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International Networking in Russian Music Theatre around 1800: Sheremetev, Yusupov and Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich

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This article investigates the role played by aristocrats in the exchange of repertoire and musical personnel between Russia and Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It discusses the involvement of three significant figures in the political and cultural milieu of the Russian Empire: Count Nikolay Petrovich Sheremetev (1751–1809), Prince Nikolay Borisovich Yusupov (1750–1831) and the Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich Romanov (who ruled as Paul I from 1796 to 1801). The central focus is on Sheremetev, whose correspondence with Marie-François Hivart, a Parisian cellist he met during a grand tour, allows us to reconstruct a clear picture of how French opera was imported and adapted at his estate theatres in the Moscow area. Yusupov and the grand duke likewise established international musical contacts during their European tours of the 1770s and 80s, and exploited them in their private and public theatrical activities in Russia. Yusupov, who was particularly fond of Italian opera, may be regarded as Sheremetev's counterpart in St Petersburg, while Tsarevich Pavel Petrovich channelled the musical contacts he established in Italy to the Russian court and crown theatres.

Together, these cases suggest some of the ways in which Russia was entangled in European musical life around 1800, revealing mechanisms of exchange in which grand tours, diplomatic contacts and the personal interests of patrons played a significant part.

Scant scholarly attention has been paid to the relationship between the musical circles of Russia and Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Some general instances of international connections have received coverage, such as the introduction of Italian opera at the Russian court in the mid-eighteenth century, or the activity of Venetian composer Catterino Cavos in St Petersburg in the early nineteenth century.¹ However, the exact mechanisms behind these early links remain far from fully understood. The reason, in part, is the lack of available evidence. What is more, scholarship is still paying the price of the anti-monarchist bias of Soviet and Soviet-orientated researchers of the twentieth century. To be sure, some studies have been carried out on the mobility of musicians between

¹ See, for instance, Marialuisa Ferrazzi, *Commedie e comici dell'arte italiani alla corte russa (1731–1738)* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2000), and Anna Giust, *Ivan Susanin' di Catterino Cavos: un'opera russa prima dell'Opera russa* (Turin: EDT, 2011).

Russia and the West. Jan Kusber, Matthias Schnettger and Maria Di Salvo, for instance, have explored the career of the castrato Filippo Balatri in Russia;² Mark Ferraguto and Maria Petrova have conducted research on the role of diplomacy in musical exchanges between Vienna and the empire of Catherine the Great;³ Marina Ritzarev and Anna Porfir'yeva have tackled the issue of the migration of celebrated Italian musicians to Russia, a topic that is also among my research interests.⁴ The crucial role played by aristocrats and their personal connections, however, remains to be explored in detail. Furthermore, none of these publications delve into the theatrical activities that these figures stimulated outside Russia's main cities.

The tradition of inviting foreign singers and composers to Russia was established during the reign of Anna Ioannovna (ruled 1730–40), when the first permanent Italian opera troupe was founded in St Petersburg under the direction of Francesco Araja (1709–c. 1770). The Russian Imperial Theatres, which constituted the core of operatic life in the two main Russian cities, developed out of this *Italianskaya kampa-niia* and gradually curated a network of connections that facilitated the hiring of (pre-eminently) foreign artists. The process behind the hiring of these individuals is far from fully understood: what we do know is that in the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, artists were often personally connected with distinguished figures, such as diplomats or members of the royal family. The reconstruction of these personal relationships and their concrete consequences for the movement of music and musicians depends on archival work, based on material often dispersed across improbable locations. The task becomes doubly complicated when considering the- atrical activity beyond the main centres of Moscow and St Petersburg.

This article seeks to understand how these relationships functioned and how they affected the flow of personnel and repertoire, by investigating the interna- tional connections of three significant figures in the political and cultural milieus of the Russian Empire: Count Nikolay Petrovich Sheremetev (1751–1809), Prince Nikolay Borisovich Yusupov (1726–1831) and the Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich Romanov – the future Tsar Paul I (1754–1801). As was typical of European

² Jan Kusber and Matthias Schnettger, 'The Russian Experience. The Example of Filippo Balatri', in *Mobilities and Music Migrations in Early Modern Europe: Biographical Patterns and Cultural Exchanges*, ed. Gesa zur Nieden and Berthold Oder (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016): 241–54; Maria Di Salvo, 'Moskau und das Moskauer Reich in den Memoiren des Italienischen Sängers Filippo Balatri', in *Musik am Russischen Hof: Vor, Während und nach Peter dem Grossen (1650–1750)*, ed. Lorenz Erren (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2017): 75–84.

³ Mark Ferraguto, 'Diplomats as Musical Agents in the Age of Haydn', *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America* 5/2 (2015): 1–32; Maria Petrova, 'The Diplomats of Catherine II as Cultural Intermediaries: The Case of the Princes Golitsyn', in *Intermédiaires culturels: Séminaire International des jeunes dix-huitièmistes (2010: Belfast)*, ed. Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding and Ellen R. Welch (Paris: Honoré-Champion, 2015): 83–100.

⁴ See, for instance, Marina Ritzarev (Ritsareva) and Anna Porfirieva (Porfir'yeva), 'The Italian Diaspora in Eighteenth-Century Russia', in *The Eighteenth-Century Diaspora of Italian Music and Musicians*, ed. Reinhard Strohm (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001): 211–53. I have tackled the issue of the mobility of Italian singers to Moscow and St Petersburg in the 1820s and 1840s in 'Giovanni Battista Perucchini mediatore d'arte e d'artisti tra Russia e Italia', in *Un nobile veneziano in Europa: Teatro e musica nelle carte di Giovanni Battista Perucchini*, ed. Maria Rosa De Luca, Graziella Seminara and Carlida Steffan (Lucca: LIM, 2018): 79–104, and in 'Giovanni Battista Perucchini: Mediator between Italy and the Russian Empire', paper presented at the International conference 'Performing Arts and Artists in the North, The French and Italian Diasporas (1600–1900)', Rome, Danish Academy, 29–30 January 2019.

aristocrats, these noblemen were involved in musical and theatrical activities, and each of them held positions in politics, diplomacy and foreign affairs, which allowed them to establish contacts with numerous individuals abroad. As it turns out, moreover, all three established important operatic contacts during their grand tours in Western Europe in the 1770s and 1780s. The significance of this kind of early tourism for cultural imports into Russia has mainly been studied in relation to the visual arts.⁵ While the tour of Pavel Petrovich has attracted the interest of music historians, it has not yet been examined as an occasion for establishing relations with professionals and 'agents' in music.⁶ As I hope to show, the contacts established during these tours had a notable effect on subsequent operatic activity in Russia.

Sheremetev, a noted patron of theatre, will serve as the article's central case study. His example is exceptional due to his efforts to stage serious French opera, and for the level of detail in which his activities can be reconstructed. His story, what is more, serves to illustrate the importance of private estate theatres in the circulation of foreign personnel and repertoire. The cases of Yusupov and Pavel Petrovich, while similar and related in various ways, complement this picture by revealing that tours and diplomatic activity abroad also generated contacts that brought performers of Italian opera to stages in the Russian capital. Rather than a comprehensive picture, these three case studies offer a series of illustrative glimpses into Russia's entanglement in international cultural networks around 1800. A full reconstruction is still far from being complete, but the elements considered will produce evidence of the connections existing within the Russian Empire, and between the Empire and the rest of Europe.

Nikolay Petrovich Sheremetev and His Theatres

Count Nikolay Petrovich Sheremetev was a descendant of a family of military leaders and diplomatic functionaries and took on numerous high-level positions in his lifetime, including a seat in the Senate from 1795.⁷ He also owned several theatres, as was consistent with the Russian aristocracy's tradition of establishing theatrical activities in their provincial estates (the *usad'ba*).⁸ Russian historians have recorded instances of private stages from the age of Peter the Great, most of them in

⁵ See, for instance, Konstantin V. Malinovskiy, *Istoriya kollektcionirovaniya zhivopisi v Sankt-Peterburge v XVIII veke* (St Petersburg: Kniga, 2012).

⁶ With regards to music, research into Pavel Petrovich's tour has concentrated on single performances given in the locations where he was received. For instance, on the celebrations organized in Venice, see *Du séjour des comtes du Nord à Venise en Janvier MDCCCLXXXII, Lettre de M.me la comtesse Douairière des Ursins, et Rosenberg à M.r Richard Wynne, son frère* (London, 1782); Antonio Pilot, *Spettacoli e feste per l'arrivo dei conti del nord a Venezia nel 1782* (Venice: Scarabellin, 1914); Silvia Balletti, 'Venezia 1782. La visita dei Conti del Nord', *Venezia Arti* 10 (1996): 67–76; Maria Marcella Ferraccioli and Gianfranco Girauda, 'Quanto costa un principe in incognito? Appunti sul viaggio dei Conti del Nord a Venezia', in *Od Kijowa do Rzymu: Z dziejów stosunków Rzeczypospolitej ze Stolicą Apostolską i Ukrainą*, ed. Mariusz R. Drozdowski, Wojciech Walczak and Katarzyna Wiszowata-Walczak (Białystok: Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem kulturowym Europy, 2012): 1145–72.

⁷ Douglas Smith, *The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008): 13–20, 154–9.

⁸ A discussion of the cultural role of the *usad'ba* in the mental space of the Russian people can be found in Yekaterina Ye. Dmitriyeva and Ol'ga N. Kuptsova, *Zhizn' usadbnogo mifa: utrachenniy i obretynniy ray* (Moscow: OGI, 2008).

Moscow and the surrounding areas. Under Catherine the Great (ruled 1762–96), a wave of theatre mania swept Russia and virtually every member of the Russian aristocracy equipped themselves with a troupe of singers and an orchestra for the production of operas.⁹ These troupes were part of the ancient institution of Russian serfdom – not abolished until 1861 – which granted noblemen total control over the lives of their serfs. On the basis of talents detected in their younger years, some of these serfs were diverted to artistic professions and became involved in performances intended for private or public audiences on aristocratic estates. On family and religious holidays, the serf troupes staged performances to which spectators were only admitted upon invitation. Even though this practice constituted an integral part of Russian musical life, it has received little attention from music historians, who have tended to focus on the two capital cities.

Private theatres were intended for the exclusive pleasure of the owner and his guests and therefore were not subject to the market laws that dominated entrepreneurial theatre in Europe. Their productions did not so much reflect the tastes of the audiences as those of the patron, who administered them unhindered by the financial restrictions of public theatres. Among the undertakings of this kind, those of the Sheremetev family, one of the wealthiest dynasties of the Russian eighteenth century, were the most brilliant.

