

Research article

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“LOST IN TRANSLATION”? CHALLENGES IN CONVEYING THE ORIGINAL TITLES OF TCHAIKOVSKY’S CHILDREN’S ALBUM

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Abstract. Using the linguistic methods of metaphor, discourse, and comparative analysis, this study presents the problem of authentic translation of the composition titles from Tchaikovsky’s *Children’s Album*, Op. 39, for English editions or concert programs. We examine this problem from the perspective of the origins of this piano masterpiece and its subsequent transformations. Among many other factors, reordering of the compositions influenced the editorial decisions on selecting the proper equivalents for titles in English. Specifically, we explore how appropriate translations of the composition titles can help in preserving the important historical and cultural connotations and musical authenticity of the 24 piano pieces known as the *Children’s Album*, and therefore contribute to a better understanding of the whole original masterpiece, particularly in light of the significant reordering of the pieces in the first published edition compared to the original manuscript. By comparing the number of canonical known editions, we suggest a model designed to address the evident “lost in translation” issues in existing editions and resources.

Keywords: metaphor, musicology, translation authenticity, Tchaikovsky, comparative analysis, discourse analysis.

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«ТРУДНОСТИ ПЕРЕВОДА»? ПРОБЛЕМА АДЕКВАТНОЙ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ НАЗВАНИЙ ПЬЕС «ДЕТСКОГО АЛЬБОМА» ЧАЙКОВСКОГО

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Аннотация. С использованием лингвистических методов анализа метафоры, дискурсивного и сравнительного анализа в данной работе исследуется проблема аутентичности перевода названий пьес «Детского альбома» Чайковского для нотных изданий и концертных программ на английском языке. Проблемы анализируются с точки зрения истории возникновения произведения и последовавших за этим трансформаций. Среди многих факторов изменение порядка пьес оказывало влияние на решения редакторов по выбору эквивалентных названий на английском языке. В качестве ключевого момента работы исследуется вопрос о том, как адекватность перевода названий композиций способствует сохранению исторических и культурных коннотаций, а также музыкальной аутентичности 24 фортепианных пьес, известных как «Детский альбом», и, следовательно, лучшему пониманию всего произведения в целом. В частности, особое внимание уделяется значительным изменениям в порядке пьес, внесенным в ходе подготовки первого издания по сравнению с рукописным оригиналом. В результате сравнения названий на английском языке, использованных в ряде распространенных канонических изданий, предложена модель, призванная разрешить выявленные в имеющихся изданиях и ресурсах «трудности перевода».

Ключевые слова: метафора, музыковедение, аутентичность перевода, сравнительный анализ, дискурсивный анализ.

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Introduction

This article follows the series of works dedicated to the analysis of the transformations and genesis of the Children's Album, 24 pieces for piano, Op. 39, composed in 1878 by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893). It was first published as the Jurgenson edition [1], in which the compositions were significantly reordered compared to the original manuscript [2]. It is virtually undisputable that the sequencing of musical pieces within the complete work is not merely a logical decision but an artistic choice profoundly affecting the listener's appreciation of the narrative flow and thematic development of the whole music composition. This makes it rather surprising that the first systematic research efforts to examine the sequence of the *Children's Album's* compositions as found in the original Tchaikovsky's manuscripts, and to analyze its subsequent disruptive transformation did not emerge until the 1990s, nearly a century after Tchaikovsky's death [3, 4].

Our previous works identified the literary, linguistic, and computational grounds that support the following important findings [5]:

1. The documented author's approval of the first published edition with its rather disruptive reordering of compositions compared to the available manuscripts must not be considered as a final author's will. The metaphors that can be discovered from the preserved original manuscripts alongside the thematic and structural coherence of the compositions require significant efforts from both performers trying to deliver an authentic creation context to their audiences, and editors preparing publications in various national and cultural contexts.



2. The original version helps us understand the *Children's Album* as an integral inseparable larger scale composition rather than a collection of 24 independent pieces. The compositions are semantically and musically linked to appear as several untitled parts of the whole. The original version must not be ignored while translating the titles for the international audience.

3. Though the pedagogical value of the compositions from the *Children's Album* is undisputable, the purpose of advancing piano playing skills is definitely not the main motivation leading the composer to create this masterpiece. Therefore, the problem of translation must not be considered as a minor issue.

