

Lyle K. Neff
Corrections to article “César Cui’s Opera *Feast in Time of Plague*,”
Pushkin Review, v. 1, 1998, p. 121-48.

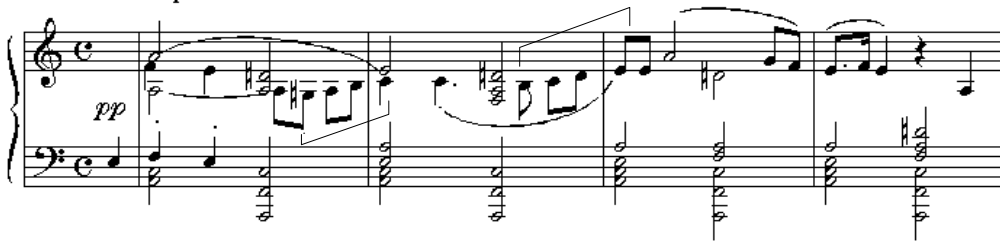
p. 121, footnote 1: “Lawrence” should read “Laurence.”

p. 123, 10 lines from top: *Cappeared*’ should read ‘*appeared*’

p. 126, brackets in Ex. 2 and 3 should be shown as follows:

Ex. 2.

Tempo di marcia funebre. ♩=88.



Musical score for Ex. 2, showing piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Tempo di marcia funebre. ♩=88." and the dynamic is "pp". The score consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and accidentals.

Ex.3.

Poco meno mosso. ♩=104.

М. ЧЕЛ. *ad libitum*



Musical score for Ex. 3, showing vocal line. The tempo is marked "Poco meno mosso. ♩=104." and the dynamic is "mf a tempo". The score consists of three staves, all in treble clef, with Russian lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: Почтен - ный пред - се - да - тель Я на - пом - ню о че - ло - ве - ке о - чень нам зна - ко - мом, о том чьи шут - ки, по - ве - сти сме - шны - е, от - ве - ты ос - тры - е и за - ме - ча - нья, столь

p. 147, note 26: quote should restore third line to read as follows:

Well, I deem
The grave did never silence with its dust
A tongue more eloquent.... (Wilson 1816: 44)

p. 147, note 35: *Kevelev* should read *Ševelev*

p. 147, 3 lines from bottom: *Бернзндт* should read *Бернандт*

p. 148, lines 5 and 7: *Беляев* should read *Беляев*

César Cui's Opera *Feast in Time of Plague*
Пир во время чумы

Драматические сцены А.С. Пушкина
Музыка Ц. Кюи

Lyle Neff, Translator

Prefatory Note¹

César Antonovich Cui² (1835–1918), a Russian of French-Lithuanian descent, was by vocation a professor of fortifications in St. Petersburg's military schools, but also a prolific composer and music critic. Although much of his musical output—except for some standard songs and piano pieces—was largely forgotten after his death until recently, he is remembered in Russian musical life as spokesman in the 1860s–80s for the “mighty handful,” or “new Russian school,” that group of composers which was headed by Milij Balakirev, mentored by Vladimir Stasov, and included Nikolaj Rimskij-Korsakov, Modest Musorgskij, Aleksandr Borodin, and Cui himself.

While Cui's musical setting of Puškin's *Feast in Time of Plague* officially dates from 1900,³ the idea of using the great poet's “little tragedy” had occurred to the composer over forty years earlier. In a letter of June 23, 1858 to Balakirev (some years before Dargomyžskij began composing his setting of the companion play, *The Stone Guest*) Cui reported that Viktor Krylov, his first librettist and later a successful playwright under the pseudonym Viktor Aleksandrov, brought Puškin's *Feast* to him as a libretto, which the composer at that time found “quite musical, truly good and effective” (Кюи 1955: 48). Over 30 years later Cui set the two songs from the play to music and published them in song

¹ My thanks to Lawrence Richter of Indiana University for taking the time to hear my rendition of the polyglot score at the piano and to John Hartley of Bloomington, Indiana for detailed comments and suggestions on the manuscript. All translations of Russian documents herein are mine.

² Given Cui's background, the Western spelling of his name is preferred here over “Cezar Antonovič Kjuj.”

³ That is, according to the published vocal score (Кюи 1901: 3). Both vocal and full scores were issued. Musical excerpts transcribed here are based on the vocal score.

collections: “Walsingham’s Hymn,” Op. 49, no. 5 (composed 1889, published 1895); “Mary’s Song,” Op. 55, no. 2 (composed 1890?, published 1897).⁴ These two songs were performed on stage for the first time as part of a performance of the play on April 3, 1899 during a “Puškin” soirée at the Mariinskij Theater in St. Petersburg (Чешихин 1905: 241). This centenary event, along with Cui’s lasting admiration for Dargomyžskij’s setting of *The Stone Guest* and the 1899 production of Rimskij-Korsakov’s setting of another “little tragedy,” *Mozart and Salieri*,⁵ may well have formed the impetus to set the entire play as an opera.

