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Amateur Piano Music-Making and the Ufa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society*

The geographic position of Ufa, which in the early 19th century was a deep province, was not conducive to the development of musical culture. However, we must consider as an important element in its formation the active spread of household music-making and the wish of amateurs to participate in the city's concert life. The "Society for Singing, Music and the Art of Drama" was founded in 1885 in Ufa following the wishes of the city residents.

The twenty-year-long existence of the Society has left a considerable trace in the development of musical education and the exposure of the public to the academic genres of the art of piano performance; it played a significant role in the development of musical literacy and the musical hearing of the residents of Ufa.

In virtue of a number of existing social reasons the Society was closed down, but following the request of the most educated part of the local nobility and intelligentsia the Ufa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS). Having existed for only a few years, until the revolution of 1917, it was able to lead the art of music to a new, higher level. Professionals with a higher musical education were conducive to the further expansion

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Географическое положение Уфы, одного из крупных городов России, являющейся в начале XIX века глубокой провинцией, долгое время не способствовало развитию музыкальной культуры. Однако важным явлением для её становления следует считать активное распространение домашнего музицирования и желание любителей участвовать в концертной жизни города. В 1885 году в Уфе по просьбе горожан было открыто «Общество пения, музыки и драматического искусства».

Двадцатилетнее существование Общества оставило значительный след в развитии музыкального просветительства и в приобщении публики к академическим жанрам фортепианного искусства: были апробированы новые концертные формы, способствовавшие развитию музыкального вкуса горожан. В силу ряда сложившихся социальных причин Общество вскоре было закрыто, но по просьбе передовой части населения было открыто Уфимское отделение Императорского Русского музыкального общества (ИРМО). Просуществовав всего несколько лет, до революции 1917 года, оно смогло вывести культуру Уфы на новый, более высокий уровень.

^{*} Translated by Anton Rovner.



of promotion of music with their concert performances and teaching lessons in the musical classes and enhanced the development of the art of professional music in Bashkiria.

Keywords:

Ufa, music lovers, salon music-making, Society for "Singing, Music and the Art of Drama," Imperial Russia Musical Society (IRMS). Приехавшие в республику профессионалы с высшим музыкальным образованием своими концертными выступлениями и педагогической работой способствовали дальнейшему расширению любительского музицирования и содействовали развитию профессионального музыкального искусства Башкирии.

Ключевые слова:

Уфа, любители музыки, салонное музицирование, Общество «Пения, музыки и драматического искусства», Императорское Русское музыкальное общество (ИРМО).

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The path towards professionalism traversed by the Bashkir musical art of piano performance turned out to be lengthy and unique in its essence. The formation of the musical traditions of Ufa took place in the context of complex social-historical, religious and political conditions. Ufa, which appeared on the map of Russia in the second half of the 16th century amidst the virgin steppes and forests of the Ural Mountains, with a dearth of connections with the civilized world in many ways determined this specific character.

Local history expert Alexander Gulyayev wrote in 1914: "This was a comparatively small town, similarly to a military outpost, raised far from the boundary of the area settled by Russians and standing at a rather isolated position from it. Onward from Ufa to Southern Siberia, as well as in the Kyrgyz steppes and, generally, in the direction towards Central Asia at a distance of many thousand versts there was not a single Russian person residing" [4, p. 87].

A specific and decisive factor in the formation of this process could be seen, first of all, in the parallel existence of two cultures: the unique national monody culture of the Bashkirs, presented exclusively by the art of the oral village tradition, and the traditions of household music-making in the Russian urban milieu. In virtue of these circumstances the formation of the culture and the art of music took place slowly, while the period of accumulation of the premises for their development will extend for almost three centuries.

Also noteworthy is that the formation of the art of music in Ufa in the 18th and 19th centuries was connected with amateur music-making, primarily by pianists. In the 19th century this style of pastime for the nobility in the capital cities began to spread along the various regions and cities of the country. It started being cultivated much earlier in the Western regions, for example, in the Ukraine — in Kharkov and Odessa.

In Ufa the process of generation of amateur piano music-making began significantly later: the mid-19th century is characterized merely by the appearance of its rudiments. Similar tendencies can be noticed in the cities of Siberia and the Far East — for example, in Tomsk, Irkutsk and





Photo 1. Inscription under the Photograph:
"The Death of Sussanin.
The role of Sussanin is performed by Timokhov"²

Tobolsk, where the formation of the piano performance school began to emerge only in the 1820s and 1830s.