Nikolay Petrovich's distinguished position brought him into contact with music-making at the highest levels, both within Russia and beyond. In his adolescence, he acquired a taste for music and was given lessons on the violin and clavichord. Around the time of the coup that raised Catherine the Great to the throne, Sheremetev was selected as her son's playmate.¹⁰ Consequently, the count spent a good deal of time with the Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich, who was a passionate music lover as well. He and the young grand duke would go on to stage numerous productions together.

After the death of his mother, Princess Varvara Cherkasskaya, Sheremetev embarked on an extended grand tour in Western Europe. In 1771–72, he experienced theatrical life in England, Holland and Switzerland, but it was operatic activity in Paris that most caught his attention. He arrived there in March 1772 and attended all the city's main theatres: the Académie royale de musique et de danse (Opéra), the Comédie-Française and the Comédie-Italienne at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. In so doing, he became familiar with the *opéras-comiques* of composers such as André Grétry, Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny and François-André Danican Philidor. Of all the theatrical genres he encountered, however, the count became most enamoured with French *tragédie lyrique*, a genre he would continue to pursue once back in Russia.

⁹ Theatres were present in the residences of the landowners Apraksin, Stolipin, Gagarin, Volkonsky, Narishkin, Golitsin and Saltikov. Permanent troupes worked in the estates of Lyublino, Yaropol'ts, Ostaf'yevo and Marfino, where performances took place in dedicated venues. See Liya A. Lepskaya, 'Repertuar krepostnogo teatra Sheremetevikh', in *Starinnnye teatry Rossii, XVIII–pervaya chetvert' XIX v.*, ed. M. V. Shchedrovitskaya (Moscow: Gos. tsentr. Teatral'nyy Muzei im. Bakhrushina, 1993): 47–58; Vladimir K. Stanyukovich, *Domashniy krepostnoy teatr Sheremetevikh XVIII veka* (Leningrad: Izdaniye gosudarstvennogo russkogo muzeya, 1927); Pyotr A. Bessonov, *Praskov'ya Ivanovna grafinya Sheremeteva: yeya narodnaya pesnya i rodnoye yeya Kuskovo* (Moscow: Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1872); and Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ In his youth, he served in the Preobrazhensky Life-Guards Regiment and then as a gentleman-of-the-bedchamber of Empress Catherine.

When he returned to his homeland in 1773, Count Sheremetev took over the troupe founded by his father, Pyotr Borisovich (1713–1788), and became increasingly involved in theatrical activity at his private estates near Moscow: Kuskovo and Ostankino. Nikolay Petrovich became so invested in his theatrical projects that he allowed them to infiltrate his personal life. He took the serf soprano Praskov'ya Kovalyova, nicknamed Zhemchugova from the Russian 'zhemchug' ('The Pearl'), as his mistress, and eventually married her in secret. The romantic intrigue of this story has exerted a strong influence on how the count's theatres have been discussed in the literature, particularly in the Soviet period. Soviet accounts are dominated by the agenda of demonstrating the relevance of the lower social strata to Russia's cultural history, and thus focus on 'The Pearl' and her trajectory from peasant to countess as an *exemplum* of emancipation from slavery by the means of art.¹¹ The activities of Sheremetev's theatres, however, are remarkable for several additional reasons: they boasted a high level of artistic quality, stemming from a tremendous investment of labour, finances and infrastructure. All this meant that the Sheremetev theatres could accommodate complex scenic effects, newly imported operas and the production of local works inspired by this repertoire.

With the assistance of experienced musical professionals at home and abroad, Nikolay Petrovich was able to stage productions that outclassed those of Moscow and St Petersburg. He occasionally even beat them to Russian premieres, notably in the genre of *tragédie lyrique*, which was had not yet been staged at the Imperial Theatres. The composer Stepan Degtyaryov (1766–1813) and the librettist and translator Vasily Voroblevsky (1730–1797) helped the count to become particularly effective at managing his theatres.¹² As for the provision of new foreign works, a key figure was Marie-François Hivart (1745–1815). An employee of the Opéra, Hivart had given the count cello lessons in Paris during his grand tour, and the two remained in touch almost up to Sheremetev's death in 1809. Hivart never visited Russia, but Sheremetev made him *homme d'affaires* for all his theatrical needs. In the 1780s and 1790s, Hivart was entrusted with supplying the main needs of the Ostankino and Kuskovo theatres for the staging of French repertoire. Once or twice a year, he packed up large wooden crates on the count's orders. These were then sent by barge up the River Seine to Rouen, where they were placed on ships heading out to sea at Le Havre and from there on to St Petersburg. Hivart (sometimes through the mediation of a certain Monsieur Godin¹³) used this method to

¹¹ This is particularly true of the above-mentioned studies by Bessonov and Stanyukovich. The monograph by Douglas Smith can be included in the same category, although it is supported by recent research in archival sources.

¹² Stepan Anikiyevich Degtyaryov was a serf of the Sheremetevs and worked as a music teacher and artistic director of theatrical productions. Although many sources attest to his industrious activity as editor of the operas that were staged in the theatres of Kuskovo and Ostankino, as explored later in this article, he remains inadequately studied. Vasily Grigor'yevich Voroblevsky was Count Pyotr Borisovich's secretary, librarian and translator. Although he was a serf, he received his education in St Petersburg, where his first translation was published in 1771. For most of his life he lived in Moscow, where he took part in the organization of theatrical productions. He was the author of translations and adaptations of around 20 operatic librettos from French and Italian into Russian. His career has been reconstructed by Aleksander I. Kuz'min in 'Krepostnoy literator V.G. Voroblevsky', *XVIII vek* 7/4 (1959): 136–56, and V.G. Voroblevskiy (Moscow: Akademiya arkhitekturi SSSR, 1949).

¹³ No information is available about this figure. However, the dictionary *Les Français en Russie* includes a family of merchants with this surname, which had settled in Russia after 1748. Jacques-Laurent Godin was the owner of a grain business who lived in St Petersburg

dispatch librettos, published or manuscript scores of orchestral and chamber music (sometimes without the composer's permission), and scaled models for costumes and sets from the Paris Opéra and other French theatres. He also sent a number of objects and furniture for sets, drawings, plans and models of theatre buildings.

The count regularly communicated his orders to Hivart through letters in which he explained his needs in detail and sought professional advice. This correspondence consists of a relatively complete set of 77 letters, written in French, concerning many aspects of theatrical production. Through it, we learn of the hiring of artists and the count's critical approach to foreign repertoires and their Russian treatment. The preserved correspondence between Sheremetev and Hivart dates between 1784 and 1792, although its contents make it clear that by 1784 the correspondence was already well established.¹⁴ A later printed source also includes letters from 1803. These materials were published in Russian translation in a 1944 study by a Soviet theatre historian, Nadezhda Yelizarova,¹⁵ but no other translations are known to exist, nor are there any publications of the French originals.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the available materials constitute a rich source on Sheremetev's theatrical practice and help us connect it to its French origins.

With Hivart's help, Nikolay Petrovich supplied his troupe with a series of new theatre buildings designed for the staging of his favourite genres: French *tragédie lyrique* and reform opera of the Gluck-Calzabigi type. Compared to the prior imported traditions of Italian *seria* and *buffa*, these works were decidedly more complex in terms of scenic production, since they involved complex effects and a stage that was wide enough to accommodate them. Hivart offered instructions relating to all his architectural commissions and the purchasing of stage equipment. Construction work on the theatre in Kuskovo, which had been commissioned in the 1760s by Pyotr Borisovich Sheremetev, spanned a period of fifteen years, and a second theatre was built in 1785–87 and 1789–92. Additionally, a theatre *en plein air* was created in the gardens to take advantage of the natural peculiarities of the site.¹⁷ Beside these projects, Nikolay Petrovich had a theatre

in the late 1750s and, after some failed business ventures, settled in Moscow not later than 1777, where he was imprisoned for his efforts to collect payments. His son Adrien-François, born in St Petersburg on 5 April 1755, was also a merchant and might be the one who dealt with Hivart and Sheremetev. He was a Freemason and is recorded as a 'maître' in the session of the loge *La Réunion des Etrangers de l'Orient de Moscou* on the first day of the fifth month of the year 5775 (1775). Anne Mézin and Vladislav Rjéoutski, eds, *Les Français en Russie: dictionnaire des Français, Suisses, Wallons et autres francophones en Russie, de Pierre le Grand à Paul I^{er}*, 2 vols (Ferney-Voltaire: Centre International d'études du XVIII^e siècle, 2011): vol. 2: 380–81.

¹⁴ Their letters are now kept in the Historical Russian State Archive (RGIA) of St Petersburg. RGIA, F. 1088, op. 1, d. 186, Perepiska Ivana Sheremetevu [Correspondence of Hivart to Sheremetev], 1784–1791 and F. 1088, op. 1, d. 121, 1785–1792. The oldest letter from Hivart dates from 15 August 1784.

¹⁵ 'Perepiska N. P. Sheremeteva s yego Parizhskim korrespondentom violonchel'istom Bol'shoy Operi Ivarom', trans. Vladimir Stanyukovich, in Yelizarova, *Teat'ri Sheremetevikh*, 391–79. The last letter is dated 15 July 1803.

¹⁶ The only research on this topic in French is, to my knowledge, Mooser's work from the 1950s: Robert-Aloys Mooser, 'Les théâtres Chérémetief à Kuskovo et à Ostankino', in *Annales de la musique et des musiciens en Russie au XVIII^e siècle*, 3 vols (Geneva: Montblanc, 1951): vol. 3: 833–57.

¹⁷ On this theatre see N.N. Liban, "'Vozdushniy teatr" v Kuskove', in *Teatral'noye prostranstvo*, ed. Irina Ye. Danilova (Moscow: Sovetskiy khudozhnik, 1979): 253–61.

in his palace on Nikol'skaya Street in the centre of Moscow, which existed until 1800,¹⁸ and a theatre in Markovo, near Kolomna. Finally, with Hivart's help, he had his Palace-Theatre built in Ostankino between 1792 and 1798. After Pavel Petrovich's accession to the throne in 1796, the count's theatrical activities declined due to his increased obligations towards the new tsar; eventually the death of Zhemchugova in 1803 would prompt Sheremetev to disband the troupe altogether.¹⁹

Sheremetev and the Mobility of Theatrical Personnel

The running and training of Sheremetev's troupe depended on the free movement of personnel between Russia and abroad, and within the Empire. As was typical at that time, the main troupe consisted of the family's serfs. While the cast of singers was not particularly numerous compared with those of other provincial theatres, the orchestra was superior in numbers. At its height, the entire troupe counted as many as 50 artists.²⁰ Actors, musicians and technicians were selected from the count's estates, where he periodically sent his administrators.

