

# Soviet War Songs in the Context of Russian Culture



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By

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To my dearest parents,  
Kholzakov Nikolay Gavrilovich and Nadezhda Aleksandovna,  
who taught me and my sisters to love, understand, and value  
the deep roots of Russian songs;  
and  
to my husband Alexey Polyudov  
who always supports me in my work

“To Moscow to get the songs”  
—Russian saying

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of a book appeared many years before the beginning of my writing and educational career. It appeared somewhere in my subconsciousness and had been waiting for the right moment to become the written word since, for the first time in my life, I had felt the beauty of the melodies of Russian songs; when, for the first time in my life the words of those songs had become an essential part of my personality. Those words and melodies became as meaningful as the complete images of my native language mentality.

In my family, my parents valued the beauty of folklore songs, the melodies of famous Russian and Soviet composers, and their optimistic mood. The songs we were listening to and singing during my childhood years were not perceived as part of propaganda or an ideological background. The content of the songs established the moral values of life. What I remember from my earliest years: my parents constantly sang different songs while they were working in the garden, in their leisure time and celebrations, and as lullabies too. The songs were always an essential part of our life. Indirectly, we three sisters started to listen more attentively to the words; and the words became deeper in meaning, forming our national identity and interest in the history of our country, assisting us in the process of understanding ourselves as individuals and as part of the culture. During adolescence and youth, the songs' melodies and contents fulfilled life by their significance; in the songs there were answers to questions that each young person asked himself: who am I; what is the meaning of morals, honesty, integrity, and self-esteem; what does it mean to be a part of your cultural heritage; what is the love for your Motherland; what does it mean to keep your word? Now we sing and listen to these songs just as my parents did, even when living abroad. The songs become an irreplaceable part of life.

For a long time, I did not realise the importance of war songs for my inner world. However, unexpectedly, I started including an analysis of war songs in the literature classes for the students I taught. Several lessons were dedicated to discussions of content based on the history of the songs. There was one fact that impressed me repeatedly. It was the deep psychological and emotional impact of the songs on the students. In the 1990s and the first decades of the twenty-first century the students reacted

empathically to the performances of the war songs, and to the history and memory of the Great Patriotic War (in Europe this is known as World War II or the Second World War). This subject was never monotonous and arid. It was surprising that the students were always attentive to understand the nuances and intonations of different performances. It is hard to forget the tears while the students were listening to the songs “Dorogi” (“Roads”), «Na bezymyannoï vysote» (“On the Nameless Height”), and «Do svidaniya, mal’chiki!» (“Farewell boys!”), which were performed by different professional singers, either by Muslim Magomayev or Dmitri Hvorostovsky or bards such as Bulat Okudzhava or Vladimir Vysotsky.

The peculiarities of Dmitri Hvorostovsky’s performance need to be considered specifically because his ability to deliver an emotional atmosphere of songs is incomparable. One of the reasons I started to think about writing this book was the students’ reactions to Hvorostovsky’s performance of war songs. During the lessons dedicated to the subject of the Great Patriotic War, records from Dmitri Hvorostovsky’s concert of 2003 were used to illustrate the content of the Russian and Soviet musical heritage and memories of the Great Patriotic War. It is hard to describe the emotional power of Hvorostovsky’s performance. The students were astonished by his intonations and expressiveness. They could barely stop their tears while listening to the most lyrical songs, such as “Dorogi” (“Roads”) or “Temnaja noch” (“Dark night”). No doubt, the songs were known by the students because war songs are a significant part of Russian cultural heritage. However, Hvorostovsky’s performance gives them a new perspective to acquire the content of the songs in their entirety and the depth of their emotional power. The students asked to listen to one song after another, more and more, despite a class time limit. It completely transformed a lesson into conversation and a tribute to the War. After these classes the history teachers of our school mentioned the increasing interest of the students in the Great Patriotic War materials such as its history, down to the details, to personalities and to people’s lives.

The special part of the academic process was the process of preparing and running the concerts for the Great Patriotic War anniversary. The students took the preparation and the concerts very responsibly. Everything was important, from choosing a song to perform to the day of the concert itself. The concert day was a day of great celebration for the entire school. It was not expressed in special speeches or formal procedures. The main items of the day were the songs themselves. The students felt this for they wanted to deliver the best performance they had prepared at the concert. The atmosphere of a sacred event of native culture was the main intention of the concert. In our concert preparation, the

students and I became familiar with words that sounded differently when read as texts.

