



Musorgsky

Richard Taruskin

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"It is [a] fully illuminated story that Richard Taruskin, in the path-breaking essays collected here, unfolds around Modest Musorgsky, Russia's greatest national composer.... [Taruskin's] tour de force comes with a frontal attack on all the Soviet-bred truisms that for a century have refashioned Musorgsky from what the evidence suggests he was--an aristocrat with an early clinical interest in true-to-life musical portraiture and a later penchant for drinking partners who were both folklore buffs and political reactionaries democrat."--
From the foreword

Incorporating both new and now-classic essays, this book for the first time sets the vocal works of Modest Musorgsky in a fully detailed cultural, political, and historical context. From this perspective Richard Taruskin revises fundamentally the composer's historical and artistic image, in particular debunking the century-old dogmas of Vladimir Stasov, Musorgsky's first biographer. Here the author offers the most complete explanation of the revision of the opera *Boris Godunov*, compares it to contemporaneous operas by Chaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, advances a revisionary characterization of *Khovanshchina* as an aristocratic tragedy informed by a pessimistic view of history, discusses Musorgsky's use of folklore, and, focusing on *Sorochintsi Fair*, brings to a climax his refutation of Musorgsky as a protorevolutionary populist. The epilogue is a survey of revisionary productions of Musorgsky's works at home during the Gorbachev era.

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