According to Nazarov (1989: 161–63), *Feast* was completed in summer of 1900, after the aging Cui had experienced a renewal of creative strength and hope with the completion and successful production of his full-length opera *The Saracen* in 1899 at the Mariinskij Theater. Cui arranged for a private reading of his new Puškin opera to take place on Dec. 4, 1900 with a few close friends. The composer sang the vocal part while his daughter Lidija Cezarevna accompanied him. According to G. N. Timofeev’s recollections of the event, “The music of *Feast in Time of Plague* produced a great impression, and, furthermore, an extremely full one: it was written to Puškin’s wonderful text without any changes or omissions.”⁶

A few months later Rosa Newmarch (1857–1940) experienced the new work while visiting the composer himself:

While I was in Russia in the spring of 1901, Cui played to me a “dramatic scene,” or one-act opera, entitled *A Feast in Time of Plague*. It proved to be a setting of a curious poem by Poushkin which he pretended to have translated from Wilson’s “City of the Plague.” [...] Cui has set Poushkin’s poem word for word, consequently this little work is more closely modelled upon Dargomij’sky’s *The Stone Guest* than any other of his operas. When I heard the work, I was under the impression that it was intended

⁴ Before being published in Op. 49, “Walsingham’s Hymn” had also been published individually (Кюи 1892: 109–12). Citations of 1895–97 as composition dates for the opera apparently derive that information from the date of publication of the songs in their respective opus numbers (see Кюи 1895 and Кюи 1897) rather than from the dates the songs were composed.

⁵ *Mozart and Salieri* was first produced in Moscow on Dec. 7, 1898 at Mamontov’s Private Russian Opera, and later reviewed by Cui on Mar. 12, 1899 in *Новости и биржевая газета*. Another of Rimskij-Korsakov’s operas, the one-act *Noblewoman Vera Sheloga*, reviewed by Cui on Mar. 24, 1899 in the same periodical (Кюи 1952: 659), provided for Cui another example of a relatively unchanged blank-verse drama set to music, in this case, the first act of Lev Mej’s *The Maid of Pskov*.

⁶ Timofeev’s unpublished reminiscences quoted in Nazarov are titled *Заметки о встречах с Ц.А. Кюи*.

only as a dramatic cantata, but it was afterwards produced as an opera... The song sung by Walsingham's mistress, Mary ("Time was"), which is Scotch in character, has considerable pathetic charm, and struck me as the most spontaneous number in the work, which, on the whole, seems an effort to fit music not essentially tragic in character to a subject of the gloomiest nature (Newmarch 1914: 277–78).⁷

Months before the premiere Cui felt satisfied but ambivalent about his new work, as he expressed in a letter to M. S. Kerzina on Mar. 29, 1901: "I am pleased with *Feast*. *Feast* has Capped, but isn't the merit in that to a significant degree Puškin's?" In the same missive he boldly claimed that, with regard to text-setting, "since the time of *Flibustier*,⁸ indeed, my vocal technique is without reproach," (Кюи 1955: 234–35), a claim that relates to correct declamation, but is rather exaggerated inasmuch as a number of passages in *Feast* leave something to be desired in the area of musical prosody.⁹

⁷ Newmarch's evaluation of "Mary's Song" as "Scotch" is not shared by M. Montagu-Nathan, who asserts that the song bears "no hint whatsoever of anything approaching a Scottish musical idiom. In every respect the contour of her melody would easily pass as that of a Russian folk song." (Montagu-Nathan 1956: 77).

⁸ *Le Flibustier* (titled *У моря* in Russian) was Cui's only opera written to a French text (by Jean Richepin), composed in 1888–89 and first produced in Paris at the Opéra Comique in 1894. Its only Russian production, using the composer's translation, occurred in 1908 with the forces of the Moscow Conservatory. As late as Feb. 1912 Cui still valued the "irreproachable declamation" in this opera, among other features (Кюи 1955: 424).

⁹ Cui's major lapses in prosody in *Feast* seem to be limited to three-syllable words in which initial- and final-syllable stress is interchanged, at least as regards the distribution of syllables among the strong and weak beats of measures. In Ex. (i), *вызовет* is set: despite the fact that the true stress falls on a longer note, the last syllable (albeit sung with vowel reduction) falls on the stronger beat after an emphasis-giving leap; hence the effect is one of at least equal musical stress on the two syllables, if not unnatural false stress on the latter.

[Allegro non troppo. 108.]
 ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ. *mf*

Тень ма - тери не вы - зо-вет ме-ня от-се-ля;

Feast premiered on Nov. 11, 1901 at the Novyj Theater in Moscow, along with Cui's Auberian comic opera *The Mandarin's Son*, composed in 1859 to a libretto by Krylov, and Rimskij-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*, composed in 1897, libretto adapted by the composer (Кюи 1955: 623). The double cast for Cui's new work was assigned as follows:

President: I.K. Gončarov, R.F. Bernardi
 Young Man: V.S. Sevast'janov, S.I. Gardenin
 Priest: F. . Šaljapin, V.A. Cvetkov
 Mary: S.A. Sinicyna
 Louisa: M.A. Dejša-Sionickaja
 Conductor: U.I. Avranek (Бернандт 1962: 227)

Subsequently the opera was produced in Moscow at the Bol'šoj Theater on Nov. 7, 1902 (Чешихин 1905: 241), and at least once more at the Music Drama Theater in Petrograd on Dec. 14, 1915 (Бернандт 1962: 227–28). A newspaper account of the Bol'šoj production reported as follows:

On November 7 C.A. Cui's operas *Feast in Time of Plague* and *The Mandarin's Son* were given for the second season ticket. In the theater the composer was present, watching the performance, as he was in the loge of the managing office of the Imperial Theaters. The public, overflowing the auditorium, having found out about the presence of the composer in the theater, began to call for Mr. Cui. The composer exchanged greetings with the public, and the unanimous calls turned into a tumultuous, endless ovation ("Tearp" 1902: 4).

