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The Imperial Russian Musical Society and the Formation of Russian Vocal Education*

The article is devoted to the role of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS) in the process of formation of Russian vocal education. As a result of the Society's work, the art of Russian singing became established onto a sturdy systemic basis and acquired high professional orientation directed at the time of the Rubinstein brothers. Some of the results of these activities became visible in the first decade of the existence of the conservatories in St. Petersburg and Moscow. However, they revealed themselves especially distinctively at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries, when the general standard in academic singing became quite high. Moreover, this pertained not only to opera, but also to the chamber-singing genre, which found its confirmation on an official governmental level. The archival materials demonstrate that one of the most crucial roles in this work belongs to the Imperial Russian Musical Society. As the result of its highly developed regional infrastructure it made musical and, in particular, vocal education accessible for the broadest strata of the population. In the long run, this would necessarily affect the formation of the national school of performance, a gradual rise of the overall level of professional singing culture, which reached its peak at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In such a context the significance of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in the act of formation of Russian vocal education cannot be overestimated.

Императорское Русское музыкальное общество и становление российского вокального образования

Статья посвящена роли Императорского Русского музыкального общества (ИРМО) в становлении отечественного вокального образования. Благодаря Обществу российское певческое искусство приобрело прочную системную основу и высокие профессиональные ориентиры, намеченные при братьях А.Г. и Н.Г. Рубинштейнах. Определённые результаты этой деятельности обозначились в первое десятилетие существования консерваторий в Петербурге и Москве. Но особенно отчётливо они проявились на рубеже XIX–XX веков, когда средняя планка в академическом пении была достаточно высока. Причём это касалось не только оперы, но и камерно-вокального жанра, что находило своё подтверждение на официальном уровне. Архивные материалы показывают, что одна из ключевых ролей в этой работе принадлежит Императорскому Русскому музыкальному обществу. Благодаря развитой региональной инфраструктуре оно сделало доступным музыкальное и, в частности, вокальное образование для самых широких слоёв населения. Это в итоге не могло не сказаться на формировании национальной исполнительской школы, постепенном повышении общего уровня профессиональной певческой культуры, достигшего своего апогея на рубеже XIX–XX веков.

* Translated by Anton Rovner.

**Keywords:**

Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS), vocal education, vocal art, musical classes, opera.

Ключевые слова:

Императорское Русское музыкальное общество (ИРМО), вокальное образование, вокальное искусство, музыкальные классы, опера.

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Task-oriented work in the field of vocal education began in Russia only with the establishment of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS). With the aid of this organization the art of Russian singing quickly became established onto a sturdy systemic basis and acquired high professional orientation directed at the time of the Rubinstein brothers.

Certain results of these activities came into view already in the first decade of the existence of the conservatories in St. Petersburg and Moscow. But they revealed themselves especially distinctively at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries. However, against the background of the brilliant achievements of the Silver Age the indicated tendency, most likely, does not stand out too conspicuously among others. And the question is not that the scenes of the imperial theaters at that time saw the predominance of Feodor Shalyapin, Leonid Sobinov, Antonina Nezhdanova, Ioakim Tartakov, Alexander Davydov, Vassily Petrov¹ and many others, but rather that the overall standard of singing at that time was very high. This pertained not only to opera, but also the chamber-vocal genre, which boldly asserted itself in the likeness of Maria Olenina D'Alheim, Anna Zherebtsova-Andreyeva, Zoya Lodiy, and Olga Butomo-Nazvanova.² This situation found its reflection on the official level, as well. Thus, in one of the circular letters sent out by the Ministry of People's Enlightenment from July 18, 1915 we read: "Attention has long since been drawn on teaching music and singing

as one of the serious means of aesthetical development of the trainees... instruction of singing has entered upon strong soil and has provided favorable resultsm."³

The reviews of that period demonstrate quite visibly the vocal-technical level of the numerous soloists who performed on provincial stages; for example: "Opera in this season is one of the best in the provinces. Such female singers are Synerberg, Kartavina and Meichik, or such singers as Tomors, Drakuli and Bragin — will be valuable acquisitions to any opera company."⁴

Indeed, the newspaper publications of the turn of the centuries regularly informed of the successes of various opera companies in such cities as Irkutsk, Tomsk, Perm, Tiflis, Voronezh and Samara. At the same time, it was not as much the amount of financial gain that was considered, as the artistic side of the opera productions, the range of evaluations of which varied between "favorable impression" to "extraordinarily good."

