

A ‘completion’ of Liszt’s transcendental studies with a Russian imprint

Modality and topics in Sergey Lyapunov’s *12 Études d’exécution transcendante* (1897–1905)

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I. Introduction

In 1827, when sixteen, Franz Liszt published a set of exercises entitled *Étude pour piano en quarante-huit exercices dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs*. Actually only 12 pieces were composed, constituting the first of what appears to be four projected volumes.¹ In 1837 Liszt completely transformed these simple, youthful exercises – clearly influenced by his teacher Czerny and other composer-pianists of his generation – into the imaginative and incredibly technically difficult twelve *Grandes études*. In 1851, he once more reworked them into the version that is commonly performed today, the *Études d’exécution transcendante*.² As is well known, the keys of the études move along the circle of fifths in the subdominant direction, alternating between major and relative minor: C major, A minor, F major, D minor and so on, terminating with B♭ minor in the twelfth étude.

The 1837 set was announced as *Vingt-quatre grandes études pour le piano*,³ indicating that Liszt abandoned the idea of writing studies in all keys at a comparatively late stage. As Jim Samson points out, ‘it can be argued that études and exercises, almost by definition, were weakly conceived in terms of work character’ (Samson, 2003, p. 54). Nevertheless, personally I have always felt No. 12, the ‘Chasse-neige’, to be a somewhat strange closing of the set. Undoubtedly, this has to do with the character of the piece: Although outwardly a musical representation of the falling of snow increasing to a veritable storm, the last 14 bars of the piece have an intensified elegiac character, depicted through conventional devices like minor mode, continuous darkening of the timbre and descending melodic gestures emphasizing the ‘lamento-Phrygian’ lowered second step (C♭). It is as if the music has reached an emotional low point, from which it is only possible to move upwards (through the sharp keys). Was Liszt completely satisfied in ending the set with this sombre and enigmatic piece? We will probably never know, unless material from Liszt or his circle shedding new light on the subject should unexpectedly appear.

However, Liszt’s abandoned project of composing études in all keys *did* find its fulfilment, but only a half-century later and by another composer. Between 1897 and 1905 the Russian Sergey Lyapunov (1859–1924) wrote his *12 Études d’exécution transcendante* (Op. 11) in the sharp keys not utilized by Liszt, i.e., continuing the circle of fifths in subdominant direction

¹ According to the catalogue of Liszt’s works by M. Eckhardt and R. C. Mueller in *Grove Music Online*, a hitherto unpublished piece in F♯ major entitled ‘Preludio’ (Allegro maestoso) was destined for No. 13, i.e., the first étude of the second volume. Andrew Banks suggests that the concert study ‘Ab Irato’, in E minor, may have been intended as the next piece in the series: ‘This being the case, Liszt would have continued his sequence, had he written them, not with the expected key of G-flat major (enharmonic F-sharp major), but with E minor, followed by G major, B minor, D major and so on, finishing in the key of F-sharp major’ (Banks, 2004, p. 13). It seems somewhat improbable that Liszt would alter the key pattern halfway through the cycle. Moreover, ‘Ab irato’ was originally intended for Moscheles’ and Fétis’ *Méthode des méthodes*, a collection of études.

² The relation between the three versions of the set is thoroughly discussed in Samson, 2003.

³ See, e.g., Walker, 2004, p. 305.

from F# major and D# minor to G major and E minor. The complete set of the studies, dedicated to the memory of Liszt, was published in 1905 by Musikverlag Zimmermann (Leipzig/St. Petersburg/Moscow) and later reprinted, both in Russia and in the West. Lyapunov belonged to the same generation of Russian composers as Sergey Taneev, Aleksandr Glazunov and Anatoly Lyadov. He came from a talented family: his father was an astronomer, while his brother Aleksandr was a famous mathematician and physicist and his other brother Boris a well-known linguist. After studies with Taneev (composition) and Karl Klindworth (piano) at the Moscow conservatoire (1878–1883) Lyapunov moved to St. Petersburg, where he formed a close friendship with Mili Balakirev (1837–1910), who along with Liszt would exert a pronounced influence on his musical style. He composed, i.a., two symphonies, two piano concertos and several works for piano solo, including a sonata (Op. 27) and the 12 transcendental studies. He also took a particular interest in collecting Russian folk songs; in 1893 he undertook an expedition together with Balakirev and Lyadov, collecting nearly 300 folk songs, 30 of which Lyapunov then arranged for voice and piano.

Lyapunov has not been considered a composer in the front rank – an issue which I will come back to in the epilogue of this article – but his transcendental studies have nevertheless received a certain attention. Several pianists have performed some of these pieces, and five have recorded the whole set.⁴ There are at least six theses or dissertations in English submitted at Western universities focussing exclusively on this work, albeit of varying length and musicological ambition.⁵ The transcendental studies are also examined in two extensive Russian works on Lyapunov: Mikhail Shifman's book on Lyapunov's life and work (Shifman, 1960) and Olga Onegina's dissertation on his piano works (Onegina, 2010). The Western studies of this work, of which Michael Burford's (1988) is probably the most substantial, detect influences from Liszt's transcendental studies (form, piano textures) as well as from several Russian composers, including Balakirev, Borodin and Musorgsky. Rather than continuing the tradition of being the detective who searches for traces of other works in Lyapunov's set of studies, I shall concentrate on two features that *distinguish* it as an original counterpart to Liszt's transcendental studies:

- A. *Modal harmony*, or more precisely the usage of the diatonic (church) modes, which is an element that is almost entirely absent from Liszt's studies. The issue of modality is only sporadically touched upon in previous Western and Russian literature concerning Lyapunov's transcendental studies.
- B. *Topics and plots*. I will demonstrate that Liszt's and Lyapunov's 'transcendentals' differ significantly regarding their musical topics, and that Liszt to a greater extent than Lyapunov shapes his studies as kinds of plots. Quite a few writers have called attention to elements from Russian folk and church music in some of Lyapunov's studies and to the cultural meaning of their titles, but these issues have not been addressed earlier.

A and B are of course closely connected, as the harmony plays an important role for the musical character of the pieces.

The main objective of this article, then, is to examine these two highly interesting elements in Lyapunov's studies, applying relevant musicological literature. The discussion of these subject matters is preceded by a short presentation of Liszt's and Lyapunov's respective sets of studies.

⁴ Up until 2020 Louis Kentner (twice, 1949 and 1972), Konstantin Scherbakov (twice, 1992 and 2019), Malcolm Binns (1993), Vincenzo Maltempo (2016), and Etsuko Hirose (2017).

⁵ These are, in chronological order, Smith, 1967; Robinson, 1978; Burford, 1988; Banks, 2004; Chernyshev, 2007; Saratovsky, 2012.

II. Liszt's and Lyapunov's 'transcendentals': a short presentation

Liszt	Lyapunov
1. C major, 'Preludio'. Presto	1. F# major, 'Berceuse'. Andantino
2. A minor. Molto vivace	2. D# minor, 'Ronde des fantômes'. Presto
3. F major, 'Paysage'. Poco Adagio	3. B major, 'Carillon' (Trezvon). Allegro moderato e maestoso
4. D minor, 'Mazeppa'. Allegro	4. G# minor, 'Térek'. Allegro impetuoso
5. Bb major, 'Feux follets'. Allegretto	5. E major, 'Nuit d'été'. Lento ma non troppo
6. G minor, 'Vision'. Lento	6. C# minor, 'Tempête'. Allegro agitato molto
7. Eb major, 'Eroica'. Allegro - Tempo di Marcia	7. A major, 'Idylle'. Andantino pastorale
8. C minor, 'Wilde Jagd'. Presto furioso	8. F# minor, 'Chant epique' (Bylina). Allegro maestoso
9. Ab major, 'Ricordanza'. Andantino	9. D major, 'Harpes éoliennes'. Adagio non tanto
10. F minor. Allegro agitato molto	10. B minor, 'Lesghinka (Style Balakirew)'. Allegro con fuoco
11. Db major, 'Harmonies du soir'. Andantino	11. G major, 'Ronde des sylphes'. Allegretto scherzando
12. Bb minor, 'Chasse-neige'. Andante con moto	12. E minor, 'Elégie en mémoire de François Liszt'. Lento capriccioso

Table 1. Keys, titles and tempo indications in Liszt's *Études d'exécution transcendante* and Lyapunov's *12 Études d'exécution transcendante*

Overall structure

Both sets of études are conceived on a grand scale, Lyapunov's lasting some 70 minutes, 5–10 minutes more than Liszt's. The key schemes of the cycles have been discussed in Part I. All the studies have titles, except for Nos. 2 and 10 in the Liszt work.⁶ As to the tempo indications seven may be described as very fast – relatively fast (Presto – Allegretto) and five as relatively slow – slow (Andantino – Adagio) in both cycles. The considerable number of (relatively) slow pieces demonstrates the distance between these two works and traditional collections of études for the piano from the first half of the 19th century (even in Chopin's Opp. 10 and 25 there are only three slow études out of a total of 24). Several of Liszt's and Lyapunov's transcendental studies may be described as *Charakterstücke* of immense technical difficulty.