After years of organising those events, I had realised the importance of the materials we were studying. And an idea for a book appeared in my mind because of my childhood experience and the cultural heritage given to me by my parents; as well as due to the influence of my pedagogical experience, when a teacher can see the emotional power of war songs even in a classroom, in a school environment. Finally, the idea was to publish not only the history of war songs, but also the analysis of the texts. It was a decision to complete a mission to understand the native culture and the mood of war. It was a decision to pay tribute to my parents and grandparents and to all who made Victory true. It was a decision to share the educational experience of an unpredictable process of forming the feeling of respect for native culture by the young generation. It was a decision to talk about the value of the musical culture and the texts for supporting the soldiers in combat circumstances.

While working on this book, I have returned to my young years, recreating the joy of discovering the world, immersing myself in philosophical questions, always being surprised by the answers to those questions which were either complicated or simple. All are connected to one point in the formation of your own personal attitude to the world, and to life, to an understanding of life's meaning. In general, everything is about realising the culture that your parents gave you and that you will give to your children without eloquent phrases, but simply by your life and your attitude to your cultural heritage. War songs give us a chance to remember it one more time, to remind us about being serious and deep in life and in expressing feelings to beloved parents, and the Motherland. In modern times when everybody talks about callousness, unyieldingness, and anomy, it is impossible to discuss these matters with youths seriously and honestly. One more time we may talk about ideals and sacred feelings. No doubt, it requires special настрой and a special reason to start such a conversation. The highest standards and ideals expressed in war songs are the reasons to talk about them without being superficial or sentimental. The songs themselves, carrying the highest moral standards, create an atmosphere for honest conversation and deep thought.

While I was working on the book, I wanted to include in it some theoretical considerations to make the term "song" clearer and well-defined. The philological background demonstrates the diversity of the song genre, which exists as folklore, lyrical, children's, work, war, and other types of songs. I really want the book to become the reflection of the war song genre in the Russian culture of the twentieth century in its

different aspects: a linguistic, historical and cultural phenomenon, a collection of texts and their analysis, and the strategy of using them in the educational process.

I wish each educator to find his own perspective to talk about the materials presented in the book because in the field of humanities there are no predicted ways to reach students' interest as suggested by the Russian poet Feodor Tutchév in his short and laconic five-line poem:

It is true it is impossible to foresee  
The echo of the word we place  
Escapes our best anticipation,  
And we receive appreciation  
Much as the blessedness of Grace.

F. I. Tutchév, 1866<sup>1</sup>

The miracle of Russian war songs is in the state of compassion that the songs give to listeners.

Let our students become familiar with compassion not by hearsay, but from their own experiences, which they live through in their young years. This experience of compassion and the value of thankfulness will fulfill the rest of their lives. In the future they will be able to give this experience to their children as a priceless part of the cultural heritage.

The book contains four chapters. Chapter I is the “Song as a phenomenon of Russian folklore culture”, and characterises a genre of songs in terms of their definition, specific traits, their role in social life, and as a part of the cultural heritage. The historical approach allows us to see the development of the genre from the past to today.

Chapter II “War Songs. The historical approach: the creation and life of war songs”, considers the genre of war songs not only as a specific part of folklore, but as a part of Soviet and post-Soviet musical folklore. There are several types of songs which depict the war in different dimensions: marches and patriotic hymns; factual portrayals of combats; and personal expressions of soldiers' feeling and memories. The chapter defines these genres and gives examples of war songs which illustrate the specificity of the groups.

Chapter III, “The history and analysis of selected war songs”, considers fourteen of the most popular war and post-war songs: the facts and legends of their creation, performances, and their existence during the war and post-war. All songs are placed according to their dates of creation.

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<sup>1</sup> (Tutchév 1966), 1-217

Each part of a song's consideration includes: 1. The history of the creation and performance of a song; 2. The analysis of the lyrics from the perspectives of genre, style, etymology, word choice, and composition; and 3. The significance of a song in cultural memory. Each song is presented from the perspective of the cultural discourse, as a part of the cultural heritage that expresses the patterns of modern life. The songs' lyrics are analysed as part of the national heritage, from the roots of the folklore tales to the fine art images. The analysis of the lyrics includes stylistic and etymological characteristics of the songs' lyrics. A chronological list of the songs is as follows:

1905

“Na Sopkakh Manchurii” (“On the Hills of Manchuria”)

1938

“Katyusha”

### **1941-1945, the Great Patriotic War**

1941

“Svyaschennaya Voina” (“The Sacred War”)

1942

“Moya Moskva” (“My Moscow”)

“Sinij platochek” (“Blue Scarf”),

“Temnaya Noch” (“Dark Night”)

“V zemlyanke” (“In the Dugout”)

1943

“Ogonek” (“Glimmer”),

“Sluchainyi Val's” (“Accidental Waltz”)

1944

“Solovji” (“Nightingales”)

“Smuglyanka-moldavanka”

### **1945-1955**

1945

“Dorogi” (“Roads”)

**1956-1964**

1963

“Na Besymyannoi Vysote” (“On the Nameless Height”)

