

Centaur Records will be releasing *The Romances and Poems of Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev (1856-1915)* later this year. The translations for all 36 songs can be found below. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by Aleksey Berg, to whom I give my deepest thanks and appreciation. Poems which were originally written in English appear below in their original form.

Opus 17, No. 1 *The Isle*

Percy Bysshe Shelley (Russian translation by Konstantin Balmont)

There was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven:
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where not sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven;--
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

17/2 *My thoughts arise and fade in solitude*

Percy Bysshe Shelley (Konstantin Balmont)

My thoughts arise and fade in solitude,
The verse that would invest them melts away
Like moonlight in the heaven of spreading day;
How beautiful they were, how firm they stood,
Flecking the starry sky like woven pearl!

17/3 *Music when soft voices die*

Percy Bysshe Shelley (Konstantin Balmont)

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou are gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

**17/4 *That time is dead forever, child!*
Percy Bysshe Shelley (Konstantin Balmont)**

That time is dead forever, child!
Drowned, frozen, dead forever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes that thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

The stream we gazed on then rolled by
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

**17/5 *Not the wind, blowing from the heights*
Aleksy Tolstoy**

forthcoming

**17/6 *When, whirling, the autumn leaves*
Lev Kobylinsky (after Lorenzo Stecchetti)**

When the whirling autumn leaves
scatter over our poor cemetery,
There, where flowers cover everything,
You will find my final abode!

Then adorn my face with a garland of fresh flowers,
Which will have grown out from my heart, having been warmed by it,
Those flowers are the sounds of my unfinished songs,
They are words of love, unspoken.

17/7 Nocturne
Nikolay Fjodorivich Shcherbina

On a fragrant spring night,
I stare at the sky unceasingly,
Having fallen asleep, the sea is
So beautiful, so peaceful, and so comforting.

When I hear the crops growing,
And drinking in the breath of night,
My heart calls out to you,
My eyes see you everywhere...

It is as if those stars were you, looking upon me,
You, breathing nature's breath,
You, blossoming like the flowers of the night,
Inhabiting air and water.

When I hear the sounds of the night,
That pour forth and melt in the air
That mysteriously mix suffering and grief,
Calm and worry,

Then I feel that you are rushing to me
From far away, unseen,
As if I could sense it: you hurtle by me,
Like a flame licking at my heart...

Tell me, what is so precious that's hidden
In this night and its sounds, and is a part of you,
And which of its strings is fused
To my heart and my fate?

17/8 *Out from the hazy shroud*
Afanasy Fet

Out from the hazy shroud
Drifted forth the vernal crescent-moon,
Garden blossoms are breathing
Apples and cherries,
They are clinging and kissing,
Secretly, shamelessly.
Aren't you hurt?
Aren't you languorous?

Weary of singing,
The nightingale is without roses,
The old rock is crying
Dropping tears into the pond.
A drooped head dangles its tresses,
Involuntarily.
Aren't you hurt?
Aren't you languorous?

17/9 *The agitated heart is beating*
Nicolai Nekrasov

The agitated heart is beating,
My eyes grow misty,
A torrid wave of passion
Comes over me like a storm.

I remember the clear eyes
Of my distant wanderer
And repeat the passionate verses
That I once composed for her.

I call out to her, the beloved:
Let's fly away together, again
Into that promised land
Where love married us.

There, fragrant roses blossom,
There, skies are bluer,
There, nightingales sing louder
And the leaves of the woods are thicker...

17/10 *Everyone is asleep*

Afanasy Fet

Everyone is asleep: let us go to the shady garden,
Everyone is asleep, only the stars are looking at us,
But even they can't see us through the branches,
Nor can they hear us--only the nightingale can...

But he can't hear us either, his song is too loud,
Only the hand and the heart can hear:
The heart hears, how much joy and happiness
We have brought to this place;

And the hand, once it hears, tells the heart,
That another is burning and trembling in it,
And that this hand is warm from that trembling,
And that a shoulder involuntarily is leaning towards another shoulder...

26/1 *The Origin of the Harp*

Thomas Moore (Russian translation by Lev Kobylinsky)

Tis believed that this Harp, which I wake now for thee
Was a Siren of old, who sung under the sea;
And who often, at eve, through the bright waters roved,
To meet, on the green shore, a youth whom she loved.

But she loved him in vain, for he left her to weep,
And in tears, all the night, her gold tresses to steep,
Till heaven look'd with pity on true-love so warm,
And changed to this soft Harp the sea-maiden's form.

