Part one: early songs and influences

Ben Flanders baritone
Michael Delfin piano

“My music must be an artistic reproduction of human speech in all its finest shades. That is, the sounds of human speech, as the external manifestations of thought and feeling must, without exaggeration or violence, become true, accurate music.”

–Mussorgsky, Letter to Lyudmila Shestakova on July 30, 1868

Where are you, little star? [text by Grekov]
Darling Savishna [text by Mussorgsky]
Many flowers have grown from my tears [text by Heine, trans. Mey]
The Lark (music by Glinka, text by Kukolnik)

The Lark for piano [arr. Balakirev]

Part Two: The Nursery

A song cycle of childhood on texts by Mussorgsky

Lauren McAllister mezzo-soprano
Michael Delfin piano

Under the direct influence of his nurse he made the close acquaintance of Russian folk tales. This acquaintance with the spirit of Russian folk life was the main stimulus for his musical improvisations...

–Mussorgsky writing about himself in the Riemann Musik-Lexicon

1. With my Nanny
2. In the Corner
3. The Beetle
4. Playing with a Doll
5. Now I lay me down to sleep
6. Sailor Cat
7. A Ride on a Hobbyhorse

Meditation for piano (1880)
Part three: Sunless
A song cycle on texts by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov

Ben Flanders baritone
Michael Delfin piano

“Art is not an end in itself, but a means of addressing humanity.”
-Mussorgsky, attributed

1. within four walls
2. you did not recognize me in the crowd
3. At last the noisy, useless day is done
4. be bored
5. elegy
6. over the River

Translations

where are you, little star? text by Nicolai Grekov

where are you, little star?
Ah, where are you shining one?
Have you hidden yourself
behind a black cloud?
an ominous stormcloud?

where are you, maiden?
where are you beautiful one?
Have you deserted your love?
your adoring, one true love?
The black cloud hid the star,
the cold earth took the maiden.

bright savishna words by Mussorgsky

darling savishna, sweet ivanovna,
And they treat God’s vanya with kicks,
feed me with cuffs on the head,
but on holidays in their Sunday best,
dressed up with scarlet ribbons,
They give some bread to halfwit vanya,
so God’s vanya is not forgotten.
darling savishna, bright falcon,
fall in love with me, the ugly one,
show me love, the lonely one.
how I love you, I can’t put into words,
Darling savishna, believe me, if only you will believe,
sweet ivanovna!

many flowers have grown from my tears
text by Heine, trans. by Lev Mey

From my tears have grown
many bright, fragrant flowers,
but my sighs have been spilled out
in a midnight choir of nightingales,
in a midnight choir of nightingales.

If you fall in love with me
my sweet dear, the flowers will be yours,
and beneath the window a ringing song,
for you alone, my love, the nightingales will sing.
The Lark music by Glinka, text by Kukolnik

bounded by the earth and sky
A song arises,
an endless stream of sound
pours out louder, louder.

the unknown singer in the field
where he sings so loudly
to his lady love,
is the sonorous skylark.
singing to his lady love,
is the sonorous skylark.

the wind is carrying the song,
to whom, it does not know.
she, who appreciates it,
will know who it is from.

Pour forth now, my little song,
song of sweet hope...
she will be thinking of me
and give a secret sigh.

The Tsarina always had a cold,
and how when she sneezed,
it made the windows break into pieces!
Listen, Nanny dear,
don't tell me about the bogey-man again!
Let's leave him alone!
Tell me the other story, the funny one!

2. Бу́гны – in the corner

oh, you naughty boy!
you've tangled my wool, and messed up my needles.
really! you've made me drop all my stitches!
This sock is all splattered with ink!
go into the corner! into the corner!
off with you into the corner!
you naughty boy!

I didn't do anything, Nanny dear,
I never touched your sock, Nanny dear!
The kitten tangled up your wool,
it was the kitten who messed up your needles;
Misha was a good boy,
Misha was a clever boy.

But Nanny is wicked and old, Nanny has a dirty nose.
Misha is nice and clean, and his hair is properly brushed,
but Nanny's cap is all crooked.
Nanny has upset Misha, and put him in the corner
for no reason at all:
Misha won't love his Nanny any more, so there!