In the overall flow of comments there, from time to time, it was possible to run across not entirely favorable reviews. For example, in one of the newspapers from 1910 we read: "Mr. Sobinov greatly disappointed the Tambov audience. Sobinov did not sing the way 'Sobinov' sings, as many said in a disappointed tone, leaving the concert prior to its termination."⁵ Or "Tartakov... performed in the role of 'Onegin'... and Kazan almost did not recognize its idol. < ... > He sang the first acts of the opera so weakly, that the audience was perplexed."⁶ But the

very diverse angles of the reviews merely emphasized the overall interest in vocal art, in the perfection of its professionalism.

Not infrequently one could meet artists of a European quality in provincial theaters: “The artist Synnerberg in the role of Ortrude especially sunk into my memory. I have never heard such a performance, either in our country, or later in Germany” [1, p. 37]. Incidentally, Russian singers were quite broadly and successfully represented on European, and even on world stages. Besides the aforementioned first-rate performers, mention must be made of Evgenia Mravina, as well as Ivan Alchevsky, Evgenia Bronskaya-Makarova, Nadezhda Van Brandt, Maria Dolina, Maria Kuznetsova-Benoit, Lidia Lipkovskaya, Nadezhda Papayan, Mikhail Rezunov, Inna (Nina) Timrot, Maria Cherkasskaya, Olga Schmidt and others.⁷

It is necessary to bring to our attention that the success of any opera production depended on numerous accompanying near-theatrical factors and organizational nuances, which frequently did not have any direct relation to the singers’ vocal techniques, but substantially affected the opinions of both the critics and the audience. For this reason, even very strong performers became victims of suggested circumstances and were evaluated by the critics, rather, in negative light: “The role of page Urban was passed on to Mrs. Synnerberg. The outward appearance of the venerable artist, exceedingly massive and full-grown, makes the audience prejudiced against her. After all Urban is a youth, almost a boy, who is aflame with first love towards his queen.”⁸

Analysis of a large mass of criticism of those years showed that the representatives of Russian vocal art at the turn of the century demonstrated a satisfactory European level and were quite actively integrated into the world cultural space. One of the crucial roles in this belongs to the Imperial Russian Musical Society. Moreover, not only in the undoubted significance, as exemplified by the establishment of conservatories in St. Petersburg (1862) and Moscow (1866) and

the creation of the ramified network of “musical pedagogical institutions”⁹, but also in a mediated way, indirectly affecting the situation. For example, one of the newspapers from the early 20th century hinted that the founding of the Moscow Philharmonic Society, established by graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory Piotr Shostakovsky, took place as the result of conflict between the latter and the leadership of the Moscow Conservatory.¹⁰ Apparently, the College of Music and Drama affiliated with the Society, established in 1883 on the basis of the latter’s private music school, was opened in accordance with the logical elaboration of the present situation.

It must be noticed that the College of Music and Drama, indeed, was a competitor to the Moscow Conservatory. Moreover, the program and the diplomas of the College corresponded to those of the Conservatory. The sole difference was demonstrated in the presence of an Actors’ (Drama) Department within the College. And even though among the “star” students of its singing classes only Leonid Sobinov is regularly mentioned, the College of Music and Drama let out an entire set of vocalists who were successful in their profession and who recommended themselves as sound professionals. They included Alexei Kruglov, Moisei Agulin (Agulnik),¹¹ Olga Schmidt and many others. For this reason, it is impossible to disagree with the author of the newspaper publication that such «incidents» not only “were beneficial to the cause of the musical development of Moscow,”¹² but also served the rise of the level of Russian vocal art in general.

