

Russian *Émigré* Culture

Russian *Émigré* Culture:
Conservatism or Evolution?

Edited by

Christoph Flamm, Henry Keazor
and Roland Marti

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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

Russian culture has always fascinated and puzzled the outside world and Western and Central Europe in particular. Russian icon-painting, the Russian novelists of the 19th century, Russian music and its performers, the proverbial *ballets russes* etc.; they were all perceived as the expression of that unfathomable “Russian soul” that seemed so familiar and yet so elusive. The situation became even more complex after the October Revolution that eventually led to a division: a Russian culture in Russia (or rather in the Soviet Union) and a Russian *émigré* culture came into being. The latter was, for political reasons, mainly studied in the West, and the analyses as well as the culture itself were often politically tainted. The political changes at the end of the last century brought about a revival of these studies, as Russian *émigré* culture could finally be recognised everywhere as an important part of Russian culture in general. Numerous conferences were held and their proceedings were published, usually devoted to particular periods (the several waves of emigration), particular centres of emigration (“Russian Berlin”, “Russian Paris”) or particular areas of culture (above all literature, but also the arts and music).

In view of this it might seem superfluous to publish yet another volume to document yet another conference devoted to Russian *émigré* culture. This particular conference, however, is different from most of the others. It was conceived of as a companion to an international festival of music written by Russian *émigré* composers (Prokof'ev, Rakhmaninov, Stravinsky, Grechaninov, Tcherepnin, Denisov, Schnittke and many others). The festival was organised jointly by E. Derzhavina (Moscow), T. Duis and C. Flamm (both Saarbrücken) and took place in Saarbrücken in November 2011 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the death of N. Medtner. The organisers felt strongly that a proper understanding of the music of these composers would not be possible without considering the larger context of Russian *émigré* culture in general, and thus the idea of the conference “Russian *Émigré* Culture: Conservatism or Evolution?” was born, including, in addition to music, the visual arts and literature.

The conference papers were delivered in English or German, Russian being the third, “semi-official” language, often used in discussions. They were revised for the publication and are published in English, the original multilingualism of the conference being reflected in the abstracts (and in many cases in the papers where quotations are often given in Russian and in an English translation).

A major problem encountered in preparing the papers for publication was the transliteration of Russian proper names. Basically British transliteration was used except in those cases when the names appear mainly in non-Russian sources in a specific transcription. Still some inconsistencies remain.

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“MY LOVE, FORGIVE ME THIS APOSTASY”:
SOME THOUGHTS ON RUSSIAN
ÉMIGRÉ CULTURE¹

CHRISTOPH FLAMM

οἶδ’ ἐγὼ φεύγοντας ἄνδρας ἐλπίδας σιτουμένους.
(Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1653)

I know how men in exile feed on dreams of hope.

Caelum, non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt.
(Horace, *Epistles*, I, xi, 27)

They change their sky, not their soul, who rush across the sea.

Since Gorbachev’s *perestroyka*, Russian emigration, which had until then been anathema to Soviet authorities, has been thoroughly reconsidered both from within and outside of Russia. When president Boris Yel’tsin on 11 August 1994 issued the ukaz “Об основных направлениях государственной политики Российской Федерации в отношении соотечественников, проживающих за рубежом” [On the main directions of the state policy of the Russian Federation concerning compatriots living abroad], a decree ultimately resulting in the present-day federal bureau *Rossotrudnichestvo* which takes care of all matters concerning Russians living outside Russia, it was a symbol, a start signal for directing one’s minds anew to those millions that had left Russia in Soviet times. Since then, the study of Russian emigration as a phenomenon has become a separate branch of research. With the support of the Russian government, specialised university departments and public institutions have been founded, such as the *Biblioteka-fond ‘Russkoe zarubezh’e’* in Moscow (1995), renamed *Dom russkogo zarubezh’ya imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna* in 2005. The first steps were directed at emigrant networks and centres such as the YMCA Press in Paris, and such influential representatives of Russian *émigré* culture as Solzhenitsyn. In redefining a new post-Soviet identity, Russia had tried to pick up the broken ties of pre-revolutionary culture, the most symbolic expression being the canonisation of the Romanovs in 2000, which took place in the resurrected Cathedral of

Christ the Saviour on the banks of the Moskva which had been demolished under Stalin and replaced by a public swimming pool under Khrushchev. Separate from tsarist nostalgia, there has been a reconsideration of the incompatible “elements” of later Soviet times as well, of both the expelled and the suppressed, often referred to as the outer and inner emigration. This is a Russian heritage of its own, most often unconnected to pre-revolutionary ideas. Obviously, Russian *émigré* culture is multifaceted.

