ABSTRACT

ART, LIFE, AND COMMUNITY IN RUSSIA ABROAD:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE ÉMIGRÉ MAGAZINE TEATR’ I ZHIZN’

by Caitlin Leigh Winstead

This thesis examines the relationship between the Russian émigré publication Teatr’ i Zhizn’ and Russian national and cultural identities from late 1928-1929. This research examines how émigrés used theatre and the arts to reinforce notions of identity within and outside the Russian émigré community. The research begins by exploring the creative anxieties felt by émigré artists as their art form and community was threatened by new innovations, such as cinematography, and emigration. This thesis then explores the centrality of children and their education to the community, by exploring the ways that the magazine discussed not only the arts but the community at large. Finally, by exploring the ways that émigrés wrote about Russian émigré performances and Russian performances in the Soviet Union, this thesis explores the ways that émigrés saw themselves as the true inheritors of Russian culture.
ART, LIFE, AND COMMUNITY IN RUSSIA ABROAD: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ÉMIGRÉ MAGAZINE *TEATR’ I ZHIZN’*

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................. v

Setting the Stage: The Introduction ........................................... 1

The Show Must Go On: An Examination of the Theatre Journal *Teatr’ i zhizn’,* 1928-1929 ........................................ 10

  Creative Anxieties: Concerns for the Future of Russia Abroad and Theatre ........................................... 17

The Resurrection of National Russia: Educating the Children ................................................................. 23

The Shows: Accounts of Performances Abroad ................................................................. 29

Alternate Endings: Émigré Connections to Soviet Activities ................................................................. 39

Conclusion: Examining Émigré Identity and Outcomes ................................................................. 44

Bibliography ................................................................. 47
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my step-father Jamie Mitchell and written in honor of my grandfather, George Roberts. The countless hours of History Channel we watched together when I was young sparked a love for history that I will never outgrow.
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Setting the Stage: The Introduction

“Life is short, art is eternal.” The cliché phrase may be familiar, but in this case, it comes from the title of a short story from the 2nd issue of the Russian émigré magazine Teatr’ i zhizn’, or “Theater and Life,” published in Paris, France in 1928 and written by one of the editors of the magazine, Alexander Filipov. The story was set in World War I, over ten years before its publication, and described the strange suspension of trench life. The soldiers “were waiting for something, but they were not waiting.”¹ To address their boredom, it was suggested that they arrange for a theatrical performance in a club in what remained of a nearby town. One detail became very important, however. They wanted the phrase “life is short, art is eternal” painted on the curtains, and the narrator went through great pains to requisition the paints and bring them back. Finally, the words were emblazoned on the curtain and all the non-essential officers and soldiers gathered for the performance. Noting that there was a wrinkle on the left side of the curtains distorting the “life is short” portion of the phrase and the one of the organizers, Selivanov, stood and went to go smooth it out. He did not have time to finish before “a violent whirlwind burst into the club” followed by “a grave silence.” Neither Selivanov nor the left side of the curtain survived the club, only the banner with the phrase “Art is eternal.”²

The short story spanned barely a page and a half, and was tucked into the middling pages of a small magazine, but offers some important insights into Russian émigré culture a decade after the end of World War I and the beginning of the Russian Revolution. World War I was able to stand on its own, with little foreshadowing of the harrowing events that were to come. Although Filipov did not directly reference the Revolution, the aphorism is still important—and in many ways describes the attitude that the Russian émigrés publishing in Teatr’ i zhizn’ espoused in its pages from 1928-1929. While many Russian émigrés may have hoped their lives as émigrés would be short because the Soviet Union would collapse and they would be allowed to return home. It was far more likely that their lives would be shortened because of illness, poverty, or a surrender to the new regime and a return to the geographical Russia, if not the Russia that they called their homeland. Through their efforts as artists and authors, Russian émigrés sought to ensure that the art of Russia would outlive the political chaos through their

¹ Aleksandr Filipov, Zhizn’ korotka – iskusstvo biychno. Teatr’ i zhizn’, December, 1928. 5
efforts in emigration, instead of dying at the whirlwind of changes unleashed by the Bolshevik regime.

The magazine *Teatr’ i zhizn’* illustrated the importance of theatre and other social and cultural activities in the maintenance of émigré identity abroad. The community was attempting to hold the Russia that they knew in stasis and, in doing so, they created a time capsule. United in exile and bound together by necessity, the community settled in to other locales. The first issue of the magazine was published late in 1928, just months after the Soviet state celebrated the ten year anniversary of the October Revolution. By focusing on the eight issues published from the end of 1928 to the end of 1929, this thesis aims to explore the ways in which émigrés reacted to this milestone. Ten years after the Revolution, the Soviet Union was gaining permanence and the likelihood that Russian émigrés would be able to return to the Russia that they knew was incredibly low. However, just as the Soviet Union celebrated a ten-year anniversary, so too did the Russian émigrés. Every year that passed served to further entrench their community in the life and culture of where they settled. The time capsule, as it was, was buried deeper and deeper as new layers of sediment piled on with the years. As émigrés settled into communities and neighborhoods, as they established theatres and schools, their roots broke through the confines of the capsule and allowed more of the outside to creep in.

By examining *Teatr i zhizn’* at this crucial moment, it is possible to take a snapshot of the Russian émigré community at that exact moment. Since the pressures the community faced were so volatile, changing from year-to-year, a study of such a narrow chronological scope helps to better understand the ways that the community reacted to new pressures. For example, in the first section *Creative Anxieties*, some emigres feared for the future of theatre considering the advent of “talking” cinema. The following section, *The Resurrection of National Russia*, explores a parallel anxiety for the future—how to educate the next generation. These two sections reveal something fundamental about the very nature of the magazine and the theatre community. “Life” was not an arbitrary addition to the title, but instead reveals a fundamental concern with Russian émigré life. Theatre, and even more broadly art, were vital components of Russian émigré life and the magazine reiterates through its focus on non-theatre topics like children’s education and émigré philanthropy. The third section, *The Shows*, does explore the ways that émigrés navigated Russian émigré performances and their importance to the community, but does not lose sight of
the importance of émigré life and community to art. Finally, *Alternate Endings* explores the ways that Russian emigres insulated themselves against the Soviet Union by exploring how émigrés reacted to Soviet theatre current events. Again, this section reveals the importance of community, culture, and *life* to the theatre world. Throughout each section, a careful focus on émigré language and description is used to try to better understand how Russian émigrés saw themselves as fitting into Paris, Russian identity, and the world and to better understand the “time capsule” that the émigrés had created. In doing so, more nuance can be added to our understanding of Russian émigré conceptualizations of Russian identity at that pivotal ten-year anniversary of their exile and just how connected to and reliant on theatre those notions of identity were.

However, to understand theatre's importance in the Russian emigre community, it is vital to understand the role art and artists have played in the construction of Russian national identity. Theatre can play a significant role in the formation of national cultural identity. Distinguished figures in the theatrical world, such as playwrights and star actors, often possess substantial amounts of cultural capital, serving as embodiments of national traits and national cultures. Even beyond the realm of cultural identity, theatre can also impact national identity more broadly. Russian émigrés, seeking refuge from the changes brought about by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and subsequent Civil Wars, brought with them to Paris a complicated relationship between theatre and identity, but one that nonetheless invoked the authority of theatre as both a constructor of national identity and an actor in its perpetration. The magazine *Teatr i zhizn’* can serve as not just an informant to the theatrical world of Russia Abroad; it also helped to solidify émigré constructs of Russian national cultural identity and Russian national identity. The magazine helped to insulate Russia Abroad against both Soviet and French influence into the community. By placing *Teatr i zhizn’* into a wider cultural context of Russian theatre and its relationship to national identity, national cultural heritage, and the Russian emigration, the significance of the magazine’s attempts to continue processes of Russian national identity creation and maintenance is clear.

Russian theatre, and its relevance to Russian national cultural identity, is a relatively young historical phenomenon. Although theatre had been introduced at court nearly a century before Peter I, it was largely undeveloped in Russia until his westernizing reforms in the eighteenth century. Peter used theatre to work toward his westernizing and modernizing goals,
but political reforms and other cultural reforms took precedence. While his reforms did not
directly concern theatre, historian Catherine Schuler argues that “in his efforts to bring order to
chaos, Peter invented and implemented policies that affected the very core of Russian social and
cultural identity.” The policies that he did enact shaped Russian social and political life in such
a way that made Russian culture more open generally, and more open to western European
theatrical developments more specifically. The westernizing pressures placed on society included
politicosocial reforms such as “The Table of Ranks,” which was supposed to transform Russian
official society from one beholden to nepotism to a meritocracy. This system, which also
affected military service, created some upward social mobility where it had not existed before,
and the newly-minted group of educated professionals were able to interact with nobility in
unprecedented ways. These “[cracks] in the social hierarchy helped to create a social space for
the theatre and its practitioners,” a space that was eventually filled by the Russian Imperial
Theatre. One of the families that took advantage of the new spaces were the Sheremeteys. They
were an instrumental force in the development of Russian theatre, ranked on par with the St.
Petersburg theatre and higher than the Moscow troupes, which was particularly significant
because it was staffed mainly by serfs.

These slow-moving processes would alter Russian theatrical culture and with it, Russian
national identity. Katia Dianina, in her discussion of Russian visual culture, pointed to the late
nineteenth century as an important moment in the proliferation of arts, as well as debate and
discussion about the arts. The “social space” created by Peter the Great’s reforms had been
further opened by the liberalizing reforms of Alexander II, including the emancipation of the
serfs. She adds that “art-inspired writing, which fed on contemporary cultural nationalism,
helped convert local events into building blocks of identity. Commentary in the mass-circulation
press was crucial because newspaper columns not only reflected cultural happenings, but gave
them meaning for the community at large.” Many of the debates carried out about the form or

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3 Schuler, 14.
4 Catherine A. Schuler, Theatre and Identity in Imperial Russia (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2009), 2.
5 Orlando Figes, Natashas dance: a cultural history of Russia (New York: Picador, 2002), 37. That their theatre was
staffed by serfs was particularly significant because one of the Sheremeteys, Count Nikolai Petrovich Sheremetyev
(1751-1809) married one of his serfs and the prima ballerina of the family’s troupe.
6 Katia Dianina, When Art Makes News: Writing Culture and Identity in Imperial Russia (Dekalb, IL: NIU Press,
2013), 4.
function of Russian culture would take place in newspapers and magazines. These “building blocks of identity” could most easily be disseminated amongst literate Russians in such a format, and in a relatively wide circulation, to help bolster the very communities that they represented.

Despite the conversion of social groups and the new places for theatre in Russian society, it was not until the late nineteenth century that those involved in the theatre felt that they could be qualified as professionals. Murray Frame, one of the most preeminent historians of Russian theatre, argued that this shift in identity, wherein the newly-minted theatre professionals now felt comfortable identifying as “citizens” and “public figures”, did not come until the establishment of the first real professional society, the Russian Theatre Society, in 1894. Over 200 years after Peter the Great’s reforms, Russian society and theatre had only just developed to the point that they were comfortable asserting these identities. This professionalization may have been slow-moving, but by that point theatre had long been involved in a cultural conversation about Russian national cultural identity.

