

## **Russian Masters**

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### **Course Description:**

In the 19th century, Russia experienced an explosion of cultural achievement and produced a rich body of music influenced by the turbulent marriage of Eastern and Western traditions. We will highlight the flamboyant and coloristic compositional techniques of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov, radically different from the Germanic compositional tradition, and the elegance and craftsmanship of Tchaikovsky. We will also consider the presciently modern rhetoric of Mussorgsky and the virtuoso performance tradition of this music from its Lisztian origins to its indestructibility on concert stages today, concluding with an examination of the controversial Soviet scene. Musical literacy is not required.

### **Week 1**

Slavs and the West, Slavs and the Orient  
Folklorists and Colorists  
Imitations of Europeans

### **Week 2**

Glinka, Dargomizhsky, Balakirev, and the founding of a tradition

### **Week 3**

Mussorgsky and the Mighty Five, Part 1  
Tchaikovsky: Ballets and Operas

### **Week 4**

Mussorgsky and the Mighty Five, Part 2

### **Week 5**

Tchaikovsky's orchestral music  
Scriabin: from Post-Chopinist to Mystic  
The Russian Stravinsky

### **Week 6**

Rachmaninov  
Prokofiev in the West

### **Week 7**

The Soviet Prokofiev  
Shostakovich, through the death of Stalin

### **Week 8**

Late Shostakovich  
Post-Shostakovich: A brief overview, including a consideration of Alfred Schnittke

## **Recommended Readings:**

### Music

Gerald Abraham, ed., *The Music of Tchaikovsky*  
David Brown, *Musorgsky*  
David Brown, ed., *New Grove Russian Masters I and II*  
Faubion Bowers, *Scriabin*  
Richard Anthony Leonard, *A History of Russian Music*  
Alexander Poznansky, *Tchaikovsky Through Others' Eyes*  
Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov: *My Musical Life*  
Sergei Rachmaninov, *A Lifetime in Music*  
Vladimir Seroff, *Modest Mussorgsky*  
Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*  
Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*

### General Interest:

Edward Crankshaw, *In the Shadow of the Winter Palace*  
Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer*  
Orlando Figges, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*  
W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight and Midnight: A History of St. Petersburg*; and *The Romanovs*  
Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great* and *Nicholas and Alexandra*  
Konstantin Muchulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Works*  
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lessons on Russian Literature* and *Nicolai Gogol*  
Constantine Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*  
Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*

Collected writings of Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov