CHAPTER 1

Context I

The Road to the Moscow Art Theatre

Born in 1863 in Moscow as Konstantin Alekseyev to a wealthy manufacturer of gold and silver thread, he took the name 'Stanislavsky' after a ballerina whom he had admired as a boy. He experimented with this name when he joined his father's factory at the age of eighteen, adopting it permanently in 1885 as he increasingly played in amateur theatres other than the Alekseyev Circle in which, since childhood, he had developed his imagination with his siblings and family friends. Custom obliged him, as others of comparable or superior social standing, to take a pseudonym for the stage, largely because many Russian actors had been serfs. They included the renowned Mikhaïl Shchepkin and Glikeria Fedotova, whose truthful characterization was to inspire Stanislavsky, Shchepkin by reputation (he died the year Stanislavsky was born) and Fedotova through personal contact. In addition, he was aware of the significance of his father's upward social mobility, which separated Stanislavsky by four generations from his peasant ancestry. Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, co-founder with him of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) in 1897, would ungraciously evoke Stanislavsky's origins when referring to him, throughout their forty-year collaboration, as 'our merchant' and to his allegedly deficient literary culture.

The immediate prompt, however, for Konstantin Alekseyev's capitulation to social pressure was his parents catching him red-handed performing in a risqué French vaudeville. His was an indulgent father who had responded to the family's enthusiasm for making theatre by building a theatre in their Moscow home as well as at Lyubimovka, their country estate. Sergey Alekseyev had also nurtured his children's love for going to the theatre – ballet, opera, plays, the circus – whether Russian or presented by touring companies from abroad. Nevertheless, he was a paterfamilias in

the patriarchal mould of tsarist Russia, and he was now going to exercise his authority. He firmly pointed out to his son that material of finer quality, co-actors less inclined to drink, swearing and blasphemy, and improved working conditions would better serve his artistic dreams. This was all very well from a sternly moral point of view, but Stanislavsky learned much from the fun, vivacity, timing and speed of lightweight and saucy material, invariably from France.

Stanislavsky was to remember his father's lesson when, on the demise of the Alekseyev Circle in 1888, he formed the Society of Art and Literature, replacing operettas, melodramas and lover-in-closet farces with reputable plays (Ostrovsky, Tolstoy, Shakespeare) and contemporary ones from the foreign repertoire (Gerhart Hauptmann). He exchanged, as well, the doubtful venues of his freelance activities for clean, ventilated spaces, while his day job helping to run the family factory paid for them. Societies, like the modest, often domestic Circles on which the Alekseyev Circle had been patented were common enough urban occurrences, also in Russia's far-flung regions. Together with the serf theatres of noble estates before them (serfdom was abolished in 1861, soon leading to the end of serf theatres), they offered small-scale alternatives to the monopoly of the five Imperial Theatres in existence until the 1917 October Revolution, three in St Petersburg and two in Moscow. In the latter city, the Bolshoy was reserved for opera and ballet and, in the adjoining square, the Maly for drama.

The Maly Theatre became a state theatre in 1824 and was enlisted under the 1756 charter of Empress Elizabeth I, the daughter and eventual successor of Peter the Great who had 'westernized' Russia while introducing monarchic absolutism to the country. Her edict had declared theatre to be a state institution tasked with providing high artistic quality, although the subsidies for Russian theatre were significantly below those for the French and Italian theatres resident in Russia at that time: Russian theatre, in the eyes of the Europeanized court, was simply inferior.[1] The Maly, hailed as the 'Second Moscow University' (the University was founded in 1755 with the support of Elizabeth I), proved to be a cultural hub for Russian talent, and it was here that Shchepkin and Fedotova garnered their fame.[2] Stanislavsky was to say in his 1926 *My Life in Art*

[1] Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (eds.), *A History of Russian Theatre*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 54.
[2] Ibid., 223.

that 'the Maly Theatre, more than any school . . . was the key factor in directing the spiritual and intellectual sides of our life'.[3]

The monopoly of the Imperial Theatres was abolished in 1882, thereby opening the way for private theatres, and so, eventually, for the MAT. As models of cultural influence, the Imperial Theatres guided Stanislavsky's ambitions for the amateur Society of Art and Literature, which had opera and drama sections, the former headed by Fyodor Komissarzhevsky, a lauded opera tenor who had taught Stanislavsky singing; his son, a successful theatre director in St Petersburg, would emigrate to England in 1919 and, known as Theodore Komisarjevsky, would attempt to consolidate his career there. The importance of Stanislavsky's singing training cannot be stressed enough, for, apart from its technical benefits for acting such as placing the voice and encouraging clear diction, it enabled him to phrase the tones, intonations, tempi, breathing and rhythmic patterns, and cadences of speech not only for the musicality of his and fellow actors' performances, but also to improve the overall arc of the productions he directed for the Society. These gains would be of great use to his work in the future. So too would his skills in drawing and watercolours for the visual composition of his productions.

The Society venture was attractive to the intelligentsia, that distinctively nineteenth-century Russian conglomerate of individuals whose education and culture, according to Geoffrey Hosking, 'plucked [them] out of one social category without necessarily placing them in another'.[4] However, it must be noted, the same education and culture were indispensable for their aspirations to some kind of social status and esteem. Set outside Russia's strict social hierarchy, they thus belonged to the *raznochintsy*, the people of disparate ranks thrown back on their own resources to forge a place for themselves; Anton Chekhov, who was one generation removed from serfdom, was representative of this mixed intelligentsia. It was from them, and especially from the liberal professions among them – doctors, lawyers, writers, teachers – that, in its early years, the MAT would generally draw its audiences. In the meantime, during the ten or so years it took to build up the Society's credentials, Stanislavsky honed his acting and directing

[3] *Moya zhizn v iskusstvye*, *SS* 8, 1. All translations from this book are mine. Note my 'spiritual and intellectual sides of our life', which accurately translates Stanislavsky's words and corrects Jean Benedetti's 'mental and intellectual development', since 'mental' does not have the same meaning as 'spiritual'. Moreover, 'mental' weakens Stanislavsky's point that the Maly profoundly affected people's moral constitution and their emotional capacities to deal with life. See *My Life in Art*, trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, 29.

[4] *Russia: People and Empire, 1552–1917*, London: Fontana Press, 1998, 263.

skills to equal the best that the Maly had offered in its heyday. So impressive had Stanislavsky's achievements become that the well-established playwright, critic and acting teacher Nemirovich-Danchenko sought him out to start a 'new theatre' intended to shake up the professional Russian theatre which, in his as well as Stanislavsky's view, was mired in 'simple, workable technical tricks'.[5] Further, in Stanislavsky's words: 'the theatrical profession was, on the one side, in the hands of barmen and those of bureaucrats on the other. How could the theatre flourish in such conditions?'[6] His answer, throughout his lifetime, was that it could not.

Stanislavsky's summary in *My Life in Art* of their eighteen-hour meeting contains his impassioned account of the 'inhuman conditions' in which actors, 'these servants of beauty ... spend three-quarters of their lives'[7]: filthy, airless and unheated quarters, more like stables than dressing-rooms with planks for wardrobes and cracked, unlockable doors; ice-cold wind blowing from the street onto the stage where rehearsals took place; damp prompters' boxes causing tuberculosis, and many more vividly observed details based on Stanislavsky's own experiences. The fervour of his account suggests that priority would be given to 'surroundings that would be fit for educated human beings', for only then could 'proper, decent behaviour from actors' be expected and become an integral part of company ethics.[8] Ethical behaviour was a point on which he and Nemirovich-Danchenko were to insist to the end of their days. Both men also agreed that beauty was not the prerogative of a select few and, for this very reason, the MAT would be open and accessible (*obshchedostupnoye*) to all.

Their views, in this, were liberal, although even liberal attitudes had been touched by the populism of the *narodniki* ('advocates of the people' – *narod* means 'people' or 'folk') who, in preceding decades, had 'gone out' to teach the illiterate peasantry but who, by the turn of the twentieth century, had become socialist revolutionaries, ready to bring down tsarist autocracy. The fact that the censors had definite ideas as to what was suitable for the people, urban as well as rural, meant that any lingering hopes Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko may have had about showcasing their envisaged theatre as something of a *people's* art theatre had to be dropped, along with the adjective *obshchedostupnoye*, which they had originally attached to the word 'art' in their chosen name. For the censors, as for the remaining tsarist bureaucracy, the very notion of 'open accessibility' was potentially seditious. Yet, later, nothing in the reigning

[5] *My Life in Art*, 159. [6] Ibid. [7] Ibid., 162. [8] Ibid., 161.

system of control could prevent Stanislavsky from giving a lecture in the fateful year of 1905 about the 'high artistic mission' of the theatre, which 'more than any of the other arts' could 'withstand the oppression of censorship and of religious and police restrictions'.[9]

The issue of how the MAT could be socially inclusive did not really become a pressing one until the revolution of February 1905, when the persistent struggles between the authorities and the champions of social reform, among them factory women demonstrating against their working conditions in St Petersburg, came to a head on 'Bloody Sunday' in that capital city. This critical landmark in increasingly deteriorating relations – a peaceful mass petition to the tsar had turned into a massacre – was followed by a series of strikes. Strikes in Moscow encouraged several members of the MAT, which on Stanislavsky's insistence had always counted the stage technicians and all support staff, not least the doormen and cleaners, to vote to close down the theatre for six days in solidarity with the city's workers.[10] Further strikes in November cut electricity supplies, which closed down all theatres for a considerably longer period.

Fear stalked the streets. The political turbulence aggravated the artistic crisis within the MAT – by no means the last crisis in its history – which foregrounded its uncertainty as to whom, and for whom, the theatre was performing in an unstable country, riddled with injustices. The MAT had already wound down artistically in 1904, at around the time of Chekhov's death. Chekhov had become the house playwright, and his loss was all the more keenly felt because the company had enjoyed close ties with him, while Olga Knipper, one of its founding members, was his widow. The issue of social inclusivity was not to become urgent, however, until the MAT was forced by circumstances way beyond its control to encounter the completely new audiences thrown up by the October Revolution.

A decree signed in December 1919 by Lenin and Anatoly Lunacharsky, a literary and theatre critic who had recently been appointed Commissar of Enlightenment, nationalized all theatres which, the MAT not excepted, gave out free tickets to factory workers, other proletarian groups, and soldiers on leave from the battlefronts of the Civil War (1918–21) in order to 'educate' and 'enlighten' – in the current thinking – an emerging

[9] Quoted in I. Vinogradskaya, *Zhizn i tvorchestvo K. S. Stanislavskogo. Letopis* (*Life and Work of K. S. Stanislavsky. Chronicle*), Vol. 1, Moscow: Moscow Art Theatre Press, 2003, 488. All translations throughout this book from Vinogradskaya's compilation are mine.

[10] Ibid., 520.

participant public;[11] and this public was beginning to be engaged not only with the theatre, but also in every area of civic life, having been deprived of civil liberties and responsibilities by centuries of repressive monarchies. Nationalization meant renaming the MAT an 'academic theatre', hence changing its acronym to MKhAT (Moscow Art Academic Theatre – MAAT). Lunacharsky's rather pompous label was part of his strategy to protect the Art Theatre from left-wing accusations that it was 'bourgeois' and thus noxious as well as obsolete. Stanislavsky, although well aware of Lunacharsky's benevolent ploy, soon discovered that a title he had found galling to begin with had made no substantial difference. By 1925, he was able to vent his frustration, writing to his son Igor that the most 'insulting' term going was '"academic theatre"', amid many abuses and obstructions fomented by the Art Theatre's antagonists.[12]

Lunacharsky was an unconditional Bolshevik who believed, within the frames of reference of the Communist Party, that the proletariat had become active in history instead of remaining its faceless victim. But he was also an old-style humanist who valued the cultural legacy of the privileged classes, which, being a means for enriching lives, necessarily had to be shared with this recently empowered proletariat. The October Revolution had finally made it possible to open the doors to the dramatic, musical and performance treasures of the Art Theatre, the Maly and the Bolshoy. Lenin, while prepared to tolerate the Art Theatre, had serious doubts about the validity of the 'bourgeois' Bolshoy, which he thought should be razed to the ground. Lunacharsky countered by arguing vigorously that, with the overthrow of the old regime, all the institutions protected by his policy had passed to the 'masses', their rightful heirs. The Bolshoy building survived, while its repertoires were slowly acclimatized to the changing society.