Russian theatre, even after the establishment of the Russian Imperial theatre, remained dominated by Western European influences for quite some time. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, intellectuals had begun to engage over whether they should depart from the European influences dominating theatre and other cultural forms. When the so-called Westernizer-Slavophile debate began in the 19th Century, arguments about theatre could be mapped onto these two camps (which often found more common ground than has been popularly understood). The Westernizers were less opposed to modeling Russia in the traditions established by European powers, and they saw themselves as participating in the same intellectual sphere. In contrast, “Slavophiles” advocated for a uniquely Russian craft, seeing Russia as separate from Europe on the World stage, as something not quite European, not quite Asian. Russia in this view was simply unique—and that uniqueness should be reflected in Russian culture, which had been content to play host to European language, art, literature, and theatre until then. As these political and cultural debates show, Russian national cultural identity had become inseparably with theatre. Aleksandr Shakhovskoi, a prominent artist-administrator of Russian theatre, was one of the first to understand that “difference was more important than similarity in the

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construction and representation of national cultural identity.”

Schuler argued that this distinction between “us” and “them” in Russian culture could be distilled to the simple point of whether or not one possesses russkaia dusha, the elusive “Russian soul.”

Schuler’s use of this phrase is to be treated with care—the term “Russian soul” is comes with considerable baggage and ambiguity, and runs the risk of eroticizing Russian cultural identity. While Shakhovskoi introduced the dichotomy of the Russian soul, as head of the Imperial Theatre from 1802-1826, it continued to be a guiding principle of national cultural identity construction in the theatre—but it was often targeted internally. By the mid nineteenth century after the end of the Crimean War, it was “the specter of ‘two Russias’” which haunted national identity formation,” both in the theatre and out.

The two Russias, of course, were the Europeanized Russia of the nobility and the Russia that was perceived to be uniquely Russian, one that had begun to identify much more with provincial life and culture although some cultural elite still advocated on its behalf. This is particularly reflective of the fact that Russian private theatres were often staffed largely by serfs until theatre’s professionalization.

Russian theatre, then, was not the foundation on which national identity, or even national cultural identity, was erected, but the two were intimately tied by the end of the 19th Century. With a history dating back to Peter the Great, theatre was just one of the ways in which cultural elites in Russia began to assert their conceptions of Russian national identity. The cultural elite attempted to employ the theatre as a tool to educate peasants, while they began to draw upon provincial influences to inform their new conceptions of russkaia dusha. The relationship between Russian theatre and Russian government had begun to strengthen, indicative of the growing importance of theatre in the conversation about Russian national cultural identity. By the eve of the 1905 Revolution, Russian theatre had been legitimized through government sponsorship and involvement. The Revolution interfered with theatre as a mechanism for disseminating morality, but professionals had begun to elevate it instead as an art form, importantly not removing any of its cultural significance although its role had changed.

It was under these cultural conditions that Russia theatre found itself just before The Great War.

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9 Quoted in Schuler, Theatre and Identity in Imperial Russia, 246.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. 246.
Murray Frame argues that groups involved in the theatre, or theatrical life, continued to assert “that the drama stage was a worthy factor in public life was accentuated during the war, a fact that was expressed most vividly in a perceived link between the material interests of the stage, national culture and wider political reform.”\(^{13}\) It was through these efforts to reassert themselves as public figures that theatrical professionals worked to reclaim their position as a “vital didactic element of national culture.”\(^{14}\) These assertions, although overblown, illustrate the desire for theatrical professionals to retain their cultural authority in a fractious time. Ultimately, it is in these conditions that Russian theatre found itself before the Revolution of 1917. Russian theatre, although not always an absolute moral authority, saw itself as inhabiting a place of cultural authority and was actively seeking engagement with the public. This brief background helps understand the connection between theatre and national cultural identity, which underscores the utility of a source such as *Teatr i zhizn’* as an instructive source for understanding Russian national cultural identity as upheld by Russian emigres. After the whirlwind of revolution, many Russian emigres believed they needed to take Russia’s theatrical heritage with them in order both to protect it and nurture it. “Russia Abroad” therefore sought to constitute itself as a society, as a national community, through this dual policy.

Undoubtedly, the most significant historical examination of the Russian emigration after 1917 is Marc Raeff’s *Russia Abroad*, which posits that the unique demographic of Russian émigrés allowed for the continuation of Russian society in pockets of Eastern and Western Europe.\(^{15}\) “Russia Abroad”, he asserted, was largely uninfluenced by the politics of their new host countries, in part because Raeff argues that nearly all of the émigrés intended to return to Russia as soon as the Soviet Union, which was in the minds of the emigres only temporary, collapsed. The idea of the temporary notion of their exile was reflected in several ways, notably in the education of their children and the resistance, at least of the first generation of émigrés, to assimilate into their host country. The “Russia Abroad”, created by these pockets of communities, was able to exist in the interwar period, but ultimately ceased to exist when Germany invaded France and the communities were forced to scatter once more. Raeff’s work,

\(^{13}\) Ibid, 290.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 322.

\(^{15}\) He also makes frequent references to Kharbin, China, which was the only notable city of emigration in the East, as even before the Revolution it had been an established hybrid Russian-Chinese town on the Chinese Eastern Railway, financed in part by the Russian Empire.
researched and published before the fall of the Soviet Union, is one of the few studies to attempt to cover the entirety of the Russian émigré experience in a broader framework. Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savicky took a narrower focus in *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918-1933*, which explores the complex relationship between Russians, Russian émigrés, and the Czech state. Andreyev and Savicky argued that this relationship created some unique solutions, such as the Czech government’s “Russian Action” program, which were not seen in other Russian diaspora communities. They also craft an interesting argument about the ways in which the eventual “acceptance” of the Soviet Union by many émigré host countries undermined their status as independent actors, through acquiescence to the Soviets and later through attempting to utilize the émigrés in early Cold War rhetoric. While these insights are valuable, Andreyev’s and Savicky’s work illustrates the nature of historical studies of Russia Abroad, for it focuses on one community in one place at one time.

Other historical works have examined different aspects of the Russian emigration. Robert C. Williams conducted a thorough examination of Russian émigrés in Germany in *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881-1941*. The work began with coverage of the Late Imperial period, and thus examined two types of Russian emigration: The pre-1917 and post-1917 waves were radically different in their composition. Williams ultimately argued that the existence of pre-1917 émigré communities, largely Russian Jews and “russified” Germans, fostered the initial focus on Berlin as a destination for émigrés, but that ultimately German politics interfered with any possible establishment of a Russian community in Germany. *Culture in Exile* attempted to do something fundamentally different from either Raeff’s or Andreyev and Savicky’s works in its comparison of these two waves of emigration. Part of the work also focused on non-ethnic Russians, who would have had a very different experience of emigration than ethnic Russians. However, even though they were not ethnically Russian, Marc Raeff asserted that some Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, Georgians and Kalmyks affiliated themselves with Russian culture abroad and its proliferation.\(^\text{16}\) There are few Anglophone studies of these groups studying émigrés of the immediate post-Revolutionary or early Soviet periods, and like

\(^{16}\) Raeff, 26. One prominent example that is explored in this work would be that of Prince Alexei Tsereteli, of Georgian descent.
most studies of ethnic Russian émigrés, more studies are available focusing on the mid-to-late Soviet period emigrants\textsuperscript{17}

*Teatr i zhizn’* is an important source for examining only a microcosm of the larger community that was Russia Abroad, however. The Parisian emigres and their devotion to theatre were an important part of the larger community that saw itself as responsible for perpetuating Russian high culture. It is impossible to tell what extent the viewpoints of the editors and authors published in *Teatr i zhizn’* are representative of that of the entire, or even a majority of, the Russian artistic community in Paris because of the fragmentary data available on émigrés and the lack of data on *Teatr i zhizn*’s demographics. However, an analysis of the publication can still reveal the anxieties about the future that plagued at least some parts of the émigré community, what aspects of theatre they deemed important in understanding cultural identity, and how the émigrés reacted to at least some of the cultural news coming out of the Soviet Union. While Marc Raeff’s book provides a comprehensive examination of Russia Abroad, it provides only “summary” of the ways that émigrés saw their participation in theatre as a fundamental extension of Russia Abroad. By examining *Teatr i zhizn*’, this study will expand on the groundwork laid by Raeff’s study to elaborate on the importance of theatre, and the life surrounding it, to the émigré community.

Ultimately, *Teatr i zhizn’* is simply, what it says it is. A magazine about theatre and life, and what those things meant to a community of people whose lives had been vastly different than what they or their ancestors would have anticipated from them. In the case of the Parisian Russian community a decade after 1917, writing about theatre and life in Russia Abroad helped the community to establish and maintain its borders and boundaries. As the émigré authors in the magazine wrote about theatre, cinema, and current events in both Russia Abroad, the West, and the Soviet Union, they revealed anxieties about not only their own futures, but the future of Russia. By framing theatre as the face of Russia Abroad and the cornerstone of Russia Abroad’s cultural-diplomatic efforts, the editors made theatre a part of the life of Russia Abroad.

\textsuperscript{17} For more see: Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and its diaspora* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010). Kobrin’s work does pay some focus to the early Soviet period.
The Show Must Go On: An Examination of the Theatre Journal *Teatr’ i zhizn’, 1928-1929*

The pages of *Teatr i zhizn’* offer many insights into émigré perceptions of what the theatre should be to the community of Russia Abroad. In many ways, the editors and authors espoused an image of theatre as the guiding force of the community, in Paris. However, there was also a deep concern for news coming from outside the community. While the clear majority of the articles and news were obviously focused on Russian Paris, Russia Abroad, and the Soviet Union, the authors and editors also seemed to show concern for events in the theatre world at large. The contents of *Teatr i zhizn’* are all still carefully tied into how Russian émigrés saw themselves as the inheritors of Russian theatre, and the associated responsibilities of continuing Russian cultural continuity from before the Revolutionary period. Part of maintaining Russian theatre would mean maintaining what the editors saw as the uniquely Russian historical and cultural characteristics in the theatrical community. This meant keeping abreast of the latest news and information from outside of the community to maintain and present a Russian theatrical community that was still on the same timeline of development as Western Europe’s theatrical scene. Now that Russia, according to the émigrés at least, could only be found within Russia Abroad, this need would be even more pressing. Much like Russian émigrés existed within their “host” countries, which would not necessarily be their permanent residences, Russian theatrical communities existed in “host” communities; Russian theatre in Paris would not be able to exist without the already established French theatrical communities, and it was important to present Russian theatre as something worthwhile to both Russia Abroad and to the host community in order to guarantee its continued existence. Although Russian émigrés often held little desire to fully assimilate, it was necessary that they work around the limitations of the host community in order to thrive. Furthermore, it was necessary that members of the theatrical community of Russia Abroad work around trends of increasing worldwide significance, such as cinematography. The following examination of the available issues of the 1928-1929 run of *Teatr’ i zhizn’* explores the anxieties caused by the advent of cinematography, the importance of education and its impact on the life of émigrés and their descendants, and the importance of émigré interpretations of Soviet news in émigré narratives.
Teatr i zhizn’ was published bimonthly in Paris from late 1928 through at least May of 1934. Over the course of the magazine’s publication run, the format of the cover changed only once. From the earliest issues of the magazine, the title had been written in large bold font in Imperial Russian style orthography, with the French version of the title “Le Theatre et la Vie” written in a smaller font below it. In April of 1929, this changed. The Russian title was no longer as prominent on the cover—the French version of the title was much larger and centered, although the Russian title was larger and bolder than the French title had been before the change. Other than the change in presentation of the title, the cover of the magazine remained largely unchanged over the years. The upper half of the cover page was taken up by the title, the issue number, the month of publication, and the names of the directors of the magazine. Alexandre Filipov remained director for the entire run, while the first year of the magazine’s run Eugene Efimovsky was his co-director. Filipov was later the Executive Manager of Colonel de Basil’s notorious version of Ballet Russes, which may relate to the eventual discontinuation of Teatr i zhizn’. Finally, the cover of the magazine featured an address: 40 Rue de Trévise Paris, and a phone number. Also listed was the price; each issue cost 3 francs and fifty cents, equivalent to approximately $0.13 in US dollars at the time and $1.79 today.

