

Rückführung des wagnerschen Sprachgesanges zum Primat des gesprochenen, deklamierten Wortes, wobei der genuin musikalische Konnex natürlich bestehen bleibt, aber eben nur als subkutane Wirkung erwünscht ist. Auch diese spezifische Wagner-Rezeption ist nicht aus Wagners Denken oder aus sich selbst heraus zu erklären, sondern, ebenso wie die Deklamationen des Josef Kainz, vor allem als Spielart der zeitgenössischen Ambivalenz zwischen uneingeschränktem Sprachvertrauen und Sprachskepsis erklärbar.

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The English Operetta and the Musical Comedy as a Reflection of the Russian Anglomania at the End of the 19th Century

Beginning with the epoch of Peter the Great, Russia took the path of active interaction with Western Europe, the path of western influence on life style, industry, education and certainly culture. Thousands of foreign people came to Russia and settled there forever having found their niche in local life. The spreading of French and German languages was very high not only among the native speakers but also among the noble and educated Russian circles. »Процесс этот зашел столь далеко, что ›естественное‹ и ›искусственное‹ (›свое‹ и ›чужое‹) могли меняться местами [...] столичные дворяне вынуждены были обучаться русскому языку как чужому.«¹ English influence was not as overwhelming as that of French and German, but its examples were to be found in all the spheres of life: landscape architecture and Chippendale style, Wedgwood porcelains and factories, pianos and tailors, watches and horses, tutors and dogs, education and sport.

The ›English style of life‹ became a model for nobles and rich merchants. Great Britain was surrounded by the halo of a sparkling wit and a refined taste. English clubs were popular despite of very high membership prices. To be the member of the English club meant to have a high society status. From the very beginning of the 19th century English language and education came into fashion and into use among the high circles. »Нынче у нас распространяется изучение Английского языка. Причина этому очевидна: Английская литература теперь самая богатая оригинальными сочинениями, почти по всем родам

1 »This process went so far, that ›natural‹ and ›artificial‹ (›home‹ and ›foreign‹) could exchange places. [...] Metropolitan nobles had to learn Russian as a foreign language«. See Yuriy Lotman, *Беседы о русской культуре: Быт и традиции русского дворянства (XVIII–начало XIX века)* (Talks on the Russian Culture: Everyday life of Russian Nobles (XVIII–Beginning of XIX centuries)), St. Petersburg 1997, p. 188. All translations of Russian sources were made by the author of this paper.

наук и предметов общежития», wrote the *Northern Bee* in 1837². English educational institutions invited young Russians to come and study. As far back as 1803 the Grammar school (Boston, Lincolnshire) put in the *St. Petersburgische Zeitung* an advertisement inviting young Russians to study in Boston, where »The English language is spoken with a great Purity and Correctness; and those young Gentlemen who come for the Purpose of attaining it, find their Progress very much facilitated by daily Opportunities of hearing, and conversing with good speakers«³.

But most of the rich families preferred something else: they invited native speakers to teach their children. Russian aristocrats and merchants paid generously, and plenty of subjects of Great Britain – real scientists, former students, impoverished nobles, old spinsters and simply adventurers – came to Russia in the hope of earning their living. They and their children constituted the English community in Russia. Many of them strictly preserved their style of life and habits, but some not only spoke Russian fluently, but also adopted typical manners of the common people.

The English community of 18th century St. Petersburg was big and important. In the 19th and 20th centuries the quota of the English-speaking population in Petersburg steadily decreased and reached 0,12 % by 1910 – approximately 2000 persons. These people were to be entertained. As far as in 1770 the English troupe of Fisher came, which introduced the genre of early English comic opera of Bickerstaffe with the music of Thomas Arne, Samuel Arnold and Charles Dibdin to the Russian audience. But it was rather an exception. »British« entertainment was associated mostly with farces, clowns, circus, dance troupes and – very seldom – drama companies or famous people from the musical world such as the composer Michael Balfe (1853). The last quarter of the 19th century in Russia was a time of the great »British fashion«, the time of »Anglomania«, the time when »the British« fully separated from the »all-European«. This process was inspired and began in the high society, in the Royal family and court. The »typical Englishmen« Charles Heath for a long time occupied the post of the children's tutor for Tsar Alexander III. He had a big influence on their future tastes and understanding of fine arts. The great Russian painter of the new generation, Alexander Benoit, described skeptically how Heath could produce a dozen pre-*tentious* landscapes in one hour:

Царские дети [...] именно на таком вздоре (или еще на сентиментальных картинках в *Graphics*'е и в *Illustrated London News*) учились »понимать изящное«. Немудрено, если в них так и не [...] выработалось какое – либо серьезное отношение к искусству. Они были склонны на все художественное творчество глядеть через очки доброго дяди Чарльза, для них искусство осталось невинным и пустяковым баловством⁴.

