

Title: Music and Knowledge in Leskov's *Cathedral Folk*  
Author: Martha Kelly, University of Missouri

Leskov's representations of Russian Orthodoxy have galvanized discussions of the author's religious loyalties. The dichotomies raised between Leskov as essentially Protestant or Orthodox in spirit blur when viewed through another lens. In this paper I will consider how Leskov uses representations of Orthodoxy not to answer ecclesial or narrowly religious questions, but to explore through narrative how human beings come to a sense of conviction or knowledge.

This paper makes up part of a larger project on depictions of musical performance in late-nineteenth-century Russian fiction. The paper, as with the larger project, examines how authors use scenes of musical performance (especially liturgical and folk performance) to depict and validate non-rational modes of knowing. In this sense aspects of Leskov's work represent a more poetic or romantic type of realism and can also be seen as anticipating key features of modernism. The paper focuses on Leskov's *Cathedral Folk* (Soboriane), arguing that in this work performance narratives (especially in association with liturgy) serve as the primary vehicle for epiphany.

Leskov's novel in key ways centers on the figure of Akhilla, a deacon early on characterized by his booming, rich bass which he loves to show off, even in a liturgical context. As the novel progresses Akhilla becomes a figure emblematic of the spiritual stagnation and renewal of the parish in which the story is set. This renewal is marked by a shift in his performance practices. Much of the conflict which propels the narrative forward stems from the fiery, Protestant-like sermons by which the priest Tuberozov seeks to stir his Orthodox congregants from their self-satisfied stupor. Despite the powerful reasoning and rhetoric of the sermons, what seems to catalyze and signify conversion lies in participatory ritual and song. Performance serves on the level of both plot and narrative to effect change.