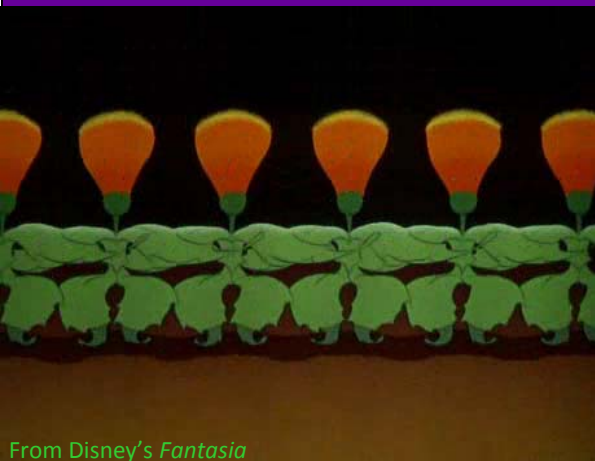


## Gopak from *The Fair at Sorochinski*

## Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

**Modest Mussorgsky** was born in Russia and his mother gave him his first piano lessons. Modest went to military boarding school, and when he graduated, he joined the army as an officer. Mussorgsky started studying music with Russian composer, Mily Balakirev, and left the army to become a composer.

He was part of a group of five Russian composers known as "The Five," or the "Mighty Handful," who were all **avant-garde** composers of Russian music in the romantic period. They wanted to create a uniquely Russian style of music unlike the traditional methods of Western classical music (like the music of Mozart and **Haydn**). Many of his works were inspired by Russian history and folklore.



From Disney's *Fantasia*

*The Fair at Sorochinsk*, is an opera based on a Ukrainian story. *The Fair* is a comedy about Ukrainian peasants who through trickery convince a young couple to get married, and dance a **gopak** (or hopak) in celebration.

The **gopak** is a dance that dates far back in Ukrainian and Russian history. Its most remarkable feature is that the dancers leap while squatting, kicking their legs out. The music is very joyful and fun, and gives the feeling you are at a celebration!



Photo by Marco Levitsky

The **gopak** is one of the few numbers that Mussorgsky completed for his opera. Mussorgsky died in 1881 before he was able to finish his opera so Anatoly Liadov completed the composition in 1904.

Mussorgsky loved his native country of Russia, and composed pieces based on Russian folk songs that would produce a uniquely Russian sound.

He is known as a **nationalist** composer, like Grieg who you will learn about on the next page!

