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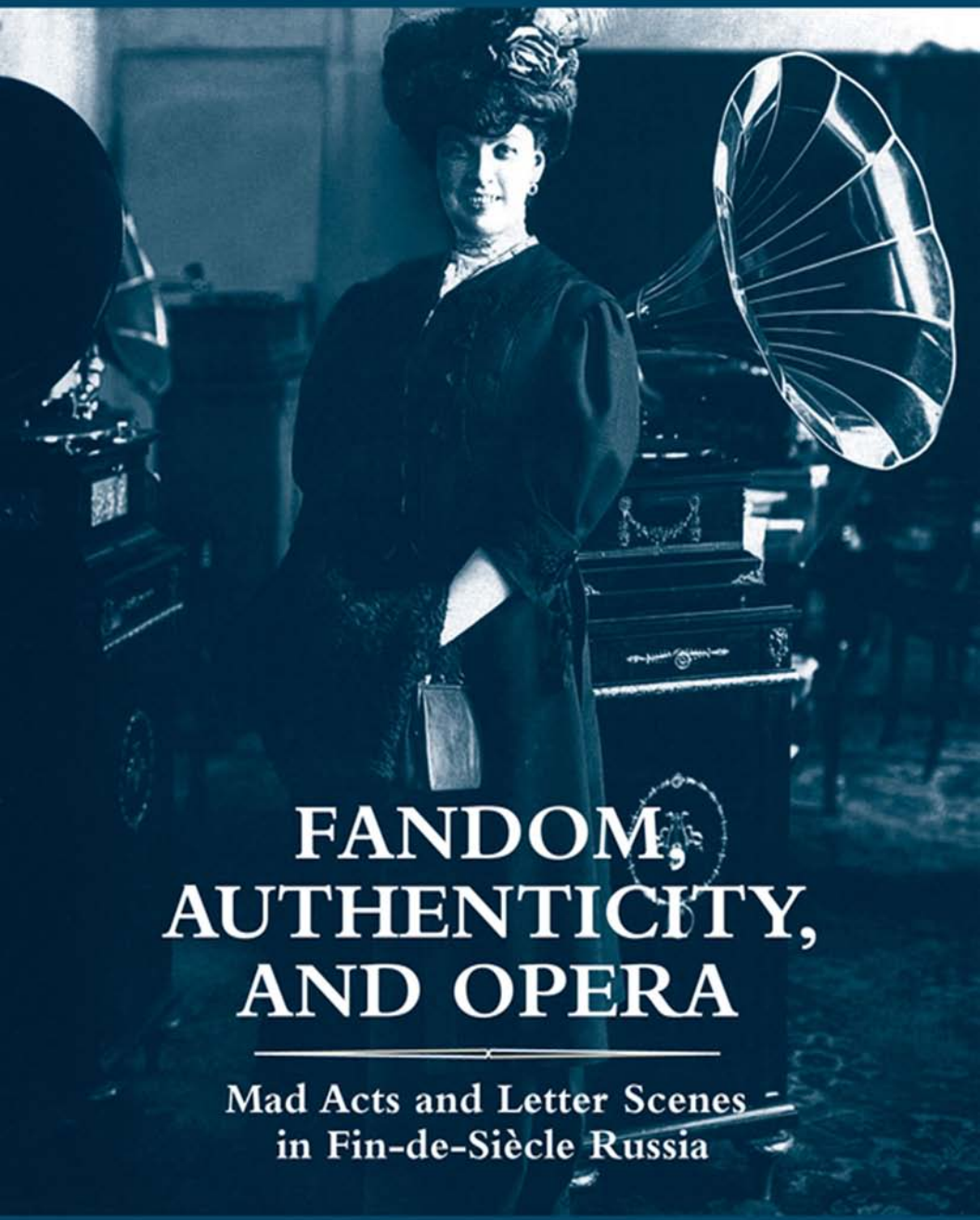

FANDOM, AUTHENTICITY, AND OPERA

Mad Acts and Letter Scenes in Fin-de-Siècle Russia

Anna Fishzon

Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History

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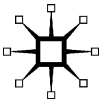

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In memory of my operatic grandparents,
Alexandra and Moisei Zarankin,
and the effervescent Dora Nastashkin

Contents

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Illustrations

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Thank you all, and see you at the opera!

Anna Fishzon
New York City
February 2, 2013

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Notes on Transliteration and Dates

Most transliterations in this book conform to the Library of Congress style. Exceptions are made in the cases of a few names with well-known English variants: Alexander Kerensky, Modest Mussorgsky, and Peter Tchaikovsky. I also retain the original spelling in quoted material, and when referring to works cited in endnotes and bibliography.

All transliterated Russian titles at their first appearance are followed by common English translations in parentheses, for example, *Budil'nik* (*Alarm Clock*); and in brackets when in quoted material, for example, *Zhizn' za tsaria* [*A Life for the Tsar*]. Thereafter only the Russian titles are used.

Prior to February 1918, Russia followed the Julian calendar, twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the West in the nineteenth century and thirteen days behind in the early twentieth century. All dates in this book are given according to the Russian calendar in use at the time.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Russian are mine.

Figure I.1 Fedor Shaliapin with cigarette.

Figure I.2 Fedor Shaliapin as Ivan the Terrible.

Introduction

Few images capture the preoccupations of fin-de-siècle Russian cultural life better than two widely circulated photographs of the famous Bol'shoi Theater bass Fedor Shaliapin, one as Ivan the Terrible, another as himself, reclining with a cigarette. In the photograph of Shaliapin "in life," he sits, facing the camera, elbow on the back of the chair, head leaning on his hand (figure I.1). With his elegant suit and tie, prominently displayed cufflinks and pinky ring, hair arranged in a wisp curving upward, the erstwhile peasant Fedor now embodies Wildean sangfroid, gazing into the distance with determined stylization, as if fashionable appearance were a remedy for the boredom and emptiness of inner life. In the other photograph, "in role," the stylish celebrity is unrecognizable. Eyes gleaming with ardor, large prosthetic nose protruding, neck stretched forward, Shaliapin-as-Ivan gives everything away (figure I.2). Psychic nuances—anxiety, drives, and paranoia—seem to be pushing against and rupturing the costume, loudly announcing themselves in posture and gesture. Here Shaliapin is turned inside out; he is all depth. One photograph is about image, the sleek surface; the other is about interiority and emotional intensity. Together they represent the contradictory impulses and offerings of spectacularization and the spectacular in Russia, and modern life generally.

More than a decade ago, historians of fin-de-siècle Europe began to investigate the sensationalization of everyday life as a central aspect of modernity. Parisian newspapers were among the first to issue daily reports on exceptional events that happened to ordinary people, making the "real" a spectacular and valued thing, a widely desired commodity.[1] The real or authentic acquired an aesthetics and became an object and narrative practice one could produce, purchase, possess, and affect. Reality as a genre and mode of behavior gained self-consciousness and representational criteria. And according to such criteria, or generic standards, authenticity in the late nineteenth century was histrionic and pungent. Realism transformed into lurid naturalism.[2]

This book argues that the public discourses and cultural forms of fin-de-siècle Moscow and St. Petersburg, even more boldly and comprehensively than those of urban Europe, sought to make the prosaic extraordinary. At the turn of the twentieth century, Russian periodicals and newspapers, political speeches, revolutionary actors, and the private correspondence of so-called ordinary people regularly articulated extreme emotional states and gushing avowals. Opera fandom and celebrity, I claim, were at the center of this modern, and especially Russian aesthetic project.

Scholars of Russia only indirectly have addressed this intense approach to public life and private longing, which I call the melodramatic imagination.[3] They have chosen instead to focus on canonical written texts and mass-produced visual culture in order to chart the Russian experience of consumer capitalism.[4] One can guess the reason for their reticence: fantasies and affective tendencies of a culture are daunting, immense topics, difficult to render and almost impossible to prove empirically. Music and art historians, with some notable exceptions, often are reluctant to discuss reception on similar grounds, citing its elusiveness (how does one know if press reports of audience reactions are "accurate," for example?) and sparseness of adequate source material.[5] By reading artifacts of commercialized opera culture as examples of broadly shared behavioral codes and emotional vocabularies, I offer a solution to some of these vexing problems.

My point of departure is not the intention of composers or librettists but the experiences and desires of fans, impresarios, and the press. I analyze sources rarely subjected to in-depth, serious study—theater periodicals, satirical feuilletons, sound recordings, images of opera stars, and fan letters—to illuminate how self and personal authenticity were conceived. Highly theatrical, operatic confessions, I argue, were required of properly authentic individuals, and the opera star was well suited to exemplify such a mode of behavior. But just as images and stories of celebrity performers bolstered the power of the individual and embodied sincerity, they also expressed fears and served as pretexts for discussions about artifice and the disintegration of the self. This book ultimately suggests that authenticity in fin-de-siècle Russia was defined in melodramatic terms—as an intense convulsion of feeling that rises spontaneously and forcefully to the surface and requires strident declaration—because the political and social turmoil of the time created a crisis of belief and meaning. The revolutions of 1905 and 1917 constituted a moment in which notions of selfhood, ethics, and knowledge were violently

destabilized, prompting excessive, operatic utterances—on record, stage, and in everyday life—that testified to more vivid truths and enacted a new moral order.

Music history as history

One of my aims is to integrate Russian musical life, so often overlooked by historians, into the historical narratives of Europe, the fin de siècle, and late imperial Russia. As noted recently by Lynn Sargeant, students of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century tsarist empire acknowledge the importance of literary forms while paying far less attention to aural and visual cultures.[6] The reasons for the omissions are many, but the most obvious seem to be the lack of musical expertise among historians and the assumption that such topics are better left to those formally trained in musical analysis, performance, and art history.

Certainly one can make a case for such a division of labor. Musically inclined literature scholars and musicologists, among them Rosamund Bartlett, Julie Buckler, Boris Gasparov, Simon Morrison, and the prolific and highly influential Richard Taruskin, already offer us much more than just musical interpretation.[7] They present readers with complex social and intellectual worlds, critical reactions, and insight into performance, relating musical practice to political events like the revolution of 1905 and the larger story of Russian politics and society. Nonetheless, their focus on well-known compositions, composers, virtuosos, and published criticism leaves unexamined political and social fields crucial for historians. Why, after all, have the weighty contributions of these scholars not been engaged or taken up in significant ways by broad social and political histories of the Russian empire? Despite the heroic efforts of historicist music and literature scholars, as well as historians of theater cultures like Murray Frame and Richard Stites, music often has remained largely outside, or beside, History.[8]

One of the problems, as I see it, is that music fans, publics, and audiences—large swaths of society that watched, listened to, dreamed, obsessed, and read about performers and the performing arts—usually are presented as anonymous masses or elaborately adorned bon ton. They are packed into theater boxes, given lorgnettes, monitored for inappropriately rowdy and unbourgeois-like listening habits, and ultimately abandoned, entombed in concert halls and theaters. Alternately, the public appears in these studies as the critic (often himself a musician), reviewing for newspapers and the entertainment

press, embroiled in personal relationships and ideological conflicts with his counterparts. Reception, therefore, often amounts to a cultural politics or professional agendas shaped and deployed by groups within educated society vying for public recognition and authority.[9]

In recent years we have begun, finally, to liberate audiences and music makers from elegant baroque and neoclassical venues and the pages of serious journals, to see fandom and musical engagement in the affects, strivings, expressions, politics, and materiality of everyday life.[10] In James Loeffler's *The Most Musical Nation*, for example, the stories of renowned Jewish musicians in Russia and the Russian-Jewish national movement dovetail in interesting ways with the commercialization of culture and the advent of mass reproduction. In his discussion of music publishing, as well as the negotiations between the Society for Jewish Folk Music and record companies, Loeffler gives us a glimpse of a musical everyday life altered by sound recording and new ethnographically based music anthologies like the *Songbook for the Jewish School and Family*. The definitions and hybridization of "high" and "low," art song and popular music were always at stake in the combative debates about songbook and sheet music language, generic categories, cover design, and other elements of their narrative architecture. But anxieties about genre mixing and the taint of profit motive were especially high when the society's board contemplated collaborating with record merchants and spreading their version of Jewish music to the masses in the form of frozen sound. Discourses of crime, biology, sex, and religion—contagion, corruption, purity, and danger—typically entered discussions about commercial success and the popularity of gramophones. References to the "pornographic tendencies" of the "lust machine" expressed panic about the temporal and spatial promiscuity of the gramophone—its ability to bring liturgical music into saloons, bars, and theaters, making porous the boundaries between the profane and sacred. The gramophone and its purveyors clearly symbolized the ever-encroaching market, penetrating all arenas of life and disrupting identity, hierarchies, bodily integrity, and the self.[11]

Sargeant's work on the Russian Musical Society, the conservatories, and the professionalization of musicians in the late imperial period brings to light how much the definition and legitimacy of both "Russian artists" and an artisan corps of orchestral players depended on the abjection and derision of overlapping categories of misfit amateurs: Jews and bourgeois female students of piano and voice. Sargeant's discussion of such marginalized groups allows her to leave the concert hall and the Imperial Theater archive and

introduce diverse sources like satirical feuilletons and biographies written by conservatory applicants. I claim that only when we situate music in spaces such as these, organized by discourse and media, and understand the role of sonic experience in emotional and interpretive communities entered not always voluntarily, will we be able to view musicality and musical life as integral components of the social, economic, and political.[12]

When I suggest that this book offers a symbiosis of music and history, then, I refer to so-called serious music and cultural history, and the long overdue investigation of the encounter of the former with consumer capitalism. "High art" was defined as such only in the late eighteenth century, when it traveled from the imperial court to the public theater and later met wealthy merchant and self-defined intelligentsia audiences hoping to replace the nobility as disseminators of Russian enlightenment. By the fin de siècle, as one senses from the work of Sargeant and Loeffler, the specter of commodification was central not only to "high culture" in the narrow sense of art songs, opera, and symphonies but also to music criticism, professionalization, patronage, civic activism, Russian and Jewish national music, and the legitimacy of inventions like the gramophone. That the commercialization of leisure and entertainment was a Russian reality by the early twentieth century is well documented.[13] What is left virtually unexplored is that the market's perceived threat to high art generated a melodramatic politics of inclusion and exclusion, emotions, and discourses—pathologization, decadence and pessimism, utopianism, and persecutory bombast.

Tracing the processes of the commodification of "serious" art provides insight into the making of stereotypes, categories, and identities such as the middle class, national music, professionals, dilettantes, "theater lunatics," and melomanes; it brings us to the parlor, the satirical journal, the hobby magazine, the fashion plate, the fan letter—the practices and modes of expression of the "ordinary person" as understood by contemporaries. And it complicates our views of acclaimed voluntary associations, composers, and canonical musical works—triumphant narratives of societies, the Imperial Theaters, and hallowed conservatory studios.[14] Attention to aesthetic practices and shared cultural fantasies found in the entertainment press and personal correspondence enables us to treat impresarios and directors like Savva Mamontov as famous personalities modeling taste and behavior, and also as consumers and fans of celebrity entertainers.

When thinking about "serious" music and "fine art," it is useful to remember the point made trenchantly by Laura Engelstein decades

ago: the boulevard was a site of cultural production that violated status, class, and gender distinctions; it was "by definition indiscriminate, [mixing] high and low in both thematic and stylistic terms."[15] Since Engelstein's seminal *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*, the boulevard has appeared mainly as the playground of celebrities like Anastasiia Verbitskaia and the *meshchanstvo*, or middle-class philistines—a space of supposedly middlebrow cultural forms like variety theater, operetta, and cinema.[16] But, as I will discuss, commercialized "high art" is also the boulevard's transgressive creation and an especially troubling one because, more than entertainment defined a priori as "light" fare, it imperiled middle-class claims to status. Opera records, reproduced images of virtuosos and renowned composers like Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov, therefore, are underexamined canvases of social politics and collective imaginings.

Behind this book lies the conviction that if we want to expand our knowledge of musical life, view it in the context of the everyday, the body and the self, we need to approach music in conjunction with the history of emotions as advocated most recently by Mark Steinberg.[17] We have to ask, too, as Joan Scott advises, about fantasy in the psychoanalytic sense—as the dynamic expression and vehicle of a culture's unconscious drives, desires, and projections: here specifically, the fantasies governing articulations of gender and national identities and the role music plays in structuring those fantasies.[18] The symphony concert and the recorded art song certainly aid in constituting the professional orchestral musician and the native Russian composer. They also contribute to definitions of authenticity and artifice, the spectacularization of city life, high and low, producer and consumer. Fantasies about gender difference and Russianness suffuse images of female piano students, Jewish violin virtuosos, and feminized opera fans. They are crucial to accounts of all these social actors and cultural types, and further critical reading is needed to develop their structure and significance.

To attempt to map fantasy is to risk accusations of fantasizing, falsely attributing meaning. But I see no other way to gain understanding of how people lived musically, incorporating melody, rhythm, and soaring voices into their modes of speech, ethical positions, aesthetic practices, and daydreams—in short, the poetry of daily routine and the passion of politics. This sort of inquiry requires a broad theoretical brush, certainly, and analytical use of materials like letters, magazines, posters, feuilletons, and sound recordings. These objects were produced by journalists, conservatory and *gimnaziia* students,

composers, and music lovers in the service of fixed categories and trusted knowledge, but also within and for the sake of emotional worlds, listening pleasure, and flights of fancy.

Singing the nation: Opera celebrities as representatives of Russia

In April 1899, a concert tour of the Mariinskii Theater contralto Mariia Gorlenko-Dolina captured the attention of newspapers around the world. Her renditions of Russian romances and arias before aristocratic audiences in Paris and Dresden garnered rave reviews from the *Music Courier* in New York, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Morning Post* in London, and sundry musical journals in Paris. The Russian press treated Dolina's triumphs as stories of considerable national importance, as "serious" Russian vocal music rarely had been performed abroad by native stars. French and German audiences finally were being exposed to an array of Russia's latest "great" compositions, as well as its superior vocal talent.

Dolina's two-and-a-half hour Dresden concert, attended by Saxon royalty and declared "an unprecedented event," was followed by an even more stirring visit to Berlin, where she unexpectedly received an invitation to sing before the emperor and empress at the palace.[19] The St. Petersburg conservative daily *Novoe vremia* (*New Times*) was the first to interview the prima donna after the performance, and excerpts of her account, brimming with colorful and detailed impressions, circulated in the European and American press for weeks. Dolina told the *Novoe vremia* correspondent that Their Majesties chose arias from Aleksandr Borodin, Anton Rubinstein, Peter Tchaikovsky, and Aleksandr Dargomyzhskii, which she sang in Russian and German. During the performance, they smiled warmly, nodding their heads. Afterward, they expressed gratitude and complimented both the pieces and her singing. The empress asked Dolina to comment on the acoustics of the hall, and Emperor Wilhelm engaged her in a long conversation. He spoke "loudly and interestingly," called her voice "radiant," and then turned to Russian music and contemporary composers, topics of "great interest" to him: "'Why, Tchaikovsky is dead, Rubinstein too, Borodin . . .' (He stopped short)." Dolina prompted that Borodin had also died and listed his compositions. "'Then whom do you have now, and who is among the most important and interesting?'" Dolina cited "the composers of *The Snow Maiden*, *Dubrovskii*, *Kordelia*, *The Captive of the Caucasus*, and others," and the emperor expressed particular interest in Rimskii-Korsakov. She then

named Milii Balakirev, Anton Arenskii, and Aleksandr Glazunov, "the last as a serious musician with formal training." The emperor seemed to find Dolina's characterization of Glazunov amusing, especially since he had composed the ballet *Raimonda*. Wilhelm laughed heartily, "'How can it be that a serious composer has written a ballet? I imagine how grateful to him the ballerinas must be—dancing to symphonic music!'" Dolina offered that Glazunov's music pleased Russian ballerinas as well as serious music lovers, and the emperor lamented:

> "Too bad that I have never heard a single Russian opera, yet there are probably very interesting ones. For example, the one by Glinka—the plot of which is taken from the time of Pozharskii and Minin, the election to the throne of the first Romanov—where a peasant sacrifices his life . . . the title escapes me now . . . " I prompted: "*A Life for the Tsar*, Your Majesty."—"Yes, yes, *A Life for the Tsar*! Tell me: is it true that the music [in this opera] is good?" I answered that it is a work of genius. "Then why is it that it is not produced here? Why, in the coming days we are going to hear a French opera by some Le Borne, but we haven't yet produced a Russian opera! I will speak immediately to one of our people about it . . . We have to stage *A Life for the Tsar*."[20]

The emperor and Dolina then proceeded to discuss the choruses in Glinka's opera, the quality of libretti translations, Russian dramatic theater and its stars, the sound of the Russian language, and the acoustic properties of various German and Russian theaters. Finally, the empress motioned to the emperor to bid farewell. Upon being presented with a gracious note attached to a diamond brooch, Dolina was escorted to her hotel. The *Novoe vremia* reporter, writing under the pseudonym Russkii, ended his interview and article by wishing the prima donna continued success in "promoting our vocal music abroad" and declaring that her efforts "deserved the recognition of the entire Russian musical world."[21]

Dolina's concerts in Europe, reported as novel and exciting events in 1899, became common practice a few years later. Russian opera stars began to sing abroad regularly, performing native roles in concerts and staged productions. Russian newspapers and entertainment magazines paid close attention to such trips and continued to celebrate touring singers for bolstering the reputation of "serious" native music in Europe. Exportation and international recognition of national opera was important to Russian music journalists of all political stripes, but whether they wrote for *Novoe vremia* or its liberal counterpart *Rossiia*

(*Russia*), reporters rarely aimed to prove that Dargomyzhskii, say, was superior to Richard Wagner. Rather, as in the accounts of Dolina's tour, they sought primarily to demonstrate that their native compositions conveyed Russianness on an artistic level equal to that of typically French and German operas—that Russia too possessed a rich, highly expressive national idiom.

Renowned opera singers in particular received recognition for disseminating and representing national music abroad, I suggest, for two reasons. First, unlike prominent conductors, composers, and other virtuosos, singers literally embody music. More precisely, singers' instruments, located inside their bodies and emitting piercing sounds produced from within, bind national music to individuals and thereby render it unique and accessible. Second, because opera tells stories both verbally and musically, and connects multiple artistic forms—namely, orchestral and vocal music, drama, literature, history, visual art, and occasionally dance—it was perceived to be the most comprehensive conduit of national culture.

As a *Novoe vremia* reporter pointed out in an 1895 feature on Dolina, one of the distinctive characteristics of Russian opera is the "space it gives to the contralto (or mezzo-soprano) to display her talent."[22] Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Russian composers wrote larger roles for both female and male low voices than Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini. But while the centrality of the bass roles in the Russian repertoire often is acknowledged, likely because of the overall masculine bias of the operas of Modest Mussorgsky, Borodin, and Rimskii-Korsakov, the significance of the contralto parts tends to be ignored. My point, admittedly impressionistic, is that the deployment and relative importance of the low female voice in Russian opera, particularly noticeable if we contrast the dramatically explosive Marfa (*Khovanshchina*), Liubasha (*The Tsar's Bride*), and Liubava (*Sadko*) with the barely visible mezzo-soprano nanny roles in the operas of Puccini, reveals key aspects of its national idiom and, in turn, the cultural concerns of composers and audiences.

Perhaps more striking than the prominence, if not outright dominance, of the Russian contralto is her virtually singular purpose in the plot: sometimes as a mother but more often as a lover, she appears on stage to express excruciating grief over loss and abandonment. Unlike sopranos and male voice types, which within and across operas portray a variety of psychological and social problems, the contralto functions in Russian opera as the main vehicle for exploring the inconsolable, frequently vengeful agonies of the spurned woman. Marfa spends much of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* (1881) consumed by thoughts of her lover Andrei's betrayal. Liubasha, neglected by

Griaznoi and in considerable emotional pain, is absorbed in plots of revenge against his new romantic interest in *Tsarskaia nevesta* (*The Tsar's Bride*, 1898). Liubava, another abandoned figure, mourns the loss of her wayfaring husband Sadko in a strident aria in scene 3 of Rimskii-Korsakov's eponymous opera (1896).

Against a political setting and a prevailingly masculine vocal background, then, we find at the center of Russian historical operas—Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, Rimskii-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride,* and Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* (1884), for example—intensely personal drama and stormy inner worlds. That female characters would represent or give expression to these private realms is not unexpected. In nineteenth-century opera, high voices commonly articulate private concerns and inhabit idyllic familial spaces, while male characters occupy the public arena and dwell in the lower register. What sets Russian heroines apart is their ability, through single-minded pursuits of private goals, to affect politics and, at times, the course of history. These abandoned lovers do not accept their abandonment quietly, soaring high above the staff with mezza voce eloquence. Rather, Marfa and Liubasha announce their suffering in aggressive chest tones, killing or ruining the men who wronged them. In contrast to Verdi's assertive mezzo-sopranos, Russian contraltos are not satisfied with imprecation and pointed, localized acts of revenge. While the marginalized gypsy Azucena, in a stupor for much of *Il Trovatore* (1853), can only watch as her adopted son is beheaded in the final scene, and the avenging Amneris condemns Radames and her rival Aida to death by entombment, Marfa conflates the treachery of Andrei with the arrival of the apocalypse and leads a procession of Old Believers to the pyre. In Verdi's Egypt, betrayal and bereavement causes the deaths of two lovers. In Mussorgsky's Russia, it translates into the self-immolation of an entire community.

When Dolina and other contraltos traveled to France and Germany to promote national opera, therefore, they linked the Russian idea with an emotional vocabulary that emphasized and placed value on private suffering. The Russian national idiom, ironically, was a personal idiom, one spread to domestic as well as foreign audiences. Native opera celebrities, new phenomena in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, disseminated such notions of Russia to the broader public via an increasingly commercialized art form, thereby influencing behavior and self-perception. The pursuit of pure feeling came to order not only Russian opera—its music and libretti—but the reception of all operas in Russia. Operagoers and fans, understanding themselves primarily as emoting beings, psychologized and

perceived as human even the godlike, mythic characters of Wagner. Such modes of reception, as I soon will discuss, also were encouraged by newly introduced "realist" performance practices that privileged the psychological and intimate over the political and social in music drama. The distance between the operatic stage and "real life" narrowed, and the heightened poetics of opera, long ascribed to the world of artifice, now entered discourses proclaiming truth and knowledge.[23]

Fandom

To begin to understand the place of opera and its personalities in early-twentieth-century urban Russia, we have only to think of cinema today. Film audiences peruse newspapers in search of reviews, expecting to see new releases featuring their favorite stars. Fans of cinema might take pride in knowing its traditions and derive a sense of cultivation from attending film festivals. But one need not be a film aficionado or expert to possess knowledge about movie stars, since their images incessantly appear in various media. Some fans admire celebrity entertainers because of their association with political or philanthropic causes. Others relate their identities and experiences to those of celebrity film actors and their signature roles, adopting their on- or offscreen manners and sartorial choices.

Fandom often is described in cultural studies as a product of twentieth-century mass culture, but the basic practices associated with fandom as we understand it today emerged in the mid-nineteenth century with the widespread commodification of music and the consequent expansion of concert life. One no longer had to go through the trouble of producing music: the labor entailed in practicing, creating difficult sounds, purchasing sheet music, and so on was rendered unnecessary by increasingly professionalized musicians. One now simply could buy tickets and engage solely in the acts of hearing and viewing. Since performances were regularly timed and relatively consistent, concertgoers could attend the entire run and learn pieces, and repeatedly see particular performers—even imagine a unique bond with them.[24] An important consequence of such encounters for spectators, especially those well acquainted with romantic ideas about authentic selfhood, was a newly heightened awareness of the personal qualities—and bodies—of the performer. Decreased involvement in music making, therefore, did not necessarily mean passive or slacking engagement with performances and artists. Fans formed emotional communities that, through regular and highly

cathected immersion in media texts, transformed both the meanings of those texts and the very notion of authorship. Fandom came to connote shared pleasures, passions, affective sensibilities, and cultural spaces.[25]

Fandom, then, can be defined, in rather neutral terms, as a set of socially and historically located tastes, interpretative strategies, and consumption practices. Yet, it first surfaced in mass media as an improper, sometimes pathological concept rather than a benign phenomenon. Almost from its inception, fandom was tied to lunatic behavior. In Russia, particularly in regard to opera fans, it is tempting to read this characterization as the rhetorical maneuver of an intelligentsia with a deep antipathy toward commercialized, profit-driven art. Such a reading is difficult to sustain, however, since the stigmatization of fans came largely from the press organs of the very entrepreneurs responsible for the commodification of opera.[26] An alternate explanation for the common view of fans as abnormal, ersatz music lovers is that they broke the rules of the market economy. Fans "did not accept the equation of a ticket for a performance" but attempted in various ways to extend their audience experience beyond the opera house—by collecting postcards and other paraphernalia, stalking, making scrapbooks, and corresponding with the star. Fans signified those who rejected the anonymous, colder, and bounded music spectatorship required by commercialization; they instead sought (and arguably still seek) "to creatively imbue their participation in musical life with a lasting personal connection and depth of feeling."[27]

As is likely clear by now, fans differed sociologically from eighteenth-century opera and concert audiences. With the proliferation of troupes and entertainment periodicals, and the emergence of the recording industry at the turn of the twentieth century, opera and its stars became more accessible to a greater number of individuals from all economic and social strata. And although high ticket prices and subscriptions at the Imperial Theater ensured that the state opera house would remain an elite venue, cheap gallery seating, charity concerts, gramophone records, and ubiquitous celebrity narratives allowed even poor institute students and lowly clerks to inscribe themselves into operatic contexts and stories.[28]

Merchants and the commercialization of entertainment

The appearance of private opera companies in St. Petersburg and Moscow after the dissolution of the Imperial Theater monopoly in

1882 had an enormous impact on the politics of operagoing and fandom. Entrepreneurs from the merchant estate financed and managed such companies, often playing a large role in artistic decisions. Several private troupes operated in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the turn of the twentieth century. I will focus on the two most successful—the Moscow Private Opera, first established in 1885 by the industrialist Savva Mamontov (1841–1918), and the more commercial Zimin Opera, founded and managed from 1904 to 1917 in Moscow by Mamontov's self-designated successor, Sergei Zimin (1875–1942). Interested in expanding the repertoire and operagoing public, enlightening their audiences, and forging a Russian operatic canon, these companies produced Russian national-historical operas as well as popular and lesser known foreign works, heavily promoted native singers, and induced sweeping changes in the aesthetic orientation and repertories of the competing Imperial Theaters. In the 1890s, the Bol'shoi Theater in Moscow and the Mariinskii Theater in St. Petersburg shed their century-long virtually exclusive commitment to the French and Italian repertoires and, following the lead of private opera, staged the historical music dramas of Rimskii-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Dargomyzhskii, and other newly canonized native works. Russian operatic heroines proliferated, as did opportunities for Russian divas. The press coverage of Dolina's sojourn in Europe, and the very existence of an internationally recognized Mariinskii prima donna best known for Russian roles, signaled the realization of goals initially pursued by private rather than state theaters.

Until Olga Haldey's work on the entrepreneur and stage director Mamontov, his tremendous aesthetic contributions to the operatic stage, as well as his direct influence on Konstantin Stanislavskii, Sergei Diaghilev, and Shaliapin, had been ignored or undervalued in English-language scholarly writings. Russian scholarship has portrayed him mostly as a nationalist much like the famous music critic and Mighty Handful supporter Vladimir Stasov, firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century realist tradition and committed only to the promotion of Russian composers. But, as Haldey argues and as I will elaborate in the next chapter, Mamontov preached not only psychological realism and Russian national revivalism but also modernism and art for art's sake. Moreover, he insisted on, and often practiced, cosmopolitan decadent eclecticism in daily life.[29]

The mischaracterization and underestimation of Mamontov is symptomatic of historians' more general tendency to disparage Russian merchants. As protoindustrialists of the eighteenth century certainly, but also professionals and entrepreneurs on the eve of World War I,

merchants often are described as conservative, politically impotent, poorly educated, and religious; lacking adequate class consciousness, in the estimation of Thomas Owen; and passive and trapped in tradition, according to Alfred Rieber. Taken together, the traits attributed to the Russian merchants form the basis for an invidious comparison with the Western bourgeoisie, and an explanation of Russia's weak civil society and absent liberal parliamentary democracy. Although Rieber and Owen trace the evolution of the merchantry into an "entrepreneurial class" in the post-Reform late nineteenth century, and some studies emphasize merchants' involvement in philanthropy, politics, and the art market, especially in the years following the Revolution of 1905, a stain of inadequacy remains on the *soslovie*, or estate—Russia's failed capitalists—numerically small, embattled, and incohesive.[30]

In truth, there were not many of them: according to the 1897 census, merchants comprised only 1.3 percent of the population and small traders, 44.3 percent.[31] And, is not the supposed lack of bourgeois consciousness identified by historians inherent in the category "merchant"? The merchantry was a substratum of a legal system of social classification (nobility, clergy, peasants, and townspeople) that evolved between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries and remained an important tool of identity formation probably until the Bolshevik Revolution. After the emancipation created a more mobile labor force and enabled greater economic dynamism and social fluidity, new communities and identities appeared, and the castelike soslovie system began to crack and grow less relevant. Particularly at the fin de siècle, given the challenges posed by industrialization, urbanization, and consumer capitalism to the status hierarchy, the legal designation "merchant" often obscured rather than elucidated Russia's social organization and meaning system.[32]

For centuries, the tsarist state granted noblemen exclusive rights to serfs, privileged access to education, and careers in the military and civil service. This study aims to show how entrepreneurs from the merchant soslovie self-consciously staged what they believed to be an overdue corrective to the economic and social advantages long enjoyed by the nobility. Occasionally, impresarios like Mamontov and Zimin asserted themselves *as merchants* in the cultural sphere in order to shatter once and for all the image of backwardness, isolation, and diffidence attached to their soslovie. Through a politics practiced in theaters and concert halls instead of the Duma, they hoped to take the power of meaning making from the nobility and become national role models in the realms of arts patronage, consumerism, philanthropy, and leisure. I argue that they sought to exemplify as

well as create a self-cultivating audience, and treat them as both devotees and idols of fin-de-siècle opera culture.

Studies of late imperial Russian commercial culture tend to situate the "middle class" in those sites of leisure and entertainment understood to occupy the "cultural middle"—variety theaters, cabaret, operetta, and movie houses. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly equating consumers of romance fiction and other middlebrow forms with the bourgeoisie, and "middle-class tastes" with those of merchants and less wealthy urbanites, scholars imply that audiences in elite venues such as opera houses were mostly of noble birth and virtually neglect the importance of high culture to the social middle.[33]

Here I attempt to illuminate the part played by opera in the creation of the Russian cultivated class. The parvenu may have spent most of his leisure time in cabarets and collected mainly records of popular songs, but it was his annual night at the opera and handful of aria recordings that testified to his sophisticated taste and elevated social status. And because opera culture trumpeted a model of selfhood that stressed personal fulfillment and social mobility, its celebrities increasingly represented artistic greatness and great consumerism. Distinguished for their achievement and belonging to the sphere of leisure, they were, to borrow Leo Lowenthal's terms, both "idols of production" and "idols of consumption."[34]

Celebrity culture, authenticity, and melodrama

Each of the following chapters explores a different aspect of the relationship between commercialized opera culture and prevailing understandings of self, authenticity, and affect in fin-de-siècle urban Russia. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 (Epilogue) investigate the ways melodramatic aesthetic practices intersected with revolutionary politics to create modes of expression and personal ethics.[35]

Chapter 1 examines the aesthetic outlook and social politics of merchant-entrepreneurs, patrons, and music journalists who operated and promoted private opera companies after the dissolution of the Imperial Theater monopoly. Through repertory changes, experimental productions, collaborative managerial principles, and explicitly didactic literature, this new cultural elite sought to define and safeguard "high culture," mold tastes, and edify the public. "Realistic" operatic performance practice, understood in melodramatic terms, privileged the psychological and intimate over the political and social, employed vocabularies of self-reflection, and circulated the idea of the inner self as exquisitely conflicted.

The next chapter discusses the rise of celebrity culture and its impact on the problem of authentic selfhood. The concept "celebrity culture," as it is employed in this study, connotes a society in which media-generated personalities structure how individuals fantasize and play a critical role in articulating prevailing ideologies. Of particular importance here are the ways public discussions about celebrities like Shaliapin reflected and shaped contemporary notions of sincerity, as well as concerns regarding the relationship between fame and artifice, the public persona and the inner self. Further, the chapter analyzes specific images of opera stars in the press, drawing attention to the plot structure of success stories, and the consumerist desires and values portrayed by them. It also provides an initial glimpse into the world of fans, examining a few letters to illustrate how opera devotees utilized the images of famous personae to tell their own stories.

Next, I look at opera fandom as it was characterized by the entertainment press and ponder the fan as a foil for the developing concept of "high culture." The third chapter focuses on new cultural stereotypes such as the "*psikhopatka*" (madwoman or lunatic) and "*meloman*" (music fanatic) to show how gendered language was used to stigmatize ways of viewing and listening thought to be consumer-oriented and unsuitable for the highbrow. Personality obsessed fans—psikhopatki, as opposed to "true" opera aficionados—were attached by critics and satirists to the devalued feminine and pathological. Hysterical and feminized psikhopatki embodied aesthetic decadence and personal dissolution. Their approach to reception and communication was deemed at best laughable, at worst abnormal and dangerous. Their mere presence signified transgression. Here I argue that music journalists transmitted the cultural mission of opera entrepreneurs and managers. They fought a battle against lax, aristocratic viewing and listening practices on the one hand, and what they deemed to be a frivolous, publicity-driven engagement with opera on the other. Yet, both impresarios and the press used the very methods they decried—advertising and publicity—to sell their product and spread their ideas. Deploying discourses containing contradictory messages, they unwittingly played a key role in fostering a celebrity culture.

Chapter 4 has three objectives and bears on many of the themes discussed in previous chapters. First, it seeks to show how the emergent recording industry penetrated and altered everyday emotional experience, the arena of work, and the organization of leisure. Second, through an examination of advertisements and Russia's first audiophile magazines, it analyzes the marketing strategies of gramophone

manufacturers attempting to elaborate a form of consumption appropriate for men (like record collecting), and thereby sell gramophones as purveyors of high culture and signifiers of cultivation. Finally, the chapter links gramophonic discourses to celebrity culture and its melodramatic rhetoric of authenticity and sincerity. In part because Russian audio magazines and gramophone manufacturers heavily promoted celebrity opera recordings, sonic fidelity was equated with the capacity of the recorded voice to convey "sincerity," understood, in turn, as the announcement of ardent feelings.

The concluding chapters read fan mail as an aesthetic practice in melodramatic mode. They trace how the imperatives of melodrama—both as a genre and a meaning system—shaped fans' yearnings and self-expression. I present a portion of the 60 or so letters I have been able to locate in Moscow and St. Petersburg archives written between 1880 and 1917 by fans of various social strata and ages. The authors do not announce their origins and rarely sign their full names, but one often can gather something about their backgrounds and status from the content and style of the letters. The fan letters, and I do not have in mind those composed by famous personalities, are dispersed among many archives, but some performers' personal files contain a relatively large sample.[36]

In my analysis of fan mail, I take as a given that letters to opera stars utilized shared emotional sensibilities and modes of narration. Satire about female opera fans that appeared in the Russian entertainment press also relied on commonly held cultural stereotypes to elicit recognition and consequent amusement. Opera fans necessarily were embedded in networks of meaning and drew on widely circulating notions of the authentic to lay claim to their own sincerity. But narrative structure and lexicon were not the only unifying elements of the sources I examine. Fan letters conveyed an underlying aesthetic and affective orientation—a melodramatic approach to everyday life.

In the final chapters I make perhaps the most explicit connection between melodramatic behaviors and morality. To confess all, submit to an explosive inner truth rather than superficial social conventions, is what marked the author-heroines of the letters as sincere and morally irreproachable. The latter part of the book also reveals that female devotees appropriated not only melodramatic texts about celebrities but also press-generated negative images of fans in the arrangement of their identities. Fans acted out roles of transgressive psikhopatki, giving positive valuation to excess, emotional eruptions, and loss of self-control.

Finally, I discuss the usefulness of the melodramatic imagination for understanding early Soviet subjectivity. Melodrama as an imaginative mode was in no small measure elaborated by and implicated in the fin-de-siècle consumer economy, but its polar indices of light and darkness and its promise of social reintegration resonated with the revolutionary projects of 1917. After the Bolsheviks took power, I propose, the melodramatic point of view continued to shape the contours of everyday life. Chapter 6 (Epilogue) proffers an analysis of fan letters from the 1920s and 1930s, as well as early political speeches as the basis for future inquiry, sketching the affinities between the confessional, ecstatic modes of melodrama and revolutionary rhetorical styles, aims, and aesthetics. Melodramatic understandings of self and sincerity made revolutionary injunctions and rituals legible, and later provided narrative and conceptual frameworks (as well as alternatives) for communist autobiographies, show trials, and other performative aspects of Soviet life.

1

Entrepreneurs and the Public Mission of the Russian Private Opera

Liza Mamontova: Inner conflict and modern Russian subjectivity

On October 27, 1872, Savva and Liza Mamontov arrived in Rome, their three children and nanny in tow, planning to stay for seven months. While Savva periodically returned to Russia to oversee railroad construction, Liza remained in a rented villa through late May, tending to their ailing son Andrei and carousing with a circle of Russian expatriates. The couple would play a key role in the transformation of Russian opera 13 years later, when the Imperial Theaters dissolved their monopoly (1882) and private enterprises appeared in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Savva Ivanovich Mamontov, a railway magnate and prominent arts patron, founded, financed, and directed the influential Moscow Private Opera (1885–87; 1896–99). Elizaveta Grigor'evna Sapozhnikova Mamontova (1847–1908) organized arts and crafts workshops at Abramtsevo, the family summer residence and art colony just north of Moscow. Though not directly involved in Savva's opera enterprise, she provided the inspiration for many of its productions, encouraging the artists he employed to study and revive Russian peasant architecture and handicrafts, and create murals and sets based on folklore themes.

In 1872, Savva and Liza had decided to spend their second consecutive winter in Italy on the advice of doctors, who had warned that the harsh Moscow climate adversely affected little Driusha's kidney condition. But there was another, more selfish reason for their trip. The Mamontovs went to Rome hoping to forge a connection with a group of Russian artists and intellectuals residing there—the young sculptor Mark Antokol'skii, the painter Vasilii Polenov, a St. Petersburg art

history professor by the name of Adrian Prakhov, and others.[1] Savva had not yet established his art colony, and the rather naïve Liza was only beginning to discover Europe, but the couple's name, money, and genuine curiosity about everything allowed them to realize their dream easily. They were immediately welcomed into a "family" of warm, creative people whose mirthful dinners, history lessons, edifying excursions, and artistic workshop proved formative, laying the foundation for later collaborations at Abramtsevo and the Moscow Private Opera. Liza kept a diary during these trips and in the early 1900s composed a memoir based on it. Later in life, she waxed most enthusiastic about the Roman winter of 1872–73:

> Rome was no longer a foreign city to me; with every arrival my life merged with it more—because there I experienced so much that was good, the best years of my youth. And that winter I can call only a "celebration of life." So many new feelings and aspirations awakened in my soul during those months, so many new relationships were formed; not fleeting but enduring friendships…that completely changed the very structure of my life, pushed me to develop intellectually…This eternal city never left me; and from that moment forward, through every kind of circumstance, it opened in me more and more interests. In all the difficult moments of my life, there, in that country of beauty and spiritual elevation, I have found peace and consolation, and that is why my thoughts always go there with gratitude.[2]

In November, Antokol'skii introduced Liza and Savva to the endearingly awkward, "lanky, red-headed, and unattractive" composer Mikhail Ivanov, or "Mikele," also nicknamed "Encyclopedia."[3] He in turn brought the Mamontovs to a party hosted by Adrian and Emiliia Prakhov. Liza approached the Prakhov house with some apprehension: she "had never before been a guest at the home of professors and therefore assumed a serious disposition, expecting immediately to be involved in some sort of academic conversation, probably about history."[4] Much to her relief, Liza found both the hosts and the company gathered at the dinner table to be loud, lively, inebriated, and completely unserious—at least that evening. Emilia L'vovna introduced Polenov as "Don Basilio," Ekaterina Mordvinova as "the general," and Mordvinova's younger sister Marusia as "princess." Antokol'skii was called by his Hebrew name, Mordukh, and Liza and her husband soon became Lizen'ka and Savvochka to everyone present.[5]

Though Liza was embraced by her new acquaintances, she initially did not feel comfortable in their company. A prominent Moscow silktrader's daughter taken to posh European resorts as a toddler, Liza was nevertheless a sheltered girl of seventeen with little formal education or worldliness when she met Savva in 1864 and married him five months later. In middle age, Liza described herself during her early "Rome life" as an "undeveloped" nervous wreck who observed the knowledge, behavior, and past experiences of her atheist and occasionally hedonistic coterie with both awe and incomprehension. Liza recalled how she grew to love and eventually emulate the people she feared most, particularly the eccentric Ekaterina Mordvinova. Already widowed at age 23, Ekaterina was born Princess Obolenskaia, "married for love," and participated in Alexander Herzen's émigré circle:

> Mordvinova bore the strong imprint of her past, a mixture of two opposing currents in public life. First, the aristocratic stratum in which she was born and spent her childhood, and then, the environment of her young adulthood, spent among Russian and Polish émigrés. She was such a lady [*barynia*] in her upbringing and habits, but assumed the guise of a radical [*demokratka*], spoke very gruffly, larded her speech with sharp expressions, smoked, and so forth. Her manner grated on me—I've never liked gruff people and rude expressions. But underneath was something else that I found very compelling and we soon became friends, even close friends.[6]

It was Mordvinova who openly addressed and curtailed Liza's struggle with her insecurities, enabling her to take pleasure in the city and relationships that so altered and "enriched" her life:

> [Ekaterina] almost instantly got after me about my constant self-analysis. And, truly, this company disturbed my inner peace, and I experienced very strongly the weight of finding myself among new types of people, more evolved than me. After a conversation with one of them, I would torture myself by parsing every word I said and invariably feel depressed. The next day I would meet my interlocutor embarrassed, and the more interesting the person was to me, the more I tortured myself.

Mordvinova comprehended Liza's agitation, "the state of her soul," and assured her that it was "shameful to fret over [her] *'I'* so much.

'Is it really true,'" she would ask, "'that all of those around you are less worthy of your attention than your own *I*, over which you fuss so painstakingly? Leave it alone and tend to others. Believe me, you will find life easier.'"[7] Liza was stunned by these words, but "understood that there was truth in them," and on many occasions thanked Mordvinova for her "friendly advice." The recognition of the relative unimportance of her *I*, however, did not stop Liza from engaging in further self-examination. Rather, she "began working on [her]self in a different way," taking the direction suggested by Mordvinova; and, indeed, "life became easier."[8] Liza's approach to self-fashioning—based on a dialogical notion of *I*, and formulated as the search for inner truth through the admiration and comprehension of others—was disseminated at the turn of the twentieth century, as we shall see, by new realist dramatic modes and aesthetic practices that her husband shepherded to prominence.[9]

The Rome circle spent virtually every day together immersed in an assortment of activities: in the mornings, excursions were taken to Pincio, where the children could run around and play. Afternoons were devoted to visiting the galleries and studios of fellow artists. After lunch, most of the men absconded to the "Gigi Academy" (essentially a barn with a lofty title), where interested models and artists congregated to sketch or sculpt. Savva tried his hand at sculpting and developed a great passion for it. He began going to the academy regularly to work with Antokol'skii, who discerned Savva's "unquestionable" artistic talent and encouraged him to approach sculpting more seriously. A few productive hours at the academy were followed by gatherings at one of the homes of the circle's participants. Evenings of animated debates about art, opera, politics, and antiquity often passed into nights of bacchanalia. Adrian Prakhov's history lectures and Ivanov's sober reflections on music were terminated by the prankster of the group, Emiliia L'vovna, with toasts and lewd jokes. Bottles of vodka were opened, champagne was poured; Antokol'skii performed impressions of various "Jewish types," Savva sang arias, Mikele treated the company to his compositions, Adrian recited poetry, and Emiliia played the piano—quite well, according to Liza, especially Chopin.[10]

Savva valued and enjoyed their life in Italy nearly as much as Liza did. When his business associates and the exigencies of railroad construction summoned him back to Russia in January 1873, Savva wrote to her that he had "never experienced life as fully and as well [as he did in Rome], in the company of truly good people." He struggled to adjust to Moscow and wondered how he ever would be able to

"reconcile [him]self to its emptiness and ugliness."[11] In another letter to Liza, dated January 15, 1873, he predicted that their time in Rome would be the best of their lives.[12]

But the following year, Savva did not accompany his wife and children to Rome, opting instead to remain in Russia and supervise the construction of the Yaroslavl'-Arkhangel'sk and Donetsk railroad lines. Liza characterized her sojourn in Italy in 1874 as "more placid and serious."[13] Though Antokol'skii organized semiweekly drawing and sculpting lessons, and Ivanov offered to teach Liza Italian, poor health, the birth of Lev Antokol'skii, and a series of partings limited opportunities for festivity. Ekaterina Mordvinova left Rome shortly after the death of her younger sister Marusia; a sudden bout of homesickness prompted the Prakhovs to move back to Petersburg; rheumatism plagued Antokol'skii for the better part of December and January; Polenov, cursing Italy and dreaming of Russia, decided to forsake both and join Il'ia Repin in Paris.[14] The little "family" was breaking up. "Despite the fact that…I was happy in Rome that year," recalled Liza, "thoughts of my husband and Russia did not leave me for a minute. News of the famine in Samara oppressed me and I kept thinking that if I were living in Moscow, perhaps I could be of some use."[15]

A year earlier, shortly after Savva's departure in January, Liza informed him, not without regret, that their circle had been "living more modestly" since he left, "staying at home two, sometimes three nights a week." It seemed to her that "everyone simultaneously felt the need to be more focused and set to work."[16] Now Liza lamented her lack of purpose, missed Savva, and yearned for Abramtsevo, where she hoped to establish a hospital and a school. It was her turn to lose Rome to memory and set to work.

In studies of Abramtsevo and late-nineteenth-century Russian art and music, Elizaveta Mamontova is depicted (to the extent that she is depicted at all) as a deeply religious Slavophile, interested almost exclusively in peasant handicrafts and old Muscovite architecture.[17] Elizabeth Valkenier, for example, in her book *Valentin Serov*, points to the fact that Liza "set up a training school and workshops that crafted furniture, toys, and embroidery based on folk designs threatened by mass production" as evidence of her quaint moral values and narrow cultural outlook.[18] Viewing her from the perspective of Serov, who first became acquainted with the Mamontov family in his boyhood, Valkenier describes Liza as "a gentle, compassionate person who enveloped family, friends and dependents in warmth and motherly love."[19] Thus Liza emerges here, as elsewhere, an emblem of piety and maternal kindness, a serene and retiring figure,

perpetually dispensing filial care and subjecting Abramtsevo visitors to religious rituals.[20]

I foreground Liza Mamontova, a marginal figure in Russian cultural studies, to show that while she may have been on the discursive margins of opera, her subjectivity was not. As I will demonstrate later, the advent of private opera and cultural entrepreneurialism brought the feminine subject, marginal by definition, to the center of fin-de-siècle culture. In this period, operatic performance of the kind developed and popularized under Savva Mamontov's aegis at the Moscow Private Opera aimed to reveal the emotional essence of characters and posited that essence as the defining feature of humanity. Such performance modes resonated with audiences and began to define the commercialized, and therefore feminized, culture of fandom. Although the image of the female fan and her project of self-fashioning was a constitutive component of opera culture at the turn of the twentieth century, entrepreneurs like Mamontov and "serious" music journalists certainly failed to acknowledge it. On the contrary, they hoped to link operatic notions of personal authenticity to private enterprises and their ethos of artistic freedom, innovation, and service to high culture, construed as masculine. Recent scholarship on the Silver Age has reproduced this gendered interpretation of Russian culture, establishing Savva Mamontov's eclecticism, cosmopolitanism, and interest in high art through a tendentious comparison with the provincialism, narrowness, and religiosity of his wife.[21]

Most renderings of Liza suggest that her identity was forged primarily in relation to the Russian Orthodox faith, and, in simpler terms, they attribute to Liza a squeamishness toward preoccupations outside her own limited purview that is belied by her letters and reminiscences. While the artist Valentin Serov sneered at Liza's religiosity, declaring that he "could not understand it," she displayed sympathy and even admiration for the ideas of his mother, Valentina, a composer, atheist, and dogmatic radical.[22] Having made the acquaintance of Serova in Rome, Liza wrote to Savva on January 15, 1874, that she was "a splendid personality" who "influenced everyone in an inspiring and refreshing way." In another letter to her husband, written four days later, Liza commented more extensively on Serova's rejuvenating presence: "She enlivens our company very much. Conversations with her positively help one mature, develop. I am very happy that I had the opportunity to meet her. Meetings with such people always have an impact."[23]

Though Liza exoticized Serova, she did not conceive her as a threatening embodiment of values completely external to her self-under standing and epistemological assumptions. Serova, like Mordvinova,

was for Liza a source of authority and meaning that challenged but also entered and shaped her beliefs, or "development." In her memoirs, Liza again reflected on their initial encounters, describing the unique and "fascinating" Valentina Semenovna in some detail:

> A typical woman of the sixties, she participated in the Petersburg radical movement of that intense time and personally experienced that which reached me only in vague rumors. [In Rome] she could not sit still, rushed everyone, raised the most stirring questions, persuaded, argued, and instructed, without considering for a moment whether her audience found what she said agreeable. She spoke . . . brusquely and tactlessly, which annoyed many people. But the questions she raised were so interesting to me that I didn't notice her gruff manner.

Mamontova's discussion of Serova's "Jewish" features, while informed by contemporary antisemitic stereotypes, was intended to provoke interest rather than contempt. According to Liza, Serova was "short, poorly built, with a very particular Jewish body type, large features, big teeth, and a shrill voice . . . somehow not in keeping with her musical profession . . . [A]s a musician, too, she brought much liveliness to our evening gatherings."[24]

Liza certainly was religious and dedicated to the "preservation of old Russian ways and patterns."[25] And yet, her memoir is an example of a decidedly modern and secular engagement in self-fashioning. Liza's experiences and self-perception were ordered, in other words, not by the ceremonies and narratives of the church but by the populist ethos of her friends, critical explorations of inner life, and the social performance of intellectual development. She presented her self as a project and measured the maturity of her *I* against those of "more evolved," that is, cosmopolitan, progressive, and educated individuals. What is more, the positive turning points in Liza's life, as well as the importance of self work in bringing them about, were revealed through stories of encounters with difference: European art and architecture, "strange" but intriguing women, "Jewishness," and, of course, Rome—conceived as a space where varying views and cultures collide and then coalesce in a theatrical and symbolic "celebration of life."[26]

It is not my intention to claim that Mamontova was really an agnostic cosmopolitan or a devout populist. Nor do I mean to argue that she was a perfect synthesis of the two. I suggest, rather, that Liza's psychological understanding of subjectivity enabled her to

inscribe herself within the narrative orders of both. The temptation, then, might be to view Liza as a tortured soul, torn between an amalgam of neopopulist and religious concerns and the secular, modernist bent of many in her circle. But no evidence exists that she perceived the contradiction: her interiority, dialogically formulated, accommodated multiple aesthetics and ideologies.

Eclecticism as a way of life: Savva Mamontov

If the breadth of Liza's interests and ideas has been overlooked, Savva's eclectic tastes and cosmopolitanism are evident in many of his personal writings and cultural enterprises.[27] Mamontov's first Private Opera in Moscow (1885–87) was an Italian troupe that performed primarily Verdi masterpieces. During Mamontov's tenure as stage director at the second Moscow Private Opera (1896–99), the Russian repertoire dominated, as did Russian talent: the baton was given to Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov in 1899, and singers like Fedor Shaliapin and the soprano Nadezhda Zabela-Vrubel' appeared weekly as beloved national heroes and heroines. Deeply devoted to Russian opera, Savva maintained close contact with Stasov, the famous nationalist music critic and champion of the Mighty Handful, as well as the prolific Rimskii-Korsakov. But he was equally passionate about bel canto and verismo, and made numerous attempts (with mixed results) to popularize or revive a broad array of French, Italian, and German works. In the winter of 1898, Savva wrote to the composer and critic César Cui:

> The majority of the public has begun to sense that [the Private Opera] is not an empty escapade, that there is something pure and good in it. People have started to approach the opera amicably, even passionately. The huge Solodovnikov Theater often is completely full, every last seat taken—and it accommodates up to 2,500 people! I have observed a significant phenomenon: the public strongly expresses its preference for Russian operas and, with the exception of *Faust*, doesn't want anything to do with the foreign repertoire. A well-performed *Romeo and Juliet* or *Samson and Delilah* does not fill even half the opera house. On Sunday, even *A Life for the Tsar* was performed before a full house…At the Private Opera, Slavs, boyars, knights, boyar's wives, peasants, and minstrels never leave the stage. This is all well and good, but sometimes one feels suffocated. There is beauty in other images after all…Is it right, then, always to indulge the tastes of audiences? Am I not obligated, as a

> director of a cultural institution . . . to disseminate . . . other sounds and images that ennoble the soul just as much? I have done this: *Orfeo* was wonderfully produced, performed in a . . . restrained manner, but is too naïve and the public grew bored and ceased coming. I produced it nonetheless and forced young audiences to listen to Gluck in the mornings on holidays. I wanted to stage *Alceste* but lost my nerve. I didn't even touch Mozart.[28]

Mamontov's pet project of the 1896–97 Private Opera season was Puccini's *La Bohème*. The Moscow press praised Konstantin Korovin's sets, the production, and the performances—everything but *Bohème* itself. When Mamontov turned to Cui for an explanation, the latter responded with an airy dismissal of Puccini's music:

> *Bohème*? Its genre scenes of everyday life are a medley of various mannered phrases mechanically mixed together. Lyrical scenes are set every five minutes to wailing high notes and a disintegration of the orchestra. Everything bears the stamp of vulgarity and coarseness. Still, Puccini is a talented, spirited person, and so in *Bohème* there are a few extraordinary moments. Savva Ivanovich, I think you probably were moved by the plot and performances rather than the music.[29]

Cui reproached Savva for his erroneous assessment of Puccini with a hint of gentle condescension and always with "the deepest respect." Mostly, however, Cui gushed about the importance of the Private Opera, and "bowed" before the impresario's "energy and commitment" to national music drama, for Mamontov force-fed his audiences not only Gluck and Puccini but Dargomyzhskii, too.[30]

Savva did his part to ingratiate himself with Cui and his cohort, frequently appealing to Rimskii-Korsakov in particular for permission to study new piano-vocal scores and premier his latest compositions. Yet, as we have seen, Savva also had his mind (and money) on other aesthetic visions, other kinds of "images." He subsidized and copublished the modernist *Mir iskusstva* (*World of Art*) journal, and remained a friend and supporter of its archenemy Stasov. His productions at the Private Opera were viewed by critics as laudable examples of realist acting, while the sets, designed by Mikhail Vrubel' and Korovin, often were perceived as "decadent," symbolist creations. He invoked the motto "art for art's sake," but as a director often strove for historical and emotional veracity, influencing both Stanislavskii and Diaghilev.[31]

The sweep of Mamontov's artistic tastes was matched by the scope of his talents and expertise. There was no craft, it seems, that Savva did not attempt or master, no branch of art he left unexplored. In Russian scholarship, the list of his occupations is rivaled only by that of the iconic Peter the Great: Savva Ivanovich was a gifted businessman, railroad builder, sculptor, playwright, translator, historian, opera singer, character actor, and stage director. Charismatic, stubborn, mercurial, and sometimes tyrannical, he worked tirelessly to make an imprint on every aspect of his enterprises—especially the opera companies.[32]

Few of Mamontov's sculptures are extant, and though other fruits of his creative activity survive in the form of manuscripts and drawings, evidence of his skill as a director reaches us today mostly through the reverent memoirs of colleagues and relatives.[33] One certainly can debate the merits of Mamontov's writings and artistic production, no doubt exaggerated after his death and enshrinement by opera historians, Russian musicologists, and Abramtsevo Museum curators. But simply to call him a jack-of-all-trades would be to miss the larger significance of his personality—for opera and for fin-de-siècle Russian culture more generally. The art patron was not just a dilettante.

Mamontov's persona was emblematic of the self-designated new cultural elite at the turn of the twentieth century—entrepreneurs directly involved in the creation and promotion of high art and a cosmopolitan, individualist ethos. He was a role model for Sergei Zimin, the son of a gold-thread manufacturer who founded and managed the successful Zimin Opera from 1904 to 1917, and an inspiration to other merchant opera impresarios. What is more, Mamontov shared a social environment and ideology with the many entertainment magazine editors and music critics who both spurred and critiqued the commercialization of culture.[34] In the decades that followed Savva's departure from the Moscow Private Opera in 1900, his aesthetic views and social politics would be synthesized and transmitted by journalistic discourses on everything from opera celebrity and fandom to personal authenticity and social mobility.