Among his stage works, *Feast* was the first of three short, serious, one-act operas which Cui was to compose in 1900–07, the others being *Mademoiselle Fifi* (1902–03, after Maupassant and Méténier) and *Mateo Falcone* (1906–07, after Merimée and Žukovskij). Of the three, only *Fifi* achieved success in terms of widespread performance throughout the

Of course, syncopation, note duration, melodic pitch level, placement of syllables in the measure, and the accompaniment can work variously for or against declamation. Other examples that can be studied include the words *никогда* (Кюи 1901:19; text line 87), *мастерски* and *говорит* (Кюи 1901:39-40; text line 188), *проповед* (Кюи 1901:47; text line 224), and *достягнет* (Кюи 1901:51; text line 235). The last two instances are notable as contrafacta: each uses music employed elsewhere with different words, hence revealing the composer's longstanding preference for iterative musical structure over absolutely faithful declamation and melodic uniqueness of a text phrase. (By contrast, it should be mentioned that Rimskij-Korsakov's setting of *Mozart and Salieri* is comparatively nearly pristine in regard to observance of word-stress.)

Russian empire, no doubt thanks to its patriotic connotations which were especially appreciated during World War I (Кюи 1955: 692).

Compared to the other three operas which constitute settings of Puškin's "little tragedies" (i.e., Dargomyžskij's *The Stone Guest*, Rimskij-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*, and Raxmaninov's *The Miserly Knight*, 1903–05, libretto by Modest Čajkovskij¹⁰), only Cui's setting keeps the dialogue complete, without changes to Puškin's text (a claim which Cui and others often made misleadingly concerning Dargomyžskij's opera), although the chorus is, of course, allowed to repeat phrases in its six lines. As the shortest of these musical "little tragedies," and requiring only thirty-five minutes to perform, Cui's opera presents Puškin's text in a direct manner, employing a lyrical style even for sections of dialogue, as had been his wont for decades.¹¹ The opera is written as a single act without division into labelled numbers or scenes, yet certain speeches have a rounded or even closed musical form.¹² A few choice passages, such as the opening frantic "feasting" music (Ex. 1):

Ex. 1. (Кюи 1901: 3)



and the plaintive funeral march (Ex. 2):

¹⁰ This listing does not include Prokof'ev's youthful setting of *Feast* from 1903 (Prokof'ev 1979: 65–66, 69, 71). Prokof'ev specifically praised Cui's craftsmanship in the composition of "Mary's Song" (72–73).

¹¹ Richard Taruskin concludes that "the form of *Feast During the Plague* is not truly dictated by the words; Cui's treatment of Pushkin's play is in no way distinguishable from the arrangement and deployment of materials in a conventional libretto, save perhaps for its brevity" (Taruskin 1981: 328).

¹² Taruskin asserts that "The composer seized every opportunity to impose standard musical formats upon Pushkin's verse: long speeches are treated not as freely lyrical ariosi [à la Dargomyžskij—*L.N.*], but as far as possible as strophic (!) songs" (Taruskin 1981:328). This latter claim of strophic construction (with Taruskin's own exclamation mark) is not borne out by the score, especially with the free musical form in the Young Man's opening speech and the tendency in other long speeches toward rounded form (ABA or ABA', with or without a codetta of some sort). Only "Mary's Song" reveals a relationship to strophic form, and it is not a speech.

Ex. 2. (Кюи 1901: 21–22, vocal parts omitted; text line 103)

Tempo di marcia funebre. ♩=88.

recur at strategic points. The introductory music later underscores Louisa's account of her dream and finally recurs when the Priest leaves and the feast resumes, only to be interrupted by the funeral march (in accordance with the composer's added stage directions), whose theme dominates the final chords. In fact, the march can be viewed as a source for much of the musical material in the opera, particularly with the rising four-note figure in the tune (bracketed in Ex. 2 and 3), a motif that dominates the opening speech of the Young Man and suggests persistent striving against the gloomy conditions all around:

Ex. 3. (Кюи 1901: 5, accompaniment omitted; text line 1)

Poco meno mosso. ♩=104.

М. Чел.: *ad libitum*

Поч-тен-ный пред-се-да-тель! Я на-пом-ню о че-ло-
 ве-ке о-чень нам зна-ю-мом, о том чья шут-ки, по-ве-сти сме-
 шны-е, от-ве-ты ос-тры-е и за-ме-ча-нья, столь

Furthermore, the dirge-like character of the Priest's music (Ex. 4), in recalling the tempo, mode, and plodding harmonies of the earlier funeral march, suggests an interpretive stroke on the part of the composer which musically links the darkness of the plague with the church's message,

thus providing Walsingham with additional justification to reject the Priest.¹³

Ex. 4. (Кюи 1901: 37; text line 174)

Andante. $\text{♩} = 80$.