In this contribution, we refrain from discussing in detail the transformations and commonly held views on Tchaikovsky's work that were addressed in separate studies. This research explores the problem of translating titles into English, which often fail to adequately preserve the original connotations of the pieces, their interconnections, and the context of their creation; thereby depriving the audience of a considerable amount of pleasure in uncovering these links and connotations.

Context and problem statement

The linguistic analysis of the approach to an authentic translation of the composition titles requires careful attention to the historical, cultural, and musicological contexts affecting the editorial decisions. Integrating the insights from the different disciplines supported by linguistic and computational instruments enables us to propose reliable and coherent translations that preserve the metaphors and cross-cultural connotations embedded in the compositions.

Context

Fig. 1 depicts the pages from the documents being the key artifacts for the current study. The original Tchaikovsky's hand-written scores, containing the composer's remarks, are preserved in the Russian National Museum of Music, while the Jurgenson edition has become a bibliographic rarity. Nevertheless, numerous stereotyped editions are still based on the initial Jurgenson's publication.

The *Children's Album* was completed and published in 1878, a year belonging to a very productive period in Tchaikovsky's career, when much larger scale compositions in different genres appeared, including the majestic 4th symphony, the diamond of the Russian operatic repertoire *Eugene Onegin*, and the innovative *Violin concerto in D Major*, Op. 35, along with the chefs d'oeuvres, such as *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, the *Grand Piano Sonata*, and a number of smaller scale works.

By 1878, Tchaikovsky was already a celebrated composer, the author of the magnificent *First piano concerto in B Flat Minor*, Op. 23 (1875), the timeless musical masterpiece *Swan Lake* (1875), the exquisite *Rococo Variations* and the three symphonies. That is why, initially, the composer might have been considering the *Children's Album* as merely a modest contribution to the music literature for the young, featuring attractive titles, in a similar vein to the approach of Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) in his *43 Clavierstücke für die Jugend*, Op. 68 [6] as we can learn from one of Tchaikovsky's letters to Nadezhda von Meck [7]:

“Since a while ago, I've been thinking that it would be nice to contribute to the children's music literature, which is not rich at all. I want to create a series of little sketches of unconditional simplicity with titles that would be attractive for children, like Schumann's [titles]” (our translation).

Thus, there is no doubt that finding appropriate and resonant titles was of great importance for the composer. Therefore, the translations of these titles for foreign language editions and resources must be considered with caution and carefulness.

Problem

The original Russian title of the whole work «Детский альбом» is usually translated as the *Children's Album*. It is also (but less often) translated to the *Album for the Young*. However, translating the names of individual compositions varies more significantly. This variability may lead to the differences in interpretation and thoughts about the intended audiences but also potentially undermine the purpose of the album, impact stage performances, and influence academic musicological studies across different



Fig. 1. The fragment of the first page of the original Tchaikovsky's manuscript and the cover page of the first Jurgenson edition

languages and cultural contexts. Such discrepancies can obscure the thematic and narrative connections that Tchaikovsky apparently intended to convey through the titles.

In reality, the primary purpose of title translations appears to be to simply convey the literal meaning, with perhaps minimal attention given to the language rhythm and conciseness of Tchaikovsky's original titles. This problem pales in comparison to the complexity of authentic translations of poems, such as *Eugene Onegin*, for example, requiring, according to Charles Johnston, the serious efforts to convey the author's tone of voice, the sparkles of his jokes, the flavour of the epigrams along with the accuracy of narrative, equivalence of rhymes, and cross-language counterpoint of the Russian original [8]. Nevertheless, it is quite surprising that there are significant inconsistencies that can be found in the existing translations of just the composition titles.

Research questions

Though the considered problem pertains to a particular music work, its broader implications may impact the understanding of the practices of authentic translations of music compositions in different languages. In such cases, the common concepts of translation equivalence, coherence, and adequacy need to be extended through the concept of translation authenticity. Specifically, in the current article, we aim to cast light on possible resolutions of the problems by answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent do the common English translations reflect the original meaning in Russian?
2. What is the impact of the rearrangement of the sequence of pieces in the first published editions to the appropriateness and authenticity of translation?
3. How can the original connotations related to the musical history and national traditions be preserved and presented in the English translation?