Regarding the formal relation between the two sets of 'Transcendentals', Michael Burford contends that 'there is little evidence to suggest that the order of the Liszt studies had any bearing on the final sequence of [Lyapunov's] Op. 11, except as far as tonality is concerned' (Burford, 1988, p. 71). Nevertheless, when deciding on the first and last study of his set, Lyapunov would obviously have been aware of the musical character of the corresponding items in Liszt's cycle: He could, like Liszt, have started with a short and fast prelude-like study, a 'warming up' for the pianist. Instead, he commences his cycle with a quiet 'Berceuse', a highly original beginning for a set of studies, creating an extreme contrast of character with the last Liszt étude, the 'Chasse-neige'. Lyapunov's 'Berceuse' is followed by the swift 'Ronde des fantômes'. Thus, he shares Liszt's predilection for sharp contrasts between subsequent items (notice, for example, Liszt's placing of the two most tranquil études of the set, 'Paysage' and

⁶ No. 2 has frequently been described as the 'Paganini étude'. Samson suggests 'Chopin' as an appropriate title for No. 10, because of its intertextual dialogue with Chopin's F minor étude Op. 10, No. 9 (Samson, 2003, p. 185).

‘Ricordanza’, between fast and stormy pieces). Lyapunov’s study No. 12 occupies a particular position in the cycle by virtue of its very title, ‘Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt’, and its remarkable length (running time 11–12 minutes). Starting in dark E minor with a section reminiscent of the beginning of Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 1 and developing towards a majestic ending in E *major*, this piece serves as a highly appropriate conclusion of the whole set of studies. Had Liszt carried out his initial plan of writing études in all 24 keys, he might also have terminated the set with a monumental apotheosis in a similar manner to Lyapunov.

The titles and their functions

Liszt probably provided titles for his transcendental studies out of consideration for the contemporary audience, who, in his opinion, consisted of a small group of *Kenner* and a considerably larger group of *Liebhaber*, the latter being untrained in musical listening and lacking sufficient knowledge of the conventions of musical expression. Therefore, a title or a programme might be helpful in guiding the listener on the right track.⁷ Although experienced listeners probably attach less importance to titles than more untrained persons, evocative titles generally contribute to steering the listening in a certain direction.⁸ Thus, over the years the titles of Liszt’s transcendental studies have become an inseparable part of the music.⁹

By providing his ‘transcendentals’ with titles, Lyapunov signals both a connection to Liszt’s cycle of studies and a continuation of the approach of the Balakirev circle.¹⁰ Lyapunov was very careful in deciding on the titles, settling on some of them only after lengthy pondering (cf. Burford, 1988, pp. 77ff). Thus, the titles of his studies may be considered metonymic for a certain field of extramusical associations attributed to the work by the composer. They comprise generic indications (‘Berceuse’) as well as references to objects in the real world (e.g., ‘Térek’ [No. 4], which includes an excerpt from Lermontov’s poem about this magnificent river). No. 3, ‘Carillon’/‘Trezvon’ even has a programme, describing elements of a Russian church service. In the first edition published by Zimmermann, all titles are in French, following a widespread custom in Russia before the 1917 revolution. Only Nos. 3 and 8, the arguably most ‘Russian’ of the studies, have alternative titles in Russian.¹¹

III. Modal harmony (diatonic modes)

Definitions

In the 21st century, the concept of modes and modality is quite wide-ranging, encompassing a multitude of scales that differ from the major and minor (e.g., Olivier Messiaen’s seven *modes à transposition limitée*). In this article I use the term ‘modality’ in a more limited and traditional sense, as

1. usage of chord structures and chord progressions within the diatonic (church) modes: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, Locrian.

⁷ For a discussion of Liszt’s view on this subject, see, e.g., Altenburg, 1977.

⁸ In this text, ‘listener’ denotes everyone who relates to any existing musical work, as a part of the audience at a concert, listening to a recording of it, playing it, studying it theoretically, etc.

⁹ The 1837 version of the studies, *Grandes études*, have no titles; instead, there is an abundance of unusual expression marks. See Samson, 2003, pp. 175ff.

¹⁰ The ‘Balakirev circle’ refers here to the group of Russian nationalist composers that is commonly known as ‘The Mighty handful’ (Moguchaya kuchka in Russian) – Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov – as well as to their ideologue, the librarian Vladimir Stasov.

¹¹ When the Zimmermann edition was reprinted in the Soviet Union in 1947, the French titles were replaced with Russian ones and the programme for No. 3 describing the church service removed, obviously for ideological reasons.

- usage of diatonic progressions untypical of functional harmony: Chord progressions in descending fifths (like ii-V-I in a major key), descending thirds (like I-vi-IV) and ascending seconds (like IV-V) are much more frequent in functional harmony than progressions in the opposite direction, at least when it comes to chords in root position. Thus, using progressions like I-iii-V or V-IV-iii in a major key yields the music a modal flavour. Likewise, extensive use of plagal turns (e.g., IV-I) in place of authentic cadences is also a hallmark of modality. When these progressions occur frequently in a major key, the key may rather be termed Ionian.

I have chosen an analytic terminology that is in accordance with quite a large part of modern literature on the subject: Uppercase Roman numeral = major triad; lowercase Roman numeral = minor triad. Added intervals (sevenths, ninths) and chord inversions are indicated in accordance with figured bass notation, by Arabic numerals. ø7 added to a lowercase Roman numeral = half-diminished seventh chord (see, e.g., Blatter 2007, p. 116). All the scales discussed are octave-repeating.

Theoretical framework

The importance of the chromatic scale certainly grew during the 19th century. Dmitri Tymoczko has pointed out that there were two different approaches to this development:

The first, associated with composers like Wagner, Strauss, and the early Schoenberg, de-emphasized scales other than the chromatic. [...] The second approach, associated with composers like Rimsky-Korsakov, Debussy, and Ravel, preserved a more conventional understanding of the relation between chord and scale, but within a significantly expanded musical vocabulary. New scales provided access to new chords, while new chords, in turn, suggested new scales (Tymoczko, 2004, pp. 219-220).

Tymoczko calls this the *scalar tradition*.¹² Modulation between scale types typically takes place by means of common tones (shared subsets) and smooth voice leading. Regarding the diatonic (church) modes, we can observe 'scalar modulation' within short time spans between modes with the same tonic (modal interchange) or between major-minor and modal scales, enhancing the music's macroharmonic richness.¹³

While major and minor (with the seventh degree raised) were omnipresent in European art music of the 18th century, the usage of the so-called church modes returned in the following century, motivated by at least three significant tendencies: a quest for stylistic innovation, a predilection for the archaic, and an immersion in folk music, closely tied to the development of the nation states and the idea of national identity. With the Russian 'pioneers' of the generation before Lyapunov - the Balakirev circle - modality served a dual function as marker of national identity, signifying both a preoccupation with folk music (and more sporadically with Russian liturgical music) and a detachment from Western European traditions - not least German

¹² Based on set theory, Tymoczko presents a rigorously developed scale theory, providing explanations for early twentieth-century composers' preference for certain scales other than the diatonic. He describes three constraints that characterize diatonic scales: 'diatonic seconds', 'no consecutive semitones', and 'diatonic thirds'. He demonstrates that there are actually four types of scales that contain all these three properties: diatonic, octatonic, whole-tone and acoustic ('overtone'), which he calls 'locally diatonic scales'. 'The four locally diatonic scales represent natural objects of exploration for those early-twentieth century composers who wanted to expand the resources of traditional tonal music without discarding such concepts as "triad" and "scale step"' (p. 227). To the 'locally diatonic scales' he adds harmonic minor, harmonic major (harmonic minor with a raised third degree) and the symmetric hexatonic scale C-D \flat -E-F-G \sharp -A-C. These three scales violate the 'diatonic second' constraint, but they are much used, i.a., because they make possible tertian harmony.

