

Mussorgsky: Pictures from an Exhibition **Pictures of What?**

Perusal script

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VO 1

NARRATOR

Summer 1873...

A young Russian artist... Viktor Hartmann...

dies... quite suddenly...

His close friend... Modest Musorgsky... is struck down by grief...

ACTOR *(voice of Musorgsky)*

Such sorrow, such sorrow!

Why does our Russian art have to suffer so?

Last time I saw him...

after music... we went out for a walk together...

At a corner of the street, he stopped... turned white...

and leaned against a wall... gasping for breath...

I... foolishly... gave no particular attention to this event...

and simply asked him whether such a thing had happened often...

He said it had...

I babbled some nonsense to reassure him... and we walked on...

NARRATOR

Next winter... Hartmann's friends...

organised an exhibition... with four hundred of the dead man's works...

ACTOR *(reading from publicity for the exhibition)*

Drawings, water-colors, designs for household objects...

sketches for theater costumes... and architectural plans...

NARRATOR

Musorgsky was inspired by what he saw...

to write a work... of piano music...

To begin with, he simply called it...

ACTOR *(voice of Musorgsky)*

'Hartmann'...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 1 - live camera 1

Promenade 1 Complete PIANO

VO 2

NARRATOR

Seven years later Musorgsky himself was dead... aged only forty-two...

his music... like Hartmann's art... barely noticed...

Another forty years went by...

[Josephine Baker recording to underscore the moment]

The cultural center of Europe in the 1920s... was Paris...

In the lavish surroundings of the Opéra...

Serge Koussevitsky... a Russian émigré conductor...

was planning... a series of orchestral concerts...

to celebrate...

ACTOR *(the proud Koussevitzky)*

The history of Russian music...

(as if an idea suddenly strikes, with exuberance and arrogance)

I will ask Ravel... that 'pillar of French modernism'....

to take this almost forgotten Russian piano composition...

and orchestrate it!...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 2

Promenade 1
VO 3

Opening to 1 bar after fig 3

ORCH

NARRATOR

Ravel was a 20th century Frenchman!

Hartmann and Musorgsky...

belonged to 19th century Russia...

and... to an idealistic generation...

ACTOR *(with the slightest mockery)*

Men of the 1860s!

NARRATOR

Writers, painters, philosophers, musicians...

all searching for a new... distinctive...Russian art...

For composers, this meant...

being inspired by folk tunes...

ACTOR *(with crude patriotism)*

The music of a Russian composer...

must spring entirely from the melodies of the people...

NARRATOR

Like this authentic folk melody...

in Tchaikovsky's second symphony!...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 3

Tchaikovsky

**Sym 2 String double phrase,
just after tutti intro of 4th mvt**

ORCH

VO 4

NARRATOR

Musorgsky... put a well-known folksong...

in his opera... 'Boris Godunov'...

ACTOR *(the words of the music we are about to hear)*

Glory to the Tsar... shining over mighty Russia like the sun!

[sound recording of Slava chorus]

NARRATOR

But in 'Pictures from an Exhibition'...

instead of quoting from existing folksongs...

Musorgsky creates new melodies that sound like folksongs...

ACTOR *(the Italian is wrong, but these are the words Musorgsky wrote in his score, which we see on the screen as the actor speaks)*

Nel modo russo!

In the Russian mode!

NARRATOR

Especially when they use the falling fourth...

Just two notes!

ACTOR *(Glinka's famous dictum, a slogan for Russians)*

The soul of Russian music!

MUSIC EXAMPLE 4a

[Piano plays a fourth]

VO 5

NARRATOR

Musorgsky takes folk elements like this...

modal scales and changing rhythms...

and builds new structures from them...

like Viktor Hartmann's designs...

also inspired by Russian folk traditions...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 4b

[Piano plays the four fragments]

NARRATOR

In Russian folksongs... solo voices... are often answered by a chorus...

[recording of solo/chorus: Seversky CD, track 13]

NARRATOR

Musorgsky borrows this idea as well...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 5

Promenade 1

First 4 bars

PIANO

VO 6

NARRATOR

After Musorgsky died... poisoned by alcohol... and destitute...

his colleague Rimsky-Korsakov... was horrified by what he found...

