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## On the Outskirts of Europe: Mikhail Glinka and his Spanish Overtures

Natalie Olivia Maeda  
*Western Washington University*

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ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EUROPE:  
MIKHAIL GLINKA AND HIS SPANISH OVERTURES

Natalie Olivia Maeda  
WWU Honors Capstone Project  
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It is indisputable that Italian, French, and later German music...received universal prominence, and from them European music evolved. It became so firmly rooted everywhere and people became so accustomed to hearing it, that ordinary, ingenuous sounds of native music could hardly make much of an impression on a large number of people.

— Federovich Vladimir Odoevsky<sup>1</sup>

As the “closest Other of the Occidental world,” Spain became a popular target to exoticize in nineteenth century Europe.<sup>2</sup> There were several reasons why Spain would have been considered an ‘Other’ to the rest of Europe. After the end of Spain’s Golden Age in the mid-seventeenth century, Spain continued to decline politically and economically, all the while becoming increasingly culturally isolated.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, because Spain remained a highly Catholic society, many European countries viewed Spain as an antiquated, superstitious country that refused to progress into the modern era.<sup>4</sup> In complete contradiction with this view, however, Europeans also saw Spain as a sinful land filled with men and women indulging in their carnal desires and passions.<sup>5</sup> This belief was supported by the fact that bullfighting was considered a national pastime in Spain,<sup>6</sup> and that Gitanos, Spanish Gypsies, would often cater their dance

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<sup>1</sup> Federovich Vladimir Odoevsky, “The New Russian Opera, *A Life for the Tsar*. Music Composed by Mr. Glinka, Libretto by Baron Rozen,” *Russian Invalid*, Jan. 30, 1837, quoted in Alexandra Orlova, *Glinka’s Life in Music: A Chronicle*, trans. Richard Hopps, (London: UMI Research Press, 1988), 157.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Etzion, “Spanish Music Perceived in Western Music Historiography: A Case of the Black Legend?” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, 29 (1998): 95.

<sup>3</sup> Butler Clarke, *Modern Spain: 1815-1898*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 3-9.

<sup>4</sup> Etzion, 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Bullfighting: A Troubled History*, trans. Sue Rose, (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 95.

performances to tourists' preconceived notions.<sup>7</sup> However, these views on Spain were also compounded by the fact most of those who were writing about Spain had never actually been to Spain themselves; they were simply basing their information on previous writers who had traveled to Spain.<sup>8</sup> It should come to no surprise then that the exoticization of Spain was as widespread as it was. However, James Parakilas explains that as more composers became drawn to Spain, more people became interested in discovering the musical "soul" of Spain.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, there were composers, such as Georges Bizet, who had little interest in understanding Spain and simply used the country's exotic stereotypes to suit their creative interests, but there were also composers who spent time learning about Spain before they composed "Spanish" music. One such composer was the Russian Mikhail Glinka. Glinka spent two years in Spain, taking his time to become familiar with its inhabitants and music, and while he is better known for establishing a national tradition for Russian opera, Glinka played a critical role in developing a style of Spanish music by foreign composers that was more authentic to what Spanish music actually was.

Glinka writes that he arrived in Spain on his birthday in 1845, "completely delighted" by his surroundings.<sup>10</sup> After his compositionally fruitless trip to Paris, Glinka came to Spain with the "artistic objective" of collecting Spanish folk tunes as inspiration to compose a large work upon his return to Russia.<sup>11</sup> Glinka was hopeful that he would find what he needed in Spain because, as he wrote to his mother, the few Spanish folk tunes he had heard reminded him of Russian folk tunes, which had been the source of his two operatic successes, *A Life for the Tsar*

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<sup>7</sup> Lou Charnon-Deutsch, "Travels of the Imaginary Spanish Gypsy," in *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain: Theoretical Debates and Cultural Practice*, ed. Jo Labanyi, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

<sup>8</sup> Etzion, 94.

<sup>9</sup> James Parakilas, "How Spain got a Soul," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 137-139.

<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Glinka, *Memoirs*, trans. Richard B. Mudge. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 195.

<sup>11</sup> Orlova, 423.

and *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, Glinka came prepared for Spain. A year before his trip, Glinka began learning Spanish from a Spaniard, Biesma Guerrero, in Paris, so when he arrived in Spain, he claimed that he knew Spanish better than Italian.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, while in Paris, he studied several maps of the country and read classical Spanish literature to become familiar with the geography and culture of Spain.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps most significant, however, is that when Glinka finally went off to Spain, he was accompanied by Hernández Santiago, a Spaniard who had been his servant in Paris.<sup>15</sup> With Don Santiago as his personal tour guide, Glinka was able to explore Spain extensively, obtaining intimate experiences with each city he visited.

Once in Spain, Glinka became enamored not only with Spanish theatre and entertainment, but also by the Spaniards, who treated him with a warmth and cordiality he had not experienced anywhere else in Europe.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, Glinka appreciated how different Spain was from France, arguing that life in Spain suited his temperament perfectly.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the more time Glinka spent in Spain and the more he learned about its culture, the more the composer seemed to adore the country, unlike most other European visitors of the time, such as Théophile Gautier,<sup>18</sup> who, as Parakilas describes, became disillusioned upon arriving to the country they

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<sup>12</sup> Orlova, 425.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 420-422, 447. This is significant considering the fact that Glinka spent three years in Italy studying musical composition.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 428-429.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 452-453.