Now that ideological prescriptions and archival restrictions have generally disappeared – though subtle and even not-so-subtle ideological premises are discernible on both sides of the former iron curtain – research is being carried out in the most varied of ways, and with varied intentions: be it the realisation of Solzhenitsyn’s dream of a monumental All-Russian Memorial Library uniting the cultural heritage of the Russian diaspora on Russian soil, in order to heal the Russian soul, be it the correction of cultural historiography that has been distorted in Cold War times, or be it the application of colourful (even if faded) nationalist stamps on the disenchanting grey of globalised culture. As fragmentary as present-day knowledge of archival sources and artistic works might still be, the whole complex of primary and secondary materials concerning “Russia Abroad” (*Russkoe zarubezh’e*) has become immense. There are two ways of dealing with such a vast panorama: either dividing it into suitable portions according to research fields, chronological or geographical criteria, or contemplating the phenomenon in its entirety. The heuristic golden path should probably lead through a healthy combination of both perspectives – it would call for an interdisciplinary approach as well as for in-depth investigation of single representatives or their works of art: writings, paintings, compositions, choreographies, films etc.

Problems of definition

But before thinking about “Russian *émigré* culture”, we should ask for more precise definitions. What is this expression supposed to cover and what are its limits?

The first aspect is chronology. Obviously, the paramount historical significance of the October Revolution and its traumatic consequences has shaped – and thus narrowed – any perspective on Russian emigration as a whole. Seldom has the mass exodus after the Bolshevik revolution and Civil War, the so-called First Wave, been put within a broader perspective of Russian emigration, beginning with the siege of Byzantium by an army

from the Kievan Rus' in 906 A.D. and leading up to the present day (Glad 1999). Not only have there been second (World War II), third (the Brezhnev era) and fourth (the economical breakdown of the 1990s) waves, but also phases of considerable intellectual or economical emigration in tsarist times, not to mention those leaving Putin's Russia more recently. So, while it can be stated that "the condition of formal exile" ceased to exist at the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Velis Blinova 2009: 19), it is impossible to close the book on Russian emigration in general. Artists like Kandinsky or Stravinsky who set foot in the West well before the Revolution are considered archetypes of Russian *émigré* culture, but here the (anti-)Soviet background only matters to a very small extent. Still, the question of whether or not one should view the Russian diaspora as an entity may depend on periodisation. Marc Raeff has argued that between the Civil War and World War II, Russia's *émigrés* had indeed established a sort of exiled society, since most social classes were represented and the *émigrés* did not want to assimilate in their host countries for fear of denationalisation: "Russia Abroad was a society by virtue of its firm intention to go on living as 'Russia', to be the truest and culturally most creative of the two Russias that political circumstances had brought into being." (Raeff 1990: 5) It remains questionable, though, to what extent sociological aspects allow the grouping together of *émigré* Russians in matters of aesthetics and cultural production. Often enough, this idea has been wishful thinking of those concerned. The so-called Paris group of Russian composers in the 1920s, which according to Arthur Lourié represented an unexplainable "Russian musical language" (Lourié 1932: 528), was evidently connected by biographical factors only, whereas aesthetical positions and stylistic profiles differed widely: "not a musical band of persons holding similar views, but merely a geographical one" (Sabaneyeff 1927: 235). Much the same can be said of the Paris group of Russian painters. The sort of unification that did happen to artistic exile communities was their sharing of common influences.

Apart from chronological questions, every constituent of the expression "Russian *émigré* culture" seems in need of explication.

"Russian": Russia's boundaries moved forward and (less often) backward across the centuries, and it has been home to many ethnic groups. Being part of a supranational entity, Soviet Russia spread its influence, its cultural models and its artistic protagonists even farther over vast territories. Is it appropriate to view the Georgian composer Giya Kancheli as part of Russian *émigré* culture, since his most intimate ties and influences

were with Soviet composers outside Georgia, and he did not intend to write works portraying his Caucasian home? Would it be inappropriate if he had decided to write works in a nationalist spirit? There are no easy answers to such questions. However, isolated from the convergence or divergence of Soviet versus Russian definitions, and from the well-known problem of national identity, there has been a tacit understanding of principally separating Russian emigration from other, similar *émigré* movements, for example in other countries of the former Eastern bloc. Particularly in view of the supranational structures in Soviet times, covering *de facto* much of the cultural life of all of Eastern Europe, it seems inappropriate to apply traditional ideas of nationhood in this new context. Recently, attempts have been made to consider the tidings of Russian exile in a broader panorama of European countries (Gutthy 2009).