Still her bosom rose fair -- still her cheeks smiled the same --
While her sea-beauties gracefully form'd the light
And her hair, as, let loose, o'er her white arm it fell,
Was changed to bright chords uttering melody's spell.

Hence it came, that this soft Harp so long hath been known
To mingle love's language with sorrow's sad tone;
Till thou didst divide them, and teach the fond lay
To speak love when I'm near thee, and grief when away.

26/2 Canzone XXXII
Lev Kobylinsky (after Dante Alighieri)

Into the heavenly, infinite expanse, you are gliding,
Into the blessed land where holy Angels
Are enjoying peace in the serene dale,
You ascended, forever leaving behind,
Beautiful wives, but neither earthly troubles,
nor summer heat, nor the cold of a snow storm
did part us with your tender soul,
Into the bounds of paradise leading Beatrice...
But the creator himself, in silent admiration,
Called upon his immortal creation,
as he was raising Beatrice to the spectral realm...
Our life's grief and worry
should not touch your sinless soul,
and your eyes should close in your last dream.

26/3 Reflections
Lev Kobylinsky after (Maurice Maeterlinck)
Translated by Bernard Miall (1915)

Under the brimming tide of dreams,
O, my soul is full of fear!
In my heart the moon is clear;
Deep it lies in the tide of dreams.

Under the listless reeds asleep,
Only the deep reflection shows
Of palm, of lily, of rose,
Weeping yet in the waters deep.

And the flowers, late and soon,
Fall upon the mirrored sky,
To sink and sink eternally
Thro' dreamy waters and the moon.

26/4 *The dense woods*

Lev Kobylynsky (after Charles Baudelaire)

O somber, dense woods – like cathedrals,
How sad is your continuous rumbling, like that of an organ,
In the dejected hearts, full of bitter thoughts,
One can hear the dying groan responding to menacing reproaches...

You, terrifying Ocean, the hopping of your billows,
Your merciless roar in the silence of midnight,
And fierce laughter and bitter wailing,
They all remind me of my own laughter and wailing.

I love you, Night, my dreams are for you.
But the trembling of bright stars pours anxiety into my soul,
I seek only darkness, only cold emptiness.

But darkness is but a blank canvas, and full of delight,
Once again, I can see on it forgotten visions,
And the familiar figures of dear ghosts.

26/5 *Music*

Lev Kobylynsky (after Charles Baudelaire)

Music often transports me like a sea!
Toward my pale star,
Under a ceiling of mist or vast ether,
I set sail;

My chest thrust out and my lungs filled
Like a canvas,
I scale the slopes of wave upon wave
That the night obscures;

I feel vibrating within me all the passions
Of ships in distress;
The good wind and the tempest with its convulsions

Over the vast gulf cradle me.
At other times, dead calm, great mirror
Of my despair!

26/6 *Stalactites*

Lev Kobylinsky (after Sully Prudhomme)

How dear to me is the grotto, where the smoky light
Of my torch burns crimson in the twilight,
Where the sad echo answers
My sad, uncontrolled sigh;

How dear to me is the grotto, where the row of stalactites
Frozen, like bitter tears,
Hang from the stone vaults,
And droplets of water fall onto stone plates.

Let the solemn calm
Reign in the sad twilight forever,
And let the stalactites hang in front of me,
Like burial attire.

Alas! The bitter tears of my love
Have long since frozen,
But the heart is destined to weep
In unending winter frosts.

26/7 *Fountains*

Lev Kobylinsky (after Georges Rodenbach)

Like a translucent wall of airy palm trees in a forest,
A whole row of fountains towers in the greenhouse.
Each of them reaching up into the air, wishing they could fly into space,
Blowing a kiss to the azure sky.

When the evening shadows fall on the lawn,
Where respite and shelter await them,
They will stop their flight, calmly falling asleep,
As the dim light of the lamp, dolefully fades away.

26/8 *And the foes trembled*
Lev Kobylinsky (after Jose-Maria de Heredia)

And the foes trembled under the collective push,
And through the bloody, stomped-out fields,
Was heard a terrible cry of the triumphant chieftains
And piles of dead bodies, and last snatches of an argument...

Counting those who perished, like dead leaves,
The soldiers mournfully direct their angry gaze there
Where a company of Phraates' archers disappears;
Hot sweat smears their swarthy faces.

Marc Antony, pierced by arrows and covered by wounds,
Drenched in blood from head to toe,
Rides out arrogantly to the blare of trumpets,
Antony, on his exhausted stallion...
The firmament is ablaze in crimson red.

