

Declamation in Russian Operas: *Kamenniy gost'*, *Zhenit'ba* and *Igrok*

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This paper discusses the possibility of identifying melodic patterns of declamation (*deklamatsiya*) as was adopted as a device or style in Russian opera. The concept of *deklamatsiya* was advanced by César Cui, who denounced the Italian aria and insisted that Russian composers should use Pushkin's text as libretto without any alteration. Cui stated this idea was demonstrated in the opera *Kamenniy gost'* of Dargomizhsky. Cui said that the composing device "melodic recitative" needs two elements: *deklamatsiya* and "musical mind." "Musical mind" uses a composer's imagination to set melody to a poetic text, while *deklamatsiya* faithfully duplicates the rhythm of the Russian language. After *Kamenniy gost'*, *Zhenit'ba* of Musorgsky was composed at Cui's suggestion. Imitating speech excessively, *Zhenit'ba* almost ignores the melodious side, but it still uses *deklamatsiya* as a device for vocal composition similar to the earlier opera.

Later, in *Igrok* of Prokofiev the device of *deklamatsiya* becomes a style to create a particular effect. Musicologists have pointed out that, though *Igrok* was influenced and inspired by *Zhenit'ba*, the *deklamatsiya* of *Igrok* differs from imitation of natural speech in *Zhenit'ba* and uses melodic formulas. Comparing these formulas of recitative this paper identifies two kinds of melodic patterns as "molds of *deklamatsiya*." The contours of the molds are close to the intonation patterns in certain types of speech, such as incantation. In mold A the line moves in whole- or half-steps, while mold B is basically a monotone with sudden jumps in pitch. These molds are inserted into the opera not to exaggerate the pose of singing or speaking, but to exaggerate the act of reading a text. These stylized intonational contours can be compared with general practices of reading texts in the theater.