Священник:

mf

Без-бож-ный пир, без-бож-ны-е без-ум-цы! Вы пир-шеством и

pp

Feast in Time of Plague was by no means Cui's only work based on a Puškin source. It may be mere coincidence that both his first full-length opera, *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1857–58, 1881–82; libretto by Krylov), and his last, *The Captain's Daughter* (1907–09), derived from Puškin; but Cui greatly loved Puškin's directness and simplicity of language and like many other Russian composers relied on Puškin as inspiration for numerous songs and choruses.¹⁴

Indiana University

¹³ Other musical relationships of interpretive interest include the similarity in the contour of the opening motives of "Mary's Song" (Кюи 1901:10; text line 32) and "Walsingham's Hymn" (Кюи 1901:31; text line 138), and a subtle motivic and tonal parody of "Mary's Song" that can be detected in Louisa's first berating speech (Кюи 1901:20-21; text line 93).

¹⁴ Romances such as "Сожженное письмо" (op. 33, no. 4, 1886) and "Царскосельская статуя" (op. 57, no. 17, 1899) are still in the standard repertoire today. Notable Puškin-based vocal works with orchestra include Cui's bilingual setting of Mickiewicz's *Trzech Wudrysów* (op. 98, 1915) and *Шесть песен западных славян* (op. 99, 1915).

Пир во время чумы^{15,16}

Драматические сцены А.С. Пушкина

(Отрывок из Вильсоновой трагедии *Чумный город*)¹⁷

Музыка Цезаря Кюи

1900 г.

Под редакцией Лайла Неффа

ДЕЙСТВУЮЩИЕ ЛИЦА¹⁸

Председатель (Вальсингам ¹⁹)	<i>баритон</i>
Молодой человек	<i>тенор</i>
Священник	<i>бас</i>
Мери	<i>меццо-сопрано</i>
Луиза	<i>сопрано</i>
Негр (не поющий) ²⁰	
Хор пирующих ²¹	

Действие происходит в Лондоне, в 1665 г.²²

*ЗАНАВЕС.*²³ *Терраса.*²⁴ *Накрытый стол. Несколько пирующих мужчин и женщин.*

МОЛОДОЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК (*встает и ударяет ножом о рюмку*)²⁵

Почтенный председатель! Я напомним
 О человеке, очень нам знакомом,
 О том чьи шутки, повести смешные,
 Ответы острые и замечанья,
 Столь едкие в их важности забавной,
 Застольную беседу оживляли
 И разгоняли мрак, который ныне
 Зараза, гостя наша, насылает
 На самые блестящие умы.
 10 Тому два дня, наш общий хохот славил
 Его рассказы, не возможно быть,
 Чтоб мы в своем веселом пиrowаньи
 Забыли Джаксона. Его здесь кресла
 Стоят пустые, будто ожидая
 Весельчака, но он ушел уже
 В холодные, подземные жилища...
 Хотя красноречивейший язык
 Не умолкал еще во прахе гроба,²⁶

¹⁵ Notes to the text are given at the end of the text and translation.

Feast in Time of Plague
 Dramatic scenes by A. S. Pushkin
 (An excerpt from Wilson's tragedy *The City of the Plague*)
 Music by César Cui
 1900
 English singing version by Lyle Neff*

CHARACTERS

President (Walsingham)	<i>baritone</i>
Young Man	<i>tenor</i>
Priest	<i>bass</i>
Mary	<i>mezzo-soprano</i>
Louisa	<i>soprano</i>
A Negro (non-singing role)	
Chorus of feasters	

Setting: London, 1665.

CURTAIN. A terrace. A table is set. Several feasting men and women.

YOUNG MAN (*stands up and strikes his wine glass with a knife*)

Our President most honored! There's a person
 Whom we all know and whom we should remember.
 He had a gift for jokes and comic stories,
 For sharp rejoinders and keen observations,
 So full of bitter portent, yet amusing.
 They livened up our table conversation,
 And drove away the gloom brought by this plague
 Which now is visiting us, that infection
 Which robs us of our best and brightest minds.
 10 Two days ago how we did praise his stories
 With joyful laughter. It can never be
 That at our merry feast the name of Jackson
 Would be forgot by us. Here stands his armchair,
 Alone and empty, still as if expecting
 The merry chap; but he has gone away
 To dwell below in darker, colder places...
 I swear, though, that no voice more eloquent
 Was brought to silence by the dusty grave.

20 Но много нас еще живых,²⁷ и нам
 Причины нет печалиться. И так
 Я предлагаю выпить в его память
 С веселым звоном рюмок, с восклицаньем,
 Как будто б был он жив.

*(Встают с бокалами в руках, но по знаку Председателя снова садятся.)*²⁸

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Он выбыл первый
 Из круга нашего. Пускай в молчаньи
 Мы выпьем в честь его.

МОЛОДОЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК

Да будет так.

(Все пьют молча.)

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Твой голос, милая, выводит звуки
 Родимых песен с диким совершенством:
 Спой, Мери, нам уныло и протяжно,
 Чтоб мы потом к веселью обратились
 30 Безумнее, как тот, кто от земли
 Был отлучен каким-нибудь виденьем.

