

## *THE MUSICAL REVIEW*

Published weekly in St. Petersburg from 22 September 1885 to 22 December 1888, *The Musical Review* focused on the state of the music in Russia, and in particular on the work of Russian composers, while offering news about musical life abroad.

Vasily Vasil'yevich Bessel, a prominent figure in the musical world of St. Petersburg and the founder and manager of the music publishing house V. Bessel and Co., edited *The Musical Review*. Bessel was born in St. Petersburg in 1843, and died in Zurich in 1907. Upon admission to the St. Petersburg Conservatory Vasily Vasil'yevich studied violin with Henrick Weniawski, viola, and the theory of composition with the theorist and composer Nikolay Ivanovich Zarembo. In 1865 Bessel graduated as violist from the class of Ieronim Andreyevich Weickmann, and between 1866 and 1874 worked a violist in the ballet orchestra of the Imperial Theaters in St. Petersburg.

In 1869 V. Bessel and his brother Ivan Vasil'yevich Bessel founded the musical firm "V. Bessel and Co." Before doing so however V. Bessel traveled to Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, Mainz, Cologne, Paris, Milan, Vienna, and Warsaw in order to become familiar with the activities of important publishing firms.

V. Bessel was the first Russian publisher to issue operatic and symphonic scores (including choral and orchestral parts) of works by Russian composers. This practice permitted the diffusion of these works not only in Russia but also in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland and America. V. Bessel & Co. also published many vocal, choral and chamber works by Russian composers as well as pedagogical collections of exercises for students, and books on music. Among the many operas V. Bessel published are *The Stone Guest* by Dargomyzhsky, *The Demon* by Anton Rubinstein, *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* by Musorgsky, *The Oprichnik* by Tchaikovsky, *The Tale of Tsar Saltan* and *The Snow Maiden* by Rimsky-Korsakov, and *Angelo* and *William Ratcliff* by Cui.

As stated in a 1904 study of Bessel's firm:

The close connections of V. Bessel with the musical community headed by A. Rubinstein, and the influence of that environment, gave rise in both founders of the firm to specific views concerning the merchandising and publishing of music. To be devoted to the service of musical art, [and] to further its development in Russia were the leading ideas and aspiration of the newly-founded firm whose motto was "all that is good is talented."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>35-letie muzikal'no-izdatel'skoy deyatel'nosti torgovogo doma "V. Bessel i Ko" [Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of Music and Publishing Activities of the Firm "Bessel and Co."] (St. Petersburg, 1904): 3-4.

Bessel shared Rubinstein's interest in promoting a musical enlightenment in Russia that included developing professional music educators who would promote the best works of Russian and foreign composers.

From September 1872 to May 1877 Bessel's firm published a weekly music journal entitled *The Musical Leaf* edited by V. Bessel. After the journal ceased publication in 1877, V. Bessel worked for ten years as a collaborator for the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* (Leipzig) reviewing musical activities in St. Petersburg. Bessel, who had met Liszt in 1873, was introduced to the journal's editorial board in Leipzig by the celebrated composer-pianist.

Bessel worked extensively as both musician and writer. His literary contributions, in addition to articles in periodicals, included publications about the music publishing business, the history of music, problems of copyright, and recollections about Anton Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky and Liszt.<sup>2</sup>

In 1885 Bessel's firm founded a new musical journal, *The Musical Review* which he also edited. However, his participation in the journal was not limited to editorial functions. In fact, from this point on V. Bessel's literary activities focused almost exclusively on the new journal. For it he wrote a number of articles, reviews, and obituaries, as well as surveys of the concerts of the Russian Musical Society<sup>3</sup> and the activities of its branches in different Russian towns.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>See for example: "Materiali k istorii notno-izdatel'skogo dela v Rossii," [Materials for the history of music printing business in Russia] *Novoye Vremya* [New Times] 6878 (1895); *Kratkiy ocherk muziki v Rossii* [A brief outline of music in Russia] (St. Petersburg, 1905); "Iz vospominaniy o P. I. Chaykovskom: 'Oprichnik'" [From the memoirs of P. I. Tchaikovsky: *The Oprichnik*] *Novoye Vremya* (April 5, 1895); "Tri velikikh pianista: Frants List, Adolf Genzel't i Anton Rubinshteyn (iz moikh vospominaniy)" [Three great pianists: Franz Liszt, Adolf Henselt and Anton Rubinstein (from my memoirs)] *Russkaya muzikal'naya gazeta* [Russian Musical Gazette] 45 (1902); "U Frantsa Lista" [At Franz Liszt's] *Novoye Vremya* 1990 (1881); "Moi vospominaniya ob Antone Grigor'eviche Rubinshteyne" [My memoirs of Anton Rubinstein] *Russkaya Starina* [Russian Old Times] (May 1898).

