

Lyudmila Ivanovna Shestakova and Prague

Ljudmila Ivanovna Šestakova (1816–1906), die Schwester des russischen Komponisten Michail Ivanovič Glinka, kümmerte sich nach dessen Tod um seinen Nachlass. Der erste Ort außerhalb Russlands, an dem Glinkas Opern aufgeführt wurden, war Prag, das Šestakova selbst besuchte. Hier fand sie mehrere Freunde, unter anderem Josef Kolář, mit dem sie später korrespondierte. Ihre Briefe an Kolář sind ein interessantes Zeugnis der Hintergrundereignisse.

Lyudmila Ivanovna Shestakova (1816–1906) was the sister of the Russian composer Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, and after his death she took care of his legacy. The first place outside Russia where Glinka's operas were performed was Prague, which Shestakova herself visited. In Prague she made several friends, including Josef Kolář, with whom she later corresponded. Her letters to Kolář are valuable witness of the background of events.

Lyudmila Ivanovna Shestakova, née Glinka, was the younger sister of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, the so-called father of Russian music. She took care of her brother's legacy after his death and was spreading awareness of his music, which eventually led her to visit Prague where she befriended, among others, Josef Kolář, who she was exchanging letters with. Her memories of Prague and letters to Kolář are a valuable source of learning the Czech-Russian musical relations.

Shestakova was born on November 17, 1816,¹ and despite being twelve years younger than Mikhail, in the adulthood she became one of his closest friends. They spent significant parts of their lives living together, mostly in St. Petersburg, and when Glinka died in Berlin in February 1857, it was his sister who arranged the transfer of

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the dates are given according to the Julian calendar.

his remains to St. Petersburg and buried him in the Tikhvin Cemetery in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. Shestakova became the heir of all his tangible and intangible assets, but she renounced the inheritance in favor of her sisters and retained only musical rights, although not for monetary reasons: Both Glinka's operas and other large works had already been sold by the composer himself. Having decided to stay in St. Petersburg, she devoted herself fully to her daughter Olga who died untimely of diphtheria in December 1863. When she overcame the worst period of mourning, Shestakova dedicated the remainder of her life to propagating her brother's legacy. (Shestakova 1955: 51–52)

Around 1866, a group of composers known as the Mighty Handful began to form among Shestakova's friends. The members, admirers of Glinka, were meeting at Shestakova's house and there they performed their new compositions, some of them dedicated to Lyudmila Ivanovna.

Apart from taking care of Glinka and providing a comfortable environment for him to work, Shestakova assembled a complete collection of his romances, and later she impelled him to write his autobiography *Zapiski* (Shestakova 1955: 50). It is also thanks to her that Sergey Levitsky took the last photographic portrait of Glinka in 1856 (Shestakova 1870: 611–612, 621) and she herself wrote several memoirs of her beloved departed brother.

As one of Shestakova's most significant deeds during Glinka's life can be considered arranging transcriptions of the orchestral scores of the operas *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and *A Life for the Tsar*. Until then, there were only a few manuscripts with many errors:

В 1853 году сгорел Большой театр в Москве и с ним партитуры Руслана и Жизни за царя, так что осталось только по одному экземпляру этих опер в Петербургской театральной дирекции. Брат не раз говорил мне, что он ужасно боится, что и здесь могут сгореть партитуры и тогда его музыка пропадет, а особенно он боялся за Руслана, и это по двум причинам: он эту оперу больше любил и ставил ее несравненно выше Жизни за царя, а во-вторых, партитура Жизни за царя сохранилась в оригинале, тогда как от партитуры Руслана были только небольшие наброски. Видя, как брат серьезно тревожится этим, я попросила К. Б. Шуберта² отрекомендовать мне самого лучшего переписчика из артистов и поручила ему переписать по два экземпляра партитуры Руслана и Жизни за царя. Конечно это писалось более