3. Жу́к—the beettle

Nanny, Nanny dear! Listen what's happened,
Nanny darling!
I was playing there on the sand, behind the
summerhouse, by the birch trees,
building a little house out of maple twigs,
those which Mama had cut for me.
I'd already finished building the little house,
a little house with a roof, a proper little house,
when suddenly... !
There, right on the roof, a beetle was sitting.
a huge, black one, with his whiskers bristling so fearfully,
and staring straight at me! I was terrified!
Then he started buzzing and getting angry, he opened his
wings wide, and wanted to grab hold of me... !
Then he flew at me and hit me on the forehead! I hid myself,
Nanny dear, and crouched down;
I was afraid to move!
I just peeped out of one eye, 
and listen, nanny, what do you think, 
the beetle lay there on his back, with his feet folded and 
his nose in the air; and he wasn’t angry any more, and his 
whiskers weren’t bristling.
do you think he was dead, or just pretending? 
what do you think, 
nanny, what was up with the beetle? 
he hit me, and then fell down! what was he up to, 
that beetle?

4. С куклой—with the doll
Dolly, bye, bye, Dolly, sleep, go to sleep, 
Lie down quietly! Dolly! it’s time to go to sleep! 
Dolly, sleep, go to sleep, or the boogey-man will eat 
you up, the big bad wolf will get you, 
and take you away into the dark forest. 
Dolly, sleep, go to sleep!
tell me about your dreams: 
About the wonderful island where they 
don’t reap or sow, 
and where luscious pear trees blossom and ripen, 
and where all day and night golden birds sing! 
bye, bye, lullaby, bye, bye, Dolly!

5. На сон грядущий—now i lay me down to sleep
“God bless mummy and daddy, 
and keep them safe, O Lord! 
god bless my brothers vasenka and mishenka! 
god bless my old granny, give her good health, 
she’s such a good granny, a dear old granny, Lord! 
and protect, o God, my aunts katya, natasha, 
masha, parasha, and my aunts lyuba, varya, sasha, 
olya, tanya and nadya, and my uncles petya and kolya, 
my uncles volodya and grisha and sasha, and all of them, 
o Lord, protect and bless them all, 
and philya and vanya and mitya and petya and dasha, 
and pasha, sonya, oonyusha... 
nanny, o nanny! how does it go next?”

“really, what a scatterbrain! how many times have i told 
you: ‘god bless me and forgive my sins!’”
“god bless me and forgive my sins! 
is that right, nanny dear?”

6. Кот Матрос—sailor the cat
Oh, oh, oh, oh, mama, darling mama! 
i just ran to get my sunshade, mama, it’s so hot, 
i hunted through the cupboard, 
and i looked in the table drawer: no luck! 
hurriedly i ran to the window, 
maybe i’d left the sunshade there... 
then suddenly i saw, on the window sill, our cat ’sailor’, 
he’d crept up to the cage, and was scratching at it! 
the little finch was trembling, and hid in the corner, 
chirping. i got so angry! 
“So, puss, you like eating birdies, don’t you? 
stop it! i’ve got you. just you look out, pussy!”
i stood quite calmly and peeped, 
I kept one eye on him: what a strange thing!

The cat looked me coolly straight in the eye, 
and was just about to grab the bird, when i slapped him! 
mama, what a hard cage it was! 
it hurt my fingers so, mama! 
mama! here, right at the tips, 
it’s such an awful pain, an awful pain ‘ 
“oh, what a nasty cat, mama, isn’t he?”

7. Поехал на палочке—on the hobbyhorse
“Trot, trot, trot, trot! hey faster! 
trot, trot! hey faster! 
trot, trot, trot! trot, trot! 
hey! hey! hey! faster! 
whoa!... stop!

vasya, hi vasya! 
listen, come and play today! don’t be late! get on now! 
trot! trot! goodbye, vasya! i’m off to yukki... 
but i’ll definitely be back by evening, 
you know we go to bed very early... 
just come and see!

ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! hey! faster! 
i’m going to crash!

oh, it hurts! oh, my leg! oh, it hurts! oh, my leg!... 
“My darling boy, what’s the matter? stop crying! 
it’ll soon get better, my love! come, stand up properly: 
there, my child! Look, isn’t that lovely! can you see? 
in the bushes on the left! oh, what a wonderful little bird! 
Look at his feathers! 
can you see it? ... so, is it better now?”
“yes, it is! i’ve been to yukki, mama! 
now i must hurry back home... 
trot! trot! we have guests coming... 
trot! trot! we must hurry...”
Без Сонца—sunless  
texts by Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov

1. **within four walls**  
dear little room, quiet and pleasant,  
the darkness impenetrable, unresponsive;  
a thought from the depths, a sorrowful song;  
a pounding heart holds a secret hope;  
the quick flight of moment to moment;  
an unmoving gaze on a faraway happiness;  
so many doubts, anticipation.  
here then, is my night, my lonely night.