One significant note about the style of Teatr i zhizn’, is that every issue is written in the old style of Russian orthography. While at first glance it may appear quite similar to modern Russian orthography there are some key differences that distinguish the two. Some conjugational endings are spelled differently between the two alphabets, and some letters are present in the old-style orthography that are entirely absent from the modern style orthography, while some letters only slightly changed their form. The Bolsheviks made a few key changes, including replacing the letter ё (yat) with е, replacing о with Ω, and replacing и with ы. In all, the new style of orthography was actually simpler than the old style, especially because of the elimination of the hard sign at the end of a number of words. However, Russian émigrés continued to write in the old-style orthography because the changes were instituted after the Revolution, under the Bolshevik regime.

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18 Currently, these are the only known issues. I have found no issues beyond 1934, but Indiana University libraries lists the publication as running from 1928 to 1936.
19 81, Heysen to Heysen. Still looking for verifying information.
20 Used Paper-dragon.com and dollartimes.com. Trying to find a more reliable/academic gauge for the historical price.
Although these changes were in response to imperial measures far pre-dating the Revolution, the timing of their implementation was incredibly divisive since there were no moves to enact the changes until December 1918. Over the course of that year, the Bolsheviks slightly altered the initial decrees ordering the use of the new orthography, but remained consistent in their message: the new orthography was there to stay. While the old orthography was not expressly forbidden, it was made impractical to use in publications. The Soviet state ensured that most new publications, especially government sponsored or related publications, in Russia were published in the new orthography. This tended to be true for many publications, due to Soviet censorship and control. Although impractical, it was not impossible and the old orthography was still used in Russia, in some capacity, until 1929. While this year marked the effective end of the use of old orthography in Russia, it continued to be used in émigré communities well into the 1970s. The changes made in the orthography represented the product of Imperial efforts, but the timing of their implementation created a fissure between new and old and, eventually, between home and abroad. By the time of the publication of *Teatr’ i zhizn’*, the clear majority of easily-accessible publications in Russia would have been state sponsored, and therefore written in the new orthography. Although the implementation of Imperial-based reforms is an example of one of the many ways in which the Soviet regime attempted to coopt the authority and legacy of the Imperial government, it also illustrates that people may have been, to some extent, aware of these attempts. Many of those involved in writing and publishing would have been aware of the Imperial efforts to construct language reform, and aware that the Soviet policies had their roots in these pre-Revolutionary efforts. However, émigrés chose not to accept these policies. In doing so, they were denying the Soviet state the authority of continuing Imperial policy and denying the Soviet state’s ability to speak as a moderator of culture.

The significance of whether émigré publications were published using old or new orthography is fundamentally tied to language’s relationship with national identity. Benedict Anderson clearly argues for the importance of language, especially print language, as intrinsically connected with the rise of national identity and nationalism. As fundamental components in the burgeoning notions of national identity, vernacular languages were adopted by imperial authorities.\(^{21}\) Through the adoption of the “common tongue”, imperial authorities, as

\(^{21}\) Anderson.
a broad non-Russian exclusive category, were as much asserting themselves as a part of the common vernacular nation as they were attempting to consolidate their power by using one language. The formerly French or German speaking cultural elite in Russia worked through these ideas in the Westernizer versus Slavophile debates. By the late nineteenth century, Russian had become the language of rule and of the vernacular.

Besides the addition or appropriation of vocabulary, however, spoken Russian remained largely the same on each side of the Revolution. It was the print language that had changed. Anderson connects print language to his conceptualization of national identity extensively. “Novels and newspapers,” he wrote, were the “technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation.”²² Novels and newspapers, incidentally, were both some of the mainstays of émigré life. William Chapin Huntington, former Commercial Attache to the United States Embassy in Moscow, claimed that “The book follows the émigré,” pointing out that many “Russians-out-of-Russia [were] well educated people,” familiar with Russian literature, which was “imbued with social consciousness.”²³ He also pointed to Russian newspapers as being fundamentally important to the Russian émigré community, both as connections to the Russian language and for their ability to be the arbiters of political discourse in the absence of a more appropriate venue.²⁴ This language usage complements Anderson’s assessment of newspapers as important for their wide accessibility and low cost, both important factors in reinforcing community because people knew that other people were reading the same exact thing that they were. People in a community were likely to have the same concerns for what was considered “news,” and they were most likely going to read about it, or process the information, in a similar way. Furthermore, it is important to note that there was little restriction on the émigré publications, aside from monetary considerations. Huntington points out that the émigré press was the only free press in the world—it was not subject to the censorship of either the Imperial government, or the Soviet regime.²⁵ Without these types of censorship, émigrés had more flexibility in determining and propagating information that they felt informed and reinforced community.

²² Anderson, 25.
²⁴ Ibid., 198.
²⁵ Ibid., 201-202.
The authors of *Teatr i zhizn’* were fundamentally concerned with both Russia’s past and future. Throughout the publication, the usage of language helps to clarify some of the boundaries of the community. As Katia Dianina has argued, it was in mass print circulation that the arbiters of cultural national identity could give these events significance and meaning to a wider audience. It was in writing about art and culture and making these connections, that these figures were able to connect a national *cultural* identity to a broader framework of national identity. The importance of Imperial Russian script has already been discussed and that the magazine was published in Russian was clearly significant. Through its usage, émigrés were insulating their community and reaffirming their cultural and linguistic heritage. More surprising was that French was used in the magazine at all, and not just in utilitarian ways. Addresses, of course, were written in French, but most issues had at least one article and some advertisements written in French. While some articles were written in French, these articles were not frequently about figures within Russia Abroad. Often, the magazine’s French articles profiled figures outside of Russia Abroad, such as the actress Hope Hampton, in issue 12 released in July 1929, or Madame Mary McCormic, in issue 14 released in August 1929, in their French language articles. Since these articles were not about members of the Russia Abroad community, any commentary about them would not have been relevant in reinforcing boundaries of the community. The language the articles were written in would have been, to a minor extent, irrelevant. While it is obvious that there was at least some anticipation amongst the editors or publishers that at least some of the audience could read French, or had access to someone that could translate the articles for them, but the use of French in the magazine was, at most, of marginal importance to the Russian community. That the magazine *was* written in Imperial Russian solidifies that it was meant mostly for members of Russia Abroad, and not even Frenchmen who may possess a casual interest in Russian theatre.

Although, historically, many Russians spoke French or had some reading knowledge of the language, it was not as commonly spoken in the early twentieth century by the political and cultural elite as it once had been. While many the Russian emigres participating in the theatre world of Russia Abroad likely spoke French to conduct day-to-day business, the conscious decision to relay most of the magazine articles in Russian served to reinforce Russia Abroad by
making it available to *all* Russians in Paris, even if the audience may have been somewhat limited due to cost and interest. If publications serve not only as venues to hash out cultural debates, but also to give them significance and imbue cultural events with meaning it is important that people beyond the authors can read the magazines, of course. Additionally, by writing the magazine largely in Russian, the authors were insulating Russia Abroad against French intrusion into the community and providing a means of resisting assimilation. It is highly unlikely that as many of the local French spoke Russian as the Russians spoke French, and by denying the French access to Russian cultural writing they were only reinforcing the boundaries of Russia Abroad. While Frenchmen interested in Russian theatre may be able to attend the performances and interact with Russians involved in the community, they were, at least, denied access to the more intimate writings in the magazine. Those articles that were written in French did not delve thoroughly into the anxieties of the emigration—most were only profiles of dancers, directors, or films, such as the profiles of Hampton and McCormic discussed above. All the poetry, prose, and meta-writings of the community were made off limit through language barriers, allowing authors to write freely in their native language for the community to retain boundaries around subjects that may seem more personal. This includes most of the articles discussed in this analysis.

Out of the available issues for analysis, the second issue of *Teatr i zhizn’* is typical. The cover of the thirty-six page long issue featured the émigré author, Aleksandr’ Ivanovich’ Kuprin’, who was the subject of the first two articles. These articles provided biographical sketches and lamented that an “arrogant” literary critic had already attempted to divide Russia Abroad by defaming Kuprin’s name. Kuprin’s own short essay “Dying Art” [*Umiraiushchee iskusstvo*], on Commedia dell’arte and the circus’ decline as professional art forms, was published immediately following these articles. Articles followed on concert success and failures, the Russian season in Barcelona, and Spanish dancing. “The Death of the Ballerina Lidia Ivanova” [*Ubistvo baleriny lidii ivanovoi*] profiled the actress Lidia Ivanova’s suspicious death in the Soviet Union, taking great pains to point out that the official story that the boat had overturned due to mechanical failure was suspect because the steering wheel was in perfect condition. These articles, and some smaller paragraph long blurbs, tended to have a geographic

or thematic connection to the Parisian community of Russia Abroad yet still pay attention to the
great expanse of Russia Abroad. While the focus is on the Parisian community and its centrality
to the network of Russia Abroad, the individual branches of the network were not ignored.
Furthermore, most of the articles related more specifically to theatre, yet some articles, like the
article on Lidia Ivanova, explore social and cultural topics deemed important. These types of
articles made up the core of the magazine and typically took up the first twenty or so pages.

The latter half of the magazine typically featured sections, like “Theatre Life in Soviet
Russia” [Teatral’naya zhizn’ v’ sovietskoi rossii], “Cinema” (Kino), “Little Things” (Melochi),
shorter articles, and advertisements. In issue 2, for example, the sections containing news from
Russia reported on Konstantin Stanislavskii’s recent illness and the effects it had on his Moscow
Art Theatre. One film about Rasputin made the news in the section on Cinema, where the
unnamed author wryly remarked: “We are spoiled by the quantity, but not by the quality of
foreign depictions of Russian themes.” Unsurprisingly, the author found quarrel with the
“jubilant welcome” of the Revolution, and criticized the film’s attempt to pack too much into the
hour and a half film.27 The “Little Things” column featured snippets of news, ranging from one
to three paragraphs, that simply didn’t seem to go anywhere else. In issue 2, this column reported
on Mussolini disgracefully banning a film in Italy and on the Russian theatre critic A.R. Kugel’s
memorial service. Issue 2 was somewhat of an aberration because, after the “Little Things”
column, there a crossword puzzle was published before the advertisements. Advertisements for
the magazine were typical throughout, with some businesses advertising every issue, and
featured Russian restaurants, Russian doctors, Russian ballet studios, and Russian shops. Much
as with the first half of the magazine, the latter half still focuses primarily on theatre, yet more on
making sure that the magazine’s audience is familiar with current events in the Soviet Union’s
theatrical community. Other columns contribute to the well-roundedness of the magazine by
fleshing out émigré life and culture through reports on cinema and petty gossip. The several
pages of advertisements, mostly in Russian with some addresses in English, serve simply to help
émigrés find required services, but also to reinforce community ties by making sure that émigrés
know which Russian businesses they could access. This outline of issue 2 represents a typical
issue of the magazine and its format, although there were variations in the length and exact

substance of columns from issue-to-issue. By balancing out émigré concerns with news from Russian Paris, Russia Abroad, the Soviet Union, and simply interesting or useful information, *Teatr i zhizn’* was able to establish the boundaries of Russia Abroad for its readers.