<sup>18</sup> Ivor Guest, "Théophile Gautier on Spanish Dancing," *Dance Chronicle*, 10, (1987): 3. Guest explains that Gautier, a French dance critic, visited Spain in hopes of studying authentic Spanish dance. Upon arriving to Spain, he quickly realized that the Spanish dances he had grown accustomed to in France were very different from the national dances performed in Spain. He was disappointed to find that the dances performed in Spain were not exotic at all, and were in fact, highly European in style. Like many travelers to Spain in this time, Gautier found that his exotic expectations of Spain were not met.

had been exoticizing for so long.<sup>19</sup> In fact, towards the end of his life, Glinka claimed the years he spent in Spain “were among the best in [his] life.”<sup>20</sup>

While Glinka enjoyed his time in Spain, he struggled to achieve his “artistic objective” of understanding the “national character of Spanish music.”<sup>21</sup> With every city and town Glinka visited, he encountered new and distinct types of dances, songs, and styles, each of which he copied into his Spanish album for future reference. However, within two months of his visit, Glinka realized that it would be difficult to find one unifying element of Spanish folk music because each section of Spain seemed to have its own culture and traditions. In a letter to his mother, Glinka makes an insightful observation:

Spain is not like any of the other parts of Europe, in that every province is clearly distinctive from the others. This is why most travelers describe her inaccurately, judging the whole from the parts. I, however, prepared for a long time for my trip and selected the most interesting provinces.<sup>22</sup>

It would seem that Glinka would keep this thought in mind for the duration of his trip because over the next two years, Glinka would work tirelessly to understand the regions that made up Spain.

Glinka wanted to find “pure” Spanish folk music, but this would prove to be difficult. He soon realized that, like so many other countries in Europe, the music performed in Spain’s national theatres was dominated by Italian music.<sup>23</sup> In order to overcome this obstacle, Glinka began collecting songs from workmen and common people, rather than listening to what was

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<sup>19</sup> Parakilas, 147-148.

<sup>20</sup> Orlova, 492.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 453.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 457.

being performed in Spain's theatres. In this way, Glinka made his way around Spain as an ethnomusicologist, keeping note of how each province differed, musically. He found that Arabic styles and tonalities prevailed in the folk music of New Castille, an area which was historically Arabic in origin. In Granada, Spanish citizens danced the fandango, while Gypsy citizens had their own dances, such as the *uncan*. In Castille and Aragon, Glinka found that the *jota*, a couples dance, was particularly popular.<sup>24</sup> In fact, it was based on one of these *jotas* that Glinka wrote his first Spanish piece.

Glinka first encountered the *jota* while staying in Valladolid, which was one of his first stops in Spain. It was there that he met Felix Castilla, a talented amateur guitarist. Castilla introduced Glinka to several folk songs and dances, but it was the *jota aragonesa* that captured the composer's attention most. In fact, Glinka would use this *jota*, along with Castilla's variations on it, as inspiration for his *Capriccio brillante*, which would later be known as his *Spanish Overture*.<sup>25</sup> Glinka was not unique in his attraction to the *jota aragonesa*. Indeed, non-Spanish composers, such as Franz Liszt and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and native Spanish composers, such as Fernando Sor and Pablo de Sarasate, had all been drawn to this particular *jota*, placing Glinka in company with a diverse range of composers all interested in writing about Spain.

However, unlike some of these composers, Parakilas argues that Glinka wrote his *Capriccio brillante* for Spain with the intention of having it performed at one of the theatres in Madrid.<sup>26</sup> This is a reasonable argument. A month before he finished writing the piece, Glinka writes to his mother that "literature and theatre [in Spain] are better than I would have supposed,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>25</sup> Glinka, 196.

<sup>26</sup> Parakilas, 154.

and therefore, having looked around, I think I might undertake something for Spain.”<sup>27</sup> This statement is significant because, before arriving to Spain, Glinka had intended to use the Spanish musical material he found for a composition he could bring back to Russia. Additionally, this statement reveals that Glinka had developed a respect for Spain that he did not share for France. Glinka arrived in Paris with the expectation that he could write something for French theatre, but he came to the conclusion that the tastes of French audiences were “very unmusical,” so he became uninterested in this endeavor.<sup>28</sup> By writing the *Capriccio brillante* with the intention of having it played in Spain reveals that Glinka held the Spanish audiences in a much higher musical esteem than he did for those in France.

Unfortunately, while Glinka was interested in composing music for Spain, the Spanish audiences seemed unwilling to receive it. Throughout his journey in Spain, Glinka noticed that Italian music was overwhelmingly popular in Spanish theatres, yet it was not towards the end of his journey that he realized that this Italian invasion would prevent him from presenting his *Capriccio brillante* in Spain. Somewhat bitterly, Glinka writes that his “enemies are the Italians with their ‘Lucias,’ ‘Sonnambulas,’ etc., with their Bellini, Verdi, Donizetti, and with their success... They have taken possession of the best theater in Madrid and the Spanish audience, which, like all audiences in the world, bows before fashionable idols.”<sup>29</sup> While Glinka was popular amongst the common people and the Gypsies he interacted with, he was unable to make a compositional debut in Spain as he had hoped. Despite this, it is clear that he intended *Capriccio brillante* for Spanish audiences.

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<sup>27</sup> Orlova, 453.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 418, 425.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 470.



A telling clue is in the piece's original title. While Glinka eventually changed the title to *Spanish Overture* under the suggestion of Prince Odoevsky in 1849, the original title made no allusion to Spain.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the original title of the piece was *Jota Aragonesa: Capricho Brillante*. The first title gave the piece a more local feel to it, as though the composer of the piece was from Spain. After all, a Spanish composer would not have to clarify that a piece based on the *jota aragonesa* was Spanish in origin. Additionally, the original title offers some intimacy with the intended Spanish audience since Spaniards would have been familiar with this popular *jota*. Glinka only changed the title to a more generic one after he left Spain and realized that the Spanish audiences were not interested in a national orchestral piece, least of all one by a Russian. In a way, by changing the title, Glinka was retrospectively shifting the piece's intended audience to non-Spaniards, but this does not change the piece's original goal. Additionally, and more importantly, when listening to the piece, it is clear the Glinka took great care to understand the source *jota* thoroughly.