Theatres, whether seen as keepers of tradition or companions of revolution, were expected to supplement the ideological tutoring of the population carried out variously, not least by straight-out propaganda. Russia and the territories of the former Russian Empire became the USSR in 1922. Just how the Art Theatre could artistically serve ('these servants of beauty') an altogether different people, the newly evolving Soviet people, without being enslaved by the Soviet state, art and beauty intact, ineluctably

[11] Lunacharsky headed the *Narodny Komissariat po Prosveshcheniyu* (the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment), usually known by its acronym Narkompros. *Prosveshcheniya* is frequently translated as 'education', since the Russian word encompasses this idea.

[12] Laurence Senelick (selected, trans. and ed.), *Stanislavsky – A Life in Letters*, Routledge: London and New York, 2014, 464, letter of 3 June.

preoccupied Stanislavsky. He dealt with the problem and its practicalities, including the negotiations required to survive Stalin's multiple versions of the 'oppression' he had spoken against in 1905, as intelligently and shrewdly as he could until his death in 1938.

Stanislavsky's is a story of riches to rags. The prosperous Alekseyev factories, which had traded internationally and had enjoyed international prestige, were confiscated after the October Revolution, leaving the entire Alekseyev family destitute. Stanislavsky took responsibility for his extended family both economically and in terms of its moral well-being. But, above all else, his is also a story of attainable ideals and indomitable spirit. Regardless of personal upheaval, serious illness, fear, political interference, cumulative state domination, pervading social turmoil and the volatility of theatre practice across the board, Stanislavsky unfailingly kept in sight the 'high' mission of his life in art.

Ensemble Theatre

Among the numerous innovations bequeathed by Stanislavsky and the MAT to the world is his radical idea of ensemble theatre. This was not, for Stanislavsky, merely a case of getting a group of people together to form a company along the lines of a 'corporate' team. Nor was it an ad hoc arrangement to stage this or that piece of work – what today is called project-based theatre. Still less was it a vehicle for the star system fostered in the later nineteenth century by the hierarchical structures of the Imperial Theatres in Russia and the actor-managers and entertainment-commercial theatres of Europe and the United States. Ensemble theatre was a matter of like-minded people with a 'common goal', who *wanted* to be together and were fully dedicated to making theatre permanently together according to this goal;[13] they also shared the same expectations and values, which Stanislavsky often spoke of as common 'foundations' and 'ideas'.

The 'many creativities' of the writer, actor, director, designer, musician and other collaborators were to be merged harmoniously in a piece of work whose various 'creative elements' – word, music, light and so on – would come together in a unified and structured 'whole' (Stanislavsky's *tselost*).[14] Such a collective input of individual talents required a balance between individual interests and those that took hold integrally in the work being

[13] The quotation is from *My Life in Art*, 74.
[14] *SS* 8, 5, 428, and *SS* 8, 6, 75, 280; *SS* 8, 6, 367, especially, for 'creative elements'.

made. It is helpful to seize Stanislavsky's meaning by thinking of the work being made as a transcendent entity to which everyone involved had to 'submit'.[15] Stanislavsky's 'submit' is telling, since it suggests that he was well aware of the push-and-pull and drive for prominence and brilliance of powerful 'creativities'. His envisaged harmonized 'whole' was in sharp contrast with the piecemeal results of competing competencies, as well as rivalries between actors predominant in the nineteenth century.

The framework he conceived for ensemble activity enabled Stanislavsky to reconsider the role of the stage designer who, by past practice, had become accustomed to arranging the scenic 'picture' (Stanislavsky's word) independently of the actors' and the director's wants and needs.[16] When he found in Viktor Simov a like-minded scenographic partner rather than an artist merely hired temporarily for the job – and Simov was to design in close consultation with Stanislavsky and the MAT for most of his life – Stanislavsky gave the very role of designer its full range and significance, probably for the first time in theatre history. The role was one of constructing space rather than illustrating it and, in addition, of providing not decorative backgrounds for situations but a visual insight into, and an interpretation or even synthesis of, the core aspects of a production. This role, a liberating one in so far as the designer was not a subordinate but an equal partner in the process of making a production, was to be a shaping force of twentieth-century theatre, extending to the present in the twenty-first century. Here, indeed, in the designer's place at the *centre* of theatre work along with all other collaborators can be seen a long-lasting consequence of Stanislavsky's advocacy of ensemble practice. The piece of work fashioned collectively, that 'transcendent entity', as described above, was neither a 'thing' nor a 'product', but an *embodiment* of the collective effort invested in its making.

Despite his eighteen-hour deliberations with Nemirovich-Danchenko in 1897, Stanislavsky did not draw up a fully detailed blueprint for ensemble theatre. He was not a theorist as such. It took him a lifetime to contour his thoughts and to test and revise them in different ways in different periods, as much through his stage practice – rehearsals included – as his teaching. His observations regarding ensemble theatre are scattered

[15] *Moya zhizn*, 86. Benedetti in *My Life*, 74, erroneously translates the Russian verb for 'to submit' (*podchinyatsya*, thus Stanislavsky's 'submit to a common goal') with the English verb 'to work' (Benedetti's 'work towards a common goal'). However, as is clear from my text above, Stanislavsky's reference to submission is vital for his idea that collaborators need to respect the goal and the artistic 'whole' (*tseloye*) above their personal interests.

[16] *SS* 8, 5, 428.

over a wide range of sources, going from his private notebooks, diaries and letters, quotations and commentaries among students and friends, public speeches on designated occasions, and of course *My Life in Art* and *An Actor's Work on Himself, Part One* (1938) and *Part Two* (1948), as well as *An Actor's Work on a Role* (1957), which Stanislavsky had planned as a sequel (never completed) to the preceding book. The main points from across these sources have been extracted for these pages and are treated in clusters of ideas rather than in chronological sequence. Clarity of exposition must rely on some interpretation, and this includes my analogy with music below, which is appropriate for Stanislavsky's practical knowledge of singing and his musically endowed approach to the theatre, but is not to be found in precisely these words in Stanislavsky's writings.

The MAT was to be a platform for actors of a *new* type. Such actors were to agree with the principles of artistic and personal unity on which the MAT was based. Consequently, they were to be prepared to reject the star system that had indulged egos excessively, fostering the individualism, narcissism and exhibitionism of actors whom Stanislavsky identified, according to his well-known aphorism, as loving themselves in the theatre instead of loving the theatre in themselves.[17] If the ensemble blueprint took years to be fleshed out, this feature of ego-abnegation for love of the theatre was defined right from the start. Yet let there be no misunderstanding. The 'individualism' denied by the MAT cannot be confused with 'individuality', which Stanislavsky prized and encouraged in actors without fail.[18] Time and again he referred to the necessity of nurturing individuality both for the sake of the actors' own abilities and for the highest potential of the ensemble which, in his view, could not be

[17] The exact aphorism is 'love the art in yourself, not yourself in art' in *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*, trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti, Routledge: London and New York, 2008, 558.

[18] The theme of the actor's individuality runs right through Stanislavsky's classes, as recorded in shorthand and transcribed and compiled by Konkordiya Antarova in *Besedy K. S. Stanislavskogo v Studiya Bolshogo teatra v 1918–1922* (*K. S. Stanislavsky's Conversations in the Bolshoy Studio Theatre 1918–1922*), general ed. and introduction by L. Ya. Gurevich, Moscow and Leningrad: All-Russian Theatre Association, 1939, especially 54 and also on the teacher's obligation to bring out the student's individuality so that it flourishes thereafter in his/her professional work. See 80–2 for the 'best human strengths' (Stanislavsky) 'in concert' (my gloss). A wayward version of Antarova's book in English is titled *Stanislavsky: On the Art of the Stage*, trans. David Magarshack, London: Faber and Faber, 1950. This being unreliable, I refer only to Antarova's transcription in the chapters that follow.

For Stanislavsky's view of the actor, in which many of the points cited are summarized, see his 1928 'Iskusstvo aktyora i rezhissyora' ('The Art of the Actor and the Director') in *SS* 8, 6, 232–42, commissioned by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and published as 'Direction and Acting' in Vol. 22, 1929–32, 35–8.

realized without the development of individualities in concert, as equals among peers.

An ensemble was absolutely necessary for the 'collective creativity' and 'collective creation' – recurrent phrases in Stanislavsky's vocabulary – that defined the 'new theatre' he and Nemirovich-Danchenko had founded.[19] The actors of this kind of theatre could be nothing but united by a common purpose, and they were to be deeply connected to each other by how they acted: acutely listening to and hearing each other and co-ordinating each nuance of sound, glance, gesture and action so that the overarching movement developing from moment to moment was like the music played by an orchestra. It did not matter whether the music was on a grand symphonic scale or intimate like a chamber orchestra. The point was that the playing – acting – was inseparably together, constructing the line, texture and density of the piece so that nothing was outside it, going it alone, so to speak. This finely tuned and tuned-in ensemble playing was indispensable for any group identified as 'ensemble theatre'. How Stanislavsky attempted to realize such playing, and how it led his productions at the MAT and activated his laboratory-studios are discussed in subsequent chapters of this book.

As Stanislavsky saw it, ensemble playing worked best when it worked consistently, and this was reason enough to believe that ensemble theatre should be a *permanent* group and endure over the long term. He spared no effort to have the Art Theatre survive, which it did for decades, irrespective of outside political and other pressures, its own vicissitudes, shortcomings and failures, and the disappointments experienced, as well as caused by, its various members – founding members, too, not excluding Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko, and younger recruits. Stanislavsky well knew that duration allowed actors to grow and change as everyday human beings as well as artists, since their body, spirit and successive emotional inner states, in short, everything that they were becoming in the flow of life, were integral to the very process of acting. The ensemble both facilitated and protected this motility, while channelling its energy so that nothing went randomly into the ether, away from the work undertaken.

The ensemble was equipped to capture and focus energy because actors were not obliged to waste it by getting to know each other, as do strangers

[19] To be found, for example, in *SS* 8, 3, 254. Benedetti in *An Actor's Work* omits this section, which refers specifically to collective and united creativity. For other strong references, see *SS* 8, 3, 416, *SS* 8, 5, 428–9 (reflections of 1908) and *SS* 8, 6, 369 (1938); the dates in parenthesis suggest Stanislavsky's consistency of thought on 'collective creativity' from the pre-Soviet to the Soviet period. See also Senelick, *Stanislavsky*, 593, letter of circa 29 September 1935 to his sister Zinaïda.

in entertainment and/or project-based theatre when they come together for the first time and then disband after their work is done. Working within the same group of people was immersive and continuous, and both immersion and continuity inspired and sustained individual and collective confidence, while safeguarding the members of the group against fragmentation, dislocation and isolation. In this, an ensemble was akin to a family and, in its devotion, it was comparable to a church. In a notebook of 1908, Stanislavsky reflected on the vital need for a 'theatre-church' in a period of religious decline, and observed how practitioners 'demanded new art or new buildings, wanted a theatre without actors, or dreamt of turning spectators into theatre participants', whereas 'no one has tried to purify himself and pray in the theatre. What a mistake!'[20] In the same entry, he likened actors to 'priests', thereby suggesting the sacredness of their purpose.

Ensemble theatre, for Stanislavsky, was also a permanent *repertory* company bound to the principles of energy, growth, change, immersion and continuity here noted. Productions in stock made them available for actors to improve them over time, as the MAT's founding actors, in fact, did for the first decade or so of the company's existence. Thereafter, they were less willing to renew and reconstruct what they felt they had already mastered, unlike Stanislavsky, who ceaselessly revised his roles. But, then, they were less committed to researching acting than he was, and a number of them mistrusted the younger actors' enthusiasm for his new findings, which they soon critically dubbed his 'system'. Stanislavsky noted ruefully their complaints, during the mid- and later 1900s, that he had 'turned rehearsals into an experimental laboratory and that actors were not guinea-pigs'.[21] Regardless of their disparagement of his efforts to find a common basis for acting ('system') – fundamental, in his view, for pulling actors in the same direction so that, instead of pursuing individual paths, they all performed the same production – Stanislavsky remained firm in his belief that a repertory ensemble provided actors of differing abilities with prime opportunities for learning from each other.