Literature review

To fit the task of translating the musical titles, which are the parts of the story represented by the whole work, a special attention must be directed to the sequencing of the compositions, as well as the existing naming and translation conventions in connection to the narratives conveyed by the compositions and the metaphors they manifest.

Sequencing conventions

The sequencing of musical pieces shapes the emotional journey for performers and their audiences, making it a critical consideration. In educational contexts, the sequencing of musical pieces can be pedagogic, arranged to progressively build the pianist's skills. However, it is perhaps even more important



that the sequencing of pieces within a musical album is a fundamental aspect that composers leverage to enhance narrative flow, thematic coherence, emotional engagement, and educational value in a broader sense than just developing the musician's skills.

Therefore, it is impossible to overlook the fact that reordering of the compositions from the *Children's Album* (see Fig. 2) has a significant impact on both the audience's perception and the editorial decisions regarding translations of the individual titles.

The edits applied to the first and the majority of the subsequent publications did more than disrupt the internal structure of the album as an indivisible whole; they not only distorted the micro-cycles existing in the manuscripts, but also severed the evident harmonic and thematic links, diminished the emotional tension and undermined the narrative authenticity of the original version [9]. Nekhaeva arguably suggests that the fact of signing the Jurgenson edition by the composer must not be overvalued: the manuscript is not signed, but it is already a signature, an autograph, therefore, it is an authentic original itself (!) while the published edition is then a copy, just one of the possible interpretations [10]. Therefore, it is easy to understand why many contemporary pianists deliberately decide to play and record the compositions from the *Children's Album* in their original versions and original order.

Naming conventions

The ways classical music pieces are named have changed significantly over time. In the Medieval times, pieces were frequently untitled while in the Baroque and Classical eras, works were identified primarily by their form, number and key, e.g. *Symphony No. 5 in C minor* or *String Quartet in D major*. This systemic method simplified categorization and perhaps helped listeners fit musical pieces into their own schemata of classical music. Lanzendorfer noted that in concert programs from the Leipzig Gewandhaus starting in the late 18th century, the designations of musical pieces included increasingly more detailed information, including the key, tempo, and programmatic titles [11]. However, even in those times, poetic or descriptive titles were often used to convey the mood, inspiration, locale, or specific story, such as Haydn's "*Farewell*" *Symphony No. 45* (1772), for example, with its fascinating finale aimed to convince the Haydn's patron and employer Prince Esterházy to let the musician finally go to the vacation to see the families after their overdue service for the royal orchestra. In contrast to the usual dynamics of the final *Allegro*, the last movement unexpectedly changed to *Adagio*, during which, the musicians were blowing out the candles on their lecterns after finishing their themes and immediately leaving the stage, so that by the end only two nearly silent violins remained on stage.

As the Romantic era developed, titles became more descriptive or evocative, reflecting the increasing importance of expressing specific emotions or narratives through music. Titles were chosen to evoke imagery, stir emotions, set the mood, or convey the content of a piece. Some titles were rather generic, such as the famous title of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 14 in C Sharp minor* "*Moonlight Sonata*". It is well-known that this title actually was not ascribed by the composer but by a German music critic Ludwig Rellstab who stated that the movement evoked the feeling of moonlight shining over the lake Lucerne [12]. Similarly, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6 in B minor*, Op. 74 was given the nickname "*Pathétique*" posthumously, while Chopin's *Polonaise in A Flat major*, Op. 53 received the (perhaps unnecessary) epithet "*Heroic*" from George Sand.

Along with the essential components of understanding and interpreting the works of art, the emergence of such complementary names is one of the components of the co-creation paradigm [13]: the reproduction of artwork (be it a piece of music, a theatre play, a novel, or painting) approximates the will of the artist, giving rise to a plethora of possibilities of interpretation or implementation as an act of dynamic collaboration between the author, the performer, and the beholder.