Mamontov's eclecticism was methodical, often dogmatic. It was his worldview, an approach to art and life he relentlessly preached. He wanted to instruct Russian audiences, show them beauty in a wide array of images, introduce them to diverse sounds, and "ennoble their souls." Just as Mamontov immersed himself in his leisure pursuits and enterprises, playing a variety of parts and playing them well, the singer-actors at the Moscow Private Opera were engaged fully in the dialogical elaboration of operatic roles, transforming themselves

into their characters when on stage. Preparation for new roles was intensive: the troupe was taken on field trips to historical sites, made to study the period in which premiering operas were set or written, and advised to go abroad during the off-season for further "research and enlightenment." Most important, Mamontov trained singers to communicate the interior lives of characters through makeup, facial expressions, and devices of gesture. Utilizing intimate detail—their knowledge of self and history—performers were to show the emotional essence of their characters, articulate what it meant to be human, and thereby inspire introspection in spectators.[35]

Many of the opera singers who emerged from the Private Opera, most notably Shaliapin, enjoyed critical acclaim, and went on to become celebrities at the Imperial Theater and abroad. Their on- and offstage images, generated and disseminated by publicity postcards, advertisements, interviews, and critical commentary in various newspapers and biographical literature, continued to function as representations of the values and attitudes central to Mamontov's self-fashioning long after his departure from public life.

My central theme, which I will pursue in greater depth in the chapters that follow, is that images of opera stars and public discussion about celebrity were crucial to reconceiving selfhood in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. The very idea that one personage, say Shaliapin, could embody many different types and psychologies—look and emote like the deranged Boris Godunov in one opera, appear as the humble, self-sacrificing Ivan Susanin in another, and impersonate evil as Mephistopheles in a third—attested to the notion that the self can seem dialogical, fluid, contradictory, or momentarily lost and still retain an essence, an irreducible and authentic realm that ensures its ultimate coherence.[36] Performance practices pioneered by Mamontov that changed famous operatic types into distinctive, rounded characters with interior motivation thereby were implicated in the logic of an emerging celebrity culture, and inseparable from its rhetoric of authenticity and politics of individualist consumerism.

Impresarios like Mamontov, as well as the many theater, music, and entertainment journalists who championed private opera and its stars, were not the only sources of such cultural phenomena and politics. When considering the ideology of Mamontov and his followers, I do not wish to leave the impression that they always were aware or in control of the consequences of their endeavors. In fact, Mamontov and many of his colleagues held less than affirming views on opera singers *as celebrities* and assumed paradoxical, self-contradictory positions on the subjects of fandom and the commodification of

culture. Later I will examine some of the ways fans and the press appropriated the new conceptions of personhood, society, and authenticity embodied by opera personalities and consider how images of these personalities (and the ethics suggested by them) functioned in everyday meaning making. At this point, my more modest aim is to discuss the cultural mission of those involved in the production of operatic characters—strata of Russian urban society composed largely of wealthy non-noble patrons, entrepreneurs, and musicians—and look at the specific behaviors, tastes, and identities they embraced and disseminated.

Mamontov's aesthetic practice as social politics: Sergei Zimin

In 1914 Sergei Zimin celebrated the tenth anniversary of his opera company with a gala crowned by Rimskii-Korsakov's opera-ballet *Mlada*. He also planned (and ultimately failed) to publish *The History of Private Opera in Russia*, a collection of essays conceived as a genealogy of his very own Zimin Opera.[37] The second of two introductory essays in the book manuscript begins with a history, as grim as it is brief, of Russian oppression. "For many centuries Russian society," wrote its author, the composer and opera critic Nikolai Kochetov, "and, hence, initiative were in shackles; and due to the peculiarities of the Russian soul, society was resigned to its slavery." But even in the days of serfdom, "the Russian public sphere occasionally produced people who could not endure inert submission and strove in various ways to express themselves—to demonstrate their powers so as not to be strangled by the grip of brutal reality." Kochetov proudly asserted that "there have been more than a few Il'ia Murometses among the ranks of our oppressed Russian society—those who became, through sheer force of will, heroes [*bogatyri*] of thought and action."[38]

He did not dwell on the exploits of epic folk legends and heroic intellectuals, however, finding it "equally important" to discuss the achievements of other kinds of "activists"—creative people "who spent great energy on their favorite pursuits"—the many who "struggled to break free and attempt great deeds but were forced by circumstances to waste their talents on everyday, humdrum occupations." Vague about what he meant by "circumstances," probably to elude tsarist censors, Kochetov was more specific about the exceptional individuals who labored to enter the annals of history, the precious few who had managed to use "their talents and resources to serve their native

land." Fate had granted them much wealth, but they "did not wish to spend their lives in peace, financially secure and worry-free."[39]

Kochetov then ascribed estate categories to the individuals in question and elaborated a narrative of progress that reached its apogee with merchants supplanting the nobility as the driving force of Russian culture:

> In the days when the Russian nobility was the dominant estate, the alpha and omega of Russian life, there were many people in its ranks who were not satisfied by wealth or honors, or by the nobleman's comfortable life, and became innovators . . . The reforms of Alexander I called to civic action . . . estates [sosloviia] that previously vegetated on their land, indifferent. Then, the merchants, by virtue of being accumulators of capital, put forth from their ranks many keenly sensitive businessmen who responded to the needs of their native land. In particular, those in Moscow, the center of the all-Russian merchantry, gave their capital to noble causes. The millionaire Solodovnikov donated his fortune to civic goals, and there will come a day when his legacy will be fully realized.[40]

Here, "civic action" is cultural production, and the sort of culture Kochetov has in mind is high art—the unique product of one person's genius. His story, in the end, is not only (or even mostly) about social groups, the fall of the nobility and the rise of the merchantry: the procession of estates is followed by a list of celebrated names that testify to the triumph of individualism. Pavel Tret'iakov established a gallery that is "the jewel of Moscow and the pride of all of Russia. Soldatenkov, Botkin, Tsvetkov, and others also distinguished themselves in the sphere of art collecting." The merchant Alekseev, Kochetov reminds readers, "created an exceptional theater company that . . . made famous the name Stanislavskii."[41] And finally, Savva Mamontov, the father of private opera:

> The indomitable pioneer Mamontov was not fulfilled solely by his [railroad] ventures, which so benefited his native north, but proved himself also in the artistic sphere, laying the foundation for Russian private opera with his mighty hand. He . . . pointed the way . . . for such Russian autodidact-talents as Vrubel', Rimskii-Korsakov, and Shaliapin . . . A great burden was placed on the shoulders of the pioneer; he encountered many obstacles. There were moments when it seemed that his important artistic-civic work would be destroyed . . . due to exhausting struggles against various

> unfavorable conditions. In the beginning, one even might have feared for its survival. But now there is no place for such doubts. The victory of the young enterprise has proven decisive.[42]

If in Kochetov's understanding of success individuals like Mamontov are seen to shape art and, ultimately, society, then in his definition of failure individuals are severed from cultural work and oppressed, suffocated by the anonymity, resignation, and banal traditions of that same society. Descriptions of both achievement and defeat are informed by the notion that the individual, discrete and singular, can rise above society and act upon it, propelling history forward.

Kochetov, like other advocates of opera entrepreneurs and their endeavors, employed the word "*rutina*" (routine) to convey the strangulation, inertia, and slavishness to which Russian society was prone. In the theater discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rutina was used regularly with regard to the Imperial Theater and its directorate's unreflective conformity to tradition: specifically, its stale and boring productions, and rigid management style. Champions of private opera typically argued that Mamontov's company and its successors fought valiantly against rutina by adopting innovative aesthetic and managerial principles.[43] For Kochetov, the collaborative approach of directors at the Private Opera made it both morally and artistically superior to the hierarchical state-run theaters. Mamontov's enterprise gave soloists "the opportunity to work independently and often," while benefitting from instruction and mentoring. The Imperial Theaters had a "very limited number of roles" for young talent and offered fewer opportunities "for advancement and independent initiative." Singers under contract at state theaters felt defeated, claimed Kochetov, because their artistic decisions "encountered strong resistance from conductors [and] directors . . . who unquestioningly executed the written orders of the management." He recalled disputes between soloists and the directorate at the Bol'shoi Theater, instances of powerful bureaucrats arbitrarily quashing soloists' reasonable aesthetic suggestions:

> The artistic director demanded that M. A. Deisha-Sionitskaia sing her entire part in *Vera Sheloga* . . . in a fur coat. The artist protested that it is impossible to sing in a fur coat and that to sit in a cottage [*izba*] in fur makes absolutely no sense. Management did not back down. The whole affair culminated in a long, heated debate—with forces like Deisha-Sionitskaia one must reckon—and ended with a "compromise": the artist was permitted to "pull the fur coat off one shoulder," only one![44]

Such difficult battles were conceivable only for artists with considerable status and ultimately were "paralyzing, killing all desire to work independently." Less talented singers and beginners only blindly could follow orders from the management, much to Kochetov's chagrin:

> Is it not true that sometimes the most radiant, least routine [*ne rutinnye*] ideas occur precisely to young talent? F. I. Shaliapin had served at the Mariinskii Theater for an entire year unnoticed, but in the course of only one winter was transformed into a great artist at the opera of S. I. Mamontov.[45]

The Imperial Theater did "have its good traditions," he conceded, "the most valuable of which [was] utmost correctness of performance." But even the pursuit of "correctness" was a problem at the Bol'shoi as it was "linked with a complete suppression of all artistic freedom . . . [E]very surge of the singer's artistic temperament and inspiration [was] met with a spirited rebuff."[46]

To recapitulate, Kochetov's introduction to Zimin's book on private opera contended that the state excessively controlled the artistic interpretations, wardrobes, and professional lives of singers, stifling individual creativity. While the directorate of the Bol'shoi and Mariinskii theaters, itself rigidly hierarchical, treated its artists in a paternal and restrictive fashion, private opera management, dedicated to collective decision making and an ongoing dialogue with each member of the troupe, ran its enterprise more informally and democratically. And herein lies the polemical heart of *The History of Private Opera*. By arguing that private enterprises were institutionally (and not simply aesthetically) stronger than the Imperial Theater, champions of the former criticized the most fundamental aspects of official ideology: the estate order and state service. The difference between the Imperial Theater and private opera was also the distinction between the state and the entrepreneur: the latter served employees while the former demanded only that employees serve it. "Service to art in the [Imperial] Theater," remarked Kochetov, was "just like civil service in other kinds of tsarist institutions." Bureaucratic starch was evident in the work of state theater stage directors and "bright and promising stars of the private stage grew dim after coming to the Bol'shoi."[47]

Conductors and stage directors at the Bol'shoi Theater, continued Kochetov, subjected their demoralized, ever-weary musicians to an inordinate number of rehearsals in large part because of directorate regulations and occasionally because of their own need to familiarize themselves with the score. Such an atmosphere of ceaseless

repetition and docility produced not artists but automatons: even though "the majority of directors were knowledgeable people, they worked under conditions that obliged them to conform and train artists, their subordinates, to do the same." Discipline of course was "essential to the success of private opera as well," but at such companies there was "nonetheless much more freedom to display the artists' individual qualities—even at the start of their careers. "Would the swift [artistic] development of . . . Shaliapin, [Vera] Petrova-Zvantseva, [Elena] Tsvetkova, and others have been possible on the state stage?" Kochetov doubted it. And his "doubts about the career of Shaliapin were the strongest."[48] By invoking the most famous names associated with the private stage, Kochetov suggested that when companies gave soloists a voice in artistic decisions, they not only sparked creative self-expression, innovation, and the swift maturation of individual talents but also advanced singers' careers and ensured success. Private opera companies, in short, produced stars.

Kochetov's argument was not unique. In fin-de-siècle theater commentary, stars of the private stage were crucial to establishing a categorical distinction between the Imperial Theaters, which remained committed to outmoded traditions, and enterprises like the Moscow Private Opera and the Zimin Opera, which embraced a progressive ethos. Not surprisingly, Shaliapin was the most prized embodiment, exponent, and product of that ethos. Born to a peasant family and receiving very little formal musical training, he rose to fame under the auspices of Mamontov's Private Opera in Moscow, where he sang from 1896 to 1899.[49] Most observers and supporters of private opera agreed that Shaliapin would not have achieved greatness if his talent had not been recognized and nurtured by Mamontov and his company. They claimed that if the world-renowned bass had spent his formative years at the Imperial Theater, he would not have developed his inimitable vocal technique and dramatic ability. Shaliapin himself shared this view. He declared in his 1932 memoir that he had declined an attractive contract offered by the Mariinskii Theater and allowed Mamontov to lure him to Moscow mainly because of "the moral atmosphere at the Mariinskii," where singers and actors were "obliged to nod their heads when bureaucrats expressed opinions" or issued orders. Shaliapin judged this decision to have been the correct one: in the "Moscow period" he discovered "the true path in culture" due to Mamontov's generous yet unobtrusive advice and the opportunity to interact and work with artists such as Isaac Levitan and Serov.[50]

Like Shaliapin's autobiographical account, Zimin's book tells of how the private stage created not only a brilliant singer but also a cultivated, exceptional, and forward-thinking person with a deep knowledge of history and visual art. The story of Shaliapin's ascension is one of education and self-improvement. His artistic talent "matured brilliantly on the private stage" as all of Moscow "talked about him, at first with caution and later with more conviction." Sometimes one heard "protests from people who did not want to or could not understand that a great artist had appeared—an artist to whom the usual criteria could not be applied." During his years at the Private Opera, "Shaliapin worked among painters and writers, improving himself in a circle of artists like Serov, Korovin, and Vrubel', who were improving themselves as well." When Shaliapin left for the Bol'shoi, "many feared that his development would come to a halt due to the conditions of 'service' there," but Shaliapin's "strong will" triumphed. "The theater did not subordinate him to itself, but he subordinated the theater to him." Kochetov exclaimed:

> The Sturm und Drang that accompanied his breach of [Bol'shoi] traditions only confirms how entrenched they are. But, arguably, the tempo even of Shaliapin's development on the imperial stage has been much slower than the pace of his growth was on the private stage. True, he was younger then, but this is precisely the point: young artists can mature only on the private stage.[51]

Kochetov stated repeatedly that under leaders like Mamontov and Ippolit Prianishnikov the private opera "resembled a school" at which inexperienced talent benefited from the guidance of "cultured," well-educated men.[52] The director's best pupils, in turn, set an example for the rest of the company. An artist like Shaliapin served as a role model not only by the manner in which he performed a particular role, but also by the way he prepared for it. Kochetov had the opportunity to observe how Shaliapin prepared "the artistic aspect" of his roles during his years at the Solodovnikov Theater—how the bass created a "dramatic type" that shaped its "musical-vocal aspect":

> Especially memorable was the time [Shaliapin] worked on the role of Ivan the Terrible from Rimskii-Korsakov's *Maid of Pskov*. He studied the entire epoch of Ivan the Terrible using every possible historical source, made many . . . comparisons, and created his own portrait or, more precisely, the character and his inner qualities

> [*dushevnyi oblik*]. These inner qualities, however, did not translate immediately into something concrete: the soul was discovered but the body did not exist yet. In order to establish the external attributes [Shaliapin] had to learn more…find the right makeup and costumes. Once again, he searched for all existing depictions of Ivan the Terrible, studied and compared the many images created by artists. Then it occurred to Shaliapin to approach V. M. Vasnetsov, who at that time was finishing his [painting of] Ivan the Terrible…Shaliapin quickly produced some sketches from Vasnetsov's portrait, making it easier for him to remember the austere figure created by the painter—a type that resonated with the Ivan the Terrible Shaliapin had imagined.[53]

Shaliapin was an exemplary artist for critics like Kochetov because he performed vivid, "living" types.[54] He assembled each role from many images and studied it from multiple perspectives until it became *his own*, more than the sum of its parts. An important goal of the patrons and critics associated with private opera (and I will return to this point later) was to popularize such an approach—to establish a completely new standard of performance. They sought to create portraits that were emotionally accessible and dynamic rather than wooden and remote, to present operatic types resembling novelistic characters. They hoped to accustom audiences to historical figures with *personal* histories as well as psychological cores, tsars and boyars with bodily, external attributes that emerged from within—peasants, villains, benevolent gentry, and even demons constructed dialogically and performed from the inside out.[55]

What about the intelligentsia? Politics and Russia's vexed "middle"

Scholars often do not credit Russia's "middle," the merchant estate and especially its theater impresarios and journalists, with possessing coherent political views or objectives—neither in government nor in the artistic sphere.[56] Rather, they tend to associate strongly the "intelligentsia" with both high culture and political action. In the scholarship on nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Russian intelligentsia has been assigned a significant place as an identity, national myth, and heuristic category ascribed to educated individuals engaged in revolutionary activity.[57] And in recent studies of fin-de-siècle leisure and entertainment specifically, the intelligentsia is identified, against an expanding middle class, as the creator and

exponent of the highbrow, as well as the sole adversary of commercial, or "boulevard" cultural production. Such an emphasis obscures the part played by the entrepreneurial class in establishing the category of "serious" or pure art, and fails to illuminate the politics behind its critical stance toward commercialized culture. Paradoxically, some of the most scathing critiques of profitable art originated with its producers, who connected authentic culture to individualism, elevated social status, and enlightenment in an attempt to make noble privilege irrelevant.[58]

Roughly three years before Zimin began editing *The History of Private Opera*, a flurry of books and essays appeared in Moscow that defined and charted the genealogy of the intelligentsia. For left-liberal Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) and neopopulist authors of these works, "intelligentsia" was a socioethical category and an identity. In R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik's *History of Russian Social Thought* (1911), the intelligentsia denoted a "continuous group" that transcended class and estate, and was united in a struggle for the emancipation of the individual through social and political modernization. The neopopulist Ivanov-Razumnik traced the origin of the intelligentsia to the 1870s, the approximate moment of the formation of the populist movement in Russia, and conceived for it a formidable foe—the meshchanstvo—also a group composed of individuals from various social and economic strata. Representing mediocrity and banality, the meshchanstvo fought to maintain the status quo in all spheres of life.[59]

Most other philosophical narratives of social change featuring a heroic intelligentsia drew on populist, liberal, and occasionally Marxist thought. The Kadet Dmitrii Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii authored a three-volume *History of the Intelligentsia* (1909–11) in which he defined "intelligentsia" succinctly as the "educated and thinking part of society that creates and spreads universal spiritual values."[60] Historian, Kadet, and former Marxist Mikhail Tugan-Baranovskii, in his 1910 essay "Intelligentsia and Socialism," contended that sympathy toward socialism was the Russian *intelligent's* distinguishing feature. The degree of this "sympathy" varied with the individual but, in any case, "one never [found] in Russia an antipathy toward socialism among the educated classes of the type that could be found in the West."[61] Tugan-Baranovskii understood the intelligentsia to be "not only the representative of intellectual work or 'thinking proletariat,' but people with a certain worldview, a specific moral outlook." And while in places he articulated a liberal agenda, declaring that intelligenty were "critically thinking individuals" who "rejected

prejudices and cultural traditions" in the name of "equal rights and happiness," Tugan-Baranovskii shared Ivanov-Razumnik's conception of the intelligent as a "renegade and a revolutionary, enemy of rutina and stagnation, and seeker of a new truth."[62]

The ideological thrust and narrative features we encounter in *The History of Private Opera* in striking ways resemble those found in histories of the intelligentsia. Zimin's book also presents a social group charged with shaping the moral character and cultural outlook of the Russian people, a corps that seems destined to deliver their homeland from its backward and servile condition. But of course in Kochetov's introduction, the disseminators of enlightenment, staunch enemies of rutina and stagnation, are merchants and opera personalities rather than intelligenty; and the representative of mediocrity and banality is not the meshchanstvo but the bureaucracy of tsarist cultural institutions.

Admittedly, the conceit of Zimin's book and the subject of its introductory essay are much narrower in scope than the sweeping imperatives and themes of an opus like Ivanov-Razumnik's. It may seem straightforward and inconsequential that the heroes of Kochetov's stories would be called, simply, merchant theater entrepreneurs and opera celebrities rather than placed in a category as unstable and ideologically loaded as intelligentsia. Yet, the common concerns and structural parallels of *The History of Private Opera* and the literature on the intelligentsia (they tell virtually the same story with different characters) suggest that these works produced and referenced competing epistemologies. The omission of the intelligentsia from the discourse on private opera posed a direct challenge to the vision of progress circulated by left-leaning Duma deputies and academics.

On stages and in print, Zimin tried to disseminate values similar to those expressed in works like Ivanov-Razumnik's *History of Russian Social Thought* but to produce different frames of reference, other myths with their own rites and symbols. Non-intelligentsia opera patrons and professional music critics also defined art: they assigned it a social function, linked it to self-improvement, and proclaimed merchant-entrepreneurs as its true guardians. And this leads to a second, related point worth repeating: perhaps no group was more censorious of commercialized culture than the agents of its production and dissemination. Mamontov ran his Private Opera as a business and promoted its stars, yet was obsessed with educating the public, not selling tickets to popular fare.[63] Zimin's enterprise lost money in its first three years and never earned a substantial profit despite many critically acclaimed, sold-out productions.[64] And music

journalists like Kochetov, outspoken advocates of private companies and their aims, frequently attacked the publicity tactics and celebrity narratives that appeared in their own magazines. To assume that this paradoxical, self-contradicting stance was fashioned only in response, in the words of one historian, "to the politics and values expressed by the intelligentsia," is to misunderstand the substance and goals of the business elite's social politics.[65]

Since the eighteenth century, the Russian nobility presided over the domains of leisure and entertainment, laying claim to elite status and privilege through opera attendance and patronage of the arts. It was this domain that merchants and other non-noble urban inhabitants hoped to penetrate and reconstitute, establishing cultivation (instead of birth and lineage) as an important marker of cultural authority. The views and aspirations of Russia's capitalists and music professionals—their contradictory positions on less "serious" art, suspicion of commercial success (even their own), and assertion of status through demarcation and consumption of high culture—were related primarily to their challenge of noble privilege. In this way the Russian "middle strata" closely resembled their counterparts in Britain and France.

But, as was painfully obvious to the social layer in question, Moscow and St. Petersburg were not London and Paris: the Russian middle did not strive for political ascendancy. There was no parliament to control, no liberal order to serve as a basis of power and legitimacy. Kochetov wrote in a liberal voice, but his "public sphere" produced only art patrons and his "civic goals" were cultural ones. Russia's urban entrepreneurs and professionals did not adopt the rhetoric of class or explicitly identify as bourgeois in part to distinguish themselves from the middle class in the West. Russian society had been in shackles for centuries, proclaimed the introduction to Zimin's book, and in order to overcome its slavish resignation, to lead society in the struggle against rutina, Russia's heroes would have to be pedagogues first, capitalists second.

* * *

The anemic constitution and weak political will of the Russian middle class has occupied as much attention, perhaps, as the influence of the intelligentsia in studies of the late imperial period.[66] Concluding an essay on the Moscow Art Theater, Edith Clowes, for example, argues that its repertory "exhibited the weak and deeply ambivalent social self-image of a diverse and conflicted middle of society." The

"emerging cultural elite" wished neither to embrace estate classifications like merchant or peasant nor to create for itself a "coherent social identity." Russian stages lacked "a sociocultural myth that would lend legitimacy to the new predominance of the middle." The middle strata of society "had no strong protagonist[s]…who legitimately and productively transformed the terms of the present and created an imaginable future or who challenged the limitations of existing social structures." Their "sense of selfhood" was affirmed not by political endeavors or economic projects but by "personal ideals of individual cultivation and pride in professionalism."[67]

Clowes's contention is in some respects unexceptional, and echoed by the evidence presented here. Most opera and theater commentary of the period was innocent of the panegyrized merchantry that appears in *The History of Private Opera*. And, as I noted previously, even in Kochetov's contribution, nobles and merchants promptly are replaced with an index of great individuals—mainly conductors, opera personalities, and managers who seem to transcend their estate and class affiliations. In the preface to Zimin's book, Ippolitov-Ivanov refers to Mamontov and other renowned private opera managers not as "merchants" but as "entrepreneurs."[68] Yet, the reluctance of Russia's middle to appropriate a social identity rooted either in juridical or class categories did not preclude the wide dissemination of a coherent message—one that suggested the imminent obsolescence of social categories and proclaimed as heroes those who transcended their boundaries. The sense of selfhood shared by various entrepreneurs, journalists, and performers, certainly affirmed by "personal ideals of individual cultivation and professionalism," was a private feeling as well as an ideology performed in the public domain.

Opera impresarios and their supporters attacked the Imperial Theaters, and by extension noble arts patronage and the state. They also undermined the tsarist order in ways they probably did not consciously intend or fully anticipate: by featuring psychologically animated and emotionally stirring operatic personalities, theaters and entertainment journals circulated and inspired reconceived subjectivities incompatible with a static estate system and hierarchical society. Private theaters indeed functioned like "schools." Not only schools of cultivation and artistry for talented singers, as Kochetov and Savva's nephew Platon Mamontov noted, or professionalism and citizenship for theater people, as historian Murray Frame asserts, but also schools of self-fashioning for audiences.[69] Strong and positive middle-class protagonists, rarely encountered on the pages of "serious" plays and opera libretti, were the performers rather than the characters of the

legitimate stage. It was not the roles, in other words, but the performances and media-generated images of their players that challenged existing ideas of authenticity and self, and served as representations of a newly imagined social order.

Native opera personalities, or, Russia's melodramatic subjects

The Moscow Private Opera from its inception in 1885 introduced a revolutionary idea of theater. Instead of the professional craftsmen customarily employed to construct and paint backdrops, Mamontov enlisted artists like Vasnetsov, Korovin, Levitan, and, later, Serov and Vrubel'. Sets no longer provided merely a decorative background but related to the action on stage; the décor became an integral component of the mise-en-scène and the production as a whole. The various elements of the performance thus were synthesized, given equal importance. Painters, responsible not only for the sets but the design and execution of the costumes and makeup as well, now were expected to consult with singers and participate actively in the creation of roles. As art historian Camilla Gray noted, "The singer had to subordinate his performance to the other elements: décor, costume, gesture, music, language."[70]

On the one hand, singers were asked to prepare for roles, make them more "truthful," by methodically studying history, painting, and literature. On the other hand, they were expected to perform with considerable spontaneity, emotional investment, and passion—to reveal psychological truth by "acting out." Such demands for artistic and historical veracity, I argue, produced melodrama, as performers used gesture, visual effects, musicality of movement and, of course, voice to externalize the psyche and thereby realize what Mamontov and they understood to be complete and human portraits.[71]

In letters to the tenor and director Vasilii Shkafer, Mamontov explained his vision for a union of drama and opera: "Look at [the French actor Jean] Mounet-Sully, how he grabs you and *won't let go* even for a second, making you follow his thought, a passing motion of his hand, his face, his eyes. In drama, this is completely in the hands of a performer, but in opera, a performer absolutely must connect all these movements with music . . . the deeper a performer fuses the internal impulses of his character with the sound of his voice and the orchestra the stronger the impact on the listener's soul."[72]

Mamontov was determined to create "singer-artists," or singing actors, and for him such a fusion required risk, embarrassment, even

shame. Shkafer and other soloists sometimes protested what they felt to be an overvaluation of acting that distracted from vocal art, but Mamontov insisted: "You must step over the barrier called 'a bit ashamed.' Step over it! You'll see!" Mamontov pointed to "Shaliapin's *huge* acting success," which he believed resulted not only from talent but also from bravery, "a great deal of desire and at the same time *decisiveness to be affected and to act out on stage*."[73]

Mamontov asked performers to pay close attention to detail, capturing the entirety of the role, and through facial and bodily expressions to convey emotions even in silence.[74] Psychological "authenticity" was the goal of virtually all productions, even the modernist, decorative ones. Authenticity did not necessarily mean realism, and certainly not naturalism: sometimes it meant finding a deeper truth or import in literary and historical sources. To this end, Mamontov did not object to "tightening or shifting scenes," altering libretti and established historical narratives in order to show "internal motivation," to highlight the internal drama of protagonists, and "strengthen relationships between the characters."[75] He shared a host of visual materials in rehearsals—including his own sketches and sculpture—to help singers imagine and enter roles, communicate moods, and develop characters' personalities. His nephew Platon recalls that Mamontov aimed to "created portraits that were not only 'truthful' and alive, but artistic."[76] Mamontov's drawings featured "details of costumes and accessories, but concentrated more on poses and movements of the characters, supplemented by precise instructions." Creating an authentic role also entailed "looking and thinking deeply . . . absorbing the [inner life] of the depicted person." Mamontov utilized his talent as a sculptor to display for singers how feelings are expressed through gesture.[77] Roles were therefore collaborative efforts ultimately resulting in individualized, melodramatic, psychologically driven characters.

Later, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes took the methods, ideas, repertoire, and artists of the Private Opera to Paris. Zimin, too, imitated Mamontov's aesthetics and ensemble concepts, employing many of the same designers and conductors. In the late 1890s, the state theaters responded to the success of their competitors, enticing stage directors and performers formerly at private enterprises with generous contracts and the promise of international exposure. By the 1910s, the Imperial Theater and many west European opera theaters produced an array of previously ignored Russian opera, adopting the "realistic" and unified performance mode introduced by Mamontov.[78]

The influence of Mamontov's "collaborative methodology" and "vision of theater as a synthesized art form" has served as a point of departure in the musicological and historical studies of both Russian modernist and realist theater.[79] What I wish at once to stress and illuminate here is that this collaborative spirit was associated as much with individual freedom of expression and self-realization as it was with collective decision making. Shaliapin, under Mamontov's direction, consulted painters, studied manuscripts, took trips to historical locations, and met with academic historians like Vasilii Kliuchevskii before attempting roles like Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov.[80] But his creative process was also a highly personal one: he engaged his own psychology to fashion inner lives for his characters. And the seemingly glaring contradiction—the emphasis on ensemble work, on the one hand, and the exaltation of individual artists on the other—was treated by critics like Kochetov as a simple matter of cause and effect. In contemporary discussions of private opera, the chief goal of collaboration was the production of exceptional, famous personalities. Dialogically conceived subjectivities came, paradoxically, to epitomize autonomy and individuality.

* * *

Renowned artists embodied the qualities of their patrons and employers: skill, risk, ingenuity, and cultivation. Moreover, whether they sang with private troupes or not, opera stars represented and disseminated *Russian* greatness; that is, they served as vehicles for national, and occasionally nationalist, narratives. In Ippolitov-Ivanov's preface to *The History of Private Opera*, for example, a causal chain is presented in which the entrepreneur, responding to the desire of Russia's public for native music, gathers artists like Shaliapin and inspires them to bestow their exceptional talent on the works they perform—to bring out their consummate, uniquely Russian attributes:

> Mamontov, as a person with an enormous artistic sensitivity and taste, saw that the Imperial Theater could not satisfy the desire . . . of the urban public to hear Russian opera . . . and went a long way toward fulfilling that desire. With his Russian soul he sensed that Russian art holds within itself an inexhaustible wellspring of spiritual beauty; the time had come to show to the general public the extraordinary works of Russian genius, and the . . . Italomanes were transformed into staunch devotees of the works of Mussorgsky, Rimskii-Korsakov, and Tchaikovsky.[81]

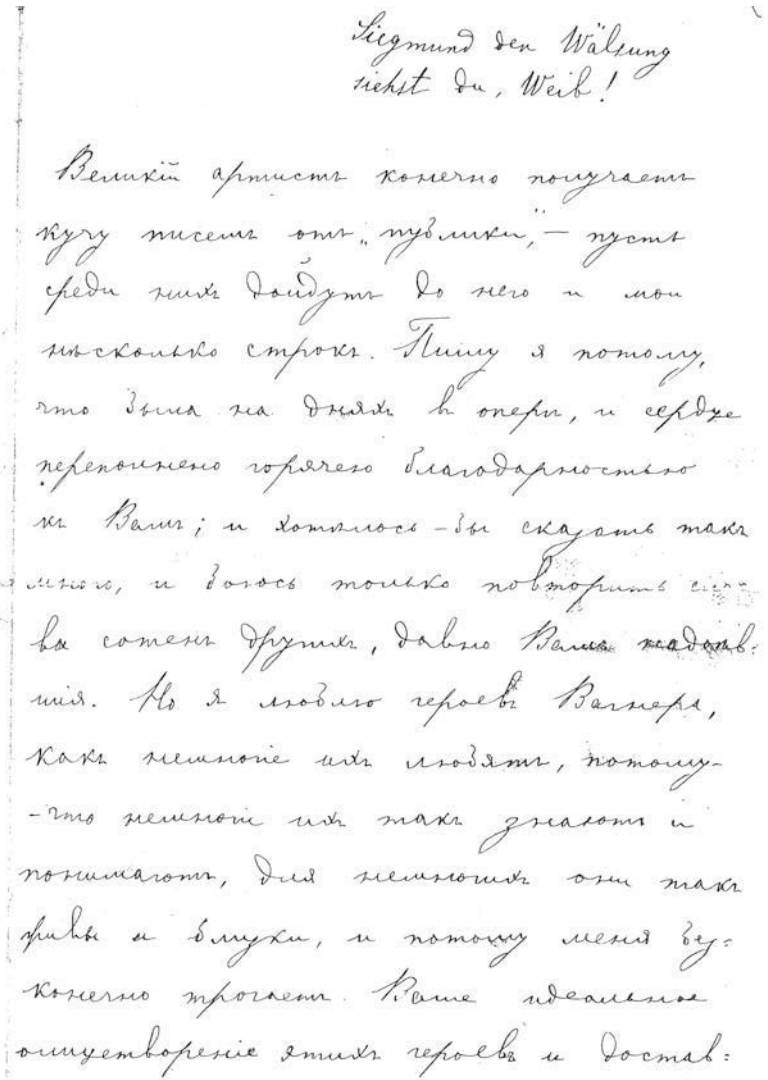
Mamontov, we recall, was no nationalist, and tried to expand the repertoire to include compositions from diverse eras and traditions. But Ippolitov-Ivanov repeatedly stressed the impresario's commitment to native opera:

> [Mamontov] attracted Russian artists to his enterprise, gathered gifted young people around himself, and recognized, due to his artistic sensitivity, the enormous talent of Shaliapin. He lured [Shaliapin] away from the Imperial stage, and involved him in passionate, exciting work…that enabled his exceptional talent to…grow. And because of [Shaliapin], the incredible compositions of Mussorgsky and Rimskii-Korsakov appeared before the public as they were conceived—in all their artistic beauty. A series of amazing productions unveiled a portrait of…recently created Russian art.[82]

By 1914, the dominance and popularity of Italian compositions and troupes, unrivaled for the entire nineteenth century, had been attenuated due, in large part, to the incorporation of many German and Russian operas into the repertoires of the Imperial Theaters. This development was not mentioned in the preface to Zimin's book, for its purpose was to portray private opera as an alternative to state institutions, the true producer and representative of Russian art. Its other, attendant objective was to present members of "cultivated society" as the prime creators and audience of a national culture worthy of competing with French and Italian repertoires for a place in the European canon. Ippolitov-Ivanov declared that Zimin's opera deserved the "deep gratitude of all who love art." Now that Russian opera finally had conquered Europe and destroyed the dominance of the foreign repertoire in Russia, "the mandate of private opera should be service to native culture." Such national contributions were "key to the continued success of [private opera] and the eternal gratitude of Russia's cultivated society."[83]

While Zimin staged many new Russian operas, he also offered audiences quite a few foreign works, including those of Wagner, Puccini, as well as some old favorites by Gioachino Rossini.[84] But even if Ippolitov-Ivanov's ideals had not been realized fully by the company that employed him, native singers whose talent merchant-entrepreneurs claimed to have discovered and cultivated indeed had supplanted foreign singers as Russia's cultural icons.

The melodramatic aesthetics and affective sensibilities of such native icons were appropriated by fans and reflected in their modes


Siegmund den Wälsung
siehst du, Weib!

Великий артистъ конечно получаетъ
кучу писемъ отъ „публики,— пусть
среди нихъ дойдутъ до него и мои
нѣсколько строкъ. Пишу я потому,
что была на днѣхъ въ оперѣ, и сердце
переполнено горячею благодарностью
къ Вамъ; и хотѣлось-бы сказать такъ
много, и вотъ только повторить слова
сотенъ другихъ, давно Вамъ надоѣвшія. Но я люблю героевъ Вагнера,
какъ немногіе ихъ любятъ, потому-
что немногіе ихъ такъ знаютъ и
понимаютъ, для немногихъ они такъ
живы и близки, и потому меня Ва-
конечно трогаетъ. Ваше идеальное
олицетвореніе этихъ героевъ и достав-

Figure 1.1 Letter from a fan to Ivan Ershov.

of expression. Writing to Ivan Ershov, the famous Mariinskii Theater Wagnerian tenor of the 1910s and 1920s, a fan calling herself simply "Woman" construed both his performances and her intense, confessional outpourings as pinnacles of human experience (figure 1.1). She had gone to the opera several days before, and her "heart brimm[ed] with burning gratitude." She "yearned to tell [Ershov] so much" but was afraid she would "only repeat the words of hundreds of other" fans. And yet, she was so moved that she could not resist. For her, Wagnerian heroes "were alive and close," and she knew and understood them like few others. Ershov's "impeccable realization" of these heroes gave her "deep and piquant pleasure." The tenor's acting ability and ample voice were not what impressed the fan most. More important, explained the anonymous Woman, were the psychological insights and profound feelings Ershov elicited in listeners:

> You have penetrated into the very soul of Wagner—you express it in the roles you have created…And besides possessing power over superficial emotions and driving the public to ecstasy, you manage to touch even the deepest and warmest parts of individuals. You are no longer only [a Wagnerian] hero to them. And when your name appears on a Wagner opera bill, people know that their evening in the theater will be one of the most illuminating moments of their lives…that for a few hours they will be carried to great heights.[85]

The fan's suspicions were true: her words were not original, and Ershov did receive hundreds, perhaps thousands of such letters. Posters featuring him, Shaliapin, and other stars graced walls of institute dormitories; and stories of singers' journeys from poverty to wealth and fame reached urban subscribers of glossy art magazines and provincial readers of the penny press alike. Russia's middle, with the aid of the mass-circulation press and the operatic stage, communicated a national vision. And at the center of that vision was a subject who played many roles, traversed the social terrain, experienced a gamut of extreme emotions, yet remained true to himself. He exemplified virtue understood as the discovery and revelation of heightened, melodramatic feelings. Images circulating in the public domain, however, were difficult to control, and opera entrepreneurs and journalists were not their only interpreters. As will be elaborated in the next chapter, the image of the great artist, author, and hero of the drama of the self, the individuated and virtuous subject, was also the reproduced object of advertising and consumption—disseminated by means that, ironically, posed a threat to the very idea of individuality that famous artists were supposed to shore up.

2
Russia's New Celebrities: Offstage Narrative and Performance

Celebrity culture

At the height of his fame, Fedor Shaliapin received a letter from a certain Vera. She did not know Shaliapin personally and began by explaining her reasons for composing what she described as a "reproof." Vera had spotted Shaliapin by chance at a railway station, and after scrutinizing the man she called "the pride and glory of Russia" was prompted to write to him. Vera declared that she was "somewhat interested in the arts, although [she] had not attended the theater since [her] youth."[1] The tone of the letter was at moments impassioned and peremptory and at others apologetic and demure. The "reproof" consisted of a critical examination of Shaliapin's physique and recommendation about how he might manipulate it to better suit the role of Mephistopheles:

> I saw your Mephistopheles in the journals and it struck me that one cannot detect on your hands strained tendons or muscles and, in general, the tension that ought to be visible in a powerful demonic figure. If your legs are not lean enough then you should cover them with your cloak, otherwise the incarnation of Mephistopheles suffers due to the sleekness of your tights. To what extent this can be seen from the stage I do not know. I repeat that I am judging only from photographs. I wanted you to provide a more truthful portrait, even in the details, and that is the only reason I am giving you my opinion. I believe that a truly Russian soul will not be insulted by a sincere reproof perhaps by an ignorant person in artistic matters but one who loves and senses art in all its manifestations.[2]

As she detailed her objections to Shaliapin's insufficiently demonic hands and legs, and suggested wardrobe changes and other remedies, Vera freely admitted that she never had seen the singer on stage—neither in Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele* (1868) nor in any other opera. In fact, she preferred liturgical music and based her judgments of Shaliapin's appearance and talent solely on a media-created image: "I never heard your singing because I do not attend secular concerts. If you would give a concert of sacred music then I would try to be there. If your voice is divine, as they say and write, then how I would like to be there! The church is my heart's favorite delight."[3]

Vera ended her letter on a personal and rather presumptuous note. Having read about the death of Shaliapin's son, she offered consoling and pious words, assuring him that grief would make him a better, more fully realized artist and person: "It is said that you, Fedor Ivanovich, have endured a great tragedy. The bigger it is the more your sensitivity will deepen. A person who has known suffering is a more complete person and it too is a gift and grace sent to earth from the . . . creator . . . I apologize for the letter, if it is unwelcome, which I don't want to believe because I write from the bottom of my heart, frankly, simple-heartedly. I remain devoted to your work and . . . talent."[4]

Vera signed the letter with only her first name. What inspired her to write to Shaliapin was not his singing—an exalted evening at the Bol'shoi or a concert hall—but the fame and ubiquity of his image.[5] She had carefully studied that image in its various incarnations: photographs, critical reviews, feature articles, interviews, and feuilletons. Without having seen him perform, Vera possessed detailed knowledge of Shaliapin's embodiment of Mephistopheles, confidently mentioned the greatness of his talent and "divine" singing, and boldly commented on his son's death. Her observation of the star in the flesh confirmed rather than contradicted the impression and intimacy forged by her steady consumption of the two-dimensional and textual Shaliapin. She did not distinguish between the singer's body and personality as it appeared on the railway platform and its commodified form, reproduced in entertainment periodicals. Tellingly, Vera ended the letter with an ambivalent apology, feeling it was not improper to intrude on the private life of a public figure—the pride and glory (and therefore property) of all of Russia. Shaliapin's body and internal world were also hers; she appealed to his soul and cited her sincerity and heartfelt intentions.

The motives for Vera's letter, and perhaps its very existence, illustrate the emergence of a celebrity culture in Russia at the turn of the

twentieth century. By "celebrity" I mean what the sociologist Chris Rojek calls "attributed celebrity," that is, a celebrity status that results from special talents and rare skills, but not exclusively. Attributed celebrity also derives from "the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries."[6] Rojek distinguishes attributed celebrity from "ascribed" and "achieved" types, the former based on lineage and the latter simply on "perceived accomplishments of the individual in open competition."[7] Shaliapin, while certainly an accomplished opera singer, was vaunted for more than his vocal and dramatic achievements in roles such as Ivan Susanin and Boris Godunov: he was a phenomenon, a cultural icon. Shaliapin's image, like those of other opera stars, had contradictory functions and held in precarious balance the seemingly incompatible values that characterize all modern celebrities: in the press, famous performers were Russian national treasures as well as the embodiments of universal values and qualities; lauded as role models, conceived as social types, and packaged as commodities, they were also presented as extraordinary godlike figures. The phrase "celebrity culture," as it is used here, does not suggest simply the existence of widely recognized individuals but refers to a society in which ubiquitous, commodified representations and narratives featuring those individuals play an important and often seminal role in the organization of identities, self-understanding, and desires.

Rojek attributes the rise of celebrity culture to three interrelated historical developments: "the democratization of society, the decline of organized religion, and the commodification of everyday life." He also connects the advent of a "celebrity society" to the "decline of Court society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which involved the transference of cultural capital to self-made men and women." Celebrities filled the void created by "the decay in popular belief in the divine right of kings and the death of God." Celebrity culture, therefore, is a decidedly modern phenomenon, created by the outcomes of industrial capitalism—mass reproduction, mass communication, and, in Rojek's terms, "the ideology of the common man."[8]

Though in Russia these processes were somewhat muted and only partially realized, professionalization, consumer society, and the attendant messages of upward mobility and self-realization were certainly present by the late nineteenth century.[9] Celebrity stage performers were not the only ones who supplemented and competed with the weakened monarchy as national integrative symbols. Nicholas II himself and, later, politicians like Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970) used publicity and emotive performance strategies, thereby implicating

themselves in the consumerist logic and ambivalent messages of celebrity narratives that undermined both traditional tsarist political myths and collectivist intelligentsia values.[10]

* * *

The fast-paced, consumer-oriented modern city, with its celebrities, fashions, and technological wonders, gripped the imagination of Russia's urban denizens. The inhabitants of St. Petersburg and Moscow, conscious of having entered into a new era, embraced and grappled with the "modern age" as journals and newspapers defined, narrativized, and parodied it. A humorous story published in the Moscow satirical weekly *Budil'nik* (*Alarm Clock*) in 1910 describes the pleasures, uncertainties, and annoyances of being a "civilized person" in the twentieth century. "Although it is currently fashionable to be an atheist, or at least a 'God-seeker,'" begins the narrator, "I do not conceal and unabashedly admit that every morning I thank the Creator that he did not create me during the Stone Age."[11] The narrator then details the ordeals, exigencies, and discomforts of a typical day in the life of a man living in the Stone Age: the unfortunate fellow wore "the leathery skin of some vile beast on his hips" in cold temperatures, hunted mammoths while worrying about inciting the wrath of ichthyosaurs and other prehistoric animals, ingested "warm, fatty, and disgusting bone marrow," and "clamber[ed] up to the peak of a rhododendron" to get a night's sleep and avoid being tortured by wild creatures. Dismayed by his own imaginings of such a perilous world, the narrator compares the arduous life of the hypothetical prehistoric man to his own. He lives "not at the peak of a tree, but a six-story building" and, instead of having to climb up there for the night, he "quickly and without ado" is brought to the top by an "elevator of the latest design." Other amenities include: a servant who brings home a variety of foods from nearby stores on demand, a telephone that enables the narrator to speak to anyone he chooses, including the "most highly placed individuals in the city," and a gramophone, which he uses in stressful moments to transport himself "to a heaven of sounds and delight." After the narrator declares his gratitude to the "twentieth century for providing humanity with so many comforts and pleasures" and announces that he is a "civilized person," the story shifts to real time:

> What a great singer is Shaliapin! I am sitting in my study, and next to me in the dining room my son Pet'ka has put on a record

> of "Mephistopheles' Ballad." What a powerful voice, how much unconcealed contempt for "the human race paying homage to the golden calf." It's amazing how singing calms the nerves. My work is being written so freely and easily. That fine lad Pet'ka put on "Mephistopheles' Ballad" again. Yes, Shaliapin is truly the pride of Russia—no matter what they say about his scandalous character. And Edison may be the pride of the entire world.[12]

Pet'ka repeatedly plays "Mephistopheles' Ballad" and for a while the narrator continues to be "intoxicated by the sound of Shaliapin's bass." But by the fifteenth time, his thoughts grow confused and the singing begins to interfere with his work. He muses, "It is nice to hear Shaliapin sing a variety of ballads . . . Just think what a great invention the gramophone is: a horn, a spring, and a stylus. Any idiot could have thought of it." Finally, the narrator loses patience and becomes unhinged:

> Why is Pet'ka starting up "Mephistopheles' Ballad" for the thirty-sixth time? I screamed at him—the rascal—to stop, but he really doesn't hear me!! And Shaliapin too is really something: to sing the same thing thirty-six times! . . . Forty-second . . . Fifty-third . . . Forgive me, this of course is not very civilized, but I could not stand it anymore: I hit Pet'ka over the head with the horn of the gramophone and pounded his ear with the record of "Mephistopheles' Ballad." The ear remained intact but the record cracked.[13]

Other inventions trouble the narrator as well, and as the day's mishaps turn into calamities that cannot be shrugged off, his asides about the achievements of the modern age grow more and more sarcastic:

> The elevator: the greatest invention of our century—but only when it works. Otherwise, it is worth peanuts. But the worst elevator of all is the elevator of the latest design. At least our elevator of the latest design is very bad. It hadn't worked for seven days—and today it worked only for five minutes and stopped again. And I experience shortness of breath. I was unable to walk up to the sixth floor, especially after I had been run over by a mad automobile and, properly rumpled, barely crawled to the porter's lodge. I only rented the apartment because of the elevator. Again—a civilized invention.[14]

Next, readers learn that the unlucky chronicler has been assigned a phone number that "once belonged to some sort of merry widow,"

and that this misfortune results in strangers calling at all hours of the night, demanding to speak to someone named Niunia and shouting accusations of infidelity; the meat the cook brought back from the butcher was maggot-infested and could not be exchanged because of outstanding debts; and an autumn coat had to be pawned in order to pay for dinner. But his troubles did not end there:

> At two o'clock a bailiff arrived and took an inventory of my furniture because of the debt I owe to my tailor. Well, do you expect me to dress myself in the skins of wild animals? At 2:30 my daughter sat down at the piano and would have played scales forever if at seven o'clock in the evening I hadn't deviously arranged an intermission by tearing out about twenty strings. My daughter sobbed; my wife called me a "barbarian from the Stone Age," and afterwards quickly, strongly, and confidently applied three plates to my head—one after the other—and then a milk jug, since [the plates] didn't break.[15]

The narrator concludes that he does not live among civilized people; "Perhaps it really was better in the Stone Age," he opines.[16]

This story, instructively titled "A Civilized Person: A Common Tale," presented to *Budil'nik* readers exaggerated versions of typical situations with which they could sympathize, thereby offering, through laughter, an opportunity for recognition and a sense of belonging. The narrator, despite his initial statements, shows the urban environment of the young twentieth century to be more treacherous, chaotic, and difficult to master than the feral world of prehistoric times. The "wild beasts" are no longer ichthyosaurs and mammoths but "mad" automobiles that terrorize and occasionally maim people. Elevators, telephones, and gramophones—technology devised to make life easier and more comfortable—introduce new complications and dangers. Time, too, is an important and problematic object. As if to keep pace with the rapidly unfolding disasters, the narrator begins to mark time: the phrases "at two o'clock…at 2:30…at seven o'clock" introduce the action in the latter part of the story. The shift to this journalistic style demonstrates the increased consciousness and segmentation of time that characterizes twentieth-century life. In the story, however, regimentation and detailed scheduling bring frenetic frustration rather than order to events, driving the narrator to irrational, violent behavior.

"A Civilized Man" does not feature civil servants, noble-born gentlemen, and other stock types of nineteenth-century fiction; rather,

it presents the staple characters of a modern twentieth-century Russian city, including a celebrity of modest origins, a butcher, a bailiff, and a narrator of unknown rank and lineage. The story ultimately reads like a list of the clichés about the pathos of modernity composed by later generations and modernists themselves. The narrator depicts a world in which evanescence and unpredictability is the norm. Random, intrusive encounters—with debt collectors, reproduced Shaliapin arias, and telephone voices of hectoring strangers—are unavoidable even in one's private home. The reliance on mass-produced amenities is emphasized, as is the centrality of commodities in the arrangement of identity. The story communicates that in the modern era, selfhood is as contingent and fragile as the faddish goods and novel technology used to create it. The narrator stresses that he is a "civilized person" because he buys fashionable clothes, rides an elevator, and owns a gramophone and a telephone. When his treasured possessions wreak havoc, and unpaid bills prevent him from looking and feeling up-to-date, the narrator loses control, repudiates his once prized "civilized" persona, and begins to think and act like a barbarian.

Celebrity culture flourished under the conditions described in this story. Shaliapin and other opera stars, like the gramophones that played their records, were purchased and utilized in the creation of collective and self identity. Russia's theater celebrities, public and individualized, allowed urban inhabitants living in a disjointed and changing social milieu to feel connected to a community of fans, as well as understand and express their *selves*.

Celebrity entertainers were not only the by-products of modernity, they also encapsulated and personified the capriciousness inherent in modern life and the variegated performances demanded by it. First, stars were required to be in a constant state of flux, playing a variety of parts—on and offstage—in an equally convincing fashion. Profligate consumers and philanthropists at home, as well as Russia's ambassadors abroad, opera singers in particular performed diverse and incongruous roles. Second, the display of wealth through expensive commodities, extravagant public self-presentation, and other expressions of celebrity had to be vigilantly maintained and perpetually refreshed. Third, fame—often viewed as sudden, accidental, and fleeting—served as an appropriate metaphor for the day-to-day events and challenges of modern urban life. Consequently, and not surprisingly, apprehension about "modernity" in all its contested forms often was expressed through both satirical and serious discussions of celebrities and celebrity culture.

Consuming divas

The commercialization of opera was facilitated by the dissolution of the Imperial Theater monopoly in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1882. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Mariinskii and Bol'shoi were competing directly not only with private opera and theater companies but also a host of newly launched "middlebrow" enterprises—such as cabaret and variety theaters—that drew their revenue from the same pool of potential consumers. As I noted previously, the Imperial Theater directorate was forced to rethink its repertoire, as well as vie for the best vocal talent. Russian opera singers were beneficiaries of this increasingly competitive environment. In the 1880s, Russian soloists had been earning roughly 800 rubles a year. In 1913, the Moscow entertainment weekly *Rampa i zhizn'* (*Footlights and Life*) reported that "many ordinary singers [at the Bol'shoi] earned between fifteen and forty thousand rubles a year."[17]

Russian singers, furthermore, enjoyed a celebrity status unknown to their counterparts in the previous century. Interviewed in newspapers and theater journals, photographed for postcards, and featured in advertisements, they were supposed to be appreciated not only for their talents but also their lifestyles, values, and appearance. Manufacturers of expensive perfume and confections began to utilize the pictures and endorsements of opera personalities to sell their products. Special issues of magazines like the Moscow arts weekly *Solntse Rossii* (*Russian Sun*) featured color posters of singers in costume or engaged in "real life" activities such as painting or reading at home. Fans were invited to tear out and hang these images or contemplate them in private. Entertainment periodicals chronicled mundane activities of stars such as Shaliapin, reporting on his whereabouts and gossiping about the company he kept. Singers' salaries and spending habits often were detailed by the press as well; and when the mezzo-soprano Anastasiia Vial'tseva became gravely ill in January of 1913, the avid readers of *Rampa i zhizn'* received regular briefings about her body temperature, medical treatments, and degrees of consciousness.[18]

Opera celebrities certainly were not invented in Russia in the early twentieth century, but prior to the 1880s, Russian soloists did not enjoy prestige comparable to visiting Western stars. Singers like Pauline Viardot and Mattia Battistini were adored as much for their foreignness as for their voices. European divas who obtained lavish contracts with the St. Petersburg Italian troupe at the Imperial Theater were not infrequent guests in aristocratic homes and approached mainly

by privileged society. Their idealized images, printed in collectible lithographs, were as imperious and ornamental as their coloratura flourishes; their inaccessibility was the source of their allure.

In contrast, twentieth-century Russian opera stars, exposed and scrutinized in novel ways in a burgeoning entertainment press, were more available and in closer proximity to their admirers. The focus on singers' civic activities and descriptions and photos of their everyday lives made it possible for opera enthusiasts to feel intimately acquainted with performers without meeting them in one of the elegant drawing rooms of St. Petersburg or Moscow. What is more, singers' biographies became Russian stories: their struggles with impoverished provincial obscurity and Petersburg fame and affluence were familiar to readers trying to negotiate an unstable and treacherous urban social terrain. Fans now recognized themselves in and identified with opera celebrities; and advertisers and journalists prompted publics not simply to desire famous people but to aspire to look, act, and consume like them. While their enormous salaries, luxurious attire, onstage personalities, and prodigious talents made opera stars larger than life and worthy of adulation, photos of them in domestic spaces performing ordinary tasks made them human and possible to emulate.[19]

The use of opera celebrities' images in advertisements for products that had little to do with theater indicates that singers' personalities came to signify more than just musical gifts. Because their fame accorded them symbolic potency, celebrities became embedded in the semiotics of advertising, which often relies on consumers' associations of commodities with social outcomes. As signifiers of approbation as well as financial and emotional consummation, opera stars' representations possessed social and cultural value and, therefore, were linked to the brand names of a variety of products.[20]

Early-twentieth-century advertisers' methods of constructing commodity signs, that is, "inviting viewers to perceive exchange between otherwise incommensurate meanings systems," were not very subtle by today's standards.[21] The St. Petersburg chocolate factory Mignon, for example, published a promotional pamphlet designed to resemble an *al'bom*—a collection of celebrities' autographed photographs that fans commonly purchased or created. Appealing to theater audiences and utilizing the already existing link between consumption and fandom, the "album" presented photographs of singers, dancers, and actors in costume and everyday attire. Each image was coupled with a reproduction of the artist's handwritten and signed endorsement, adding a personal touch. The publisher's preface to the album

initially adopted the language of dedications and addresses sent to theater stars on celebratory occasions such as anniversary galas. It began: "To you, idols of multitudes, we show our gratitude for the unforgettable moments of joy that you, so generously endowed by nature, bestow upon us, enabling us to forget all the day's unpleasantness and fuss."[22] Further, the preface hailed the famous performers as experts on commodities as well as art and offered the album as a guide for aficionados of both fine chocolate and glamorous personalities:

> Often we express [our appreciation] in the form of material gifts: you are showered with laurels, valuables, flowers, and chocolates. Who, then, can appraise the value of such things better than you?...That is why we as a chocolate company have asked for your assessment of the quality of our products. In offering this album to the public, we offer our deep gratitude to all the esteemed artists for their favorable judgments and gracious readiness to respond to this first survey about chocolate.[23]

The celebrities featured in the album performed at both the Imperial and private theaters, yet all were "artists" understood to participate in the creation of high culture such as opera and ballet.[24] The Mignon company produced "fine," highly priced chocolate and wanted to show that its brand, like each of the stars that endorsed it, was unique and belonged to an elite group that distinguished itself from competition of lesser quality. The "responses" featured in the album were distinct. The baritone Ioakim Tartakov, for example, cited the therapeutic effect of Mignon, declaring that "as an ardent lover of chocolate" he found the brand "delicious and very refreshing at times of common fatigue." The Bol'shoi star soprano Mariia Kovalenko, sporting a large plumed hat, found Mignon to be both pleasurable and useful: the chocolate was "delicious" and "helpful to singing." The Mariinskii mezzo-soprano Nadezhda Lanskaia avowed, "Your chocolate is such a pleasure that I will betray every other brand; from now on I will buy only from the Mignon company."[25] Contralto Evgeniia Zbrueva appeared in the costume of Mignon, a character from Ambroise Thomas's opera of the same name. Her endorsement was a short poem entitled "He or Mignon?":

> *On* your lips is the dark song of Mignon
> But *between* your lips—seductive, Sweet Mignon...
> You sing, smiling, he accompanies, in love...
> Who is the reason for this bliss? Mignon or he?[26]

Here the company's advertisers present the reader-buyer with a chain of signification that recasts human qualities as chocolate and translates social relations into the consumption of Mignon. The brand name is an obvious referent to Thomas's opera, which evokes the mastery of operatic singing and the passion between the gypsy Mignon and the student Wilhelm Meister. The image of Zbrueva-as-Mignon, the object of love and the agent of seduction—the symbol of pleasure associated with music and sex—is then equated with blissful and delicious candy. Consumers who purchased Mignon chocolate also acquired the opera heroine Mignon, Zbrueva-as-Mignon, and Zbrueva herself—their fulfilled desire, fervor, seductiveness, and prestige.

A Moscow cosmetics company employed the same advertising strategy as Mignon chocolates. Aleksandr Ostroumov's perfumery also published an ersatz album with autographed endorsements, entitled "Our Artists" ("Nashi artistki"). On the inside cover was a short history of the company, which produced everything from antidandruff soap to creams and perfumes. The chemist and owner Ostroumov boasted that his high-quality cosmetic, medicinal, and hygienic products were revolutionary "thanks to advances in chemical and technological equipment in 1910."[27] Eager to lure consumers away from fashionable, sleekly packaged west European cosmetics and perfumes, the company referenced science, an "international reputation," and glamor in order to add value to its brand.

