

МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ ЛИСТОК (1872-1877) [*Muzykal'ny listok /The Musical Leaf*]

Muzykal'ny listok [The Musical Leaf] was published weekly in St. Petersburg for nearly six years, from 3 September 1872 to 5 June 1877. It appeared on Sundays (with the exception of holidays) during the yearly nine-month musical season from September/October to May/June. Each issue contains up to sixteen pages printed in single columns; the journal's dimensions are 14 x 22 cm.

The Musical Leaf occupied the central place among Russian music periodicals of the 1870s, which included three other important music journals, namely, *Literaturnoye pribavleniye k "Nuvellistu"* (1844-1874) [Literary Supplement to the Nuvellist], *Muzikal'nyy svet* (1847-1878) [The Musical World], and the *Nuvellist: Muzikal'no-teatral'naya gazeta* (1878-1905) [Nuvellist: Musical-theatrical gazette].¹ The first two journals focused on foreign music and contained a great amount of entertaining information, notes, reports, reviews, etc. The *Nuvellist*, one of the oldest and most informative music periodicals in pre-revolutionary Russia appeared after *The Musical Leaf* ceased publication. Thus, *The Musical Leaf*—the purpose of which was to offer an in-depth view of the many aspects of Russian musical life as well as foreign events—became an important phenomenon in the history of nineteenth-century Russian music periodicals.

In its first issue, the journal's editorial board published a lead article in which the journal's goals were formulated.

We have no [truly] specialized² music periodical. In order to make up for this significant deficiency we are publishing *The Musical Leaf*... We intend to offer readers a brief but clear and full picture of musical activities both abroad and especially in Russia. That is one aim of our periodical. The other aim is ...to advance significant ideas based on strict but not unreasonable demands; [and] to carefully separate good from bad in all works of all composers.³

Vasily Vasil'yevich Bessel (1843-1907), the journal's publisher and sole editor determined and actively supported these principles in the publication. V. Bessel was born in St. Petersburg, and studied at the Reformation Church College and at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. After studying music theory at the Conservatory with Nikolay Ivanovich Zarembo (1821-1879) (with Tchaikovsky as his classmate), Bessel graduated

¹Marina Ovtcharenko, *Nuvellist: Muzykal'no-Teatral'naya gazeta* [Nuvellist: Musical-Theatrical Gazette] 1878-1905, Répertoire International de la Presse Musicale, 4 vols. (Baltimore, Maryland: National Information Services Corporation (NISC), 1998).

²While other Russian music periodicals were published at this time, Bessel refers to the fact that none specialized in Russian music and musical life.

³*The Musical Leaf* 1 (1872): 3-4.

in 1865. At the age of twenty-six, in 1869, Bessel, with his younger brother Ivan Vasil'yevich opened a music shop in St. Petersburg which expanded into the thriving publishing firm "V. Bessel and Co." with its own printing house.⁴

An important enlightened center of Russian musical life, Bessel's firm published works by prominent Russian composers, notably Tchaikovsky, A. Rubinstein, Dargomyzhsky and the members of the New Russian Musical School—Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui, Balakirev, and Borodin. While showing preference for Tchaikovsky and A. Rubinstein in the 1870s, Bessel, at the beginning of the 1880s, began to promote the New Russian School, particularly in his second journal, *The Musical Review* (1885-1888).⁵

The Musical Leaf reflects the wide-ranging interests of its principal editor. Its articles are objective and the subjects treated are selected in an impartial manner. Most of them deal with music by Russian and foreign composers, and with musical life both at home and abroad.

The first issue of the journal is organized into five parts; the content of each is described by the editorial board in the following manner.