¹³ This feature is frequently found in, e.g., Grieg and Rachmaninoff. See, respectively, Taylor, 2017, pp. 66-81, and Johnston, 2014, pp. 8-11.

music, represented by the influential Anton Rubinstein. There are several important works from the 20th century on modality in Russian music, spanning from Boleslav Yavorsky's *Stroenie muzykal'noi rechi* [The structure of musical speech] (1908) to Andrey Myasoedov's *O garmonii russkoi muzyki (Korni natsional'noi spetsifiki)* [The harmony of Russian music (The origins of the national characteristics)] (1998).¹⁴ Myasoedov, to whom I refer below, considers the subject chronologically, from the Middle Ages up to Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev. Lyapunov is not mentioned at all in his book. Regarding modality, Lyapunov's point of departure is clearly *Moguchaya kuchka* (and consequently also Glinka). Briefly, Russian modality the way we know it from the music of the 'kuchkists' is characterized by

- i. A predilection for the minor modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian), and also Mixolydian
- ii. Emphasis on plagal cadences, and accordingly an attenuation of the dominant function
- iii. So-called *mutability* (in Russian *peremennost'*) or *mutable mode* (in Russian *peremennyy lad*),¹⁵ which refers to the tendency in several Russian folk songs and liturgical chants to waver between two tonal centres; frequently the songs will even end on a different note than what was clearly indicated as a centre earlier in the song.¹⁶

There are, of course, certain common harmonic features in Liszt's and Lyapunov's 'transcendentals', i.e., the chord vocabulary and the use of V as an important element in re-establishing the tonic towards the end of most of the pieces.¹⁷ However, in the musical *foreground*, the importance of the dominant function is considerably weakened in Lyapunov's studies (cf. ii. above). Instead – as I shall demonstrate below – the tonal centre is frequently established by other types of cadential formulas, or by pedal points. A passage like the one quoted in Example 1, from Liszt's first study ('Preludio'), is hardly conceivable in the musical universe of Lyapunov's transcendental studies.

¹⁴ In the light of their widespread use, Tchaikovsky's and Rimsky-Korsakov's textbooks of harmony (1871 and 1886, respectively) may be said to be the most important Russian works before 1900 on music theory. Both present a decidedly functional approach to harmony, in this way following German textbooks (e.g., Ernst Friedrich Richter's *Lehrbuch der Harmonie*, 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1860). See, e.g., Glyadeshkina, 2013, p. 11. However, in the preface to *O garmonii russkoi muzyki* Myasoedov refers to the pedagogue Valentin Taranushchenko, who pointed out that Tchaikovsky introduces the triads on all the scale degrees at once, while Rimsky-Korsakov starts with the triads on I, IV and V. Taranushchenko found that Tchaikovsky's method is closer to the essence of Russian music (Myasoedov, 1998, p. 3).

¹⁵ The common English rendering of Russian *lad* as *mode* is unfortunate, as *lad* is an ambiguous concept which is not directly translatable to English. See Ewell, 2019.

¹⁶ One of the first authors to discuss the phenomenon of mutability in English was Richard Taruskin, in an article on Glinka and Balakirev (Taruskin, 1983, reprinted in Taruskin, 1997, pp. 113–151). A more extensive account of this concept is found in Bakulina, 2014. As there are no obvious occurrences of folksong-like or chant-like mutability in Lyapunov's transcendental studies, I shall not dwell further on this subject here.

¹⁷ For a discussion of tonalities in Liszt's transcendental studies, see, e.g., Samson, 2003, pp. 159–174, in which there are also several references to general literature on 19th century harmony.

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The image shows a musical score for Liszt's 'Preludio' (Example 1), bars 9-14. The score is in two systems. The first system (bars 9-11) is marked '[Presto]' and 'ff'. It features hammering fortissimo chords in the left hand and ascending fourths in the right hand. The second system (bars 13-14) is marked 'non troppo presto' and 'mf'. It features a 'legatissimo' melodic line in the right hand and a trill in the left hand. Pedal points are indicated with 'Ped.' and asterisks.

Example 1. Liszt, *Études d'exécution transcendante* (1851). No. 1, 'Preludio', bars 9-14.

The hammering fortissimo chords in bars 9:4-11:1 with ascending fourths in the top voice (A \flat -D \flat -F \sharp -B-E-A) harmonized with a sequence of falling fifths (A \flat ⁷/G \flat -D \flat /F-F \sharp /E-B/D \sharp , and so on) make a hectic impression typical of most of the fast etudes in the set.¹⁸ Liszt's frequent use of secondary dominants in this example would have been quite untypical of Lyapunov, as would the fast harmonic rhythm. Generally, the modulation frequency in Lyapunov's studies is slower than in Liszt's.

Still, the most striking difference between Liszt's and Lyapunov's cycles of studies regarding harmony manifests itself in the use of modality in the latter. Modality is almost entirely absent from Liszt's transcendental studies,¹⁹ although there are modal elements in his church music, and in some of the secular works as well (e.g., in the archaic-ecclesiastical fourth variation of *Totentanz*). Some of the Lyapunov studies, like 'Carillon'/'Trezvon' (No. 3) and 'Chant épique'/'Bylina' (No. 8) are quite permeated by modality, while others display an amalgamation of modality and more traditional Western functional harmony. A couple of studies show but few features of diatonic modality, e.g., 'Ronde des sylphs' (No. 11).²⁰ Generally, however, the modal element in Lyapunov's transcendental studies is so pronounced that it immediately bestows on the cycle an atmosphere different from Liszt's cycle of studies. To consider all modal elements in each of the 12 studies would require a lot of space and probably be tiresome to the reader. Instead, I have selected *examples* of different kinds of modal harmony taken from several of the studies. Only 'Chant épique' is discussed separately regarding its harmony.

¹⁸ As a whole, Example 1 may be harmonically interpreted as a prolonged cadence in C major, the D \flat major chords in bars 9 and 10 representing the Neapolitan subdominant.

¹⁹ The lowered second steps (C \flat) in the last part of 'Chasse-neige' are an indication of Phrygian; at the same time these notes are included in chords that may be interpreted as altered dominant structures or Neapolitan sixth chords in B \flat minor.

²⁰ In this piece, Lyapunov to some extent emphasizes the symmetric octatonic structures hidden in Liszt's embellished diminished seventh chords in 'Feux follets' ('Will-o'-the-wisp'). Likewise, the modulating sequences in 'Ronde des fantômes' (No. 2), dividing the octave equidistantly into three and four parts, probably also reveal a Lisztian influence. In these three pieces, the equidistant divisions of the octave most likely have to do with their depiction of supernatural creatures ('will-o'-the-wisp', sylphs, ghosts).

Aeolian (natural minor)

Andrey Myasoedov points out that while in Western European classicism the functional harmonic patterns in the minor mode were generated by analogy with the major mode – that is with a *raised* seventh degree – the case was opposite in Russian music. After emphasizing the central role of the minor mode in the latter, he states:

The functional relations of the major mode have always felt a pressure from the laws of the minor mode. Therefore, the subdominant and plagal turns, which play an extremely important role in natural minor, also influenced the major mode (Myasoedov, 1998, p. 32, translated from the Russian).²¹

The predilection for minor subdominant in major modes among Russian composers from the second half of the 19th century may partly be explained from this influence. Rimsky-Korsakov's inclusion in his textbook on harmony of the so-called harmonic major mode (C-D-E-F-G-A \flat -B-C, see also footnote 12) as one of four modes constituting the foundation of harmony (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1949, p. 15) also testifies to the prevalence of the minor mode in Russian music from this period.

Example 2 reproduces the beginning of the 'ritornello' in the second study, 'Ronde des fantômes'. This excerpt is entirely in D \sharp Aeolian, except for the concluding Phrygian cadence, in which the leading tone is raised (C \sharp). (Alternatively, the second phrase from the upbeat to bar 21 may be interpreted as a transposition of bars 16–20 from D \sharp Aeolian to G \sharp Aeolian, but with changes in bars 23–24 so that the phrase ends with the dominant of D \sharp minor.) These eight bars illustrate the Russians' predilection for plagal turns (ii⁶⁷-i⁶ in bars 19–20, iv-i in bars 20–22).

[Presto]

8^{va}

Example 2. Lyapunov, 'Ronde des fantômes', Op. 11, No. 2 (1897/98),²² bars 16–24.

Mixolydian

Myasoedov states that the Mixolydian mode, together with natural minor, occupies a leading position in Russian folk music. This also applies to the old forms of church music in major mode, in which 'the raised leading tone has always "fought" with the lowered seventh degree' (Myasoedov, 1998, p. 33, transl. from the Russian). Thus, it is probably not coincidental that Lyapunov utilizes the Mixolydian mode in the two studies that are most inspired by Russian church music – No. 3, 'Carillon'/'Trezvon' – and Russian folk song – No. 8, 'Chant

²¹ All translations from the Russian in this article are the author's responsibility.

²² The dates of the individual pieces in Lyapunov's cycle are based on Burford, 1988, pp. 10–12.

epique'/'Bylina'. Example 3a shows the beginning of 'Carillon'. Rather obviously, the opening of the piece is inspired by the first bars of Liszt's transcendental study No. 11, 'Harmonies du soir' (Example 3b).

Example 3a. Lyapunov, 'Carillon'/'Trezvon', Op. 11, No. 3 (1901), bars 1-4.

Example 3b. Liszt, *Etudes d'exécution transcendante* (1851). No. 11, 'Harmonies du soir', bars 1-5.