**1965-1991**

1968

“Zhuavli” (“Cranes”)

1973

“Pesnya o Dalyokoi Rodine” (“The Song about the Far Homeland”)

1975

“Den’ Pobedy” (“The Victory Day”)

Chapter IV, “War songs as a part of cultural memory. Russian war songs in the modern world”, is the last part of the book which describes several perspectives of the existence of Russian war songs today. The first part of the chapter describes the results of the survey “Remember ten of your treasured war songs”. The survey took place in some Russian, American, Canadian, and Israeli cities amongst students, parents, higher education students, adults, and seniors. The chapter describes the responses of more than two hundred participants and their reactions to the survey about their most memorable war songs. The survey has helped the author choose the songs for the study. The second part of the chapter refers to a project, which took place in the Moscow music school where students with their educators were preparing for the anniversary concert. During the project students of different ages studied the history and meaning of several war songs.



## CHAPTER ONE

# SONG AS A PHENOMENON OF RUSSIAN FOLKLORE CULTURE

This chapter characterises a genre of songs in terms of their definition, specific traits, their role in social life, and as a part of cultural heritage; this is important at the beginning of a conversation about one of the most beloved song genres in Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet culture. The historical approach allows us to see the development of the genre from the past to today. This chapter characterises an overview of the song's genre for theoretical materials to provide the basis for seeing well-known material from new perspectives and helping to create new ideas and approaches. The definitions, specific traits and roles of songs are considered in social life and as a part of the cultural heritage. Special attention is paid to a new song genre, "the Soviet mass song" that was created during the times of the Soviet Union. The observation presented in the chapter is based on professional dictionaries and theoretical sources that consider the genres of song in general, and the Soviet mass song specifically.

This section briefly describes a genre of song with its definition and characteristics, which help to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon, to analyse it and to talk about its structure and features. In Vladimir Dahl's Dictionary songs ("pesnya" or "pesn'") are "rhymes for singing, the lyrics of a song; a lyrical poem, oda, psalom; or a part of the epic poem, a chapter".<sup>1</sup>

Etymologically, the Russian word "pesnya" ("song") is close to the roots of the words "pet'" and "poju" and derives from the praslavic root "peti". The origin of this root still remains unclear, but some versions by M. Fasmer and O. Trubachev see a very close connection with the root "piti" ("to drink"): the same forms for "poju" as "give to drink" and "make musical sounds by voice". The scholars connect the root with the Greek "παιων", Ionic "παιων" or Attic "παιων" as a "paean" or a hymn in

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<sup>1</sup> (Dahl'), <http://slovardalja.net/word.php?wordid=26012>

Apollo's honour, which starts "ἡ παῖων". Hence, the words "pet", "vospevat" ("to sing", "to anthem") derive from the ritual of sacrificial libation.<sup>2</sup> When defining a song, all dictionaries have the same concept. According to the Encyclopedia of Literature, a "song" is a primary type of music and a verbal expression, a folk genre, in its broad meaning, which includes all that is sung, in a united combination of words and melody. In its more narrow meaning the Encyclopedia defines a song as a small rhyme lyrical poetic genre, which exists in all cultures and is characterised by the simplicity of the musical-poetic structure.<sup>3</sup> In a shorter version of the definition, Ozhegov's Dictionary explains a song as "1. a poetic piece for singing (...); and 2. the sounds of birds singing".<sup>4</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines song as the act of singing; the result or effect of this, vocal music; that which is sung (in a general or collective sense); occasionally, poetry. The second meaning is a metrical composition adapted for singing, especially one in rhyme and having a regular verse-form; occasionally, a poem; (...) d. mus. a musical setting or a composition adapted for singing or suggestive of a song; (...) e.g. a sound of singing (vol. 15, 1003). In the book the term is used in its narrower sense, as a small lyrical poetic genre performed with an accompaniment of music written specifically for performing. Its main characteristics, which will be considered later, are: the simplicity of the music and the verbal structure of a story; and the coalescence within a single work.

In European culture the studies of oral songs are associated with the interest in the study of folklore from the second half of the XVIII century. The growing interest in oral "folk songs" had started because of the changed social conditions; and folk songs that had been cast out for so long attracted the attention of scholars. The term "folk song" (Volkslied) was first used by Herder in 1773. At the end of the XVIII century he published a collection of "The voices of the people in songs" where he included songs of various nationalities. The publishing of this collection intensified the interest in folklore in many European countries. In the last quarter of the XVIII century young Goethe was interested in folk songs: he collected and published songs in Strasbourg. In the process of the development of the Humanities and the formation of the national identities of European countries after the series of revolutions, the interest in folklore was raised in the beginning of the XIX century. While collecting and recording folk songs, scholars encountered a new problem connected to forming a new approach to folklore heritage. C. Brentano and J. Grimm

