

## RUSSIAN CULTURE – Early Modern Period

**Overview** With Peter's westernization and secularization and Catherine II's Enlightenment processes, under the strong influence of the ideologies and attitudes of European thinkers and writers Russian life was thoroughly transformed in all aspects.

### VERBAL ARTS

#### Literature

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. 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)*.

The most important reform carried out in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Ivan the Terrible who took the throne after the death of Vasiliy III was the start of printing. The first Russian book *Apostol* was printed by Ivan Fedorov in 1564. In these years in which the rate of literacy outside the church increased greatly, Ivan Fedorov's first grammar book *Alphabet (Bukvar)*, and Lavrentiya Zilzaniya's *Grammar (Grammatika)* were published in 1574 and 1596 respectively.

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 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. Of these, one group of writers wrote works such as *The Tale of the Year 1606 (Povest' 1606 goda)*, and *Metaphor (Inoe skazanie)* claiming that the ruling landowner class would save the the Russian people from this confusion. Another group of writers produced works whose topics were the people's hopes, behavior and psychology, such as *The Tale of the Death of Mikhail Vasil'yevich Skopin-Shuyskiy (Povest' o prestavlenii ry Mihaila Vasil'evicha Skopina-Shuyskogo)*, *The New Tale of the Orthodox Russian Tsardom (Novaya povest' o preslavnom Rossiyskom tsarstve)*.

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century for the first time a history book, *Synopsis (Sinopsis)*, written by the monk Innokentiy Gizel was published. This was followed by Andrei Lizlov's *History of the Scythians (Skifskaya istoriya)* and S.U. Remezov's *History of Siberia (Istoriya Sibirskaya)*.

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)*.

### **Westernization and the Development of Distinctive Russian Literature**

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. Foreigners were confined to designated sections of particular cities and their freedom to associate with the native population was still limited. In spite of this, their numbers were growing, their restrictions on them were being reduced, and enforcement of these restrictions was lax. The foreigners who came to Russia were often educated people, and missed the literary and artistic culture of their native lands. They tried to recreate that culture in Russia by bringing books of poetry and establishing theaters in the "foreign quarter."

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.

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.

### Discussion/Questions

- 1-Discuss the period of Peter the Great and Western influence in Russian Literature. How was the Russian language affected?
- 2- Although Catherine II is considered a proponent of Enlightenment thinking, why was she intolerant of writers who criticized her policies?

### Reading

- 1-Mirsky, D.S., *A History of Russian Literature, From Its Beginnings to 1900*, Vintage Books Edition, 1958.
- 2-*The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Edited by Charles A. Moser, 1992.
- 3- *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, Edited by Neil Cornwell, 2001.

### **Language**

Late in the 14<sup>th</sup> century southern Slavic clerics from the Balkans escaping from the Ottomans migrated to Russia, and one effect of their immigration was the injection of Old Church Slavonic elements into Old Russian. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian language had undergone an orthographic reform since the Russian language still had archaic features that were used incorrectly. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century French influence was predominant and the French language was spoken by upper class families.

**Civil script (*Grazhdanskiy shrift*):** During the modernization and secularization period, Peter the Great introduced the simplified *civil script* (*grazhdanskiy shrift*) in 1708; This modernized Cyrillic alphabet distanced writing from the Church which continued to use the ancient script. All textbooks and works on mathematics, geography, artillery, and military science were produced with this civil script, but the Russian Orthodox Church continued to use the Church-Slavonic alphabet. During Peter the Great's reign, translations from European languages increased the capacity of the printing industry and the number of secular literature publications. In addition, the literary language was freed from religious influence and opened up to western borrowings.

**Three styles of writing:** Various writers such as A. Kantemir, A. P. Sumarokov and V. Trediakovsky made serious attempts to modernize the Russian language. Nonetheless, it was M.V. Lomonosov whose proposal of three styles of writing for Russian in his Russian grammar published in 1755 that contributed significantly to the development of the Russian language. According to this theory, in the high style, Old Church Slavonic should be used for the composition of epics, odes, and poems. The middle style should be used in dramatic works and literary prose; and the low style, the language of townsmen and peasants, should be used for comedy and personal correspondence.

