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The  
MORKOV PROJECT

Elizaveta Miller  
Fortepiano

Oleg Timofeyev  
Seven-string guitar

SALON MUSIC FROM MID-19-TH CENTURY ST. PETERSBURG

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## Musical Life in 19th-Century St. Petersburg: Works for Russian Seven-String Guitar and Fortepiano

This recording is based on a little-known manuscript for guitar and fortepiano held at the Glinka Museum of Music in Moscow. On one level, the album aims to support the revival of the Russian seven-string guitar, an instrument with its own distinctive tuning (D–G–B–d–g–b–d’), rich history, and unique repertoire. On another, it uses this important archival source as a window into the broader musical culture of mid-19th-century St. Petersburg. To present a fuller picture, we have supplemented the manuscript selections with solo works for both fortepiano and guitar.

Some listeners may already be familiar with **Vladimir Ivanovich Morkov** (1801–1864), a remarkable figure in Russian musical life: composer, arranger, critic, and guitarist. In 2020, we released a recording of his works for one and two

seven-string guitars.<sup>1</sup> The arrangements featured here, for seven-string guitar and fortepiano, further attest to Morkov’s musical sophistication and stylistic fluency, whether working with Italian opera arias, Russian and Ukrainian folksongs, or French ariettas.

A word should be said about the uniqueness of this manuscript. While ensemble works involving the six-string (“Spanish”) guitar were common in 19th-century Europe, the situation in Russia was quite different. Russian guitarists tended to perform either solo or with other guitarists, rarely collaborating with pianists, singers, or players of other instruments. As a result, published or manuscript works pairing the seven-string guitar with any other instrument are quite rare.

Morkov’s manuscript is thus exceptional – both in its scope and in the technical quality of the music for each instrument. However, it also presents a significant

<sup>1</sup> “A Tribute to Morkov,” by John Schneiderman and Oleg Timofeyev, seven-string guitars. Hänssler Classics 2 CD set, HC 20018.

challenge: only the piano part has survived. Fortunately, all but one of the pieces also exist in versions for two guitars, allowing us to reconstruct the missing guitar parts with a high degree of confidence. This was not a straightforward task: sensitive to the character of each instrument, Morkov often wrote more elaborate versions for fortepiano than for guitar, occasionally assigning to the keyboard material that would be unplayable on any guitar.

The album opens with Morkov's **Potpourri of Russian Folksongs** (Track 1), which includes several genuine peasant tunes. The first, "A Birch Tree Stood in a Field," will be familiar to many listeners – this theme also appears in the finale of Tchaikovsky's *Fourth Symphony*. Morkov's setting is lyrical, though playful touches suggest his awareness of the folksong's tongue-in-cheek message: a woman's preference for a young lover over her old husband.

Tracks 2 and 3 – **The Bouquet from a Ball** and **A Dark-Eyed Girl** – are arrangements of light French ariettas that enjoyed wide popularity across Europe. The latter is the only piece in Morkov MS that does not exist in a two-guitar version. To reconstruct the missing guitar part, we referred to Théodore Labarre's original song for voice and piano.

The **Variations on "How Did I Upset You?"** (Track 4) are attributed to a composer with the last name *Eustachio*, likely a member of the Italian musical family active in Moscow. While little is known about this figure – possibly the son ("le fils") of the *Kapellmeister* Eustachio appointed to the Pokrovsky Theater in 1787 – the music suggests deep familiarity with Russian musical idioms. The folk song theme, with its irregular 14-bar phrase, is left intact – unlike in the famous *Souvenir de Russie* by Fernando Sor, who adjusted this very melody to fit the regular form.

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Tracks 5 and 6 are Morkov's straightforward yet elegant arrangements of **Privet** ("Greeting") by Alexander Dargomyzhsky and **Adieu** by Franz Schubert. Both originals are masterpieces of laconic musical language, and both are pleasantly direct and charming as adapted for guitar and piano.

**Piotr Naymanovsky** is a largely forgotten guitarist who appears to have published only one composition: **Variations on the French Song "Que le jour me dure loin de toi"** (Track 7). This rare publication – outside of Morkov's circle – nonetheless reflects a shared pedagogical lineage, likely through their teacher, the Russian-Czech guitarist **Andrei Sychra** (1773–1850).