In the 1837 version of the studies, *Grandes études*, Liszt has indicated 'cloches' in parenthesis in bar one. Between the pedal point on A \flat and the major chords in the right hand (bars 2-4 in Example 3b) dissonances of an almost polytonal variety arise, as the succession of chords may be related to E $\flat\flat$ major, the 'Neapolitan' key of D \flat major. By means of the harmonic incongruity between these two elements, played *piano*, Liszt actually conjures an impressionistic sound picture - a masterly depiction of the tranquil evening mood! The texture of the opening bars of Lyapunov's study, including the pedal point on the dominant, is strikingly similar to the beginning of Liszt's piece. Therefore, one might easily dismiss Lyapunov's opening as a pale Liszt copy, not capable of matching the latter's harmonic boldness. However, Lyapunov offers something that is not found in the introduction of Liszt's study: He strengthens the bell effect by piling two fifths on top of each other (F \sharp -C \sharp -G \sharp), and - more importantly - the music has a pronounced modal stamp. While Liszt reaches the tonic of D \flat major after nine bars, Lyapunov maintains the pedal point on the dominant for 29 bars, in this way establishing F \sharp as a temporary tonal centre. In this tonal context, the C \sharp minor and F \sharp major chords in the right hand of Example 3a are not perceived as ii and V of B major, but as v and I of F \sharp Mixolydian.²³ It is also worth noticing that while the chord in the fourth bar of Example 3a may be formally described as a dominant ninth chord in B major, its function as a dominant is considerably weakened because of its particular voicing - a C \sharp minor triad above the F \sharp pedal point - and by the omission of the leading tone A \sharp . From the very beginning of the piece Lyapunov takes us into an ecclesiastical-modal world that is quite different from Liszt's 'Harmonies du soir'.

²³ In view of the contour of the upper voice, these bars may alternatively be related to Dorian C \sharp . In that case the pedal point is on the fourth degree of this mode.

‘Carillon’ reaches the tonic of B major only in bar 38, after a prolonged dominant ninth chord in the previous bars. The theme introduced here is described as ‘a solemn church melody’ in the composer’s preface to the piece (more on this in part IV), printed on a separate sheet in the Zimmermann edition. See Example 4 (the theme, encircled in red, moves between the upper voice in the F clef and the lower voice in the G clef). Olga Onegina has identified the melody as an Orthodox church hymn on the much-used text ‘O come let us worship and fall down before Christ...’ (Onegina, 2010, p. 144, translated from the Russian).

The image displays a musical score for Example 4, consisting of five systems of piano music. Each system contains two staves: a treble clef staff (upper voice) and a bass clef staff (lower voice). The music is in B major, indicated by four sharps in the key signature. The tempo and mood are marked 'Con moto, solennemente' and the dynamics are 'f' (forte) and 'pesante' (heavy). The score shows a melodic theme in the upper voice, which is circled in red in the original image. This theme moves between the upper and lower voices across the systems. The bass line features a prolonged dominant ninth chord in the initial bars, which resolves to the tonic in bar 38. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The systems are numbered 38, 41, 43, 45, and 47.

Example 4. Lyapunov, ‘Carillon’/‘Trezvon’, Op. 11, No. 3 (1901), bars 38–48.

A 'completion' of Liszt's transcendental studies with a Russian imprint

This theme has several features typical of old Russian church melodies: uneven phrase lengths, stepwise movement, small range – in this case within a Phrygian tetrachord (D#-E-F#-G#). The melody is nevertheless harmonized in B; first most probably in major/Ionian (the leading tone A# occurring only in the piano figurations in bar 42), then in Mixolydian in bars 43–47, the lowered seventh degree A manifesting itself clearly. However, Lyapunov adheres to the Phrygian modality of the melody by harmonizing its final notes E-D# (bars 47–48) with vii-I in D# Phrygian (i.e., with a picardy third on I). The archaizing chord repertory – mostly major and minor triads primarily in root position – also adds to the church quality. These features of a past harmonic style are combined with brilliant pianistic figurations in the right hand.²¹

Dorian

Both 'Carillon', 'Chant epique'/'Bylina' and 'Lezghinka' contain passages that can be related to Dorian mode. The most striking Dorian element is nevertheless found in study No. 7, 'Idylle'. See Example 5.

Example 5. Lyapunov, 'Idylle', Op. 11, No. 7 (1901), bars 38–48.

²¹ The archaic style of this passage is of course illusory – albeit successful – its texture and sound decidedly belonging to the 19th century.

This section, which has an interesting polyphonic texture with the voices sporadically doubled in thirds or sixths, is in its entirety in D \sharp Dorian.²⁵ In his piano works Lyapunov generally preferred keys with many sharps and flats, as he felt that they were more convenient to play (see, e.g., Burford, 1988, p. 70). This somehow remote Dorian universe disappears when the raised leading tone (C \sharp) is introduced in bar 47.

Phrygian

Phrygian elements are often encountered in late romantic Russian music, probably most of all in Rachmaninoff.²⁶ A feature of special relevance for the Lyapunov studies is the Phrygian chord progression v^{o7}-I (v^{o7} in root position or inverted). Because of the Picardy third on I, this chord progression can be related to a scale with a raised third degree, e.g., E-F-G \sharp -A-B-C-D-E. This scale – i.a. termed ‘Phrygian major’ or ‘Phrygian dominant scale’ as it starts from the fifth degree of the harmonic minor – is sometimes especially associated with Andalusian flamenco music, but the Russians use the v^{o7}-I progression predominantly in music that has nothing to do with Spain.²⁷ The modal cadence v^{o7}-I resembles the authentic cadence V-I in that it is a perfect fifth between the roots of the chords, and that the seventh is resolved stepwise downwards. On the other hand, the sound of a half-diminished seventh chord is markedly different from the sound of a dominant seventh, and while the leading tone is the raised seventh degree in major-minor, it is the flattened second degree that functions as a leading tone in Phrygian. Most probably, the v^{o7}-I progression was one of the elements *Moguchaya kuchka* introduced to set itself apart from German music and its ‘dominantness’ (cf. pp. 65–66). A possible source of inspiration for the Balakirev circle when it comes to this chord progression is Liszt, who they held in high esteem. The first bars of his famous *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* (1847) alternate between I and v^{o7} in C \sharp Phrygian (major), probably signaling this music’s difference from Western ‘high’ music culture. See Example 6.

The chord progression with a half-diminished seventh chord that moves down a perfect fifth to a major triad does not occur only as v^{o7}-I in Phrygian, but also as the half cadence ii^{o7}-V in harmonic minor. Example 7 shows this chord progression analysed in two tonalities. The half cadence ii^{o7}-V is of course a part of Western common practice harmony, but in late romantic Russian music we frequently observe a tonization of V for a certain time span in these half cadences, combined with an emphasis on the descending minor second from the sixth to the fifth degree, which gives the music a temporary Phrygian character. In cases like this, an interesting ambiguity may occur between a ‘local’ tonal centre in Phrygian major and a more ‘global’ tonal centre a perfect fifth lower. The Phrygian chord progression v^{o7}-I is a fingerprint that distinguishes Russian modality from the modality in, e.g., Brahms and Bruckner, with the half-diminished seventh chord yielding the music a yearning character.

²⁵ Incidentally, Onegina points out that the tenor voice in bars 38–45 (‘poco marc.’) quotes a shepherd’s melody that Lyapunov heard on one of his summer holidays in Bolobonovo (Onegina, 2010, p. 151).

²⁶ Regarding Rachmaninoff’s rich usage of Phrygian, see Johnston, 2014, pp. 1–3, 9–11, 12–13. The Phrygian element in Rachmaninoff’s music was observed early on by Russian (Soviet) musicologists, e.g., Vladimir Protopopov’s discussion of the Phrygian mode in the composer’s Third symphony in an article from 1947 (Protopopov, 1947).

²⁷ And yet, the Phrygian major scale and the harmonic progression v^{o7}-I are used in the fourth movement of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnol* (1887), ‘Scena e canto gitano’ [Scene and gypsy song]. The key signature indicates D minor, but the tonal centre appears to be A, owing to a nearly constant pedal point on this note and the frequent alternation between E \flat 5⁷ and A – i.e. v^{o7} and I in A Phrygian major. However, the typical cadential figure in Andalusian Phrygian tonality is iv-III-II-I, while chords built on V are avoided, at least in flamenco music from the 19th century (see, e.g., Manuel, 1989, p. 72.) Consequently, the sources for Rimsky-Korsakov’s usage of v^{o7} in this context is difficult to ascertain.

Lento a capriccio

non legato

Example 6. Liszt, *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 2 (1847), bars 1–8.

E phrygian (major):	v^{o7}	I
A minor:	ii^{o7}	V

Example 7. A peculiar modal cadence.

