

Polovtsian Dances - Borodin

Pronunciation, Transliteration, and Translation

Vowels as in Latin/IPA, except:

- ´ = indicates stressed syllable
- ĭ = indicates a "hard ĭ" (IPA [i]): closed unrounded vowel, tongue in center of roof of mouth (there is no English equivalent)
- ǫ = unstressed vowel, sounds like "ah," "aw," or schwa [ə] depending on context and length of sung vowel (but not "oh")
- ĩ̃ = a quick "ih" sound + ah

Consonants as in English, except:

- ~ = indicates a "soft" consonant: *sounds like* a quick "y" sound after the consonant, produced by "smiling" the consonant itself (important - connect the "y" to the *consonant*; it is very brief and it is not a vowel)
- r = always rolled
- ħ = aspirated like Scottish ch (but not guttural or overly hard like German)
- l = hard "l" sound, tongue raised in the far back of the throat (here indicated by "ll")
- zh = as in English "pleasure"

Note: This Russian text preserves the spelling conventions used prior to the 1918 orthographic reform, which was implemented following the Russian Revolution.

Dance of the Young Girls.

Ⓐ Улетай на крыльяхъ вѣтра

Uĭetáy **na** **krĭlyah** **vĕtra**
[oo-lyee-tah-ee nah kril-yah vyeh-trah]
(*Fly away on the wings of the wind*)

ты въ край родной, родная пѣсня наша,

tĭ **f kray** **rōdnóy,** **rōdnáya** **pĕsnĭá** **násha**
[tĭ fkrah-ee rahd-noy rahd-nah-yah pyes-nyah nah-shah]
(*to the native land, our dear song,*)

туда, гдѣ мы тебя свободно пѣли,

Tudá, **gdĕ** **mĭ** **ĭebĭá** **svōbódnō** **pĕli**
[too-dah gdyeħ mi tyee-byah svah-boħ-dnah pyeh-lee]
(*to where we sang you freely,*)

гдѣ было такъ привольно намъ съ тобою.

gdĕ **bĭlō** **tak** **přivólno** **nam** **s tōbóyu**
[gdyeħ bi-llaw tahk pryee-vohl-nah nahm stah-boħ-yoo]
(*where we felt such freedom with you.*)

Тамъ подъ зноинимъ небомъ,

Tam **pōd** **znóynĭm** **ńĕbōm**
[tahm puhd znoy-nĭm nyeh-buhm]
(*There beneath the scorching sky,*)

нѣгой воздухъ полонъ,

ńĕgōy **vózduħ** **pólōn**
[nyeh-goy voh-zdooħ puh-lluhn]
(*the air is filled with sweetness,*)

тамъ подь говоръ моря,

tam pōd góvōr mórĭa
[tahm puhd goh-vahr moh-ryah]
(there to the murmur of the sea,)

Дремлють горы въ облакахъ;

dřémĭut góřĭ v"ōblakáh
[drehm-lyoot goh-ri vaw-blah-kach]
(the mountains slumber in the clouds;)

ⓑ Тамъ такъ ярко солнце свѣтитъ,

Tam tak yárkō sóntse švéit
[tahm tahk yahrr-kuh sohn-tseh svyeh-tyeet]
(There the sun shines so brightly,)

родныя горы свѣтомъ заливая,

rōdnĭya góřĭ svétōm zalívaya
[rahd-ni-yah goh-ri svye-tawm zah-lee-vah-yah]
(flooding the native mountains with light,)

въ долинахъ пишно розы разцвѣтають

V dōlĭnah pĭshnō rózĭ raztsvētáyut
[vdoh-lee-nach pi-shnah rah-zi rahz-vyee-tah-yoot]
(in the valleys, lush roses bloom)

и соловьи поють въ лѣсахъ зеленыхъ.

i sōlōvyĭ pōyút v ĭesáh želĭónĭh
[ee saw-llaw-vyee pah-yoot vlyee-sach zyee-lyoh-nich]
(and nightingales sing in the green forests.)