A squire from the Tambov region and an accomplished improviser, **Fedor Zimmerman** was reportedly a frequent guest in Morkov's circle. His guitar music, often transmitted by others due to his reluctance to write it down, is inconsistent

in quality. But the two **Capriccios** (Tracks 8 and 9), dedicated to Morkov, are arguably his finest works and much more coherent than most of his output – perhaps thanks to Morkov's involvement in their publication.

Morkov's affinity for Ukrainian folk music is evident in **Ukrainian Song** (Track 10), a lyrical piece that joins several other Ukrainian-themed works in his solo guitar output. In a broader cultural context, such arrangements point to the complex dynamic between Russian cultural condescension and genuine enthusiasm for Ukrainian music.

The dramatic and virtuosic **Variations on an Aria from Bellini's *Il Pirata*** (Track 11) appears in two of Morkov's manuscripts as well as in a version by Sychra. Questions of authorship arise here: while the accompaniment is likely by Morkov, Sychra's solo version includes two contrasting introductions, one of which matches **Mauro Giuliani's** Op. 114 on the

aria “Oh, cara memoria” – suggesting a web of musical borrowing and adaptation.

**Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart’s Variations on a Russian Theme, Op. 20** (Track 12), chosen by Elizaveta Miller as her second solo piece, is the work of W.A. Mozart’s youngest son, who was also known as the Polish Mozart. Composed during his years in Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine), where the composer spent 25 years of his life, the piece reveals both technical brilliance and deep emotional resonance, and its theme – whether folk-derived or not – captures the spirit of Slavic musical tradition.

**Stepan Davydov**, a *Kapellmeister* at the Imperial Theaters and composer of ballets, sacred music, and operas, is represented by the charming **Arietta** (Track 13), frequently found in Russian guitar anthologies. Its delicate elegance provides a graceful prelude to the album’s final selections.

The last two tracks present different strains of musical exoticism. The **Bolero** (Track 14), taken from the 1838 ballet *La Gitana*, blends pseudo-Gypsy and pseudo-Spanish elements, foreshadowing the stylized musical language of Bizet’s *Carmen*. Its authorship is uncertain – both **Hermann Schmidt** and **Daniel Auber** contributed to the ballet’s score – but its vivid character speaks for itself.

The closing **Potpourri of Tyrolean Waltzes** (Track 15) reflects another form of musical “otherness.” Tyrolean motifs, including yodeling figures, were common in mid-19th-century Russia’s cosmopolitan soundscape. Morkov, like Sychra and others, embraced these flavors, blending them seamlessly into the seven-string guitar’s idiom.

This kaleidoscope of genres – folk songs, operatic fantasies, salon miniatures, and virtuosic variations – offers a rich portrait of musical life in 19th-century Russia.

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In Morkov's salon, as in this recording, Italian opera mingles with Slavic melodies, French charm, and Central European color, capturing a cultural crossroads that was both distinctly Russian and unmistakably Western.

*Oleg Timofeyev*  
*Chicago, April 2025*

**Oleg Timofeyev** is a musicologist, guitarist, composer, documentary film director, and the world authority on the Russian seven-string guitar tradition. Dr. Timofeyev holds an M.A. in Early Music Performance from the University of Southern California and a Ph.D. from Duke University. The recipient of two IREX Fellowships, two Fulbright Research and Teaching Fellowships, he has won the coveted Noah Greenberg Award for his CDs "Music of Russian Princesses at the Court of Catherine the Great." In addition, he has recorded more than twenty CD solo and ensemble recordings featuring the music for the Russian

seven-string guitar, to critical acclaim worldwide. Dr. Oleg Timofeyev has taught at universities and conservatoires in the US, Russia, and Ukraine. In addition to a book on Russian-Romani guitar playing (Centerstream, 2018) and a critical edition of collected works by Matvei Pavlov-Azancheev (with Stefan Wester, DGA Editions, 2020), Timofeyev recently published the ground-breaking monograph on the seven-string guitar tradition in Russia (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023).

**Elizaveta Miller** is a versatile historical keyboardist whose artistry spans harpsichord, fortepiano, clavichord, organ, and modern piano. Her repertoire encompasses five centuries of music, with a particular focus on reviving under-represented works, curating imaginative programs, and commissioning new compositions for historical instruments.

Winner of the First Prize at the 2013 Musica Antiqua Competition in Bruges,

Miller has since performed widely across Europe and Russia at festivals and venues such as the MA Festival Bruges, Beethovenfest Bonn, Bozar Music, the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, and The Homecoming Festival. As a continuo player, she has collaborated with leading conductors including Václav Luks, Reinhard Goebel, Maxim Emelyanychev, Robert Hollingworth, and Christian Curnyn.