Several of the studies in Lyapunov's Op. 11 use this kind of Phrygian-coloured harmony. 'Chant epique' (No. 8) opens with an introduction (bars 1–38) with a recurring pedal on C#, functioning as the dominant of the main key of the piece, which is F# minor. Example 8 shows an excerpt from this section. The composer here creates an impression of C# Phrygian (major) by means of a movement from the 'Phrygian second' D to C# in the melody in bars 24 and 26, and the now familiar cadence formula v^{o7} -I (in bars 22, 25, 28–29). At the same time, it is also possible to hear this chord progression as ii^{o7} -V in F# minor. In Example 9, from 'Terek' (No. 4), two chords that may be analysed as ii^{o7} (in root position and second inversion) and $V^{\frac{1}{3}}$ of C# minor alternate, but the tonic never occurs. Instead, G# establishes itself as a temporary tonal centre (only to return as the tonic of the main key later in the piece), with the descending minor second A–G# in the upper voice as a distinctive Phrygian mark. Incidentally, also in sections that are clearly in major/minor in Russian romantic music, modulations are frequently introduced with a ii^{o7} in the new key.

22 [Allegro maestoso]

mf f Led. * Led. * mf f Led. * Led. *

26 8va

con Led. f sempre

Example 8. Lyapunov, 'Chant epique'/'Bylína', Op. 11, No. 8 (1903), bars 22-29.

59 [Allegro impetuoso]

sf p cresc. * Led. *

61

63 8va sf f *

Example 9. Lyapunov, 'Térek', Op. 11, No. 4 (1900), bars 59-64.

Chant epique/Bylina

The thematic material for this study (1903) – the second largest of the cycle after No. 12 – is a folk song, the soldier's song 'Iz-za lesu, lesy temnogo' [Out of the woods, dark woods], which Lyapunov wrote down during his folk song expedition in 1893 (see Saratovsky, 2012, pp. 22–25). Burford (1988, p. 125) believes that this is the only folk song directly quoted in the whole of Lyapunov's cycle of studies. The Russian subtitle of the study, 'Bylina' (rendered in French as 'Chant epique'), signifies a type of Russian epic folk song frequently describing heroic achievements (see also Part IV). Modality is one of the elements used in this piece in order to evoke an atmosphere of ancient times. It is nearly entirely based on modal scales, dominant structures with a raised leading tone being used primarily in short modulating transitions.

After a striking use of the 'Phrygian fingerprint' v^{o7} -I in the introductory section of the study (see Example 8), the folk song is introduced, first *unisono*, then harmonized in this way (Example 10):

The image shows a musical score for Example 10. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked [Allegro maestoso] and begins at bar 47. The second system begins at bar 51. The music is in F# major and 2/4 time. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of quarter notes. The piece is in a modal style, with a lowered leading tone (E) in the bass.

Example 10. Lyapunov, 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', Op. 11, No. 8 (1903), bars 47–52.

Although the seventh degree is absent from the melody, the harmonization is clearly in F# aeolian, owing to the lowered leading tone (*E*) in the bass. Several variations on this theme follow, after which an increase leads to the contrasting central part of the piece, in a major mode (Example 11):

The image shows a musical score for Example 11. It consists of a single system of music. The music is in E-flat major and 2/4 time. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of quarter notes. The piece is in a major mode, contrasting with the previous example.

Example 11. Lyapunov, 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', bars 121–124.

The lowered leading tone indicates E \flat Mixolydian. This theme is also subjected to variant development, whereupon a modulating bridge brings us back to a compressed and intensified version of the introduction and the folk song. In place of functional authentic cadences *pedal points* occasionally function as temporary tonal centres (see Examples 12a and 12b):

Example 12a. Lyapunov, 'Chant epique'/'Bylína', bars 213-217.

Example 12b. Lyapunov, 'Chant epique'/'Bylína', bars 221-225.

Despite the contour of the upper voice and the cadence $v^{\flat}_4 - i$ in E Dorian in bars 216:4-217 of Example 12a, the pedal point pulls the passage towards A Mixolydian. In Example 12b, on the other hand, the pedal (*E*) teams up more with the melody. In these two examples one may take note of the textural richness – typical of Lyapunov's piano style – with four layers (the melody in the right hand, a slower secondary melody in the middle register, the quaver triplet arpeggio in the bass, and the pedal).

The unexpected C# major chord (instead of E minor) in the last bar of Example 12b initiates the return to the main tonal centre F#. Eleven bars later the most emphatic authentic cadence of the piece occurs (Example 13), marking the beginning of the virtuosic coda (*Allegro vivo - Presto*) in F# major, based on earlier thematic material.

Allegro vivo M.M. ♩=88

Example 13. Lyapunov: 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', bars 236–237.

For a moment it would seem that the raised leading tone is going to emerge victorious from the coda, but towards the end the composer somehow interrupts himself, instead concluding the piece in an unequivocal F# Mixolydian. See Example 14.

Example 14. Lyapunov: 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', conclusion.

If one were to replace all the *E*'s of Example 14 with the raised seventh degree *E#*, the harmony of this conclusion would have been entirely functional. As with the Phrygian cadence $v^{o7}-I$, one may get the impression that the flattened seventh functions ideologically, as a marker for Russian music's difference from the Western European mainstream.²⁸

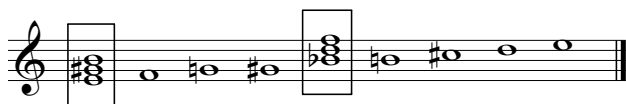
The very last cadence

In the last study, 'Elégie en mémoire de François Liszt', there is a particularly striking final cadence (Example 15a):

Example 15a. Lyapunov, 'Elégie en mémoire de François Liszt', Op. 11, No. 12 (1905), last four bars.

²⁸ Burford (1988, pp. 130f) points out striking similarities between this section and the conclusion of Balakirev's Fantasy on themes from Glinka's *A life for the Czar* (1855, revised 1899). More interesting is perhaps his observation on the resemblance between the last bars of 'Chant epique' and Debussy's 'L'isle Joyeuse', composed about one year after Lyapunov's piece. This testifies to the Russian composers' great importance to Debussy, not least as regards harmony and piano texture.

The upper voice movement from the lowered leading tone *D* to the tonic *E* is harmonized with the tritone progression *B♭* major – *E* major (bars 3 and 2 from the end). It seems a little contrived to interpret this chord progression as V–I in Locrian *E*; more reasonably it may be related to a symmetrical octatonic scale, in the light of the octatonic elements earlier in the piece and the general interest in this scale by Rimsky-Korsakov and other Russian composers.²⁹ See Example 15b.



Example 15b. Lyapunov: ‘*Élégie en mémoire de Francois Liszt*’, suggested octatonic basis for the final cadence.

Irrespective of how to interpret this unusual final cadence, it obtains a particularly strong effect by virtue of concluding the last and most monumental piece in Lyapunov’s cycle of studies. It contributes to the scalar richness of the work as a whole, at the same time further distinguishing the harmony of the work from the harmony of Liszt’s transcendental studies.³⁰

IV. Topics and plots

The concept of musical topic

The analysis of musical *topics* was brought into focus with the American musicologist Leonard Ratner’s book on music from the Classical period (Ratner, 1980). A branch of music semiotics, topical analysis in a way bridges the gap between a more formal stylistic/structural analysis of a piece and its relation to the composer’s ‘surrounding reality’ – society and culture. This subject, of course, was by no means new, but Ratner’s description of 18th century topics was particularly rich and illuminating. He explains the term *topic* in this way:

From its contacts with worship, poetry, drama, entertainment, dance, ceremony, the military, the hunt, and the life of the lower classes, music in the early 18th century developed a thesaurus of *characteristic figures*, which formed a rich legacy for classic composers. Some of these figures were associated with various feelings and affections; others had a picturesque flavor. They are designated here as *topics* – subjects for musical discourse (Ratner, 1980, p. 9).

Ratner describes dance *types* (e.g., gavotte, minuet, sarabande) and a great number of *styles*, e.g., ‘Empfindsamkeit’, ‘Military and hunt music’, Pastoral, ‘Sturm und Drang’, ‘Brilliant style’ (like numerous passages in the piano part of Mozart’s piano concertos).³¹ The social and cultural changes in the 19th century entailed changes in the topical ‘lexicon’: Some topics disappeared (e.g., certain dances), some were reinterpreted,³² and some were added, e.g.,

²⁹ For the development and the ‘semantics’ of harmonic progressions related to octatonic scales in the 19th century, and particularly in Russian music, see Taruskin, 1996. It is worth noting that a tritone progression is used as the very last cadence in at least two other Russian works written in a late romantic idiom: Medtner’s piano sonata in A minor, Op. 30, 1915 (Eb7–A), and the third movement of Rachmaninoff’s symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 44, 1935–1936 (Eb–A).