2. **you did not recognize me in the crowd**  
you did not recognize me in the crowd,  
your gaze told me nothing.  
but i froze in amazement and dread  
when i caught your eye:  

---it was only a moment;  
but believe me, in that moment i endured  
all the sweetness of past love,  
all the bitterness of your disregard and my tears!

3. **finally, the useless, noisy day is over**  
finally, the useless, noisy day is over;  
the mundane world has fallen silent, drowsing.  
all is silence, and the darkness of the may night  
embraces the sleeping city.

---but my eyes will not close in sleep.  
and by the time of the dauns’ light  
my imagination is leafing through  
the pages of the book of lost years.

once again breathing in the narcotic fumes  
of spring’s passionate visions,  
my soul pours out anew  
a surge of hope, of delusion...

---alas, those are only ghosts!  
this dead crowd bores me,  
and the noise of their stale chatter  
has no power to move me.

---of them all, only one, in darkness,  
came to me, like a breath of love, and,  
like a true friend from past days,  
knelt down by my bedside.

---and, resolute, i gave to her alone  
all my soul in a silent tear.  
no one saw it. all my happiness,  
in one tear i had hidden for so long!

4. **be bored**  
be bored, then. you boring creature.  
without feeling pain, we feel no joy,  
just as there is no reunion without parting,  
just as without struggle there is no victory.

be bored, then. be bored with words of love,  
in the silent emptiness of your heart,  
responding with lies and insincerity  
to the truth of a pure dream.

---be bored, then. from cradle to grave  
your path is laid out before you:  
drop by drop you’ll waste your youth,  
and then you’ll die, and god have mercy...  
god have mercy!

5. **elegy**  
the drowsy, misty night. one mute star  
flickering, lonely, through the veil of clouds.  
there is a far off, mournful jingling of harnesses  
from a herd of grazing horses.  
like clouds in the night, my treacherous thoughts  
rush over me, anxious and morose;  

---hopes once dear, reflected there, now lost and dead.  
leaving only regrets... and tears.

thoughts whirling, aimless and endless;  
at times, they come to resemble the face of my beloved,  
they call to me, reawakening my heart’s desire.  
then, they fade back into black darkness,  
full of mute threats,  
and disturbing thoughts of coming struggles.  
in the distance is heard life’s grating din,  
the crowds’ heartless laughter, the hidden growl of  
treachery, the mundane pettiness, whispering incessantly, and the grim tolling of death!..  
the all-knowing star, as if ashamed,  
hides her bright face in the sullen mist,  
like my future, mute and unknowable.
ABOUT THIS CONCERT
This concert spans virtually the whole of Mussorgsky’s life. Not only from his first song “where are you, little star?” from 1857, but from his happy childhood, with his memories of the folk tales and fairy tales told him by his peasant nurse, which certainly gave depth and realism to his portrayal of childhood in “The Nursery”, but also through his last major completed song cycle “Sunless” from 1874, and one of his last completed piano works, the meditation of 1880.

Part one of the concert concerns early songs and influences, from his earliest known song, “where are you, little star?” which is in a folksong style. (протяжная песня—or lingering song which refers to the slow ornamentation of the melody), although Richard Taruskin makes a good argument that the original song was extensively reworked after Mussorgsky came under the influence of Balakirev, who did extensive musicological research into Russian and Ukrainian folksongs, and was very much a mentor and father figure for the young Mussorgsky. Balakirev took it upon himself to teach Mussorgsky theory and counterpoint and to introduce him to a wider range of musical influences. He was also the head of the group dubbed by the music critic Vladimir Stasov as the “mighty handful”, or simply “The Kuchka”, which was a group of five composers, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov and Cui, all trying to create a truly “Russian” music rather than emulating European models. They consciously modeled their music on Russian folk songs and the Russian language itself, trying to create an art that would arise naturally from the Russian soul. This radical artistic vision is on full display in Darling Savishna, which is one of Mussorgsky’s many experiments in ultra-realism in music. Not only setting words to music but trying to find the music that the words themselves express. The song tells the story of an episode that Mussorgsky supposedly witnessed, where the village simpleton is asking the most beautiful girl in the village to love him and not shun him. He sets the words he wrote himself in a folk poetry idiom called a пятисложник— which pretty much just means pentameter. Like iambic pentameter it consists of two five syllable “feet”, but with the accent only on the third beat.