**Creative Anxieties: Concerns for the Future of Russia Abroad and Theatre**

Many émigrés were concerned not only for the continuation of Russia and Russian culture abroad and the futures open to them, but they were also concerned for the future of theatre and its associated forms. In some instances, these forms blurred together; concerns about creativity and the ability to create effectively abroad were merged with concerns whether or not theatre would even continue to exist as a valid art form. Reports on new technologies and unemployment illustrated these anxieties. One such case was a report on actors unemployment in America. They specifically expressed concerns that over 10,000 actors were threatened by unemployment because seats were “beyond the means of an ordinary American citizen” at the cost of $8.5/ticket. They reported that professional organizations in America were “worried about the impending disaster,” and that they would be meeting soon in order to address the community’s concerns.28 Considering that Russian émigrés would have already had higher rates of unemployment in their host countries, due to a limited need or desire for Russian language theatre, opera, etc., it is easy to see why they may be concerned about the growing unemployment elsewhere, especially with such high numbers at risk. Many émigrés, even those who were otherwise successful, struggled to make ends meet—just one example being Ivan Bunin, who became the first Russian author to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1933. Marc Raeff cites that even such a high level of international recognition, and the prize money that came with it, was not enough to draw Bunin out of poverty. Many other authors and artists lived on meager wages, as well—it was not simply the case of one man who mismanaged money or had bad luck. While the award was certainly a boon for Russia Abroad, it was hardly an answer to all the problems that the émigré communities faced.29

However, even beyond the purely economic concerns about whether or not someone could afford a ticket, theatre was threatened by new advances in technology. “Speaking Films,” or “Talkies,” were just beginning to grow and popularity, and theatre critics were concerned

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29 Raeff, 109.
about attendance in the face of an “uneven fight.” “The fight is not fair. We are fighting with 8-ounce gloves on our hands, while our enemy is holding brass knuckles,” said a quote in the article “The Fight Against Theatre With Speaking Films” [Bor’ba teatrov’ s’ govoryashchimi fil’mami], which appeared in issue 10, published in June 1929. These odds may have felt particularly stacked because of prices. According to the article, prices for a movie theater ticket ranged from 2 to 7 shillings, roughly equivalent to $.60 to $2.00.³⁰ It is easy to see how this could be concerning, when they were charging only as much as 23% the cost of a theatre ticket, if prices can be taken as roughly equivalent to the cost of a theatre ticket in America. While the editors clearly wanted to voice these concerns, and remain closely abreast of the trends abroad, they also were hesitant to proclaim firmly that theatre was dead, or that it was the cinema responsible for theatre’s death, even if it was its natural successor. Many émigrés and Russian artists actually worked in the cinema and theatre, and there were some studios that produced Russian films abroad—particularly in larger cities such as Berlin and Paris. Quite a number of columns and articles reported on a well-known actor or actress being cast in a major film or that a studio was going to begin producing a film. That these snippets did not include any more identifying information, for the most part, excludes the possibilities that they were advertisements for anyone who may have been interested in working on the film. They were simply short updates on what was going on in the community, indicating that there was at least somewhat widespread interest amongst those heavily immersed in the theatre community of Russia Abroad. As was the case in most countries, there may not have been a long tradition of Russian cinema by the time of the Revolution, it was still an avenue in which Russians abroad could express themselves and distribute Russian culture, either within the community or outside of it.

However useful cinema could be, many Teatr i zhizn’ writers believed it posed a threat to the theatre. According to an article that appeared in June 1929 in Issue 10, theatre was a relic of an older age, dying a slow but natural death to be succeeded by cinema. This may have sounded quite familiar to what Russian émigrés had heard about Imperial Russia, before the Revolution. The article, written by Valerian Svetlov in response to an essay by French dramaturg Andre Lang, said that the present age was the “last convulsion of dramatic art” and that what would

³⁰ “Bor’ba teatrov’ s’ govoryashchimi fil’mami,” Teatr’ i zhizn’ 10 (June, 1929): 26. Currency conversions made at: https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm
arise may be called theatre, but would be nothing like what been fifty years ago when “dramatic theatre was in full force.” Although he was French, and most likely referring to the situation in the French theatrical community as he knew it, its inclusion in the magazine is indicative of its importance to the émigré community. While it is difficult to say to what extent the community agreed or disagreed with his sentiment, the editors thought that it was an important enough viewpoint that their audience should be well-versed in it.\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps, they saw parallels between a slow decline of theatre and the destruction of Imperial Russia and the growing acceptance of cinema and the Soviet Union. While not every émigré felt this way, as there was some émigré activity in cinema abroad, the anxieties that were expressed about the death of traditional theatre abroad make it clear that some émigrés were legitimately concerned that the advent of cinema would lead to the extinguishing of the torch of Russian theatre abroad.

One article does seem to indicate that the community leaned slightly more on the “threatened” side, when it comes to theatre. “Famous Russian operetta artist M.S. Dalsky” returned to Paris after a two-year stay in America, the article reports, and confirmed that there was something of an “artistic crisis” because “talkies” were putting musical artists out of work. What work that did exist, he notes, was not enough to go around. The article hinted that it was this cinematic pressure that was behind the closure of the private Russian opera company that existed in America and not any other circumstances that were plaguing the émigré community. Because of this “artistic crisis,” many Russian artists were leaving America for Europe.\textsuperscript{32} This article appeared in a September 1929 issue of \textit{Teatr i zhizn’}, on the same page as an article, describing what some more prominent artists were planning on doing after the Paris season. The timing may have been a coincidence due to the end of the season—or it may have been an intentional reminder to the community that, just because a successful season had ended, they were still not entirely safe from the threat of destruction of Russian culture.

The anxieties caused by new technologies such as cinema were not the only anxieties that Russian émigrés expressed about the future of Russia abroad in the arts. Even aside from sharing news about the threats theatre faced from external movements into its cultural territory, there were internal threats to Russian art abroad. These threats and the anxieties that they caused were

\textsuperscript{31} Valerian’ Svietlov’, “Diktatura cinematograf’a”, \textit{Teatr’ i zhizn’} 10 (June, 1929): 20
never far from mind. The writers published in *Theatre and Life* were frequently very self-conscious about their status and there were many poems, articles, and prose pieces that explicitly reference emigration and displacement. Some of these pieces were more introspective and creative versus being strictly news pieces, and these pieces reference separation from the homeland frequently, and often equate it to being separated from their creative inspiration or creative abilities. In one article, “Creative Messianism,” the author, Eugene Efimovskiy, went so far as to reference a “national creativity.”

Creative individuals are only bright lights in the starry sky. Subtract the blue background and extinguish the myriad of bright points, and all you will have remaining is a great number of bright bodies, givers, perhaps, of a lot of heat, but unable to light anyone or inspire anything. In this is the power and value of national poetry. To get away from [her/poetry], is to get away from the meaning of life.

Artists are likened to the “bright lights in the starry sky” of a nation, but once the sky is removed then the artists are also removed from their ability to produce meaningful work. Once removed from their ability to produce, they are devoid of meaningful life. Life in emigration was seen as a challenge and a hardship for continuing to produce important works. This is a recurring theme in the articles of *Teatr i zhizn’*. Even when an émigré feels generous to their “compatriots (sootchestvennik)” “here,” in emigration, when they see the original pieces of artwork and their loveliness—they recognize something “lost” and will think of their homeland (*Rodina*).

Émigrés are thus, to some degree, self-described or self-referenced as “lost” and unable to continue to produce the same type of work that they were when they were connected to their homeland—a source of inspiration and creativity. This is, of course, in conflict with the fact that émigrés did actually continue to produce work and perform after leaving Russia. It does, however, reveal some insight as to how émigrés conceptualized of their creative output abroad—as something “dulled” or somehow inherently “lost.” However successful those works may be, it was not enough to solve the creative depression that some artists experienced when separated from Russia.

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34 Ibid.
Not every work published in Russia Abroad was strictly creative in nature. While few new and original books were published in the emigration, some nonfiction did examine Russian history or cultural figures. One such review in Teatr’ i zhizn’ tackles a new biographical work of a figure associated with Aleksander Pushkin. The article, “Genius and Betrayal,” summarizes and reviews two recently published books, each biographies of a woman. One of the works focused on Cosima Wagner, illegitimate daughter of Franz Liszt and Marie d’Agoult and the second wife of Richard Wagner, while the other explored the life of Anna Petrovna Kern, most well known for being the subject of one of Pushkin’s poems. “Ia pomnii chudnoe mgnovenie” (I remember a wonderful moment) is regarded as one of the best love poems in Russian, and is certainly the most well-known. Russian émigré Vladimir Nabokov used the poem to criticize attempts to translate Russian into English, or specifically to translate Pushkin, into English. In fact, this quality is one that makes so many Russians laud Pushkin as one of Russia’s greatest authors. In describing the process of attempting to translate Pushkin into English, Nabokov wrote:

Thus I was confronted by that opening line, so full of Pushkin, so individual and harmonious; and after examining it gingerly from the various angles here suggested, I tackled it. The tackling process lasted the worst part of the night. I did translate it at last; but to give my version at this point might lead the reader to doubt that perfection be attainable by merely following a few perfect rules.36

That he faced such difficulty translating is particularly momentous when one considers that Nabokov wrote some of his most well-known works in English, in some cases decades before ever translating them into Russian. That a poem with a first line “so individual and harmonious,” that the poem is so well known, makes it no little wonder that émigrés might have been interested in knowing more about its original subject.

Interestingly, this was one of very few mentions of Pushkin in the pages of Teatr i zhizn’ during the year of 1929. This was to be somewhat of an aberration—as Pushkin remained a central figure of research during the height of Russia Abroad, according to Marc Raeff. The work above is just one example of new academic examinations of Pushkin and his life, however he also became a central figure in celebrations of Russian identity: after all, Pushkin’s birthday

became the Day of Russian Culture in Russia Abroad. According to Marc Raeff, it was Pushkin’s writings about other countries that sometimes introduced Russians to foreign mentalities. Pushkin’s politics were also attractive to émigrés because they resonated clearly with the political viewpoints they often find themselves espousing; “His accommodation to the tsarist regime for popular anarchy—his occasional praise of Russia’s nationalism and imperialism, as well as his uncompromising individualism and spiritual libertarianism” were all appealing.³⁷ While Teatr i zhizn’ did not write extensively on Pushkin or the Day of Russian Culture, other magazines did hold features on these events. One such example was an article published by the former Russian ambassador to France, Vasily Maklakov elaborating on the above and accompanied by a full page of illustration and the opening lines to Pushkin’s Ruslan i Liudmila, upon which Glinka’s popular opera Ruslan was based.³⁸ This choice was likely incredibly deliberate—as an attempt at a national epic, it contained many references to Russian history and culture, and was completed while Pushkin was in exile. While Pushkin was not featured prominently in the pages of Teatr i zhizn’, he would certainly not have been far from the émigré consciousness.

These articles and examples illustrate some of the anxieties over creative construction and expression reveal some of the concerns that émigrés in the theatrical community faced as they attempted to continue their work abroad. Fears of becoming outdated, unemployed, and creatively blocked were the foundation of their concerns for not only the existence of the theatrical community in Russia Abroad, but for the continuation of Russia. Although national cultural identity is more nuanced than what can only be found in the theatre, for those involved in the theatrical communities of Russia Abroad, it was a key component of how they remembered and envisioned Russia. For the authors, directors, performers, and other individuals involved in these communities, keeping Russian theatre alive through their work and performances was the best way at ensuring that Russia lived on.