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<sup>2</sup> (Fasmer 1964-1973) 3- 249 and 3- 253

<sup>3</sup> (Literaturnaya entsyclopedia 1929-1939) 8-587

<sup>4</sup> (Ozhegov 1986), 443

discussed the dilemma of either accurately recording materials as they existed inside the national environment or the possibility of their being corrected by scholars and publishers who were “more educated” than regular people. At that time many series of folklore pieces were issued based on editors’ philosophical views, which not only selected materials according to their own points of view and altered them by connecting different parts and verses but even created new ones.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt that romantic collections have played a significant role in the history of folklore although the folklore songs and literature songs were not divided into two different types for a long time. Nowadays songs are divided not by genres, but by the sources of their roots. Was a song created by an author, or was it known in a certain region with no information of its origin?

In Russian folklore studies of the XIX century the names of F. I. Buslajev, A. N. Afanasjev and O. F. Miller are important to mention. The Russian folklore school was interested in the exact records of original folklore texts. A new approach developed by the School was the special attention given to the performers of folklore genres, concentrated on the personal characteristics of the performers, seeing them as transmitters of folklore culture, but enriching it with their personal attitudes, experience, and creativity. This approach influenced the way Russian folklore was studied: different texts were grouped according to the personal styles of different performers. Specific attention was paid to biographies of performers and the special characteristics of their performing manner.<sup>6</sup> In modern times the subject of study was placed at the crossroads of humanitarian fields. Songs have been analysed from the different perspectives of cultural studies, linguistics, folklore studies, sociology, language arts, political studies, and so on.

Our approach is based on the principles of the historic poetics created by Russian philologist A. N. Veselovsky. Veselovsky first formulated the principles of working with literature pieces intuitively during his first studies on ancient Russian literature. He concentrated his attention on the in-depth study of all parts and details of text, phrases and expressions. Working on texts of ancient Russian literature, Veselovsky recollected his feelings of the precise analysis of each detail: “It was such a challenge... full of little particulars, which extract the unexpected revelations from various Flowerbeds, Bees...”<sup>7</sup> and later, as a renowned scholar, he finalised those first attempts in the principles of the historic poetics.

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<sup>5</sup> (Literaturnaja enciclopedia 1929-1939), 8-601

<sup>6</sup> (Gumanitarny. slovar 2010), 202

<sup>7</sup> (Russkaja literatura 1999), 641

Trying to trace the development of plots, characters, and metaphors in Russian literature, he explored changes of genres over the centuries of Russian culture. The comparative-historical method allowed him to see the development of epithet in folklore and literature.<sup>8</sup> Imaginative tools of modern poetry grow from the convergence of man and nature in ancient poetry. Nature in folk songs is as happy or mourned as a man because the minds of ancient people have not owned non-imaginative abstract thinking; there is no clear delineation between the actions and feelings of the people and the phenomena of the natural world. Based on this premise, Veselovsky formulated the principles of psychological parallelism when phenomena of nature and events in the lives of people are compared with each other in terms of the correlations of actions and their consequences.<sup>9</sup> According to Veselovsky, many epithets that are traditional for folk poetic language reflect similar experiences by people of different events in the world: “We learned to enjoy separately and distinctly understand phenomena around us which do not mix ... the phenomena of sound and light. But the idea of the wholeness, of a chain of mysterious correspondences ... mesmerises us more and more”. Historical poetics demands that we enter into the poetic skills of other cultures and look at them from the inside. It also requires the ability to go from the outside to the poetic system of our own culture. It teaches us to avoid cultural self-centredness and look back with understanding on the realities of the past. Looking through this lens on the process of creating the Great Patriotic War songs, we have to talk about cultural traditions expressed in the entire corpora of the genre. In reflecting the War, songs used the entirety of the Russian poetic system which existed in myths, bylinas, tales and other folklore genres. If “the goal of the historic poetics is to define the role and the boundaries of the ancient stories in the process of personal creation” as Veselovsky claimed, then it is the goal of this book to describe the artistic world of the Great Patriotic War genre in the context of the artistic world of Russian culture. In this book songs are considered not only from their historical background, but also from the perspective of interconnections with cultural traditions and with the ability of the songs to express the unique, individual details of reality, using the figurative language of cultural heritage.

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<sup>8</sup> (Veselovsky 1989)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Specific traits of the genre

Based on previous studies, the modern academic approach characterises the song genre from different perspectives: formal traits, content, and the sources of creation. Originally, the poetic system of songs goes back to the ancient peasant oral traditions, in folklore. The oral songs of the peasantry were improved and developed in the depths of the nation's consciousness and were practised for centuries. This explains the stable poetics of folk songs in each social environment in which songs existed. Later, with the development of the authors' song genre with individual personalised lyrics and melodies, the genre was evolving in expanding directions of subjects, styles, and poetic systems unique for each author. A lyrical folk song does not have a permanent stable form, but it has developed a sustainable system of poetic instruments of verbal ornamentation, and it is enriched by the typical moments in the story line.<sup>10</sup>

To define the specific traits of the song genre, some important characteristics of song should be named. They could be divided into two groups, such as traits that characterise the literary origin of songs and those that ponder its musical existence. A specific trait is the origin of lyrics, the so-called source of creation.