Originally from Moscow, she studied at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory and the Yale School of Music. After nearly a decade on the faculty of the Moscow State Conservatory, she resigned in March 2022 in protest of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She was subsequently appointed Assistant Professor of Harpsichord and Coordinator of the Early Music Area at McGill University's Schulich School of Music in Montreal, Canada.

In 2024, she co-founded the ensemble *Les Temps Perdus* with cellist Jessica Korotkin, continuing her commitment to reimagining early music through performance and scholarship, and to mentoring emerging artists at the outset of their careers.

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## The Instruments

### **Seven-String Guitar by Mikhail Eroshkin, Ryazan Region, Russia, 1912.**

Mikhail Vasilyevich Eroshkin (1868–1922) began his career in the workshop of Franz Paserbsky, a prominent luthier best known for his innovations in the design of the modern balalaika. After Paserb-

sky's death in 1903, Eroshkin established his own workshop and quickly gained recognition; in 1907, one of his instrument received favorable notice at the All-Russian Exhibition in St. Petersburg. Eroshkin went on to build more than one hundred seven-string guitars, many of which were equipped with an additional neck and extended bass registers.

The instrument featured in this recording, bearing the number 64 on its label, was crafted in 1912 and represents a more traditional model with a single neck. Its relatively short string length of 59.3 cm makes it particularly well suited for our performance. This feature is of special importance in the context of Russian guitar-fortepiano duets, where the guitar effectively acts as a transposing instrument, tuned a whole step higher than its written pitch.

**Thirteen-String Guitar by Johann Gottfried Scherzer (1802–1870), Vienna, Austria, ca. 1860.**

Tuned at the regular pitch, this guitar is used only for the two solo pieces. Scherzer made it in typical Viennese fashion, i.e., as a six-string guitar with seven additional basses. For use as a Russian seven-string guitar, the Canadian luthier Scott Tremblay built a new neck, to accommodate the seven strings on the main neck and six additional basses.

**Grand piano by Anton Martin Thÿm, Vienna, ca. 1815. Rawlins Fund, 1985. NMM 03587.**

The piano featured in this recording is a Viennese grand by Anton Martin Thÿm, built circa 1815 and now housed in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. Though slightly older than the music of Vladimir Morkov, this instrument was selected for its capacity to match the Russian guitar in both color and projection. In mid-19th-century Russia, it was not uncommon to find such earlier pianos still in regular use, especially in private salons. The delicacy of this instrument's sound allows for a nuanced partnership between fortepiano and guitar, where neither voice dominates, and harmonies and melodic lines are woven into a single fabric.

Like many Viennese pianos of its time, this Thÿm instrument is equipped with an array of sound-modifying mechanisms, operated by no fewer than seven pedals.

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These include the familiar *una corda* and damper lift, as well as more unusual features designed to expand the instrument's expressive range. The harp stop, for instance, combines lifted dampers with a silk buffer placed against the strings, producing a muted shimmer reminiscent of a harp. The bassoon stop creates a low, buzzing resonance by bringing parchment into contact with the bass strings – a timbral effect evoking its namesake instrument. Two separate moderator pedals introduce layers of felt between hammers and strings, each to a different degree, yielding progressively darker and more veiled sonorities. The Janissary stop, a nod to the popular vogue for Turkish music, activates a mechanism of bells and a small bass drum mallet that strikes the underside of the soundboard; pressed gently, only the bells sound, while a firmer pressure summons the full percussive effect.

These colorful devices are not mere curiosities – they serve as expressive

tools, giving the performer a wide palette of effects. True to the practice of 19th-century Viennese pianists, Ms. Miller employs the stops selectively and imaginatively, using them to illuminate the contrasts and character shifts in Morkov's music, and at times to add a touch of theatricality. In doing so, she draws the listener deeper into the intimate, kaleidoscopic sound world this repertoire once inhabited.


*Arian Sheets, Curator of Stringed Instruments, National Music Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota, April 2025*





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**Piano tuner and technician:** Darryl Martin

**Recording engineer:** Peter Nothnagle

**Digital editing:** Oleg Timofeyev

**Digital mastering:** Peter Nothnagle

**Programme Notes:** Oleg Timofeyev / Arian Sheets

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