The titles of musical pieces may vary both geographically and diachronically. Pieces with rather generic titles may acquire more distinctive ones [14]. A case in point is Beethoven's *5th Symphony*, which is commonly referred to in the West simply by its number and key, while the nickname "*Fate Symphony*" is often used nowadays in non-English speaking countries, such as Japan where it is known as "*Unmei*",

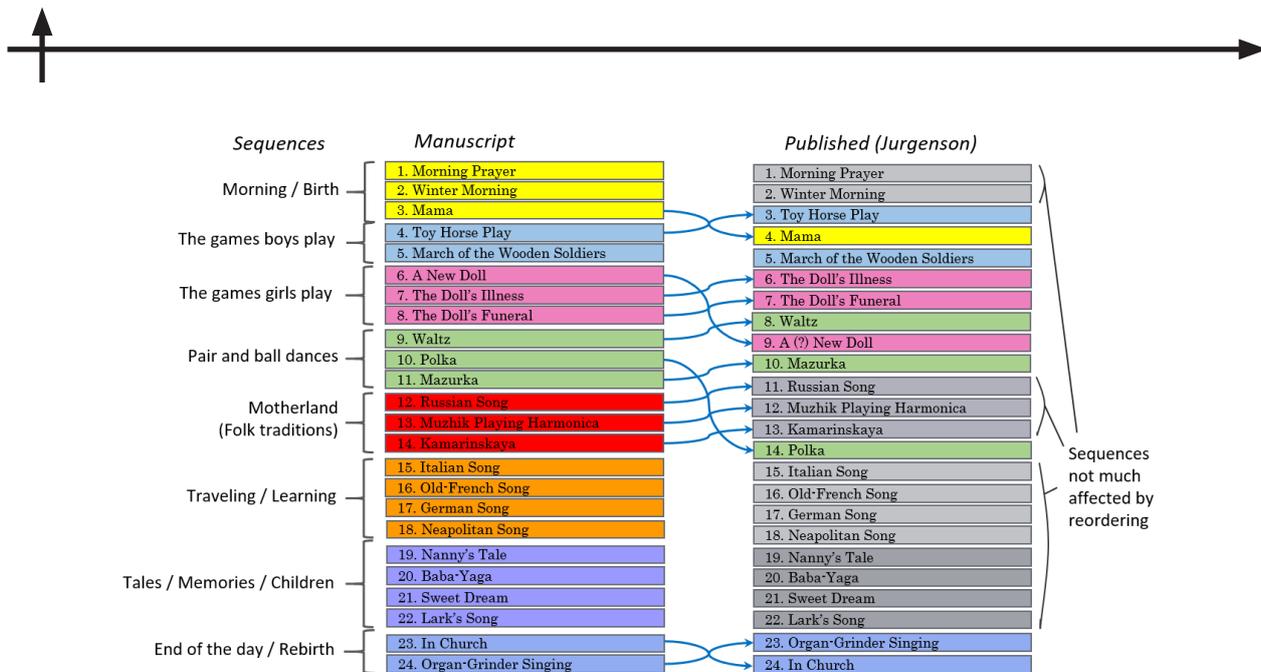


Fig. 2. Reordering of the compositions from the *Children's Album*

meaning destiny or fate. This nickname was not ascribed by Beethoven himself but was later attached due to the distinctive four-note motif that may be interpreted as “*fate knocking at the door*”. This motif is composed of a short-short-short-long rhythmic pattern, and in the key of C minor, it is typically realized as: G-G-G-E flat [15]. Pieces may therefore be named systematically or descriptively, and not necessarily by the composers themselves. However, there is no doubt that the names given by the composers have to be acknowledged, and their semantics have to be respected while introducing these names in different cultural contexts and language systems.

Translation conventions

Translators draw on established conventions to balance fidelity to the original text with accessibility and cultural relevance for the target audience [16]. These conventions vary significantly depending on the type of content being translated [17].

General translation conventions include direct translation, which aims for a literal translation, maintaining the precise wording and structure of the original language as much as possible. This is most notable in legal, technical, and some academic texts where precision is paramount. Idiomatic translation, also known as dynamic equivalence, focuses on conveying the meaning of the original text in a way that is natural and idiomatic to the target language and culture. Cultural tailoring involves adapting content to fit the cultural context of the target audience, which may include changing names, locations, cultural references, or idioms. It is widely used in marketing, film localization, and popular literature to ensure that the translated material resonates with local audiences.