ACTOR *(voice of Rimsky-Korsakov, pedantic)*

All the music my dead friend left behind... was in complete disorder...

fragments... filled with ugliness...

arrogantly incompetent mistakes on every page...

But there was so much talent there... so much originality...

that, for me... correcting... organising... and publishing these pieces...

was a moral obligation...

NARRATOR

Rimsky encouraged his students... at the Conservatory...
to orchestrate Musorgky's piano music for themselves...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 6

Promenade 1 **Tushmalov version, first 4 bars** **ORCH**

VO 7

NARRATOR

Since that first apprentice effort... over a century ago...
there've been innumerable other versions of this music...

Like this one... by Walt Disney's favourite conductor... Stokowski...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 7

Promenade 1 **Stokowski version, first 8 bars** **ORCH**

VO 8

NARRATOR

Not every arrangement's been for symphony orchestra...
There've been versions for jazz band... synthesisers... rock and roll...
death metal ...even classical guitar...
Compare all these different solutions... to Ravel's...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 8

Promenade 1 **Ravel version**
 First 4 bars **ORCH**

VO 9

NARRATOR

Ravel believed that orchestration was an art...

ACTOR (*voice of Ravel, precise*)

You must understand the difference...

between instrumentation... and orchestration ...

Instrumentation is when take you take what you or someone else has written...

and find instruments to go with it...

It works... sounds good... but that is all...

Orchestration is when you give the feeling of the pedals at the piano...

building an atmosphere... around the notes...

NARRATOR

Take the right hand of the piano...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 9 - **live camera 2**

Promenade 1 **bars 3 & 4** **PIANO RH**

VO 10

NARRATOR

Three notes in every chord... Three trumpets...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 10

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4 3 TPTS

VO 11 - live camera 3

NARRATOR

And in the left hand... just two notes in every chord...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 11 - live camera 3

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4 PIANO LH

VO 12

NARRATOR

A trombone... and a tuba...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 12

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4 TBN3 + TBA

VO 13

NARRATOR

Ravel could have left it just like that...

Not 'orchestration', but 'instrumentation'...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 13

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4

TPTS + TBN3 + TBA

VO 14

NARRATOR

But the Frenchman wanted...

ACTOR (*voice of Ravel, insistent*)

The feeling of the pedals at the piano... the sound around the notes...

NARRATOR

And so he added... horns...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 14

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4

4 HNS

VO 15

NARRATOR

This is how he... 'builds the atmosphere'...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 15

Promenade 1 bars 3 & 4

ORCH TUTTI

VO 16

TITLE 'The story of the "Promenades"'

NARRATOR

Musorgsky composed his epic piano work...

in June 1874...

in a frenzy... in just twenty days...

ACTOR *(voice of Musorgsky, filled with excitement)*

My... 'Hartmann'... boils within me...

The sounds... and the idea... hung before me in the air...

And now I gulp and gorge on them...

I hardly even have the time to scribble them...

By the way, you'll see me in this music...

in the 'promenades' between the pictures...

NARRATOR

Musorgsky wanted us to see him...

To see his face... with his different feelings and expressions...

and his thick-set, awkward body...

as he walks... from one of Hartmann's pictures to another...

reacting to what he has been looking at...

That's why he changed the title to...

'Pictures from an Exhibition'...

Not 'at', but 'from'...

This... is a drama... about a man...

who chooses from among four hundred pictures.....

the handful with most meaning for him...

Gnomus!

ACTOR *(from the exhibition catalogue, an announcement)*

A design for a nutcracker... in the shape of a distorted gnome...

NARRATOR

Musorgsky walks away... preoccupied... a bit disturbed...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 16 - live camera 4

Promenade 2 bars 1-4 PIANO

VO 17

NARRATOR

For Ravel... no trumpet this time... but solo horn... and woodwind...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 17

Promenade 2 bars 1-4 ORCH

VO 18

NARRATOR

As a young man... Viktor Hartmann travelled in the West...

in France and Germany and Italy...

painting and drawing... everything he saw...

ACTOR *(from the introductory article to the exhibition catalogue)*

Ragpickers... donkeys rubbing up against the trees...

cities and cathedrals...old women saying prayers...

and ruined buildings in a southern landscape...