<sup>3</sup>The Imperial Russian Musical Society was founded in 1859 on the initiative of A. Rubinstein; according to the statute of R.M.S.; the main aim of the society was to promote musical education and musical art in Russia and to support Russian musicians. V. Bessel was connected with the Russian Musical Society for many years. After its founding, the firm "V. Bessel and Co." served as an agent of its St. Petersburg branch (till 1885). The Board of the St. Petersburg branch of R.M.S. elected Vasily Bessel a lifelong Full Member of the Russian Musical Society expressing gratitude to him and his firm for their valuable contribution to the Society. V. Bessel was also a member of the following societies: the Chamber Music Society (lifelong member), the Russian Society of Musical Publishers and Merchants of Music and Musical Instruments, the Printing Business Society, the Mutual Aid Society of Employees in Book and Music Trade and Libraries, the Society of Musical Teachers and Art Workers, the Theatre Society, the Mutual Aid Fund of Musical Artists.

<sup>4</sup>His articles in *The Musical Review* include "Rubinstein's Historical Concerts" 15 (1886): 116-17; "Fiftieth Anniversary of *The Life of the Tsar*" 11 (1886): 81-82; "The Sixth Symphony Meeting of the Russian Musical Society" 16 (I) (1887): 123-24; "Survey of the Russian Musical Society's activities for season

In the first number of *The Musical Review*, its editorial board published a statement of intent:

In our art, music, we value all that is good, independently of by whom [it was created], where and when it was written. However, do not expect from us so-called objectivity which frequently hides an indifference beneath it. There is no musical criticism with full objectivity...Russian music is particularly dear to us...not only because it is ours, but also because it is incredibly talented and at present takes priority in Europe. We damaged ourselves very much kneeling before that which is foreign, while neglecting our own, even if ours is less than perfect. To find all that is ours beautiful is absurd chauvinism; to neglect all that is ours is the worst westernism; to support what is ours and deserves to be supported is the natural duty of everyone. In our music we pay particular attention to the works of those of our composers who imparted impetus and a life to our music after Glinka, and strengthened the avant-garde position of our modern music, striving tirelessly to progress, being carried away sometimes too far, taking sometimes wrong turns. The aim of our publication is to assist as much as we can in the elimination of the disorder in music that reigns among us, to explain the inconsistent and vague terms, and to return criticism to its true purpose which is an analysis and evaluation of artistic phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the emphasis on Russian music and musical life is repeated on the opening page of the journal's first issue of 1888 in which the editorial board prints a lead article entitled "To Our Readers":

...our task is the development of the understanding of all that is elevated in the domain of music and particularly of all outstanding events in the life and development of our country's music.<sup>6</sup>

The first year of the journal contains thirty issues published from 26 September 1885 to 29 May 1886 with a total of 240 pages. The second year with a total of 360 pages contains forty-five issues which fall into three groups: the first, nos. 1-15 (25 September 1886 to 31 December 1886) appears under the subtitle "The second year"; the second, nos. 16 [1] - 30 [15] under the subtitle "The second season" (8 January 1887 to 14 May 1887); and, the third, nos. 16-30 (24 September 1887 to 31 December 1887) under the repeated subtitle "The second year." The third year contains thirty issues published from 8 January 1888 to 22 December 1888 with a total of 248 pages.

1886-87" (1888): 24-26, 29-30. Obituaries include P. Sokal'sky 27 (XII) (1887): 209-10; E. Goldstein 16 (1887): 6-7; N. Hubert 19 (1888): 151-52.

<sup>5</sup>*The Musical Review* 1 (1885): 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>*The Musical Review* 1 (1888): 1.

The majority of the issues consist of eight pages, each divided into two columns (with the exception of those pages on which advertisements appear).<sup>7</sup> Printed just beneath the journal's title in each issue appears a table of content, information for correspondents and advertisers, the subscription rate, and, announcements.

*The Musical Review* consisted of two parts: the literary weekly and the monthly music supplement. Both publications pursued the same goal, namely to promote the New Russian School ("The Mighty Five"), an association formed in the 1860s of five composers, Balakirev, Cui, Borodin, Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov. With many of these composers V. Bessel had relations not only as publisher but also as a close friend.

Considerable space in the journal is devoted to the works of A. Rubinstein, the celebrated composer, conductor, and pianist who founded the St. Petersburg Conservatory and served as its first director.

Two prominent contemporary music critics Herman Laroche (1845-1904) and Cesar Cui, were invited to be the directors of the journal. Cui, who was a committed fighter for the ideals of the New Russian School, played a determining role in establishing the critical position of the journal.