Intrepid (or obstinate), Stanislavsky expressed his wish in a letter of 1929 to the 'MAAT collective' that younger members take advantage of what their seniors could still teach them.[22] He said this as if to counter the attitudes of a post-revolutionary period, when the younger generations were vigorously questioning the authority of the older ones, especially

[20] *SS* 8, 5, 420, my translation. [21] *My Life*, 257.
[22] *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 525, letter of 31 December 1929.

when the imprecation 'bourgeois' came to hand as they sought to fit in with the current political regime. He said it, moreover, despite his own misgivings, ever since the company first toured the United States in 1923, about whether the established company actors were capable of learning anything new. He had written at the time to Nemirovich-Danchenko, who was keeping the rest of the Art Theatre open and performing in Moscow, that the older actors 'don't want to [work] in a new way, and the old way is impossible'.[23]

There is still another important aspect to be considered. An ensemble company such as the MAT was in a strong position to build up lasting relations with audiences who would come to know its distinctive approach to performance as an *ongoing* group. There was never any doubt in Stanislavsky's mind that spectators were far from passive onlookers, or merely empty receptacles to be filled from the stage. He saw them as active and participatory because they communicated their feelings back to the stage in a myriad of subtle as well as quite ostentatious ways (their soundless relay of intense concentration, for instance, or, by contrast, their audible shuffling). They thus influenced performances in the moment and indicated to actors where they might consider modifying them in the future. A spectator in the process of connecting and interacting with the players became, in Stanislavsky's words, a 'co-creator', 'one of the collective creators' of a performance.[24] His view that spectators were interactive was totally modern (for Stanislavsky they were interactive by their very nature) and the issue of co-creative spectatorship and how it functions is still a concern of the early twenty-first-century performing arts, evident in such cases as 'participatory', 'promenade', 'immersive' and 'one-on-one' theatre.

The MAT was to enjoy the benefits accrued from its ensemble practice when it first performed abroad in 1906. After discussions with the company, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko engineered this three-month European tour to kick-start it out of its artistic impasse. In Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig, and then elsewhere along its journey, which included Prague, Vienna and more cities in Germany before going to Warsaw, the MAT saw again what it had first discovered in the hamlet of Pushkino, near Lyubimovka. These were the weeks of concentrated preparation in idyllic seclusion of *The Seagull*, planned for the MAT's inaugural season in 1898. The discovery was this: learning as one body, with all parts interconnected, as happened between the instrumentalists of an orchestra, was a potent catalyst for productive work; meanwhile, the experience of

[23] Ibid., 416, letter of 14 February 1923. [24] *SS* 8, 6, 87, notes of 1918–19.

synergized learning was stored up in the collective body memory, allowing actors to source and renew it afterwards. The productions taken on tour – the Chekhov stalwarts *Uncle Vanya* (1899) and *The Three Sisters* (1901) among them – relied heavily on this principle of reinvigoration to give performances that were fresh and full of life. The foreign critics invariably noted the latter qualities, stressing the extraordinary ensemble work of the actors (who, in their view, surpassed similar attempts in Germany) and its musicality, harmony and emotional depth, together with the co-ordination of the scenic whole.[25] There was praise, as well, for the directing.

Reviewers had caught what Stanislavsky saw not as being set features of ensemble theatre but its 'processes', his term suggesting the *organic* rather than fixed nature of creativity, in which Stanislavsky profoundly believed – intuitively believed, one could say – but had not yet tried to formulate in words: verbalization was to come in the ensuing years. Put differently, processes are about something coming into being, something that gradually takes shape and form to which a name, if it is necessary, is assigned only after the event for the purposes of differentiation. In Stanislavsky's view, as will be clear in the chapters to follow, acting, directing, devising from etudes and imaginative flashes, intuitions and insights are part and parcel of organic creativity made flesh.

The MAT did not always live up to Stanislavsky's expectations of what an ensemble theatre could or should be, and Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko's disagreements with each other, dating from before the tour, many to do with Stanislavsky's burgeoning System of acting, destabilized the situation. Many more difficulties, stemming from the Art Theatre's Chekhov years, were bound up with what proved to be two irreconcilable directorial positions: Nemirovich-Danchenko's, which was primarily literary, stressing the priority of the author and the author's text, and Stanislavsky's, which was theatrical and so *of* the theatre, stressing the right of the theatre to shorten, reorganize and otherwise modify the author's text – while retaining its kernel ideas – when this was beneficial for scenic work; in Stanislavsky's case, then, the necessities of performance took priority over the words on the page as such – that is, words did not dominate but were components of an integrated performed whole.[26] The October Revolution subsequently played a major part in the rocky

[25] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 2, 6–29 for varied commentaries.

[26] Olga Radishcheva's remarkable study of the difficult relations between Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko throughout their forty-year collaboration details the rift that occurred between them over the role of the director in staging plays and the kind of direction that was desirable. Their disagreement began relatively innocuously with *The Seagull* in 1898, tapered away

course that the Art Theatre was to take as it found itself face to face with immense economic hardship. Quite predictably, in sequential post-revolutionary circumstances on a cataclysmic scale, the company was obliged to undertake another tour, this time to the United States, with performances in Berlin, Prague, Zagreb and Paris en route, in that order. Paris saw [a] 'colossal success, general acclaim, fantastic press', as Stanislavsky jubilantly reported.[27]

There was never any doubt that this tour was for anything but foreign currency – Stanislavsky wrote of the actors 'actually starving';[28] and the government, while shilly-shallying over whether to give the troupe permission to travel, for fear that it might never return, recognized that political mileage would be had from a display of renowned 'Soviet' art. On the side of the United States, there were also commercial as well as culturally and politically invested interests. Stanislavsky was to write afterwards that the main initiators of the tour years before it actually took place had been the company's impresario Morris Gest and the journalist Oliver Sayler who had spent time visiting various theatres in Moscow and was an Art Theatre enthusiast;[29] and, according to Stanislavsky, Sayler 'played an important role in our journey' writing numerous newspaper articles on the Art Theatre and broadcasting radio lectures across the United States before its arrival to spread the word and prepare potential audiences. Sayler's book *The Russian Theatre under the Revolution* (1920), republished in 1922 as *The Russian Theatre* (most likely in order to take the incendiary edge off his title) was to have similarly preparatory and publicity value. Intensive preparations involved printing cheap playtexts in English of the productions that spectators would hear in Russian. These were sold out within a few hours. Stanislavsky refers also to the advertising and organizing help of Nikita Baliyev (Chapter 2), a former Art Theatre shareholder and actor who now ran a theatre in New York.

Contrary to original intentions, the tour lasted for two years, from September 1922 to early summer 1924, mainly because its first performances in 1923 in the United States (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia,

with *Uncle Vanya* in 1899, but came to a head during their co-direction of Gorky's *The Lower Depths* in 1902 and again, when co-directing *The Cherry Orchard* in 1904. See *Stanislavsky i Nemirovich-Danchenko. Istoriya teatralnykh otnosheny. 1897–1908* (*Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko: A History of Theatre Relations. 1897–1908*), Moscow: Artist. Director. Theatre, 1997, especially 100–1, 124–5 and 155ff.

[27] *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 403, telegram of 5 December 1922 to Nemirovich-Danchenko.

[28] Ibid., 398, letter of 26 May 1922 to composer, pianist and conductor Sergey Rachmaninov, who had left Russia in 1917, settling in the United States.

[29] *SS* 8, 6, 408, endnote 72.

Boston) had incurred prohibitive expenses, leaving the company in debt to their impresario, who had arranged a contract greatly to his own advantage. The (now) MAAT was forced to return to perform in Europe and then go back again to the United States in the hope of recouping its losses. Meanwhile, their impoverishment amid North American riches had triggered off in the actors what Stanislavsky saw as money-grubbing and the 'putrid, decomposing rot' caused by its single-minded pursuit;[30] not that he condoned his own pursuit of 'damned dollars' to pay for his tubercular son Igor's cure in Switzerland.[31]

Further, besides Igor, he had thirty and more relatives in Moscow to feed. Stanislavsky's personal situation was little better. He was embarrassed to appear in the United States in his threadbare trousers and worn-out shoes beside his splendidly dressed hosts at occasions in his honour; and he felt ill at ease at lavish banquets, having lost the habits of wealth in the economic straits of Soviet life. The Art Theatre's circumstances were anything but capitalist luxury, which their political enemies in the Soviet press accused them of enjoying; and, while Stanislavsky maintained the dignity of the poor, he was bound up in moral contradictions regarding his own actions – like scrambling for 'damned dollars' while, contradictorily, defending moral fortitude – from which he suffered shame.

Other than the obligation to bear such humiliations, Stanislavsky began to face his gnawing disillusionment with the company. In 1923, he gave in to despair. 'One must get accustomed to the idea', he wrote to Nemirovich-Danchenko, 'that the Art Theatre is no more' for 'no one and nothing has a *thought*, *idea*, big *goal*'.[32] He, Nemirovich-Danchenko, had already understood this several years before, and now it was undeniable. Yet why did the 'Americans so extol' the company? Stanislavsky's almost eureka reply to his own question was: 'the ensemble!'[33] His principles for harmoniously integrated stage work had been so deeply implanted that they had withstood the negative influences weakening the troupe on other fronts, mainly of their daily life, seemingly without so much as a sign of resistance against them from the actors.

However, Stanislavsky also saw the broader, more positive, picture. He foregrounded 'America's might', the size of the country's towns and the endless queues for tickets at the box office, concluding that, by comparison

[30] *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 444, letter of 6 April 1924 to his family.
[31] Ibid., 437, letter of 12 February 1924 to Nemirovich-Danchenko.
[32] Ibid., 415, letter after 14 February 1923, following the date indication in *SS* 9, 9, 78; Senelick's translation modified by MS, substituting his 'outstanding' with 'big'.
[33] Ibid.

with Europe's smaller-scale wealth, 'one can only do business in America'.[34] Such thoughts led him to avow that the MAAT needed American dollars to keep the company and the studios going in Moscow and that, in fact, only the MAAT of the old guard – '*the first group alone*' – could be a 'dollar-making machine'.[35] (He had ruled out the studios as cash benefits.) Stanislavsky was clearly thinking like the tried and tested entrepreneur that he was in his father's factory. He believed, above all, in the sanctity of art, but was not impractical regarding finance and how it supported art.

He praised the American public, who had seen the best talents from Europe, and praised, almost without reserve, the country's great actors: 'We do not have an actor like Warfield, who plays Shylock' and 'Barrymore as Hamlet, although not ideal, is very charming'.[36] His admiration knew no bounds for the lavish resources available to Belasco's *Merchant of Venice* and, across the board, the quality of lighting and lighting technology ('which we can't begin to imagine') and the impressive number of competent stage hands together with a foreman 'we would not ever have dared to dream of'. Compared with America's incomparable advantages, the only thing the Art Theatre could really offer was its unique ensemble work – and this was considerable, if not priceless, as the Americans had realized. He referred as well to a letter by the investor Otto Khan who said that the MAT had 'brought America not the cut-and-dried clauses of a commercial treaty, but the living Russian soul for which America had felt a bond'.[37] In such a context, Stanislavsky found it all the more reprehensible that the company was frittering away the '*idea*' and its 'big *goal*', which galvanized an ensemble.