Parakilas argues that when Glinka wrote his *Spanish Overture*, he purposely Italianized the melody to mimic the widespread Italianization of Spanish music that was popular at this time.<sup>31</sup> However, Glinka's Italianization of this piece is not as intrusive as one might think. Glinka simply adapted the *jota* for a "gran orchestra" and used the Western theme and variation model. The *jota aragonesa* theme can be clearly identified throughout the duration of the piece, even through the varying textures of Western orchestration.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, this was not the first time Glinka had Italianized a piece. In fact, it was through the Italianization of Russian folk songs that Glinka established Russian national opera in his operas, *A Life for the Tsar* and

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<sup>30</sup> Glinka, 196.

<sup>31</sup> Parakilas, 154-156.

<sup>32</sup> Orlova, 457.

*Ruslan and Lyudmila*.<sup>33</sup> While it is possible that Glinka was trying to mimic how Spanish composers of the time wrote music, it is also likely that Glinka was drawing from his experience in Russian opera when he was writing his *Spanish Overture*. If he was able to establish a Russian national style while fusing Russian folk music with Italian musical structures, perhaps he thought he could do the same for Spain.

Whatever his original intention was for the piece, however, Glinka left Spain without debuting there as a composer. However, he did not lose interest in Spanish music. Once Glinka left Spain, he brought along Pedro Fernández-Nelasco-Sandino, an aspiring musician Glinka met towards the end of his trip. As they slowly made their way to Russia, Glinka and Don Pedro would give private performances for the people they stayed with, giving their hosts a taste of Spain. Once back in Russia, Glinka continued working with the folk songs he had collected. Specifically, he was interested in using the melodies he collected in Andalusia, but because of the melodies' eastern scales, Glinka was unable to create a piece he was satisfied with. Eventually, he turned to some melodies he had heard in Madrid. As early as 1848, he had written what he considered an experimental work that he planned to expand into his second Spanish overture.<sup>34</sup> By 1851, Glinka expanded the piece to something he was satisfied with to present to Russian audiences.

The most obvious difference between Glinka's first and second Spanish overtures is that the first is based on a singular theme that can be clearly recognized, even as it develops throughout the piece. The second overture, however, is made up with several different melodies. From Glinka's *Memoirs*, one finds that at least two of these melodies are two La Mancha

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<sup>33</sup> Aleksandr Ivanovič Demčenko, "Contexts, Connotations, and Postscripts in Mikhail Glinka's Works." *Russian Journal of Academic Studies*, 1, (2007): 9.

<sup>34</sup> Orlova, 506, 540.

*seguidillas* he heard from a *zagal*, or a coachman, in Madrid.<sup>35</sup> This brings attention to the full title of his second overture. It reads *Souvenir d'une nuit d'été à Madrid*, or *Recollections of a summer night in Madrid*. As Parakilas points out, from the title it seems that Glinka is approaching his second overture from a different perspective than the first. While the first overture was meant for Spain, the second might have been composed as a way to share his experiences in Spain with non-Spanish audiences. Additionally, since the title is pointing to a summer night in Madrid, Parakilas argues that perhaps Glinka meant the piece to sound like “the carnival atmosphere of the Prado on a summer night,” when the air was filled with several different folk songs at once.<sup>36</sup> From this standpoint, Glinka would have been able to display many of the different folk elements he encountered in Spain.

Interestingly, the working title for this piece had been *Recuerdos de Castilla*, making it unclear about who Glinka had intended this piece for. The working title closely resembles the final title of the piece, in that both titles highlight the fact that Glinka is composing memories of Spain. However, because the working title was in Spanish, it almost seems as though Glinka intended for this piece to appear as though it was written by a Spanish composer, or at least someone with intimate knowledge about Spain, rather than a non-Spanish foreigner. He spent years reworking this piece, trying to get the exact sounds, rhythms, and melodies he felt best represented his time in Spain.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, Glinka's *Second Spanish Overture* might even be a better attempt at Spanish national music than his first. As mentioned before, his first overture was based on the well-known *jota aragonesa*. In fact, it was so well-known that it was one of the first pieces Glinka encountered in the country. There was nothing unique about Glinka using it

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<sup>35</sup> Glinka, 197.

<sup>36</sup> Parakilas, 156.

<sup>37</sup> Orlova, 506, 540, 560, 579.

for a Spanish piece, since countless of other composers used the melody in their Spanish pieces, as well. In a way, this melody had been completely exoticized by the time Glinka found it. On the other hand, for his second overture, Glinka used La Mancha *seguidillas* as the main themes, and while it is still difficult to determine which *seguidillas* these were, they were not as well-known to non-Spanish composers as the *jota*. This can be attested by the fact that a quick search reveals that compositions of La Mancha *seguidillas* are mostly by Hispanic composers.

Additionally, Glinka finished writing his first Spanish overture after he had only been in Spain for about four months. Over the next year in a half, Glinka would learn so much more about the different cultures and folk songs of each Spanish province. He would even learn more about Aragon and Valladolid, since he would visit both of these locations several times in the course of his trip.<sup>38</sup> In this way, Glinka composed his *Capriccio brillante* with much less knowledge of Spanish culture than he did with his *Souvenir d'une nuit d'été à Madrid*. While it can definitely be argued that Glinka's use of the *jota aragonesa* was much different than that of Liszt and Sarasate—as it will be later in this paper—Glinka's *Second Spanish Overture* was written by a composer with a much deeper understanding of Spanish music than his first, and this can be heard through the orchestration and sources melodies of the piece.

