

Scientific Dialogues: Russia and the UAE in the 21st Century

Materials of International University Scientific Forum
April 23, 2025

2025

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Part 1

April 23, 2025

UAE

Proceedings of the International University Scientific
Forum **“Scientific Dialogues: Russia and the UAE in
the 21st Century”**. Part 1.

(April 23, 2025. UAE)

DOI 10.34660/conf.2025.38.64.044

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IVAN IVANOVICH LAPSHIN ON THE WORK OF N.A. RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

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Abstract. *The article examines the views of I.I. Lapshin on the work of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov. It is noted that these views were predetermined by Lapshin's philosophical attitudes. It is pointed out that Lapshin's philosophy was a kind of Russian neo-Kantianism, which sought to know the transcendence of the world. It is emphasized that the revealed variety consisted in the philosopher's discretion of the possibility of cognizing the transcendence of the world in the act of creativity. It is established that I.I. Lapshin interpreted the music of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov as a pantheistic breakthrough to the transcendence of being.*

Keywords: *I.I. Lapshin, N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, Russian philosophy, Russian music.*

Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin (1870-1952) was an outstanding Russian philosopher and musicologist. He has wonderful thoughts about the music of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov. We would like to introduce readers to these reflections, but above all to Lapshin's philosophical teaching, which underlies his judgments about Rimsky-Korsakov's music.

Lapshin's philosophy is usually attributed to *Russian neo-Kantianism*, which focused on the issues of *cognition of the transcendence of the world: the nature of things, man* [10]. At the same time, the peculiarity of Lapshin's neo-Kantianism was that he saw the possibility of *cognizing the transcendence of the world in the act of creativity* (1).

Lapshin's attention to the problem of creativity as a philosophical task was also due to the philosopher's extensive erudition and his excellent knowledge of various spheres of creative life. Lapshin believed that in every epoch all types of creative activity are in a *synergetic unity* – it is significant that one of Lapshin's works, published in 1933 in French in Prague, is called “La Synergie spirituelle

(La morale, la science et l'art dans leurs reciproques)" [7]. Lapshin's extraordinary erudition is confirmed by many researchers of Russian philosophy (V.V. Zenkovsky, N.O. Lossky and others).

Almost all of Ivan Lapshin's philosophical texts are devoted to the study of the nature of creativity. The ideas expressed in them are summarized in his book ***"The Philosophy of Invention and Invention in Philosophy: An Introduction to the History of Philosophy" (1922; 1924).***

In this work, creativity is considered primarily on Western European material, while Lapshin divides creativity into *philosophical* and *artistic*.

Philosophical creativity, according to Lapshin, is a rigorous science that requires logic and thinking. This is a kind of field of scientific activity "surrounded" by the visible and the felt. Philosophical creativity is based on *a worldview*.

Artistic creativity, Lapshin believes, is a free play of imagination and fantasy. It is accompanied by joy, ecstasy and leads to the experience of *a universal feeling*: "Everything is in me, and I am in everything" (Tyutchev) (2). Artistic creativity is determined by *a sense of world*.

Lapshin emphasizes that these two types of creativity should not be confused: "Equally, *the fact that there were artistically gifted people among philosophers* and that many philosophical works are valuable as works of art does not in the least give us the right to speak of philosophy in general as art alone. Plato's 'Feast', some works by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Solovyov, etc., of course, are included not only in the history of philosophy as objects of research, but also in the history of art... but this in no way prevents us from separating the aesthetic shell in a philosophical work from the core of *scientific significance*" [6, p. 9].

Lapshin believed that overcoming the boundaries of the world in creativity occurs due to the fact that the creative person *feeling* an object and thus finds unity with it. (Lapshin calls this "the transfer of the psyche to objects".) Feeling, according to Lapshin, leads to *an understanding of the "alien self"*. (An interesting question arises: what does Lapshin's "alien self" mean: "I am a stranger" or "I am in a stranger"? It seems that Lapshin's "alien self" means the fusion of two "selves": "I am my own" and "I am someone else's".) It is important to note that the "alien self", Lapshin explains, can be found not only in another person (or in a group of people at once), but also in objects of animate and even inanimate nature.