Sufficiently much has already been said about the significance of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in the development of Russian music. It is of no doubt that it served as an effective model for other social organizations, which by the turn of the century began to appear ubiquitously in Russia. In addition, the establishment of numerous musical courses in the image and likeness of the Society’s Musical Classes



played a substantial role in the development of Russian musical education, which is also a well-known fact. In this context mention must also be made of the highly developed educational infrastructure and the most important enlightening mission of the Imperial Russian Musical Society, which was obviously appreciated at the highest governmental level. However, we must not forget that all of this became possible only due to the endorsement of the Imperial Family and the active support of patrons. Naturally, such a privilege was hardly accessible to every organization, and it put certain image-related¹³ and moral responsibilities on the Society, which were not always given sufficient attention, especially in the provincial regions. The latter, in its turn, aroused the dissatisfaction in the circles of the nascent society taking care, in other ways, of the quality of Russian education. In the beginning of the 20th century this was complemented by political instability, which merely raised the level of intensity in regard to the accumulating problems. Unsurprisingly, then, in one of the publications of that period it was asserted that “the Musical Society, especially acting through the local sections, is a typical society of musical dilettantes, amateurs, maybe, sometimes, very good... people, but bad musicians.”¹⁴

Maybe this assertion did, indeed, have in itself some real rationale, but in regard to vocal art it is seen as arguable, since the level of instruction of singing in institutions affiliated with regional sections of the Imperial Russian Musical Society was always very high. For example, Camillo Everardi, whom there is no need to introduce, having been invited to work a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory upon the initiative of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, also taught at the Society’s Music College in Kiev for almost ten years, where “a there was a mass of students from the southwestern gubernias gathered.”¹⁵ And it was particularly there, under the direction of the celebrated maestro, that the son of a

common teacher, subsequently the famous tenor Alexander Davydov began his path of ascension towards the big stage. At the same time, in the Musical Classes of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in Odessa a simple teacher of a female college Antonina Nezhdanova took her first steps in her studies with Sofia Rubinstein.¹⁶

It is noteworthy that in Vladivostok before the revolution the singing class was presented, in the words of a critic, “better than the others” [i.e., local classes — *E. Sh.*], since it was “in the hands of an experienced and conscientious instructor — the f[or]mer artist of the Russian opera, S[imeon]... Lugarti.”¹⁷ Hortensia Synnerberg, mentioned earlier numerous times, upon completing her artistic career, taught at the Musical Classes of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in Kharkov. And this list could be continued at length. Not to mention the graduates of the conservatories who were active in the discipline of vocal pedagogy practically throughout the entire Russian Empire. The most well-known example in this sense is Camillo Everardi’s student Dmitri Usatov, who worked in Tiflis, where he gave absolutely gratuitous lessons to the son of a peasant from the Vyatka Gubernia, Feodor Shalyapin.

The selfless ascetic devotion (in Russian: “*Podvizhnichestvo*”), exemplary of the monastic movement in Russia which emerged at the time of the founding of the Imperial Russian Musical Society initiated by Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna and Anton Rubinstein, presents a characteristic trait, which always distinguished the true members of this organization in the highest sense of the word. Indeed, it is not clear how the destiny of the son of a tailor from Odessa Ioakim Tartakov would have been shaped, if it were not for Anton Rubinstein’s mother, who brought him to pass an audition in St. Petersburg. Or how would the fate of another descendent from the Russian province, Vassily Petrov, been realized, for whom the then director of the Moscow Conservatory Vassily Safonov personally sought financial



means for professional education. From this perspective the result of the existence of the Society, in our opinion, becomes most distinctly perceptible. Notwithstanding all the existent arguable organizational flaws, it presented hitherto unprecedented possibilities for disclosing the creative potentials of artistic personalities, and as the result of a developed regional infrastructure made musical and, in particular, vocal

education accessible virtually to all the strata of the population. This cannot but affect the gradual rise of the overall level of the professional singing culture, which reached its peak at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In such a context the significance of the Imperial Russian Musical Society in the goal of the formation of Russian vocal education can hardly be overestimated.

