

TSARIST RUSSIA AND THE MUSICAL WORLD

The contents of this themed issue were complete, reviewed and accepted well before Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022. We recognize that perceptions of Russian culture, nationalism and transnational connections will have changed substantially as a result of the war and that writing about Russia's position in the world may now carry painful associations. This issue is in no way intended as a commentary on contemporary events. Firm in the belief that there is worth in historical research that challenges and decentres nationalist mythologies, we have decided to publish our texts in their original form.

Introduction

Russia has rarely been considered a normal part of nineteenth-century musical Europe.* The conventional image of musical affairs in nineteenth-century Russia is that of a backward country, an 'outpost' even 'a colony of the West',¹ where eventually – and quite miraculously – a national tradition of composition emerged, founded on the work of Glinka, the Kuchka and Tchaikovsky; this tradition, however, is typically presumed to have had little direct consequence for what happened in the West at the same time. Indeed, the story often goes that it was not until Sergei Diaghilev's *saisons russes* of the early twentieth century that this music had any real impact in the West, and even then, it was only in the form of sensationalised curiosities.²

* The articles in this issue follow the transliteration principles outlined by Gerald Abraham for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, including the spelling of proper names, which may deviate from strict transliteration for the sake of simplification (particularly in the suffix *-sky*) or established Anglophone practice. Spelling has been updated to reflect modern Russian practice. Until 1917, Russia used the Julian (Old Style) calendar, which in the nineteenth century was 12 days behind the Gregorian (New Style) calendar used in Western Europe (and 11 in the eighteenth). The dates are given in either old or new style depending on the local context; where there is room for doubt, the calendar used has been indicated with either 'O.S.' or 'N.S.'.

¹ Robert C. Ridenour, *Nationalism, Modernism, and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Russian Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), 5.

² Richard Taruskin coined the term 'Diaghilevshchina' to describe the phenomenon of marketing Russia as exotic or barbaric to the West in *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of Works through Mavra*

In this themed issue we seek to dispel this image of a culturally peripheral and exotic Russia, and emphasize how Russian musical life in the long nineteenth century was a vastly international affair. From the very beginning of the century, when the country's capital hosted the likes of Giuseppe Sarti, Adrien Boïeldieu and John Field, to the years leading up to the First World War, when Igor Stravinsky and Aleksandr Scriabin were spending much of their careers abroad, there was a steady dynamic of exchange and interaction. In the course of the century, moreover, Russia became increasingly able to connect. The 1860s saw new steps in the professionalization of musical life in Russia, due in large part to the endeavours of Anton and Nikolay Rubinstein. The liberal reforms of Alexander II, what is more, rendered Russia more palatable politically. Broader infrastructural and technological improvements over time also meant that cities such as St Petersburg and Moscow became prominent nodes in musical networks: performers, patrons, impresarios and conductors could move with ease between Russia and the rest of Europe; correspondents could communicate reviews of new works to European periodicals at speed; and publishers could distribute new repertoire widely. With these networks in place, people, ideas and music could flow in and out of the Russian empire on a routine basis.

This state of affairs itself has never been a secret – it has merely been obscured by a number of long-standing biases that have caused the study of Russian music history to be dominated by the study of ‘Russian music’.³ For much of the twentieth century, musical

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1016, and has discussed the issue extensively since, including in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), xi–xviii, and ‘Non-Nationalists and Other Nationalists’, *19th-Century Music* 35/2 (2011), 143–144.

³ This tendency to focus on works by native composers can be traced back to the very beginnings of Russian music historiography in the late nineteenth century (e.g. Cui, *La musique en Russie* [Paris: Fischbacher, 1881], 11–14, 19), and is of course still common in conventional music histories (e.g. Francis Maes, *A history of Russian music: from Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002]). A notable early exception can be found in Polikarp Perepelitsin, *Istoriya muziki v Rossii* (St Petersburg and Moscow: M.O. Vol’f, 1888), the title of which (*History of Music in Russia*) is significant enough: Perepelitsin does not focus exclusively on the Russian national canon and discusses a great number of performers active in Russia (both native and foreign). In recent Russian scholarship, the recognition of the need to document and understand the local musical world in its broadest sense is exemplified most clearly

works were the focus rather than the people that mobilised them; genesis and style predominated over reception; and interest in music perceived as Russian far outweighed that which betrayed foreign influence. This combination of composer-centric historiography and methodological nationalism continues to brand the activities of foreigners in Russia as not belonging to the purview of Russian music history proper; and of those of Russians abroad being of secondary importance at best – at least, until Stravinsky’s *Sacre du printemps* burst into the Western repertory.⁴

