

Aleksandr Porfir'yevich Borodin, *Knyaz' Igor' [Prince Igor]*, edited by A. V. Bulycheva (Moscow: Classica-XXI, 2012), Piano Score, ISMN 979-0-706365-44-2. [PB 10159]

When Borodin died in 1897, he left several incomplete works, the grandest of which was his nationalist, epic opera *Prince Igor*, composed intermittently over a period of 18 years (1869–87). According to the accepted narrative of the opera's genesis, immediately after Borodin's death Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and his student, Alexandr Glazunov, set to work on a sprawling mass of manuscripts. They collated drafts of completed numbers, composed new music for unfinished sections, orchestrated Borodin's partial piano-score sketches, and determined what to include in or cut from the opera. In 1888, the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov version of *Prince Igor* was published by Mitrofan Belyayev's publishing house in Leipzig; two years later, the opera received its premiere at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. Despite its length and somewhat awkward dramaturgy, due at least in part to what Richard Taruskin calls the 'committee' effort in its preparation,<sup>2</sup> *Prince Igor* has enjoyed many performances and continues in the repertory to this day.

Until now, the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov edition has been the most reliable (and only practical) edition available; but with Anna Bulycheva's new edition of the opera, based on Borodin's own manuscripts, a long-awaited critical score is now forthcoming. To date, a piano score, with a brief preface and critical notes, has been published; a full score is currently under preparation. Bulycheva has based her edition on no fewer than 93 autograph manuscripts, mainly housed in archives in St Petersburg and Moscow. The score is rendered without indication of instrumentation. The text is in Russian, as are the names of characters and choral parts, while musical directions are in Italian. Bulycheva's preface briefly mentions previous editions of the opera but emphasizes that hers is the first critical edition ever attempted and the only score to rely on Borodin's autograph manuscripts alone as authoritative. Her 'Critical Notes', which appear in Russian at the end of the volume, with an abridged version in English, provide some information about editorial decisions and give an overview of sources without going into the technical details.

Bulycheva maintains that, contrary to long-accepted belief, Borodin did not leave *Prince Igor* in a 'chaotic pile of drafts' when he died.<sup>3</sup> In fact, he had practically

1 Alexandr Glazunov, 'Zapiska A. K. Glazunova o redaktsii "Knyazya Igorya" Borodina' [Note by A. K. Glazunov on the editing of Borodin's *Prince Igor*], *Russkaya muzykal'naya gazetta* [Russian Musical Gazette] 3 (1896): 155–60; Gerald Abraham, 'The History of "Prince Igor"', in *On Russian Music: Critical and Historical Studies of Glinka's Operas, Balakirev's Works, etc., with Chapters Dealing with Compositions by Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Glazunov, and Various Other Aspects of Russian Music* (London: Reeves, 1939); see also Richard Taruskin, *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009): 185.

2 Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, 185.

3 Anna Bulycheva, Preface to Borodin, *Prince Igor*, 5.

finished the opera; but then Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov significantly changed, rather than ‘completed’, most scenes.<sup>4</sup> In Bulycheva’s view, the integrity and unity of the opera reside in Borodin’s own work, not in posthumous editorial additions.<sup>5</sup> This information is sure to create much interest in scholarly and operatic circles.

The genesis of *Prince Igor* is not explained in detail by Bulycheva, but it is worth considering in order to understand the significance of her achievement in the current critical edition. The opera’s history is complex, first, because of Borodin’s erratic methods of working and, second, because of the extensive cuts, additions, and reordering that Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov applied while editing.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1869, the music critic Vladimir Stasov suggested the twelfth-century epic poem ‘The Lay of the Host of Igor’ to Borodin as the basis for an opera and drew up a scenario. Borodin immediately began composing operatic numbers as they occurred to him, writing the libretto and music simultaneously but unsystematically. Within a year, however, he became discouraged and decided to abandon *Prince Igor*, citing his inexperience in opera, concern over the scale of the project, and uncertainty about his ability to finish it. Over the next 18 years, he frequently returned to the opera, sometimes incorporating music from other abandoned works (such as his opera *The Tsar’s Bride*), at other times dispersing parts of *Prince Igor* into other pieces (like the *B-Minor Symphony* and the opera-ballet *Mlada*, a collaborative project for which Borodin composed the fourth act), and at still other times entirely duplicating music within *Prince Igor* itself (such as two complete, orchestrated versions of Igor’s aria in Act 2). Borodin’s long compositional process thus provided many challenges for those attempting to reconstruct his opera.

As a direct result of this process, the source situation is extremely thorny. In the first edition of the opera, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov cut out about one fifth of Borodin’s music, but added a great deal of newly composed music (over 1,200 bars in Act 3 alone, as well as the overture written by Glazunov).<sup>7</sup> Fortunately for later scholars and editors, Glazunov wrote an article in 1896 for *Russkaya muzykal’naya gazyetta* [Russian Musical Gazette], in which he detailed what he and Rimsky-Korsakov had collated, completed, orchestrated, or newly composed for the opera.<sup>8</sup> Some of Glazunov’s descriptions are vague (e.g., certain passages are ‘just as Borodin wrote them’, except for ‘some cuts’),<sup>9</sup> but other parts of his list are very precise (e.g., ‘the first two bars [of the orchestral passage before and after the chorus of prisoners] are by Rimsky-Korsakov, the last two [bars] by me’)<sup>10</sup> and a few items are accompanied by musical examples. Yet even after the publication of the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov edition, *Prince Igor* remained a large, unwieldy mass of music.

