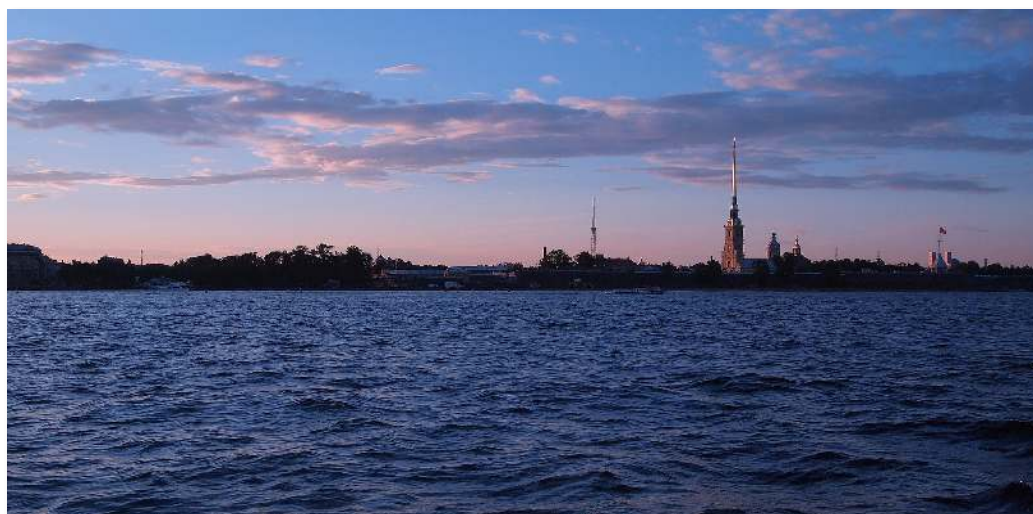


SONGS AND POEMS FOR RUSSIAN PRONUNCIATION



Dr. Curtis Ford



Does your tongue get tied into knots when trying to pronounce Russian? You know you need to practice, but you can only work on dialogues from a textbook for so long before falling asleep.

Happily, **there's a better way.**

Songs

When you've found a song you love, listening becomes a pleasure: you can get the repetition you need for effective learning without boring yourself to death.

Poetry

Getting to know Russian poetry is essential for understanding the culture. And learning a poem or two will impress your Russian friends!

Three Favorites

Over the years I've introduced my students to many songs and poems, and now I'd like to bring you three of my absolute favorites. In the following pages you'll find the Russian texts, with additional notes on pronunciation, and links to the best readings and performances I've found.

Я вас любил (К ***) is one of the best-loved poems by Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, whose place in Russian literature equals that of Shakespeare in English. I've included links to several interpretations on Youtube.

В тот месяц май, в тот месяц мой is a short poem by Bella Akhmadulina, one of Russia's most gifted poets of the 20th century. You'll find a link to readings by actresses Anya Chipovskaya and Ainur Niyazova.

Я спросил у ясени is one of the well known songs in Ирония судьбы (The Irony of Fate), the perennially popular romantic comedy. Its leisurely tempo and repetition of key phrases make it ideal for those who are just starting out with Russian.

Using these resources

- Listen. Listen, and listen again!
- Bookmark the Youtube videos so you can return to them easily.
- Listen while following along with the texts; listen without looking at the texts.
- Try pausing often so you can repeat, line by line or phrase by phrase.
- After some practice, see if you can read or sing along as you listen, matching the rhythm and sounds as closely as you can.
- You'll also find notes on a few places where the pronunciation doesn't seem to match the spelling, with links to videos on the [Russian Grammar Channel](#) for more thorough explanations.
- The final challenge: to recite the poems by heart! Be sure to let the recordings be your best guide, rather than the text on your screen.

Enjoy!

-Dr. Curtis Ford

Александр Сергеевич Пушкин
Я вас любил

Я вас любил: любовь¹ ещё, быть может
 В душе моей угасла не совсем;
 Но пусть она вас больше не тревожит;
 Я не хочу печалить вас ничём.
 Я вас любил безмолвно, безнадежно,
 То робостью, то ревностью томим;
 Я вас любил так искренно, так нежно,
 Как² дай вам бог³ любимой быть другим.

I loved you; even now I may confess,
 Some embers of my love their fire retain;
 But do not let it cause you more distress,
 I do not want to sadden you again.
 Hopeless and tongue-tied, yet I loved you dearly
 With pangs the jealous and the timid know;
 So tenderly I loved you, so sincerely,
 I pray God grant another love you so.