Hence, while it has become increasingly common of late to reframe music history in terms of mobility and cosmopolitanism, scholars of Russian music have had to combat particularly entrenched ideas about national tradition. In addressing these matters, we can build on the by now well-known critiques of, on the one hand, the myths of national character within the Russian tradition itself, and on the other, the ‘fetishized difference’ with which Western musicologists have tended to approach it.⁵

A steady stream of research has in recent decades attempted to normalize attitudes towards Russian music and musicians. Richard Taruskin, for instance, sought to “‘mainstream” Russian music and musicians into the general narrative’ of his monumental *Oxford History of Western Music*, rather than lumping them into separate chapters on national schools.⁶ Meanwhile, various Russian scholars have crossed the traditional divide between specializations in either Russian music or *zarubezhnaya muzika* (foreign music), amongst

in the encyclopaedic project *Muzikal’niy Peterburg*. Volumes 10 and 11, edited by I. F. Petrovskaya (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2009–2010), which are dedicated to the nineteenth century, have entries for a variety of actors, including performers, institutions and patrons, both native and non-native.

⁴ For the notion of methodological nationalism, see for example Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, ‘Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology’, *The International Migration Review* 37/3 (2003), 576–610.

⁵ See in particular: Taruskin, ‘Some Thoughts on the History and Historiography of Russian Music’, *Journal of Musicology* 3/4 (1984), 321–339; Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, where the term ‘fetishized difference’ is introduced on page 48; and Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁶ Taruskin, ‘Non-Nationalists and Other Nationalists’, 133.

others through a series of volumes exploring bilateral relations with other nations, or by exploring the involvement of an individual composer with another culture.⁷

In terms of reconsidering Russia's place within Europe in the long nineteenth century, influence has been a primary concern. The imprint of the techniques of the Kuchka on the music of Debussy and Ravel, for instance, has been well documented.⁸ While the methods and systems through which composers came into contact with Russian repertoire are not at the heart of these influence studies, they nevertheless serve as reminders that Russia was well integrated into the wider musical world long before the advent of 'Diaghilevshchina'.

Equally, various musicologists have exposed the flaws in the nationalist myth that the music of Glinka and the Kuchka somehow emerged completely independently from the European tradition. Various scholars have now analysed Glinka's indebtedness to *bel canto* in *A Life for the Tsar*, for example, and Marina Frolova-Walker has provided evidence that members of the Kuchka looked to Robert Schumann even in formulating idioms that would eventually be perceived as inherently Russian.⁹ The ways in which these composers became familiar with

⁷ See for example Valery Vasil'yevich Smirnov, ed., *Russko-frantsuzskiy muzikal'nyye svyazi: sbornik nauchnikh statey* (St Petersburg: Sanktpeterburgskaya Gosudarstvennaya Konservatoriya im. N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova, 2003); Alla Konstantinovna Kyonigsberg, ed., *Russko-ital'yanskiye muzikal'nyye svyazi: sbornik statey* (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Politekhnikheskogo Universiteta, 2004); and Kyonigsberg, ed., *Russko-nemetskiye muzikal'nyye svyazi: sbornik statey* (St Petersburg: Sanktpeterburgskaya Gosudarstvennaya Konservatoriya im. N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova, 2006); Yelena Mikhaylovna Petrushanskaya, *Mikhail Glinka i Italiya: Zagadki zhizni i tvorchestva* (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2009).

⁸ On Russian influences on French music, see André Schaeffner, 'Debussy et ses rapports avec la musique russe', in *Musique russe: études réunies*, ed. Pierre Souvchinsky (Paris: Bibliothèque internationale de musicologie, 1953), 95–138; Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 185–208; Roy Howat, 'Russian Imprints in Debussy's Music', in *Rethinking Debussy*, ed. Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31–51; and Steven Bauer, 'Ravel's "Russian" Period: Octatonicism in His Early Works, 1893–1908', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 52/3 (1999), 531–592. Gareth Thomas has made similar claims for English composers in his 'The Impact of Russian Music in England 1893–1929' (PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2005), 131–261.

