

RICHARD WAGNER AND THE CULTURE OF THE RUSSIAN SILVER AGE

^aMARYNA CHERKASHINA-GUBARENKO, ^bLILIIA MUDRETSKA, ^cINNA TYMCHENKO-BYKHUN, ^dPANOVA NATALIYA, ^eOLENA NAUMOVA

^{a,e}*Tchaikovsky National Music Academy of Ukraine, 1-3/11, Architektor Gorodetsky Str., 01001, Kyiv, Ukraine*

^{b,c,d}*R. Glier Kyiv Municipal Academy of Music, 31, Lva Tolstoho Str., 01032, Kyiv, Ukraine*

email: ^a*gubaresha@ukr.net*, ^b*lmudretska@ukr.net*,

^c*inna_tymchenko@ukr.net*, ^d*panova_natata@ukr.net*,

^e*elnaumova@ukr.net*

Abstract: The reflections that Richard Wagner's works evoked in Russian culture could be considered in various aspects. Emil and Nikolai Medtner were chosen in the present article as particularly revealing in two respects. Firstly, both brothers were connected by their origins and family traditions with the German culture. As a result, Wagner's name became a part of their family history's perception. Secondly, the attitude of the Medtner brothers toward the German genius was determined by the occupation, professional interests, aesthetic views, and place in the Russian culture of each one of them. The absence of a direct link between the music compositions of Nikolai Medtner and the Wagnerian art was indicative of a very close connection between Emil Medtner and the Wagnerian discourse of the Russian Silver Age. The article aims to provide a consistent analysis of the developmental stages and possible components of the Wagnerian theme in Russian culture, which commenced in 1863, during Wagner's concert tours in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The emphasis of this work is on what role critic Alexander Serov, as one of Wagner's Russian apologists, played in the dissemination of the German genius' principles. The importance of the first Russian productions of Wagnerian operas and the reputation of touring performances of the foreign opera companies in Russia had been revealed. By studying the early Sergei Prokofiev biography, the article shows the acceptance of Wagner as a recognized classic and the established authority among the representatives of the new generation of composers.

Keywords: Opera house, Russian culture, Russian music critics, Wagnerian discourse in Russia, Silver Age.

1 Introduction

Although the theme "Richard Wagner and Russian culture" would seem to be well established in the fields of musicology and, generally, cultural studies [4, 9, 10, 11]; it still cannot be deemed completely exhausted. There is an arising need to present the development of ideas and perception of Wagner's musical innovations by Russian society as a multi-step and multi-level process with its important milestones. After the first information that appeared in the press, and news, which came mainly from abroad, the landmark events include Wagner's concerts in 1863 in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. They were held not without the active participation of composer and music critic Alexander Serov, a Russian admirer of the German genius' work. We also need to mention the first productions of Wagnerian operas on Russian stages and the reaction to them. The attendance of the representatives of the Russian music world at the first Wagner Festival in Bayreuth on August 13-17, 1876, and their assessments of what they have seen and heard were just as important [5]. Growing interest in Wagner, which captured Russia and many other countries, had increased even more after the composer's passing. On Russian soil, such interest was facilitated by the acquaintance with the tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* performed by touring opera theater groups, then its adaptation by Russian artists and musicians. All the while, Wagner's theoretical and aesthetic works were studied and commented on [3]. The Wagnerian theme began to intertwine with the exhilaration plot of the Wagner-Nietzsche relationship, as well as a renewed fascination with Friedrich Nietzsche and his philosophy by the figures of the Russian Silver Age – a creative period of Russian culture, spanning approximately from the 1890s to the 1920s.

The new features of the present article include not only parallel coverage and integration of various research aspects of the theme "Richard Wagner and Russian culture" into a common dynamic sequence, but the recognition of unapparent connections between Wagner's persona and the Medtner family. In one way or another, the family history has influenced the attitude of publicist, literary and music critic, Emil Medtner (full Russian name – Emil Karlovich Medtner), and his younger brother,

composer and pianist Nikolai Medtner (or Nikolai Karlovich Medtner), towards Wagner. It would seem difficult to find a direct link between the Wagnerian art and music of this Russian composer – one of the iconic figures of his time, alongside Sergei Rachmaninoff and Alexander Scriabin. Nikolai Medtner's German roots are hardly a decisive factor in the comparison: all his life, the composer presented himself as a truly Russian artist, he never wrote operas or showed much interest in musical theater altogether. Nor did he write the symphonic music, which would have made it possible to speak about the impact of the Weimar school of Liszt and Wagner on Medtner's creativity. Nevertheless, Nikolai Medtner (1880-1951) did not pass by Wagnerian art, and, at some point, found the German composer's views consonant with his own beliefs.