The literature characteristics are:

- lyrical theme;
- composition;
- symbolism;
- psychological parallelism;
- epithet;
- rhyme;
- rhythmical structure.

Music traits are:

- melody;
- temper of music;
- performance.

A lyrical theme is always present inside a song as a general subject conveyed in specific circumstances and details. For example, a lyrical theme of love could be expressed in a situation of addressing a lover in

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<sup>10</sup> (Literaturnaja entsiclopedia 1929-1939), 8-588

specific conditions. The development of the lyrical theme, according to B. M. Sokolov, is “taking a gradual narrowing of images”, i.e. “a combination of images, when they follow each other in descending order from the image with the widest scope to the image with the most narrow volume content”. For example, images could be placed in a song in the following order: a description of nature, a home, details of a person and his/her attire.

The genre has its own compositional methods that support the development of a lyrical theme. Being part of the form, the compositional methods represent so-called tools or instruments, which help to express the idea that each song represents. Different folk and authors’ songs use the variations of the compositional methods. The dexterity of an author to facilitate a composition exemplifies the content.

There are some compositional methods, such as:

- Repetitions in their numerous versions, from words to whole phrases or epithets. They are used to tie parts of a song, as well as for the stylistic stratagem of the figurative expression;
- Rhythmic-syntactic parallelism, which determines the musical structure of songs; and because of this a song splits into separate and complete musical phrases that echo each other with slight differences;
- Stylistic strategies: the similarity of the syntactic and rhythmic construction of a noun; adjectives; epithets; and the effect of actions: “Ai, on the sea, past blue waves hit.”

The essence of psychological parallelism, according to Veselovsky, is an involuntary transfer of our self-perception of life to nature’s traits. It is reflected in an action and in the manifestation of the forces under our will в проявлении силы, направляемой волей. The basis of psychological parallelism is the animism and anthropomorphism in the perception of nature by human beings. It is an inevitable characteristic of human nature to personify nature, and to give signs of the human person to its appearance, such as qualities, motives, and characteristics. In the song genre, this tendency develops in song symbolism, in which one part of the symbol replaces another. The song sings not about a tree and a girl, but only about a tree; not about a falcon and a fellow, but only about a falcon. However, the most common and frequent characteristic of parallelism is negative parallelism. This characteristic had a more recent origin during the process of dissimilation of the human world and nature.

One of the most important characteristics of songs is their symbolism. It elaborated from the psychological parallelism of ancient thought, and became consistent as the system of certain symbols, which do not need to be explained. A Russian peasant song mirrors the nature, flora and fauna of the East European Plain, which is specific: the seasons, plains, knolls, forests and rivers. Nature occupies a leading position in the folk song, presenting the images of mental states and emotions.

An epithet determines poetic motives and events, which are described or referred to in the song. It not only expresses the artistic conception of the world for a singer, but also the traditional, established relationship to the described phenomenon. A folk song is characterised by constant epithets associated with images: “jasnyj sokol” (“the bright falcon”), “chicto pole” (“clean field”), “byjnaja golovushka” (“energetic little head”), “lesa dremuchije” (“the deep primeval forest”), “sablya ostraja” (“sharp sword”), “trava shelkovaja” (“silken grass”), “dobryj molodets” (“good fellow”) and “krasna devitsa” (“fair maiden”). Constant epithets serve as a basis or the skeleton of a folk song: a structural unit of its figurative language.

Lyrics of modern songs are the author's rhymed texts made in the fictional tradition. At the same time, folk variants of modern songs, under the influence of the fictional tradition, are also created in the form of rhymes. For example, there are more than two hundred variants of the lyrics for the song "Katyusha", which are spread over oral folk tradition without authorship. The folk lyrics of the song are different although the versions retain the rhythm and music structure of the initial song.

Music traits are:

- melody;
- temper of music;
- performance.