“*Émigré*”: Though there are cases of artists being expelled physically (Joseph Brodsky was put on an aeroplane in 1972), in most cases it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the primary reasons for leaving Russia: were they political, economical, or personal (religious, spiritual, moral)? In spite of all the extremities and sufferings involved, it is clear that many emigrants after 1917 chose to leave their country primarily for reasons similar to those for which their ancestors in former centuries, or their descendants in more recent times, crossed borders, namely economical stability and a peaceful life; Rakhmaninov comes to mind. Many of the artists that left Russia did neither experience political pressure nor aesthetical disapproval, not to mention censorship or banning – notwithstanding the fact that censorship since tsarist times (and to the present day) has been a major issue in Russian cultural life. Looking at the first wave of artistic emigration after 1917, John E. Bowlt states that “neither disappointment in the proletarian dictatorship, nor alarm at state interference in the arts served as dominant reasons for the mass emigration of artists and writers. Reasons were often much more trivial and more mundane such as the lack of applies, physical discomfort, personal enmities.” (Bowlt 1981: 215) Yet, the financial or professional misery of many emigrants still was the result of compulsory expropriation, social or institutional restructuration, their decision to move away thus inseparably bound to political actions. And with the exception of the experimental 1920s and the thaw period, artistic ideas, if directed at the public, had to suit expectations or at least to avoid offensive gestures. All this explains in a certain sense why the overall impression of *émigré* culture has often been its “political” character, in the words of the prose writer Alla Ktorova: “the main theme of *émigré* literature seemed to be a tiresome exposure

of the evil Soviet government” (cit. after Glad 1999: 15). Western scholars in particular tended to stress the political dimensions of emigration and exile, and emphasised the political message or subtext of Russian *émigré* culture accordingly, especially in literature. But already Marc Raeff has put the interest in politics within the Russian exile community into perspective (Raeff 1990: 7-8). Very few writers were politically active. Nevertheless, the “works of these dissident writers have rarely been studied for their purely aesthetical value, and scholars are often unable to resist reading extra-textual political content.” (Gutthy 2009: 3) Meanwhile, new approaches to Russian *émigré* culture have become possible. This does not necessarily mean de-politicising the *émigrés’* output only because it had seemingly been politicised before, in the aftermath of the Revolution, World War II and the Cold War. But it could mean trying to look on the cultural heritage of Russia abroad, at least in a first putative step, as if it had been created by anybody else who left his country. Significant questions could then be addressed more properly to works and authors – and their true political meaning or dimension might become much clearer.

“Culture”: Until now, studies of Russian *émigré* culture have mostly been confined to literature. From the 1930s on, *émigré* writers themselves reflected on the state of their literature (Khodasevich 1933, Aldanov 1936; cf. Iswolsky 1942). From Struve’s initial survey (1956) to the dictionaries of our days (Nikolyukin 1997-2006), Russian *émigré* literature has been continuously explored separately, because it started doing so. Apart from this obvious circumstance, the exclusion of other areas of culture has been justified with the assumption that these did not express national identity so clearly:

Modern Russian culture, it seems, found its strongest expression, in its most individualized and characteristic form, in literature. Of course, literary media are easily transmitted and seem to be the most ‘exportable’; and language is the one feature that defines a unique national identity. Painting and music can also claim to represent Russian cultural achievements in unique ways, but such claims are contestable, since music and visual arts are seen rather as universal and are more easily assimilated into the Western or world cultural scene. (Raeff 1990: 95)

This assumption is highly problematic. At the very least, a distinction should be made between artistic form and content: Though the Russian language is a defining aspect of Russian culture, it may be used to serve completely different purposes to those which have usually been claimed by Raeff and others, namely “preservation, conservation, and preparation