Because Ostroumov's company aimed to attain a favorable position vis-à-vis its formidable foreign competitors, the employment of native-born stars in its advertisement was crucial. They fit neatly into the album's narrative framework, which linked its own success story to those of other native "products"—namely, Russian celebrities. The use of the appellation "artist" was important as well, as it suggested the eminence of the endorsers and, in turn, the stature of the brand they praised. Among the artists featured was Elizaveta Azerskaia of the Bol'shoi Opera, who "welcomed Ostroumov's perfumery" and proclaimed it "a serious rival to foreign perfumeries." The dramatic soprano Leonida Balanovskaia, wearing an elegant dress, issued the following report: "Since I have become familiar with chemist Ostroumov's cream No. 2, I have understood the importance of choosing [the right] cosmetics. The amazing effect of this cream on the skin is incomparably superior to all other creams."[28]

Some singers were shown in the costumes of characters that evoked the names of the products they described. Photographed as Cio-Cio-San from *Madame Butterfly*, the Zimin Opera soprano Vera Liutse opined: "The unusually delicate and natural aroma of

Ostroumov's 'Japanese Lilac'…reminds me of the native land of this flower, the land of the rising sun and flowers."[29] Drawing on Liutse's image and text, "Japanese Lilac" mimetically appropriated the allusions of Puccini's popular opera and heroine. The Russian Liutse cloaked in the kimono of the foreign Cio-Cio-San added an exotic charge to the product's name and echoed the message of the album's introductory text, which situated the Russian company in the international market.

Other Ostroumov products shared the names of opera characters, and thus were tied more directly to celebrities and their signature roles. The Bol'shoi star soprano Antonida Nezhdanova, appearing as the eponymous heroine of Leo Delibes's opera *Lakme*, declared that she "likes the perfumery of the…Ostroumov company very much, especially the soap, cologne, and the powder 'Lakme.'"[30]

As these advertisements demonstrate, opera stars' images were often a fusion of their offstage personae and signature roles. Even when celebrities appeared as "themselves" in publicity photographs and other texts, they seemed to be playing a part. The impingement of operatic characters on putative "real" personalities lent fluidity and multivalence to stars' images and, as will be discussed next, fueled some journalists' concerns about the erosion of the distinction between performance and authenticity, external and internal aspects of selfhood—in both celebrities and their adoring and emulating fans.

More is more! Ershov mania and operatic performance

Wagner mania swept St. Petersburg in the 1910s. The *Ring* in particular captivated audiences. Siegfried was adopted by Russian operagoers as their hero, inspiration, alter ego, and, in some cases, love object. During the 1909–10 season, seven of Richard Wagner's operas and music dramas were performed to full houses at the Mariinskii Theater. Wagner dominated the repertoire of the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg throughout the first half of the decade, productions and performances of his works outnumbering those of any French, Italian, or Russian composer.

The Mariinskii tenor Ivan Ershov, an opera "phenomenon" rivaled only by Shaliapin, played an essential role in the so-called Wagner fashion.[31] Ershov was touted by Russian and Soviet music critics as an unequalled interpreter of Wagner and credited with raising the public's interest in the composer's works.[32] Scholars also

recognize his enormous contribution to the performance history of music drama in Russia. Yet, Ershov's contemporaries and historians, eager to underscore the irresistibility of Wagner's music and affinities between German and Russian culture, fail to consider that Russia's "Wagnerism" amounted to "Ershovism" with the majority of the public.[33] They tend to underemphasize the fact that the fabled enthusiasm turn-of-the-century Russian audiences had for Wagner's works was limited almost entirely to St. Petersburg, where Ershov performed.[34]

Ershov attracted audiences, as many have noted, because he was a gifted tenor with a powerful voice and unique dramatic skill. But here I will explore the broader and perhaps deeper reasons for his popularity and status as a cultural icon. An analysis of the desires Ershov embodied reveals the aspirations and longings of his fans. By examining the way his persona was packaged for consumption, the basis of his appeal, and the influence he and his image exerted on the public, I hope to shed light on the ways Russia's urban society fantasized about itself at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the earliest years of what was to be Ershov's illustrious Mariinskii career, neither his manner of singing nor his dramatic talent was unanimously recognized. When he joined the troupe in 1895, he was repeatedly criticized for overacting, gesticulating too wildly, moving about excessively, and producing a guttural, "pinched" sound. Even Ershov's most devoted admirers later conceded that the tenor's beginnings in St. Petersburg were inauspicious. A fan wrote to him in 1908:

> I began listening to you when I was still a gimnaziia student . . . [when] you first performed on the Mariinskii stage. I loved the operas in which you sang, and engaged in heated debates with many of your erstwhile opponents from the public. You were not understood by the audience initially . . . [I]t took some time to prove to our public that Wagner, Borodin, and Rimskii-Korsakov were better than the works of Verdi, [Vincenzo] Bellini, [Gaetano] Donizetti, and so on. I remember the first performance of *Tristan* [*and Isolde*] with you and [Feliia] Litvin: it was difficult to tell where there were more people—in the audience or on the stage, counting the orchestra . . . But now I am firmly convinced that the approaching revival of *Tristan* will produce completely different results.[35]

Ershov's biographer Abram Gozenpud reasons that the singer grew more popular with critics and audiences at least partly because his

voice and stage presence improved.[36] Such an explanation is certainly plausible, but in reviews of Ershov's performances there is no evidence to suggest that he was any less frenetic and emotive in 1908 than he had been in 1895. What initially had appeared overly emotional, too personal, and distastefully real was considered perfect a decade later. It was not Ershov's style but its evaluation that had changed.

The public's acceptance of the turn to psychological "truth" in opera reflected a shift to a modern conception of the self. In the nineteenth century, Russian operagoers, nourished by a steady diet of bel canto repertoire, expected singers to impersonate rather than become the roles they sang. Camp ruled the day; emotional nuances, psychologization, and character development were not required on the operatic stage. Acting ability was certainly welcomed, but audiences and music critics alike primarily focused on expressiveness and beauty of singing. Adelina Patti, an Italian nineteenth-century prima donna beloved by the European and Russian public, was legendary for her impeccable tone, grace, and, among other things, a tendency to eclipse her roles. As Wayne Koestenbaum points out, while Patti's costumes changed, her expressions and body language did not. Comparing two photographs of Patti, one as Norina in *Don Pasquale* and one as Lucia di Lamermoor, Koestenbaum observes that the two are identical. Echoing nineteenth-century critics he declares: "Patti imperiously refuses to alter her gesture from role to role, and her indifference thrills us. She doesn't fall short of her role; she surpasses it. Our pleasure derives from her acting's [*sic*] insufficiency, its laxness, its willed remoteness from truth; realism is beneath Patti, for no diva needs to be realistic to achieve her ambitions."[37]

While it is true that Patti can be considered unique in her utter disregard for acting, it is unlikely that she would have achieved a legendary status in Russia if she had performed at the beginning of the twentieth century. By then, so-called realism had triumphed—and Ershov and Shaliapin, considered its mightiest practitioners, would soon be pronounced titans of the Russian stage. Ershov was the exact opposite of Patti and was adored for it. Rather than transcend his roles, he allowed them transform him. Fans and music critics often lauded his tremendous ability to provide his characters with an inner life—and to reveal their motivations and powerful emotions through facial expressions, body movements, and vocal coloring.

The renowned theater scholar and Wagnerian critic Eduard Stark, for example, offered the following typical commentary in 1905 on the occasion of Ershov's tenth anniversary at the Mariinskii Theater:

> The most valuable aspect of this artist, aside from his absolutely extraordinary vocal resources, is [his] amazing capacity to identify with the character he depicts . . . Every one of Ershov's portrayals invariably carries a completely unique stamp. The way he shows himself to you today, in the role of Sadko, for example, he will not present to you tomorrow in the role of Tannhäuser. Artistic temperament—and in him it is staggeringly powerful—is present in everything he does, but in each case appears in a totally different form. You can be assured that regardless of what Ershov sings the house becomes engrossed, since he has the ability like no other to electrify the audience—even one consisting of frigid subscribers.[38]

Another critic, reviewing the Moscow premiere of Rimskii-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* in 1916, extolled Ershov's portrayal of the opera's antihero Grishka Kuter'ma (figure 2.1). He insisted that "in order to understand the nature of [Grishka]—this terrible and pathetic, tragic and frightening . . . type, to feel his deep realism that . . . borders on the fantastic, the grotesque, we must see and hear Ershov's incarnation." The critic found it "almost impossible to enumerate the individual successful moments, the vivid and bold details" of [Ershov's] interpretations, the "complex mixture of sensations and experiences" offered by the artist: "sudden hysterical transitions from buffoonery and malicious scheming to insincere pleading and false humility; from madness to pathetic helplessness, blasphemy to prayer; from anguish and pangs of conscience to . . . animal fear." Ershov conveyed it all with "power and brilliance." He was "never out of character" and never let his "interests as a performer push aside the one being portrayed."[39]

Ershov gave every character a distinct psychology. The Russian public no longer desired the stable and known identity embodied by singers like Patti. Instead, audiences took pleasure in the exploration and narration of self. They were thrilled by the different incarnations offered by Ershov and the mastery with which he was able to assume many guises. The allure of the eternal had faded, and a new era of protean identity and fervent play had arrived.

Fans failed always to differentiate between Ershov and the exalted characters he portrayed, blurring theater and reality, on- and offstage

Figure 2.1 Ivan Ershov as Grishka Kuter'ma.

personalities. Since the nineteenth century, Russia's fans and music journalists described opera soloists as binary types. Ershov, for example, was referred to as "Ershov-Siegfried," "Ershov-Tannhäuser," or "Ershov-Tristan." The performer was often a mere hyphen away from fusing with his roles. Moreover, as commodified images and personal accounts of Russian opera stars proliferated, opera devotees entered

into triangular, interchangeable relationships with singers and their roles. Fans not only saw themselves in operatic plots and characters, "acting out" in the manner of their idols with ardor and truth, they also inserted celebrities into autobiographical narratives.

Mariia Platonova's 1902 letter to Ershov illustrates how opera fandom contributed to self-realization and gave embodiment to exalted, authenticating confession. Platonova exhilaratingly wrote:

> "O Siegfried! Siegfried! Child of the world! Siegfried—joy, hope of the earth! Giver of life, radiant hero!" How much light, truth, and beauty there is in you, pure and youthful! You showed us young people what youth and life means… You expressed it…through your person…you depicted it, gave a living, concrete picture, fulfilled a vague desire…I feel myself and my words to be small and pathetic before Siegfried…I view my entire life through fantasies, chasing after dreams and pursuing the most romantic ideals, the questions…of life…[Y]ou have riveted my interest and sympathy with the greatness of your personality.[40]

Platonova began by paraphrasing Brünnhilde, appropriating the language and position of an operatic heroine, addressed Ershov alternately as Siegfried and as a portrayer of Siegfried, proclaimed him her role model as well as an unattainable ideal, and then wove an evaluation of herself into a tribute to his talent.

Like Siegfried, Ershov was perceived as a "hero of life" whose personality conquered day-to-day urban challenges. Whether he appeared on the street, near his home, or on the stage, he seemed to be performing. Memoirists, music journalists, and Ershov's biographers have noted his "theatrical manner" outside of the opera house, and without makeup. Fans also noticed and appreciated the tenor's diverse repertoire of roles, and capacity to always play the suitable part, on stage and in real life. In letters, Ershov's admirers related the times they had seen him on the streets of St. Petersburg, at railway stations, or as himself on the concert stage. Pleased to catch aspects of the fiery characters he portrayed in him, they described the gestures and mannerisms that reminded them of Tannhäuser, Siegfried, or Sadko. Ershov inhabited the public sphere in various guises while maintaining his individuality, and provided his audience with a diverse supply of fantasies and roles they could assume with breathless passion.[41]

In her letter, Vera dwelt, we recall, on Shaliapin's realism, and what she perceived as ruptures in his characterization. She wanted

the singer to look and feel like a "true" Mephistopheles, down to the smallest bodily detail. In worrying about the sustainability and believability of role and identity, Vera expressed a concern that was shared by influential impresarios and opera directors like Stanislavskii and Mamontov, and celebrity performers like Shaliapin and Ershov, who bestowed verisimilitude even on Tannhäuser and Siegfried—idealized, remote types not normally associated with naturalistic performance practice. But, of course, "verisimilitude" in fin-de-siècle Russia was decidedly more hyperbolic than mid-nineteenth-century realism or naturalism. By making characters believable and vivid with both gesture and voice, Ershov also embodied and dramatized an authenticity of a very intense sort. Merely to play a role was not enough. To sing a role convincingly was to hurl oneself into it, inspire in spectators and listeners the most excruciating ecstasy, heroic acts of pain and fury—even altered states of consciousness akin to madness. Only then were characters "believable."

Singing their way to the top: Success stories

Ershov sang his way to the top of the opera world from the very bottom of Russia's social hierarchy. Born illegitimate in Novocherkassk, entrusted by his unmarried mother to the care of a destitute peasant family for the first five years of his life, he could not have started out further from the glamor and prosperity he would later enjoy in the capital. Yet, the path from indigence to fortune was more than a possibility in late imperial Russia; it became a common narrative framework for biographical accounts written by and about celebrity performers. Whereas nineteenth-century music journalists would have downplayed or remained silent about Ershov's social origin, early-twentieth-century critics underscored and exaggerated it. Stark, in his 1905 review article, for example, compared Ershov to Shaliapin, commenting that the two singers "shared in their roots" something that was "of particular fascination." Both were "of the people. Shaliapin—a peasant from Kazan'; Ershov—a Don Cossack." Stark went on to claim that the legendary singers were "complete autodidacts." Conceding that Ershov had "a bit more formal education than Shaliapin" because he attended "something along the lines of a railroad college" and "almost became a locomotive driver," Stark nonchalantly dismissed the fact that the tenor graduated from the St. Petersburg conservatory.[42] Ershov had extensive musical training and was hardly an "autodidact."

Regardless of his family's social status, an accomplished singer recalling the early years of his career tended to emphasize material

deprivation and consequent spiritual turmoil. Deliverance from such dreadful circumstances (and from anonymity) usually resulted from a fortuitous encounter with a patron-entrepreneur, who either intervened directly by providing employment or referred the struggling artist to sympathetic music teachers and impresarios. Gradual acquisition of wealth, luck, and knowing the "right" people, therefore, were key components of tales of personal transformation.

The internationally recognized Mariinskii tenor Nikolai Figner recalled his humble beginnings in a 1907 interview. Neglecting to mention that he was born into a noble family, Figner described at length his difficult years in Milan, where he had gone to launch an operatic career. Swindled by incompetent teachers, who "sucked from [him] not only all of [his] money but also [his] voice," Figner sat penniless and thoroughly discouraged in a café, contemplating his bleak predicament. All of a sudden, a man approached him and asked whether anything was troubling him. A long conversation ensued during which Figner confessed his problems. Fortunately, the affable stranger turned out to be an "opera entrepreneur," and he recommended a reputable voice instructor, a friend of his, to the young tenor. The encounter with the entrepreneur proved pivotal for Figner. He went to see the voice teacher (who offered him free lessons), his voice returned, and he debuted a couple of months later.[43]

Figner's narration of his early career in Europe reads like a ledger. His initial performances *cost* him 75 francs each—he paid 50 francs to the entrepreneur and 25 to claques. Later in Naples he earned up to 100 francs per performance; in Romania his compensation increased to 200 francs, and for his debut at the Mariinskii in 1887 he received 500 rubles for three performances.[44] Further, the tenor confessed that he was somewhat of a libertine and a spendthrift, remarking that while recently on leave from the Mariinskii he toured 80 Russian cities because he needed the money. "I don't hide that in the past twenty years I've earned more than a million rubles," he conceded, "but I have a lot less left now."[45] Figner's account was not unusual, in that hard work and formal musical training were mentioned but rarely cited as central to success. Career advancement was marked and measured by increases in income. Performers themselves enthusiastically provided detailed accounts of their salaries and consumption habits, connecting changes in both to given stages of their self-realization and fulfillment.[46]

Such tales of social mobility and self-transformation support Louise McReynolds's claim, following Warren Susman's observations about the United States, that a "culture of personality" took shape in Russia

in the early twentieth century.[47] Susman argued that a "culture of character," dominant in the nineteenth century, was supplanted in the early twentieth century by a "culture of personality" linked to consumer capitalism and mass reproduction. The former put forth a model of selfhood that idealized characteristics congruous with the demands of entrepreneurial capitalism, such as thrift, sobriety, industriousness, and citizenship. The latter promoted values that encouraged consumption. Display, management of public self, and self-realization through fashionable commodities and leisure activities were increasingly perceived and presented as crucial to social and financial success.[48] Susman asserted that the "social role demanded of all in the new culture of personality was that of a performer. Every American was to become a performing self."[49]

Susman's "personality" certainly pervaded the pages of Moscow and St. Petersburg periodicals at the turn of the twentieth century. Yet, the personality model of selfhood, as it appeared in Russia, was denigrated as often as it was vaunted. It came under attack from the very agents of its formation: members of the entertainment press—professional journalists as well as entrepreneurs and performers who moonlighted as satirists and music critics. They claimed that Russia's new consumer culture lacked authenticity, bemoaned the role advertising and publicity played in the forging of personalities, and attempted to delegitimize what they perceived to be a hollow, mutable, and purchasable selfhood.

Self and stardom: The case of Fedor Shaliapin

A feuilleton in an October 1910 issue of *Budil'nik* entitled "Shaliapin's Left Leg" touched on themes common in fin-de-siècle entertainment periodicals: agency, authenticity, and selfhood in the context of fame, fortune, and "greatness." The story begins with a diagnosis and case history of the singer's peculiar problem:

> Fedor Ivanovich is not only a great artist but also a superb, rare person . . . his only misfortune lies in the fact that he has a left leg. There was a time when Shaliapin's left leg was in a barely noticeable, embryonic form and exhibited hardly any signs of life. It modestly went wherever its master wanted to go. It did not dare utter a peep . . . At that time no one . . . could have predicted that some day it would transform into a monster . . . Working in harmony with the right leg, the left leg indefatigably led Shaliapin to fame. But . . . as [his] fame grew, so did his left leg. It gradually

> expanded, becoming flabby and swollen; it acquired a self-satisfied expression. It went to America, spent time in Monte Carlo, and upon its return to Russia bought a modest estate and a small house…and immediately began to show its true character. The mild Shaliapin fell into servitude to his left leg. Now…it is [always] necessary to discern when [Fedor Ivanovich's] actions are his own, those of the great artist, and when they are those of his nagging left leg. It's like a split personality.[50]

The following section chronicles a "typical" day in the life of Shaliapin and his impertinent leg. While sipping his morning tea, Fedor Ivanovich asks the left leg what it would like to sing: "'I don't feel like it [today] for some reason,' it answers, yawning. 'But how can you say that? It's awkward. It's been announced that Shaliapin will be singing. All the tickets have been sold.' 'What do you mean *sold*? Why did people buy them? Why, we artists cannot force ourselves, can we?'" Life does not become easier when the left leg lets Shaliapin go to the theater. The directors grow pale when they see it entering with a "sheepishly smiling" Shaliapin. After several hysterical protests and physical intimidation by the left leg, Fedor Ivanovich is forced to apologize repeatedly, muttering that he can do nothing. The leg is unhappy with the tempos set by the conductor and, during intermission, makes another scene. It orders Shaliapin to remove his makeup and go home, and at the first sign of hesitation tears off his wig, throws it aside, and carries him away. "'I can't help it. This is the way my left leg wants it,' Fedor Ivanovich sadly explains to his [fellow] artists." Next, readers encounter a tranquil scene. As Shaliapin and his leg sleep later that night, "a blissful smile can be detected on the singer's face: he is taking a rest from his left leg."[51]

Implicit in this comic account of Shaliapin's "split personality" is an assertion, as well as uneasiness, about the notion of a fixed, authentic, and autonomous self. The feuilleton is clearly ironic, but where does the irony, and the tension it creates, reside? The story not only permits multiple readings and meanings but also poses questions regarding the very possibility of multivalence. What *is* the bloated and flabby leg? Is it a metaphor for an integral part of Shaliapin's stable and coherent ego? Or does it represent a vanity and caprice created and nurtured by exogenous circumstances, namely wealth and fame? When or if the leg "split" from the great artist's true, "superb" self, did it do so organically or did he perform the separation? Was Shaliapin's authenticity rubbed out by the artificial appendage of celebrity status or did fame merely allow his essence

to become public? And finally, can Shaliapin and his fastidious ego or leg appear and function simultaneously, have a dialogical relationship—be two "selves" within the same person and, therefore, be equally real or true?

From the beginning of the story, the duality of Shaliapin's "personality" is both affirmed and denied. The ego-as-leg is a constituent part of his embodied subjectivity, yet unlike the special, "great artist," it is irascible, obstinate, and fickle. On the one hand, the declaration, "no one . . . could have predicted that some day [the leg] would transform into a [monstrous entity]" implies that the leg's metamorphosis was contingent or perhaps unnatural. On the other, the statement: "[the leg] immediately began to show its *true character*" after it purchased an estate and traveled abroad suggests that the leg's appearance is the realization or expression of its former latent state—the ego's trajectory is teleological.[52]

The feuilleton, in part, is mocking the contradictory images of Shaliapin in the press. Most of the reviews of the bass's performances and interpretations were laudatory. But while a virtual consensus about the greatness of Shaliapin's vocal and dramatic ability developed already in the latter 1890s, journalists' assessment of the singer's character and offstage behavior were far less consistent and complimentary. Shaliapin was sharply criticized and often scorned for his purported caprice, materialism, vanity, egotism, and avarice. "Shaliapin's Left Leg" refers to specific scandals and conflicts that he was supposed to have incited—last-minute cancellations and tantrums resulting from disagreements with conductors over tempos and artistic decisions.[53] Within a given issue of an entertainment journal, Shaliapin appeared as a dignified genius in one article and a spoiled, pompous fool in the next. By positioning these two characterizations on the body of the singer, and engaging them in a dialogue, the feuilleton represents a conflict (between the inflated ego and the great personality) but also offers a resolution (both exist, however uncomfortably, within the same individual).

The readers of *Budil'nik*'s absurdist sketch are prompted to attribute the actions of the "left leg" to Shaliapin himself, but who or what constitutes that "self" is unclear. In ascribing the artist's problematic qualities to the leg and thereby subjectifying it, the story playfully examines the possibility of an intractable, fluid, and two-sided selfhood—the essence of which is unknowable or absent. The narrator's sarcastic tone suggests that the author is simply lampooning Shaliapin, but the scenario and metaphors through which humor is achieved demonstrate a preoccupation with selfhood and

its meaning—which celebrity culture, via the press, reflected and perpetuated.

The themes and questions of "Shaliapin's Left Leg" bear a striking resemblance to those raised in Nikolai Gogol's 1836 short story "The Nose." Both Shaliapin and the protagonist of Gogol's story suffer an identity crisis due to discord with parts of their anatomy. When the leg and the nose, which once "knew their place," rebel against their respective owners, the latter metaphorically lose control over their own selfhood. The differences between the nineteenth-century fantastic tale and its parodic successor, however, are just as conspicuous as their similarities: they testify to a shift in popular understandings of subjectivity in the twentieth century.

In Gogol's "The Nose," the collegiate assessor Kovalev awakens one morning to discover that his nose has vanished. A series of adventures ensue as the civil servant desperately searches for this essential feature of his identity. The nose masquerades as a state councilor (an official of higher rank than the hapless Kovalev), visits a church, and takes cabs all over St. Petersburg. The nose's irreverence and assertion of will renders Gogol's protagonist powerless. When Kovalev confronts the independent nose in the Kazan' Cathedral and exclaims, "I am somewhat surprised sir…I do think…you should know your place," the nose feigns incomprehension, tells Kovalev to "make clear," and then pulls rank, asserting: "You are mistaken, my good sir. I am a person in my own right."[54]

The nose's bad behavior, much like that of Shaliapin's pompous left leg, thwarts his former master's ability to fulfill professional commitments. Without the cooperation of his nose, the ambitious bureaucrat cannot court women and attend meetings he deems necessary to the advancement of his career. Kovalev frantically explains this predicament to the nose in an effort to convince it to rejoin him: "It would be rather unseemly for me to walk around without a nose. It would be alright for some market woman, selling peeled oranges…to sit there with no nose; but as I'm hoping for a promotion…and moreover being acquainted with the ladies of a number of distinguished houses: with state councilor Chekhtarov's wife, and others…Judge for yourself."[55] But it is not merely status anxiety and the desire for olfactory satisfaction that cause Kovalev to frenetically pursue the renegade nose. There is another, more fundamental reason for his panic: Kovalev's very selfhood is at stake. Wishing to place an announcement in the newspaper regarding his missing nose, he pleads with a reluctant clerk: "This is about my very own nose, which amounts to practically the same thing as myself."[56]

The denouement of Gogol's tale is a happy one. The collegiate assessor wakes up one morning with his nose in its proper place and order is instantly restored. Once the nose is back on Kovalev's face, it resumes its inert form, giving "no sign of…having taken a leave of absence."[57] Kovalev, having recovered complete mastery over his nose and himself, freely and gleefully vies for a promotion, flirts with ladies, and goes shopping.

Gogol's story, like "Shaliapin's Left Leg," is about a fracturing of subjectivity, but whereas the former ultimately reaffirms a unified self, the latter renders it as permanently dual and perpetually conflicted. Much of what has been written about the feuilleton's stylistic criteria echoes the critical literature on "The Nose." Donald Fanger and others have argued that Gogol, through the narrator's inconsistent voice and nonlinear plotting, frustrates the reader's generic expectations and ability to derive a singular, clear meaning from his story.[58] Similarly, Peter Fritzsche observes that feuilletons, "not conforming to the predominant regimes of knowledge, full of ironic possibility…demonstrated that things were not always in place or properly understood. Producing a spectacle of surprise, feuilletonists pleaded the case for the confusion of meaning."[59] Disruption of meaning, however, does not equate to its annihilation. The limits of ironic possibility in the two stories—the symbolic margins beyond which meaning, rather than confused, becomes impossible—reveal that "The Nose" and "Shaliapin's Left Leg" are informed by different ontological and epistemological assumptions about selfhood.

The feuilleton's ambiguity and humor depends on a depiction of Shaliapin's struggles with his leg while it is affixed to him, but Gogol cannot be ironic while the nose is positioned on Kovalev's face. Kovalev "loses" his selfhood when the nose is severed; when it resumes its former place on the body the self is reintegrated. Put another way, Kovalev and his nose-as-self are at odds with one another only when the latter leads an independent life. Shaliapin, however, indefinitely must negotiate with his left leg—a contradicting ego that shapes his motivations, influencing his behavior and affecting those around him. The ego/leg, asserting itself within the parameters of Shaliapin's body, symbolizes his inner self (motivations and desires) as well as personality (the social self that is projected to others)—both of which are split and contradictory. In the feuilleton, therefore, agency is presented as more complex and elusive, residing in a subjectivity with a divided external as well as internal aspect.

One of the reasons that the concerns of "Shaliapin's Left Leg"—personality, sincerity, and, by implication, selfhood—recurthroughout

entertainment periodicals and satirical journals in the early twentieth century is that images of celebrities reflected and promoted theatricality, or the notion of life-as-theater.[60] As Elizabeth Burns points out, the spread of the notion of "the world as a place where people, like actors, play parts, in an action which is felt obscurely to be designed by social forces or drives of individual men,"[61] has consequences for understandings of selfhood. Theatricality coexists with the belief that selfhood is divided, that there is a fixed and knowable self that is distinct from the social roles one plays and the ways one presents his "personality" to others. However, Burns also underscores that the analogy between life and drama ultimately throws into question the idea that there is a discrete, autonomous inner layer of selfhood and prompts concerns that individuals are merely the sum of their performances—a set of socially defined behaviors dictated by a given culture.[62]

Theatricality in everyday life was not new to Russia. William Mills Todd and others have argued that Russia's polite society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries not only was disposed toward but embraced and diligently enforced theatricality, viewing it as a standard social practice and a moral imperative. Todd explains that "participation in the social whirl required considerable adaptability and a large repertoire of roles . . . members of society [were] expected to maintain a variety of costumes, properties, personae, and linguistic styles for different events and occasions . . . [and] further were required to tailor their talk and letters to the characteristics of their different interlocutors and correspondents."[63] He goes on to examine some reasons why the concept of life-as-theater was especially amplified in Russia during Pushkin's time:

> Russian life of the period, with its whirl of activities, ever-changing fashions, abundant foreign models, and orientation toward talk, developed this multiplication of selves to an extraordinary degree, largely because the subject that the ideology of polite society constituted was an insistently composite one: the *honnete homme* or *chestnyi chelovek*—a person of balanced humors, emotions, and interests, capable of playing a variety of roles.[64]

At the turn of the eighteenth century, "role playing" was an activity and concept infused exclusively with a regard for the social—it was an economy of behaviors, interests, and vocabularies that facilitated sociability and confirmed membership in high society. The emphasis on theatricality was not accompanied by a concern about

the integrity of the interior self. Theatrical and multiple self-representations, according to Todd, were not perceived as a danger to a deeper, more constant, and authentic layer of selfhood until the time of Gogol, when "the potential of this behavior norm for encouraging imposture soon became a prime generator of literary plots, but at least initially this multiplication of selves could be seen not as insincerity, but as an essentially moral activity."[65]

If Russia's bon ton began to view the social and internal orders as separate and potentially conflicting only in the early nineteenth century, by the early twentieth century conceptions of both the social and the psyche were in flux. Theatricality now was discussed and practiced in the context of a commodity culture, novel imaginings of the urban social landscape, greater availability of rags to riches narratives, and the popularization of psychoanalytic concepts (if not psychoanalysis proper).[66] Role play, increasingly associated with consumption and mass reproduction, was no longer the exclusive privilege of polite society but preoccupied urban dwellers from a variety of social strata. And, as in the cases of Liza and Savva Mamontov, it was often quite serious play, concerned not only with behavior and activities but also with belief and feeling—the innermost workings and expressions of the "I."

When Todd refers to "multiplication of selves" in the early nineteenth century, he is alluding to a set of social roles played for others. It is useful, however, to discuss subjectivity in Burns's terms and distinguish between a "personality" (the public, performed persona) and a "self" or ego, signifying an interior, potentially unchanging and private realm. While this distinction seems to have been clearer in Gogol's time, as "The Nose" suggests, and authenticity was understood as congruence between one's inner self and social performance, it becomes more problematic in the feuilleton, where these two parts of selfhood are more mutable and the boundary between them is threatened.

The burgeoning celebrity culture of the early twentieth century in many ways shored up the notion of an irreducible, authentic inner self, but it simultaneously made the "constructedness" of personality and self explicit. Opera celebrities at once acted on stage and appeared as "themselves," embodying the performing self. Images of stars without costumes and in intimate settings, as opposed to characters sung and represented on stage, were supposed to show them as authentic people. Celebrities' offstage images were treated ambivalently by entertainment periodicals. The press sometimes presented them as unmediated reflections of a star in "real life"—as glimpses

into the person behind the role, the true self obscured by makeup and costumes when on stage. But often journalists undermined such representations by revealing their constructed nature and exposing them as chimerical—the inauthentic creations of entrepreneurs, the press, and the celebrities themselves.

The artifice of everyday life: Critics of celebrity culture

Sergei Zimin, whose enterprise, whatever his claims, was more commercial than Mamontov's, was a frequent target of satirical journals—particularly during his publicity campaigns at the start of each season. In the fall of 1909, the company heavily promoted a new production of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* in which the singer V. A. Levitskii was scheduled to perform. "If Zimin did not exist," wrote a *Budil'nik* contributor, "he would have to be invented. But Zimin not only exists, he is an inventor himself…Yesterday he invented Levitskii. Only three days ago no one had heard of him, but today he is compared to [Vasilii] Damaev, who, as everyone knows, was also invented by Zimin. Yesterday Zimin fashioned yet another 'ziminzinger,' the baritone [Andrei] Dikov."[67]

Proclaiming celebrity as an arbitrary creation of publicity rather than a result of special innate talent, satirists also implied that celebrity culture had a corrosive effect on the inner selves of personality-obsessed fans. The following *Budil'nik* sketch, for example, parodies a touring opera singer who plays a variety of roles, both on stage and in life, in a superficial manner and lacks an essence:

> As soon as he arrives somewhere, the first order of business is to place on the hotel room table a huge, bright red leather-bound album that contains all of his carefully glued laudatory reviews. And on the walls appear countless postcards, on which the famous touring [artist] is featured in every imaginable pose and role, in costume, and without a costume—in nothing but his tights. There is also a picture of him with all kinds of celebrities, living and deceased…(The secret of how to arrange, with some help, postcards featuring these sorts of combinations, is known only by one minor Kiev photographer, who makes a decent living off "touring [singers].")[68]

The touring singer assumes personae that are inauthentic, and is himself starstruck, forging his identity from imagined relationships with other celebrities. He is all surface, pure artifice—a collection

of photographs that falsely testifies to his fame. "Psychology" for the ersatz celebrity is a mere catchword used in social situations to impress others and satisfy his vanity:

> The touring artist likes to show off his erudition . . . he stands among a group of gimnaziia students, pompously saying: "Yes, ladies and gentlemen! In our business education is most important, and psychology! Psychology and education! . . . Why does my costume in *Demon* have fish scales on it? Because I believe that when the demon fell from the sky, he fell into the sea. And since he fell into the sea, he must have been coated with scales. You see, ladies and gentlemen, I'm telling you: education and psychology first and foremost."[69]

Acting without self-reflection, the touring singer mistakenly imagines himself to be the heroes and lovers he portrays on stage:

> He loves women . . . Once, while passing in a cab, he blew a kiss to a lady standing at her window. The husband chased after him in another cab and caught up to him . . . [The husband] struck our hero's top hat with a whip. Upon returning home he dreamt about a duel, and fondled his revolver, but [the revolver] accidentally fired, and he became so frightened that he went into convulsions. Consequently, he dropped all thoughts of dueling and simply replaced his top hat.[70]

Journalists' discussions of the commodification of culture and its impact on society were not always humorous or oblique. In an article in *Rampa i zhizn'*, a certain A. Ardov gravely lamented that "advertising has become a serious concern for true theater lovers who cannot get used to the thought that the pure and high-principled business of serving art is quickly going downhill." According to the author, the press contributed to the degradation of cultural production when it mingled or replaced critical literature and factual reporting with advertisements. He wrote that "[even] *Novoe vremia* . . . prints, for a fee, publicity notices in their 'theater chronicle' [section] . . . And so, under the guise of personal, purely artistic evaluations of a particular trend in the arts, private objectives with material calculations are put forth." Ardov went on to despair that Russian theater, "the most principled in the world," was beginning to resemble "the majority of theaters in west Europe," and that Wagner's prediction, made in 1849, had come to pass: "In essence, the theater is becoming an industry; its goal is profit, its purpose—entertainment for the bored."[71]

Like Kochetov in Zimin's book on private opera, but with a less optimistic outlook, Ardov declared that theater had a unique role in Russia, and served a pedagogical purpose because it was "the most important and serious cultural institution in an otherwise stifled and frozen country."[72] Ardov and other theater commentators believed that advertising corrupted theater and Russian spectators, who turned to opera and drama for instruction about art and life. Publicity, inherently false, generated equally guileful celebrities, who in turn, acting as role models, created unprincipled people.

Satirists challenged celebrity culture and its commodification of personality on the grounds that images of stars like Shaliapin, employed by fans in the fashioning of their own personalities and selves, ultimately robbed them of their individuality and humanity. Contributors to entertainment weeklies replete with advertisements often contradicted the ideology of their own publications, arguing that opera celebrities, as players of diverse roles and embodiments of success, seemingly offered fans narratives of authentic self-transformation and the means to create protean and unique identities, but actually produced an easily malleable, docile, and undifferentiated public.

"How F. I. Shaliapin Saved Russia," a sketch that appeared in *Budil'nik* in 1911, illustrated the ways in which Shaliapin's "brilliant" and magnetic image invited both worship and emulation, effected a suppression of the fissures of post-1905 society, inspired an uncritical passivity and ideological uniformity among the population, and thereby insidiously served the interests of the tsarist police state:

> Ever since the brilliant artist and greatest of singers Fedor Shaliapin published an [open] letter in the Parisian press . . . a letter that was translated into Russian and appeared in [our] newspapers . . . the veil has been lifted from our eyes. Shaliapin expressed himself with his characteristic genius, directly and keenly: "I am called to play on the stage before the public, and since [the public consists of people] who hold differing convictions, I do not feel I can express my own." One of the first to ponder the meaning of these . . . brilliant words was an eminent author, respected for the . . . firmness of his progressive views. The author had read the "letter to the editor" in the newspapers of the world's capitals while lying in bed, and as he dressed thought to himself: "Bah, Fedor Ivanovich is a thousand percent right. How can I be guaranteed that my books will not be bought by trade unionists, nationalists, or even Octobrists? All sorts want to read brilliant literature. The eminent

> author then wrote a letter to the editor announcing that he shares the great artist's viewpoint. [His letter] opened the floodgates. First there flowed tens of such letters, then hundreds, and soon newspapers began to print nothing but letters.[73]

Lawyers wrote letters explaining that "they must defend individuals with all kinds of convictions, doctors [wrote] that they are obligated to treat [patients] with a variety of principles," and so on. The author of the feuilleton offered a few notable examples. A restaurateur declared: "'After reading . . . Shaliapin's letter in the newspapers, I came to the same conclusion as the great artist. My restaurant is patronized by people of radically different convictions, even suicidal types, and therefore I do not feel that it is possible for me to have my own convictions on my political menu.'" A butcher also weighed in: "'Due to the fact that rumps and thighs can be purchased by people of various creeds and nationalities, and because roast beef is bought only by the English . . . I don't believe that I have the right to voice my own political convictions.'"[74]

Letters to the editor were composed by nefarious characters as well. Following Shaliapin's logic, a pogromist reasoned that "'since during pogroms we normally start, God forgive me, with the yids, but then beat anyone who happens to be nearby—students included—from now on I do not feel that I can express my own opinions.'" Even the traitor Azef, a one-time Socialist Revolutionary who had been exposed as a police agent, was moved to pen a letter from the grave. He insisted:

> "Shaliapin said nothing I haven't stated already. I served people with different convictions: both the government and the Socialist Revolutionaries. Clearly, I did not feel able to voice my own convictions, and so when the revolutionaries sent me to arrange assassinations, I went; and when the government ordered me to snatch Socialist Revolutionaries, I caught them. I don't think there is anything original in this."[75]

The tale's sarcastic epilogue brings its criticism of celebrity culture into focus. A few weeks after the "brilliant initiative" of Shaliapin, "placid and soothed Russia refrained completely from expressing her opinions and got down on her knees. The chief of police was sick with envy . . . and paced his office pulling his hair, exclaiming: 'Just think—how simple it all was!'" The author concluded: "The question of an all-Russian petition for the erection of a monument to Russia's

extraordinary singer and artist, the genius Fedor Shaliapin, remains open to this day."[76]

A few months prior to the appearance of "How Shaliapin Saved Russia," the real Shaliapin and the Mariinskii chorus dropped to their knees and sang the national anthem during a St. Petersburg performance of *Boris Godunov* attended by Nicholas II. Such a display of patriotism caused a scandal in Russia and abroad, fueled by castigating open letters sent to European newspapers (to avoid censors) by progressive émigré Russian artists and writers. Shaliapin, who had departed soon after the performance on a European tour, received bundles of hate mail and feared returning to Russia. Distraught and eager to explain his actions, he only made matters worse by turning to various foreign newspapers with slightly varying and occasionally conflicting versions of the story.[77]

The feuilleton certainly makes implicit reference to the widely publicized incident but also treats readers to humorous criticism of a phenomenon much broader in scope than a singer's political obtuseness. As is repeated to the point of monotony, Shaliapin's greatness emanates from vocal and acting abilities: he is Russia's "extraordinary singer and artist." His "brilliant" opinions, however, have nothing to do with talent or artistry and are adopted by an ever-widening cast of characters who may or may not appreciate music. In the story, Shaliapin functions not as an extraordinary opera performer but as a signifier of extraordinariness itself, detached from a specific context or meaning. The appropriation of his words therefore imparts banality rather than uniqueness and creativity. Because the reading public desires to recognize and attach itself to Shaliapin as an embodiment of an abstracted extraordinariness, he is an effective national, unifying symbol, albeit in a negative sense. As consumers and apers of the celebrity's image, the social middle—lawyers, doctors, and entrepreneurs—are indistinguishable from pogromists and ruthless double agents. Shaliapin, accomplishing goals the police could not, renders Russia's subjects standardized and innocuous.

"How Shaliapin Saved Russia" ultimately suggested that celebrity images, like other commodities, bolstered dominant or official ideology by reconciling or suppressing its contradictions.[78] Its caustic humor targeted capitalist values, which some journalists feared supplanted the progressive ethos that guided the Revolution of 1905. And it portrayed an assault on the self by the advent of commercialization and the mass-produced, profit-driven, or apolitical nature of stars' personalities. Like much of the discourse about celebrity, the feuilleton reflected a concern that the self was no longer reliably

constant and whole but always vulnerable to disintegration and misrepresentation in a consumer culture.

* * *

Shaliapin was one of the most praised and satirized celebrities in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the omnipresence of his image—his status as celebrity *par excellence*—probably was not accidental. Shaliapin's tempestuous personality illustrated especially well anxieties about a reconceived, increasingly fractured subjectivity and the resulting concern about personal authenticity. Like all celebrities, he was exposed as a dandified egomaniac, impure, spoiled by fame and consumerism. But such inauthentic, corrupting aspects of celebrity were also comforting, for one could see through them. What is more, Shaliapin's caprice and scandalous behavior were narratively linked to his emotive singing style. The extreme behavior seemed at once an extension of the psychological realism of his various opera roles and a unifying force that submerged heterogeneity in a flood of feeling. What did it mean, then, when fans, opera aficionados, and even novices like Vera, only a few years after Shaliapin's ascent in 1898, listened to his voice in their drawing rooms, on a record? What happened when ardent, operatic voices emerged from furniture and became part of daily life? The following chapters will pursue the themes of fandom, listening, and emotions.

3
Deviant Audiences and the Feminization of Fandom

The Psikhopatka

Throughout the nineteenth century, Russian theater periodicals and memoirs referred to "melomany"—zealous opera lovers who populated the gallery. They worshipped Rossini, showered their favorite stars with gifts, and went to great lengths to acquire tickets. Often they were young, male aristocrats who were "slumming," as Julie Buckler puts it.[1] By the 1880s, references to "Wagnerites" appeared in the theater literature. The Wagnerite was a contested identity and category of fan—at times deemed aristocratic and glitzy, at others bourgeois and sober. Self-proclaimed Wagnerites fancied themselves as elite music listeners, but often were lampooned as philistine subscribers in the press. In the early twentieth century, a new breed of fan joined the ranks of the masculine-coded melomany and unisex Wagnerites: the psikhopatka. The term psikhopatka, as it was used in the theater literature of the early twentieth century, was not always specifically defined, but a number of criteria can be discerned from the context in which it appeared. In the argot of entertainment journals, the word retained shades of its literal meaning—lunatic, or madwoman. But it also connoted a specific type of female opera fan—one who had an unusually intense penchant for performers—often but not always male singers, usually but not exclusively tenors. The epithet appeared only in its feminine form. Theater discourse never put forward the masculine variant, thereby naming and pathologizing female fans exclusively. The absence of a *psikhopat*, I will show, suggests that opera fandom—and perhaps fandom as a whole—was feminized at the turn of the twentieth century.

The current definition of meloman is simply music lover, and the nineteenth-century melomany indeed loved music. They attended

opera primarily to hear their favorite composers' works and appreciated individual performers for their vocal abilities. Often choosing the acoustically superior gallery seats over the luxurious bel étage, the young, well-to-do melomany privileged aural enjoyment over visual pleasure. The psikhopatka, on the other hand, worshipped only specific personalities—their voices and appearance. The composer's creation, the design of the sets, the orchestra, choruses, ballets—in short, the operatic work and the ensemble that performed it—did not interest the psikhopatka, who focused squarely on her object of desire: the physique, voice, and persona of the opera star.

"Psikhopatka," a poem printed in a 1909 issue of *Budil'nik*, provides a burlesque, vivid portrait of the eponymous antiheroine's behavior in the theater:

> From the gallery down the stairs
> I gallop like an antelope
> And run up to the footlights
> Pleading to be let into the orchestra pit.
> I call out my "idol" (*dushka*),
> I am the herald of his success
> And applaud with all my might,
> And blow him kisses.
> I am prepared to listen to him
> With ecstatic passion,
> Wildly exulted by the piercing fire of anguish.
> I am prepared to eat him up in his entirety,
> His enchanting costume, boots, and socks.
> And again to the gallery
> I race like an antelope.
> Gratitude has been awakened in the hearts of the public.
> I am sensitive,
> I am perceptive, discerning all talent.
> I applaud until a dozen blisters form on my hands.[2]

The psikhopatka is disruptive and wild. She is a savage, horned, and galloping beast. Her rapacity has an unsubtle erotic charge: yearning to swallow whole the male performer, she objectifies and marks him for postcoital annihilation. Her sexual attraction and obsessive devotion transform into an equally dangerous identification with the idol. In her eagerness to be near the stage and herald his success, the psikhopatka threatens to subsume his identity under her

own—engulf him in flames of passion. The psikhopatka's approach to opera, therefore, is markedly narcissistic. She idealizes the performer, applauding while concomitantly recognizing herself in him: it is unclear whether she credits the singer's performance or her heartfelt ovation and perspicacity for awakening "gratitude in the hearts of the public."

The carnivorous desires and narcissistic tendencies of the psikhopatka suggest anxieties about Russia's expanding consumer economy and the growing link between commodity consumption and fandom. The emergence of "middlebrow" entertainment in the late nineteenth century—cabarets and nightclubs that catered to privileged society, cloaked themselves in respectability, and heavily promoted individual performers to sell tickets—was deemed dangerous by self-proclaimed defenders of "pure art," supposedly devoid of profit motive.[3] Private opera companies and the Imperial Theaters increasingly appropriated the marketing strategies of middlebrow enterprises, creating and commodifying celebrities in order to attract audiences. Such practices were anathema to "serious" music and theater journalists attempting to preserve the distinctiveness and meaning of "high culture." As they articulated an opposition between the noble aspirations of the discerning pursuers of real art and the vanity of those who indiscriminately ingested its commodified imposter, guardians of high culture feminized the latter.

In his 1910 article in *Rampa i zhizn'*, Ardov argued that Russian audiences, unlike the west European public, were not savvy readers of advertisements, and could not distinguish between legitimate acclaim and hype: "In France, when a petit-bourgeois reads the pathetic advertisements of cunning entrepreneurs sprinkled among thousands of Parisian newspapers, he smiles slyly and says to himself: 'Crafty rascal—advertises and spends lots of money—that means the actress must be worth something'... [But in Russia], deceitful and malicious advertising is especially slick and, without any discretion, cloaked in a virtuous costume."[4]

In the discourse about theater and celebrity, "*artistka*," the feminine form of artist, was often metaphorically linked to or displaced by "*reklama*," the feminine noun meaning publicity or advertising. The sanctity of the masculine "*teatr*" was thus tainted by the debauched and deceitful feminine "cloaked in a virtuous costume." In the following passage, for example, the author of the article "The Latest Theater Celebrities" progressed rather effortlessly from a blunt comment about the ubiquity of advertising to images of

seductive and materialistic female artists, to descriptions of behavior associated with the licentiousness and corrupting influences of prostitutes: "Advertising is currently the *epicenter of life* and theater advertising especially hits you in the face. It approaches the virtuosic, and true '*virtuozki-reklamy*' perform on stages. On bills appear 'artistki' that have nothing in common with art: [they are] *accidental celebrities* having risen from the dregs of society . . . It makes no difference to them whether they howl gypsy songs or prance in dramas so long as they have an opportunity to 'demonstrate' their shoulders, valuable jewelry, and wardrobes. While on stage their minds are behind the scenes because they know their true talent lies elsewhere . . . their diamonds do the 'acting' for them . . . And serious theater transforms into 'puppet theater' for grown-up children."[5]

The metaphoric and sometimes quite plain association of women on the professional stage with prostitutes was not new, but female artists' fame, wealth, status, and cultural authority was. Gendered public discussions about reklama and its corrupting ways reflected concerns about the much maligned, unbridled New Women, that is, the perceived growing financial independence and public role of women. Just as the mass-produced, feminized reklama threatened to contaminate the distinctive, masculine teatr and undermine generic hierarchies, so too did assertive, professional women threaten to violate conventional gender roles.

Mercenary celebrities and their gullible devotees, frequently derided through gendered allusions to impurity and transgression, received even more negative attention in discussions about opera—arguably the most important bastion of high culture. As we have seen, satirical journals often invoked Fedor Shaliapin, Russia's quintessential celebrity, to illustrate and lampoon the superficiality of commodified culture and its deleterious effects on both producers and consumers. In an August 1910 issue of *Budil'nik*, a sketch entitled "Shaliapin's Free Time" related a trip to Shaliapin's estate by a group of ardent fans desperate to see the famous opera singer. While still far from their destination, they peered into the distance, expecting that the star's "greatness" would enable them to catch sight of him. But Shaliapin could not be detected. When the fans finally arrived at his estate, they spotted a cashier's box at the entrance:

> Someone inside shouted: "Please get tickets!"
>
> "What tickets?"
>
> "Did you think that you could see Shaliapin without tickets? For free? That's impossible."

> We agreed that it was indeed impossible and tried to enter using free passes. The cashier grew very angry:
>
> "For Shaliapin free passes are not valid!"
>
> We were forced to pay. The prices were so high that we immediately felt we were at Shaliapin's. There could not be any doubt.[6]

High ticket prices and financial greed were not the only upshots of Shaliapin's fame punctuated in the piece. The public's puerile and insatiable voyeurism and narcissism were suggested as well. Soon after the group of fans paid admission and entered the estate, they found their beloved Shaliapin "consuming curdled milk [*prostokvashu*]. Stools, chairs, and theater boxes were set up in front of the stage on which he was [eating]. The audience was large and there was not an empty seat in the house." The fans negotiated with the usher, who let them stand in the aisle:

> "It isn't very nice of…Shaliapin," the public complained. "He's eating curdled milk and we have to pay."
>
> "Nothing can be done about it. He can't open his mouth for free, after all."
>
> It was a grandiose spectacle as Shaliapin put spoonful after spoonful into his mouth. The critics scribbled in their notebooks. The audience applauded and shouted "Encore!":
>
> And Fedor Ivanovich kept eating encores. There were ceaseless ovations.
>
> Finally, Shaliapin pointed to his throat and said:
>
> "I cannot go on. I'm gorged [*syt po gorlo*]."
>
> The psikhopatki wailed with joy.[7]

Forgetting or perhaps not caring that Shaliapin is supposed to sing, the psikhopatki watch him in order to satisfy their desire for self-recognition. As Shaliapin eats on stage, consuming for their pleasure, he mirrors their consumption of him. The object of their identification is not a represented operatic hero, or even Shaliapin's voice, but rather "the representation itself, the spectacle as a performance." The feminized audience-as-psikhopatki come to see Shaliapin less for what he portrays than for the performances he facilitates and mimics.[8]

While the fans are contemptuously depicted as unreflective consumers interested in stars rather than artistic creations, Shaliapin is doubly impugned, appearing both as a banal commodity and a docile consumer. The image of him eating sour milk metonymically

evokes the maternal body and nursing newborn. As the fans urge Shaliapin to continue eating, he dutifully and repeatedly obeys until he is stuffed, receiving adulation for each spoonful. In this grotesque scene, the so-called "great" and "incomparable" bass is emasculated through a symbolic association with the secretions and demands of reproductive females, and his extraordinary talent is rendered meaningless. By linking the activities of Shaliapin and his fans to the pedestrian relationship between mothers and their feeding infants, the author of the sketch warns his readers that commercialization and celebrity cults imperil lofty, unique cultural production and the autonomy of the male artist. The feuilleton's title is ironic on multiple levels since neither Shaliapin nor his fans are "free": the former is enslaved by his commodification, and the latter by their own gaze.[9]

High culture must be protected!

Entrepreneurs, music critics, and feuilletonists, often overlapping sociologically and discursively, attempted to establish and safeguard the realm of high culture through a logic of alterity: normative, unique, and autonomous artistic production, invested with universal significance and given a privileged place, was constituted through its opposition to formulaic, replicable, or mass-produced boulevard literature and entertainment—a quotidian, feminine domain.[10] In Russia and elsewhere in Europe, the challenge posed to the elite/popular dichotomy by hybrid cultural forms produced an effect whereby Woman was not only the Other of modernism, as Andreas Huyssen has argued convincingly, but also the Other of the notion of high culture more broadly.[11]

The delineation of "serious art" that evolved, paradoxically, in the Russian middlebrow press, depended on Woman's symbolic excision, which in turn rested on a set of gendered metaphoric and metonymic associations: women with consumption (inferior to production), ravenous femininity with corrupt and inauthentic celebrity, the desiring female and her sexualized body with fandom, and feminized fans with an undifferentiated mob that threatened to smother the individual genius and his creative work.[12]

Satirical journals were replete with misogynist humor. The vain and thriftless woman who squandered money and time on the boulevard was a staple of critiques of consumer capitalism. Also common were images of aggressive wives browbeating their emasculated, cowering husbands and uttering statements like: "He never contradicts me. Let him dare open his miserable mouth—I'll scratch out his eyes

and pull his hair out, the scoundrel!"[13] Nightclub singers, operetta stars, and provincial actresses were objects of arch parody as well. Representations of female performers in erotic poses with exaggerated busts and comical makeup were juxtaposed with sketches that portrayed them as depraved mercenaries with predatory sexual appetites. One such caricature featured a fashionably dressed starlet holding a man upside down by his ankles and shaking out coins from his pockets. The caption read: "Easy 'artists' ['artistki'] not only turn art upside down but also their fans; they shake the soul out of the public and money out of fans."[14]

The inauthentic artistka-in-quotes was not to be confused with the genuine article—an actress of the Imperial Theater or a prima donna at a major opera company.[15] The former was an artistka-manqué, a regular on the cabaret stage, and an occasional interloper at more eminent venues. Satirists frequently reminded their readers that the artificial artistka and her employers used sex to sell tickets, tacitly instructing them through mock dialogues not to mistake erotic appeal for talent. In the short sketch "At a Concert," witty audience members are not bewitched by flesh-baring divas: "'Do you find that this pretty singer reveals too much of her cleavage?'—'Yes, apparently she wants to cover up a deficiency in her voice with a deficient toilette.'"[16]

With her protruding, fertile, and vulgar body that obscured the lack of true artistry and undermined elevated, measured appreciation of authentic creativity, the caricatured female performer was a composite of the conspicuously consuming well-to-do lady and the castrating wife. Her modus operandi was vapid and circular: beguile and extract money from men by means of sex appeal in order to acquire luxurious adornments for the purpose of attracting more men. And yet, the masquerading artistka's close proximity to legitimate art, combined with her unabashed public display of sexuality, made her habits a shade more menacing than those of her sister types.

The feminization of consumption, as I have suggested, did not amount simply to abundant depictions of consuming women. Much of the language used to describe or signify the material instruments and mechanisms of commercialization was gendered as well. In a 1903 poem "Girlfriends," for example, reklama (advertising) is synonymous with Woman:

> Looking around with great dismay
> Straight, sideways, right, and left
> I see two girlfriends roam and sway
> They're Advertising and Disrespect.
> Attractive both of them appear

Presentable throughout
For these two girlfriends far and near
Suitors abound, there is no doubt.
One can lose count—a vast array
Your arguments have no effect:
Well-esteemed in our day
Are Advertising and Disrespect![17]

The omnipresence and redundancy of impudent advertising is equated with pairs of women who seem to replicate and reappear at every turn and from whom there is no escape. Although the potential buyers are scores of "suitors" and presumably men, they fully succumb to the rules of "girlfriends." The boulevard is a space where the unindividuated feminine roams with no aim except to seduce and absorb everyone who crosses her path. Femininity, therefore, is not associated only with consumption, but is inscribed on an entire consumer culture of which commodification, social deportment, a moral economy, and mass consumption are integral components.

The linkage between Woman and consumption certainly was not unique to fin-de-siècle Russia. Victoria de Grazia, examining the origins of the association in Europe and the United States, points out that "ever since the eighteenth century, admiration for the new sciences of productivity has gone hand-in-hand with fear of carnivalesque excess, one identified with imperturbable maleness, the other with an out-of-control femininity."[18] She further suggests that the "propensity to feminize consumption…was reinforced by two structural changes" arising in the nineteenth century. "The first was the division of labor in the work process, and the simultaneous identification of wage labor with male labor." This change deepened an already existing distinction between the home and the workplace, female procurers and male workers, and consumption and production. The second change, according to de Grazia, was "the advent of liberal politics and public space…premised on the reconceptualization of needs" that entailed "distinguishing those needs that were defined as irrational, superfluous, or so impassioned that they overloaded the political system from those that were rationally articulated," and deemed appropriate for political sphere. "The former…tended to be identified with the female population, who by and large were excluded from electoral representation, whereas the latter were identified with enfranchised males."[19]

Industrial capitalism and the representative political system valued production more than consumption (condemned as "non-work") and privileged the male voice of the public sphere—its civic culture and

egalitarian politics of rights—over the private, particularistic needs and desires of the household. Although the bourgeoisie was transformed in the mid-nineteenth century into a consuming class that constituted itself through the acquisition of luxury goods and invidious hierarchies of taste, a fear remained that women would spend more than their husbands earned. Consumption and the crowd potentially could transform into wasteful spending and an unruly mob, and disrupt the bourgeois order. The feminine, long identified with capricious, primitive forces of nature that technology struggled to vanquish, was tied symbolically to social and political threats. Liberal capitalist discourses repeatedly naturalized and therefore validated class and status distinctions through articulations of sexual difference. Even with the advent of consumer capitalism in the late nineteenth century, the links between femininity and consumption, and masculinity and production endured, as did their respective valuations.[20]

The question that arises, then, is: Why was feminized consumption so often presented as a society's hydra in the entertainment journals of tsarist Russia, hardly a paragon of representative politics or a prime example of the Habermasian public sphere? What was jeopardized by the appearance of Russian celebrities, and why was it implied that they were emasculated by those who idolized them? If the feminine was not conceived as a threat to a specific political order, what were the broad social and personal fears—beyond the arena of opera culture—articulated so often through gendered metaphors? Finally, when celebrities and their fans were connected to the pathological, the infantile, and the feminine, who was conceived as the masculine, sane grown-up?

A close look at a 1913 *Rampa i zhizn'* article by the Shakespearean actor Nikolai Rossov provides some initial answers.[21] Rossov begins by peevishly asking: "Why does drama, compared to opera, remind one of Cinderella? Even first-class dramatic artists are valued half as much as opera [singers]—judging not only by 'filthy lucre' but by attention from the public." To illustrate his point, Rossov contrasts Shaliapin's overwhelming success with the reception of the famous French classical actor Mounet-Sully.[22] The latter, "a god of Greek tragedy," played to a nearly empty theater during his last visit to St. Petersburg. Conceding that Shaliapin's talent merits the recognition and enthusiasm of audiences, Rossov shifts the focus of his contempt to other opera singers, who are less deserving:

> All the Shaliapin imitators [*podshaliapintsy*] achieve only one thing: because of their [bad] acting they create not opera, not drama, but the most insufferable boredom and noise in the head. This

> perhaps is what explains the noticeable drop-off in opera attendance . . . [O]pera performances draw crowds only when celebrities are featured. Consequently, it is unnecessary to speak of opera's potential to edify [*vospitat'*] aesthetically. For whom do the great opera artists perform? Mostly for the titled and wealthy nobility. Young people and servants, not to mention the impoverished, are deprived of the opportunity truly to acquaint themselves with opera stars because they appear on stage only for "stupendous" amounts of money.[23]

Celebrities like Shaliapin, though worthy of their high salaries and fame, spawn imitators who degrade opera. The "titled and wealthy" are complicit in the creation of inflated celebrity status and, therefore, the infiltration of "filthy lucre" into what ought to be pristine artistic utterance and unmediated communion with music. Here Rossov expresses a view shared by opera entrepreneurs, music critics, and other journalists. As I discussed, "serious" theater was for them the principal vehicle for educating and spiritually uplifting elite society as well as the masses. Hoping to supplant the nobility as disseminators of enlightenment, they aimed to change the meaning of operagoing and alter its culture of exclusiveness. The masses, exposed to opera and other high art through popular theaters like the Narodnyi dom (People's House) and provincial touring companies, ideally would see and hear truly great artists and not charlatans who merely played at "greatness." Well-to-do audiences were not supposed to go to the theater primarily to see celebrities (though, apparently, they did). Rossov and like-minded contributors to entertainment weeklies imagined crowds flocking to the theater for supremely performed music and drama, not famous names.

Later in the article, Rossov compares celebrities to commodities and equates the latter with women. He ironically remarks that high ticket prices are "not the fault of opera artists. Their function resembles that of splendid beauties or precious stones. Both serve as rare ornaments of life and therefore are worth a high price. Why shouldn't large sums of money be taken from those who wish to own these ornaments and have the means to pay for them?"[24] Suggesting that opera stars are the market's latest commodities because they represent grandeur and convey social status, Rossov implies that celebrities are acquired by audiences aspiring to gain prestige and transform themselves through encounters with reified fame and financial success. By then likening opera's artists to "splendid beauties," he also suggests that craving celebrity as adornment is akin to desiring contact with women's bodies or possessing the feminine.