Of course, as has been previously stated, Glinka was not the only composer in the nineteenth century who successfully wrote Spanish music. In fact, there were a handful of composers, both Spanish and non-Spanish, who, like Glinka, were able to successfully adapt Spanish folk songs to Western concert music. However, Glinka's Spanish compositions tend to be different from other composers' Spanish compositions of this time, and in some ways,

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<sup>38</sup> Glinka, 203.

Glinka's compositions seem to reveal a deeper understanding of Spanish folk music. In order to illustrate this, one must compare Glinka's overtures to other Spanish pieces of the time.

Perhaps the most obvious composer to compare Glinka to is Franz Liszt. Not only did the two composers know of each other, but Liszt took a trip to Spain from 1844 to 1845, one year before Glinka did. In fact, it was Liszt's trip to Spain that inspired Glinka to finally take his in 1845.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, two of Liszt's Spanish compositions were written under similar circumstances as Glinka's Spanish overtures. His 1845 *Grosse Konzertfantasie über spanische Weisen*, a piano fantasy, was written while he was in Spain, and like Glinka's *Capriccio Brillante*, Liszt's piece was based on the *jota aragonesa*. Later in 1858, years after his trip to Spain, Liszt wrote another piano piece called *Rhapsodie espagnol*. Interestingly, Liszt once again based his piece on the *jota aragonesa*, but Parakilas explains that Liszt also used the *folies d'Espagne*.<sup>40</sup> The fact that he chose to use the *folies d'Espagne* for a Spanish composition and the *jota aragonesa* for two different Spanish pieces reveals that Liszt had a stereotyped idea of Spain that he was not willing to change. As mentioned previously, the *jota aragonesa* was a very popular Spanish song during this time, and countless composers used it for their Spanish compositions. While there is nothing inherently wrong with using such a popular melody, the fact that Liszt used it for two separate pieces raises some questions about how much he knew or cared about Spanish music. As exemplified by Glinka and as will be exemplified by the next composers, there were hundreds of other Spanish folk songs Liszt could have used, but he chose to use one melody twice. While this does not necessarily mean Liszt did not have a deep

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<sup>39</sup> Orlova, 419-421; When Glinka went to Paris in 1844, he hoped to meet with Liszt as a way to "get closer with the important artists of Paris" to help establish himself as a composer, however, at the time, Liszt was not in France. When Glinka found out Liszt was in Spain, he wrote; "Liszt is going to Spain. This has awakened my long-standing desire to go to Spain."

<sup>40</sup> Parakilas, 158.

understanding of Spanish music, it at least implies that he only wanted to write about Spain from the shallow parameters he had set for it. This is further supported when Parakilas points out that, while Liszt noted that he never heard the *folies d'Espagne* being played in Spain, it was such a popular 'Spanish' song outside of Spain, he included it in his 1858 piece on Spain.

Despite the issues with his source material, Liszt treats the both the *jota aragonesa* and the *folies d'Espagne* with care. In both pieces, it is evident that Liszt is writing to display his virtuosity on the piano. While the listener is able to hear the *jota*'s melody, Liszt often blurs it with scale-like embellishments. In his *Grosse Konzertfantasie über spanische Weisen*, he develops the melody through distortions of the original pitches. In particular, he uses the pentatonic scale, and this might have been done to emphasize the exotic nature of Spain, despite the fact that Spanish folk songs do not typically use it. Contrastingly, his *Rhapsodie espagnol* has more rhythmic distortions of the main theme. Specifically, he makes use of dotted rhythms and syncopation. Additionally, the two hands in the piano are often offset from each other, giving the piece an unsteady, jagged feel. The piece grows increasingly hectic, especially in tempo, until it finishes off with a dramatic cadence.

Parakilas suggests that because Liszt was Hungarian, he was approaching Spain from a similar perspective as Glinka.<sup>41</sup> Hungary, Russia, and Spain were all seen as marginalized countries of Europe, which offers an explanation as to why Glinka was so sensitive to the folk music of Spain. However, while Liszt might have had a Hungarian heritage that he worked to connect to throughout his life, Liszt was culturally German. For this reason, Liszt probably did not approach Spain from the same perspective as Glinka. In fact, considering the fact that he limited himself to the types of Spanish melodies he used, it is likely that Liszt held a similar

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 158.

opinion on Spanish music as he did on Hungarian music. Liszt equated Hungarian music to Gypsy music, and in doing so, he ignored the rich folk tradition non-Gypsy Hungarians had.<sup>42</sup> In a similar fashion, Liszt seems to reduce Spanish music only to the *jota aragonesa* and the *folies d'Espagne*, despite the fact that Spain had so much more to offer, musically.

In order to gain a better perspective, however, Glinka's overtures should also be compared to works by Spanish composers. Choosing Spanish composers from the nineteenth century is somewhat difficult, considering the historical difficulties Spain was facing with its national music in the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup> However, two composers from this period played significant roles in developing Spanish music outside of Spain, and while they are both significantly younger than Glinka, it would be useful to compare some of their Spanish compositions to Glinka's overtures. They are Pablo de Sarasate and Isaac Albéniz.

Born in Pamplona, Navarre, Sarasate showed an aptitude for the violin at a young age. That is how he found himself at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of twelve.<sup>44</sup> In fact, Sarasate spent most of his life in Paris, receiving most of his musical education from France. For this reason, Grange Woolley explains, Sarasate "considered himself more a Frenchman than a Spaniard."<sup>45</sup> With the exception of his hometown, Pamplona, Sarasate did not particularly like Spain, its inhabitants, or its culture. He would often criticize Spain for being a "*tierra de bárbaros*," or a land of barbarians, and in general he did not hold high opinions for Spanish music.<sup>46</sup> To further complicate matters, despite his self-proclaimed cultural identity, most

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<sup>42</sup> David Malvinni, *The Gypsy Caravan from Real Roma to Imaginary Gypsies in Western Music and Film*, (New York: Routledge, 2004): 8.