[for the return]” (Mjør 2011: 48). And of course there are broad and deep Russian traditions in painting and music as well, traditions which have been discussed, defended and strengthened all throughout the 19th century, traditions based both on subject and on style – it may suffice to mention Stravinsky and the Russian works of his Swiss pre-war period. And if we want to understand the phenomenon of Russian *émigré* culture as a whole, the notion of culture must be broadened much further. A two-volume survey of the cultural heritage of the Russian emigration 1917-1940, published only a few years after the end of the Soviet Union (Chelyshev & Shakhovskoy 1994), dedicated whole sections to politics, philosophy and theology, genealogy, (natural) science and technology, literature, arts and archival matters. In the end, Igor’ Sikorsky’s helicopters are as much part of Russian *émigré* culture as Nabokov’s novels. But there is a much more serious methodological objection to most of the studies on Russian *émigré* culture (or parts of it): They are guided by the desire to see them as being coherent in some way, to see a common denominator for virtually all the *émigré* artists in their allegedly common intention to preserve and continue the traditions of their homeland, to create a collective cultural memory (cf. Mjør 2011: 49). This view is necessarily simplistic, for it does not take into account the possibility of *aesthetical immigration*, i.e. of choosing a new artistic home and expression in new surroundings, independent of passports. In any case, the intention of *émigré* artists should be deduced not only from their self-analyses, the *émigré* press and memorial literature, but from an analysis of their artworks as well. The inner perspective of self-reflection has to be measured against the outer perspective, which can be gained by comparison. Just how different such perspectives could be in Russian *émigré* circles has been expressed in a telling caricature of *Illyustrirovannaya Rossiya* (ill. 1).

This leads us to the initial idea of the symposium that lies at the heart of this volume. It had been directed not only towards the artistic life of the Russian *émigré* culture, but especially towards its artistic products. To what extent do these works reflect conservation of traditions? Would this result in conservatism of artistic means as well, or does preserving Russian spirit allow for an evolution of style? In what way does the confrontation with cultural activities in other countries lead to interaction, or to rejection? If *émigré* artists really shared common aesthetical views, has their relationship been subjected to transformation according to different developments abroad? Or, to put it simply: is Russian *émigré* culture conservative or progressive, and how does this relate to the cultural developments in other countries – and in Russia itself?

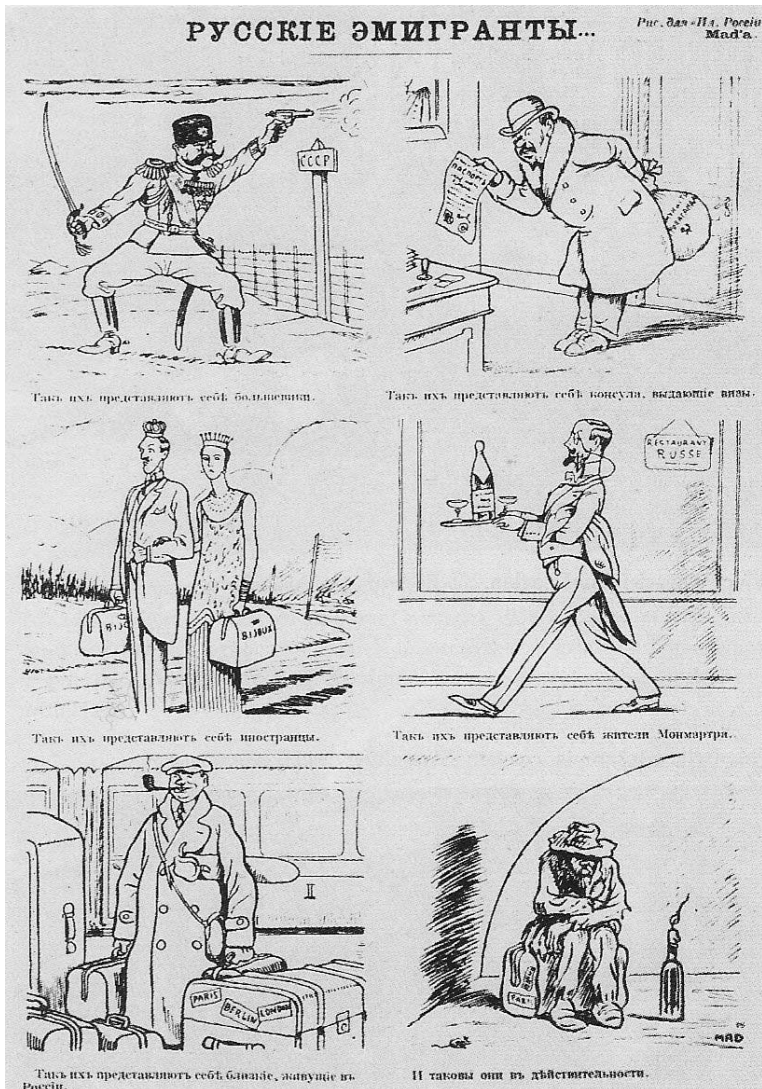


Illustration 1: Mad (Mikhail Aleksandrovich Drizo), *Russkie emigranty*, in: *Ilyustrirovannaya Rossiya*, not dated (after Schlögel 1994). The captions run: Russian emigrants as imagined by the Bolsheviks; as imagined by the consuls who give visas; as imagined by the foreigners; as imagined by the inhabitants of Montmartre; as imagined by their kinsmen living in Russia; as they are in reality.

