

# RUSSIAN CULTURE

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## RELIGION

**Overview** Religion has always been an important element in the Russians' spiritual life. From early Paganism to the powerful Christianized Kievan State and its religious plurality, and continuing with *state*-controlled and suppressed religious faith under the Soviets, Russian religious life provides a multifaceted picture.

## ANCIENT PERIOD

**Paganism:** Centuries ago tribes in Kievan Rus' believed in gods and spirits which they identified with the forests and meadows. Although very little information has survived about the religious customs of these tribes, we can learn about the religious beliefs and practices of one East Slavic tribe, the Rus, from priests' manuscripts, epics and some treaties signed with princes. The pagan Russians, as mentioned in *The Tale of Bygone Years*, worshipped the earth, trees, stones, fire, the sun and water. The Russians conducted their ceremonies, and made their prayers and supplications in these forests and in shrines. During these ceremonies they played trumpets and rang bells in a wild, noisy fashion, and danced skipping and hopping. Sacrifices were made during these ceremonies to obtain from the gods what they had asked for. Animal and human bones, skulls, vessels, coals and ashes have been found in archaeological excavations. Human sacrifice in Russia continued up until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## POST CLASSICAL PERIOD

**Christianization:** There was no unity among the Russian princes, and paganism was unsuitable for the unification and centralization of the unruly principalities. Vladimir wanted to unite his people under a single state religion, and adopted Christianity from Byzantium to serve this purpose. However, Christianity had first appeared in this pagan land with Princess Olga's visit to Constantinople in 955. Our information about her visit and acceptance of Christianity there comes from *The Tale of Bygone Years*. Following this conversation the Emperor, with the help of the Patriarch, baptized her. When Olga returned to Kiev she wanted her son Svyatoslav to be baptized also, but the request was rejected by Svyatoslav. The long-running violence during the reigns of Svyatoslav and his son Yaropolk were not enough to reduce the strength of Olga's Christianity, rather its influences began to become apparent in later years. Years later, when Vladimir, a Viking descendent, became prince of Kiev in 978 he compelled the people of Kiev to accept a single religious system. To this end, he constructed a temple containing images of the gods within Kiev, and demanded that everyone venerate them. However, this effort was unsuccessful and in 988 he himself accepted Byzantine Orthodox Christianity. *The Tale of Bygone Years* relates that before Vladimir converted to Christianity, Jews from the Khazar Khanate, Muslims from the Bulgar state on the banks of the Volga, Catholics from Germany and Greek philosophers from Byzantium came to him, each attempting to convince Vladimir to accept their faith.

**Byzantine Heritage:** The new religion which Vladimir had obtained from the Greeks is known as Eastern Orthodoxy, or Greek Orthodoxy. At first, the Russians perceived their rapid Christianization as an insult to

the old gods, and believed that the new religion impoverished the Russian language. However, this religion assisted in the start of Russian autocracy, and became the reason that the new values flourished on Russian soil. Christianity in Russian territory brought with it a church organization with a Greek archbishop appointed from Constantinople at its head. Unlike the Byzantine church, the Russian church used a language close to the Russians' own language, Old Church Slavonic. The Greek priests who served in the churches in Russia accepted the use of Old Slavonic as a liturgical language in place of Greek.

Through Byzantium the Russians took the customs of Near Eastern, Greek and Christian civilizations "ready-made", but adopted them by giving them a uniquely Russian character. The political hegemony of princes recognized by the Orthodox Church in Byzantium was carried to Kievan Russian also, and was the reason for the princes' consolidation of their power. At the same time, Christianity ended the separation between the indigenous and foreign tribes, merging these peoples with one another.

As soon as Christianity had been accepted, beginning with Kiev, churches and monasteries were constructed, icons, frescos and mosaics were made and craftsmen were brought from Byzantium. Kiev became a religious center, and the Metropolitan of Kiev appointed from Constantinople became the highest ranking religious leader in Russia. The first Metropolitan for the Russians was Greek, a situation that would continue until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1051 the Metropolitan Ilarion, a Russian, was accepted by Constantinople, but remained in his post for only one year. The rules for the churches in Russia (*Nomokanon*) were also brought from Byzantium. The Prince of Kiev, Vladimir, had Byzantine style cathedrals built in each large city for the purpose of introducing Byzantine art and culture to the Russian people. It is also reported that after the cathedrals were built Vladimir separated children from their families and sent them away to learn the new religion's sacred scripture, the Gospel, for the purpose of creating a new clergy and religious leaders.

Another characteristic that the Russians inherited from Byzantium was the relationship between the church and the state. In Russia, as in Byzantium, the church remained subservient to the state. In western Europe the church and the state were often in conflict, the church was independent of the state and often held a position superior to the state.

In 1054 the Christian world witnessed the final schism dividing the Eastern Orthodox and the western Roman Catholic churches. The western church had adopted the principle of papal superiority and authority over all churches and in matters of doctrine, and claimed that this principle could not be questioned. The Russian church, having its origin in Byzantium, sided with the Orthodox church and opposed Rome.

A few years after accepting Christianity Vladimir granted the church a number of privileges; his son and successor, the Prince of Kiev Yaroslav also gave the church some additional rights. It has been argued that Christianity brought with it attitudes that harmed the status of women in Russian society although Yaroslav's *Kiev Canon Law (Russkaya Pravda)* contained elements that protected the rights of women.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**15<sup>th</sup> century:** In the initial years of Christianity the Russian church was under the control of the Greek Patriarch in Constantinople. Following the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Russian church established itself as an archbishopric and declared its independence. While the state removed the Metropolitan of Moscow, Isidore, who had signed the declaration of the Council of Ferrara-Florence to reunite the eastern and western churches, they appointed a new Metropolitan, Iona, the Metropolitan of Moscow as the head of the independent Orthodox Church. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Russia began to see herself as the successor to the Roman and Byzantine empires and destined to protect the Orthodox people. The *Third Rome* doctrine appeared in the writings of the Russian monk Filofei of Pskov in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century which resulted in Moscow's status as a patriarchate being accepted.

**16<sup>th</sup> century:** In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Church came completely under the control of the state, and the Metropolitan Philipp was ousted from his post by Ivan IV, who later had him murdered.

**Possessors and Nonpossessors:** Both Ivan IV and the Orthodox Church were terrified by the beginning of the free-thinking German Reformation (Protestant Reformation), with its apparent emphasis on the individual conscience in religious belief and practice. Therefore he closed his borders to western influence, and imprisoned any clerics who propagated the tenets of the Reformation. Nevertheless, the Reformation had a decisive influence on the development of the Russian Orthodox Church. The 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the struggle between the *Possessors (stiazhateli)* and *Non-possessors (nestiazhateli)*. The non-possessors, led by Nil Sorsky, insisted that the Church should renounce worldly wealth, that monks should adhere to vows of poverty, and that church and state should be separate. On the other hand, the leader of the possessors, Joseph of Volotsk who advocated a powerful, wealthy church, and emphasized the importance of a harmonious relationship between the Church and the Tsar, was supported by a Church council in 1503. The Non-Possessors were condemned of being opponents of the church. Although they were driven out of the monasteries by Ivan IV and his successors, their influence continued, and a century later, the movement known as the Old Believers appeared.

**17<sup>th</sup> century:** Known as the Time of Troubles, the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a period in which the Russian church turned its back on Catholic politics. The Patriarch Filaret, who had assumed his position after the death of the Patriarch Germogen, gained fame with his anti-Catholic policies. As he was also the father of Tsar Mikhail Romanov, he was given the title *Great Lord*.

**Old Believers and Schism (Raskol):** During the reign of Alexis Romanov, patriarch Nikon introduced reforms in church liturgy to correct mistakes made in the translation of Greek texts into Russian, to modify the sign of the cross to follow Greek usage, and to introduce some restrictions on the church's acquiring additional lands. This movement met with strong disapproval from traditional followers of the Orthodox faith and led to a schism between the believers of Nikon and the traditionalists. The opponents of reforms introduced by the Patriarch between 1652–1666, became known as Old Believers (*Starovery* or *Staroobriadtsy*) who were led by Avvakum. They have remained a small sect within the Orthodox tradition to this day, and were separated after 1666 from the official Russian Orthodox Church. Old Believers continued to practice the old liturgical practices, causing a split in the Orthodox church known as the *Schism (Raskol)*.

**18<sup>th</sup> century:** In this period the Russian church experienced major reforms, particularly in the time of Peter the Great.

**Holy Synod:** Peter closed the office of the Patriarch of Moscow and its place was taken by the Holy Synod. In 1700, after the death of the patriarch Adrian, he did not allow a new patriarch to be elected. Instead, a committee appointed by the Emperor was established. Peter turned the Church into a department of state headed in practice by an *Over-Procurator (Ober-Prokuror)*, a bureaucrat appointed by the tsar to control the Holy Synod, and Church Slavic was retained for the Church by Peter's order. Thus, by putting an end to the church's independence he was able to transform it into an institution bound to the state. Peter's most important actions were the measures he took to attempt to achieve unity through religion. Peter ordered priests to determine those who had left the Orthodox church and to find ways to bring them back into the church. He even permitted priests to use force to achieve this, if necessary. Those who had left the church paid higher taxes and were forbidden from working in the civil service. However, Peter's efforts to achieve national unity through religion came to naught as Russia's borders expanded and peoples of other religions began to live within the boundaries of the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, the efforts to convert members of other religions to Orthodoxy continued; Muslims who refused to convert were driven from their villages. The efforts to convert Muslims to Orthodoxy only came to an end in the time of Catherine II. The Russian state permitted Muslims to practice their religion provided they lived in the remote corners of the Empire and were obedient.

With Catherine II's annexation of a large territory that had been under Polish rule, came a large number of Jews who were now within the boundaries of the Russian Empire. Anti-Jewish measures which began in the period of Ivan the Terrible had, by the start of the 1700s, reached the degree that Catherine I ordered all Jews who refused to convert to Orthodoxy to be driven out of Russia. Attacks against the Jews gradually increased, and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were even held responsible for Alexander II's death at the hands of an assassin. In Catherine II's time Catholics living within the borders of the empire were left with no choice

but to be associated with the Russian church. At the same time in this century a small Protestant group became active. In the 1860s, a group known as Baptists, active in the Caucasus and the Ukraine, began to expand rapidly within the borders of the empire. Worried by this development, the Holy Synod banned all sects and denominations. Members of the Baptists were kept under surveillance and those who were caught were persecuted. Orthodox missionaries were sent to all villages and efforts began to convert to Orthodoxy anyone who belonged to another denomination. The church's attitude became so strict that it eventually alienated its own people.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Sobornost:** The idea of *Sobornost* (communality) appeared in Russian religious thought, which was identified with the Slavophiles Ivan Kireyevsky and Alexey Khomyakov's concept of the communal unity of all believers, like Russian *obshchina*, a peasant commune, united by Orthodox values denying Western individualism.

**Russian Bible Society:** The first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed active endeavors for spiritual satisfaction on the part of large segments of Russian society. One group, called the Russian Bible Society, opened in 1813. Although initiated by the upper strata, it derived support from all classes and from many faiths with Prince Alexander Golitsyn who also happened to be Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod, at its head. Later in 1817 he was appointed head of a new Ministry of Spiritual Affairs and Education. The ministry introduced the fusion of secular and sacred into the state, and issued a statute declaring all religions equal. By virtue of the prominence of many of its leaders, the Society had significant impact in the government, and it eventually became an official arm of the government.

**Toleration Though Isolation:** In the Russian Empire non-Orthodox religious communities fell into different legal categories. Some were legally recognized and tolerated; others were tolerated but lacked legal recognition; and still others were neither legally recognized nor tolerated. However, official toleration did not imply freedom of conscience, since toleration was considered to have been granted to a distinct, recognized group, an approach that frequently resulted in nationality and religious identity being inextricably linked.

**Revolution of 1905:** After the Revolution of 1905, for the first time, the state promulgated an Edict of Religious Toleration in April 1905, granting legal tolerance to all other religions in Russia, and allowing members of other religious groups to act more freely than before.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Bolsheviks, to clear the way for a new socialist society, changed the structure of the traditional patriarchal family, army and church associated with the tsarist regime. A major campaign against the Orthodox church began when the Orthodox church supported the Whites during the Civil War. Soviet law gave the State the legal right to supervise all religious activities.

From the Bolsheviks' perspective tsarist oppression and the Orthodox Church's conservatism together had combined to produce an utterly backward society that was intensely religious, agrarian, superstitious, peasant and illiterate. According to Lenin, religion served as opium for the Russian people, and was an obstacle to building socialism. A decree of February 1918 separated church and state, deprived churches of property and rights of ownership, and nationalized them. Intensive Soviet persecution of religious leaders and believers of all religious groups began.

**Militant Godless League:** The Militant Godless League was formed to conduct propaganda campaigns. The Godless League, formed in 1925 by Stalin, periodically ridiculed and humiliated religion and promoted atheism; and attempted to turn superstitious citizens into atheists.

**Living Church:** To further weaken the Orthodox church the Soviets supported the Living Church which was a reformist movement among the Russian clergy (Renovationist) to split the clergy and the Russian Orthodox Church (1922–1946).

There was an important change in the state's perception of religion under Stalin. During the Second World War, Orthodox identity and the church were used in official propaganda for the purposes of mobilization, and the state also restored the Patriarchate in 1943 as a propaganda agent.

Traditional socialist ideology was re-emphasized when Khrushchev came to power, leading to a new round of religious persecution. Numerous religious institutions and churches that had been reopened under Stalin during the Second World War were closed again.

Nevertheless, religious life continued to exist despite official restrictions, and when Gorbachev came to power approximately forty-five million people belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. For Gorbachev and his government religious groups with their numerous followers represented potential allies in helping to carry out the extensive political, economic and social reforms that they envisioned

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. How is Christianity reflected in Russian culture?
2. Is it possible to see traces of pagan culture in Orthodox Russia?
3. Talk about the concept of the Tsar as God. Where did this concept come from? How did the Byzantines regard their Emperor?
4. Why did Russia see herself as the Third Rome? Why did this doctrine fail?
- 5- Why did religious tolerance end during the Soviet Union? How can we explain the shift that took place during WWII? Why did Stalin use the idea of Orthodox identity as official propaganda for purposes of mobilization?

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## PHILOSOPHY

**Overview** Russian philosophical thought only emerged in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, remaining faithful to its Western founders. However, the contributions of philosophical thought in Russian history had begun earlier despite the restrictions imposed on philosophy by conservative political and religious institutions. With the formation of the first Rus state in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the conversion of pagan Russia to Christianity in the next century, and the end of Russia's 200 year-subjection to the Mongols in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a period marked by isolation and cultural decline, Russians began to increase the level of their intellectual life.

## POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Russia was introduced to philosophy via religion, specifically through *The Fathers of the Church*, a work translated from Greek shortly after the late 10<sup>th</sup> century conversion to Christianity. Translations of other religious works, the theological works of St. John Damascene in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Dionysius the Areopagite in the 14<sup>th</sup>, provided the impetus for some Russian clergymen to compose their own works on philosophy and theology.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**Filofey (Philotheus) Prokopovich:** Regarded as the first Russian philosopher, Filofey of Pskov proposed that Russia was the third Rome, since both the first Rome and second Rome (i.e. Byzantium) were in the hands of heretics. In a work dedicated to Grand Prince Basil II in 1510 he stated: "Two Romes have fallen, the third stands, there shall be no fourth".

### Europeanization:

While Russia was cut off from developments in Western European philosophy during the period of Mongol rule, this situation began to be reversed during the reign of Peter the Great. Russian intellectuals began to examine their society through the lens of science and the perspectives of contemporary European thinkers such as Voltaire.

**Peter Mogila:** Taking his knowledge of Renaissance philosophy and Western scholasticism gained from study in Paris, Mogila established a school for young monks at the Lavra whose curriculum included rhetoric, theology, classical authors and philosophy. In addition, Mogila, converted the Fraternity School into the Kiev-Mogila College where theology was taught under the heading of philosophy.

**Feofan Prokopovich:** A bishop and theologian who had an important role in reorganizing the Russian Church, Feofan argued for an independent science of man that was in harmony with theology. Feofan, on the basis of the concept of natural law, called for unhindered scientific investigation, religious tolerance, and a secular curriculum.

**Gregory Savvich Skovoroda:** Although a layman, Skovoroda was a moralist and religious thinker who studied briefly at the Kiev Academy. He refused an offer of a position at the Moscow Theological Academy, instead living as religious mendicant and creating his own doctrine from studies of the Bible, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Philo, neo-Platonists, the Church Fathers and German mystics until his death in 1794.