In 1924, a complete year later, Stanislavsky returned to his theme of how the company's impressive ensemble playing risked being undermined by a visibly compromised ensemble unity. The Americans were 'perplexed and excited' by the presence of not just one striking 'individuality' (Stanislavsky was surely thinking of America's love of stars) but of 'six excellent actors in a single production'.[38] But he was dismayed by the actors' lack of discipline, bad behaviour, carping attitudes and heavy drinking – in short, by the lack of ethics, which had sustained the MAT at its beginnings and without which, he stressed, there could be no talk of 'a group, a troupe'.[39] He worried about the repertoire – 'the oldest stuff we've got' (at the heart of which were the Chekhov productions) – and

[34] Ibid., 417. [35] Ibid., 418.
[36] Ibid., and also for following citation; *SS* 9, 9, 80–1 from which MS translates.
[37] Ibid., 419; *SS* 9, 9, 84. [38] Ibid., 438–9, letter of 12 February 1924. [39] Ibid., 438.

about the actors routinely falling back on 'earlier acting techniques, which have turned into the bad cliché of the Art Theatre'.[40]

Reality had invaded the ideal of 'ensemble' and, Stanislavsky feared, the fierce conditions of Soviet Russia, together with pressure on the MAAT from its opponents to perform socially topical and politically acceptable material would hinder its restoration. Nevertheless, he was certain, having witnessed the impact of the Art Theatre's very *practice* of ensemble theatre in Europe as well as in the United States, that this was, indeed, its unique and defining characteristic. Ensemble practice had also become its brand image as much at home as abroad. 'People', he wrote to Nemirovich-Danchenko, as they discussed the MAAT's opening season on its return to Moscow, 'are expecting an ensemble', and, while he had lost faith in the old guard's ability to maintain the ensemble they had once created so powerfully together, he doubted that the 'newly introduced youngsters' in Moscow would 'achieve one'.[41] The season would open with Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (part of the 'oldest stuff'), and 'people', Stanislavsky was aware, were expecting the 'elders' (*stariki*) to play it. However, 'the acting of the old-timers in *Government Inspector* is so-so'.[42] Stanislavsky had not spared his own acting in the United States from his criticism. It, too, had suffered from a damaged ensemble.

There were, nevertheless, happier notes in his reflections of 1924. He thought of the pleasurable discoveries in this hitherto unknown continent, which he and his colleagues had first approached with some misgivings, anticipating skyscrapers that blocked out the sun and similarly prefabricated stereotypes. On 17 May 1924, the day their ship left New York, Stanislavsky wrote a letter in his and the Art Theatre's name titled 'To the American People', to be published in the American press.[43] He explained that he was not used to speaking with spectators through newspapers – the ease of public dialogue through this medium was 'strange' to him, while 'in America a newspaper addressed the whole country'. He thanked the American people for their generous hospitality and open receptivity, likening them to the Russian people, and thanked them, too, for how they had treated their fifty-four-week tours in a foreign tongue with so much attention and respect. Stanislavsky's tribute, if rather stiffly written, was sincere, as were two articles on the tour published in journals in the

[40] Ibid., 409, letter of 10 January 1923 to Maria Lilina, his wife, a founding actress of the MAT; and 442, letter of 12 March 1924 to Nemirovich-Danchenko.
[41] Ibid., 457, letter of 10 July 1924. [42] Ibid.
[43] *SS* 9, 9, 151–2, published in this edition for the first time; *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 446–7.

Soviet Union in May 1923 and August 1924.[44] In both of these he was keen to dispel any doubts about his appreciation of theatre and theatre audiences in the United States (which suggests that he had been misreported).

However concerned he may have been to set the record straight from every angle, suspicions about the MAAT's loyalties to the Soviet Union had grown during the company's time abroad and, on its return, vociferous Communist groups increasingly threatened its security, along with that of the remaining 'academic theatres', the Bolshoy in the forefront of their condemnation. Additionally, Stanislavsky's personal relations with Nemirovich-Danchenko continued to degenerate in tandem with Stanislavsky's deteriorating health, on the one hand, and, on the other, with internal politicking among company members. The generation of actors undergoing 'Sovietization' was more aggressive than the *stariki* about getting on in the world, but the demands of external politics on them all depleted their energies and lowered morale. These factors were so invasive that Stanislavsky, after his heart attack while performing Vershinin in *The Three Sisters* in 1928, followed by an obligatory two-year treatment abroad, began to take some distance from the MAAT, which was fast becoming an institution co-opted by the state, to find alternative ways of realizing his wishes for it.

Nevertheless, Stanislavsky held fast to his vision throughout these continual, frequently insurmountable difficulties in order to help himself and the colleagues in sympathy with him to keep aspiring to it. He had the highest hopes regarding the younger ones from the six laboratory-studios that he had set up from 1912 to 1935 (the last being the Opera-Dramatic Studio in his home), with the intention of exploring, teaching and developing his System. The Opera-Dramatic Studio gave him special opportunities for enriching the System through the crossover of dramatic and music theatre in which various techniques thought to be exclusive to the one – voice production for the tempo-rhythm of singing, for example – proved to be transformative for the other. The studios were a means, as well, of keeping the ensemble flame burning and, at the same time – the case particularly of the first three studios – of replenishing the Art Theatre with new blood. Only through steadfast aspiration, he was convinced, could the goal of ensemble theatre come closer, and his own dogged faith, or even what some of the founding members of the Art Theatre saw as

[44] 'Stanislavsky ob Amerike' ('Stanislavsky about America') in *SS* 9, 6, 491–5, and 'Khudozhestvenny Teatr za granitsey' ('The Art Theatre Abroad'), 495–501. My translation.

mere stubbornness, caprice or eccentricity, was an example in itself of the compelling power of such aspiration.

Striving for ensemble theatre did not – and does not – inevitably have to lead to the inwardly explored 'psychological theatre' associated with Stanislavsky. On the contrary, history has shown that the idea and the ideal of ensemble theatre can give rise to a whole range of theatre aesthetics. Vsevolod Meyerhold, who had participated in the Pushkino experience and had played Konstantin Treplev in *The Seagull*, also worked within the principles of ensemble theatre after he left the MAT in 1902. Yet he produced not only one genre and style different from that of the MAT, but a series of them, the most prominent and daring being Constructivist theatre, which he based on the biomechanics that he elaborated with his actors. Yevgeny Vakhtangov, the student whom Stanislavsky had loved the most, forged another genre, 'fantastic realism' (also known as 'magic realism') out of his company's ensemble work.[45] Mikhaïl Chekhov, Anton's nephew, whom Stanislavsky considered a 'genius' actor, sought ensemble coherence in which powerful artistic individualities like his own could breathe freely within theatricalized, stylized, modes of performance.

The varieties cited are Russian grown, coming out of Stanislavsky's school, regardless of their divergence from the 'psychological realism' characteristic of the MAT. Others, elsewhere – for example, Bertolt Brecht's 'epic theatre', Tadeusz Kantor's 'theatre of death', Ariane Mnouchkine's 'theatricality' (*théâtralité*) and Elizabeth LeCompte's techno-improvisatory The Wooster Group – are salient types of theatre outside Russia generated from ensemble-theatre practice, and which, most probably, could only have been generated from it; and there are many more, both inside Russia and beyond, down to the present day, encompassing Jerzy Grotowski's 'holy theatre' and the groups derived from, or inspired by, Grotowski.[46] The Théâtre du Soleil, Mnouchkine's non-realistic, indeed, vehemently anti-realist theatre, is a highly visible example of an enduring ensemble: it originated in 1964, in a decade when Mnouchkine strongly advocated Stanislavsky's model (it was in tune with the spirit and politics of co-operatives favoured by the counter-culture of the 1960s), and this ensemble is still active according to its collectivist ideals as the 2010s draw to a close.

[45] See Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 77–93.
[46] Ibid., 229–52.

Looked at retrospectively from the twenty-first century, ensemble theatre proves to have been a radically innovative idea-and-practice because, whatever else it had sparked off, it spawned, not necessarily directly from Stanislavsky (his indirect impact was, in any case, enormous), numbers of different aesthetic approaches while maintaining its singular operative principles, which have sustained them all. Its diversity within longevity bears witness to the magnetism of ensemble theatre.

These very principles set the Moscow Art Theatre apart right from the start, for, while functional ensemble companies were in existence, led by such significant managers and directors as André Antoine in Paris and Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt in Berlin, they were 'ensembles' in so far as they were a cohort of people carrying out the same task – performing– without being seamlessly unified by their style of acting and artistic convictions; and without holding beliefs and everything else that makes up a common 'worldview' to cement their relations. Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater (he succeeded Brahm in 1905) came the closest to this encompassing idea of ensemble – an achievement knitted together with related achievements (seeking to make productions integrated wholes, co-operation with dramaturgs) on which Stanislavsky congratulated Reinhardt in 1930 for his theatre's twenty-fifth anniversary.[47]

But that was Stanislavsky looking back at a colleague's success in which he saw reflections of his and the MAT's contribution by their very own example. In the nineteenth century, however, there had been no such precedent to rely upon. Even the Saxe-Meiningen Court Theatre, which Stanislavsky first saw in Moscow in 1890, having missed its first 1885 tour, derived its apparent unity not from the synergized, symbiotically attuned acting that Stanislavsky was to pursue with the MAT, but, rather, from the co-ordination of costumes with the historical subject and setting of plays, and with the visual and sound effects to illustrate them; cohesion, where actors and acting were concerned, was to be found only in the immaculately organized crowd scenes.

Aleksandr Ostrovsky, Russia's most important playwright of this period, noted in 1885, after his initial excitement over the Meiningen's crowd scenes in *Julius Caesar*, that 'the impression I got was no more powerful than the impression I would have got from the march of a well-drilled regiment or the dancing of a well-trained *corps-de-ballet*'.[48] This technically articulated unison had been achieved, moreover, on the orders of the

[47] *SS* 9, 9, 426, letter of 24 May 1930.
[48] David Magarshack, *Stanislavsky: A Life*, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, 40–1.

director Ludwig Chronegk: command was his method. To add insult to injury, 'the leading actors are bad and the leading actresses are worse', and they too 'always played at the word of command'.[49]

Five years later, Stanislavsky seemed little disturbed by the Meiningen's lack of actor connectivity and oneness, noting, instead, his gratitude for having witnessed incomparable 'directorial devices' – offstage crowd noise in *Julius Caesar*, mechanized gliding gondolas in *The Merchant of Venice* – that 'revealed the essence of the productions'.[50] Pictorial detail of this kind was intrinsic to the fundamentally photographic 'naturalism' of the last decades of the nineteenth century, above all at Antoine's Théâtre Libre (1887–95), and Stanislavsky was not free of its influences at the Society of Art and Literature. His debt to the Meiningen variation on it showed then, and subsequently, in the verisimilitude of dress and furniture in his stage environments – with a big difference, however, that makes all the difference in that Stanislavsky, in a highly innovative move, constructed these environments to help actors act in the 'new' MAT way. In other words, his details of setting at the MAT were less about telling and illustrating a story and passing a social message through it, as was largely the case of European naturalism, than a *support* for the actors' imagination and creativity during a performance.

Additionally, as Stanislavsky openly acknowledged, he modelled himself, when a young director, on Chronegk's despotic methods.[51] Nevertheless, the impact of the Meiningen 'was something less than a theatrical Road to Damascus', as Jean Benedetti accurately observes.[52] And it was less than an epiphany precisely because Stanislavsky was already broaching the problem of how to stage convincingly without complete recourse to command or, for that matter, to the heavily ostentatious eye-and-ear-catching external effects that quashed the actors' inner impulses, preventing them from becoming fully, viscerally, engaged in their acting. The Art Theatre was where he would do his utmost to develop his precocious insights.

Utopian Communities

Stanislavsky's vision of ensemble theatre emerged from within a thickly intermeshed socio-political and cultural context that sheds considerable light on the MAT project. Of uppermost importance, although sorely

[49] Ibid., 41. [50] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 23–4. [51] *My Life*, 115.
[52] Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: His Life and Art*, London: Methuen Drama, 1999, 41.

neglected by studies of Stanislavsky and the Art Theatre, both in Russia and abroad, is the fact that the last third of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth were highly conducive to belief in togetherness and to its actual implementation for multiple reasons to be sketched shortly. The established word for this coming together was *sobornost*, that is, people's willingness and aptitude to form a congregation and steadfastly *be* one. *Sobornost* was most likely Stanislavsky's starting point for his image of an ensemble and its 'collective creation', a phrase he modulated according to visible social changes but without losing its primal connection to the spirit of togetherness. *Sobornost* resonates with Russian history and has powerful cultural connotations, including those to do with the nineteenth-century Slavophil doctrine of pan-Slavic unity.