³⁰ At the same time, the tritone cadence B♭–E may be read as a subtle homage to Liszt, as the keys of the corresponding numbers in Liszt’s and Lyapunov’s ‘transcentinals’ are tritone related. Moreover, in this final tritone cadence, B♭ mirrors the tonic of the last Liszt study, the ‘Chasse-neige’.

³¹ Ratner offers no systematization of the topics. For an interesting attempt at categorization, see Hatten, 2004, pp. 74–75.

³² This includes military music. Julian Horton has an illuminating discussion of the shift in social meaning of the *march*, comparing the slow movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 100 (‘Military’), the finale of Beethoven’s Fifth

various 'exotic' and regional music styles, related to notions of ethnic and/or national identity.³³ It would seem that the motivations for our decision on a topic are multifarious, including a perceived isomorphism between the music and extramusical elements (i.e., an *iconic* relationship) as well as metonymic transferences of the type part-for-whole (i.e., an *indexical* relationship). In addition, of course, suggestive titles of the pieces of music may also evoke a rich field of associations in the listener.

Titles and topics

Judging from the titles, several of the pieces in Liszt's and Lyapunov's sets of studies involve similar subjects: heroism (Liszt's 'Mazeppa' and 'Eroica', Lyapunov's 'Chant epique'/'Bylina'), nature (Liszt's 'Paysage', 'Chasse-neige' and perhaps 'Harmonies du soir', Lyapunov's 'Terek', 'Tempête', 'Idylle' and 'Harpes éoliennes'), depiction of supernatural creatures (Liszt's 'Feux follets', Lyapunov's 'Ronde des fantômes' and 'Ronde des sylphs'), etc. However, the studies that carry related titles sometimes sound quite different from each other. This applies to Liszt's 'Eroica' and Lyapunov's 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', although both of them are written in a kind of variation form (see below). On the other hand, Lyapunov's 'Nuit d'été' is influenced by 'Ricordanza', although the titles point in different directions. In 'Harpes éoliennes', Lyapunov has followed Liszt's textural idea in 'Chasse-neige' of constant tremolo figures. Since the tremolos are written out in full in both pieces, one single bar frequently occupying a whole system, the image of the score may give the impression that these two pieces are more similar than they really are. Among other things, Lyapunov's study is considerably more tranquil than Liszt's, and tinged with melancholy. Lyapunov's 'Tempête' resembles Liszt's F minor study (No. 10, without a title) in several ways: identical tempo marks (*Allegro agitato molto*), rapid 'rotating' figurations in the upper voice, a similar formal outline with a second theme in *minor* laid in octaves in high register over an arpeggio accompaniment, etc.

Thus, the links between Liszt's and Lyapunov's transcendental studies are many-sided and complex. However, returning to the main purpose of this article, I will consider two important *differences* between these two works regarding their topics and their musical discourse. Due to limited space, the studies discussed in this part of the article are not illustrated by music examples (with one exception). Readers wishing to verify my arguments are invited to consult the scores.

The heroic versus the quotidian

Burford contends that several of the titles of Liszt's transcendental studies 'betray the presence of a hero viewing the world on our behalf' (Burford, 1988, p. 77). This is an interesting observation, unfortunately not developed further in his text. Clearly, heroic topics are present in 'Mazeppa' and 'Eroica'. Two other Liszt studies without obvious references to the heroic in their titles, nevertheless have climactic sections evoking associations to heroic triumph: In the extended monumental section in G major with the dynamic indication *fff* in 'Vision', military signals appear frequently (i.e., in bars 39, 47 and 55), a much-used element in the musical depiction of a heroic topic. The climactic versions of the refrain theme in 'Harmonies du soir' (bars 80ff, marked *trionfante*, and bars 120ff) also contain signal motifs; moreover, the ascending major triads in this theme may be associated with fanfares.³⁴ The title of Lyapunov's study No. 8, 'Chant epique'/'Bylina', suggests a heroic topic, as Bylina is the name of old Russian epic folk songs about heroic deeds, some of them dating back to the 10th and 11th

symphony, and the fourth movement ('Marche au supplice') of Berlioz's *Symphonic fantastique* (Horton, 2014, pp. 2-3).

³³ See, e.g., Dickensheets, 2012, pp. 128-131.

³⁴ Regarding the military topic in music, see particularly Monelle, 2006, pp. 113-181.

centuries. In bar 4 of this piece we find the expression mark *armonioso imitante salterio*, suggesting a bard plucking the folk instrument *gusli* (illustrated in Example 8). This element, frequent usage of open chords with the third omitted, and in particular the pronounced modality (see above) relate this study to ‘Bardic style’ in Dickensheets’s lexicon of romantic topics, which she illustrates with excerpts from Gade’s *Ossian* overture and Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet* overture (Dickensheets 2012, pp. 126–129). However, compared with Liszt’s ‘Eroica’, Lyapunov’s ‘Bylina’ bears a far more seamless and undramatic stamp. Of Lyapunov’s 12 transcendental studies, the last, ‘Elégie en mémoire de François Liszt’, is probably the one that the most evokes heroic associations, including a triumphant apotheosis in E major (bars 162ff) – a monumental tribute to one of the composer’s two musical heroes (the other was his mentor Balakirev).

If the Lisztian heroic element is toned down in Lyapunov’s transcendental studies, what do we get instead? Already the first piece, ‘Berceuse’, suggests an answer to this question: The human tenderness and intimacy of this piece, evoking the image of a child being rocked to sleep, is very far from the heroic universe of several of the Liszt studies. This piece does not resemble any of the studies in Liszt’s cycle, neither stylistically nor regarding musical character. While none of Liszt’s transcendental studies are written in an identifiable dance idiom, Lyapunov includes a *Lezhinka* (No. 10), a vigorous dance of Ukrainian origin. Indicated as ‘Style Balakirew’ in the score, it is clearly intended as a tribute to this composer and his virtuosic piano fantasy *Islamey* (1869). In ‘Carillon’/‘Trezvon’ (No. 3), Lyapunov develops the bell sound idea in the opening bars of Liszt’s ‘Harmonies du soir’ into a full piece based on elements from a Russian Orthodox church service, alternating between imitation of different kinds of bells and an archaic-modally harmonized hymn (see Examples 3a, 3b and 4). Although Liszt’s ‘Vision’ may also be said to have religious overtones, this piece is written in an entirely different style. These three Lyapunov studies centre around *everyday life* – bringing a child to sleep, people dancing, a singing congregation at a church service – something which brings them considerably closer to the Balakirev circle than to Liszt. The Russian musicologist Aleksey Kandinsky says this about the relation of this group to the common people:

Popular topics and the aesthetics and poetic-musical stylistics of the folklore are of especial importance to the composers of the ‘Moguchaya kuchka’ [...]. Therefore, people and their lives, motifs from folk tales and bylínas, and depictions of nature occupy a particularly important place in the programmatic ‘compound’ of their works – in short, a poetical interpretation of the objective reality (Kandinsky, 1971, p. 4, translated from the Russian).

These aesthetic values, to which Lyapunov also adhered, emphasize national identity, i.e., music as a reflection of the surrounding reality. In Lyapunov’s cycle of studies this is also expressed by the titles, four of which have to do with Russia, either culture (‘Trezvon’, ‘Bylina’, ‘Lezhinka’) or nature (the river ‘Térek’).³⁵ In Liszt’s transcendental studies, on the other hand, the local colour is toned down. To the extent that it is present at all, it suggests different regions (the ‘hunting theme’ in ‘Wilde Jagd’, bars 59ff, points to Weber and *Der Freischütz*; the ‘serenade’ in ‘Harmonies du soir’, bars 58ff, reminds one of Italian romantic opera; etc.). It is also worth noticing that even the titles of the studies are in different languages – French (‘Paysage’, ‘Feux follets’, ‘Harmonies du soir’), Italian (‘Preludio’, ‘Ricordanza’) and German (‘Wilde Jagd’). Generally, Liszt’s music is characterized by the absence of a singular national

³⁵ ‘Térek’ has a wild and turbulent character, actually even more tempestuous than the study named ‘Tempête’. Saratovsky argues convincingly that in order to understand the character of ‘Térek’, it is necessary to read the whole Lermontov poem, not only the first eight lines that are printed in the score, as ‘the poem goes on to describe how Térek feeds the Caspian Sea with its “gifts” of human corpses: dead warriors killed on the battlefield and a fair maiden’s head with pale flowing hair’ (Saratovsky, 2012, p. 36).

style: In a period in which national musical 'schools' were emerging rapidly, he stood out as a truly transnational composer.³⁶

Plots

A character piece, the way this genre was understood in German music culture in the 19th century (*Charakterstück*), implies a *stable* musical character, either throughout the whole piece, or by returning to the initial character in the last part of the piece after some kind of contrast has been introduced.³⁷ A number of Liszt's and Lyapunov's transcendental studies are character pieces in this sense. However, some of the studies have a different kind of progression, with a pronounced change from one topic to another, without returning to the former. This transfer may evoke ideas of some kind of *plot* in the listener. One may object that this is hardly a sufficient foundation for constructing a plot, but I find this term useful here in order to differentiate between these studies and studies where one single topic is predominant.³⁸ In addition, I can lean on Anthony Newcomb, who asserts that Schumann's Second symphony and Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth symphonies belong to the same '*plot archetype*':

The particular evolving pattern of mental states in all three of these works defines what Walter Wiora [...] defines as a 'principal type of small and large instrumental music in the nineteenth century:...the expression, reinforced by sound symbols, of a psychological evolution, such as suffering followed by healing or redemption' (Newcomb, 1984, p. 234).