**Enlightenment:** In the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Catherine the Great presented herself as a supporter of the principles of the Enlightenment, maintaining correspondence with Voltaire and other leading figures of the European Enlightenment. Although in her *"Instruction"* she advocated rational government, equality before the law, and the pursuit of reason, in practice she opposed the French Revolution and bolstered the autocracy.

**Nikolay Novikov:** During the period of Catherine II's support for free speech and journalism, Novikov was able to use his publishing company, journal, writings and philanthropy to promote Enlightenment principles

in Russia. In 1791 the government put an end to Novikov's publishing activities following the publication of "*The Drone*" which criticized the government. Novikov was arrested the following year, imprisoned and held for fifteen years, only gaining his freedom after Catherine II's death.

**Alexander Radishchev:** During his studies in Leipzig Radishchev became acquainted with the social theories and philosophies of Leibniz, Herder, Helvetius, Locke, Rousseau and Montesquieu. In his work "*Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*" Radishchev, in line with his Enlightenment ideals, expressed his opposition to serfdom, autocracy and corruption. Despite having originally sent Radishchev to Leipzig to study, in the context of the radicalism unleashed by the French Revolution Catherine the Great began to regard him as a threat to the state. Tried as rebel, Radishchev was convicted and given a death sentence that was later reduced to a 10-year exile in Siberia. Freed in 1801, Radishchev took his own life the following year.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Philosophical Circles:** The development of philosophy in Russia was strongly influenced by a number of intellectual circles that emerged after 1815. Nikolay Stankevich's circle, established in the 1830s played a key role in introducing such figures as Granovsky, Bakunin and Belinsky to Hegel's idealism. In the next decade Slavophiles and Westerners discussed on what bases a new Russia should be established, and in the last years of the 1840s the Petrashevsky circle criticized the institution of serfdom and debated how to transform Russian society into a socialist, democratic one.

**Slavophiles:** In line with German Idealism, Slavophiles argued that Russia should seek solutions to current problems from its own unique culture and traditions, and turned their backs on the Western influences that had begun during the reign of Peter the Great. Slavophiles claimed that three institutions were the basis of Russia's unique character – the Russian Orthodox Church, the tsarist autocracy and the peasant commune. The movement was conservative in its reverence for tradition and the past, presenting a potent vision of an ideal Russia that was in contrast to "the West" that has remained influential even to this day.

**Alexey Khomyakov:** Khomyakov combined elements of classical German Idealism, and the theories of Hegel and Schelling. In particular he argued that Christianity's spiritual and moral freedom that lay at the heart of Orthodoxy distinguished it from the Catholic Church's "despotic tradition".

**Konstantin Aksakov:** Aksakov, introduced to the philosophy of Hegel through the Stankevich Circle, interpreted it through the lens of Slavophilism. In addition, in the more relaxed political atmosphere of the latter 19<sup>th</sup> century Aksakov worked as a playwright and social critic.

**Stankevich Circle:** Established in 1831 by Nikolay Stankevich, the Stankevich circle was closely linked to the beginning of the Westernizing movement. Among its members were Granovsky, Aksakov, Lermontov, Bakunin, Belinsky, Kavelin, Koltsov, and Botkin. They shared an interest in the philosophy of Hegel, history, literature and Schelling's aesthetics and philosophy of nature. Although sharing many ideas with the Herzen-Ogarev circle, they had no defined political agenda.

**Westernizers:** In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French and German Romanticism had profound influence on Russian thought, and it was in this period that calls were made for government reform, educational improvement, and individual freedom in the light of rationalism and science. For the Westernizers Russia's future lay with Europe and would be based on the ideals of the French Enlightenment, rather than in the romanticized vision of Russia's past presented by the Slavophiles. The Petrashevsky Circle would be instrumental in formulating an adaption of Western European utopian socialism for Russia.

**Petrashevsky Circle:** A devotee of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier, Mikhail Butashevich Petrashevsky organized his group in the 1840s in St. Petersburg. Linked by common interests and a desire to reform Russian society and government, the Petrashevsky Circle met weekly.

**Peter Chaadaev:** Chaadaev examined Russia's historical role and future in his *Philosophical Letters*, written in the late 1820s. His philosophical understanding is religious in general, and his views on history show French, Catholic influence in particular. Like many members of Russia's educated elite in this period, Chaadaev expressed in his work a sense of powerlessness and apprehension about Russia's future.

**Vissarion Belinsky:** As a member of Stankevich's circle Belinsky was introduced to the ideas of Hegel and Schelling's philosophy of nature, and later those of French socialism and the German thinker Feuerbach. In contrast to the Slavophiles who argued that Peter I's reforms were responsible for the gap between the common people and the educated elite, Belinsky claimed that the reforms that had created this gap were merely the first step in the modernization of Russia, and that as the necessary reforms of Russian society and politics were carried out, the gap between the elite and the common people would eventually disappear.

**Alexander Herzen:** During his student years in Moscow at the Physico-Mathematical Faculty Herzen became acquainted with the ideas of St. Simon, Feuerbach, Goethe, Proudhon, Schiller and Hegel. Imprisoned and exiled to northeast Russia in 1834, Herzen emigrated to France in 1847 where he published two magazines, *The Polar Star* and *The Bell*. Herzen's socialism was a major influence on the early Russian revolutionary movement in general, and on the participants in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 in particular. Convinced that Europe was on the verge of collapse and that fundamental reform could only be achieved through protracted, bitter conflict, Herzen urged Russia to reject capitalism and bourgeois society in order to avoid this fate.

**Nihilism:** Popularized in the novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) by Ivan Turgenev, nihilism was an ideology that rejected traditional sources of authority, saw individual freedom as its highest goal, claimed that materialism was the only reliable source of knowledge, called for society to be based on rationalism and had tenuous links to a revolutionary movement between 1860-1917. However, nihilism soon degenerated into mere anarchy and by the late 1870s was group linked to terror or political murder could be labelled nihilist.

**Existentialism:** Advocating individual definitions of meaning in life and the effort to make rational choices in an irrational cosmos, existentialism claims that embracing existence is the only means of finding meaning in universe that lacks, meaning or purpose. Two of the most important Russian existentialists were Feodor Dostoyevsky (particularly in *Notes from the Underground*), and Nikolay Berdyaev, a political and Orthodox thinker.

#### **Anarchism:**

**Mikhail Bakunin:** Considered the founder of collective anarchism, Bakunin was introduced to the ideas of Kant, Fichte and Hegel as a member of Stankevich's circle. Bakunin's role in several political uprisings earned him years in prison, death sentences, and exile to Siberia where he escaped in 1861 to England. From there he went to Italy and eventually Switzerland, where he became an influential figure among Russian and European radicals.

**Leo Tolstoy:** Tolstoy was a student of Schopenhauer's philosophy whose travels in Europe brought him into contact with Proudhon and other French anarchist intellectuals. Tolstoy's strongest social criticism was aimed at institutionalized religion which he believed had corrupted Christ's true teachings. His Christian anarchism was based on Jesus' stress on resisting evil, which Tolstoy interpreted as *never do violence* to another. According to Tolstoy, Christ had been crucified by the authorities of his time as a conscious response to the threat his teachings posed to social structures based on violence or the threat of violence.

#### **Materialism:**

**Nicholas Chernyshevsky:** Chernyshevsky's thought was shaped by numerous influences – Feuerbach, 18<sup>th</sup> century French materialism, Hegel, Proudhon, Leroux, St. Simon, and Leroux. Religious until 1848, Chernyshevsky became a materialist, atheist, socialist and democratic republican who advocated the use of the scientific method and denied both divine revelation and the Orthodox tradition. Arrested and



sentenced to penal servitude in Siberia in 1862, Chernyshevsky argued for “rational egoism” in his novel *What Is to Be Done?*.

**Dmitry Pisarev:** Moving from religious mysticism during his university years to Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott’s crude materialism later in life, Pisarev was proud to be called a “nihilist”. He argued that useless traditions and concepts should be eliminated without mercy.

**Populism (Narodnichestvo):** The last secular intellectual movement before Marxism in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Populism advocated agrarian socialism among the Russian peasantry (narod). While Populism may have had its roots in the thought of Herzen and Chernyshevsky, Peter Lavrov was its most important theoretician.

**Peter Lavrov:** Under the influence of Spencer, Comte, Feuerbach and John Stuart Mill, Lavrov came to believe that science could provide the principles of both creative activity and knowledge. Lavrov hoped that the Russians would be the first to carry out a socialist revolution through common cultivation of the land and sharing the products of their labor. His revolutionary associations led to forced retirement and exile to Vologda in 1866. After escaping from exile Lavrov settled in Paris.

**Nicolay Mikhailovsky:** Editor of *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, Mikhailovsky was the second most important Populist thinker. Like Lavrov, he was an enthusiast for the views of John Stuart Mill.

**Tchaikovsky Circle (Tchaikovtsy):** Established by the radical Nicholas Tchaikovsky, the Tchaikovtsy began as a literary group promoting self-education, but went on to print, publish and distribute scientific and revolutionary works as it evolved into an activist, Populist (Narodnist) organization in the early 1870s.

### **Religious Philosophers:**

#### **Pochvennichestvo Movement:**

**Apollon Grigoryev:** At one time a member of the pochvenniki group, whose members included Dostoyevsky, Grigoryev claimed that each nation developed in line with its own internal principles, like living organisms. This was in contrast to the ideas of Hegel who argued that nations and societies were merely a series of players in the dialectical advance of history in accordance with the spirit of humanity, or the world-spirit.

**Fyodor Dostoyevsky:** The existential ideas presented in Dostoyevsky’s work have had a profound influence on Russian and Western thought and have inspired a number of important religious thinkers such as Lev Shestov, Sergey Bulgakov, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Nikolay Berdyaev. In particular, Dostoyevsky wrestled with issues related to anthropology, ethics and philosophies of history, religion and the human spirit.

#### **Naturalism:**

**Vasily Rozanov:** Rozanov’s intellectual roots lay in conservatism and Slavophilism, and was an admirer of Dostoyevsky and Strakhov. As an existentialist, he rejected both commonly accepted religious tenets as well as the revolutionaries’ secular vision. Rozanov considered the teachings of the New Testament to be too focused on death, and espoused an original metaphysics of family life and sexual relations that he believed was more akin to the Old Testament.

**Konstantin Leontyev:** Worried that Russia would fall under the sway of decadent Western European liberalism and pluralism, Leontiev defended the principles of faith, authority and hierarchy, as well as advocating political and aesthetic ideas in line with those of Nietzsche.

**Nicholay Berdyaev:** Berdyaev began as an active Marxist, which led to his eventual arrest and three-year exile in Vologda. After moving to St. Petersburg in 1904 Berdyaev abandoned his Marxist views and

immersed himself in study and discussion of the spiritual and mystical aspects of various groups. Despite still considering himself a radical, spiritual development took precedence over political struggle for Berdyaev, so the Bolsheviks' restrictions on personal freedom made the regime unacceptable for him. Berdyaev regarded freedom as a gift from God, who had created the world out of freedom, to humanity. These views led to Berdyaev being arrested twice; after his second arrest he was ordered to leave the country or face execution.

### **Sophiology:**

**Vladimir Solovyev:** As the founder of the theological doctrines of Sophiology and Godmanhood, and the philosophy of all-unity Solovyev attempted to merge rationalism, mysticism and empiricism in order to better know God, man and nature. He believed that Russia could play an important role in reuniting the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to create the one, true, universal Church.

**Sergey Bulgakov:** Bulgakov's complex spiritual journey took him from abandoning religion and embracing Marxism, to rejecting Marxism in 1900 and gradually returning to his Orthodox faith. In his effort to refute Positivism and Marxism, Bulgakov focused on creating a religiously-oriented idealism by combining Orthodoxy, Neo-Kantianism and Marxism. He stressed the superiority of God over this material world, although existence in this dimension remained meaningful.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

**Mikhail Bakhtin:** Philosopher and theoretician, Bakhtin was a literary critic and specialized in the philosophy of language. Regarding language, Bakhtin proposed that the development of language is dynamic, and both affects and is affected by the culture it is a part of.

**Bakhtin Circle:** As the Russian Revolution was being transformed into Stalin's dictatorship, the Bakhtin Circle examined the cultural and social issues that this process raised. While examining general social issues, they focused primarily on artistic creation the role of language in social conflict.

**Dialectical Materialism:** Coined by the Russian Marxist Georgy Plekhanov in 1891, dialectical materialism became the official designation of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Dialectical materialism both rejects all forms of religious or supernatural belief, and asserts that empirical science alone is sufficient for understanding the nature of reality.

**Georgy Plekhanov:** Plekhanov, considered the father of Russian Marxism, began his activism with the Populists as one of the organizers of the Land and Freedom movement. However, his study of Marx and Engels' ideas while in Geneva convinced him that Marxism rather than Populism would shape Russia's future, since Populism called for an end to Westernization and an independent course of development for Russia.

**Vladimir Lenin:** By taking dialectical materialism and adapting its tenets to the realities of Russia in his time as well as the revolutionary activity of the Bolsheviks, Lenin came to be regarded as the father of Soviet dialectical materialism. For Lenin dialectical materialism was the most essential concept in "the philosophy of Marxism", the sum total of all ideas found in Marx and Engels' writings.

**Alexander Bogdanov:** An original thinker who wrote on the role of culture in creating a communist society, Bogdanov also sought to link all the sciences – physical, social and biological – by identifying the organizational principles of these sciences which he regarded as systems of relationships. Bogdanov set down his philosophical and economic ideas in a three-volume work titled *Empiriomonism*. However, Lenin viewed Bogdanov's ideas as a danger to dialectical materialism.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. Discuss what philosophical ideas flowed into Russia during the Westernization period and the impact of Westernization.
2. Why did Lenin not strictly follow Marxist principles? How did he interpret Marx? How did he combine Russian Narodism (Populism) with Marxism? Can we say that this departure from Marxist principles brought the end of the socialist regime in Russia?
3. At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian thought was the first to embrace existentialism as a coherent set of new philosophical ideas. What is existentialism and why do you think that Dostoyevsky's novel *Notes from the Underground* would be regarded as an example of an existential novel?

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## SCIENCE

**Overview** After the conversion to Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine culture became the most important source of inspiration and influence for early Kiev. However, Byzantium's cultural influence was limited almost entirely to the sphere of religion for two main reasons. First, establishing a firm foundation for the new faith and encouraging its spread was the most important goal for the early churchmen. Second, the centuries of Mongol domination that continued to the 15<sup>th</sup> century effectively cut Russia off from nearly all outside influence. As a result, Byzantium's legacy of Ancient Greek and Hellenistic science and philosophy was never transmitted to Russia, and Russian interest in science did not develop until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Science, scientific studies, and developing a scientific outlook were all elements of Peter the Great's program of Westernization.

## POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Despite the fact that during the same period of Kievan Rus' florescence some of the greatest Islamic thinkers and scientists lived in Bukhara, the likelihood that Kiev would be exposed to Arabic science from that quarter was extremely low. There was contact between the Rus and the Muslim Volga Bulgars who had commercial links with the Arabs, the Volga Bulgars had no interest in Arabic science. There was, however, one exception, medicine, where some knowledge from the Islamic world did reach Kiev.

None of the major Ancient Greek or Hellenistic scientific works were translated in Russia during the medieval era. The translation of Byzantine works introduced some technical scientific terms into Russian, as well as words like 'planet', and translations of the names of signs of the zodiac, but overall Greek science was little influence on the culture of Kievan Rus.

In addition to these factors, the strong resistance to secular learning in Kievan Rus also played a role in keeping Greek scientific works from being translated. This attitude stemmed from the fact that Christianity was a foreign religion that had only recently been adopted from Byzantium, and the art of writing that came with it was equally new. The rulers supported Christianity for both pious and political reasons, and book learning was regarded as merely another method to bolster support for the new faith.

Finally, in the approximately two and a half centuries that Western Europe transitioned from the middle ages to the Renaissance and the early modern period, growing culturally and politically, the Russian principalities were under Mongol rule. Kiev's links with the West and Byzantium were cut, and this, combined with the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the expansion of Ottoman power in the Balkans, left Russia isolated ideologically and culturally.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Although Old Russian culture before the reign of Peter the Great had produced brilliant works of art, music and architecture, until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century science in the form it had developed in Western Europe was virtually unknown in Russia. Both the Renaissance of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries and the Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century bypassed Russia, and it was only during the reign of Alexei Mikhailovich in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that a party of Westernizers close to the monarch were able to introduce some Western customs via Poland and the Ukraine, but nothing even close to an introduction of Western science. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that Copernicus' astronomical discoveries and Arabic numerals made their way to Russia. It was Peter I who, in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, opened the door to Western science and technology and established the first Russian institutions for independent scientific research.