³⁷ Raeff, 96.
³⁸ The article appeared in Mir i Iskusstva, not to be confused with the Russian art collective Mir iskusstva.
The Resurrection of National Russia: Educating the Children

If Russia was to continue to exist, many emigres believed, it must exist both on stage and in their hopes of one day returning to their homeland. Year after year, the Soviet government gained more official international recognition. In France, this came in 1924 when the seat of the ambassador of Russia was finally given to the Soviet Union after nearly six years of its unofficial occupancy by V. Maklakov, triggering a minor crisis in how the French government would deal with the Russian émigrés within its borders. The Soviet government certainly did not recognize them as citizens and there were few ways that French officials could verify the émigré’s Russian language documents. This was settled, to some extent, when the French established an office of émigré affairs, which Maklakov headed until his death.\(^{39}\) Even before the French recognition of the Soviet government, however, the nature of émigré citizenship had been a difficult topic, prompting the League of Nations to create the Nansen passport in 1922. According to the initial documents of the Nansen Report, there were as many 1.5 million Russians outside of Russia that needed shelter or assistance repatriating, a number “unparalleled [in history].”\(^{40}\) In 1926, the League of Nations amended their initial guidelines for the certification of Nansen passports to specifically designate Russian refugees as: “Any person of Russian origin who does not enjoy or who no longer enjoys the protection of the Government of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and who has not acquired another nationality.”\(^{41}\) The Nansen passport gave Russian émigrés the ability to travel internationally with some ease and many Russian émigrés discussed in *Teatr’ i zhizn’*, including Rachmaninov, Stravinsky, and Chagall, were issued and utilized the Nansen passports.

While the international community did recognize the difficult situation many émigrés found themselves in, this recognition was bittersweet. These accommodations solidified the obstacle that the Soviet Union presented. However, even though émigrés began to lose hope that they would one day be able to return and reclaim the Russia that they had once known, they

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\(^{39}\) James Hassel. "Russian Refugees in France and the United States between the World Wars." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 81, no. 7 (1991): I-96. Maklakov had been a member of the last Imperial Duma and, after some hesitancy, accepted the position of ambassador offered to him by the Provisional Government. He occupied the seat with no official recognition until France’s recognition of the Soviet Union.

\(^{40}\) Nansen Report, 8th Meeting (Public) held at St. James's Palace, London, Thursday, July 20th, at 4 p.m. 722. 1.

knew that they could continue to represent that Russia on stage. Perhaps even more importantly, they knew that the children living abroad in emigration needed to be educated in what they thought were “proper” Russian values, stories, and morals. Thus, even in an émigré magazine focused largely on the theatrical community of Russia Abroad, children’s education became a noteworthy topic.

Articles discussing the benefactors of the Russian educational programs in Paris, France served to not only highlight and, to some extent, immortalize the efforts made by émigrés who devoted time, energy, and money into organizing schools, but also to further reinforce just how important it was that children were closely integrated into Russian communities and could speak the Russian language. There was little point in preserving the theatrical traditions of Russia, after all, if there was no one to carry them on in the future. These articles further reinforced the boundaries of community while, at the same time, negating Bolshevik narratives of the selfishness of “the bourgeois” class. By portraying the royal and upper-class families involved in organizing and funding the schools as generous and selfless, they sought to deny Bolshevik claims that Imperial Russian society was corrupt.

The articles in Teatr i zhizn’ that discussed children’s education and children’s role in the future of Russia are very telling. With the beginning of the Revolution ten years past, many émigrés had started families abroad. Now that many children of Russia Abroad had been born outside of Russia, or left at such an early age, there was considerable anxiety about their relationship with their spiritual homeland. Education became doubly important in the cases of émigré children born abroad—it was necessary that they be taught why Russia was important and how to be Russian. One article asserted that “Russian Children, beyond any doubt, were the most affected by the fatal events that cost Russia its power and glory,” that is the “military and revolutionary events.” Émigrés responded to these threats in several ways—including through the establishment of orphanages and schools, usually by wealthy figures with foreign ties. An orphanage established by Grand Duchess Elena (Helena) Vladimirovna (nee Romanov) and a school funded by Lord Henri Deterding and his wife, Lydia Pavlovna Koudoyaroff. These articles are rare instances where the magazine removes the focus of its article from something strictly related to the theatrical and artistic communities. By raising awareness of these

institutions, the magazine sought to do its own part in spreading awareness of the plight of Russian émigré children.

Émigrés worked to subvert assimilation pressures, as can be evidenced by the continued existence of Russian-language publications and Russian-run businesses, but children faced greater threats. As émigré author Nina Berberova discussed in her memoirs, “French literature in one way or another entered the consciousness of even the semi-intelligentsia in school years; émigré children growing up in France and bringing to their homes the ways of the new country.”

Russian children attending French schools would face considerable pressures to assimilate, at least in school settings. In fact, this was a concern for many émigrés, who were concerned about their children not only maintaining Russian culture while abroad, but also as inheritors of Russian culture. Their children, they hoped, could one day return authentic Russian culture, and cultural heritage, to Russia and displace Soviet impurities and mischaracterizations.

The article discussing Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna’s orphanage highlighted some of these concerns—many of the children had been “taken out of Russia in diapers or born in emigration,” they were children who had never yet “seen their homeland.” The Grand Duchess stepped in to remedy this, to the best of her ability.

The orphanage, apparently named after Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich, was located in Saint-Germain, near Paris, in what was described as an “ancient feudal castle” “surrounded by a beautiful park.” There, the children had freedom to play, but more importantly, under the Grand Duchesses’ care and generosity, they could learn to be Russian. In the article, “Christmas Tree in the Grand Duchess Elena Vladimirovna’s Children’s Shelter,” the author says that these children are spared the “grief” and “gravity of emigrant wandering,” but importantly, the author says that they are learning “to become honest, useful workers in the Russian national field in the future.” The children appear to be fated for something greater than what they would understand. Since the children in this community were educated on site, they would have, in all likelihood, faced less exposure to assimilation pressures. Furthermore, they were in an orphanage

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45 Ibid. It is unclear whether the orphanage was located in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a township roughly 12 miles from central Paris, or Saint-Germain-des-Prés, a neighborhood in the 6th arrondissement of Paris. The description of the orphanage implies the first, but the location cannot be verified.
46 Ibid.
run by a member of the Russian royal family—Grand Duchess Vladimirovna was Nicholas II’s
cousin, on his paternal side. In fact, the author was careful to emphasize her Russian heritage and
her connections to the Russian royal family. In 1902, the Grand Duchess became Princess Nicholas of Greece and Denmark, when she married Prince Nicholas of Greece and Denmark.
By using only her Russian title, the author is emphasizing that members of the Russian royal
family still exist—and are still actively working towards nurturing the next generation of
Russians.

Ostensibly, the article on Grand Duchess Vladimirovna was a miniature showcase of the
orphanage’s holiday festivities. The author listed the names of students and some of the
individual pieces that they performed, but did not focus on which pieces were performed or any
specific details, they only listed the titles of songs. The article did discuss the Christmas tree
featured in its title—but mostly just as an element of Russian culture and tradition, it was a focal
point for the holiday celebrations and a prop for the holiday mini-performances. “[In the shadow
of a beautiful Christmas tree]” where the children were performing songs and skits, the author
said, “the Russian emigrant felt somehow lighter and lighter in their soul.” 47 The children’s
involvement and commitment to the festivities contributed to that mood—the author described
their “little hearts” as belonging entirely to the festivities, “and then to Russia itself.” 48
Interestingly, this was the only article in that issue of the magazine that featured any discussion
of the Christmas season and associated celebrations, although the Russian Orthodox Church had
a strong role abroad and in children’s education.

Another significant article about children in the emigration was written later in the year
by the editor Alexander Filipov, “Russkiia dieti v emigratziia; dlya gryadushchei Rossii (Russian
children in Emigration; For Future Russia).” In the article, Filipov wrote that: “Children are the
future. Children are the resurrection of national Russia. Children are the blossoming of new life.
We all invest our aspirations in [our] children.” 49 This only further emphasizes the hefty role that
children are expected to play—as well as further bolstering the importance of the work being
done to help them. While the article, entitled “Russian Children in Emigration – For the
upcoming Russia,” addressed the plight of Russian children in emigration as a whole, it also had

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Aleksandr Filipov, Russkaia deti v emigratzii. Teatr’ i zhizn’ 10 (June, 1929): 16.
a clear focus on the contributions that the Deterding family had made to Russia Abroad. Sir Henry Deterding, co-founder of Royal Dutch Shell Company, organized 180 scholarships for Russian children’s education abroad and worked with other countries in order to find “the necessary funds for continuation and completion of education.”

His wife was apparently closely involved in this process and, at the time the article was published, was working to establish a Russian boarding school for thirty children and had helped to organize funds for a gymnasium in Paris with the capacity for several hundred students.

Funding the school would have been very significant for the community—it would have been the only way that most children would have been able to attend. Émigré schools were not often eligible for much, if any, government assistance from the host country and it was difficult for émigré families to afford the high tuition that they usually had to charge in order to function.

The school was advertised in the very next issue as a “Russian Secondary School in Paris – Named after Lady Lydia Pavlovna Deterding,” offering all subjects in French, except for a course on the “Law of God” and Russian language. The advertisement was careful to point out that attendance in the program would make students eligible to enroll in the “highest educational institutions in France, England, and the rest of Europe,” as instruction was offered in French and English languages.

The article focused heavily on Lady Deterding’s involvement, privileging its praise of her kindness and generosity, although her husband was also closely involved in their efforts to expand the availability of Russian education.

While Filipov’s praise is sometimes rather heavy, it is still revealing that many of the articles that focused on the nature of children in emigration pointed to concern about their role as protectors and inheritors of Russian culture. There was sometimes general anxiety about the intense assimilation pressures children faced, which would hinder their ability to fulfill their duty as “the resurrection of national Russia.” It is vital, then, that they should be educated, and powerful and wealthy figures such as the Deterdings had the resources available to reach out to Russian families in emigration to ensure they received this education. The lavish praise heaped

50 The article did not specify how he worked with other countries, and whether or not he was working with government or private organizations in order to organize the scholarships.
51 Ibid, 15.
52 Raeff, 57. Raeff discusses one school under the direction of former Russian ambassador M. A. Maklokov’s sister, which was funded by Lady Detterding. It is unclear if the article is referring to this school, or if the Deterding’s were involved in numerous ventures.
on the Deterdings solely for their contributions to children’s education highlights the importance of the educational mission. It was through the efforts of those like the Grand Duchess Vladimirovna and Sir and Lady Deterding that Russian children who had never even been to Russia, could study vital cultural information and study Russian language so that they would be able to carry on their mission as the “resurrection of national Russia.” Furthermore, Filipov specifically refers to the children as the main actors in this resurrection, referring to them as eventually returning to Russia. However, he accepted that it would not be the generation of adult émigrés—it would specifically be the children to return to Russia. After ten years after the Revolution, it seemed, at least some émigrés were beginning to expect that they would not be able to return to their Russia, from “[lands distant] from their native fields” during their lifetimes.54 As they began to accept the permanence of their own exile, they shifted their hopes towards their children instead.