The philosopher believes that the most vivid, distinct form of acquiring a "alien self" is *transformation*. Lapshin points out: "Our attitude to the 'alien self' is determined by the following composition of consciousness: for example, an imaginary transformation of oneself into an interlocutor, or (in several cases. – A.K.) empirical personalities forming a crowd with whom I am talking, or an even more vague 'transformation' when looking at an anthill, a swarm of mosquitoes, and even further – 'transformation' into inanimate objects" [6, pp. 293, 163].

According to Lapshin, transformation especially makes itself felt in *artistic work*. Such transformation, through joy, happiness from the opening prospects (ecstasy), leads to universal unity with the world. Lapshin recalls Hippolyte Tengg's words about Balzac: "Balzac's goal is to experience the joy of aesthetic transformation... and communicate this joy to the reader" [6, p. 280].

Based on the above arguments of I.I. Lapshin about creativity, we can conclude: according to Lapshin, *it is transformation in artistic creation that provides a breakthrough to the transcendence of being*.

Realizing the significance of this discovery, Lapshin dedicates an independent book to him, which he calls "**Artistic Creation**" (1922) (3).

It is important to emphasize that, while exploring the topic, Lapshin mainly talks about *music* (4). At the same time, the philosopher mainly talks about *Russian music*, analyzing the works of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov, M.P. Musorgsky and A.N. Scriabin. Let us turn to the articles devoted to the analysis of the work of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov.

Lapshin assigns two articles to Rimsky-Korsakov's work: "Philosophical motives in the work of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov" and "Musical lyrics by N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov". Of course, the problems of transformation in music are most thoroughly discussed by the author in the article "**Philosophical motives in the works of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov**" based on the analysis of the composer's creative activity. Let's get acquainted with this article.

According to Lapshin, Rimsky-Korsakov was distinguished by a subtle sense of *nature*. The thinker explains that Rimsky-Korsakov's perception of nature is carried out using a whole system of techniques, where *musical symbolism* plays the main role, based primarily on onomatopoeia (the sea, the rustle of leaves, etc.). "Onomatopoeia is here ... a reference point for the symptomatic expansion of our 'I', to include the surrounding nature in it" [5, p. 252].

Lapshin notes that such symbolism extends to the composer's "depiction" of not only sounds, but also *movements* (fast and slow), *shapes* (grandiose and miniature), *distances* (near and far), *contrasts* (light and darkness, cold and heat), etc.

The secret of such musical symbolism, according to Lapshin, lies in the composer's use of the principle of *analogy between different kinds of sensations*: "Between the rapidly ascending scale and the flight of an arrow, between the timbre of woodwinds and the feeling of cold, between the sounds of bells and the brilliance of fireflies, between low tones and darkness; between the overgrowth of the forest and the progressively increasing interweaving of voices in music" [5, p. 252].

According to Lapshin, Rimsky-Korsakov's musical symbolism "is the main technical tool for projecting our feelings onto external nature and back for sympathetic assimilation of external impressions by the soul" [5, p. 253].

Lapshin emphasizes that the secret of the extraordinary colorfulness and imagery of Rimsky-Korsakov's music is "the organic connection of auditory impressions with visual ones in (the composer's. – A.K.) creative work" [5, p. 253]. Lapshin draws attention to the fact that "to what extent Rimsky-Korsakov had this trait as one of the fundamental, organic properties of his artistic nature, one can see from the presence in his creative techniques of one feature, which (received the name. – A.K.) color hearing" [5, p. 253].

The composer "had very strong associations between a certain color and certain keys, so that he always preferred to compose music accompanying paintings of a certain predominant color in a certain key for a given color ... Thus, for a certain tonality and coloring, there was a well-known constant general emotional coefficient, which made it possible to bring into a particularly intimate, close connection the impressions of external nature with the inner movements of the soul" [5, pp. 253-254].

Rimsky-Korsakov's "love" for A major – A-dur is noticeable. Lapshin explains that Rimsky-Korsakov's "A-dur is clear, spring, pink. It is the color of eternal youth, eternal youth" [5, p. 263].