⁹ Petrushanskaya, *Mikhail Glinka i Italiya*; Daniil Zavulunov, 'M. I. Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* (1836): An Historical and Analytic-Theoretical Study' (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2010); Rutger Helmers, *Not Russian Enough? Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Opera* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 20–49; Marina Frolova-Walker, 'Against Germanic Reasoning: The Search for a Russian Style of Musical Argumentation', in *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture 1800–1945*, ed. Harry White and Michael Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), 104–122.

foreign repertoire have been touched upon in studies of the reception of Western composers in Russia. Such studies might also be taken as reminders that the reactions of Russian audiences ought to feature as prominently in our music histories as those of Central European ones.¹⁰

The incorporation and reformulation of existing compositional techniques and aesthetics by Russian composers was arguably driven by a desire to compete on the world's stage.¹¹ It follows that scholars have sought to discover how well these works actually travelled. Much has necessarily been foundational survey work, such as Elaine Brody's attempts to trace mentions of Russian composers in the pages of *Le Guide musical* between 1889 and 1914.¹² Then there are those who have embraced reception studies in order to assess Russian music's international spread.¹³ Accepting the premise that Russian music was not as autochthonous as traditionally presumed, the performance of music by Russian composers abroad formed (to borrow Philip Bullock and Rebecca Beasley's phrasing) 'a complex encounter with familiar ideas made strange'.¹⁴ Investigations into the reception of a certain composer or musical event have, therefore, often highlighted the gap between perceived and

¹⁰ Wagner's Russian reception, for example, is explored in Stephen Muir and Anastasia Belina-Johnson, eds., *Wagner in Russia, Poland and the Czech Lands* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Hannu Salmi, *Wagner and Wagnerism in Nineteenth-Century Sweden, Finland, and the Baltic Provinces: Reception, Enthusiasm, Cult* (Rochester, NY and Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

¹¹ See, for example, Helmers, *Not Russian Enough?*, 10–11.

¹² Elaine Brody, 'Russians in Paris (1889–1914)', in *Russian and Soviet Music: Essays for Boris Schwarz*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 157–183. Another source that focuses on retrieving reviews of Russian composers in the foreign press is Thomas Kohlhase's compilation, *An Tschaikowsky scheiden sich die Geister': Textzeugnisse der Čajkovskij-Rezeption, 1866–2004, Čajkovskij-Studien* (Mainz: Schott, 2006), volume 10.

¹³ See, for instance, Vincenzina Ottomano, 'Dialogo tra il Belgio e la Russia: *Il prigioniero del Caucaso* di César Cui a Liegi', *Revue belge de musicologie/Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap* 66 (2012), 49–60; 'Die erste Rezeption russischer Opern in Italien: *Ein Leben für den Zaren* in Mailand', *Studia Musicologica* 52 (2011), 143–156; Lucinde Braun, '*La terre promise*': *Frankreich im Leben und Schaffen Čajkovskijs*, *Čajkovskij-Studien* 15 (Mainz: Schott, 2014), 47–168; and Tamsin Alexander, 'Tchaikovsky's *Yevgeny Onegin* in Britain, 1892–1906: Slipping between High and Low, Future and Past, East and West', *Musiktheorie* 3 (2015), 223–234.

¹⁴ Rebecca Beasley and Philip Bullock, 'Introduction: Against Influence: On Writing about Russian Culture in Britain', in *Russia in Britain, 1880–1940: From Melodrama to Modernism*, eds. Beasley and Bullock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

actual difference. Writers on this topic have also sought out the root of such perceived differences through considering diplomatic affairs and national biases. The conclusion has often followed that presumptions of Russia's backwardness, even barbarism, hindered any sustained flow of its music westward and prevented serious engagement with it. Even the well-travelled Tchaikovsky famously complained about Russian composers being treated with condescension abroad.¹⁵

Others have gone beyond work-centric studies to take the people behind musical movement between Russia and Western Europe as their subject. Understandably, the role played by composers who travelled to promote their own work has been a primary concern so far, as exemplified by Rosamund Bartlett's work on Wagner, or Lucinde Braun and Galina Petrova's work on Berlioz.¹⁶ But alternative intermediaries that facilitated the movement of music and musicians have also begun to come into view, such as the diplomat Count Andrey Razumovsky, the mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot or the writer on Russian music Rosa Newmarch.¹⁷ Philip Bullock has also taken an institution – the Queen's Hall – as a lens on Russian music in London.¹⁸ The articles in our issue build on this work, while offering alternative perspectives. There is much about Russia's connectedness to the rest of world,

¹⁵ As recorded by Tchaikovsky in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck from Vienna on 27 November (9 December) 1877. P. I. Tchaikovsky and N. F. von Meck, *Perepiska* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2004), volume 1, 123; translated in Rosa Newmarch, ed., *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky* (London: John Lane, 1906), 241. Discussions of assumptions of barbarism in Russian music are exemplified by Stephen Muir's work on the reception of Rimsky-Korsakov in Britain. See his "'About as Wild and Barbaric as Well Could be Imagined...': The Critical Reception of Rimsky-Korsakov in Nineteenth-Century England", *Music & Letters* 93/4 (2012), 513–542.