NOTES

¹ Feodor Shalyapin (1873 – 1938) was a Russian opera and chamber singer (bass-cantante). For nearly a year he studied in Tiflis with Dmitri Usatov. He performed on the stage of the imperial theaters and in the provincial cities and towns. He sang with triumph on the best opera stages of the world, and with great success he staged operas as a producer.

Leonid Sobinov (1872 – 1934) was a Russian opera and chamber singer (lyrical tenor). He studied at the College of Music and Drama affiliated with the Moscow Philharmonic Society (in the class of Alexander Dodonov, then the class of Alexandra Santagano-Gorchakova), perfected his vocal skills with Rafael Delli-Ponti, performed on the stage of the Imperial Theaters and in the provinces, sang in the best opera stages in Europe, and was the director of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (1911). The singer's performance skills were highly esteemed by many Russian and European composers of that time. Among the latter were Sergei Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin, Igor Stravinsky, Camille Saint-Saens, Jules Massenet, as well as singers Tito Schipa and Toti dal Monte.

Antonina Nezhdanova (1873 – 1950) was a Russian opera singer (lyrical coloratura soprano). She studied at the Moscow Conservatory (in the class of Umberto Masetti). For over 30 years she sang on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater, having performed the role of Gilda in Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Rigoletto" (1912). During the Soviet period she gave concerts in other countries and in the Russian provincial cities and towns, and also taught at the Moscow Conservatory.

Iokim Tartakov (1860 – 1923) was a Russian opera and chamber singer (lyrical-dramatic baritone). He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Camillo Everardi).

He performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns, and also sang in operettas and toured in Europe. He was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the Russian stage, engaged in opera production and pedagogical activities, including teaching at the Petrograd Conservatory. The singer's talent was highly esteemed by Antonio Cotogni, Anton Rubinstein, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Konstantin Stanislavsky, etc.

Alexander Davydov (Izrail Levenson) (1872 – 1944) was a famous opera and chamber singer (lyrical-dramatic tenor). He studied in Kiev with Camillo Everardi, performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns, toured other countries, participated in Sergei Diaghilev's "Saisons russes" in Paris (1909), became famous as the composer and performer of "Gipsy" art songs, and was the director of the Russian section of the company "Kinetofon Edisona" ["Edison's Kinetophone"]. During the time of his emigration he lived in Paris, where he was a consultant at the Paris Theater of the Russian Opera, and also worked as a producer in Feodor Shalyapin's opera company and at the "Opera comique" theater; upon his return to the USSR he taught at the evening singing school affiliated with the Mariinsky Theater.

Vassily Petrov (1875 – 1937) was a Russian opera singer (bass). He studied at the Moscow Conservatory (in the class of Anton Bartsal). He performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater and in the provincial cities and towns. He was the vocal director of the Konstantin Stanislavsky Opera Theater, and later — of the Opera Studio of the Bolshoi Theater.

² Maria Olenina D'Alheim (1869 – 1970) was a Russian chamber singer (mezzo soprano) who stood at the origins of the Russian school of

chamber singing. She studied in St. Petersburg and Paris and performed in Russia and Europe. Her artistry was highly esteemed both by Russian composers (Piotr Tchaikovsky, Anatoly Lyadov, the members of the “Mighty Handful”), as well as French ones (Jules Massenet and Claude Debussy).

Anna Zhrebtsova-Andreyeva (1868–1944) was a Russian chamber singer (mezzo-soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Natalia Iretskaya), performed in Russia, toured in Europe, and taught at the St. Petersburg and Riga Conservatories.