2 »Now it becomes fashionable to study English language. The reason is evident: English literature is now the most rich with original works in all kinds of sciences and social life«. See »Смесь« (*Miscellaneous*), in: *Северная Пчела* (*Northern Bee*) 88 (1837), p. 349–350.

3 »Education in England«, in: *St. Petersburgische Zeitung* 10, 3rd February 1803, p. 163–164.

4 »The Tsar's children [...] were brought up on such nonsense (or also on sentimental pictures in *Graphics* and *Illustrated London News*) [...] It is no surprise that they did not cultivate a serious attitude

The future Russian Emperor Nicholas II, who came to the throne in 1894, spoke English so well that he could easily pretend to be an Englishman. Between him and his bride Alexandra, granddaughter of Queen Victoria, English was adopted as an intercourse language. He and his English cousin George V were very much alike in their appearance, characters and tastes. Robert Massie, the American writer and Russian historian believes that the main injustice of destiny for Nicholas II lies in the fact that he, a typical educated English monarch, had to be the Emperor of the whole gigantic Russia, which was on the brink of a revolution.⁵

During Nicholas' British-oriented reign the English community flourished. In 1902 they celebrated the coronation day of Edward VIII and Queen Alexandra with a splendid banquet in the hotel Hermitage. There were a lot of consequences of this ›official Anglo-mania‹: in industry, commercial life, science, sport and art. The cultural and especially theatre life was also influenced. However, the most impressive for the Russian public became not the serious plays, which were known before, but the light music theatre: the Savoy Opera of Gilbert and Sullivan and the musical comedy. More than 20 of them were staged in Russia at this time. They were in the repertoire of the plenty of operetta, opera and even drama companies, were played in the Imperial Theatres, in famous theatrical enterprises and on private miniature stages. The whole quantity of performances reached over a thousand, and the wave soon swept over the Moscow and Russian provinces. Those English productions perfectly reflected the impetuous process of the development of Russian operetta theatre, which played one of the most important roles in the formation of the metropolitan (St. Petersburg/Moscow) and provincial entertainment industry. It was a long way from the first adaptations and traditional theatre of the the 1880s to the stage director's innovations of the 20th century.

The place of the English operetta in the repertoire stream changed every season. In the end of the 1880s – middle of the 1890s the quota didn't reach even one percent of the titles. From the end of the 1890s *The Geisha* by Sidney Jones created a furore and went into the repertoire of all the operetta theatres in the capitals and provinces. On the diagram, which presents the dynamics of the English operetta's popularity an unprecedented flight right in the year 1898 can be seen.

The Geisha was followed by a long series of British operettas and musical comedies. I have found information about more than 20 works and 200 productions by William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Seymour Sullivan, Sidney Jones, Ivan Caryll, Lionel Monckton, Osmond Carr, Paul Rubens and Howard Talbot.

From the very beginning the Russian operetta theatre benefited from foreign works imported from Vienna, Berlin and Paris. The Russian stage-directors only transferred the foreign novelties with every kind of energy and luxury. The main business of the operetta producers and stage-directors was travelling abroad in the search of novelties. After a long

towards art. They were prone to look at all creative work through the glasses of uncle Charles; all art for them remained to be an indulgence – harmless and trifling«. Alexander Benoit, *Мои воспоминания* (My recollections), vol. I, Moscow 1990, p. 585.

5 See Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World*, London 1982; *ibid*, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, London 1985; and *ibid*, *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter*, New York 1995.

