive in both versions of this arrangement. Borodin features the harp in the original orchestration. While the gestures of the harp could be used as a basis for the piano texture, there is much more that can be exploited when writing for piano. As best as possible, most notes throughout the orchestral score have been accounted for in the trio arrangements, at times having to weigh the importance of certain inclusions in the original. Certain voices from the orchestral score had to be

eliminated since the arrangement was created for three instruments, but the tonality was never sacrificed (see Figures 8.1 & 8.2).

Figure 8.1 is a page of a musical score for A. Borodin's *Konchakovna's Cavatina*, measures 17-21. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Clar.), Bassoon (Fag.), Voice, Arpa (Harp), and Violoncelli (Violoncelli). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked *pp* (pianissimo). The voice part has lyrics in Russian and French. The Arpa part is marked *amorzoso*. The Violoncelli part is marked *pp pizz.* and *div.* (divisi). The score shows a complex texture with overlapping lines and dynamic markings.

Figure 8.1. A. Borodin, *Konchakovna's Cavatina* Full Score, Mm. 17-21.

Figure 8.2 is a page of a musical score for a Trio Arrangement of A. Borodin's *Konchakovna's Cavatina*, measures 14-18. The score includes parts for Violin (Vln.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked *pp* (pianissimo). The Violin part has a melodic line with a triplet. The Violoncello part has a bass line with a triplet. The Piano part has a complex texture with overlapping lines and dynamic markings. The score shows a complex texture with overlapping lines and dynamic markings.

Figure 8.2. Trio Arrangement, Mm. 14-18.

Although the violin does in fact bear the weight of much of the melodic line, that is not the case in the beginning measures of the trio. The first notes in the violin are from the solo oboe in the full score. Chromaticism, a characteristic representation of exotic foreigners, is employed from the beginning. Following the first two pages of the orchestral score, the violin moves between the woodwind instruments, notably the oboe and the flute. In these introductory twelve measures, the vocal line introduces the main motivic ideas of the aria, which are assigned as a duet between the cello and piano. The beginning measures translate to, “Daylight fades, let us end our songs and dancing! The night spreads its cloak of darkness.” Here, Konchakovna is putting an end to the dance that immediately precedes the aria.

As the piece transitions to the aria proper, the upper register of the piano plays a free, transitional passage, originally assigned to the clarinet, that leads to and establishes the key of G-flat major. Now, for a time, the piano imitates the rolled chords of the harp. The violin at this point officially takes over the role of the contralto. Thanks to the free nature of time in these instances, the line can fit naturally in a rubato style, where the violinist can feel free to lean into dissonances that may otherwise pass by quickly. This rubato is accommodated and enhanced by the rolled chords in the piano in the following ten bars (15-24).

After the introduction, the contralto sings of being enveloped in darkness, which is accompanied by instability in the other instruments. The cello has an independent counter melody for four bars after instances of *pizzicato* D-flats. The two strings rise and fall together, and bar 24 is the first instance of an interjection by the chorus of sopranos and altos. Here the violin and cello continue as a duet, while the piano is given the

fluttering woodwind lines in the right hand and the song of the maidens in the left. The quick 32nd notes in bars 24-27 in the piano are taken from the orchestral flutes and clarinets indicated as *sol*i (see Figures 9.1 & 9.2).

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Horn in F

Treble Solo

Treble

Treble

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

Figure 9.1. A. Borodin, *Konchakovna's Cavatina*, Mm. 24-26.

4

25

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

Figure 9.2. Trio Arrangement. Mm. 25-26.

The words become more agitated and impatient, further emphasized in the music. “Will my beloved not come to me? Does he not feel that I have long waited for him here?” The violin (Konchakovna) now continues with more jagged rhythms marked *Poco piu animato*, accompanied by both a solo cello and staccato punctuations in the piano, representing the strings in the original score. The cello plays a similar role with *pizzicato*. The left hand of the piano takes on the solo bassoon line which typically moves in opposite directions of the cello with unstable half-steps. Konchakovna becomes increasingly impatient: “Where are you? Answer me!” Here the vocal line is defined by the same half-step pattern repeated throughout the next eight bars. In a call-and-response, the cello comments on these half-step figures with its own, again in unison with the lower register of the piano. The piano was given the staccato string parts in the right hand,

which generally follow the contour of the solo voice/violin. At the end of this passionate moment, the violin now has the same transitional material seen earlier in the part of the piano, which lessens the textural and dynamic instability with the translation, “I’m waiting for you, my love.”