МЕРИ *(поет)*²⁹

Было время, процветала
 В мире наша сторона;
 В воскресение бывала
 Церковь Божия полна;
 Наших деток в шумной школе
 Раздавались голоса
 И сверкали в светлом поле
 Серп и быстрая коса.

40 Ныне церковь опустела,
 Школа глухо заперта.
 Нива праздно перезрела,
 Роща темная пуста.
 И селенье, как жилище

20 But we all here are still alive, and we've
 No reason then to grieve today. A toast,
 Friends, I am thus proposing to his mem'ry,
 With joyful clinking glasses and loud shouting
 As if he were alive.

(All stand up with goblets in hand, but sit down again on a sign from the President.)

PRESIDENT

He was the first one
 To leave our company; now in his honor
 Let us drink silently.

YOUNG MAN

Let it be so.

(Everyone drinks silently.)

PRESIDENT

Your lovely voice, my dear, brings out the music
 Of native songs with marvelous perfection:
 Now, Mary, sing us something sad and drawling,
 So that we then return ourselves more madly
 30 To merriment, as one who from the earth
 Was brought away by some strange apparition.

MARY *(sings)*

Once our country, ever growing,
 Flourished peacefully before;
 Churches filled to overflowing,
 Ev'ry Sunday bringing more;
 In the schoolhouse, faces beaming,
 Children's voices would resound;
 Scythe and sickle, brightly gleaming,
 Harvested the fertile ground.

40 Now church gatherings have ended,
 Schools are locked and silence keep;
 Groves in darkness left untended,
 Ripened fields with none to reap.
 And the village, like a lonely

Погорелое, стоит.
Тихо все, одно кладбище
Не пустеет, не молчит.

50 Поминутно мертвых носят,
И стенания живых
Боязливо Бога просят
Упокоить души их.
Поминутно места надо
И могилы меж собой,
Как испуганное стадо,
Жмутся тесной чередой.

60 Если ранняя могила
Суждена моей весне,
Ты, кого я так любила,
Чья любовь отрада мне,
Я молю: не приближайся
К телу Дженни ты своей.
Уст умерших не касайся,
Следуй издали за ней.

70 И потом оставь селенье,
Уходи куда-нибудь.
Где б ты мог души мученье
Усладить и отдохнуть,
И когда зараза минет,
Посети мой бедный прах;
А Эдмонда не покинет
Дженни даже в небесах!

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Благодарим, задумчивая Мери,
Благодарим за жалобную песню!
В дни прежние чума такая ж видно
Холмы и доли ваши посетила,
И раздавались жалкие стенанья
По берегам потоков и ручьев,
Бегущих ныне весело и мирно
Сквозь дикий рай твоей земли родной;
80 И мрачный год, в который пало столько
Отважных, добрых и прекрасных жертв,
Едва оставил память о себе

Burned-down dwelling place, stands bare.
All is still, the graveyard only
is not silent, growing there.

50 Ev'ry moment dead are carried
By the living, who with dread
Pray to God, as each is buried,
That His peace may calm the dead.
Ev'ry moment there are places
Needed as each is interred,
Pressing close in narrow spaces,
Gathered like a frightened herd.

60 If the grave commands me early
That my spring shall never be,
You, whom I have loved so dearly,
And whose love is joy to me,
I implore: from her be hidden,
Far from Jenny's body stay;
Her dead lips are now forbidden,
Follow her from far away.

70 Leave the village, stay no longer,
Seek another place to dwell;
Let your weary soul grow stronger,
all your torments to dispel.
When the plague has left forever,
Find my lowly grave somehow:
Jenny's love for Edmund never
Falters, though in heaven now!

PRESIDENT

80 We give you thanks, oh kind and thoughtful Mary,
We give you thanks for that most doleful song!
In former days, no doubt, a plague like this one
Must once have visited your hills and valleys,
And such a mournful moaning there resounded
Along the banks of ev'ry stream and brook,
Which runs along now peacefully and gaily
Through that wild land, your native paradise;
The gloomy year in which we saw so many
Courageous, good, and comely victims fall,
Has barely left a mem'ry of itself

В какой-нибудь простой пастушьей песне,
Унылой и приятной... Нет, ничто
Так не печалит нас среди веселий,
Как томный, сердцем повторенный звук.

МЕРИ

О, если б никогда я не певала
Вне хижины родителей своих!
Они свою любили слушать Мери:
90 Самой себе я, кажется, внимаю
Поющей у родимого порога.
Мой голос слаще был в то время: он
Был голосом невинности.

ЛУИЗА

Не в моде
Теперь такие песни! Но все ж есть
Еще простые души: рады таять
От женских слез, и слепо верят³⁰ им.
Она уверена, что взор слезливый
Ее неотразим: а если б то же
О смехе думала своем, то верно
100 Все б улыбалась. Вальсингам хвалил
Крикливых северных красавиц: вот
Она и расстоналась. Ненавижу
Волос шотландских этих желтизну.

*(Луиза оканчивает свою фразу в прежнем темпе, не обращая
внимания на его перемену в акомпанименте.)³¹*

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Послушайте: я слышу стук колес!