2 Materials and Methods

In the memoirs of a pianist, composer, public figure, and the creator of the Russian Conservatory in Paris, Vladimir Pohl (1875-1962), there is a curious episode, which allows his contemporaries to recognize Medtner's attitude towards the musical talent of Richard Wagner. In his letter to Nikolai Medtner, Pohl cited Wagner's words, found in the journals of his French muse of the *Parsifal* period – the talented poetess, novelist, and translator, Judith Gautier. After being asked by Mme. Gautier to review the score she had received from a young fashionable avant-garde composer, Wagner replied, "Sometimes I think how much music exists in the world, and how small is the number of musicians I could appreciate because of a few compositions, containing all that I call music... Even the audacities of orchestration, you are telling me about, upset me. In all these young people' beginnings I see nothing besides daring in orchestration or harmony, though never in melody" [18, p.318]. Nikolai Medtner could very well subscribe under this Wagnerian confession. Thanking his correspondence for the shared quotations – not only by Richard Wagner, but also by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, – Medtner added his own comment, "...It is extremely valuable that such advanced masters, with all the munition of orchestration in their power, have awarded the greatest importance to the melody – the soul of music, without which all the rest of the flesh has no value" [18, p.104].

Without a doubt, out of two Medtner brothers, namely Emil Karlovich had a great understanding of the German Maestro. Emil Medtner (1872-1936) was closely connected with the culture of the Russian Silver Age and Russian symbolism, and both were impossible to imagine without the involvement of the "Wagnerian plot." As a tribute to his fascination with Wagner, Emil Karlovich took a pen-name Wolfing, with which he signed his articles. The pen-name appeared from a reference to the Walsung family, which was created by the hero of Wagnerian tetralogy, the god Wotan, and included his children, Siegmund and Sieglinde, as well as grandson Siegfried [14].

The special attitude of the Medtner brothers to Wagner's name and personality was associated with one of their own family sagas, related to the maternal line of Gebhardt-Goedicke. A family relic, passed down from his grandmother, Polina Feodorovna Goedicke, came to be in Emil Medtner's possession. It was the first German edition of Wagner's famous work *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* ("The Artwork of the Future"), published in 1850 in Leipzig by Otto Wiegand, with a dedication to Friedrich Feuerbach, which Wagner subsequently took off. This book was kept among other valuable books and written documents, such as the first edition of Goethe's *Faust* dated 1808, in the personal library of the Medtner's maternal great-grandfather, – actor of the Imperial German Court Theatre in Saint Petersburg, Friedrich Gebhardt (1769-1818). Born in Thuringia, young Gebhardt followed the family tradition and chose to be a theologian. Later, he became interested in theater and ran away from home with the theater troupe. He started his acting career in the town of Riga and continued it in Saint Petersburg. Here, in the capital of the Russian Empire, he performed together with his wife, née von Stein, simultaneously

in German drama and opera troupes. After retiring and settling in Moscow, Friedrich Gebhardt led intellectual classes and corresponded with prominent cultural figures. Among his correspondents, there were his personal acquaintance Goethe, as well as Wagner. The first edition of *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, that Emil Medtner received from his grandmother, became his guide into the world of Wagnerian thoughts about the ideal of musical drama, juxtaposed to the old operatic model. Written in October-November of 1849, this Wagnerian work offered the earliest systematized description of the German composer's views on the synthesis of music and drama as a stage art of the future. Describing his great-grandfather's interest in this work, Emil Medtner stressed the importance of the fact that "the old Goethean, the actor brought up on Shakespeare and Schiller, a singer who since his youth was akin to Mozart and Rossini, at the first glance could see in the young reformer of art an undoubted genius" [1, p.297].

When Richard Wagner died in Venice on February 13, 1883, little Nicholai Medtner was barely three years old, and his older brother Emil was only eleven. By this time in Russia, the process of mastering Wagner's ideas and music had already passed several stages. The name of the German composer became known even before his music was played. Wagner himself was only searching to find his own way and tried his hand as a music critic. Poverty-stricken in Paris, he hoped in vain to conquer the main opera stage in the whole of Europe – the Paris Grand Opera. In Russia, his name was mentioned, when the article "On the Overture" was published in 1841 in the Parisian *Gazette musicale*, in Russian translation [29, p.5-18]. The Russian press soon began to receive reports about the successful premiere of the opera *Rienzi* in Dresden. The main Dresden operas of the 1840s, which had a programmatic meaning for the composer, had reached the Russian public much later. At first, the German composer would become known as an ideologist and theorist, criticizing the modern state of art and advocating its significant renewal.

Understanding Wagner's theoretical works fed the interest that accompanied the German composer's arrival to Russia in 1863. That year could be named the beginning of the second step of the Russian "Wagnerian plot." By that time, Russia already had its own passionate Wagnerite, whose articles and performances prepared the audience for a meeting with the music of a new German genius. Like some of his contemporaries, composer and popular critic Alexander Serov (1820-1871) first discovered Wagner as a music theorist. Since the late 1850s, he became the most devoted Russian Wagnerite, continuously informing Russian readers of the German maestro's views on opera reform and introducing his work. In the letter to Maria Anastasyeva, Serov writes that he is upset about her dislike for Wagner, stating that "as for me, I just dream Wagner, play him, study him, read, write, speak, and preach about him. I am proud to be his apostle in Russia" [21, p.534].