That the magazine featured articles that focused so heavily on children and education is unsurprising. William Huntington pointed out that “the thinking émigré sees the school as the very custodian of Russian cultural values which may otherwise be irretrievably lost . . . only in ‘beyond-the-border Russia,’ the émigrés believe, is authentic Russian intellectual and spiritual life possible.”55 This can be easily be proven by the extent to which articles denigrate theatrical activity in the Soviet Union, but it serves to further highlight the importance of education in émigré communities. If the émigré community is solely responsible for maintain the purity of Russian culture, then teaching that culture must be of paramount importance. The articles give women a special role in this maintenance as well; they both focus on the native Russian woman’s involvement in these pursuits, although their husbands were involved in varying degrees. Furthermore, Filipov explicitly says that “Women are wonderful, women are Russian. Women, far away from their homeland, preserved in their soul all the eternal charm and freshness of Russian freedom.”56 In another short article discussing a children’s institute in the Parisian suburb Chaville, the anonymous author praises the “maternal care” of the children’s caretakers. The school was a “small Russia in miniature,” where the children could be taught what it meant to be Russian under the cares of Margarita Alexandrovna Spiridovich, who raised and donated

54 Filipov, “Russkiya dyeti v emigratzii.” 16.
55 Huntington, 104.
56 Aleksandr Filipov, Russkaia deti v emigratzii, 16.
80,000 francs for the school’s maintenance. Women, particularly those of noble or upper class heritage, seemed to take the initiative as custodians of Russian children’s education and cultural upbringing in Russia Abroad. To what extent this was a continuation of social duties expected of women from their stratum of society is hard to say, however what is clear is that the magazine thought it necessary to emphasize both their involvement and their maternal nature. The magazine was propagating an image of upper class women as compassionate and caring, a stark contrast to the narrative of the upper class espoused by the Bolshevik regime.

The Shows: Accounts of Performances Abroad

Performances of Russian operas and by Russian musicians were the most common recitals in Russia Abroad. As Marc Raeff has explained, music was able to transcend linguistic boundaries. In the issues of Teatr i zhizn’ examined, there was little indication of non-musical Russian theatrical performances—every major performance that was given a thorough examination was of an opera. Typical repertoires included a variety of what had come to be considered the Russian classics. These performances mostly included operas from the so-called “The Mighty Handful,” [Moguchaia kuchka] the 19th Century Russian composers who sought to create a distinctly “Russian-sounding” classical music. Of particular importance were works by Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Alexander Borodin. Many of their pieces were based heavily on Russian folklore or the works of beloved Russian authors such as Aleksandr Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol. Because the works are often so closely connected with Russian cultural traditions from the Imperial era, it was important for émigrés that they were able to continue staging these productions as they knew them from Russia, thereby claiming them and presenting them as their own.

By sharing the details of some of noteworthy productions in the pages of Teatr i zhizn’, émigrés were reinforcing the importance of these events and stories. Some of the articles make

57 “Russkii priiut’ v’ Shavilie.” Teatr’ i zhizn’ 10 (June, 1929): 17.
58 Raeff, 116-117.
59 Although Nikolai Gogol was technically Ukrainian, some Russians have historically tried to claim the legacy for his works as Russian since, during his life in the early-to-mid 1800’s, delineations between Russian and Ukrainian identities were not drawn as sharply. Nikolai Gogol’s works became a rallying point for some Ukrainian nationalists, but the adaptations of his works were often considered Russian since they were written by members of the Mighty Handful.
explicit references to Russian history and draw parallels between the historical circumstances of the opera’s stories and current events. To recall Benedict Anderson’s identification of newspapers as a means of “re-presenting” the imagined community, the articles in the magazine served to show how “good” Russian members of Russia Abroad should interpret not only the quality of the performance, but the content as well. One company, in particular, the Russian Private Opera became a focus of the articles of Teatr i zhizn’ over the course of the issues examined. The company, possibly named after Marmontov’s successful Russkaia Chastnoi Opera, based out of Moscow, would reference an incredibly successful opera tradition that included domestic and foreign performances. Some of the notable shows in Marmontov’s opera included Glinka’s Life for the Tsar, Borodin’s Prince Igor, Mussorgsky’s Boris Godunov, Glinka’s Ruslan and Liudmila, and Vasilenko’s The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya. These performances are all notable for the fact that they were performed in Russia Abroad and were, by the early-mid 20th Century, considered Russian classics. Not only was their classical repertoire a clear sign that they were truly a Russian company replicated on the success of a Russian company, but the impressive list of talent participating in the company ensured that they would receive careful attention.

Even before the Russian Private Opera of Paris opened, the article “In the Workshops” highlighted the importance of the costumes that would be showcased in its upcoming performances of Prince Igor, The Tale of Tsar Sultan, The Snow Maiden, and The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya.60 A group of “prominent” Russian artists were responsible for the drawings and design elements for sets of costumes, special emphasis was put on the work of the costumer I. Nemenskii, who had apparently gained a reputation as being a “veteran costumer of the rich in the world of costumed Imperial Theatres in Russia.”61 His reputation and skill were important in successfully recreating classic Imperial costumes for these works—the author, only identified as Zritel’, which translates to “spectator”, seemed to be impressed with the wide variety of costumes he had seen. However, even more so than the costumes—he seemed impressed by the fact that the Theatre des Champs-Elysees had been taken over by Russians. “Take a good look at workers,” he said, “these are all Russian emigres of an

60 The Russian Private Opera in Paris is distinct from the Russian Private Opera established by Savva Marmontov in Russia in 1885 and operated in Moscow.
intelligent appearance, who have seen better days” but were enthusiastic about their craftsmanship and their intent to “create a costume, whose smallest details would correspond to the intentions of the artist and director.” He also suggests that, by the time the Russian Private Opera was expected to open, at least three hundred more Russians would be employed in its service.\textsuperscript{62} While that number may have been high and hardly touches even a fraction of the number of emigres living in Paris, it does indicate that the Russian theatrical community was more than simply a connection to art and culture for Russian émigrés—it was a potential employer. While this is obvious for figures such as directors, ballerinas, and musicians—it reveals a concern and dedication to hiring from within the community at every level of the process.

The Russian Private Opera lived up to its name as a private pursuit—Zritel’ describes all of the stage, set, and prop building as in-house efforts, not to mention the training for the orchestra and dancers. Of course, such a large and multi-faceted pursuit would seem quite chaotic. This, however, would only be to take a superficial view. To examine the Private Opera closely would reveal that in fact, each department was “subordinated to one center, one will,” that of the administration.\textsuperscript{63} Zritel draws a wider parallel. The Russian Private Opera was exemplary of what the Russian theatre in Paris should be for the émigré community. Because of that exemplary nature, it should then be seen as an example and an extension of the broader community of Russia Abroad. Those responsible for keeping the Russian theatrical community abroad together, then, were responsible for keeping all of Russia Abroad together. Zritel’ carefully emphasized how life and the quality of work done in the workshop for the Private Opera was “just as it was in Russia.”\textsuperscript{64} At the very least, the Russian Private Opera was a microcosm where that community could grow, flourish, and exist as it had back in Russia. Although the company could only employ a finite number of people, they were at least performing beloved Russian operas that would deliver an authentically Russian performance. In the end, Zritel declares that the Russian Private Opera will “undoubtedly create a new era for the expansion of the sphere of Russian Art Abroad. The epoch will be original and interesting.”\textsuperscript{65} It is clear that at least part of his excitement is attached to his perception of a genuinely Russian

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 8.
product, but furthermore the genuine product of the émigré community. Not only will the Russian Private Opera rejuvenate Russian art in much the same way the Ballet Russes had created this era before it, but this new era will bring something distinct and original to the table as well.

When the Russian Private Opera premiered with a performance of Alexander Borodin’s *Prince Igor*, it fulfilled its promise. The cover page of the 4th issue, released in January 1929, featured an image of Maria Nikolaevna Kuznetsova, the star actress, and Prince Alexey Tsereteli, one of the principle organizers. The headlining article detailing the play, entitled “Opening of the Private Opera,” was quick to lavish praise for the success of the performance of *Prince Igor*, emphasizing the roles that some key figures, such as Tsereteli, Kuznetsova, the choreographer Mikhail Fokine, and the conductor Emil Cooper, had played. Many of those involved in this staging of *Prince Igor* were already well-seasoned in its performance, as they had been involved with productions of the play during their tenure with Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes. Poplavski’s article, however, does not focus solely on praise for this individual production of *Prince Igor*, but instead places a great deal of emphasis on its historical and cultural importance.

The careful attention that Poplavski paid to the historical and cultural context of *Prince Igor* features an interesting moment in which the Russian émigrés attempted to lay claim to Russian history and cultural memory. According to Poplavski, it was in *Prince Igor* that “Borodin opened the window to the East for the first time.” Although earlier composers had already introduced orientalist themes into their work, it was Borodin who successfully incorporated those themes to “strengthen the epic color of” the

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66 The Opera was unfinished at the time of Borodin’s death, and was actually finished jointly by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov
original work, while Glinka had “only groped” at in *Ruslan i Liudmila*. By drawing attention to the importance of these Eastern and “Eurasian” influences and contrasting them to the “western novelty” Pagliacchi, which premiered in the repertoire of a private opera in Moscow at the same time as *Prince Igor*, Poplavski carefully distinguished Russian opera from western European opera. Unlike a “western novelty,” *Prince Igor* was able to fuse European and Asian influences into something that vivified what Poplavski referred to as a Russian epic. That Poplavski referred to it as an epic at all is quite interesting, as many Russian writers in Russia’s Golden Age in the early 19th Century felt quite some anxiety about Russia’s lack of a national epic. A large part of this was a concern that the lack of a valid epic delegitimized Russia on the European stage, and there were several attempts to identify a national epic that would remedy this perceived status. Alexander Pushkin’s *Ruslan and Lyudmila* was one such long poem that attempted to address this concern, which makes it interesting that Poplavski referred to Glinka’s operatic adaptation of the poem. For Poplavski, it may simply be that “Borodin feels heroic in scope” and characters like the “dreamily sad prince create the mood of our dear to the heart national life, which is so acutely experienced by the listener to the opera Igor right now, in a foreign land, far from the homeland.” The opera was able to create strong emotional connections through plot and music to the characters in the opera itself, but Poplavski also found resonance through the historical connections that émigrés could draw with Kievan Rus. Performers of Russia Abroad were able to tap directly into Russian cultural and historical heritage that no one else could connect to, and through that, the émigrés were able to establish firm ownership of these operas. These performances, therefore, not only allowed the audiences to connect to what the émigrés saw as the only authentic experience of Russian cultural heritage, but because it was the only authentic expression of this heritage, they were able to establish ownership through performance.

Set in the late 1100s, the events of *Prince Igor* take place in the middling days of Kievan Rus’, detailing the trials of a Prince about to lead a campaign against the Polovitsians. As

68 Ibid. 69 *The Lay of Prince Igor’s Host* would be, more accurately, an epic of Kiev Rus. That Poplavski claims it as a Russian epic is both interesting and significant, and ignores Ukrainian claims to the heritage of Kievan Rus. Additionally, it also glosses over the anxieties of Golden Age authors, such as Alexander Pushkin, wherein they perceived Russia as having no epic as its own, and thus, delegitimizing Russian history and literature.