Other than Cui, Larosh and V. Bessel, the journal's permanent collaborators in St. Petersburg included the critics Pyotr Petrovich Yevstafyev, Nikolay Alexandrovich Sokolov, and Alexander Andreyevich Filonov. Collaborators in other cities included Semyon Nikolayevich Kruglikov (in Moscow), Vasily Davidovich Korganov (in Tiflis), Ivan Petrovich Larionov (in Saratov), Pyotr Petrovich Sokal'sky (in Odessa), Friedrich Spiro (in Berlin), Viktor Antonovich Chechott (in Kiev and later Moscow), and Neznamov (in Kazan'). Most wrote for the "Chronicle" and the "Correspondences" sections that were distinguished by completeness of coverage and by the variety of topics treated.

During its three years of publication the structure of the journal did not change substantially. Each issue contains some of the following twelve sections: (1) lead articles; (2) chronicle of Russian musical life; (3) correspondence from home and abroad; (4) foreign news; (5) Russian music and Russian artists abroad; (6) bibliography; (7) announcements; (8) reference section; (9) miscellaneous; (10) short articles; (11) *feuilleton*; (12) obituaries. As a rule all sections are not present in each issue; normally each issue consists of one or two lead articles and some of the most frequently appearing sections such as the "Chronicle," "Correspondence," "Bibliography," and "Announcements." The remaining sections appear infrequently.

<sup>7</sup> Pages containing advertisements are presented in a variety of graphic layouts.

The lead articles can be classified and divided into three groups: reviews, historical and biographical studies, and theoretical articles. Considerable space in lead articles is devoted to Cui's reviews which treat the symphonic and quartet concerts of the Russian Musical Society, the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Society, the series of A. Rubinstein's historical concerts and St. Petersburg productions of operas by Russian and foreign composers — among which were *The Snow Maiden* by Rimsky-Korsakov, *Khovanshchina* by Musorgsky, *Manon* by Massenet, and *Otello* by Verdi. Among historical and biographical studies published as lead articles the following merit particular mention: seventeen letters from Liszt to Cui, V. Bessel and Louise de Merci-Argenteau, recollections of Richard Wagner, translations of articles by Camille Benois ("Comical Element in Music"), by R. Wagner ("On the Overture") and Charles L'Évêque ("L'Évolution de la symphonie"). Among the lead articles dealing with music theory those of particular interest are: the publication of the chapter "Chinese Scale in Russian Folk Music" from the treatise by the composer, music critic and folk music scholar P. Sokal'sky;<sup>8</sup> and, articles by the critic Dmitry Stefanovsky ("On Rhythm and Rhythmic System," "Basso Continuo and the Musical Cipher"). An extended analytical article entitled "The Modern Work by Cui" written by a poet and critic Vyacheslav Alexandrovich Gaydeurov merits special mention; it treats Cui's operatic, vocal, choral and chamber works in detail.

Two regular sections, "Chronicles" and "Correspondence," treat concert life in Russia in detail with particular attention paid to the Russian Musical Society and its branches, as well as to the St. Petersburg Society of Chamber Music, and to other philharmonic societies and music associations active in Russian cities. These sections offer reviews both of concerts series, of operatic exercises prepared by students of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and of operatic productions and solo recitals in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Odessa, Kazan, Kiev, Kharkov, Tiflis, Saratov, and Nikolayev.

"Correspondence From Abroad," "Foreign News" and "Russian Music and Russian Artists Abroad" are devoted to prominent musical events in Germany, Austria, England, France, Sweden and Belgium.

"Bibliographies" deal with books on music by Russian and foreign authors published in Russia and abroad, and on music printed by Russian music publishing firms (mainly V. Bessel and P. Jurgenson). Among the books discussed are *Illustrierte Musikgeschichte* (*The Illustrated History of Music*) by German musicologist Emil Naumann, *The Theory of Musical Expression: Stresses, Nuances and Tempos in Vocal and Instrumental Music*

<sup>8</sup>P. P. Sokal'sky, *Russkaya narodnaya muzika, velikorusskaya i malorusskaya v eyo stroenii melodicheskoy i ritmicheskoy i otliche yey ot osnov sovremennoy garmonicheskoy muziki* [Russian Folk Music, Great Russian and Ukrainian, its Melodic and Rhythmic Structure and its Difference from the Principles of Contemporary Harmonic Music] (Kharkov, 1888).

by French piano teacher Matisse Lussy (translated into Russian by V. Chechott), and *Peasant Songs Recorded in the Village Nikolayevka of the Menzensky Region of the Ufa Province* by Nikolay Yevgrafovich Pal'chikov.

“Announcements” inform readers about forthcoming activities in St. Petersburg concert halls, offering lists of performers and compositions. The “Reference section” contains information supplied by the Direction of the Imperial Theatres: for example, curricula, exams schedule, lists of the personnel employed at the St. Petersburg and Moscow conservatories and in other Russian musical educational institutions; and lists of members of some opera troupes.