His singers were usually natives of Borisovka, one of Sheremetev's villages in the Belgorod region in southwest Russia. Nikolay Petrovich's grandfather, Boris Petrovich (1652–1719), had initially gathered a theatre company for his own consumption there, and this became the nucleus of the Kuskovo troupe. During the eighteenth century, the southwest of the Russian Empire served as a nursery for singers: in particular, the town of Glukhovo (in today's Ukraine) was known for nurturing young talent, leading Empress Anna to create a music school there in 1738.²¹ A domestic cappella was also organized in Glukhovo by Kirill Grigor'yevich Razumovsky (1728–1803), the brother of Empress Elizabeth's favourite, Aleksey (1709–1771). During Elizabeth's reign (1741–62), professional singers were sent to Ukraine to recruit new voices for the Imperial Theatres and the Court Cappella of St Petersburg, a system that Sheremetev was to imitate in his private activity.

Once they arrived in Kuskovo, serf-singers, musicians and workers were taught various disciplines by experienced maestros. In line with Enlightenment ideas on education, Pyotr Borisovich had created a school in his estate, where young serfs received general instruction. Nikolay Petrovich developed this school, focusing teaching on the skills necessary for the various theatrical professions. This activity took place in Kuskovo until 1801; in 1802 the school was transferred to Ostankino.²² The count privately hired instructors for this purpose, thus motivating professionals to move either from Moscow – particularly from the Petrovsky

¹⁸ According to Yelizarova, Sheremetev purchased another hall in Vozdvizhenka Street (Moscow). Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 40. However, no information about this venue has been preserved.

¹⁹ According to Yelizarova, the troupe was officially disbanded on 31 January 1800. A few other performances followed this date, however, including one for the reception of the new Tsar Alexander I on 1 October 1801. Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 175, 269.

²⁰ The count himself kept their names and salaries recorded in a register of the musicians of his orchestra: [Nikolay P. Sheremetev], *Stoletniye otgoloski 1802 goda* (Moscow: A.V. Vasil'yev, 1902). The register does not include specific indications of the musicians' roles, but these are listed in Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 489–90, 492–4. A list of the count's personnel in 1789 is given at 331–2.

²¹ Ritzarev, *Eighteenth-Century Russian Music*, 43–4; Anna Giust, 'Towards Russian Opera: Growing National Consciousness in 18th-Century Operatic Repertoire' (PhD diss., University of Padua, 2012): 59, 145–6.

²² Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 270–72.

Theatre of the impresario Michael Maddox – or directly from St Petersburg. Some of the instructors were Russian, including the aforementioned composer Stepan Degtyaryov, who had studied with Giuseppe Sarti in 1791, and according to some documents may have followed his teacher to Italy in the early 1790s to complete his education. Documents also reveal the names of singers such as the soprano Yelizaveta Semyonovna Fyodorova (nicknamed ‘Uranova’, 1772–1826) and her husband Sila Nikolayevich Sandunov (1756–1820), who had been active in St Petersburg before moving to Moscow.²³ The French repertoire staged in these theatres required excellent skills in stage acting: actress Mariya Stepanovna Sinyavskaya (1762–1829) was charged with teaching Zhemchugova and directed the female part of the troupe from 1790 to 1797.²⁴

The teaching of foreign languages, meanwhile, required the hiring of native professionals: French teachers included Madame Dyuvrii and Sheval’ye (Duvrilly and Chevalier) – the latter was possibly the same Chevalier who worked at the French Court troupe from 1798 onwards and gained the favour of Emperor Paul I²⁵ – while a Signor Torelli was hired in 1789 to teach Italian. Other foreign professionals featured in Sheremetev’s documents were involved in areas more closely related to the stage. For example, the documents include the names of the Frenchman Floridor, a tragic actor of the Court troupe,²⁶ singers such as Torelli (perhaps the same Torelli who worked as language instructor),²⁷ a Barbarini, the castrato Adamo Solci and the tenor Vincenzo Alippi.²⁸ The artistic paths of these artists

²³ The couple had moved to Moscow after a scandal in St Petersburg in 1791: during a performance of Martín y Soler’s opera *Una cosa rara*, the soprano directly addressed Empress Catherine, asking her help in rejecting the solicitations of the directors of the Imperial Theatres, Soymonov and Khrapovitsky. See Andrey L. Zorin, ‘Redkaya veshch’ (“sandunovskiy skandal” i russkiy dvor vremyon Frantsuzskoy revolyutsii), *Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye* 80 (2006): 91–110. For a digital version see <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2006/80/zo7.html>.

²⁴ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 281.

²⁵ Galina N. Dobrovol’skaya, ‘Frantsuzskaya pridvornaya opernaya truppa’, in *Muzikal’niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar’, XVIII vek’*, ed. Anna L. Porfir’yeva, 3 vols, vol. 3 (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2000): 210; Yelena S. Khodorkovskaya, ‘Sheval’ye (Chevalier), urozhdyonnaya Puaro (Poirot)’, in *ibid.*, vol. 3: 263–64.

²⁶ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 274.

²⁷ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 273. I am not sure we can assume this was the ‘Ignacio’ specified by Smith (*The Pearl*, 63, 139) since I could not find any trace of this person elsewhere. One Federico Torelli was active in St Petersburg between 1780 and 1783. He was a composer at the Court of Catherine the Great and the author of one of the first operas in Russian, *Orfey* (St Petersburg, 1781). His name remains a footnote in the history of music among Italian scholars, but it is assumed that he returned to Italy and spent his last days in Bologna. The performance of an opera entitled *La presa di Okzakov* was recorded there in 1791. He also composed a musical scherzo titled *La battaglia di Karcim*. Both these works were most likely inspired by his time in Russia. Although his oratorio *La passione di Gesù Cristo* was given in Bologna in 1787, in the libretto of his cantata *Le furie di Oreste*, printed in 1789, he is still defined as ‘maestro di cappella di s. m. l’imperatrice delle Russie’ (Kapellmeister to her Majesty the Empress of All the Russias). See [Federico Torelli], *Le furie di Oreste, cantata a cinque voci da darsi in una Accademia nella sala del palazzo senatorio Magnani in Bologna l’anno 1789* (Bologna: Nella stamperia del Sassi, 1789), and the entry ‘Federico Torelli’, in *Dizionario enciclopedico universale della musica e dei musicisti: Le biografie*, ed. Alberto Basso, 8 vols, vol. 8 (Turin: UTET, 1988): 67–8.

²⁸ According to Yelizarova, Barbarini and Alippi were invited directly from Italy to work in Sheremetev’s estates. Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 274, 282. See also Smith, *The Pearl*, 139.

in Russia (and beyond) can be pieced together by tracing their names through Sheremetev's documents and various playbills, although variants in transliteration can complicate matters. Vincenzo Alippi appears in the Sheremetev documents and in Russian secondary literature as Alimpi or Olimpy.²⁹

For a better understanding of their movements, we can take the example of Adamo Solci. Solci had been active in Italian theatres since the 1760s before he joined Sheremetev's troupe.³⁰ He was among the cast of the operas given for the celebration of the wedding of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and Maria Beatrice d'Este in 1771 (Hasse's *Il Ruggiero ovvero L'eroica gratitudine* and Mozart's *Ascanio in Alba*)³¹ and had served as first soprano at the Ducal Chapel of Santa Barbara (Mantua), where he had been appointed in 1777. In the summer of 1784 he arrived in St Petersburg: his name appears in the correspondence with the Imperial Cabinet led by Sarti, who reached the capital in the same period.³² In accordance with his prior experience, he was hired for the Court troupe of Italian seria.³³ In the late 1780s, however, this company experienced a crisis due to a shift in the Court's interests towards comic genres, a fact that partly explains Solci's relocation to Moscow, where he appears to have remained until his death.³⁴ Traces of his activity in the ancient capital can be found in two concerts given with one Lady Gattoni in 1789 and in the publication of a Russian romance in a Muscovite periodical in 1794.³⁵ Under Sheremetev, he probably served as a music teacher, as indicated by the count in a letter to Voroblevsky, in which he gives instructions for managing

²⁹ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 274.

³⁰ His name appears in various orthographies: Solci (Mooser, *Annales*, vol. 3: 835–57), Sulzi or even Solitsi (Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 181, 349, 494), Adam or Adamo. He debuted in 1766 in Bergamo as Mirteo in Mysliveček's *Semiramide* and in 1768 he sang in Mantua in Traetta's *Il tributo campestre*. See Giovanni Battista Buganza, *Il tributo campestre, componimento pastorale drammatico da rappresentarsi in musica nel Regio Ducale teatro nuovo di Mantova* (Mantua: Per l'erede di Alberto Pazzoni, 1768): 22; and Alessandro Lattanzi, 'Luigi Gatti and Anton Theodor Colloredo, Archbishop of Olomouc', in *Keine Chance für Mozart: Fürstbischöf Hieronymus Colloredo un sein Letzter Hofkapellmeister Luigi Gatti (1740–1817)*, ed. Eva Neumayr and Lars E. Laubhold (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2013): 352n.

³¹ [Pietro Metastasio], *Il Ruggiero ovvero L'eroica gratitudine, dramma per musica composta dal Sig. Pietro Metastasio Romano* (Rome: Natale Barbiellini a Pasquinio, 1771): vi; *Elenco de' Signori Virtuosi di Canto, e di Danza Attualmente addetti alli Teatri con loro Nome, Cognome, e Patria Per servire d'aggiunta all'Indice de' Spettacoli* (Milan: Motta, 1776): 29; and *Ascanio in Alba, Festa teatrale da rappresentarsi in musica* (Milan: Gio. Batista Bianchi, 1771).

³² Mooser claims he moved to St Petersburg only in 1786 (*Annales*, vol. 2: 507), but he was listed among the singers of the St Petersburg Italian Court troupe in the years 1784–87, having signed a contract in 1784. Solci's contract can be found in *Arkhiv direksii Imperatorskikh teatrov*, ed. Vladimir P. Pogozhev, Anatoly E. Molchanov and Konstantin A. Petrov (St Petersburg: Direktsiya imperatorskikh teatrov, 1892): vol. 3: 293–4. See also Nikolai Findeizen, *History of Music in Russia from Antiquity to 1800*, trans. Samuel William Pring, ed. Miloš Velimirović and Claudia Rae Jensen with Malcolm Hamrick Brown and Daniel C. Waugh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008): vol. 2: 107.

³³ His name figures among the actors of the capital's Court theatre featuring Sarti's *Idalide* and *Armida e Rinaldo*. [Lorenzo Formenti], *Indice de' spettacoli teatrali di tutto l'anno, dalla primavera 1785 a tutto il Carnevale 1786* (Milan: 1786): 133.