Conservatism or evolution?

Joseph Brodsky, the famous dissident poet and Nobel prize laureate who had been imprisoned in the USSR as a “social parasite” first (1962) and then forced into exile (1972), once spoke about his new life in America in metaphorical terms: “To be an exiled writer is like being a dog or a man hurtled into outer space in a capsule (more like a dog, of course, than a man, because they will never retrieve you). And your capsule is your language.” (Brodsky 1995: 32) Brodsky’s “capsule” does not simply mean the Russian language as compared to other, foreign languages: rather it is a personal idiom, wrapped in his mother tongue Russian. The metaphor drastically raises the problem of identity and cultural uprooting: What consequences does an artist face when leaving his home country? Will he get transplanted or become isolated, will his work be understood or rejected, what transformation will it undergo – if any? (And will there be differences regarding Russian *émigré* artists as compared to, let’s say, Irish or Greek emigrants?)

One of the few Russian writers who indeed changed his poetic language in emigration was Vladimir Nabokov. It must have been an extremely painful step. This becomes evident in one of his poems of the mid-1940s: *An Evening of Russian Poetry* (1945). Here, at the end of an imaginary discussion about Russian literature, the American host wants to hear his Russian guest utter some flowery phrases. Nabokov’s poem indeed switches from English to Russian, but the Russian words are expressing the opposite of what would be expected (Nabokov 1970: 162-163):

‘How would you say “delightful talk” in Russian?’

‘How would you say “good night”?’

Oh, that would be:

*Bessónnitza, tvoy vzor ooníl i stráshen;
lubóv’ moyá, otstópnika prostée.*

(Insomnia, your stare is dull and ashen,
my love, forgive me this apostasy.)

Instead of a good night’s sleep after a cosy little chat, the guilt-ridden sleeplessness of a poet comes to the fore who betrayed his mother tongue, that is, his first and deepest love. These macaronic verses testify to Nabokov’s linguistic genius. Beyond that they are a shattering document of the traumatic consequences of emigration: The artist’s way of expres-

sing himself is so deeply rooted in his language that a change of the idiom cannot leave the contents which are being transported unchanged.

This interdependence of content and style (idiom) lies at the heart of our issue. If preservation is the intention of the *émigré* artist, what consequences will its realisation have on his creative output – will his stylistic appearance, his artistic techniques, his choice of subjects be deep-frozen together with a nostalgic worldview? Will he become an isolated dinosaur, or a member of a flock of dinosaurs grazing the meadow of *fin de siècle* grass? Answering such questions makes historiographical overviews difficult, since perspectives of this sort inevitably tend to focus on individual artists and their fate. Yet, facing the risk of over-simplifying matters, as a first step one could look for a typology. Its basic prototypes could be three: first, the keeper of traditions who seeks refuge in a poetic past that has been irretrievably lost; second, the developer who does not want to erect a monument to his own tradition, but rather takes it across the borders as an embryo, where his future development will reflect to some degree the experience of his new surroundings; third, the cosmopolitan who shakes off old traditions and acquires new ones. Three examples may illustrate this basic typology; for the sake of clarity, they are taken from the field of music only.

Example 1: Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1952), the keeper of tradition. He is hardly known at all outside of circles enthusiastic about late romantic Russian piano music. Some of his piano pieces are charming echoes of Chopin and Arensky, but they show a personal idiom reflecting Tchaikovsky and Strauss as well. Having settled in Vienna, he retreated into his late romantic shell and hibernated untroubled in Nazi Austria. His First Symphony dating from 1937 is a real time machine. There is a Tchaikovskian theme of fate running through the entire work, and the finale depicts the exuberant dance atmosphere of an oriental bazaar in a manner that the *Mighty Handful* would have praised some fifty years earlier. But the apotheosis of the work comes in the form of the old *Tsarist Hymn*, very much like Tchaikovsky's Overture *1812*. Two decades after the October Revolution, old imperial Russia was resurrected in music, thanks to Bortkiewicz. Of course, this Symphony might be easily dismissed as a monstrous zombie, a bizarre symphonic Frankenstein bred in tsarist nostalgia, a manifestation as much of political as of musical reaction. Yet as a historical document, it is very revealing, because in his wish to compensate for the loss of his home by conserving past traditions, Bortkiewicz opted for a combination of both artistic language (style, technique, genre)