(1) Theoretical, historical and biographical articles; (2) reviews and criticism of concerts, opera productions, conservatory evenings, lectures on music, etc.; (3) bibliography: treating all music printed abroad and especially in Russia; (4) notices and news relating to current national and foreign musical events: obituaries, performances, conservatories, music schools, performers, etc.; (5) announcements concerning both Russian and foreign musical life, including musical bibliography and commercial issues, concerts, meetings, lectures, notices of conservatory exams, etc.⁶

The journal's regular rubrics reflect the proposed content. As a rule, lead articles open each number and focus, as outlined in the proposed model, on theoretical and historical issues as well as biographical studies. Of these, the following merit particular mention: Serov's letters; the majority of the articles by critic Herman Laroche ("Historical Method of Teaching Music Theory," "About What is Right in Music," "Fétis père as Music Historian"); those by the famous violoncellist Karl Yul'yevich Davydov ("Some Effects Following from the Violoncello's Fifth Pitch System"); and by the critic A. S. Famintsyn ("About the Chorus in Opera"); as well as the articles by V. Bessel, V. A. Chechott, and N. F. Solov'yov. Some lead articles are translations of works by foreign authors. Of

⁴Established in 1871 the firm's printing house had very high technical standards. The editions published by Bessel's firm received awards at two world exhibitions (Vienna, 1873 and Milan, 1876).

⁵Lilia Suslova and Irina Torilova, *Muzykal'noye obozreniye* [The Musical Review] 1885-1888, Répertoire International de la Presse Musicale, 2 Vols. (Baltimore, Maryland: National Information Services Corporation (NISC), 1998).

⁶*The Musical Leaf* 1 (1872): 2.

particular interest are those by Richard Pohl ("Development and Purpose of Opera"), Richard Wagner ("Notes of the Structure of Modern German Opera"), and Edward Hanslick, ("Modern Opera"). Extensive reviews devoted to the remarkable opera productions at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, to works performed at the Court Opera Theatre in Vienna, and, to premières in Bayreuth, were also published as lead articles.

The second priority of the journal, namely, reviews and criticism, is found mainly under two rubrics, "Chronicle" and "Correspondence." The "Chronicle" includes reviews of various musical and theatrical activities in St. Petersburg, such as the concert series of the Russian Musical Society (symphonic and quartet meetings), and the Russian and Italian opera productions at the Imperial Theatres. In the 14 October 1873 issue (the first of the second year) the column titled "Chronicle" changed to "Petersburg Chronicle." From 14 October 1873 until January 1876 Famintsyn was responsible for these columns. In 1877 M. Ivanov assumed responsibility for the "Petersburg Chronicle." The "Correspondence" column contains reports of musical life—and particularly about the concerts of the branches of the Russian Music Society—as well as reviews of theatrical productions both in Russian towns (Kronshtadt, Nizhny Novgorod, Orel, Odessa, Voronezh, Kazan, Vilno, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Tver, Poltava) and those abroad (Vienna, New York, Milan, Boston, Brussels, Cologne, London, Paris, Venice, Rome, Prague). Many correspondents contributed to this column including A. S. Razmadze in Moscow, P. Bel'chenko in Poltava, Peter Petrovich Sokal'sky in Odessa, and many others who signed with pseudonyms and remain unidentified.

"Bibliography,"⁷ the journal's third priority, is reflected in the regularly appearing rubric of the same name, which frequently opens an issue. While as a rule "Bibliography" deals with music by Russian composers published by "V. Bessel and Co.," such as Dargomyzhsky, Cui, Tchaikovsky, Balakirev, A. Rubinstein and Napravnik, it also contains reviews of their new works. The authors who regularly published in the section, such as H. Laroche and V. Chechott tried to demonstrate an unbiased attitude toward the works reviewed and to select those that were the most interesting and important.

Three columns in the journal, namely, "News," "Obituary" and the brief "Reference List of the Famous Artists' Residences" represent the fourth direction of *The Musical Leaf* program ("current music events"). In 1873-74 (the journal's second year of publication) the "News" and "Reference List" columns were dropped, and new regular sections appeared, namely, "Various News from Russia," "Foreign News" and "Russian Artists Abroad." As a rule they contain brief surveys of a wide variety of musical events both in Russia and elsewhere. Reports were printed not only from the large Russian towns and foreign capitals but also from far-off places in Siberia and China, America and Canada. At times the "Russian Artists Abroad" section published extensive reviews devoted to Russian instrumentalists and singers performing in many European cities. Among those

⁷In this journal "Bibliography" has broad meaning and includes reviews of new music.

treated are Anton Rubinstein, Anna Nikolayevna Esipova, Nadezhda Alexandrovna Muromtseva, Elizaveta Andreyevna Lavrovskaya, Anna Porfir'evna Belocca, Julia Fyodorovna Platonova, Alexandra Pavlovna Krutikova.