<sup>43</sup> Leticia Sánchez de Andrés, "Music and Education during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in Spain," *Sonus*, 31, (2010): 56-60. During the nineteenth century, Spain's music tradition was mostly centered on the Neapolitan School of Music and Rossinian style of music. Additionally, the country did not have a well-established music conservatory until the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>44</sup> Grange Woolley, "Pablo de Sarasate: His Historical Significance," *Music & Letters* 36 (1955): 237-238.

<sup>45</sup> Woolley, 240.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

Spaniards claimed him as their own and the French saw him as an authentic authority on Spanish music.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Sarasate often served as an advisor for the Spanish compositions of his friends, including Georges Bizet, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Édouard Lalo. How proficient Sarasate was at giving advice to these composers is debatable, especially considering Bizet's superficial understanding of Spanish music, as can be seen in *Carmen*. Alternatively, Woolley points out that when helping Lalo with his *Symphonie espagnole*, Sarasate supplied Lalo with melodies that closely resembled traditional Spanish melodies.<sup>48</sup> These circumstances make Sarasate an interesting Spanish composer. He wrote myriad of Spanish pieces, yet he identified more closely with French culture. Still, many of his Spanish compositions are made up of Spanish folk melodies along with themes of his own creation. While some Spaniards felt he misunderstood Spanish music, the rest of Europe heard Sarasate's music and believed it was authentically Spanish.<sup>49</sup>

Like Glinka and Liszt, Sarasate wrote a piece based on the *jota aragonesa*. Simply called *Jota Aragonesa*, the piece is written for solo violin and piano accompaniment. As a virtuoso violinist, Sarasate's composition is filled with quick runs and embellishments; however, he manages to make the piece sound very folk-like. This is helped by the endless repetition of the main theme, paired by the guitar-like accompaniment in the piano. Towards the end of the piece, the violin mimics guitar strumming, adding to the Spanish atmosphere of the piece. Another piece that also clearly embodies Spanish folk idioms is his 1874 *Airs Espagnol*. Just like his *Jota Aragonesa*, this piece is written for violin and accompaniment. However, it is a longer piece, made up with several themes, allowing Sarasate to develop the Spanish sound further than he did

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 239-239.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 248-249.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 242.



with his *Jota Aragonesa*. For example, while the piece starts out in three-time, it eventually shifts to 5/4 time, highlighting the rhythms characteristic of Spanish folk dance. Additionally, similarly to the *Jota Aragonesa*, the solo violin will occasionally mimic the guitar by using pizzicato. Finally, while the accompaniment mostly supports the violin solo, occasionally the accompaniment provides a counter-melody or harmonizes in parallel thirds with the violin, giving the piece additional ties to its folk roots.

Albéniz, however, comes from a different perspective than Sarasate. Born in the Catalan province, Girona, Albéniz was considered to be a child prodigy. While he was eligible to attend the Paris Conservatoire at age seven, he was deemed too immature to attend, so Albéniz began his studies in music at the Real Conservatoria Superior de Música, or the Madrid Conservatory.<sup>50</sup> Considered a “Spanish Liszt,” Albéniz had been touring around the world for a few years by the time he was a teenager.<sup>51</sup> Although he traveled away from Spain frequently, Albéniz had much stronger ties to Spain than Sarasate, which is especially interesting considering the fact that Albéniz was actually Basque. However, his strong identification with being Spanish was strengthened after he met and studied under Felipe Pedrell, a prominent Spanish musicologist, composer, and guitarist of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century.<sup>52</sup> Throughout his career, Pedrell worked to reestablish a national musical style for Spain. His ultimate goal was to create a pan-Spanish style by using Spanish folk songs as the foundation for all Spanish music.<sup>53</sup> Albéniz quickly subscribed to these ideas, and he would strive to uphold them in his compositions for the rest of his life.

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<sup>50</sup> Walter Aaron Clarke, *Isaac Albeniz: A Research and Information Guide*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Clarke, 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Felipe Pedrell, *Lirica Nacionalizada*, (Paris: Librería Paul Ollendorff, 1909), 9.

Unsurprisingly, Albéniz wrote an immense number of Spanish compositions that covered several genres. However, for the sake of brevity, this paper will only examine two movements from his *Suite Española No. 1*. The first and sixth movements, *Granada* and *Aragón* are not as focused on virtuosity as Liszt's and Sarasate's pieces are. In both of these movements, Albéniz takes his time developing the themes, often playing with the major and minor modes. *Granada* is characterized by rolled chords that seem to mimic guitar strumming, and a slow melody that repeats and shifts throughout the course of the movement. Compared to the other pieces, *Granada* is subdued, revealing a calmer side to Spain that the other compositions have not. *Aragón* uses a theme that closely resembles the theme in *Granada*. However, this movement is much quicker and more upbeat. While the piano does not seem to mimic the guitar here, Albéniz seems to be interested in showcasing the danceable rhythms of the melody. Overall, both movements use repetition that is a characteristic of folk music, and Albéniz seems to be focused on emphasizing folk elements of the source melodies, rather than creating a virtuosic piece.

It should be noted that it is complicated to compare the compositions of each of these four diverse composers. This issue is mainly due to the fact that the examples drawn from each composer were written for distinct genres. Consider, for example, a comparison on how each composer treats the source material. Because four of the eight pieces examined use the *jota aragonesa*, it should not be too difficult to observe that each composer treats the *jota* differently. However, these differences are best explained by the genre each composer is writing in, rather than how well each composer understands the melody of the *jota*. For example, Liszt, Sarasate, and Albéniz were all solo performers, while Glinka was not. Liszt and Sarasate especially were considered piano and violin virtuosos, respectively, so their uses of the *jota aragonesa* are very different from Glinka's, especially since Glinka preferred writing for a full orchestra. Liszt and

Sarasate embellish the source melody with excessive scales and runs, making it difficult at times to hear the original melody. To a certain extent, Albéniz embellishes the source melodies as well, although not as nearly as dramatically as Liszt or Sarasate, and this is because, while Albéniz too was a virtuoso, he was more interested in developing the folk idioms than these other two composers. Glinka, however, focuses on trading the source melodies amongst the instruments, and he occasionally distorts the melodies with dissonances or by changing the rhythm. The second issue that comes with comparing pieces from different genres is the differences in textures. Both of Liszt's and Albéniz's compositions are for solo piano, while Sarasate's pieces are written for violin and accompaniment. These two formats have vastly different standards for textures than Glinka's orchestral fantasies, and for this reason, it would not be helpful to compare textures across the pieces.