Although there is a body of research on music and translation [18], to the best of our knowledge, there is no published research specifically addressing the translations of the titles of classical music pieces. The conventions for translating titles of classical music typically strive to balance preserving the composer’s original intent with ensuring accessibility and relevance for a global audience. Many classical music pieces retain their original titles in programs and recordings, regardless of the language of the audience. Non-Latin script titles are frequently transliterated and sometimes translated. For example, Russian pieces by Tchaikovsky might be transliterated for ease of pronunciation and understanding by non-Russian speakers. Some classical music pieces have descriptive titles that may be translated to convey meaning, such as Dvořák’s *Ninth Symphony “Z Nového světa”* commonly known in English as *Symphony No. 9 in E Minor “From the New World”*. Dvořák himself added the descriptive title to symbolize his experience of his new



world (America) in contrast to his old world, Europe. These titles are often translated because they convey significant thematic or narrative elements. Some pieces have acquired nicknames in various languages that reflect how the piece is perceived culturally, such as the *Moonlight Sonata*. While the core names of compositions often remain unchanged, especially for instrumental music, there is flexibility in translating descriptive or informal titles to enhance cultural relevance and accessibility.

Linguistic methods

We employ three major analytical approaches to explore the translation issues, the latter being also connected to the study of sequencing of the pieces from the *Children's Album*. These analytical approaches include discourse analysis, metaphor analysis, and comparative analysis.

Discourse analysis provides insights into qualitative aspects of assumed naming conventions and their development up to the Romantic period in music and literature. These aspects need to be discussed and interpreted across different cultural and scholarly contexts. We examined reviews, academic literature, and educational materials to uncover discursive patterns and dominant narratives surrounding the album. Key themes, interpretations, and critiques provide insights into how translation choices and sequencing impact the reception and understanding of Tchaikovsky's compositions. **Metaphor analysis** is used to uncover the underlying conceptual metaphors employed by Tchaikovsky's narrative and partially embedded in the titles. Preserving the metaphorical connections in the translation contributes to keeping – or at times even restoring – the authenticity of the masterpiece. **Comparative analysis** is used to compare and contrast commonly used translations appearing in the editions of Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album*, as well as through the encyclopedic resources. This analysis involves a detailed examination of how titles are rendered across both languages, variations in sequence among published editions, and the consequent effects on thematic coherence and emotional progression within the album.

Findings

This section is divided thematically into three subsections addressing the problems of the authentic title translations, the approach to the conceptual analysis of the translation task, as well as the study of metaphors and connotations affecting the translation problem. However, it should be remembered that the discussed concepts are interwoven and interdependent, since, for example, the sequence of translated titles may itself carry metaphorical significance, further complicating the translation process.

Titles and translations

Fig. 3 lists the composition titles from a number of the widespread authoritative publications and online resources. To maintain consistency, the order of the compositions follows the original manuscript, but their numbers as in the Jurgenson edition are given as well.

In Fig. 3, we annotated the known translations to place emphasis on whether they completely succeed to convey the meaning and connotations of the original compositions.

Conceptual shifts

Our study revealed discrepancies in translation that may alter the perception of the compositions. Translation does not occur in a vacuum; it is shaped by historical and cultural context of the source and target languages, which need to be considered. It should also be noted that as languages evolve over time, translations themselves also need to be revisited periodically. This subsection describes the historical context of Tchaikovsky's creation of the *Children's Album*, its comparison with Schumann's work, and the subsequent changes in various editions. It discusses the original intent behind the compositions and how they were perceived and transformed over time.

Linguistic analysis of the terms, concepts, and entities can also provide some interesting insights to the phenomenon of the *Children's Album*. In the original manuscripts, most compositions are entitled in both Russian and French. Interestingly, however, subsequent international editions appeared in English often overlooked or disregarded the meanings conveyed by the titles in the original manuscript.