¹⁶ Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia*; Galina Petrova and Lucinde Braun, 'Berlioz und Russland – neue Ansätze, neue Quellen', *Die Musikforschung* 69/3 (2016), 209–230.

¹⁷ See Mark Ferraguto, 'Beethoven à la moujik: Russianness and Learned Style in the "Razumovsky" String Quartets', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 67/1 (2014), 77–124, and 'Representing Russia: Luxury and Diplomacy at the Razumovsky Palace in Vienna, 1803–1815', *Music & Letters* 97/3 (2016), 383–408; Jean Gribenski, 'Pauline Viardot et l'apparition des musiques russe et finlandaise à Paris, à la fin du XIX^e siècle', *L'esprit français' und die Musik Europas: Entstehung, Einfluss und Grenzen einer ästhetischen Doktrin* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2007), 654–661; Tamsin Alexander, 'Decentralising via Russia: Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Nice, 1890', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27/1 (2015), 35–62; Philip Bullock, *Rosa Newmarch and Russian Music in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁸ Philip Bullock, 'Tsar's Hall: Russian Music in London, 1895–1926', in *Russia in Britain*, 113–128.

after all, that remains unknown. In particular, to further the project of understanding Russia in its wider global context, the means by which connections were made need to be established.

We are very much aware that by making ‘Russia’ the theme of our issue, the nation has in some form been retained as an a-priori category of analysis – even if we stress the complicating factor that Tsarist Russia was itself a multi-ethnic empire.¹⁹ Our essays, however, have been collected under this label to combat the aforementioned assumptions of isolation and to highlight Russia’s place in and as part of musical life at large. The conjunction ‘and’ in our title, to be sure, is not meant to suggest notions of Russia as separate from the rest of the musical world, or even of ‘Russia’ and the ‘musical world’ as two distinct, definable poles. We mean to study the presence of the musical world in Russia and vice versa, highlighting that one was an inalienable part of the other. In so doing, our aim is to encourage both further investigation into Russia’s international ties, and the general incorporation of Russian music, musicians and locales into music histories in reflection of the high levels of cross-border activity in the long nineteenth century.

Each article in this issue, therefore, is about more than just ‘Russia’ or ‘Russian music’. The purpose has been not to zoom in on Russia, but to open it up. We do so by broadening our understanding of ‘Russia’ or ‘Russian culture’ along the lines suggested by James Clifford, who has argued in his pioneering meditation on ‘traveling cultures’ that we should ‘focus on any culture’s farthest range of travel’ as well as its centres, ask how ‘groups negotiate themselves in external relationships’, and how a culture can also be ‘a site of travel for others’, making ‘one group’s core another’s periphery’.²⁰ In this way, we aim to show

¹⁹ Taruskin has identified the same irony in his own *Defining Russia Musically*, observing that ‘that book, of course, did not succeed in shaking the baleful question [“How Russian is it?”] because it, too, was almost wholly devoted to music by Russian composers and therefore, at best, merely added a new wing to the ghetto.’ Taruskin, ‘Non-Nationalists and Other Nationalists’, 132.

²⁰ James Clifford, ‘Traveling Cultures’, in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 101.

how musical life and musical culture in Russia were intertwined with musical life and musical culture elsewhere.

The articles in this issue address and illustrate elements that are essential for furthering the current understanding of Russia's embeddedness in the international musical culture of the long nineteenth century: the exchange of musicians and repertoires; the social and political conditions in which these exchanges took place; the range of mediators, from aristocratic patrons to musical professionals; the methods of movement; and the ways in which Russia was imagined and experienced by foreigners. Naturally, our aim is not to offer complete coverage of the gaps in our knowledge all at once: in the selection of these articles, we have chosen for a measure of diversity that may illustrate various aspects of Russia's position in the world.