2 A Russian conductor.

года; но по окончании этого труда, я, по желанию брата, по одному экземпляру каждой оперы послала в Берлин к Дену,³ – любимому учителю брата, а другие два отдала Стасовым. Этому моему распоряжению (без хвастовства могу сказать) искусство и публика обязаны, что слышат Руслана. Забыла в котором году сгорел Мариинский театр в Петербурге и с ним Руслан.⁴ Тогда-то дирекция и брала списывать партитуру Руслана у Стасовых.⁵ (Shestakova 1955: 50–51)

She made an enormous effort to fulfill her brother's dream, to print the score of *Ruslan and Lyudmila*; however, the score could only be published after the death of Fyodor Stellovsky, a music publisher and the owner of Glinka's works, who had been impeding the publication of the operas. After her brother's death, Shestakova sold all the previously unsold works for symbolic twenty-five roubles to Stellovsky, but problems followed when Stellovsky refused to fulfill his obligations connected with the printing of the scores, probably under the influence of a mental illness. After Stellovsky died in 1875, Shestakova came to an agreement with a new manager of the music publishing house, and she sacrificed her last money to print *Ruslan and Lyudmila*'s score in Leipzig in 1878 under the editorship of Balakirev, Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. Afterward, she sent copies of *Ruslan* as a gift to Russian conductors and music associations and to major European libraries, conservatories and theaters (including Prague's) (Shestakova 1870: 631; Shestakova 1955: 53).

Lyudmila Ivanovna died at the age of 89, on January 18, 1906, and was buried next to her brother.

3 Siegfried Dehn, a German musicologist. Glinka died while staying in Berlin and learning church music with him.

4 It was in 1859.

5 Transl. by the author: »In 1853, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow burned down and with it the scores of *Ruslan* and *A Life for the Tsar*, so the last copies of these operas were at the St. Petersburg Theatre Directorate. My brother told me more than once that he was terribly afraid that the scores could burn there too and then his music would disappear, and he was especially worried about *Ruslan* for two reasons: He loved this opera more and considered it incomparably superior to *A Life for the Tsar*, and secondly, the original score of *A Life for the Tsar* was preserved whereas from the score of *Ruslan* there were only small sketches left. Seeing how my brother's serious concern about this, I asked K[arl] B[ogdanovich] *Schubert* to recommend me the best scribe among artists and I instructed him to rewrite two copies each of the *Ruslan*'s score and the score of *A Life for the Tsar*. Of course, it took over a year to write, but at the end of this work, at the request of my brother, I sent one copy of each opera to Berlin to Dehn, my brother's favorite teacher, and gave the other two to the Stasovs. Art and the public owe to this order of mine (I can say without boasting) that they can hear *Ruslan*. I forgot in which year the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg burned down, along with *Ruslan*. After that, the directorate copied the score of *Ruslan* from the Stasovs.«

Glinka's operas in Prague

In years 1866 and 1867, the premieres of Glinka's operas took place in Provisional Theatre in Prague. It was a step of a great importance for both the Czech and the Russian sides because Glinka's operas were being performed outside of Russia for the very first time. For this purpose, Mily Balakirev came there twice and Shestakova herself also visited Prague at the end of October 1866 as the result of the effort to spread her brother's legacy when his opera scores could not get printed abroad because of Stellovsky. She stayed there for several days; the beginning of her visit, according to the press, was dated on October 27,⁶ (*Národní listy* 1866: 3) and as it is known from one of her letters to Kolář, on November 5, she arrived back in St. Petersburg. She wrote the following about her visit to Prague:

Дело с Стелловским затянулось, и не было никакой возможности и думать о печатании партитур, а мне хотелось что-нибудь предпринять в пользу музыки брата и потому, узнав, что чехи очень дружелюбно относятся к музыке Глинки и ставили в Праге Жизнь за царя, попросила Милия Алексеевича Балакирева ехать туда, взяв с собою партитуру «Руслана». Балакирев проездил довольно долгое время, но не мог ничего сделать, потому что это было время австро-прусской войны 1866 года.