Zoya Lodi (1886–1957) was a Russian chamber singer (a lyrical soprano), who stood at the origins of the Soviet school of chamber singing. She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Natalia Iretskaya), took lessons from Anna Zhrebtsova-Andreyeva, perfected her skills in Italy with Vittorio Vanzo, performed in Russia and toured in Europe. She was the founder of the classes of chamber singing at the Moscow (1929) and Leningrad (1932) Conservatories. The singer’s artistry was highly esteemed by her contemporaries.

Olga Butomo-Nazvanova (1888–1960) was a Russian chamber singer (mezzo-soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Natalia Iretskaya). She performed in Russia, toured in Berlin and Paris, and taught at the Kiev Conservatory. The singer’s artistry was highly esteemed by Anatoly Lunacharsky.

³ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1915. No. 32, p. 580.

⁴ *Provintsial'naya letopis'* [Provincial Chronicles]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1902. No. 50, p. 969.

In this instance the following singers are being discussed:

Hortensia Synnerberg (1856–1920) was an opera singer (contralto and mezzo-soprano), a student of Francesco Lamperti. She sang on the stages of the imperial theaters and in the provincial cities and towns, and also performed with great success in Europe and South America. Various variants of the spelling of her name may be found in the sources: Synenberg, Synnenberg; but the correct spelling is Synnerberg.

Anna Kartavina (1863–?) was an opera singer (coloratura soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Elizaveta Zwanziger). She performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns.

Alexandra (Anna) Meichik (1875–1934) was

an opera singer (contralto and mezzo-soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Carolina Ferni-Giraldoni), and perfected her skills in Italy. She performed on the stages of various theaters in St. Petersburg and in the provincial cities and towns, as well as in Europe and North America. During the course of several seasons she sang at the La Scala Theater and performed Wagner’s opera repertoire at the Metropolitan Opera. Later she directed a vocal studio in New York.

Iosif Tomars (1867–1934) was an opera singer, dubbed by many as “the Russian Masini” (lyrical tenor). He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Stanislav Gabel). He sang on the stages of the imperial theaters in the provincial cities and towns, and also in Europe. He performed in the concerts of the Imperial Russian Musical Society. The singer’s artistry was highly esteemed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

Alexander Drakuli (Drakul-Kritikos) (1876–1949) was an opera singer (bass). He studied at the Moscow Conservatory (in the class of Anton Bartsal). He performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater and in the provincial cities and towns. He is considered to be the first performer in Russia of the solo part of Giuseppe Verdi’s “Requiem” (1898). After the revolution he lived and worked in France.

Alexander Bragin (Braginsky) (1881–1955) was an opera and operetta singer (baritone). He studied in Kiev with Mikhail Medvedev and at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the classes of Stanislav Gabel and Ioakim Tartakov), and perfected his vocal skills in Italy, Vienna, Berlin and Paris. He sang on the stages of the imperial theaters and in the provincial cities and towns and toured in Berlin. Later he was a famous chamber singer and performed with thematic concerts. He performed at the Odessa, Moscow, Kiev, Tashkent and Baku Conservatories, GITIS, etc.

⁵ *Provintsial'naya letopis'* [Provincial Chronicles]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1910. No. 18, p. 381.

⁶ *Provintsial'naya letopis'* [Provincial Chronicles]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1899. No. 22, p. 412.

⁷ Evgenia Mravina (1864–1914) was an opera singer (lyrical coloratura soprano), the sister of Alexandra Kollontay. She studied with Ippolit Pryanishnikov, perfected her skills in Italy, took lessons with Desirée Artôt, Mathilde Marchesi, etc. She performed on the stage of the Mariinsky theater, as well as the Covent Garden Theater in London, was awarded the title of



Covent Garden Soloist. She sang in Moscow and in the provincial cities and towns, as well as in many European stages. The singer's artistry was highly esteemed by Anton Rubinstein, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, etc.

Ivan Alchevsky (1876–1917) was an opera and chamber singer (lyrical-dramatic tenor). He studied with his elder brother, singer, church and pedagogue Grigoriy Alchevsky and perfected his skills in Paris. He performed on the stages of the imperial theaters and the Grand Opera, sang in the provincial cities and towns, toured in Europe, North America, Algiers, participated in Sergei Diaghilev's "Saisons Russes" in London (1914). He was the first performer of a number of opera roles, including that of Siegfried in Richard Wagner's opera "Götterdämmerung" at the Bolshoi Theater. The singer's artistry was highly esteemed by Camille Saint-Saens.

Evgenia Bronskaya-Makarova (1882 (1884, 1888)–1953) was an opera singer (lyrical coloratura soprano), dubbed as the "Russian Tetrizzini." She studied the St. Petersburg Brovka-Wiesendorf Music School and perfected her skills in Italy with Teresa Arkel. She performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns, and also in Europe and North America.

Nadezhda Van Brandt (Klabanovskaya) (1882–1925) was an opera singer (lyrical coloratura soprano). She received her education in Switzerland at the St. Genevieve Monastery (near Lausanne), and perfected her skills with Desirée Artôt, Mathilde Marchesi and others. She performed on the stage of the "Opera comique" in Paris, in the opera scenes of St. Petersburg and Moscow, sang in the provincial cities and towns, toured in Europe and in China. Outside of Russia she received the appellation of "the Russian nightingale". She was the first performer of a number of opera parts. The singer's artistry was highly esteemed by many composers in Russia and in other countries of that time, among them, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Giacomo Puccini, Camille Saint-Saens, Jules Massenet and Claude Debussy.

Maria Dolina (1867 (1868)–1919) was an opera and chamber singer (contralto). She studied with Selma Grenning-Wilde, and perfected her skills with Carolina Ferni-Giraldoni and Yuri Arnold, and also in Paris and Italy. She sang on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater, in the provincial cities and towns, and in Europe, was awarded the honorary title of "Officier d'Academie de France" (Paris) for

promoting Russian music. She was the first performer of a number of opera parts. Starting from 1894 she was the organizer of annual orchestral concerts in St. Petersburg, the artistic director of the concerts at the Pavlovsk Railway Station (1904–1906), etc. The singer's talent was highly esteemed by many composers from Russia and from other countries — Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Camille Saint-Saens, as well as Antonio Cotogni, Adelina Patti, Mattia Battistini, etc.

Maria Kuznetsova-Benoit (1880–1966) was an opera singer (lyrical soprano), in her third marriage — the wife of Alfred Massenet, the nephew of composer Jules Massenet. She studied singing with Ioakim Tartakov. She performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns, and also in Europe, South and North America and participated in Sergei Diaghilev's "Saisons russes" in Paris (1914). Later, she sang in the opera theater of Stockholm, Copenhagen, London and Paris, and worked as a consultant at the Barcelona Opera.

Lidia Lipkovskaya (Marschner) (1884–1955) was an opera and chamber singer (lyrical coloratura soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Natalia Iretskaya), and perfected her skills in Italy with Vittorio Vanzo. She performed on the stage of the imperial theaters, the Theater of Musical Drama and in the provinces. She toured in Europe, North America, China and Palestine, participated in Sergei Diaghilev's "Saisons russes" in Paris (1909, 1920–1930), etc. She was engaged in pedagogical activities at the Kishinev State Conservatory, the Timișoara Conservatory (Romania), the Russian Conservatory of the Russian Musical Society outside of Russia (Paris), and was the director of the Beirut Conservatory "Académie Beaux-Arts" (Lebanon), etc.