As in a number of other regions, the formation of the art of music in Ufa passed through the stage of the creation of a regional musical society. The end of the 19th century witnessed the gradual formation of a milieu ready to join forces for the sake of combined organized music-making. In 1885 upon the initiative of the head of the Ufa Gubernia Dmitri Volkov a circle of the most musically advanced city dwellers gathered together with the aim of establishing a permanent society of lovers of music and drama.¹

On the example of the organization of this society it becomes possible to observe how at the end of the 19th century a new form of performers' community begins to emerge, which would replace the salon-chamber type of music-making — essentially, the

first concert organization which included membership of regular performers. At their first stages, as a rule, such artistic communities had *mixed* type of membership. They were headed by people who possessed certain definite skills and abilities and even the corresponding education. They, in particular, formed around themselves a circle of amateur musicians, striving for a high-quality performance of musical compositions acceptable for the perception of outsiders. In this connection the creative collaboration of the Ufa-based musicians at that time may be regarded as activity with elements of mandatory performance conditions. It must be noticed that work on rehearsals was carried out from the musical scores.

The amateur level of the overwhelming number of performers led to the flourishing of *ensemble music-making*. Analysis of the





Photo 2. Inscription under the Photograph: "Soloists: I. Sussanin — Bulykin II. Sobinin — Abramov III. Sussanin — Tilyukov IV. Sobinin — Yeverestov V. Vanya — Baboshina VI. Antonida — Stepanova 7. Vanya — Glatsinova"

programs of the musical evenings has made it possible to ascertain that the piano held the steadfast position of an indispensable participant.³ Among the immutable numbers in the programs, among the solo pieces, were the four- and eight-hand piano compositions.

An extremely significant form of presenting academic classical music — namely, the public concert — begins to be formed. The concert evenings in Ufa became entrenched into the everyday life of the city as an indispensable part of the culture. Their organization was regulated by a system of perception about the arrangement of life of the city's population and aroused positive responses. Among the mandatory components, whereupon, were balls with dances, comprising the basic element of the social-aesthetic activity as "an important structural element of the everyday life of the nobility."

Towards the early 20th century the "Society of Lovers of Singing, Music and the Art of Drama" undergoes a period of decline. The directorate makes the attempt to save the organization from disintegration, making the decision to accustom the musicians who could perform technically difficult repertoire to work. The leader in piano performance during the course of several years was Varvara Dmitrievna Parshina, a pianist and vocalist who possessed a professional musical education, a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, where she studied piano and voice. In the article "Obshchestvo lyubiteley iskusstva" ["Society of Art Lovers"] the Ufa-based local history expert Georgiy Gudkov writes that Varvara Parshina studied with Anton Rubinstein, who "made the most active contribution to the success of the talented pianist from Ufa" [3]. In Ufa Parshina gave private piano and voice lessons and



presented numerous concerts. In his article "Pervaya uchenitsa Feodora Ivanovicha Shalyapina" ["The First Lady-Pupil of Feodor Ianovich Shalyapin"] Nikolai Barsov placed his reminiscences of Ivan Sadovnikov about Parshina's performing style: "I was fortunate to have heard several times her performance on the piano. She played lightly, freely, conveying the conceptions of the composers of various works with ravishment," the old-timer noted [1].

In 1892 Marionilla Ivanovna Andrzheyevskaya, who arrived in Ufa after completing studies at the Moscow Conservatory, where she was a piano student of Alexander Siloti, reinforced the group of active members of the Society. The appearance of the pianist, who carried the best traditions of the Russian school of performance, on the scene was undoubtedly conducive to inactivating the continuity of the professional connections of the city's musicians.

An interesting detail draws attention towards itself in the reports of the Society. The programs frequently listed names of amateur musicians among the participants of the musical evenings. Apparently, the Society's permanent members considered themselves *professionals*. This peculiarity of this artistic community elucidates the meaning and the interpretation of the essence of the concepts of "professional" and "amateur", which are frequently reduced to external signs. The active members of the Society and other government officials participating in the city's musical life did not pertain to the category of professional musicians by contemporary standards. In the understanding of the city residents of those years, the active members of that time were:

- 1) professionals (who had a professional musical education),
- 2) half-professionals (persons who received musical training in the form of household private musical lessons),
- 3) amateurs (most likely, self-taught learners engaged in musical activities independently).