Тамъ роза цвѣтетъ

Tam róza tsvētĭót
[tahm roh-zah tsvyee-tyoht]
(There the rose blossoms)

и сладкій виноградъ растеть.

i slátkiy vĭnōgrád rastiót
[ee sllahtkee vyee-nah-graht rahs-tyoht]
(and sweet grapes grow.)

Тамъ тебѣ привольнѣй пѣсня,

Tam tēbé pĭvólĭney pĕsĭĭa
[tahm tyeh-byeh pryee-vohl-nyee pyeh-snyah]
(There your song is more at ease,)

ты туда и улетай.

tĭ tudá i uĭetáy
[ti too-dah ee oo-lyeh-tah-ee]
(fly away there.)

General Dance.

ⓓ Пойте пѣсни славы хану! Пой!

Póyťe **ṗésni** **slávī** **h́ánu!** **Poy!**
[poy-tyeh pyeh-snyee sllah-vi chah-noo poy]
(*Sing songs of glory to the Khan! Sing!*)

Славьте силу доблестъ хана! Славь!

Sláťte **š́ilu** **dóbľest** **h́ana!** **Slaf!**
[slah-ftyeh syee-lloo douh-blyehst chah-nah sllaf]
(*Praise the strength and valor of the Khan! Praise!*)

Славенъ Ханъ! Славенъ онъ Ханъ нашъ!

Sláven **h́an!** **Sláven** **on** **h́an** **nash!**
[slah-vyehn chahn sllah-vyehn ohn chahn nahsh]
(*Glorious is the Khan! Glorious is he, our Khan!*)

Блескомъ славы солнцу равенъ ханъ!

Bľeskõm **slávī** **sóntsu** **ráven** **h́an!**
[blyeh-skahm sllah-vi soh-tsoo rah-vyen chahn]
(*In the brilliance of glory, the Khan equals the sun!*)

Нѣту равныхъ славой хану! Нѣтъ!

Ńétu **rávnĭh** **slávõy** **h́ánu!** **Ńet!**
[nyeh-too rahv-nĭch sllah-vuhy chah-noo nyeht]
(*There are none equal in glory to the Khan! None!*)

Dance of the Slaves

ⓔ Чаги хана, славятъ хана своего.

Chági **h́ana,** **slávĭat** **h́ana** **svõyevó**
[chyah-gee chah-nah sllah-vyaht chah-nah svah-yeh-vaw]
(*The Khan's chagis (tribeswomen) praise their Khan.*)

The KHAN KONCHAK (ХАНЪ КОНЧАКЪ - the leader of the Polovtsians) sings:

Видишьли плѣнницъ ты

Vídishľi **plĕnñits** **tĭ**
[vyee-deesh-lee plyeh-neets tĭ]
(*Do you see the captives*)

С моря дальняго

S móřia **dálñavõ**
[smoh-ryah dahl-nyah-vaw]
(*From the distant sea;*)

Видишь красавиць моихъ

Vídish **krasávits** **mõih**
[vyee-deesh krah-sah-vyeets mah-eech]
(Do you see my beauties)

Изъ-за Каспія?

Iz-za Káspiya?
[ee-zah kah-spyee-yah]
(From beyond the Caspian Sea?)

О, скажи, другъ

O, skazhí, **drug**
[oh skah-zhi drook]
(Oh, tell me, friend)

Скажи только слово мнѣ:

Skazhí **tólkõ** **slóvõ** **mñe:**
[skah-zhi tohl-kah slloh-vah mnyeh]
(Tell me just one word:)

Хочешь — любую изъ нихъ

hóchesh — **ĩubúyu** **iz** **ñih**
[choh-cheesh lyoo-boo-yoo eez nyeech]
(If you want to — any one of them)

Я тебе подарю.

Ya **ťebé** **põdařú.**
[ya tee-byeh puh-dah-ryoo]
(I will give to you.)