### Discussion/Questions

- 1-What type of linguistic reforms were introduced by Peter the Great?
- 2-What are the historical and socio-cultural factors that have played a role in the evolution of the Russian language?

### Reading

- 1- Comrie, Bernard, "Russian", in *The World's Major Languages*, Edited by Bernard Comrie, Routledge, 1987, pp. 274-288.
- 2- Cubberley, Paul, *Russian: A Linguistic Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 12-51.
- 3- Worth, Deans S., "Language", *The Cambridge Companion Modern Russian Culture*, Edited by Nicholas Rzhevsky, 1998, pp.19-38.

### Script

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Russian language has undergone an orthographic reform. The existing Cyrillic alphabet still had archaic features that belonged to Church Slavonic, and consisted of 43 letters, over half of which were Greek. During the modernization and secularization period, Peter the Great introduced a simplified *civil script* (Grazhdanskiy shrift) in 1708. This modernized version of the ancient Cyrillic alphabet helped to distance modern writing from the Church. Many of the old Cyrillic letters were replaced by new letters and phonetically unnecessary Greek letters such as  $\theta$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\psi$ ,  $\nu$  as well as all diacritics and accents were thrown out. The new civil script was utilized in secular writings such as textbooks and works on mathematics, geography, artillery, and military science etc. However, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to use the Church-Slavonic alphabet. After Peter founded printing houses in Moscow and Petersburg, he instituted standardized symbols for the Russian alphabet to make printing easier. The geometry text book issued in 1708 was the first book printed in the civil Russian alphabet.

### Discussion/Questions

What radical changes did Peter the Great introduce to distance the existing Cyrillic alphabet from the Church Slavonic alphabet?

### Reading

Crackraft, James, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Culture*, Chapter 6 The Language Question, Harvard University Press, 2004, pp. 256-293.

### Folklore

The Orthodox clergy was still opposed to the collection of folklore, storytelling, and folk celebrations in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For example, Abbot Panphilus wrote against what he regarded as popular pagan celebrations, stating that these festivals and songs provoked immoral behavior in women that, in turn, constituted a terrible temptation to sin in men and youths. With literacy virtually limited to churchmen, there are practically no collections or descriptions of folklore from this period. Nonetheless, some folkloric elements were incorporated into hagiographic literature, such as the story of the 15<sup>th</sup> century saint, Mercurius. In this story St. Mercurius is described as returning from a battle with the Tatars carrying his severed head under his arm.

**Storytellers:** Despite religious opposition, professional storytellers, *skazochniki*, were frequently found in the courts of nobles as entertainers, and were popular among other social classes as well. They were sometimes hired by workers such as hunters, lumbermen and fishermen in northern Russia to entertain workers during their breaks.

**Folk dance:** Ancient Russian dance was religious in nature, a part of organized pagan rituals where dances were performed in honor of the gods. Ancient folk dance *Khorovod* (*karagod, tanok, krug, ulitsa*) is 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*, is another folk dance 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. The ancient folk dance *Pereplyas* is 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. *Prisyadka* (Cossack Dance) is danced by men, this folk dance is characterized by kicks performed from deep squats. The other folk dance *Barynya* is 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. The folk dance *Kamarinskaya* is characterized by losing oneself in the dance, improvisation, and strong emotion. *Chechotka*, on the other hand, is performed by a *bayan* (accordion) player wearing *lapti* (shoes made of birch bark fiber), the *chechotka* is a traditional Russian form of tap dance. *Troika* is named after the traditional Russian sled pulled by three horses, this dance is performed by one man and two women. *Trepak* is characterized by *prisyadka* (kicking from a deep squat), this lively Cossack dance is generally performed by men. *Yablochko* is generally considered a sailor's dance, it is performed to accompaniment of *chastushka* folk songs.