В том же 1866 году, по окончании войны, в сентябре месяце, преследуя свою мысль о постановке Руслана в Праге, я запаслась письмом от В. И. Ламанского к Ригеру⁷ и поехала в Прагу; в день моего приезда, вечером, Ригер перед спектаклем зашел ко мне и, узнав, что я тоже еду в театр (в тот день давали в первый раз «Проданную невесту» Сметаны), сказал, что после первого акта, с директорами и дирижером, придет ко мне в ложу (надо заметить, что тогда было двенадцать директоров в Праге в чешском театре). Дело о постановке Руслана устроилось в десять минут, так что я в тот же день, возвратясь из театра, написала Балакиреву в Петербург об этом. Тут не могу не прибавить, что на этот раз русская пословица неверна: – «у

6 According to the Gregorian calendar.

7 A Czech politician.

семи няnek дитя без глазу». А у нас есть пример недалекий, где одна нянька не делает того в десять лет, что сделали чехи в десять минут. Но это к делу не идет; возвратимся к Праге. Один из директоров, а именно Наперсток, заметил, что я в театре восхищалась пением и игрою Иосифа Иосифовича Палечека: он для меня сделал вечер, где я впервые слышала Палечека, – исполнение его партии Сусанина в Жизни за царя. Что за прелестный тембр голоса был у него тогда, описать нельзя; скажу только, что этот вечер был для меня истинное наслаждение.

Пробыв в Праге дня три, я, с помощью гг. Колара и Патера,⁸ осмотрела все замечательное в городе и отправилась обратно в Петербург, где, не теряя времени, через посредство В. В. Стасова, предложила покойному Ивану Ивановичу Горностаеву нарисовать для образца рисунки костюмов действующих лиц в Руслане, аксессуары и все, что может дать понятие о постановке Руслана (эти рисунки подарены мною Публичной библиотеке). И как только они были готовы, М. А. Балакирев отправился с ними, в декабре месяце, в Прагу для постановки на Пражской народной сцене Руслана. 4-го февраля было первое представление; успех был очень большой и до сих пор эта опера не сходит в Праге со сцены. Недавно еще получила письмо, что в нынешнем (1880 г.) году возобновлены костюмы и декорации, несмотря на бедные средства театра. Не худо бы нам пример с них, брать. За оперы Глинки, не дав ему ни копейки, получено более миллиона, а угощают публику (1880 г.) костюмами засаленными и оборванными – вот вам и одна нянька.⁹ (Shestakova 1955: 52–53)

8 Patera was a Czech historian and philologist.

9 Transl. by the author: »The case with Stellovsky dragged on and there was no way to even think about printing the scores, but I wanted to do something for my brother's music, and therefore, having learned that the Czechs are very friendly to Glinka's music and were staging *A Life for the Tsar* in Prague, I asked Mily Alexeyevich Balakirev to go there and take the score of *Ruslan* with him. Balakirev travelled for quite a long time but could not do anything because it was the time of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. In 1866, after the end of the war, in September, pursuing my idea of staging *Ruslan* in Prague, I took a letter from V. I. Lamansky to Rieger and went there; on the day of my arrival, in the evening, before the performance, Rieger came to me and, having learned that I was also going to the theatre (that day they were performing Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* for the first time), he said that after the first act, with the directors and the conductor, he would come to my box (it should be noted that then there were twelve directors in Prague in a Czech theatre). The case of the production of *Ruslan* was settled in ten minutes, so on the same day, returning from the theatre, I wrote

Perhaps this success in Prague was one of the impulses that led to the reassessment of the opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, which had not been recognized in Russia until then, and in 1871, it was re-performed at the Mariinsky Theatre.

Both Balakirev's visits to Prague were subsidized by Lyudmila Ivanovna, who also sent to Prague, at her expense, the scores and designs for scenes and costumes by the Russian artist Gornostayev (Findeisen 1904: 505).