and content. In this he was by no means alone: such aims were shared by other notable Russian *émigré* composers such as Glazunov and Grechaninov, though the latter not only adhered strictly to his stylistic ideals, but tried to reconcile Western and Eastern spirituality in composing both Russian orthodox and Roman Catholic church music, ultimately blending them in his *Vselenskaya messa / Missa oecumenica* op. 142 (1933-1936; Paisov 2004: 303-305). Rakhmaninov, however, had first fallen silent as a composer in emigration and then written music rather unlike his pre-revolutionary output, music that has become partially cool, sometimes cynic, and that reflects some influence of jazz – in itself not very significant, but characteristically pointing at a loss of tradition. His works are nostalgic in a sense quite different to that of Bortkiewicz's nostalgia: Rakhmaninov does not try to prolong the tradition he stems from, instead he realises its end, and it is this irrevocable end which he puts into music in his late works, much as his *émigré* fellow Nicolas Medtner does. Musicological ears have often been deaf to all these conservative and even reactionary tendencies, but Bortkiewicz does form part of cultural history in general and Russian *émigré* culture specifically, and he needs to be taken seriously, which does not necessarily raise his standing as a composer.

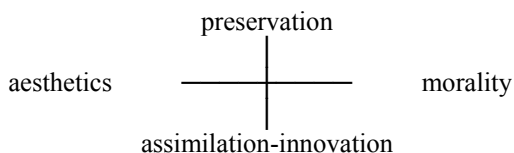
Example 2: Igor' Stravinsky (1882-1971), the developer or innovator *par excellence*. There is a photograph of him holding an identification number before his breast, as if sent to jail: It was taken when he applied for an extension of his residence permit to live in the US. But rumors of Stravinsky being arrested could easily have arisen, since he actually had committed an criminal offence: he had “disfigured” the American national anthem by adding sevenths in his arrangement of the *Star Spangled Banner*, for which reason the state of Massachusetts had almost imposed a fine of 100 \$ on him. In the immediate years after settling in the USA, Stravinsky used American themes more than once: he wrote a *Circus Polka* for an elephant performance in the famous Barnum Circus, as well as soundtracks to anti-fascist propaganda films, parts of which eventually ended up in his orchestral *Scherzo à la Russe*. Its title was inherited from a piano piece by Tchaikovsky (op. 1 no. 1), but the *Petrushka*-like playfulness and rustic Russianness of the music was now entrusted to the Jazz orchestra of Paul Whiteman who had premiered Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Maybe we need not call this *Scherzo* a Russian-American symbiosis, but it is undoubtedly a product of acculturation. Behind the American *façade* of instruments, the inner life of the music is Russian in a very specific and idiomatic way: The melodic substance is based on a mid-19th

century collection of Russian folk tunes the composer had bought in a Los Angeles music store, and its structural aspects reflect those fundamental Stravinskian principles that ultimately stem from Russian folk devices (cf. Taruskin 1996: 1623-1632).

Finally, example 3: the cosmopolitan. Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977), a second-generation *émigré* and a member of a whole family of Russian *émigré* composers, wrote music in a more or less neoclassical style. (After all, how do we even define neoclassicism?) Passing through Tbilissi in the first years after the Revolution, and having lived afterwards in Paris for many years and then in the Far East, Tcherepnin tried, among many other things, to combine Asia's pentatonic mellifluousness with Western techniques, resulting in a hybrid neoclassicism *à la chinoise*. His second symphony actually is also called "the Chinese". But this was only one of Tcherepnin's many musical faces. He once tried to sum up the very varied circumstances of his life and the complex nature of his artistic identity as follows:

Russian composer
 Georgian composer
 Composer of the School of Paris
 Chinese composer
 American composer
 is this a handicap or an advantage? [...] I wandered around in forty countries, was at home everywhere and really felt at home nowhere. My only home is in my inner self, which remains the same and follows its own development. (cit. after Korabelnikova 2008: 144)

In spite of its obvious shortcomings, this typology could be extended onto painters and other artists, a task deliberately left open. How difficult this task will be if it is to be done with the necessary precision, can be seen from a study about the change of metrics in the poetry of *émigré* writers written between 1920 and 1940 (Smith 1978): So great are the differences between the single writers' idioms that it seems almost impossible to draw general conclusions about the conservation or transformation of these Russian idioms in exile. The result is more or less the same if one turns to *émigré* painting (Bowl 1981). But at the end of such tentative typologies, there could be a clearer picture of artistic behaviour and artistic development, connected to external factors such as biographical, geographical and political dispositions, as well as to aesthetical and ethical aspects. John Glad has proposed a grid of two intersecting *continuums* for classifying *émigré* writers (Glad 1999: 484):



As convincing as this diagram might be, it seems not to cover a specific question of *émigré* culture that at the end of our rough typology has been raised by Alexander Tcherepnin's failure of defining himself: the idea of national identity.