³⁴ During this period of partial inactivity, Solci worked as a teacher until his departure from St Petersburg in 1787; see *Arkhiv direksii Imperatorskikh teatrov*, vol. 3: 71.

³⁵ Findeizen, *History of Music*, vol. 2: 126. According to Mooser, the romance was published in an appendix to *Priyatnoye i poleznoye preprovozhdeniye vremeni* (Pleasant and useful pastimes). Mooser, *Annales*, vol. 2: 507.

the company during his absence.³⁶ Yelizarova suggests that Solci taught the girls of the troupe fortepiano, but in light of his experience it seems highly probable that his subject was actually singing.³⁷

Vincenzo Alippi covered the same route in the opposite direction. In his hometown of Parma, he was featured among the singers in Giovanni Paisiello's *dramma giocoso Il re Teodoro in Venezia* at the Regio Ducale in the 1788 Carnival season.³⁸ A short time later, he was active in Milan, performing at La Scala up to the summer of 1790 (in Paisiello's *La modista raggiratrice* and Domenico Cimarosa's *Giannina e Bernardone*).³⁹ That winter, he moved to Russia and appears to have worked for Sheremetev both as a teacher and a performer, but his engagement lasted no more than four months. Alippi seemingly left his post without giving the count any notice and moved to St Petersburg to join a new *opera buffa* troupe that arrived from Italy in 1793. As we shall see, the troupe was hired by Nikolay Borisovich Yusupov at his own expense in order to replace the disbanded Italian court troupe.⁴⁰

Among dance instructors, the Sheremetev archives feature the names of Franz [sic] Morelli and Charles Le Picq;⁴¹ Giuseppe Salomoni and his wife Angelica Caselli, who were by that time employed in the Petrovsky Theatre,⁴² as well as the dancers Pinucci (1797) and Alessandro Guglielmi (up to 1799).⁴³ In 1791,

³⁶ [Nikolay P. Sheremetev], 'Nastavleniye Vasiliyu Voroblevskomu', in Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 494.

³⁷ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 349.

³⁸ Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: Catalogo analitico con 16 indici* (Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli, 1994): 23.

³⁹ *Serie cronologica delle rappresentazioni drammatico-pantomimiche poste sulle scene dei principali teatri di Milano, Dall'autunno 1776 sino all'intero autunno 1818, ... Compilazione di G. C.* (Milan: Giovanni Silvestri, 1818): 40. Alippi's name also figures in stagings at La Scala of Salieri's *La partenza inaspettata*, and Cimarosa's *I due baroni di Rocca Azzurra* (spring 1786), and in Vincenzo Fabrizi's *Chi la fa l'aspetta*, and Luigi Caruso's *I campi elisi* (both 1788). *Serie cronologica*, 40; *Chi la fa l'aspetta: dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro alla Scala la primavera dell'anno 1788* (Milan: Gio. Batista Bianchi, 1788); *I campi elisi, ossia Le spose recuperate, dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel Teatro alla Scala la Primavera dell'anno 1788* (Milan: Gio. Batista Bianchi, 1788).

⁴⁰ According to Stanyukovich, he arrived in Moscow on 15 December 1790; Yelizarova dates his hiring to 1791. Stanyukovich, 'Domashniy krepostnoy teatr', 21–4; Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 282–3; Smith, *The Pearl*, 139–40.

⁴¹ Charles Le Picq (1744–1806) was a French choreographer and dancer active in Vienna, then in Venice, Milan (Regio Ducale Theatre) and Naples (1773–76, 1777–81). In Naples he became acquainted with Vicente Martín y Soler, who provided the music for most of his original ballets from 1780 onwards. In 1782 Le Picq moved to London, where he was first a dancer at the King's Theatre and then director of ballets (1782–85). According to *The New Grove*, 'His initial successes [in London] led Catherine II to instruct the Russian ambassador in May 1783 to engage him for her court ballets, but prior contracts did not permit acceptance until 1786. He was ballet-master at St Petersburg until his retirement in 1799, collaborating on several occasions with Martín y Soler, court composer since 1790'. Guy Oldham and Pierre Hardouin, 'Charles Le Picq' in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 29 vols (London: Macmillan, 2001): vol. 14: 572.

⁴² Salomoni worked as a choreographer from 1782 at the Petrovsky Theatre. He was possibly in the service of both institutions in the late 1780s, since from 1788 he had at least one of his ballets, *L'honnête voleur*, performed in Kuskovo. Mooser, *Annales*, vol. 3: 838; Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 283–4.

⁴³ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 287. Another figure who appears in the documents is the famous ballet master Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810), but it would appear that his

Sheremetev succeeded in hiring one Cianfanelli, who at that time worked as *balet-meyster* at the St Petersburg Imperial Theatres. To be exempted from engagements in the capital, he seems to have adduced health claims and took the opportunity to move to the Sheremetev estates. Once there, in 1792 he signed a contract with a higher salary than the one he had received in St Petersburg, and this lasted at least until 1795.⁴⁴

As for composers and instrumentalists, a few names of foreign origin appear in the Sheremetev documents. Sarti, Degtyaryov's instructor, likely moved to work for Count Sheremetev in 1791 after the death of his patron Grigory Potyomkin (1739–1791), a former favourite of Empress Catherine.⁴⁵ The Sheremetev archives also include the names of naturalized Russian instrumentalists of German origin, such as the violinist I. A. Feyer,⁴⁶ the cellist Johann-Heinrich Facius,⁴⁷ one Meier,⁴⁸ the oboist Wenzel May and the clarinetist Beer.⁴⁹

Taken as a whole, this information suggests that artists, including foreign ones, were far from sedentary within Russia, even when they enjoyed stable positions at Court. They would work for private theatres not only in the intervals between contracts, but also as attractive alternatives in and of themselves. Within the Moscow

expertise did not earn him a stay in Sheremetev's estates. Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 283.

⁴⁴ Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 284–6. Galina N. Dobrovol'skaya, 'Chianfanelli', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar', XVIII vek'*, vol. 3: 255–6.

⁴⁵ Having annoyed Empress Catherine II by quarrelling with the singer Luísa Todi when he was working for the Court of St Petersburg, Sarti did not see his first contract renewed and joined the musical establishment of Grigory Potyomkin in the territories of New Russia, which the general was subtracting from to the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Turkish war (1787–92).

⁴⁶ Also known as Fehrer or Fehre. *Moskovskkiye vedomosti* reported a concert in which the orchestra conducted by Feyer played in a concert with the prominent pianist Johann Wilhelm Hässler on 14 March 1795; Mooser, *Annales*, vol. 2: 654–5.

⁴⁷ Johann Heinrich Facius was born around 1760, possibly in a German-speaking country. He was in Russia from 1779; his first concert in Moscow, in Salt'kov's palace, is recorded in the *Moscow Gazette* of 21 January 1781. He was in the service of the Sheremetevs until March 1805. During this period, he was active in many musical activities: apart from playing in the count's orchestra, he was known in Moscow as a performer, composer and music teacher. In 1806, after the troupe's disbanding, he lived with Vsevolod Andreyevich Vsevolozhsky's family in Moscow and its surroundings. In the years 1807–08 he was in the house of Countess Anna Alekseyevna Orlova-Chesmenskaya in Moscow. From 1809 he lived in Krasnoslobodsk (Penza region), where he remained at least up to March 1810. Dmitriy B. Gudimov, 'Praktika prepodavaniya violoncheli v Rossii s serediní XVIII do 60-kh godov XIX veka', in *Muzikal'noye obrazovaniye v kontekste kul'turi: voprosi teorii, istorii i metodologii* (Moscow: Litres, 2012): 332–48. According to Findeizen, after working for Sheremetev, Facius moved to Vienna, where he was still living in 1810. Findeizen, *History of Music*, vol. 2: 496.

⁴⁸ Meier's exact name is unknown. According to Findeizen, he might have been the same musician who had his own School of Fortepiano and Singing in St Petersburg in the 1830s. This pianist, whose name was Charles Mayer, and who taught Mikhail Glinka, was possibly the son of Sheremetev's musician. Findeizen, *History of Music*, vol. 2: 495–6; 'Mayer, Sharl', *Muzikal'niy Peterburg, Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'-issledovaniye, 1801–1917*, 2 vols (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2010): vol. 2, tome 11: 3.

⁴⁹ Findeizen, *History of Music*, vol. 2: 121, only mentions his last name, but this is presumably the virtuoso Joseph Beer, who was active in Russia in the 1780s. See Ulrich Rau, 'Beer, Joseph (Berlin)', in *MGG Online*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken, first published in 1999, online 2016, www.mgg-online.com/article?id=mgg01216&version=1.0.

area, a sort of osmosis can be observed between the theatres of the country estates and the Maddox-Petrovsky, the most active theatre of the city at that time and the ancestor of today's Bol'shoy Theatre. This practice is also documented in reference to other private organizations: Aleksey Yemel'yanovich Stolipin (1744–c. 1810), a landowner of the governorate of Saratov, often rented his orchestra to the Petrovsky Theatre before eventually selling it to the Imperial Theatres in 1806.⁵⁰ Fragmentary as it is, the evidence attests to several levels of circulation among opera artists, between international centres, between Russia's two capitals Moscow and St Petersburg, and between different theatres in the ancient capital and its periphery.

Sheremetev and the Mobility of Opera

It was through this rich network of personnel that Sheremetev was able put on a remarkable variety of repertoires. His single company staged works side by side that in Paris would be produced in separate theatres by separate troupes. During the regency of Pyotr Borisovich, the repertoire of the Sheremetev theatres had included French *opéras-comiques* by composers such as Grétry, Sacchini, Monsigny and Dalayrac, early Russian comic operas (*operi komicheskiya*) and several Italian buffas, though in lesser percentage. Later, under the supervision of Nikolay Petrovich, the activity of the troupes received new momentum due to the count's desire to stage grand French *tragédies en musique*. This fact itself stands out as an exception in comparison to the Russian theatrical landscape, notably to the Imperial Theatres of St Petersburg, which preferred comic or sentimental subjects. It was a genre, moreover, that only the foremost European theatres could afford. Largely through his connection with Hivart, Nikolay Petrovich was among the first in Russia to receive such scores as *Echo et Narcisse*, *Alceste* and *Armide* by Gluck, *Cleopatra* by Cimarosa and *Renaud* by Sacchini. Nikolay Petrovich and Hivart also discussed producing Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Niccolò Piccinni's *Didon*, *Atys* and *Roland* and Antonio Salieri's *Dardanus* and *Les Danaïdes*.