General Dance

Ⓢ Пойте пѣсни славы хану! Пой!

Póyte **pěsni** **slávi** **h́anu!** **Poy!**
[poy-tyeh pyeh-snyee sllah-vi chah-noo poy]
(Sing songs of glory to the Khan! Sing!)

Славьте щедрость, славьте милость! Славь!

Sláfte **shchédrost̄,** **sláfte** **ml̄ost̄!** **Slaf̄!**
[sllah-ftyeh shyeht-rawst sllah-ftyeh myee-llawst slaf]
(Praise his generosity, praise his mercy! Praise!)

Для враговъ Хань! грозенъ онъ Ханъ нашъ!

Dl̄avragóf **han!** **gróžen** **on** **han** **nash!**
[dlyah-vrah-gof chan gro-zyehn ohn chan nahsh]
(To his enemies, the Khan is fearsome — our Khan!)

Ктоже славой равень хану, кто?

Ktozhe slávõy ráven h́anu, kto?
[ktoh-zheh sllah-voy rah-vyihn chah-noo ktoh]
(Who is equal to the Khan in glory, who?)

Блескомъ славы солнцу равень онъ!

Bléskõm slávī sóntsu ráven on!
[blyeh-skohm sllah-vi sohn-tsoo rah-vyihn ohn]
(In brilliance of glory, he equals the sun!)

Dance of the Men

Ⓚ Славой дѣдамъ равень ханъ нашъ, Ⓛ ханъ Кончакъ,

Slávõy d̃édam ráven h́an nash, h́an Konchák
[sllah-voy dyeh-dahm rah-vyihn chahn nahsh chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Equal to the forefathers in glory is our Khan, Khan Konchak.)

Славой дѣдамъ равень онъ! грозный ханъ, ханъ Кончакъ.

Sllávõy d̃édam ráven on! gróznī h́an, h́an Konchák
[slah-voy dyeh-dahm rah-vyihn ohn groh-zní chahn chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Equal to the forefathers in glory is he! The fearsome Khan, Khan Konchak.)

Ⓝ Славень ханъ, ханъ Кончакъ!

Sláṽen h́an, h́an Konchák!
[sllah-vyehn chahn chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Glorious is the Khan, Khan Konchak!)

Dance of the Young Girls

Ⓞ Улетай на крыльяхъ вѣтра ...

Ulétáy na krílyah ṽétra ...
(Fly away on the wings of the wind ...)

Въ край тотъ, гдѣ подъ знойнымъ небомъ, ...

F kray tot, g̃de pod znóynim ñéboň ...
[fkrah-ee toht gdyeh phd znoy-nim nyeh-bohm]
(To that land, where beneath the scorching sky, ...)

Ⓟ Тамъ такъ ярко солнце свѣтитъ,

Tam tak yárkõ sóntse sṽétit
[tahm tak yahr-kaw sohn-tseh svyeh-tyeet]
(There the sun shines so brightly.)

родныя горы свѣтомъ озаряя,

rõdníya góri sṽetõm õzaríáya
[rahd-ni-yah goh-ri svye-tohm oh-zah-ryah-yah]
(illuminating the native mountains with light.)

въ долинахъ пышно роза разцвѣтаеть

v dŏlínah **pīshnŏ** **róza** **raztsvĕtáyet**
[vdah-lyee-nach] pi-shnah roh-zah rahs-tsvyee-tah-yet]
(in the valleys, the rose blossoms splendidly)

и соловьи поють въ лѣсахъ зеленыхъ.

i **sŏlŏvyí** **pŏyút** **v lĕsáh** **žĕlĭónĭh**
[ee soh-lloh-vyee pah-yoot vlyee-sach zyee-lyoh-nich]
(and nightingales sing in the green forests.)