*(Едет телега, наполненная мертвыми телами. Негр
управляет ею. Луиза падает в обморок.)³²*

Ага! Луизе дурно; в ней я думал,
По языку судя, мужское сердце.
Но так-то: нежного слабей жестокий,
И страх живет в душе, страстями томимой!
Брось, Мери, ей воды в лицо.

(Около Луизы суетятся.)³³

Ей лучше.

In some reflective, simple shepherd's ditty,
 At once both sad and pleasant... No, there's naught
 That can so sadden us amid our pleasures
 Like languid sounds repeated by the heart.

MARY

Oh, had I never sung such songs as that one
 Outside my parents' cottage far up north!
 They loved to listen to their little Mary:
 90 It seems that I can hear my own voice singing
 As I would sit at home upon the threshold.
 My voice was sweeter in those old days: it
 Was then a voice of innocence.

LOUISA

Such folksongs

These days are out of fashion. But there still
 Are those of simple spirit gladly melting
 At women's tears and blindly trusting them.
 And she is certain that those tear-stained glances
 Of hers can overwhelm; but if she thought now
 Of laughter, rather than of tears, then always
 100 She would be smiling. Walsingham, we know,
 Has often praised loud northern beauties: there
 She goes and starts her moaning. Scottish maidens,
 Like these with yellow tresses, I detest.

*(Louisa ends her phrase in the previous tempo, not paying attention
 to the change of tempo in the accompaniment.)*

PRESIDENT

A noise I hear: just listen -- grinding wheels!

*(A cart goes by, filled with dead bodies. A Negro is driving it. Louisa
 falls in a swoon.)*

Aha! Louisa's fainted; I was thinking
 That, judging from her speech, her heart was braver.
 But really, harshness is more weak than meekness,
 And fear can live in hearts where passions torture!
 Splash, Mary, water on her face.

(There is bustling around Louisa.)

She's better.

МЕРИ

110 Сестра моей печали и позора,
Приляг на грудь мою.

ЛУИЗА (*приходя в чувство*)

Ужасный демон
Приснился мне; весь черный, белоглазый...
Он звал меня в свою тележку. В ней
Лежали мертвые и лепетали
Ужасную, неведомую речь...
Скажите мне: во сне ли это было?
Проехала ль телега?

МОЛОДОЙ ЧЕЛОВЕК

Ну, Луиза,
Развеселись! Хоть улица вся наша
Безмолвное убежище от смерти,
120 Приют пиров ничем невозмутимых,
Но знаешь? эта черная телега
Имеет право всюду разъезжать.
Мы пропускать ее должны. Послушай
Ты, Вальсингам: для пресечения споров
И следствий женских обмороков, спой
Нам песню, вольную, живую песню,
Не грустию шотландской вдохновенну,
А буйную, вакхическую песнь,
Рожденную за чашею кипящей.

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

130 Такой не знаю; но спую вам гимн
Я в честь чумы: я написал его
Прошедшей ночью, как расстались мы.
Мне странная нашла охота к рифмам,
Впервые в жизни! Слушайте ж меня:
Охриплый голос мой приличен песне.

ХОР (*все кроме Председателя*)³⁴

Гимн в честь чумы! Послушаем его!
Гимн в честь чумы! Прекрасно! Bravo! bravo!

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ (поет)³⁵

Когда могучая³⁶ зима,
Как бодрый вождь, ведет сама
140 На нас косматые дружины
Своих морозов и снегов,
Навстречу ей трещат каминны,
И весел зимний жар пиров.

*

Царица грозная, чума
Теперь идет на нас сама,
И льстится жатвою богатой,
И к нам в окошко день и ночь
Стучит могильною лопатой!..
Что делать нам? И чем помочь?

*

150 Как от проказницы зимы,
Запремся также от чумы!
Зажжем огни, нальем бокалы,
Утопим весело умы
И, заварив пиры да балы,
Восславим царствие чумы!

*

160 Есть упоение в бою,
И бездны мрачной на краю,
И в разъяренном океане
Средь грозных волн и бурной тьмы,
И в аравийском урагане,
И в дуновении чумы!

*

Все, все, что гибелью грозит,
Для сердца смертного таит
Неизъяснимы наслажденья,
Бессмертья, может быть, залог!
И счастлив тот, кто средь волненья
Их обретать и ведать мог.

*

PRESIDENT (*sings*)

140 When mighty winter comes along,
Just like a leader, cheerful, strong
And hearty, sending us a greeting,
With shaggy troops of ice and snow,
The fireplace crackles at the meeting
And keeps the merry feast aglow.

*

 The dreadful plague, that gruesome queen,
Now comes upon us, yet unseen,
And boasts a harvest rich, increasing.
Upon our windows day and night
It knocks with graveyard spades, unceasing!..
What can we do to help our plight?

*

150 As with the winter's crafty tricks,
Our doors against the plague we'll fix!
We'll light the fires and fill our glasses,
While merrily our minds are drowned.
Before the feasting revel passes,
The royal plague shall then be crowned!

*

160 In waging battle there is bliss,
As on the edge of an abyss,
And in the ocean's angry flowing,
Amidst its dark and stormy swell,
And in the tempest's mighty blowing,
And in the whiff of plague as well!

*

 All, all that threatens and destroys
Conceals untold and boundless joys;
For mortal souls, perhaps this token:
A pledge of immortality!
And he who finds that pledge unspoken
There midst the storm shall happy be.