No. (Orig.)	No. (Jur.)	Wiki	TchRes	NCE	AFY	Our's
1	1	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer
2	2	Winter Morning	Winter Morning	Winter Morning	Winter Morning	Winter Morning
3	4	Mama	Mama	Mummy	Mama	Mama
4	3	Playing Hobby-Horses	Playing Hobby-Horses	Playing Hobby-Horses	The Little Horse-man	Toy Horse Play
5	5	March of the Wooden Soldiers	March of the Wooden Soldiers	March of the Wooden Soldiers	March of the Wooden Soldiers	March of the Wooden Soldiers
6	9	The New Doll	The New Doll	The New Doll	The New Doll	A New Doll
7	6	The Sick Doll	The Sick Doll	The Doll's Illness	The Doll's Illness	The Doll's Illness
8	7	The Doll's Funeral	The Doll's Funeral	The Doll's Funeral	The Doll's Burial	The Doll's Funeral
9	8	Waltz	Waltz	Waltz	Waltz	Waltz
10	14	Polka	Polka	Polka	Polka	Polka
11	10	Mazurka	Mazurka	Mazurka	Mazurka	Mazurka
12	11	Russian Song	Russian Song	Russian Song	Russian Song	Russian Song
13	12	The Harmonica Player	The Accordion Player	The Russian Peasant Plays the Harmonica	Peasant Prelude	Muzhik Playing Harmonica
14	13	Kamarinskaya	Kamarinskaya	Kamarinskaya	Folk Song	Kamarinskaya
15	15	Italian Song	Italian Song	Italian Song	Italian Song	Italian Song
16	16	Old-French Song	Old-French Song	Old-French Song	Old-French Song	Old-French Song
17	17	German Song	German Song	German Song	German Song	German Song
18	18	Neapolitan Song	Neapolitan Song	Neapolitan Song	Neapolitan Song	Neapolitan Song
19	19	Nanny's Story	Nanny's Story	Nurse's Tale	The Nurse's Tale	Nanny's Tale
20	20	The Sorcerer	The Sorcerer	Old Witch	The Witch	Baba-Yaga
21	21	Sweet Dreams	Sweet Dreams	Sweet Dream	Sweet Dreams	Sweet Dream
22	22	Lark Song	Lark Song	Lark's Song	Song of the Lark	Lark's Song
23	24	In Church	In Church	In the Church	In Church	In Church
24	23	The Song of the Organ-Grinder	The Organ-Grinder Sings	The Organ-Grinder Sings	The Hurdy-Gurdy Man	Organ-Grinder Singing

Resource	Reference
Wiki	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_compositions_by_Pyotr_Ilyich_Tchaikovsky
TchRes	https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/pages/Children%27s_Album
NCE	New Complete Edition, Jointly Schott and Muzyka (1993)
AFY	Album for the Young, https://musopen.org/music/2161-childrens-album-op-39
Our's	Our suggestion

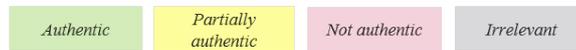


Fig. 3. Annotated translations of the composition titles

Translation is a sort of semiotic task [19]. A good translation always suggests a concept transfer from the source language system to a target language system. This interpretation is in tune with both Aristotle's theory of metaphor¹ [20], the latter defined as a transference process [21], and Quintilian's approach to metaphor highlighting alteration and mutation [22]. Interestingly, during such a transfer, one can discover meaningful insights into the structure, rhythm, semantics of the constructions from the source language system as well. From the perspective of linguistic reverse engineering, we examine the different translations of the *Children's Album's* composition titles. From the many editions that appeared over the 150 years since its creation, we selected the five of the most significant and representative resources, from the viewpoint of how they illustrate the degree of success in maintaining the authenticity of the original Russian titles. As we can see in Fig. 3, many composition titles did not exhibit any significant conflict in their translations. However, there are cases deserving of particular attention.

Narratives, metaphors, and connotations

This section introduces the major cases requiring a closer look towards restoring the translation accuracy and authenticity with respect to the metaphors and connotations that can be discovered based on the careful analysis of the original manuscripts and related literary, musicology, and linguistic sources. The numbering of the compositions analyzed in this section are given based on the original manuscript unless it is explicitly mentioned.

¹ Wood M., Aristotle and the Question of Metaphor, PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2015. DOI: 10.20381/ruor-4757



No. 4 “Toy Horse Play”. There are translation cases that are rather easy to debate, for example, for some titles from the quite widespread AfY version, which goes against the existing tradition without any serious grounds such as orig. No. 4 translated as “*The Little Horseman*”, which shifts the intended imagery from playing with toy wooden horses and instead suggests a real rider on horseback, thereby losing the original connotation.