During his trips abroad in 1858-1859, Alexander Serov met Wagner personally, and started corresponding with him [4, p.46; 6, p.162]. The beginning of Serov's friendly contacts with Wagner was a particularly difficult period in the life of the German composer. His Paris plans and hopes of setting up the permanent German Opera House there, were futile. The premiere productions of *Tannhäuser* on the stage of the Grand Opera turned into a scandalous failure. The fate of the score of *Tristan und Isolde*, completed five years ago, remained unclear. Financial struggle was not the least of the reasons that led Wagner to Russia. His orchestral concerts, held in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, were attended by the most famous representatives of the Russian artistic environment of that time. Maestro's tactical move turned out to be correct: the risk of getting to know the unusual music was much less with the concert performance of symphonic episodes and opera fragments. The talent of Wagner as a conductor received unconditional recognition; the temperamental author's interpretation facilitated the perception of this music [27, p.481-484]. Thanks to the Wagnerian concerts of 1863, a larger group of enthusiasts of his art had begun to form in Russia.

Soon after, it was time to open the way for the stage performances of Wagner's operas [15]. The first one, introduced to the Russian public in 1868, 18 years after its Weimar premiere under the direction of Franz Liszt, was *Lohengrin*. Let us take notice of that significant coincidence: 1868 was the year Richard Wagner met and got acquainted with a young Friedrich Nietzsche. It was the start of their long friendship, even though with time, it modulated into something very trying and dramatic. This is worth remembering, because in the process of forming the image of "Russian Wagner," the shadow of Nietzsche, in one way or another, will always be present, and Russian Nietzscheanism would create complex crossings and interlockings with the Wagnerian plot. In this regard, Emil Medtner's letter to Andrei Bely – the pseudonym of Russian poet, writer and critic Boris N. Bugaev (1880-1934) – dated January 31 – February 3, 1903, is significant in its author's comparisons. Admitting that he is not familiar with Wagner's musical drama well enough, Emil Medtner nevertheless compares the phenomenon of Wagner and Nietzsche. He writes, "As the philosopher, poet and musician, Nietzsche is a rarity made possible by Kant's liberating austerity (as in music, a strict style usually precedes the unrestrained one); and so is the musician, poet, and philosopher Wagner. They recombined, reconnected, and symbolized – what was 'mixed' before, now, after being detached by the might of Kant's wisdom, was capable again of not being 'mixed,' but united" [13].

Returning to the subject of *Lohengrin*, the reviews for its 1868 premiere varied. The reaction of the representatives of Saint Petersburg's "new composer school" was frankly negative. It is believed that part of this aversion may have been due to the quality of the performance. Konstantin Lyadov (1820-1871), who conducted the premiere, was about to retire from his conductor's career and not very inspired by the new score. It certainly affected the music's perception by the public. A year later, in 1869, the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre was headed by a talented young *Kapellmeister* Eduard Nápravník (1839-1916), who was destined to become an outstanding Russian interpreter of Wagner's operas. In 1874, six years after *Lohengrin*, opera *Tannhäuser* was staged under his leadership. The performance caused a clear division of the audience into fans and enemies of the composer.

At that time, there was a fateful coup in the life of Wagner himself. In 1864, his devoted admirer and life-long patron, a young king Ludwig II of Bavaria, suddenly succeeded to the throne. One of the artistic results of their "star friendship" was the production of the opera *Tristan und Isolde* on the stage of the Royal Opera House in Munich. In 1869, during the repeat performance of the opera, Alexander Serov and his wife Valentina were in the audience at the invitation of the composer. According to Valentina Serova, "after the first sounds, I was literally destroyed by the power of impression. It is the grasping of a man from the prosaic domain exactly to where Richard [Wagner] will want him to be – it is his strength, his genius" [20, p.1695]. Alexander Serov himself describes *Tristan und Isolde* as "the world's highest and most accomplished musical tragedy; in comparison to it, both *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* are only preparatory steps with obvious flaws, which are absent in *Tristan und Isolde*." Then he adds about its author, "I am truly proud that I am a contemporary of this colossus, and that I am his friendly acquaintance. His (sincere) friendship elevates me in my own eyes" [20, p.1697].

After Serov's sudden death in 1871, to which Wagner responded with a warm letter of condolences, there was an innovative cultural and historical event, which magnified the figure of Richard Wagner and all his activities to a whole new scale. During the four evenings of the August 1876 premier of Wagner Bayreuth Festival, which was opened with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, the entire cycle of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* – *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung* – was performed for the first time. Famous guests of the festival came from all over the world and included leading representatives of the Russian musical community: opera composers, music professors and conductors Nikolai Rubenstein and Pyotr

Tchaikovsky, composers and critics César Cui and Herman Laroche, as well as musicologist, composer, music critic and professor, Secretary of the Imperial Russian Music Society, Alexander Famintsyn [5, 12]. Their detailed reports about the festival appeared in the Russian press. Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), who by that time had completed three operas and three symphonies of his own, represented the popular mass newspaper *Russkiye Vedomosti* ("Russian News") as a music critic [23, 24]. It is noteworthy that in the first of his series of five newspaper articles, bearing the eloquent name *Bayretskoye Musykal'noye Torzhestvo* ("Bayreuth Musical Celebration"), Tchaikovsky advertised the upcoming Wagnerian festival to the Russian audience as an event "destined to mark one of the most interesting eras of art history" [26, p.302]. Among the listeners of the first Wagner Bayreuth Festival, there was the German composer, virtuoso pianist, violinist, conductor, student of Franz Liszt and a personal acquaintance of Wagner, Karl Klindworth. From 1868 to 1881, he worked as a professor of the Moscow Conservatory and as a colleague of Pyotr Tchaikovsky. During his Moscow period, Klindworth had finished the piano translations of all four operas of the Wagnerian tetralogy. It opened new channels for both professionals and amateurs in Russian and other cultures to connect to the German Maestro's music [25].