There is little change in text in the remainder of the aria. Konchakovna repeats the same thoughts presented at the beginning of the aria. Night is falling, and soon the hour of their meeting will come. The music that follows explores the various thematic material presented earlier, concisely summarizing each section. The final eight bars echo the introductory passages, with the violin again taking on the role of the oboe. The cello responds this time instead of the bassoon. After one more unexpected cadence, the piano now outlines the final moments in G-flat major from the strings and harp (see Figures 10.1 & 10.2).

The image shows a musical score for the ending of *Konchakovna's Cavatina* by A. Borodin. The score is arranged in a system with seven staves, each labeled with an instrument: Flute, Oboe, Horn in F, Harp, Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. The music is in 3/4 time and has a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score concludes with a final double bar line. The Flute, Oboe, and Horn in F parts feature sustained notes and slurs. The Harp part has a final chord. The Violin I, Violin II, and Viola parts have sustained notes and slurs.

Figure 10.1. A. Borodin, *Konchakovna's Cavatina*, Full Score Ending.

77

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

Figure 10.2. Trio Arrangement, Mm. 77-81.

A Second Version of the Aria

The second version of this aria contains altered passages, new textures, added countermelodies, and swapping of violin and cello parts. The substantial changes created for this version produce variety in a potentially repetitive melody, since the words cannot create that variety. In the first version, the contralto melody is almost wholly assigned to the violin, while the second version takes liberties in its placement. This difference also creates variety in the sounds produced in the violin and cello, and it gives an almost entirely different impression of the contralto line.

The beginning of this arrangement preserves the work of version 1, as it seems the most fitting use of the instrumentation. The first instance of change occurs in mm. 28-32, where the roles are switched, and the violin and cello assume the piano's role in the original. The piano writing changes to fill out the harmonies in the left hand, while the right hand plays the aria melody in octaves (see Figures 11.1 & 11.2).

30

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

Figure 11.1. Version 1, Mm. 30-33.

30

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

arco

arco

Figure 11.2. Version 2, Mm. 30-33.

After this moment, the roles revert to their original assignments, now with the important melodic line played in unison in the cello and left hand of the piano. The right hand now creates the *staccato* articulation that was previously *pizzicato* in the strings (see Figure 12). These changes create a noticeable difference of timbre from the first arrangement.

The image shows a musical score for measures 34-38. It consists of three staves: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The Violin staff (top) has a melodic line with some rests. The Cello staff (middle) plays a melodic line that is in unison with the left hand of the piano. The Piano staff (bottom) has a right hand with a staccato accompaniment and a left hand with a melodic line in unison with the cello. The measure number 34 is indicated at the beginning of the first staff.

Figure 12. Version 2, Mm. 34-38, Cello & Piano in Unison.

The next change occurs in mm. 47-60. Some creative license was used to invent a countermelody in the cello line that was otherwise stagnant. The cello echoes the violin's melody while also supporting the harmonies in the piano (see Figure 13.1).

47

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

This musical system covers measures 47 to 49. The Violin part (Vln.) features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and triplets, marked with a '3'. The Viola part (Vc.) provides a harmonic accompaniment with sustained notes. The Piano part (Pno.) consists of a left-hand accompaniment with chords and a right-hand part with eighth-note patterns. The key signature has three flats, and the time signature is 3/4.

50

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

This musical system covers measures 50 to 52. The Violin part (Vln.) continues the melodic line with eighth-note patterns and triplets, marked with a '3'. The Viola part (Vc.) provides a harmonic accompaniment with sustained notes. The Piano part (Pno.) consists of a left-hand accompaniment with chords and a right-hand part with eighth-note patterns. The key signature has three flats, and the time signature is 3/4.

Figure 13.1. Version 1, Mm. 47-52.

7

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.), covering measures 47 to 52. The score is written in a key signature of three flats and a 3/4 time signature. The Violin part (Vln.) begins at measure 47 and features a melodic line with slurs and triplets. The Cello part (Vc.) provides a counter-melody, also with slurs and rests. The Piano part (Pno.) consists of block chords in the right hand and bass notes in the left hand. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system covering measures 47-49 and the second system covering measures 50-52.

Figure 13.2. Version 2, Mm. 47-52, Countermelody in Cello.