**Folk Music:** The origins of Russian folk music extend back to the settlement of European Russia by Slavic tribes in the middle of the first millennium CE. Russian folk music, the vocal and instrumental music of the peasantry, consists of songs and dances performed for entertainment, religious purposes, and work. There are also songs commemorating ritual events or seasonal events, as well as music for *korovody*, circle dances, and the more rapid *plyasovye* and *chastye* dances. Among both urban and rural populations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a related form, the *chastushki* (lively music to accompany satirical or humorous four-line verses) became quite popular. In the Soviet period folk music was regarded as an art form that had emerged from the people, and both the study and performance of folk music was given official support in the 1930s. One result was the emergence of a new type of folk music, the Soviet folk song, with lyrics praising socialism and the Soviet state set in traditional folk melodies and arrangements.

A variety of instruments was often used in Russian folk music. Among the stringed instruments are the *gudok* (an ancient string musical instrument, played with a bow ); the *gusli* (a multi-string plucked instrument); the *balalaika* (a three-stringed triangular-bodied lute); and the *domra* (a three- or four-stringed round-bodied lute). Wind instruments include the *svirel* (pennywhistle), and *zhaleyka* (hornpipe). Other common instruments are the *bayan* (accordion), the *buben* (a hand percussion musical instrument), and the *treshchotka* (an idiophone instrument which is used to imitate hand clapping).

### **Discussion/Questions**

Why was the Orthodox clergy still opposed to the collection of folklore, storytelling, and folk celebrations in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century?

### **Reading**

Bortnes, Jostain, 'Literature of Old Russia: 988-1730, in The Cambridge History of Russian Literature, Edited by Charles A. Moser, 1992, Ch.1, pp.1-45.

## VISUAL ARTS

Along with the new religion came growing influence from artistic developments in Europe which would challenge traditional Russian artistic conventions.

**Painting:** Western art began to have a major influence on Russian icon painting from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century on. Despite the objections of the church, these influences proved to be unavoidable. This was mostly due to Peter the Great and his program of westernization. Since the main centers of icon painting were in the Kremlin, they were subject to royal influence and Peter could dictate the style artists would employ in their work.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century that Russian painting finally broke with the traditions of icon painting, but it was not until the Academy of Arts was formed that painting in the western style became predominant. The Academy was heavily influenced by classicism, and this is reflected in the early works of this period.

Although the 18<sup>th</sup> century was period in which the genres of Russian painting had expanded, religious painting remained influential due to the church's patronage of the arts. Among the painters who continued to paint religious themes were Alexander Ivanov and Anton Losenko.

In the wake of Peter the Great's reforms aimed at westernizing his country, Russian art became more and more secular, much as art in Western Europe. Western architects and sculptors were invited to Russia by Peter to help in the construction of St. Petersburg, his new capital. In addition, a large number of Russian artists were sent to Europe to learn the skills and techniques Peter demanded. Peter had intended to establish a separate department of art in his recently founded Academy of Sciences, but died before he could carry out his plan. However, Ivan Shuvalov, the minister of education in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century fulfilled Peter's wish by establishing the Imperial Academy of Arts.

**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.

**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 created a new artistic synthesis that combined the features of secular portraits with long-standing traditions of icon painting in Russia, 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.

**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.

**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.

### Discussion/Questions

How did westernization and secularism effect painting in Russia?

### Reading

- 1- Basu-Zharku, Iulia, O., "Byzantine and Russian Influences in Andrei Rublev's Art", *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, Vol. 3, No.02, 2011.
- 2- Bowlt, John, E., "Art", *The Cambridge Companion to Russian Modern Culture*, Edited by Nicholas Ryzhevsky, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 205-235.

### **Sculpture**

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.

### Discussion/Questions

Discuss the western sculpture's influence on Russian artist and their methods.

### Reading

McBurney, Erin, *Art and Power in the Reign of Catherine the Great: The State Portraits*, Thesis, Columbia University, 2014.

### **Architecture**

**Stone Architecture:** 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 Arkhangel 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. In the early years of this century the white stone walls of the Kremlin were replaced with bricks. In the icons which

were painted on the walls and ceilings of churches, monasteries and palaces the lives of saints, historical events and hymns were brought to life.