Shestakova and Josef Kolář

One of Shestakova's new friends in Prague was Josef Kolář, a Slavist and translator of both Glinka's operas into Czech. The letters from Shestakova to Kolář can be found with his other literary legacy in the Museum of Czech Literature.¹⁰ Most of Shestakova's letters are dated only by days and months, so the year they were written must be estimated from their subject matter. Shestakova wrote the first letter to Kolář on the second day after her return to St. Petersburg, on November 6 / October 26,¹¹ 1866:

[...] я глубоко чувствую и ценю доброе расположение Ваше ко мне и верно не раз буду еще в Праге, но до того времени воспоминания о проведении мною там времени будет мне большою отрадою в жиз-

to Balakirev in St. Petersburg about it. Here I cannot help but add that this time the Russian proverb »seven nannies means a child without babysitting« is incorrect. And we have an example where one nanny will not do that in ten years what the Czechs did in ten minutes. But this does not go to the point, back to Prague. One of the directors, namely Naperstok, noticed that in the theatre I admired the singing and acting of Iosif Iosifovich Palechek: he made an evening for me where I first heard Palechek's performance of his role of Susanin in *A Life for the Tsar*. What a lovely timbre of voice he had cannot be described; I can only say that this evening was a real pleasure for me. After staying in Prague for three days, with the help of Kolar and Patera, I saw everything notable in the city and went back to St. Petersburg where, without wasting time, with the help of V. V. Stasov, I offered to Ivan Ivanovich Gornostaev to draw a design of the costumes of the characters in *Ruslan*, props, and everything that can raise awareness of the production of *Ruslan* (these drawings were donated by me to the Public Library). And as soon as they were ready, in December, M. A. Balakirev went with them to Prague to stage *Ruslan* there. On the 4th of February, there was the first performance; the success was great and until this day this opera has not come off the stage in Prague. Recently I received a letter saying that this year (1880) costumes and props have been renewed, despite the poor means of the theatre. It would not be bad for us to follow their example. For Glinka's operas, not giving him a penny, more than a million was received, and they treat the audience with greasy and ragged costumes; so much for one nanny.«

10 Museum of Czech Literature, fonds Josef Kolář no. 818, Correspondence received, Letters from Lyudmila I. Shestakova.

11 Dated by herself in both variants. However, her data transfer does not correspond with the then twelve-day-difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

ни. [...] Прилагаю три карточки брата (верно Вы давно получили ноты и четыре карточки посланные мною из Готы) которыми прошу Вас распорядиться нижеследующим образом. Одну отдайте Директору Наперстоку [...] Вторую карточку отдайте Смятоне, уверена, что он доволен будет иметь карточку товарища по таланту, в самом деле опера его Проданная невеста, чрезвычайно хорошая и я рада была бы иметь несколько нумеров чтобы познакомить Петербургских Артистов и публику с этою музыкаю. Третью карточку отдайте Палечку (Сусанину), верно, он с удовольствием примет карточку того, чего музыка он так славно исполняет.¹²

The letter also contains information that she has ordered designs of properties and costumes for the Prague premiere, and a request that Kolář try to arrange a kind reception for Balakirev in Prague. In other letters, she for example thanked Kolář for his solicitude for the performance and the care of Balakirev or asked him for sending all the newspapers and press where the operas and Balakirev were mentioned. These letters were written in 1866 and 1867. In the following years until 1875, there were only four letters sent to Kolář in the fonds, which contain common pleasantries.

In 1874, in a letter dated June 28, she asked Kolář to preserve the scores, she explicitly wrote: »Партитура мне нужна для печатания и надо сохранить ее.«¹³

In 1875, the situation changed fundamentally for Shestakova and especially for the possibility of printing the scores as Fyodor Stellovsky was placed in a psychiatric hospital and died. In her letters to Kolář at the time, Shestakova urged the return of the scores of her brother's operas, which Balakirev had left in Prague. Unfortunately, it is not possible to ascertain from her letters how Kolář explained the reason for keeping these scores there. The situation escalated on Shestakova's side, and in the first half of 1875, there are eight letters in Kolář's fonds concerning the sending of the scores.