Тамъ роза тамъ в садахъ цвѣтеть

Tam **róza** **tam** **f sadáh** **tsvĕtĭót**
[tahm roh-zah tah fsah-dach tsvyeh-tyoht]
(There the rose blooms in the gardens)

сладкій виноградъ растеть.

slatkiy **vinŏgrád** **rastĭót**
[sllat-kee vyee-nah-grat rahs-tyoht]
(and sweet grapes grow.)

Тамъ тебѣ привольнѣй пѣсня.

Tam **ťĕbe** **privólney** **pĕsnyĭa**
[tahm tee-byeh pree-vohll-nee pyehs-nyah]
(There your song flows more freely.)

Ты туда и улетай.

Tĭ **tudá** **i** **uĕtáy**
[ti too-dah ee oo-lyeh-tah-ee]
(So fly away there.)

Dance of the Men

Ⓜ Славой дѣдамъ равень ханъ нашъ, Ⓜ ханъ Кончакъ,

Slávŏy **ďĕdam** **rávĕn** **han** **nash,** **han** **Konchák**
[sllah-voy dyeh-dahm rah-vyihn chahn nahsh chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Equal to the forefathers in glory is our Khan, Khan Konchak.)

Славой дѣдамъ равень онъ! грозный ханъ, ханъ Кончакъ.

Slávŏy **ďĕdam** **rávĕn** **on!** **gróznĭ** **han,** **han** **Konchák**
[sllah-voy dyeh-dahm rah-vyihn ohn groh-zni chahn chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Equal to the forefathers in glory is he! The fearsome Khan, Khan Konchak.)

Ⓜ Славень ханъ, ханъ Кончакъ!

Slávĕn **han,** **han** **Konchák!**
[sllah-vyehn chahn chahn kohn-chyahk]
(Glorious is the Khan, Khan Konchak!)

General Dance

⑤ Пляской вашей тѣшите хана,

Přáskoy **váshey** **ťeshťe** **hána**
[plyah-skoy vah-sheh-ee tyeh-shtyeh chah-nah]
(With your dance, delight the Khan,)

⑥–⑧ Пляской тѣшите хана чаги хана своего.

Přáskoy **ťeshťe** **hána** **chagi** **hána** **svǒevó**
[plyah-skoy tyeh-shtyeh chah-nah chya-gee chah-nah svah-yee-vaw]
(With dance, delight the Khan, chagis of your Khan.)

⑨ Пляской вашей тѣшите хана,

Přáskoy **váshey** **ťeshťe** **hána**
[plyah-skoy vah-sheh-ee tyeh-shtyeh chah-nah]
(With your dance, delight the Khan,)

⑩ Пляской тѣшите нашъ ханъ Кончакъ!

Přáskoy **ťeshťe** **nash** **han** **Konchák!**
[plyah-skoy tyeh-shtyeh nash chan kohn-chyak]
(With dance, delight our Khan Konchak!)

CONTEXT

Plot overview of Borodin's *Prince Igor*: Prince Igor of Seversk sets out on a campaign against the nomadic Polovtsians (also called Cumans), but his army is defeated, and he is taken captive by the Polovtsian Khan Konchak. The opera explores themes of patriotism, honor, captivity, and reconciliation. Borodin didn't finish the opera – it was completed by others, including Rimsky-Korsakov.

Where in the Opera Do the Polovtsian Dances Happen? Act II... Igor is being held as an honored prisoner by Khan Konchak, ruler of the Polovtsians (the Polovtsians were a powerful nomadic people of the Eurasian steppe). Konchak, rather than treating him harshly, tries to impress and befriend him — possibly to forge an alliance. As part of this, Konchak entertains Igor with a lavish display of his culture: the Polovtsian Dances. It's a cultural showcase and dramatic pause in the narrative, contrasting the foreign yet noble world of the Polovtsians with the unstable political world of the Rus'. It suggests that honor and beauty exist even among enemies, while also building tension: Igor is honored, but still a prisoner — will he escape or ally? (ultimately, Igor is offered an alliance, but respectfully declines)