**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. The main building material is again wood. The wooden tsar's palace in Kolomenski is decorated with wood carvings and colorful paintings on the ceiling. In this century the Rostovskiy Kremlin, which contains a number of monasteries, was built. In the last quarter of the century small churches built in the baroque style began to be seen. For example The Sukharev Tower in Moscow, and the Pokrov Church by Lev Naryshkin in Fili were built in this style. Two of the finest examples of wooden structures are also 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-Baptise Leblond, Niccolo 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.

### Discussion/Questions

Compare the Muscovite Baroque and Petrine Baroque. What are the differences between these two styles?

### Reading

Voyce, Arthur, *The Art and Architecture of Medieval Russia*, University of Oklahoma Press, Oklahoma, 1966, pp.87-127.



## PERFORMING ARTS

**Dance:** 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.

**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.

### Discussion/Questions

How did the period of Europeanization effect ballet?

### Reading

Homans, Jennifer, *Apollo's Angels, A History of Ballet*, Ch. 7., Random House, New York, 2010.

### **Music**

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. 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.

**Secular Music:** 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. 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.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century most of the developments in Russian music took place in St. Petersburg, as this was both the location of the tsar and his court, but also the center for the secular culture that was developing.

## 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.

## Reading

- 1-The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture, Edited by Nicholas Rzhevsky, Cambridge University Press, 1998, Ch. 10.
- 2-Jensen, C. R., Musical Cultures in Seventeenth - Century Russia, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2009.

**Theatre:** 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, and this attitude continued until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Skomorokhi**

The high point of the Skomorokhi was the period of the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century. 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.

The Skomorokhi's performances were banned by Tsar Alexei 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 Alexei Mikhailovich.

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 put on shows 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.

**Western Influence:** 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. An early example of this process can be seen in the plays of A.P. Sumarokov. Considered the founder of Russian drama, Sumarokov blended Russian themes with European dramatic forms in his works.

A public theater was built on 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 A. Sumarokov. His tragedy, *Khorev*, is regarded as the first Russian drama and was even performed for the Empress Elizabeth. Sumarokov would direct Russia's first professional public theater between 1756 – 1761, and his works would also 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.

Based on the quality of his satirical comedies, Fonvizin is generally regarded as the pre-eminent playwright in 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia. 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.

### Discussion/Questions

Discuss the *skomorokhi* and their importance in the history of Russian theater. Why theaters suffered partial destruction and the persecution of performers?

### Reading

- 1-Malnick, B., "The Origin and Early History of the Theater in Russia", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 53/54, The Slavonic Year-Book (1939 - 1940), pp. 203-227
- 2- Senelick, L., T., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, Ch.11. The Cambridge University Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 264-299.

## **WORLDVIEW**

### **Religion**

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.

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.

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 *Starobriadtsy*) 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)*.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century 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.

### **Discussion/Questions**

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, why did Russia begin to see herself as the successor to the Roman and Byzantine empires and destined to protect the Orthodox people?

### **Reading**

1-The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture, Cambridge University Press, 1998, Ch.3: Religion: Russian Orthodoxy.

2- Laats, A., "The Concept of the Third Rome and Its Political Implications",

[https://www.ksk.edu.ee/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/KVUOA\\_Toimetised\\_12-Laats.pdf](https://www.ksk.edu.ee/en/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/KVUOA_Toimetised_12-Laats.pdf)

### **Philosophy**

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.

**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.

### **Discussion/Questions**

Discuss what philosophical ideas flowed into Russia during the Westernization period and the impact of Westernization.

### **Reading**

- 1-Lossky, N.O., *History of Russian Philosophy*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1952, pp.9-64.
- 2- Copleston, Frederick, C., *Philosophy in Russia, from Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev*, Search Press, University of Notre Dame, 1986, pp. 1-24.

### **Science**

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.

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.

### **Discussion/Questions**

Why science and scientific studies did not develop until the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Russia?

### **Reading**

Graham, R. Loren, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union, A Short History*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.