By the same token, this word has deep roots in Russian Orthodoxy and its fundamental idea that human beings must live in a believing community, for, without this community, they are doomed to such manifestations of spiritual poverty as egoism and greed. Stanislavsky had been brought up in a regularly church-going family and in the creed and rituals of Russian Orthodoxy, and, although as a late nineteenth-century, Russian-style liberal he disagreed with the ultra-conservative outlook of the Orthodox Church, he observed Orthodox customs. It should not come as a surprise, then, to discover that a priest (*svyashchennik*) was called in to hold a service at Pushkino, blessing the actors and their shared enterprise before work began. Lack of space in Moscow had forced Stanislavsky to find an alternative in the country, and lack of money meant that the actors had to do the daily household chores themselves. Stanislavsky, who really did not know how to boil the proverbial egg, set the example by being the first to take up domestic duties. What he *did* know, however, was that the actors had been gathered to live and work together for a common cause, with shared responsibilities for each and all, and this was enough to be a community.

Stanislavsky was no stranger to communities. Savva Mamontov, the railway magnate who was his cousin by marriage and in whose house in Moscow only several streets away the Alekseyev children had spent countless hours making costumes and stage props, had bought the estate of Abramtsevo near Moscow in 1870 with the express purpose of establishing a colony of artists on the property. Abramtsevo artists would soon become key painters, designers, sculptors and ceramicists of Russian art history. There was Ilya Repin, a leader of the Wanderers (*peredvizhniki*), the painters who initiated mobile exhibitions to make art accessible to the people by bringing it to them – a practical instance of the social perspective

of 'accessibility' that Stanislavsky was to take up for the MAT; and there were the brothers Viktor and Apollinary Vasnetsov, Valentin Serov, Mikhaïl Vrubel, and Yelena Polenova and her brother Vasily whose portraits and landscapes reflected his faith in beauty while paintings on religious subjects, several on the life of Christ, reflected his Orthodoxy.[53]

The collective aim of the Abramtsevo artists was to combine the arts with the crafts, Vrubel notably moving with ease from his imposing mystical *Demon* paintings to stained glass mosaics and ornamental glazed ware (majolica). Their sculpture, woodwork and pottery workshops, complete with apprentices on three-year courses and guests eager to learn, produced brightly coloured pieces for use in the artists' homes, as in Mamontov's Abramtsevo and Moscow residences. Polenova ran art classes for local peasant children, in keeping with the intelligentsia benevolence of the Abramtsevo nest.

The young Stanislavsky had occasion to visit Abramtsevo with his family during the summers spent at Lyubimovka and to absorb the excitement of the colony's activities. In 1878, Stanislavsky, then fifteen, saw the first 'living pictures' performed at Abramtsevo (after the *tableaux vivants* in which Mamontov and Abramtsevo artists had participated in Paris). On their return home to Lyubimovka nearby, he had his family perform versions of this new form of theatre, later relished by the Symbolists.[54] The Alekseyev family was part of the wider group involved with the Abramtsevo Circle, yet Stanislavsky's links with this world of visual sensuality were woven in other ways as well. Isaac Levitan, the landscape painter who was a pupil of Polenov and an intimate friend of Chekhov, called frequently at Abramtsevo in the 1880s, when he exhibited with the Wanderers. His subtle, so-called mood canvases had their counterpart in Chekhov's countryside stories and, of course, in his plays; Dr Astrov's passionate speeches in *Uncle Vanya* about the natural environment and the need to protect it reflect both Chekhov's and Levitan's ecological views. Simov, a painter, who was to become Stanislavsky's designer, was part of the Abramtsevo Circle and a great admirer of the Wanderer group. The Wanderers' feel for an unassuming, everyday kind of rural Russia permeated his designs for the MAT, especially for its Chekhov productions.

[53] Polenov's travels to Rome and then to the Middle East, including Jerusalem, were palpable in his religious paintings, as documented in Tatiana Mojenok-Ninin, *Vassili Polenov: Chevalier de la beauté*, Rouen: Editions points de vue, Association Vassili Polenov, 2013, 127–49.

[54] Eleonora Paston, *Abramtsevo: Iskusstvo i zhizn* (*Abramtsevo: Art and Life*), Moscow: Iskusstvo, 2003, 326.

Abramtsevo studios were architecturally harmonious in carved wood, according to what their artists imagined to be an authentic folk style; they painted the icons and frescos of the small church constructed on the estate, features of its exterior suggesting the decorations on village houses. Indeed, they concentrated on free reconstructions of an elemental 'old Russia' and its folklore, primarily legends and fairy tales. Polenova wrote stories modelled on folk tales. Repin soon began painting actual rather than imaginary scenes of archaic Russian life, recording a heritage that was to disappear faster than he or any of his companions realized. Romantics in their gaze backward, they also looked ahead to putting firmly into place a veritably national, quintessentially Russian visual culture comparable in stature to the established visual cultures of western European countries.

Stanislavsky's education in the visual composition fundamental to his directing seriously began here, while Repin's example of painting the cruel realities of degraded humanity was to show in Stanislavsky's visual detail for his production of *The Lower Depths* by Maksim Gorky in 1902. The influential theatre critic and MAT commentator Nikolay Efros described Stanislavsky's fastidious approach to detail of costume and setting as 'ethnographic' and 'archaeological'.[55] According to Efros, these were habits of socio-historical veracity translated into pictorial idioms that Stanislavsky had acquired from directing at the Society of Art and Literature before French and German 'naturalism' became popular in Russia. Indeed, Efros' astute assessment alters the gaze to notice how deeply these habits infiltrated such early MAT chronicle-like productions as *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* (1898) and *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* (1899), both by Aleksey Tolstoy (allegedly a distant relative of Lev Tolstoy, but not so). Here as elsewhere – and beyond Gorky – Stanislavsky's idioms were certainly more 'ethnographic' and Abramtsevo-inspired than 'naturalistic' in the footsteps of western Europe.

The Abramtsevo artists echoed, with vestiges of *narodnik* zeal, the folk-nationalistic sentiments that had begun to surface among an earlier generation, most distinctly in Modest Mussorgsky's songs, operas and instrumental music; and such contemporary composers of note as Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov were rapidly taking up Mussorgsky's baton. Mamontov, when he launched his Private Opera Theatre in Moscow in 1885, produced operas on Russian tales and themes alongside his impressive Italian

[55] *Moskovsky Khudozhestvenny Teatr. 1898–1923* (*The Moscow Art Theatre 1898–1923*), Moscow and St Petersburg: State Publishing House, 1924, 148.

repertoire, sometimes helping to stage them as well as the operas he had composed himself.

The ambitions of the Private Opera Theatre were prodigious for a small organization. The bass-baritone Fyodor Chaliapin, soon to become the most sought-after singer on the world stage, sang twenty different roles in his three seasons with the Private Opera Theatre, including fourteen new creations; and not only did Mamontov firmly encourage him to sing the title role of Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, the acme of his exceptional artistry, but he also taught Chaliapin to understand how the new, proactive designers and others working together at the Private Opera Theatre in 'an atmosphere of trust and friendship' had combined 'all the arts – music, poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture', and dramatic characterization harmoniously.[56] This type of creativity of threading, weaving and texturing is precisely what Stanislavsky had learned under Mamontov's tutelage-by-example at the Private Opera Theatre, and its image stood before him in 1918 as he remembered Mamontov's 'authority regarding art' and his credo that it was 'necessary to accustom the eye of the people (*narod*) to beauty in stations, churches and in the streets'.[57] The musical education he received in this exceptional context came to his aid when he experimented with grand opera in the 1920s and 1930s (Chapter 4). In matters of art, Chaliapin would become one of his most important points of reference for the rest of his life.

'Beauty', understood as multifaceted sensory stimulation, was the kernel of the Private Opera Theatre. The resounding success of Mamontov's first season was Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*, based on Ostrovsky's play. Viktor Vasnetsov's bold folk-style, ethnographic design in vibrant colours had contributed to the sensation caused by the work, and more was whipped up by the following seasons, Rimsky-Korsakov's operas of magic and mystery usually at the top of their lists. Stanislavsky would direct Ostrovsky's play at the MAT in 1900 with visual flair and a beguiling fairy-story atmosphere – Simov's 'old Russia' costumes echoed Mamontov motifs – but it failed to stir audiences. He was fascinated by opera's capacity for enfolding multiple artistic elements into drama, and responded enthusiastically to Mamontov's occasional requests for help with various productions, also singing in *King Saul* composed by Mamontov in 1890.[58]

[56] Both phrases are Chaliapin's, cited in Victor Borovsky, *Chaliapin*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988, 115 and 123.
[57] *SS* 8, 6, 96–7 and 100. [58] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 115.

Beside the Vasnetsov brothers, Vrubel, with whom Stanislavsky came into contact more than once and not only through Mamontov, drew designs and made sets for the Private Opera Theatre, as did Serov but also, on occasion, Simov. Vrubel performed as well, when Mamontov was short of performers. Levitan painted scenery, but avoided playing on the stage. By now Konstantin Korovin, the impressionist painter who had travelled to France and Italy with Mamontov in 1888, had become part of the Abramtsevo community, sketching *en plein air* the subjects of his canvases; Stanislavsky asked him to provide the sets for his 1891 *Foma* after Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Village of Stepanchikovo* for the Society of Art and Literature. In 1895, he asked Vrubel to design the costumes for his production of *Othello* (1896), notably those for Desdemona to be performed by his wife, Maria Lilina.[59]

Stanislavsky's great debt to the Private Opera Theatre and the Abramtsevo community generally for a visual culture that buoyed up his entire professional life largely remains uncharted territory. Yet his account in *My Life in Art* of how, according to his 'director's and actor's habit', he squeezes his body into the frame of a Vrubel painting (undoubtedly one of Vrubel's *Demon* paintings) to 'become physically accustomed to it, not from without but from within' is a visual tour de force in itself, let alone a strong clue to Stanislavsky's affinities.[60] Stanislavsky's is an extraordinarily exact analysis of Vrubel's idiosyncratic lines: sloped shoulders, lengthened arms and fingers, a turned-out waistline – all constituting the 'inner substance of the painting'. While gliding from detail to detail, Stanislavsky articulates precisely what distinguishes Vrubel's painting: its 'forms', which meld with 'inner substance' in a non-representational, abstract way, and so much so that they are 'too abstract, non-material' to submit to Stanislavsky's attempts, both as an actor and a director, to give them corporeal shape. And, as Stanislavsky visualizes how he would be acting Vrubel's painting, he merges painting and acting so that the one contemplates and illuminates the other. Visualization from within an action to externalize it concordantly in form became a cornerstone of his System.[61]

The activities interlacing Abramtsevo and the Private Opera Theatre stimulated the kind of multidimensional cross-arts development delineated in the previous paragraphs, and Mamontov went further afield to finance *The World of Art* headed up by Sergey Diaghilev in St Petersburg in 1899. Diaghilev used the journal to publicize the eponymous group of artists he

[59] Ibid., 170. [60] *Moya zhizn v iskusstvye*, 278–9; *My Life in Art*, 243–4.
[61] Preliminary principles of such visualization are in *SS* 8, 2, 69–95; *An Actor's Work*, 60–85.

was gathering around him, organizing international exhibitions to show off their talents. Vrubel and Serov were involved in this group, rubbing shoulders with Aleksandr Benois, Aleksandr Golovin (he had joined the Abramtsevo Circle in 1898) and Leon Bakst, who would become renowned designers of the Ballets Russes, managed by Diaghilev in Paris between 1909 and 1929. Benois would briefly design and direct for the MAT, most notably Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* in 1915, while Golovin, an exceptional painter of colour and light, designed elegant sets and costumes, which he together with Stanislavsky lit exquisitely, for Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro*, part-directed by Stanislavsky in 1927. Stanislavsky's collaborations with these two major artists showed that he was more than capable of renewing contact, as the years passed, with old family connections to the advantage of the Art Theatre.

Mamontov's financial partner for *The World of Art* was Princess Tenisheva, whose artistic community at Talashkino, her estate near Smolensk, shared Abramtsevo's perceptions and ambitions. These two pioneering phalanxes of Russian art, combined with Mamontov's no less pioneering Private Opera Theatre, were most certainly forerunners of the Ballets Russes, whose musical, visual and dance brilliance intended to outshine anything that they had done. The Ballets Russes also magnified 'Russianness' to an unprecedented degree, shocking Paris audiences with the 'primitive' (which they equated with 'Russian') *The Rite of Spring* in 1913, and titillating them and other international audiences afterwards with a brand of Orientalism like no other, born of the Russian Empire that extended to Central Asia and the Far East.