Much like the singer-celebrity, who is virtually devoid of agency and attains fame due to an arbitrarily swollen salary, the operagoing fan in Rossov's account lacks a strong will, consuming as part of a soulless and undifferentiated "herd":

> Although . . . talent cannot be measured by money, nearly always a cunning mediocrity earns thousands while indisputable talent is rewarded with half-kopeks . . . [B]oth here and abroad, the more an artist earns, the more his performances are attended by every conceivable person. This already is a herd mentality . . . The level of interest of the titled and wealthy crowd in [opera] celebrities and the salaries paid for their talent cannot be compared to almost any other branch of art. How strong in a person is the passion for everything that does not burden the mind, for that which does not stir his conscience or the best part of his soul but only gives pleasure . . . like lemonade in springtime.[25]

When stardom stands in for the true gratification one derives from great art and talent, self-realization is not achieved through the difficult work of reflection but—much to the author's dismay—blithely purchased.

Rossov's diatribe alluded to fears that also informed the feuilletons lampooning the psikhopatki and Shaliapin: when celebrity images were commodified, selfhood and identity were too. Crowds did not attend theater for the works artists performed but for performance as such—to witness and imitate theatricality. The "herd mentality" in the form of throngs of overly zealous fans or insipid groups of subscribers repeatedly appeared in public discussions about opera. Signifying a deficiency of individualism, a mass of empty selves, herdlike fans threatened the conception of subjecthood high-culture exponents were attempting to promote. The ideal personality or *lichnost'* for entrepreneurs and others in the cultural elite was predicated on the notion of a dynamic but unitary core—a conscious "I" securely situated in society. Yet, literary writings and opera libretti since Fedor Dostoevsky and Mussorgsky increasingly depicted an interior life that was prone to fragmentation, a self susceptible to irrational impulses that destabilized its locus in the social order. *Crime and Punishment* and *Boris Godunov* portrayed the self's acute suspicion of itself—its base proclivities, delusional fits, and capacity for dissolution. By the early twentieth century, this version of subjectivity had entered the popular imagination, becoming commonplace. It was a version that high art advocates, despite their invocations of the Cartesian self, clearly acknowledged when

they stigmatized behaviors that betrayed a split consciousness or anemic ego, and distanced themselves from the cultural forces that produced it.

Merchant impresarios, satirists, and others contributing to Russia's entertainment periodicals did not have a liberal political order to defend, but they did have what loosely can be called a liberal subjectivity. The notion of a coherent self with knowable parameters underpinned their progressive ethos and exalted cultural mission. The salvation and enlightenment of Russia through reflexive experiences of high art such as opera depended on self-fashioning that was, ultimately, from the inside out. In other words, self-transformation for them did not mean a forging of an altogether new self or the superficial multiplication of personalities but, in Rossov's words, the "stirring" of one's "conscience"—an expansion and deepening of an interiority that had been present all along.

Fandom as Woman: High culture's Other

Vanity, excess, and changeability—all gendered feminine—were considered harmful to the cause of high culture, where a correct approach involved discernment, informed reverence, and modulated emotional responses. In the press, fans most frequently were superficial and easily agitated females concerned with affect and sensual display rather than rational contemplation, emoting rather than looking inward. The judgment of these wide-eyed admirers was impaired by a romantic interest in their idols, causing them to confuse unique artists with false celebrities generated by the ubiquitous images of publicity campaigns: mediocrities making hackneyed pseudo-art. While the true music lover appreciated great art, the spontaneously created work of an extraordinary individual, the female fan desired and identified with his persona, coveting reproduced images.

As a set of practices, feminized fandom was associated primarily with the arena of mass-produced, boulevard literature—where "serious" journalists and impresarios obviously wanted it to remain. Huyssen has pointed out that in Europe and the United States "time and again documents from the late nineteenth century ascribe pejorative feminine characteristics to mass culture . . . serialized feuilleton novels . . . family magazines, the stuff of lending libraries, fictional bestsellers, and the like—not, however, working-class culture or residual forms of older popular or folk cultures."[26] In Russia, the defining characteristics of a typical fan of mass-produced or popular works extended to fans in general.

The fan-as-woman of early-twentieth-century feuilletons was interested mostly in the author of her beloved writings, whom she envisioned to be a heroic poet or romantic artist capable of realizing the desires of her heart and body and completing her. In the 1911 satirical feuilleton "Talents and Their Fans" (*Talanty i poklonniki*), for example, Mariia Kiseinova, "loses her head" over Vadim Nartsisov's poems, which she reads daily in the penny press. Every Sunday, the enraptured Mariia races to purchase her favorite newspaper from a street peddler and scampers home, where she voraciously reads Nartsisov's poems in a secluded corner, savoring every line:

> And the poems, as if on purpose, were very seductive. Everything was about love, rendezvous, kisses, embraces…all things attractive and near to a girl's heart…After reading the poems aloud, she would begin to dream and her thoughts would suddenly turn from the work to the author: "What could the composer of these poems be like?…Probably he is an attractive, wonderful young man, able to love so strongly, so passionately."
>
> Do you recall that wonderful evening?
> Remember that jasmine shrub
> O, in what languorous voluptuousness
> Did a pair of burning lips rub!
>
> "How poetic!…Ah, Nartsisov! Ah, Vadim!"
>
> Falling in love with the poetry, Marusia [also] gradually fell in love…with Nartsisov in absentia…And constantly her reveries were:…"Ah, Vadim…Will you return my love some day?…How I would like to see you!"[27]

Mistaking the syrupy, insipid stanzas of a hack rhymester for the sublime verses of a literary genius, she conflates the poet and his poetry. Captivated by an illusion, she ceaselessly fantasizes about the love they could share. Mariia imagines her idol as a radiant, effervescent youth, with a beautiful figure and sincere heart. In actuality, he is jaded, dissolute, and middle-aged:

> The poet Vadim Nartsisov or, more commonly, the reporter Ivan Utkin, sat with his colleagues in a bar writing a poem for the next issue…
>
> "Just try [doing this!]…[A]fter getting beaten to a pulp in a fist fight it's hard to get into a lyrical mood," with sadness he said to his friends. "I have to write about the moon and the scent of

lilac, but all I have in my head is some sort of car wheel and the stink of gasoline. My brain is completely messed up…And it's unthinkable: yesterday I turned fifty…so help me, won't you—who's good at rhyming words?"

Under a fragrant branch of jasmine…
I sat…

"Listen, Vania!"—remarked one of them—"Why is it always jasmine with you…I'm tired of it!"
"But what else?"—Utkin grew angry—"Tea doesn't go with 'Aniuta's eyes'…And I'm sick of lilac too…"
"For God's sake, it's up to you! Don't put them beneath flowers! Couldn't you put them somewhere else?"[28]

Nartsisov/Utkin is a foil for the autonomous artist, the sole agent in the creation of singular, original work. Utkin collates poetry from disparate sources, mechanically constructing longer rhymes from ready-made smaller ones. Mariia's cherished poems are simply a set of component parts arranged by random people according to clichéd formulas. Like the commodities that are advertised in Utkin's newspaper, they are fabricated by anonymous and systematized assembly, without inspiration and through reiteration. Utkin's pseudonym puts a human face on this mundane, sterile process, falsely individualizing the poems and their method of production:

You sat, about love you held a scroll…

"Scroll!"…Now that's good!…A poetic word! It'll be like this then: "we went for a moonlight stroll…scroll…"
"That means what, exactly?"—sardonically asked his colleague. "A scroll…of love?"
"Well, a love letter or something…Just leave me alone!"—said the "poet" angrily and continued to compose:

In dreams and reveries slumbered a garden somnolent
And the jasmine emitted a scent!

"Again jasmine!"—chuckled the colleagues.
"Ugh! Well, you must agree: a birch or an oak doesn't give off a scent, now does it? Damned foolishness!"

And said I: O darling Zina, the one I cannot replace…

"Well? C'mon *dzhigity*!"

> "Vase!…Brace!…Ugly face!…How pleasant is your ugly face!"—voices rang out.
> "I have no time for jokes!"—frowned Utkin—"Now 'brace' fits best."…In about two hours the poem was completed.[29]

The prosaic setting in which Utkin wrote his poems and the amount of time it took to complete them was important in demarcating lowly compositions from high art. In feuilletons, mass-produced culture and fandom commonly were degraded through a connection with the imitative, repetitive, or ordinary feminine. When Shaliapin monotonously ingested curdled milk, garish advertising assaulted onlookers relentlessly, and Utkin inserted "jasmine" into rhyme after rhyme, the desires and products of the female body were invoked. Mariia and the psikhopatki were entranced and propelled to action by romance, sensuality, and scheduled consumption—their subjectivity was organized around rhythmic, reproductive bodily drives.

The discourse of entertainment and satirical journals denigrated certain modes of cultural production and consumption by situating them in a routinized, cyclical "feminine time"—broken up into discrete units and characterized by repetition. Legitimate art, by implication, existed outside of everyday time—it was always remarkable, complete unto itself, and coded masculine. Utkin wrote his poem in the perfunctory manner one performs a workday task, taking a mere two hours. Fans too behaved predictably, as if to the cadence of a ticking clock; even their excessive, manic outbursts were ritualized. Femininity in these depictions was akin to nature: signifying both fickleness and regularity, it reproduced seasonally and destroyed arbitrarily.

The feminine in its various forms was of less concern to "serious" art defenders when it inhabited or arranged the domain of second-rate literary production. The rules and ordinariness of "feminine time," after all, were inherent to mass culture, which relied on metaphorical or actual machines for its creation and reproduction. Critics like Rossov expressed concern especially when comportment and reception in spaces such as the opera house were organized by feminine time. In their view, the automatic consumption and habitual eruptions of fans trivialized the creative individual and his original artistry, erasing the distinctions between chansons and arias, chanteuses and prima donnas.

"Talents and Their Fans," finally, reveals the way gendered representations of the cultural hierarchy established a connection between fandom and an illegitimate model of selfhood. Mariia, like the

psikhopatka, both desires and identifies with her idol. Assuming that she and Utkin share a capacity for ardent and pure love, Mariia also believes that he is her complement and yearns for their union. Upon reading the last lines of Nartsisov's rhyme, "If you let me on this silent night / I will love you with all my might," she ecstatically exclaims, "My dear Vadim!…All I do is await this love! I also love you so terribly…for such a long time…I so appreciate the value of your divine loving heart…When, then? When?"[30] Utkin's pseudonym, of course, is suggestive: Mariia engages not with Nartsisov but in narcissism. She can only see her hero-poet the way she envisions herself. The feuilleton presents the fan's thirst for the love of an idealized mirror image as a misguided longing for self-consummation. But Mariia's fantasies about her poet, while offering the illusion of unity and wholeness, only provide her with a fissured and chimerical selfhood.

Representations of fans contrasted sharply with those of opera artists. Shaliapin and Ivan Ershov, in discussions that focused on artistic acumen rather than celebrity status, were presented as autodidacts with enthusiasm and sometimes contrary to fact. Performers-as-singers (not as celebrities) developed their extraordinary talents unassisted by formal conservatory training and monotonous exercises. Inspired by stage directors and other artists to seek knowledge, experiment independently, and discover themselves from within, truly great artists were not mere reflections of exogenous influences. Satirical stories about fans, therefore, dramatized an undesirable form of self-fashioning and contained a disavowal of an understanding of the self as permutable and split. Fans possessed a false definition of themselves not only because they sometimes chose the wrong individuals to emulate, but also because their very existence as subjects was derived only from sources external to them. In the context of a fickle celebrity culture that constantly generated new celebrity images—proliferating personalities donned like fashionable garments—the concept of a deeper, true self could be emptied of meaning. The gendering of the fan as feminine Other, prompted in part by a concern about the disintegration of the self, thus amounted to a rejection of the idea that a polymorphous selfhood was normal and, more importantly, authentic. In the discourse about fandom, the desire for recognition always led, as in Mariia's case, to misrecognition.

Disciplining spectators

In 1894, Moscow buzzed with excitement over the Lenten season at the Bol'shoi Theater. A star-studded Italian opera company

assembled by the baritone-turned-entrepreneur Bogomir Korsov was performing there during the Imperial Theater's usual holiday break. The tenor Francesco Tamagno and baritone Mattia Battistini were among the legendary soloists singing major parts in a repertoire that included Italian, French, and Russian operas. Subscriptions sold out, St. Petersburg residents flocked to Moscow, music journalists scrambled for interviews with the Italian visitors, and the critics of the daily *Novosti dnia* (*News of the Day*), like those of other Moscow newspapers, wrote sterling reviews of most performances. But on March 29, during the premier performance of Anton Rubinstein's opera *The Demon*, a "scandal" briefly dampened the enthusiasm of both the public and the press. Battistini, singing the title role, declined to perform an encore of the popular aria "Do not weep, child" despite deafening exhortations from the audience.[31] His refusal incited the wrath of the raucous Russian public, which drowned out his subsequent aria with boos and insults.[32] An outraged *Novosti dnia* journalist sympathetic to Battistini described the lurid scene:

> The public grew noisy, moaned like a forest before a thunderstorm, and [its cries] merged into one ecstatic howl—"Encore [*Bis*]!" Two or three minutes passed, maybe fewer, but under such conditions [minutes] stretch into what feels like an entire hour. "Encore" did not abate, growing louder and louder. In the meantime, the Italian Demon wearing his little shaggy wings carefully made his way . . . beneath the floor [of the stage] to the new trap door so that he could immediately rise again and sing "In the ocean of the sky." Noticing that the singer did not want to give an encore . . . the orchestra resumed its work [and] . . . the opera continued its normal course. But nobody was listening to it anymore. The music was drowned out by the ceaseless [shouts of] "encore!" The situation was not helped by the reappearance of Battistini. The first half of his [next] aria was performed to wild applause, and the second half—to even wilder . . . whistles, and shouts: "that's enough, no more!" And every other appearance of the singer in this central act . . . revived the bacchanalia of hissing and whistling. Only occasionally a single note of the powerful baritone would pierce through the snakelike hissing. This is how the mob took revenge on [him] for refusing to heed their will and encores.

Further, the author asked his readers to consider that encores commonly "arranged" by the audience "according to strict rules of legalistic theory" during the opera's action not only were unnecessary

but also disruptive and detrimental. He was dismayed by the incomprehension of self-righteous Russian spectators, who could not relinquish or reconsider their importunate rituals. During the intermission, audience members had discussed the matter passionately, and even those who had not participated in the "protest" sided with the audience and against Battistini. The journalist chided and instructed the boorish public condescendingly:

> You see, by repeating an aria, the singer merely gives you a gift—one that is above and beyond that which he has promised and is obligated to give you. An encore is a gift for which you must bow low, not clamor come what may . . . Behaving in the manner of our melomany is the same as grabbing a person by the collar, pinning him to the wall, and bellowing—"give me [a gift]!" Gift giving in this case turned into a kind of mugging or assault, since the aria, after all, was not repeated.

The journalist suggested that "a singer might have any number of reasons for refusing to repeat an [aria]." He might feel too fatigued and want to "save himself in the interest of spectators." Battistini, it turned out, "was concerned only with artistic integrity, trying to serve art and heed the direction of Russian critics who had warned him against repetition of the ill-fated 'Do not weep, child' during the first performance." And for this the public "punished him." Encores, moreover, were "abnormal":

> In a simple little Italian opera, some sort of Donizetti that presents only a collection of separate melodies tied any which way by a nonsensical libretto, constant encores can occur without spoiling one's impression; there is nothing to spoil. But you cannot tear a music drama into shreds. You cannot excise a particularly brilliant piece in order to overindulge in it, forgetting the whole. In our dramatic theaters, artists now do not come out in the middle of an act for curtain calls, and the public is slowly adapting to this, having learned to save its enthusiasm for the end of the act and not interrupt a scene with noisy applause. Why should opera be treated differently? Do you really want to subtract meaning from a serious work of art? And isn't it time that we bring "encore" to order, to place it within necessary boundaries?[33]

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century music critics, interested in establishing and safeguarding the boundaries of both genre and respectability,

often attempted to bring the rowdy Russian public and their encores to order.[34] They hoped that disciplined, calm spectatorship attentive to the libretto and "artistic considerations" would replace "legalistically arranged" yet disorderly and bullying "mob rule." Critics now expected audiences to exhibit behavior and attitudes consistent with the "serious" demands of music drama. In Russia, "music drama" of course was associated first and foremost with Wagner's repertoire, but by the 1890s it was used to refer to contemporary Russian operas—even works like *The Demon*, heavily influenced by French grand opera, and not without self-contained musical numbers. Occasionally, music drama meant anything "artistic," or all operas not in the tradition of Italian bel canto. The term, pregnant with high-minded connotations, was deployed rather haughtily by journalists when inveighing against two not completely discrete groups: melomany, understood more and more as an agglomeration of fanatical, encore-shouting claques, and fashionable society, imagined as a set consisting almost exclusively of the tone-deaf, indifferent nobility. The first group, once the gallery-dwelling high priests of opera, was being censured in the late nineteenth century for expressing its enthusiasm too passionately, inciting chaos, and unwittingly desecrating serious art. About ten years later, as we shall see, the melomany would be depicted as more pathetic than dangerous. The second group defiled the opera house because it understood it as site of leisure, not a hallowed place of learning.

For more than a century, the Russian nobility, much like their west European counterparts, used the opera house as an arena for building patronage networks, negotiating social hierarchies, and reproducing itself. The theater was a place to display one's wealth, engage in courting rituals, and exert influence. Music was often of secondary importance, as was the drama unfolding on stage. The bel canto repertoire, with its discrete numbers and uncomplicated plotlines, perhaps facilitated this lax form of spectatorship. Leaving a performance before it was over or socializing between arias was acceptable conduct.

Late-nineteenth-century professional music journalists allied with opera entrepreneurs, modernist theater lovers, and other contributors to the entertainment press in an effort to transform opera attendance from a way in which the nobility consolidated its identity into a means of confirming membership in a more inclusive, cultivated society unified by the sublime experience of watching and listening. A spectator was supposed to give his undivided attention to the performance, contemplating the work privately as it was being

presented. Ideally, operagoing was a journey of self-exploration and transformation, and not simply a social event.[35]

But what Lawrence Levine has called "the new high culture"—austere norms of reception created in the mid-nineteenth century by middle classes in their quest to secure, among other things, social authority—came "late" to Russia.[36] At least this is what Russia's emerging cultural elite surmised. They were conscious of the fact that while the audiences of St. Petersburg and Moscow retained their preference for "numbers operas" and vociferously expressed their disapproval, in Berlin and other European capitals a shift in the politics of operagoing had taken place, and tamed spectators sat quietly in the dark, respectfully listening to music drama.[37] Russian operagoers, as the article about encores noted, were still "adapting," learning to mutely defer to experts, and coming to view "art as a one-way process: the artist communicating and the audience receiving."[38] After a performance of Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* ended prematurely due to fatiguing encores, one reviewer explained that "the Russian public has not been sated, quite unlike the European public. You let them bite a finger and they want to bite off your hand and arm up to the elbow."[39]

Richard Wagner's categories of "serious" and "frivolous" opera, as well as his brand of music drama, increasingly became central to the endeavor of changing viewing and listening habits. Decades earlier in the United States, magazines had "announced the decline and fall of Italian opera." In 1884, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* proclaimed, "the appearance of 'another audience of the highest cultivation and of another taste,' which harbored 'a significant disposition to regard Italian opera . . . as a kind of Mother Goose melodies, good enough for childish musical taste, but ludicrous for the developed and trained taste of to-day.'"[40] In Russia, during the Italian opera's 1894 stint at the Bol'shoi, a critic in *Novosti dnia* hinted grudgingly at a similar development:

> As you well know, opera listeners are divided into two big camps. To the first belong the fans of impressive bravura singing. Music critics call them "lovers of high notes" and hide a touch of contempt beneath this nickname. The second camp consists of lovers of bel canto . . . There is still another tiny camp. These are musical sages. They like neither high notes nor bel canto, but are interested only when the orchestra and vocal parts produce a racket such that one cannot make heads or tails of it. Such people loudly proclaim themselves to be "Wagnerites," although Wagner here is

> merely an afterthought. These camps usually have an adversarial relationship: the first two quarrel, while the third observes them with the cold eye of a sage, nose in beard.[41]

As the journalist suggests, some operagoers used Wagnerism as a marker of cultivation and superior music taste, but the appropriation of Wagner for the purposes of redefining and displaying elite status was hardly a far-reaching phenomenon in the 1890s. There was a modest albeit growing Wagnerian camp among patrons of the Bol'shoi and Mariinskii Theaters at this time, but Italian opera lovers constituted the far greater portion of the audience. As late as 1900, long after Wagner and his music dramas had achieved acclaim, canonization, and widespread popularity in the rest of Europe and the United States, the Russian public was attending primarily Italian and French operas, swooning over Meyerbeer, and only beginning to acknowledge the merits of contemporary Russian composers.

The spread of Wagnerism in Europe is often associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie and its efforts to assert cultural control by redrawing taste and status hierarchies.[42] But mid-nineteenth-century Moscow, as well as all the other cities and provincial centers of the Russian empire, still lacked an urban entrepreneurial class that seriously challenged the cultural authority of the nobility. This partly explains why the majority of music critics did not champion Wagner's philosophy of culture until the 1910s, when they began asserting their professional expertise and using attendance at performances of music dramas as a yardstick of the sophistication of Russian audiences.[43]

When the *Ring* caused a sensation at the Mariinskii in the first decades of the twentieth century, Wagnerian journalists gave credit not only to Ershov and the director of the Imperial Theater, Vladimir Teliakovskii, but also to the maturing public of St. Petersburg. Critics like Sofiia Sviridenko felt that Russia's high esteem for Wagner had been inevitable, if long overdue. Their camp had been engaged in a propaganda campaign since the 1860s, and after many battles with a slowly shrinking but nevertheless formidable group of Wagner haters they won. Cui, who for years had argued that Wagner's music was devoid of ideas and boring for the public, finally found himself in a minority of routinely derided and ignored voices. Rimskii-Korsakov, once contemptuous of Wagner, was now emulating him. The Wagnerians repeatedly proclaimed their triumph in the press, but the discourse surrounding the popularity of Wagner was not unequivocally self-congratulatory or consistent. The imagined operagoing

public, at moments enlightened and musically astute enough to appreciate Wagner, was at other times a philistine, disinterested bevy of peacocks.

The 1911 first issue of *Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta* (*Russian Musical Journal*), for example, contained a review that presented Russia's operagoers in a favorable light, noting that the public's experience of music was "marked by a transition from unconscious musical enjoyment and entertainment to a conscious attitude to art."[44] Later that year and in the same journal, however, the Wagnerian Sviridenko gave a different impression. In her review of the *Ring* she observed that due to "the current 'Wagner fashion' the performances were being frequented by crowds from the 'musical non-intelligentsia' because '*cosi fan tutte*.'" She also lamented that "the Imperial Theater directorate was becoming increasingly indifferent to the artistic side of the performances because it was assured such high box office returns."[45] Wagner's cycle, according to Sviridenko, was a victim of its own success.

When she sarcastically remarked on allegiances to fashion and the "music non-intelligentsia," Sviridenko attacked a shallow and feminized form of spectatorship unworthy of Wagner. Her quip referencing Mozart's opera *Cosi fan Tutte* (*Women Are Like That*) made it clear that she targeted the nobility. Because noblewomen were crucial in maintaining the boundaries of high society, going to the opera served as an opportunity for them to advertise their husbands' status and rank through fashionable attire, and scout the marriage market for their children. The expensive boxes and the bel étage constituted an important niche, situated between the male sphere of civil service and the private sphere of the home, where women exerted considerable social influence. Since this space had symbolized noble status and privilege for over a century, the aristocratic attitude to opera was linked effortlessly to the decadent, consuming, and "unconscious" feminine. Whenever critics aimed to instruct the wealthy how *not* to behave at the opera, they evoked the image of the effeminate nobility and thereby shamed all subscribers, including elite audience members from the merchant estate.

The satirist-critics of *Budil'nik* voiced their contempt for the fashionable set less delicately than Sviridenko, who wrote for the "serious" Wagnerian journal *Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta*. The feminized well-to-do public of feuilletons was not only frivolous but inhuman, sinister, and threatening. In the 1909 "In the Critic's Chair," for example, the author complains that "theater audiences have become strange, especially at premier performances and interesting performances in general. You enter a packed hall and are enveloped by a

many-headed, dolled-up mob that has come for reasons completely different from yours." Wishing to conjure up both triviality and excess, the "critic" (undoubtedly male) alludes to the feminine initially by describing the audience as a multicephalic, undifferentiated entity that engulfs him.[46] But then he paints another image—one of rigidly arranged automatons: "Everyone sits in well-ordered rows, with gushing snobbery and dumb self-congratulation. You begin to feel that they are not interested in the least in what happens on stage when the curtain rises."[47]

Here, as in other satirical sketches, hindrance to high art and to the deliberative individual takes the form of a simultaneously ordered and chaos-inducing femininity. Embodied in the moneyed theater crowd, it impairs aesthetic edification not with strident boos or bravos but with indifference, immaturity, ostentatious attire, and "gushing" false etiquette. The petty, juvenile diversions of the affluent audience members distract the serious-minded, adult theatergoer. In the orchestra seats and boxes they are preoccupied with "'puppet farce,' toilettes, adornments, rumors and gossip." The "farce" commences even before the curtain rises: "Dolls rustle their silk, shift in their chairs, peer through their lorgnettes [*lorniruiut*], cough in order to draw attention to themselves." They care little about the performance, "assuming that it is enough for you to admire them; they talk and laugh with one another, making necessary plans":

> When your eyes adjust to the electric brilliance, you notice that you do not find yourself in a theater but in a menagerie . . . Like horses in the stable, dandies and bon vivants stamp their hooves, making their way to the first row of chairs. Vixens lustfully bare their teeth and suitors approach the aroused brooding hens, decorated with diamonds and other jewelry. The wasps look dumb; the seals slumber under the illusion of stage scenery, dreaming of a trip abroad; and the wolves become vigilant, knowing that the desirable sheep can be found in the mixed herd. Finally, the dominant fashionable lionesses sit in boxes like in cages, and their prey willingly climbs up to them.[48]

Feminine characteristics are first ascribed to the audience through references to items found in the private world of the nursery—dolls and puppets suggestive of women and playing children. Like mothers who placate and amuse their charges with toys, trinket-wearing female spectators entice, engage, and thereby infantilize male theatergoers. The specter of high art devolving into children's games

is soon replaced, however, by an even more harrowing image. The doll-like audience becomes a herd of hunting, mostly female animals eager to capture their prey, and the elite theatergoing public transforms finally into wild, feminized nature that compulsively ingests and emasculates.

Disdain for the older aristocratic mode of theatergoing often merged with fears of the new culture of theatricality and the notion of selfhood informing it. "In the Critic's Chair" provides an illustrative example of the way music journalists and feuilletonists used the obscene female body as a key link in the chain of signification connecting consumption, role play, middlebrow amusements, and artifice. The audience enacts a "puppet farce," mimicking theatricality instead of watching theater. Fashionable society, coming to performances to see (others in the audience) and be seen, dominates the theater with its murmuring presence and "electric" visibility. "Vixens" lustfully bare their teeth, unleashing their depraved desires. Beastly women and effeminate men, their bodies adorned in expensive commodities, are carriers of consumer culture. Descriptions of lavishly dressed socialites luring suitors to their boxes express anxieties about the marketplace penetrating and polluting the opera house, a temple of sacred art where individuals are supposed to acquire "consciousness" by looking inward, not at each other. The feuilleton typically calls the wrong type of audience a "herd" because Russian promoters of the new high culture, like their counterparts in the United States 30 years earlier, "aimed to convert audiences into a collection of people reacting individually rather than collectively."[49] Female animals, driven by instinct, pursue male prey just as the anonymous market and commodification threaten and stalk masculine, high art.

The debased world of the orchestra, boxes, and bel étage is contrasted in the feuilleton to the divine gallery, where true theater lovers reside—the audience with which the authoritative critic identifies:

> Only we, at the top, under the ceiling in the "heavenly lands" tremble, feeling the pangs of true joy… Alas, I will never again make it there: my legs can't lift me up there, and shortness of breath prohibits me. Enslaved in the critic's chair, I am trapped among the theatrical zoology and never again will experience the "heavenly" bliss of my youth.[50]

The gallery is portrayed here as a sanctuary, a realm safely removed from the herd below, where one experienced *real* emotion. Significantly, it is a nostalgic place to which the author cannot return.

The inhabitants of the opera house gallery had been imagined as young melomany: masculine, informed, genuine opera lovers. Yet, as we have seen, since the late nineteenth century they no longer were immune to ridicule and attack. Their "bacchanalia" of passion and violent outbursts of emotion were viewed now as obstacles to "true" enjoyment: consistent judiciousness and authentic comprehension of self and music. Now they too could be co-opted by the massifying feminine, seduced by the effects of commercialization—consumer-oriented role play and celebrity obsession, or fandom.

High-art defenders were fighting a two-front battle in the mass-circulation press: excessive fervor on one hand and fatuous superficiality on the other. The former was associated mainly with young enthusiasts, and the latter with privileged society. When Russian opera celebrities grew in influence and stature, bringing new threats to the enlightenment project undertaken by opera entrepreneurs and music journalists in the early twentieth century, the female opera fan, as *poklonnitsa* (female fan, literally) or psikhopatka, became the staunchest enemy of restraint and aesthetic refinement. Her image combined the seemingly disparate and contradictory traits and behaviors that were perceived to be endangering the identity and mission of true artists and their supporters. Whether as an inane and nervous loner or as a participant in an unruly celebrity cult, the feminized fan introduced consumerism, frivolity, debauchery, and mob rule into the opera house.

Unruly (feminine) fans

In the press, the typical opera fan was a woman with a perverse loyalty to one male singer. Under the spell of images and stories she encountered in magazines and newspapers, the fan cultivated a fantasy relationship with a celebrity figure privately, outside the opera house and apart from music. Fans doted on their idols: they purchased and pored over posters and photographs, wrote letters, composed odes, and sent gifts. Their affection for celebrities was alternately filial and romantic. Fans cherished chance encounters with their love objects on the street, imagining that the latter shared their desires and returned their glances. Feuilletons commonly depicted female opera devotees having various acute somatic and emotional reactions to seeing their favorite male stars—sobbing, screaming effusively, and fainting. When alone, fans obsessively dreamed about celebrities, depending on them for psychic and erotic nourishment. Inside the theater, they joined others like themselves, and crowd contagion sparked orgiastic frenzy.[51]

In the feuilleton "Sobinov and Shaliapin," for example, a couple of female fans brag about their respective "relationships" with the two singers while at a sold-out charity concert featuring their "darlings." Their exchange takes place among "legions of other Shaliapinists and Sobinovists":

> "Ah, you do not understand, Mariia Ivanovna, that sweetheart Sobinov! Today I saw him on Petrovskii, he was walking, my dove, bowed and, you know what, looked at me with one eye—like this."
>
> "But just imagine [what happened to *me*], Dariia Petrovna…[wait, here's]
>
> Shaliapin, Shaliapin! What a darling! What a *mamochka*! What a delight! My
>
> angel! My rosebud!"[52]

The fans are mocked for their fixation on the personalities rather than talents of the two celebrities. Frenetically spewing pet names, Mariia and Dariia fancy that they know their "dear" ones intimately. The emptiness of the women's chatter reflects the absurdity of their narcissistic devotion: the duo is surrounded by like-minded devotees, each presuming to have a unique bond with her idol. The fans scream in ecstasy the minute the singers appear on stage and before a single note is sung, responding to an imaginary communion rather than the actual performance: "Ladies and Gentlemen, now, listen, it's starting, it's starting, here's Shaliapin! Shaliapin, Shaliapin! Shaliapin! Shaliapin!" Shaliapin comes out and begins:

> Nations and kings come together
> To hail the infamous idol
> And to the sinister clink of coins
> They whirl in a frenzied ring
> Round and round his pedestal!
>
> "Bravo-o-o-o Shaliapin!…Shaliapin dearest! Shaliapi-i-i-i-i-i-n! Bravo-o-o-o-o!"

Shaliapin barely walks off the stage before his place is taken by Sobinov, who is greeted with the same thunder: "Sobinov! Sobinov! Sobinov!…" Sobinov begins:

> Hail, chaste and pure dwelling where
> One can feel the presence of an innocent and holy soul.
>
> "Sobinov, Sobinov! Sobinov! Sobinov bravo-o-o-o-o!"[53]

As Shaliapin performs Mephistopheles's Song of the Golden Calf—an aria from Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1859) about the hailing of a false idol—the author describes the public assembled in the hall. In contrast to the noisy and heckling audience members chided in the 1894 article in *Novosti dnia*, the fans gathered to hear Shaliapin and Sobinov engage in uncritical star worship. While the wild melomany reacted—with both enthusiasm and disgust—to the action and singing on stage, this female audience coos and cheers in response to the mere presence of celebrities. The press outlined correct and incorrect forms of music appreciation, but fandom was inherently wrong. Not only the activities of fans but the fans themselves were abnormal, as the appearance of the deranged psikhopatka at the turn of the twentieth century indicates.

In the press, fans thus differed fundamentally from opera lovers, and all undesirable patrons of the opera house became fans. Fandom, or uncritical star worship, understood as a feminine compulsion and associated with the irrational and excessive, was not limited to women and girls. The behavior of male "fans" (*poklonniki*)—as opposed to critical, dignified operagoers and aficionados (e.g., *liubiteli*)—increasingly was deemed ridiculous, infantile, or effeminate. In Moscow weeklies such as *Rampa i zhizn'* and *Budil'nik*, the opera fanatic as effete schoolboy was a more loveable, less threatening sort than the despised female fan. Nonetheless, he evoked the specter of the mentally and physically infirm feminine contaminating the ideal (i.e., masculine), healthy constitution of the operagoing public.

The establishment of a connection between opera fandom (as a whole) and the pathological feminine is evidenced by the changes in the image of the meloman, which had been substantially degraded since its identification with Rossini mania in the mid-nineteenth century. A 1915 *Budil'nik* poem chronicles his futile endeavors:

Don Ivano Melomano
With provisions in coffers,
Though arriving quite early,
Found a crowd at the box office.
To return without a ticket,
You'd agree would have been strange, no?
And he stood guard until dawn
Don Ivano Melomano.
Don Ivano Melomano
Until dawn he did remain
But a ticket he did not obtain.
Don Ivano was not perturbed,

And angered only slightly,
Returned to the ticket window,
The place he had been nightly.
But when the rays of dawn
Shown in the early morrow,
Once again without a ticket was
Don Ivano Melomano.
Don Ivano was stubborn,
He told his stomach: no way!
And resigned to his fate,
Stood guard a third day.
And once again the rays of dawn
Shone in the early morrow,
And still without a ticket
Again stood Don Ivano.
Don Ivano gripped his number tightly,
Thinking: all kidding aside!
And having waited some six days
He bought the ticket, and died.[54]

The earlier, nineteenth-century melomany also had been young, naïve male music devotees. Their exuberant approach to opera, though a touch callow, had been characterized by gallant acts and virility. Fearless melomany had risked their lives by illegally climbing into the attic of the old St. Petersburg Bol'shoi Theater in order to hear and perhaps get a glimpse of their beloved Italian divas.[55] But in the feuilletons of the 1910s, the meloman's image suffered an ominous alteration. His élan and broad appreciation of music was reduced to an obsession with Shaliapin and ticket acquisition, rendering him malnourished, pathetic, and, in the above case, dead. A once romantic and dynamic youth with a varied repertoire of activities became one-dimensional, engaged in a monotonous, repetitive exercise.

In the early twentieth century, as Janice Radway has argued in her study of middlebrow culture in the United States, standardization, streamlining, and technological reproduction was often, and perhaps counterintuitively, feminized by highbrow defenders such as literary critics and journalists. Delegitimization of mass-produced culture was achieved by eliding oppressive, mechanized sites of production with inexorable feminine reproductive forces that would overwhelm and extinguish the autonomy of "distinct, singular, always male individuals."[56] In Russia, the opera fan as a consumer of commodified celebrities was implicated in a similar metonymy.

Ivano Melomano's routinized campouts at the box office and the repetitive language that describes them evoke the iterant functioning of a machine. Possessed by the same idée fixe as another favorite of satirical journals—the shopping bourgeois lady who habitually strolls up and down the boulevard—the meloman is mocked for being a consuming reproducer and presented as yet another example of urban decadence.

With the erosion of his status as a legitimate connoisseur, the once vernal and robust meloman acquired a frail disposition. As the following 1910 feuilleton demonstrates, he suffered from feminine ailments such as physical weakness and fatigue, fainting spells, and incoherent, hysterical speech:

> A few days ago on Theater Square, a student of Moscow University named Semago felt faint and, losing consciousness, fell onto the roadway. The unfortunate fellow was taken to the infirmary of the Malyi Theater, where [doctors] tried to bring him back to consciousness. [They] were convinced that the poor young man had not eaten anything for three days and decided to make him some nourishing bouillon.

When the student came to, he began muttering:

> "b . . . b . . . b . . . b . . . "
> "You want some bouillon? Just a moment—we'll give you some."
> But the student shook his head "no."
> "B . . . b . . . b . . . a [Bol'shoi] ticket for Shaliapin!"[57]

It turned out that Semago not only starved for three days but also stood in line for 72 hours at the Bol'shoi box office: "Semago never did manage to get a ticket but says that the gimnaziia's society will award him a prize for beating the record for the number of hours spent standing up."[58]

The university student's fandom, like Don Ivano's, is constituted through pointless and incessant waiting. Ritualized standing seems to be an end in itself, since neither gains entry into the theater. Semago receives a prize for this quotidian "act," one that, ironically, does not involve action, or movement. Despite the fact that he is given a prize for "the number of hours spent standing up," the student is not a hero but a victim of a feminine-coded chronology. Much like the Nartsisov-adoring Mariia, he lives every day in the same manner and with the same purpose, and is governed by the

quantitative and imitative rather than the qualitative and creative. Indeed, Semago is completely time-bound. Doctors can assess the amount of elapsed hours by looking at his body. He is rendered an object that measures time—a clock incarnate. Each day of Semago's life, moreover, marks a victory for time and a defeat for the self. As time ravages his mind, the student continues to stand until he is utterly incoherent and depleted, obstinately bearing witness to his own demise.

Apparently not insane enough to be called a psikhopat, the student nonetheless suffers from an incurable (and possibly terminal) feminized disease, fandom, which causes a permanent nonunderstanding, hollowing out his interiority and replacing it with a mechanical counter. Journals again and again portrayed fans as automatons who behaved in ways that defied common sense and inflicted harm on themselves as subjects. The hapless melomany often were positioned outside of the opera house in feuilletons. Nearing extinction, they did not have many opportunities to infect audiences. The same cannot be said for the deranged but resourceful psikhopatki and other poklonnitsy, who colonized the theater and imposed their odd customs on hale spectators.

Public worship was essential to the psikhopatka's fandom and self-definition. She paid homage to celebrities privately, but only regularized performance of her devotion before others validated her existence and enabled self-realization. The close proximity of her idol also was crucial for the psikhopatka. In isolation and without him, she appeared lost and pitiable. As part of a collectivity and as an audience member, she was an ebullient instigator of feminized activities. In the *Budil'nik* 1902 sketch "Idols," for example, the author enumerates the vacuous preoccupations of psikhopatki and other female fans, alluding to their successful co-option of fellow spectators:

> Sobinov has left and Shaliapin is leaving…
>
> "He is now gone and we are suffering!" wail the psikhopatki, female fans [poklonnitsy], as well as mere music lovers [*liubitel'nitsy*].
>
> How many broken hearts and…empty lives!
>
> What is there to do now for the theater lovers [*teatralkam*] who stood entire nights in order to get tickets "for the idols," arranged ovations as a group, pitched in to buy wreaths, as a chorus shouted "hurrah," and collectively threw bonnets in the air?!
>
> So much effort was exerted, so many concerns, thrills, and now they can only gaze at the portraits and grip the souvenirs, crumpling them in their hands…

> And how will patrons advance art, suitors serve ladies, wives bankrupt their husbands? Finally, whom will the vacant unmarried women chase?
>
> All is finished, around them is emptiness: life without purpose and the theater without idols!
>
> Poor, unfortunate psikhopatki![59]

The absence of Sobinov and the impending departure of Shaliapin expose the emptiness within fans, who rely on mass rituals and orchestrated consumption to fill their lives with meaning. Fandom threatens not only opera but also the selfhood of spectators, who, when deprived of an opportunity to express their desires and identity theatrically, are rendered hollow. Feuilletonists, aware of the thinning line dividing middlebrow performance culture and opera, linked the danger posed by commercialization to high art with images of volatile and deviant femininity. The female fan, like the middlebrow, lacked stable boundaries: she confused introspection and narcissism, and blurred aesthetic appreciation and sexual arousal.

A satirical poem entitled "Psikhopatki" explicitly portrays female fans as madwomen who transform the opera house into a den of vice and corruption:

> Rushing to the theater benefits
> Are mothers, daughters, coquettes.
> Faster than the wind, psikhopatki won't tarry
> They run as quickly as their legs can carry.
> Inside the theater is Sodom—a din
> Like the Battle of Shipka, what thunder!
> It's like an asylum, a loony bin,
> Where I ended up due to blunder.[60]

The poem points to a curious duality in the image of the female fan. At times, the early-twentieth-century press depicted her as hopelessly feminine, a prime representative of what, very typically, Russian culture deemed inferior about women: she was a narcissistic coquette, a frivolous and passive consumer. Yet, in the opera house she shouted with a physical power and command that belied her supposed defenselessness. The psikhopatki exhibited an erotic, animalistic athleticism: racing to the theater, running to the gallery, and pursuing their idols with reckless abandon, they acted with the force and determination of hearty, virile men. Of course, excess and irrationality were part and parcel of the notion of women's inferiority. Their emotionalism was what supposedly made them vulnerable

to the messages of advertising and celebrity cults. Nonetheless, there was something fiercely masculine about the psikhopatka's active sexuality and assertive desires. Admiring as well as identifying with male opera stars, she gave expression to the fledgling cultural elite's fears of both genre and gender transgression.

Were psikhopatki mere discursive creations, conjured up by music and entertainment journalists to feminize and stigmatize fans thought unsuitable for the highbrow? Or did actual psikhopatki deliriously applaud, worship, stalk, and identify with their favorite stars? "Psikhopatka," obviously due to its pejorative meaning, was not overtly embraced by female theatergoers as a self-identification. Yet, texts featuring this unruly, emotive, and compelling type, contrary to the morals encoded in them, presented women with a set of model behaviors and self-narratives.

In letters to their idols and to each other, opera fans describing their reactions to celebrities employed the language and characterizations used in the press. For example, L. Zubasheva, a fan who had been attending the Mariinskii Theater for over 15 years and infatuated with Ershov since age 12, confessed to him in a lengthy letter, "When last year I heard you [in *Tannhäuser*]…from the first sight of you—your face, your pose—during the dreadful ballet, I felt a physical jolt and my heart raced. [I experienced] a sensation of a sudden expansion and tensing of my entire being—as from an injection of camphor…[It was] a thrill that I had never experienced in my life, an exertion of all my emotional forces, driving me to the point of ecstasy, physical pain, suffocation…by the end of the second act I thought that I would not endure it."[61]

The author of the letter, like the psikhopatka, focuses almost exclusively on Ershov's physicality and her own bodily responses. Not choosing to comment on his and others' singing, she homes in on the tenor's movements and gestures: the "awful ballet" interferes with rather than adds to her ecstatic, purely sensual experience. Aware that the order and form of her experiences fit within the parameters of a cultural stereotype, the fan writes, "I am not a student or an old lady. I am thirty years old, married twelve years. I have two children—forgive me, I am explaining myself so that you will not take all of this for the hysterical outburst of a theater psikhopatka."[62]

Journalists relied on prevailing assumptions about gender to distinguish between cultural realms and promote their understandings of authentic art and authentic self. Clearly defined gender differences

and sexual dimorphism were all-important to the feminization, and thus discrediting, of market-oriented fandom. But defenders of "serious" art, by generating narratives about fans, unwittingly participated in the dissemination of the celebrity culture and gender-confounding theatricality that they rigorously attempted to stave off. The next chapter, devoted to authenticity-obsessed gramophonic discourse, and the impassioned letters to opera stars to be discussed in Chapter 5 bear this out.

4

Authenticity in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, or, How the Gramophone Made Everyday Life Operatic

Authenticity and sincerity have been obsessions in the West since the late eighteenth century. Now, perhaps more than ever, mass media draws attention to the authenticity of politicians and other famous individuals (or, sometimes cynically, to how well they have been able to affect it). Historians have attributed the ascendancy of authenticity and sincerity to Enlightenment and romantic ideas—to what can be called, succinctly, the emergence of the individual as the most important repository of morality.[1] Others have traced the preoccupation with authenticity specifically to capitalism and the advent of mechanical reproduction. As Walter Benjamin noted decades ago, issues of authenticity could gain widespread currency only when copies and reproduced commodities began to permeate everyday life.[2] Sociologists like Rojek have complicated the discussion by turning our attention to celebrity culture as an important vehicle for both consumer desire and discourses of sincerity and authentic selfhood. They have argued that celebrities, by periodically falling from grace or giving us a glimpse of their imperfect everyday selves, perform authenticity itself and testify to the power of the human personality.[3]

As we have seen, sincerity and authenticity were salient preoccupations of the Russian mass-circulation press in the early twentieth century. The two concepts were often presented together and were mutually constitutive. Sincerity (usually *iskrennost'*) was understood as the correspondence between inner belief and avowal. Authenticity was articulated through a broader vocabulary and evoked a weightier problem—a set of ethical and moral questions concerned with the very nature of the inner self and its constancy.[4]

In this chapter, my examination of the meanings of authenticity in late imperial Russia spotlights the discourse of early sound technology and its close relationship to celebrity narratives and their injunctions. Virtually from the birth of recording, cultural theorists understood that gramophones and concerns about "sound fidelity" reflected broader social and narcissistic longings in the age of crowds and mass reproducibility. In 1928, Theodor Adorno mused in his essay "The Curves of the Needle" that recording technology served as a mirror—that it not only stimulated the desire to hear oneself, but, perhaps more profoundly, had been invented in the first place because of the primordial wish to do so.[5] The paradoxical function of celebrity images was echoed by the emissions of the gramophone horn: both supplied human presence and intimacy by making manifest their opposites—disembodied, untouchable voices and distant, "incomparable" stars.

Russia proved hospitable to the gramophone industry as well as celebrity culture, and their point of intersection was the singer-performer, since the vocal repertoire dominated early recording. Fan letters to opera stars and audiophile magazines of the period are therefore the proper places from which to explore Russia's particular melodramatic notion of the authentic.[6] And, on a more straightforward level, both sources evidence the originality of the Russian case: loudly and passionately declaimed avowals were considered proof of naturalness—in gramophonic discourse and personal correspondence. In Russia, to put it in yet another way, authenticity was conceived in emotionally intense, confessional terms and expressed in an operatic style.

The reason I offer for such a definition of authenticity, necessarily speculative, points to the connection between revolution and melodrama. During the social and political upheavals of 1905–07 and 1917–18, in the absence of stable religious and state authority, the individual personality was especially burdened with moral enunciation and assumed a mode of excess commensurate with the weight of that burden. But the more daring question, perhaps, is whether this theatrical, all-avowing approach to authenticity made violent revolutionary injunctions and rituals readable and later shaped communist self-fashioning.[7]

The materiality of recorded sound

Anton Chekhov's three sisters dreamed of moving to Moscow as the grim events of their lives unfolded in a dull provincial town.

Oppressed by indolence, bored out of their minds, they hoped to escape domestic gloom, but, lacking the requisite imagination and will, devoid of an "inner" Moscow, the sisters remained in a stifling backwater. Olga, Masha, and Irina had to rely on temporarily stationed military officers, bedraggled troubadours, and random bands of carnival participants for occasional and ultimately unfulfilling entertainment. But what if they had been able to transcend temporal and spatial limitations—acquire a source of constant pleasure and delight without having to leave their homes? What if the three sisters had owned a gramophone?[8]

This question was posed by the French record company Pathé Brothers in a 1912 full-page advertisement in Moscow's satirical weekly *Budil'nik*.[9] Utilizing Chekhov's play as a referent, Pathé presents the theme of provincial ennui as a problem easily solved by commodified entertainment, namely, its gramophones and records. The advertisement, entitled "Three Sisters," is a cartoon that tells the story of a patriarch who succeeds in reviving his ailing daughters. Drawn in the style of the satirical caricatures in the journal, it consists of seven framed images and corresponding captions. The first of these shows the three women slumped on a sofa and an older man sitting in the background with his head in his hands. The caption reads: "Worn down by provincial tedium, utterly deprived of big city entertainment, three sisters, three young lives slowly faded." The next three images present the sisters in a variety of slouching positions, still on the sofa, as their father paces, reads a newspaper, and then waves his finger in the air, struck by an intriguing thought. The corresponding captions explain, "In vain, the father, a bureaucrat in a provincial town, invited famous doctors who wrote prescriptions for all sorts of patented medications—nothing could bring back the joy of life and therefore health to his daughters. But one day, while reading his newspaper, he had a brilliant idea." The father gestures to his daughters that he has news for them as they yawn and whine, "Oh, what is it now?!" The fifth frame depicts an entirely different scene. The father stands before his daughters with a gramophone as they and the bug-eyed family dog bend forward, backs arched, attentively listening and smiling. "They were not yawning anymore. As if mesmerized they stood by the table: 'Heavens, what is that! Heavens, who is that!'—they whispered in amazement." In the sixth picture, two happy sisters flank their proud-looking father as he reclines in an armchair, while the third cranks a gramophone in the center of the frame. A rather large, strapping fellow in a black suit, presumably a salesman, is sitting on a divan across from the sisters and their

father, solemnly listening: "Three blossoming, cheerful maidens surrounded the venerable elder when he said to me: young man, the gramophone is a source of joy." The last picture, at the bottom of the page, is of a man heading toward a giant gramophone while reading a book, probably a catalogue of recordings. The reader is instructed to remember the address of the Pathé Brothers store, centrally located on Tverskaia Street.[10]

The advertisement invites potential consumers to derive pleasure from three attributes of recorded sound: its tangibility, portability, and repeatability.[11] The musicologist Mark Katz, in *Capturing Sound*, imagines an early-twentieth-century phonograph listener holding "a heavy shellac disc in his hands," watching the "play of light on the disc's lined, black surface." Early records, Katz notes, were "radically new types of musical objects"—*things* containing "frozen sound."[12] In the ad, this tangibility is what enables the once hapless patriarch to become a competent consumer and valiant father. With the aid of the Pathé salesman, he brings objectified, rejuvenating sound into his once desiccated home. The attention-grabbing gramophone acquires a central position in the drawing room as well as in family life, pulling the sisters together and toward its emanations. The allure of the preserved human voice resides in its materiality—the physical presence of an entertaining machine, grooved discs, and a set of activities that involve listeners in sound production and commodity consumption: needle setting, cranking, and record collecting.

Portability is another feature of recordings emphasized in the Pathé advertisement. The transformation of performed events into commodities allows the father to take big city amusements out of their original context and expose his daughters to music and sound they would not hear otherwise. Gramophones and records do not discriminate; they travel everywhere—even to remote villages and unglamorous venues. Unfettered music, freed from the performers who created it, also offers freedom to its listeners. The ultimate source of the three sisters' newfound bliss, as the man with the catalogue in the last frame of the ad suggests, is the means to reproduce joy whenever and as many times as they wish. Thanks to a long and varied list of recordings, the entire family perpetually will be enchanted by familiar voices or novel sounds as they purchase new records and replay their favorites.

That tangibility, portability, and repeatability are aspects or effects of recorded sound is perhaps obvious; less obvious is the notion that these properties are inherently desirable. The appeal of cradling, transporting, and replaying preserved music is suggested (though

not always overtly) by Katz, a self-confessed record enthusiast, and other scholars investigating the ways recording technology changed performance and reception of music.[13] This transformative potential of recorded sound did not elude its early manufacturers, who in their advertising narratives sought to persuade readers that tangibility, portability, and repeatability were innately valuable, and that these reified, salutary qualities, acquired with the purchase of its gramophones, brought consumers self-realization and emotional health.

Framed by imagery and tales of harmonious domestic life, the gramophones and records of advertisements were objects of felicity: they introduced music and voices at once exotic and comforting, thrillingly strange yet easily integrated into daily routine. The message of advertisers was that gramophones fit neatly, like the piano and other musical instruments, into the space and time of private leisure. Facilitating group listening, they were unifying rather than atomizing and disruptive. But evidence suggests that early reception of recorded sound diverged far from the ideal put forth by its marketers. The place of gramophones in the home was quite different than that of musical instruments. As Evan Eisenberg observes, "While the amateur pianist was free to insert music into his everyday life, there were certain limitations; it was difficult to play the piano while eating, shaving, writing, and falling asleep. It is possible to play records while [doing all those things], and for many people it was impossible not to."[14] Record playing created a new relationship not only with music and leisure but with work as well. Record collecting prompted some to rethink their identities, and others to reconceive identity itself. Music recordings engendered gramophilia and gramophobia—ecstatic and rancorous reactions to the emotional intensity, chaos, and insistent intimacy of disembodied sound.[15]

Opera penetrates the Russian everyday

By the 1910s, gramophones were a common sight throughout the Russian empire, and recordings of Russian performers were available on foreign and domestic labels. Pathé Brothers manufactured and sold its machines, cylinders, and discs in Moscow, and had branch offices in St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don, Odessa, and Warsaw. Emile Berliner's Gramophone Company, best known for its recordings of European opera celebrities, had been active in Russia since the late nineteenth century and continued to expand its operations. Initially appearing in the guise of the quasi-independent (and not altogether legal) joint-stock company run by Maks Rubinskii, Gramophone

opened a record-pressing plant in Riga in 1902, and in 1910 operated offices and retail stores in many cities, including St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov, Tbilisi, and Omsk. Prices of discs increasingly fell as smaller German record companies like Sirena Record and Lyrophon mushroomed, and the catalogues of upstarts such as the Russian Metropol-Record competed with those of Gramophone and Columbia. Discourses pertaining to recording technology and its socially elevating effects were disseminated through multiplying trade journals, record magazines, catalogues, advertisements, and editorials in the music press. Gramophone retail stores and independent record dealers advertised in all the major newspapers and entertainment journals.[16]

All of this suggests that Russia proved to be a profitable market for the early recording industry, and that the gramophone had begun to gain acceptance as an important feature of modern life. Yet, the discourse strategies of large manufacturing companies and retailers alike indicate that in the 1910s many remained ambivalent about the cultural legitimacy of the gramophone. Establishing its status as an essential home gadget still required inventive and careful argumentation.[17]

One of the challenges to the domestication of the gramophone was its unattractiveness, or at least this is what Eldridge Johnson, Berliner's business partner, deduced.[18] Convinced that machines with dubious aesthetics would not appeal to the upwardly mobile consumer eager to display his refined taste, Johnson resolved to soften its look. The Gramophone Company and Victor were therefore the first to encase their product in a decorative wood cabinet, hiding the horn and introducing storage compartments for records. Other manufacturers followed suit, and by the 1910s Russian shops advertised gramophones as stylish and durable pieces of furniture fit for respectable bourgeois homes. Advertisements appearing in 1912 in the weekly arts magazine *Solntse Rossii* for the St. Petersburg dealer Iurii Zimmerman, for example, featured "hornless" gramophones with "the best Swedish nickel-plated mechanisms." The machines, hidden in what looked like giant jewelry boxes, were distinguished by their "durable construction, elegant finish, and full, soft, and natural sound reproduction." Zimmerman's products "took up little space and were convenient to ship," and his stores provided costumers with free catalogues of their "large selection of recordings" on demand. The ads showed five gramophones in a variety of styles, sizes, colors, and types of wood, ranging in price from 35 to 100 rubles.[19]

The Zimmerman ads contain several of the discourse strategies typically used by the recording industry to target individuals interested

in improving their social standing. In addition to presenting the gramophone as a tasteful, decorative object that easily harmonized with an equally tasteful drawing room, the ads boasted technological fidelity and a large catalogue meant to seduce budding record collectors. The addressee of both advertisements and emergent audiophile magazines such as the St. Petersburg monthly *Novosti grammofona* (*Gramophone News*) and the Moscow biweekly *Grammofonnaia zhizn'* (*Gramophonic Life*) was a member of the "cultivated class"—perhaps a cosmopolitan, modern sort—eager to acquire the most detailed, scientific knowledge about recording in order to purchase the latest gramophone model with the best acoustic capability, and build an impressive music library by buying every classical and opera title in the catalogue. To create this ideal, obsessive consumer, magazines devoted to the gramophone and phonograph took steps to develop an epistemology of recording: they printed illustrated technical and historical articles, record reviews, and didactic columns advising novices on ways to obtain the best, most "authentic" sound from their recently bought machines. Such periodicals tended to focus on so-called serious recording artists and music, thereby aiding the promotion of records as signifiers of cultivation. Vignettes of opera and cabaret celebrities, libretti of recorded songs and arias, and listings of newly released recordings also encouraged record collecting as a leisure pursuit and linked it to self-improvement.

Feuilletons of the period provided less flattering allusions to the role of gramophone ownership and record collecting in the articulation of social status. Poking fun at recorded music enthusiasts and their listening habits, satirists also lampooned, though not without sympathy, the attitudes of those who felt besieged by importunate gramophone owners, the machines themselves, and what seemed to them an interminable sonic effluvium. The humorous feuilleton "Gramophone" in a 1910 issue of *Budil'nik*, for example, tells of how the presence of the machine turned an already awkward business meeting at the home of one Nikolai Fedorovich into an unmitigated disaster. The narrator, an aspiring entrepreneur seeking to procure capital for his latest venture, trembled as he climbed the stairs to Nikolai Fedorovich's apartment, worried that the esteemed industrialist would reject his proposal: "It appeared to me that my business with him was clear, as simple as one-two-three. But who can figure them out—these business types—these financial geniuses!" Though the meeting began inauspiciously, the determined narrator remained hopeful: "I have to give him a breather," he mused, "and then we will approach the matter from another angle." But before the narrator had

a chance to formulate his next move, the sounds of a gramophone wafted from the adjoining room: "Nikolai Fedorovich immediately cheered up, and his brow unfurrowed. 'Come, let's listen to my new gramophone…It's an entirely new design: the so-called no-noise machine.'" At this suggestion the narrator grew cold, terrified by the prospect of enduring the noise of a no-noise machine. Consumed by the project, convinced that he could not process music "even if Shaliapin himself showed up and started singing," he nonetheless pretended to be interested in the gramophone, and followed Nikolai Fedorovich into the drawing room. The famed businessman, audiophile, and avid record collector then asked his guest what he would like to hear while the latter secretly panicked:

> "We own almost the entire Sobinov. Mania, put on 'Kuda, kuda vy udalilis',' will you?"[20]
>
> The new type of gramophone began singing.
>
> "Oh, how splendid they are, aren't they, these no-noise gramophones? Better than the previous ones, don't you think?"
>
> "Yes, yes, the no-smoke gramophones are better…"
>
> "What? What did you say? No-smoke gramophones? Ha, ha-ha!"
>
> I was embarrassed, and blushed to the roots of my hair.
>
> "Well, now we will listen to Vial'tseva."
>
> I had no choice but to listen to the entire repertoire of Sobinov as well as the entire repertoires of Vial'tseva, Shevelev, Kamionskii, etc.[21]
>
> Nikolai Fedorovich was overcome by bliss while I sat on pins and needles. There was no end in sight…My mood was such that I felt as if someone was slowly dripping hot tar on my poor, aching head.

The narrator managed to find the courage to remind Nikolai Fedorovich of the purpose of their meeting and direct him back to the study: "'And so,' I began, 'as you may have been persuaded already…' 'Oh, yes, of course, the no-noise gramophones undoubtedly are better than the regular ones…And I am very happy that I sold that other one and bought this one,' said Nikolai Fedorovich. I cursed him and fled!"[22]

The feuilleton presents two social types, both shaped by the emerging gramophone culture. The first, Nikolai Fedorovich, approaches business and leisure with equal seriousness; he is a hero of consumption as well as production. He derives great satisfaction from his

specialized knowledge of gramophone technology and exhaustive record collection. The businessman's faith in the merit of his consumption choices is based on the widely circulated discourse of verisimilitude—the notion that recorded voices are indistinguishable from live performances. Believing that a newly developed "no-noise" gramophone is superior to his previous, presumably "noisy" one, he echoes the advertisements, trademarks, and insignia of Victor and other companies that "equate[d] technological 'fidelity' with aesthetic quality."[23] Nikolai Fedorovich, furthermore, is a show-off. He does not retreat to secluded corners to listen to records but, on the contrary, conspicuously displays his collection and erudition, exposing the ears even of unconcerned visitors to his entire inventory. Significantly, he lists recordings by performer, thereby conveying his stellar reputation and discriminating taste through reference to the famous opera artists in his library.