The third and fourth songs are examples of the straightforward style of “Romance” popular with the Russian aristocracy in salons and concerts. The first is by Mussorgsky on the poetry of Heine, and the second is by Glinka, on the famous poem “the Lark” of Kukolnik. Glinka, a generation earlier than Mussorgsky and Balakirev, was the first composer to really use Russian themes and began to experiment with music based in the Russian language and Russian folk themes. Everyone who came after him owed him a huge debt. Certainly Balakirev did, who used this song as a stepping stone for the virtuoso solo piano piece The Lark.

6. Over the River

The pensive moon, the distant stars,
The deep blue heavens contemplate the waters.
Silently, I gaze out over the depths;
My heart feels their mysterious magic.

The rippling waters conceal tender caresses;
Their murmuring is powerful, hypnotic.
One senses vast thoughts and boundless passions...
A mysterious voice, roils my soul,
Seducing, frightening, making me doubt.

Does it command me listen? I am rooted to the spot;
Does it drive me away? I would retreat in confusion;
Does it call me into the depths?
Without looking back, I would plunge right in!
Part two. The Nursery

The nursery is a character piece par excellence. When Rimsky-Korsakov first heard Mussorgsky perform it, he said that the piece was a great success, but he could not imagine anyone but Mussorgsky performing it. Today it is performed by both men and women. For a bass it is a character piece with silly voices and a charming incongruousness as he plays the various roles of a little boy, a little girl, nanny, and mother, but when it is sung by a woman it becomes a magical entree into the mind and the outsize world of a child. At bedtime, a child barters with his nurse for just the right bedtime story. A buzzing beetle becomes a frightening attacker, the hobbyhorse becomes a magical steed carrying a young boy through the neighborhood, a child and nurse are ending the day with sleepy prayers at bedtime. But these are not saccharine sweet caricatures either, tantrums and hurt feelings abound. A boy decides he doesn’t love his nanny anymore when she punishes him by making him stand in the corner. A girl shoos the cat away from the birdcage and hurts her hand. Putting the doll to bed involves tales of the bogey-man or the big gray wolf who will carry you off if you don’t go to sleep! Mussorgsky wrote the texts for these songs and the children seem very real. The narrative arc of these songs rings true in a child’s voice. “This happened, then this happened, then this...” The children of his friend Stasov always rejoiced when Mussorgsky came to visit. One of the children recalled that he did not talk down to children, but engaged them as equals in conversation, saying “He almost seemed like one of us...”

Part three: Sunless

Mussorgsky rebelled against his wealthy, aristocratic upbringing by living the life of a drunken bohemian artist. He and his drinking buddies celebrated the myth of the drunken artist, the creative addict, the starving artist, the penniless artist, which would have worked out fine for him but for the alcoholism, depression, and health problems which manifested as “fits” and fainting spells, and presumably other neurological symptoms. Also, there was the penury, as his family’s wealth was largely erased by the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Being a bohemian artist is a risky life if it’s not backed by a trust-fund. He did somehow scrape by, and he always relied on friends and his brother Filaret to bail him out of trouble.

Musically, Mussorgsky eventually was able to find a balance between “realism” and a truly Russian use of music to convey emotion, leaving behind the artistic constraints of the kuchka, and his dependence on Balakirev and Stasov. The sunless song cycle is a return to a more balanced artistic melding of speech and verse. Here, Mussorgsky uses the music to amplify and support the emotion, music as an equal companion in the artistic endeavour rather than simply a vehicle for the natural speech rhythms of the Russian language.

In contrast to the posthumous Songs and Dances of Death, the texts for these songs are intimate and introverted. These are dark songs. Night Thoughts. Time is fleeting, and the future is bleak and unknowable. In the final song, the piano asks the question “what of the ultimate mystery? if death calls to you from the depths, will you plunge in to meet it?” and finally, only the question remains, unanswered.

