

The relationship between music and text in *Les Noces Villageoises* (1923) by Igor Stravinsky; Pre-presentation essay.

It is important to know the type of intertextuality we come across in *Les Noces*. Stravinsky, as he himself describes in his autobiography, for the most part alludes to Russian folk music and does not quote it directly:

Such a sound combination in *Les Noces* was the necessary outcome of the music itself, and it was in no wise suggested by a desire to imitate the sounds of popular [feasts] of this kind, which I had, indeed, neither seen nor heard. It was in this spirit, too, that I had composed my music without borrowing anything from folk music with the exception of the theme of a factory song which I used several times in the last scene, with different words ... The other themes, airs, and melodies were of my own invention (Stravinsky 1975 p.105-106).

Moreover, this writing suggests that his allusions to the Russian tradition of 'Chastushka' (Trochimoff 1912) and the traditional literary writing style were not intentional¹; these will be explored in the presentation.

Another important point, is the necessity of focusing on the original language; Marry Orr's *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* highlights this importance:

'Popularizing anthologies and guides dependent largely on translations may not in fact be serving intertextuality well... Thus, the multilingual bibliography test underscores how critical (in many senses) is the availability of key texts, and, if in translation, that they follow rapidly on the heels of their language of first publication. (Orr 2003, p.8).

This is even more crucial when looking into the relationship between the music and text in a musical work. A translation of this kind would jeopardise the analysis of low level mimesis as the words and syllables would be unlikely to match their originally assigned beats. Furthermore, undergoing a poetic analysis would be almost completely wrong as it would misguide the audience from the original alliteration, rhyme, and metric structure.

¹ 'For the speech of the boys Turgenev uses some dialect words, as well as repetitions and syntax characteristic of peasant speech, but beyond this it is not individualized. The educated narrator's language underlines everything.' (Proffer 1969 p.18).

Therefore I decided to spend much of the beginning of the presentation focusing on the original Russian language and its relationship with the music, providing the audience with a good mid and high level analysis of the piece. In turn this allowed for the follow-up detailed, lower level analysis presented by my colleagues to be more comprehensible; I offered my Russian language skills to them in order to avoid falling into the trap of the aforementioned translation related fallacy. In fact we found a number of awkwardly translated passages by the original — Russian to English — translator Millar Craig. After undergoing further research we found that Craig was a musicologist who also translated Schoenberg's music from German to English and was committed to working for the Radio; thus his translations, albeit at a very high standard, have flaws.

In the presentation I will also challenge Millar Craig's musicological writing by saying that he does not properly tell us that Stravinsky uses primitive Russian throughout the score; Craig does correctly identify the 'village parlance' but only tells the reader that Stravinsky 'alludes' to it in the ballet's subtitle (Craig 2005, p.v).

Notes:

Please note that although I have quoted 'allmusic.com' which may be perceived as un-credible, the author of the article, Alexander Carpenter, is a respected published academic with a PhD in historical musicology (academia.edu 2015).

The reference to Leoš Janáček's work (to be mentioned in the presentation) is justified by this excerpt from a published review:

[Janacek's] art is rooted in the soil and people of Moravia, based on melodic phrases that arise from the shape and direction of both the country's folk music and the natural speech patterns of the Czech language. For Janacek, setting a line of text that faithfully follows spontaneous inflection was more than a matter of good prosody: the "speech melody" he sought was intended to "open a little window into the human soul". (Davis 1982 p.81).

Academia.edu, 2015. *Alexander Carpenter*. Published by Academia.edu
URL: <http://ualberta.academia.edu/AlexanderCarpenter/Allmusic-com-Entries>
Date accessed: 16.11.2015

Craig D. M. (English text writer), (2005). *Les Noces: Full Score*. Published by Chester Music Limited.

Davis P. G., 1982. *Review* (Reviewed works: *Leoš Janáček: A Biography by Jaroslav Vogel*, and *Leoš Janáček: The Field That Prospered by Ian Horsbrugh*). Published by Music Library Association.
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/939260>
Date accessed: 30.10.2015

Doctor J., 2000. *Music in the Twentieth Century; The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922-1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes*. Published by Cambridge University Press.

Orr M., 2003. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. Published by Polity Press.

Proffer R., 1969. *From Karamzin to Bunin: An Anthology of Russian Short Stories; Bezhin Meadow*. Published by Indiana University Press.

Stravinsky I., (1975). *Igor Stravinsky: An Autobiography*. Published by Calder & Boyars Ltd (originally published in 1936 by Victor Gollancz Ltd).

Taruskin R., (1996). *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra; Volume II*. Published by the University of California Press.

Trophimoff M., 1912. *Folklore, Vol. 23, No. 4; Modern Russian Popular Songs*. Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1254737>
Date accessed: 30.10.2015

White E.W., (1985). *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works*. Published by University of California Press.