Nikolai Fedorovich is the consummate gramophile. In fact, he is so thoroughly informed by gramophonic discourses, that his function in the story is to demystify them. Crass in his consumerist perfectionism, wholly absorbed in the pursuit of mechanized music, Nikolai Fedorovich serves to expose the discursive operations that produced him—to make the implied, target audience of gramophone publicity campaigns explicit.

The second type represented is of course the narrator, a man completely ignorant of the technological wonders and sonic delights that preoccupy his proselytizing host. When subjected to the aesthetics and practices of the new gramophone culture, he is seized by gramophobia—an array of negative responses that ultimately drive him to curse and flee the home of the man he had hoped to sway. The reader is let in on the vicissitudes of the narrator's antipathy and terror, and thus invited to identify with him.

The world the narrator depicts is one in which the boundaries of work and leisure have been redrawn or erased. Mechanized music and its purveyors have penetrated every aspect of life, including the ambit of business, and it is this unavoidable presence, the promiscuity of recorded sound, that unnerves him most. He cannot adjust to new rules of social and professional deportment that call for proficiency in the grammar of record collecting, exhibition of technical knowledge, and an ability to listen to music during business negotiations. With the narrator's farcical "no-smoke" faux pas, made in the presence of an unsympathetically rendered Nikolai Fedorovich, the story hails readers ambivalent about both material and aural aspects of sound recording, offering reassurance and opportunities for self-recognition

to those unable to assimilate the pedantry of gramophone producers and consumers.

"Gramophone" appeared in *Budil'nik* only a few weeks before "A Civilized Person: A Common Tale," another parody of the gramophonic discourses of spiritual elevation and fidelity. The latter story, in which the pate of young Pet'ka receives several blows for playing a Shaliapin aria 53 times, subverts the value attached to the repeatability, portability, and tangibility of recorded sound. Unlike the three sisters in the Pathé advertisement, the narrator, Pet'ka's father, is undone by the singing machine. Initially believing he is the quintessential cultivated twentieth-century man because he derives pleasure from listening to the recorded voice of Shaliapin while writing "freely and easily," the narrator resorts to violent, quite "uncivilized" behavior when Pet'ka's gramophone becomes a distracting and cacophonous automaton. He parrots recording industry narratives regarding the salubrious effects of music in the home, namely peace of mind ("singing calms the nerves"), emotional fulfillment ("I am intoxicated by the sound of Shaliapin's voice"), and access to artistic greatness ("Shaliapin is truly the pride and glory of Russia"), but ultimately cannot live them. "Just think what a great invention the gramophone is…Any idiot could have thought of it," he sardonically remarks after hearing Shaliapin for the fifteenth time, and then, losing all patience and capacity for insouciant wit, beats his son with the horn and record. In this story and others, the impact of the recorded voice on the narrator's consciousness and mood is extreme: he neither fully can accept nor remain indifferent to its obstinate and iterative presence.[24]

* * *

When Berliner's representative Frederick William Gaisberg traveled to Russia in 1901 to record opera stars like Fedor Shaliapin and the tenor Leonid Sobinov, he shored up the musical credentials of the gramophone and laid the groundwork for what was to become an important marketing strategy of his company and others. Russian record manufacturers sold the notion that consumers acquired sophistication and status through purchase of native "greatness"—the experience of beautiful voices and exemplary personalities in their own language. But important too was the idea that the gramophone owner was a citizen of the world, so to speak, bringing the talent of European opera houses into his drawing room. A 1908 advertisement for the Russian branch of Gramophone, for example, shows winged discs "flying" into the Moscow skyline. At the top is a large banner with the words "foreign guests" and the discs bear

the names of internationally renowned opera personalities such as Enrico Caruso, Adelina Patti, and Francesco Tamagno.[25]

Satirists examined these two related themes of advertising narratives—the triumph over time and space, and the equation of records with "real" voices—and raised questions pertaining to the effects of gramophone listening on understandings of the boundaries between private and public, work and leisure—and perhaps even self and other. They suggested that the immediacy and intimacy of the reproduced operatic voice, fulfilling for some and maddening for others, reordered the everyday, and created a more dynamic and intense view of emotional experience. While feuilletons offered a critique of recording culture, they also added to its narrativization and thus affirmed recorded sound as a fact of modern life. The following joke, printed in 1911 in *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (*Petersburg Gazette*), conveyed rather bluntly the inevitability of recording:

> "Please allow me to inform you, says a tenant to his landlord, that my neighbor will not give me any peace with his gramophone. It's becoming intolerable."
>
> "But what can I do about it? One can't prohibit a tenant from singing and playing in his home . . . "
>
> "Oh, well in that case I'll also buy a gramophone and play it from morning till night."
>
> "That's your business! Only I will warn you that landlords have very strong nerves. Open up a gramophone factory if you like—as long as you pay [the rent] promptly on the 1st of the month."[26]

Gramophonic literacy and the romance of masculine consumption

The inaugural 1907 issue of *Novosti grammofona* welcomed its subscribers with an unpresuming editorial that justified its existence. The publication claimed to be a pioneer, the first audiophile magazine in Russia, and though confident that new gramophone owners desperately needed its expert guidance as they leapt into the alien and complex world of record labels, machine brands, and stylus models, *Novosti* had to concede that the size of its potential readership was still relatively modest:

> It is difficult to believe how swiftly the gramophone has spread throughout the world even though relatively little time has passed since its invention. The broad and quick dissemination of the

> talking machines is even more astounding at first glance if we take into consideration the relatively high prices of the instruments and records, as well as the ephemerality of the records and the constant desire to update one's repertoire. All of this requires big and sometimes even enormous expense, and is the reason the gramophone has not penetrated the masses yet, especially here in Russia . . . The needs of the village are so great that it cannot afford even to dream of gramophones now! And still, no matter how strange it may seem initially, the gramophone is more widespread in Russia than in other countries.[27]

Two years later, while spending his summer in Sontsovka, a remote Ukranian village, the teenaged Sergei Prokofiev wrote his conservatory classmate Vera Alpers:

> Not long ago civilization sprang up in our backwoods in the form of a gramophone bought by one of the peasant men. And now toward evening, this damned invention stands outdoors in front of his hut and starts to wheeze its horrible songs. The crowd that gathers makes a racket, expressing its joy, and pretends to sing along. Dogs bark and howl, the cows coming from the fields moo and run in all directions, and, to top off all this torture, someone from a neighboring hut starts to play along on the accordion, off-key. At first I try closing all the windows, then I sit down at the piano, but finally I lose my patience and go off riding on my bicycle in the fields so as to spare myself this frightful cacophony.[28]

In the late 1910s and early 1920s, gramophones peppered the stories and plays of Isaac Babel. The machines appeared in Odessa, Petrograd, and Zhitomir—as the cherished possessions of Jewish mobsters, Cossack Red Cavalrymen, and haggard toilers, and as the purveyors of public amusement in bawdy clubs and smoke-filled restaurants. In "The End of St. Hypatius," a textile worker drags on sleighs "her washtubs, geese, and hornless gramophone" into the courtyard of a monastery, once the "cradle of the Muscovite Tsars," and now home to the laborers of Kostroma United Flax Mills.[29] The dining room of the gangster Benia Krik's house in the play *Sunset* is "low-ceilinged, homey, and bourgeois" with "paper flowers, chests of drawers, a gramophone, portraits of rabbis," and family photographs.[30] Benia's young son Levka hears a neighbor's gramophone play Jewish songs just before the night falls silent, and "the air, the rich air, pour[s] through his window."[31] And in "Gedali," a wizened Zhitomir shopkeeper sits atop an empty

beer barrel in an abandoned bazaar and whispers doubts about the Revolution as the warm "aroma of decay" flows past:

> The Pole has closed my eyes…that evil dog! He grabs the Jew and rips out his beard, *oy*, the hound! But now they are beating him, the evil dog! This is marvelous, this is the Revolution! But then the same man who beat the Pole says to me, "Gedali, we are requisitioning your gramophone!" "But gentlemen," I tell the Revolution, "I love music!" And what does the Revolution answer me? "You don't know what you love, Gedali! I am going to shoot you, and then you'll know, and I cannot *not* shoot because I am the Revolution!"…Bring a few good men to Zhitomir. *Oy*, they are lacking in our town, *oy*, how they are lacking! Bring good men and we shall give them all our gramophones. We are not simpletons. The International, we know what the International is.[32]

The gramophone turns up in Babel's stories in contexts that are particularly voluptuous, pungent, and lyrical. Both as a maker of music and a mute *thing*, it functions as a metonym, summoning the scent of nightfall, the memory of loss, and the mundane sumptuousness of material culture. During his travels as a war correspondent with the Sixth Cavalry Division in 1920, Babel chronicled the life of things as well as people, and though the gramophone has a public existence in his writings—in the Petersburg Palmyra Restaurant and in pubs patronized by Red Army fighters—it is principally an object that belongs to individuals.[33] Gedali, heartbroken and alone in a padlocked bazaar, expresses his grief and dismay at the violence of revolution through a tale about the requisitioning of his gramophone, its loss signifying the loss of self and personal choice to an unworthy collective. In Babel's stories, workers haul gramophones, not balalaikas or accordions, on their sleighs. The gramophone is for many a repository of memory, and for Gedali, a symbol of private life.[34]

* * *

The future about which the editors of *Novosti grammofona* did not dare even to dream in 1907 was realized in a relatively short time: by 1910 the gramophone had penetrated the villages of the Russian empire, becoming a fixture of the rural landscape. Initially a coin-operated curiosity of the boulevard, then an expensive toy of the cosmopolitan set, the talking machine quickly had become the household musical instrument of peasants and shopkeepers. For the contributors

of *Novosti*, however, not all news about the democratization of the gramophone was good news. Assuming the role of consumer guide, the magazine of course promoted the domestication and spread of recording technology. But the scenes described by Prokofiev and Babel would have displeased its editors and reviewers, who did not wish their championed product to be associated with uncouth sing-along popular melodies, wild merrymaking, or kitsch that passed for Jewish music in the gangster homes of Odessa. The magazine envisioned its readers engaged in selective, informed consumerism—one that entailed knowledge and appreciation of science and technology on the one hand, and "serious," or good music on the other. Like *Rampa i zhizn'* and other entertainment periodicals, *Novosti grammofona* was ambivalent about its market orientation, and tempered its enthusiasm for new commodities with an aesthetic politics and leisure ethic that condemned otiose, "low" forms of consumption. Record reviews and editorials were not the only conduits for such a politics. The narrative structure of the magazine as a whole, consisting of advertisements, humorous feuilletons, letters, and industry reports, trumpeted technological progress and mapped a social order underpinned by active, productive leisure and highbrow, enlightened entertainment.[35]

Colin Symes has compared record magazines to etiquette manuals, noting that the former "helped readers acquire appropriate modes of behavior in unfamiliar domains, including those of technology."[36] And indeed, *Novosti*, along with early-twentieth-century theater and music journals, aimed to facilitate a "civilizing process." All specialized periodicals tacitly outlined a code of behavior for their readers, but whereas theater periodicals spoke to the initiated—that is, seasoned opera and theatergoers or fans—the first magazines devoted to the gramophone gave candid advice primarily to an intended readership with little or no prior knowledge about sound recording.

Assuming that readers approached new technology with trepidation, *Novosti* adopted an avuncular, conversational narrative voice. Its journalists explained terms simply and deliberately, employing pseudonyms like Uncle Sasha and Gramophone Grandpa. Such familial characters, benevolent and loquacious, taught neophytes how to conduct themselves in a shop, what qualities to seek in recordings and gramophones, and when to service or change equipment. In the April 1907 issue, Gramophone Grandpa dispenses wisdom about the purchase and use of styluses:

> Gramophone needles: they seem trivial—but a lot depends on them. In gramophonic matters, as in life, nothing is trivial. Here

> everything is important. First, if you want to preserve your records, replace the needle after every record you play! If the package says that the needle may be changed every two records, don't believe it! Change the needle every time . . . if you want to get a clear and bright sound . . . Some believe that wide needles damage records faster. This is not true![37]

Uncle Sasha, an authority on recording technology and the tricks of its traders, helps his nephew Vladimir shop for his first gramophone in a serialized feuilleton also printed in 1907. For several issues, the master and his young pupil visit stores in pursuit of a dependable, well-constructed 40-ruble machine, dauntlessly surmounting various obstacles: cunning salesmen, shoddy overpriced products, and Vladimir's ignorance.

When they enter "one of the premier gramophone stores," Vladimir is stupefied by its wide selection. Agape, he scans the shelves: "A few [gramophones] have straight horns painted red on the inside, some have horns resembling flowers, and others are shaped like question marks."[38] Vladimir is a clerk earning 25 rubles a month and cannot afford most of the models displayed in the shop. He lives with his mother, Sasha's sister, a pensioner with a "great love for music, especially religious music." Together, they have saved 60 rubles, 20 of which is designated for records. Mother and son are "modest people with modest needs," homebodies who wish to play "their music without having to go to the theater."[39] Vladimir solicited the assistance of his uncle because he suspected that choosing the right gramophone for his little family would not be easy, but nothing in the youngster's limited experience prepared him for the dizzying cornucopia of commodities he now confronts. Breaking his nephew's stunned silence, Uncle Sasha requests that the salesman demonstrate the 40-ruble machine, and the latter immediately complies. He "cranks the gramophone, places the stylus in the diaphragm, and is about to put a record on the rotating disk" when Sasha, wishing "to hear if the mechanism operates smoothly and quietly," asks the salesman to run the machine without the record.[40] The salesman agrees, the disk rotates, and the mechanism rattles. Sasha is perturbed and asks why the "mechanism emits such a racket." The salesman insists that the noise is inaudible when the record plays. But Sasha does not relent:

> "Let's suppose that I will not hear the noise when the record plays; but still, this is clearly a defect. The mechanism is not complex and it is not supposed to make any noise when [the disk] rotates."

> "The fact that even the most expensive machines make noise while spinning," answered the salesman, "proves that the noise is inconsequential."
>
> "Well, my dear fellow, that's no argument! In every branch [of industry] there are poor and first-class manufacturers and if the factory isn't capable of eliminating defects from its best products and they are just like its low-grade products, then . . . such a factory is not top-notch and all of its goods must be sold at the same price. And furthermore, I see that you have gramophones for 150 rubles as well!?"
>
> "And even more expensive ones."[41]

Uncle Sasha remains skeptical and persists in challenging the salesman, asking why the disk wobbles as it rotates. His unflappable interlocutor responds calmly that it is supposed to wobble because "when the record plays, the quiver of the disk allows the stylus to be more sensitive to sound waves." Such "unabashed insolence" angers Sasha "to the depths of his soul," but he maintains his composure and remarks sarcastically:

> Imagine that! I had no idea. Based on what you've said, of course one must conclude that those gramophones in which the disk rotates evenly play worse, or less "intensely," so to speak. I regret very much that for the sake of comparison you cannot show us a machine with an evenly rotating disk so that we could have the opportunity to verify your claim.[42]

As the two leave the store empty-handed, Vladimir expresses his gratitude: "I am so glad that I turned to you for advice, uncle. Had I decided to go shopping . . . by myself, I probably would have yielded to the salesman's assurances and procured the sort of coffee grinder we just heard." Sasha then promises to tell Vladimir "what [he] should expect from a good but inexpensive gramophone" on their way to the next store.[43]

In the second installment of the story, Uncle Sasha delivers a lecture on how to become a discriminating, independent consumer. First, one must "distinguish between [the acoustic capabilities of] records and gramophones" and assess the quality of both: "If the record is engineered well and the performer has a commanding voice, it will make a good impression even if played on a cheap gramophone. But if the recording is made poorly, and the performer is 'wooden,' even the most expensive machine will produce wooden results." The

quality of the gramophone, of course, is also important. "It is absolutely essential that the mechanism runs evenly and smoothly . . . so that there is no distortion," and the disk rotates quietly, "otherwise, you will hear extraneous noise."[44]

Second, in order not to overpay one must be aware of how the gramophone is priced and apprehend the worth of its essential components, the diaphragm and horn. The diaphragm, constructed simply, must be meticulously examined. "The vibrating disk must be standard in width and the needle holder sufficiently sensitive. If these criteria are met, there cannot and should not exist variations in price." Every gramophone, according to Sasha, "from the cheapest to the most expensive should be equipped with the same diaphragm." But the horn is a different matter: as "its size unquestionably affects acoustics," it is perfectly reasonable that cheaper gramophones are equipped with smaller horns.[45]

Vladimir listens with rapt attention to his uncle's explanation and demonstrates understanding by raising a "sensible" question: "If a gramophone meets all of the enumerated criteria, then a moderately priced machine of approximately sixty rubles should be of very good quality . . . why, then, are so many machines sold at considerably higher prices?"[46] Uncle Sasha praises his nephew's newly acquired perspicacity and provides the following explanation:

> Properly speaking, machines should not be more than sixty rubles, and if you like, there should be cheaper ones on the market than that, but . . . here there are other factors to consider: capital, the pursuit of pleasure, and competition. Well-off people usually possess more developed tastes than people with small incomes and therefore like convenience. For the wealthy, gramophone manufacturers have devised double- and triple-spring mechanisms that play, with only one wind-up, two, three, or more records . . . Decoration and finish also raise the price of gramophones tremendously . . . a plain machine transforms into an expensive one without any change in quality. This is the case too when you acquire a gramophone with a famous brand name like The Gramophone Company or Columbia. If you purchase a less known, average brand, you will get the same thing . . . but without any extra features or trim.[47]

The feuilleton's trenchant lessons, offered in a cozy narrative setting, reveal much about the editorial concerns of gramophone magazines generally and tell us more about the types of subjects *Novosti* aimed to identify, address, and create. As I noted earlier, early-twentieth-century

recording enthusiasts and manufacturers disseminated the idea that gramophones provided spiritual and social elevation to their listeners. The talking machine of record magazine narratives did not prattle or drone; in fact, it did not talk at all. It sang and played "serious" music—music that, though reproduced, fell under the rubric of high (that is, masculine) culture. Appropriately, the implied reader of most of these narratives was male, and the consuming activities related to gramophones and records affirmed masculinity.[48]

In its elaboration of a sphere of consumption dissociated from the feminine, gramophonic discourse linked the purchase of sound-reproducing commodities to autonomous selfhood, productivity, and mastery. Uncle Sasha's story, like the Pathé "Three Sisters" advertisement, focuses on the family and, more specifically, the relationship between a paternal figure and an impressionable youngster. It identifies authoritative men, calling on them to distinguish themselves as consumers and mold others in their image. Uncle Sasha presides over Vladimir's developing interest in gramophones with diligence and moral clarity. His principal message echoes that of Gramophone Grandpa: no matter concerning the gramophone is trivial and every element of its construction deserves careful attention. Consumption deemed suitable for men is thus scientific and tradition-making. It is premised on an epistemology and creates a legacy—expertise passed down from one generation to the next. Above all, masculine consumption is conquest: youths like Vladimir must venture into a chaotic marketplace armed with enough knowledge and poise to outwit oleaginous retailers and successfully provide musical enjoyment for their families.[49]

Though primarily directed at male beginners, the offerings of *Novosti grammofona* also targeted "advanced" readers, as well as those still transitioning from utter benightedness to ripened gramophilia. Vladimir is not a static character—he desires to learn and does. And though he will be, due to constant technological novelty and obsolescence, an eternal student, he does not dwell in darkness for long. The episodic nature of Vladimir's development allows readers to remain engaged as they attain proficiency over the course of many issues. Some may identify with the pupil—first in his callow, then well-versed state; others, with time, may relate to the pedagogically gifted narrator, Uncle Sasha.

The feuilleton is a gramophone success story, and as such it lent support to the cultural objectives of *Novosti* and served to encapsulate its overarching narrative framework. Basic audio equipment reports were positioned forward in the magazine, as were vignettes

familiarizing skeptical novices with terminology and record store protocol. More technically complex industry and record reviews, and the "Letters" column, located in the latter part of the magazine, were aimed at a broader spectrum of individuals, some with abundant cultural capital and gramophonic expertise. Occasionally containing erudite allusions, these sections advised both the socially ambitious clerk and wealthy aesthete on ways to optimize the performance of their gadgets and get more value for less money. The temporal and spatial dimensions of the magazine thus acknowledged the reader's "progress," to paraphrase Symes, creating the impression that as the beginner read further, he moved, as it were, from the margins of the enlightened gramophile community to its center.[50]

The other addressee of *Novosti grammofona*, as the feuilleton also demonstrates, was the recording industry. The relationship between audio magazines and advertising was crucial, both on the economic and rhetorical levels. Mass-circulation periodicals always have relied heavily on income derived from advertising, using it to subsidize their production costs. This was especially true for Russia's audio magazines, which devoted nearly 50 percent of their space to Pathé, Gramophone, Columbia, and Sirena Record ads.[51] In turn, publications like *Novosti*, heralds of new technology and consumer habits, of course provided favorable sites for gramophone and record advertisers. Endorsing the latest machine models and unequivocally encouraging record collecting, the magazine's editorials and reviews often reinforced the messages of its ads.

Yet, this undeniable alliance confronted an immediate embarrassment. The magazine, after all, claimed to represent the interests of the consumer. Its appraisals of products were supposed to counteract the exaggerated assertions of advertisements and defend shoppers from the blandishments of unscrupulous retailers. Moreover, in their effort to exalt and therefore masculinize gramophone culture, the contributors to *Novosti*, in contrast to ads, fostered as well as policed desire for commodities. Less well-off readers especially were urged to spend wisely and resist seductive but superficial "decorations." If young men like Vladimir, overcome by the "trim and finish" of expensive machines, consumed unreflectively and squandered their mothers' meager pensions, they would be indistinguishable from the boulevard-roaming bourgeois ladies of satirical journals. Their leisure pursuits, by implication, would be purposeless, out-of-control, even dangerous—in short, feminized.

Critically oriented leisure magazines, almost by definition, could not place significant limits on consumption since "leisure" itself had

been conceived by and for the needs of consumer capitalism. How then did *Novosti grammofona* negotiate these discursive contradictions and tensions, manifested in all periodicals of its type? It did so, in part, through texts that performed both normative and informative functions—feuilletons and reviews that "variously proclaimed the record's [or gramophone's] presence in the world" and evaluated it.[52]

Uncle Sasha's tale, for example, provided a detailed description of the products in a gramophone store without overtly judging their merits, thereby alerting consumers to the existence of a broad range of sound-reproducing commodities and inviting curiosity about them. Even as Vladimir's experience assured less affluent shoppers that expensive machines were not necessarily better than cheaper ones, prosperous gramophiles with "developed taste" were informed that the "extra features" of high-priced gramophones made listening more convenient and pleasurable. Sasha's adventures and lectures, furthermore, operated on several rhetorical fronts, one of which proclaimed the unavoidability of self-interest and corruption in a modern capitalist economy. Life always would be as it was: capital, competition, and the "pursuit of pleasure" inevitably would inflate prices. Yet, the feuilleton also can be read as a guide to business ethics. The incisive portrayal of the interaction between Sasha and the dishonest salesman suggested to vendors that unfair or ruthless commercial practices may cause them to lose clients and offered a view of what constituted probity in the marketplace.

The second, related way the magazine dealt with its conflicting allegiances was by maintaining silences in its audio equipment reviews. More specifically, reviews announced and presented new products, often through accompanying illustrations, but critically assessed only their technical aspects. The evaluative component of the review, in other words, focused on a machine's durability and sonic attributes rather than appearance. To the extent that reviewers did mention artistic (visible) elements—innovative horn designs or elaborate engravings—they did so mainly to measure the impact of such features on sound quality, often understood as clarity or "naturalness."

A short review under the heading "Unique Machines," for example, contained virtually no commentary on the illustration embedded in its written text—an image of a large gramophone in the form of a leafy potted plant. Its author declared simply: "Gramophones designed like music boxes have appeared recently in stores." Their sound production was "weaker than that of ordinary ones but more pleasant and warmer, especially if the box is closed tightly."

Enthusiasts could acquire these machines "in the shape of various objects and the like."[53] Another review submitted a terse opinion on the decorative features of flower-shaped horns but then quickly turned to the effects of their construction on acoustic capability:

> New hand-painted horns imported from America have appeared in Petersburg. These resemble other flower-shaped horns (*Blumen Trichter*), but their bells, in addition to being painted, are adorned with art work; not bad, though the colors are too bright. Like all flower-like horns, these are made of tin rather than copper. Some say that the quality of the material used does not affect the sound, but others disagree.[54]

In adjudications of a product's capacity for sonic verisimilitude, "clarity," "purity," and "brightness" were privileged over high volume. Novelties such as the *oksetofon*, which "transmitted sound by charging the air with an electrical pump" in order to achieve loudness, were "good for orchestral music" but not "solo numbers and singing," claimed one reviewer. An increase in volume might cause distortion and spoil the intimacy of a vocal recording: "then say good-bye to naturalness [*estestvennost'*]!"[55]

Record reviews also were instrumental in stimulating desire for commodities. Complementing the listings of new releases advertised in the magazine by Columbia, Fonotipia, and other companies, they kept collectors abreast of the latest label numbers and recording artists. But, as I already have noted, *Novosti* discouraged indiscriminate acquisition, prompting consumers to choose records on the basis of their sonic as well as musical merits: good records played "good" music—the only kind worth collecting. Record reviews did not devote equal space to all genres of music, steering readers to opera arias and other classical repertoire. In addition to assessing the performances and aural "realism" of each record, reviewers judged the inherent value of compositions, appraising them according to the "serious"/"popular" or high/low classifications and vocabularies that emerged in Russian music and theater discourse at the end of the nineteenth century. Aspersions were cast on operetta numbers and art songs were treated with ambivalence, while recordings of "popular" or folk music virtually were excluded.

The record review was a novel concept in 1907. The first issue of *Novosti grammofona* established its generic features and analytic categories. The anonymous author of the lengthy introduction to "Our Reviews (Notes of an Enthusiast)" addressed readers in the prevailing

tone and language of the magazine—accessible, candid, and a touch condescending. "This is not criticism—heaven help us!... More accurately, these are personal observations," he proclaimed emphatically. Most Russians were not prepared for "real" or "harsh" music-related record criticism. Their unsophisticated and tone-deaf condition instead demanded gentle directives and readable information: "The gramophone trade is developing abroad, and with every year we have more and more gramophiles, though the musical education of our society is far from high. We, of course, are not speaking about those 'gramophiles' who don't care to what they listen as long as something 'buzzes,' and who always prefer native compositions such as 'Van'ka fell in love with Tan'ka' and what came of it to incomprehensible Italian melodies."[56]

But if "serious criticism" was premature, "then some kind of review still was necessary" to help the public "make sense of what it liked" and obviate reliance on catalogues. Readers of reviews, now possessing knowledge about the performers and musical content of specific records, would cease poring over copious pages of catalogue numbers in utter confusion. Consumers in remote provinces without access to stores would no longer struggle with foreign titles or resort to "philistine" methods, choosing records solely on the basis of famous artists' names.[57] Reviews offered collectors a lens through which to interpret records: "A gramophone record can be judged on the basis of its musical performance, artistic (technical) reproduction, and the substance of the performed piece itself. The performance can be wonderful but poorly recorded, or the sound might be impeccable but the performance weak. Finally, sometimes both the sound and performance are good, but the work itself is vulgar, trivial, or completely unknown. [All]...three factors...can affect the quality of a record."[58]

The hermeneutics of the record was informed by the discourse of social mobility and self-improvement prevalent in fin-de-siècle Russian entertainment journals—a discourse that focused on consumption of "serious" art and personal authenticity, and contained paradoxical views of commercial success. In a 1907 review of a Gramophone recording of "Swings," a song from Franz Lehár's operetta *The Merry Widow*, the reviewer notes that while the work "is sung very well and the sound is outstanding...it is...empty of content and melodically thin. It is 'fashionable'...because it is completely graspable for the 'general' public. But then, a good performance does mean a lot."[59] "Fashionable" clearly was synonymous with "vulgar" and "trivial" but, as the introduction to the review section suggests, "completely unknown" was equally suspect.

Given the magazine's cagey treatment of music popular with the "general public," it perhaps is not surprising that record reviews also expressed contradictory positions on celebrity and celebrity culture. The system of categories under which the reviews were grouped discouraged the "philistine" practice of selecting records by performer. Reviews were arranged by record label rather than voice type or artist—the categories commonly used by record companies in their advertisements of new releases. And more often than not the reviewer began with a characterization of the label (e.g., Pathé, Gramophone, or Columbia), assessing the quality of its repertoire, engineering methods, and so forth. Such efforts to direct collectors' attention away from famous personalities, however, were undermined by the magazine's other narrative features. Portraits of opera recording stars like Titta Ruffo, Alesandro Bonci, and Caruso accompanied the reviews, and stories about these and other celebrity singers appeared on pages directly following or preceding the review department. Reviews of individual records, moreover, often focused on performers, particularly their ability to vocally convey pathos in a "nuanced" and "sincere" manner.[60] In a review of Gramophone recordings of arias from Tchaikovsky's opera *Pikovaia dama* (*Queen of Spades*, 1890), for example, the baritone Polikarp Orlov's performance of Tomskii's ballad "Three cards" was praised for its "vivid dramatics." Of special note, too, was his "strong" voice, which "sustained a crescendo until the [aria's] final chord and laugh." Herman's aria "What is our life?—A game!" was performed "with great feeling by [Aleksandr] Davydov," and the lines "'Let the loser weep, cursing his fate!' were pregnant with sincere pathos."[61] Interrogating the recorded voice in an attempt to judge its approximation of live performance and emotional truth, these texts shared with celebrity narratives concerns and questions about affect, realism, and presence.

Novosti grammofona ceased to exist in 1908. But it soon was followed by other magazines devoted to sound recording, among them *Grammofonnaia zhizn'* and *Grammofonnyi mir* (*Gramophone World*), with more inclusive and varied cultural and social agendas.[62] By the 1910s, the narrative configuration of audio magazines had changed in a few significant ways: more space was allotted to celebrity photographs and gossip, the review field included nonclassical recordings, and less patronizing editorial commentary tacitly acknowledged that subscribers had evolved, too. Yet, despite the leavened content, these later periodicals retained many of the features of their predecessor, fulfilling similar didactic and informative functions. The evaluative framework of the product and record reviews first introduced in *Novosti grammofona*

was regularized, as were the other departments: product reviews, technical articles, and the letters section.

The imagined readers of *Grammofonnyi mir* and *Grammofonnaia zhizn'* were similar to those of *Novosti*. They lived in a social world increasingly dictated by the mechanized rhythms of the production process, dehumanizing modes of commercial exchange, and a steady flow of commodities. Among the masses of urbanites whose palates had been numbed by indiscriminate consumption of "vulgar" boulevard-generated culture, audio magazines identified a group of men—not defined by estate or rank, not "intelligentsia" or "nobility," with disposable income, some leisure time, and a burning desire for cultivation—as their reading public. Audio magazines sought to help readers navigate the terrain of commodities, rehumanize them, awaken and refine their tastes, provide them with a community and new means of self-understanding. Aspiring gramophiles would learn how to listen to records, organize their leisure, express themselves, and purchase good machines.

Characterizations of "good" machines resembled in striking ways the conception of selfhood privileged (and increasingly complicated) in the entertainment press of the time. A gramophone worthy of an astute male consumer was beautiful on the inside: it possessed a durable, well-functioning mechanism—a stable core not unlike the "I" of lovers of serious art. The hermeneutics of the gramophone record, by which I mean here the modes of listening and interpretation used to assess aural "realism" or fidelity, reflected the preoccupation of broader public discussions with discernment, acquisition, and embodiment of truth and authenticity.

Sound fidelity as discourse of personal authenticity

The first renowned record producer Fred Gaisberg began his career at age 16 as a piano accompanist for the Columbia Phonograph Company in Washington, DC. Three years later in 1891, he went to see a "funny German" in his early twenties "who had started experimenting with a flat-disc talking machine record." In a small laboratory on New York Avenue, the enthusiastic émigré "dressed in a monkish frock" greeted Gaisberg warmly with a "'Hello, hello!' in guttural, broken English" and a rendition of "Tvinkle, tvinkle little star, how I vonder vot you are."[63] The inventor was Emile Berliner, and Gaisberg had been invited to witness the making of the first gramophone record.

After working as an assistant in Berliner's laboratory for eight years, Gaisberg was sent to Europe as an agent of the London Gramophone Company to find and record celebrity opera singers. Successes in London, Leipzig, Vienna, Budapest, Milan, and Madrid were followed by impressive achievements in the place Gaisberg called "the El Dorado of traders," Russia.[64] Among the first Russian singers to sign contracts with Gramophone were Davydov, Kamionskii, Sobinov, and Vial'tseva. A few years later, after some coaxing, a generous fee, and the signing of Caruso, Shaliapin agreed to a contract as well.[65] Gaisberg's efforts in Russia and elsewhere yielded a sizable catalogue of celebrity opera recordings distinguished by a red label and a high price.

The "Red Label" records were issued in 1902, their distinctive markers signifying the preeminent status of the artist and, by extension, the London Gramophone Company. Gaisberg credited a St. Petersburg gramophone dealer by the name of Rappaport for providing the idea of the Red Label. In *Music on the Record*, a memoir of his years with Gramophone, Gaisberg recalled with fondness his profitable visits to the Russian capital—its opera talent, "carefree nightlife," and eccentric Jewish traders, whose ethically suspect but innovative approach to business he occasionally admired:

> I [still] can see excited dealers lining up when the word went out that a fresh consignment of Chaliapin or Sobinoff records had arrived from the factory. The price was £1 each, single-sided, first come first served, and they sold like hot cakes…It was Rappaport…who preached to us that to be a success in business one had to be *frech* (Yiddish or German slang for "fresh"). So he at once opened a *de luxe* gramophone store on the Nevsky Prospect, with red-plush chairs and palms complete. He also advised affixing a Red Label to the Figner and Sobinoff records and selling them for £1 each. Needless to say, only the aristocracy and the wealthy merchants could afford to own a gramophone [in those days]. It was really this rogue who, to secure goods of distinction for his emporium, always forced us to attempt the impossible in music and artists. Still, he lifted us out of our "small town" mentality.[66]

Gaisberg was an ardent lover of music and musicians. He respected, pampered, and disarmed many of the artists he recorded. With the aid of several engineers and his brother Will (who "regarded the artists as children and mothered them all"), he set up recording

equipment in the parlors of world-famous operatic tenors and temperamental divas, and persuaded them to sing into the horn of a machine.[67] The artists opened their homes as well as hearts to the affable Gaisberg, and often he became their adviser and confidant. As Eisenberg points out, "Gaisberg's conception of his role was not grandiose. He was an engineer and a businessman, charged with getting the best musicians to record and seeing to it that the discs were without serious blemish. But he was proud of having documented so many legendary musicians, [and] proud of having made legends of some (like Caruso)."[68] Later producers envisioned a more active, collaborative part for themselves. Walter Legge, the prominent record producer for EMI in the 1940s and 1950s, maintained that musicians benefited from his artistic judgment, practice sessions, and splicing techniques. He believed, along with others of his generation, that records could be error-free and acoustically superior to public performances. Gaisberg, initially working with more modest technology (the acoustic horn rather than the microphone, first used in the mid 1920s), merely sought to produce "sound photographs"—not to perfect vocal performances but to capture perfectly the flawed, human voice.[69]

Before the advent of electrical recording in 1924, "musicians played or sang into a recording horn, which funneled the sound to a narrow opening covered with a flexible membrane (of mica or glass); the diaphragm, as it was called, transferred the vibrations to a stylus, which in turn engraved a disc" (made of zinc until 1901, and then wax).[70] This system placed high physical demands on performers. It required musicians to develop a rapport with the diaphragm and horn, and often entailed intimate contact between singers and production assistants. As Katz explains, "soft and loud notes…[called for] drastically different techniques. A vocalist might literally stick her head inside the horn to ensure that her pianissimo would be heard, but then, with the timing of a lion tamer quickly withdraw for her fortissimo, so as to avoid 'blasting' the engraving needle out of its groove." Often studio assistants would have to grab singers, shoving them toward the horn or pulling them away "according to the changing dynamics of the music."[71]

Gaisberg recollected the difficulties of recording the most famous soprano of the Victorian age, and "the only real diva [he] ever met," Adelina Patti.[72] At the time of the session, autumn 1906, she was well past her vocal prime, somewhat reclusive, and vain as ever. The woman who is said to have remarked, "Now I understand why I am

Patti!" upon hearing the first record of her voice, did not appreciate being man-handled:[73]

> It was an ordeal for her to sing into [the] small funnel while standing still in one position. With her natural Italian temperament she was given to flashing movement and to acting her parts. It was my job to pull her back when she made those beautiful attacks on the high notes. At first she did not like this and was most indignant, but later when she heard the lovely records she showed her joy just like a child and forgave me my impertinence.[74]

If the early recording process was intimate, so were its results. In the acoustic era, the voice was the easiest and most practical instrument to record. Gaisberg admitted that producers "had to choose 'titles' so as to obtain the most brilliant results without revealing the defects of the machine. The first of the instruments to be recorded successfully was the human voice because its range of frequencies was within such a limited compass. Next in order came…brass, wind, and percussion instruments. Therefore in the pre-1914 catalogues…vocal and military band records predominate."[75]

The turn-of-the-twentieth-century gramophile's collection was primarily comprised of scantily orchestrated solo vocal records. Opera arias often were accompanied by a tinkling piano or a lonely clarinet. "There was no pretence of using the composer's score [for the vocal records]," remarked Gaisberg: "We had to arrange it for wind instruments entirely…Though marked advances were made in the technique of manufacture which reduced the surface noise on the disc, nevertheless the artist and the music had invariably to be selected with care so as to cover up all instrumental deficiencies."[76] When a symphonic effect was attempted, wind and brass instruments often took the place of strings because the former produced a louder, piercing sound that could be directed more easily toward the recording horn. Clarinets and oboes were used in lieu of violins, a tuba occasionally replaced the double basses, and the Stroh violin, a hybrid brass and string instrument that substituted a small metal horn for the sound box, sometimes replaced an entire string section.[77]

Early-twentieth-century opera recordings thus were very different from live opera performances. On records, singers did not compete with an orchestra. Voices were heard virtually alone, detached not only from such other aspects of opera as its stagecraft and embodied

characters, but also its larger musical and dramatic organization. This focus on abstracted vocal works, I suggest, intensified the experience of recorded voices as at once quite familiar and intrusive. For while recording disembodied music, the visual texts linked to records—such as reviews and Red Label catalogues replete with photographs of opera stars—enabled listeners to (re)attach the voice to a corporeal form. Vocal recordings, vehicles of personal, solitary dramas (and usually lacking pianissimos, according to Gaisberg), played over and over, made the personalities to whom the voices belonged part of fans' everyday lives in ways that press accounts and posters alone could not, and contributed to a growing fetishistic preoccupation with the celebrity opera singer.[78]

* * *

The gramophone repeatedly appeared in satirical depictions of dacha life in the 1910s. Its ubiquity sometimes was implicated by the press in the social commentary on the transformation of the dacha—from a "rustic retreat," where the well-born and intelligentsia escaped urban bustle, relaxed, and communed with nature, into a place of cacophony and chaos, where ostentatious parvenus flaunted their newly acquired commodities and participated in mindless amusement from noon until night. Given both the increasingly diverse social composition of dachas and the still questionable cultural legitimacy of the gramophone, the connection made between the upstart invention and social climbers is understandable. Other satire linking *dachniki* and gramophones was more subtle in its social diagnosis, focusing its parodic lens instead on the introduction of novel sonic experiences into an exurbia conceived, at least by some, as a sphere of physical exercise on the one hand and quiet domesticity on the other.[79] Samuil Marshak's 1911 poem "Dacha" about the aurally bombarded summerfolk is a typical example of such ironic commentary:

> Dacha windows open wide,
> And all day long roars in the street
> The angry bass of a gramophone:
> "At the human race by his feet!…"
> The machine just broke,
> I'm resurrected! (Thought I didn't have a chance!…)
> But the record again comes on:
> "And Satan leads the dance!"

Willy-nilly you're depressed:
Cursed and hapless I was born!...
"Why, Lenskii, aren't you dancing?"
Protests the obnoxious horn.
As the torrid horizon blazes
In the heavy afternoon...
"The little wind breathes gently"—
A gramophone croons.
At the neighbors'—who can know them!—
With every hour their affection grows.
The gramophone at their house wails
And "The Hymn to Hymen" drones.
You leave the dacha. Go out to the fields.
There's a family...and a picnic near...
But here too—in the open air
A gramophone's appeared.
Amid the waves of golden wheat,
Under the sheltering blue sky,
You pray to heaven it will rain
On their heads held high![80]

In Marshak's poem, as in many of the other fictional narratives presented here, it is recorded *vocal* music that permeates daily routine. Unlike "live" singing—whether in a big concert hall or during a small social gathering—recorded music did not need an occasion, nor was it necessarily at the center of one. Rather, it often served as a backdrop to everyday activities; it set a mood. One can say, as Marshak and other Russian satirists suggested (and Benjamin decades after them), that recordings cheapened music, robbing it of specific time and place, its ritual value, its "aura," and ultimately its authenticity.[81] But one can also argue that record playing created new rituals of listening and added meaning even to the most banal activities.

The reproduced singing voice in particular has the capacity to organize emotional experience and memory—to provide a structure for personal narratives. It can do so because it is word, because it is disembodied utterance that nevertheless references a subject (putatively, it is captured "human" sound); and because, by playing and replaying a record, its listener can will it into being, speak to it, or embody it. By quoting lines from well-known opera recordings in his poem, Marshak shows the gramophone to be an intrusive device that speaks to him constantly in varying and unwelcome tones and voices. Yet, "Dacha," with operatic statements seamlessly inserted

into the author's rhymed narration, serves precisely to illustrate how the gramophone played with the boundaries of identity, its vocal emanations at once intimate and alien, inside one's head and from a distant, unseen other.

In *The Inconsolable Widow*, a play produced by the St. Petersburg company Nevskii Farce in 1911, mechanized music enters an indisputably intimate sphere: the conjugal bed. A husband suspecting his wife of infidelity devises a plan to catch her in the act. He places an electrical contraption under her mattress before departing for a trip. When a mass of more than five poods, or the weight of two bodies, is placed on the bed, electrical wires connect, and a gramophone, attached to the contraption by a hidden chord, begins to play a bravura march.[82] In the final act, a friend of the couple who is in on the scheme hears the march "Longing for the Old Days," and laments, "Alas! It is too late to save her: the currents have joined!"[83]

In the play, the gramophone alone "witnesses" and testifies to the wife's infidelity. Or does it? No sentient being actually sees or relays the "event"—the wife's betrayal—so how can the audience be certain of what actually took place in her room? Did the recorded march signal the descent of paramours on a wired bed? Or did the bereft wife, longing for her absent husband, place a heavy metallic box of his photographs on the mattress? A stack of records, perhaps? In order to be sure of the wife's infidelity, as the family friend was, we would have to have faith in a machine, and we would have to believe that the gramophone, offering sonic evidence, does not lie.

Since the advent of the recording industry, inventors, manufacturers, retailers, and record reviewers have been obsessed with another kind of fidelity—sound fidelity. Gaisberg was committed to producing records that did not sound mediated, that is, recordings free of surface noise and distortion. The advertisements and trademarks of the Gramophone and Victor companies claimed that their records were faithful to "living" voices, and went still further to equate record and singer. Berliner's famous "His Master's Voice" (HMV) trademark, based on Francis Barraud's painting of his terrier Nipper peering into the horn of a phonograph (originally an Edison machine), suggests that the dog is unable to distinguish between a record of his master's voice and his real master.[84] And widely disseminated Victor ads from the 1910s featured Caruso standing next to a disc roughly the size of his torso with the caption: "Both are Caruso." These ads went on to boast that "the record of Caruso's voice is just as truly Caruso as Caruso himself. It actually *is* Caruso—his own magnificent voice, with all the wonderful power and beauty of tone that make him the greatest of all tenors."[85]

The early discourse of sound fidelity or verisimilitude thus suggested that "perfect" fidelity was achieved when the technology enabling sound reproduction, acting as a mediator, vanquished itself, and the relation between "living" and reproduced sound was rendered transparent.[86] But while the Victor ads claimed to erase the distinction between the original and copy, they also alluded to an external reality or original that looked quite different from the disc beside it—the picture of Caruso. The assertion that *both* were Caruso, in other words, introduced the very idea of "originals" and "copies"—and the notion that there could be a difference between the two.

In *The Audible Past,* Jonathan Sterne argues that an idea of sound fidelity based on a "fundamental distinction between original and copy will most likely bracket the question of what constitutes originality itself," emphasizing the technology rather than the process of reproduction. But both originals and copies actually are mediated: "The efficacy of sound reproduction as a technology or as a cultural practice is not in its keeping the faith with a world totally external to itself. On the contrary, sound reproduction, from its beginnings . . . implied social relations among people, machines, practices, and sounds. The very concept of sound fidelity is a result of this conceptual and practical labor."[87] Sterne then turns to Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in which *aura* is defined as "the unique presence in time and space of a particular representation, its location in a particular context and tradition."[88] Sterne stresses not the part of Benjamin's essay that expresses regret over the "withering" of aura, freed from its time, space, and tradition in the age of mechanical reproduction but a footnote that qualifies his definition of aura: "Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity."[89] Sterne elaborates on aspects of Benjamin's analysis of film to assert that the mediation resulting from sound reproducing technologies is a cultural rather than ontological problem:

> The very construct of aura is, by and large, retroactive, something that is an artifact of reproducibility rather than a side effect or an inherent quality of self-presence. Aura is the object of a nostalgia that accompanies reproduction. In fact, reproduction does not really separate copies from originals but instead results in the creation of a distinctive form of originality: the possibility of reproduction transforms the practice of production. . . . [A]uthenticity and presence become issues only when there is something to which we can compare them.[90]

Notions of sound fidelity changed fundamentally in the 1930s, as record producers and companies increasingly announced that their products were superior to live performances.[91] In the era of electrical recording, fidelity could connote the correspondence between two different reproduced sounds, a measurement of recordings against other recordings. But even purists like Gaisberg, producers of the acoustic age whose modest aim was to make faithful recordings of the best "living" voices, referred to a living voice or reality already mediated by the idea and process of reproduction. When Gaisberg recorded the "Volga Boat Song" with Shaliapin, "together [they] produced two more stanzas and conceived the idea of beginning the number softly, rising to a forte and fading away to whisper, to picture the approach and gradual retreat of the haulers on the river banks."[92] Gramophone chose to record Caruso in part because the "overtones and strong vibrato in his voice etched a particularly 'brilliant' tone—it suited the technology well, and enhanced "fidelity." For Caruso's 1906 recording of Verdi's *La Forza del Destino* (1862) with baritone Antonio Scotti, Victor "shifted the frequency range of the reproducing equipment upward to favor the higher registers, reinforcing the 'ringing tones.'" One Victor ad then proclaimed that "the sound [is] a bit louder than the 1905 recordings and 'so natural that it seems to be Caruso himself singing instead of the machine.'"[93]

The recognition that record producers both construct and capture so-called live or original performances, as well as an objection to Benjamin's statement that reproduction destroys the ritual value of a work of art, leads Eisenberg to declare that "there is no original musical event that a record records or reproduces. Instead, each playing of a given record is an instance of something timeless. The original musical event never occurred; it exists, if it exists anywhere, outside history. In short, it is myth, just like the myths re-enacted in primitive ritual."[94] But if studio recordings record "nothing," as Eisenberg provocatively writes, if recordings "piece together bits of actual events" to "construct an ideal event," if they create myth, then what were the constitutive narratives of the myth (the construction of which is time-bound and culturally specific) repeatedly invoked and dramatized in early twentieth-century Russia?[95] Put another way, if the "authentic," original performance—the aura of live music—is as historically contingent as its copy, and if sound fidelity is a concept with aesthetic and ethical implications, then what were the values and practices that informed fin-de-siècle Russian discourses of sonic authenticity/artifice? To what, or whom, were records supposed to be faithful?

The introduction to the record review section of *Novosti grammofona* discussed earlier drew a distinction between the "musical" and technological or engineering aspects of recordings, implying that the merits of each would be determined separately. In reviews, however, evaluations of aural and aesthetic qualities invariably overlapped, and "good sound" was equated explicitly with "good performance." In the following 1907 review, for example, sonic "perfection" is created not only by the absence of surface noise and distortion—transparency of reproduced sound—but also by a pleasing timbre, purity of tone, and variation in dynamics:

> The records produced by [the] Italian company [Fonotipia] are impeccable . . . The recordings of [soprano] Mariia Barrientos are superb . . . Olimpiia Boronat conveyed her arias beautifully, but Barrientos's efforts transfer even better because the timbre of her voice is more pleasant. And though [Barrientos] sings with equal if not greater power, she does not have the harshness of Boronat . . . The technical perfection of these recordings enables us to appreciate all the nuances of her performance, even the softest pianissimo, and the perfection of her performance creates a flawless illusion, compelling one to forget that one is listening . . . to a machine and not a living human voice.[96]

The review ends with a tautological statement not unlike that of Victor's Caruso ads: perfect technological fidelity enables the perfect performance and the singer's perfect performance creates a "living" recording.

In part because vocal records were at the center of early discussions of reproduced sound, the idea of fidelity was never simply about technology and sonic clarity: "good" recordings provided an illusion of *human* presence. Natural-sounding records were "expressive," emoting ones, as the 1908 review below demonstrates:

> With sincere pleasure we listened to a series of new Pathé recordings and can recommend them without reservation to every gramophile: the "phonographs" of the company Pathé Brothers stand out among talking machines because they transmit sound clearly and cleanly—without any noise . . . Of the [new releases] first we must note the wonderful duet by M. A. Mikhailova and A. I. Smirnov, "Mountaintops," and the graceful trio of [Nadezhda] Lanskaia, [Nikolai] Bol'shakov, and Smirnov . . . The voices here, especially in the latter number, do not blend the way they often do on other

> recordings, but sound distinct and expressive. The performance is very loud and powerful but without harshness, and in general the voice transfer is very natural.[97]

Here "power" and "loudness" are in close proximity to "expressive," suggesting powerful and loud emotions rather than high volume. Often in the *Novosti* record reviews, a language of affect was used to discuss sonic clarity, and "naturalness" of sound was elided with the expression of intense feelings. One review, commenting on a disc of the Miller's aria from Dargomyzhskii's opera *Rusalka*, attributed the "clear" sound of the recording to the "powerful and expressive" performance of the bass Dmitrii Bukhtoiarov.[98] In another review, a well-engineered, "clear" Shaliapin recording of Mussorgsky songs conveyed the "strength of the singer's voice" and "the gamut of sounds—from severe plaintiveness to some sort of sobbing."[99] And in the July 1907 issue, an evaluation of a Columbia new release typically links "perfect recording sound" to the capacity of the recorded material to "move" listeners:

> The artist T. I. Nalband'ian managed splendidly the aria "Forgive me, loveliest of creatures" from *Pikovaia dama*. There are arias that have particular capacity to move the public, that are advantageous for the artist. [Such arias] are even better for the public when it hears them performed in an exemplary manner. Of course, a perfect recording sound, for which Columbia has become known, also helps. [Nalband'ian] performs Lenskii's cavatina from *Eugene Onegin* equally well . . . We particularly liked that the first of the two arias is sung with persuasive and sincere feeling.[100]

Through a succession of condensations and displacements, discussions of sound fidelity provided a basis for measuring humanity. Sonic "realism" connoted sincerity, which in turn meant the communication of fervent emotion; the phrase "natural sound" attached value to and often became synonymous with pathos. One could say, therefore, that the discourse of fidelity in early-twentieth-century Russia contained and disseminated an operatic definition of personal authenticity.

* * *

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s the Edison Phonograph Company conducted so-called tone tests, a publicity campaign organized

across the United States to show the superior fidelity of its machines. In darkened rooms, sometimes concert halls, audiences would listen to the singing of famous Edison recording artists and then try to determine whether the voices were "live" or recorded. Often they would guess wrong and gape in amazement when the lights came on to reveal a machine playing. Now, when listening to early vocal recordings, one cannot help but smile with incredulity and bemusement at this story. To the contemporary ear, the crackling, pitch distortion, and limited dynamic range of acoustic opera recordings make the distinction between them and "real" voices so stark that one is tempted to ask: Did early-twentieth-century listeners hear differently than we do today?

Adorno's 1928 gramophone essay offers an answer. In it he stressed that gramophones did not act as vanishing mediators of voices and the intrusion of technology facilitated rather than hindered authenticity. The residue of incidental noises and other imperfections, paradoxically, made the recordings sound human.[101] What could he have meant? Despite all the efforts of early gramophone companies to perfect records by removing evidence of reproduction, one needed to be made aware of the machine's presence to distinguish and name that which was human and "real." The pure voice, exactly reproduced, fully detached from a mediating corporeality, was uncanny and unnatural seeming. It was in the excess, as it were, that humanity was expressed.[102] The many invocations of "natural sound" or "authenticity" in early record reviews, I suggest, referenced not an exact reproduction but this very excess and, in the Russian case, a powerful emotional upheaval that demanded immediate expression.

The discourse of sound fidelity reflected and advanced the obsession with selfhood and its wholeness or truthfulness we encountered in previous chapters. Gramophone records deepened relationships to celebrity opera singers (heavily promoted by audio manufacturers and magazines) and enabled the disembodied voice to penetrate new spaces and choreograph emotional life. Perhaps because recordings were so intimately tied to human sound, simultaneously claiming to be faithful to "living voices" and introducing the very ideas of copies and "live performances," Russia's pioneering audiophile magazines linked sonic fidelity and emotional, inner truth—the capacity of the recorded voice to convey sincerity, equated with the expression of *intense* feelings. Discussions about sound fidelity, therefore, were about another faith: like opera fans' ardent letters, they trumpeted the importance of personal authenticity and its extravagant, confessional imperatives on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution.

5
Fan Letters, Melodrama, and the Meaning of Love

Tchaikovsky's Tatiana as prototypical fan

In Tchaikovsky's popular opera *Eugene Onegin* (1878), the heroine Tatiana, having assured her concerned nanny that she is "on fire" due to love rather than illness, is left alone in her bedroom at night. The orchestra repeats the theme of her impassioned plaint, introduced in the previous scene. The violins commence the melody in a major key, soon enriched by the lush undulation of all the strings. Short chords follow, gradually quickening, crescendoing, and then stridently giving expression to Tatiana's nervous anticipation and trembling body. Suddenly, the orchestra falls silent, and the last chord resounds with unresolved tension until Tatiana's soprano rings out, in forte: "Let me perish, but first / Let me summon, in dazzling hope / Bliss yet unknown / Life's sweetness is known to me!" The melody, thus far restrained in the orchestra, now swells as Tatiana exultantly continues: "I drink the magic potion of desire!…Everywhere, everywhere I look, / I see my fatal tempter!"[1]

The tension temporarily dissipates: Tatiana goes to her table and reproduces her rapture in a letter to Eugene Onegin. As if impelled to catharsis by manic violins—the musical utterance of her emotions—Tatiana resolves to confess her love. Next the orchestra delicately plays a chromatic melody appropriate for epistolary contemplation. Tatiana's unbridled enthusiasm transforms into reflection and then self-criticism. The melody slows in tempo and is suddenly interrupted by a sforzando major chord: "No, that's all wrong, I'll begin again," the frustrated Tatiana exclaims as she tears up her unfinished missive, "Oh, what's the matter with me! I am all on fire. / I don't know where to begin!"[2] But the heroine's agonizing indecision is fleeting. Tatiana inexplicably regains her self-possession and, contradicting the statement she uttered moments before, imperturbably

composes a lengthy letter. She writes to the accompaniment of steady, repetitive phrases from plangent oboes, flutes, and clarinets that, in Stanislavskii's words, "almost seem to dictate [the letter] to her."[3] Initially slowly and plaintively, Tatiana sings the opening lines: "I write to you—and then? / What more is there to say? / Now I know it is within your power / to punish me with disdain! / But if you nourish one grain of pity for my unhappy lot / you will not abandon me. / At first I wished to remain silent / then, believe me, you would never / have known my shame, / never!"[4] While feverishly writing, and in periodic asides, she continues to reveal the ebb and flow of her thoughts and emotions to Onegin and the audience.

Like the fictional Tatiana, an admirer and seeming erstwhile lover of Fedor Shaliapin stayed up one night composing a confessional letter replete with longing, ambivalence and self-deprecation. Vacillating between agitation and resignation, despair and hope, the early-twentieth-century letter resembles Tatiana's in structure and content. The young woman writing to Shaliapin also begins reluctantly—not with the customary greeting, but a declaration of uncertainty about her own motives and desires:

> I do not know why I am writing to you again. I did not want to write, but Liuba somehow convinced me, saying that you would respond. They all think that I am ill, that I am weak. I have enough strength to endure many things. She tells me that I should tell you what I want from you. Do I really have the right to demand anything from you? I do not even want anything. [If I did] I would be imposing on you and this I would not and could not do. All the letters I have written to you, all that I have said—is delirium. I wrote everything in an unconscious state. Now that I am fully conscious I do not want to write. It is nighttime now and it is so frightening . . . cold . . . I am afraid of everything . . . Maybe it is true that I am ill.[5]

Plagued by remorse and shame, both letter writers emphatically opt for the loneliness of nocturnal reverie, announce their fears, and then, as if to heighten and prolong their masochism, recall and mourn falling in love. Tatiana, after declaring that she "is prepared, come what may" and will "confess all," reflects on her fate and ponders a duller yet more peaceful life without Onegin: "Why, oh why did you visit us? / Buried in this remote countryside, / I should never have known you / nor should I have known this torment. / The turbulence of a youthful heart, / calmed by time, who knows?—/ Most

likely I would have found another, / have proved a faithful wife / and virtuous mother."[6]

The author of the amorous letter to Shaliapin similarly conjures up their now lamentable first meeting—the act of falling in love, as well as the "forgetting" that typically results from it:

> Now, for some reason, I am recalling the past—how you and I met, how I did not like you at first, and later how I fell in love with you. I forgot everything then—forgot that you were married, forgot it all. I dreamt about you. Not about your love (you loving me), of course. I desired something else—good, pure relations. I did not understand that this was all boring for you. I did not understand that you do not want to see me, that you are tired of everything.[7]

Here the opera's denouement is anticipated, echoing Tatiana's response to Onegin's belated change of heart in the final scene: "Onegin, I was younger then, and a better person, I think. / And I loved you, but what, then, / what response did I find / in your heart? / Only severity! / Am I not right in thinking that a simple young girl's love was no novelty to you? / Even now . . . dear God, my blood runs cold whenever I recall that cold look, that sermon!"[8] Shaliapin's admirer, though still relatively young, is nearing the end of her tale of unrequited love, and therefore claims a knowledge and understanding that eludes the teenaged Tatiana during her fateful night of composition:

> I will soon be twenty years old. I still love you, but today and only today. I understand everything. I don't know, should all men be this way? They do not want anything from women except certain kinds of relations. Is it really true? You were my joy, my dream! When I realized that all was finished, that you were leaving me forever, such terror came over me! I began doing reckless things—forgot my self-esteem, demeaned myself before you! I realized what happiness was for me—no! Now I will not live, but merely survive! I was stunned by the injustice of my fate. It was too frightening to refuse happiness. I did not have the strength![9]

But even the inexperienced Tatiana intuits that Onegin's response might prove humiliating as she writes her letter. Though beside herself with ecstasy, the heroine never completely forgoes analysis of herself and her situation, constantly pausing to ponder the risks of her endeavor, and voice doubts about the true nature of her "seducer." After Tatiana sings directly to the audience about God

having sent Onegin to her, the C-major melodic line rising ever higher and finally slumping, another theme inaugurates a change of mood. Its orchestral introduction, punctuated by a ruminating oboe, guides her back to the writing table, where she asks: "Who are you? My guardian angel / or a wily tempter? / Put my doubts to rest. / Maybe this is an empty dream. / The self-deception of an inexperienced soul, / and something quite different is to be."[10] Addressing the absent Onegin in the sweetest mezzo piano, Tatiana trails off into melancholic thought. A brief pause ensues after which her most resolute utterance emerges in fierce tempo: "But so be it! My fate / henceforth I entrust to you; / in tears before you, / your protection I implore, / I implore!"[11] Her words pulsate, the violins produce a rash of sixteenth notes resembling heart palpitations, and the vocal line finally triumphs, as the last "implore" soars above the orchestra, silencing it. Tatiana holds the last note, achieving mastery over her fears, as well as the entire string section.