70 Ibid. 02-03.
predicted by a bad omen, the attack goes poorly and Igor and his son are captured, leaving Igor’s people vulnerable to the conspiratorial efforts of Prince Galitsky of Galich. While the Polovitsian Khan offers Igor freedom once Igor’s son falls in love with the Khan’s daughter, but Igor refuses because the terms of his release would have prevented Igor from attacking the Polovitsians again in the future. Igor is eventually able to escape and return to his home, where the opera ends on the promise that he will attack the Polovitsians in order to rescue his son, who had been kept as a hostage and married to the Khan’s daughter. Prince Igor, with its hopeful ending of the titular character preparing to avenge his people in a battle against the Polovitsians that he would assuredly win, could not only remind Russian émigrés of the unique qualities that set them apart from the Europeans that surrounded them, but also give them hope. Just as Igor was able to escape Polovitsian imprisonment and would lead his people to victory, so too would émigrés be able to escape their own form of imprisonment, represented by their exile, and rally their compatriots towards victory.

Prince Igor would have been an appealing hero to Russian émigrés. According to an analysis comparing the opera to the epic poem from which it was based, Borodin carefully preserved the nature of the poem and the protagonist’s role. Zsusasa Domokos’ analysis of The Lay of Igor’s Host and Prince Igor maintains that Igor “represents the warrior whose duty is to save his country and all he does is determined by this responsibility. He has to regain freedom, this is what the text in the musical allusions always suggests.” However, although this parallel already existed, Poplavski sought to make the opera even more relevant. Instead of drawing on these parallels, he mistakenly identifies the Polovitsians as the Mongols, a favorite historical “enemy” in Russian culture. “The Russian people moaned 240 years under the Tatar yoke,” Poplavski said, “and from that tradition came many Russian motifs, artistically crafted by Borodin.” While Borodin had written Prince Igor many years before, the substance of Prince Igor had a new relevance, because now it was clear to émigrés that “Russia groans in the clutches of the Bolshevik yoke.” In drawing the connection, although it was not historically accurate, Poplavski created parallels aimed to strengthen the connections between his audience and the

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73 Ibid, 3.
opera and create more empathy with Igor, the type of leader who understood his responsibility towards his people, and strove for freedom, even at personal cost.

While Poplavski paid a great deal of attention to the plot and substance of *Prince Igor*, those involved in its production received some attention. Kuznetsova was praised for her “flexibility and genuine talent” and the choreographer Fokine was “incomparable;” together the cast and crew “created the triumph of national Russian art.” Not only, then, was the opera a resounding success on its own terms, but its release was “the day of the conquest of Paris” and a victory for all Russian people abroad. Because *Prince Igor* served as a Russian national epic of sorts, because the story and its historical and cultural ties are so strong to the Russian people and so relevant to those living abroad, its success is important for all Russian people abroad to rejoice in. This would be especially important because, as Poplavski pointed out in previous issues, Russian émigrés were involved at every level of production—not just as the stars of the show. However, the prominent figures involved in production still deserved their fair credit. Poplavski followed up the article on the Private Opera’s premiere show with an article for the man behind the Private Opera: Prince Aleksey Tsereteli. Poplavski heaped lavish praise on Prince Tsereteli, especially for “[breathing] new energy and courage into the Russian artists” who lost their confidence to perform once they arrived on foreign soil. The feature article also discussed Kuznetsova’s partnership with Prince Tsereteli, and how Tsereteli was instrumental in organizing concerts for Sergei Rachmaninov and Fedor Chaliapin. This focus on Tsereteli’s leadership is not surprising—if, as Poplavski stated before, Russian theatre abroad should be a leader for Russia abroad, then it makes sense to pay close attention to the leader’s responsible for the proper function of Russian theatre abroad.

Prince Tsereteli’s had become an incredibly influential figure in the world of Russia Abroad in 1929, especially with the opening of the Russian Private Opera in Paris. In addition to his involvement in that venture, he was also instrumental in organizing Russian opera seasons in Berlin and, with great success, in Barcelona. Teatr i zhizn’ reported on the departure of the Paris Opera troupe in their 10th Issue in June, 1929, proudly listing the name of a number of

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74 Ibid, 4.
75 Ibid.
classic Russian opera, such as *Prince Igor* and *Snegurotchka*. The popularity of the Russian opera in Spain was also due to the influence of Juan Mestres, director of the Gran Teatro del Sieco, of Barcelona, who had presented the Operas and endeavored to employ the best Russian directors and artists. The spread of Russian opera became so popular in Spain that he was working on plans to organize a second Russian opera season in Madrid. In July, in time for the release of Issue 12, the director of Prince Tsereteli’s company, Shteinman, confirmed in a brief interview that Tsereteli’s company had been invited to perform in Madrid for the 1930 opera season. Reporting information like this would not only give the readership access to casual information and gossip, but it would also have given members of Russia Abroad pride in their culture and its achievements, especially since these were the only touring companies.

The success of groups like Prince Tsereteli’s company was also echoed in some individuals, with some figures rising to international prominence. Sergei Rachmaninov was one such figure. Rachmaninov, born in Russia and taking inspiration from The Mighty Five, moved to New York, with his family, after the Revolution, but played international concerts with some frequency. Yulian Poplavski wrote about Rachmaninov’s concert in Paris, part of a series of articles under the heading of “Music—An Evening of Ghosts and Contrasts.” That evening Rachmaninov played Bach, Liszt, Chopin, as well as some of his own works. Rachmaninov’s concert was described as an almost mystical event, capable of transcending the cacophony of Parisian life—“and it seemed,” Poplavski said, “the walls parted, the fog settled, and everything was gone.” As if that were not enough to prove that the concert was unequalled, Rachmaninov’s skill and presence was of such quality that he was able to obscure himself as a performer, and instead reveal those whose works he was performing. In place of Rachmaninov the audience was able to envision Bach himself performing “in a white wig, an old-fashioned jacket, and in shoes with buckles.” He was able to just as skillfully perform Liszt’s Faust, about whom a German composer, quoted in the article, had said “only the devil or Faust” could play so well. Not only does this highlight the experience of the event, but it also serves to elevate Rachmaninov to the levels of these masters and solidify his importance in musical canon. His

78 Ibid.
79 Raeff, 103.
81 Ibid. 5
82 Ibid.
success was not solely his own, but also proof of the success of Russia Abroad. He was an example that the community could uphold as a Russian artist, able to uphold Russian artists as competitors to Western European artists, even in Russia Abroad’s state of exile.

Rachmaninov’s place in the musical canon and his renowned skill as a performer, however, was more significant than just his ability to conjure images of long dead men in white wigs. Like the rest of the émigrés, he was an artist who had been active before the Revolution and held strong ties to Russia that had since been severed. In this instance, Rachmaninov was able to embody Frederic Chopin, not only through his music alone, but because of other parallels in their life stories. Chopin, Poplavski pointed out, was part of a Polish émigré community in Paris, “like we Russians live here now.” Although Poplavski cites this parallel as allowing him to “retell Chopin’s secret thoughts” in his performance, Rachmaninov did not live primarily in Paris, but in America, where he eventually became a citizen. This suggests that, at least to Poplavski, the Russian community in Paris was able to fluctuate and accommodate even those merely passing through for sporadic performances. Poplavski lamented that, despite his genius, he was not more well known in Europe, but regardless of that fact—“we,” Russian émigrés, “should be proud that this artist and composer is ‘by the grace of God,’ Russian.” It is likely that Poplavski was willing to adopt Rachmaninov into the Parisian community precisely because of his talent and what renown he was able to bring to the community as he did become more well-known in the international music industry, but his importance is no less significant.

However, as luminous and exciting as Rachmaninov’s concert was, the second half of Poplavski’s article featured a much less successful performance that happened the very next night. The 1928 performance of Tchaikovsky opera Queen of Spades (Pikavaya Dama) was less than successful, according to Poplavski. A letter that immediately followed his article continued to lambast the showing, and those responsible for it. The performance was staged at the Theatre de la Gaite-Lyrique, referred to in Russian as the Getje-Lirik, in Paris, which had been home to several seasons of Diaghilev’s Ballet Russes. He called the organizers of the show, named only as Sirota and Agreneva-Slavjaiokago, “conspirators against Tchaikovsky.” Queen of Spades was a “masterpiece,” he said, but attempting to stage it in Paris, “in the world art center [was

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
impossible] with the help of unreliable hackwork." For Poplavski, it was significant that the performance had failed in Paris, he even asserted that it would have been better suited to being staged in a more modest area. Poplavski was very aware that there was a good deal of pressure from the French audience on any performance staged in Paris, and this pressure was greater because the Theatre de la Gaite-Lyrique had hosted well-known and well-organized Russian performances before. He stressed that it was obvious that the organizers behind “Queen of Spades” were clearly trying to institute a “Russian Opera” in Paris—but emphasized that this had long since been established and recognized. Although Poplavsky does not quite make it clear what, or who, was responsible for the foundation of “Russian Opera,” he does declare that its brilliance had such an impact that it marked the beginning of “an entire epoch in the artistic life of Europe of Russian national art in all cultured countries.” That this failure of a performance was staged in Paris could only be damaging—it risks the reputation that the Russian national arts had garnered. Poplavski suggests that “more modest and reliable environments,” such as Parisian suburbs where they would not be quite as exposed to the harsh criticisms of a Parisian audience, would be better places for Sirota to put on his show. “Tchaikovsky’s operas,” he reminds the reader, “are not well known here, and the name of this composer is too dear for us to vulgarize, or even worse, provoke.” Poplavski has made it quite clear that not only were the organizers of Queen of Spades at fault for a lackluster staging—but they had also put a beloved figure and, by extension, the Russian arts on trial against wider Parisian expectations.

That Poplavski was so defensive of Tchaikovsky as a figure representative of Russian culture may have once come as a surprise. In the 1800’s, the composer faced criticism for not being “authentically Russian.” The music critic Vladimir Odoyevsky created two categories for Russian music, the most significant of which consisted of artists that aligned with his and the Mighty Handful’s nationalist views by espousing Russianess through their work. Odoyevsky considered those that did not confirm to be “common” artists and not Russian ones. Tchaikovsky, however, deviated from this mold. Even though he was understood as being a

85 “Miuzika,” 5.
86 Ibid, 5. According to other articles, such as
87 Ibid, 6.
88 Marina Frolova-Walker, Russian music and nationalism: from Glinka to Stalin (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008). 45
89 Ibid, 208
fervent patriot, this did not have enough of an impact on his music for his critics to laud him as an authentic Russian artist. Perhaps Poplavski’s criticisms with the *Queen of Spades* performance were rooted in the fact that it did not accurately represent the Russian sound. What seems more likely, however, is that this signaled a relaxation of the criteria by which he was being judged. By claiming Tchaikovsky and his works, émigrés made them Russian in ways that they had not been before. By claiming valuable works and artists that were nominally Russian but may not have necessarily been seen as nationalist in their importance, the émigré community instilled that national association. Likewise, this may have signaled to members of the community who had previously seen themselves as apolitical that they, too, were a part of Russia Abroad now because of their inherent Russianness. Just as no one could really remove the inherent Russianness of Tchaikovsky, even the complex development of political and social responses towards the increasing acceptance of the Soviet Union could not remove the Russianness from the émigré community.