Translated by Katharena Eiermann

Four very different interpretations:

<https://youtu.be/6LMRqp8NW1M> Юлия Рутберг

https://youtu.be/c_RSQUQGwul Анастасия Наконечная

<https://youtu.be/v8fF5WvZgoA> Вениамин Смехов

https://youtu.be/_1qvH4fr4Kw Анатолий Белый

¹ Note how final –вь sounds like –фь – see <https://youtu.be/aSQRfSyAxe8>

² Note how final –к sounds like –г before the voiced д – see <https://youtu.be/YO9tqh460OM>

³ The final –r in бог is pronounced as if it were written х, due to Church Slavonic influence.

Белла Ахмадулина

В тот месяц май, в тот месяц мой

1 В⁴ то́т ме́сяц ма́й, в то́т ме́сяц мо́й
2 во мнѐ бы́ла́ та́кая лёгкость
3 и, рассти́лаясь над землёй,
4 влекла́ меня́ по́годы лѐтность.

5 Я́ та́к ще́дра́ бы́ла, ще́дра
6 в сча́стливом⁵ предвкусѐние пѐнья,
7 и с лёгкомы́слием щегла́
8 я́ окуна́ла в во́здух пѐрья.

9 Но, сла́ва Бо́гу, ста́л мо́й взор
10 и прои́цательней, и стро́же,
11 и ка́ждый вздо́х и ка́ждый взлѐт
12 обхо́дится мнѐ всё дорóже.

13 [И я́ прича́стна к та́йнам дня́.
14 Откр́ыты мнѐ егó явлѐнья.
15 Вокру́г огля́дываюсь я́
16 с усме́шкой ста́рого⁶ евре́я.]

17 Я ви́жу, как гра́чи галд́ят,
18 над чѐ́рным сне́гом навис́ая,
19 как ску́чно же́нщины гля́дят,
20 склон́ившиеся над вяза́ньем.

21 И гдѐ-то, в ду́дочку дуд́я,
22 не соблю́дая клу́мб и гря́док,

⁴ Listen for how the letter в is pronounced [f] before т. See <https://youtu.be/YO9tqh460OM>.

⁵ The sequence сч is pronounced as щ.

⁶ In certain grammatical endings, г is pronounced as в – so –oro here sounds like [əvə]; ero in line 14 is pronounced [jivo].

23 чужо́е бе́гает⁷ дитя
 24 и наруша́ет⁸ их по́рядок.

Listen for how the unstressed o is pronounced as [a] when it immediately precedes the stressed syllable in погóды (line 4), обхóдится and дорóже (line 12), откры́ты (line 14), вокрýт (line 15).

Read by Anya Chipovskaya
<https://youtu.be/dbhaPvhokqM>

Read by Ainur Niyazova
<https://youtu.be/F9wjEzPhcEc>

I recommend Frank Beck's translation at
<http://translations.diehoren.com/2015/05/in-month-of-may.html>

⁷ Note how the voiceless т sounds like д before the voiced д: see <https://youtu.be/YO9tqh460OM>

⁸ Since the и sound ([i] as in "see," "be") cannot directly follow a hard consonant in Russian, их here sounds as it were written ых in Chipovskaya's reading.

Я спросил у ясени**<https://youtu.be/zuOLQLtX7YI>**

Я спросил у ясени,
Где моя любимая.
Ясень не ответил мне,
Качая головой.

I asked the ash tree
Where is my beloved?
The ash tree didn't answer me,
Shaking its head.

Я спросил у тополя,
Где моя любимая.
Тополь забросал меня
Осеннею листвою.

I asked the poplar
Where is my beloved?
The poplar showered me
With autumn leaves.

Я спросил у осени,
Где моя любимая.
Осень мне ответила
Проливным дождём.

I asked the autumn
Where is my beloved?
Autumn answered me
With pouring rain.

У дождя я спрашивал,
Где моя любимая.
Долго дождик слёзы лил
За моим окном.

I asked the rain
Where is my beloved?
For a long time the rain wept tears
Outside my window.

Я спросил у месяца,
Где моя любимая.
Месяц скрылся в облаке,
Не ответил мне.

I asked the moon
Where is my beloved?
The moon hid itself in a cloud
And didn't answer me.

Я спросил у облака,
Где моя любимая.
Облако растаяло
В небесной синеве.

I asked the cloud
Where is my beloved?
The cloud melted away
In the blue of the sky.

Друг ты мой единственный,
Где моя любимая.
Ты скажи, где скрылася,
Знаешь, где она.

You, my only friend
Where is my beloved?
Tell me where she's hiding
Do you know where she is?

Друг ответил преданный,
Друг ответил искренний:
Была тебе любимая,
Была тебе любимая,
Была тебе любимая,
А стала мне жёна.

My loyal friend answered,
My sincere friend answered:
She was your beloved,
She was your beloved,
She was your beloved,
But has become my wife.

Lyrics: В. Киршон, music: М.
Tariverdiev
Sung by Сергей Никитин

Image credit: St. Petersburg, Evening
City courtesy of Maria Shvedova