3 Results

The appearance of tetralogy and its staging in the superior conditions of a unique festival theater really became a landmark event. The resonance that this cultural action caused had opened for all artists a new daring, imaginative path and significantly raised their self-esteem. Wagner – a lonely romantic genius, who was in opposition to the society of dealers, politicians and ordinary people, – came out of his solitude on the big expanses and transformed into a public face, forced to recognize the universal significance of what he had created [16]. Bayreuth as a place of pilgrimage, the unique "theatre on the green hill," became a symbol of the artist's independence, his ability to dictate his will. Despite the fact that the project itself existed, in modern terms, under the patronage of the Bavarian king, the benefaction was accepted by the composer without losing his dignity. Undoubtedly, the Wagnerian example had continued to inspire a Russian ballet impresario and big admirer, Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), who, in constant search of funds for the new productions of his *Ballets Russes*, had to reach out to wealthy aristocrats and amateurs from various countries. It is of no coincidence that later, just like Wagner, Diaghilev had planned his own death in the beloved city of Venice.

The premiere of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was a turning point in the relationship between Wagner and Nietzsche, reluctantly attending. The composer's young friend went to Bayreuth reluctantly and only because of the acquaintances' repeated persuasions. Even though the German philosopher paid tribute to his declining connection with Maestro in the fourth letter from the essay collection *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* ("Untimely Meditations"), entitled "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth" and printed right before the first Bayreuth festival, the tone of his writing and some remarks had foretold of the crisis erupting in the future [8, p.228–240]. Observing Wagner at the festival, Nietzsche perceived him as an actor working for the public. Wagner, whom he loved and knew, disappeared from that moment on. Soon, they parted their ways, and the publication of Nietzsche's book *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* ("Human All Too Human") in 1878 caused a sharp rejection by the composer. The philosopher's public verbal assaults addressed to his former friend, albeit without mentioning his name, did not go unnoticed.

Friedrich Nietzsche's *Der Fall Wagner. Turiner Brief vom Mai 1888* ("The Case of Wagner. Turin Letter of May 1888") would appear five years after the passing of the author of *Parsifal*. Throwing his former idol off of the pedestal, Nietzsche paints him as an arty pretender and seducer, and his work – as decadent, a testament to the deep crisis of the entire European culture. The introduction to *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in Russia happened shortly after the appearance of that essay. In 1889, the

managing director of the Leipzig Opera and the Estates Theatre in Prague, Josef Angelo Neumann, presented the entire tetralogy in Saint Petersburg, shown by a traveling German troupe. The orchestra and choir of the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre were performing together with the German soloists under the direction of the chief conductor Karl Mook. Thrilled with the Wagnerian art earlier, Alexandre Benois (1870-1960) – a Russian artist, friend and associate of Sergei Diaghilev, and, later, an employee of the *Ballets Russes* – had criticized that production. By that time, Benois began to form his own views on the stage interpretation of the tetralogy characters.

The year after Neumann's tour, in 1890, the Moscow troupe of the Georg Paradies Theatre (also known as the International Theatre) brought *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser* to the Saint Petersburg audience. The performances went under the direction of Hans Richter – the conductor of all four operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the 1876 Bayreuth Festival (the first ever complete performance of their entire cycle!), later becoming a principal conductor of the *Richard Wagner Festspielhaus*. In 1898, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Der fliegende Holländer* premiered at the Imperial Mariinsky Theatre. A year later, *Tristan und Isolde* appeared in the Russian singers' interpretation, among whom the new prima donna, a dramatic soprano Felia Litvinne (1860-1936), especially stood out. A more thorough acquaintance with Wagnerian works had influenced the content of the critical articles by the Russian press. From 1905, Wagner's operas were regularly produced and performed in Moscow. The staging of Wagnerian music in the Russian theatres contributed to a noticeable increase in the performance skills of Russian singers and orchestral musicians.

It is remarkable that in the same period of time the fascination with Nietzsche's writings also begins in Russia. It steadily increases from the 1890s through the early 1900s. An important role in the interpretation of the philosophical views of the German thinker was played by the Russian philosopher and literary critic Vasily Preobrazhensky (1864-1900). His study, *Fridrikh Nitzsche. Kritika morali al'truizma* ("Friedrich Nietzsche. Criticism of the Morality of Altruism"), was published in 1892 in the journal *Voprosy Filosofiyi and Psichologiyi* ("Issues of Philosophy and Psychology") and started a discussion about the Nietzschean ideas among other well-known Russian periodicals: *Nablyudatel'* ("Observer"), *Severny Vestnik* ("Northern Herald"), *Russkiy Vestnik* ("Russian Herald"), *Mir Iskusstva* ("World of Art"), *Novy Zhurnal Inostrannoy Literatury* ("New Magazine of Foreign Literature"), *Novy Put'* ("New Path"), and *Vesy* ("Scales"). In 1898-1899, Russian translations of Nietzsche's other works, *Also sprach Zarathustra* ("Thus Spoke Zarathustra") and *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* ("The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music"), also appeared in print [12].