The system of expressive methods in songs plays a significant role in forming the fabric of the music. The system includes sound, rhythm and melody. It is inextricably linked with lyrics, music and the art of language. The unity of music and words and their indissoluble harmony and expressiveness reach the highest level of emotional impact for the audience. The rhythmic and melodic structure of songs, especially folk songs, is difficult to study. On the one hand, the principle of the song's melody is simple: it is the repetition of the melody with variations. A melody can be repeated from stanza to stanza, while changing in the chorus (if it is present). It may cover two verses or be repeated from verse

to verse with a slight change at the end of the line and the final culmination at the end of the song. These principles apply to all folk songs existing in different cultures. However, in each case the nature of the song is determined by the nature of the language, its metrics, and music. In a modern professional song a melody, written by professional musicians defines the general development of a song. In cultural memory melodies live their own lives, being directly associated with special events in the country's history and the personal life of every citizen. In folklore traditional culture melodies created by unknown authors are easy-going and easy to remember. Everybody is familiar with them, and once heard it is hard to forget a folk melody. In the history of music many composers have tried to be closer to folklore culture, getting their inspiration from folk songs. For example, Tchaikovsky wrote several Italian songs and included them in ballets after visiting Italy where he was acquainted with Italian song culture. Glinka, Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and other Russian composers paid specific attention to folk songs, and many melodies from their masterpieces were based on folk music culture. Many of the modern composers are known as "kompository-pesenniki" ("song-composers") as well as the existing term "poety-pesenniki" ("song-poets"). Professional composers are very successful when their melodies are widespread. It is a difficult task to create a melody that regular people, the so-called masses, will accept and start singing. A. S. Pushkin, in his dramatic writing "Mozart and Salieri," expressed the statement by Mozart on how it is important that music written by a professional composer should go to the people and be performed like a folklore piece:

... just as I was passing  
 The inn, I heard a fiddle... Dear Salieri,  
 In all your life you never yet have heard  
 Such funny sounds! ... a blind old fiddler there  
 Was playing '*Voi che sapete*'. Heavens!  
 I could not wait, I brought the fiddler with me  
 To entertain you with his artistry.<sup>11</sup>

For Salieri who takes his profession seriously and without entertainment this act of spreading Mozart's music is a betrayal of the profession. In contrast to Mozart's perception of loving any types of music, Salieri thinks from an arrogant point of view, that art or music should be understood by regular people:

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<sup>11</sup> (The Poems, Prose, and Plays by Alexander Pushkin 1936), 430



Mozart:  
And do you not laugh too?

Salieri:  
I do not, Mozart.  
I do not laugh when some poor, wretched dauber  
Besmeared a masterpiece of Rafael's painting.  
I do not laugh when some grotesque buffoon  
Dishonours Dante with a parody.<sup>12</sup>

Anna Akhmatova developed in later Russian poetry the Mozart-Pushkin belief that different classes of society should be acquainted with art, and that there is nothing shameful in the "masses" trying and using masterpieces. She wrote about the birth of poetry as both sacred and profane when a poem could be born without any high intentions, and a simple phenomenon of life could generate inspiration:

If only you knew from what rubbish  
Verses grow without shame  
As a yellow dandelion near a fence  
As burdocks or goosefoot.

An angry shout, the smell of fresh tar,  
Mysterious mould on the wall,  
And verse already sounds, enthusiastic, fresh,  
To the delight of you and me.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most important features of the genre is the possibility of it being sung by anybody, not only by professional singers. It is probably the most "democratic" common genre that allows an individual to express himself/herself and can accompany a person during their entire life. A song can be easily memorised because of its melody and rhythm and its laconic form.

A special feature of songs is the role of performance. Any song which becomes popular is also known because of its great performers. There are legends and stories about singers and myths of creating a special, unique execution of a specific song. A performance could be considered to be a specific action with characteristics of synthesis where everything is important. In addition to good music and lyrics, which are enough but not sufficient to make a song popular, the importance of a voice and

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<sup>12</sup> (The Poems, Prose, and Plays by Alexander Pushkin 1936), 430

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 430

interpretation play a significant role in a song's life. Singers influence the audience, creating a specific interaction in exchanging the understanding of the content conveyed in all expressive strategies, from the musical, such as voice, timbre and intonations, to the theatrical, i.e. posture, mimics and gestures, attitude and outlook. Using these sources, singers perform the art of singing, which gives the song its own individual style. Professional singers have developed special techniques of singing as well as individual styles that are valued by the audience because of their unique characteristics and interpretations. Some songs exist as the songs of a certain performer who can deliver the most impressive interpretation which is accepted, cherished, and remembered by the audience. In modern times the performance of new interpretations of old songs has become a significant tradition to pay tribute to important events in a country's history. In Russia, without doubt, this event is the Great Patriotic War. Many modern performers, singers and rock groups play and sing war songs again and again, revitalising the cultural memory. A new type of performance has appeared recently. It is a mono-concert when one singer delivers the entire concert. The audience supports these new interpretations with great enthusiasm, even with existing models of the classical performance of war songs by M. Bernes, K. Shulzhenko and L. Utesov. And many other, new versions are still in demand for they echo an understanding of the event for new generations. New versions could be different and even the opposite of classical performances. For example, the half-voiced, hearty performances of M. Bernes could be transformed into a variety that is more energetic.