The MAT's inaugural production *Tsar Fydor Ioannovich* in 1898 had already evoked a similarly 'exotic' world through its opulent, ethnographically inspired sixteenth-century costumes and architectural sets, calling up the 'authentically Russian' promoted by Abramtsevo, Talashkino and the Private Opera Theatre. There was, after all, a similarly national impulse in Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko's desire, when founding the MAT, to transform *Russian* theatre rather than theatre 'in general', the phrase Stanislavsky would use when coaching actors to avoid conjuring up diffused images of characters and aim, instead, for specific characterization. Furthermore, both men considered that identifying the MAT with Russia was a prerequisite for its immortality, first in Russian culture, and then beyond national frontiers. They were keenly aware of the immense significance of their 'common idea' – in actual fact, the MAT's innovations *did* make world history – and this guiding light kept them together both through their cordial friendship and strained relations (even when they

no longer spoke with each other but communicated only by letter), as it bound them through the frequently overwhelming political pressures and stresses of the future.

Stanislavsky was acquainted with Diaghilev and, like most cultivated Russians who travelled in Europe extensively, he knew of Diaghilev's successes abroad, not least with Russian opera. Stanislavsky was all the more likely to keep his eyes and ears open because of his love of music and ballet since childhood and his training in singing. His musical passions had found a channel other than theatre performance in the mid-1880s, when he served on the Directorial Board of the Russian Music Society and Conservatoire alongside Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Stanislavsky greatly appreciated the acclaimed composer's ballets and operas, directing scenes from Tchaikovsky's *Cherevichki* and *The Queen of Spades* in 1897, these being his first experiences of opera directing. Diaghilev, who moved within much the same cultural circles as Stanislavsky, saw and praised his 1903 performance of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, directed by Nemirovich-Danchenko (although Stanislavsky loathed the role, the production and his performance in it).[62]

In short, the whole network of interlocking entities and values, interests, agreements, expectations, aspirations and perspectives identified in these pages were part and parcel of Stanislavsky's social class and 'habitus' – Pierre Bourdieu's pithy term for the dynamics of socially generated cultural appreciation, understanding, adaptation, appropriation and behaviour, which are mediated by institutions as much as by relatives, friends, friends of friends and acquaintances whose shared values, interests and so on form a cohesive social group.[63] Habitus, of whatever kind it may be, gives a social group definition ('structures' the group, in Bourdieu's language) within the 'umbrella' structure of society. The personal richness Stanislavsky's habitus offered him involved direct knowledge of artistic currents, which nurtured his creativity while broadening his culture without diverting him from his chosen path.

[62] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 2, 421. See also Senelick's commentary on Stanislavsky's performance of Brutus, *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 164–5.

[63] Bourdieu elaborates his concept of habitus from book to book, but perhaps the most comprehensive account is in *Le Sens pratique*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1980, 87–98. Bourdieu stresses that, apart from involving thoughts, perceptions, aspirations and behaviours, among other aspects itemized in my text, 'habitus' generates practices or what could be called value-embedded actions and how they are carried out. Although Bourdieu never wrote about the theatre, 'habitus' is extremely useful for studying this field and precisely because the theatre is practice. See Maria Shevtsova, *Sociology of Theatre and Performance*, Verona: QuiEdit, 2009, especially 83–102.

The ferment of these years and their lasting impact cannot be underestimated, but nor can the philanthropy that sustained it. Mamontov's patronage was on a grand scale, as was that of Savva Morozov, the tycoon benefactor and major shareholder of the MAT. Morozov not only kept the MAT from financial ruin, but he also housed the company in a building reconstructed in 1903 by Fyodor Shekhtel, the foremost architect of the Modern Style (the Russian version of Art Nouveau) that graced the dawn of the twentieth century.[64] The sculptress Anna Golubkina, whose rare gifts Auguste Rodin had recognized when he taught her in Paris, carved the façade above one of the building's doorways which, in the Modern Style, appeared to be rolling forwards between sea and air.

Not only was Shekhtel's architecture a striking example of this most recent of Europe's modernist trends, but the new theatre also boasted a revolving stage – a great innovation of the time – as well as state-of-the-art lighting technology, which Stanislavsky enthusiastically used to great advantage, becoming an adept light designer himself. The Art Theatre was equipped to leave the old world behind. Further, with its new writing, acting, directing, visual culture and ensemble organization, it was ready to face the twentieth century and, more still, to help shape it irrevocably. Shekhtel gave his services gratis, in keeping with the open and generous ethos of the group of merchant-patrons in focus here who belonged to a broader group comprising builders of roads, schools, hospitals, medical clinics, churches and other necessities of the 'civilization' that they wished to spread across a Russia in need of modernization. These benefactors' perception of Russia as 'backward' was part of their habitus and thus of their transformative actions to bring Russia forward, level with Europe.

Stanislavsky's father's philanthropic deeds were on a smaller scale. Yet, whether donation was munificent or modest, Stanislavsky must surely have imbibed the philanthropic good will surrounding him. He constructed a 300-seat theatre for the workers of the Alekseyev factory, opening it in 1904, one year after Shekhtel's completion of the MAT premises that Stanislavsky finally thought worthy of 'educated human beings'. Scholarly research has forgotten the factory theatre, but it would seem, even from the minimal information available about it in the MAT Museum archives, that the workers were not solely audiences for productions brought in according to 'art' standards, but that they staged and performed

[64] Stanislavsky's eulogy on Morozov is unusually effusive for so private a man, which indicates his profound recognition of Morozov's humane generosity and his affectionate gratitude to him. *Moya zhizn*, 244–7; *My Life*, 213–15.

productions themselves – with such enthusiasm that they stopped going frequently to the church across the road, to the consternation of its priests.[65] The factory, left completely in his charge after his father died in 1893, had put Stanislavsky squarely in the merchant class, as identified by the census at that time, listing 'industrialists' in this same category. The terminology shifted to 'capitalists' with the growing politicization of all sectors of society, and its negative connotations weighed in after 1917. Until then, come what may, and regardless of his inherited status, Stanislavsky lived his parallel life at the Art Theatre.

Still, merchants were not a uniform class, and Stanislavsky's intimate friends, Mamontov and Morozov, together with Pavel Tretyakov, who was part of the Alekseyev clan by marriage, adding to its intermesh of influential people, were especially prominent figures within a wider compass of public benefactors. A rapid profile of Tretyakov shows him to be a textile merchant and a judicious collector of contemporary Russian paintings, who left his wonderful canvases to the museum in Moscow that bears his name to this day. His collection showcased Abramtsevo artists and the Wanderers, including Levitan who stayed in Polenov's house when he visited the colony, evoking its surroundings in some of his landscapes. Then there was his 'rival' Sergey Shchukin, also a textile merchant, who was a great collector of contemporary western European art, notably French paintings and especially paintings by Matisse and Picasso, and whose art gallery in Moscow founded the first museum of modern art in the world. Shchukin intended to bequeath his collection to the people of Moscow. In the event, it was nationalized in 1918. Not to be forgotten is Aleksey Bakhrushin, a leather industrialist in the entourage of patrons constructing a country and its heritage, who, during his lifetime, bequeathed his home and vast theatre collection, which he started in 1896, to the city of Moscow.

These men, who were such a powerful presence in Stanislavsky's universe, were united within their social class by their commitment to arts patronage, but three of them, Morozov, Tretyakov and Shchukin, were distinguished within it by the fact that they were Old Believers. The Old Believers were a breakaway Orthodox group and political dissenters who had built their communities on strong egalitarian lines in Northern Russia, the Urals and Siberia. They had protested against reforms within the Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century and had adhered, without wavering, to their schismatic position ever since. Like nineteenth-century

[65] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 455.

anarchists, they defied authority, having been inured against it by Peter the Great's persecution of them and by continual attempts thereafter to crush them. Their values of industriousness, reliability, sobriety, education and high ethical standards were 'values characteristic of Orthodox monasticism', crowned by their 'view of all actions as a holy task or a religious feat'.[66]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Old Believers had produced mighty industrialists and a 'number of enlightened patrons of the arts and charities, creators of innovative industrial technology, and collectors. . . . And they acted as patrons of scholarly research'.[67] Mamontov's patronage of the journal *The World of Art* is to be seen in this context for, although not an Old Believer, he thought and behaved like one in his conviction that art was blessed and a blessing, and served the common good. His support for research, which turned out to be groundbreaking due to the calibre of its contributors, outweighed Diaghilev's commercial uses of the journal for advertising his art exhibitions inside and outside Russia. But, after all, Diaghilev was a scintillating impresario, and he had no claims to higher motives.

The values of work, integrity, ethical behaviour and so forth, on which Stanislavsky founded the MAT, corresponded to Old Believer values, although his, too, was not an Old Believer family.[68] The title he was to choose for his lifelong commitment, *An Actor's* Work *on Himself* (my emphasis), reflects this complicity, and his book makes it clear that, for Stanislavsky, work, art and acting were tightly intertwined. Stanislavsky's 'work' was not a matter of utilitarianism or expediency, or, for that matter, of excessively intensive productivity, as was to be pursued in the Soviet era. It responded to Stanislavsky's calling, to a moral-spiritual aspiration encompassed by the Old Believer notion of 'holy task'. The theatre, which he equates with art, is his holy task; acting is his holy task, and acting, as he conceives it, cannot be achieved without morally grounded and selfless work.

Acting/working of this deeply giving kind is capable of penetrating the 'life of the human spirit', the phrase Stanislavsky repeats too frequently in

[66] Dmitry S. Likhachev, 'Religion: Russian Orthodoxy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, ed. Nicholas Rzhevsky, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 47–8.

[67] Ibid., 48.

[68] Golubkina, by contrast, was from such a family. Educated at home more systematically than Stanislavsky and, like him, given the freedom to be strong-willed and independent – these were acknowledged Old Believer traits – she participated in the construction of the MAT with complete conviction in its social and artistic goals.

his writings to be discarded as something he did not altogether intend to say. 'Spirit', whatever else it means for him, refers to the non-material but nevertheless indelible component of human beings, like air or microbes; and 'spirit', in the religious terms familiar to him from his upbringing and social milieu, is the connection of human beings to God. Stanislavsky's allusions to the theatre as a 'church' presuppose that the theatre has a sacred dimension, lifting it up along the vertical going towards divinity.

All of this is to indicate that the habitus of Stanislavsky's formative years left an indelible mark on how he viewed and practised the theatre, and continued to view and practise it in the official atheism of the Soviet Union. Mamontov, in particular, must have been a mentor to Stanislavsky. His letter of 1899 to the younger man reminds him of his 'holy task of art' (*svyatoye delo iskusstva*) in words that Stanislavsky could easily have spoken himself and does, in fact, use.[69] In another letter of 1903, Mamontov repeats his encouragement in quasi-biblical language by referring to Stanislavsky's 'work in art' as a 'high, sacred sermon'.[70] Such details suggest that more attention surely needs to be paid than has been the case to aspects of the Orthodox faith underlying Stanislavsky's understanding of the theatre. Integral to that faith is a belief in beauty as a conduit to God, and as a manifestation of God. It has been argued that 'beauty determined the nature of Orthodoxy in Russia' being ever-present in its 'emphasis on ceremony, church singing . . . pleasing architectural forms . . . and church ornament and decoration'.[71]

There is no reason to doubt that faith in beauty had guided Mamontov's and Morozov's patronage of the arts. A similar faith is behind Stanislavsky's hopes for his and Nemirovich-Danchenko's 'new theatre'. In other words, Stanislavsky's allusion in *My Life in Art* to actors as 'servants of beauty' is fully serious, with no frills, let alone ironic inflections, attached; and his call on discipline and dedication to prevent acting from becoming banal and be beautiful is, in such a framework, nothing but an expression of humility. *My Life in Art* shows that Stanislavsky's is neither a pretentious nor elitist notion of art/theatre. It is a religious one that he transforms and adapts to secular conditions, for art (theatre) comes from humble devotion sustained by hard work; it is labour and creation; it is the space of congregation; it is the space of communion (*sobornost*) – Stanislavsky's word for this interactive coming together is *obshcheniye*; and, while it is not the same as religion, it has the dignity and sanctity of religious affect. Art, although ostensibly secular, has a calling akin to a

[69] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 260. [70] Ibid., 412. [71] 'Religion: Russia Orthodoxy', 40–1.

spiritual one. Beauty, which art incarnates, has spiritual power and, in so far as it improves people, making them better human beings and also making them feel better as human beings, it has healing power as well. The notion that art is a force for healing is deeply embedded in Orthodoxy – more so in Old Believer Orthodoxy – and Stanislavsky inherited it effortlessly from within his habitus, without ever needing to underline its validity for him.