While Wagner began to be evaluated through the prism of Nietzsche's contradictory position, Nietzsche's own views received their adjustment on Russian soil, and not without the influence of the spiritual leader of the young Russian generation, Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900). A philosopher, theologian, poet, and publicist, Solovyov stand at the origins of the Russian spiritual revival. He greatly influenced the poet-symbolists through the teaching of Sophiology, which identifies God's essence as Divine Wisdom or Sofia – Eternal Femininity and the soul of the world, a mystical cosmic being and an integral part of the Divine Plan. In one of his last works, titled *Ideya Sverkh-Cheloveka* ("The Idea of the Superman"), Solovyov highlighted the positive side of Nietzsche's negative judgments, the truth that goes beyond the misconceptions of the German thinker. He emphasized that, following their dual (both spiritual and physical) nature, people are characterized by their desire for infinite self-improvement leading to their ideal, the Superman, as a potential conqueror of the prime evil – death. He mentions in this connection the "firstborn among the dead," who defeated death, or the God-man Jesus Christ. According to Solovyov, many ascetics followed the same superhuman path [22].

Nietzsche's criticism of Wagner, paradoxically, only increased his general interest in his personality and views on culture in its social function. Modern scientists – philologist Igor Kondakov together with musicologist and culturologist Yuliya Korzh – wrote in their article about the peculiarities of Wagner's perception by the figures of the Russian Silver Age: “Injection” of Wagnerian ideas to the trunk of Russian culture, rooted in the theological and cultural searches of [the poet and philosopher, Aleksey] Khomyakov and [Vladimir] Solovyov, found a peculiar reflection in Wagner's interpretation by the representatives of the Silver Age” [11, p.160]. According to Kondakov and Korzh, Wagner's persona in such an interpretation appeared detached from reality and represented “a free fantasy of Russian symbolists on the theme of real Wagner, as well as Nietzsche, Vladimir Solovyov, early Slavophiles and French symbolists” [11, p.163]. Wagner interested them not as a brilliant musician-innovator, but primarily as an art theorist and a philosopher of culture.

4 Discussion

If to look at the all-European context, it becomes obvious that in the 1890s - early 1900s, the number of supporters of Wagner, as a composer and thinker, in various countries had increased so much that he was included in the class of great classics with the magnitude of Bach, Goethe, and Beethoven. While the composers of the new generation sought to free themselves from the captivity of direct Wagnerian influences and transform them in accordance with their own national tasks, the former polemical assessments of Wagner's music gave way to an in-depth study of his creative principles. The French magazine *La Revue wagnérienne*, which discussed philosophical and artistic designs, concert programs, and correspondence of the German Maestro, was published from February 1885 through July 1888 and paid special attention to the connections between Wagnerian art and symbolism. Its founders were writer and critic Téodore de Wyzewa, British-born German philosopher, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Édouard Dujardin (1861–1949), who was known as a poet, playwright, critic, and one of the originators of the symbolist dramaturgy. After the triumph of Parsifal, the new magazine united all of the leaders of French symbolism, and, besides writers and artists, included composers Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894), Ernest Chausson (1855-1899), Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931), and Paul Dukas (1865-1935).

Another fantastic enthusiast of Wagner, writer-occultist Joséphin Péladan or Sâr Mérodack (1858-1918), conceived the idea of creating *L'Ordre de la Rose-Croix Catholique est Esthétique du Temple et du Graal* in France, with its branch in Belgium, in 1891, under the influence of Parsifal. Péladan organized the famous Parisian Salons des Rose-Croix, invited around 170 artists to produce celebrated art exhibitions, and appeared at his meetings wearing the costumes of Wagnerian heroes. Artists-symbolists Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavanne exhibited their paintings at that salon.

In 1885, poet-symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé published an essay on Wagner in *La Revue wagnérienne*. Expressing his attitude to the synthesis of the arts, he reproaches Wagner for ignoring the dance in his reflections. Mallarmé is also dissatisfied with the style of Wagnerian productions in Bayreuth. Another French admirer of Wagner was the philosopher, poet, novelist, music critic, and publicist of esoteric literature, Édouard Schuré (1841-1929). In his 1875 work *Le drame musical*, he developed the idea of the arts' fusion, which, he claimed, could not be the actual musical, but the verbal drama with the inclusion of music and, following Mallarmé's example, a necessary addition of dance.

The arena of debate about the future ways of musical art had moved to assess new avant-garde trends. In Russia, the subjects of discussion were the works of French, German, and Russian composers of the new generation, in particular, those that were being performed in Saint Petersburg at the Evenings of Contemporary Music. Two music and art critics, members of the Russian artistic movement *Mir Iskusstva* and Wagner's

enthusiasts, Walter Nouvel (1871-1949) and Alfred Nurok (1860-1919), chaired such Evenings.