“Miscellaneous” and “Short Articles” offer brief reports on a variety of musical events in Russia and abroad. The “Feuilleton” include, for example, recollections by Louis-Albert Bourgault-Ducoudray concerning Hector Berlioz, and episodes from the life of Fryderyk Chopin by an unidentified author. The “Obituaries” are often quite lengthy, offering, in effect, biographical sketches of their subjects (e.g., Borodin, Sokal'sky, Goldstein, Pal'chikov, Hubert, Strakosh, Ricordi).

Some material published in different sections are translations of articles from German, French, English and Belgian periodicals. Most are reviews, or selections from reviews, of concerts in which Russian composers and performers participated. These deal with, for example, A. Rubinstein's historical concerts in Berlin, concerts of composers of the “New Russian School” in Belgium, Tchaikovsky's performances in Berlin, Prague, Paris, and London, and, the Russian production of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Berlin.

Advertisements usually appear on the last pages of the journal, and take up no more than one and a half pages of each issue. Announcements (which at times look like advertisements) also appear towards the end of the journal. These treat forthcoming publications of sheet music and books on music by V. Bessel's firm, as well as subscription prices for musical, literary-artistic and theatrical journals produced by other firms.

Frequently, the authors signed their contributions with initials or pseudonyms. Following is a list of those whose initials and pseudonyms have been identified:

В. Б., Ред.	Bessel Vasily Vasil'yevich
Б. Д. В., Б. Д. Вл.	Weber Kirill (Karl) Eduardovich
Г-вѣ В.	Gaydeburov Vyacheslav Alexandrovich
Г-нѣ Э.	Goldstein Eduard Yul'yevich
Корг. В., Коръ. В.,	Korganov Vasily Davidovich
Кор. В	

Ц. К., ***, ***, ** * *, **, *	Cui Cesar Antonovich
М.	Mikhno Nikolay Vasil'yevich
Л. П.	Polonsky Leonid Alexandrovich
П. С-й, П. П. С.	Sokal'sky Petr Petrovich
Н. С.	Sokolov Nikolay Alexandrovich
А. Ф.	Filonov Alexander Andreyevich
В. Ч.	Chechott Viktor Antonovich

Concurrently with the publication of the weekly journal, the editorial board also published a monthly sheet music supplement which they described in the following manner.

. . . Sheet music supplements will consists of music for singing (with pianoforte) and works for pianoforte in two hands. The preference is given to Russian composers, not avoiding however, outstanding foreign composers. We devote particular attention to the choice of the pieces for pianoforte, trying, as much as we can, to have all of them not too difficult technically, and, therefore, fit not only for the professional artists but also for all serious music amateurs. Through careful choice of the pieces on the grounds of just musical merits we hope to distinguish our musical supplements from other similar editions.<sup>9</sup>

The supplements then featured new works by Russian composers. For the period this is rather remarkable as many similar publications demonstrated a much greater interest in the works of foreign composers. Every issue of the music supplement included about six or seven pieces consisting in all of twenty-five to thirty pages. Among the composers represented are Arensky, Borodin, Glazunov, Alexander Konstatinovich Lyadov, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, A. Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Eduard Yul'yevich Goldstein, Karl Yul'yevich Davydov, Nikolay Feopemptovich Solov'yoy, Liszt, Grieg, R. Schumann, Bizet and Moritz Moszkowski. Of the supplements the distinguished scholar Nikolay Findeisen wrote: the sheet music supplements "of *The Musical Review* were the best and richest in their contents of all music journals that appeared in our country."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>*The Musical Review*, 1885-86. The reverse side of the title page.

<sup>10</sup>N. F. Findeisen, *Vasily Vasil'yevich Bessel: Ocherk ego muzikal'no-obshchestvennoy deyatel'nosti* [Vasily Vasil'yevich Bessel: the Sketches of His Musical and Social Acitivities] (St. Petersburg, 1909): 49.

Unfortunately, the costs related to publishing the music supplements and the journal itself exceeded the revenues received. Thus their publication became more and more burdensome forcing Bessel's firm to cease publication of *The Musical Review* after 105 issues were published (at the end of 1888). In addition to financial problems V. Bessel's increasing work as publisher and his other music-related activities, which consumed much of his time and energy, made continuing the publication of *the Musical Review* difficult.

The copy of the journal used for the preparation of the present publication is located in the Taneyev Library of the Moscow State Conservatory. The issues are bound in three volumes (1885-1886, 1886-1887, 1888). The music supplements are bound separately; some issues are missing. Their contents are accounted for in this publication as they are noted in announcements appearing in issues of the journal.

In the Calendar, all versions of names and titles of musical works appear as they do in the journal. In the Index, the spelling of leadterms however are brought into agreement with modern musciological practice. Obvious typographical errors are corrected without commentary.