26/9 *Minuet*
Lev Kobylinsky (after Christa Fabry de Orias)

Among all the legacies of bygone years,
With their fleeting charms,
The ancient minuet pleases me most,
with its occasional skipping of the beat.

Yes, in those merry times,
Science was no more difficult
Than the sweep of a foot-- the clatter of heels
In tune to the measured sounds.

The merry ritournelle pleases me,
With its motley sparkling,
I love the melodious trilling of the violin,
And the call of the clamorous oboe.

But often their lively tune,
was pierced by a sad note,
And often, in the loud twirling of the ball
I heard a different echo.

As if it were an echo hurtled by
resounding baleful, merciless words,
And a face suddenly grew colder, in the midst of laughter,
A face ensconced in a wreath of fresh flowers.

So, while everyone was curtsying,
The fate of my grandmothers,
To the passionate whisper of the madrigal,
Was being decided.

Look: smoothly, proudly
A marquise glides before the crowd,
With a minister arm in arm: what a marvel!
But a tear glitters in her meek eyes...

Met with delight and admiration,
The tsarina of the ball is welcomed,
But on Temira's face there is a trace
Of struggle and secret suffering.

And every day a soothsayer
is summoned by Temira, in fear,
"Tell me, tell me my fate..."
"Mistress, your end will be on the scaffold."

26/10 Among the foes
Lev Kobylnsky (after Friedrich Nietzsche)

It's my turn. On a public square,
A horrible noose hangs.
Silent in their angry impatience,
A mob of enemies is standing round;

Silently, with his red beard,
The hangman stands in front of me.
But, my mind is laughing,
"All I know, all is in vain."

I laugh into the face of my enemy,
I yell, "I lived in suffering,
Always dying,
I cannot die!

Hundreds of times I have been a walking skeleton,
A puny worm in the darkness of the grave.
Again, I'm life, and spirit, and light,
And the breath of a new force!"

32/1 *In the year of loss*
Yakov Polonsky

In warmth, the evil grief is blossoming, turning green,
as if it were warmed by the vernal sun.
The tears have thawed out and are streaming forth like a creek.
Over there, over the sepulchral, loose mound,
A birch tree is standing and growing numb in the snow.

There will be a time, when the cold will seep down into the soul,
the cold will seep down into the soul, and grief will freeze,
as if it were standing still.
And there, over the little grave,
Spring will be in the air, the birch tree will wake up, and in fresh leaves
Will be dressed the long meshes of branches,
And children will run down with lilac flowers.
And silently will gather the sepulchral shadows,
to listen to the voices of carefree children.

32/2 *Angel*
Yakov Polonsky

I loved the quiet light of the golden lamp,
the reverential silence around it...
Full of a secret waiting,
How often would I, having pulled aside the bed drapes, stay awake,
Leaning my hand on the soft down,
and think, think: would my guardian angel this night
come to talk with me in the quiet?

And I dreamed: on the bed, near me
in the unsteady glow of the lamp fire,
He sat dressed in a silver-pale garment.
And whisperingly, quietly I shared with him,
thoughts, comprehensible to the child's mind,
and desires, comprehensible to the child's heart.

The tranquility in his rays was sweet to me,
I was fully permeated by his divine force.

With a smile on his burning lips,
he, the light-winged, thoughtfully listened to me.
But his meek eyes were looking into the distance,
they were reading the future in my soul,
and some sadness was reflected in them,
and the angel spoke:

O Child, child, I feel sorry for you!
Child, child, will you understand the words of my sadness?

I did not understand them with my childish soul,
But seized and kissed the fringes of his garment,
with tears of joy glittering in my eyes.

32/3 *My mind was oppressed by anguish*
Yakov Polonsky

My mind was oppressed by anguish,
My eyes burned without tears,
Pine trees intertwined over the lake,
The reeds were black, --slits could be discerned
From darkness to light over water.

And many, many stars were glimmering,
And into my heart the night's haze,
In a cold shiver, was seeping in.
I could see so few, so few,
Beams of love over the abyss of evil.

32/4 *Winter road*
Yakov Polonsky

The cold night is staring blearily,
Under the mats of my carriage,
Under the runners, the field is squeaking,
Under the shaft bow, a little bell is pealing,
And the coachman is hurrying on the horses.

Beyond the mountains, woods, in the smoky clouds,
The dull specter of the Moon is shining;
The howling of hungry wolves

Resounds in the fog of dark woods...
I see strange dreams.