Peter I was inspired to establish such institutions after travelling abroad and meeting the leading scientists of the time, among them Sir Isaac Newton. In Prussia, France and England Peter I visited academies of science, and upon his return to Russia established the Academy of Science in Russia. This academy sponsored the translation of scientific works from Europe, provided technical advice to the government, and promoted education in the sciences. Despite the work of the Academy of Science, even after 1755 Moscow

University still offered little instruction in science and the vast majority of Russia's population remained illiterate.

The first major branches of Russian science that emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were mathematics and the study of natural resources. The latter field was inspired by field expeditions such as the first and second expeditions to Kamchatka.

In addition, foreign academicians were brought to St. Petersburg, particularly those who specialized in mathematics and the physical sciences. Among these early scientists were the mathematicians Daniel and Nicolaus Bernoulli, and Leonhard Euler.

**Mikhail Lomonosov:** Lomonosov's scientific interest was wide-ranging, including physics, metallurgy, mineralogy, chemistry, optics and mining, as well as history. His major contributions were in the field of mechanical philosophy, popular in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries and based on the previous research of Descartes, Gassendi and Boyle. Lomonosov applied this approach to a number of various phenomena, and came to be regarded as the first prominent Russian scientist.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the blossoming of Russian science and the emergence of a number of Russian scientists in a variety of fields who would become known around the world. Most, like Lomonosov, were from families of modest means living in distant quarters of the empire. Despite the greater educational opportunities available in the major cities, children from the privileged upper classes made almost no contribution to the development of Russian science. Although scientists benefitted from educational reforms implemented by the tsarist regime and were able to establish a firm base for the advancement of Russian science, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia still lagged far behind its western European neighbors politically and economically.

**Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevskii:** Sometimes referred to as the "Copernicus of geometry", Lobachevskii became prominent for his work in mathematics and geometry. The non-Euclidian geometry he developed was named after him, Lobachevskian geometry, as was his important work on Dirichlet integrals which came to be known as the Lobachevskii integral formula.

**Dmitrii Ivanovich Mendeleev:** One of the most important figures in the history of chemistry, Mendeleev was the discoverer of the periodic law and the creator of the periodic table which enabled scientists to predict both new chemical elements and their properties. In 1869 Mendeleev wrote *Principles of Chemistry*, a textbook on inorganic chemistry and his name was given to the Russian Physical-Chemical Society that had just been established.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although Russian science before 1917 was still not at the level of science in the major Western countries, its development had been impressive, and at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian scientists in a number of fields – physiology, mathematics, astronomy, soil science, and some branches of biology, physics and chemistry – had gained international prominence.

Nonetheless, a number of factors hampered the development of Russian technology and science in the era before the Russian Revolution. For example, industrial research remained extremely weak since both the techniques and the capital for Russian industry generally came from outside of Russia. Even strong domestic industries such as the machine and chemical industries frequently utilized foreign sources to conduct their research and development. Compared to industrial research, research conducted at Russian universities was more developed, but still relatively new.

To receive the best scientific education possible, graduate students from Russia had no choice but to study abroad, frequently in Germany. However, because many of the most talented students became involved in

political activities during their studies and became part of the political opposition in the turbulent last years of the Russian Empire, scientific professionalism was weakened as was official support for science. Lengthy strikes and demonstrations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century effectively shut down Russian universities, and more than a hundred of Russia's most talented professors were removed from their positions by the minister of education in 1911. By this time the circumstances that the tsarist government found itself in made it unable to match the support other states were providing for advanced scientific education and research.

A number of educational reforms that would impact the future development of Soviet science were implemented during the brief period when democratic socialists and liberals held the reigns of power in 1917. Among these were professional societies free of state control, new forms of administering university faculties, the election by its members of the president of the Academy of Sciences, A. P. Karpinskii, a geologist.

After the Revolution, despite calls from the proletarian culture movement for the replacement of traditional science with a radically different form of science, Lenin remained skeptical, and, instead, believed that existing institutions of scientific and technical expertise should be maintained. During the years of the Cultural Revolution, 1928-1931, the Soviet scientific establishment underwent a period of extreme change, and many scientists involved in basic research feared that insistence on social relevance and strict ideology would have a negative impact on the field of theoretical science.

The Academy of Sciences survived the Cultural Revolution, but it had undergone a series of profound transformations. While most work in the natural sciences continued much as it had before, and some researchers were able to continue their work with little serious change, other scientists were less fortunate. Hundreds lost their jobs, and of these many were sent to prison. A system of censorship controls was imposed on Academy publications, and the Academy itself was no longer a politically neutral institution. The Academy of Sciences of the USSR that was formed in this way was the flagship of Soviet science.

### **Dialectical Materialist Scientists:**

A strong evolutionary viewpoint is a distinguishing characteristic of dialectical materialist scientists. However, for these scientists, evolution was not limited to Darwinian biological evolution, but extended to nonliving matter both prior to and after the emergence of life.

### **Lev Semenovich Vygotsky:**

Vygotsky, a famous Soviet psychologist, argued that both Marxist theories and societal influences were major factors in his theory of psychology. He established cultural-historical psychology, a theory of bio-social and human cultural development that remained unfinished at the time of his death, and was a well-known supporter of the "psychology of the superman, a novel theory of consciousness. In addition, he was the head of an intellectual group known as the Vygotsky Circle.

Other important scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who helped to revive interest in the question of life's origins were the biochemist Aleksandr Ivanovich Oparin, and the physicist V. A. Fock. Before this, Oparin and Vygotsky had both shared an interest in the relationship between science and Marxism.

Fock, on the other hand, made advances in the fields of quantum mechanics and relativity physics, unusual at a time the majority of Marxist thinkers had reservations about the theory of relativity. However, Fock's materialistic understanding of relativity was philosophically compatible with Marxist theory.

### **Stalin Period:**

During Stalin's rule dialectical materialism became a byword for the terrorizing of Soviet scientists. Defense of a scientific theory that had been labelled "bourgeois" or "idealistic" by one of Stalin's lackeys could lead to charges of political disloyalty against the scientist involved. The consequences of suspected political loyalty ranged from dismissal to prison sentences, or even execution in some cases. In this form, dialectical

materialism not only crushed the creative elements in Soviet Marxism, it also became a tool for some Marxist scientists and philosophers to advance their own careers by denouncing their colleagues to the authorities for expressing “anti-Marxist” opinions. Stalin’s purges had effectively broken most citizens’ will to resist, with the result that by the late 1930s-early 1940s Soviet intellectual life was almost completely dominated by Stalin’s system of controls.

### **Lysenkoism:**

Lysenkoism was perhaps the quintessential example of ideological dogmatism and political oppression during the Stalinist era. Named after its main advocate, Trofim Lysenko, Lysenkoism rejected both Darwinian evolutionary theory and Mendelian genetics. Supporting the theory of acquired characteristics advocated by Lamarckism, Lysenko’s theory rejected natural selection, as argued by Darwin. In addition, Lysenkoism also advocated a technique called “vernalization” that was supposed to increase the chances of peasant farmers harvesting their traditional crops before the first frost. Although “vernalization” was a method that had been known to cultivators around the world for centuries, Lysenko’s frequent claims that he was working to transform socialist agriculture for the benefit of the Soviet state earned him Stalin’s support.

### **Natural Scientists:**

In the years following Stalin’s death, scientists became the advocates of important social issues. They were able to take on this role due to their obvious importance to the Soviet government. In particular, nuclear physicists had earned great prestige by providing the Soviet government with nuclear weapons, and space scientists would be viewed in the same light when the Soviet Union became the first country to put an artificial satellite into orbit in 1957, and the first man in space in 1961.

International conferences became the venue for meetings between Western and Soviet scientists, where issues related to international peace and security could be discussed. At home, Soviet scientists carried out reforms of the Academy of Sciences, stressing greater emphasis on basic research; they established new research centers, among them the *Akademgorodok* in Novosibirsk; and sought ways to provide new opportunities for talented students of science to more rapidly expand their knowledge.

However, Soviet officials clamped down on intellectuals and their contacts with Western scientists after Khrushchev’s fall in 1964, and even more so following the 1968 incursion by Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia to suppress the “Prague Spring”. These changes can be illustrated by the career of Andrei Sakharov, who was highly regarded in the early Khrushchev years, and then came under increasing suspicion during the Brezhnev period. Sakharov was eventually denounced and exiled by the late seventies, but when Gorbachev came to power he was again in favor and even held an elected position.

**Andrei Sakharov:** A nuclear physicist who worked on the development of the Soviet hydrogen bomb while working at the Lebedev Institute, Sakharov eventually became an opponent of the Soviet regime. His calls for civil reforms and civil liberties resulted in both official persecution and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. Discuss the Soviet scientists, their effectiveness, research performance and social relations during Stalin’s period. Why was the creative spirit of scientists destroyed by Stalin? Why were scientists who engaged in research labeled “idealistic” or “bourgeois” and their research ideologically suspect?
2. If substantial numbers of Soviet scientists had been permitted to participate in international scientific networks on a regular basis after Stalin’s death, what potential difficulties could the Communist Party have faced as a result of this regular interaction with international scientists?
3. Why did Lysenkoism fail? How did the Soviet Union and its allies suffer under Lysenkoism?

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## ART

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## VISUAL ARTS

### PAINTING

**Overview** Paintings found on the wall of the caves in which stone age people lived and performed religious rituals are the earliest examples of pictorial art in Russia. From the Paleolithic to the present paintings have served as a means of communication. In the prehistoric period rock paintings and drawings found at numerous sites across Russia (e.g. Karelia, the Altai, Transbaikalia, the Urals, Yakutia) recorded the the environment and way of life of the people who made them. With the adoption of Christianity painting, and icon painting in particular, became a vital element in Russian religious life, reminding the faithful of spiritual realities and their link with God. Along with the new religion came growing influence from artistic developments in Europe which would challenge traditional Russian artistic conventions.

### ANCIENT PERIOD

**Cave Paintings:** The Kapova Cave paintings, dated to 12,500 BCE, are the oldest known stone age art in Russia. They depict various Ice Age mammals painted, in addition to abstract signs, pictograph, handprints and hand stencils all painted in red ochre. Near the town of Kislovodsk in the Caucasus red ochre cave painting dating to 3000 BCE have also been found.

**Petroglyphs:** *Ancient petroglyphs have been discovered at a number of sites across Russia. Ones dating back 10,000 years in the Paleolithic period that depict bison, horses and other animals are found on the Ukok Plateau in the Altai Mountains. Petroglyphs from the Neolithic period have been found at Besov Nos in Karelia. These petroglyphs contain not only images of animals, but also also individuals, activities such as swimming and skiing, battles, religious scenes and geometric shapes.*

Petroglyphs from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, in the transition period between the Stone and Bronze Ages, have been found on cliffs at Sagan-Zaba near Lake Baikal. The variety of animals - including deer and swans – depicted has led some scholars to interpret them as tribal totems. In addition, scenes of birth and death, daily life and hunting are also found. Images of a dancing horned man may represent a shaman performing a ritual dance.

Another group of petroglyphs, the Kanozero petroglyphs, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BCE was discovered on Kamenny Island. In addition to the usual images of birds and animals, the petroglyphs also include images that have been interpreted as religious symbols, depictions of household items and typical activities, along with more enigmatic images such as bird of prey with five talons, a large shaman and a flying crane.

### POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

**Icon Painting:** Although Byzantine religious icons were brought to Russia after Vladimir I's conversion to Christianity, Russian artists did slavishly follow Byzantine styles of icon painting. Instead, Russian icon painters began to create their own original style by modifying Byzantine models and to form distinctive schools of icon painting.

**Kievan School (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>c):** As a newly imported art form icons produced in the early Kievan period were still very close to the Byzantine tradition in style. However, many Kievan School icons differed from Byzantine icons in their use of dark, somber colors and in their comparatively large size, a result of being painted on wood that had been hand-cut with an axe.

**Vladimir-Suzdal School (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>c):** During the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kiev was overshadowed as a center of icon production by Vladimir and Suzdal. Icons painted here were distinctive for their harmonious blend of silvery-blue, grayish-purple and pinkish-green colors and use of motifs derived from folk art, while preserving the spirit of Kievan art.

**Novgorod School (12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>c):** Novgorod became the center of Russian icon painting following the fall of Kiev. Frescoes produced here displayed a distinctive Russian style while still retaining clear Byzantine influence. A pivotal figure in the development of both the Novgorod and Moscow schools Theophanes the Greek (Feofan Grek) came to Russia from Byzantium in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Theophanes, after moving to Moscow, began to work with Andrei Rublev of the Moscow School. Their works are characterized energetic drawing, the contrast of large shapes, the use of warm golds and bright yellows, and a simple, economic yet precise style.

**Moscow School (16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup>c):** Influenced by the evolving political and religious atmosphere of the period of Mongol rule, the style of painting developed by the Moscow school became the foundation for a national art. From this school the works created by four artists are particularly famous. The works of Theophanes the Greek were known for their skillful, rapid execution, use of monochromatic colors in frescoes, and creation of contour and depth through bright highlights. Andrei Rublev's works were characterized by the use of luminous color, delicate lines, reduction of details to create greater impact, and complex, subtle relationships between forms. Dionysius (Dionisy) created a distinctive style of painting that softer and gentler than that of previous artists, one that downplayed sharp outlines and concentrated on the blend of warm colors. The zenith of baroque icon painting is commonly regarded to have been reached in the works of Simon Ushakov who also head of the icon painters in the tsar's employ. He is credited with bringing icon painting into the real world by depicting sacred figures with faces rendered in style more like that current in the West.

**Pskov School (13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>c):** In contrast to icons from Novgorod, Pskov icons initially displayed greater poetic inspiration, even if less sophisticated in their execution. Over time, Pskov icons adopted some features of the Novgorod style. In particular, Pskov painters adopted the strong outlines of Novgorod painting as well as certain certain topics. Early Pskov icons are characterized by their intense colors, which contrast with the subdued palette of Kievan icons. In addition, what the figures in Pskov icons lack in elegance of proportion is more than compensated for by dynamic nature of their composition. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Pskov school showed clear influence from Western artistic traditions, leading to the charge that Pskov's icon painters were spreading "Latin heresies".

**Yaroslavl School (13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>c):** Among the pioneers in incorporating landscapes into their paintings, fresco painters from the Yaroslavl School used scenes of daily Russian life as the setting for traditional biblical stories.

**Stroganov School (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>c):** Named for the boyar family that established it, the Stroganov School was established in the late 16<sup>th</sup> – early 17<sup>th</sup> century and created a new style of painting known as *parsuna*. *Parsuna* depicted contemporary secular figures rather than religious ones in a style that blended traditions of icon painting with features from secular portraiture. Two of the main representative of this school were Fedor Zubov and Simon Ushakov.

The emergence of both new forms of religious piety and new styles in icon painting is the combined result of several factors. Among these are a noticeable shift towards individual rather than communal forms of religious devotion, the rapid erosion of traditional icon painting styles, and the replacement of traditional icons with official religious painting; all of these developments took place in an intellectual milieu where Renaissance and Western ideas had tremendous influence in the Russian court.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**Neoclassicism:** 18<sup>th</sup> century neoclassicism incorporates a variety of styles whose ideas are most clearly visible in historical landscape, painting and portraiture. Neoclassicism is characterized by clarity, order, logic and a degree of realism and was, in part, a reaction to the over-refinement of the baroque and rococo styles. In Russia, neoclassicism was associated with the efforts by artists to adopt Enlightenment techniques and styles. Appreciation of Western art was particularly encouraged by four monarchs - Peter the Great, Anne, Elizabeth and Catherine the Great. This appreciation was cultivated by sending students to Europe to study, importing the works European masters, and employing foreign artists in their courts. Initially, some artists produced works that were merely copies of Western models. However, artists such as Dmitry Grigorevich Levitsky, Vladimir Lukich Borovikovsky, Ivan Petrovich Argunov, Aleksei Petrovich Antropov, Fedor Stepanovich Rokotov, Ivan Firsov, Ivan Nikitin, and Andrei Matveev created original works that moved beyond simple mimicry.