4 Ibid. 5 Ibid. 6 Abraham was one of the first to document the opera’s genesis and publication history. His essay ‘The History of “Prince Igor”’ first appeared in *Music & Letters* 16/2 (April 1935): 85–95, and was subsequently republished in his collected essays *On Russian Music*. 7 Robert W. Oldani, ‘Borodin, Aleksandr Porfir’yevich’, in *Grove Music Online*, accessed 1 June 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/>.

8 Glazunov’s article was translated and reproduced in full in Gerald Abraham’s essay ‘The History of “Prince Igor”’, 165–8; see also fn. 1.

9 Glazunov, as quoted by Abraham, *On Russian Music*, 167. 10 Ibid., 166.

In the early Soviet era, the renowned music scholar and editor Pavel Lamm turned his attention to Prince Igor, intending to reconstruct its original version, as he had done with Mussorgsky's operas. The task proved impossible. As Bulycheva explains, rather than producing the 'authentic' version he had envisioned, Lamm finally decided to combine the 77 Borodin manuscripts that he knew 'with all the additions made by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov' and to adopt the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov ordering of scenes.<sup>11</sup> After 15 years of work, Lamm transcribed these materials but never published them. In separate efforts to make Prince Igor accessible and practical, various performance versions of the opera also appeared, many of them based on the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov edition. Some versions attempted to reincorporate music that Borodin's editors had pruned; others cut out large sections (usually Act 3 as published), as well as individual numbers.<sup>12</sup>

This, then, was the source situation confronting Bulycheva when she began her critical edition. Her feat in tracing and reconstructing Prince Igor through such a labyrinth is nothing short of astonishing. Bulycheva's archival work was meticulously done, as the creation of this edition from 93 manuscripts attests; yet her presentation of the opera is so clear and straightforward that a brief glance through the score reveals little, if anything, of the complex editorial process underlying the volume. The list of archives that she consulted is also impressive – all the leading musical archives in St Petersburg and Moscow, as well as the Russian Institute of Art History (St Petersburg) and the Library of Congress (USA). Moreover, the details of the score (text setting, typeface, performance directions, divisions of scenes) are clean, readable, and easy to follow. The volume is an excellent edition for studying Prince Igor, and scholars and performers alike will eagerly anticipate Bulycheva's publication of the full critical score.

Given the complexity of the source situation for Prince Igor, it is likely that the full critical report accompanying the orchestral score will be very substantial, probably filling a volume of its own. Almost certainly the critical report will describe the types of manuscripts that comprise Borodin's autographs – probably piano-score sketches, orchestral drafts, fair copies, drafts of text, and so on – as well as their state and relative numbers in relation to each other. General statements, too, about Borodin's compositional process may shed light on the hierarchy of his manuscripts and on the way that editorial decisions were made. We might also anticipate a full list of sources and variants, as well as a systematic account of editorial procedures (e.g., barring and beaming practices; the use of square brackets or parentheses; decisions about punctuation of text, dynamics and performance instructions; ways of notating editorial additions, variants within the manuscripts, or items crossed out in the autographs). Moreover, for those who do not have intimate knowledge of Borodin's manuscripts, a short description or chart showing how Bulycheva's ordering of scenes compares to the more common division into both acts and scenes in the Rimsky-Korsakov–Glazunov edition would be helpful.

Perhaps, too, a full critical score will translate the editorial notes completely and thus speak to a range of scholars who can understand the challenges and achievements of the present edition. In the piano version, the abridged English

<sup>11</sup> Bulycheva, preface to Borodin, Prince Igor, 6. <sup>12</sup> Taruskin, *On Russian Music*, 185.

notes seem somewhat fragmented and out of context, as though significant information is sometimes lacking. The Russian notes, by contrast, provide interesting, helpful and often essential details. For example, it is impossible to understand from the English why there are textual variants for the Chorus in the Prologue, or why one version appears in plain text in the score while the other is in parentheses. The Russian notes explain these matters. (Borodin initially wrote this music for the Epilogue but then changed his mind, switched the music to the Prologue, and pencilled in a different text.) Having parallel information in both versions of the critical notes is highly desirable and would allow this fine edition to attract a broad scholarly audience.

These matters, however, are fine points. While Bulycheva's commentary somewhat understates the achievement of her edition, her full score will undoubtedly fill in the gaps by explaining the history of the opera and her own editorial process more fully. Her present piano-score version is a preview of things to come. It suggests an excellent forthcoming edition that not only clarifies the genesis and publication history of Prince Igor, but also contributes valuable new material to the study of Borodin's music.

Laura E. Kennedy  
Furman University [Laura.Kennedy@furman.edu](mailto:Laura.Kennedy@furman.edu)