For example, the character of performances by Dmitri Hvorostovsky is noticeable because of the thoughtfulness of each recital and the specific attention he pays to each detail and aspect. The singer discussed this feature of his style in one of his interviews. He specifically emphasised the role of his father in forming a specific attitude to war songs and their handling. He also pointed out the significant role which war songs help to support and develop: the interconnection between generations. The specific question the singer discussed was the key role of a phrase in a performance. The emotional power of a performance is in the attention not only to the content, but to each phrase. The text and lyrics of a song or an aria should be divided and a singer has to deliver the differences between the beginning and the finish of one phrase and manage the transition between phrases inside one musical piece. It is important, Hvorostovsky said, because with each phrase a new turn of meaning starts. Each sound and each vowel is important because they serve the whole impression of the music. Words should be interconnected inside a phrase. A phrase is fulfilled by the voice without being broken, but delivers the wholeness of

the meaning that is supported and empowered by a voice. Even though they are the principles of *Bel Canto*, Hovorostovsky does not ignore them in his work on such a popular mass genre as songs.

One more important trait of the song genre is the source of creation. It is hard to correlate this trait with formal or content characteristics because it considers the whole existence of a song. There are folklore songs which do not have specific authors but only known areas of distribution and suggested timeframes. Folk songs have flexible texts and melodies, existing in multiple social versions. From the other side, the songs of professional authors are stable in their forms and have their literary origins with the known names of authors of both lyrics and music. Folk and authors' songs influenced each other in their historical development. Some current folk songs have their origins in literature texts. Some can be named: "Kazachja kolybel'naja pesnya" ("Cossack's Lullaby") by M. Lermontov; "Chernaja shal'" ("The Black Shawl") by A. Pushkin; "Ne shumi ty, rozh, spelym kolosom" ("Do not make a noise you, rye, ripe ear of wheat") by A. Koltsov; "Sredi doliny rovnyja" ("Among the flat valleys") by Merzlyakov; excerpts from "Korobeyniki" by A. Nekrasov, such as "Korobushka" ("Crate") and "Katerinushka" (a gentle version of the name Ekaterina); "Iz-za ostrova na strezhen'" ("From the Island to the Road") by D. Sadovnikov; "Chudnyj mesyats plyvet nad rekoju" ("A wonderful moon is sailing over the river") by S. Ozhegov; "Pravda" ("The truth") by D. Bedny; "Po dolinam I po vzgorjam" ("Through the valleys and hills") by P. Parfenov, and others. They are the song-poems that retain many structural and stylistic features of folk songs. However, in their origins they cannot be characterised by unity, lyrics and melody for primarily they were composed, and then set to music. Songs and poems, often already set to music, penetrated the folklore environment through books, special songbooks and popular prints, which appeared in the form of signatures through the school, the army, and the stage, and later through the gramophone, radio, cinema, and television.<sup>14</sup>

In the case of some Soviet war songs the characteristics of folk songs could be applied. Moreover, it is possible to say that some war songs truly became folk songs. In folk songs themes and motifs are usually stable, but texts are changed because they are not fixed in writing, or they are adapted to new conditions. For example, there are more than three hundred variations of the lyrics of the song "Katyusha", and all of the versions reflected the special circumstances for which they were created. Here, the original version was the source for the spread of the song adapted for a

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<sup>14</sup> (Literaturnaja entsiklopedija 1929-1939), 8-600

new reality, providing new or partial foundations, passing by word of mouth, with changed themes, characters and circumstances. Often, new songs are new stages of development of the previous versions, naturally arising from the new conditions. Interestingly, in this sense the Great Patriotic War songs and songs about the war are included in the process in which some favorite songs gain popularity, when they are performed and listened to by various population groups. The cultural reserve is created by the fixed text and melody, as well as by the most successful and beloved performances, which allow the preservation of the historical memory of historical events. Conveyed from generation to generation, these songs deepen the process of enculturation in the upbringing of children and young people, because without them it is impossible to acquire a cultural and social environment.