Indeed, Tatiana's fate is determined, but divine intervention has nothing to do with it. *She* acts, she sends the letter to Onegin, and after a cold reply, his duel with Lenskii, and a series of events unknown to the audience, marries the hoary Prince Gremin, leaving her provincial home for the capital. Years later, in her residence in St. Petersburg, amid high society and under the arm of her adoring husband, she does not forget the searing passion that spurred her to announce her love, to speak first, to choose the danger of confession over the safety of silence. Shaliapin's correspondent predicts a similar outcome for herself—a future in which conjugal duties are stoically performed while love and disappointment are preserved in timeless seclusion, diligently protected from the everyday: "Now I am resigned. I do not need happiness, I am young. I will find the strength to leave! And I will leave! I will be away for a long time, study, get married without loving, and will never show my husband that I do not love him! Isn't it true that the greatest testament of my love for you [*vy*] would be my departure?"[12]

Tchaikovsky's Letter Scene reaches its culmination with Tatiana's forceful declaration: "Imagine: I am all alone here! / No one understands me! / I can think no more, / And must perish in silence! / I wait for you, / I wait for you! / Speak the word / to revive my heart's fondest hopes / or shatter this oppressive dream / with, alas, the scorn I deserve!"[13] During this final surge of full-throated emotion, the theme initiated earlier by the oboe is corroborated by the soprano and all of the strings. The climactic high note ("I wait for *you*") is held in dizzying fortissimo, and as the last word is sung ("the scorn

I deserve"), the entire orchestra erupts. The theme ("I am alone") is picked up by the brass section. Trumpets impersonate Tatiana by recapitulating her passionate statement, their clarion notes piercing through the orchestral commotion.

A request for a meeting or written reply that will "dispel all doubts" also appears in the concluding paragraph of the letter to Shaliapin. Contrary to her insistence that she is "resigned," the confessional letter testifies to the author's lingering hope. In desperation and not without self-reproach, she writes, reveals, pleads, and waits, forestalling resolution:

> I very much want to say good-bye to you (I am leaving on the 8th), but if you do not want [to meet me], then let's not, let's not, let's not!!! Why am I troubling you? What a long letter! I know that this is dull for you, but you are kind and you will understand everything. You are smarter than all of them! No one here understands me at all! [They] tell me I am ill, that I must undergo treatment! As if something could cure me?! They cannot comprehend that for me the faster the end comes the better! But I still have a lot of strength! I am stronger than all of them and I will survive everything! Only write—I beg you sincerely—what it is that you feel toward me . . . please give me your latest postcard, where you look most like yourself—not in a role, but "in life."[14]

After intimating that Shaliapin cynically deserted her, the inconsistent author echoes Tatiana, declaring that he alone understands her. The text as a whole, moreover, is strikingly incoherent. Assertions of understanding and "strength" are followed by self-negating statements; claims to "knowledge" precede opacities of consciousness; confused queries prolong the plot, creating opportunities for continued inner conflict, more confessions, and further action.

Tatiana dashes off the last portion of the letter as the orchestra plays her theme, signs and seals it. Her final bout of scribbling is immediately succeeded by an impetuous vocal coda: "Finished! It's too frightening to reread. / I swoon from shame and fear, / but his honor is my guarantee / and in that I boldly put my trust!"[15] Shaky nerves prompting the lines "It's too frightening to reread. / I swoon from shame and fear" are conveyed by an emphatic pizzicato introduced by the lower strings, and the phrase "I boldly put my trust" elicits a soaring A-flat from the soprano. Two weighty chords followed by a grave and protracted pause signal the conclusion of the night, Tatiana's letter, and the 15-minute aria.

The letter to Shaliapin also contains a dramatic coda, or postscript, consisting of a flustered aside and a heroic declaration: "I wanted to say something else, but I forgot what. Now I remember. Know that if you [*ty*] ever need my life, then . . . take it!!"[16] In lieu of a formal farewell, two brief lines—the date ("December 29th") and time ("Night")—like the chords in Tatiana's scene, close the letter.

Melodrama

It is possible of course that the young woman writing to Shaliapin had seen Tchaikovsky's opera, quite popular by the early twentieth century, identified with or admired Tatiana, and chose to express her passion in the heroine's language and cadence—impulsively, in a lengthy love letter, at night. We can speculate too that she had read Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse, from which the libretto was adapted, and wrote the sentimental missive under its spell. But the similarity between the letters to Shaliapin and Onegin, I argue, is more than a straightforward case of life imitating art. Fan letter writing is understood here as a specific form of aesthetic practice: early-twentieth-century fan letters shared many generic features with melodrama, and hence opera—a medium particularly well suited to melodramatic forms. Put another way, fan letters were informed by what Peter Brooks has called the melodramatic imagination, "a mode of conception and expression" with an aesthetic of excess and a Manichaean narrative structure that privileges psychic drama:[17]

> The desire to express all seems a fundamental characteristic of the melodramatic mode. Nothing is spared because nothing is left unsaid; the characters . . . utter the unspeakable, give voice to their deepest feelings, dramatize through their heightened and polarized worlds and gestures the whole lesson of their relationship. They assume primary psychic roles, father, mother, child, and express basic psychic conditions.[18]

Although Brooks conceives melodrama primarily as a fictional "sense-making system" and applies it as a descriptive critical category to nineteenth-century literature, he acknowledges its historical origins, as a term and a theatrical genre. Melodrama proper was established in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, soon dominated the stages of Paris, and within decades reached the rest of Europe, including Russia. René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, commonly considered the founder of the genre, "introduced special sight and

sound effects to engage his audiences on a fundamental sensory level." Theatrical spectacle and music "complemented the intense emotionalism of the situation that entangled his characters."[19] Although initially melodrama was a specific cultural form, it proved to be a malleable and enduring genre. Appropriated by literature, opera, and eventually silent film, it "entered everyday life as a distinct mode of behavior."[20] As Brooks suggests, the melodramatic aesthetic, obsessed with the exteriorization of inner life and moral conflict, anticipated and later dovetailed with two major philosophical currents, namely Marxism and Freudianism.[21] The enactment of an intense drama originating in the mind—previously latent emotions stirring, pressing against and breaking through, willy-nilly, the social façade—is not only a central concern of psychoanalysis but modern consciousness more generally.[22]

To read fan mail as melodrama and fandom as an aesthetic practice in melodramatic mode, therefore, is to suggest that the preoccupation of the letters, ultimately, was psychology. Early-twentieth-century Russian fan letters were quintessentially modern, and their authors, like most modernists, were interested in themselves and others primarily as psychological (rather than social) beings. That the psychological point of view dominated many of the texts I discuss below perhaps is not surprising: the preeminence of psychology in art and thought in the early twentieth century is well documented. More important than the letters' concern with internal states was their approach to them. The psyche was a locus of amplified struggle between varying desires and impulses. Thoughts and feelings were hyperbolized, often expressed in dire extremes, and only confession provided relief from emotional tumult. The authentic was understood as thoroughly psychological, and the social realm, to the extent it was discussed at all, was done so from a privatized perspective. For fans, self-knowledge and the externalization of one's soul were the only measures of sincerity. Theirs was a world of love, yearning, anxiety, self-consciousness, and the fissures within that consciousness.

To recognize fan letters as melodrama is also to situate them in a culture preoccupied with the dynamics and display of inner life. Russia's fin-de-siècle fans were immersed in the melodramatic: as consumers of the popular domestic melodramas of silent cinema, best-selling novels such as Anastasiia Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness* (1910–13) and Mikhail Artsybashev's scandalous *Sanin* (1907), or "realist" opera and press accounts of its extravagant celebrities, readers and audiences were inundated with vivid dramatizations of the mind's pathologies, transgressions, and repressions.[23] The satirized

psikhopatka of entertainment periodicals, after all, emerged at a time when the topic of madness also frequently surfaced in high-minded literary works and serious public discussions. Anxiety attacks and depression appeared already in Anton Chekhov's "A Nervous Breakdown" (1888), a story about a law student who is taken to a psychiatrist after a suicide attempt. Sexual perversions and sadistic proclivities, originating in the "murky depths" of dreams and fantasies, were described in Valerii Briusov's "Now When I Have Awakened: Notes of a Psychopath" (1905).[24] And Nikolai Evreinov's comedic one-act play *Theater of the Soul* (1912), featured characters called S_1 (the rational aspect of the Soul), S_2 (the emotional aspect of the Soul), and S_3 (the subconscious aspect of the Soul).[25]

Following the Revolution of 1905, the collective psyche received abundant attention from psychiatrists and other health professionals, who linked mental instability to social upheaval. Russian medical publications repeatedly called the revolution "a form of collective psychopathology" and "a kind of psychic epidemic."[26] Such references were not limited to obscure psychology journals and conference papers. In *Landmarks* (1909), a collection of essays that went through five editions within twelve months, members of the liberal Kadet Party attributed psychological disorders to the "body" of the revolution and its "brain"—the intelligentsia. In one contribution, the historian and literary scholar Mikhail Gershenzon claimed that the intelligentsia was "paralyzed by neurasthenia," and Sergei Bulgakov asserted in his essay that the ailing intelligentsia should "reestablish psychic equilibrium."[27]

While philosophers and liberal Duma deputies wrote about the social body—now saddled with a diseased brain that needed to be interpreted and cured—and Russia's growing community of psychoanalysts founded societies that debated the nature of the unconscious, popularized forms of Freudian thought and terminology penetrated the broader public arena. In the mass-circulation press, literary works, and theaters, the concepts of psychology and, indeed, psychoanalysis, were being employed, narrated, and performed.[28] In opera, as in philosophical works, professional discourses and cinema, the mind became an increasingly dangerous space—with a dark, mysterious corner containing depraved sexual predilections and possibly murderous compulsions; but it was also a place of glorious dreams, fantasies, and drives toward pleasure. Through their letters, often melodramatic expressions of love for opera celebrities, fans probed and made legible the conflicts and desires within this newly conceived inner self.

Melodramatic opera

In "My Pushkin," an autobiographical piece written in the 1930s, the poet Marina Tsvetaeva recalls her first encounter with *Eugene Onegin*. At age six, she and her mother attended a music school "open evening." Excerpts from various operas were performed, but one made a particularly strong impression on the young Tsvetaeva: the scene in which Onegin, having received Tatiana's letter, meets her in a garden and condescendingly explains why he cannot return her affection. Tsvetaeva remembers herself smitten with both Tatiana and Onegin (and with Tatiana "a little more")—and with love:[29]

> They were giving a scene from *Rusalka*, then *Rogneda*, and: "But to the garden let us race / Where Tania met him face to face." A bench. On the bench sits Tatiana. Then Onegin comes in, but he doesn't sit down and she stands up. They both stand. And only he talks, the whole time, and she doesn't say a word. And then and there I understood that the russet cat, Avgusta Ivanovna, the dolls, are *not* love, that *this* is love: when there's a bench, and she is on the bench, and then he comes in and talks the whole time, and she doesn't say a word.[30]

In her tribute to Russia's heroine, "daring and dignified, loving and unbending, knowing all and—loving," Tsvetaeva describes an evening of music, yet quotes stanza 11, chapter 4 of the novel rather than the libretto.[31] And hence Tsvetaeva's "first love scene," which "foreordained all the ones that followed, all the passion in [her] for unhappy, non-reciprocal, impossible love," inspiring her to be "the first to stretch out [her] hand . . . not fearing judgment," is, despite the title of her essay, intertextual, woven from the verses of the classicist Pushkin and the image of Tchaikovsky's romantic Tatiana.[32]

Tsvetaeva's confusion of the literary and operatic *Onegin* suggests that the soprano-as-Tatiana and her embodiment of love influenced readings of the novel, transforming its characters into ever-evolving, performed roles.[33] Opera performances presented Pushkin's story in melodramatic mode, staging a scenario of desire resonant with fin-de-siècle aesthetics and notions of subjectivity. Whereas Pushkin's Tatiana patterned her love letter on the epistles in eighteenth-century sentimental novels, early-twentieth-century fans composed theirs in the style of the opera heroine's letter scene. Tchaikovsky permitted spectators to access emotionally an amplified, more exposed, and psychologically complex Tatiana. Music replaced Pushkin's ironic

narrator, at once clarifying the ambiguities of the literary source and granting its characters an interiority fluid enough to accommodate the multiple interpolations of performers and listeners.

What distinguishes the opera heroine from her literary counterpart is perhaps most succinctly expressed by the poet Wayne Koestenbaum in his meditation on Tchaikovsky's Letter Scene: "Tatiana divulges, divulges, divulges."[34] For about 15 minutes, a veritable eternity in an operatic context, the audience observes and listens to a wide-mouthed, vocalizing Tatiana. Alone on stage, her face illuminated by a candle (and likely the soft glow of artificial lighting), she sings her deepest sentiments in tones traversing two octaves, with sufficient volume to carry—when necessary—over the din of a sizable orchestra. Pushkin's Tatiana is more restrained and less voluble, as Caryl Emerson explains:

> With the exception of her letter in Chapter Three and her reprimand to Onegin in Chapter Eight, Pushkin's Tatiana is almost wholly silent. We know and see almost nothing about her. The garrulous, gullible narrator—himself in love with Tatiana—jealously protects her from prying eyes and from any shock that might add to the hurt he knows is already in store. He is reluctant to share her letter . . . Tatiana's primary characteristic is detachment from her surroundings. She has profound feelings, but no public outlet for them.[35]

Emerson also points out that in Pushkin, "dramatic moments often occur . . . in dreams and fantasies; events are maddeningly delayed in the telling or happen to the heroes separately . . . live people often slide by one another." In the opera, the protagonists are brought together as they would be in any dramatization. Many of the lines belonging to the novel's narrator are given to the singers: "In both recitative and aria, the characters become infinitely 'smarter' and more forthcoming about themselves than Pushkin's narration allows them to be."[36]

But of course the function of narrator is appropriated not only by the soloists of the piece: the orchestra narrates too. Rhythm, tempo, and key changes, as well as orchestration and onomatopoeic effects convey the somatic symptoms resulting from sudden shifts in Tatiana's mood. Divergence of the vocal and orchestral lines at moments represents inner conflict and agitation, adding layers to thought processes. Motifs associated with specific emotions, ideas, and characters mediate and reveal psychology.[37]

The composer and his co-librettist Konstantin Shilovskii included only portions of Pushkin's text in their version of *Onegin*. Still, the transformation of the novel into what Tchaikovsky described as "lyrical scenes" entailed insertions as well as omissions. When Tatiana's letter, an artifact presented by a narrator, became a letter-writing process, the tortured self-reflection accompanying that process emerged as a critical component of the heroine's declaration of love. In the libretto's Letter Scene, lines taken from Pushkin are embellished by phrases sung directly to the audience: "Let me perish, / but first / Let me summon, in dazzling hope, / Bliss yet unknown" prefaces Tatiana's confession to Eugene. While in the novel the letter is cited by the narrator without interruption, the libretto instructs Tatiana to pause for contemplative recitative ("No, that's all wrong…I'm all on fire! / I don't know where to begin!") and put the letter aside during one of its climactic moments in order to announce: "O yes, I swore to lock within my breast / this avowal of a mad and ardent passion. / Alas, I have not the strength to subdue my heart!/ Come what may, I am prepared! I will confess all! Courage! / He shall know all!"[38]

The libretto, even more than the novel, dwells on Tatiana's lingering uncertainty and self-doubt, her futile efforts to suppress her passion. It also spotlights the heroine's brave struggle to confess her most private yearnings despite possible reproof and embarrassment. The tension between full disclosure and reticence is brief but important, for it celebrates the all-consuming nature of emotions—and the triumph of compulsive verbalization. Tchaikovsky's "Fate" motif and exalted symphonic statements introduced prior to the Letter Scene foreshadow and endorse the inevitability of confession and rapturous unraveling, rendering unconvincing all attempts at self-restraint. The battle against her own desire, lost in advance, is precisely what inspires Tatiana's fervent avowal.

Two of the opera's predominant themes—inner dialogue and compulsive confession—were established and melodramatized when Tchaikovsky decided to convert Tatiana's letter into an arioso. "In every opera libretto," reasoned Prokofiev, "there are…places—and they take up a large part of the text—where a composer is free to choose between recitative and arioso…It would not have been difficult to set a great part of the [Letter Scene in *Eugene Onegin*] as recitative. But Tchaikovsky preferred the language of song, with the result that the whole letter-scene grew so to speak into one huge aria."[39]

In opera, the choice between song and speech is often a choice between two modes of time. According to Ulrich Weisstein, "one mode (recitative time) is horizontally progressive and dialogic; the other

(aria time) is vertical, introspective, 'timeless.'"[40] Emerson, expanding Weisstein's poetics of the libretto, argues that aria and recitative each has a corresponding chronotope, or "time-space unit":

> Traditionally, recitative is the dynamic "spoken" message, taking place in real time and moving action forward. Aria, in contrast, is a song, and tends to function as a static element in the drama. Each of these opera times has its appropriate space. Recitative is social: it usually occurs in dialogue, and people on stage are supposed to hear and respond to it. Aria, however, can stop action. Often it is sung not to others in the opera but to oneself or to the audience, as a sort of private confession. People onstage may not be expected to listen in, and therefore the aria's act of expression need not serve to motivate the actions of other participants in the opera.[41]

Tchaikovsky utilized these and other libretto conventions in *Eugene Onegin*, but the Letter Scene has a distinct chronotope. Set mostly as arioso with patches of recitative, not belonging entirely to the temporal and spatial orders of aria, its structure maximizes the dramatic impact of Tatiana's introspection without foregoing dynamism and narrative integrity.

The "language of song" has its own special quality. Music slows down speech, inviting the audience to ponderously follow the heroine as she expatiates upon every emotion and thought. Aria functions "vertically" here—looking inward, but it does not halt time and action altogether. Instead, it temporarily brackets and elongates time, creating an illusion of timelessness that is shattered instantly with a clear C-major chord and the sound of a shepherd's pipe signaling the break of dawn. At the conclusion of the scene, spectators are reminded of time's passage and wake up, so to speak, to realize that Tatiana's sublime ruminations progressed in real, linear time and that the prosaic and extraordinary are indistinguishable. The Letter Scene is not social, though it is dialogical. Expressed symphonically and vocally, the colloquy occurs between Tatiana and Onegin (albeit his reply is delayed), and the heroine and her desire (as well as desire as such). The arioso is both introspective and forward-moving: Tatiana's evolving psychology is integral to the plot and the space within her is dialogized.

In *A History of Russian Music*, Francis Maes notes that *Eugene Onegin* "is one of the finest examples of musical realism," and that its realism is based not on the naturalistic recitative of Mussorgsky but "on

the choice of subject matter" and meticulous characterization.[42] Maes's remark raises a few pertinent questions: What happens when opera takes as its subject a slice of daily life? Can we speak of a musical equivalent of the realist novel or drama? And does verisimilitude in *Onegin* account for the similarities between Tatiana's avowal and the letters of adoring fans? The Letter Scene, anticipating verismo, united and arguably transcended two traditionally incompatible varieties of operatic time and space, making its reality relentlessly intimate, spectacular, and thus appealing to early-twentieth-century audiences as a model for everyday behavior. More to the point, fan letters reproduced not the "realism" but the melodrama of Tatiana's circumstances.

The question of romanticism, realism, and melodrama in opera is a complicated one. Although *Eugene Onegin* contains characters and situations from "real life," Tchaikovsky's music is often considered to belong to the tradition of elevated romanticism prevailing in opera from Beethoven to Wagner. Realism was pursued by Mussorgsky and Dargomyzhskii in the mid-nineteenth century through *opéra dialogué* (verbatim setting of an existing literary work), elimination of discrete vocal numbers, and the use of melodic recitative attentive to the intonation of human speech. But musical realism, as its champions themselves discovered, could not be achieved easily—or with any consistency. Dargomyzhskii's *The Stone Guest* (1872) was deemed a noble failure by contemporaries and today is considered to be little more than a historical curiosity. Mussorgsky, abandoning his commitment to continuous recitative, inserted elegiac monologues and lyrical arias into the second version of *Boris Godunov* (1873) and *Khovanshchina*. The verismo operas of Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, and Puccini are regarded as realistic in part because they focus on the darker aspects of life—infidelity, poverty, and disease. Yet, as Paul Robinson argues, "the appeal of verismo opera has little to do with realism as it is understood by novelists and dramatists of the era. These works have earned their place in the repertory above all because they are shamelessly tuneful."[43]

In opera, both romantic music accompanying a realist libretto and romantic fiction set to naturalistic music produced nothing other than sensationalized human interaction, agonizing public self-examination, and lyrical effusions of breathtaking proportions. Whether in the form of the heavy conscience of Tsar Boris, the energetic outbursts of the consumptive Mimi, or the jealous rage of Canio, sung and orchestrated "realism" amounted to melodrama.

The attempt to depict reality in an extravagant medium like opera is not as paradoxical as it may seem at first blush. Following Brooks, film scholar Christine Gledhill elucidates the connection between the ideological functions of realist and melodramatic cultural forms in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Gledhill argues that "melodrama operates on the same terrain as realism"—an individualist, secular world order—but it "offers compensation for what realism displaces."[44] When the legitimacy of sacred political and social arrangements was undermined by the French Revolution, "the newly emerging category of the individual had to incorporate within itself a motivating rationale capable of answering questions to do with commitment, justification, and ultimate significance."[45] Melodrama replaced cultural forms previously responsible for mythmaking, such as allegory and tragedy, and presented the human personality as the principal repository of moral value and meaning: "Tied to the conventions of realism, but distrusting the adequacy of social codes and the conventions of representation elaborated during the Enlightenment, melodrama set out to demonstrate within the transactions of everyday life the continuing operation of a Manichean battle between good and evil which infuses human actions with ethical consequences and therefore with significance."[46]

Nineteenth-century realist novels and dramas contained "rounded," individuated characters but, unlike melodrama, maintained the primacy of the social, that is, society as the source of ethics and personal authentication:

> The personae of melodrama are typed in a different way and to a different end from the social typage of the classic realist novel. In the latter, the accumulation of social detail around individualized characters serves to lead the reader from the individual outwards to the social network within which they take up their position as types. In melodrama this process is reversed. The emblematic types of melodrama lead not outward to society but inward to where the social and ideological pressures impact on the psychic.[47]

The confluence of realism and melodrama in late-nineteenth-century operatic representation can be viewed, then, not so much as a corruption of genre or a failed attempt at plausibility but as a graphic expression of a modern imaginary that sacralizes the psyche and identifies virtue with the exteriorization of emotional states.

Further advancing the imperatives of the melodramatic worldview was a shift in performance standards in opera at the turn of

the twentieth century. As I have already discussed, the psychologization of character and personality, if not always adequately realized, increasingly became the goal of Russian directors and opera singers. Critics praised stars like Shaliapin, Ivan Ershov, Leonid Sobinov, and soprano Medea Figner for their "authentic" portrayals while censuring others for insufficiently embodying their roles. As in dramatic theaters, verisimilitude in opera now meant "showing the life of the human soul."[48] Singer-actors were evaluated on their ability to undergo a complete transformation, to go beyond mimesis. They achieved emotional truth on stage not by imitating "real" people but examining their own inner lives in order to comprehend those of their characters—by uniting self and role. This approach in important ways resembled melodramatic acting as it initially was conceived in the late eighteenth century. The performance mode of original melodramas, explains Gledhill, "sought objectification of internal emotions and motivations in bodily action and vocal declamations, incorporating personal emotion in public gesture."[49] Like the personae of melodrama, Shaliapin and his disciples embodied conflicting desires and drives not only through intonation of the libretto text but also through a coded array of facial expressions, gesticulations, and vocal techniques.

Such "realistic" performance practices, first encouraged by Mamontov at the Moscow Private Opera and later by Stanislavskii at the Opera Studio, influenced understandings and experience of opera and subjectivity. By the early twentieth century, Russian singers at both private companies and Imperial Theaters aspired to the externalization of primal, extreme feelings and, consequently, all opera—from classical and bel canto to late romantic and realist, from Mozart and Glinka to Wagner and Mussorgsky—was performed in melodramatic mode. Simply put, opera became more "operatic."

Though libretti rarely cultivate or even attempt ironic distance, and opera "does not lend itself to cynical treatment of the central character," as Herbert Lindenberger argues, in production it always had been conscious of its artifice.[50] With few exceptions, nineteenth-century Russian singers stood rigidly during their arias, conventions limiting them to a narrow repertoire of simple, mannered gestures. The mise-en-scène, costuming, and makeup were often luxuriant but not necessarily purposeful, detailed, or expressive. Composers such as Verdi and Glinka certainly endowed many heroes with human qualities, yet it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that audiences were invited to view operatic scenarios as reflections of personal experience, and emulate the ecstatic language and

relationships of their characters. The reproduction of Tatiana's confessional love scene in fan letters suggests that opera both shaped and resonated with spectators' conception of authenticity. Fans shared operatic poetics and read opera literally, identifying with its modes of expression and behavior.

Authenticity and the operatic subject

On December 11, 1914, a certain M. Dneprovskaia wrote her third love letter to Shaliapin. Her affection had blossomed without the sustenance of replies, much less intimate encounters, yet she hoped that the singer would respond sympathetically to her latest supplication:

> Exactly two years ago you read my confession, a confession of a heart utterly devoted to you. I thought then that I was writing to you for the first and last time, but a year elapsed, and I wrote a second letter, and now I am writing another…When I wrote the first time, I was most frightened by the thought that you would laugh at me. Now…I deeply believe that you cannot laugh at my lines, which I cry over! You, with your ability to penetrate the innermost recesses of the human heart, bring to light the most complex and deep feelings—you will understand all the depth and sincerity of my love!…[But] I still fear you might say: "Why should I care about you and your love?"…A regular person would respond precisely in this way. But not you![51]

Like Shaliapin's other, nocturnal correspondent, Dneprovskaia asserts that the star *must* understand her. The star is at once an object of desire and source of identification because he, like Dneprovskaia, reveals profound emotions. Penetrating and performing "the human heart" rather than a role, Shaliapin embodies love and sincerity. Not a mere "regular person," he simultaneously represents and elicits truth, and thus legitimates the fan's mode of self-expression.

Dneprovskaia's letter dramatizes the conflict between silence and desire, restraint and the loss of control. It is a story of self-knowledge gained, lost, and recovered through confession—by means of self-narration:

> I could have loved you silently from a distance for these last three years, until one day, surprising even myself, I wrote to you! In the first letter I did not request anything…I wrote simply because I did not have the strength to remain silent…But already in the

> second letter I asked for your card. You should not have been surprised: the entire time you were here I so badly wanted to see you but I did not make the smallest attempt and only when [I learned that] you were leaving for a long period in my despair I got up the nerve to write you. And if you had answered [the second] letter with at least a few lines, like you answered the first, I would not have had to endure that which I endured—not having received a word from you! I thought that my letter and request were so importunate that you . . . had contempt for me![52]

Here Dneprovskaia replays, with some new inflections, the classic melodramatic plot of "misrecognition and clarification" that climaxes when characters "finally declaim their true identities, demanding public recognition till then thwarted by deliberate deceptions, hidden secrets, binding vows, and loyalties."[53] Repeatedly speculating about Shaliapin's reaction to her avowals, the fan casts the celebrity in the role of withholder and ultimate revealer of what she knows to be his true personality. Her pursuit of recognition is thus a tortured negotiation, a plea to resolve the ambiguity of his silence with a response in which he fully becomes Shaliapin as she perceives him—a persona of grandiose sentiment, hyperbolic speech, and maximized gesture. With a hint of glee at her own grandiloquence, Dneprovskaia avers that "of course, from the point of view of 'sensible' people, a girl who dares to write about her feelings to her beloved gets what she deserves. But you stand so far above the crowd that you could not possibly think that way! Isn't it true? Tell me this; calm me down, give me peace! If I were to become convinced that you have contempt for me—I wouldn't be able to live!"[54] First establishing an antagonism between anemic, false social convention and the spontaneous, authentic private realm, Dneprovskaia presents a drama in which powerful, inner feelings breach and exceed the normative, mundane surface. Shaliapin, standing "far above the crowd," provides the impetus and justification for this excess of emotion.[55]

Music, art, and singing are not subjects that receive much attention in Dneprovskaia's letter. The fan's primary interest is in Shaliapin's internal world:

> Do you know what I dream about? . . . To see you and talk to you . . . I would want to talk to you about you. To find out what your life is like and mainly to ask: are you happy? . . . Does art, in service of which you have reached such great heights, fulfill you? Or is everything in this sphere already ordinary and habitual? Do the

> pure joy and tears of creative work, of which Salieri speaks, still ignite your heart?! And in your private life…Do you love someone, and does that someone love you, the one you want to love you? And if [that person] loves you, then is it as deeply and selflessly as you desire to be loved?! Or has everything here also lost its value, [and] you do not want anything more—do not search for anything?…These are the questions to which I often try to guess the answers…during sleepless nights![56]

Knowledge of Shaliapin's soul is sought through a unification and ultimate transcendence of his fragmentary on- and offstage image. Information about the celebrity's public and domestic life is implicated in, but ultimately does not answer, the fan's questions regarding the state of Shaliapin's "extraordinariness," the truth of his most fundamental, psychic self.

Love, the search for happiness, and the euphoric process of discovery culminate in Dneprovskaia's fantasy, as in opera and many melodramatic narratives, with a languorous and sensual death scene. But upon declaring that she would sacrifice herself for Shaliapin, the fan resumes a more benign, conversational tone, palavering her way from the permanence of death to the uncertainty of anticipation:

> If only I could pay for your happiness with my life…Then I would want at parting to take your hand and press my face against it for a few moments and take with me forever the feeling of this caress…Because even one meeting, a single conversation [would be enough]….Tell me, do I really wish for too much, is this dream truly unrealizable?…[A]t times I think that it is mad audacity to ask you for [such things] and at other times I believe that you would grant my request…But then there is the question of where we could meet. I cannot go to your [place] on Novinskii, and you are never there alone anyway…I would [meet you], of course, wherever you want!…If I really want the impossible then at least write me a few lines. Forgive me.[57]

Though Shaliapin's "creative work" is mentioned only in relation to his affective experience, theatrical knowledge informs the imagery of the letter. The fan's poignant dream of self-sacrifice resembles the classic operatic death scene. Dying is drawn out and seductive in opera, music slowing the pace of final laments, allowing time for tragic arias or exhilarating farewells. Expiring bodies of prima donnas and slain heroes, tranquil and sublime, are displayed for sympathy

and adoration. The protracted poses and gestures of operatic death, apotheosized by fading high notes during performances, preserved and made examinable by publicity photographs, also appear in Dneprovskaia's vision of fulfillment—a consummation contained in a last and last*ing* caress.[58] And like the diva resurrected to take bows after her tubercular or fatally wounded heroine has fallen, Dneprovskaia casually turns from a portrait of her own demise to the dry banter of logistics—when, where, and how to meet Shaliapin, a list of possibilities, and so forth. The fan's drama of desire and confession continues, and the final lines of the letter bespeak hope and humble yearning rather than satisfaction and closure. "If we do not see one another," Dneprovskaia implores in a postscript, "then allow me to write to you now and then. Not more than one letter a year. This will be a great comfort and joy to me!"[59]

The most profound similarity between the two fan letters discussed thus far resides in the conception of authenticity they embrace. Earlier I mentioned that the melodramatic imagination conceives the authentic—that which grants a subject meaning and value—as a realm "indicated within and masked by the surface of reality."[60] Melodramatic utterance is necessarily excessive because it must overcome the obstacles, censorship, and stifling mediation of societal codes. "Full states of being" can only be achieved through *over*statement—the enactment of feeling in its purest, most transparent form.[61] In the letters, pronouncements such as "Know that if you ever need my life then . . . take it" and "If I were to become convinced that you had contempt for me I wouldn't be able to live" follow suspicions that Shaliapin is like all the rest—the scores of noncomprehending and judgmental others, nameless "sensible people" who occupy the social milieu of the fans. After more deliberative, cautiously formulated introspection like "maybe it is true that I am ill" and "at times I think it is mad audacity to ask you for such things," bombastic, utterly certain statements vindicate the letter writers' desire and identification. Both fans struggle with their intense feelings, initially wishing not to write, but their ultimate decision to confess all, to submit to a grand inner force rather than banal social convention, is what constitutes the author-heroines of the letters as sincere, strong, and good. While Shaliapin's correspondents certainly view him as an object of love and worship, they also recognize and relate to him as what Brooks calls an identity of "plentitude"—a conduit of a full, unadulterated expression of psychic drives and, consequently, an embodiment of virtue.[62]

In the fan letters, inner conflict, confession, and agency are inextricably linked, as they are in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Tatiana's

decisions and actions always comprise or proceed from strained avowals. Her all-important meeting in the garden with Eugene in act 1 is initiated by an exhausting, empurpled letter written in a state of great agitation and anguished self-doubt. Onegin's response is a monologue, during which Tatiana remains silent, passively listening. Later, in the final act, when Onegin returns after a five-year absence, spots the now worldly and married Tatiana at a ball, immediately falls in love, and hurls himself, with blinding passion, at her feet, she vitiates her own stern rebuff with another confession: "Why hide it, why pretend? / Oh! I love you!"[63] Tatiana's gentle yet momentous admission, offered without orchestral accompaniment, occurs after some floundering and shortly before her "irrevocable" decision, sung with renewed firmness: "No! No! / You cannot bring back the past! / I am another's now, / my fate has been decided, / I shall remain true to him."[64] Though the confession temporarily weakens her, it ultimately enables Tatiana to leave Onegin alone on stage, ending the story.

Divulging constitutes Tatiana as an agent and as a character—it defines her; she must confess in order to *be*, just as Dneprovskaia must send Shaliapin a letter at least once a year. It is through confession that Shaliapin's admirers seek knowledge—of him, the love object, and of self. By periodically claiming ignorance, alternately asserting and disavowing knowledge, the fans maintain their search for truth, preserving their ability to act, desire, and remain present. Meetings, replies, and other forms of resolution are equated with death and passivity in the letters, but desire and, more importantly, its articulation, affirms the author as a subject.

On the evidence, then, confession is integral to authenticity and therefore subjectivity in both the fan letters and *Onegin*. But the structural and conceptual affinities of Tchaikovsky's melodramatic opera and early-twentieth-century aesthetic practice do not fully explain why fans wrote confessional letters to their idols, or why truth and sincerity were of particular interest in both fan mail and the entertainment press of the time. As I noted previously, changing conceptions of self and an emerging celebrity culture raised new concerns regarding authenticity at the turn of the twentieth century. While the inner self became a site of fragmentation and transformation, the manufactured star image made plain the mutability of identities, as well as bodily and psychic attributes. In addition to complicating the question of personal genuineness, however, celebrities contributed in affirmative ways to the "rhetoric of authenticity,"

to use Richard Dyer's phrase.[65] Dyer charts the relation between the notion and construction of authenticity and the star phenomenon in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, arguing that "authenticity is both a quality necessary to the star phenomenon to make it work, and also the quality that guarantees the authenticity of the other particular values a star embodies . . . It is this effect of authenticating authenticity that gives the star charisma."[66] In a society that sentimentalizes ethics, and locates truth not in "general criteria governing social behavior" but "the person's 'person,'" star images authenticate performed values and personae because they exist in the "real world"—reference an extra-fictional, unique individual.[67]

Dyer's analysis sheds light on the operations of celebrity entertainers within the melodramatic imagination, and helps elucidate the language and affects of the fan texts discussed here. He notes that Marxism and psychoanalysis, while utilizing the paradigms of humanism, undermined the individual as "the guarantor of discourse." The growth of mass media such as advertising and journalism (as well as criticism of it) further reinforced the belief that language and images are constantly "manipulated."[68] In other words, when truthfulness of personality rather than social behavior became the basis for morality, widely disseminated discourses and the media made the possibility that people do not say what they mean increasingly likely and unsettling. Star images serve both to question and assure the validity of personality: "In the very same breath as audiences and producers alike acknowledge stars as hype, they are declaring this or that star as the genuine article. Just as the media are construed as the very antithesis of sincerity and authenticity, they are the source for the presentation of the epitome of those qualities, the true star."[69] That Russian opera celebrities—maligned by the press (which attacked itself for false advertising and crude manipulation), routinely labeled egomaniacs and publicity-generated phonies—were in a position to "authenticate authenticity" is indeed a paradox, one that entertainment journalists created and maintained as they continually reported on scandals, successes, domestic troubles, and personal motivations that uncovered the "true" personality of stars like Shaliapin.

The various texts that constructed stars affected the melodramatic mode of expression and, as we have seen, shared vocabularies and criteria for sincerity and authenticity with gramophone industry narratives. They also echoed the imperatives of other discourses circulating in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, most obviously

Marxism and psychoanalysis. Although both "displace the individual as the guarantor of discourse," as Dyer suggests,

> they do posit . . . a "real" that is beneath or behind the surface represented by "the individual" as a discursive category. Indeed, many of the claims of these theoretical discourses on our attention have been in their assertion of revealing a, or the, truth behind appearances, stripping away the veil of bourgeois categories or civilized (repressed) behaviors. The basic paradigm is just this—that what is behind or below the surface is—unquestionably and virtually by definition, the truth.[70]

Consequently, when gossip columns, interviews, feuilletons, and photographs tell readers that the star really is or is *not* like what he or she appears to be on stage or in public, they ultimately "serve to reinforce the authenticity of the star image as a whole."[71]

Star narratives replicated the plot schemae and aesthetic sensibilities of melodrama by involving the audience in an ongoing process of revelation and redemption. They disclosed contradictory and incomplete information, ensuring the emotional engagement of fans over time and across roles by occasionally granting their desires access to the "real" star persona.[72] The fans writing to Shaliapin clearly were invested not only in the composite star text as a quintessential melodramatic narrative but in their own ability, through contact with celebrities, to perform melodrama, to expose that which was "beneath or behind the surface." Like other celebrity performers, Shaliapin was in a position, as an emblematic melodramatic type and "great" personality, to offer moral, inner truths—yet he offered them inconsistently and for brief moments—on stage, in occasional replies, and in memoirs. With each new role and scandal, the drama of disclosure was reenacted. In and through their letters, fans reproduced and inserted themselves into this drama of perpetual deferral, sustaining the pleasure of discover*ing* (rather than the discovery of) an ever-emerging knowledge—of the star and themselves.

Celebrity and operatic modes of expression

Opera fans closely followed the numerous Shaliapin "scandals" created by the press, responding to unflattering portrayals of the singer with supportive or castigating letters. One of the more infamous and widely reported scandals occurred on the evening of January 6, 1911, during a performance of *Boris Godunov* attended by Nicholas II

at the Mariinskii Theater. At the conclusion of the third act, a member of the audience loudly demanded a rendition of the national anthem, "God Save the Tsar," traditionally sung at the Imperial Theaters when the tsar or high-ranking officers and court officials were present at a performance. The soloists already had taken their bows and many in the cast had repaired to their dressing rooms, but the chorus, having remained behind, complied. The curtain rose to reveal them on their knees, arms outstretched toward the Imperial box. Since custom dictated that the anthem be performed by the entire cast, Shaliapin returned to the stage, knelt on one knee and, along with the chorus, orchestra members, and other soloists sang "God Save the Tsar," repeating it six times. The next day Shaliapin departed for an engagement in Monte Carlo, unaware that he had done something controversial or "inappropriate." In the weeks that followed, Russian press organs of all political shades weighed in on Shaliapin's participation in the "affair." Staunch monarchists of course hailed his "demonstration of patriotism," but most newspapers, including the liberal *Russkoe slovo* (*Russian Word*), parodied and decried it. Shaliapin was so harshly criticized and even vilified in open letters and editorials that he feared returning to Russia and considered breaking his contract with the Imperial Theater. He came back to St. Petersburg in September only after persistent assurances from Teliakovskii, but not before a barrage of verbal threats from Russian émigrés and travelers, anonymous hate mail from disillusioned fans, and public reprimands from erstwhile friends like Serov and Aleksandr Amphiteatrov.[73]

It was to this incident, evidently, that a certain devotee referred in the following undated and unsigned note to Shaliapin:

> I am terribly worried about your decision concerning the letters you receive daily. What did you do with them?... [I]t is best not to pay attention. You do not have the right before all of humanity to risk your life. You know why!... You cannot be judged by the usual criteria, you cannot be subjected to common rules, and you are not obliged to consider anyone or anything. You are *YOU* [*vy eto VY*]! And you must proudly stride past these trifles and slights—ones who demand satisfaction and the like. It's laughable. Let every life be broken for your pleasure. I would gladly destroy mine if you wanted me to. Do not be afraid of me. My will is too strong and I love you too much to cause you unpleasantness. On my end you need not worry about a husband or children. I never would allow an unpleasant situation to develop because

> of me. How I achieve this is my business. I want to say so much to you . . . How long I have waited! . . . May God (if he exists) and Nature protect you.[74]

The first thing one notices about this letter is that it is exceedingly obsequious and effusive. The author is offering herself to a superior being, one who is above society—its demands, politics, and ethics. In her mind's eye, as on every opera bill and concert program that bore his name, Shaliapin is capitalized, elevated to superhuman status. God may not exist, but Shaliapin certainly does—and for him the author would "gladly" relinquish her life.

But if the first thing one notices about the letter is its worshipful stance—a stance not unexpected in messages from fans to their idols (though, admittedly, this "fan" is likely to have admired Shaliapin from a shorter distance than most)—the next thing one notices is that it is at moments declamatory, heroic, and quite immodest in its claims.[75]

The author reminds Shaliapin of his responsibilities and lofty position, and then informs him that he should not fear her. Issuing commands and liberally employing exclamation points, she attributes to herself all of the power and irreverent authority that she imputes to him. In plain terms, she knows what she wants and how to get it—undeterred by societal limitations and judgments. It is the grandeur of Shaliapin's image that calls her to desire, speak, and pursue heroically, with a determination and nobility equal to his. Thus the letter, beginning as a tribute to Shaliapin's greatness, becomes a self-aggrandizing expression of the author's love, strength, and will.

If the letters from Shaliapin's many female admirers were a mixture of slavish adoration and empathy, they also were ecstatic statements of sexual desire. Fans presented themselves as women driven to impetuous behavior and irrepressible lust by profound, earnest feelings. Their preoccupation with inner life, however, did not preclude an equally avid interest in the material, sensual, and thoroughly concrete—so long as it meant or pertained to the celebrity's body and the objects associated with it. After a visit to Shaliapin's dressing room, one devotee composed the following letter to her idol:

> My beloved God! How is my poor darling, still doing well? Oh, you cannot imagine how much strength and self-control it took not to throw myself, in front of everyone, on your chest, which so seductively . . . teased and beckoned me with its freshness, warmth, and tenderness. I came [to your dressing room] before you had arrived.

> On the wall hung your shirt, still warm from having touched your body. With what pleasure I pressed my face against it, and how I envy it for being so close to you [*vam*]…It seemed to me to be an animate object. You're smiling? Calling me a little fool? Well, what can I do. Can I be faulted for adoring you with all my being, for the fact that only you exist for me?…You pushed life into the background for me and I only see it through you. If I had to die and I knew that it would benefit you, I would not think twice. If someone wanted to crucify me for your sake I would offer my hands, let them hammer nails into them. If you were next to me it would not hurt. I would not feel pain. It only pains me not to see you, not to hear anything about you—now that's unbearable. That is…death. Right now all of my being is alive with hope. I believe that you will fulfill your promise and will not forget about the 30th. And at that time what will be will be. Because you are leaving and will be gone for such a long time that I think I will not survive until your next arrival.[76]

The purpose of the letter is straightforward enough: it serves as a reminder of a planned, illicit rendezvous, as well as an affirmation of its author's passion and unequivocal devotion. Descriptions of erotically charged encounters with the singer's body and shirt leave little doubt that the libidinous votary is eager and willing to act on her physical attraction. Yet, two aspects of the text are conspicuous and, I believe, require closer examination. The first is the centrality and depiction of the author's body, which, as in other fan letters, is stricken, tortured, and on the brink of expiration. The second is the way corporality is discussed—with particular attention and space devoted to body parts.

In order to understand this focus on gesture and the fragmented body we need to consider again that Shaliapin was not a mere "regular" person but a "beloved God," a celebrity. And, as Dyer has repeatedly asserted, the celebrity is a maximized type—not only a great individual but also one who performs individualism and thereby authenticates or lends coherence to personality itself. The body, exposing meaning and conveying "presence" in ways verbal language cannot, is an important site of signification both within celebrity culture and the melodramatic imagination.[77] Though fans occasionally dwelt on stars' good looks and sex appeal, they conceived the body not so much as an aesthetic object or an immutable symbol (in the case of the star) but primarily as an expressionistic vehicle, capable of revealing individuals' deepest desires and psychic

states. Like silent film and opera, as well as the press depictions of feminized fans discussed earlier, the letters describe a signifying, symptomatic body.[78] Scenes of self-sacrifice and bodily suffering, so common in fan mail, communicate otherwise ineffable subterranean urges. Shaliapin's chest "beckons," hands are offered for impalement, bodies are pressed against possessions of the beloved: graphic fantasies and extreme, hystericized gestures overcome linguistic barriers to complete disclosure.

Fans repeatedly asked for written replies from celebrities as they committed their own effusions and avowals to paper, yet their requests also indicated that words—no matter how evocative or truthful—were not enough. In the last paragraph and throughout her letter to Shaliapin, the dressing room interloper gives voice to fears that her adoring statements, however sincere, might seem contrived:

> If only I could run away with you, serve you, I would take care of you like a little "baby," grant your wishes, whims—would never ask for anything—only for the joy of being near you. Forgive me, I know that it is only a dream. But right now I do not want to think about anything else, since I will see you soon close up, close and at home, right?...No, better where we've already been once. There you will be all mine—at least for an hour. These hours are my happiness. They are so rare and they go so fast. My dearest, sweet one...I sense that you do not believe my words. But maybe very soon I will prove to you that I am not like the phrasemongers that you are used to meeting.[79]

Though the letter is at many points marked by an operatic self-indulgence, it concludes, somewhat incongruously, with a sober reflection. Initially, expressions of anxiety that Shaliapin will deem the fan's words foolish are jauntily dismissed and succeeded by restatements of compulsive adoration and a crucifixion scene. But the letter returns in the end to the problem of Shaliapin's reaction, now conceived as a question of authenticity, a question that can be answered only by a face-to-face meeting. Thus while pathos-arousing verbal confessions are crucial to truthfulness, ultimately it is the speaker's body, charged with affective and psychic representation, that confirms the sincerity of her motives. Fans' desires to see stars "close up" were not always overtly sexual or sensual. Chance encounters and the many available celebrity photographs enabled intimate study and knowledge of the body, increased attentiveness to specific attributes and facial features, and yielded assessments of their truthfulness. Shaliapin's legs, hands, and sartorial choices also provided clues

about the essence of the singer—as a performer of a role or type, and as himself, a unique individual.[80]

Admirers seldom were bold enough to ask for meetings with their idols. Most expressed their yearning for bodily presence by demanding signed photographs and other representations of opera celebrities. When requests were not granted, humble entreaty became exigent clamor, and distressed letters arrived at the opera house. Ekaterina Novoselova of Vasil'evskii Island penned one such letter to Shaliapin on December 20, 1908. The fan began by explaining that on December 9 she had sent a note, along with poems dedicated to the singer, and "a few lines of prose" asking Shaliapin for a postcard. Moreover, she had sent the letter "registered mail" to the Mariinskii Theater, fully confident that it would reach him.[81] Having received no reply, Ekaterina feared the worst:

> I don't want to let myself think that you *deliberately* did not respond to my letter, to my direct and clear appeal to you—with an *earnest* and *pressing request*... that you send me your portrait, or simply a postcard with your photograph. I *don't want to, cannot* believe it... because of all the good things that I have heard and know about you—that you are a person who is warm, responsive, truly kind; that you are always a human being in all the profound and wonderful senses of the word... Everything... I have heard... has instilled and strengthened in me the conviction that you belong to that select minority of people... who place their calling above all else.[82]

While Ekaterina assured Shaliapin (and reassured herself) of his impeccable reputation and character, she nonetheless fretted over the possible reasons for his inattentiveness, considering each at some length. Perhaps she did not send the letter at a good time—December 9, after all, was the final day of his engagement, his "farewell performance, and, of course, letters and poems were the furthest thing from [his] mind." Or maybe he never even had the opportunity to read her "ill-fated message, to hold it in his hands."[83] Ekaterina's last and most horrifying speculation was that Shaliapin's silence resulted from indignation:

> Perhaps both my letter and my poems angered and vexed you? Forgive me if I... acted tactlessly and unwisely, touching on things that should not have been mentioned, bringing to light in my ode to you with the fire of poetic truth totally sincerely, but perhaps not completely appropriately, your indignation at... the vexing

> and insignificant incident in the [Hall of the] Noble Assembly during the dress rehearsal. Forgive me if this is so, if I guessed it!...But...also judge me and my poems by their intent, and let it sway your judgment in my favor![84]

Like other fans, Ekaterina apologizes more than once for her brashness and impropriety. And yet, as in other fan mail, the insertions of "forgive me" seem rather perfunctory, at variance with the prevailing, exultant spirit of the letter. Remorse is at best equivocal and pleas for forgiveness are framed by impassioned self-justifications that dismiss the need for apologies. Indeed, it is clear that fans, rather than yearning to be forgiven, sought to be known: if Shaliapin recognized that confessions and requests were composed lovingly, spontaneously, and earnestly, there would be nothing to forgive. Lack of premeditation and self-control, so central to the aesthetic vocabularies of melodrama and celebrity culture, were offered as proof of sincere intent in the letters. Fans "brought to light" emotion "with the fire of poetic truth"—a language and imagery that, evocative of operatic singing, erupted suddenly from the body and with seemingly effortless force reached extremely high and unnaturally low registers. If *others* did not sympathize, what could be done? Compelled by deep sentiment and inspired by greatness, fans construed their outpourings as inherently authentic and admirable.

But then why ask for forgiveness? Apologies established a premise for transgression: they served as reminders of existing rules governing social behavior and implied that those rules had been broken. The letters, in this sense, echoed the discourse on fandom generated by the entertainment press. As I have discussed, the transgressive opera fan was a key figure in the reorganization of cultural hierarchies. Ill and dangerous psikhopatki and melomany represented threats to masculine artistic autonomy, unified selfhood, and measured creative expression. Fans performed the role of the transgressive psikhopatka, inverting the valuation and meaning commonly ascribed to it. They related breach of etiquette to recovery of self, excess to personal integration. Out-of-control, mad behavior and the symptomatic body were not normalized but, on the contrary, conceived as breathtakingly exceptional.

Fandom as melodramatic practice

In 1915, a year in which a deluge of messages from grateful groups of wounded soldiers and impoverished students arrived at the Bol'shoi

and Mariinskii Theaters, Shaliapin received an official-looking document entitled "The Ten Commandments of the Shaliapinists."[85] Written in large, bold script on an oversized sheet of stationery, it read:

1. Shaliapin shalt be your favorite artist and thou shalt know no artists but him.
2. Thou shalt not recognize any other artist as equal to him, or any likeness that is in the earth beneath, or in the distant past, or in more recent times, or that is in foreign lands and in Russia, and not applaud them and not call them out.
3. Thou shalt not utter the name of Shaliapin without foolish rapture.
4. Remember the creations of his genius by heart.
   Six days thou shalt stand before the entrance of the Bol'shoi Theater in order to see the "Incomparable One." But on the seventh day, outside his apartment.
5. Read *Boris Godunov*, *Ivan the Terrible*, and *Mefistofeles* that thou may be awestruck and may be a lunatic upon the land.
6. Applaud him furiously!
7. Adore him until thou art beside thyself.
8. Bow down thyself to him until thou hast driven thyself to madness.
9. Thou shalt not throw handkerchiefs and hats to the feet of the "Incomparable One," for idiotic hats are unworthy of placing at his feet.
10. Thou shalt miss not a single performance, not a single concert, nor any word that is his and follow every move of Fedor Ivanovich.
    Glory, glory, glo-o-o-ry!
    Glory to him throughout the earth, glo-o-o-ry![86]

The commandments were signed by the "secretary of the large, ever-raging society of Shaliapinists," a self-designated lunatic.[87]

Several days later, Shaliapin received another anonymous letter regarding the "Ten Commandments." Its creator begged the "most-esteemed Fedor Ivanovich" to forgive "a stupid and unoriginal joke" and anxiously explained its provenance. Apparently, the commandments were penned "one unfortunate evening" at an intimate family gathering. Wanting to "tease our young people," the contrite author "paraphrased rather poorly the so-called Commandments of the Karamzinists," printed three or four years prior in the journal

Russkaia starina (*Russian Antiquity*).[88] Now he shuddered at the horrifying thought of Shaliapin reading this tacky bit of drollery intended for the eyes of children:

> My son, because of his youth and foolishness, decided that you would be pleased by it and…tactlessly sent you this filth, for which he bore the appropriate punishment [from me]. My entire family and I are the most passionate and true fans of your mighty talent, and we cannot bear the thought that we caused you the smallest annoyance. You stand too tall to be touched by such vulgarity, and hence I beg you to forgive [my son's] immature and stupid prank. I calm myself with the hope that you did not pay much attention to it.[89]

The man calling himself "a voice from the public" concluded his letter with more assurances of "deep regret" and a pledge of the family's "sincerest and everlasting devotion."[90]

Despite the explanation offered in the apologetic epilogue to the "Ten Commandments," neither the authorship nor the circumstances of their composition can be verified. It is impossible to deduce, for example, what the young "prankster" had in mind when he mailed the so-called joke to Shaliapin. Perhaps he read it literally and imagined that the singer would be moved rather than insulted. Confounding questions arise as well about the identity and motives of the sender of the second message. Was he a father embarrassed by the actions of his son, or a rueful fan anxious that his "Ten Commandments" had been misinterpreted? But while a discussion of authorial intent and its vicissitudes would be highly speculative, more conclusive observations can be made regarding the language and content of the texts. The first of these concerns the similarities between the "Ten Commandments" and the letter repudiating it. Both invoke the name Shaliapin with reverence and passion, both condemn silly gifts unworthy of his greatness, and both contain oaths of eternal devotion to the singer. An obvious difference between the two texts is that the first resembles stylistically the satirical sketches of periodicals, while the latter shares many rhetorical and structural properties with other fan letters. The comparison, though fairly simple, highlights an important feature of fan mail: ironic distance was extremely problematic, even profane. Sarcasm and humor, at odds with the melodramatic aesthetic, also was anathema in fan letters, which, like melodrama, placed a premium on clear expression of emotion and transparency of meaning. Satire openly relies on

the play of signification: it makes use of double entendre and offers ambiguous messages. In contrast, the poetics of fandom dictated that epistolary compositions present fixed, untranslatable signs, granting direct access to the truth—the singular, impressive, and undeniable truth about one's soul. The sacrilege of the "Ten Commandments" *as a letter* was not that it equated Shaliapin with God or contained highflown language (in the follow-up letter, adoration for the celebrity was expressed in virtually the same words), but that it was based on a satirical piece and thus could be read in multiple, that is, false, ways. The "tactless" crime for which the sender received just "punishment," one could say, was the violation of genre.

The second observation relates to the intertextuality of the two letters and lends further support to my argument regarding the public's awareness and consumption of the fan narratives produced by the press. The author's appropriation of the language used in journalistic portrayals of fans suggests that admirers' overtures to Shaliapin, as well as their relationship to fandom as a whole, were "textually anticipated."[91] Satirical feuilletons and other running commentary on fandom functioned as a script with a rich array of behaviors and a colorful lexicon. And while fans, as I have noted, often rejected the import and ideological prescriptions contained in that script, they shared its discursive universe and enacted its plots.

A good portion of fan letters, like the feuilletons in *Budil'nik* and *Rampa i zhizn'* (without the humor), were tales of fruitless searches for Shaliapin tickets. They related hardships bravely withstood during campouts at the entrance of the Bol'shoi and suffering endured while scrounging for affordable tickets. Such woeful sagas provided the basis for rhapsodic, desperate appeals to Shaliapin to arrange free or inexpensive admission to one of his operas or concerts. Students at universities, institutes, and gimnazii, self-ascribed opera connoisseurs and musical illiterates alike, composed petitions beseeching the "omnipotent" star to take pity on them—valiant and impoverished seekers of sublime art, vocal splendor, and a gallery seat at just about any Shaliapin performance. The following request for free passes, written in November 1909 by a group of university students, is a particularly illustrative example of this practice:

> Mr. Shaliapin! You cannot imagine what a joy it is for us students to listen to you—our native genius and artist! And how rare such pleasure is! Having lived in Moscow for two or three years one feels it is a sin not to have heard you, but alas . . . to this one must resign oneself since the prices are prohibitive and the merciless

> guards [*dezhurstvo*] at the theater makes one's cherished dreams unrealizable. Dearest Fedor Ivanovich! Give us the opportunity to get into a rehearsal, at least . . . You! You who are all-powerful, able to do this—and how grateful the public would be [to you] for such a display of kindness! . . . Can you send us some sort of pass . . . with your signature? We ask you from the bottom of our hearts![92]

Supplicants assumed that Shaliapin's generosity and influence were boundless, believing that fame accorded him the power to overrule the Imperial Theater directorate, give away low-cost tickets, and issue free passes. Having arrived from distant provinces to study in Moscow, young fans without means expected the "native genius" of peasant origin to empathize with their plight and grant their requests.

One group of graduating female students from various "institutions of higher learning" turned to Shaliapin for help in acquiring tickets after an unsuccessful four-year effort. The students' struggle to realize their "cherished dream" involved standing "entire nights at the door of the Bol'shoi Theater." Not once had they managed to get tickets, since "none were available that they could afford on [their] frugal budgets." The seven aspiring fans asked their "dear Fedor Ivanovich" to allow them "the joy of hearing him," since they would be leaving Moscow upon graduation and "might never have the opportunity again."[93]

Another group of laboring female students humbly implored Shaliapin to change the program of the Imperial Theater so that they would get a chance to see him rather than the less thrilling, scheduled fare: They gushed about his "inimitable acting" and "divine voice," arguing that it would "cost [him], a genius, nothing" to stage an extra performance of *Boris Godunov* or *Ivan the Terrible* or anything he wished: "We poor captives are only allowed to go to the theater three times a year and this year twice we had opportunities only to see ballets . . . but the third time we would like to hear you, your wonderful voice, which some of us have never heard. We have reason to believe that your fame will not prevent you from granting our modest request."[94]

Among the most striking features of the fan requests is their underlying mythology and its resemblance to that of petitions to the tsar. At the heart of both the centuries-old tradition of petitioning the tsar and the practice of appealing to Shaliapin was the belief in an omnipotent (if not omniscient) authority that would come to the aid of his mistreated loyalists if only he knew of their lamentable circumstances. The fans' idealized image of Shaliapin, like the myth of

the tsar-*batiushka*, was that of a kindhearted, fatherly benefactor prevented from acting charitably by a feckless and cruel bureaucracy—a group of obfuscating administrators whose merciless rules could be bypassed once direct contact between the star and his devotees was established. The myth of the tsar had eroded substantially by the early twentieth century.[95] And as the requests sent to Shaliapin, the scandal surrounding his genuflection before the tsar, and much of the other fan letters suggest, celebrity culture recast and arguably supplanted that myth and its attendant rites. Images of Shaliapin and other famous artists—as divine figures, national symbols, and champions of the common people—increasingly ordered identity, popular urban rituals, and journalists' political commentary.