Stanislavsky's idea of art (theatre) as a binding force has some connection with Lev Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* (1897), as might have been expected, given the particular character of the networks of people being discussed here and the overlapping variations on their collective habitus. Other points in common with Tolstoy to do with 'feeling' and 'experiencing' will be focused upon in Chapter 3. Of immediate relevance is Tolstoy's thesis that art is communion, by which it is linked to religion, for religion unites people. Liturgy, for Tolstoy – and, when referring to it, he means Orthodox liturgy – is far more than the ceremony of faith: it is the religious expression of human communion. Art worthy of its name must aspire to this kind of *sobornost* or being together, Tolstoy's first touchstone for art. His second is folk song because, in his view, the latter conveys feeling in a simple, unaffected way, enveloping listeners and holding them together as one. Folk dance, he argues, has the same unifying capacity. Stanislavsky, although receptive to Tolstoy's general line of thought, never proposed liturgy, or, for that matter, folk/peasant performances, as models for the theatre.

Tolstoy's position was radical in the extreme, as unthinkable for Stanislavsky as his draconian criteria for what was acceptable in art. And Tolstoy was ruthlessly uncompromising. From Shakespeare's plays to Wagner's operas, with novels, poetry and concert music in between – Tolstoy tossed them all out for this reason or that, but mostly because they failed his tests of simplicity and transparency which, to his mind, were the portals of communion and divine grace. He had little time for the plays of Chekhov, for whom he had deep personal affection, although he greatly appreciated Chekhov's short stories; and he shrugged off Stanislavsky's 1902 staging of his own play *The Power of Darkness*, although he had agreed in 1895 to Stanislavsky's textual readjustment for an eventual production, in deference to Stanislavsky's experience of the theatre.[72] Sofya, Tolstoy's wife, thought it presumptuous of this upstart to importune her celebrated husband in this way.

[72] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 164.

Tolstoy's dismissal of art as it actually was mirrored his demolition of the Orthodox Church and tsarist absolutism, both of which, he insisted, had perverted their missions. The Church had lost sight of the teachings of Christ, as written in the Gospels. The tsar had failed his people. Tolstoy's Christianity – anarchist in its total repudiation of all institutional authority – turned its wrath against the private property, oppression, injustice, inequality and hatred that had caused social divisions and had denied the peasants all rights, their foremost right being the land which they still worked for their masters: Aleksandr II had failed to grant them land when he freed them from serfdom by decree in 1861.

Tolstoy was a formidable figure, attracting countless 'Tolstoyans' to his side. His indefatigable writings and activities, all denouncing the iniquities of Russian society, made him a moral beacon for the entire nation. On his death in 1910, Stanislavsky wrote: 'How fortunate we have been to have lived in the time of Tolstoy, and how terrifying to remain on earth without him. It is as terrifying as losing your conscience and ideals'.[73] Among Tolstoy's numerous actions as the nation's moral conscience was his success in arranging the passage for 5,747 persecuted Dukhobors ('spirit wrestlers') to western Canada (1898–99), where their descendants are still to be found.[74]

The Dukhobors had been pacifists for generations and refused to serve in the tsar's army, thereby incurring the wrath of the tsarist authorities. They lived by the religious and ethical precepts of their community alone, and Tolstoy idealized them, seeing in them the image of Christ, the suffering human being. Their non-resistance (also called 'passive resistance') to autocracy exemplified his own doctrine of non-resistance and non-violence, which he taught to his innumerable international visitors and disciples, including Mahatma Gandhi with whom he corresponded and who deployed it to great effect in India's struggle for independence against the British. Tolstoy raised funds in Russia for the Dukhobors' journey, approaching Stanislavsky, among many respected members of the intelligentsia, wealthy merchants and enlightened aristocrats, for

[73] *SS* 8, 8, 208–9, letter of 10 November 1910 to Nemirovich-Danchenko; *Stanislavsky – A Life*, 290, offers a different translation.

[74] Leopold Antonovich Sulerzhitsky, *Povesti i rasskazy. Stati i zametki. Perepiska. Vospominaniya o L. A. Sulerzhitskom* (*Accounts and Stories, Articles and Notes, Correspondence, Memories of L. A. Sulerzhitsky*), ed. Yelena Polyakova, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970, 168–256; L. A. Sulerzhitsky, *To America with the Doukhobors*, trans. Michael Kalmakoff and introduction by Mark Mealing, Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1982, 17. See also Aylmer Maude, *A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1904, especially 1–44.

contributions to his cause.[75] With the help of his followers in England, he gathered large donations from the English Quakers.

It is here that Tolstoy's story intersects that of the Art Theatre, and it does so through Leopold Sulerzhitsky. The transportation of the Dukhobors was a phenomenal feat, but it would have been quite impossible without Sulerzhitsky, a staunch Tolstoyan who had offered to accompany the Dukhobors to Canada. On his return to Russia in 1900, Sulerzhitsky came to know Chekhov and Gorky in Yalta and then Stanislavsky in Moscow, whose rehearsals of *The Snow Maiden* he had managed to attend. He became directly involved in theatre activities, and Stanislavsky, who had read his account of the Dukhobors' journey, invited him in 1906 to be his assistant, paying his salary out of his own pocket. The Art Theatre management had declined to do so for financial reasons. Nemirovich-Danchenko was outraged that Stanislavsky had chosen a mere 'amateur' to help him.

Sulerzhitsky quickly became Stanislavsky's closest friend. Stanislavsky asked him to direct the First Studio, formed in 1912, where Sulerzhitsky emphasized using the body, not least because, from the perspective of Orthodoxy (but not of Tolstoy), it was a conduit to and from the human spirit, as he taught the System that Stanislavsky was then elaborating. In all his dealings with the Studio, Sulerzhitsky highlighted the Tolstoyan principles of integrity and communal co-operation; these, in any case, had been among the founding principles of the MAT, and Stanislavsky was keen to encourage them in the First Studio – indeed in all the studios he was to establish. The profound connection between the two men was bound up, as well, in their agreement that the mind, body and soul were integrated rather than separate entities, or even antagonistic ones, and that their integration was precisely what the actor had to work on in a holistic manner.

Sulerzhitsky hoped to build on these principles away from the burdens of everyday life, and so, in the summers of 1913 to 1915, he took First Studio actors to the rural Kanev on the Dnepr river in Ukraine and Yevpatoria in Crimea, both being regions of the Russian Empire. Here, in the light of Tolstoy, they learned from local peasants how to till the soil. In the light of the Dukhobors, they learned to live communally. Stanislavsky had bought them a plot of land in Yevpatoria for these purposes and visited the commune, which included his daughter Kira and Vakhtangov. Sulerzhitsky's death at the age of forty-four in 1916 from

[75] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 1, 234.

the nephritis he had contracted while arranging the affairs of the Dukhobors in Canada put an end to the adventure. Tolstoy preached love and brotherhood, but Sulerzhitsky paid for them with his blood. Stanislavsky was devastated by his passing, and was never to find so close a friend again.

The romanticism of Yevpatoria, a place the communitarians could call their own, must have been intoxicating, and Stanislavsky could not have failed to recognize its advance on Pushkino. Pushkino, home of *The Seagull* rehearsals, was a short-term sanctuary, as was, for a few summer months in 1905, Meyerhold's experimental laboratory-studio, which moved thereafter to Povarskaya Street in Moscow for an equally short time. Stanislavsky had supported the laboratory personally and financially until his factory's financial losses because of revolutionary unrest throughout 1905, the great costs of studio refurbishment and studio salaries in Moscow, and Nemirovich-Danchenko's opposition on the grounds that it 'was absolutely of no use to the MAT' forced Stanislavsky reluctantly to close it down.[76] Yevpatoria, on the other hand, was not a fleeting occurrence, but one sustained over three years whose duration provided a more viable test of its potential. In addition, the moral and social benefits derived from the experience were intended to help the First Studio's research on the actor who, more than a trained-up player, was to be an enlightened human being.

Utopian communities were most definitely in the air, but they were not only in the air, for there was no denying their concrete existence. Tolstoy, alone, inspired communities to be set up hither and yon, one settling at Telyatinki, more or less on his doorstep at Yasnaya Polyana, to the horror of his long-suffering wife whom he continually accused of giving him a 'hard time'. She writes scathingly in her diary about this latest encroachment upon her life: 'There have been a number of Tolstoyan communities,

[76] Plans, itemized expenses and projects of this 'theatre-studio' of 'young forces and new forms' show how seriously Stanislavsky took the venture, as did all who participated in it. See K. S. Nos. 14548–14580, 3818 and 13233 in the archives of the Moscow Art Theatre Museum. Stanislavsky lost 75,000 roubles on the studio, a huge sum of money for this period. For details regarding Meyerhold, see Oleg Feldman (documents compiled and ed.), *Meyerhkolda naslediye* (*Meyerhold's Legacy*), Vol. 3, Moscow: Novoye Izdatelstvo, 2010, 34–40. See 40 for Nemirovich-Danchenko's hostility towards the studio enterprise.

Feldman's meticulous research indicates that economic factors were of the utmost importance in Stanislavsky's decision, and thereby debunks the myth that he was envious of Meyerhold's experiments and curtailed them for this reason. Stanislavsky also compensated all the collaborators of the studio to the tune of six months' salary each. Among them was the composer Ilya Sats, who became the head of the Art Theatre's Music Section in 1906 and wrote the music for the MAT's 1907 *Drama of Life* and *The Blue Bird* in 1908.

but they all collapsed because people had such a "hard time" living together'.[77] Just how 'hard' people found it to live together was to become apparent also in Sulerzhitsky's 'Tolstoyan' Kanev and Yevpatoria communities (Chapter 3).

Silver Age Metaphysics

Sofya Tolstoy's exasperation came from years of frustration with her husband's dissensions, but there was no getting away from practices that had become culturally ingrained. Russia, as Orlando Figes asserts, had been a 'breeding ground' for several centuries for 'Christian anarchists and utopians', and countless other sects burgeoned, year on year, on her soil.[78] According to Figes, in the 1900s, 'the theosophists, the anthroposophists, the Symbolists, Rasputinites and mystics of all types started to see in these sects an answer to their yearnings for a new and more "essential" kind of Russian faith'.[79]

However, even when 'Russian faith' as such was not the issue, the 'isms' of the cusp of the 1900s, starting with Symbolism, blossomed in the Russian Silver Age. The dates of this Age are conventionally given as the early 1890s (when not 1900) to the early 1920s (when not to 1917), and some of its major precursors, as well as pioneers, have already appeared in the preceding pages of this book.[80] The MAT, it must be remembered, was itself part and parcel of the Silver Age, contributing enormously to its manifold brilliance. Other pioneers, who were either directly related to the MAT or are now taken as contextual markers for it, show no less significantly the fertile terrain that nourished Stanislavsky's work.

Thus, in accordance with the Silver Age, Symbolism was welcomed with open arms at the MAT in the plays of Maurice Maeterlinck, first staged there in 1904. Anthroposophy, a significant feature of Silver Age esotericism, made its entrance under the banner of Rudolf Steiner but in the figure of Mikhaïl Chekhov to whom Stanislavsky had first spoken about Steiner before 1917.[81] Chekhov appears not to have read Steiner in

[77] *The Diaries of Sofia Tolstoy*, trans. Cathy Porter, Surrey: Alma Books, 2009, 132.
[78] Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2002, 308.
[79] Ibid., 345.
[80] John E. Bowlt's title gives his preferred dates. Thus, *Moscow and St Petersburg, 1900–1920: Art, Life and Culture of the Russian Silver Age*, New York: The Vendome Press, 2008.
[81] Michael Chekhov, *The Path of the Actor*, ed. Andrei Kirillov and Bella Merlin, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, 13. For Chekhov's observations on Steiner's influence on his approach to theatre practice see 160, 187–8 and Kirillov's Note 39, 210.