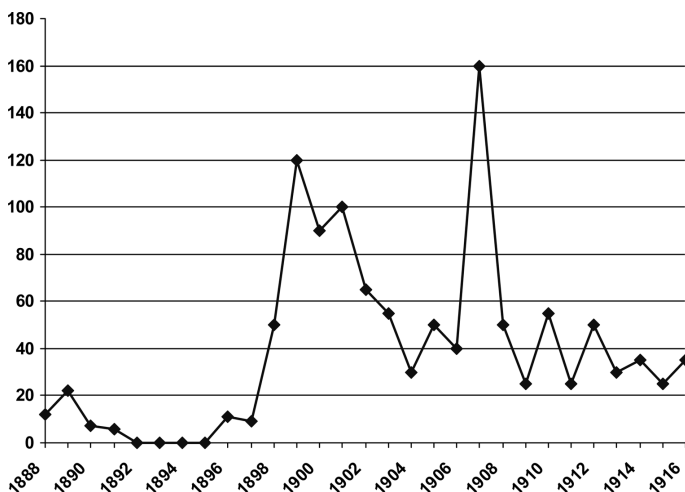


Diagram 1: Dynamic of the English operetta's popularity. This diagram shows how many Savoy Operas and British musical comedies were played per annum (1888–1916)

monopoly of Vienna, Berlin and Paris, London became a Mecca for the Russian operetta people. Travelling to London in the search of novelties became fashionable and efficient. As a consequence the professional English translators appeared, who were able to make the Russian versions directly from the original. There were plenty of such versions – translations and adaptations, professional and amateur, of excellent or poor quality. For example, in the period of 15 pre-Soviet years seven (!) versions of *The Geisha* were written, and eleven different vocal scores and tens of separate numbers from this musical comedy were published.

At last, in 1899, the St. Petersburg spectators were able to see the ›original‹, the London productions of the Gaiety Theatre, the theatre in which the genre of musical comedy was created. For many of them Gaiety-tour wasn't the first acquaintance with the British operetta performance style⁶. By 1899 plenty of people had an opportunity to travel abroad, see the original stars and compare them to home-produced ones. »Москва любит г-жу Милютину; ей много аплодировали и заставляли повторять номера. Но как далеко ей до Ms. M. Tempest!« – wrote the reporter of *Theatre and Art*.⁷

6 It is curious that the brother-in-law of Alexander Benoit, Mathew Edwardes, who was so sceptical about Charles Heath's »understanding of fine arts«, was a brother of the famous George Edwardes, who owned in London several theatres including the Gaiety. George Edwardes (1852–1915) was a business manager at the Savoy Theatre from 1881 before taking over the old Gaiety theatre in 1885 with John Hollingshead. In 1886 he became sole manager of the Gaiety and began to replace the burlesque shows with work in the new genre of musical comedy. In 1893 Edwardes opened Daly's Theatre, London and made it another home for musical comedy. Ten years later he opened his own new Gaiety theatre, his greatest success there being *Our Miss Gibbs*, which had its premiere in 1909 and ran for 636 performances.

7 »Moscow likes Miss Milyutina; she received a great applause and repeated a lot. But how far is she from Miss Mary Tempest! [The Geisha in Shelaputin Theatre]«, in: *Театр и Искусство* (Theatre and Art) 51 (1897), p. 952.

The famous American ›peripatetic‹ *primadonna* Mary Halton, whose activities were evaluated as a ›multilingual triumph‹⁸, came to Russia several times with the Viennese Carltheater at the turn of the century and performed in *The Geisha*. She became for theatre-goers the model of an English actress – at that time no difference was made between the English and the American.

Despite great publicity and expectations, the performing art of Gaiety actors was not properly understood and seemed to be alien. Russian theatre-goers were used to ›sense playing‹. »Удивительная страна! Непонятная страна! У них плачут в оперетке!«⁹ – wrote French writer Armand Silvestre. The ›imperturbable coldness‹ of Gaiety-actors was strange to them. One of the reviewers noted: »Английский юмор в соединении с клоунадой так же тяжел, как эль, ростбиф и виски.«¹⁰ Only later, in the 1910s, the Russian operetta actors tried to adopt the British eccentric performance style, with the purpose of satisfying the repertoire requirements: »Есть еще, впрочем, английская оперетка, органически примыкающая к излюбленному английскому искусству эксцентриков и танцующих клоунов. И русские опереточные Саши, Даши и Сидоры, растянув себе сухожилия, становятся эксцентриками.«¹¹

We see the paradox: the English operetta and musical comedy productions, and especially the famous ›geishamania‹ became a clear consequence of ›English expansion‹ at the end of the 19th century and were widely represented on the Russian stage. However, I ought to stress the important difference between the Russian existence of the continental and British kinds of genre. It is evident that any musical or theatrical work being transferred into the alien cultural context gradually becomes a part of a new culture. But if for the Russian audience the French operetta always was ›a part of Paris‹, and the Viennese one personified the ›spirit of Vienna‹, the English operetta was never perceived as a part of the English culture. Moreover: in the beginning it was perceived as a German phenomenon.