I dream: there is a bench,
On the bench there is an old woman,
She's spinning yarn until midnight,
Telling me my favorite fairy tales,
Singing lullabies,

And I see in the dream how I'm riding on the back of a wolf,
Along a path in the woods,
To war with a sorcerer king,
Into a land where a princess is locked up,
Languishing behind a sturdy wall.

There, a glass palace is surrounded by gardens,
There, firebirds are singing at night,
And pecking at golden fruit,
There, there is a spring of life-water and death-water,
You both can and cannot believe your own eyes.

[And the cold night is still staring blearily,
Under the mats of my carriage.
Under the runners, the field is squeaking,
Under the shaft bow, the little bell is pealing,
And the coachman is hurrying the horses on.]

33/1 *Night in the Scottish Mountains*
Yakov Polonsky

Are you asleep, brother?
The night has cooled.
Into the cold,
Silvery shimmer,
Have sunk the tops,
of giant,
blue mountains.
It's clear and quiet.
And one can hear, with a rumble,
rolling into an abyss,
A loose boulder.
And one can see,
Under the clouds,
Walking on a remote,

bare cliff,
a small wild goat.
Are you asleep, brother?
Thicker and thicker,
Turns the color of the midnight sky,
Brighter and brighter,
The planets burn.
Menacingly,
Glimmers in the darkness,
The sword of Orion.
Arise, brother!
From the castle ,
Of an invisible lute,
the airy singing,
Was brought and carried away by fresh wind.
Arise, brother!
In response,
The piercingly-sharp
Sound of the copper horn
Thrice rang out in the mountains.
And thrice,
The eagles woke in their nests.

33/2 *The light of the rising stars*

Yakov Polonsky

The light of the rising stars – all night long,
When the sky is bright without moonshine,
And dark despite the lack of clouds,
Is captured in your wonderful eyes.
I am lost in front of them and cannot understand,
Cannot convey in meaningful words,
Those thrills, unknown to the heart.
I sometimes believe that it would be my happiness
To read love in your eyes.
But sometimes I feel frightened by them,
Like on a dark night, next to a buried treasure.
What does your mysterious glance express,
When your eyes both look and don't look
From under heavy eyelashes?
Isn't it like two stars, two heavenly wanderers,
Unaware of those whose dreams flow after them,
The stars burn without heat, but... they lure.

33/3 *The kiss*

Yakov Polonsky

Emptying my mind, and heart, and memory,
I kiss you deliberately, passionately,
I kiss you for the sake of her who made me
Hide my passions – I was shy and silent,
And for the sake of her who burnt me without fire,
And was laughing, and torturing me endlessly,
And for the sake of her whose love would have been my shield,
Yet now she is murdered, and sleeps under the sepulchral cross.
Everything that caught fire in my heart, for them,
Now, as it is guttering out, let it be extinguished in your embrace.

33/4 *What is she to me?*

Yakov Polonsky

What is she to me? She isn't my wife, or lover,
Or my own daughter!
Why then her accursed lot
Refuses to let me sleep all night?

It won't let me sleep because I dream
Of my youth in a stuffy prison.
I see vaults..a window behind bars,
A cot in the dank twilight.

From the cot, feverishly torrid, her eyes
Look, without thoughts or tears,
From the cot, there hang almost to the floor,
Dark locks of her heavy hair.

Her lips do not move, nor do her pale
Hands on her chest,
They are lightly pressed to her heart, without trembling,
And without hopes ahead.

[What is she to me? She isn't my wife, or lover,
Or my own daughter!
Why then her accursed lot
Refuses to let me sleep all night?]

33/5 *The prisoner*
Yakov Polonsky

A heavy vault presses down upon me,
A big chain is clanking around me,
Now, blown by the wind,
Everything burns all around me.
I stand, leaning my head on the wall,
I hear, like a sick man in a dream,
When he sleeps, with his eyes open,
There's thunder rolling in the world.

A flying wind outside my window,
Stirs the nettles,
A thick raincloud,
The wind carries over to the drowsy fields.
And God's stars refuse
To cast a glance into my dungeon,
There is only the reflection of lightening on the wall,
As it sparkles in the window.

This beam of light comforts me,
As, in an impetuous blaze,
It breaks free from the cloud.
I cannot wait for God's thunder
To shatter my fetters,
To open all doors ajar,
And knock down the guards
Of my hopeless prison.

Then I'll go, I'll go again,
I'll go ramble in the thick woods,
Following a meandering road through fields,
Jostling in the bustling cities...