Russian *émigré* culture and national identity

Since the downfall of the Soviet Union, much has been written about Russian identity. Is this identity bound up with language, religion, citizenship or maybe even notions of "race"? There are no simple answers. Maybe for our purpose we do not even need an answer, but should perhaps ask another question: is it reasonable to think of artistic identity in the (late) 20th century in national terms? Still keeping to music history, the debates about the nature of national styles in the 18th century, the national schools of the 19th century, the politically tainted cultural chauvinism on the eve of World War I – had all this not ceased in favour of international styles such as neoclassicism, serialism, minimalism, or in favour of individualistic personal styles displaying ever greater diversity? Isn't the musical history of the last hundred years more or less the story of the abandonment of the national idea?

Looking at Russian music, at least two facts contradict this assumption. The first fact: In Soviet as well as in post-Soviet times the idea of the composer and his work being rooted in national characteristics has always been alive. Though the Soviet Union was conceived of as a supranational unity, the proclamation of the so-called Socialist Realism from 1932 onwards led to the cementation of national features in the arts: "National in form, socialist in content", such was Stalin's own definition. Each Soviet republic employed its own folk songs and dances in a repertoire that was meant to signalise optimism in instrumental music, and to support official ideology in vocal genres. After Stalin's death, the use of folk elements didn't stop: it became more abstract, symbolic, demanding. The "new folkloric wave" which emerged in Russia in the late 1950s (and which is in some ways connected to Stravinsky's Russian works some forty years before) hardly ever penetrated the Iron Curtain, but from the

1970s on Western audiences witnessed its fascinating offshoots in the work of Baltic or Caucasian composers who made iconic and spiritual use of traditional folk elements. In all these cases, the central idea has still been to represent one's home culture in music. After the breakdown of the USSR, the whole of Eastern Europe experienced an outbreak of new and old nationalism, a sort of backlash against decades of forced internationalisation and heteronomy. An immediate result of this was the re-introduction of the vernacular languages as official languages. Has there been a re-introduction of national elements in post-Soviet musical life as well? So it seems.

The second fact: The phenomenon of Russian emigration, which continues to the present day, shows that composers and historians alike have been working with national criteria – and not in spite of, but *because* of the loss of their home country. The extent of the impact of emigration on these artists has been explored from different angles, through surveys or interviews asking about traces of emigration or nostalgia in their works, about personal and national identities. Such questions have been addressed recently by the publishing house Sikorski in relation to its own composers, doubtlessly in an effort to stress the political and ethical quality (not to say superiority) of artists having left dictatorial regimes (Music and Emigration 2009). The answers varied enormously, according to age, circumstances of emigration, personal background etc. Today, leaving Russia does not imply the impossibility of returning. Many Russian composers living abroad do not see any connection between their nationality as stated on their passports and their creative output; some even find it humiliating to be categorised as *émigré*. Indeed, the American Slavist Carl Proffer took exception to this notion already in 1981:

It smacks of the ghetto. It suggests something limited, narrow, parochial, perhaps of interest for a time, but with no hope of entering the permanent culture of a language. If writers are 'only émigré writers', they will probably be forgotten. 'Émigré' literature is by definition a minority literature, a literature of special pleading, and like other defensive, minority types of literature – women's literature, gay literature, the literature of Michigan's Northern Peninsula – the attributive adjective itself determines its final fate – the compost heap of culture. (cit. after Glad 1999: 30)

If we agree with Richard Taruskin that the traditional way of speaking about Russian music has always been ghettoisation (cf. Taruskin 2011), the music of Russian *émigré* composers forms a ghetto within the ghetto. But it seems very difficult to overcome these stereotypes if composers

themselves are feeding them. The middle-aged Lera Auerbach (* 1973), who has lived in the USA since 1991, is immensely successful with melancholic works that mainly focus on Russian history and culture, on nostalgia, loss and death. Her *Russian Requiem* (2007) combines Russian poetry from Pushkin to Brodsky with orthodox prayers, it is dedicated to the victims of intolerance and repression. “Our memories define who we truly are”, so we are told by Auerbach in her preface. Isn’t this attitude astonishingly close to the late works of Rakhmaninov or Medtner? Lera Auerbach is a remarkable case, showing that the old images and sounds of Russian *émigré* culture are being perpetuated to the present day – and are still financially remunerative as well. It is probably no coincidence that her musical language is as conservative as those images of a distant Russian past. Hearing her works, one is inclined to feel that Auerbach has inherited and shouldered the heavy burden of Russia’s age-old suffering, that she is the last link in a long chain of *émigré* artists. Should we call this presumptuous? In his speech quoted above, Joseph Brodsky maintained that an exile has the right to address his own fate since it is the one thing that distinguishes him from others and thus might help success.