Thereby, for the first time in Ufa a social organization was founded which placed as its goal the organization of regular concerts for the residents of the city and the creation of conditions for public performances of amateur musicians. In addition, the Society was conducive to the formation of artistic taste and interest in academic music on the part of the audiences. The main achievement of the twenty-year old existence of the organization was the formation of premises for development of personal piano performance in Ufa.

In the first pre-revolutionary and first post-revolutionary years the condition of the urban musical culture of Ufa can be characterized as tense and contradictory. The complex social and political situation in Russia influenced the development of culture and art. Thus, in Bashkiria towards the close of 1905 the peasant movement overtook all the counties of the Ufa and Orenburg gubernias. The artistic life of Ufa was left almost entirely unilluminated in the periodical press, whereas the art of music returned once again to drawing rooms and salons. The overall city culture of that time had not yet achieved the level of development at which it could be possible to speak even of the rudiments of professional art. From 1906 to 1913 in connection with the decline in the activities of the Society's Musical Sector, as well as the result of the departure from the city of numerous active musicians the need of the Ufa residents in the satisfaction of their aesthetical requests was met by the Sector for Dramatic Art.

The period of decline of the musical life of Ufa lasted until 1913. The surviving separated musical forces and the rather developed milieu of audiences in Ufa craved for new musical impressions. By 1913 the musical community raised the question of opening the Ufa Section of the IRMS. A petition was sent from Ufa, which stated: "In the interests of art itself we consider it a timely and indispensable act to open in the city of Ufa a section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society."





Photo 3. Inscription under the Photograph: "All the Participants and Directors"

The petition sent to the Main Directorate of the IRMS in St. Petersburg was supported by a cover letter from the gubernator of Ufa from March 4, 1913, No. 1939 concerning the lack of objections from his side and a request "to satisfy the designated petition." Moreover, the journal of the Directorate of the IRMS from 1913 contains the "permission to establish musical classes affiliated with the Ufa Section of the IRMS and to rename the existent Music School of Victor Osipovich Baranovsky into them." In the certificate about the inauguration of the Ufa Section by the Provision of the Main Directorate from June 12, 1913 it has been noted that "Victor Osipovich Baranovsky graduated from the Warsaw Musical Institute with attestation as a student of a piano class and perfected his skills with professors Theodore Leschetitzky and Julius Johannsen. Prior to his affiliation with Ufa, he had his own musical school in Novocherkassk for over 10 years. It was decreed: to permit the establishment of musical classes and to ask Her Highness the Chairwoman of the Society to permit Victor Osipovich Baranovsky perform the duties of the director" (TsGIA St. Petersburg, Journal of the Main Directorate of the IRMS from November 17, 1913).

It its turn an application arrived to the Main Directorate of the IRMS with the request to confirm the chosen directorate of the Ufa Section, comprised of chairwoman Maria Sveshnikova; assistant chairman Sergei Shishkin, director Maria Kharitonova and honorary member, gubernator of the city Piotr Bashilov.⁵

The Ufa Section of the IRMS was ceremoniously inaugurated on August 29, 1913 in Ufa in the presence of Piotr Bashilov.

In the beginning of the century new names of musicians are heard in the city: pianist S. Mikhnevich, violinist Vyacheslav Sternad and cellist S. Izdebskaya, which were



conducive to a significant increase of the professional "degree of heat" in the musical life of Ufa. Their performance activities called new musical genres into existence. The audiences in Ufa become familiar with chamber music, which assumes the leading positions in the musical evenings: Piotr Tchaikovsky's Trio opus 50 in A minor, Franz Liszt's Paraphrase on the Themes from Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Rigoletto", Anton Rubinstein's Trio opus 15 No. 2 in G Minor, Max Bruch's Concerto for Violin and Piano in G Minor, and Reinhold Gliere's Ouartet in A Major; Edvard Grieg's Cello Sonata and Quartet opus 27 in G Minor⁶; Alexander Borodin's Quartet in D Major and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov's Quartet opus 9 in A-flat Major. A noticeable event in the city was a large concert consisting of three sections, organized on March 27, 1915, dedicated to the memory of Anton Rubinstein, consisting of the composer's original works. It presented to the audiences the composer's chamber works: Trio in G Minor, opus 15, the second movement of the Sonata for Piano and Cello, and "Melody" for cello, in which the piano part was performed by pianist Marionilla Andrzheyevska. In addition, she performed in a heartfelt manner — Romance and "Toreodor and the Spanish Lady."