However, there are a few aspects that can be compared across the pieces. One of these aspects are the pieces' rhythmic variability compared to the rhythmic variability of conventional Western pieces written by these composers. Josef Hanson explains that recent research has found that the native speech of a composer affects the rhythmic variability of their music. Specifically, when categorizing languages as stress-timed and syllable-timed, rhythmic patterns emerge from looking at music by composers from each type of language.<sup>54</sup> These differences occur due to the rhythmic natures of the languages. In syllable-timed languages, the vowels of the language take up about the same amount of time, so words and phrases with more syllables take longer to say than words and phrases with less syllables. Examples of syllable-timed languages include Spanish, French, and Italian. Alternatively, in stress-timed languages, the vowels of the language are variable, depending on how it is stressed. This means that phrases and words with more

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<sup>54</sup> Josef Hanson, "Rhythmic Variability in Language and Music of Latin Music and Latino-Inspired Composers," *Music Perception* 34 (2016): 482.

vowels do not necessarily take longer to say than words and phrases with less syllables. In fact, in stress-timed languages, it is, as the name suggests, the different stresses of certain words and sounds that affect the length of a word or phrase. Examples of stress-timed languages include German, English, and Russian.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, music written by syllable-timed language speakers tends to have lower rhythmic variability than music written by stress-timed language speakers.<sup>56</sup>

In his study, Hanson was interested in how these rhythmic differences manifest when a composer is writing music for a nation he or she does not belong to. Specifically, he was interested in comparing the rhythmic variability of Latino<sup>57</sup> music and Western music by Latino and non-Latino composers. In his study, Hanson compared the Latino and Western works of Aaron Copland, Liszt, and Glinka (all of whom spoke stress-timed languages); and Manuel Ponce, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Albéniz (all of whom spoke syllable-timed languages). He predicted that, because composers tend to emphasize the “idiomatic rhythms such as syncopation and hemiola indicative” of Spanish and Latino folk songs when composing Latino music, Latino-based works would have lower rhythmic variability than Western-based works, regardless of the native language of the composer.<sup>58</sup>

For the most part, Hanson’s hypotheses were supported, with one exception. While five of the composers had statistically significantly lower rhythmic variability in the Latino-based works than their Western-based works, Glinka actually had the opposite effect in his

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<sup>55</sup> For a more in-depth explanation of the differences between these two language categories, please read Marina Nespor, Mohinish Shukla, and Jaques Mehler, “Stress-Timed vs. Syllable-Timed Languages,” *Journal of Science Communication* 17 (2010): 1147-1153.

<sup>56</sup> Hanson, 482.

<sup>57</sup> Although Hanson uses the word, ‘Latino’ to describe the music and composers he is comparing, there are some pieces that would be better categorized as Hispanic since they are based on Spain, rather than Latin America. Additionally, he included Villa-Lobos as a representative for Spanish-speaking composers even though he was Brazilian and spoke Portuguese.

<sup>58</sup> Hanson, 483.

compositions. It should be noted that the differences between the rhythmic variability of Glinka's Hispanic music and Western music were not statistically significant. However, his music did not follow the patterns of the other five composers.<sup>59</sup>

Although Hanson did not examine Sarasate's compositions—most likely because Sarasate did not compose a large amount of non-Spanish music—his findings offer interesting implications for this paper. Hanson argues that it makes sense that composers would write with less rhythmic variability in their Latino/Hispanic compositions than in their Western compositions because Spanish is a syllable-timed language, and thus naturally employs lower rhythmic variability.<sup>60</sup> While Hanson cannot determine whether or not the changes in rhythmic variability are caused by intentional choices of the composer or subconscious processes, he points out that the composers who followed this pattern were conforming to the “rhythmic accent” of the Spanish language.<sup>61</sup> This opens up a new issue with Glinka's Spanish music because he did not follow this pattern. Specifically, it brings up the questions as to why Glinka did not follow this pattern, and where this places Glinka in the exoticization of Spain.

First, to understand why Glinka might have broken this pattern, consider Glinka's background. Glinka was born in 1804 to the Russian village, Novospasskoe, and for the first six years of his life, he was raised by his grandmother on her isolated estate. During this time, Glinka had limited interactions with other people and even the outdoors. However, it was at this time he had his earliest experiences with music. In his memoir, Glinka writes that while living with his grandmother, he developed a deep interest in the ringing of the bells of a nearby church,

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

<sup>60</sup> Truthfully, this point is a little complicated, especially considering the fact that Italy, France, and Germany are considered the countries that set the trends of Western music. As can be seen, two of the three countries are syllable-timed languages, so Hanson's argument does not fully explain the differences in rhythmic variability.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 485-487.