One of the many requests that Shaliapin give a benefit concert, apparently composed by an administrator or pedagogue at a teachers' college for women, illustrates the importance of celebrities as philanthropists and icons promoting social integration and upward mobility. Representing her trainees, the author of the letter reminded the star of his previous acts of altruism, expressed the "deepest, heartfelt gratitude," and demanded more: "You just gave a benefit concert for women students . . . You answered a high calling, performed a good deed . . . Now some want . . . you to give a third benefit concert for the teachers' training courses. Do not refuse to help one more time."[96]

Shaliapin's charitable acts toward struggling female student-teachers were especially important: "Many of them had come [to Moscow] from very remote places, without resources, and largely due to society's assistance a portion of such women students were able to find tolerable work." But society could do only so much, and besides classes, female students needed housing, stipends, and employment. And it was "not the thirst for entertainment or the splendor of the big city that attract[ed]" the young provincials but "the desire to refresh their knowledge and develop their skills in order to assist the simple people" back home. "Many of them arrived with enough resources for one year, some for two, and only the few who managed to find adequate positions, remained for a third year." Upon completion of their studies, many teachers returned "to their remote corners, perhaps for a long time, or forever, with nothing but memories." The teacher asked Shaliapin to give her deserving trainees "more of such bright memories":

> You are famous among young students not only as a great artist but also as a good person . . . I know former students, now teachers, who spend a large portion of their meager earnings on postcards with

> your photograph . . . I am not writing this to flatter you . . . [but] as a witness of such scenes. For example, an argument developed about your birthplace. One student from Viatskaia province insisted that you are her "compatriot" while another argued that you were from Kazan', and of course, neither one nor the other could provide definite evidence to prove her claim. Maybe this will seem funny to you, but do not laugh! They are motivated by good feelings: they will take pride in their famous compatriot and love their native land even more because so many celebrities emerge from the people. With great love they will apply their talents. And who knows, perhaps their schools too will produce great people.[97]

While the narrow focus and relative formality certainly distinguished petitions from confessional love letters, most fan mail shared structural, stylistic, and thematic elements. Ticket requests in particular brimmed with melodramatic rhetoric: they contained flamboyant phraseology, tended toward the sententious and extreme, and continually resorted to periphrastic statements of allegiance and desire. The stories they told were built on polarization. Fans described excruciating situations and antithetical psychic conditions—despair and utter joy in quick succession. The unavailability of tickets to a Shaliapin performance invariably constituted a crisis, and administrators at the Imperial Theater were the villains of the plot.[98]

One lengthy ticket request, signed by students N. Petrova and A. Bystrova, began as many fan letters did, with considerable dramatic intensity:

> For heaven's sake, forgive me for this letter! Also, I beg you, read it to the end. You probably receive thousands of letters from your many fans and are used to throwing them away without opening them. But we ask you, please, please . . . do not subject our letter to such an ordinary but cruel fate and read it! . . . [W]e are not even your fans because we have never heard you and . . . we will not write about the grand, burning impression that you leave on your listener. But we have a request, which is laughable even to express, but we will attempt anyway. If I had postponed writing this letter until tomorrow . . . I never would have written it—I would have lost my nerve. But now I am writing in the heat of the moment, after reading in the newspaper that you will be singing to a non-subscription audience on November 5th and 7th, and under the spell of the thought: "Perhaps Shaliapin will take pity on us!" . . . We have tried getting tickets so many times.[99]

The two classmates had been offered "expensive tickets for which they did not have sufficient resources." Still, they were determined to attend a Shaliapin performance. Their mad, passionate, and therefore just desire entitled them to tickets: "My God, how badly I want to hear you! I so madly love opera, singing, and how sad that here we have you—such an artist and singer—and we cannot hear you no matter what we do . . . [O]nly a small group can afford it. Those who have . . . money—[they] can go, but why can't we who do not have the means and love art as much—if not more passionately?"[100]

After more declarations of uncompromised devotion to Shaliapin's art and a request for two inexpensive tickets, the author enunciated and thereby celebrated her transgression: "This is a request that is preposterously audacious and still I am asking you." She then briskly moved on to practical matters, and concluded with yet another allusion to Shaliapin's generosity and compassion:

> We will try [to get tickets] anyway, but of course without your influence we will not get any—as always. Maybe you could send us your card with some sort of inscription so that we could show it at the box office and receive tickets for the gallery. I was uncertain about the persuasiveness of my letter, but my girlfriend and I kept saying to ourselves: "But what if Shaliapin will pity and help us?"[101]

Notable here, as well as in other letters, is the announcement of "one's own and another's moral nature," a salient feature of melodrama.[102] Fans frequently stated that they knew Shaliapin to be "good," not only as an artist but as a "person." He was proclaimed to be on the side of the sincere and sublime, at war with all that was superficial, oppressive, and ordinary. Moral questions, even those arising from social and economic inequalities, were identified with emotional states and thus redirected, as it were, to the private realm. That "only a small group of people—those with money" were able to attend Shaliapin's performances was an injustice characterized in sentimental terms: impecunious students loved opera "just as, if not more, passionately," hence they ought to have been given the opportunity to attend. Fans demonstrated their authenticity and virtue by attesting to the spontaneity of their actions and feelings. They composed their letters impulsively, "in the heat of the moment" and "under the spell" of overwhelming emotions. Descriptions of the requests as "preposterously audacious" signaled madness and lack of self-control, and therefore served as further testimony of authenticity and sincerity.

Perhaps such a rendering of the authentic was especially relevant, even necessary, in the socially and politically turbulent fin de siècle. Authenticity, after all, is a moral as well as an aesthetic category. As the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 threw into question long-held hierarchies and epistemological positions, operatic utterances—on record and in everyday life—enabled individuals to perform and ultimately transcend the perceived crisis of meaning, fixing once again morality and truth.

6
Epilogue

In the second half of the nineteenth century, urban Russia witnessed sweeping demographic and cultural changes resulting from the end of serfdom, railroad construction, and industrialization. Most relevant to this study, wealthy merchants emerged as arts patrons and active participants in public cultural life. The state and nobility remained robust sources of patronage, to be sure, but the expansion of the art market and new entertainment enterprises, including private opera companies, signaled the growing involvement of "middling" social strata in commodified leisure. The Revolution of 1905, which brought the relaxation of censorship, a press boom, and further erosion of noble privilege and cultural authority, only accelerated these developments.

Through an examination of a rapidly commercializing opera culture at the fin de siècle, I have attempted to shed light on important features of the late tsarist imagination. Each chapter has presented aspects of Russian fantasizing that illustrate the modes of expression, affective strategies, and ethical stances undergirding revolutionary language and imperatives. Melodramatically informed subjectivities, I claim, provided a vision of personal integration and epistemological certainty that both paved the way and compensated for the revolution's destruction of established meanings and institutions.

I began with the story of Elizaveta and Savva Mamontov—the ways their personal relationships, aesthetics sensibilities, and dialogical approach to self-fashioning reflected more profound and widespread shifts in Russian understandings of the self and the social. The merchant couple was shaped by, and helped disseminate through celebrity opera singers, a melodramatic meaning-making system, especially its conceptions of personal authenticity and inner life. Their model of selfhood featured intensely conflicted emotions and confessional reflexivity enacted again and again—on theater stages, in correspondence, and through images created by mass media.

The eclectic but ever-committed operatic individualism of Mamontov and his most famous creation—Fedor Shaliapin—could have become exemplary only in the context of a burgeoning consumer society and celebrity culture; and the Russian "middle" was instrumental in forging, naming, and critiquing both. It was not the intention of music reviewers and commercial culture critics to support fan cults and publicize celebrity entertainers, but through their vivid satirical depictions and tireless castigating discourse, they succeeded in doing just that. Images of the over-the-top psikhopatka fostered actual psikhopatki.

Melodramatic definitions of authenticity and selfhood were transmitted too through new recording technology and the accompanying discourses of sound fidelity. Despite audio magazines' efforts to direct attention away from famous personalities and toward sonic purity and pleasure, the gramophone industry focused increasingly on performers. Such a contradiction existed for a few reasons. First, well-known personalities humanized technology and made it more accessible. Second, the highbrow repertoire acquired its legitimacy and popularity, as the gramophone derived its elevated status, from opera singers. In a celebrity society, personalities sell records: it was largely Vial'tseva, Sobinov, and other stars of the Imperial Theaters, after all, that aspiring and upwardly mobile gramophiles like Nikolai Fedorovich collected. The readers of audio magazines were urged to admire singers as musical artists rather than celebrities, and such appreciation, deemed correct and true, required statements as grandiose and expressive as the music itself. Also, discussion of art and artists was sufficiently authentic only if passionate because the celebrity, as Dyer suggests, is a maximized type—an "incomparable" individual who enacts individualism itself and testifies to personhood at its fullest. If one felt music intensely and became emotional, one could, like the star, achieve great heights of subjectivity. Even the rational masculine discourse of sonic fidelity, which seemed to bracket questions of stardom and sentiment, then, returned willy-nilly to the problematics of self-expression and personal authenticity. Record reviews contained much about "clean" and "natural" sound, but analysis of record hygiene often slid into judgment of a performer's ability to relate emotions in a "nuanced" and "sincere" manner.

The idea of authenticity-as-excess—excess of emotion, apparent meaning, and heard truth; an excess enacted through confession, manifested in the lack of premeditation and self-control, and so central to the aesthetic vocabularies of celebrity and opera—was broadly disseminated and entered everyday life. The injunctions of celebrity

culture and fandom transcended the territorial boundaries of the opera house with the help of early-twentieth-century technologies—among them the mass-circulation press and the gramophone. Fans belonged to communities no longer fully anchored in estate, class, gender, nation, or any other easily defined category or place and, in fact, were not determined by temporal coordinates or necessarily thought of in spatial terms. Letters to Shaliapin discussed in the previous chapter testify to the power of fandom as an emancipatory and melodramatic practice.

I have delineated a melodramatic sensibility by analyzing sources that expressed commonly held values, rules of deportment, emotional idioms, and "structure of feeling."[1] Nonetheless, my conclusions must remain to a certain degree speculative. Space and the demands of close reading have not permitted me to present many press reports and letters. Another problem concerns the evanescence of sensibility as a historical phenomenon. As Susan Sontag pointed out in her classic essay "Notes on Camp," an era's "taste has no system and no proofs. But there is something like a logic of taste: the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. A sensibility is almost, but not quite, ineffable." To systematize a sensibility in an attempt to verify its existence is to harden it into an idea, argued Sontag. Yet, one must risk the endeavor, for "taste governs every free—as opposed to rote—human response. Nothing is more decisive. There is taste in people, visual taste, taste in emotion—and there is taste in acts, taste in morality."[2]

The structural similarities as well as silent presuppositions of fan letters reveal the collective fantasies and sense-making systems of which they were a part. In other words, fans' modes of expression and epistemological positions, if not the fans themselves, were typical. Letter writers like Platonova and Dneprovskaia occupied a discursive space that enabled certain forms of knowing and feeling, and barred others. Sontag mused that she could discuss camp only because she was simultaneously attracted to and repelled by it. For one who completely identifies with a given sensibility, lacks the proper distance from it, cannot analyze but only enact it: "To name a sensibility, to draw its contours and to recount its history, requires a deep sympathy modified by revulsion."[3] If early-twentieth-century Russian confessions of love seem to the contemporary reader so immoderate as to be insincere, disturbed, even comical, it is probably because they offend our own tempered emotional sensibilities and notions of the authentic. What today we might deem hyperbolic and ridiculous were in fact manifestations of an imagination

that worshipped psychic drama and equated the sacred with the luridly confessional. Scholars have linked melodrama with both the feminine and Revolution. Here I have begun to chart its expressive and political functions in the Russian capitals between 1905 and 1917.

Political celebrity: The case of Alexander Kerensky

Fedor Shaliapin was a star of the operatic stage; Alexander Kerensky was a star of political theater. Even before the fall of the monarchy, Kerensky captivated audiences with stormy, emotional speeches from the Duma floor. In February 1917, he became "The Great Enthusiast and Inspired Romantic of the Russian Revolution," according to *Rampa i zhizn'*, the "poet of the revolution" who showered audiences with blown kisses and red flowers, receiving bouquets daily in return. Kerensky was a celebrity of the so-called concert-meetings, where political speeches alternated with performances of operas like Puccini's *Tosca* or symphonies by Tchaikovsky for the purposes of edification, entertainment, and agitation.[4] Posters and bills advertising Kerensky's concert-meeting "participation" covered Petrograd. His oratory made schoolgirls swoon and left soldiers emotion-choked. Fans begged for autographs from their "darling Kerensky" and carried him out of theater halls on their shoulders like a world-class tenor or composer after a sparkling premier.[5]

Just as Shaliapin's image and those of other celebrities represented the nation by elevating the star above politics—containing and seemingly reconciling contradictory beliefs and concepts—Kerensky's persona and style appeared to be nonpartisan, even apolitical. Although he occupied a ministerial position in the Provisional Government as a Socialist Revolutionary, he shirked ideological commitments and tried to play the part of a "national figure," tailoring his speeches to various publics and eliciting rapturous feelings. As historian Boris Kolonitskii explains, "The resonance of Kerensky's speeches with the popular consciousness was [his] source of political power. When contemporaries described the 'Kerensky phenomenon' they would use words like 'hysteria of enthusiasm,' 'psychosis of the crowd' or 'hypnosis.'" Kerensky's somaticized and emotive oratory appeared to bridge nineteenth-century Russian philosophical divisions and conceptual dichotomies such as words and deeds, the people (*narod*) and the intelligentsia, and religion and politics, prompting the painter Tat'iana Gippius to comment in a letter to Dmitrii Merezhkovskii and Dmitrii Filosofov that "the ecumenicalism of Kerensky's actions is a combination of the uncombinable."[6]

Kerensky's contemporaries and biographers have observed that he had a special talent for merging with audiences—eliciting their empathy. Leon Trotsky claimed that Kerensky "echoed the mass consciousness of revolutionary Russia . . . expressed, reflected, and simultaneously molded [it]."[7] The Socialist Revolutionary ideologist Viktor Chernov also noted Kerensky's deep emotional and psychological connection with his public:

> Revolutionary eras are eras of mass hysteria and psychological epidemics. Mass leaders must be psychologically flesh of their followers' flesh. They must become infected and at the same time infect others with the unrestrained strength of their passion. Such leaders are often born actors who consciously or unconsciously seek to enter the hearts of the people surrounding them . . . through stilted words and gestures. There was a lot of such "acting" in Kerensky, too, but this did not prevent him from revealing himself, from expressing his most hidden and profound spiritual essence.[8]

The effect Kerensky had on his audiences seems to have been quite powerful. His fans came from all social strata across the empire, identifying and emoting with him as they did with other celebrities. Tat'iana Gippius wrote to her sister, the writer Zinaida Gippius, that she respected the "blood and sweat" of Kerensky's "sobbing tone," while a soldier reported in a letter from the front that his regiment reversed its decision not to attack the enemy after the "War Minister Kerensky fell on his knees before us and began to beg us . . . not to ruin our motherland and our newly won liberties. [T]he soldiers were so moved that they swore unanimously to attack."[9] Kolonitskii argues that Kerensky was "a remarkable orator, improviser," and actor who succeeded in capturing and sustaining the "rapturous, euphoric, romantic moods of the first months of the revolution [because] it corresponded to his style."[10]

Kerensky certainly reflected and furthered not only the revolutionary mood but also the melodramatic sensibility of prerevolutionary Russia. The pathos, spontaneity, and hysteria associated with Kerensky's theatrical oratorical style closely resembled the temper tantrums, extravagant walkouts, and feuds linked to Shaliapin's emotive singing technique. Such extreme modes of behavior, echoes of "realistic" opera performances, were adopted in the political sphere. The agonizing cries of Canio (*Pagliacci,* 1892) and the low-pitched howls of the tormented Boris Godunov, I claim, reverberated in the fainting fits and sweat-drenched pleas of Kerensky. To admire Shaliapin and Kerensky was to admire outburst, violence, excess, bloodbaths of sentiment. Precisely this sort of "diva" behavior was valued, seen as real,

for it transcended particular roles, disobeyed etiquette, and defied the social and expressly political. Insistent suffering, overwrought scenes, and impetuous vocal acrobatics had an appeal not unlike opera itself: they testified to drive, a constant force beneath life's various roles, embodied by each and propelling them all.

Since the "people's minister's" legendary oratorical method shared many generic features with melodrama, it perhaps is not surprising that audiences responded so sympathetically to him. Spontaneity, we recall, was crucial to the melodramatic mode and repeatedly averred in fan letters as evidence of sincerity and goodness. Kerensky, too, often insisted that his speeches were improvised, originating in the depths of his being and forcing their way to the surface:

> I don't know what I will say. I will say whatever will have to be said…It is like a…command coming from within, from deep down. A firm and persistent order, impossible to ignore. All I do is choose a word at the beginning, just before I start. After all, the order must be communicated in precise and clear language. But as soon as I begin, the words I have selected disappear somewhere. New and different words appear—required, precise and clear words. I must pronounce them as quickly as possible because other words follow on their heels, jostling each other and pushing away those ahead of them.[11]

Kerensky claimed a direct, unmediated somatic connection to the interiors, the "nerves" of his listeners: "When I speak I don't see anybody…I hear nothing…The applause enters my consciousness in shock waves, like a scream of nerves…All the time I feel the stream of nerves coming from the audience to me." His voice trembled and vibrated because "waves of heat" coursed through his chest, contributing to unintended, and hence authentic, messages: "I don't choose my expressions…the words come and go freely."[12] Contemporaries commented on both his "frankness" and "theatricality" without contradiction. That Kerensky's body manifested his psychic and emotional states served as further testimony of sincerity and intensified the already raw, confessional tone of his orations. "Before appearances, Kerensky [became so] agitated that his throat contracted in spasms. He paled, craned his neck, swallowed hard." The speeches drained him of energy and "sometimes ended with him fainting."[13]

Like fan letter writers who pledged selfless devotion to their idols, Kerensky often invoked his "sickliness" and physical suffering to create the impression of an "ascetic leader who sacrificed his health,

even his life, on the sacred altar of revolution." During an appearance before the delegates of the Helsinki Soviet, he confessed that he had barely slept since the start of the revolution, and in another version of the speech declared even more dramatically: "I cannot talk for long—please believe me, I have not slept since [February] 27th—such is the pressure in the atmosphere of the ruling circles of young Russia."[14] Recalling other Kerensky performances, the Socialist Revolutionary Mark Vishniak linked the minister's apparent physical weakness with his popularity:

> [He] was pale, emaciated, adored not only by young female students—produced a great impression on his audience on account of his very appearance, irrespective of what he was saying. Even though he repeated himself all of the time, his tension and excitement were transmitted to his listeners and they participated in his ecstasy. At the end of the speech in the Polytechnical Museum, Kerensky fainted. This only intensified the effect of his appearance.[15]

The confessional, ecstatic mode of expression—the melodramatic body and voice—functioned as a conduit of sincerity and morality, and formed the basis for trust and merger of Kerensky and his audience. Soldiers at the front admitted that they read Kerensky's speeches "'not without emotional quivering' and that they considered them to be 'coming from the heart of the most sincere man.'"[16]

Contemporaries often remarked on Kerensky's "passionate sincerity," and the minister himself constantly proclaimed and demanded it, along with "complete trust."[17] He conceived the political as intimate and personal. As many opera fans started their letters, Kerensky opened the rousing speech in the Petrograd Soviet that secured his entry into the Provisional Government with the burning words: "Comrades, do you trust me?…I am speaking from the depths of my heart, comrades, I am ready to die, if necessary."[18]

Melodramatic practice and Revolution

The themes and language in the fan letters examined in the previous chapter demonstrate key aspects of fin-de-siècle subjectivity and explain the rise of revolutionary figures such as Kerensky. Like early-nineteenth-century romantic writers, fans fixated on agonizing emotions and introspection, locating drama in the internal realm of consciousness rather than the external, social world. But

the letters also document the emergence of new sensibilities regarding self, authenticity, desire, and everyday expression—sensibilities made possible and reinforced by modernist aesthetics, mass media, celebrity culture, and consumerism, as well as events and cultural myths specific to Russia. Fans loved and confessed melodramatically, verbally paying tribute to the emotional truth and extraordinariness of the star, the virtue of pathos, and the autonomy of the psychologized, emoting individual. Through the practice of confessional letter writing, born of an unrequited desire for intractable personalities who constantly alternated between operatic roles and "real life," fans perpetuated cycles of crisis, revelation, and redemption—imagined and recreated themselves as highly expressive, exceptional, and therefore ethical beings.

The star phenomenon and the logic of celebrity culture, with its emphasis on sincerity and pathos, adds a new dimension to our understanding of contemporaries' experience of the revolutionary events and language of 1905–07, as well as the political and discursive challenges posed to the tsarist regime in the years that followed. Because celebrity culture is a function of consumer society and supports an ideology of individualism—the power of the personality—it demands constant exhibitionism and exposure, enactments of authenticity and artifice, heroic exaltation and periodic falls from grace. To submit to its rules is potentially to win fame but also to risk parody. And, indeed, Nicholas II—appearing on teacups, scarves, stamps, and coins, in photographs at the front, with his family, in automobiles, and in Cossack uniform "after a hunt"—endured both. Like Shaliapin and other creations of publicity, the tsar suffered accusations of moral corruption, effeminacy, and even treason.[19] His image, now in close proximity to mass-reproduced culture, acquired the taint of the feminine and all its negative stereotypes: irrationality, caprice, and lax morality. The same ultimately happened to Kerensky. Even before the Bolsheviks took power, Kerensky's vaunted sentimentality, impassioned sincerity, and commitment-signaling fainting spells became inauthentic "acting," windbaggery, and feminine weakness. Later, both White and Red authors charged him with overacting "like a foreign chanteuse," and the Bolsheviks caricatured him as a ballet dancer.[20]

Kolonitskii suggests Kerensky's star faded because his rapturous style, while well suited to the euphoric early days of the revolution, was not tolerated after the July crisis and further losses at the front.[21] Another explanation is that he fell victim to his own aesthetic and rhetorical devices—the brutality inherent in the melodramatic mode. As Brooks notes, melodrama from its inception was linked to the

paradigms and practices of revolution. And what Brooks writes about the French Revolution certainly can be said of the Russian political and social upheavals both before and after 1917:

> [The French Revolution] is the epistemological moment which [melodrama] illustrates and to which it contributes: the moment that . . . marks the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch) . . . the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society . . . Melodrama comes into being in a world where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been [challenged and] . . . their instauration as a way of life is of immediate, daily, political concern.[22]

During revolutionary moments, melodramatic rituals enter and saturate everyday modes of behavior and speech. The Terror operates, and perhaps is only imaginable, within the logic and Manichaeistic tropes of melodrama, specifically, its personalized notions of good and evil. Brooks argues that the revolutionary legislator seeks to make present "a new world, a new chronology, a new religion, a new morality" through verbal representation: "The revolution attempts to sacralize law itself . . . Yet it necessarily produces melodrama instead, incessant struggle against enemies, without and within, branded as villains . . . who must be confronted and expunged, over and over, to assure the triumph of virtue." Melodrama, like the oratory and rationale of the revolution, "takes as its concern and raison d'être the location, expression, and imposition of basic ethical and psychic truths." It repeats them "in a clear language, rehearses their conflicts and combats . . . menace and evil and the eventual triumph of morality made operative and evident."[23]

I recapitulate Brooks's point about melodrama and revolution not to imply, of course, that the melodramatic mode inevitably produces or accompanies terror and physical violence but to highlight the value it places on violent language or, put another way, convulsive expression of affect that, in the name of deeper truth, does violence to established rules of deportment. The similarities between melodramatic and revolutionary sensibilities also suggest the usefulness of melodrama for understanding Soviet subjectivity, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.

Melodrama and Soviet rituals

In this final section, I would like to chart a more conjectural course and point the way for future scholarly inquiry. Enraptured confessions

and violent displays of authenticity did not vanish with Kerensky and the Provisional Government. The melodramatic imagination that emerged in fin-de-siècle Russia—its notions of conflict, human psychology, and morality, but also its manifestation in celebrity culture and fandom—endured and, for some, grew more relevant after the revolution of 1917, as the letters of a certain Zubasheva, written in 1924 and 1934 to Ivan Ershov, demonstrate.[24]

Zubasheva began the first letter by stating that she hoped her decision to write would "not seem impudent or inappropriate." She yearned to tell Ershov "what he meant in her life," understanding that for him "of course these sorts of confessions were not new" but that she had "never said anything like this to anyone before" and "could not restrain [herself]." She described her first experience of Ershov's Tannhäuser as a conversion to a new way of life and gave the event mythic significance. Upon seeing him in the role, Zubasheva "suddenly felt as though a great light was approaching . . . any minute the sun would fall on [her] head—dumbfounded, blinded, deafened, [she] couldn't stand it anymore." Since, she "had not missed a single *Tannhäuser*" and her initial "sensation had not subsided; it had grown and . . . become fully realized." Zubasheva sought to explain this "ecstatic," full state of being to the man who had enabled it. She would not spare any detail to prove to him and herself that she was sincere, that she had not "made it up." Ershov was "amazing" in every role, but his Tannhäuser (figure 6.1) seemed "supernatural" to her:[25]

> Every [other role] is at a high level and is real art, an aesthetic thrill after which it is easier . . . to regain my usual energy. This helps me live. But your Tannhäuser prevents me from living. It is more than one can survive. It tears me from life, turns life upside down. During the performance I feel joy and intensity that I have never known before. Afterwards . . . intoxication, inspiration that I don't know how to overcome or what to do with. And I feel that I cannot return to my normal life, which I love, value, and cherish. For a couple of days after *Tannhäuser* everything falls through my hands and all that is mine seems alien. But I am happy even though this [feeling] also is excruciating.[26]

Zubasheva mused that her confessional manner was lurid, her statements "of course ridiculous, perhaps even rude" but immediately soothed herself, declaring: "this is You, after all—You-Tannhäuser." Ershov had given her an "experience unprecedented in her life."

Figure 6.1 Ivan Ershov as Tannhäuser.

Inspired by his greatness, she had undergone a "spiritual and physical metamorphosis" that absolved her of every verbal transgression:

> I have become a different person and everything is different. For me, marriage was also this kind of turning point. Later, the birth of my child, it completely changed everything; but it was not as acute, not as sudden and without this sensation of a thunderous

> blow. Normally I am a slow, dull person—[I am] not inclined to ecstasy. I didn't think I was capable of experiencing it. I am so happy that I experienced it. And now, when I see you without your makeup—I cannot help but sense Tannhäuser in you. And I am so terribly pleased when I catch Tannhäuser's gestures in you; your manner of holding up your head with your hand—your hands themselves . . . the way you raise your head, turn it—it is so thrilling for me to catch this—at concerts or on the street. I hope you will forgive this letter. I wanted to stop myself from writing it, but I couldn't. It is written nonsensically and sloppily, but these things are impossible to convey . . . So be it.[27]

Zubasheva wrote a second letter to Ershov on July 12, 1934. Ten years later, she recommenced with a brisk apology, communicating self-consciousness in the same melodramatic fan-letter dialect: though it was "completely ridiculous" for her to write, she "could not restrain [herself]." Ershov, "not only a Great Artist, but a grand person, would understand," and besides, how could she not surrender to irrational passions after spotting him by chance on the street:

> I hadn't seen you for two years and suddenly now, at the end of May, I think, saw you unexpectedly, and up close on the street, and since then I haven't been able to calm down. I want to "touch" you with my heart—and I am afraid (which is stupid) that you will get angry . . . Because this, after all, is a love letter. But not one that demands a reply, and a so-called posthumous one because you are no longer young and I am, for a woman, even older—I am 40 years old, and I want nothing from you—not even an answer . . . I want to tell you what you have meant in my life. I want for you to know. Why? I myself don't completely understand. Only I want you to! I want you to![28]

As one might suspect, much had transpired in Zubasheva's life, yet she continued to derive meaning both from Ershov and the lexicon of prerevolutionary theater journals: "I never was a psikhopatka and always had contempt for them," she insisted, "but music—*your* music—always turned my soul upside down." Each of Ershov's new roles and performances was "a new stage in [her] spiritual growth." She swore that his first Siegfried "compared in intensity" only to life-altering moments like the birth of her first child and marriage at age 16 to a man she "loved madly." These comparisons, Zubasheva maintained, should not be surprising. Ershov "had that effect on

many." She knew men who had experienced Ershov in the same way. One such man, her old friend Lev Nikolaevich Sil'vanskii, "love[d] to recall how as a young provincial student he heard [Ershov]—on a gramophone no less!!...and was so shaken that he inadvertently sat in a bucket of water and fish, which he had been holding in his hands."[29]

Ershov's very presence constituted a revolutionary moment for Zubasheva: as in the first letter, an encounter with the star as "himself" or a Wagnerian hero transformed the prosaic into the extraordinary. But her emotional, heightened reactions, previously described in sensual, erotic terms, were now bodiless, ethereal, or supernatural. Zubasheva's first *Tannhäuser*, once causing her to writhe in emotional and physical pain, was now a turning point akin to a religious conversion:

> I felt suddenly torn from my life—a very full, very good life—and *everything* faded before this pull toward you. For a couple of weeks my heart raged from mad happiness...and despair—that I was losing my life...Later...a surprising thing—captivity transformed into spirituality...now gives a purely spiritual thrill, religious, holy (forgive me for my silly word...this is so absurd, but I trust that you will understand me). Of course, I could have "gotten to know" you. But I did not want to. I humbly felt that I was an unattractive, plain, thirty-year-old female supplicant...and could not be interesting to you, unnecessary...not needed for anything! To be on your heels, stare at you, pester you with entreaties—I did not want that. Soon after, my husband left me. I have lived through a lot that was difficult these past ten years: much material deprivation, near indigence, many spiritual losses, deaths and departures of the people dearest to me. Most painful was the death of my son, to whom I gave my youth, all of my hope, private life, everything. He died when he was already grown, fourteen years old, after an especially difficult illness. So here it is, Ivan Vasil'evich. All these ten years, through tragedy and happiness, through hardship, exertion, and pain, I have loved you, worshipping you like an unapproachable God. You, as far away as a star, shined on me and filled me up.[30]

Thoughts of Ershov soothed Zubasheva in moments of crisis. She had not seen the singer for many years and possessed only one "portrait" of Ershov without makeup, but no other man existed for her, and she constantly conjured him up: "I thought of you by the bedside of

my dying son. And I do not have anything more valuable and more wonderful than my love for you—unrealizable, unattainable. After a short period of 'raging' and anguish it began to resemble a huge light and gave me the strength to live, love, and rear children . . . [to experience] the pleasure of music, the wind and sea . . . poetry, run-ins with you on the street and in theaters."[31]

Zubasheva then reiterated that she simply *had* to let Ershov know about her feelings, asked him to "forgive her everything"—her love and the "stupid letter"—and concluded with a postscript, added nearly a week later: "A few days ago I heard your record with the hymn of Tannhäuser. I did not sleep two nights and walked in the rain on the streets, not knowing what to do with myself from joy and anguish, and I felt that I cannot die without having 'touched' you if only with my heart."[32]

In *The Enemy on Trial*, Julie Cassiday reveals how the Soviet state used melodramatic theatrical and cinematic formulae in the show trials of the late 1920s and 1930s. Legal discourse, stage, and screen "developed overlapping models of confession, repentance, and reintegration into society," while spectators and participants at the trials, accustomed to scenes of grandiose confession and avant-garde theatrical techniques that encouraged interaction between the performer and audience, accepted their proceedings and verdicts. "Propaganda theater in the form of the *agitsud* (mock trial) initially codified the tripartite paradigm" of confession, repentance, and reintegration, concentrating on the defendant's conversion to communism. Popular films and documentaries of the 1920s "placed the threefold pattern in a specifically melodramatic context that emphasized the events preceding and following the conversion of the accused."[33] When the two models of confession merged in courtroom practice, they permitted trial organizers to create a script with roles for officials, defendants, and spectators: "By the end of the 1920s the show trial had become a legal melodrama that unmasked the regime's internal, hidden enemies and hoped to compel its spectators to replicate the *samokritika* (self-criticism) of defendants on trial." The 1930s witnessed the institutionalization of the show trial, and "theater and cinema could only depict the personal, emotional drama of defendants who replicated the threefold paradigm without fail, even if integration into society had become entirely impossible in actual trials."[34]

If we examine Zubasheva's letters in light of these observations, we find that she employed a different confessional paradigm. Whereas Soviet cinema, theaters, and actual courtrooms presented dramas that

ended with reintegration, Zubasheva's revelations and confessions put her in a state of constant flux, "tore her from life," and rendered her incapable of peacefully resuming a prosaic existence. As I noted in the previous chapter, media texts that create celebrities necessarily present a disparity between the star's performance of roles and his actual life, inviting fans to engage in melodrama as they try to reconcile the ordinary persona with the extraordinary image presented on stage and screen. Spotting Ershov on the street, ordinary, aging, and "real," Zubasheva attempted to discern in him aspects of Tannhäuser and thereby reinvest his persona with excitement and importance. Zubasheva's ritualized melodramatic engagement, moreover, enabled and provided justification for transgression. Ershov represented all that was spiritual and otherworldly, and enabled Zubasheva's courageous articulation of religious sentiments in an atheistic society. If we look not at the melodramatic cinematic and theatrical narratives of the 1920s, then, but at the melodrama offered by the public presence of stars generated by opera and eventually Soviet cinema, we discover that melodramatic paradigms did not always serve to reinforce totalizing Stalinist discourse.

At the turn of the twentieth century, fans like Zubasheva sought the extraordinary in everyday life, and the February Revolution, embodied by Kerensky, instantiated such a special, fantastical temporality. In his speech to the All-Russian Peasants' Congress on May 5, 1917, Kerensky waxed poetic about the liminality of the revolutionary present, "situated between the suffering of our ancestors and the happiness of our descendants," and pondered, as others often did, its magical uniqueness: "We live in a great time, about which historians will write many books; about which legends and songs will be written; about which our descendants will talk with envy."[35] Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, Stanislavskii, and the troupe of the Moscow Art Theater hailed Kerensky with much fanfare as a "new type of politician" and proclaimed him in a formal address as the embodiment of "the ideal of a free citizen, an ideal that the soul of mankind has been striving toward for centuries and that poets and artists of the world all transmit from generation to generation."[36] Nikolai Berdiaev in his autobiography claimed that the writer Andrei Belyi "fell in love" with Kerensky after hearing his famous address at the Bol'shoi Theater in 1917. Berdiaev's sister-in-law, Evgeniia Rapp, recalled that Belyi arrived at their home one day in ecstasy, exclaiming that he saw *him*, Kerensky: "He spoke . . . [to] a crowd of thousands . . . I saw a ray of light fall on him, I saw the birth of the New Man . . . A true M-A-N."[37] Yet, Kerensky, while probably different from

previous politicians, was not entirely original. His popularity rested not in his novelty but in the fact that in oratory, fantasy, and emotional sensibility he was very much a man of the fin de siècle.

A discussion of the melodramatic imagination, therefore, is pertinent in the context of the Silver Age, capitalism, and late imperial consumer culture, as well as the postrevolutionary period. Melodramatic notions of conflict, human psychology, and morality were in many ways reinforced by new socialist artistic forms and identities. Indeed, in speeches, comrade courts, show trials, communist autobiographies, and cinematic narratives, melodramatic styles and practices endured and, arguably, grew more relevant in 1905–07 and after 1917. Finally, given the transgressive mode of fan letters, melodrama in the Soviet experience is worth examining not only as a means of justifying the regime but also as an alternative moral universe—one that preserved the sensibilities and aesthetics of the fin de siècle, accommodated novel meanings, bypassed, confused, and perhaps even thwarted Bolshevik discourse and institutionalized practices.

Notes

Introduction

1. See, for example, Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Others made similar points about the representation and selling of "reality" in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European cities, though perhaps less directly than Schwartz; see also Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Roshanna P. Sylvester, *Tales of Old Odessa: Crime and Civility in a City of Thieves* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005).
2. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, 10–11, 90–92.
3. I borrow the concept "melodramatic imagination" from Peter Brooks, who understands melodrama as both a genre and meaning-making system that privileges excess, confession, and a Manichaean understanding of inner life. See Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995). In *Petersburg Fin de Siècle*, Mark D. Steinberg argues that the public mood in Russia on the eve of World War I was especially pessimistic, mournful, and dark. Steinberg reads the mass-circulation press and fiction of the period to chart "public experience, public reception, and public representation of the meanings of urban life." Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 6. While his focus is on melancholy, many of his sources are melodramatic in tone and content. Melodrama—as narrative, genre, and meaning system—is acknowledged throughout his book but rarely analyzed in depth. See, for example, ibid., 91, 99, 119–21, 138–41, 146, 152, 157, 172–79, 191–97, 222–23, 256.
4. For example, Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); Beth Holmgren, *Rewriting Capitalism: Literature and the Market in Late Tsarist Russia and the Kingdom of Poland* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998); and Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger, eds., *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Lynn M. Sargeant treats satirical depictions of audiences and female piano students, albeit briefly, in her excellent book on the professionalization of Russian musicians (see later). Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 141–54.
5. James H. Johnson and Michael P. Steinberg have touched on reception, including fan letters, but not systematically. Johnson, *Listening in*

Paris: A Cultural History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), and Steinberg, *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Julie A. Buckler's and Boris Gasparov's books on Russian opera culture (the latter more musicological) discuss reception but do not delve into "lay" responses to music. See Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), and Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Words and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005). Paul Du Quenoy, Olga Haldey, and Lynn Sargeant certainly address reception, but in their work the audience member typically is a professional music critic. Du Quenoy, *Stage Fright: Politics and the Performing Arts in Late Imperial Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009); Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera: The Search for Modernism in Russian Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*.

6. Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*, 5–7.
7. Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette*; Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*; Simon A. Morrison, *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Richard Taruskin's important contributions include *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); and *On Russian Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
8. See Murray Frame's *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia, 1900–1920* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2000), and *School For Citizens: Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); and Inna Naroditskaya, *Bewitching Russian Opera: The Tsarina from State to Stage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
9. See, for example, Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*, esp. 29–81; and Du Quenoy, *Stage Fright*, 170–214.
10. For example, McReynolds, *Russia at Play*; Beth Holmgren, *Starring Madame Modjeska: On Tour in Poland and America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Anna Fishzon, "Confessions of a *Psikhopatka*: Opera Fandom and the Melodramatic Sensibility in *Fin-de-Siècle* Russia," *Russian Review* 71, 1 (2012): 100–21, and "The Operatics of Everyday Life, or, How Authenticity Was Defined in Late Imperial Russia," *Slavic Review* 70, 4 (2011): 795–818.
11. James Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation: Jews and Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 151–59.
12. Following Joan Scott, Michel Foucault, and others, I am employing a concept of politics not limited to "power as it is exercised by and in relation to formal governmental authorities" but one that takes "all unequal relationships as 'political' because involving unequal distributions of power." Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History: Revised Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 26.

13. For example, see Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 359–420; Holmgren, *Rewriting Capitalism*; McReynolds, *Russia at Play*.
14. On the vital role of voluntary associations in the growth of Russia's public sphere, see Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty Is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
15. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 369.
16. McReynolds, *Russia at Play*; McReynolds and Neuberger, eds., *Imitations of Life*.
17. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle*; and Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol, eds., *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 3–17.
18. Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
19. The St. Petersburg liberal daily *Rossiia* reported that the Dresden concert was "a victory for Russian music." Dolina's "electrifying performance," permeated with "pathos and intensity," received "boisterous ovations . . . and was an unprecedented event in peaceful, quiet Dresden. The King of Saxony, normally home by 10 o'clock, stayed until the end . . . and even heard several encores." Sankt-Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi muzei teatral'nogo i muzykal'nogo iskusstva (SPb GTM), photograph division. *Al'bom: "Dolina. Paris 1898."* Press clippings. "Russkoe iskusstvo v Evrope," *Rossiia* No. 12 (April 1899), 4.
20. "Russkaia vokal'naia muzyka v Berline," *Novoe vremia* No. 8304, April 10 (22), 1899, [no page #], in ibid. Eduard Napravnik (1839–1916) completed *Dubrovskii* in 1894. The opera premiered the following year at the Mariinskii Theater in St. Petersburg, where Napravnik conducted from 1863 until his death. The opera *Kordelia*, composed by Nikolai Soloviev (1846–1916), premiered in St. Petersburg in 1885. *The Captive of the Caucasus* (1857–82), composed by César Cui (1835–1918) was produced in 1883.
21. Ibid.
22. "M. I. Gorlenko-Dolina," *Novoe vremia*, January 7 (19), 1895, [no page #], in ibid.
23. On the ways realist performance practices introduced by opera impresario and stage director Savva Mamontov forged notions of selfhood and identity, see Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, esp. 130–70. Haldey presents a wealth of evidence regarding Mamontov's interest in psychological portraits, yet stresses his pioneering modernism and melodramatic flair rather than his realism. I argue that psychological "truth" was increasingly understood in melodramatic terms and therefore agree with Haldey that the non-nationalist, deeply personal, and occasionally stylized "realism" of Mamontov's Private Opera differed considerably from the nineteenth-century realism advocated by Vladimir Stasov, for example.

24. Daniel Cavicchi, "Loving Music: Listeners, Entertainments, and the Origins of Music Fandom in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, ed. Jonathan Gray et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 237. Musical professionalization, a process by which musicians and music journalists established institutions of training, elite status, authoritative discourse, and criteria for inclusion that distinguished professionals from artisans and amateurs, originated in medieval Europe, but gained momentum only in the late eighteenth century, and arguably did not begin in earnest in Russia until the founding of conservatories in the 1860s. On musical professionalization in Imperial Russia, see Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*, esp. 83–217. On the professionalization of actors in Russia, see Frame, *School for Citizens*, 147–71. Peter the Great built the first public theater in Russia in 1701, but opera largely was associated with court life until the nineteenth century, when the theatergoing public broadened and European troupes visited regularly. On the "social geography" of operagoing in the mid-nineteenth century, see Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette*, 12–56. For an account of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theater culture in Russia, see also Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia*, and Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).
25. On the impact of romantic emotionality and understandings of music on modes of listening, see Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, esp. 237–80. On Russian celebrities as carriers of consumerist values, see McReynolds, *Russia at Play*, esp. 113–53. On the commodification of classical music in the United States and concert music fandom, see Cavicchi, "Loving Music," 235–49.
26. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, entertainment and satirical weeklies referred to female opera fans as "*psikhopatki*," or "madwomen," with some frequency between 1901 and 1914. Opera fans were portrayed similarly, though in less gendered ways, in the American press of the same period. Cavicchi, "Loving Music," 237–40.
27. Ibid., 248. On the connection between fan "pathology" and the norms of the market, see ibid., 244–49.
28. Du Quenoy presents dramatic theater, cabaret, ballet, and opera "audiences" as socially diverse but nevertheless coherent collectivities that appeared solely inside theaters and concert halls. He uses press accounts and critics' impressions, primarily from the "serious" journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* (*Theater and Art*), as well as theater memoirs written and published during the Soviet period (but no fan letters), to formulate observations about audience behaviors and attitudes—namely, political noninvolvement. See his *Stage Fright*. My point here is that early twentieth-century opera fans, unlike their counterparts in preceding eras, were publics rather than operagoers or "audiences." In fact, many listened primarily at home, and some never set foot in an opera house or even heard a recording: they simply believed that celebrities like the lyric tenor Leonid Sobinov (1872–1934) were "extraordinary" role

models and objects of desire, and hungrily followed the lives, scandals, and tours of famous singers in newspapers and less expensive entertainment weeklies like *Rampa i zhizn'* (*Footlights and Life*). Rather than read press descriptions of spectator tastes and comportment as indices of reality, as du Quenoy sometimes does, I treat them as expressions of music journalists' values and always implicit, if not overt, didactic texts. Critics' analyses of musical proclivities and viewing modes often were meant to encourage a particular approach to theatergoing and shape the relationship between listeners and music, spectators and performers.

29. See Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*.
30. See Alfred Rieber's classic study, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); and Thomas C. Owen, "Impediments to a Bourgeois Consciousness in Russia, 1880–1905: The Estate Structure, Ethnic Diversity, and Economic Regionalism," in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia,* ed. Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 75–89. For sympathetic depictions of merchants as liberal industrialists and patrons of culture, see for example, Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); James L. West and Iurii L. Petrov, eds., *Merchant Moscow: Images of Russia's Vanished Bourgeoisie* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); John E. Bowlt, "The Moscow Art Market" and William Craft Brumfield, "Building the Bourgeoisie: The Quest for a Modern Style in Russian Architecture," in *Between Tsar and People*, ed. Clowes, et al., 108–28, 308–24.
31. Nicolas Spulber, *Russia's Economic Transitions: From Late Tsarism to the New Millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.
32. On the history of *sosloviia* as legal categories, see Gregory Freeze, "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 11–36. For a view of Russian social stratification and identities more broadly defined, see Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997).
33. For example, McReynolds, *Russia at Play*; Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917.* First Edition (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003); and Daniel R. Brower, "The Penny Press and Its Readers," in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia,* ed. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). Scholars writing on fin-de-siècle Russia repeatedly assume the boulevard to be a mixture of the high and low, commercial and avant-garde culture. Yet, they also continually draw a boundary between the aims of the Russian "intelligentsia," who put forward a critique of boulevard culture, and those of its middle-class creators, more concerned with profits than the enlightenment and moral welfare of Russia's lower classes. I argue that the distinction between the critics and producers

was far from clear, particularly if we look at the promoters and patrons of music and the performing arts. For example, see Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, 359–420. Also see Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 156–229.

34. In his famous analysis of biographies in American popular magazines, Leo Lowenthal noted a significant shift in emphasis between 1901 and 1941. Earlier in this period the subjects of the biographies were "idols of production"—people celebrated for their achievement, social productivity, and advancement through hard work. In later years, they were "idols of consumption . . . stemming predominantly from the sphere of consumption and organized leisure time." Idols of consumption were entertainers or athletes whose "private" lives, appropriately, were devoted to consuming rather than "serving the basic needs of society." Stars belonging to the world of entertainment, according to Lowenthal, were models for average people who imitated their fashions and hobbies. The appearance of "idols of consumption" suggests a shift in economic imperatives—from production to consumption—but the categories offered by Lowenthal are too neat. Entertainers, at least in capitalist Russia, were recognized for philanthropic, "socially useful" work as well as their leisure pursuits and spending habits. Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols," in *Literature, Popular Culture and Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1961), 115, 121.
35. By "revolutionary politics" I mean not the political history of the revolution, or politics in the strict sense of actions and events, but *political culture* as defined by Lynn Hunt: "common values, shared expectations . . . [and] implicit rules that expressed and shaped collective intentions and actions." Hunt elaborates: "Revolutionary political culture cannot be deduced from social structures, social conflicts, or the social identities of revolutionaries. Political practices were not . . . the expression of 'underlying' economic and social interests. Through languages, images, and daily political activities," and, I would add, affects, revolutionaries constituted new social identities, interests, and relations. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 10, 12.
36. For instance, there are 30 or so letters in Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI), f. 912 (personal fond of Fedor Ivanovich Shaliapin), op. 4, d. 258 (letters from spectators to Shaliapin, F. I., 1901–1934); and about eight in Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (RNB), f. 275 (personal fond of Ivan Vasil'evich Ershov), op. 1.

1 Entrepreneurs and the Public Mission of the Russian Private Opera

1. Mark (Mordochai) Antokol'skii (1843–1902) and Vasilii Polenov (1844–1927) championed the ideals of the "Itinerants," or *Peredvizhniki*, a group of artists who seceded from the Academy of Arts in 1863,

rejecting neoclassicism and romanticism in favor of realist painting. The Itinerants traveled to the countryside to exhibit their work and cultivate a love for art among "the people." Their adherents believed that the function of art was to engage and elucidate social and moral problems. On the ethos of the Itinerants and aesthetics of Russian critical realism more broadly, see Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art, the State, and Society: The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), esp. 3–48. Adrian Prakhov, like the artists, was in Rome on an academic scholarship. In 1878 Antokol'skii was awarded the Grand Prize at the Paris World Exposition, and enjoyed international renown for his sculptures of Christ and Russian historical figures. Polenov made his most significant mark as a landscape painter, using plein air techniques to convey emotional states and the lyricism of the Russian countryside. Prakhov devoted himself to the restoration of medieval art and architecture when he returned to Russia and completed his studies.

2. RGALI f. 799 (personal fond of Savva Ivanovich Mamontov), op. 2, d. 4 (reminiscences of P. N. Mamontov), l. 58. Elizaveta Mamontova's memoir is included in P. N. Mamontov's reminiscences of his uncle Savva Mamontov. The original is located in RGALI f. 799, op. 1, d. 312 (personal fond of Elizaveta Grigor'evna Mamontova).
3. Mikhail Mikhailovich Ivanov (1849–1927) wrote concert and opera reviews for *Novoe vremia* (*New Times*) in the early 1900s, receiving more recognition for his music criticism than his compositions. Ivanov's namesake, the composer and renowned opera conductor Mikhail Mikhailovich Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859–1935), added the hyphenated forename Ippolitov so as not to be confused with his contemporary.
4. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, l. 60.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., l. 62.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., l. 63.
9. I am relying here on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical self as an "I" forged in dialogue with others, or in the social realm. The dialogical self is not a singular and unified Cartesian self but rather a multiplicity of selves. It is experienced as a collection of independent "I" positions interacting with each other or with imagined and real others. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 79–80. At the fin de siècle, the dialogical, decentered model of selfhood coexisted in tension with an understanding of the self as autonomous and indivisible.
10. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 63–64.
11. Letters from Savva Ivanovich Mamontov to Elizaveta Grigor'evna Mamontova, January 6, 1873, and January 26, 1873, ibid., ll. 64–68.
12. Ibid., l. 66.
13. Ibid., l. 87.
14. Though Liza did not return to Rome in the fall of 1874, she did not share Polenov's disillusionment with Italy. Recalling his visit to Abramtsevo

in September of 1873, she wrote: "Vasilii [Polenov] spoke enthusiastically about the North, about the Viatka River, about the Russian village and landscape, and cursed the South and Italy. We argued mightily and the more we defended Italy, the more he cursed it. He planned to go to Paris in the winter to work with Repin." Ibid., l. 84. On the life and work of Il'ia Repin (1844–1930), see Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *Ilya Repin and the World of Russian Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

15. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, l. 87.
16. Letter from Elizaveta Mamontova to Savva Mamontov, January 15, 1873, ibid., l. 65.
17. In Haldey's study of Mamontov, a mere few lines and footnotes are devoted to Liza, primarily to contrast her interest in neonationalism to Savva's appetite for "modernism" and to explain Savva's eventual abandonment of the Abramtsevo workshops to her. Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 299. Also, for example, see Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *Valentin Serov: Portraits of Russia's Silver Age* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 37–39; Wendy R. Salmond, *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21–27; and Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863–1922* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1998), 11–13.
18. Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, 37–39.
19. Ibid., 38. Serov wrote to his fiancée, Ol'ga Trubnikova, in February-March 1885: "Here at the Mamontovs there is much praying and fasting, that is, Elizaveta Grigorievna and the children with her…I do not understand all these ceremonies…feel foolish in church…I do not know how to pray; that's really not possible when one has absolutely no notion of God." Cited in ibid., 39.
20. Ibid. Bruce Lincoln described Mamontova as a "quiet, pious, and plain…woman of indomitable spirit" who shared with her husband "an interest in art, music, literature, and the beauties of the Russian countryside," adding that "a love for the people belonged especially to her." W. Bruce Lincoln, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of a Thousand Years of Russian Art* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998), 232.
21. In most English-language studies of merchant art patrons, Mamontov's commitments at Abramtsevo and productions of Russian operas receive far more attention than his promotion of modernism or the Italian repertoire; consequently, Valkenier states, he appears as a "cultural Slavophile," while the "wide-ranging scope of his ideas and endeavors is overlooked." As a corrective to this mischaracterization, Valkenier attributes the Mamontov folk art revival ventures almost exclusively to Liza, noting that, "despite their shared enthusiasms for culture and creativity, husband and wife differed profoundly in their personalities and interests." Unlike Elizaveta Grigor'evna, Savva was an agnostic "cosmopolitan, embracing Russian and Western elements." Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, 37–38.
22. Valentina Bergman Serova (1849–1924), widow of the composer Aleksandr Serov (1820–71), completed the last act of her husband's third

opera, *The Power of Evil* (*Vrazh'ia sila*, 1871), with the help of Nikolai Solov'ev. Already an accomplished pianist, Serova then began composing operas of her own. The first, *Uriel Acosta*, premiered at the Bol'shoi Theater on April 15, 1885; her third opera, *Il'ia Muromets*, was staged at the Moscow Private Opera in 1899 with Shaliapin in the title role. The manuscripts of her second and fourth operas have been lost. For an account of Serova's life and work, including her political views and activities, see Valentina Serova, *Kak ros moi syn*, ed. Il'ia S. Zil'bershtein (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1968), 15–50. See also Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, 6–19.

23. Letters from E. G. Mamontova to S. I. Mamontov, January 15, 1874, and January 19, 1874, in RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 91–92.
24. Ibid., ll. 88–89.
25. Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, 37.
26. In her memoir, Mamontova noted celebrations of Orthodox holidays such as Christmas and Easter but focused on their social rather than religious aspects, particularly activities around food and alcohol. She wrote about the winter of 1872–73, for example: "Time flew by, and Christmas suddenly arrived. We set up the tree with the children and had as much fun as they did. We wanted to put on a play, but Ekaterina Alekseevna got sick. The New Year was greeted at our place. There was no end to the speeches, toasts, and well-wishing that night. We drank to Russia, to art, to friendship, and on and on. By that time, we did not call our close circle anything but a 'family.'" RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, l. 64.
27. For a detailed history of Mamontov's opera enterprises and influential directorial work, as well as a masterful account of the modernist strains in his aesthetic outlook, see Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*.
28. Letter from Savva Mamontov to César Cui, 1898, RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 108–9. Located on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka in Moscow, the newly built Solodovnikov Theater became the home of the Moscow Private Opera in 1896 and later housed the Zimin Opera. Mamontov rented the building from the merchant G. G. Solodovnikov.
29. Letter from César Cui to Savva Mamontov, January 23, 1899, in ibid., l. 110.
30. Ibid., ll. 109–10. In December of 1886, Aleksandr Dargomyzhskii's *The Stone Guest* (1872) premiered at the Moscow Private Opera. Korovin's beautiful sets, a strong cast, and critical acclaim did not overcome the public's apparent indifference to Dargomyzhskii's idiom (the entire opera is sung in mezzo-recitative, with the orchestra subordinate to the voice). After three performances in a nearly empty house, the heartbroken Mamontov decided to cancel the run. Later he wrote to Stasov, a fellow champion of Dargomyzhskii: "You of course are interested to know how the public reacted to the production. Simply: not at all. Everyone who attended left pleased, but the majority of the public did not pay it any mind, and that was that. Even today, there are those who get choked up when exultantly reminiscing about that production, but they are so few in number that it hurts even to talk about

it." Letter from Savva Mamontov to Vladimir Stasov, [no date], ibid., l. 107.

31. While Russian scholars tend to place Mamontov in the realist or nationalist camp, the musicologist Olga Haldey links the Private Opera to modernist aesthetics and the operational principles of the Ballets Russes. What she sometimes understates is the complex composition and eclecticism of the "modernists," as well as the undiminished importance and evolving understanding of the "realist" tradition in Russian early-twentieth-century theater arts. Olga Haldey, "Savva Mamontov, Serge Diaghilev, and the Rocky Path to Modernism," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, 4 (2005): 566–67. Also see Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 35–129. I contend that Mamontov's "realism"—his desire to present opera as drama—implicitly rested on a melodramatic conception of the real or authentic and was hostile to naturalism.
32. For accounts of Mamontov's many talents and hobbies, see the biographical studies of Mark Kopshitser, *Savva Mamontov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), and Evgeny Arenzon, *Savva Mamontov* (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1995). Also see Vera Rossikhina, *Opernyi teatr S. Mamontova* (Moscow: Muzyka, 1985), esp. 15–62.
33. Sergei Rachmaninov, the assistant conductor of the Private Opera during the 1897–98 season, called Mamontov a "born stage director." Rachmaninov, *Literaturnoe nasledie* vol. 1 (Moscow: Muzyka, 1976), 55. On Mamontov's personal and professional influence, see the reminiscences of soprano Nadezhda Salina, *Zhizn' i stsena* (Leningrad: Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1941), 11–19, 56–78. Salina sang with Mamontov's first company from 1885 to 1887 and at the Bol'shoi Theater from 1887 to 1908. Also see the memoir of the singer and renowned stage director Vasilii Shkafer (1867–1937), *Sorok let na stsene russkoi opery: vospominaniia, 1890–1930* (Leningrad: Teatr opery i baleta imeni S. M. Kirova, 1936). Trained by Mamontov, Shkafer left the Private Opera to become a stage director at the Bol'shoi Theater (1904–24) and ended his career as chief stage director and artistic director of the Leningrad State Opera and Ballet. For other accounts of Mamontov's mentorship of singers, see Fedor Shaliapin, *Maska i dusha* (Minsk: Sovremennyi literator, 1999); and his nephew Platon Mamontov's reminiscences, preserved in RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4.
34. Savva's nephew and acolyte Platon Mamontov, for example, edited the weekly entertainment magazine *Russkii artist* (*Russian Artist*). Nikolai Riabushinskii (1875–1961), a scion of prominent Moscow textile manufacturers and bankers, published the extravagant Symbolist magazine *Zolotoe runo* (*Golden Fleece*); and Savva's son, Sergei Mamontov (1867–1915) wrote music criticism under the pseudonym Matov for *Novosti dnia (News of the Day)*.
35. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 129–33.
36. In making this claim, I draw on film scholar Richard Dyer's analysis of Hollywood stars. Dyer contends that film stars express ideas of personhood "in large measure shoring up the notion of the individual but also at times registering the doubts and anxieties attendant on it." The star,

after all, is more than just an onscreen image. "A series of shots of a star whose image has changed . . . at various points in her career could work to fragment her, to present her as nothing but a series of disconnected looks; but in practice it works to confirm that beneath all these different looks there is a . . . core [namely, a flesh and blood person] that gives all those looks a unity." Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 10.

37. Sergei I. Zimin, ed., *Istoriia chastnoi opery v Rossii* (1914), in RGALI f. 746 (personal fond of Sergei Ivanovich Zimin), op. 1, d. 213 (Mockup of an unpublished book about the history of private opera in Russia edited by Zimin, Sergei Ivanovich). Publication of the book likely was precluded by the outbreak of World War I.
38. Nikolai P. Kochetov, "Materialy dlia istorii chastnoi opery," ibid., l. 8. Kochetov edited and contributed to *Artist* (1889–95), a thick journal devoted to theater, music, and art. His opera *A Terrible Vengeance*, based on Nikolai Gogol's tale, premiered at the Moscow Private Opera on January 15, 1903, owing to the support of the company's principal conductor, Ippolitov-Ivanov. Il'ia Muromets is the mythical folk hero of numerous *byliny*, or epic poems. A peasant knight who defended Rus' from Tatar invasion, he is the embodiment of Russianness in Slavophile discussions of national character.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid. For an account of serf theaters and less than flattering portrayals of the nobles who ran them, see Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).
41. Ibid. Kochetov, "Materialy dlia istorii chastnoi opery," RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, l. 8; Pavel Tret'iakov (1832–98) amassed an impressive collection of Russian realist art and donated it the city of Moscow in 1892. Ivan Tsvetkov was on the governing board of the Tret'iakov Gallery after Pavel's death. The textile magnate Koz'ma Soldatenkov (1829–89) was also a publisher of books on culture and science, as well as an active member of the Society of Lovers of Art, founded in 1860. Consisting of patrons and artists, the society attempted to bring art to the people through permanent exhibitions, art competitions, and raffles. Its membership included other prominent entrepreneurs and patrons like Pavel Tret'iakov and his brother Sergei, the Morozovs, and Dmitrii Botkin. Konstantin Alekseev-Stanislavskii, cofounder of the Moscow Art Theater, was born into one of the elite merchant families of Moscow. On the influence of Tret'iakov and other merchant-entrepreneur patrons on Russian art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see John O. Norman, "Pavel Tretiakov and Merchant Art Patronage, 1850–1900," and John E. Bowlt, "The Moscow Art Market," in *Between Tsar and People*, ed. Edith W. Clowes, et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 93–107 and 108–28; also see Aleksandr N. Bokhanov, *Kollektsionery i metsenaty v Rossii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).
42. RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, l. 8.

43. For more examples of the use of *rutina* in the theater discourse of the period, see Murray Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia, 1900–1920* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2000), 45; and E. Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 54.
44. RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 32–33. Rimskii-Korsakov's *The Noblewoman Vera Sheloga* (1898) premiered at the Bol'shoi Theater as the prologue to his three-act opera *Maid of Pskov* on November 10, 1901. The dramatic soprano Mariia A. Deisha-Sionitskaia (1859–1932) sang at the Mariinskii Theater from 1883 to 1891 and then at the Bol'shoi Theater until 1908. She debuted at the Bol'shoi as Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and was associated with the dramatic roles of the Russian repertoire.
45. Ibid., l. 33.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid. The mezzo-soprano Vera Petrova-Zvantseva (1876–1944) sang at the Moscow Private Opera between 1899 and 1904, and at the Zimin Opera from 1904 to 1917. She was best known for her Carmen, Delilah, and Charlotte. Trained by Mamontov, Elena Tsvetkova (1872–1929) received critical acclaim for her interpretations of Rimskii-Korsakov's soprano roles, particularly Snegurochka (The Snow Maiden).
49. Shaliapin (1873–1938) was employed at the Mariinskii Theater when Mamontov invited him in the summer of 1896 to sing with the Moscow Private Opera in Nizhnii Novgorod during the All-Russian Trade, Industry, and Arts Fair. The young bass showed promise, and in the fall, when it was time for Shaliapin to return to St. Petersburg and begin rehearsals at the state theater, Mamontov asked him to join his company for its first season in Moscow. Shaliapin hesitated, unwilling to leave his lover, ballerina Iola Tornaghi, and reluctant to pay a forfeit to the Imperial Theater. Mamontov settled the matter quickly: he offered a three-year contract of 7,200 rubles a year (Shaliapin had been offered 300 rubles a month at the Mariinskii), agreed to pay half the forfeit of 7,200 to the Mariinskii, brought Tornaghi to Moscow, and promised Shaliapin attractive bass roles he was not given at the Imperial Theater – Susanin, Mephistopheles, and Ivan the Terrible. The Mariinskii contract was annulled and Shaliapin debuted at the Moscow Private Opera on September 22, 1896, in *A Life for the Tsar.* For Shaliapin's account of his negotiations with Mamontov and the Mariinskii Theater, see Fedor Shaliapin and Maxim Gorky, *Chaliapin: An Autobiography as Told by Maxim Gorky*, ed. and trans. Nina Froud and James Hanley (New York: Stein and Day, 1967), 123–27.
50. Shaliapin, *Maska i dusha*, 59–65.
51. RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, l. 33. Shaliapin left the Private Opera in 1899 and signed a contract with the Bol'shoi Theater, where he continued to appear until 1920. His first performance outside Russia was at La Scala in Milan in 1901 as Mefistofele (Arrigo Boito). Early success in Russia and abroad led to extended engagements in Monte Carlo, New York,

London, and Paris. Shaliapin created the title role in Jules Massenet's *Don Quichotte* and Salieri in Rimskii-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*.