The 1914-1915 concert season brought a noticeable revival. Seven concerts were organized, five of which were evenings of chamber music, the programs of which were very diverse and consisted of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Joseph Haydn, Edvard Grieg, Jan Sibelius, Alexander Borodin, Reinhold Gliere, Grigoriy Davidovsky, Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov, Mikhail Lisitsyn, Piotr Tchaikovsky, and Erkki Malartin. The performers were instructors of the Musical Classes of the Ufa Section of the IRMS: pianists Marionella Andrzheyevskaya, S. Mikhnevich, Maria Poleshchuk-Uvodskaya, cellist S.Ya. Izdebskaya, violinist Vyacheslav Sternad, violist I.P. Ishpaykin. The concert featured the participation of the loval music lovers L.I. Ass, S.M. Yuryev, N.M. Rumyantseva and D.A. Tsyganov.8

The archival documents indicate that Victor Baranovsky, who was the director of the Musical Classes, sometimes performed in concerts. For example, in the Chamber Concert on March 25, 1914 he performed Two Mazurkas opus 37 and opus 33, No. 4 by Chopin. The same concert featured a performance of String Quartet No. 4 by Robert Schumann with his participation.

The concert practice, as may be seen from the report from the Ufa Section, unified the artistic activities of *professionals*, "half-professionals" (Alexander Maklygin) and amateurs, which progressed from the general milieu of dilettantes by the brightest abilities and talents. There had not existed yet a concise division into professionals and amateur performers, and the concerts were frequently mixed in their makeup.

The activities of the Musical Classes could not possible carry on without at least a few scandalous stories. Victor Baranovsky was relieved of his duties of a director for having permitted a loss of financial assets. He was replaced in his position by Marionilla Andrzheyevskaya (1869–1957), whose talent flourished with the establishment of the Ufa Section of the IRMS. Her gift as a pianist and her contribution to the development of the art of Bashkir music, by standards of the republic's significance, is quite high. Andrzheyevskaya's formation as a concertizing pianist took place in Ufa, and in the process of her activity her individual creative line of character was revealed: her inclination towards chamber music.

A native of Ufa, Maria Poleshchuk-Uvodskaya worked in the Musical Classes, after having returned to Ufa after completing studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The pianist's successful performances brought in a gust of fresh air into the concert programs. In the responses of the critics she was characterized as a professional and mature musician (there is information available that on April 4, 1915 a musical evening took place on which Poleshchuk-Uvodskaya performed the austere and technically difficult "32 Variations" by Beethoven).

The Musical Classes demonstrated positive changes. The piano class remained the most prestigious in the school, its role is perceivable by the group of instructors, which by that time increased significantly. Besides Andrzheyevskaya, it included: E.V. Perfilova-Boris, L. Feinstein, V.A. Vordlevskaya, O.M. Rubinskaya, and N.S. Izmailova. From an advertisement from the newspaper "Ufimskaya zhizn" ["Ufa Life"] we learn of the establishment of classes of violin, cello and other instruments.

The pedagogues of the Musical Classes tried to involve their apprentices to concert practice, which is testified by archival documents. In 1915 the students prepared four concerts. The programs included: sonatinas by Fritz Spindler, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Joseph Haydn, Franz Schubert's Variations, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Fantasia; contrapuntal compositions by Johann Sebastian Bach; etudes by Felix Lecouppey, Karl Leschhorn, Stephen Heller, Jean Ravine; pieces by Cornelius Gurlitt, Robert Schumann, Charles Dancla, Felix Mendelssohn, Frederic Chopin and Ludwig van Beethoven.⁹

Obviously, the level of the programs corresponded to the normative requirements for students of the Musical Classes. However, in them ensemble music, as a rule, was also present in its most diverse genres. The listeners were presented with performances of Charles Dancla's Symphony No. 3 for 2 violins and piano, Joseph Haydn's Trio in *F# Minor* and String Quartet, Karl Maria von Weber's "Konzertstück", and Franz Schubert's "Marche Militaire" for 2 pianos. There were frequently performances in instrumental concerts with violinists and pianists, or with cellists and pianists. The piano parts, as a rule, were reserved for the students.