**Parsunas (Portraits):** Non-religious portraits painted in the style of icons were known as *parsunas*. Although unintentional, by issuing a ruling in the *Stoglav* on the question of whether portraits of living people were sacrilegious Ivan the Terrible had opened the door for the development of nonreligious art, although it would not be until the reign of Peter the Great that Russia would begin to produce secular art akin to that of the West. In the portraits by Ivan Nikitin, Andrei Matveyev, Ivan Vishnyakov, Alexei Antropov, Dmitri Levitsky and Vladimir Borovikovsky the focus is clearly on the hands and face of the subject with its serious expression. However, it is clear that the artists were attempting to accurately depict the face and clothes (with their all their folds and textures) of a specific individual.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Landscapes:** It was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that Russian landscape painting became widely popular. There had been artists before this time who had produced fine landscape paintings, among them Fyodor Alexeyev, Maxim Vorobiev, Fyodor Matveyev, and Silvester Shchedrin, but their works were products of the Italianesque romantic tradition. True Russian landscape painting only emerged with the works of Nikifor Krylov, Alexei Venetsianov, and Grigory Soroka. However, artists such as Ivan Aivazovsky and Mikhail Lebedev continued to paint in the Italianesque romantic tradition. In the field of landscape painting, French Impressionism was a major influence on Russian works in this category.

**Religious motives:** Works produced by the Wanderers (see below) were noted for an intensity, both psychological and imaginative, that had been lacking in Russian art since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Alexander Ivanov.

**Still Life:** Objects from daily life constitute the subject matter of still life painting. Ivan Khrutsky was one of the first major artists in this genre whose paintings, like those of Ilya Repin and Mikhail Vrubel in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were influenced by the masterpieces of Dutch still life painting.

**Genre Painting:** Genre painting came to occupy a firm place in Russian art, despite having been considered less prestigious than other styles of painting. Peasant culture in all its aspects would be the focus of works by Aleksei Venetsianov, while depictions of the middle class, and even social criticism, would feature in the paintings of Fedotov and other artists.

**Slavic Revival:** This artistic movement rejected Western subject matter and turned its attention to depictions of Russian culture, particularly as seen in peasant life. The works of Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail

Nesterov depict heroic episodes of Kievan history and scenes related to the Orthodox Church, and, in general, strive to reflect the richness of Medieval Russia's artistic heritage.

**Realism:** In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Realism was the predominant artistic trend. As a reaction to what they regarded as an excessively restrictive artistic tradition, painters such as Ivan Kramskoi insisted on depicting life realistically in their art. Kramskoi and other like-minded artists would come to be known as the Wanderers due to their travelling exhibitions of their art.

**Wanderers (Itinerants-Peredvizhniki):** The Academy of Arts witnessed a student revolt in 1863 in which a group of students did not follow the Academy's recommended themes, but used themes of their own. The Academy refused to accept this, leading to the resignation from the Academy of one sculptor and thirteen painters. The leading figures of this group were Ivan Kramskoi, Vladimir Stasov, Vasily Stasov, Ilya Repin, Vasily Surikov, and Vasily Perov. Travelling throughout Russia, society members inspired by the *narodniki* (Populists) held exhibitions of the art that they had produced during their travels and espoused political reform. In keeping with their realist tendencies, formal achievements for these artists were less important than the political and social aspects of their work.

**The World of Art (*Mir Iskusstva*):** The artistic movement World of Art was established by the avant-garde writers and artists based in St. Petersburg in 1899. It was also the name of their art magazine. Nikolai Roerich, Alexander Benois, Lev Bakst, Evgeny Lancere, Konstantin Somov and Sergei Diaghilev were among the founders of this society that was focused on popularization of Russian history and folk art. Despite the diverse characters of the artists in this movement, they were united by three important principles – their emphasis on individual experience, the concept of “total art work” (*gesamtkunstwerk*), and the aesthetic that art was self-justified.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

**Symbolism:** Across Europe and Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Symbolism had spread as both an artistic and an intellectual movement. In Russia Symbolism dominated the artistic scene for approximately two decades and two generations of artists. The first generation was active between 1890 to 1900, and the second, known as the Blue Rose Movement, from 1900 to 1910. Symbolist artists such as Alexandre Benois, Konstantin Somov, Mikhail Vrubel and Mikhail Nesterov attempted evoke emotion or create a mood by using traditional elements of Symbolism or through their use of color. For these painters their art was an esthetic experience.

**Avant-garde:** Avant-garde is an umbrella term for a number of distinct, but closely related artistic movements that were current in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, among them Constructivism, Cubism, Cubo-Futurism, Rayonism, Neo-primitivism, Suprematism. Russian avant-garde artists did not simply mimic European artistic styles, they introduced their own innovations into them and in the process created new interpretations of these styles. Modern art of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would be profoundly influenced by a number of artistic movements pioneered by Russian artists.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism was established by Vladimir Tatlin in 1915 and was based on an emphasis of both an object's material properties and the space it occupied. Constructivist artists put their talents to use in the service of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, in particular by applying their artistic theories to the fields of advertising and fashion. Tatlin used paper, wood, metal or glass to create distinctive three-dimensional works that expressed his artistic vision. For him, the form of his works was dictated by the *faktura* (texture) of the material being used to create them.

**Cubism:** Cubism sought to depict forms through the use of basic geometric shapes – cubes cylinders, spheres and cones – and used color freely, without being restricted to depicting forms naturalistically. Although the subject of cubist paintings is still visible, it has been reduced to simpler forms, generally lacks depth and borders on being abstract. Cubism remained popular only up to the 1920s, but its influence on avant-garde art was deep. Wealthy collectors such as Shchukin and Morozov were responsible for introducing Russia to Cubism by purchasing Cubist works and then publicly displaying them in Russia. Among the most famous Russian Cubist painters were of Malevich, Popova, and Udal'tsova.

Cubo-futurism: Cubo-futurism differs from Cubism in having more dynamic compositions that incorporate words or letters into them. Originally a French artistic movement, Cubo-futurism developed around 1910 in Russia and soon became one of the most influential movements in Russian art of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Inspired by *lubok* (Russian prints of popular stories with simple pictures) and traditional icons, two of the first Cubo-futurist artists, Larionov and Goncharova, merged elements of Russian folk art and modern French art in their effort to preserve Russian folk art.

Neo-primitivism: Founded by Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, Neo-primitivism was a short-lived movement active from 1907 to 1912. While Neo-primitivism took inspiration from a number of diverse sources, such as the *lubok* and peasant crafts, but icon painting served as the main source. Neo-primitive painters such as Tatlin, Kandinsky, Malevich, Goncharova, Chagall and Larionov incorporated a number of typical characteristics of icons – one-dimensionality, bold colors, lack of perspective, etc. – into their own works. Line and color were used to create harmony in compositions whose figures were often rendered in either an almost childish fashion, or distorted like figures in a dream.

Rayonism (Luchism): Another short-lived Russian artistic movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was Rayonism which combined Cubism's fragmented forms with Futurism's sense of movement and Orphism's use of color. Created by Mikhail Larionov, Rayonist works were produced primarily by Larionov and his companion Natalia Goncharova, and the movement came to an end when they emigrated from Russia. Paintings in the Rayonist style are characterized by a mass of slanting lines, generally painted in pure blues, reds and yellows, that represent beams of light that transit and converge across the plane of the canvas.

Suprematism: In 1915 Kazimir Malevich established the Suprematist movement. Malevich sought a means to express an artist's feelings without being limited to realistically depicting everyday objects' normal appearance. Since both objectivity and the concepts of the conscious mind were considered to be insignificant, Suprematist art utilized basic geometric forms such as rectangles, lines, squares and circles and a limited number of colors.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Icons had long served in Orthodox practice as devotional aids that portrayed sacred figures, and whose familiar images were associated with the concept of "legitimacy". Can the political posters that appeared during the Bolshevik revolution be regarded as using themes and elements inspired by Russian Orthodox iconography, such as lighting etc., to legitimize both the revolution and its leaders, despite the new state's avowed atheism?
2. What was the aim of the World of Art Movement (*Mir Iskusstva*) in Russia? What were their key achievements?
3. What is the origin of the Wanderers (*Peredvizhniki* -Itinerants)? How was a relatively minor incident at the Imperial Academy of Arts transformed into an artistic movement that would have a profound impact on Russian society and culture?

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## SCULPTURE

**Overview** Sculpture can have a number of roles in society, from ritual functions to representations of national figures who remind citizens of significant events in their country's history. Being three-dimensional works, sculptures often have a greater emotional impact on people than two-dimensional art forms.

The history of sculpture in Russian can be traced back to the Stone Age, and was later a part of the religion of the early pagan Russias who worshipped the sun, the earth, fire, water, stones and trees. With the introduction of Christianity in 988 the pagans were now considered 'sinners', their idols and sacred sites were destroyed, and churches built in their place. The Orthodox Church's prohibition of statuary remained in place until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century when sculpture in the style of Western Europe appeared again.

### ANCIENT PERIOD

#### **Paleolithic:**

**Venus of Zaraysk:** Named after the site southeast of Moscow where it was discovered, this figure was found buried in a storage pit in next to a group of Kostensky-style hollowed out earth dwellings dating from the last Ice Age.

**Venus of Kostienki:** Carved from a mammoth tusk, this figure of a tall, pregnant, and possibly older woman, was discovered near Voronezh on the the west bank of the Don River.

**Avdeevo venus:** This work depicts adult women in differing stages of human reproduction and was discovered near Kursk, at Avdeevo on the Sejm River.

**Bison Sculpture:** One of the largest Ice Age sculptures ever discovered, this figure of a bison was carved from a mammoth tusk and tinted with red ochre.

#### **Mesolithic Period:**

**Shigir Idol:** Discovered in a peat bog in western Siberia near Yekaterinburg in the Middle Urals and radiocarbon dated to between 9500 and 11,000 years, the Shigir Idol is the oldest known wooden sculpture in the world.

**Zbruchsky Idol:** This three-meter tall, limestone statue was found near the town of Gusyatin on the Zbruch River. The statue was carved in a square column with three levels depicting from top to bottom the realm of the gods, the world of men and the underworld.

### POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Due to Orthodox Church's ban on statuary, there are almost no examples of large-scale sculpture from this period. However, miniature sculpture was not included in this ban and was highly developed. Scenes from

the Gospels and representations of saints with backgrounds of hills, trees and buildings were created by Russian artists using figures that were generally less than 1 ½ inches high.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

Sculpture in Russia revived during the reign of Peter the Great who brought sculptors and casters from Western Europe to teach Russian artists their methods. Despite Peter's efforts, sculpture remained an art dominated by foreigners during his reign and that of his successors. Sculpture was taught at the Academy of Sciences during the reign of Catherine I, but royal court's demand for statuary was still being met by foreign artists, such as the Rococo artist Count Carlo Bartolomeo Rastrelli. Sculptors in Catherine's reign were employed primarily to produce mannerist busts and monuments in marble.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first Russian sculptors of note only emerged after the establishments of Arts Academies in St. Petersburg (1757) and Moscow (1832). Most were protégés of the renowned Parisian sculptor Nicolas-François Gillet, and the first to earn fame for his realistic, expressive works was Fedot Shubin. In recognition of his talent the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts appointed Ivan Vitali to the grade of professor, first degree. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian sculptors included Mikhail Vrubel, Theodore Gordeev, Ivan Martos, Mikhail Kozlovsky, Fedor Shedrin.

**House of Fabergé:** In 1842 Gustav Fabergé established the House of Fabergé in St. Petersburg. The House of Fabergé was particularly famous for the decorative Easter eggs, intricately designed and decorated with precious jewels, they produced for the Tsars. Management of the House of Fabergé passed to Peter Carl Fabergé in 1882 and continued until 1918 when the Bolsheviks nationalized the company.

**Kasli Iron Sculptures:** Cast iron sculptures produced by the lost-wax process began to be produced at the Kasli Iron Works in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Russian and Western European artists such as Eugene Lanceray, Peter Karlovich Klodt, M.D. Kanayev, and N.R. Bakh all produced works at Kasli.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

**Cubism:** By fragmenting and flattening perspective, Russian sculptors were able to create entirely new types of works in three dimensions. In his sculptures Alexander Archipenko presented several simultaneous views of a figure, creating negative space that presented novel perspectives on the human figure. Vladimir Baranoff-Rossine was noted for his use of color, applying the chameleon process or camouflage techniques in his works. Jacques Lipchitz was one of the most successful sculptors in embodying the principles of Cubism in his sculptures.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism was the product of the merging of the political fervor of the Russian Revolution with Parisian artistic movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century both before and after World War I. Constructivist artists created works from industrial materials such as glass, metal and plastic. Using these materials Russian Constructivist sculptors such as Anton Pevsner, Konstantin Medunetsky, Alexander Rodchenko and Naum Gabo, in particular, created works that conveyed a sense of space without mass. Among other notable constructivist artists El Lissitzky was known for his non-objective sculptures, Ossip Nevelson for his interpretations of modern expressionism, and Louise Zadkine for her distinctive assemblage art.

**Kinetic Art:** Referring to art that either need motion to create its effect, or has perceptible motion in it, the Kinetic Art movement developed out of the Russian avant-garde. Naum Gabo's 1920 sculpture "Standing Wave" is considered the first work of the Russian Kinetic Art movement.

**Impressionism:** The first Russian Impressionist woman sculptor to be awarded the Paris Salon prize was Anna Semyonova Golubkina. She was especially known for her numerous sculptural portraits, including ones of Leo Tolstoy, Andrei Bely, Karl Marx and Alexei Remizov.

## Discussion/Questions

1. In the early history of Russia the Orthodox Church banned statuary. Why did the Church accept icons as acceptable devotional objects, but not sculpture, unlike Roman Catholic Church which recognized sculpture's iconographic role?
2. How do politics affect the existence of statues? Why are statues more often treated as dangerous, political objects unlike the paintings? Why makes statues so politically effective?

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## ARCHITECTURE

**Overview** Surviving architecture is frequently one of the most defining elements of any civilization, and this is equally true for Russian architecture. Throughout its long history architecture has been a mirror of Russia's history, and its people's self-perception and ideals. In addition, over the centuries peoples of diverse religions, origins and cultures have migrated into, invaded and colonized Russia, and Russian architecture reflects this tumultuous history. Russian architecture has taken traditional native forms and combined them with features derived from East Asian, Persian, Indian, Byzantine and Western European architectural styles.

## ANCIENT PERIOD

### **Stone Age:**

**Dolmens (Burial Chamber):** In the north-western Caucasus archeologists found 3,000 megalithic monuments known as dolmens that date to between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE. The dolmens are built with huge stone blocks that look like tables and were supposedly used as burial tombs, however there is no solid evidence to support this theory.

### **Iron Age:**

**Kurgans (Tumuli):** Scythian and Sarmatian tumulis, burial mounds built over log houses, have been discovered in the area of the Dnieper River, the Strait of Kerch, the Kuban River and the Don River in southern Russia. The tumuli discovered in the region are the Alexandropol (Lugovaya Mogila), Chertomlyk, the Royal Tumulus (Tsarsky kurgan), the Golden Tumulus (Zolotoy kurgan), the Tumuli of the Seven Borthers (Semibratskaya Mogila), Karagodeuashkh, Kelermes, Kostromskaya, as well as many others.

## POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

**Kievan Russian Architecture:** Kievan architecture can be classified as wooden or stone structures. After the adoption of Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the first examples of monumental church architecture in Kiev appeared during the reign of three Russian princes: St.Vladimir (Church of the Assumption of the Virgin-Destinnaya Tserkov), Yaroslav the Wise (Cathedral of St. Sophia) and Izyaslav (Monastery of the Caves-Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra). In the early period, Kievan architecture was under the strong influence of Byzantine architecture. However, from the beginning it also incorporated such Russian features as the preference for multiple cupolas, and, especially in the north, thick walls, small windows, and steep roofs to withstand the inclement weather as seen in the Cathedral of St. Sofia in Novgorod. The ancient Russian Chronicles also contain information about wooden churches built completely without nails, using only an axe.



**Cave Structures:** Early cave structures were used by hermit monks to hide from persecution, and built to provide parishioners shelter against enemy attacks. Kyiv-Pechersky Lavra, Zverinetsky and Anthony's Caves of the Trinity-St. Elias Monastery are well-known Kievan cave structures. The other most notable examples of the cave structures are Svyato-Spassky Cave Church (12<sup>th</sup> century) found near the small Russian village of Kostomarovo, Pechersky Ascension male Monastery (13<sup>th</sup> century) found in Nizhny Novgorod, Pskov-Pechersky cave-monastery (mid-15<sup>th</sup> century) found in Pskov oblast and Kalachevskaya Cave (late 18<sup>th</sup> century) used as an underground monastery found in the Voronezh region.

#### **Wooden structures:**

**Klet'** – Used as a summer residence, a *klet'* is simple quadrangular structure made of wood or stone. If the *klet'* has some form of heating it is referred to as an *izba*.

**Izba (Khata)** is a single-room heated log dwelling in the countryside that lacks a chimney. Instead, the windows are used as an outlet for smoke, and the windows were kept small to protect against the cold and humidity.

**Khoromy (mansion)** Formed by linking several groups of houses with roofed passageways (*seni*), the structures of a *khoromy* were all located in one yard.