"Announcements" (the fifth priority of the journal) are approximately one to four pages in length and contain advertisements of sheet music and books on music published by "V. Bessel and Co.," and, more rarely, the other Russian musical firms (for example, Bitner's Musical Shop and Becker's Piano Factory in St. Petersburg). The advertisements of foreign music publishing houses (Reitter-Biedermann, Forberg, Breitkopf und Härtel, Aibl, Ebner, Hartmann) also appear in this section.

Considerable attention is focused throughout the journal on the St. Petersburg Conservatory, its curriculum, entrance requirements, examination schedules, personnel, as well as the yearly final exam results of graduating students, and reports supplied by Conservatory directors. Information concerning the Moscow Conservatory also appears frequently. Moreover, the *Musical Leaf* introduces its readers to music education from an international perspective, offering diverse information about conservatories and other educational institutions in Paris, Brussels, Leipzig, Berlin, and Vienna. Among the articles devoted to musical education are "Note on Singing Teaching at School" by Nikolay Petrovich Bryansky and "Historical Method of Musical Teaching" by H. Laroche.

During the journal's six-year publication run, the prominent Russian musical critic Herman Avgustovich Laroche (1845-1904) was one of its principal collaborators.⁸ His articles, which appear in thirty-three issues, display objectivity, the desire "to see the right side and the wrong side of each phenomenon" and to compare the "for and against quietly and thoroughly."⁹ These qualities fulfill the stated goals of the periodical to a great degree. The numerous reviews by Laroche devoted to Tchaikovsky, A. Rubinstein, Napravnik, Cui, Azanchevsky offer brilliant examples of his high professional skills.

V. V. Bessel, the journal's editor, also contributed articles about, among other things, the music printing business, copyright and orchestral performing. Among his contributions are two important articles: "About Music and Publishing Activities in Russia"¹⁰ and "The Problem of the Working Conditions of Musicians."¹¹ Apparently, Bessel often contributed to the "Chronicle" column (in 1872-73), as well as to the "Various News

⁸After attending the theory music class of A. Rubinstein and N. Zarembo at the St. Petersburg Conservatory Laroche graduated in 1866. He worked as a professor in the Moscow Conservatory, and, beginning in 1872 in the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Laroche began as music critic in 1864 and subsequently collaborated with many Russian periodicals (*The Russian Herald*, *The Moscow Gazette*, *The European Herald*, *The Voice*, *The Modern Chronicle*, etc.)

⁹Yury Kremlev, *Russkaya mysl' o muzyke* [The Russian conception of music], Vol. 2. (Leningrad, 1958): 307.

¹⁰V. V. Bessel, "About Music and Publishing Activities in Russia," *The Musical Leaf* 16 (1875): [211]-17; 17: [227]-35; 18: [243]-48; 19: [259]-64.

¹¹Ibid., "The Problem of the Working Conditions of Musicians.," *The Musical Leaf* 8 (1876): [113]-24.

from Russia,” signing with the initial “B.”¹² “These articles demonstrate an obvious interest in the New Russian School.”¹³

Other than Laroche and Bessel, the journal’s permanent collaborators were the music critic, composer, pianist and teacher Alexander Solomonovich Razmadze (1845-1896) and Viktor Antonovich Chechott¹⁴ (1846-1917)—prominent representatives of progressive musical and critical ideas in the Russian provinces. They both support the New Russian Musical School. Among Chechott’s writings are reviews focusing on works by N. V. Shcherbachyov, A. S. Famintsyn, E. F. Napravnik, as well as a translation of fragments from Hanslick’s *Modern Opera*.¹⁵ Also of interest is his article “The Two Most Recent Verdi Works” which treats *Aida* and the Requiem in a detailed manner.¹⁶

Music critic, theorist and composer Alexander Sergeyeovich Famintsyn represents another trend of Russian musical journalism reflected in *The Musical Leaf*. He held conservative views and “protested against the ‘Russian School.’”¹⁷ Weekly from September 1873 to January 1876 Famintsyn wrote notes about musical activities in St. Petersburg offering detailed analysis in reviews of Russian and foreign works. Of particular interest is his historical sketch “About the Chorus in Opera” which deals with the genre from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹⁸

Two other writers in *The Musical Leaf* were Mikhail Mikhaylovich Ivanov (1849-1927)¹⁹ and Nikolay Feopemptovich Solov’yov (1846-1916). In the history of the Russian music criticism they were also known as opponents of the New Russian School. Composer, critic, and professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, N. F. Solov’yov published a biographical sketch of Glinka and the article “M. Bertran’s ‘les nationalités musicales’,”²⁰ which reflect the restrained and unbiased style of *The Musical Leaf*.²¹

¹²His contributions to the “Various News from Russia” and to the “Obituaries” sections, and his articles concerning the examinations at the St. Petersburg Conservatory are also signed with “B.”, or “V. V.”

¹³Yury Kremlev, op. cit., Vol. 2: 543.

¹⁴Musical critic, pianist and composer, V. A. Chechott received his musical education in St. Petersburg. From 1883 to 1908 he lived in Kiev where he taught music history at the Kiev Musical College. He wrote extensively for Kiev and St. Petersburg periodicals.

¹⁵Eduard Hanslick, “Modern Opera,” *The Musical Leaf* 10 (1877): [146]-49; 11: [161]-67; 12: [177]-82; 13: [193]-202; 14: [209]-11; 17: [257]-63; 18: 274-79; 19: 290-96; 20: [305]-12.

¹⁶Victor Chechott, “The Two Most Recent Verdi Works,” *The Musical Leaf* 10 (1875): 150-56; 11: [161]-69; 12: [177]-82; 13: [193]-96.

¹⁷*The Russian Musical Gazette* 8 (1896): 917. In 1869-1871 Famintsyn published a journal entitled *The Musical Season* which published criticism of the Russian Musical School.

¹⁸Alexander Sergeyeovich Famintsyn, “About the Chorus in Opera,” *The Musical Leaf* 6 (1873): [81]-89; 7: [97]-104; 12 (1874): [177]-185; 13 [193]-203.

¹⁹Musical critic and composer M. Ivanov collaborated with St. Petersburg periodicals for many years. At the beginning of his journalistic career he supported Cui and the New Russian School. In the 1880s he followed the conservative critics and consequently also became Bessel’s opponent.

²⁰N. F. Solov’yov, “M. Bertran’s ‘les nationalités musicales’,” *The Musical Leaf* 20 (1873): [305]-08; 21: [321]-26.

²¹Jean Gustave Bertran, “Les nationalités musicales étudiées dans le drame lyrique,” *The Musical Leaf* 23

Among Ivanov's writing are "The Ring of the Nibelung: Wagner's Tetralogy,"²² and a benevolent review entitled "Two Symphonies by Borodin" devoted to Bessel's publication of the works.²³

As in most nineteenth-century periodicals, many articles in *The Musical Leaf* are not signed with names but rather with initials, abbreviations and pseudonyms. The following are those we have been able to identify.

Б.	Бессель Василий Васильевич
В. В.	Бессель Василий Васильевич
В. Б.	Бессель Василий Васильевич
Н. Н.	Бессель Василий Васильевич
Ред.	Бессель Василий Васильевич
Л.	Ларош Герман Августович
—р—	Ларош Герман Августович
А. Р.	Размадзе Александр Соломонович
М. С.	Сариотти Михаил Иванович
[В. С. С.]	Серова Валентина Семеновна
П. С.	Сокальский Петр Петрович
Ч.	Чечотт Виктор Антонович

The original copy of the journal used for the preparation of the present publication is located in the Taneyev Library of the Moscow State Conservatory.

(1874): 357-61; 25 (1874): 391-98.

²²Mikhail Mikhaylovich Ivanov, "The Ring of the Nibelung: Wagner's Tetralogy," *The Musical Leaf* 1 (1876): [1]-7; 2: [17]-22; 3: [32]-39; 4: [49]-56.

²³Ibid., "Two Symphonies by Borodin," *The Musical Leaf* 15 (1877): [225]-27.