Some of the Liszt and Lyapunov studies may be related to this kind of development.

In classical and romantic music, the major–minor polarity frequently plays an important part in regard to perceived contrasts in the musical discourse. Especially the change from minor to parallel major seems to be loaded with extra-musical meaning (the paradigmatic example being, of course, Beethoven's Fifth symphony). In Liszt's cycle, three of the six studies in minor keys move towards the parallel major: No. 4, 'Mazeppa' (D minor – D major), No. 6, 'Vision' (G minor – G major), and No. 8, 'Wilde Jagd' (C minor – C major). 'Mazeppa' was later reworked into a more extensive symphonic poem, inspired by a poem by Victor Hugo: The Cossack hero Mazeppa is bound to a wild horse by his enemies, after three days the horse collapses dead and

³⁶ However, especially in the interwar period, the Germans and the Hungarians tenaciously attempted to 'nationalize' him. See Deaville, 2005, p. 48.

³⁷ German aestheticians in the 18th and 19th century had different views on the concept of musical character, but they agreed on the *consistency* element. As Carl Dahlhaus states, 'Das Charakteristische ist stets, unabhängig vom ästhetischen Schulstreit, als das fest Umrissene und deutlich Ausgeprägte im Gegensatz zum vage Verfließenden begriffen worden' (Dahlhaus, 1976, p. 11). Belonging to the field of music aesthetics, the concept of character is not directly applicable in musical analysis. Jacob de Ruiter, however, emphasizes some hallmarks of the characteristic in the way it was understood in the first half of the 19th century, i.e., 'Das Expressive', 'Lokalkolorit', 'Tonmalerei' and 'Verselbständigung des Einzelnen' (Ruiter, 1989, pp. 228ff). These four features are probably particularly relevant for the character piece. In the second half of the 19th century the matter of the characteristic in music was somewhat overshadowed by the debate between adherents of 'absolute' music and programme music, but it was by no means forgotten.

³⁸ Within literary studies, Peter Brooks has defined *plot* as 'an activity, a structuring operation elicited in the reader trying to make sense of those meanings that develop only through textural and temporal succession' (Brooks, 1984, p. 37). Definitions like this, which of course refer to a more complex development than just a change from one situation to another, probably inspired the issue of musical narrativity, which was a much debated theme in musicological discourses of the eighties and nineties. Views on the fruitfulness of applying the concept of narrativity (derived from literary studies) on instrumental music varied heavily, including a fairly liberal use of it (e.g., Newcomb, 1984 and 1987), development of strict criteria for it (e.g., Abbate, 1991), and even denial of its existence (e.g., Nattiez, 1990). I consider it unnecessary to elaborate on musical narrativity here, as this concept mainly concerns longer and structurally far more complex works than Liszt's and Lyapunov's transcendental studies.

Mazeppa is subsequently saved. In the piano version, although without a programme, the fall of the horse is vividly depicted by a number of descending diminished seventh chords (the three last bars before *Più Moderato*). After 12 bars of wavering and tonal ambiguity in the *Più Moderato* section, Mazeppa's triumph is portrayed by a cascade of D major chords (*Vivace, f*). 'Vision' begins with a dark, chorale-like theme in G minor, which, after a dynamic build-up, returns as an apotheosis in G major with the dynamic indication *fff* (bars 32ff). Using Anthony Newcomb's term, both of these studies may be said to relate to one and the same 'plot archetype'. The discourse of 'Wilde Jagd' is more ambiguous. Some commentators find a demoniac element in this piece (Samson, 2003, p. 182; Monelle, 2000, p. 63, describing it as a witches' ride). On the other hand, the two 'hunting themes' in E♭ major (bars 59ff and 85ff) make a merry and jovial impression. In any case, the musical topics changes markedly in the course of the piece, from the agitated opening section in C minor with 'contrametric' rhythms that were quite advanced for its time (see, e.g., Rosen, 1998, pp. 504–505), to the last part with the two 'hunting themes' being played triumphantly in C major, *fff*. Thus, with some reservation, I suggest that 'Wilde Jagd' belongs to the same 'plot archetype' as 'Mazeppa' and 'Vision'.

Three other Liszt studies also invite a *plot* interpretation: The last section of 'Chasse-neige' (B♭ minor, No. 12) is certainly not a depiction of a blizzard calming down (which might have been conventionally rendered by a *Tranquillo* section in a major mode). Instead, as I pointed out in the introduction, several elements contribute to the interpretation of the conclusion as sorrowful, it might possibly be described as an amalgamation of *Stile appassionato* and elegy. Depicting a turbulent state (outwardly a snowstorm) that ends tragically, 'Chasse-neige' in a way reverses the 'optimistic' plots of 'Mazeppa', 'Vision' and possibly 'Wilde Jagd'. In 'Eroica' (E♭ major, No. 7), the march theme is constantly interrupted or played in another key than the main key of the piece. Samson (2003, pp. 189ff) convincingly argues that the heroic affect is hard-won in this piece, as 'the increasingly insistent quest for a collectively expressed heroic affect is no less insistently subverted by individual doubt and uncertainty' (ibid., p. 191). Thus, 'Eroica' suggests a more complex and subtle plot than those considered so far – more akin to a Beethovenian *conflict* type, in which an obstacle is to be conquered. The final major key study, 'Harmonies du soir' (D♭ major, No. 11) invites several possible interpretations: The 'refrain' thoroughly changes its character, from *ppp una corda* and *dolcissimo* when heard the first time (bars 38ff) to *ff* and *trionfante* the second time (bars 80ff), and the originally intimate 'serenade' theme (bars 58ff) is transformed into a magnificent chordal apotheosis played *fff* (bars 98ff). Such changes trigger the listener's sense of some kind of *plot*. On the other hand, the piece ends as it began in a quiet nocturnal atmosphere. Thus, perhaps it might rather be interpreted as an expansive pastoral soundscape with a number of 'scenes' with a comparatively weak connection between them.

Three of the studies in minor keys in Lyapunov's cycle also conclude in the parallel major: No. 8, 'Chant epique'/'Bylina' (F♯ minor – F♯ major), No. 10, 'Lezghinka' (B minor – B major), and No. 12, 'Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt' (E minor – E major). In 'Lezghinka', the parallel major occurs only in the four last bars in a tonic prolongation, and thus it can hardly be interpreted as part of a *plot*. In short, this is a typical character piece (albeit virtuosic) in a dance idiom. 'Chant epique' changes to the parallel major in the last 52 bars (with a twist to Mixolydian in the last 10 bars, see Examples 13 and 14). This last part certainly represents a change of character, from the somewhat dark and archaic variations of the folk song in minor mode (*Allegro maestoso*) to a much more open and unrestrained music in major modes (F♯ major/Mixolydian) and considerably faster tempo (*Allegro vivo – Presto*). The composer probably had the text of the folk song in mind when writing this coda. The poem describes how the Czar's soldiers emerge out of the woods and the mountain. The Czar begs them not to weep, for when the morning comes he will present them gifts. And all his men respond

enthusiastically.³⁹ On the other hand, this swift coda also enables the pianist to display virtuosity in the Lisztian manner with rapid alternations between the hands and wide leaps ('Virtuosic style' in Dickensheets's topic 'lexicon').⁴⁰ 'Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt',⁴¹ the study that crowns the cycle (at least as regards its length and position in the series), has a fairly obvious binary form, each part comprising two themes. In the first part, the initial theme (A), marked *All'ungarese, in modo funebre*, is succeeded by a Barcarole-like theme (B) in D \flat major, the beginning of which is shown in Example 16a. A forceful build-up leads to part two, where the theme A is repeated, again in E minor. Another massive intensification, with Lisztian alternating octaves marked *con strepito*, concludes with theme B transformed into a triumphant apotheosis in E major (Example 16b). Moving from *tragic* in the beginning to *heroic-triumphant* in the conclusion, the progression in this study corresponds to the 'evolving pattern of mental states' described by Newcomb (see p. 81). (The unusual final cadence of the piece is discussed on pp. 77–78.)