Nadezhda Papayan (1868 (1870)–1906) was an opera and chamber singer (lyrical coloratura soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Wilhelmina Raab), perfected her skills with Mathilde Marchesi, and also in Italy, where she performed on the stages of numerous opera theaters, including La Scala Opera. She sang at the Mariinsky Theater and in the provincial cities and towns and toured in Europe. She was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the Russian stage. The singer's talent was highly esteemed by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Glazunov, Anton Arensky and others.

Mikhail Rezunov (?–1909) was an opera singer (lyrical-dramatic tenor). He studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Stanislav Gabel), and perfected his skills in Germany and Austria. He performed on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater and in the provincial cities and towns, as well as in Europe. He was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the stages of provincial cities.

Inna (Nina) Timrot (1872–1948) was an opera singer (lyrical soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Carolina Ferni-Giraldini). She performed in the theaters of Italy, at the Royal Theater of Madrid (1901–1902), and also in South America.

Maria Cherkasskaya (1876–1931) was an opera singer (lyrical-dramatic soprano). She studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory (in the class of Carolina Ferni-Giraldoni). She performed on the stage of the Mariinsky Theater and, later, the Latvian Opera, sang in provincial cities and towns, toured in Europe, and participated in Sergei Diaghilev's Russian Historical Concerts in Paris (1907). She sang the Wagner repertoire on the stage of the La Scala Theater with great success. She was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the Russian stage.

Olga Schmidt was an opera and chamber singer (lyrical coloratura soprano). She studied in Kazan with Elizaveta Smagina, then at the College of Music and Drama affiliated with the Moscow Philharmonic Society (in the class of Stanislav Sonka). She performed on the stages of provincial theaters, and also in Paris and London.

⁸ What is discussed here is one of the productions of Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera "Les Huguenots" (cit. from: *Khronika teatra i iskusstva* [Chronicles of Theater and Art]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1899. No. 29, p. 502).

⁹ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1915. No. 32, p. 581.

¹⁰ "Posle ssory ushel prof. Shostakovskiy i otkryl filarmonicheskoe obshchestvo i kontserty" ["Professor Shostakovsky left after

a quarrel and founded the Philharmonic Society and Concerts."] (cit. from: Negorev, N. *Moskovskaya konservatoriya: K 50-letnemu yubileyu — 1 sentyabrya* [The Moscow Conservatory: Towards the 50th Anniversary — September 1]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1916. No. 35, p. 704).

¹¹ Alexei Kruglov (1866–1902) was an opera singer (lyrical-dramatic baritone). He studied at the College of Music and Drama affiliated with the Moscow Philharmonic Society (in the class of Semyon Bizheich).

He performed on the stages of St. Petersburg, Moscow and provincial theaters. He was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the Russian stage, and taught singing courses in Perm. The singer's skills produced a deep impression on young Feodor Shalyapin.

Moisei Agulin (Agulnik) (1864 — after 1917) was an opera singer (a lyrical-dramatic tenor). He studied at the College of Music and Drama affiliated with the Moscow Philharmonic Society (in the class of Nikolai Andreyev), and also at the Moscow Conservatory, then perfected his singing skills in Italy, where he gave performances. He sang on the stages of St. Petersburg and in provincial theaters. He was the first performer of a number of opera roles on the Russian stage.

¹² Negorev, N. *Moskovskaya konservatoriya: K 50-letnemu yubileyu — 1 sentyabrya* [The Moscow Conservatory: Towards the 50th Anniversary — September 1]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1916. No. 35, p. 704).

¹³ For example, it was considered that with the death of Anton Rubinstein the Imperial Russian Musical Society suffered a serious loss in its image.

¹⁴ *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1914. No. 23, p. 498.

¹⁵ *Provintsial'naya letopis'* [Provincial Chronicles]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1898. No. 17, p. 335.

¹⁶ The younger sister of Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein.

¹⁷ *Provintsial'naya letopis'* [Provincial Chronicles]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* [Theater and Art]. 1915. No. 22, p. 395.

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