

Meter as Character Development in 19th-Century Russian Opera
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Hypermeter in Russian Opera stems from two distinct sources: the Western European tradition, and the unique metric qualities of the Russian language. Western European hypermeter is of the generic even-bar model, while Russian hypermeter forms an atypical three-bar structure. This discrepancy allows for the use of hypermeter in Russian opera as a compositional tool to illustrate character traits not shown through other formats.

In this study, I will show how this hypermetric tool is applied in Piotr Tchaikovsky's Opera *Eugene Onegin*, focusing on two scenes: Tatiana Larina's Letter Scene, and Evgeni Onegin's Act I Aria. Tchaikovsky uses the Russian/European triple/duple distinction to emphasize the conflict between the French speech and Russian soul of Tatiana Larina, and to demonstrate the western education of Eugene Onegin. The usage of hypermeter to develop these characters is made clear through the use of poetry by Aleksandr Pushkin for the lyrics. Pushkin favors a consistent iambic tetrameter; therefore, metric decisions in these selected scenes must stem from musical, not textual, sources.