ABOUT SLAVIC VOICES
since 2015, slavic voices has been providing interested singers and instrumentalists with a platform to learn and to try out new music from eastern and central europe. This all started when I invited a few singers and pianists over to sing some rachmaninoff or some martinu, or szymanowski, and provided some beer and food. People want to sing and play this wonderful music, they want to learn about ukraine or the czech republic, they want to meet people and make connections. in 2019 we had our debut concert in cincinnati. in 2020 we became a 501 c-3 nonprofit corporation, just in time for the global pandemic, and the near total shutdown of arts organizations in cincinnati. Obviously, our plans for the 2020–21 season have been scaled back dramatically, but even in a post covid world, art song has a real potential to bring us together and to make the world a better place. Please visit us at slavicvoices.org.
ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Baritone **Ben Flanders** is the founder and Artistic Director of Slavic Voices, as well as the workshop for singers, conductors, and pianists “slavic voices at big blue”. An Alexander teacher and former professional horn player, Mr. Flanders has been a member of Cincinnati’s Vocal Art Ensemble since 2013 and has appeared as a soloist with the Cincinnati Fusion Ensemble, Collegium Cincinnati, the Bach Ensemble of St. Thomas and other groups in the Cincinnati area. Mr. Flanders has performed or covered roles for Dayton Opera, Concert Nova, Queen City Opera, Nanoworks Opera, and others as well as performing as a chorister with the Cincinnati and Dayton operas. He has performed as a recitalist in the US and Ukraine and is committed to bringing people together through music and poetry in the languages of eastern and central Europe.

Lauren McAllister is a lyric mezzo-soprano based in Cincinnati. Her upcoming appearances include Vesta in the world premiere of Fierce (Cincinnati opera), Nicklausse in The Tales of Hoffmann (Opera Louisiana), and the premiere of Robert Kyr’s work for sixteen voices, Earth Ritual (Conspirare). She recently performed with the Lubbock Symphony for their chamber sound! series, sang the role of Queen of the Virtues in Hildegard von Bingen’s Ordo Virtutum, and covered the role of Ännchen in Queen City opera’s Öber Freischütz. As a recitalist, she made her salon 21 debut in December with works by Heggie, Schumann, and a premiere of Edgar Allen Poe texts by Stephen Varlamis. Lauren is an avid performer of art song and contemporary music. While in Lubbock, she presented Jennifer Jolley’s Shine a Light on our Rights and David Little’s You Shiver, from his opera JFK. She joined the Cincinnati Song Initiative in their survey of Les six program, was a guest artist with Cincinnati Soundbox in their concert series, and sang with the Lynx Project as a member of their Autism Advocacy Project, where she premiered works by Steven Varlamis and Travis Reynolds.

Praised for “beautiful performances of great warmth” (Classical Voice of North Carolina), pianist **Michael Delfín** has soloed for the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage and the Aspen, Eastern, and Chautauqua music festivals. He has performed with the Eastern Music Festival Young Artists Orchestra and CCM Philharmonia and has captured prizes in the International Crescendo Music Awards, Chautauqua Piano Competition, EMF Piano Competition, and two consecutive CCM Concerto competitions. As a harpsichordist, he is the recipient of the 2017 Catacousic Consort Early Music Grant and has attended the American Bach Soloists Academy. His teachers include Boris Slutsky, Yoshikazu Nagai, Awadagin Pratt, and Michael Unger. In his spare time, Mr. Delfín enjoys literature, cooking, various forms of cardio, collecting fine teas, and stoking his paronomasia, for which there is no known cure. www.michaeldelfinpianist.net.
ABOUT SERENITY RECOVERY NETWORK

**Serenity Recovery Network Mission Statement**
To help build a strong foundation of lifelong recovery in a structured residential setting for addicts and alcoholics and their families who suffer from the disease of addiction.

*Adopted May 22, 2014*

**Serenity Recovery Network Core Values**
These core values are the fundamental beliefs of the Serenity Recovery Network. The core values are the guiding principles that dictate our organization’s behavior and actions. Core values help SRN determine if we are on the right path and fulfilling our organization’s mission, vision and business goals. These core values create an unwavering and unchanging guide which forms the foundation on which we perform work and conduct ourselves. They are the practices we use every day in everything we do.

1. The principles that underlie the 12 steps and 12 traditions
2. The importance of a spiritual awakening
3. Create a caring, compassionate and supportive environment
4. Provide a safe environment for residents, staff and volunteers
5. Become an accountable, responsible & productive member of society
6. Live our lives happy, joyous & free
7. Provide our services in the most cost effective manner
8. Share best practices with other recovery organizations

*Adopted May 22, 2014*

**Serenity Recovery Network Vision Statement**
By 2018, ensure that Serenity Recovery Network shall provide “best in class recovery housing” and make it widely available to addicts, alcoholics and their families.

*Adopted November 20, 2014*