**Renaissance Architecture:** Renaissance architecture was introduced to Russia by Ivan the Great when he invited a number of Renaissance architects from Italy, like the Bolognese architect Aristotele Fioravanti, to come to Russia. Fioravanti was invited to rebuild the earthquake-damaged Cathedral of the Dormition in Kremlin, where he used traditional Russian style with a Renaissance sense of spaciousness, proportion and symmetry.

#### EARLY MODERN PERIOD

#### **Muscovite Architecture:**

**Kremlin Structures:** In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian architects were put in charge of designing the Kremlin structures. Instead of Renaissance, they had to use a traditional Russian style of architecture due to the demands of the ruling class. Such cathedrals as the Cathedral of Annunciation, Cathedral of Assumption, Cathedral of the Archangel Michael and the others are grouped around Cathedral Square. Also, the Palace of the Facets in the Kremlin was built by the Italian architect Marco Ruffo as a throne and audience chamber. Near the Kremlin, St. Basil's Cathedral, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate the conquest of Kazan and the Astrakhan Khanate, combined earlier church architecture with styles from the Tatar east.

**Wooden Architecture:** From the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Muscovite architecture liberated itself from the Byzantine style and modified it by using the traditional Russian style of architecture. Two of the finest examples of wooden structures are located at the Kizhi Pogost site on Kizhi Island which includes the 18<sup>th</sup> century Transfiguration Church with 22 domes and the Intercession Church with 9 domes.

**Tent-type (shatër-Russian Gothic):** This style was developed to prevent snow from piling up on the roofs of wooden churches. This type of architecture resembles the Gothic architecture of Western Europe. The Church of St. John the Baptist in Kolomenskoye and St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square are two prime examples of this type.

**Kokoshniks:** In Russian church architecture the tent-type structure was replaced with successive rows of curved corbel arches known as *kokoshniks*. An outstanding example of this style is the Kazan Cathedral on Red Square.

**Cube-type structures:** Exemplified by the Church of the Intercession and the Winter Church on Kizhi Island, these buildings consists of a square main structure of pine logs supporting an octagonal prizma tower.

**Masonry (Stone) Structures:** Russian architects used the indigenous forms of wooden church architecture and adapted it to masonry architecture in Novgorod and Pskov. The churches of Kolomenskoye (Church of the Ascension), Ostrovo (Church of the Transfiguration) and Dyakovo (Church of St. John the Precursor) serve as prototypes for these structures.

**Muscovite (Naryshkin) Baroque:** Muscovite Baroque was the last original current in Russian architecture, combining traditional Russian architecture with elements of European Baroque architecture. The Novodevichy Convent and Donskoy Monastery are the best examples of structures built in this style.

**Petrine Baroque:** Petrine Baroque reflects a sharp departure from the influence of Byzantium, which lasted almost a millennium. It was a mixture of Italian Baroque, early French Rococo and Neo-classicism, Dutch civil architecture, and Danish and Swedish styles and movements. The Peter and Paul Fortresses, Kikin Hall and Menshikov Palace are well-known examples of this style. Its chief practitioners were Domenico Trezzini, Andreas Schlüter, Gottfried Schadel, Jean-Baptiste Leblond, Niccolò Michetti and Georg Johann Mattarnovi.

**Secular Architecture (Western Influence):** Russian secular architecture appeared simultaneously with the adoption of Western European styles, such as the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, designed by Bartolomeo Rastrelli in the Baroque style.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Russian Revival (Russo-Byzantine Style):** Russian Revival, or Russo-Byzantine, architecture combines elements of Byzantine architecture with those of pre-Petrine Russian architecture. This style is the Russian interpretation of their architectural heritage that was part of the broader renewal interest in “national” architecture that occurred in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the Grand Kremlin Palace and the Armory in Moscow are well-known examples of Russian Revival structures.

**Neo-Byzantine architecture:** In the 1850s during the reign Alexander II the Russo-Byzantine style was replaced by the Neo-Byzantine style for new churches. Although new state buildings would again be built in the Russian Revival style during the reign of his successor Alexander III, the Neo-Byzantine style remained popular down to the start of the the First World War. The Cathedral of Saint Vladimir built in Kiev and the Church of Dmitry Solunsky built in St. Petersburg are the first projects utilizing this style.

**Eclecticism:** In reaction to the strict, limited elements of classicism, Eclecticism attempted to expand the potential of architectural by combining elements taken from earlier styles. Popular until the first years of Nicholas II's reign, Eclecticism utilized elements from Baroque, Renaissance, Neoclassical and Rococo styles. Andrey Stackenschneider's Mariinsky Palace is one of the most prominent examples of this style.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

**Art Nouveau (Stil Modern):** Exploring the possibilities of metal, glass and new technologies in architecture, Art Nouveau strove to use natural, flowing lines that allowed all elements of the building – balconies, staircases and doors – to be both aesthetic and functional. In the years just prior to the Revolution a number of Art Nouveau buildings were built in St. Petersburg and Moscow, such as the Vitebsk Railway Station and the Hotel Metropol. Now the Maxim Gorky House Museum, the Ryabushinsky House designed by Fedor Shekhtel and the Yaroslavl Railway Station are also prime examples of Art Nouveau architecture.

**Constructivism:** A purely Russian style, Constructivism emerged in Moscow after 1917 as an offshoot of Functionalism. Constructivist architects took their inspiration from futurism, suprematism, and cubism and argued that efficient structures were beautiful structures. The characteristics, capacities and limits of construction materials defined Constructivist architecture, and the Shukov Radio Tower in Moscow designed by Vladimir Shukov is one of the most prominent examples of Constructivist architecture.

**Stalinist Architecture:** Stalinist architecture was heavily influenced by the political conditions of its era. Everything from the design stage, through procurement of building materials, construction and final use of the structure was under tight governmental and bureaucratic scrutiny. Architecture was expected to reflect Soviet political ideology, and the massive, monumental style favored by the Soviet government reflected both the Soviet Union's power and the promises of Communism. The most prominent of the buildings from Stalin's era, among them the Moscow State University building, were tall structures built in tiers that became known as the "wedding cake" style.

**Modernism (Functionalism):** Following the First World War a new architectural style emerged that, in contrast with previous architectural styles, advocated simple structures that were unadorned to the point of leaving structural elements of the building exposed and undecorated. Critics of Modernist architecture claimed that it lacked imagination and stifled architectural expression. In Russia, the projects for skyscrapers designed by N. Ladovsky and V. Krinsky are examples of this style.

### Discussion/Questions

1. What did ancient people depict in cave paintings and petroglyphs? What was their purpose?
2. Compare the Muscovite Baroque and Petrine Baroque. What are the differences between these two styles?
3. Compare Soviet and Post-Soviet architecture and discuss the effect of this architecture on people. What ideals did these architectural styles attempt to convey?
- 4- Mass production and the cloning of tested patterns were the main approaches to the construction of cities in today's Russia. Mass construction leads to a situation where many people are concentrated in a relatively small territory. What messages does modern Russian architecture convey with these standard structures in comparison to earlier periods? Does it have its own esthetic, or is it simply functional? Why have regional styles of architecture disappeared? Why has modern architecture become so uniform all over the world? Why have unique artistic styles been lost?

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### DANCE

**Overview** Like other nations the Russians see dance, an art form that uses the body as its instrument, as a reflection of their lives, culture and history. Ancient Russian dance was religious in nature, a part of organized pagan rituals where dances were performed in honor of the gods. Although dance later lost its religious character, it remained a part of social events such as births, marriages, religious and national holidays, festivals, etc. As one of the Western European art forms being introduced into Russia in the late 17<sup>th</sup> – early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the new dance form, ballet, carved a niche for itself among the existing forms of dance practiced and performed in the country. Russian folk dances vary from region to region, each displaying its own unique characteristics.

### ANCIENT PERIOD

**Khorovod (Karagod, tanok, krug, ulitsa):** This ancient folk dance originated as part of pagan rituals performed both to honor the sun god, Yaril, and to show repentance. The songs and the dances were slow with participants holding hands, generally in the middle of a circle created by three women.

**Plyaska:** Performed by one dancer, pairs, or numerous dancers, this folk dance is characterized by passionate movements, emphasizing the dancer's individuality. The music for this dance is a traditional instrumental form of music whose origins pre-date Kievan Rus.

**Pereplyas:** Performed in pairs, this dance takes the form of a competition with each dancer attempting to outdo the other through a display of skill, power and talent.

#### POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

**Prisyadka (Cossack Dance):** Danced by men, this folk dance is characterized by kicks performed from deep squats.

**Barynya:** A fast, spirited folk dance characterized by squats and stomping, the barynya is accompanied by *chastushka* (folk song) and is improvised, rather than following a set pattern.

**Kamarinskaya:** This traditional folk dance is characterized by losing oneself in the dance, improvisation, and strong emotion.

**Chechotka:** Performed by a *bayan* (accordion) player wearing *lapti* (shoes made of birch bark fiber), the chechotka is a traditional Russian form of tap dance.

**Mazurka:** Of Polish origin, the mazurka was popular at balls in the time of the Russian Empire. It was danced by couples, often four or eight, and involved heel clicks and stamps together with improvised moves.

**Pletionka (the Braid):** Although similar to a Greek chain dance, in the pletionka while the dancers in the chain perform the same basic steps, the lead will often break free of the other dancers and perform an improvisation.

**Troika:** Named after the traditional Russian sled pulled by three horses, this dance is performed by one man and two women.

**Trepak:** Characterized by prisiadka (kicking from a deep squat), this lively Cossack dance is generally performed by men.

**Yablochko:** Generally considered a sailor's dance, it is performed to accompaniment of *chastushka* folk songs.

#### EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**Kadril (Rigodon):** Generally danced by four couples arranged in a square this folk dance of French origin was often danced competitively.

**Lancier:** Danced by four couples, this variant of the Quadrille is a form of square dance of French origin.

**Ballet:** Ballet came to Russia with Peter the Great who made assemblies and balls important social functions in his court. The introduction of classical ballet into Russia was simply one element of Peter's diverse methods to make Russia European. Ballet was prestigious because it was foreign, and Parisian in particular, and was regarded as a form of etiquette rather than an art form. The first imperial ballet school, directed by Jean-Baptiste Landé was established in 1738, and by the 1740s there were three ballet masters. Catherine II's establishment of an imperial theater system in 1756, a directorate of imperial theaters in 1766, the construction of the Bolshoi Theater in 1773, and the establishment of the imperial theater school in

1779 all secured a firm place for ballet in Russia. As the 18<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the ballet school was an element of the imperial theater bureaucracy, and some of the most important European ballet masters and choreographers of this period had worked to create the Russian imperial ballet.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

**Polka:** With its distinctive three quick steps followed by a hop this dance of Bohemian origin requires a spacious dancefloor for couples as they circle about.

**Krakovyak:** Directed by the lead male dancer as he sings, this dance of Polish origin is performed by several couples.

**Padespan:** This rapid ballroom dance for couples took its inspiration from the Spanish Pas d'Espagne.

**Romantic Period:** Ballet masters in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued to come from abroad; among the most important were Pehr Christian Johansson, Jules Perrot, Charles-Louis Didelot, Marius Petipa, and Arthur Saint-Léon.

**Russian School:** The Russian school, which came to be regarded as possessing the most well-developed technique of any school, emerged as a synthesis of the French school and the Italian school whose techniques was introduced by Cecchetti. Some of the young Russian dancers trained by Cecchetti in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century became some of the most famous dancers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky and Michael Fokine. Other students of his such as Agrippina Vaganova in Russia and Ninette de Valois in England became founders of their own companies of developed their own teaching systems. These teachers and dancers took the techniques of the Russian school back to France, and from there they spread into other parts of Europe and the world.

**Grand Ballet (Age of Petipa):** Taken from the French term *ballet à grand spectacle*, Russian grand ballet was developed under Marius Petipa, a French dancer and choreographer who worked more than six decades at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. Grand ballet, productions that matched contemporary operas in terms of length and storyline, became the favored form in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when modern classical ballet reached its peak in Russia. Considered an “art of spectacle” [*zrelishchnoe iskusstvo*], the visual effects of grand ballet overshadowed the music, and even rivalled the dancing itself in importance.

**Ballet-Féerie:** Popular in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in private theaters in Russia, *ballet-féerie* was an Italian-based popular derivation of grand ballet which emphasized visual effects at the expense of choreography, flashy performances by the main dancers and set routines for the others. The plots were generally based on fairy tales; the most famous *ballet-féerie* was the 1881 St. Petersburg production of Luigi Manzotti's *Excelsior*.

**Bolshoi Ballet:** Taking its name from the Bolshoi Theater in 1825, some of the most important choreographers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Arthur Saint-Léon, Marius Petipa and Carlo Blasis – staged their works at this theater. Even during the Soviet period the Bolshoi Ballet was able to keep its name.

**Mariinsky Ballet (Kirov Ballet):** Originally named for the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, the Mariinsky Ballet would be renamed twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first was in 1917 when it became the State Academy of Ballet and Opera, and the second in 1934 when it was renamed the Kirov Ballet following Sergei Kirov's assassination.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

The period in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century between the last works by Petipa and the ballets of Nijinsky, Gorsky and Fokine were a period of stagnation and decline for Russian Ballet.

**Acmeism:** In the 1910s the esthetic elements of Acmeism – clarity of expression and compactness of form – could be seen Russian ballet productions staged in Paris. Mikhail Fokine's *Schéhérazade* and *Polovtsian Dances*, and the works of Vaslav Nijinsky's works all displayed a clarity of forms and a clear emphasis on the tangible world.

**Modernist Period:** The flight of numerous composers, dancers and choreographers from Russia after the revolution combined with lack of foreign artists entering the country left Russian ballet with no option other than develop its own talent. Russian ballet came to be known as Soviet ballet, and was isolated from outside influence. Although the Central Theatre Committee (*Tsentroteatr*) had assumed control over imperial theaters, including the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi, in 1919, independent, experimental choreographers and dance troupes flourished in the 1920s. However, these independent groups and artists were all brought under state control in the early 1930s.

### **Neo-classical period:**

**Ballets Russes:** Despite its name, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1911-1929), never performed in Russia, instead it used Russian artists to bring its vision of traditional Russian dance merged with new choreography, modern design, contemporary music, and folk art. Two of its dancers, Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova, would become household names. Just before the outbreak of World War I, Diaghilev began to collaborate with artists such as Braque, Cocteau, Matisse, Derain, Satie, and Picasso, as well as with Russian modernists such as Goncharova, Naum Gabo, and Larinov to stage avant-garde works.

**Balanchine:** Originally a dancer in the Mariinsky Ballet, George Balanchine defected from the Soviet Union while on tour in Europe in 1925 and joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. In 1933 Balanchine emigrated to the US, later becoming a co-founder of the New York City Ballet.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. How did the period of Europeanization effect ballet?
2. How were the Russian Avant-Garde and Diaghilev's Ballet Russes linked?
- 3- During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries what genre changes did Russian ballet pass through?

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## MUSIC

**Overview** Music plays a fundamental part in human development, and is one of the essential parts of communication, like language, facilitating human interactions within groups and sometimes even creating selfless union. Formal music originally came to Russia from Byzantium through the adoption of Orthodox Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The Russian Orthodox church's dominant position over music in pre-Petrine Russian cultural life continued until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and it engaged in a ceaseless war against folk musicians and instrumentalists. With Peter the Great's Westernization process, Russian music adopted the musical traditions of contemporary Western countries and reshaped it by blending traditional Russian music culture with it.

## POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD

### Early Liturgical Music

When Prince Vladimir converted to Orthodox Christianity in 988 he ruled a land that had not yet become a sovereign state and whose culture was pagan in nature. As a result, the Church moved quickly to become the dominant cultural force in Kievan Rus'. However, Vladimir's decision to convert to Orthodoxy led to Russia's political isolation from its neighbors, and in order to prevent outside religious influences from entering Russia the Russian Church became isolationist. One area of culture in which the Church sought to assert its influence was music, both religious and secular.

Like Orthodox Christianity itself, the music of the Russian Orthodox Church was imported in the 10<sup>th</sup> century from the Byzantine Empire. Initially, musical instruments were not used in the liturgy, as their use was considered sinful by the Orthodox Church, an attitude which would not change until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Another aspect of this hostility towards the use musical instruments was the church's long, bitter struggle against folk musicians, in particular instrumentalists. This animosity was fueled by the Orthodox Church's rivalry with the Catholic Church, which allowed instrumental music, and by its struggle against Russia's pagan heritage, a heritage which folk instrumentalists were continuing in the church's view.