52. In 1892 the Association of Opera Artists (Tovarishchestvo opernykh artistov), a troupe founded in 1889, moved from Kiev to Moscow, where it lasted only one season. The de facto manager and stage director of this collective enterprise was Ippolit Prianishnikov (1847–1921), a dramatic baritone known for his powerful voice, soft timber, and "realist" approach to acting.
53. RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, l. 33.
54. Ibid.
55. On the internal motivation and expressiveness of Mamontov's characters, as well as their emotional intensity (understood as psychological truth), see Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 152–57,166–70, 188.
56. Some historians have emphasized the increasing porousness of the legal estate structure, which by the late imperial period could not accommodate the new urban occupations, "middle-group" identities, and a rapidly growing consumer economy. For example, see Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997).
57. For example, see Michael Confino, "On Intellectuals and Intellectual Traditions in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Russia," *Daedalus* (Spring, 1972), 117–49; Aleksander Gella, "A Structural Definition of the Intelligentsia against the Background of Three Historical Periods," in *The Mythmakers: Intellectuals and the Intelligentsia in Perspective*, ed. Raj P. Mohan (New York: Praeger, 1987), 21–31; Abbott Gleason, *Young Russia: The Genesis of Russian Radicalism in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Martin Malia, "What Is the Intelligentsia?" in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1–18; Vladimir C. Nahirny, *The Russian Intelligentsia: From Torment to Silence* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1983); and more recently, Susan K. Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
58. For example, Louise McReynolds refers to the bulk of the "cultural elite" as the intelligentsia, who "through successive generations" exercised cultural hegemony and "enjoyed status as a social category . . . entrance to [which] was based on political attitudes rather than economic or family status." The intelligentsia was the principal source of high art and the essential referent for all criticism of capitalism and commercial culture in Russia: "Fetishizing Russia's highbrow culture, the intelligentsia provided both a frame of political reference and a common stock of symbols that influenced subsequent generations . . . Its members came to dominate as the lead characters in a master narrative that has only recently begun to incorporate interpretations of culture that compete with theirs." McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 7–8.
59. R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvenoi mysli*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1911), 3–24.

60. Dmitrii N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, *Istoriia russkoi intelligentsii*, 3 vols., in *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, 1909–11), v. In another work published in 1910, Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii insisted that "intelligentsia" was not coterminous with "intellectuals" or the "educated class." Rather, it was a "thinking stratum specifically with a rationalist outlook and moral civic consciousness." Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, "Psikhologiia russkoi intelligentsii," in *Intelligentsiia v Rossii/Vekhi: Sborniki statiei 1909–1910* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1991), 382.
61. Mikhail I. Tugan-Baranovskii, "Intelligentsiia i sotsializm," in *Intelligentsiia v Rossii/Vekhi*, 419.
62. Ibid., 430–31.
63. Mamontov was not indifferent to the solvency of the private opera, certainly, but he viewed his company largely as an experimental, "studio theater" rather than a commercial enterprise. He incurred deficits or just broke even most seasons. See Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 265–74.
64. In his memoirs, Zimin recounts borrowing large sums of money from his family to keep the company afloat and repeatedly calls his opera a labor of love. The unimpressive profits were due mainly to competition from the Bol'shoi opera and other private institutions, the high costs of his lavish productions, and the generous salaries paid to celebrity singers, set designers, and conductors. Gosudarstvennyi tsentral'nyi teatral'nyi muzei imeni A. A. Bakhrushina (GTSTMB), manuscript division f. 104 (personal fond of Sergei Ivanovich Zimin), d. 30 (reminiscences, autobiography).
65. McReynolds, *Russia at Play*, 9.
66. In *Stage Fright*, a study of the performing arts in late imperial Russia, Paul Du Quenoy argues that neither middle-class impresarios nor theater audiences were politically engaged at the turn of the twentieth century. But because Du Quenoy's understanding of politics is confined to Duma participation, radical opinion, and overt revolutionary activity, his intervention misses an opportunity to describe and analyze the power struggles actually in evidence: the contests for institutional and discursive dominance among variously allied impresarios, entrepreneurs, newly minted music professionals, and journalists seeking to implement their vision of enlightenment and to define the nation. Du Quenoy also ignores the ways aesthetics informed revolutionary politics and does not acknowledge political culture as an important field of inquiry—behaviors, affective sensibilities, aesthetic practices, and symbols transmitted aurally, visually, and textually, whether its carriers knew it or not. Du Quenoy, *Stage Fright: Politics and the Performing Arts in Late Imperial Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), esp. 1–15, 137–214, 243–65.
67. Edith W. Clowes, "Social Discourse in the Moscow Art Theater," in *Between Tsar and People*, 286–87.
68. Mikhail. M. Ippolitov-Ivanov, "Vmesto predisloviia," in *Istoriia chastnoi opery v Rossii*, ed. S. I. Zimin (1914), RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 2–3.
69. See RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 129–33; and Frame, *School for Citizens*.
70. Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, 23–24.

71. Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 156; RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, ll. 142–43.
72. Letter from Savva Mamontov to Vasilii Shkafer, fall 1899, RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 23. Cited in Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 156–57.
73. Letter from Savva Mamontov to Vasilii Shkafer, November 1899, RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 23. Cited in ibid., 157. The soprano Zabela-Vrubel' was not amenable to Mamontov's "acting out," finding it "embarrassing" and "unacceptable." Ibid., 161.
74. Ibid., 157.
75. Ibid., 175–76.
76. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, l. 143.
77. Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 177.
78. Rachmaninov, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Tsvetkova, Vasnetsov, and Nikolai Roerich, for example, were employed both by Mamontov and Zimin. On changes in repertoire and recruitment of artists from the World of Art group (Léon Bakst, Aleksandr Benois, Mikhail Fokin, Aleksandr Golovin, Rachmaninov, and others) at the Imperial Theaters after the appointment of Director Vladimir A. Teliakovskii, see Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters*, 44–59. On Mamontov's influence on the Imperial Theaters and Vsevolod Meyerhold, see Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 177, 193.
79. Haldey, "Savva Mamontov, Serge Diaghilev, and the Rocky Path to Modernism," 561. Art historian Camilla Gray observed that with the "use of painters, rather than traditional artisans, to paint sets, the idea of realistic décor was born" and pointed to the "direct influence" of such methods on west Europe. Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art*, 23.
80. RGALI f. 799, op. 2, d. 4, l. 143.
81. Ippolitov-Ivanov, "Vmesto predisloviia," in RGALI f. 746, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 2–3.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., l. 4.
84. Ippolitov-Ivanov hints at the breadth of Zimin's repertoire, stating in his preface that "the achievements of private opera companies are not limited to new productions of Russian operas. In addition to Shaliapin, these enterprises cultivated a large number of formidable artistic talents of which we can be proud." Ibid., l. 3. The 1914–15 season at the Zimin Opera, for example, featured Russian works like *The Demon* (Rubinstein), *Khovanshchina* (Mussorgsky), *Eugene Onegin*, *Mazeppa, Pikovaia dama*, *The Enchantress* (Tchaikovsky), and *The Mandarin's Son* (Cui); but the season also included popular Italian and French operas such as *Barber of Seville* (Rossini), *The Huguenots* (Meyerbeer), and *Lakme* (Delibes). The works of Verdi (*Otello, Aida, Un Ballo in Maschera, Rigoletto, La Traviata*) and Puccini (*Tosca, La Fanciulla del West, Madame Butterfly*) were staples, and evening performances of *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Madame Butterfly* were among the most profitable of the season. GTSTMB, manuscript division f. 104, d. 26 (records of the Zimin Opera repertoire and profits, 1914–1916).
85. Letter from "Zhenshchina" to Ivan Ershov [no date], Xenia Krivocheine (Ershov family) private archive, Paris.

2 Russia's New Celebrities: Offstage Narrative and Performance

1. RGALI f. 912 (personal fond of Fedor Ivanovich Shaliapin), op. 4, d. 258 (letters from spectators to Shaliapin, 1901–1934), l. 11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., l. 12. Fan letter writing and religiosity were not mutually exclusive in the late nineteenth century. On the celebrity status of Father John of Kronstadt, see Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), esp. 151–96.
4. Ibid.
5. By "image" here I mean, following Richard Dyer, a "complex configuration of visual, verbal, and aural signs." The image is generated by various media texts and the body of the celebrity, and often has explicit narrative content. Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 32.
6. Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 18.
7. Ibid., 18–19.
8. Ibid., 13.
9. Similar points have been made in relation to celebrities in Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); and Roshanna P. Sylvester, *Tales of Old Odessa: Crime and Civility in a City of Thieves* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), esp. 106–28.
10. On the marketing of Nicholas II, see Richard Wortman, "Publicizing the Imperial Image in 1913," in *Self and Story in Russian History*, ed. Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 94–119; Boris Kolonitskii, "'We' and 'I': Alexander Kerensky in His Speeches," in *Autobiographical Practices in Russia / Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland*, ed. Jochen Hellbeck and Klaus Heller (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2004), 179–96.
11. Arkadii Irisov, "Kul'turnyi chelovek: samaia obyknovennaia istoriia," *Budil'nik* 43 (1910): 9.
12. Ibid. Mephistopheles's aria, or Song of the Golden Calf is from Charles Gounod's *Faust*, act 2, scene 3.
13. Arkadii Irisov, "Kul'turnyi chelovek: samaia obyknovennaia istoriia," *Budil'nik* 43 (1910): 9.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. *Rampa i zhizn'* 26 (1913): 6.
18. For example, *Rampa i zhizn'* reported that "on January 30, Dr. Mikhailov administered two injections of phosphorus. The room in which the artist is located has been filled with oxygen to facilitate the patient's breathing. Hopes for improvement in Vial'tseva's condition have utterly collapsed. Despite terrible weakness, Vial'tseva does not sleep. Last night her temperature—37 degrees; pulse—127. Doctors do not leave the patient's bedside." *Rampa i zhizn'* 5 (1913): 12.

19. Louise McReynolds, too, has argued that as fandom was redefined in Russia it "became increasingly associated with the values implicit in consumption." McReynolds, "'The Incomparable' Anastasiia Vial'tseva and the Culture of Personality," in *Russia. Women. Culture*, ed. Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 280–81. For contrasting views of the extent to which the advertising industry, commercialized leisure, and mass retailing undermined tsarist social hierarchies and introduced new aspirational values, see Marjorie L. Hilton, *Selling to the Masses: Retailing in Russia, 1880–1930* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 14–172; Christine Ruane, *The Empire's New Clothes: A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 87–182; and Sally West, *I Shop in Moscow: Advertising and the Creation of Consumer Culture in Late Tsarist Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011).
20. As Robert Goldman and Stephan Papson note, citing John Berger, "Advertisements are always commodity narratives…'The spectator-buyer is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself.' Consumer ads typically tell stories of success, happiness, and social fulfillment in the lives of the people who consume the right brands." Goldman and Papson, "Advertising in the Age of Accelerated Meaning," in *The Consumer Society Reader*, ed. Juliet B. Schor and Douglas B. Holt (New York: New Press, 2000), 82.
21. Ibid.
22. Sankt Peterburgskii gosudarstvennyi teatral'nyi muzei (SPb GTM), photograph division. *Chto govorit artisticheskii mir?* Izdaniia akts. obshchestva "Min'on," S-Peterburg, 1913 [no page #]. Publicists and other sloganeers, like the advertisers of Mignon, often effected reification by invoking "pleasure" and "escape," which they linked to their products via celebrities and theatergoing. Impresarios and journalists who construed opera as a pedagogical tool that aided in personal growth and enlightenment objected to the commercialization of high art and rejected the notion that operagoing was escapist.
23. Ibid.
24. The meaning of "high culture" was not uncontested and will be discussed later.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. SPb GTM, photograph division. *Nashi artistki o parfiumerii t-va parfiumernoi fabriki provizora A. M. Ostroumova*. Izdaniia t-va parfiumernoi fabriki provizora A. M. Ostroumova. Moskva, 1912.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. The theater manager Nikolai Bogoliubov recounted that "the audience at the Wagner subscriptions was quite special. It was then considered a sign of bon ton (although many were bored) to be a Wagnerite and

sit without an interval for an hour and forty minutes as it was with *Götterdämmerung*. Black tie, dinner jackets, ball gowns, and the finest fragrance of Paris perfume—these were the external signs by which one immediately could tell without even hearing any music that one was at one of the Wagner performances. It was fashionable." Nikolai N. Bogoliubov, *Shest'desiat let v opernom teatre* (Moscow: Vseros. teatr. o-vo, 1967), 157. Cited in Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 107.

32. For example see Abram Gozenpud, *Ivan Ershov: Zhizn' i stsenicheskaia deiatel'nost' i issledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Kompozitor, 1999).
33. Much to the chagrin of Moscow's Wagnerian journalists, the Bol'shoi Theater embraced Wagner at a more sluggish pace than the Mariinskii Theater, and the public of the former never sustained the level of fascination maintained by the latter. In 1913, a year in which the capitals of Europe celebrated the centennial of Wagner's birth, a Moscow critic writing under the pseudonym "Siegmund" lamented his city's virtual indifference to the anniversary. In the article "Wagner's Anniversary and 'Us,'" he complained that he found no evidence of plans for a celebration, and worse, *Götterdämmerung* and *Siegfried* had disappeared from the Bol'shoi's repertoire. *Rampa i zhizn'* 19 (1913): 5–6. During the 1912–13 season, seven Wagner operas were performed twenty-seven times at the Mariinskii, while at the Bol'shoi only three Wagner operas received eleven performances.
34. Bartlett explains the Russian public's sudden infatuation with Wagner in much the same way that Nikolai Kashkin, Eduard Stark, and other early-twentieth-century Wagnerian music critics did in articles and later in memoirs. Like them, she assumes that once the Imperial Theater directorate warmed up to the German repertoire and Wagner was performed more often, operagoers naturally gravitated to his work. In other words, through mere exposure to the composer's works the ears of Russian audiences grew more sophisticated, enabling them to better process complex music and inevitably to recognize Wagner's superiority to Verdi and his ilk. *Wagner and Russia*, 36–116.
35. RNB f. 275 (personal fond of Ivan Vasil'evich Ershov), op. 1, d. 55 (letter from Vladimir Karlovich Zhuk to Ivan Vasil'evich Ershov), l. 1.
36. Gozenpud, *Ivan Ershov*, 109–23.
37. Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 109–10.
38. RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 117 (articles, reviews, and reminiscences about I. V. Ershov published in various newspapers), l. 2. Eduard Stark (pseud. Siegfried), "I. V. Ershov," *Sankt-Peterburgskiia vedomosti* No. 44, February 22/March 5, 1905, 2.
39. RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 116 (articles and reviews by various authors about I. V. Ershov), l. 7. "Teatry—Ershov," *Utro Rossii* December 4, 1916, [no page #].
40. RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 68 (letter from Mariia Sergeevna Platonova, daughter of the academic S. F. Platonov, to Ershov), ll. 1–2.

41. For example, see RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 1–2.
42. RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 117, l. 1. Stark, "I. V. Ershov," *Sankt-Peterburgskiia vedomosti* No. 44, February 22/March 5, 1905, 2.
43. RGALI f. 898 (personal fond of Nikolai Nikolaevich Figner), op.1, d. 11, *25 let slavy v opere: k proshchal'nomu benefisu N. N. Fignera* (brochure), ll. 20–21.
44. Ibid., ll. 17–22.
45. Ibid., l. 25.
46. For more examples of success stories bearing such features, see discussions of the biographical accounts and interviews of actresses Polina Strepetova and Vera Kommissarzhevskaia in Catherine A. Schuler, *Women in Russian Theater: The Actress in the Silver Age* (London: Routledge, 1996), 90–109, 155–88; on similarly structured autobiographies of contralto Dariia Leonova and operetta diva Aleksandra Smolina, see Julie A. Buckler, *Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 204–10; and on the rags-to-riches narratives of wrestler Ivan Poddubnyi and actress Mariia Savina, see McReynolds, *Russia at Play*, 113–53. Perhaps the most popular fictional rise-to-fame tale circulating in late tsarist Russia was that of the Isadora Duncanesque heroine Mania in Anastasiia Verbitskaia's novel *Keys to Happiness* (1909–13).
47. McReynolds, *Russia at Play*, 114.
48. Warren Susman, " 'Personality' and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 271–86.
49. Ibid., 280.
50. "Levaia noga g. Shaliapina," *Budil'nik* 42 (1910): 3.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid. Emphasis added.
53. For accounts of such incidents, see Victor Borovsky, *Chaliapin: A Critical Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 349–63, 35; Paul Du Quenoy, *Stage Fright: Politics and the Performing Arts in Late Imperial Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 109; and Vladimir Teliakovskii, *Vospominaniia* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1965), 393–406.
54. Nikolai Gogol, "The Nose," in *Nikolai Gogol Plays and Petersburg Tales*, trans. Christopher English (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 43.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 48.
57. Ibid., 60.
58. Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 119–22.
59. Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 44.
60. Richard Dyer, citing Elizabeth Burns, explains that theatricality, or "the analogy between life and drama or theater has been in use from Plato onwards. However, where in earlier times the analogy derived from 'a view of life directed by God, Providence or some less anthropomorphic

spiritual force,' current usage derives from 'a growing awareness of the way in which people compose their own characters, contribute to situations and design settings.'" Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 20–21

61. Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality* (London, 1972), 11. Cited in ibid., 21.
62. Ibid.
63. William Mills Todd III, *Fiction in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narratives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 33.
64. Ibid., 34.
65. Ibid., 33–34. In making his argument, Todd relies heavily on the approach and claims of semiotician Iurii Lotman in his studies of theatricality among the early-nineteenth-century Russian gentry. For example, see Iurii M. Lotman, "Teatr i teatral'nost' v stroe kul'tury nachala XIX veka," in *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Tallin: Aleksandra, 1992), 269–86.
66. See Martin Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 3–50; also see Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 1–178.
67. N. Shubuev, "Iz dnevnika veselago teatrala," *Budil'nik* 34 (1909): 6.
68. "Opernyi gastroler (eskiz iz natury)," *Budil'nik* 7 (1909): 7.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. A. Ardov, "O teatral'noi reklame," *Rampa i zhizn'* 48 (1910): 785.
72. Ibid.
73. "Kak F. I. Shaliapin spas Rossiiu," *Budil'nik* 8 (1911): 8.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Teliakovskii, *Vospominaniia*, 402. I will revisit this "scandal" and provide more details in Chapter 5.
78. Contemporary American cultural theorists have made similar points about celebrities in the United States. For example, Charles Eckert has argued that the loving and charitable image of Shirley Temple reconciled incompatible and failing solutions to the Depression. Charles Eckert, "Shirley Temple and the House of Rockefeller," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (New York: Routledge, 1991), 60–73.

3 Deviant Audiences and the Feminization of Fandom

1. Julie A. Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 40.
2. "Psikhopatka," *Budil'nik* 7 (1909): 10.
3. The term "middlebrow" was not employed in early-twentieth-century discourse to describe hybrid literary and musical works. Instead, the Russian mass-circulation press used a wide variety of terms, such as

"boulevard fiction" and "light theater." I use the category "middlebrow" to refer to an incoherently identified, but nonetheless existing, new cultural territory situated between and borrowing from the terrain of "serious" art (such as opera) and that of supposedly lower forms (such as the circus and the *lubok*). Middlebrow culture included romance novels, cabaret, and operetta; targeted respectable, wealthy audiences; and employed market-oriented formulas. On the emergence of middlebrow culture in Russia, see Louise McReynolds, *Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 45–75, esp., 43–47; see also Beth Holmgren, *Rewriting Capitalism: Literature and the Market in Late Tsarist Russia and the Kingdom of Poland* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 93–114.

4. A. Ardov, "O teartral'noi reklame," *Rampa i zhizn'* 48 (1910): 785.
5. *Budil'nik* January 18 (1904): 6.
6. "Shaliapin na vole," *Budil'nik* 33 (1910): 4.
7. Ibid.
8. Samuel Weber, "Taking Place: Toward a Theater of Dislocation," in *Opera through Other Eyes*, ed. David J. Levin (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 113.
9. My analysis of the feminization of fandom and celebrity draws on and echoes Janice Radway's observations about the demonization of middlebrow culture in the Unites States in the 1920s and 1930s. Educators and critics, for example, repeatedly infantilized Book-of-the-Month Club members, characterizing them through various gendered metaphors as docile and undiscerning consumers. Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 1997), esp. 142–220.
10. "Serious" writers also worked as feuilletonists; actors and singers moonlighted as theater critics; and merchant-patrons such as Mikhail Morozov (pseudonym Iur'ev) published books and essays on history, as well as articles on music and opera reviews. As Holmgren points out, at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia, "we see a blurring of the boundary between the writer and the journalist—indeed, between the writer for a living and a number of other professions." Holmgren, *Rewriting Capitalism,* 32. See also Harley D. Balzer, "The Problem of Professions in Imperial Russia," in *Between Tsar and People*, ed. Clowes, et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 185–86.
11. Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 188–207. For an examination of the creation of the division between highbrow and lowbrow culture in the United States, see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). Sometimes I use familiar terms like "high culture" and "highbrow" to designate what Russian journalists and writers variously called "serious art," "fine art," and simply "art" (e.g., *khudozhestvo*, *khudozhestvennyi teatr*, *iskusstvo*).

12. On the perceived threat to the status of Russian conservatories by the high enrollment of bourgeois female piano students, as well as music professionals' anxieties about the very of idea of the female musician, see Lynn M. Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord: Music and the Transformation of Russian Cultural Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 141–54.
13. "Iz zhizni," *Budil'nik* 47 (1908): 19.
14. M. Sviridenko, "Stsenicheskaia etoil," *Budil'nik* 40 (1902), back cover. On the denigration of women in late imperial advertising, see Sally West, *I Shop in Moscow: Advertising and the Creation of Consumer Culture in Late Tsarist Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 159–63.
15. Promoters of high culture employed a specific language to distinguish their product from less savory amusements and prevent it from sliding into the emerging middlebrow realm. Designations such as *artist* and *artistka* were commonly applied to opera singers to denote an elevated performance standard. Prima donnas' images, usually devoid of sexual innuendo, were protected from accusations of depravity hurled at other female entertainers.
16. "Iz zhizni," *Budil'nik* 47 (1908): 19.
17. A. L., "Podrugi," *Budil'nik* 40 (1903): 6.
18. Victoria de Grazia, "Introduction," in Victoria de Grazia, ed., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 14–15.
19. Ibid., 15.
20. Ibid., 13–20. On the feminization of consumption and gendered advertising in late imperial Russia, see West, *I Shop in Moscow*, 141–58. On the gendering of retail spaces, see Marjorie L. Hilton, *Selling to the Masses: Retailing in Russia, 1880–1930* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 110–31.
21. Nikolai Petrovich Rossov (pseud. of Pashutin, 1864–1945) was a touring actor specializing in classical repertory and famous for his Hamlet. In the early 1900s he wrote feature articles for *Rampa i zhizn'* and *Teatr i iskusstvo*.
22. Mounet-Sully (Jean Sully Monet, 1841–1916) was one of the mainstays of the Comédie Française. Hailed as a great tragedian, he was best known for his Hamlet.
23. Nikolai Rossov, "Kaprizy zhizni," *Rampa i zhizn'* 26 (1913), 2–3.
24. Ibid., 3.
25. Ibid.
26. Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," 193.
27. Fritskhen, "Talanty i poklonniki," *Budil'nik* 35 (1911): 10.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. *Dzhigity* were Caucasian horsemen who engaged in trick riding.
30. Ibid.
31. "Ne plach', ditia" is an aria from act 2, scene 3 of *The Demon*.
32. Battistini was so shaken, he felt compelled to explain his decision in an open letter published in the newspaper the next day. He wrote:

"Allow me…to justify myself to the public, the opinion of which I value very much. I did not repeat the cavatina 'Do not weep, child' despite the insistent demand of the audience not because I did not want to, but for the simple reason that the press, it was relayed to me, found the repetition of this aria at the premier…anti-artistic. Performing before a Russian audience in a Russian opera, I felt I absolutely had to accept guidance from Russian critics. Could I have been be mistaken?…[T]here were no bad intentions on my part." GTSTMB, manuscript division f. 104 (personal fond of Sergei Ivanovich Zimin), d. 27 (Newspaper clippings from *News of the Day*, the Lenten Season of the Italian Opera at the Bol'shoi Theater in Moscow, 1894). *Novosti dnia*, No. 3875, March 30, 1894 [no page #].

33. Casus, "Bis," *Novosti dnia*, No. 3876, March 31, 1894 [no page #], in ibid.
34. Reports of the public's zealous behavior were neither unusual nor consistently negative in tone. A brief review of the Italian opera's premier of *Le Prophète*, for example, related the following: "The performance was completely sold out. The part of John of Leyden offered Tamagno the opportunity to display all of his colossal vocal power. A persistent clamor could be heard in the theater due to the curtain calls and applause. Tamagno was compelled to repeat the finale of the third act after the curtain already fell. The public insisted that the curtain be raised again; the chorus and soloists, who had dispersed and retired to their dressing rooms, had to be called back to repeat the final scene, and Tamagno again received a spirited ovation. The ecstatic reception continued all evening and was completely justified by the amazing vocal heights that Tamagno reached." *Novosti dnia*, No. 3858, March 13, 1894 [no page #], in ibid.
35. On the beginnings of a similar shift in viewing and listening practices in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, see James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), esp. 9–95. Johnson relates the transformation of listening patterns to new developments in the composition and performance of music, as well as social changes. On the conceptualization of the "cultivated classes" and increased attentiveness at musical performances in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s, see Joseph A. Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation: A Social History of Music in America, 1870–1900* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971).
36. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 229. On concert going in imperial Russia and efforts by critics to discipline audiences, see Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*, esp. 69–81.
37. A "numbers opera" is constituted by "self-contained vocal pieces numbered consecutively in the score, in contrast to the 'endless melody' of the music drama." Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 401.
38. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 195.
39. GTSTMB f. 104, d. 27, "Opera," *Novosti dnia*, No. 3860, March 15, 1894 [no page #].

40. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 102.
41. GTSTMB f. 104, d. 27, "Opera," *Novosti dnia*, No. 3860, March 15, 1894, [no page #].
42. For an overview, see William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris, and Vienna between 1830 and 1840* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), xi–xxxiv.
43. On musical professionalization, see Lynn M. Sargeant, "A New Class of People: The Conservatoire and Musical Professionalization in Russia, 1861–1917," *Music and Letters* 85, 1 (February, 2004): 41–61; also Sargeant, *Harmony and Discord*, 121–74. On professionalization in late imperial Russia more generally, see Harley D. Balzer, ed., *Russia's Missing Middle Class: The Professions in History* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe: 1996).
44. "Muzykal'nyi 1910 god v Rossii," *Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta* 1 (1911): 1–5. Cited in Rosamund Bartlett, *Wagner and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106.
45. S. Sviridenko, "Vagnerovskii sezon 1910–1911," *Russkaia muzykal'naia gazeta* 18–19 (1911): 456–58. Cited in ibid., 107.
46. The reference to dolls, or being "dolled up" also evokes the artificial, vain, and hence femininity-as-masquerade.
47. Orion, "Na retsenzentskom kresle" *Budil'nik* 7 (1909): 9.
48. Ibid.
49. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 195.
50. Orion, "Na retsenzentskom kresle," 9.
51. Such characterizations of fans are quite common in the literature on mass culture today. Most scholarship on fandom links negative depictions of debauched fans to concerns about mass media and morality in the mid-twentieth century, limiting examination of the nexus of fandom, class, and gender almost exclusively to post-1950 Europe and the United States. For a discussion of the sociology of fandom and a defense of fan culture, see Lisa A. Lewis, ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp., Joli Jenson, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," 9–29.
52. RGALI f. 864 (personal fond of Leonid Vital'evich Sobinov), op. 1, d. 1325 (articles and notes about L. V. Sobinov; album). Newspaper clipping, March 30, 1914 [no page #], l. 108.
53. Ibid. Shaliapin here sings the Song of the Golden Calf. Sobinov performs Faust's aria "Salut! Demeure chaste et pure" from Gounod's *Faust*.
54. *Budil'nik* 40 (1915): 4.
55. A memoirist writing in the 1880s, for example, nostalgically recalls the passion and awe-inspiring feats of the "legendary" melomany of the 1840s: "The chandelier . . . was lowered from a wide, circular opening in the decorated ceiling, so that a free space of fourteen inches . . . remained around it, and this very opening was used by many people to hear the opera. They climbed up into the attic of the Bol'shoi [after bribing the] theater watchman and settled themselves there on the upper side of the ceiling around the opening a half hour before the beginning of the performance, before the chandelier was lit . . . [T]here were

no chairs…the ceiling and the edge of the opening were somewhat sloped…[W]hen the chandelier was lowered, the heat from [the] lights was concentrated up into the ceiling opening. The stage…was not visible, but everything was audible." A. N. Iakhontov, "Peterburgskaia ital'ianskaia opera v 1840-kh godakh," *Russkaia starina* (December 1886). Cited in Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette*, 40.

56. Radway, *A Feeling for Books*, 209. Andreas Huyssen has similarly noted that in Europe modernist authors and artists "inscribed the feminine on the notion of mass culture" in order to separate themselves from the everyday and the banal, and establish their cultural production as masculine, superior, unique, and individuated. Woman was modernism's Other in the sense that gendered discussions were necessary to forge the very aesthetic of modernism. Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," 192.
57. Novyi, "Sensatsionnaia khronika," *Budil'nik* 41 (1910): 3.
58. Ibid.
59. "Kumiry," *Budil'nik* 6 (1902): 3–4.
60. Chirskii, "Psikhopatki," *Budil'nik* 4 (1907): 7. The Battle of Shipka was an important battle of the Russo-Turkish War at Shipka Pass in the mountains of Bulgaria in 1878.
61. RNB f. 275, op. 1, d. 57 (letters from L. Zubasheva to Ivan Ershov, St. Petersburg), l. 1.
62. Ibid.

4 Authenticity in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, or, How the Gramophone Made Everyday Life Operatic

1. On notions of sincerity and personal authenticity in Europe and the United States, see, for example, John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," *American Historical Review* 102, 5 (December 1997): 1309–42; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
2. See Walter Benjamin's famous 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hanna Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–51. On the role of "sincerity" in consumer capitalism, see Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), esp. 173–201.
3. See, for example, Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 2002); and Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).
4. See Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity;* Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).
5. Theodor Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 54.

6. See the fan letters discussed in previous chapters. More fan letters will be presented in Chapter 5.
7. In making this claim, I am influenced by Peter Brooks, who put forward similar ideas about the operations of melodrama during the French Revolution. See Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 15; and Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," in *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. Jacky S. Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994). See Chapter 5 for a more thorough discussion of melodramatic behavioral modes in fin-de-siècle Russia. On Soviet self- fashioning through confessional rituals, and autobiographical and diary writing, see Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Igal Halfin, *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at the Leningrad Communist University* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).
8. In the early years of the recording industry, the term "phonograph" referred to Edison machines, which played cylinders only, while "gramophone" denoted disc-playing Berliner machines. In the 1920s, when cylinders were phased out, both terms were used to refer to record players. "Gramophone" was more common in Europe, where Emile Berliner's company made significant inroads at the turn of the twentieth century, while "phonograph" was favored in the United States. Because the term *grammofon* (gramophone) was vernacularized earlier and employed much more frequently in Russia than *patefon* (phonograph), it will be used generically in this chapter. For a more detailed discussion of the terminology of early sound recording technology, and the links between etymology and marketing, see Marsha Siefert, "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture: How the Talking Machine Became a Musical Instrument," *Science in Context* 8, 2 (1995): 418–19; and Colin Symes, *Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 18–22; also see Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 201–9.
9. *Budil'nik* 13 (1912): 3.
10. Ibid.
11. Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 9–31. Katz identifies and analyzes seven characteristics of sound recording technology, or "phonograph effects": tangibility, portability, (in)visibility, repeatability, temporality, receptivity, and manipulability.
12. Ibid., 9.
13. Ibid., xiii. See also William H. Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a brief account of the emergence of sound recording, as well as a discussion of the responses to and effects of new media, see Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey

Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1–114.

14. Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Music, Records, and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 38.
15. Coined in the 1920s in England by Compton Mackenzie, a prominent record journalist and author, "gramophilia" and "gramophobia" aptly describe the two sets of practices and behaviors attributed to gramophone lovers and detractors respectively by the Russian press in the 1910s. On the adoption of these terms in England, see Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 19.
16. For a concise history of both foreign and domestic gramophone companies in Russia and a catalogue of vocal recordings made by the Russian branch of The Gramophone Company (1899–1915), see P. N. Griunberg and V. L. Ianin, *Istoriia nachala gramzapisi v Rossii: Katalog vokal'nykh zapisei rossiiskogo otdeleniia kompanii 'Grammofon'* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2002). For brief discussions of early advertisements in Russian newspapers for the Gramophone Company and gramophone records, see Sally West, *I Shop in Moscow: Advertising and the Creation of Consumer Culture in Late Tsarist Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 128–29, 134, 200–1.
17. On the link made by Russia's intellectuals and music professionals between the "gramophone epidemic" and pornography (and debased commercial culture more generally), see James Loeffler, *The Most Musical Nation: Jews and Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 153–56, 171–72.
18. Johnson considered the horn attachment "an affront to people of refined taste." E. R. Finemore Johnson, *His Master's Voice Was Eldridge R. Johnson: A Biography* (Milford, DE: State Media Inc., 1974), 73. Cited in Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 25.
19. *Solntse Rossii* 1, 100 (1912): 17.
20. "Kuda, kuda, kuda vy udalilis'?" (Where, where, ah where have you gone?) is an aria sung by the poet Lenskii in act 2, scene 2 of Peter Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* (1879). Leonid Sobinov was the reigning tenor at the Bol'shoi Theater in the late 1890s and early 1900s. His most celebrated roles were Lenskii, Werther, Romeo, Alfredo (*La Traviata*), and the Duke of Mantua (*Rigoletto*).
21. Anastasiia Vial'tseva (1871–1913) was the most famous Russian diva of the fin de siècle. Christened "The Incomparable One" by fans and reviewers, her operetta, opera, and art song performances were featured regularly in entertainment journals, as were her personal habits and predilections. Nikolai Shevelev (orig. Sheviukhin, 1868–1929) was a baritone in Mamontov's Private Opera from 1896 to 1901. He created the roles of Griaznoi in Rimskii-Korsakov's *The Tsar's Bride* and the Messenger in *Skazka o tsare Saltane* (*The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, 1900). Oskar Kamionskii (1869–1917), another baritone, was known as the "Russian Battistini."
22. Novyi (pseud.), "Grammofon," *Budil'nik* 40 (1910): 3.
23. Marsha Siefert, "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture," 417.

24. *Budil'nik* 43 (1910): 9. See Chapter 2 for a fuller text of this story.
25. *Budil'nik* 12 (1908): 2, *prelozh*.
26. Shapka-Nevidmika (pseud.), "Shutki dnia," *Peterburgskaia gazeta* 46 (February 16, 1911): 4.
27. A. Emte, "Vnimaniiu chitatelei," *Novosti grammofona* 1 (1907): 3. Contrary to its assertion, *Novosti grammofona* was not the first specialized magazine in Russia devoted to sound recording. It was preceded by the St. Petersburg monthly *Grammofon i fonograf* (*Gramophone and Phonograph*, 1902–04), the title of which changed in 1905 to *Svet i zvuk* (*Light and Sound*) and then to *Grammofon i fotografia* (*Gramophone and Photography*, August-September 1906).
28. Sergei Prokofiev, *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, ed. and trans. Harlow Robinson (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 7–8. July 26, 1909. Prokofiev's letter and Isaac Babel's short story "Gedali" (see later) are also cited in Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel*, 57, 25.
29. Isaac Babel, "The End of St. Hypatius," in *The Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, ed. Nathalie Babel, trans. Peter Constantine (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 127. The story was first published in *Pravda*, August 3, 1924, under the heading "From My Diary."
30. Babel, *Sunset*, in *Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, 756. The play was first published in *Novyi mir* (*New World*) in 1928.
31. Ibid., 192. The story "Sunset," written in 1924–25, was first published in the November 20, 1964 issue of *Literaturnaia Rossiia* (*Literary Russia*).
32. Babel, "Gedali," in *Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, 228–29. "Gedali," dated June, 1920, was first published in *Krasnaia nov'* 4, 1924.
33. See Babel, "The Georgian, the Kerensky Rubles, and the General's Daughter (A Modern Tale)" (1918), and *1920 Diary*, entry of September 11, 1920, in *Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, 469, 509.
34. In another story, Prishchepa, a young Cossack and Communist from the Kuban', returned home a year after the Whites had killed his parents. The White Army had been driven out of his village, and neighbors had ransacked and looted his parents' house. "Prishchepa hired a communal cart and went through the village picking up his gramophone, kvas jugs, and the napkins that his mother had embroidered." He ambled "from one neighbor's house to the next" reclaiming his parents' belongings and brought them back to his hut, where he gathered and arranged everything "in the way he had remembered it from childhood." After appropriating vodka, Prishchepa "locked himself in the hut for two days, drank, sang, and cried." On the third night, he shot his cow, burned down the hut with everything in it, and disappeared on his horse. Babel, "Prishchepa," in *Complete Works of Isaac Babel*, 260–61.
35. On the regimentation of leisure, see Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Chris Rojek, *Leisure and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).
36. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 178. On advice literature in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 156–229.

37. Grammofonnyi ded, "Grammofonnyia igolki," *Novosti grammofona* 1 (April, 1907): 5–6.
38. Diadia Sasha, "Besedy," *Novosti grammofona* 2 (May, 1907): 24.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 24–25.
41. Ibid., 25.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Diadia Sasha, "Besedy," *Novosti grammofona* 5 (August, 1907), 72–73.
45. Ibid., 73.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 74.
48. On the delineation of other forms of masculine consumption in late imperial Russia, see West, *I Shop in Moscow*, 145–51, 163–71. And on masculine retailing practices, see Marjorie L. Hilton, *Selling to the Masses: Retailing in Russia, 1880–1930* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 110–31.
49. On collecting as masculine consumption, see Leora Auslander, "The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France," in *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, ed. Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 79–112. Also on collecting, see John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, eds., *Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Paul Martin, *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: The Reinvention of Museums?* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); and Susan Pearce, ed., *The Collector's Voice: Critical Readings in the Practice of Collecting* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000).
50. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 178. My account of Russian audio magazines draws on Symes's description and analysis of *The Gramophone* and other British and American magazines devoted exclusively to record reviews in the 1920s.
51. On hobby magazines as disseminators of the meanings and values of consumer capitalism, see Richard M. Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996); also see Matthew Schneirov, *The Dream of a New Social Order: Popular Magazines in America, 1893–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
52. Here I borrow a few terms and concepts, namely the idea that certain reviews "combined acts of promulgation and evaluation," from Symes's discussion of *The Gramophone* and other audio magazines. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 186. While I am indebted to Symes's work, we disagree on a key point. Symes mentions that some of "the first independent magazines devoted to the phonograph appeared in tsarist Russia" but then quickly dismisses such publications because he assumes (incorrectly, I suggest) that "only rarely did [they] engage the recording industry or seek to challenge its directions." Ibid., 158.
53. "Original'nye apparaty," *Novosti grammofona* 1 (April, 1907): 8.
54. "Novye rupora," *Novosti grammofona* 1, 7.

55. "Oksetofon," *Novosti grammofona* 1, 7–8.
56. "Nashi otzyvy (otmetki liubitelia)," *Novosti grammofona* 1, 9.
57. Ibid., 9–10.
58. Ibid., 10.
59. Ibid., 12.
60. Ibid., 10–12.
61. Ibid., 12.
62. On the St. Petersburg monthly *Grammofonnyi mir* (*Gramophone World*, 1910–17) and the colorful life and ideas of its editor Dmitrii Bogemskii, see L. I. Tikhvinskaia, "Fragmenty odnoi sud'by na fone fragmentov odnoi kul'tury," in *Razvlekatel'naia kul'tura Rossii XVIII-XIX vv.: Ocherki istorii i teorii*, ed. E. V. Dukov (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2000), 430–63.
63. Frederick W. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1946), 15.
64. Ibid., 30.
65. Gaisberg made several more trips to Russia, signing the likes of the coloratura soprano Antonina Nezhdanova and tenor Nikolai Figner to lavish contracts. In addition to recording the stars of the Russian Imperial Theaters, Gaisberg obtained recordings of romance and gypsy song performers like Natalia Tamara and Varia Panina, as well as everything from church choirs to military band marches.
66. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record*, 34–35.
67. Ibid., 45.
68. Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel*, 95.
69. On Walter Legge (1906–79) see Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music. Listening to Musical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 40–43.
70. Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 37.
71. Ibid., 37–39.
72. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record*, 86.
73. Patti's reaction was documented by Landon Ronald, her piano accompanist on the Gramophone recordings. Landon Ronald, *Variations on a Personal Theme* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 103–4. Cited in John Frederick Cone, *Adelina Patti: Queen of Hearts* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993), 243.
74. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record*, 87.
75. Ibid., 78.
76. Ibid., 80.
77. Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 39. On the use of the Stroh violin in the recording studio, see also Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 11.
78. Acoustic recordings did not register pianissimos especially well. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record*, 80.
79. On the diversification of dachas and their dwellers (*dachniki*) in the 1890s and 1900s, and the advent of dacha "hygienic" advice literature, see Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 182–88. For an in-depth study of the dacha as a cultural space and competing notions of dacha living in the early

twentieth century, see Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710–2000* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 86–117.

80. Samuil Marshak, "Dacha," *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1968–70), 475–76. The poem first appeared in *Solntse Rossii* 28, 1911, under the pseudonym D-r Friken. "At the human race by his feet" and "And the Satan leads the dance" are lines from Mephistopheles' Song of the Golden Calf. The line "Aren't you dancing, Lenskii?" belongs to Onegin in act 2, scene 1 of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. The "Hymn to Hymen," or Epithalamium, is sung by Vindex, prince of Aquitania, in act 1 of Anton Rubinstein's opera *Nero*. Multiple recordings of these arias with Shaliapin, Shevelev, and other singers were made by Gramophone between 1901 and 1914. For other examples of satire published in the 1910s relating to dacha gramophone culture, see Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 183; and Tikhvinskaia, "Fragmenty odnoi sud'by," 452.
81. See Benjamin, "The Work of Art," in *Illuminations*, 217–51.
82. A pood is equal to 36.11 pounds.
83. A synopsis of the plot appears in *Grammofonyi mir* 28 (1911): 10. Cited in Tikhvinskaia, "Fragmenty odnoi sud'by," 450–51.
84. The HMV trademark was first employed by the Gramophone Company in advertising in 1900 and has appeared on its records since 1909. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 29.
85. The Victor Talking Machine Company, based in Camden, New Jersey, was the parent company of Gramophone. For a more thorough analysis of the Victor Caruso ads and similar ads featuring Geraldine Farrar, see ibid., 27–29.
86. Sterne, *The Audible Past*, 218. "Inasmuch as [the product's] mediation could be detected," notes Sterne, "there is a loss of fidelity or a *loss of being* between original and copy." Emphasis in the original.
87. Ibid., 219.
88. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 221. Cited in *Audible Past*, 220.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Edison anticipated this later concept of fidelity, maintaining that his phonograph could improve music and produce recordings more pleasing to the ear than stage performances. On Edison's "tone tests" (1912–15), which were supposed to prove his claims, see Siefert, "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture," 441–45.
92. Gaisberg, *Music on the Record*, 68.
93. Siefert, "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture," 439.
94. Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel*, 41.
95. Ibid., 89.
96. *Novosti grammofona* 3 (June, 1907): 49.
97. *Novosti grammofona* 1 (January, 1908): 11.
98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., 10.
100. *Novosti grammofona* 4 (July, 1907): 65.

101. Adorno, "Curves of the Needle," 48–50.
102. Slavoj Žižek, citing Adorno, has suggested that the voice-as-object displays a "spectral autonomy" and can be experienced as undead, traumatic. Slavoj Žižek, *On Belief* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 44–46, 56–58; see also, Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 116–21. Certainly a disembodied, "natural sounding" recorded voice, severed from a subject, bearing no traces of technological intervention or other evidence of material life, might seem, paradoxically, machinelike. Crackling and other distortion metonymically evoked human warmth and imperfection, reattaching the object-voice to an external reality.

5 Fan Letters, Melodrama, and the Meaning of Love

1. Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Konstantin Shilovsky, *Eugene Onegin in Full Score* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1997), 117–22.
2. Ibid., 122–23.
3. Constantin Stanislavski and Pavel Rumyantsev, *Stanislavski on Opera*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 1998), 87.
4. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 125–29.
5. RGALI f. 912 (personal fond of Fedor Ivanovich Shaliapin), op. 4, d. 258 (letters from spectators to Shaliapin, F. I., 1901–1934), l. 39.
6. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 131–37.
7. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 39.
8. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 461–63.
9. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 39.
10. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 144–46.
11. Ibid., 146–47.
12. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 39.
13. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 147–50.
14. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, ll. 39–40.
15. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 155–57.
16. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 40.
17. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xiii.
18. Ibid., 4.
19. Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger, "Introduction," in *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia*, ed. Reynolds and Joan Neuberger (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.
20. Ibid., 4. See also Helena Goscilo, "Playing Dead: The Operatics of Celebrity Funerals, or, The Ultimate Silent Part," in *Imitations of Life*, 283–319.
21. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 201–2.
22. Ibid., 201–6. According to Brooks, psychoanalysis is "a systemic realization of the melodramatic aesthetic applied to the structure and dynamics of the mind." Psychoanalysis is a "version of melodrama" because of

its "conception of the nature of conflict…stark and unremitting, possibly disabling, [and] menacing to the ego, which must find ways to reduce or discharge it. The dynamics of repression and the return of the repressed figure the plot of melodrama. Enactment is necessarily excessive: the relation of symbol to symbolized (in hysteria, for instance) is not controllable or justifiable." For perspectives on melodrama influenced by Brooks, see Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill, ed. *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 1994).

23. On Freudian themes in Russian silent films during the Great War, see Louise McReynolds, "Home Was Never Where the Heart Was: Domestic Dystopias in Russia's Silent Movie Melodramas," in *Imitations of Life*, 127–51. For a discussion of Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness* as melodrama, see Beth Holmgren, "The Importance of Being Unhappy, or, Why She Died," in ibid., 79–98.
24. Valery Briusov, "Now When I Have Awakened (The Notes of a Psychopath)," in *The Silver Age of Russian Culture*, ed. Carl Proffer and Ellendea Proffer (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1975), 303–8.
25. In the prologue, the play's three main characters are introduced irreverently by a professor: "The research of Wundt, Freud, Theodule Ribot, and others demonstrates that the human soul is not something indivisible, but consists of several Selves. Is that clear so far? (*Writes on the board:* $S_1 + S_2 + S_3 = Sn$)." Nikolai Evreinov, "The Theater of the Soul: A One-Act Monodrama with Prologue," in *Silver Age of Russian Culture*, trans. Christopher Collins, 351.
26. These conclusions were reached at the 1906 annual conference of the Moscow Society for Neuropathologists and in a 1907 issue of *Russkii vrach* (*Russian Physician*), for example. Martin Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 18. For more on psychiatrists' connection of revolutionary and mental disorder, see Julie Brown, "Revolution and Psychosis: The Mixing of Science and Politics in Russian Psychiatric Medicine, 1905–1913," *Russian Review* 46, 3 (1987), 283–302. See also Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 255–64.
27. Mikhail Gershenzon, "Creative Self-Cognition" and Sergei Bulgakov, "Heroism and Asceticism: Reflections on the Religious Nature of the Intelligentsia," in *Landmarks*, eds. Boris Shragin and Albert Todd, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Karz Howard, 1977), 81, 62. Bulgakov insisted that the "unhealthy" intelligentsia was "the nerves and brain of the revolution's enormous body," ibid., 25.
28. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* was translated into Russian in 1904, and by the 1910s a significant body of psychoanalytic literature had been published in Russia, including translated and original papers, review articles, and Russian case studies. On the launching of the journal *Psikhoterapiia* (*Psychotherapy*) in 1910, the founding of Nikolai Osipov's Russian Psychoanalytic Society in 1911 in Moscow, and the psychoanalytic movement in Russia more generally, see Miller, *Freud and the*

Bolsheviks, 19–50; and Alexander Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

29. Marina Tsvetaeva, "My Pushkin," *Marina Tsvetaeva: A Captive Spirit. Selected Prose*, ed. and trans. J. Martin King, (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1994), 216.
30. Ibid., 215.
31. Ibid., 217.
32. Ibid., 216.
33. Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, a novel in verse, was begun in 1823 and completed in 1831. In Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness*, the heroine Mania becomes infatuated with Harold, a famous modernist poet, and writes him a passionate fan letter. She later obsessively purchases his books and portraits, and compares him to the operatic Onegin. Verbitskaia, *Keys to Happiness*, ed. and trans. Beth Holmgren and Helena Goscilo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 214–21.
34. Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 230.
35. Caryl Emerson, "Tchaikovsky's Tatiana," in *Tchaikovsky and His World*, ed. Leslie Kearney (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 217.
36. Ibid., 217–18. On the two versions of *Onegin*, also see Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 58–94. Gasparov argues convincingly that Tchaikovsky's opera was more popular than Pushkin's novel in the late nineteenth century and remains better known today because the composer's psychological portraits are more resonant with generations reared on the extroverted characters of the realist fiction of the 1860s and 1870s.
37. On how Tchaikovsky's music renders irony and multiplies meanings, see Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 53–55.
38. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 129–30.
39. Sergei Prokofiev, "Prokofiev Explains," *Musical Times* 89, 1266 (August 1948): 234.
40. Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 152. The argument referenced by Emerson appears in Ulrich Weisstein, "The Libretto as Literature," *Books Abroad: An International Literary Quarterly* (Winter 1961): 16–22.
41. Ibid., 165. Emerson further argues that these two operatic chronotopes can "overlap" and occasionally have been "fused" by composers challenging generic conventions (e.g., Mussorgsky): "When a recitative is cast as a stage aside for the audience alone, it must be played in 'aria time and space.' Conversely, under certain circumstances an aria can become part of the dramatic action."
42. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 131.

43. Paul Robinson, *Opera and Ideas: From Mozart to Strauss* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 160.
44. Christine Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Gledhill (New York: Routledge, 1991), 208.
45. Ibid., 209.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Stanislavski and Rumyantsev, *Stanislavski on Opera*, 54.
49. Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama," 219.
50. Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 44.
51. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 49.
52. Ibid., ll. 49–50.
53. Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama," 211.
54. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 50.
55. Like other effusions composed by female devotees to male celebrities, including the nocturnal letter discussed earlier, Dneprovskaia's love letter resembled Tatiana's to Onegin, reproducing it sometimes verbatim.
56. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 50. Dneprovskaia cites Salieri's opening monologue from Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov's one-act opera *Mozart and Salieri,* based on the second of Pushkin's five "Little Tragedies" (1830). The libretto was taken verbatim from the original text and the music resembles the arioso-recitative style of Dargomyzhskii's *The Stone Guest*. The first performance was given at Savva Mamontov's Private Opera on December 7, 1898, with Shaliapin as Salieri. The opera is a psychological drama and Salieri immediately became one of Shaliapin's favorite signature roles. In a letter to Rimskii-Korsakov following the premier, Mamontov reported, "Shaliapin really was inspired, full of fire, and devised wonderful makeup which created a perfect illusion…It was a man belonging entirely to that epoch, without any imitation props. Such personification is possible only for people of strong creative powers." Cited in Victor Borovsky, *Chaliapin: A Critical Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 223.
57. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, ll. 50–51.
58. Dneprovskaia offers no direct testimony of nights at the opera in her letter, but her knowledge of Shaliapin's repertoire is evident from her reference to Salieri.
59. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 51.
60. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 5.
61. Ibid., 41.
62. Ibid.
63. Tchaikovsky, *Eugene Onegin*, 479.
64. Ibid., 481–83.
65. Richard Dyer, *"A Star Is Born* and The Construction of Authenticity," *Stardom*, 137.
66. Ibid., 133.
67. Ibid., 133–35. For audiences, photographs (publicity postcards, posters, and so on) of celebrities in roles and "in life" are crucial referents of such a "reality," or the "real" existence of the star.

68. Ibid., 134. "Marxism . . . proposes that [electoral politics] . . . is not the real politics of society at all, which on the contrary resides in the invisible operation and structures of the means and forces of production and reproduction . . . Psychoanalysis equally proposes that consciousness is not really consciousness, but a surface masking the workings . . . of the unconscious."
69. Ibid., 135.
70. Ibid., 136.
71. Ibid.
72. Gledhill has linked stars to melodrama, noting that stars represent "clearly articulated personal identities" and thereby meet the melodramatic demand for a persona "totally committed to living out his or her dominant desires despite moral and social taboo or inter-personal conflict." Yet, she also argues that multiple star texts require audiences to make sense of conflicting accounts and thus participate in the creation of these "clear," monopathic identities. Gledhill, "Signs of Melodrama," 212–27.
73. For a detailed account of the controversy surrounding the incident, see Vladimir A. Teliakovskii, *Vospominaniia* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1965), 393–406; also see Borovsky, *Chaliapin*, 357–62. Both Teliakovskii (director of the Imperial Theaters, 1901–17) and Shaliapin's biographer accuse the press of distorting facts and maliciously inciting the public against the bass. Shaliapin provides his perspective on the "unpleasant episode" and its aftermath in his memoir, *Mask and Soul* (1932), Fedor Shaliapin, *Maska i dusha* (Minsk: Sovremennyi literator, 1999), 265–77.
74. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 33.
75. The author's use of the formal "you" [*vy*] suggests that she and Shaliapin, despite allusions to the contrary, may not have been close friends or lovers at the time the note was written.
76. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, ll. 31–32.
77. See Brooks, "Melodrama, Body, Revolution," *Melodrama*, 11–12. Brooks argues that silent cinema "revives a certain semiotics of the body which first made its appearance in [eighteenth-century] melodrama . . . The moment of the French Revolution . . . itself calls into being a new valorization of and attention to meanings inscribed on the individual body." My point is that early-twentieth-century opera performance practice (similar to silent film in its reliance on corporeal expressivity) and fan letters shared such a notion of "meaning embodied" and thus reflected, during Russia's revolutionary moment, a commonly shared aesthetics and politics of the body.
78. See also, for example, L. Zubasheva's letter to Ershov in Chapter 3.
79. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 32.
80. For example, see Vera's letter to Shaliapin in Chapter 2.
81. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, ll. 7–8.
82. Ibid., ll. 8–9.
83. Ibid., ll. 9–10.
84. Ibid., l. 10. Ekaterina is referring to an extensively reported "unfortunate" incident that occurred at an open dress rehearsal of a concert on

December 5, 1908. The Kadet newspaper *Rech'* (*Speech*) recounted that "because…Shaliapin had sung the role of Holofernes [in Aleksandr Serov's opera *Judith*] the night before, he felt tired and sang at half volume at the rehearsal. This elicited grumbling from the audience in the sold-out Hall of the Noble Assembly. Despite requests from the audience…Shaliapin refused to sing at full volume. Loud noise, whistling, and hissing filled the hall. The artist then refused to participate further in the rehearsal." *Rech'*, December 6, 1908. Cited in Iu. Kotliarov and V. Garmash, eds., *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F. I. Shaliapina*, vol. 1 (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1989), 342–43.

85. On Shaliapin's charity concerts during World War I and other philanthropic activities, see Borovsky, *Chaliapin*, 352–57.
86. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 45.
87. Ibid., l. 46.
88. Ibid., l. 43.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. I am borrowing a phrase from Paul Robinson, *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 49.
92. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, ll. 41–42.
93. Ibid., l. 30.
94. Ibid., ll. 27–28.
95. On the myth of the tsar and its role in peasant rebellions, see Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
96. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 34.
97. Ibid., ll. 34–35.
98. Fans never blamed Shaliapin for the exorbitant cost of tickets to his performances, though his high salary and the demanding terms of his contract were reported.
99. RGALI f. 912, op. 4, d. 258, l. 13.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., ll. 13–14.
102. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 37.

6 Epilogue

1. Cultural theorist Raymond Williams used the concept "structure of feeling" to describe the emotional and interpretative relationships of a given historical period and place—"the deep community that makes communication possible." Structure of feeling denotes modes of experiencing and reacting that are widely shared through various cultural forms, and not individually conceived. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press Ltd., 2001), 64–67.
2. Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 54.
3. Ibid., 53.

4. Boris Kolonitskii, "'We' and 'I': Alexander Kerensky in His Speeches," in *Autobiographical Practices in Russia / Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland*, ed. Jochen Hellbeck and Klaus Heller (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2004), 182; and Richard Abraham, *Alexander Kerensky: The First Love of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 179.
5. Abraham, *Alexander Kerensky*, 135.
6. Kolonitskii, "'We' and 'I': Alexander Kerensky in His Speeches," 193–94.
7. Ibid., 194.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 184.
10. Ibid., 183.
11. Ibid., 181.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 181, 183.
14. Ibid., 188. Another report of Kerensky's physical strain and sacrifice appeared in the June 2, 1917 resolution of the general meeting of the Elizavetgrad hussar regiment: "Overstraining his sick lungs, selflessly burning his precious life, War Minister Kerensky cries out, warns, pleads, not to turn over Russia to disgrace and slavery, but to unite it in a single, powerful army and overthrow the enemy!"
15. Ibid., 189.
16. Ibid., 183.
17. Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 86.
18. Abraham, *Alexander Kerensky*, 142.
19. For images of Nicholas II, see Richard Wortman, "Publicizing the Imperial Image in 1913," in *Self and Story in Russian History*, ed. Laura Engelstein and Stephanie Sandler (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 109–10. On the desacralization of the monarchy and depictions of Nicholas as an unmanly, feckless, and immoral traitor, see Figes and Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution*, 9–29.
20. Kolonitskii, "'We' and 'I': Alexander Kerensky in His Speeches," 182.
21. Ibid., 184–85.
22. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 15.
23. Ibid.
24. The first of these were discussed at the conclusion of Chapter 3. Since Zubasheva had been a long-time patron of the Mariinskii Theater, and the totalizing discourse of the Soviet regime had not been institutionalized fully in 1924, the structural resemblance of the first letter to fan mail composed before 1917 certainly is understandable and, I believe, expected. Much more striking are the stylistic continuities between Zubasheva's first and second letter, written in 1934.
25. RNB f. 275 (personal fond of Ivan Vasil'evich Ershov), op. 1, d. 57 (letters from L. Zubasheva to Ivan Ershov, St. Petersburg), l. 1.
26. Ibid., ll. 1–2.

27. Ibid., l. 2.
28. Ibid., l. 3.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., l. 4.
31. Ibid., ll. 4–5.
32. Ibid., l. 5.
33. Julie A. Cassiday, *The Enemy on Trial: Early Soviet Courts on Stage and Screen* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 6.
34. Ibid., 6–7. For discussions of melodrama and melodramatic performance in Soviet legal practice and film see Lars T. Lih, "Melodrama and the Myth of the Soviet Union," in *Imitations of Life: Two Centuries of Melodrama in Russia*, ed. Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 178–207; and Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). On the importance of sincerity and other melodramatic imperatives in Party card verifications at academic institutions of the 1920s, see Igal Halfin, *Intimate Enemies: Demonizing the Bolshevik Opposition, 1918–1928* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 284–332.
35. Kolonitskii, "'We' and 'I': Alexander Kerensky in His Speeches," 192–93.
36. Ibid., 195.
37. Ibid., 194.

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Novosti dnia
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Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* refer to figures.