Obviously, national categories are not only a historical reference system depending on objective administrative or political facts, but rather a condition of the subjective perception and self-definition of the artist himself. The resulting tension of internal and external identities in the work of art can only be understood and explained if the notion of nationality is implied as a potential category, even if that should be its absolute negation.

Thus, the history of Russian *émigré* culture must not be written anew. But it should become broader, and some new perspectives should be added to the (very) old ones. It is a task that knows no borders. How fitting!

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Notes

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SECTION 1:
**RUSSIAN *ÉMIGRÉ* CULTURE IN GENERAL;
LITERATURE**

THE PARTICIPATION OF RUSSIAN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY DIPLOMATS IN THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN EMIGRATION*

MARGARITA KONONOVA

As a rule, when Russian *émigré* culture is mentioned and when its special cultural mission and its significant contribution to the world is analysed, historians and other scholars usually mean literature, art, music, theatre and cinema and the names of brilliant Russian *émigré* writers, artists, musicians are remembered. But political culture has also been an important part of Russian pre-revolutionary national culture as a whole and of the culture of Russia Abroad in particular. Political culture is understood as a system of historically developed political traditions, norms, beliefs, values, ideals, ideas and models of political behaviour. It provides a reproduction of political life of a society on the basis of continuity. The political culture of pre-revolutionary Russia was destroyed by the Bolsheviks coming to power, but it continued in Russia Abroad. Political culture is formed by individual and group political cultures. Among the various political groups of the Russian emigration, Russian diplomats of the Imperial and Temporary governments deserve special consideration. Their political culture directly defined their actions in the emigration, influenced their reflections and creativity. In the present article we will consider for the first time the contribution of Russian diplomats to the cultural life of the Russian emigration.

As a result of the refusal of Russian diplomatic representatives abroad to cooperate with the Bolshevik government and due to the solidarity of other officials of the Russian diplomatic and consular establishments as well as members of Russian colonies abroad, six Russian embassies, nineteen legations, three diplomatic agencies, a set of consular establishments sub-

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ordinated to them and ambassadorial (legation) churches formed the “nucleus” of a phenomenon “перемещенная государственность” [transferred statehood], that was characteristic for the future huge post-revolutionary Russia Abroad (the term was coined by the historian Miroslav Jovanović (Jovanović 1995: 675)).

The traditional principles of strict centralisation and rigid bureaucratic hierarchy in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the spirit of corporativism allowed Russian diplomatic representatives to quickly create a unifying centre in Paris and, under conditions of anarchy, to organise and to continue managing Russian colonies politically. The non-Bolshevist diplomats saw the main purpose of their activity in the execution of their official duties – protection of the national interests of Russia and Russian citizens abroad. The concepts of “чувство долга”, “долг перед Россией”, “служение родине”, “защита чести России” [call of duty, a duty to Russia, service to the homeland, protection of the honour of Russia] were of the utmost importance for Russian diplomatic representatives. Their understanding of Russia as a great power (among other powers) with her sphere of interests (according to the concept defined by the Vienna congress in 1814-1815), the primacy of the idea of the Russian state (statehood) and its “vital interests” formed the basis and “stem” of Russian non-Bolshevist diplomatic mentality.

Two kinds of diplomatic pre-revolutionary official duties defined all their various activities after 1917 in the twenties and even in the thirties (obviously changing eventually): on the one hand there was the protection of Russian territorial unity and of the place of Russia in the world, opposition to separatist tendencies, preservation of the inviolability of Russian national property abroad (for example, in Persia and China), and on the other hand the protection of the interests of compatriots abroad (prisoners of war, refugees, emigrants) and the rendering of legal, material, cultural support. In the following we will describe the main forms of participation of Russian diplomats in the cultural life of Russia Abroad.

Diplomats and culture

First of all, we should note the participation of a number of Russian diplomats in the cultural mobilization of Russians abroad around the “День русской культуры” [the Day of Russian culture]. It was dedicated to the birthday of Aleksandr Pushkin, Russia’s great poet, on June 6 and was celebrated for the first time in 1925. In 1926 two Russian diplomats – the