12 Transl. by the author: »[...] I strongly appreciate your good disposition towards me and I will surely be back in Prague more than once, but until that time the memories of my time there will be a great pleasure in my life. [...] I enclose three photo portraits of my brother (surely you received scores and four pictures sent by me from Gotha long ago) which I ask you to dispose in the following way. Give one to Director Naprstek [...] Give the second picture to Smetana, I am sure that he will be pleased to have the card of a talented comrade. In fact, his opera, The Bartered Bride, is extremely good and I would be glad to have several numbers to acquaint the Petersburg Artists and the public with this music. Give the third card to Palechek (Susanin), he will certainly gladly accept the photo of the person whose music he performs so gloriously.«

13 Transl. by the author: »I need the scores for printing, and it is necessary to save them.«

The next letter is dated on February 8, 1875, and it is probably the last letter dated with a year. Here Shestakova demands the sending of scores to her or Balakirev in St. Petersburg, or in Dresden to Nadezhda Stasova, sister of the famous critic. At the end of the letter, she mentioned the sale of rights for performing Glinka's operas abroad and the reason why the scores in Prague are so important:

Партитуры эти теперь решительно не нужны в Праге, потому что права мои на постановки опер брата за границей, я передала господине Горчаковой, поэтому одна она может только поставить оперы брата, как в Праге, так и везде за границей, где пожелает; к тому же это единственные экземпляры просмотренные и исправленные самым братом, и понятно, что по ним должны печататься партитуры.¹⁴

The excerpt suggests that the copies of the scores, made on Shestakova's instructions for her brother, were probably sent to Prague; to ensure that Glinka's operas would not disappear from the world, she needed them to be sent back to Russia. In his response, Kolář apparently informed her of a new staging of the opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (premiere of this staging took place on February 26, 1875),¹⁵ which was a surprising choice, as Shestakova replied on 25 February:

[...] я никак не думала, чтобы опять возобновили Руслана, тем более что Вы сами писали мне, что он идет так плохо, что лучше его не давать; теперь же я постараюсь сделать все, что можно, и именно: 10е, партитуры, для переписки оставьте у себя не больше, как на два месяца. Прошу гна Ригера и Вас, чтобы через два месяца, аккуратно, партитура Руслана была з меня, в Петербурге; я поручилась в этом Д. В. Стасову [...].¹⁶

14 Transl. by the author: »These scores are now decidedly not needed in Prague because I have transferred my rights to stage my brother's operas abroad to Mrs. Gorchakova, so she alone can only stage my brother's operas in Prague and everywhere abroad, wherever she wants; moreover, these are the only copies reviewed and corrected by my brother himself, and the printing of the scores should be based on them.«

15 According to the Gregorian calendar.

16 Transl. by the author: »[...] I never thought that *Ruslan* would be resumed because you wrote me it was going so badly that it would be better not to stage it at all; now I will try to do everything I can and that is: firstly, do not keep the scores for copying for more than two months. I ask Mr. Rieger and you that in two months, neatly, *Ruslan's* score will be with me in St. Petersburg, I vouched for this to D. V. Stasov [...].«

Shestakova had to leave the scores in Prague for a little longer to enable to make a copy that was necessary for the performance. The following letters concerned her request for the scores which had not yet been sent. On April 20, she sent a request to Kolář to inform her in advance when the scores would be posted, on May 31, she wrote an indignant letter saying that the scores had still not been delivered. On June 5, she wrote a very bitter letter, in which, for instance, she says:

Сильно считаю себя оскорбленной выходками, или вернее придирадками Вашего театрального начальника, и очень жалею, что я столько тратилась и заботилась о постановке Руслана в Праге. [...] Пожалуйста покажите им это письмо и скажите, что даю им сроку 2 даже 3 недели, и ежели я по вашему стилю не получу партитуру Руслана к 1му и не позднее 5го Июля то будет запрещено давать Руслана в Праге на чешской сцене а может быть поставлять его на Немецкой. Вы не можете вообразить, как мне все это досадно. [...] На счет же партитуры Жизнь за Царя. Сегодня у меня был Милий Алексеевич [Балакирев] и объявил, что он вспомнил что отдал ее на хранение Патеру в Музей до востребования и потому пожалуйста возьмите Партитуру Жизнь за Царя от Патера из Музея, и присоединяя ее к Руслановой партитуре поспешите прислать ко мне.¹⁷

On June 20 and 21, she sent additional letters, one of them asked for the involvement of Rieger, who could help with this matter, the other one was official, and was maybe intended as a proof to Rieger and theatre officials that Shestakova herself was asking for sending the scores:

17 Transl. by the author: »I strongly consider myself insulted by the antics, or rather the nagging of your theatrical director, and I am very sorry that I spent and cared so much about Ruslan's production in Prague. [...] Please show them this letter and tell them that I give them a period of two, even three weeks, and if I do not receive Ruslan's score, according to your calendar, by July 1st and no later than July 5th, it will be forbidden to produce Ruslan in Prague on the Czech stage, and maybe to stage it on the German one. You cannot imagine how annoyed I am. [...] As for the score of A Life for the Tsar. Today Mily Alexeyevich [Balakirev] visited me and announced that he remembered that he had given it to Patera to the Museum for safekeeping until he will request it back and therefore, please take the score of A Life for the Tsar from Patera from the Museum, and add it to Ruslan's score, hurry to send it to me.«

Милостивый Государь, Осип Иванович

Прошу Вас сделать для меня одолжение, получить из дирекции Пражского Чешского театра партитуру оперы Руслана и Людмилы, оставленную там на некоторое время г. Балакиревым по моему поручению, равно прошу Вас получить от г. Патера, из Пражского народного музея партитуру оперы Жизнь за Царя, отданную туда тем же г. Балакиревым на сохранение до востребования моего. И получа эти обе партитуры покойного брата моего Михаила Ивановича Глинки, прошу Вас поспешить доставить их мне в Петербург, чем очень меня обяжете. Имею честь быть Вам, милостивый Государь, Покорная слуга Вдова Армейского поручика Людмила Шестакова (рожденная Глинка).¹⁸

On July 1, Shestakova thanked for the letter containing the message that the scores will be posted. This letter of hers also responds to the explanation of the delayed sending of the scores written by Kolář which she only comments on with advice not to worry. This is probably the last letter to Kolář preserved in his fonds (as mentioned, missing years in the dates of the letters make it burdensome to arrange them chronologically). Therefore, a letter confirming the final delivery of the scores to her is missing.

Despite these unfavorable events, Shestakova remembered Prague positively, as a place where not only Glinka, who was underappreciated in Russia until that time, but also young Balakirev received well-deserved attention. This is proved by the memoirs cited above which were written without any sign of bitterness, only with deep respect to the Czech culture. Although she wanted to come back to Prague again someday, there is no evidence of her second visit.

18 Transl. by the author: »Dear Sir, Osip Ivanovich, I ask you to do me a favour, to get from the directorate of the Prague Czech Theater the score of the opera Ruslan and Lyudmila, left there for some time by Mr. Balakirev on my instructions, I also ask you to receive from Mr. Patera from the Prague National Museum the score of the opera A Life for the Tsar, given there by Mr. Balakirev for safekeeping until I ask for it. And after you receive these two scores of my deceased brother Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka, I ask you to hurry up and send them to me to St. Petersburg, thereby you will make me a great service. I have the honour to be your humble servant, my dear Sir, Widow of an Army lieutenant Lyudmila Shestakova (née Glinka).«

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