Among these titles, Salieri's *Les Danaïdes* and Grétry's *Les mariages samnites* may serve as representative examples for the activity of the Sheremetev theatres as recorded in his correspondence. The *tragédie lyrique Les Danaïdes* was premiered at the Paris Opéra on 26 April 1784, more than a decade after Nikolay Petrovich had left the French capital. Nevertheless, news of its brilliant premiere must have reached this inveterate *mélomane*, and producing the work became something of an obsession for him. Although his attempts at staging the opera were ultimately unrealized, he made detailed preparations by discussing sets, effects, costumes and acting with Hivart.⁵¹ The following extract from the correspondence, concerning the horrifying final scene of the opera, sheds some light on the measures the count would go to in preparing his stagings:

La décoration change et représente les Enfers, on voit le Théâtre [coulant] des flots de sang, sur les bords, et au milieu du Théâtre. Danaüs paroît enchainé sur un rocher.

⁵⁰ Mooser, 'Les scènes féodales', 827.

⁵¹ The exchanges of Hivart and the count about the Parisian stagings of this opera have been the subject of an article: John A. Rice, 'The Staging of Salieri's *Les Danaïdes* as Seen by a Cellist in the Orchestra', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26 (2014): 65–82.

Les entrailles sanglantes, sont dévorées par un vautour, les Danaydes sont les unes enchainée par groupes, tourmantes par des furies et des Serpens. C'est aussi dans cette scene que se fait l'inondation: quoique j'ai déjà une idée, il ne me seroit pourtant pas inutile de me [la] rendre encore plus claire [...]⁵²

The sets change and represent Hell, one can see the stage turning red for the gushes of blood, on the edges and in the centre. Danaos appears chained up on a rock. His bleeding innards are devoured by a vulture, the Danaids are chained in groups, tortured by furies and snakes. It is also in this scene that the flooding occurs: although I do already have an idea [of how this mechanism works], it would be not useless to make this clearer to me.

Evidently, the count was concerned about understanding the technical details that would make for the most effective staging of this scene. Further on, he even asks Hivart to send the actual props used in Paris for the sake of accurately recreating the production in his own theatre. Rather than 'a drawing ... of the dagger', he writes, 'it would be better to send a couple of *real daggers, the ones that you use in the Theatres* [my emphasis]; what does Pelagus use to strike Danaos – the sword or the dagger?'⁵³

Some further exchanges reveal the count's awareness of the differences between the theatre buildings in Paris and Kuskovo, and his consequent doubts about the feasibility of importing French repertoire. Responding to Hivart's observations concerning the disparity in size (the theatre in Kuskovo being three times smaller than the Paris Opéra), the count appears to have been determined to solve any technical problems:

ce que Vous ditte des Danaydes est très juste, qu'il faut beaucoup de monde sur le Théâtre, mais tout cela peut s'arranger, je dois seulement avoir un detail exacte des decorations, et du reste apres avoir reçu tout je ferai mon possible, pour l'approprier sur notre petit theatre.⁵⁴

What you say about the *Danaïdes* is quite right: in the play on the stage there is a large number of people, but all this can be done. I just need to have the exact details of the decorations ... and, once I receive these, I will do everything possible to represent [this work] in our small theatre.

Sheremetev continually requested Parisian sketches of sets and machines: in some cases, his workforce was required to adapt to his venues in order to obtain the most faithful possible replication of the Opéra's productions.

While the count appears to have been particularly concerned with exact recreation in terms of visual effects, the scores and libretti underwent loose adaptation. At a time when the inviolability of artworks was a concept yet to appear, this

⁵² Letter of Count N.P. Sheremetev to Hivart, 22 December 1785. RGIA, F. 1088, op. 1, d. 121, l. 3. The correspondence between Sheremetev and Hivart is in old French, which also contains errors in orthography, punctuation and grammar. The original errors are retained here and in further transcriptions of the documents in this article.

⁵³ 'le dessein ... du poignard, il vau mieux envoyer une couple de poignards véritables, tels que l'on se sert chez vous aux Théâtres; Pelagus frappe Danaüs, avec quoi est-ce – de l'épée ou du poignard, – qu'il se sert[?]' Sheremetev to Hivart, 22 December 1785. RGIA, F. 1088, op. 1, d. 121, l. 3.

⁵⁴ Sheremetev to Hivart, 22 December 1785, RGIA, F. 1088, op. 1, d. 121, l. 4. See also Hivart's letter dating 9 September 1785.

approach to opera translation was typical in Russia and, indeed, across Europe.⁵⁵ Translators so freely altered the original texts that they were often confused for being the original authors. In Russia, translations typically entailed the Russification of characters' names, shifts of the action to Russian locations and the replacement (or removal) of passages using realia or jargon, resulting in 'remakes with adaptations to our [Russian] customs' (*peredelki so skloneniyem na nashi nravī*), as theorized in the field of dramatic theatre by the playwright and translator Vladimir Lukin (1737–1794). This approach had consequences for the development of Russian comic opera (*opera komicheskaya*): playwrights used these adaptations as a means of appropriating foreign models and producing a national repertoire of Russian plays with music intended for local audiences. This practice was particularly common in the Moscow area, possibly due to its audiences being less cosmopolitan than those of St Petersburg.⁵⁶

At Sheremetev's theatres, performances were mostly given in Russian, using translations provided by Vasily Voroblevsky (see n. 12), and the discussion and staging of their repertoire suggest that a similar process was applied to French opera. Grétry's *Les mariages samnites*, which was produced as *Braki samnityan* starting from 1785 (24 November), offers a representative case of a foreign title being confused for a local one. The French ambassador to Russia Louis-Philippe de Ségur witnessed one performance, and in his memoirs clearly assumed the opera was Russian:

On joua sur un très beau théâtre un grand *opéra russe* [my emphasis]; tous ceux qui comprenaient le poème le trouvaient intéressant et bien écrit. Je ne pouvais juger que la musique et les ballets; l'une m'étonna par son harmonieuse mélodie; les autres par l'élégante richesse des costumes, la grâce des danseuses et la légèreté des danseurs.⁵⁷

They performed on a very beautiful stage a grand *Russian opera* [my emphasis]; all those who understood the text found it interesting and well written. I could only judge the music and the ballets; the former surprised me with its harmonious melodies; the latter with the elegant richness of the costumes, the grace of the female and the agility of the male dancers.

⁵⁵ Adaptations were found in the translation of Italian operas into Western languages from the late eighteenth century. Explorations of this practice include Sergio Durante, 'Quando Tito divenne Titus: Le prime traduzioni tedesche della *Clemenza mozartiana* ed il ruolo di Friedrich Rochlitz', in *Max Lütolf zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. B. Hangartner and U. Fischer (Basel: Wiese, 1994): 247–58; Sergio Durante, 'La clemenza di Tito and Other Two-Act Reductions of the Late 18th Century', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* 1991, 733–41; Valentina Confuorto, *Il Don Giovanni di Mozart in Germania: Rochlitz traduce Da Ponte* (Bologna: Albisani, 2013); Francesc Cortès, 'L'adattamento dei libretti italiani alle opere spagnole della prima metà dell'Ottocento: due drammaturgie sopra un solo argomento', *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 43–45 (2008/2010): 247–97; Francesc Cortès, 'Le versioni variate dei libretti operistici: *La buona figliola* e *Gli uccellatori*', *Problemi di critica goldoniana* 14/1 (2009): 135–54; Andrea Fabiano, *Histoire de l'opéra italien en France (1752–1815)* (Paris: CNRS, 2006); Christina Fuhrmann, *Foreign Opera at the London Playhouses: From Mozart to Bellini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ Anna Giust, 'Translation as Appropriation: The Russian Operatic Repertoire in the 18th Century', in *Translation in Russian Contexts: Culture, Politics, Identity*, ed. Susanna Witt and Brian Baer (London: Routledge, 2018): 66–84.

⁵⁷ Louis-Philippe de Ségur, *Mémoires, ou Souvenirs et anecdotes*, 3 vols (Paris: Alexis Emery, 1825–26): vol. 3: 233.

Loose adaptation principles were also applied to the music. This is evident from an entry in the private journal of Stanisław Poniąkowski, which recalls a production of the same opera in 1797. The former king of Poland was then living in St Petersburg as a virtual prisoner, and, having accompanied Tsar Paul I on his coronation journey to Moscow, recorded that the opera was given to receive the guests visiting Sheremetev's estate. Poniąkowski, who did apparently recognize the original, alludes to interventions in the score, with possible interpolations of new music:

A la levée de la toile, on a vu donner en langue russe une représentation des mariages Samnites, musique de Grétry mêlée seulement de quelques airs d'autres maîtres.⁵⁸

When the curtain was raised, we saw a staging of *Les mariages samnites* in the Russian language, with music by Grétry merged with some numbers of other masters.

The insertions mentioned by Poniąkowski are apparent when comparing the printed French original to the Russian score, which shows that some parts were customised for Kovalyova, who played the protagonist Eliane. It is unclear whether the 'other masters' mentioned were Russian. Most likely, the edits were made by the music director, Degtyaryov, since he was usually charged with the task of adapting the scores to suit Sheremetev's cast.

The broader push in those years to build a repertoire that catered to Russian audiences also resulted in the creation of original works expressly for these theatres. Kuskovo inspired the composition of librettos that were directly related to the location in which they were staged. These librettos, ascribed to Voroblevsky, included *Tshchetnaya revnost', ili Perevozchik kuskovskoy* (The worthless jealousy, or The carrier of Kuskovo, 1781) and its sequel *Gulyan'ya, ili Sadovnik kuskovskoy* (The promenades, or The gardener of Kuskovo, 1785).⁵⁹ These were small-scale comic operas following the dramaturgical scheme of French *opéra-comique*: the action was carried out in spoken dialogue, which was interspersed with closed musical numbers. The subjects, however, were directly related to one of Kuskovo's theatres and their owner, the count.⁶⁰ While *Gulyan'ya* was set to music by Ivan Kertseli,⁶¹ *Tshchetnaya revnost'* was set to music of other plays of

⁵⁸ Stanislas A. Poniąkowski, 'Journal privé du Roi Stanislas Auguste pendant son voyage en Russie pour le couronnement de l'empereur Paul Ier', *Mémoires secrets et inédits de Stanislas Auguste comte Poniąkowski* (Leipzig: Wolfgang Gerhard, 1862): 121.

