



MODEST MUSSORGSKY

Pictures at an Exhibition

Modest Petrovich Mussorgsky (1839-1881) was a Russian composer, one of the group known as "[The Five](#)". He was an innovator of [Russian music](#) in the romantic period. He strove to achieve a uniquely Russian musical identity, often in deliberate defiance of the established conventions of Western music. Many of [his works](#) were inspired by [Russian history](#), [Russian folklore](#), and other nationalist themes. Born into a wealthy and land-owning family, he was originally destined for military service. His meeting with Alexander Borodin and [Alexander Dargomyzhsky](#), at that time the most important Russian composer after [Mikhail Glinka](#) in 1856 shaped Mussorgsky's fate as a composer, although he remained within the civil service. Suffering from alcoholism throughout his life, Mussorgsky lived only to see his 42nd birthday.

Pictures at an Exhibition ([Russian](#): Картинки с выставки – Воспоминание о Викторе Гартмане, "Pictures from an Exhibition – A Remembrance of Viktor Hartmann") is a [suite](#) in ten movements (plus a recurring, varied Promenade) originally composed for [piano](#). Russian critic Vladimir Stasov provided a brief program for the piece, in which he comments on each of the movements:

Promenade: Roving through the exhibition, now leisurely, now briskly in order to come close to a picture that had attracted his attention, and at times sadly, thinking of his departed friend

Gnomus: A sketch depicting a little gnome, clumsily running with crooked legs.

Il vecchio castello: A medieval castle before which a troubadour sings a song.

Tuileries: An avenue in the garden of the Tuileries, with a swarm of children and nurses.

Bydło: A Polish cart on enormous wheels, drawn by oxen.

Балет невылупившихся птенцов (Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks): Hartmann's design for the décor of a picturesque scene in the ballet *Trilby*.

"Samuel" Goldenberg und "Schmuyle": Two Polish Jews, Rich and Poor (Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle)

Limoges", le marché: French women quarrelling violently in the market.

Избушка на курьих ножках (Hut on Fowl's Legs): Hartmann's drawing depicted a clock in the form of [Baba-Yagá's](#) hut on fowl's legs. Mussorgsky added the witch's flight in a [mortar](#).

Богатырские ворота (The Great Gate of Kiev): Hartmann's sketch was his design for city gates at Kiev in the ancient Russian massive style with a cupola shaped like a slavonic helmet.