Lapshin points out: "Rimsky-Korsakov's religion is pantheism... It was only in the first period of his work that *aesthetic* trait prevailed in this pantheism, while in the latter it was *ethical*" [5, p. 258]. The aesthetic feature, according to the researcher, "nowhere ... reaches such integrity and completeness as in 'The Snow Maiden'" [5, p. 254]. In this opera, the main character, the Snow Maiden (the daughter of Spring and Frost), experiences a feeling of love, which turns out to be a feeling of merging with nature. Lapshin poetically explains: "The feeling of merging with nature is born in the Snow Maiden along with the birth of love in her heart. She says, 'What a beautiful green forest dressed up!.. The water beckons, the bushes call... and the sky, Mom, the sky!' Music inimitably conveys this sudden *change of the whole nature* in the eyes of a loving being. Here we are not talking about fantastic mental metamorphoses, but about a real psychological fact" [5, p. 254].

The culmination of merging with nature is the moment of the melting of the Snow Maiden, which, according to Lapshin, "seems to symbolize the sympathetic, joyful impulse of the soul to merge with the Cosmos" [5, p. 254].

However, Lapshin believes that none of Rimsky-Korsakov's works outlines the ethical side of his pantheism as vividly as in "Kitezh". The work harmoniously combines the depth of an ethical mood with a mystical worship of nature. Fevronia, the main character in this religious mystery, prays to God in the forest, where she lives in close communion with plants and animals. As Lapshin emphasizes, "her moral ideal is active love for people, eternal willingness to sacrifice oneself with joy. This willingness gives her the highest insight into the world, leads her

into mystical ecstasy, in which she overcomes the horror of evil and death... Her premonitions come true: at the moment of heroic death, she subjectively experiences the fulfillment of her expectations, she experiences supreme bliss and complete reconciliation with life" [5, p. 261].

Thus, Lapshin argues, "Rimsky-Korsakov is the greatest singer of *universal feeling, cosmic emotion*. His muse, who appears in shifts in (various. – A.K.) images... this is the same universal soul, whose presence in his soul was so vividly felt by the great musician" [5, p. 251] (5).

There is no doubt that, according to Lapshin, the music of N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov is a pantheistic breakthrough to the transcendence of being (6).

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12. Obviously, Lapshin's attitude to creativity was prepared by his study of the works of V.S. Solovyov. According to Solovyov, the knowledge of the world as an All-Unity is complicated by its distortion and falsity. According to Solovyov, there is no truth in our reality, and therefore we do not know the truth. "For ... the organization of knowledge, – Solovyov wrote, – the organization of reality is necessary. And this is already the task not of cognition, as a perceiving thought, but of creative thought, or creativity" [11, p. 743].

13. Lapshin devoted two of his works to the description of this experience: [4; 8].

14. "Artistic Creation", in fact, is a collection of articles in which Lapshin develops the ideas expressed by him in his work "Philosophy of Invention and Invention in Philosophy". Here is what he writes in the Preface to the collection: "In the two-volume work: 'The Philosophy of Invention and Invention in Philosophy'... the author of this book intended to analyze the process of creativity (first of all. – A.K.) in philosophy... The collection of articles offered to the reader's attention is devoted to a similar analysis of artistic creativity. These two works are interconnected ... and ... mutually complement each other" [2, p. 3].

15. And this is natural, since Lapshin was a musicologist. But I must say that the Russian philosopher was not only interested in music theoretically – Lapshin played the piano and sang beautifully. In one of N.I. Zabele-Vrubel's letters, he noted: "The ability to live for almost a month without hearing (music. – A.K.) indicates that the 'fons vital' (Latin – the source of life. – A.K.) is impoverished in a person" [9, p. 115].

16. Lapshin offers a similar conclusion in the article "Musical lyrics by N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov": "Pantheism is the basis of R[imsky]-Korsakov's worldview... The spiritualization of nature, Rimsky-Korsakov's feeling for it in the foreground. The singing of birds, the sound of the ocean, the brilliance of the stars, the numbness of cold, the heat of the sun, the change of rainbow colors, etc. find a symbolic representation in his music. But the descriptive moment always plays an official role here – in the foreground is the expansion of the artist's personal 'I', the awakening of cosmic pathos in him" [3, pp. 271-272].

17. For more information about I.I. Lapshin's views on the work of Russian composers, see: [1].