

LOBACHEVSKY

words and music by Tom Lehrer

Author's note: Most of the following is meant to be spoken rather than sung, freely in some cases and rhythmically in others. The specific accompaniment used by the author on his recording would require too many pages to write out and is therefore omitted. Prospective performers of the piece (if any) are advised to heed its basic precept and plagiarize the author's version.

The author would like to make it clear that, although Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky (1793-1856) was a genuine, and indeed eminent, mathematician, the peccadillos attributed to him herein are not substantiated by history. The format of the song was suggested by a Danny Kaye-Sylvia Fine routine entitled "Stanislavsky", and the name of the protagonist was chosen for purely prosodic reasons.

- (spoken)* Who made me the genius I am today,
The mathematician that others all quote?
Who's the professor that made me that way?
The greatest that ever got chalk on his coat.
- (sung)* One man deserves the credit,
One man deserves the blame,
And Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky is his name.
Hi!
Nicolai Ivanovich Lobach ---
- (spoken)* I am never forget the day I first meet the great Lobachevsky.
In one word he told me secret of success in mathematics:
Plagiarize!
Plagiarize!
Let no one else's work evade your eyes.
Remember why the good Lord made your eyes,
So don't shade your eyes,
But plagiarize, plagiarize, plagiarize ---
Only be sure always to call it please "research".
- (sung)* And ever since I meet this man my life is not the same.
And Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky is his name.
Hi!
Nicolai Ivanovich Lobach ---
- (spoken)* I am never forget the day I am given first original paper to write.
It was on analytic and algebraic topology of locally Euclidean
metrization of infinitely differentiable Riemannian manifold.
Bozhe moi!
This I know from nothing.
But I think of gtreat Lobachevsky and get idea --- ahah!
- (sung)* I have a friend in Minsk,
Who has a friend in Pinsk,
Whose friend in Omsk
Has friend in Tomsk
With friend in Akmolinsk.
His friend in Alexandrovsk

Has friend in Petropavlovsk,
Whose friend somehow
Is solving now
The problem in Dnepropetrovsk.

And when his work is done ---
Haha! --- begins the fun:
From Dnepropetrovsk to Petropavlovsk,
By way of Iliysk and Novorossiysk,
To Alexandrovsk to Akmolinsk
To Tomsk to Omsk to Pinsk to Minsk
To me the new will run,
Yes, to me the news will run.

And then I write
By morning, night,
And afternoon,
And pretty soon
My name in Dnepropetrovsk is cursed,
When he finds out I publish first.

And who made me a big success and brought me wealth and fame?
Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky is his name.
Hi!
Nicolai Ivanovich Lobach ---

(spoken) I am never forget the day my first book is published.
Every chapter I stole from somewhere else.
Index I copy from old Vladivostok telephone directory.
Thie book was sensational!
Pravda --- well --- *Pravda* --- *Pravda* said:
*(**)*
"It stinks!"
But *Izvestia* --- *Izvestia* said:
*(**)*
"It stinks!"
Metro-Goldwyn-Moskva buys movie rights for six million rubles,
Changing title to "The Eternal Triangle",
With Ingrid Bergman playing part of hypotenuse.

(sung) And who deserves the credit?
And who deserves the blame?
Nicolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky is his name.
Hi!

*(**)* At each of these two junctures one should insert some phrase in Russian (if the audience does not speak Russian) or some Russian double-talk (if it does). The author's own choices varied from performance to performance, ranging from the merely inappropriate to the distinctly obscene.