*

Итак, хвала тебе, чума!
 Нам не страшна могилы тьма,
 170 Нас не смутит твое призванье;
 Бокалы пеним дружно мы
 И девы-розы пьем дыханье,
 Быть может—полное чумы.

*(Входит старый Священник.)*³⁷

СВЯЩЕННИК

Безбожный пир, безбожные безумцы!
 Вы пиршеством и песнями разврата
 Ругаетесь над мрачной тишиной,
 Повсюду смертью распространенной!
 Среди ужаса плачевных похорон,
 Среди бледных лиц, молюсь я на кладбище,
 180 А ваши ненавистные восторги
 Смущают тишину гробов и землю
 Над мертвыми телами потрясают!
 Когда бы стариков и жен моленья
 Не освятили общей, смертной ямы,
 Подумать мог бы я, что нынче бесы
 Погибший дух безбожника терзают
 И в тьму кромешную тащат со смехом.

ХОР

Он мастерски об аде говорит!
 Ступай, старик! ступай своей дорогой!

СВЯЩЕННИК

190 Я заклинаю вас святою кровью
 Спасителя, распятого за нас:
 Прервите пир чудовищный, когда
 Желаете вы встретить в небесах
 Утраченных возлюбленные души.
 Ступайте по своим домам!

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Дома
 У нас печальны: юность любит радость.

So plague, our praise upon you here!
Your gloomy grave brings us no fear;
170 Your call does not disturb our leisure!
We raise our bubbling glasses high,
Drink in the fragrant wine with pleasure,
And maybe there the plague may lie!

(The old Priest enters.)

PRIEST

A godless feast, enjoyed by godless madmen!
Your banquets and your songs, depraved and wretched,
Do desecrate the gloomy veil of silence
Which now spreads ev'rywhere with certain death!
Amidst the horrid funeral in tears,
Amidst pale faces I pray in the graveyard;
180 But you, amidst your odious enjoyment,
Disturb the silence of the graves, thus shaking
The earth that firmly covers the departed!
When supplications of old men and women
Would not now consecrate the common grave-pits,
The thought could then occur to me that devils
Who tear the souls of godless men to pieces
Will drag them into utter hell with laughter.

CHORUS

His talk of hell is very masterful!
Go on, old man! Go on, your road awaits you!

PRIEST

190 I do invoke you by the holy blood
Of Christ, our Savior, crucified for us,
To stop this monstrous feast of yours, if you
Desire a life in heaven and the chance
To meet again beloved souls who've left us.
Go on, now, all of you go home!

PRESIDENT

Our homes
Are full of sadness: youth loves to be joyful.

СВЯЩЕННИК

Ты ль это, Вальсингам? Ты ль самый тот,
Кто три тому недели, на коленях,
Труп матери, рыдая, обнимал
200 И с воплем бился над ее могилой?
Иль думаешь: она теперь не плачет,
Не плачет горько в самых небесах,
Взирая на пирующего сына
В пиру разврата: слыша голос твой,
Поющий бешеные песни между
Мольбы святой и тяжелых вздыханий?
Ступай за мной.

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Зачем приходишь ты
210 Меня тревожить? Не могу, не должен
Я за тобой идти: я здесь удержан
Отчаяньем, воспоминаньем страшным,
Сознаньем беззаконья моего,
И ужасом той мертвой пустоты,
Которую в моем доме встречаю,
И новостью сих бешеных веселий,
И благодатным ядом этой чаши,
И ласками (прости меня Господь!)
Погибшего, но милого создання.
Тень матери не вызовет меня
Отселе; поздно слышу голос твой,
220 Меня зовущий; признаю усилья
Меня спасти. Старик! иди же с миром;
Но проклят будь, кто за тобой пойдет!

ХОР

Bravo, bravo! достойный председатель!
Вот проповедь тебе. Пошел! пошел, старик!³⁸

СВЯЩЕННИК

Матильды чистый дух тебя зовет!

PRIEST

200 Tell me, oh Walsingham: were you the one
Who just three weeks ago now, gently kneeling,
Embraced your mother's corpse with cries and sobs
And thrashed about upon her grave in sorrow?
Or do you think that she is now not weeping,
Not weeping bitter tears in paradise,
While looking down upon this wretched banquet,
And her son feasting, as she hears your voice
Sing songs of madness and abandon, drowning
The sacred pray'rs and heavy sighs around you?
Come, follow me.

PRESIDENT

Enough! Why did you come
To cause me worry? I cannot, nor should I
Get up and follow you: for I am held here
210 By great despair, by a most dreadful mem'ry,
By knowledge of transgressions I have made,
By horrors of that emptiness of death
Which I have met of late in my own household,
By novelties of these insane amusements,
By beneficial poison in this goblet,
By tenderest (forgive me, Lord, my God!)
Endearments of a lost but precious creature.
My mother's shadow will not call on me
To leave here; much too late I hear your voice
220 Give me the warning; I will summon effort
To save myself. Old man! In peace now leave us;
But damned be they who choose to follow you!

CHORUS

Bravo, bravo, our president most worthy!
That's how to preach for us! Be gone! Be gone, old man!

PRIEST

Matilda's sinless soul is calling you!