which he described had “sharp, shrill sounds” that he would imitate with two copper bowls.<sup>62</sup> In fact, until his grandmother’s death, the only music Glinka heard were the folk songs of peasants and church music.<sup>63</sup> Domingo del Campo explains that the folk music Glinka most commonly heard at this time would have been *podgolosnaya*, heterophonic music for three to four voices that, unlike its Western counterpart polyphony frequently employed dissonances.<sup>64</sup> Once Glinka began attending school in St. Petersburg, he continued to be exposed to the folk songs and traditions of other nations. For example, at school, he learned about Scottish dances, the quadrille, and the waltz.<sup>65</sup> Campo argues that all of Glinka’s exposure to folk music culminated in 1823 when he visited the Caucasus for medical reasons.<sup>66</sup> There, he visited the city Pyatigorsk, where he was introduced to Circassian dances and folk music.<sup>67</sup>

However, while his early experiences would create a deep interest and passion for folk music, Glinka’s later experiences helped him to appreciate Western musical styles and traditions, as well. In 1830, Glinka took a three-year long trip to Italy and Germany, and on this trip, he spent his time furthering his musical education. In Italy, he studied at the Conservatory of Milan under Francesco Basili, where he was introduced to Italian opera and *bel canto*. In Germany, Glinka studied under the music theorist, Siegfried Dehn, who introduced him to compositional techniques, including three and four-part fugues, thorough bass, instrumentation, and his science of harmony.<sup>68</sup> Unsurprisingly, during this trip, Glinka became very familiar with the works of Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini, and by the end of his stay in Italy, Glinka wanted to

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<sup>62</sup> Glinka, 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. He claims that the sounds of his early childhood (bells, instruments, family concerts) are what developed his attraction and love of Russian folk music.

<sup>64</sup> Domingo del Campo, “El Caso Glinka,” *Scherzo: Revista de Música* 187 (2004): 110.

<sup>65</sup> Campo, 110.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 110. A doctor suggested that Glinka visit the Caucasus for the mineral water commonly found there.

<sup>67</sup> Glinka, 24-25.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

compose works for Russia equivalent to the works Donizetti and Bellini had composed for Italy.<sup>69</sup> Bringing back with him the knowledge of Italian opera, French ballet, and Western music theory and compositional techniques, Glinka began to commit more seriously to composition. However, Campo explains that Glinka mostly went unnoticed until 1836 when he shocked Russia with his opera, *A Life for the Tsar*.<sup>70</sup>

*A Life for the Tsar* follows the story of the seventeenth century Russian national hero, Ivan Susanin, who helped protect Tsar Mikhail by withholding his location from the Polish army.<sup>71</sup> Besides the strongly nationalistic plot, Glinka meticulously incorporated various aspects of Russian culture into the opera alongside the Western concepts he learned abroad in attempt to create a national operatic style for Russia. The opera was clearly Western in structure. Richard Taruskin explains that *A Life for the Tsar* was the first fully sung Russian opera and the first attempt at writing a Russian opera in the tragic style of *opera seria*.<sup>72</sup> Because the work was written in the style of *opera seria*, Glinka included Western styles that were unheard of in Russian national theatre, such as *bel canto*, the use of *leitmotiv*, and diversely textured orchestral movements.<sup>73</sup> However, Glinka worked tirelessly to properly apply each of these techniques to the Russian language and story. For example, when composing the recitatives, Glinka considered how the intonations, accents, and intervals of the Russian language worked so the singers could sing the recitatives in a way that sounded natural to his Russian audiences.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, while Susanin does meet his heroic death by the end of the opera, Glinka finished the opera by exalting the tsar and the heroic deeds for Susanin, breaking with the contemporary German operatic

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<sup>69</sup> Campo, 111.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 113-114.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Taruskin, "Glinka's Ambiguous Legacy and the Birth Pangs of Russian Opera." *19th-Century Music* 1 (1977): 142-143.

<sup>73</sup> Campo, 111-112.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 111.

convention of tragic endings in favor of the tradition of happy endings in Russian tales.<sup>75</sup>

Additionally, Aleksandr Demčenko argues that Glinka even incorporated social messages that the Russian audiences would have been attuned to. For example, Demčenko argues that Glinka included commentary on issues such as the gender-stratified society of Russia by displaying a clear divide of the differences between men and women.<sup>76</sup> More interestingly, however, he argues that Glinka was trying to emphasize his idea that common people and peasants make up a vital part of a nation's identity. Specifically, Demčenko argues that the Russians in the opera represent peasants, while the Poles represent the arrogant, oppressive upper-class, so the opera ultimately celebrates the victory of the peasants.<sup>77</sup> This analysis offers interesting insight considering the fact that Glinka had deeply embedded Russian folk idioms within the entirety of the opera.

Up until Glinka, when Russian folk tunes were used in Russian national opera, they were used as decorative music; they did not add any depth to the plots, and they could have easily been replaced.<sup>78</sup> In fact, this was a technique that Glinka's rival, Alexy Nikolayevich Verstovsky, used in his own operatic works. Glinka, however, did not use Russian folk tunes. Instead, he composed his own melodies that exhibited the essence of Russian folk music.<sup>79</sup> More importantly, these folk-like melodies were vital to the character development and the drama of the plot, and they were embedded within every aspect of the opera.<sup>80</sup> Russian audiences were

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>76</sup> Demčenko, 197-198. Specifically, he argues that Glinka polarizes the sexes by only including basses and coloratura sopranos—the extremes of male and female vocal ranges—in the opera. Additionally, he explains the Glinka made sure to include exclusively male scenes and exclusively female scenes that demonstrated the gender-stratification by the music and what the characters were doing. Male scenes often centered around military activities, accompanied by noisy percussion, while female scenes emphasized grace and nobility, and were accompanied by calm orchestral colors.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>78</sup> Taruskin, 143.

<sup>79</sup> Campo, 111.