Liturgical music in the Orthodox Church was sung a capella by all-male choirs who performed a monadic chant in unison. Over time this type of liturgical music began to evolve into new forms that were unlike the Byzantine chants. One of these, developed some time around the 12<sup>th</sup> century was the *Znamenny chant* (*Znamenny raspev*). These chants were performed using a system of eight voices.

### Traditional Instruments and the *Skomorokhi*

Before the introduction of Christianity the musical instruments found in Russia were similar to those used throughout medieval Europe. Among these were the *svirel*, an oboe-like instrument; the *gusli*, similar to a zither; the *gudok*, similar to a fiddle; and horns. In addition there were tambourines, assorted noise makers, drums, and small bells, instruments more typically associated with shamanic rituals. These instruments were played during religious and court ceremonies, and for entertainment. They were also associated with the *skomorokhi*, folk musicians in Kievan Rus and Muscovy who often played at weddings.

**Skomorokhi:** Skomorokhi were the wandering minstrels in Russia; they were singers of freedom, who dared to ridicule the power, the clergy, and the rich and sympathized with the common people. The *skomorokhi* found themselves officially banned during the "Time of Troubles", the period when Muscovite Rus' was being transformed into a secular, centralized state between the 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The reasons for this ban are not entirely clear; they may have been sacrificed to maintain relations between the church and the state, or they may have been regarded as a threat to the state. Whatever the true reason, pressured by the church Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich issued the decree banning the *skomorokhi* in 1648. After having

been an integral part of Russian popular culture for over 700 years, the *skomorokhi* found themselves exiled to northern Russia or Siberia, and their instruments destroyed.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

### **Secular Music and Western Influence**

The Russian tsars saw their position as rulers as having not only a secular aspect, but a spiritual one as well, an attitude that would not change until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century when Peter I became tsar. The tsars believed that they were the spiritual leaders of an Orthodox state and servants of God as well. For example, Tsar Ivan IV composed a number of church chants and was said to be a talented church musician. As a result of this view of their religious role, the tsars were against secular music, both foreign and domestic. Anyone giving public performances of secular music, like the *skomorokhi*, were treated as criminals.

The hostile attitude towards secular music changed dramatically when Peter the Great ascended the throne. He set in motion a number of reforms to transform Russia from what he saw as a backward society into a modern, Western-style country. In his new capital, St. Petersburg, he held court balls in the manner of Western Europe where his aristocrats attempted to perform unfamiliar European dances. Copying the Germans, he formed "staff orchestras" that played at court ceremonies, and even travelled with his army in the field. Hoping to marry Peter's daughter, the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, Carl Friedrich brought a German chamber orchestra with him to St. Petersburg in 1721. The orchestra played works by a number of contemporary composers, and chamber orchestras soon became a requisite element of aristocratic society. In the years after Peter the Great's reign musicians and composers continued to be brought from Europe and paid well for their talents. Private orchestras and choirs, as well as opera and ballet theaters had become feature of the estates of a number of Russian aristocrats by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This trend provided a new opportunity for some former serfs; trained by teachers from Europe they went on to become some of the most famous performers of the day.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

### **Russian Composers and the Incorporation of Russian Influences**

As Russia had no conservatories prior to the 1860's, Russia's first composer, Mikhail Glinka, had to travel abroad to obtain the majority of his musical training. This allowed him to study the folk music of many different countries and to make the acquaintance of many well-known European composers. After his return to Russia Glinka would greatly influence Russian music's development in general, and opera in particular.

A number of composers after Glinka followed his lead and composed music based on Russian fairy tales; among them were Rimsky-Korsakov, *The Golden Cockerel*; Stravinsky, *The Nightingale*; and Prokofiev, in *Love for Three Oranges*. In the compositions for ballet, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Prokofiev would also be influenced by Glinka's use of fairy-tales.

Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* and *Ruslan and Ludmila* which was first performed in 1842 would be the first in a long line of operas based on Russian fairy tales. Glinka's compositions mark a turning point in Russian music, the point at which Russian music truly becomes a part of European music, while still retaining its folk music traditions.

**Russian Musical Society:** Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna and the composer Anton Rubinstein established the *Russian Musical Society* in 1859. Its primary aim was to encourage and expand the musical study and performance in the country. Regarded as Russia's first school of music, the Society provided instruction to anyone who wished to study music.

One of the most important events in the growth of Russian music occurred with the opening in St. Petersburg of Russia's first conservatory in 1862.



**Balakirev Circle:** Mily Balakirev established the Balakirev Circle, a musical group, in St. Petersburg. The Circle studied a wide spectrum of musical traditions to employ in their own compositions: Russian folksongs, classical composers and music from Spain, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Exoticism was becoming as important a part of Russian music as it was in European music. This can be seen in the Middle Eastern influences in *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov, and the Central Asian elements in Borodin's opera *Prince Igor*.

In 1866 Russia's second conservatory was established in Moscow by Anton Rubinstein from St. Petersburg and Nikolai Rubinstein from Moscow. Both brothers would play important roles in making Russian music more professional. Famous graduates of Russia's first two conservatories include Tchaikovsky (St. Petersburg) and Rachmaninoff (Moscow).

**Mighty Handful (Moguchaya kuchka):** At approximately the same time, five composers from St. Petersburg formed a group which became known as "The Mighty Handful" (or "The Mighty Five"). They shared common political and aesthetic opinions and held that music made by Russians should accurately reflect the people of Russia, and not what was taught by Germans in the conservatory. The group's leader was Balakirev, with Mussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin and César Cui making up the rest of the group.

They advocated the use of Russian elements such as folk music and folklore in compositions, and were disturbed by the predominant position of European music and European musicians. Because of their ability to convey a narrative message they preferred song, symphonic poems and opera over other genres. Despite the group's early solidarity, by the mid-1870s Balakirev and the other members were no longer on good terms and the group was, for all practical purposes, dissolved.

A number of well-known works would be composed by members of the Mighty Handful, among them the operas *Sadko* and *The Snow Maiden*, and the symphonic poem *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov; *Khovanshchina* and *Boris Godunov* by Mussorgsky; *Tamara* by Balakirev; and *Prince Igor* by Borodin. All are regarded as masterpieces of romantic nationalism and are inspired, as many of the Mighty Handful's works were, by Russian literature, history and folk stories.

One of the first graduates of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Pyotr Tchaikovsky disagreed with the Mighty Handful over the composition of classical music, in particular which tradition, Western or Russian, should determine how it was composed. Although Tchaikovsky's interest in nationalistic music grew in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, he remained opposed to the Mighty Handful's nationalistic bent. Despite his disagreements with the *Mighty Handful*, Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* shows the influence of Balakirev.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the central themes of composers such as Sergei Vasil'evich Rachmaninov, Igor Fedorovich Stravinsky, Sergei Sergeevich Prokofiev and Dmitry Dmitrievich Shostakovich were liturgical and folkloric. Specifically, Mussorgsky in his historical operas *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*; Rimsky-Korsakov in his *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevronia*; and Prokofiev in his score to Sergei Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*, used Russian folkloric and liturgical music combining the techniques of Western music and the Russian classical music tradition.

After 1917 musicians were subject to extreme pressure from the state to follow aesthetic standards determined by the government. State control over musicians was extended by Stalin in 1932 with the formation of the Union of Soviet Composers. This was a regulatory body whose mandate was to direct all musical activity for the government's own political purposes. One result was that all Soviet composers were compelled to follow very specific regulations concerning the types of music they produced and this also led to the permanent emigration of numerous music composers and musicians, such as Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, and the pianist-composer Nikolai Karlovich Medtner, to Europe and the United States.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Discuss the early developments in Russian music. Why would the Skomorokhi be treated as criminals?

2. Discuss Westernization and its effects on Russian music. How were the 19th century Russian composers influenced by Western composers and how did they influence the popular culture of the West?

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## THEATRE

**Overview** Until the 11<sup>th</sup> century the early Russian people had primitive forms of entertainment, mostly ritualistic ceremonies, pagan shows with dramatic recitations of fables, tales and proverbs, and singing and dances, performed by *skomorokhi*, traveling minstrels. While in the past the rigid rules of the Orthodox Church made the development of a truly national theater impossible, and *theaters suffered* partial destruction and the persecution of performers, during the Soviet period theaters had to conform to the rigid frames of ideological dictatorship.

### ANCIENT PERIOD

Pagan ceremonies in which tales, proverbs and fables were recited, together with the songs and dances of itinerant jesters, known as *skomorokhi*, laid the foundation for the development of Russian theater.

### POST CLASSICAL PERIOD

**Skomorokhi:** The Skomorokhi, based on Byzantine models, appeared around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Kievan Rus and were performers who played musical instruments, sang, danced and even composed the scores for their performances.

The *skomorokhi* were not universally popular in Kievan Rus, and were described in pejorative terms in the *Primary Chronicle*. Both the ruling authorities and the Orthodox Church viewed the *skomorokhi* as being in league with the devil, and persecuted them for maintaining what they regarded as pagan traditions.

A major reason for the *skomorokhi's* unpopularity with both the secular and religious leaders was the nature of their art. The *skomorokhi's* performances were aimed at ordinary people, and often were in opposition to those in power. As a result the clergy and feudal rulers viewed the *skomorokhi* as useless to society at the very least, and politically and religiously dangerous at the very worst.

Both civil and religious leaders subjected the *skomorokhi* to particularly intense persecution during the period of Mongol rule, a period which also coincided with the Orthodox Church's strong advocacy of asceticism.

The *skomorokhi's* performances continued to be viewed with suspicion during the time of Ivan IV; it was believed that they undermined the authority and interest of the civil and religious leaders. There were even claims that their practices were somehow a form of devilry from the Greeks.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**16<sup>th</sup> century:** At this time the Orthodox Church was hostile to any kind of performances and allowed only plays that had religious content. Performances were given in city squares or in the streets; spectators were encouraged to take part in them. Occasionally, in the 16<sup>th</sup>– 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, groups of *skomorokhi* would join together to form a *vataga* (large group) and put on a performance.

**17<sup>th</sup> century:** The *skomorokhi's* performances were banned by Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century for being blasphemous; nonetheless, popular celebrations remained a venue for occasional performances. A number of dramatic performances were given in the royal court in 1640 and 1650. An English merchant, John Hebdon, was ordered to hire German puppeteers in large numbers to perform in Russia in 1660. Significant changes in both Russian theater and Russian society would result from the introduction of Western theater during the reign of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. Court theatrical performances continued until Alexis' death in 1676, after which they were stopped under pressure of the Patriarch Joachim.

It was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the introduction of literary culture, that the concept of a dramatic repertoire became known in Russia. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the large number of works translated from western languages and the founding of Russia's first theater were clear indications of Western influence. The degree of this influence grew dramatically with the reforms of Peter I. One result of this increased contact with Western Europe was the attempt to adapt the literary models of Western Europe to Russian writing.

**18<sup>th</sup> century:** The 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the end of the *skomorokhi's* performances, but some aspects of their art survived in the *rayok* (humorous talk shows) and *balagan* (puppet theater). The puppet shows had a long existence, and shows were put on in city and market squares as well as at fairs. Performances were aimed at the lowest classes, with jokes and plot lines being rather bawdy.

A public theater was built in Red Square in 1702 by order of Peter the Great. When completed a German theater troupe came to put on performances. Initially the performances were in German, but by 1705 plays were being translated into Russian and performed. Most of these plays were translations of German and Dutch comedies, or poor adaptations of plays such as Molière's *Le Médecin malgré lui*. Later, both the Moscow Academy and the Moscow Medical School would stage dramas. More surprising,

perhaps, was the establishment of a theater in Rostov by its bishop, Dmitrii, which he then used for performances of plays he wrote.

It was not until the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the theater truly became an institution in Russia. The establishment of St. Petersburg's Alexandrinskiy Theater on August 30, 1756 is often taken as the starting point of Russian professional theater. A major innovation was the merging of two theatrical groups – aristocratic students from the Cadet School and a troupe of professional actors from the theater founded by Fedor Volkov – and then giving performances for the public at large. At the same time uniquely Russian drama was emerging in the works of the playwright Alexander Sumarokov. His tragedy, *Khorev*, is regarded as the first Russian drama which depicts the relationship between the monarch and the nobles and includes warnings against tyranny, excessive favoritism, and arbitrary disgrace, and was even performed for the Empress Elizabeth.

Considered the founder of Russian drama, Alexander Sumarokov blended Russian themes with European dramatic forms in his works. Sumarokov was appointed as the first director of the Russian theater in 1756 by Elizabeth, and directed Russia's first professional public theater between 1756 – 1761; his works would become the basis of the theater's repertoire. His later works included comedies such as *The Troublesome Girl*, *The Imaginary Cuckold*, and *The Mother as Rival of Her Daughter*; and such tragedies as *Mstislav* and *The False Demetrius*. This last work is ostensibly a tale about a despotic ruler, and has often been interpreted as a criticism of papal power. However, its real significance is as an indirect criticism of Catherine the Great's arbitrary use of power, while at the same time defending legitimate monarchy. *The False Demetrius* is thus the beginning of a long tradition of theater as political criticism. In addition, Sumarokov's plays *The Guardian* and *Khorev* are regarded as the first political comedy and tragedy in Russia.

Catherine the Great, fearful of importation of liberal Western *European thought*, introduced a state monopoly on the Moscow and Petersburg theaters, and the Ministry of Interior supervised actors' registration as members of the civil service, applied strict censorship on the repertoire of the theaters in Moscow and Petersburg, and independent entrepreneurs were allowed to operate only under police supervision.

The major playwright of Catherine the Great's era was Denis Fonvizin. Two of his most famous plays were the neo-classical *The Minor* and *The Brigadier*. Both were satires of the values of the age and attempted to encourage more moral conduct, however *The Brigadier* takes particular aim at the ignorance and moral laxity of the upper classes. Despite the fact that the monarchy often took issue with Fonvizin's works, Catherine the Great was an admirer of them.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

In 1819, the Ministry of the Interior had taken control over theatrical censorship; the severity of its censorship would only increase over time and expand outside of the theaters. In some cases periodicals which made negative comments about actors found themselves the target of the Ministry's displeasure – since actors were civil servants,

criticizing them was tantamount to criticizing their employer, the state. However, the effect of official censorship was felt most keenly in the theaters in St. Petersburg and Moscow, whose creativity was stifled by government guidelines. Beyond St. Petersburg and Moscow, the situation was slightly better, as independent theaters could put on performances, but still under the watchful eye of the police.

The roles of St. Petersburg and Moscow as the Russia's theatrical centers grew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as new theaters were founded. In Moscow in 1824 the Maly (Small) Theater was established, followed in 1825 by the Bolshoi (Big), which was a replacement for the Peter's Theater which had burned down. In 1832 the Alexandrinsky Drama Theater opened in St. Petersburg, and in 1898 the MAT (Moscow Art Theater) established by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and Konstantin Stanislavsky opened in Moscow which later renamed the Gorky Moscow Art Theater in 1932.

The MAT proved to be the most influential with their productions of the last four plays written by Chekhov which brought them great fame, and the theater would go on to profoundly influence theater in Russia. Combining their talents, playwright Nemirovich-Danchenko and actor-director Stanislavsky adopted Wagner's approach to play production as high art.

Directors would now determine how a drama would be staged, as well as their atmosphere and style – an innovation in Russian theater. The MAT was saved from financial ruin in its initial season by its sixth production, *The Seagull* by Chekhov which opened on December 17, 1898. Its first performance two years earlier in St. Petersburg had been a disaster, and Chekhov was understandably hesitant to give his permission for a second production of his play. However, Nemirovich-Danchenko's persistent pleading paid off and Chekhov was more than rewarded by the reception his play received from its second production. The following year in 1899 the MAT staged *Uncle Vanya*, and Chekhov wrote his two last plays, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* with the MAT in mind.

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed the appearance of Russian drama's first masterpieces. Among these works were *Inspector* by Nikolay Gogol, and Alexander Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit*. The plays by Alexander Ostrovsky which appeared around the middle of the century would inspire a new generation of performers. His series of plays on merchant life highlighted the negative qualities of merchants as cheats, tyrannical bosses and fathers, and narrow-minded philistines.

After the emancipation of Russian serfs in 1861, and the abolition of the imperial monopoly during Alexander II gave impetus to the people's theater movement which was promoted by the *Narodniks* (populists). The theater now began to serve less as a leisure activity than as an educational tool.

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were only six Imperial theaters in Russia administered by the Directorate of Imperial Theaters, and all explicitly served Tsarist

propaganda purposes. However, after the first revolution of 1905, the government was gradually easing restrictions on theaters. Theaters were not only sponsored by the Imperial government, there were also intellectuals who organized theaters for peasants and workers throughout the country, and a few touring troupes and eventually-amateur theaters organized performances for peasants and workers. In addition to the Tsarist government, in many provinces local *zemstva* (local administration) and factory-owners sponsored popular theaters. Theaters began to stage controversial and almost overtly political plays.