No. 13 “Muzhik Playing Harmonica”. This case depicts a good illustration of the phenomenon of an overly foreignized translation [19]. The AfY English title of No. 13 “*Peasant Prelude*” is hardly authentic, since using the term “prelude” contrasts sharply with the depiction of a Russian muzhik playing his harmonica and producing a quasi-infinite folk-style simple melody. The native Russian word, which retains all its cultural and connotative richness, has been included in its original form in other languages, including English² and French³. Therefore, there is no justification to substitute unnecessary euphemisms for it. The same grounds suggest that a more fashionable and more French “accordion” is hardly an adequate equivalent for the Russian harmonica.

No. 14 “Kamarinskaya”. Translating No. 14 as a plain “*Folk Song*” could not be accepted either for the following major reasons. First, “*Kamarinskaya*” is more a dance than a song, “*quick dance tune*”, according to Tarushkin [23] (or at least dance accompanied by singing). Second, the generic term “*Folk Song*” fails to convey its deeper connotations as a tribute to Mikhail Glinka, a great predecessor of Tchaikovsky who, according to Russian critic Vladimir Stasov, was a creator of the new Russian language in music, comparable to Alexander Pushkin, the creator of the new Russian language in literature [24], with his own famous symphonic *Kamarinskaya*; finally, keeping the original name of this dance is important, Glinka’s *Kamarinskaya* is often considered as a quintessential symbol of the beginning of the Russian art-music tradition [25].

No. 20 “Baba-Yaga”. Similar reasoning leads us to suggest keeping the original “*Baba-Yaga*” (also included in The Oxford English Dictionary) to preserve the folk tale connotations and national poetics inherent in the title selected by Tchaikovsky rather than using (by definition) approximate and vague, and therefore very inexact translations, such as “sorcerer” or “witch”.

No. 24 “Organ-Grinder Singing”. Furthermore, using a string hurdy-gurdy (see Fig. 4) for translating No. 24 is probably less authentic since the stereotypical piped street, or barrel, organ is a much closer equivalent to Russian “шарманка”, according to dictionary definitions. While we lack the exact knowledge of which instrument Tchaikovsky envisioned while describing his journey to Italy and mentioning “a charming little song” carried away from Venice in his letter to von Meck [26] (Dec 16th, 1877). However, since he used the Russian “шарманщик” (literally, “sharmanka” player), it was likely to have been a street organ.

Nos. 6–8: Pieces from the “Doll Story”. One of the most indicative cases is formed by the compositions metaphorically portraying the part we refer here as a “Doll Story”, namely Nos. 6–8 in the original manuscript. If one accepts the idea that the *Children’s Album* is not merely a collection of unrelated pieces but a more substantial narrative composed of several interconnecting though untitled parts, each representing the linked micro-cycles mapped to the stages of the human life, then it must not be surprising that the composition opening the “Doll Story” (orig. No. 6, Russian title “Новая кукла”) appears on the same handwritten music sheet as the preceding “*Марш деревянных солдатиков*” – “*March of the Wooden Soldiers*” (orig. No. 5), the same happens with the orig. No. 7 “*Болезнь куклы*” – “*The Doll’s Illness*” and No. 8 “*Похороны куклы*” – “*The Doll’s Funeral*”.

The analysis of this sequence supports interpreting the opening composition as a metaphor of discovering society and human relationships. As such, the orig. No. 6 can be authentically translated into English using an indefinite article “a”, thus, exposing an introduction to the entire micro-cycle: “*A New Doll*”. In the manuscript, the story and its metaphors are developed through the lamentations of the penetrative

² The Oxford Russian-English Dictionary, ed. by D.P. Costello, W.F. Ryan, M. Wheeler, B.O. Unbegaun, 2nd. ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, New York, 1984.

³ Le Grand Larousse Illustré, éd. par I. Jeuge-Maynard, Larousse, Paris, 2023.



Hurdy-gurdy in Hamamatsu
Museum of Musical Instruments
Photo by Evgeny Pyshkin, 2023



Street Organ Grinder
Sydney, Australia, 9 April 1940,
by N. Herfort Public Domain

Fig. 4. Hurdy-gurdy and barrel organ

“*The Doll’s Illness*” evoking the structure and voicing of *Lacrimosa* from Mozart’s *Requiem*, followed by the “*The Doll’s Funeral*” with its profound melancholic tension.