<sup>80</sup> Taruskin, 143.



highly receptive to Glinka's efforts in creating a Russian national opera and his use of folk idioms. Fedor Alekseevich Koni, a contemporary journalist, comments on Glinka's opera:

In his opera *A Life for the Tsar*, Glinka became the first to give melody the rights of citizenship in Russian opera, and having demonstrated that recitative is just as adaptable to the sounds of the Russian language as it is to Italian. Verstovsky, a composer not without talent, does not produce the same magical effect with his opera as Glinka, for in his case there is an appreciable absence of melodiousness, and his arias are therefore similar to couplets and his operas to vaudevilles... Verstovsky often took folk songs and turned them into operatic motifs, and they got lost. Glinka composed Russian melodies which then became folk songs. Thus it was necessary in the case of the former to coerce the folk song to conceal it in measured rhythm, while [Glinka] gave the melody complete freedom, as if it had just sprung from the breast of a peasant improviser.<sup>81</sup>

In the eyes of his Russian audience, Glinka had been able to capture the “idealization of the Russian national musical heritage” even as he set it in the context of Italianized opera.<sup>82</sup> As Demčenko points out, Glinka created a model for Russian national opera that future Russian composers would follow, which emphasized the fusion of Russian folk music with Western styles.<sup>83</sup>

While the opera was widely successful and popular in Russia, *A Life for the Tsar* drew two opposing criticisms. The first came from those who felt the opera's music was too much like the “interminable and monotonous song[s]” that Russian coachmen and other lower-class

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<sup>81</sup> Fedor Alekseevich Koni, “Melodies by D. Struysky for Tenor and Violin with Piano Accompaniment,” *The Northern Bee*, Apr. 17, 1837, quoted in Orlova, 165.

<sup>82</sup> Taruskin, 143.

<sup>83</sup> Demčenko, 200.

members of society would sing.<sup>84</sup> In other words, some felt Glinka's music was too folk-like. Contrastingly, the second criticism came from those who felt Glinka's opera was too Italianized, and this opinion would grow with Glinka's second opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.<sup>85</sup> However, these criticisms point to the fact that Glinka had successfully achieved his goal of "marrying"<sup>86</sup> Russian music with Western music.

Considering his success in establishing a nationalist operatic tradition opera, it becomes clear why Glinka approached his Spanish overtures in the way he did. This is especially true when considering that Russia and Spain had similar music histories leading up to the nineteenth century. Like the Spanish Bourbon monarchs of the eighteenth century,<sup>87</sup> the Russian monarchs, from Tsar Peter I to Catherine the Great, brought in Italian, French, and German musicians, which encouraged foreign musical styles to flourish over Russian ones.<sup>88</sup> As previously seen, Glinka would have drawn this parallel as soon as he realized that Spanish folk music was also overshadowed by Italian and French music. Additionally, because of his early and intimate exposure to Russian folk music, Glinka held the belief that pure folk music revealed a nation's true style, so he would not have been satisfied with the Italianized orchestras in Spain's main theatres.<sup>89</sup> In combination with all the other parallels Glinka drew between Spain and Russia, as well as with his deep interest in Spanish culture, Glinka set himself up to approach Spanish music just as he approached Russian music. As he did in his operas, Glinka imbedded Spanish folk music within the structures of Western music.

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<sup>84</sup> Orlova, 153.

<sup>85</sup> Taruskin, 145.

<sup>86</sup> Demčenko, 200.

<sup>87</sup> Ann Livermore, *A Short History of Spanish Music*, (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 109-120.

<sup>88</sup> Campo, 110; Hanson, 485-486.

<sup>89</sup> Orlova, 456.

The results of his efforts are clear. In both overtures, Glinka attempted to infuse the most important aspects of Spanish folk music he knew in order to create a deeper connection to the Spanish national character, even as he used Western techniques to do it. He did this by going beyond just using Spanish folk themes. The themes developed, shifted, and were traded amongst the instruments, perhaps as a way to represent the fluid nature of folk music. The strings and harp mimicked the strumming and picking of the Spanish guitar, and his inclusion of the castanets invokes the dancing that would invariably accompany these folk tunes.<sup>90</sup> While Glinka did not experience the same immediate success with his Spanish overtures as he did with his *A Life for the Tsar*, the overtures did not go completely unnoticed by the Spanish public. Some Spaniards, in fact, felt Glinka captured the “essence of ‘Spanishness’”<sup>91</sup> in his overtures, suggesting the fact that Parakilas might not be far off when he argues that Glinka was offering “a lesson in auto-exoticism” through the writing of his Spanish overtures.<sup>92</sup>

However, Glinka’s overtures seem to have gone deeper than auto-exoticization. While working to establish a Spanish national style in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—decades after Glinka had written his overtures—Pedrell writes:

How have the founders of modern musical nationalities produced this art...? Listening intently to and, with the soul in grace, charmed, the voices of the people; tempering their accents to the sound of the national soul.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Memoirs, 206. Glinka observed that many Spanish folk dances have three basic components: voice or melody, guitar or accompaniment, and dance or percussion. On one occasion in Seville, he writes that “during the dances the best local national singers would burst out in the Eastern manner, while the dancers would continue their intricate steps, so that we were hearing three different rhythms, that is the singing went on by itself, the guitar went separately, while the dancer would clap her hands and stamp her foot, as though entirely apart from the music.”

<sup>91</sup> Carol A. Hess, *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain, 1898-1936*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>92</sup> Parakilas, 156.

<sup>93</sup> Pedrell, 110. “¿Cómo han producido este arte los fundadores de nacionalidades musicales modernas...? Escuchando atentos y, con el alma en gracia, encantados, las voces de los pueblos; templando sus acentos al son del alma nacional.”

Pedrell modelled his ideas of Spanish nationalism on composers who helped shaped their own country's nationalism, and one of those composers was Glinka. Pedrell, however, recognized Glinka for the compositions he wrote for Russia, not the ones he wrote for Spain. Yet, Glinka cared deeply about Spain, so much so that he spent two years listening intently to "*las voces de los pueblos*," as if they were his own people.

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