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NIKOLAI FINDEIZEN, TRANS. SAMUEL WILLIAM PRING, ED. AND ANNOTATED
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*HISTORY OF MUSIC IN RUSSIA FROM ANTIQUITY TO 1800. VOLUME 1: FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE
BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

Russian Music Studies, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008
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HISTORY OF MUSIC IN RUSSIA FROM ANTIQUITY TO 1800. VOLUME 2: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Some eighty years after its original publication in Russia as *Ocherki po istorii muzyki v Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVIII veka* (2 volumes, Moscow and Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, Muzsektor, 1928–1929), the English translation of this seminal study has only just been launched. The unusual delay may be attributed to two main factors: the great significance of the work itself and a chain of editorial misfortunes. While both published volumes present material of considerable interest, this review will focus on the second, which is devoted to the eighteenth century.

Nikolai Fyodorovich Findeizen (1868–1928) was a multi-talented scholar who, like many of his contemporaries, began his musicological career as a critic. His great charisma no doubt played a part in helping him establish the *Russkaya Muzykal'naya Gazeta* (Russian Musical Gazette), an authoritative publication that featured much of his own work as well as contributions invited from leading experts. Findeizen sustained personal and professional relationships with many prominent nineteenth-century Russian musical figures, including Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, Vladimir Vasil'yevich Stasov (whom Findeizen considered his mentor) and Glinka's sister, Lyudmila Shestakova, thus bridging the gap between old and new generations. Musicians such as Skryabin, Stravinsky and Rachmaninoff also expressed their respect for him. In short, Findeizen appears to have been an influential figure to whom the whole community of Russian musicians and musicologists was in some way indebted during the period between 1890 and the 1920s. He was a prolific writer: besides his published legacy, he left a large archive of unpublished materials in the form of diaries and letters, which recent studies have shown to contain interesting personal insights into contemporary culture.

In nineteenth-century Russia, the newly born discipline of musicology preached a doctrine of musical history that placed Glinka firmly at the centre and regarded all Russian music prior to him as a kind of teleological prelude to the eventual and inevitable emergence of a genuine national school. Findeizen, however, took a different view. His extraordinary historical and historiographical vision prompted him to study the pre-Glinka legacy in the greatest possible detail. Over a period of approximately two decades he worked almost entirely alone in collecting materials relating to eighteenth-century Russian musical culture.

His next task, the writing of a study that synthesized and interpreted this mass of data, was a pioneering and daring project. There are many ways in which such extensive materials can be organized, and Findeizen developed a clear structure for his work, devoting separate chapters to different themes. These themes included music in court life during the reigns of the most significant Russian rulers, music in Russian domestic life, music in Russian public life, musical creativity and musical 'infrastructure' (publishers, sellers of sheet music, instrument makers and merchants). While Findeizen observed general chronological patterns in his treatment of each subject, his detailed and consistent coverage inevitably requires the reader to jump from the end of the eighteenth century, the point at which each essay concludes, back to some earlier period for discussion of the next new topic. Yet the author was probably aware of this methodological departure from a historical 'grand narrative', and the Russian title of his original publication could be



translated literally as *Essays on the History of Music in Russia*, as opposed to the more general title of this new English translation, *History of Music in Russia*.

This structural shortcoming is insurmountable, and we see it reflected in subsequent works such as the *Istoria russkoy muzyki (v desyati tomakh)* (*History of Russian Music (in Ten Volumes)*) (Moscow: Muzyka, 1983–1997), which was written by a large group of scholars and edited by Yu. V. Keldysh, O. E. Levasheva and A. I. Kandinsky. This history, which devotes two volumes to the eighteenth century (published in 1984 and 1985 respectively), follows the same principle of organization, although each of its subjects is treated in much greater detail than in the work of Findeizen. Robert-Aloys Mooser, on the other hand, chose another approach in his three-volume *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au XVIII^e siècle* (Geneva: Mont-Blanc, 1948–1951): he wrote what was essentially a meticulous chronological account of musical life in eighteenth-century Russia. But this task did not oblige him to cover as many topics as Findeizen, who was striving to be as comprehensive as possible. A more recent attempt at combining both the thematic and chronological approaches is my own *Eighteenth-Century Russian Music* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006) (EDITORIAL NOTE: this work was reviewed by Pauline Fairclough in *Eighteenth-Century Music* 4/2 (2007), 312–314).

With the passing of time, all the topics covered in Findeizen's study – as well some he did not broach – have received further treatment by later generations of Russian music scholars. New information has come to light and new cultural connections have been established, while monographs on single composers, genres and musical institutions (which appeared mostly in the 1970s and 1980s) have all served to expand the field of Russian musical history. It is only to be expected, then, that research undertaken after Findeizen's original publication would complement and/or correct many factual and interpretative elements of his study – and this is in spite of the scholar's academic rigour and basic accuracy. Consequently, the scholarly value of Findeizen's original work has tended to diminish with the appearance of each new publication of research in the field. Moreover, musicologists have continually revised each other's works during a period of intensive research over the last seventy years or so. It is the biographical aspect of Findeizen's work, which was largely based on nineteenth-century biographies of eighteenth-century musicians, that has suffered most of all, as such biographies were largely anecdotal in nature and their credibility was seriously questioned by twentieth-century scholars working after Findeizen.