In the season of 1900-1901, the Mariinsky Theatre staged *Die Walküre*, performed by a Russian troupe under the direction of Eduard Nápravník, in February 1903 – Siegfried, and in September of the same year – *Götterdämmerung*. By 1905, the entire Wagnerian cycle had been implemented and season tickets were issued, allowing the tetralogy to be seen as a whole. Russian composer, critic, and musicologist-researcher Boris Asafyev (1884-1949) recalled the great role of these subscription cycles in the artistic life of Saint Petersburg, at that time full of bright events. He called these events “the best school of musical perception, not only as auditory attention, but as a process of artistic and intellectual. ...What was happening in the intermissions in the upper tiers of the theater: philosophical and musical debates, discussions of scores, criticisms and delights at the performers, dialogues of Italian musicians and priests of Wagnerism, musical-professional circle discussions, fireworks of thoughts of writers and historians, poets and artists...” [2, p.442].

In 1909, at the moment of great resonance of Wagnerian productions by the Mariinsky Theatre, a Russian translation of Édouard Schuré's book *Le drame musical: Richard Wagner, son oeuvre et son idée* (“The musical drama: Richard Wagner, his work and his idea”) was published [19, p.312]. In the foreword to the book, its editor, musicologist Aleksey Kal' (1878-1948), lamented the small amount of Russian literature available about Wagner, while, in his words, “Wagner was deeply rooted in Russian culture and the interest in his work was no less intense than in Western Europe” [19, p.9].

Both Richard Wagner's attitude to art and his persistently repetitive assertion that it is internally unified were particularly close to the aesthetic thinking of the 20th century. It is important to note that this attitude was at odds with the traditional methods of art education, prevailing in professional educational institutions. According to them, learning art was understood as mastering a craft. This is how students were taught at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory [30]. Boris Asafyev, who came to the conservatory after graduating from his preliminary year at St. Petersburg University, wrote about it in his memoirs. In his words, the conservatory, compared to the university, was “once again a gymnasium or a monastery life, and sometimes a provincial professionally closed workshop-craft school... The main tone of university life was: learn, think, explore; in the conservatory: learn, listen, believe in word and taste, and do not try anything! It was not about the difference between a school of scientific research and a vocational, even an artistic one. This natural difference was easy to take into account. Alas, the reasons for the drastic distinction were deeper – they were in the fundamental differences between the academic culture of the university and the conservatory, proudly enclosed in its own artistic and professional shield” [2, p.396].

A narrow understanding of their tasks by the conservatory instructors, including even such outstanding personalities as composers and conductors Nikolai Roman-Korsakov (1844-1908), Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936), and Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914), led to the fact that the actual artistic and creative development of students remained outside the sphere of attention and direct influence of their teachers. Talented people, who were chosen to study in the conservatory, had to find their own way to overcome the prevailing methods of education.

Wagner's work was the exact opposite of such trends. It was not enough to have musical flair and to understand the technical aspects of music in order to understand his works. It took a strong intellectual effort.

In connection to this statement, it is interesting to cite observations of the famous Soviet musicologist and theorist Yuri Tyulin (1893-1978) about the nature of creative talent, which, paradoxically, brings the aptitudes of Richard Wagner and Nikolai Medtner closer together. Tyulin writes, “Medtner belonged to the number of composers, who are natural-born

professionals to the highest degree; just like Chopin, Wagner, and Glazunov, he did not have much to learn for the mastery of it" [1, p.110-118]. Both Wagner and Medtner, in their years of studying music theory, equally struggled to grasp dry mathematical calculations. Thus, after two years of having harmony lessons with the Leipzig violinist and composer, Christian Gottlieb Müller, Wagner considered them pedantic and dry. "Music was and remained for me a demonic kingdom, a world of mystically sublime miracles: everything that is right, in my mind, only made it unpleasant. I searched for something more relevant to my ideas, than the teachings of a Leipzig orchestral musician, in Hoffmann's fantastical stories" [28, p.47]. Nikolai Medtner, a piano student at the Moscow Conservatory, also stressed that he had never studied the art of composition as such. He took an elementary harmony class only, on a par with other pianists. After taking the class of counterpoint, led not just by anyone, but the well-respected Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915), Nikolai left without completing even one full semester – it did not interest him at all. At the same time, Taneyev highly appreciated the polyphonic skill shown in Medtner's works, as well as his organic sense of structure; once the professor had jokingly said that Medtner was born with a sonata form in his brain.

Clearly, it appears that the foundation for Wagner's extraordinary fascination by the figures of the Russian Silver Age, to which Emil Medtner had belonged, was well-prepared. Wagner remained a constant subject of their reflections and philosophical acknowledgement, giving life to allusions and reverberations in their own art work. Both Rimsky-Korsakov during his late period and a growing courageous talent, Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915), bared the captivity with Wagner, challenging musical norms, and so did a group of young Russian composers, prone to bold innovations. Thus, music of the German Maestro had played an important role in shaping the artistic thinking of Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953). Thorough acquaintance with Wagnerian works and their analysis helped the young composer break through the boundaries of workshop-level goals and prepared him for communication with the representatives of the Saint Petersburg artistic elite [7, p.38-43]. In those years, Russian Wagnerism captured poets and literary critics Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949), Alexander Blok (1880-1921) Andrei Bely, Valery Bryusov (1873-1924), artists Nicholas Roerich (1874-1947), and Alexandre Benois (one of the founders of the magazine *Mir Iskusstva*).