The opening article by Anna Giust studies the ways musical patrons facilitated or influenced the exchange of repertoire and musical personnel around 1800 – a period of Russian music history that has received scant scholarly attention – and finds compelling evidence that musical imports at this time relied extensively on the contacts made during international diplomatic missions and grand tours. Katelyn Clark focuses on the work of a single pianist-composer, John Field, whose career fits poorly in a mode of historiography that separates Russia from the Western mainstream; Clark suggests how Field's music might be understood as a product of displacement, cultivated in and on the roads between St Petersburg and Moscow. The contribution by Rutger Helmers returns to the theme of aristocratic patronage for the period around the mid-century, but looks at these relations from a different perspective: that of the travelling performers who had to navigate the world of the Russian elites. Tamsin Alexander's article, finally, focuses on an era when Russian works and performers were beginning to be accepted more readily by Western European audiences, and looks at the promotion and reception of *Yevgeny Onegin* in Nice; it shows how, in this case at

least, a Russian opera would be anticipated not as an exotic import, but as an instructive and progressive model for the French themselves.

There are a number of common threads that connect these contributions. To begin with, they seek to go beyond the confining categories of national style and national identity. Clark, for instance, explores the possibility of the environment or landscape shaping the composition and international reception of music, complicating the picture of John Field as either simply a Russian composer or as one essentially extraneous to Russia. By studying how and where national categories were transcended, our work also relates to the subject of cosmopolitanism. This is made most explicit in Alexander's contribution, which argues not only for the power of cosmopolitan aspirations in the final decade of the nineteenth century, but also for the significant role Russia could play in the imagined musical community of the world. Indeed, our contributions together look to four different spaces that cannot be easily defined in national terms: diplomats' journeys, roads, cosmopolitan courts and a tourist city.

The articles also explore alternative representations of Russia that existed alongside the well-known imagined, 'barbaric' Russia. Helmers' work points out the complementary representations of Russia's musical scene as a world of glamour and high and society, as it frequently appeared in travellers' memoirs and the musical press, and experienced first-hand by a substantial number of Europe's musical luminaries. As mentioned above, Alexander shows that for the critics in France, Russian music did not have to be regarded as exotic in order to be attractive.

We have combined these analyses with attention to 'the physical, infrastructural, and institutional conditions of movement', a good grasp of which, as Stephen Greenblatt amongst others has argued, is essential for understanding movements in the symbolic realm of culture, and which are therefore to be regarded as 'serious objects of analysis.'²¹ We have tried to

²¹ Stephen Greenblatt et al., *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 250.

point out, therefore, what was actually on the move in the exchanges we describe. This includes wooden crates with production details for *tragédies lyriques* sent up the Seine, and scores of Field's nocturnes and Tchaikovsky's *Onegin* disseminated in Western Europe. It includes the tireless travel of virtuosos, who only in the second half of the century would have the luxury to reach St Petersburg by train, as well as the migration of Bohemian chapel masters seeking appointments in the Russian capitals, and Russian critics finding their way to France. And it includes correspondence between these actors across and within borders. Each of these elements would be guided and limited by the available methods of movement and the technologies behind it.

Just as importantly, and highlighted more consistently in the following articles, are the social networks allowing for these exchanges. Far from focussing exclusively on well-known composers, we have tried to identify the important actors that guided and promoted travel, which included performers, institutions, patrons and critics. The contributions by Giust and Helmers, for instance, show how musical professional networks were still complemented by the diplomatic and dynastic networks of the ruling class.

The specific contact zones where musicians and other relevant actors met included, of course, the public musical establishment of metropolises such as Paris and St Petersburg; but also private audiences, courts, country estates and provincial centres. Alexander's case study undermines facile centre-periphery dichotomies by looking at Nice, a highly cosmopolitan space that played an important role in introducing Russian opera to France prior to Paris.

Ultimately, understanding Russia's place in the musical world is relevant not just for Russian studies but for our understanding of music history at large. Although we cover but a small portion of the 'musical world' referred to in our title, our approaches are hopefully widely transferable. After all, the methods and networks through which people and things moved in our stories were shared and replicated across Europe and beyond. Russia's

particularly ghettoized status makes for an extreme case study, but nonetheless one that draws attention to the need to continue rethinking the traditionally nationalist focus of nineteenth-century studies. This collection of essays offers a glimpse of the rich array of musical spaces, people and objects that come into view when we look outside, in between and beyond narrow national categories.