### **The social existence of songs**

A song has a certain social value because of its laconic format. From the perspective of the existence of the genre, songs were known from ancient times. In past times when husbandry was the prime human activity, songs helped to regulate stages of labour, expressing rhythm and types of actions. In magic, according to views of prehistoric life, a song helped people to subdue nature, but functioned as a facilitator to discharge biological tensions and anxiety. The aesthetic features of a song gradually evolved from practical functions. The aesthetic development of the genre was reinforced by changes in social significance. The song expresses the imaginative creativity of a nation even if it does not have a written language. It was and still is the expression of mythology presented in society:

The song genre is the main, the most representative genre of mass musical culture closely connected and often included in other mass vocal-instrumental genres. (...) The song is the main genre that embodies and disseminates the ideology and mythology of various social groups. The ideals and myths of these groups were expressed in the song's musical and poetic language; the mythical and poetical embodiment was the representative mirror of social consciousness of the era.<sup>15</sup>

In feudal and capitalist societies a song predominantly exists as the art of the lower classes, such as peasants, artisans and workers. In this case a song is a replacement for literature and serves as the social history of these

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<sup>15</sup> (Leleko 2011), 70

mentioned classes. When a society is stratified, a song acquires new features and new social functions, reflecting the development of the social structure. New varieties of social songs have evolved, such as urban songs, and the songs of craftsmen, the wage-worker, and so on.<sup>16</sup> Every social group creates and cultivates its own songs, and makes the contents and styles. Songs could be sung in most circumstances in the household: at work, at the weaving nets and networks and in spinning. There are many proverbs which relate to songs and the different perspectives for their use: for example, as helpers in routine work “Beseda dorogu korotajet, a pesnya–rabotu” (“Conversation shortens a way, and a song shortens a job”); or they could be part of entertainment during holidays: “Kogda pir, togda I pesni pet” (“When feasting, it is time to sing songs”). They also accompany different moments in life, from dances, games and weddings to funerals. An interesting aspect of using songs is their flexibility for use as personal and private performances by oneself, during a walk or with friends and relatives. Traditionally, songs for gatherings are performed by a choir and love songs are supposed to be sung individually.

### **Songs of different social groups**

It is important to ponder over the diversity of the genre to see the different social origins of modern songs. In addition to the conditions of their existence and the circumstances of their execution, such as choral, wedding, lyric, etc., songs could be classified based on their social existence in different strata of society, according to the historical context, such as the social diversity of content, themes and motifs in the chronological framework. Different strata of a society create songs that are close to their realities and problems. Living in the same place never guarantees the same songs for all parts of a local society.

This statement seems so obvious nowadays with wide-spreading media and Internet sources; but even at the beginning of the XX century, each part of a society was characterised by a certain set of songs.<sup>17</sup> For example, the bourgeoisie of the countryside created its own songs. The stability of the peasant middle-class household has affected the sustainability of songs reflecting the routine life of the farm world. The ideal of the rich peasantry of the feudal era was the life of the higher social strata: the nobility and élite. That is why the household songs of this part of the peasantry poeticise the life of the aristocracy, placing it into real

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<sup>16</sup> (Larousse Encyclopedia Of Music 1966), 88

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 8-591

countryside situations, for example, the wedding songs that poeticise the patriarchal family life. These songs of the countryside bourgeoisie are more conservative and formal. In opposition to this part of rural society, the poor people made up songs according to their needs and about the problems of struggling to survive. Contradictions among the Russian peasantry are fully reflected in the limericks (Russian "chastushka"). Living on the lower level of the social hierarchy, the poor household sings about injustice; arranged marriages, the inevitable hostile fate of youths, and so on. Russian peasant songs are characterised by the diversity of everyday household chores and depict many routine details. Later, in the capitalist era, wealth and "access to a better life" became the ideal life scenario. A special law for the subscription of young countryside lads into the army in Imperial Russia led to the creation of recruits' peasant songs ("rekrutskie pesni"). These songs are about this tragic household event because at that time a young man served in the army for twenty-five years. Fellows sent into the army in their youth returned to their native villages in their old age. This historic background explains the dismal motifs of these songs, which tell how a young guy was taken into the army and how he took leave of his girlfriend or fiancée (there are special expressions that reflect this historic phenomenon, such as "lob zabrili", i.e. "made a guy bald" which literally means "bald forehead"; or "sdali v soldaty", i.e. "surrendered to the army" which literally means "he was given to the army". All of those idiomatic phrases are in the passive voice for it is not the will of a young man, but his duty and a commitment that he must not refuse or choose voluntarily). In the most heartbreaking tones and expressions these songs tell about the separation from home and a girlfriend or wife and about the hardship of military life. They have the characteristics and atmosphere of grieving for the dead and at funerals. Recruiting peasant songs never speak of the "service for a tsar" or "to the fatherland". On the contrary, "service" is depicted as "shockingly fierce". Soldiers' songs are generally historical and associated with certain historical events. They can be satirical, and close to limericks, about the unfortunate generals and officers, and the grievous fate of soldiers.

One interesting phenomenon of peasant songs is the so-called robber's song, which expresses the main reasons for breaking up with the hard peasant life, committing crimes on roads, and robbing passers-by and travellers. These songs express the severity of serfdom and the desire to be free. They also reflect significant historic events. For example, there is the series of songs about Stepan Razin and Emelyan Pugachev.

A new type of song developed in the late XIX and early XX centuries with the changing social structure of society due to the industrial