Much work was being done on Russian translations of the text of Wagnerian libretto. In 1913, during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the German composer, a four-volume Russian edition of Wagner's works was published, including his memoirs *Mein Leben* ("My Life"). Of the concluding character was a pamphlet of literary scholar, teacher and religious writer, Sergei Durylin (1877-1954), entitled *Wagner i Rossiya. Pro Wagnera i buduschkiye puti iskusstva* ("Wagner and Russia. About Wagner and the Future Ways of Art") [9]. According to the author, Wagner should be perceived as a complete phenomenon of both the myth-creator and the myth-thinker. The myth as a people's creation, was returned back to people by Wagner with his art. Durylin wrote about pagan and Christian motives of Wagnerian myth-thinking. The embodiment of the first was, in his words, the character of a "forest boy" Siegfried, unfamiliar with the existing system of moral prohibitions in society, and acting according to his own natural motives. According to the author of the booklet, the pagan element, embodied in the *Der Ring des Nibelungen* tetralogy, has found the greatest response in Germany. At the same time, Parsifal and the Christian religious myth were closer to Russian followers. Among them, Durylin mentions the younger symbolist in Russian poetry, Vyacheslav Ivanov, who studied the religion and the cult of Dionysus in detail. Ivanov advocated for the creation of folk synthetic art, based on religious myths and myth-thinking. In the booklet by Sergei Durylin, as a model of such thinking, the *Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* was described in detail. Curiously, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera on this topic was not considered by the author the ideal embodiment of that plot.

Sergei Durylin's views and his concept of Parsifal as a religious myth are debated in a new large-scale study by the modern Russian philologist and literary critic, Mikhail Pashchenko [17]. In his opinion, based on the philological method of studying sources and backed by a critical assessment of many traditional judgments, Parsifal is a model of true Christian Mysterium. The last opus of the German Maestro is closely related to his turn to Christianity and to the widely understood canons of the Christian faith, overcoming confessional limitations. The only continuation of the unique Wagnerian experience, according to Mikhail Pashchenko, would be Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's last two operas, written 25 years after Parsifal, – a grand epic *Scz o Nevidimom Grade Kitezhe i Deve Fevroniyi* ("The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya"), and the amusing, satirical *mysteria* of Zolotoy Petushok ("The Golden Cockerel").

Observing how the Wagnerian persona and musical inheritance were accepted and adapted in the Russian culture during the years, leading up to the First World War, it is impossible to ignore the name of the largest Russian Symbolist poet and playwright, Alexander Blok (1880-1921). The interest in Wagner and the thorough knowledge of his works is proven by the fact that the Blok's library collection included a fourteen-volume edition of Wagnerian art, as well as Russian translations of his works. Back in 1900, Blok gave his poem *Val'kiriya* ("Valkyrie") a subtitle "[written] on the motif of Wagner's opera." In the summer of 1909, Blok saw the German production of all four operas of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and in 1910 he conceived and mostly completed the poem *Vozmezdnye* ("The Retribution"). In the prologue of the poem, there was a detailed comparison, which included a reference to the plot of Wagner's Siegfried. On March 1918, his article *Iskusstvo i Revolyutsiya* ("Art and Revolution") was written as a response to Wagner's essay *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, published almost 70 years ago. Among the details of Wagnerian biography, Blok recalls the German composer's interaction with the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), and the involvement of both in the revolutionary events that unfolded in Dresden and led to the May uprising of 1849. Despite Wagner's further departure from the revolutionary ideas, his art, in Blok's view, has not lost its truly revolutionary spirit.

The First World War, which divided Russia and Germany as opposing parties, began at the culmination point of Russian Wagnerism. Further acknowledgement of the German Maestro's persona and creative talent would come in the years following the Russian October revolution of 1917. A unique perception of Richard Wagner's legacy as a composer, poet, philosopher, and art theorist inspired the representatives of the period of the cultural peak of Russian history, named the Russian Silver Age, its writers, philosophers, artists, and musicians. In its own way, Wagner's legacy had also influenced the artistic stance of two bright figures of that era, brothers Emil and Nikolai Medtner.

5 Conclusion

The influence of Wagnerian art that the representatives of the Russian Silver Age felt was emphasized by their fascination with the figure of Friedrich Nietzsche and the development of the unique branch of Russian Nietzscheanism. The indirect connections between the nature of the musical talent and aesthetic views of Wagner and Nicholas Medtner have been identified. The origins of the Wagnerism of Emil Medtner were found in the Medtner's family history, it was the first German edition of Wagner's *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, which he inherited from his grandmother, Polina Feodorovna Goedicke. It could be concluded that to Emil Karlovich Medtner, like many other figures of the Russian Silver Age, Wagner was interesting primarily as an art theorist and philosopher of culture. The influence on the formation of images of "Russian Wagner" and "Russian Nietzsche" that made the opinions of religious philosopher, poet and publicist Vladimir Solovyov, as well as Russian Slavophiles and French symbolists, was revealed. It was emphasized that the understandings of the figures of the Silver

Age on the Wagnerian persona and its significance were closely correlated with the all-European context of the 1890s-1900s.