NARRATOR

A picture of an old castle... lifts the composer's mood ...

and he walks on with more determination...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 18a - **live camera 5**

Promenade 3 **bars 1-2** **PIANO**

VO 19

NARRATOR

The tune is stronger... and in octaves...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 18b

Promenade 3 **bars 1 only, RH only** **PIANO**

NARRATOR

Ravel tried... at first... to keep those octaves in the orchestra...

doubling the trumpet with two horns underneath...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 19

Promenade 3 bars 1-2

VO 20

NARRATOR

Then he changed his mind... and scrubbed out the horns...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 20

Promenade 3 Tutti as written by Ravel, bars 1-2 ORCH

VO 21

NARRATOR

Two painfully contrasted pictures change Musorgsky's mood again...

ACTOR (*again, from the catalogue article*)

First... wealthy children with their nannies in a Paris park...

then... abject poverty... in the Polish or Ukrainian countryside...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 21

**Promenade 4 bars 1-2, stressing height of last 3 chords, by
VO 22 accenting slightly PIANO**

NARRATOR

Those last chords... high on the piano keyboard...

sound delicate... like little bells...

But on orchestral instruments they'd be shrill and harsh...

So Ravel lowers them an octave...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 22 - live camera 6

**Promenade 4 Demonstrate lowering of last 3 RH chords
Score to follow. PIANO**

VO 23

NARRATOR

The effect... is now less anguished... more ethereal...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 23

Promenade 4 bars 1-2 ORCH

VO 24

NARRATOR

The next time we see Musorgsky in this music...

he's in determined mood again...

He's been imagining a furious argument...

between two Jewish men... in the Polish town of Sandomir...

the beggar Schmuyle...

and the wealthy merchant Samuel Goldenberg...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 24

Last 2 bars of Jews leading straight into first 2 bars of Promenade 5
PIANO

VO 25

NARRATOR

Invigorated... Musorgsky strides off towards another picture...

And another argument...

a fierce discussion in a market place... in Limoges... in France...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 25

Last 3 bars + 2 notes of Promenade 5 leading straight into Limoges first 2 bars
PIANO

VO26

NARRATOR

Ravel... left out this long fifth 'promenade'...

Perhaps he thought we'd heard the tune too many times already...

But he might have been responding to a mistake...

in the printed music he was working from...

Here's how Musorgsky imagined the rich merchant...

brusquely finishing the argument...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 26a

Correct version of the end of Jews

PIANO

VO 27

NARRATOR

And here's what was printed in the score Ravel was using...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 26b

Faulty version of end of Jews

PIANO

NARRATOR

The mistake... is weaker than Musorgsky's original...

but it connects the Polish Jews in Sandomir...

neatly to the market-place in France...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 27

***Last 4 notes of Jews leading straight into Limoges first 5 bars plus
downbeat of 6th bar*** **ORCH**

VO 28

NARRATOR

After the worldly bustle of the market in Limoges...

A place of silence ... of darkness... and of human bones...

the Paris catacombs... deep underground...

Hartmann depicts himself... together with a friend...

gazing at skulls...

the artist prophesying his own death...

This time... instead of moving from this picture to another one...

ACTOR *(the actual words of Musorgsky, written on the score)*

The creative genius of my dead friend... leads me towards the skulls...

He speaks to them... and they begin to glow...

NARRATOR

Musorgsky called this music...

ACTOR

Cum mortuis... in lingua mortua...

With the dead... in a dead language...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 27a - live camera 7

From fig 75 to first bar of 76, ending on the pause PIANO

VO 29

NARRATOR

Musorgsky has now moved over...

from our world into the world of Hartmann...

and the last time that we see him in this music...

he no longer walks between the pictures...

but speaks... as the dead Hartmann does... from deep within them...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 28

**Great Gate From fig 112 (minus notes that tie over from
previous bar) for 6 bars only ORCH**

VO 30

NARRATOR

This is the journey that Musorgsky takes us on...