The new paths of development of the art of piano performance in Ufa were denoted more and more precisely. The quality of repertoire programs of public concert evenings testifies about a significant increase of the professional level. They included compositions that were complicated in the technical regard and profound in their contents both by the

Classicists (Ludwig van Beethoven) and by the Romanticists (Robert Schumann, Frederic Chopin, Edvard Grieg). Most impressive was the interest on the part of the performers towards the music of Russian composers: Sergei Rachmaninoff, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov and others.

The concert repertoire consisting of works primarily of salon direction, popular in the milieu of lovers of ensemble music gives place to serious and complex genres that trios and quartets present themselves to be. Large-scale, significant compositions come to the forefront, demanding from the performer not only a successful rendition of the musical score, but an understanding of the profound essence of the musical composition, which frequently does not lie at the surface. Thereby, the concert activities of the musicians of the city passes onto a new, professional stage. This may be judged by the qualitatively new repertoire in the programs: Ludwig van Beethoven's "32 Variations", Franz Liszt's "Paraphrase" for piano on the themes of Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Rigoletto", and Piotr Tchaikovsky's Trio opus 50, which testify to the fact that in Ufa there appeared musicians the level of mastery of piano performance of which made it possible to turn to musical compositions that were complex in their technique and significant in their content, demonstrating at the same a high and perfect level of performing art.

Thereby, the changed historical realities brought out new realities before the musical culture of the city. The art of piano playing in Ufa also sensed the wind of change against the background of a rising movement of national consciousness. What corresponded closest of all to the spirit of the times was the style of Romanticism with its soul stirring aspiration towards liberty and heroic pathos. This direction was apprehended by pianists who remained in Ufa and by new teachers who comprised the faculty of the renewed afresh Musical Classes of the Imperial Russian Musical Society, which existed until 1917.





- ¹ The principle of the formation of a "circle", as it was called at that time, was based on a distinction between the social classes. It consisted of nobility, state councilors, the clergy and landowners. The Society of Lovers of Singing, Music and the Art of Drama owes its formation to the greatest degree to true lovers of art the Sevastyanov family: Dmitri Sevastyanov (professional violinist), his daughter (professional pianist) Varvara Parshina, her brother Mikhail Sevastyanov (a doctor by his education).
- ² The photographs in the article are taken from a photo album published in Ufa in 1913. On the cover it is inscribed: "In memory of the production of Mikhail Ivanovich Glinka's opera 'A Life for the Tsar' in Ufa by the Pupils of Intermediary Educational Institutions on the Day of the 300th Anniversary of the Reign of the Romanov Dynasty. Ufa. Photographer: O. German."
- ³ For example, in the Report of the Music Sector it can be noticed that a considerable number of compositions for piano were performed in ensembles: four-hand piano Carl Maria von Weber's Overture to the opera "Abu-Hassan", Franz von Suppe's Overture to his opera "Poet snd Peasant", and Richard Eilenberg's "March of the Gnomes". There were frequent performances of compositions by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Joseph Haydn,
- Gioacchino Rossini, and Giuseppe Verdi. The best renown was enjoyed by the music of Russian composers: the vocal compositions of Mikhail Glinka, Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Anton Rubinstein, and the "Russian German" Alexander Dubuck. A perceivable amount of attention in the concert programs was given to composers who were popular at that time: Alessandro Stradello, Richard Eilenberg, Cesar Puni, Joseph Foersten and others [for more details see: Reports of the Ufa Society for Singing, Music and the Art of Drama (1885–1902). Scholarly Library of the UNTs UO RAN. r V 16979].
- ⁴ Petition for the Establishment of the Ufa Section of the IRMS. TsGIA. St. Petersburg. F. 744, D. 32. RL. 15.
- ⁵ Report of the Ufa Section of the IRMS for 1914–1915. TsGIA. St. Petersburg. F. 408. Inv. 1, D. No. 63a.
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