Literature:

1. Apetian, Z.A. (Eds.) (1981). *N.K. Metner. Vospominaniya, stat'i, materialy*. Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor.
2. Asafyev, B.V. (1974). *O sebe. B sbornike "Vospominaniya o B.V. Asafyev"*. Leningrad.
3. Bohdanova, I. (2013). Richard Wagner ta italiys'ka opera ostann'oy tretyny XIX st. *Chasopis, Naukovy zhurnal NMAU*, 2(19), 33-44.
4. Braudo, E.M. (1923). *Richard Wagner i Rossiya. (Novyye materialy i yego biografiya)*. Petrograd: Nachatki znaniy.
5. Cherkashina, M.R. (2005). Wagnerovskiy festival' v Bayroite: stranitzy istoriyi. *Kyivs'ke muzykoznavstvo. Kul'turologiya ta mystetstvoznavstvo*, 18, 107-122.
6. Cherkashina, M.R. (1985). *Aleksandr Nikolayevich Serov*. Moscow: Muzyka.
7. Cherkashina-Gubarenko, M.R. (2002). Fridrikh Nitzshe – filosof i muzykant. *Muzyka i teatr na perekhresty epoch*. Kyiv, 1, 148-156.
8. Cherkashina-Gubarenko, M.R. (2002). Nemetskiy master kak uchitel' Prokof'eva. *Muzyka i teatr na perekhresty epoch*. Kyiv, 1, 38-43.
9. Durylin, S. (1913). *Richard Wagner i Rossiya. O Wagnere i budushchikh putyakh iskusstva*. Moscow: Musaget.
10. Gozenpud, A.A. (1990). *Richard Wagner i russkaya kul'tura*. Leningrad: Sovetskiy kompozitor.
11. Kondakov, I.V., & Korzh, Y.V. (1996). Richard Wagner v russkoy kul'ture Serebryanogo veka. *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'*, 1, 159-170.
12. Korzh, Y.V. (2005). *Dukh muzyki v filosofiyi kul'tury russkogo simvolizma*. A Master Dissertation. Moscow.
13. Lavrov, A.V., Malmstad, J., & Pavlova, T. (Eds.) (2017). *Andrei Bely i Emiliya Metner. Perepiska. 1902-1915*. Moscow: OOO Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye.
14. Medtner, E.K. (1981). *Letter to P.D. Oettinger, 27 September, 1921. N.K. Metner. Stat'i. Materialy. Vospominaniya*. Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor.
15. Mudretska, L. (2013). Wagnerovskiy vliyaniya v opere Jules Massenet "Esklarmonda". *Kyivs'ke muzykoznavstvo. Kul'turologiya ta mictetstvoznavstvo*, 45, 181-199.
16. Mudretska, L. (2005). Wagner i frantsuzskiy kompozitory-sovremenniki. *Kyivs'ke muzykoznavstvo. Kul'turologiya ta mictetstvoznavstvo*, 18, 123-138.
17. Pashchenko, M.V. (2018). *Syuzhet dlya misteriyi: Parsifal' – Kitez – Zolotoy Petushok (istoricheskaya poetika opery v kanun moderna)*. Moscow; St. Petersburg: Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ.
18. Pohl, V. (1981). *Fragmenty vospominaniy. N.K. Metner. Stat'i. Materialy. Vospominaniya*. Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor.
19. Schuré, É. (1909). *Richard Wagner i yego muzykal'naya drama*. Foreword by A. Kal'. St. Petersburg, Moscow: M.O. Wolf & Partners.
20. Serov, A.N. (1897). Letter to M.E. Slavinsky, 6 July 1869. *Russkaya muzykal'naya gazeta*, 12, 1695.
21. Serov, A.N. (1877). Letter to M.P. Anastasyeva, 7 April 1859. *Russkaya starina*, 20, 534.
22. Solovyov, V.S. (1989). *Ideya sverkh-cheloveka. Sochineniya. Chteniya o Bogochelovechestve. Filosofskaya publitsistika*. Moscow: Pravda, 2, 610-619.
23. Tchaikovsky, Peotr I. (2021). *The life and work of the Russian composer*. "Bayreyskoye muzykal'noye torzhestvo", Part 1. Available at: www.tchaikov.ru/bayr1.html.
24. Tchaikovsky, Peotr I. (2021). *The life and work of the Russian composer*. "Bayreyskoye muzykal'noye torzhestvo", Part 5. Available at: www.tchaikov.ru/bayr5.html.
25. Tchaikovsky, Peotr I. (1953). Bayreyskoye muzykal'noye torzhestvo. *Muzykal'no-kriticheskiye stat'i*. Moscow: Muzgiz.
26. Tchaikovsky, Peotr I. (1953). *Muzykal'no-kriticheskiye stat'i*. Moscow: Muzgiz.
27. Viskovaty, P.A. (Eds.) (1883). Alexander Serov i Richard Wagner, *Russkaya starina*, 38, 481-484.
28. Wagner, R. (2003). *Moya zhizn'*. Moscow: Ekmo, St. Petersburg: Fantastica.
29. Wagner, R. (1974). *Stat'i i materialy*. Moscow: Musika.
30. Yuggren, M. (2001). *Russkiy Mefistofel'. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo Emiliya Metnera*. St. Petersburg.

Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AL