In bar 56, the cello is given the thematic material of the vocal line, while the violin has its own countermelody that I have created. This countermelody is loosely based on what comes afterward in its own part, particularly rhythmically. The piano retains its importance of supporting the harmony (see Figures 13.3 & 13.4).

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.), covering measures 57 to 59. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The Violin part (top staff) features a rhythmic countermelody consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The Cello part (middle staff) plays a single note, likely the thematic material mentioned in the text, which is sustained across the measures. The Piano part (bottom staff) provides harmonic support with chords and single notes, including some tremolos in the right hand.

Figure 13.3. Version 1, Mm. 57-59.

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score is for measures 57, 58, and 59. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The Violin part (top staff) has a melody consisting of quarter and eighth notes. The Cello part (middle staff) features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth-note chords. The Piano part (bottom staff) provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments.

Figure 13.4. Version 2, Mm. 57-59, Melody in Cello.

The consistency of Borodin’s writing style inspired what became the original transcription of this aria. The assignment of melody, accompaniment figures, and treatment of form contributed to its creation because that is what I believe was not only important to him, but to his contemporaries. Although they sought to “reinvent” and codify the Russian sound with folk tunes, their output was rather conservative at the same time, not to mention slowly produced. Much of their inventions were still Italianate in foundation, thanks to the influence of Glinka. This trait is even more evident in Borodin’s style, with strict adherence to Western-European forms that influenced him so early in his training. This combination of Western-European traditions along with this newfound Russian aesthetic is what I believe creates a truly unique sound to Aleksandr Borodin’s music. The other members of the Mighty Handful more closely followed the teachings of Mily Balakirev, placing less trust in these Western-European norms. What is

produced by Borodin then became an amalgamation of both schools, a charming interpretation of his love of the music of his youth and of his country's traditions.

Note on Performance

As with any orchestral transcription, careful consideration must be made as to which material will be kept, maintaining as much of the original as possible. While composers may find it difficult to remove anything from their original works, hard choices must be made to create a successful performance in an arrangement. In this transcription of *Konchakovna's Cavatina*, I have done my best to account for all the composer's original work, while also making sure that the writing does not become too thick, clumsy, or impossible to play. Here, the bulk of the tonality is outlined in the piano which, along with the violin, can experiment with rubato much more readily than a large orchestra. The writing for the cello complements this idea, with a lack of intricate rhythms that would otherwise require an adherence to strict time. While there are a few instances that would require some extra rehearsing between the three musicians, Borodin has written the music around the vocal line to account for any ensemble issues, which allows a more improvisatory feeling. Additionally, the piano part contains many rolled chords, which gives the ensemble a touch more freedom in terms of exact entrances.

Conclusion

This research project began with several goals. Aleksandr Borodin's output for the piano is limited, with few instances of piano chamber music. What we are privileged to have at our disposal should be celebrated: his *Piano Quintet* and *Piano Trio* are early signs by a skilled composer that would add much to any concert program. By no means is the *Piano Trio* a raucous finale to an evening recital, but the movements that survive are exciting and filled with emotion. The *Piano Quintet* remains Borodin's earliest masterpiece, and sadly it goes mostly unnoticed. These few pieces are the last instances of his chamber music that included the piano. He would live almost thirty more years without producing any similar works.

His later output that includes *Prince Igor* should also be celebrated. It marks a change in his musical thoughts and priorities. This new transcription, along with the second version, provides an accessible piece to include in many performance settings. Because of the ideals of the Mighty Handful, there is in fact little piano chamber music of the late nineteenth century from this group to choose from, as they were obsessed with opera and other larger works. Rimsky-Korsakov produced a quintet for winds and piano that was not made public until his death. The inclusion of a work by Borodin for this instrumentation is not only a solution to this problem, but it is also a solution upon which can be expanded, with further candidates for arrangement available from Borodin and other members of the Mighty Handful. This transcription of *Konchakovna's Cavatina* is but a small contribution towards these possibilities.

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APPENDIX A

KONCHAKOVNA'S CAVATINA VERSION 1

Konchakovna's Cavatina

Aleksandr Borodin
Arr. Nathan Arch

Largo ♩ = 48

Violin *p dolce*

Violoncello *p*

Piano *p*

7

12

rit. *a tempo*

pizz

rit. *a tempo*

3

17

arco

21

mf

mf

25

28

f

mf

p

mf

33

mf

f

mp

f

39

f

f

ff

f

44

rit. a tempo

mf *mp* *f*

rit. a tempo

mf *mp*

48

mf *mp*

52

pizz arco

f *mf*

f *mf* *mp*

57

Musical notation for measures 57-60. The top staff is a single melodic line with eighth-note patterns and a triplet. The bottom staff is a bass line with long notes and ties.