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ (*встает*)³⁹

230 Клянись же мне, с поднятой к небесам,
 Увядшей, бледною рукой, оставить
 В гробу навек умолкнувшее имя!
 О, если б от очей ее бессмертных
 Скрыть это зрелище! Меня когда-то
 Она считала чистым, гордым, вольным
 И знала рай в объятиях моих...
 Где я? Святое чадо света! Вижу
 Тебя я там, куда мой падший дух
 Не досягнет уже...

ЛУИЗА⁴⁰

Он сумасшедший:
 Он бредит о жене похороненной!

СВЯЩЕННИК

Пойдем, пойдем...

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ

Отец мой, ради Бога,
 Оставь меня!

СВЯЩЕННИК

Спаси тебя Господь!
 Прости, мой сын!

(*Уходит.*)

Пир продолжается. Председатель остается прогруженный⁴¹ в глубокую задумчивость.⁴² Издали доносятся звуки похоронного шествия. Пирующие прислушиваются как бы в оцепенении и потом с отчаянной решимостью вновь принимаются за пир. Занавес быстро падает.

PRESIDENT (*stands up*)

230 You swear to me, by raising unto God
Your ghastly, pale and withered hand, forever,
Within the grave to leave that name in silence!
Oh, would that I could hide this festive pageant
From her immortal eyes! She once had thought me
A man of purity and pride and freedom.
And she found paradise in my embrace...
What's this? The holy child in brilliance! Faintly
I see you there, where my poor fallen soul
Can never hope to reach...

LOUISA

He's going crazy:
He raves about his wife who's long since buried!

PRIEST

Let's go, let's go...

PRESIDENT

For God's sake, please, my father,
Leave me in peace!

PRIEST

May God grant you his grace!
Farewell, my son!

(*He leaves.*)

The feast continues. The President remains absorbed in deep pensiveness. From a distance are heard the sounds of a funeral procession. The feasters listen as if numb, and then with desperate resolution begin to feast anew. The curtain falls quickly.

Notes to Text:

16. Cui's libretto here is extracted from the vocal score of the opera. The few changes to Puškin made by Cui are noted in the endnotes, except for punctuation, which here follows Cui's vocal score; in general the edited Russian text presents Cui's text in modern orthography, restoring stage directions present in Puškin but omitted from the vocal score, and adding a few editorial clarifications. The English translation is meant for singing, hence observing breaks within the vocal line that would not be required in a verse translation for reading; but it also takes into account Puškin's verse structure, maintaining the line-breaks and rhyme patterns. Syllable count in the blank verse is maintained exactly except in a few rare instances where a final two-syllable ("feminine") ending on the same vocal pitch is rendered as one-syllable ("masculine"), or vice versa, as with the word *зроба* in the first speech (Кюи 1901: 7; text line 18). The German translation printed in the vocal score takes great liberties by comparison. (For an edition of Puškin's play, see ПУШКИН 1978.)
17. This information is missing from the published vocal score of the opera, an omission which seems to annoy Montagu-Nathan (77). Puškin gives the title of Wilson's play in English, not Russian.
18. The list of characters is not included in Puškin's text.
19. Character's name added by editor from dialogue.
20. This character is not included in Cui's list of *dramatis personae* for the opera, but does appear in the stage directions later as per Puškin.
21. The chorus as such is likewise not in the list of characters for the opera, but is present in the score. Puškin's text assigns these outbursts to *многие* ("the many") or *несколько голосов* ("several voices").
22. The actual place and time of action are not included in either Puškin's or Cui's texts, but is added here (based on Montagu-Nathan 1956: 76). The original play by John Wilson does not specify the date directly (Wilson 1816). Richard Taruskin takes the setting to be Renaissance Italy (!) (Taruskin 1992: 1024).
23. Curtain-raising not in Puškin.
24. Per Puškin: *улица* ("street"), not *терраса*. However, given the later passing of the dead-cart and the Young Man's third speech, staging for the opera should include a street near the terrace.

25. Cui's stage direction, not in Puškin.
26. This and the preceding line are rendered in the English here to match Wilson's original rather than Puškin:
 “Well, I deem
 The grave did never silence with its dust
27. Кюи 1901:8 has *в живых* instead of *живых*.
28. Cui's stage direction, not in Puškin.
29. Кюи 1901:10 lacks Puškin's stage direction. “Mary's Song” can be heard sung by Boris Christoff (Cui 1970).
30. Кюи 1901:20 reads *верить* instead of *верят*.
31. This purely music-related performance direction is not, of course, by Puškin.
32. The last sentence in these stage directions is by Cui.
33. Stage direction not in Puškin.
34. Stage direction not in Puškin.
35. As with “Mary's Song,” Кюи 1901: 31 here again lacks Puškin's stage direction. In 1901 N. Kevelev recorded “Walsingham's Hymn” with piano (*Singers* 1992).
36. In Puškin: *могущая*.
37. This stage direction from Puškin is missing in Кюи 1901: 36–37.
38. Cui here adds the word *старик* from the previous choral utterance (line 189).
39. Another stage direction from Puškin missing in Кюи 1901: 49.
40. In Puškin: *женский голос* (“woman's voice”).
41. In Puškin: *прогужен*.
42. Remaining stage directions not in Puškin.

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