Russian translation until 1918, but he took to Steiner's esoteric elaboration of Christianity, passing it through the yoga he had practised during his studies with Stanislavsky and Sulerzhitsky in the First Studio. It was here that Chekhov forged the warm friendship with Vakhtangov that gave rise to a highly productive artistic collaboration, especially regarding the work of actors. The more Chekhov studied Steiner, the more he moved away from Stanislavsky's anything but other-worldly System, despite its spiritual base, and, eventually, from Vakhtangov's more secular and politically activated than religious or metaphysical imagination.

Yoga had come to the First Studio with Nikolay Demidov, who taught it to all Studio actors. He was Stanislavsky's son Igor's gymnastics tutor and, besides knowing the theatre practically from his manger-director father during childhood, he had studied 'traditional' medicine, psychiatry and Tibetan medicine. Demidov became a family friend, discussing the System with Stanislavsky, assisting him with teaching actors and with editing several drafts of *An Actor's Work on Himself*, for which Stanislavsky gratefully thanks him in his preface, as well as for his 'precious instructions, materials, examples'.[82] Also a friend of Sulerzhitsky, Demidov was well aware of the experimentations under way in the First Studio – he, together with Igor, joined the Yevpatoria community in 1915 – and, while he had doubts about the feasibility of the System, he had few about the creative intentions of the Studio.

Vakhtangov died of cancer in 1922, aged thirty-nine, leaving Stanislavsky heartbroken, once again. He had lost a kindred spirit, not as close as Sulerzhitsky, but, even more painfully, he had lost 'the hope of Russian art'.[83] Chekhov, who took charge in 1923 of the First Studio, as it was evolving into the independent Second Moscow Art Theatre (MAAT2), was by then under attack from the hard-line left factions of the 1920s for his anthroposophical beliefs. Essentially, Chekhov's anthroposophy was a convenient pretext for their political ambitions at a time when the arts were intermingled with politics and, as well, were used transactionally for political reasons. Within a few years he understood that, notwithstanding the political conflicts in society at large, political splintering and divisions of allegiance and intention within the MAAT2 set him at odds with its majority inclination to 'fit in with the Soviet system', as the Art Theatre

[82] *SS* 8, 2, 8. Benedetti omits this preface in *An Actor's Work*. For further details see *Nikolai Demidov: Becoming an Actor-Creator*, ed. Andrei Malaev-Babel and Margarita Laskina, trans. Andrei Malaev-Babel with Alexander Rojavin and Sarah Lillbridge, London and New York: Routledge, 2016, 1–7.

[83] *Zhizn i tvorchestvo*, Vol. 3, 196, from an inscription of 18 April 1922 on Stanislavsky's photograph to Vakhtangov, now mortally ill.

scholar and editor Zinaïda Udaltsova puts it.[84] Seeing that he was no longer able to build up his own kind of theatre, he left Russia in 1928, going to Berlin, Paris, Riga, Dartington Hall in England and Connecticut in the United States before settling in Hollywood, where he died in 1955.

Chekhov was a dazzling 'individuality' in the Pleiad that had risen from the MAT. He stunned colleagues and audiences alike with his compelling performances of the insane king in August Strindberg's *Erik XIV*, directed by Vakhtangov in 1921. For some time now, he had been in search of an acting style that projected what was other than obvious reality, or was on the edge of it, and this resonated with a strand of anthroposophy concerned with finding how to make visible the invisible spiritual world. Take, for instance, Chekhov's idea that the actor did not need to seek a character from within: the character, lured by the imagination, would come from without, like a visitation, to the actor.[85] His theory of the 'psychological gesture', by which the actor physicalizes a character's mysterious, hidden impulses, can be understood in terms of the 'ineffable' that was central to anthroposophy, together with its interest in the expressivity of the body. A good number of Chekhov's ideas on acting came together in his stellar creation of the role of Hamlet in 1924 at the MAAT2, directed by Valentin Smyshlyayev, Vladimir Tatarinov and Aleksandr Cheban, with Chekhov, effectively, as the fourth director. Smyshlyayev, issuing like Chekhov from the First Studio, is foregrounded in the following chapter.

The invisible was a hallmark of Symbolist drama which, in Russia, was generally written by poets – thus Andrey Bely, Aleksandr Blok and Valery Bryusov, to cite only the most well known of them.[86] Bely was an anthroposophist who encouraged Chekhov to take a studious approach to the subject. He was, at the same time, a theorist of Symbolism, who urged the 'transformation of theatre into a shrine', a goal that, at first glance, looked deceptively like Stanislavsky's until closer inspection proved

[84] Personal conversation 13 April 2017. Udaltsova, a great admirer of Mikhaïl Chekhov, queries his hints as well as the claims of his acquaintances abroad that imminent arrest because of his anthroposophical views forced him to emigrate. For Chekhov's account, see *Literaturnoye naslediye* (*Literary Legacy*), ed. Maria Knebel et al., Vol. 1, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1995 (with supplementary material added to the 1986 first edition), 181–2, 246–7 and 249.

[85] Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, 21–34 and 63–76 for the 'psychological gesture'.

[86] In any case, separation of writers by literary genres was never a Russian practice. Virtually all the great Russian writers from Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy and, of course, Chekhov to the Symbolists here noted and well beyond them wrote in multiple forms – poetry, plays, novels, essays, treatises and so on.

it was quite different.[87] Stanislavsky thought of the theatre as comparable to a place for prayer and so for the cleansing necessary for the 'life of the human spirit'. Bely's 'shrine' was to the chimera of wherever vertiginous fantasy took a creator: the 'shrine' was for crystallized poetic experience. And so it happened that, in 1921, years after Bely's theoretical pronouncements, he and Chekhov turned his delirious novel *Petersburg* into a weird and wonderful theatre piece. Chekhov played the role of the ghostly, grotesque Ableyukhov, a civil servant, who was Bely's emblem of the 'unreal' city built by Peter the Great on water, shrouded in mist. None of Chekhov's performance extravagances could have been too extravagant for this phantasmagorical work.

Years earlier, in 1906, Meyerhold had taken a similarly visionary direction when he staged Blok's *The Fairground Booth* in St Petersburg. Overnight, Meyerhold's production became a rallying point for Symbolists of all stripes, even though Meyerhold, like Blok, had cast a satirical eye on the play's mystics. Stanislavsky, whom Blok liked and admired, valiantly attempted to grasp Blok's plays, to Blok's good-natured amusement at his efforts. But Stanislavsky was not cut out for the vagaries of Symbolism, as his lame 1904 short-play Maeterlinck productions, *The Blind*, *Interiors* and *The Intruder*, had shown.

The Fairground Booth in Meyerhold's hands was groundbreaking for its mixture of genres, going from balletic *commedia dell'arte* to clowning, and for its championship of the *cabotinage* (ham acting) that Stanislavsky had banished from the MAT. Each and every aspect of Meyerhold's multilayered production supported the stylized acting favoured by Symbolist theatre. Vera Komissarzhevskaya, daughter of Fyodor, Stanislavsky's singing teacher, was probably the Symbolist actress par excellence, with her highly expressive, highly theatrical manner that appeared to be evoking something in existence beyond her actual performance.

Komissarzhevskaya had hired Meyerhold to direct in her theatre in St Petersburg to promote Symbolism, the antithesis, from her point of view as much as Meyerhold's, of the MAT's psychological-realistic work. The Symbolist poets-novelists-critics had a field day smashing what they took to be the MAT's claims to lifelike art. Most vocal among them was Bryusov, who had been on Stanislavsky's payroll when he collaborated with Meyerhold in the 1905 laboratory financed by Stanislavsky and who

[87] Quoted in Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold, the Director*, trans. George Petrov, Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981, 85.

argued that art was artifice and so anything but 'like life'.[88] Bruysov's *The Fiery Angel* (1908), which teamed with demons and witches, and demonstrated his knowledge of the occult, corroborated his assertion. Then, on top of the home-grown Symbolists, there were the imported ones like Strindberg, favoured by Vakhtangov, and Maeterlinck, preferred by the MAT.

The visual and musical arts abounded in allusions to the invisible universe. Demons flew across Vrubel's dark, overwrought canvases, while newer artists, turning their back on the nineteenth century, burst into the twentieth with arms outstretched. Vasily Kandinsky, by contrast with Vrubel, sought to materialize in luminous compositions the intangible correspondences between spiritual experiences and colours; Marc Chagall, to materialize the mystical flights of the soul. Kasimir Malevich painted his intimations of spaces aeons away, so far beyond the ken of ground-bound mortals that they could only be intuited through the most abstract of forms; and so his black-square pictures, just like his white-square counterparts, appeared to dissolve into nothingness. The first of Malevich's black squares had made its appearance in the Futurist opera *Victory Over the Sun* (1913) whose *zaum* (language beyond rational understanding) by Aleksey Kruchenykh, with a prologue by *zaum* poet Velimir Khlebnikov, was meant, with glints of humour, to blow the mind away. The music by Mikhaïl Matyushin was to do much the same, albeit in the dissonant, anti-lyrical idiom of Russian Futurism, which, preoccupied by abstractions rather than the immediately knowable of daily experience, was more cerebral than sentient and sensual.

Nerve-end sensation was the Symbolists' aperture to the 'beyond'. It took the composer Aleksandr Scriabin, who was heavily influenced by theosophy, to soar into the heavens with his notes of many colours and there find ecstasy. His 1908 symphonic *Poem of Ecstasy* was nothing if not the apotheosis of his quest for absolute spiritual freedom, already announced to the fanfare of trumpets, the instruments of angels, in *The Divine Poem* written four years earlier. It has been said that Tolstoy was profoundly moved by Scriabin's music and, if the anecdote is not true, then its invention expresses true insight into Tolstoy's own quest.

And what of Stanislavsky in this maelstrom of utopian journeys, some, with Malevich and Scriabin in the lead, travelling into the farthest reaches

[88] 'Realism i uslovnost na stsene' ('Realism and Convention on the Stage'), essay of 1908 reprinted in *Teatr. Kniga o novom teatre* (*Theatre, A Book about the New Theatre*), Moscow: GITIS, 2008, 202–14.

of the cosmos, hoping to touch infinity? Stanislavsky responded to Scriabin's inimitable sounds with a sense of recognition and, in the coming years, had his compositions played at the convivial Monday meetings held at the MAT.[89] He may have soared in spirit with Scriabin, but his feet stayed on the ground. Stanislavsky's limitless capacity for inventiveness, for unexpected, astonishingly imaginative turns was legion among those who took part in, or witnessed, his rehearsals.[90] However, for all his flights of the imagination and intimations of the divine and the cosmic 'beyond', he was closer to the earth, intent on establishing on it the natural, fully organic creative actor within a creative community: actor and community were mutually inclusive and, together, they gave the theatre both its concreteness *and* its sacred dimension.

[89] See, for scattered references to Scriabin, *Khudozhestvenny Teatr. Tvorcheskiye ponedelniki i drugiye dokumenty 1916–1919* (*The Art Theatre: Creative Mondays and Other Documents, 1916–1919*), compiled and commented Z. P. Udaltsova, Moscow Art Theatre Press, 2006.

[90] See, for example, Vsevolod Meyerhold's letter of 28 June 1898 (during rehearsals of *The Seagull*) to his first wife Olga in Jean Benedetti (selected, ed. and trans.), *The Moscow Art Theatre Letters*, London: Methuen Drama, 1991, 28; Maria Knebel, *Vsya zhizn* (*My Whole Life*), Moscow: All-Russian Theatre Society, 1967, 213–56; Aleksandr Gladkov, *Teatr. Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya* (*The Theatre: Recollections and Considerations*), Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980, 236–51; V. O. Toporkov, *Stanislavsky na repetitsii*: *Vospominaniya*, Moscow: AST-Press SKD. 200, especially 75–155 on *Dead Souls* (1932) and in English as *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal: The Final Years*, trans. Christine Edwards, New York and London: Routledge, A Theatre Arts Book, 1998, 76–152; Boris Zon, 'Vstrechi s K. S. Stanislavskim' ('Meetings with K. S. Stanislavsky') in *Teatralnoye naslediye. K. S. Stanislavsky. Materialy. Pisma. Issledovaniya* (*Theatre Legacy. K. S. Stanislavsky. Materials. Letters. Research*), ed. I. E. Grabarya et al., Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1955, 444–91.