In 1909 a commission on village theater was set up under the protection of the Moscow Society of People's Universities as *The Section to Aid in the Establishment of Rural, Factory, and School Theaters*, and in 1915 the Section was joined by the *Russian Theater Society* (RTO). There was a blossoming of theatrical performances as official control of the arts relaxed. A number of private theaters appeared. One of them was Alexander Tairov's Chamber (Kamerny) Theater that opened their doors in 1914 after the end of the government's theater monopoly in 1882.

Shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917 they issued a decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars on 9 November 1917 that placed all the theaters under the authority of the arts section of the State Commission for Education, and all served as *agitprop* (agitation and propaganda) theater. The Soviets also opened a theater section (TEO) to monitor the theaters, and appointed Meyerhold as director in 1920, its repertoire was selected by the poet Alexander Blok, and the directing section was run by Evgeny Vakhtangov and Stanislavsky's friends.

Lenin, on 26 August 1919, signed a decree centralizing all the finances and nationalizing all theatrical property. They regularly distributed free tickets to the ordinary people to promote popular education, changing the predominantly urban character of earlier theater.

An experimental artistic institution, the Proletkult was founded in September 1917 by Alexander Bogdanov during the course of the war. Its stated goals were a total break with the bourgeois past, radically modifying existing artistic forms, rejecting all existing professional theater and promoting a new, so-called proletarian culture. However, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party approved a decree on 1 December 1920 which condemned both the institution as a duplication of services that competed with existing bureaucratic systems, like Narkompros, and its hostile idealist philosophy. As a result, Proletkult was integrated into Narkompros.

The full-scale Bolshevik offensive against the theater began during Stalin when all theaters were accused of having purely bourgeois, alien and hostile ideology. For the Soviets the theater should serve as a propaganda tool of Party's orthodox catch-phrases. The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party passed a resolution on April 23, 1932, the so-called *On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organizations*. There was a terror of persecution and intimidation of art experts and players, many of whom lost their positions, and theaters were closed.

When the Soviets began preparing for WWII, the state turned its attention to the previously condemned Russian past, and to increase patriotism, they used the Russian tsars, princes, military leaders and religion.

After the death of Stalin, the attitude towards theaters was suddenly changed with Khrushchev's Thaw period (1956-1964). Khrushchev's de-Stalinization speech presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> Party congress in 1956 introduced more freedom and humanism in the theater. During Khrushchev's period, Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Days of the Turbins*, and *Flight*, the dramatisation of his novel *The Master and Margarita* were staged; and three directors, Georgii Tovstonogov at the Gorky Theater in Leningrad; Anatolii Efros and Iuriy Liubimov at the Malaia Bronnaia and Taganka theaters in Moscow directed outstanding plays.

Under Brezhnev, on the other hand, the majority of theaters favored safe plays, and, as a result, theaters played to half-empty houses, continuing to survive due to financial support from the Ministry of Culture.

Gorbachev's new and more liberal approach to the arts showed its effects, and there was a 50% increase in the number of theaters in Moscow in only two years (1986-1988). There were also a number of *Palaces of Culture* (club-houses attached to the factories), which provided auditoria for amateur and semi-professional groups to perform. The control of theaters was removed from the Ministry of Culture and handed over to the independent *Union of Theater Workers* established in 1986 which aimed at freeing all theaters from the Ministry's strict control, allowing theater companies to handle their own affairs, effectively abolishing censorship.

### **Discussion/Questions**

- 1- Discuss the *skomorokhi* and their importance in the history of Russian theater.
- 2- Why was theater was used as a weapon during Stalin's time?
- 3- Why did the theaters served as *agitprop* theater during the Soviet Union? Why did the artists' political inclinations compel them to subordinate art to ideology?
- 4- What were the motives behind the hostility of the Soviet government toward the creative theaters? What distinguishes the Soviet attitude from the Tsarist attitude against theater?

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## CINEMA

**Overview** Film was introduced into Russia via Europe. During the Imperial period in addition to foreign films, they began to produce Russian films began to be produced. Film became the most popular form of mass entertainment and was inexpensive and easy to produce for urban cultural life. This art form came to be used as a very effective propaganda tool by the Bolsheviks and later became an important industry influencing the social and political history of Russia.

### PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CINEMA

**Foreign films:** Russian filmmaking emerged as an offshoot of European films, introduced by Russian film enterprises that had connections with European film companies. The Lumière brothers introduced the first films in Russia in 1896 and their cameraman Camille Cerf produced his first short film in Russia. It was a recording of the coronation of Nicholas II at the Kremlin. Initially, foreign films predominated until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several foreign companies, led by Pathe and Gaumont, shot short documentaries and also helped to create a film market in Russia. 90% of the films shown before World War I were foreign made and most of the production companies in Russia were foreign. The first Russian production company was not established until 1907. During World War I, the number of foreign films was reduced as a result of anti-German campaigns and Russian filmmakers began to produce more nationalistic films.

**Silent film:** Evgeny Bauer was one of the first film producers of silent films. He worked in the genres of social and psychological drama, and directed *Tears, After Death* in 1915 and *A Life for a Life* in 1916. Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold created his silent film *The Picture of Dorian Grey* in 1915, using his *biomechanical principles* of acting. There were other popular silent films based on folk tales. Film director Alexander Drankov began his career in Russia while he was working as a photographer for the *The Times* in London, and received most of his financial support and equipment from England in 1907. He produced his seven-and-a-half-minute, first Russian silent narrative film *Stenka Razin*, a tale of a Cossack hero in 1908. In 1913 new movie theaters were opened in the Russian Empire, 134 in St. Petersburg and 107 in Moscow<sup>i</sup>. Film directors and screenwriters such as Aleksandr Khanzhonkov (who also created stop motion animation) and Vasily Goncharov produced historical war films like *Defence of Sevastopol* in 1912. The main theme of these films was the struggle against foreign imperialistic powers and the strengthening of autocratic power for the Soviet Union's unity.<sup>ii</sup>

Literary classics also became the themes of silent films. Film director and screenwriter Yakov Protazanov produced a biographical film about Lev Tolstoy called *Departure of a Grand Old Man* in 1912, *Nikolai Stavrogin* after Dostoevsky's *The Devil* in 1915, *Queen of Spades* after Pushkin's tale in 1916, and *Father Sergius* after Tolstoy's tale in 1918.



Film director Vladimir Gardin named his film *Home of the Gentry* after Turgenev's novel. He co-directed with Yakov Protazanov a film *Natasha Rostova* in 1915 after Tolstoy's *War and Peace* character Natasha Rostova.

**Animation:** The first Russian animator, dancer and choreographer, Alexander Shiryayev, using a 17.5 mm Biokam camera, and his hand-made puppets in a toy theatre, recorded the dancers' movements creating first *stop-frame* animation in Russia. Polish-Russian director, Ladislav Starevich directed his animated silent film *Lucanus Cervus* in 1910.

## REVOLUTIONARY CINEMA

*"The cinema is for us the most important of all the arts"*  
Lenin<sup>iii</sup>

The Revolution in 1917 made significant changes in the film sector. At the beginning, films, having been considered an educational activity, were placed under the supervision of the People's Commissariat of Education headed by Anatoly Lunacharsky.

Films had to be created and transported to the masses. *Agitka* films which are characterized by their openly didactic content and direct verbal appeals to the audience, such as *Red Army Soldier, Who Is Your Enemy?*, *For the Red Banner* and *Toward the Bright Kingdom of the Third International* appeared to serve that purpose. They were agitational short films used to train illiterate masses and raise the morale of the Red Army during the Civil war.

Films produced during this era also contained anti-Tsarist themes. The first film produced was a religious film *Father Sergius*, which was based on Tolstoy's novel and was directed by Yakov Protazanov in 1918. In 1919, the film industry was nationalized and the world's first film school *Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography* (the VGIK) was opened in Moscow. On 27 August 1919, Lenin, by signing a relative decree, showed how important the art of cinema was for the newly formed Soviet state. It was in 1922 that state control over cinema production was imposed with the establishment of the official cinema controlling apparatus, the *USSR State Committee for Cinematography (Goskino)*. From this time until the late 1980s film-makers in the Soviet era were bound to the state and cinema production was planned, financed, censored, and subject to censorship and bureaucratic state control. Cinema was proclaimed a means of propaganda, upbringing and education, with the result that all films become some manifestation of communist ideology.

The first documentaries were shot by two important Soviet directors and theorists, Lev Kuleshov and Dziga Vertov, who developed the "camera-eye" (*kino-glaz*) concept which records what is occurring live.<sup>iv</sup> Lev Kuleshov also was one of the founders of the world's first film schools, the Moscow Film School, and created a montage effect called the *Kuleshov Effect*. Dziga Vertov produced avant-garde films and documentaries, such as *Man with a Movie Camera* in 1929.

Trained as an architect, Sergey M. Eisenstein moved to cinema in 1924 and his **Strike**, which began as a documentary and presented a portrait of the inequalities of capitalist Russia, was shown in theatres in 1924. Eisenstein's **silent film** *The Battleship Potemkin*, released in 1925, depicted the mutiny of Russian sailors on the Potemkin during the first Revolution of 1905. Film director Vsevolod Pudovkin was another film director who produced a number of feature films depicting inner conflicts and the psychology of people who fought against Tsarist rule during the Revolution of 1905 as in the film *Mother* which was based on Mikhail Gorky's novel of the same name.

**Socialist Realism:** In 1934 Russia went through a cultural revolution when socialist realism was officially declared the only acceptable form of artistic expression. For Stalin, art had to reflect only the reality that had accepted by the Party, and the "heroic struggle of the world proletariat ... the grandeur of the victory of Socialism, and the great wisdom and heroism of the Communist Party".<sup>v</sup> With the consolidation of Stalinist power Soviet film came under almost total state control. For Stalin cinema provided him a window on cultural life and allowed him to control it. Just before World War II, in 1938 Sergey Eisenstein directed a historical drama film *Aleksandr Nevsky*, deliberately using this heroic historical event to associate it with the current

political situation, creating Marxist heroes liberating the proletariat from fascist Nazis. His movie was supervised by Party officials, and it received the Stalin Prize. One year after World War II, another film, the first Soviet fantasy and color movie, *The Stone Flower* which depicted the creativity of the Ural miners against cruel landlords and social oppression and directed by Aleksandr Ptushko in 1946 won the Stalin prize.

**The Thaw:** The Soviet film industry received new impetus immediately following Stalin's death during Khrushchev's de-Stalinization period called "The Thaw". The cinematographer Mikhail Kalatozov's film *The Cranes Are Flying* marked a new beginning for Soviet cinema focusing on personal portraits of ordinary people who suffered from the stresses and cruelty of World War II, winning the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious Grand Prix in 1958.

**The Stagnation:** After the brief period of "The Thaw" censorship was reintroduced "The Stagnation" occurred under Brezhnev with the film industry becoming more heavily bureaucratized. The Goskino began to hire veteran Communist Party officials who did not have any experience in film. Sergey Paradzhanov had several projects blocked and spent several years in prison on a charge of homosexuality. Aleksandr Askoldov's *Commissar*, released in 1967, because it included strong themes of feminism and motherhood during the Civil War, was not released until 1987 and he was barred from the studios.

The most successful film maker in overcoming barriers and in challenging the socialist realist aesthetic was Andrey Tarkovsky, who directed the films *Ivan's Childhood*, *Andrey Rublev*, *Solaris*, *Mirror* and *Stalker*. Tarkovsky gained a reputation at home and abroad after *Ivan's Childhood*, which conveyed the human cost of war and did not glorify the war experience, and the film *Andrey Rublev*, which was based on the themes of artistic freedom, religion, political ambiguity, and the making of art under a repressive regime, received Prize in Venice 1962 and won at Cannes in 1969. Although Soviet officials attempted to place obstacles in the way of the film festival judges, they were able to obtain the film and it was shown in Russia only after major cuts.

There were World War II dramas **internationally recognized** released in the 1970s and the 1980s which depicted the cruelty of war such as *They Fought for Their Country* directed by Derzhey Bondarchuk in 1975, and ***At Dawn It's Quiet Here*** directed by Stanislav Rostotsky. Andrey Konchalovsky was the first film director to release World War II films in Hollywood such as *Maria's Lovers* in 1984, *Runaway Train* in 1985 and *Tango & Cash* in 1989.

**Glasnost and democracy:** The Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers Union in 1986, leaving behind the heritage of socialist realism, introduced less strict policies into the film industry during the period of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The Congress established a Conflict Commission to release previously banned films, and the members of the union established a film museum for the previously suppressed heritage; complete control over the production of films was lifted, and censorship was lessened. The central themes of Soviet films began to cover the problems of ordinary life for the Russian people, and two such films released in 1988. *Little Vera* depicted sexuality and alienation in Soviet society, and the thriller *The Needle* covered the struggle with mafia and drug addiction. Several Soviet films have received Oscars such as *War and Peace*, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* and *Dersu Uzala*.

### Discussion/Questions

1. How was the Russian film industry affected by the Revolution?
2. Under what conditions were films first made in Russia?
3. During the period of "The Thaw", how much freedom did Soviet film makers have?
4. In what ways did Soviet films from the 1980s depict citizens' ambiguous feelings about the Soviet state?

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## LITERATURE

**Overview** Literature constitutes one base of society, in that it reflects the history, politics, economic systems, and structure of a society, its people, religion and culture. Literature gives us a detailed view of the human experiences of a country. Russian literature is intimately connected with the life of Russian society; it reflects the collectivity, spirituality, hopes and sorrows of common Russians. In Russia, the history of literature dates back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century starting with translations of homiletic works from Greek after Christianization, and early literature was dominated by religious themes. Literary production in Russia continued with a wide array of genres, but it was not until the 16<sup>th</sup> century that secular genres such as novels and satires began to appear in Russia under Western influence. With Peter's westernization and secularization and Catherine II's Enlightenment processes, Russian literature came under the strong influence of the ideologies and attitudes of European thinkers and writers. In the following centuries, Russian writers began to show increasing interest in a more realistic approach to social issues in their works by depicting the ordinary life of Russian people under the strict censorship of the Empire and the intensive pressure, control and politicization introduced by the Soviet state and by battling against state restrictions on artistic expression.

## POST CLASSICAL PERIOD

The story of Russian literature begins in 988 - a date of great importance in Russian political and cultural history, when the ruler of Kievan Rus officially accepted Christianity and made it the new faith of his realm. Prior to this date there was no written literature in Rus, but with his conversion Prince Vladimir laid the foundation for what is now known as medieval Russian literature, although it would not attain its true form — on the basis of the literature which survived the destruction of the Mongol invasions - for a number of years thereafter. But the eastern Slavs received an alphabet created by Cyril and Methodius, and also became heirs to the extensive Byzantine cultural heritage which had already been and would later be translated from the Greek.

**Religious literature:** In the Kievan period the foreign works which were translated in Russia primarily reflected the interests of the church: almost all were translated from Greek, and most related to the interests of the church. Written in 1056-1057, *The Ostromir Gospel* (Ostromirovo evangeliye) is the oldest Russian manuscript which can be securely dated. Hilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace* (*Slovo o zakone i blagodati Ilariona*) is another notable religious story of Old Russian literature.

**Hagiography (biography of the saints):** Hagiography was the most common genre of Old Russian literature, with a number of works from the earliest period. Among these surviving works are a chronicle and two hagiographies of Boris and Gleb, the first Russian saints. The most important hagiography of this period is the *Life of Saint Sergius of Radonezh* (Zhitie Sergia Radonezhskogo) written by Epifany Premudry.

**Epics and historical works:** The most important secular work written in the period between the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is the *Primary Chronicle* (Povest' vremennykh let) written

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by Nestor in the Pecherskiy Monastery in Kiev some time in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and covers the history of Russia between the years 1040-1118. The *Chronicle* begins with the genealogy of the Slavs. Other important works from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century are the *Testament of Vladimir Monomakh* (Pouchenie Vladimira Monomakha) and *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (Slovo o polku Igoreve), a type of epic poem concerning Prince Igor's raid against the Polovtsy (Kipchak), a steppe people, his capture, and his escape.

## EARLY MODERN PERIOD

**15<sup>th</sup> Century** A series of works in assorted genres, known collectively as the Kulikovo cycle, celebrated the first Russian victory over the Tatars in 1380 under the leadership of Grand Prince Dmitry Ivanovich Donskoy. A less-accomplished imitation of the Igor Tale, *the Zadonshchina* glorifies Dmitry Donskoy.