Piano accompaniment for measures 57-60. The right hand has chords with tremolos, and the left hand has long notes.

61

Musical notation for measures 61-63. The top staff has eighth-note patterns and a rest. The bottom staff has long notes and ties.

Piano accompaniment for measures 61-63. The right hand has chords with tremolos and a triplet. The left hand has long notes.

64

Musical notation for measures 64-66. The top staff has long notes and ties. The bottom staff has long notes and ties.

Piano accompaniment for measures 64-66. The right hand has chords with tremolos and a triplet. The left hand has long notes.

67

Musical score for measures 67-72. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a melodic line with some rests. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and chords. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the piano part.

73

Musical score for measures 73-76. The system consists of three staves. The vocal line has a melodic line with some rests and a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and chords. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the piano part.

77

rit.

Musical score for measures 77-80. The system consists of three staves. The vocal line has a melodic line with some rests and a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and chords. A fermata is placed over the first measure of the piano part.

rit.

APPENDIX B

KONCHAKOVNA'S CAVATINA VERSION 2

Concertpiece on Konchakovna's Cavatina

Aleksandr Borodin
Arr. Nathan Arch

Largo ♩ = 48

Violin *p dolce* *mp* *p*

Violoncello *mf* *f*

Piano *p* *mf* *f*

6 *Red* *f* *3*

12 *p* *mp* *p* *pizz.* *f*

mp a piacere *mf*

17

f *doloroso*

f

mf *pizz.* *arco* *mf*

21

f

mf *p*

25

mp

mp

28

pizz.

f

pizz.

f

mp f *pesante*

3

33

arco

arco

39

3

43

facilmente

This system contains measures 43 through 46. The upper staff features a melodic line with slurs and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 45. The lower staff provides a bass line with some rests. The tempo marking *facilmente* is placed above the upper staff.

This system contains measures 43 through 46. The upper staff has a sustained chord with a fermata in measure 46. The lower staff has a bass line with some rests.

47

f *sim.*

This system contains measures 47 through 49. The upper staff has a melodic line with slurs and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 48. The lower staff has a bass line with slurs and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 48. The dynamic marking *f* is above the upper staff, and *sim.* is above the lower staff.

sospirando

This system contains measures 47 through 49. The upper staff has a melodic line with slurs and a fermata in measure 49. The lower staff has a bass line with slurs and a fermata in measure 49. The marking *sospirando* is placed above the upper staff.

50

This system contains measures 50 through 52. The upper staff has a melodic line with slurs and a fermata in measure 52. The lower staff has a bass line with slurs and a fermata in measure 52.

This system contains measures 50 through 52. The upper staff has a melodic line with slurs and a fermata in measure 52. The lower staff has a bass line with slurs and a fermata in measure 52.

53

58

61

63 *pizz.*

f *ff*

p

65 *arco*

f *ff* *mf* *f*

mf

70

73

Musical notation for measures 73-75. The vocal line (treble clef) has a long note in measure 73, followed by a rest in measure 74, and a note in measure 75. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a long note in measure 73, followed by a rest in measure 74, and a note in measure 75. Both parts have *sfz* markings in measure 75.

Musical notation for measures 76-77. The vocal line (treble clef) has a note in measure 76, followed by a rest in measure 77. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a note in measure 76, followed by a rest in measure 77. Both parts have *sfz* markings in measure 77.

76

Musical notation for measures 78-79. The vocal line (treble clef) has a note in measure 78, followed by a note in measure 79. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a note in measure 78, followed by a note in measure 79. Dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *ff* are present in the vocal line.

Musical notation for measures 80-81. The vocal line (treble clef) has a note in measure 80, followed by a note in measure 81. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a note in measure 80, followed by a note in measure 81. Slurs are present over the notes in both parts.

78

Musical notation for measures 82-83. The vocal line (treble clef) has a note in measure 82, followed by a note in measure 83. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a note in measure 82, followed by a note in measure 83. The word *niente* is written below the notes in both parts.