⁵⁹ [Vasilij Kolichev], *Tshchetnaya revnost', ili Perevozchik kuskovskoy, Pastush'ya opera v dvukh deystviyakh, Muzika sobrana iz raznikh frantsuzskikh komicheskikh oper. Predstavlena na bol'shom Kuskovskom teatre zdelannom iz zeleni, sostavlyayushchem chast' sada, sobstvennimi Yego Siyatel'stva Grafa Petra Borisovicha Sheremeteva pevitsami i pevchimi* (Moscow: 1781), and *Razluka, ili ot'yezd psovoy okhoti iz Kuskova, Komicheskaya opera v dvukh deystviyakh s yeya posledovaniyem v odnom deystvii, sochinenaya *** ***** (Moscow: v vol'noy Tipografii Ponomareva, 1785). Lepskaya includes in her inventory also *Kuskovskaya nimfa* (The nymph of Kuskovo), a prologue in honour of Pyotr Borisovich for his recovery, staged in Kuskovo in 1782. Lepskaya, *Repertuar*, 130.

⁶⁰ Passages referring to real events can also be detected: for instance, in one of his arias the Gardener directly refers to the reception of Catherine: 'Shchast'ye v zhizni to imeli, chto tsaritsu zdes' mi zreli' ('In our life time, we had the pleasure of seeing the empress here'). *Gulyanya, ili Sadovnik Kuskovskoy, Posledovaniye operi Perevozchik Kuskovskoy, Malaya opera v odnom yavlenii, Rechi togozh sochinitelya, Muzika g. I.I. Kertseli* (Moscow: 1781): 58.

⁶¹ Ivan (or Yosif) Kertseli (or Chertzelli) was an opera composer and conductor. He was a member of a family of musicians of Italian, Czech or Austrian origin, who settled in Russia

the same kind, to which new words were added in a process that later was called 'podtestovka' in Russian. This method was used in the case of *Braki samnityan*, as well as in the translations of several foreign Italian buffas.

Another local commission was the libretto for a three-act opera entitled *Tomyris, reine des Massagets* (Tomyris, queen of the Massageteans). Judging from Hivart's references, the opera was commissioned to Louis Hurtaut Dancourt (1725–1801), the author of several librettos set to music by Gluck. Hivart first mentioned *Tomyris* in a letter of 14 December 1790, and in the following March he announced that the text was ready, the author having respected the instructions received from his commissioner:

Les paroles du grand opera avec des récitatifs mêlées de chœurs et de danses telles que vous m'avez ordonné de le faire faire, vient enfin d'être terminées. En conséquence, j'ai l'honneur de vous les envoyer ci jointes en attendant les dessins des decorations et des costumes nécessaires de cet opera qui ne son pas encore près. Il a pour titre Tomiris Reine des Massagetes. Opera heroïque en trois actes. Cet ouvrage serieux et politique comportoit nécessairement un plus grand genre de spectacle que les mariages samnites qui n'est qu'un opera comique. Il y a de quoi faire briller le talent du compositeur à qui MLC donnera ce Poème à mettre en musique.

C'est à Monsieur Le Comte à juger si l'auteur de cet opera, Monsieur Dancourt, en observant bien toutes les convenances nécessaires, à rempli les intentions de Monsieur Le Comte dans cet ouvrages: en rappelant les actions glorieuses et mémorables qui caractérisent si dignement le règne de Cathérine II, surtout celle qui ont raports aux circonstances actueles et qui font tant d'honneur à ses vertues et à son rare mérite.

Voici les quatre personnes auguste qu'on a eut l'intention de figurer dans cet opera.

Sa Majesté Imperiale sous le role de la Reine Tomiris.

Son Altesse Le Grand Duc et La Grande Duchesse sous ceux de Phédor et de Pentasilée.

Monsieur LC sous celui du gouverneur Barces.

Je sens d'avance toute la satisfaction qu'éprouveroit Monsieur Le Comte, si comme il l'espere cette année sa Majesté venoit encoure honorer par sa presence le spectacle de MLC et qu'elle put y voir la premiere representation de Tomiris.

Les decoration et les habit seront aussi brillants que le costume scythe peut le permettre.⁶²

The libretto for the grand opera, with recitatives mixed with choruses and dances, as you ordered, has finally been finished. As a result, I am only awaiting the drawings of the sets and costumes, which are not quite ready, before sending it to you. The opera is titled *Tomyris Queen of the Massegeteans: A Heroic Opera in Three Acts*. This serious and political work entails, by its nature, a greater level of spectacle than *Les Mariages Samnites*, which is just an *opéra-comique*. There is enough material to emphasize the talent of the composer who will set this libretto to music on Your commission.

It will be for you to judge to what extent the author of the opera, Mr Dancourt, in taking note of the necessary properties, has respected these works: in

during the eighteenth century. Apart from *The Promenades*, he was the author of some Russian operas: *Lyubovnik – koldun* (The lover-magician, Moscow, 1772), *Rozana i Lyubim* (Rozana and Lyubim, Moscow, 1778), both on librettos by Nikolay Nikolev; and *Derevensky vorozheya* (The village wizard), on a libretto by Vasily Maykov after Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Moscow, c. 1777).

⁶² Hivart to Sheremetev, 24 March 1791. RGIA, F. 1088, op. 1, d. 121, l. 105r–106v. Yelizarova, *Teatri Sheremetevikh*, 145.

immortalizing the glorious and monumental actions that characterize the reign of Catherine II with such dignity, notably in reference to the contemporary circumstances, which honour her virtues and merits.

The four main dramatis personae are Her Imperial Majesty, in the guise of Queen Tomyris; Their Imperial Highnesses the grand duke and duchess under the names of Phédor and Pentasilée; and Your Excellency, under the name of Governor Barces. Permit me to say that I already feel some of the pleasure that you are experiencing knowing that Her Majesty may well visit you once again this year and will see the premier of *Tomyris*.

The sets and costumes will be as luxurious as possible for a Scythian costume.

According to Hivart's description of the libretto, the main characters of this play were Empress Catherine the Great, her family and the commissioner, who were represented allegorically in the spirit of French Baroque opera. The empress was hidden within the figure of Queen Tomyris as well as being depicted in the role of defender of the Muses; her son Pavel Petrovich and his wife were represented as the Prince Fyodor and Pentazileya, while Count Sheremetev was embodied in the governor of Borus. Due to the scarcity of information, the details of this project cannot be examined more deeply;⁶³ the alleged celebrative character of the libretto is not supported by any evidence, neither is the identity of the composer known. This suggests that the staging never took place. However, Hivart's testimony does indicate plans to celebrate Catherine's achievements in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787–92 in an allegorical frame similar to her own play with music *Nachal'noye upravleniye Olega* (The Early Reign of Oleg, 1790), in which Sarti took a direct part.⁶⁴ Sarti had accompanied the empress to Sheremetev's residence when she visited the count during her journey in the southern territories of the Empire, in 1787. As mentioned above, Sarti worked for Sheremetev for a period in 1791. Having gained experience writing celebratory music, he could well have been a suitable candidate. Sheremetev's control over operatic productive means, as well as the breadth of subject of this projected opera, clearly shows a step forward from the style of the librettos of Pyotr Borisovich's time in the direction of an increased level of grandeur.

In 1795, a similarly 'Eastern-themed' project, imitating the French tradition but turned to a local audience, finally came to fruition. On 22 July, a *liricheskaya drama* (most likely a calque from the French 'drame lyrique') was staged at Sheremetev's theatre in Ostankino: *Zel'mira i Smelon, ili Vzyatiye Izmaila* (Zelmira and Smelon, or The capture of Izmail).⁶⁵ Every element of this production was local: an original Russian text written by a Russian author, Pavel Sergeevich Potyomkin (1743–

⁶³ The libretto does not seem to be preserved, nor is there a score at the Ostankino Archive.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Bella Brover-Lubovsky, 'The "Greek Project" of Catherine the Great and Giuseppe Sarti', *Journal of Musicological Research* 32/1 (2013): 28–61; Larisa Kirillina, 'In modo antico: The "Alceste" Scene in *The Early Reign of Oleg*', *Die Tonkunst* 7/1 (2013): 53–67; Anna Giust, 'Catherine II's *The Early Reign of Oleg*: Sarti, Canobbio and Pashkevich Working Towards an Ideal', *Muzikologija/Musicology* 20 (2016): 15–30; Anna Giust, 'Gli inizi del governo di Oleg di Caterina II: Sarti, Canobbio e Paškevič al servizio di un'idea', *Studi musicali* 7/1 (2016): 39–66. See also Bella Brover-Lubovsky, ed, *Nachal'noe upravlenie Olega (The Early Reign of Oleg)*, Music by Carlo Canobbio, Vasilij Pashkevich, and Giuseppe Sarti for the Play by Catherine the Great (Middleton: A-R Editions, 2018).

⁶⁵ [Pavel S. Potyomkin], *Zel'mira i Smelon, ili Vzyatiye Izmaila, liricheskaya drama* (St Petersburg: v Tipografii Korpusa Chuzhestrannikh Yedinovertsov, 1795).

1796), cousin of the renowned Grigory Aleksandrovich; a subject that was directly related to recent Russian history (the Russo-Turkish War); and original music by the composer Osip Kozlovsky (1757–1831), a naturalized Russian musician of Polish origin. The surviving libretto reveals a plot based on the opposition between love and duty (as was typical of French tragedy) but used as an allegory to legitimate the subjugation of all peoples (including the Turkish) to the Russian Crown. Had activity at his theatres not diminished after Paul I's ascension to the throne in 1796, it is likely that Sheremetev would have continued developing Russian operas of this kind.

Although sources surrounding the works discussed in this section are sparse, the available information shows that the importation of musical and literary sources from Paris to Russia, via the personal connection between Sheremetev and Hivart, not only instigated faithful copies of productions, but also opened up new horizons for creativity in the country, developed by foreign musicians as well as by local ones.

Nikolay Borisovich Yusupov and Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich

Pavel Petrovich Romanov and Nikolay Borisovich Yusupov, in a sense, acted as counterparts to Sheremetev. Many of their contacts overlapped and interlinked, and this is perhaps unsurprising considering the similarities in the relationships they formed. Like Sheremetev, Yusupov and the grand duke established their high-level cultural contacts during European grand tours. And these contacts were cultivated both as a result of and in order to fuel their own special musical interests. In what follows, however, it will become apparent that, if not anchored in a single theatrical enterprise as in Sheremetev's case, the connections between the Russian nobility and foreign musicians could be complex and numerous, and at the same time fragile and ephemeral.

Yusupov, like Sheremetev, fulfilled various high positions in state service, including being a member of the Senate from 1788.⁶⁶ He worked as a diplomat from 1783 to 1789 and during these years he built up a wide range of connections in various countries (France, Prussia, Austria and Italy).⁶⁷ He spoke five languages, which he learned during his travels. These included a personal grand tour in 1774–77, followed by a journey as a member of the entourage of Pavel Petrovich in 1781–82.

Later, Yusupov could enjoy this friendship in fulfilling his duties in St Petersburg. Among his various offices, Yusupov served as the director of the St Petersburg Imperial Theatres from 1791 to 1799. At this time, their Directorate employed various opera troupes distinguished by nationality, including Italian, French and Russian.