Concurrent with Moscow's increasing power, a number of writings appeared on the subject of "translation of empire", writings whose purpose was to legitimize Russia's imperial claims. They sought to do achieve this by creating elaborate genealogies and relating accounts of how imperial and ecclesiastical regalia were transferred to Russia. Among the most influential of these works was the monk Filofei's epistle to Vasily III (written between 1514 and 1521). In it he put forward the claim that in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (the second Rome), Moscow was the Third Rome of the only truly Christian state, Orthodox Russia. In essence, this proposition was an attempt to legitimize Russian ambitions.

Some of the other well-known works of the period include stories designed to entertain; the *Tale of Peter and Fevroniya of Murom* (Povest o Petre i Fevronii Muromskikh) is one such example. A merchant, Afanasy Nikitin, describes his voyages to Persia and India between the years 1466–1472 in his *Journey Beyond Three Seas* (Khozheniye za tri morya). However, one of the most significant aspects of this period is the fact that the Renaissance completely bypassed Russia, a fact which only helped to increase the cultural differences between Russia and the West. Russia would not produce the secular literature found in the West.

The themes of almost all works composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century are the establishment of the centralized Russian state, the unity of Russian territory, the struggles to re-establish the independence of the lands invaded by the Tatars, and the crushing defeat inflicted on the leader of the Golden Horde, Mamai Khan, at the Battle of Kulikovo in the late 14<sup>th</sup> – early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most important literary works of this century are the *Story About the Bloody Battle of Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich with Mamai* (Povest' o poboishche velikogo knyazya Dmitriya Ivanovicha na Donu c Mamaem), *Story About the Bloody Battle of Mamai* (Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche), *The Life of the Metropolitan Peter* (Zhitie metropolita Petra), and *The Story About Timur Aksak* (Povest' o Temir Aksake).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century patriotic consciousness reached its peak, reflections of this consciousness are clearly seen in the works of writers such as Epifaniy Premudriy, Maksim Grek and Andrey Rublev. Biographies maintained their place in the literature of this period. Important works from the 15<sup>th</sup> century include *The Life of Stephen Permsky* (Zhitie Stefana Permskogo), *The Life of Sergiy Radonezhsky* (Zhitie Sergiya Radonezhskogo), *Nestor Iskander's Tale on the Taking of Tsargrad* (Povest' Nestora Iskandera o vzyatii Tsar'grada), Afanasy Nikitin's *Journey across Three Seas* (Khozhenie za tri morya Afanasiya Nikitina).

**16<sup>th</sup> Century : Popular literature:** The 16<sup>th</sup> century literature consists of popular literature on socio-political subjects. Writers both within and outside of the church dealt with the most important state and societal issues in their works. The most important works of 16<sup>th</sup> century literature are *The Tale of the Princes of Vladimir* (Skazanie o knyazyakh Vladimirskikh), *Legend of Sultan Mehmet* (Skazanie o Magmete-saltane), *Great Monthly Readings* (Velikie Chet'i - Minei), *The Book of Degrees of the Tsars' Genealogy* (Kniga stepennaya tsarskogo rodosloviya), *Chronicle of Kazan* (Skazanie o Kazanskom tsarstve) and *Domostroy* (Domostroy).

**17<sup>th</sup> Century : Early Western Influence** The continuing social conflicts, foreign interventions, changes in the socio-economic life of the country, and the unavoidable influence of western European culture all played a major role in the development of 17<sup>th</sup> century Russian culture. In this century we see that the attempts of Russian culture, which was beginning to become more universal, to free itself from the

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influences of church become more important. In this period, called by contemporaries as the *Time of Troubles* (*Smutnoe vremya*), works whose subjects were the period's stormy event were written by both churchmen and lay authors. The most important works written in this period were *The Life of Avvakum* (*Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*), *The Tale of Ersh Ershovich* (*Povest' o Ershe Ershoviche*), *The Tale of Woe and Misfortune* (*Povest' o Gore-Zlochastii*), and *The Tale of Savva Grudtsyn* (*Povest' o Savve Grudtsyne*).

After *the Time of Troubles* and the founding of the Romanov dynasty in 1613, however, the country was relatively peaceful, wealthier and more open than it had been previously. A great variety of books from Western Europe began to enter the Russian land from Western Europe, and by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century many foreigners, Germans in particular, were in Russia.

### **18<sup>th</sup> Century : Westernization and the Development of Distinctive Russian Literature**

When Peter the Great came to the throne at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was his intent to bring Russia up to the level of the other European powers. However, he realized that this was possible through a process of Europeanizing his country. Although not very interested personally in literary culture, his overall policy allowed western models of literature to come into Russia and encouraged their adaptation to the conditions in Russia.

The authors who appeared in 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia were responsible to a large degree for the creation of a written language and literature. During Peter the Great's reign the written Russian language was greatly modified, with the result of facilitating translations from western European languages. In addition, education and the development of the printing industry in Russia were promoted by Peter the Great. The final result of all these efforts was the emergence of secular Russian literature.

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While writers of this period imitated French patterns they were also searching for their own themes, language and style. Throughout the entire period writers attempted to give their literature a unique national character; for example, the satirist A.D. Kantemir combined European neoclassicism with depictions of Russian life. In addition to his panegyrics of Peter's reforms, he also initiated a long-running debate on proper syllabic versification in the Russian language. Only later would V.K. Trediakovsky and M.V. Lomonosov create the accepted theory of the proper patterns of Russian versification. Finally, the founder of Russian drama, A.V. Sumarokov, combined European forms and Russian themes in both his fables and in his plays.

**Enlightenment:** In the literature produced during the reign of Catherine II the influence of the European Enlightenment is evident. In her own dramas Catherine combined both classical style and a satirical tone, as is seen in the journals of N. I. Novikov and G. R. Derzhavin's odes. Satire was combined with realistic motifs in Likewise, the plays of D. I. Fonvizin, and in the fables of I. I. Khemnitser combined classicism and satire. Towards the end of the century A. N. Radishchev merged political radicalism with Rousseauian sentimentalism. The development of sentimentality is also seen in the dramas of V.A. Ozerov, as well as in the prose of N. M. Karamzin, the pioneer of the Russian short story.

The reign of Catherine the Great is also noteworthy for the expansion and support given to secular literature. The debates over the function and form of literature in relation to the Russian language in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by Peter I's reforms, established the precedent for writers in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century during Catherine the Great's reign. In the second half of the century. However, the themes and scopes of the works produced by the writers of this period were often more poignant, political and controversial than those of earlier writers.

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The import of Western European culture was accompanied by the influx of western ideas, such as liberal democracy and freedom, which the Russian government found itself unable to halt. Such ideas were clearly contrary to the authoritarian tsarist system in place in Russia, and the results of this clash were entirely predictable: when the concepts of freedom and self-rule became associated with first the American, and then the French Revolution, the Russian government responded by attempting to stop the flow of foreign ideas into Russia.

As an example, the depictions of socio-economic conditions, the condition and treatment of the serfs, and local governmental corruption in —A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow by A. N. Radishchev, shocked the Russian public. Catherine the Great was displeased by his depictions of the situation in her realm and had Radishchev arrested. He was originally sentenced to death, but his sentence was later commuted to exile in Siberia.

**Sentimentalism:** The beginnings of the literary movement of Sentimentalism appeared only in the last years of Catherine's reign. In drama, V.A. Ozerov employed Sentimentality, and was best seen in *Poor Liza* (Bednaya Liza) by N. M. Karamzin. Reform of the literary Russian language was a continuation of Peter the Great and Lomonosov's reforms. However, the gap between the written and the spoken language, between the educated classes and the ordinary people, between the new and the old Russia was increased by Karamzin's language reform. On the other hand, his language reforms would also help to usher in an age of classical poetry.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

It was only during the reign of Alexander II that Russian writers were able, for the first time, to experience the satisfaction of independent, creative work which was national in both its spirit and its style. Poetry above all was regarded as a spiritual exploit and a worthy vocation.

**Golden Age:** Traditionally the 19<sup>th</sup> century is regarded as the "Golden Era" of Russian literature. Poetic talent in particular flourished in the Romantic movement; two of the most prominent poets in this period were. A. Zhukovsky and his protégé A. S. Pushkin.

**Romanticism:** It was V. A. Zhukovsky who first brought European romantic idealism into Russian poetry. The fables of I. A. Krylov show a growing interest in national characteristics, and the wars against Napoleon I only furthered this trend. A. S. Pushkin, often regarded as the greatest Russian poet, developed a realistic, nationally conscious modern Russian style, influenced to a degree by romanticism and European poetry in the 1820s. Following Pushkin, the poetry of M. Y. Lermontov was able to maintain such stylistic excellence for a while.

**Realism:** It was in the 1830s that a cultural divide between Slavophiles and Westernizers became apparent. V. G. Belinsky, the main proponent of the Westernizers, emphasized the importance of the link between literature and national life, and advanced the development of Russian literary realism. Likewise, N.V. Gogol, the main initiator of realistic prose, also demonstrated qualities of romantic and morbid fantasy in his satirical and humanitarian tales. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, I. A. Goncharov developed a harsh realism, tinged with humor; A. N. Ostrovsky, the first depict the merchant world in Russian literary works, wrote numerous plays, although most of them are no longer performed. F. I. Tyuchev's poetry endowed everyday events with philosophic significance, and N. A. Nekrasov penned verses with social purpose.

The prose works of Russia's literary golden age were written in the context of a strong tsarist autocracy. While generally composed within a realist framework, the masterpieces of this period are also characterized by mysticism, brooding introspection, and melodrama. I. S. Turgenev became internationally renowned for his complex novels which were also extremely critical of Russian society. The moral and religious idealism found in F. M. Dostoyevsky's works earned him both critical and popular acclaim, as did the novels of L. N. Tolstoy. These two writers remain even today among the giants of world literature. A. P. Chekhov closed the golden age with his sensitive plays and stories, and the following period is better known for its poetic works.

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## TWENTIETH CENTURY

**Socialist Realism:** Although Socialist Realism claims to present an unbiased, accurate depiction of life, as did its predecessor 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian realism, there are significant differences between the two, particularly in regard to subject matter. Socialist Realist works focus almost exclusively on the themes of building socialism and creating a classless society. Maxim Gorky is widely regarded as the pioneer of this genre with his novel *The Mother*.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism conveys its message through the use of symbols whose meanings are grasped intuitively. It emerged as a reaction against realism and can be seen in the works of F. Sologub, V. K. Brynssov, I. F. Annensky, A. Bely, A. A. Blok, K. D. Balmont, and A. M. Remizov. The religious and philosophical works of V. S. Solovyev and the historical novels of D. S. Merezhkovsky also show the influence of symbolism.

**Acmeism:** Acmeism, led by N. S. Gumilev and S. M. Gorodetsky, in 1912 promoted a return to more concrete poetic imagery. Among the followers of this movement were O. E. Mandelstam and A. A. Akhmatova. Among the major figures in the field of fiction were V. M. Garshin and V. G. Korolenko.

**Émigré Writers:** Following the Bolsheviks' victory in the Russian Revolution (1917), many writers emigrated and continued writing abroad, among them Bunin, Kuprin, Merezhkovsky, Aldanov, and Nabokov.

Others stayed in Russia but no longer published, some became Communists, while others found a niche for themselves in the new system, writing but remaining above its official doctrines. Initially, literature in the Bolshevik regime was little different from that current in Western Europe.

**Silver Age:** Up until 1921 poetry continued to thrive, the major writers being the symbolist Blok, the imagist S. A. Yesenin, and the iconoclast V. V. Mayakovsky. Boris Pilnyak, an older novelist, documented the new society, and Isaac Babel wrote vivid short stories. Between 1922-1928, the era of the New Economic Policy, literary dictatorship was the subject of great debate; one group, known as "On Guard" supported it and the group around Mayakovsky was against it.

Another group that included K. A. Fedin, M. M. Zoshchenko, V.V. Ivanov, V. A. Kaverin, Y.I. Zamyatin, and L.N. Lunts, and known as The Serapion Brothers voiced their support for artistic independence, while the formalists stressed poetic structure over poetic content. The novel was once again a major literary form, as seen in Ilya Ilf and Y. P. Petrov's satirical works, and in L. M. Leonov, Y.K. Olesha, and Kaverin's psychological and romantic novels. M. A. Sholokhov wrote epic novels on the subject of the revolution and Gorky a large audience in 1928.

**Oberiu movement:** Numerous avant-garde literary groups emerged in the early years of Soviet rule, and the Oberiu movement was one of the most significant of these many groups. Writers such as Alexander Vvedensky, the absurdist writer Daniil Kharms, Nikolay Zabolotsky and Konstantin Vaginov were among its more famous members. The short story writers Mikhail Zoshchenko and Isaac Babel, as well as, the novelists Andrei Platonov and Yuri Olesha were also associated with the Oberiu movement.

**Formalism:** Based in St. Petersburg, the OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) was a major element in the creation Russian Formalism, which emerged in tandem with Russian Futurism. Among OPOJAZ's members, two became particularly influential. The first was Yury Tynyanov who wrote a number of historical novels, many set in the time of Pushkin, that were based on his extensive knowledge of Russian literary history. The second was Viktor Shklovsky whose blend of social commentary, narration, aesthetic commentary, and autobiography in his works make them difficult to categorize.

**Moscow Linguistic Circle:** Regarded as the Moscow counterpart to St. Petersburg's OPOJAZ, the Moscow Linguistic Circle was active between 1915 – 1924, and was composed of specialists in literary theory, semiotics, and linguistics such as Grigory Vinokur, Filipp Fedorovich Fortunatov, Petr Bogatyrev,

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Roman Jakobson, and Boris Tomashevsky. The formation of Russian formalist literary linguistics and semiotics was a result of the activities of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOJAZ.

Between 1929 and 1932 the various literary groups were dissolved, and the political mobilization of writers became a noticeable trend. Stalin's purges of the intelligentsia during the 1930s only accelerated this, and socialist realism became the guiding principle of all literary output. As an art form supported by the state and widely used as a means of propaganda, drama after the revolution was associated with a number of eminent figures, among them Y. L. Schvartz, N. R. Erdman, M. A. Bulgakov, S. M. Tretyakov, V. P. Katayev, V. M. Kirshon, A. N. Afinogenov, and A. N. Arbuzov. The prominent poets of this period were B. L. Pasternak and N. S. Tikhonov, while N. A. Ostrovsky, A. N. Tolstoy, and I. G. Ehrenburg were among the most widely read novelists. V. B. Shklovski became a very influential critic.

Stalin's death in 1953 ushered in a new period for a number of writers; some who had previously been publicly disgraced, returned to official favor; other living writers were once again allowed to publish. *Thaw*, a famous novel by Ehrenburg, described the desperation of writers who had no choice but to write according to the party line. Extraordinarily, cultural exchange with foreign countries was encouraged and, in contrast to official party propaganda, literature which criticized aspects of Soviet society was permitted, at least for a while. The nonconformist poetry of A. A. Voznesensky and Y. A. Yevtushenko was immensely popular. Voznesensky's innovative form and use of language was singled out for particular praise.

However, this period of relative literary tolerance came to an end in 1963 when both the government and the Union of Soviet Writers severely reprimanded these and other dissident writers. *Doctor Zhivago*, published outside the Soviet Union and widely praised throughout the West, was not allowed to be published in the USSR, and state pressure compelled Pasternak to decline the Nobel Prize for literature.

The effort to free Soviet writing from official control increased after Khrushchev was removed from power in 1964. Public calls for an end to political censorship came from well-known writers such as Voznesensky and A. I. Solzhenitsyn. For publishing works outside the USSR which criticized the Soviet regime under pseudonyms A. D. Sinyavsky and Y. M. Daniel served prison sentences. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the first novel written by Solzhenitsyn, described prison-camp life; when published in 1962 its anti-Stalinist tone was politically acceptable. Solzhenitsyn's later works resulted in his 1974 exile from Russia.

In the 1980s the stories of T. N. Tolstaya were one example of the religious, even mystical, trends in literature. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn returned from exile in 1994, twenty years after he had left.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. What do medieval Russian documents from the 11<sup>th</sup> century reveal about the literary genres used in this time?
- 2- How do the writings about saints' lives differ from modern biographical stories?
- 3-Discuss the period of Peter the Great and Western influence in Russian Literature. How was the Russian language affected?
- 4- Discuss the effects of the European literary movement 'sentimentalism' on 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature.
- 5- Discuss Utopian Socialism and Utilitarianism. How was it spread among the Russian intelligentsia? Who were the leading figures of this thought in Russia?
- 6- How can we characterize Russian literature at the age of Socialist Realism?
- 7- Discuss the response of émigré Russian writers to being exiled and living abroad as reflected in their works.

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