As one can see from Fig. 2, the “Doll Story” pieces obviously suffered the most from the reordering. In the published version, moving the orig. No. 6 after “*The Doll’s Funeral*” along with inserting the orig. No. 8 “*Waltz*” in between has at least two very serious consequences. First, the “Doll Story” narrative is now almost destroyed, therefore our translation “*A New Doll*” would not work for Jurgenson edition-based order of compositions: placing an indefinite article before “*The Doll’s Illness*” would sound much against the original narrative and, using the terms from [27], could not be situationally determined. Second, the reordering breaks up the sequence of ball dances – three scenes of adolescence: the games with the dolls, toy horses, and wooden soldiers are set aside as the young ladies and gentlemen make their debut at their first society balls. From this perspective, the Tchaikovsky’s “*Waltz*” from the *Children’s Album* could be projected to the first ball of Natasha Rostova from Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* [28] rather than merely serving as an incongruous intermezzo between two “doll” pieces as it does in the Jurgenson edition.

Conclusion: “Subtle science and exact art”

As an outcome of our study, we suggest our model for translating the composition titles of the *Children’s Album* as displayed in Fig. 3 and summarized in Table 1 alongside the original titles in Russian. The model has been constructed in accord with the principles of translation equivalence and accuracy but also respects the authenticity of the original manuscripts.

Though being relatively simple compared to the drastically challenging historical scientific translations, such as *Eugene Onegin* by Pushkin [8] or *King Richard III* by Shakespeare [29], the case studied in this research illustrates the important idea of translation, specifically applicable to the domains of imaginative literature but even also to the scientific works: in process of translation, an adequate expression of the structure, semantics, rhythm, and other language features in the frame of a target language system can (and often do) contribute to the better understanding of the original language constructions and the concepts they express. This statement is in concordance to Vygotsky’s consideration that scientific learning of the foreign (target) language reciprocally impacts on the everyday learning of the native (original) language, bringing a scientific component to the understanding of this original language [30].

While working on this study, we attempted to be in line with the method discussed by the early Renaissance Florentin humanist and interpreter Leonardo Bruni in his *De interpretatione recta* (“Of the Correct Interpretation”) [31]: the translations *ad verbum* and *ad sensum* must not be opposed but complement each other in a meaningful way rendering the “words” according to the “spirit” [32], the latter including not only the creator’s style but the original context of the creation.



Table 1. Towards authentic translations of the titles from the Children’s Album

Title in Russian	Orig. No.	Jurg. No.	Title in English
Утренняя молитва	1	1	Morning Prayer
Зимнее утро	2	2	Winter Morning
Мама	3	4	Mama
Игра в лошадки	4	3	Toy Horse Play
Марш деревянных солдатиков	5	5	March of the Wooden Soldiers
Новая кукла	6	9	A New Doll
Болезнь куклы	7	6	The Doll’s Illness
Похороны куклы	8	7	The Doll’s Funeral
Вальс	9	8	Waltz
Полька	10	14	Polka
Мазурка	11	10	Mazurka
Русская песня	12	11	Russian Song
Мужик на гармонике играет	13	12	Muzhik Playing Harmonica
Камаринская	14	13	Kamarinskaya
Итальянская песенка	15	15	Italian Song
Старинная французская песенка	16	16	Old-French Song
Немецкая песенка	17	17	German Song
Неаполитаская песенка	18	18	Neapolitan Song
Нянина сказка	19	19	Nanny’s Tale
Баба-Яга	20	20	Baba-Yaga
Сладкая грёза	21	21	Sweet Dream
Песнь жаворонка	22	22	Lark’s Song
В церкви	23	24	In Church
Шарманщик поёт	24	23	Organ-Grinder Singing

To sum up, though the presented study examines a single case of improving the music title translations keeping the composition authenticity and historical connotations, this case can be considered within the broader cross-disciplinary discourse involving musicology, translation studies, and linguistics. In a similar vein, just as music models can contribute to the mastery of spoken languages [33, 34] and understanding their poetics [35], linguistic models enhanced with the present-day AI technology can reciprocally enrich musicology knowledge by providing additional interesting insights to the analysis of the music compositions, their links, metaphors, structure, and naming conventions. All of these elements, to quote Professor Severus Snape from “*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*”, form essential parts of the “*subtle science and exact art*” [36] of music.

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