In 1791 Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais seemingly acted as a mediator for Nikolay Borisovich when he hired the actor Louis Montgautier (Lui Mongot'ye)

⁶⁶ Later in his career, Yusupov fulfilled the roles of Actual Civil Councillor (from 1796) and Minister of State Properties (1800–16), and was a member of the State Council in his later years. In 1797 he served as director of the Hermitage, the Kremlin Armory and the State porcelain factories. See 'Yusupov, knyaz' Nikolay Borisovich', in *Russkiy biograficheskiy slovar'* v 25 tomakh (St Petersburg: Imp. russ. ist. obshchestvo, 1896–1918): vol. 24: 352–4.

⁶⁷ For instance, he served as a plenipotentiary at the court of King Victor Amadeus III of Sardinia in Turin and was in Rome between 1789 and 1790. See *Yusupovskaya kolleksiya: Sobraniye pechatnikh not iz fondov Otdela notnikh izdaniy i zvukozapisey i Otdela rukopisey. Katalog* (St Petersburg: Rossiyskaya Natsional'naya Biblioteka, 2008).

for the French Court troupe.⁶⁸ The prince had become acquainted with the playwright in 1776 during his grand tour, and in 1782 he organized a reading of his play *Le mariage de Figaro* for Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich, who was travelling throughout Europe. Thus in 1792 Montgautier started working in St Petersburg, where he was active along with the company up to the year 1806, at least.⁶⁹

As for the Italian Court troupe, it was disbanded in 1790.⁷⁰ This partly corresponded to the wish of the central authorities to support the development of native genres; still, the disbanding of the company was mainly due to financial troubles that had plagued the institution since the beginning of the reign of Catherine the Great.⁷¹ The decision was certainly not due to any lack of popularity with St Petersburg audiences. Prince Yusupov himself was particularly fond of Italian opera and in his capacity of director did all he could to reintroduce its performance. These efforts included personally funding a troupe. With his support, a troupe arrived in the capital in 1793, and it was this troupe that the tenor Alippi joined when he left Sheremetev for St Petersburg. For the most part, they staged comic operas that were still unknown to Russian audiences, and the level of novelty seems to have paid off: according to some memoirists, the performances were extremely popular, even though the admission fee was high.⁷²

In 1795, the troupe was replaced by a new one headed by Gennaro Astaritta (1745 or 1749–after 1803), a composer not new to Russia. He had moved from Naples to St Petersburg in 1784 under the impression that he was to replace Paisiello as court composer, but upon arrival had found the position occupied by Sarti, who by that time had signed his first contract with the Directorate. Consequently, Astaritta became *kapel'meyster* at the Petrovsky Theatre in Moscow, where his ballet *La Vengeance de Cupidon, ou La fête offerte par Vénus à Adonis* was staged on 20 January 1785. Once more, Moscow represented a good alternative when things did not work out in the capital. Astaritta possibly returned to St Petersburg by the end of 1786 when Sarti's contract was set to expire. He may have worked for the Russian Theatre of Karl Knipper, given that his Russian opera *Pritvornaya sumasshedshaya* (The feigned madwoman) was staged at the wooden theatre of Tsaritsin Lug in the summer of 1789. It was probably at this time that Yusupov became associated with him. It is unlikely that Astaritta was in Russia

⁶⁸ Nataliya P. Grishkun, 'Yusupovskaya kolleksiya', in *Yusupovskaya kolleksiya: sobraniye pechatnikh not iz fondov Otdela notnikh izdaniy i zvukozapisey i Otdela rukopisey. Katalog* (St Petersburg: Rossiyskaya Natsional'naya Biblioteka, 2008): 16; Yelena S. Khodorkovskaya, 'Mongot'ye, Lui', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, XVIII vek', vol. 2: 217.

⁶⁹ Dobrovol'skaya, 'Frantsuzskaya pridvornaya opernaya truppa', 204–12.

⁷⁰ Ira F. Petrovskaya, 'Yusupov, Nikolay Borisovich', *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, XVIII vek', vol. 3: 307.

⁷¹ Grishkun puts forward the hypothesis that Catherine appointed Yusupov Director not only because she considered him a good administrator, but also because she believed he could liberally draw funding from his personal boundless fortune. Grishkun, 'Yusupovskaya kolleksiya', 28.

⁷² See Yelena S. Khodorkovskaya, 'Ital'yanskaya kompaniya opery buffa', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, XVIII vek', vol. 1: 411–12. The season opened on 21 October with Paisiello's *La modista raggiratrice, ossia La scufiara*. The repertoire included works by Cimarosa (*Il credulo, L'impresario in angustie, Il matrimonio segreto, Giannina e Bernardone* and *L'amor rende sagace*), Paisiello (*Nina, o sia La pazza per amore, Gli zingari in fiera* and *Il Re Teodoro in Venezia*), Sarti (*Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode*), Gazzaniga (*La moglie capricciosa*) and Marcello Bernardini (*L'ultima che si perde, è la speranza*).

between 1791 and 1794, as his opera *I capricci d'amore* was produced in Venice in 1791.⁷³ In 1795, however, he had returned to St Petersburg and finally signed a contract with the Imperial Theatres under Yusupov. According to the Directorate, the Court provided the logistical needs for his troupe and received part of the revenues with the rest serving to pay the singers.⁷⁴ The success was due to the support of the influential Yusupov and to the high quality of the staff (which included such singers as Teresa Saporiti, Giulia Gasperini, Stefano and Paolo Mandini and Santi Nencini). Along with the aforementioned Solci and Alippi, who were in Sheremetev's service, all these artists had previously worked at La Scala in Milan, which suggests that they may have remained in contact with each other.⁷⁵

Astaritta's role within this enterprise was not destined to last long. He abandoned his directorship in 1799, handing it over to Antonio Casasi.⁷⁶ The troupe continued its activity up to 1800 and was generally successful, which possibly led the Directorate to integrate it back into its workforce.⁷⁷ However, this continuity in the activity of Italians at the Russian Court was also due to the support of the influential figure of Yusupov: although he had resigned from the post of Director in 1799 – when he was replaced for a short time by Nikolay Sheremetev – he personally purchased the scores necessary for this troupe's performances.⁷⁸

In his effort to support Italian opera at Court, Yusupov could count on the contacts he had acquired through his diplomatic activity. At the same time, the numerous connections he had created in his public activities were subsequently turned to private use. As a nobleman, he too possessed a provincial estate in Arkhangel'skoye (Moscow), where he had a private theatre built in 1810. Here, at his personal service, he hired architect Pietro Gonzaga (1751–1831), who represents yet another aspect of circulation between Western Europe and Russia. Gonzaga worked as chief decorator at the St Petersburg Imperial Theatres, where he had been invited by Giacomo Quarenghi in 1786 to become a stage

⁷³ *I capricci in amore dramma giocoso per musica da rappresentarsi nel nobilissimo teatro della Nobil donna Tron veronese in san Cassiano l'autunno dell'anno 1791* (Venice: Modesto Fenzo, 1791). The opera was premiered in St Petersburg in 1787. 'Astaritta, Gennaro', in *Dizionario enciclopedico*, vol. 1: 160–61.

⁷⁴ These were initially engaged directly by Astaritta because the Imperial Theatres were still facing the risk of financial failure.

⁷⁵ The *Indice de' teatrali spettacoli* for the years 1796–97 records Sarti as Maestro di Cappella, Martín y Soler as 'Primo Maestro dell'Istituto Nobile', Gennaro Astaritta as 'Maestro Ispettore, e Compositore del teatro venale Italiano', Canobbio as 'Direttore dell'orchestra'. 'Indice de' teatrali spettacoli di tutto l'anno dalla primavera 1796 a tutto il carnevale 1797: Parte duodecima', Roberto Verti, ed, *Un almanacco drammatico: L'indice de' teatrali spettacoli 1764–1823*, 2 vols (Pesaro: Fondazione Rossini 1996): vol. 2: 1239. More details on the troupe's staff are collected in Yelena S. Khodorkovskaya, 'Astaritti Zh. truppa', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, XVIII vek', vol. 1: 67–72.

⁷⁶ Astaritta started organizing a series of oratorio performances, which was soon acquired by the Imperial Theatres. In the summer of 1803 he left Russia, and from this time on no notices about him are preserved. Anna L. Porfir'yeva, 'Astaritta', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg: Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, XVIII vek', vol. 1: 65–8.

⁷⁷ It was at this point that the composer Catterino Cavos was appointed at its head, although the details of his arrival are still shrouded in mystery. See Giust, 'Ioan Susannin' di Catterino Cavos.

⁷⁸ Anna L. Porfir'yeva, 'Dve papki', in *Muzikal'niy Peterburg, Èntsiklopedicheskiy slovar' - issledovaniye, XIX vek, 1801–1861*, ed. Nataliya A. Ogarkova, vol. 14 (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2017): 156.

designer for the newly erected Hermitage Theatre. Yusupov remained his patron until his death in 1831. Like the singers mentioned above, the architect had previously been active at La Scala in Milan and had also lent his expertise to Sheremetev. This suggests the existence of a network of theatre professionals attached to Yusupov as an individual. Contacts were surely fostered by grand tours and diplomatic activities of noblemen who were able to move through Europe and establish a circulation of people that supported their private theatrical enterprises. Yusupov stands out as a significant example in this respect, though many further individuals remain to be investigated.

A similar dynamic can be observed in the case of Pavel Petrovich. In September 1781, the grand duke set off on a 14-month journey across Europe, where he visited a number of countries and met sovereigns and diplomats.⁷⁹ He was accompanied by his spouse Mariya Fyodorovna and by a retinue of Russian noblemen captained by Yusupov. The tour had no official purpose and the couple travelled incognito under the evocative name 'Counts Severny' – 'of the North'. Their secret, however, seems to have been poorly kept. Throughout the tour, they received welcomes consistent with their rank. In the knowledge that the tsarevich and his wife were passionate music lovers, their hosts often centred their reception on musical performances.⁸⁰ During their visits, the couple were able to meet artists and see and hear works that had not yet reached Russian stages. For example, in Vienna, Emperor Joseph II presented them with operas by Gluck and with concerts in which Clementi and Mozart directly took part.⁸¹

In Milan (between 4 and 9 April 1782), Pavel attended the Cathedral where Sarti directed the cappella; and in Parma, Sarti's opera *Alessandro e Timoteo* was premiered for the reception of the Russian princes. It is highly indicative that Sarti, who met the grand duke during his stay in Italy, enjoying his appreciation, subsequently moved to St Petersburg. As discussed above, he was invited by Catherine the Great (Pavel Petrovich's mother) to cover the position of *kapel'meyster* in 1784, and once his first contract expired, he spent time in the service of Grigory Potyomkin. This was not the end of his Russian career, though. In 1793, during Yusupov's regency, the composer signed another contract with the Imperial Theatres. In this period Sarti composed mainly sacred or occasional music – including for Catherine's *The Early Reign of Oleg* (1791) – and was employed as the music teacher of Pavel Petrovich's daughters. Possibly due to a long-standing familiarity, when Pavel took the throne in 1796, the composer received many concrete signs of acknowledgement. One of these was the commission of operas according to the

⁷⁹ The legs of the journey were detailed by one of the members of the entourage, navy officer Sergey Ivanovich Pleshcheyev (1752–1802): *Nachertaniye puteshestviya ikh Imperatorskikh Visochestv, Gosudarya Velikogo Knyazya Pavla Petrovicha i Gosudarini Velikoy Knyagini Marii Feodorovni* (St Petersburg: Imperatorskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1783).