There are several reasons for this situation. Firstly, the Savoy Opera, the first representative of the English operetta, came to the Russian stage much later than others, within adaptations' stream, in the context of operettas by Strauss, Millöcker and Suppè. Librettos were often translated from German versions. Many productions used Vienna, Berlin or Paris productions as a model. Its musical style was eclectic and didn't carry as strongly pronounced national colour as Offenbach's or Strauss' tunes. The specifically ›British‹ genres of Savoy Operas in the Russian audience's perception were mixed with the familiar genres from French and Viennese operettas. The musical style of Edwardian musical comedy is vernacular, popular and couldn't promote its identification as a British phenomenon.

8 Kurt Gänzl, *The Encyclopedia of Musical Theatre*, New York 1994, Vol. 2, p. 1272.

9 »Astonishing country! Incomprehensible country! They cry in the operetta!« See Elizaveta Uvarova, *Как развлекались в российских столицах* (How People Entertained Themselves in the Russian Capitals), St. Petersburg 2004, p. 100.

10 »English humour in the combination with clownery is as heavy as ale, roast beef and whisky«, in: *Theatre and Art* (Театр и Искусство) 19 (1899).

11 »There are the English operettas, bordered with the favourite English art of eccentrics and dancing clowns. So the Russian operetta Sasha's, Dasha's and Sidor's, straining their tendons, become eccentric.«. »Notes«, in: *Theatre and Art* (Театр и Искусство) 1 (1911), p. 17–19.

Secondly, due to unprecedented unity of text and music, which was yet a topic for many musicological analyses, the Savoy Opera lost much more in translation than other kinds of operetta. The interest in Savoy Opera and Edwardian musical comedy exactly as a British cultural phenomenon was displayed just at the end of 20th century in the context of heightened interest in intercultural relations and the assimilation of the works belonging to different nations on Russian territory.

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»... überhaupt ist mit dem Choral nicht zu spaßen«

Entstehung und Funktion eines ›deutschen‹ Geschichtsmythos

Identitätskonstruktionen berufen sich auf Geschichte. Jedoch vermag die Vergangenheit niemals als ein objektivierbares Faktum zu überdauern, sondern kann immer nur im Kontext einer kulturellen Gegenwart rekonstruiert werden. In ihrer Konstruiertheit ist die Vergangenheit damit auch immer anfällig für Funktionalisierungen, die Inbesitznahme durch Ideologien, ästhetische Paradigmen, wie auch für interessengeleitete Geschichtsbilder.

Bei der Frage nach den Konstitutiva deutscher Identität im 19. Jahrhundert war es – in Anbetracht der Nichtexistenz einer politischen Entität ›Deutschland‹ – vor allem der Rückgriff auf die Geschichte, der zur Identitätsbildung genutzt wurde. Ein Fixpunkt in diesem Diskurs war das 16. Jahrhundert. Martin Luther konnte als Schöpfer der deutschen Hochsprache heraufbeschworen werden, und schließlich konnte auch die Musik in der Reformation den ›Anfang‹ eines deutschen Idioms ausmachen, wenn sie im Kirchenlied, dem ›Choral‹, den deutschen Beitrag zur Musikgeschichte sah. Zur Hilfe kam dieser Sichtweise der ästhetische Diskurs des späten 18. Jahrhunderts, der mit dem Postulat der ›Simplizität‹ einerseits und der ästhetischen Aufwertung des vierstimmigen Choralsatzes (als der mehrstimmigen Gestalt des Chorals) andererseits, einen Grundstein legte. Letzteres geschah überdies in so musikästhetisch unterschiedlichen Ansätzen wie dem Kirnbergers und Abbé Voglers, so dass der Choral auch als überkonfessioneller Kompromiss fungieren konnte.