L'istesso tempo, molto tranquillo (♩=♩)

cantabile

Example 16a. Lyapunov, 'Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt', part one, beginning of theme B (bars 88–91).

Poco sostenuto, con maestà

Example 16b. Lyapunov, 'Élégie en mémoire de François Liszt', part two, the beginning of the apotheotic version of theme B (bars 162–165).

³⁹ The text of the folk song is translated into English in Saratovsky, 2012, pp. 82–83. See also pp. 33–34.

⁴⁰ Dickensheets, 2012, pp. 111–113.

⁴¹ Shifman (1960, p. 80) calls this study a musical *portrait*, without further elaboration.

Lyapunov's 'Carillon'/'Trezvon'⁴² (B major, No. 3) stands out from all the other transcendental studies by being provided with a preface, printed on a separate page in Russian, French, German and English. The latter is reproduced below (with a few changes in order to bring it as near as possible to the Russian original version). I have suggested possible correspondences between the text and the music in brackets:

A bell calls for church service [bars 1-7]. Across the measured strokes of the bell the sounds of a hymn come from the church [bars 7-23]. The ringing grows louder and louder and the small bells blend with the sounds of the great bell [bars 24-37]. The solemn tones of the hymn alternate with the sounds of the bells [bars 38-108], ending in a general majestic choral effect interspersed with the deep sounds of the great bell [bars 108-122] (Liapunow, 1958, Book 1, p. 15).

Because the text describes a succession of events that is possible to identify in the music, this piece may certainly be categorized as programmatic. However, it may also be perceived as a more static 'sound picture', in which the hymn singing is a sound object at the same level as the sound of the church bells. Thus, it has much in common with Liszt's 'Harmonies du soir', discussed above (see Examples 3a and 3b). On the basis of certain cues in the music, it would have been easy to provide this piece with text, thus changing it into 'programme music' of a kind similar to 'Carillon'/'Trezvon'. Vice versa, without a verbal description of a 'plot', the Lyapunov piece might have been perceived as a character piece with a religious 'atmosphere' based on its title, the imitation of church bells and the modally harmonized hymn melody (see Example 4). Without the programme, the listener might perhaps also focus more on the form of the piece, of which bars 1-37 may be interpreted as an introduction on the dominant with fragments of the hymn melody, bars 38-108 as the main part, presenting the hymn melody and a number of variations on it, and bars 108-122 as a coda, harking back to elements from the introduction.

In Table 2 below, I have divided the studies into two categories: Under 'plot' I have placed the pieces just considered (the numbers refer to the order of the studies listed in part II). 'Suffering-redemption' refers to Newcomb's term for the relevant 'plot archetype'. The question marks indicate that I have suggested alternative interpretations. The pieces under 'One single prevailing topic' can hardly be said to suggest any *plot*, they appear more as character pieces in the sense of the word that I described above. I have divided this category into 'stable' and 'intensified conclusion', the latter referring to pieces that have an intensification towards the end, which, however, does not develop into a new topic.

	One single prevailing topic			
	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Intensified conclusion</i>		
Liszt	3, 5, 9	(1), 2, 10		
Lyapunov	1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 11	4, 6, 10		
	Plot			
	<i>Extra-musical programme</i>	<i>'Suffering-redemption'</i>	<i>Tragic conclusion</i>	<i>Conflict</i>
Liszt	11?	4, 6, 8?	12	7
Lyapunov	3	8?, 12		

Table 2. Topics and plots in Liszt's and Lyapunov's transcendental studies

From the survey in Table 2, it becomes apparent that there are twice as many pieces that give an impression of a *plot* in Liszt's transcendental studies compared to Lyapunov's, and that there are considerably more pieces with a stable musical *topic* in Lyapunov's cycle of studies than in

⁴² Trezvon = The ringing of multiple bells.

Liszt's, contributing to the more dramatic quality of the latter. In describing all the Lyapunov studies except the last as *musical pictures*, Shifman (1960, p. 80) probably had in mind just this predominant stability of the character of the pieces (the *Charakterstück* element) – in principle, after all, a picture is unable to move. The modal elements to some extent strengthen the pictoriality by toning down the implicit goal orientation of major-minor tonality.

I have called attention to some features of Lyapunov's transcendental studies that separate them from Liszt's cycle of studies:

1. Several of the studies have a pronounced modal harmony (diatonic church modes), a feature that is absent from the Liszt work.
- 2A. While the topics of some of the Liszt studies have to do with the heroic and the exceptional, this element is toned down in Lyapunov; instead, we encounter topics related to ordinary people's everyday life.
- 2B. While half of the Liszt studies have a dramatic discourse eliciting notions of a *plot*, most of the Lyapunov studies have a stable, uniform musical character, evoking pictorial associations.

These features clearly relate Lyapunov's transcendental studies to the five composers of the *Moguchaya kuchka* and their followers (Lyadov, early Glazunov).

Epilogue (somewhat personal)

As a young student, I bought the sheet music of Lyapunov's transcendental studies and the only available complete recording of them at that time, by Louis Kentner (1972, cf. footnote 4). I enjoyed their textural variety (somewhat resembling Rachmaninoff's 'orchestral-polyphonic' piano style, but more ornamental), the colourful harmony and the wide range of imaginative topics, everything beautifully laid out for the piano. However, I soon discovered a striking discrepancy between my enthusiasm for these pieces and the lack of interest in this composer by music historians. In music history surveys and textbooks his name is generally absent, and even in Western textbooks on Russian music he is given a negligible place. He has been regarded as an *epigone*, a kind of composer that is ostracized from traditional Western accounts of music history with their emphasis on innovation and historical progress. To take a couple of examples, Richard Taruskin dismisses Lyapunov as one of the 'postkuchkist epigones' (Taruskin, 1983, p. 200),⁴³ while Jim Samson claims that Lyapunov *replicates* Liszt's transcendental studies (Samson, 2003, p. 218, footnote). In this article I have demonstrated that Lyapunov certainly does not replicate Liszt's studies, but some of his formal solutions and piano figurations are undoubtedly inspired by them, and indeed Lyapunov does carry on several of the 'kuchkists' stylistic idiosyncrasies – particularly Balakirev's – in his transcendental studies. However, these elements are integrated in such a way that the whole becomes something more than just the sum of influences from these composers. It seems that late representatives of a certain musical tradition have frequently been described as epigones. A telling example is Rachmaninoff, who was dismissed as a Tchaikovsky epigone by innumerable Western music historians and critics throughout most of the 20th century, but who is now generally revered as one of the greatest late romantic masters.

Having said all this, I do not claim that Lyapunov's transcendental studies can compare with the fervency and strong personal stylistic identity of Rachmaninoff's best works, but they still

⁴³ In fact, with the possible exception of S. Taneev, the whole 'second generation' of Russian composers born in the 1850s and -60s has been disparaged by Western music historians: They have either been ignored, or regarded as epigonic or academic. Already Igor Stravinsky claimed to find 'evidence of alarming symptoms of a new academism' in, i.a., Glazunov's and Lyadov's works (Stravinsky, 1970 [1942], p. 125).

possess many remarkable qualities. There is a late romantic opulence in this work, allowing the listener to discover new details and nuances even after several hearings, and a wonderful sense of *sound* when it comes to harmony and piano textures. Apart from a couple of Balakirev's and Tchaikovsky's piano pieces hardly any other Russian composer before Skryabin and Rachmaninoff composed solo piano music with such harmonic and textural richness and idiomatic and virtuosic pianism as Lyapunov in his transcendental studies. However, regardless of their position in Russian music history, these pieces unveil an extremely attractive musical universe in which many listeners would probably delight, assuming a performer on the highest level.

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Abstract

Franz Liszt originally planned to write 24 studies in all keys, but he completed only twelve, the famous *Études d'exécution transcendante* (1851). However, half a century later the Russian Sergey Lyapunov (1859–1924) fulfilled Liszt's abandoned project by composing *12 Études d'exécution transcendante* (Op. 11) in the sharp keys not utilized by Liszt. The main objective of this article is to examine two highly interesting features in Lyapunov's transcendental studies that have been only sporadically touched upon in previous Western and Russian research: 1. *Modal harmony*, or more precisely the usage of the diatonic (church) modes, which is an element that is almost entirely absent from Liszt's studies; 2. *The musical topics*, which are considerably closer to the aesthetics of the Balakirev circle and their followers (Lyadov, early Glazunov) than to Liszt's transcendental studies.

In a short Epilogue the author somewhat problematizes Lyapunov's standing as an epigonal composer, stating that, apart from a couple of Balakirev's and Tchaikovsky's piano pieces, hardly any other Russian composer before Skryabin and Rachmaninoff composed solo piano music with such harmonic and textural richness and idiomatic and virtuosic pianism as Lyapunov achieves in his transcendental studies.

Keywords: Liszt, Sergey Lyapunov, transcendental studies, modal harmony, musical topics

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