Another problem with Findeizen's study concerns his use of archival sources. When he worked on this book, he often based his statements on materials from his own private collection, since archives in the modern sense did not yet exist. It was Findeizen himself, in fact, who established a number of significant Russian archival and museum collections, donating his own materials as their basis. Although many of his sources have now been catalogued and can be located today, not every manuscript he referred to is available in Russia: some disappeared or possibly ended up in the West. This study, therefore, still contains data whose original sources are uncertain. Until such information is confirmed, rejected or corrected, we are obliged to accept it, keeping in mind Findeizen's knowledge and experience and his reputation for general accuracy, yet exercising due caution nevertheless. In spite of these apparent drawbacks, Findeizen's work still remains a cornerstone of Russian musical studies, and every student of eighteenth-century Russian music should have a copy to hand.

How did the editors of this new translation manage to deal with all the materials that were revised by further generations of Russian musicologists? If, by examining and comparing the vast number of later studies, they had attempted to provide a detailed commentary for each original datum or statement, it is unlikely that the project would ever have been completed. Their solution, therefore, was to include an updated bibliography for each topic. But this begs the question: how will the reader know when or when not to rely on Findeizen? The only way is to locate the bibliographical sources (which are mostly in Russian), study them (or at least consult *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*) and then, on the basis of this examination, decide whether or not Findeizen's account is reliable. Readers should be aware, of course, that it is impossible to assess the level of accuracy of every sentence in Findeizen's text, and that it is their own responsibility to evaluate the credibility of each statement. This translation, then, can be considered as a



historiographical monument, an old guide or a kind of early twentieth-century encyclopedia of pre-Glinka Russian musical culture, complemented by modern scholarly apparatus.

As a musicologist working in this field, I can assert that the lack of an English translation of this classic source has until now greatly distorted the historiography of Russian music in the West. Throughout the twentieth century, general knowledge of Russian musical history was largely based on a Glinka-centric conception that was formulated and promoted by Stasov in the late nineteenth century. Earlier Russian music – with the exception of folksong collections – was almost wholly ignored in both musicological literature and musical performance, and the names of some leading composers, such as Maxim Berezovsky and Dmitry Bortniansky, used to mean little, even to professional musicologists. If, as was originally planned, an edition of Findeizen had appeared in 1949, as a parallel publication to Mooser's *Annales*, the perspective might have been quite different, and Western scholars, inspired by Findeizen's study, could have made a greater contribution to research in this field. Moreover, the entire map of European eighteenth-century musical culture would have looked much more complete, since Findeizen's book (like Mooser's) casts light on the activity in Russia of such Italian celebrities as Baldassarre Galuppi, Giovanni Paisiello, Tommaso Traetta, Domenico Cimarosa, Giuseppe Sarti and others.

Findeizen's prose provides a fascinating narrative, and the translator, Samuel William Pring, has succeeded in conveying its original flavour. From my own familiarity with the original Russian text, I can attest that undertaking a translation and commentary that would meet present-day academic criteria must have seemed an almost impossible task. That is why I wish to emphasize that the completion of this project is one worth celebrating, and that the collective labour of those involved deserves the approbation of the wider musicological community.

'Insiders' and 'outsiders' always have different approaches to works such as this, and each of these approaches has its inevitable advantages and disadvantages. In the present case, Russian scholars could hardly match the level of translation offered here. The translator and editors have endeavoured to select the most appropriate and precise vocabulary for this far-ranging study, which embraces several epochs and layers of Russian culture, and their achievement is considerable. From now on, early Russian music studies in English can be based on reliable terminology. On the other hand, we should remember that other relevant publications, from outside Russia, need regular updating, and in this respect it would be ideal if the efforts of musicologists both within Russia and elsewhere could be combined. We can only dream that such post-Findeizen studies as Boris Volman's *Russkie pechatnye noty XVIII veka* (Eighteenth-Century Russian Music Editions) (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Musykal'noe Izdatel'stvo, 1957), which, despite its age, is fully reliable as regards its sources and the accuracy of its conclusions, or the five-volume encyclopedia edited by Anna Porfirieva, *Muzykal'ny Peterburg: XVIII vek, Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar'* (Musical St Petersburg: Encyclopedic Lexicon, Eighteenth Century) (St Petersburg: Rossiyskiy Institut Istorii Iskusstv; Kompozitor, 1996–2002) – both of which summarize the corrections to Findeizen's study – will some day be translated into English. Still, this new translation of Findeizen's *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800* is a significant resource which exposes some fascinating episodes in Russia's musical past and which will no doubt encourage the study of early Russian music by scholars outside the country, just as the original publication stimulated study by musicologists in Russia itself.

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