Musical notation for measures 84-85. The vocal line (treble clef) has a note in measure 84, followed by a note in measure 85. The piano accompaniment (bass clef) has a note in measure 84, followed by a note in measure 85. The word *niente* is written below the notes in both parts. The marking *molto rit.* is present above the piano accompaniment.

APPENDIX C

LINK TO ORCHESTRAL SCORE OF *PRINCE IGOR*

Prince Igor full score

Aleksandr Porfiriyevich Borodin (1833-1887)

Completed & orchestrated by

N. Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

A. Glazunov (1865-1936)

[https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e8/IMSLP526676-PMLP5748-Borodin -](https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e8/IMSLP526676-PMLP5748-Borodin_-)

[Prince Igor - Overture \(etc\).pdf](#)

APPENDIX D

PRINCE IGOR – TABLE OF ORCHESTRATORS & ARRANGERS

No.	Act	Number	Start	End	Composer	Orchestrator
–	–	Overture	1887	1887	Glazunov	Glazunov
1	–	Prologue	1876	1885	Borodin	Borodin
2a	Act 1, Scene 1	Chorus	1875	1875	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
2b	Act 1, Scene 1	Recitative and Song: Galitsky	1879	1879	Borodin	Borodin
2c	Act 1, Scene 1	Recitative: Galitsky	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
2d	Act 1, Scene 1	Maiden's Chorus and Scena	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
2e	Act 1, Scene 1	Scena: Skula, Yeroshka	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
2f	Act 1, Scene 1	Song in Honor of Prince Galitsky: Skula, Yeroshka	1878	1878	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
2g	Act 1, Scene 1	Chorus	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov

No.	Act	Number	Start	End	Composer	Orchestrator
3	Act 1, Scene 2	Arioso: Yaroslavna	1869	1875	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
4	Act 1, Scene 2	Scena: Yaroslavna, Nurse, Chorus	1879	1879	Borodin	Borodin
5	Act 1, Scene 2	Scena: Yaroslavna, Galitsky	1879	1879	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
6	Act 1, Scene 2	Finale: Yaroslavna, Galitsky, Chorus	1879	1880	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
7	Act 2	Chorus of Polovtsian Maidens	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
8	Act 2	Dance of Polovtsian Maidens	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
9	Act 2	Cavatina: Konchakovna	1869	1869	Borodin	Borodin
10	Act 2	Scena: Konchakovna, Chorus	1887	1887	Rimsky- Korsakov / Glazunov	Rimsky-Korsakov / Glazunov
11	Act 2	Recitative and Cavatina: Vladimir	1877	1878	Borodin	Borodin

No.	Act	Number	Start	End	Composer	Orchestrator
12	Act 2	Duet: Vladimir, Konchakovna	1877	1878	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
13	Act 2	Aria: Igor	1881	1881	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
14	Act 2	Scena: Igor, Ovlur	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
15	Act 2	Aria: Konchak	1874	1875	Borodin	Borodin
16	Act 2	Recitative: Igor, Konchak	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
17	Act 2	Polovtsian Dances with Chorus	1869	1875	Borodin	Borodin / Rimsky-Korsakov / Lyadov
18	Act 3	Polovtsian March	1869	1875	Borodin	Borodin / Rimsky-Korsakov
19	Act 3	Song: Konchak	n.a.	n.a.	Glazunov	Glazunov
20	Act 3	Recitative and Scena	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Glazunov
22	Act 3	Recitative: Ovlur, Igor	1888	1888	Glazunov	Glazunov
23	Act 3	Trio: Igor, Vladimir, Konchakovna	n.a.	1888	Borodin / Glazunov	Glazunov

No.	Act	Number	Start	End	Composer	Orchestrator
24	Act 3	Finale: Konchakovna, Konchak, Chorus	1884	n.a.	Borodin / Glazunov	Glazunov
25	Act 4	Lament: Yaroslavna	1875	1875	Borodin	Borodin
26	Act 4	Peasant's Chorus	1879	1879	Borodin	Borodin
27	Act 4	Recitative and Duet: Yaroslavna, Igor	1876	1876	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
28	Act 4	Gudok-Players' Song, Scena and Chorus	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Rimsky-Korsakov
29	Act 4	Finale: Skula, Yeroshka, Chorus	n.a.	n.a.	Borodin	Borodin / Rimsky- Korsakov

Album notes to the 1993 Kirov Opera recording, Philips CD 442–537–2. Information compiled by musicologist Marina Malkiel.