'the idea'... that 'hung before him in the air'...

the form... the musical structure... of the composition...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 29

Key scheme of Promenades:

PIANO

(score to follow, actually taken from piano versions and ending with longer version of GGK peroration)

B flat / A flat to E flat / B / D minor / B flat / B minor to B major / E flat

VO 31

TITLE 'The story of the "Pictures"'

NARRATOR

The original 'exhibition' took place in February 1874...

in the Academy of Artists... in St. Petersburg...

And from around four hundred of Hartmann's pictures hanging there...

Musorgsky chose... only a tiny handful...

Just five contrasted subjects...

covering...

human experiences from childhood through adulthood to death...

And for each subject... one Russian and one Western image...

First... the world of fairy-stories...

And a design in Swiss or German style...

ACTOR

A toy nutcracker for a Christmas tree...

A little gnome... on twisted legs...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 30

Gnomus

Bars 1-10

PIANO

VO 32

NARRATOR

By contrast... a clock-design... inspired by Russian folk stories...

a little house... on chicken's feet...

the home of Baba Yaga... a wicked witch...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 31

Baba Yaga

Fig 79-81

PIANO

VO 33

NARRATOR

Next... two scenes with children...

First... the western one... a public park in Paris...

Hartmann's original has been lost...

but the exhibition catalogue suggests...

ACTOR (*We will see some of these words on the screen, in Musorgsky's handwriting*)

Children with their nursemaids...

in the gardens of the Tuileries...

playing games and quarrelling...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 32

Tuileries

First 10 bars

PIANO

VO 34

NARRATOR

The second scene with children is a Russian one...

Hartmann's costumes for a now forgotten ballet in St.Petersburg...

a children's fantasy...

ACTOR

Unhatched canary chicks... enclosed in eggs... like suits of armour...

with canary heads... like helmets...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 33

Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks

Figs 48-52

PIANO

VO 35

NARRATOR

Two satirical scenes of adult life...

From southwest France, quarrelling gossips in the Limoges market-place...

ACTOR *(with ridiculous élan – these are Musorgsky's words, written on the score)*

Great news!

Monsieur de Panta Pantaléon has just retrieved his cow, the one that ran away!

NARRATOR

Yes, madam, that was yesterday!

ACTOR

No, madam, that was the day before yesterday!

(suddenly whispering at speed)

I must tell you about Madame de Remboursac's new false teeth!

MUSIC EXAMPLE 34

Limoges

Fig 63-bar after 65

PIANO

VO 36

NARRATOR

And... from Poland... the two Jews... one rich, one poor...

These two pictures... belonged to Musorgsky himself...

and they meant a great deal to him...

for they had been given to him by the artist...

The antisemitic mockery of this scene of quarreling...

makes many feel uncomfortable...

but the composer was fascinated by Jewish music...

ACTOR *(voice of Musorgsky, writing to a friend)*

In Odessa I visited two synagogues and heard the Jews...

singing their ancient songs...

I was in raptures...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 35a - *live camera 8 through to end of VO 37, just before ME 36*

Goldenberg and Schmuyle **Fig 56 for 15 notes only** **PIANO**

VO 37

NARRATOR

The rich merchant sings the modal music of religious chant...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 35b

Goldenberg and Schmuyle

The next 9 notes, stopping on the high F **PIANO**

NARRATOR

The poor Jew... is given klezmer music...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 35c

Goldenberg and Schmuyle

From fig 58 for 4 bars... **PIANO**

NARRATOR

Musorgsky then combines the two... to make the argument...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 36

From bar after fig 60 (with upbeat) to end of 3rd beat of 2nd bar after fig 61
PIANO

VO 38

NARRATOR

Hartmann painted many pictures of landscapes and old buildings...

almost none of which survive today...

We can only imagine from the music, what they might have looked like...

ACTOR *(the catalogue again)*

An Italian castle...

with a mediaeval troubadour... singing a love-song...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 37

Il vecchio castello Fig 19-bar before 22* *PIANO

VO 39

NARRATOR

Hartmann's Eastern European landscape was quite different...

The composer calls this music... 'Bydlo'...

the Polish word for... 'Oxen'...

and in a letter, he speaks of a 'telega'...

a Russian peasant cart...

the very emblem of provincial poverty...

MUSIC EXAMPLE 38

Bydlo* *Opening to fig 38* *PIANO