⁸⁰ Mariya Fyodorovna was an amateur pianist; in St Petersburg, she was a pupil of Paisiello. Paul was also interested in music theatre and staged several opera productions in his residence in Gatchina (not far from St Petersburg).

⁸¹ A record of the musical events organized to celebrate them in Vienna is given in Dexter Edge, 'The Count and Countess of the North at *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*' (<https://sites.google.com/site/mozartdocuments/documents/1782-10-08>). Mozart, who had conceived his *Entführung aus dem Serail* for this occasion, was considered for hiring at Potyomkin's service in 1791, some months before the death of both the composer and the nobleman. See Anna Giust, 'Il grand tour di Pavel Petrovič Romanov: andata e ritorno tra Russia ed Europa', *Diciottesimo secolo* 2 (2017): 143–63.

tsar's preferences: *Andromeda* (1798), *Enea nel Lazio* (1799) and the French *opéra-comique* *La famille indienne en Angleterre* (1799). Considering his advanced age, it may be no coincidence that he left Russian service in the same year as Paul was murdered (1801).⁸²

Sarti was only one of various musicians who performed before Pavel Petrovich during his European visit and ended up in Russia shortly thereafter. The notion that the Russian heir's tour was perceived as an occasion for initiating professional networking has already been put forward by John A. Rice in relation to the composer Cimarosa. According to Rice, Cimarosa conceived *Il convito* (particularly the quartet 'Amore mio bellissimo') with the intention of impressing the 'Counts of the North' so that he might be summoned to Russia, given the tradition of hiring Italian composers as music directors there.⁸³ The opera was staged at the Teatro della Pergola in Florence on 7 April 1782 and seems to have produced the desired effect: when Sarti's first contract in St Petersburg expired in 1787, Cimarosa was called upon to replace him.

Vicente Martín y Soler, too, successfully exploited the opportunity for self-promotion with the Russian guests. For the grand dukes' visit to Naples, Martín y Soler composed the music of *Partenope*, a *componimento drammatico* to a libretto by Metastasio, which was staged at the Nobile Accademia di musica di Dame e Cavalieri in Santa Lucia, while the San Carlo Theatre gave an encore performance of his *Ifigenia in Aulide*. He moved to St Petersburg in 1789, where he was to remain (apart from a brief stay in London) until his death in 1806.

The singers Luigi Marchesi (1755–1829) and Luísa Todi (1753–1833), for whom, Juan Bautista Otero argues, Martín y Soler had tailored his opera, also took the opportunity to relocate to Russia.⁸⁴ As in the case of various musicians mentioned above, Marchesi had been active in Milan.⁸⁵ He was familiar with Sarti's operas, which he sang in Florence (1779) and London (1785). When he went to St Petersburg, he performed his *Armida e Rinaldo* to inaugurate the Hermitage Theatre (1786).⁸⁶ The Portuguese mezzo-soprano Luísa Todi had already enjoyed successes in London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin and Vienna, when she was called to St Petersburg. Since Empress Catherine showed no personal interest in opera, she may have been informed about Todi's success by her son, who had heard

⁸² In 1801 he asked the new emperor, Alexander I, to be released from his duties due to health reasons. He left Russia in 1802 and died in Berlin on his way back to Italy.

⁸³ John A. Rice, 'Amore mio bellissimo' Cimarosa's quartetto di nuova invenzione and the Conti del Nord', in *Commedia e musica al tramonto dell'Ancien Régime*, ed. Antonio Caroccia (Avellino: Il Cimarosa, 2017): 269–81.

⁸⁴ Juan B. Otero, 'Musique pour la transformation des genres', in *Ifigenia in Aulide*, CD Booklet (Harmonia Mundi, 2006).

⁸⁵ During Carnival 1775 the Italian castrato took minor roles at the Regio Ducale Theatre. Subsequently he was active in Venice, Treviso and the Munich court. During his engagement at the San Carlo Theatre in Naples (1778–79) he appeared in operas by Mysliveček, Platania and Martín y Soler. In the autumn of 1779, in Florence, he began an important association with the composers Bianchi and Sarti, and at Carnival 1782 he made a triumphant return to Milan. After singing in Turin, Rome, Lucca, Padua, Sinigaglia, Florence and Mantua (1782–84), in August 1785 he appeared in Sarti's *Giulio Sabino* in Vienna and Warsaw.

⁸⁶ After the autumn season Marchesi left Russia and appeared in Berlin in 1787. From 1788 to 1790 he divided his time between Italy and London, where his greatest success was his performance in Sarti's *Giulio Sabino* on 5 April 1788. After his last London performance (17 July 1790) he returned to Italy, where he remained for the rest of his career, apart from short trips to Vienna in 1798 and 1801.

her in Naples. In the Russian capital, Todi also became familiar with Sarti's music. She was Marchesi's partner in *Armida e Rinaldo* and had enormous success with *Castore e Polluce*.

Of course, news about the talent and success of these artists would also have reached Russia through other channels by word of mouth. However, once again this spread of information can be traced through the individual acquaintances of powerful individuals. The invitations of Cimarosa and Martín y Soler to Russia, for instance, were supported by Joseph II, who frequently wrote to the Russian tsarina, and mentions them and their works in his correspondence with the members of Catherine's retinue. His letters confirm the personal relationship created between artists and members of the aristocracy, and the role of their recommendations in the artists' careers. This can be seen in the following extract from a letter by the Austrian emperor to his Minister to Russia, Ludwig Cobenzl, relating to Martín y Soler's first attempt to take up the post of *kapel'meyster* in Russia:

Mon cher Comte de Cobenzl. Il ne vous arrive plus de Maitre [sic] de Chapelle sans être porteur d'une de mes lettres. Celui qui vous remettra la présente est un nommé Martin qui se rend à Pétersbourg. Il s'est signalé par trois jolis opera [sic] qui ont eu du succès [*Una cosa rara* (1786), *Il burbero di buon cuore* (1786) and *L'arbore di Diana* (1787)]. Il n'est pas aussi bouffon que Cimarosa, mais sa composition n'est pas moins agréable, ce qui me fait croire qu'il réussira également chez vous.⁸⁷

My dear Count Cobenzl, every Kapellmeister you receive has a letter from me with him. The name of the carrier of the present letter is Martin. He is going to Petersburg. He gained some reputation thanks to three nice operas that were successful [*Una cosa rara* (1786), *Il burbero di buon cuore* (1786) and *L'arbore di Diana* (1787)]. He is not as comic as Cimarosa, but his compositions are not less pleasant, and this makes me believe that he will also be successful in Russia.

Conclusion

In exploring the channels of exchange aristocrats used to import foreign music, musicians and musical products, my study reveals some of the ways in which Russia was entangled in international cultural networks at the threshold of the nineteenth century. Significantly, the international connections of Sheremetev, Yusupov and Pavel Petrovich were rooted in their European grand tours. The tradition of travelling for the sake of education enabled these Russian noblemen to expand their awareness of European culture, and consequently to contribute to its transferral to Russia, establishing repertoires that reflected their personal interests, sometimes – as in the case of Sheremetev – in remarkable combinations of genres. Yusupov's passion for *opera buffa*, the grand duke's nurturing of Italian seria and the peculiar taste of Sheremetev for *tragédie lyrique* had repercussions for the repertoire staged in their respective spheres of influence. At the same time, the adaptation to local audiences – a practice that was itself connected to wider European traditions of this period – helped to naturalize these foreign

⁸⁷ Joseph II to Ludwig Cobenzl, Vienna, 22 October 1787, in *Joseph II. und Graf Ludwig Cobenzl: Ihr Briefwechsel*, ed. Adolf Beer and Joseph Ritter von Fiedler, 2 vols (Vienna: Kaiserischen Akademie die Wissenschaftes, 1901): vol. 2: 212.

repertoires, and the case of *Les mariages samnites* gives an insight into the way European operas were translated and re-worked to fit their new Russian context.

Mobility went beyond the importation and adaptation of libretti and scores. These individuals' operatic interests fostered a circulation of operatic professionals (singers, composers, set designers), who were in high demand in Russia and were able to find employment and recognition in Moscow and St Petersburg as well as on private estates. Once these noblemen returned to their homeland, their contacts enabled them to develop artistic activities, while the musicians themselves could benefit from lucrative long-term appointments. This process, it seems, functioned for private and public theatres alike: while the participation of members of the Russian elite such as Yusupov, the Grand Duke Pavel Petrovich and Nikolay Sheremetev in theatrical activity responded in great measure to their quest for personal pleasure, these noblemen relied on their personal networks and the 'team' they had created for private purposes in their public functions, too. This was most obviously the case for Yusupov during his tenure as director of the Imperial Theatres, but it also applies to Pavel Petrovich: as I have argued above, the musical experiences he enjoyed during his European tour seem to have affected the choice of personnel and repertoire of the Imperial Theatres for many subsequent years. It should be observed that these personal musical networks were not independent of each other: their members crossed, met and together formed a single, dense (though wide and pervasive) network that seems to mirror the diplomatic environment.

While the reconstruction of these networks requires further systematic analysis, the stories of these three individuals have shed some light on activity in the Russian Empire that has been previously ignored. All in all, these cases serve to displace the myth that a cultural fracture existed between the musical worlds of Eastern and Western Europe. The evidence gathered here rather suggests the existence of a common space in which musicians and musical products circulated. As for music theatre in Russia, this circulation had intensified substantially since the first operatic performances in the 1730s and gained popularity among members of the highest social spheres who had the capacity and means to cultivate it. Thanks to the persistence of the Ancien régime in Russia long after the French Revolution, these dynamics were actively functioning at the end of the eighteenth century and would continue well into the nineteenth.