34/1 *The last conversation*
Yakov Polonsky

A nightingale sings in the stillness of the garden,
Lights are extinguished beyond the pond.
The night is still. Maybe, you aren't happy
That there are just two of us here?

I, myself would want to leave you,
But I am sorry to leave that bench,
Where you love to indulge in your dreams,
and listen to the nightingale.

Rest easy! I will talk neither of
how I could have loved you,
nor of how my heart ached,
I won't talk of that.

My words are troubling, unsettling,
it's more enjoyable listening to the nightingale,
Because the nightingale cannot
err, cannot suffer, in love.

But even he fell silent in the dead of night,
He flew away, a happy one, to rest.
Wish me a good night, too,
Until we meet again.

Wish me to not notice the night,
And to wake up a different person in heaven,
Where I can meet you with dignity,
With a nightingale's song on my lips.

34/2 *Do not my passions*
Yakov Polonsky

Do not my passions
Stir up a storm?
To wrestle with the storm,
Is it in my power?

The storm has swept past,
And with rain and hail,
The storm cloud has spilled
Over the green garden.

Oh Lord! On the leaves,
Of a rose that dropped its leaves,
Sparkling, like diamonds,
Aren't those my tears?

Or, maybe Nature,
Like a heart in life,
Has its own smile,
And its own worries?

34/3 *The Mask*
Yakov Polonsky

As my idle gaze was gliding over
the motley crowd at the ball,
As I was tormented by evil boredom,
I met a masked woman by the colonnade

Holding out her child-like hand,
She squeezed mine, quite deliberately
My face was burning hot,
But I did not recognize my sweetheart.

From under the pink silk mask,
Two little eyes, like starlets, were beaming warmly,
And her gaze arrested on me,
Speaking both of love and reproach.

At last she quietly said:
“I've been looking for you everywhere, forever”
The quivering sound of her voice changed,
And I recognized the tremble of her dear hands.

Oh, in the name of artless love
Do not remove this soulless mask,
I am afraid, my dearest friend, as I am in love,
At this moment, I fear for you.

In the motley crowd of the ball
Let slander pass unnoticed,
And may the words of ingenuous love
Not be overheard by foul gossip.

34/4 *As I was languishing amid the soft rustling of the wheat fields*
Yakov Polonsky

As I was languishing amid the soft rustling of the wheat fields
And the azure of the sky;
I loved not, [while] delighting in the grain field,
either the dark clouds or the tempests.

But a storm cloud came with hail,
It rumbled – it thundered in the twilight;
And I, like an ear of wheat, now
Am nailed to the damp ground,

Am nailed to the damp ground – and am frozen,
Cold and numb.
And now, does it really matter whether it's the sun
Or a cloud that hovers over me in the sky?

34/5 *The last breath*
Yakov Polonsky

“Kiss me
My bosom is burning,
I still love..
Lean over to me.”
Thus, in the parting hour,
Now babbling, now silent,
Was your quiet voice,
As if it was melting,
in the depth of the soul,
of your expiring soul.
I dared not to breathe,
Into your face,
Like a dead man, I stared--
I strained my ears,
But--alas! my friend,
Your last breath
could not finish the tale,
of your love for me.
And I don't know,
how my life
will end
Nor where I will ever hear the end of that tale,
of your love for me!

34/6 *Night in Crimea*
Yakov Polonsky

Do you remember the glimmer of moonlight,
the rustling of the sea over the rock,
the trembling of drowsy leaves,
and the rattle of cicadas
behind the garden's hedge?

Through the twilight, in the highland garden,
We were walking; the laurels were blooming,
a grotto loomed behind the grapevine,
and a pool under the waterfall
brimming, was reverberating.

Do you remember the freshness of the air,
The smell of roses, the swirling streams,
the whole of Nature's charm,
and the involuntary meeting of lips,
into an unbidden kiss?

This is the music of Nature,
this is the music of the soul,
I heard it some other years,
After tempests and storms,
I heard it clearly in the stillness of air.

I listened--and my heart grew warmer,
by the Southern warmth in the air,
it was easier to sing and believe,
I listened, and I wanted this music
to permeate everything.

34/7 *My heart is like a spring*
Yakov Polonsky

My heart is like a spring, my song like a wave,
disappearing into the distance, overflowing,
In the storm, my song is dark, like a cloud,
At daybreak, it is reflected in the rising sun,

But if suddenly the sparks of unexpected love blaze up,
Or grief piles up in my heart--
Into the womb of my song my tears will pour,
and the wave will hurriedly carry them away.