**Alternate Endings: Émigré Connections to Soviet Activities**

Although *Teatr i zhizn*’s editors and authors were largely concerned with publishing news from Western Europe and America, there were still several articles in each issue that dealt with events from the Soviet Union. While it was difficult for émigrés to get news to their friends and family back home, this was often a one-way restriction. Émigrés would have had easy access to news and publications coming from the Soviet Union. Furthermore, select few Soviet artists were able to leave the Soviet Union on passports to perform internationally. This was not incredibly common, especially for lesser-known artists of exceptional skills or high potential. If a Soviet official saw the potential for an artist to receive a high salary or an attractive offer while abroad, they were often denied in their passport application, forfeiting their application fee. On occasion, some émigré performers even went to the Soviet Union to perform. In these cases, the authors in *Teatr i zhizn*’ felt that the émigré artists visiting the Soviet Union were granted special privileges and immunities from the otherwise difficult circumstances that many Soviet artists faced. According to one article, some well-known émigré artists such as Lydia Lipkovskaya made 1,500 rubles for a performance while prominent domestic artists may make

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only 200-300 rubles if they were well known or only 60-70 if they were only members of the choir or orchestra. This permeability was not available to many émigrés outside of these high-profile, high-skill careers, but it would have allowed for even more flexibility of information than just would have been accessible from publications crossing the borders.

As may be expected, the editors and authors featured in Teatr i zhizn’ were highly critical of the forces that expelled them from their homeland. These criticisms, however, were not restricted to just the current Soviet leadership, but, even ten years later, the authors spoke critically of the Revolution and the Provisional Government. “The powerless Provisional Government could not do anything,” “Baletoman” said in the January 1929 article, criticizing the “dirty gang” that was occupying prima-ballerina M.F. Kshesinskaia’s luxury mansion in Russia. Once the Revolution had come Lenin arrived in his “armored car” and occupied the mansion. For Kshesinskaia, there was little hope in regaining her property, and the difference between the Provisional Government and Lenin’s government was nonexistent. For Kshesinskaia, as for many of those who would emigrate, “the events go on, replacing one another.”92 The weariness reveals author’s frustration and disappointment at the fact at both the Provisional Government, and the fact that nothing changed after them. Lenin was just another member of a “dirty gang,” illegally occupying property.

Unfortunately for Kshesinskaia, the occupation of her property was not the end of her difficulties in Soviet Russia. She received a great deal of pressure from the authorities, and was nearly unable to perform at the last show she had organized in Russia. Russian émigrés criticized Bolshevik class-based language in order to express disapproval of their policies and cultural changes as well as discredit those policies and changes. In the April 1929 issue of Teatr i zhizn’, in an article entitled “The Last Speech,” the author lambasted the Soviet prioritization of “robbing the ‘bourgeois’ instead of presenting bread to the starving population”93. The article, which presented an account of Kshesinskaia’s last performance in Russia, also discussed the composition of the audience at her performance—which was plagued by her nervous anxiety and fears for her safety in light of Bolshevik involvement. By pointing out that the “undesirable bourgeois” were in the presence of the soldiers and workers in the “diverse audience” that

91 Ibid, 11.
“overcrowded” the Conservatory, they pointed out Soviet hypocrisy. In writing the article, which was effectively an advertisement for Kshesinskaia’s new Parisian Ballet Studio, the author criticized the Soviet fixation on punishing the bourgeois instead of fulfilling their supposed mission, while at the same time pointing out that they were not even effectively dealing with the “undesirable bourgeois.” By doing so, the author presented an image of an impotent, or at least incompetent, Soviet Union, whose control over theatrical and cultural performances was far less comprehensive than the leaders may have desired.

In general, the authors in Teatr i zhizn’ did their best to discredit the ongoing theatrical productions in the Soviet Union. One article went so far as to say that “there is no theatre in Russia, in the sense that [theatre] is used to understand and love cultured people.” Whatever was left of pre-Revolutionary theatrical life in Russia had at worst been demolished and at best severely diluted. Bolshevik censorship destroyed “any hint of artistry.” Plays were criticized for being excessively long, monotonous, and lacking drama, the author even compared them to “the lubok of Soviet political teaching,” criticizing the overly political nature of Soviet arts and the insertion of politics into theatre. Although plays from the pre-Revolutionary era were still a part of the Soviet repertoire, the author agonized over how they were unrecognizable: “but, my God, in what warped, in what disfigured forms . . . I do not know [them].” Poor performances and “staging innovations” were responsible for “[distorting] the style” of the performances. Soviet attempts to create new theatrical forms that would distinguish them from the Imperial theatrical forms had backfired, while émigrés were still performing pieces to their original specifications.

While the writers in Teatr i zhizn’ were sharply critical of the Soviet regime and what it had done to theatrical productions, they did not necessarily place blame equally. In fact, the authors express sympathy for directors and performers. They recognize that, in Moscow for example, some people had just been “swept [up]” in the tide of Bolshevism, but it “has not erased their [past lessons], lending something authentically Russian to otherwise “savage Soviet productions.” That there were some professionals who remembered the past was paramount—according to the article, schools were not producing quality professionals, further detracting from

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95 Ibid.
any potential quality that Soviet productions could have had. The only thing keeping Soviet theatre afloat was that it had not had enough time to become thoroughly Soviet.

Even the talent that was remaining in Soviet theatres, however, was not likely to last long. *Teatr i zhizn’* frequently reported on arrests, retirements, emigrations, and, occasionally, even the murders of theatrical professionals. For émigrés, this was proof that Soviet Russia was not truly dedicated to artistic pursuits just as it served to remind readers of the significance of maintaining the Russian cultural heritage. One artist, I. F. Kashinsky, had served in the arts for 45 years and was only provided a pension of 125 rubles per month, valued at roughly 25-30 rubles after war-time and Revolutionary inflation spikes. Apparently, even after appeals to the People’s Commissariat, he was deemed unworthy for any greater amounts because his family was “‘bourgeois’ and ‘ideologically harmful.’” For Rogov, this was clearly unacceptable; “So, this is how people in modern Russia are valued for half a century of service in the arts.”

Unfortunately, Kashinsky was lucky to receive a pension at all. Much like Kashinsky, the head of the Petrograd Ballet School, V. I. Lihosherstova, had taught students and helped promote Russian ballet to “world glory.” However, “one word” by the “chekist” actress Merkulova, who claimed that he was only preparing ballerinas to become “concubines for the aristocracy,” he was forced to retire, without pension, after forty years of service. Meanwhile, Merkulova was able to join the company at the Mariinsky Theatre “as one of the most zealous GPU agents.” The émigré focus on these events reveals a certain amount of frustration, if not outrage, at the way the new Soviet government treated members of the theatre community. By publishing this information and making it available to the readership, they were ensuring that members of Russia Abroad who may or may not have otherwise had access to information from within the Soviet Union understood the extent of the damage done to art and cultural life there. Figures within the community who would have formerly commanded respect, were now pushed aside and forgotten. Meanwhile, a culture that encouraged betrayal was proliferating among the basic ranks of the theatre.

released in August 1929, *Teatr i zhizn’* reported that the dancer and actress Viktorina Kriger had decided to take up not only her usual fields, but also writing. She had an essay published in *Evening Moscow*, which apparently exposed a dancer, who went unnamed in the *Teatr i zhizn’* article, for using her status for material gain.\(^{99}\) The following issue clarified that Kriger had published her essay after returning to Russia from Riga and that she had published another essay decrying the vitality of émigré life. In her second essay, the article added somewhat facetiously, that “of course, she must testify she did not meet with counterrevolutionaries.” At the end of the article, they added that Kriger had made plans to return abroad, but cancelled these plans when she discovered that she was being boycotted by émigré communities.\(^{100}\) Again, the author’s use of language is very telling toward how émigrés perceived the behaviors and how the community should perceive the news. By clarifying that émigré communities in the Baltics did indeed boycott her, they are further reinforcing that Kriger’s behavior was abhorrent. That it was supported by the Soviet regime goes to further show how alien the Soviet regime and its expectations were.

*Teatr i zhizn’*’s reported on current events in the U.S.S.R. to ensure that their readers not only knew about the excesses of Soviet policies on the theatrical community, but also to illustrate that the émigré community was exactly that—a community. By reporting on the failures of the Soviet regime to properly compensate and protect the relationships between members of the theatrical community, the émigrés were revealing the fractures that they thought might undermine the Soviet theatre community and lead to its destruction. These reports and their preoccupation with respect and betrayal illustrate that, perhaps, even worse that perverting Russian plays with new Soviet artistic conventions, the Soviet theatre’s neglect of the relationships of trust and respect between members of the theatre community jeopardized Russian culture.


\(^{100}\) “Melochi: podvigi Viktoriny Kruger’,” *Teatr’ i zhizn’* 15 (September, 1929): 27.
Conclusion: Examining Émigré Identity and Outcomes

At the very heart of Teatr i zhizn’s articles is a preoccupation for not only Russian culture, but the Russian national community. The pages of the magazine are dedicated to not only remembrance of the Russia that they knew and had, however unwillingly, left behind, but also to the reconstitution of a Russian community Abroad. The focus on prominent figures such as producers, directors, and ballerinas illustrate a preoccupation for not only the star talents of Russia Abroad, but a desire for leadership. The authors and editors hoped that these people could be more than just members or leaders of Russia Abroad, but also individuals that could help lead Russia, in its new configuration, on an international scene.

The Russia that émigrés knew no longer existed, that much was clear. The Bolshevik regime’s lack of respect for venerated members of the theatre community who were “trapped” and could not emigrate or travel abroad was only one such sign, but further still the corruption endemic in the community illustrated behaviors that they wished to portray as so far removed from what theatre had been like in Imperial Russia, that they were unrecognizable. In some ways, the Russia that had existed before had crystallized abroad. Any imperfections had been smoothed over and the image that émigrés wished to present of Imperial Russia was neat, clear, and, almost, perfect. Not only was this image easier to present and digest, but it may have helped émigrés swallow any distaste left in their mouths if they had, ever, participated in any of the revolutionary fervor. After all, figures such as Aleksander Pushkin were popular for a reason. As mentioned above, one reason that Pushkin was attractive to émigré consciousness was because of his tolerance to “popular anarchy.” While Imperial Russia had not been perfect, it was far better than the alternative that now stood in its place—or than the intermediary Provisional Government had been.

The émigré community, however, could improve upon the Russia that they had brought with them. The focus on educating children was extremely important for that reason. The journal’s articles presented an ideal scenario for a Russian child, one who was to be taught in Russian culture, history, and Orthodoxy, but also to have a well-rounded education, including education in French and or English. Although they hoped that these children would be able to return to Russia, in the meantime they needed to be able to survive the international climate—and carry on to advanced schooling in international colleges and universities. If they were able to
secure a scholarship or help with tuition, émigré children who were able to attend higher education and advance the collective knowledge of Russia Abroad would be important for not only providing leadership, but ensuring that when they returned to Russia, they would be able to lead the country through its repair—but also into a place of global prominence.

As important as community was to the members of Russia Abroad, it was not enough that theatrical productions were popular only within the community, they also needed to be palatable and popular to the host country. For the members of Russia Abroad in Paris, this was even more difficult considering that many considered Paris to be the capital of the artistic world. The competition was even greater than it might have been in Eastern Europe or closer to Russia, and Russians had to compete against well-known Western European classics in easier to learn and more recognizable languages. The authors repeatedly stressed how difficult Parisian audiences were and how important it was that all the performances staged there succeed. It had been some years since France had officially recognized the Soviet Union in 1924, in place of the Imperial Russian regime, so the émigrés may have felt considerable pressure to remind the French public that they were the best of Russia. They were the Russia that the French should think about, so their best performances and productions should always be at the forefront. This may be one reason why few negative reviews of performances were ever published. Although many aspects of the magazine and its articles were intended to reinforce the boundaries of the theatre community in Russia Abroad and was not largely read by the French public, it was still important that they were focusing on the presentation of this identity within their own community.

Ultimately, Russia Abroad was a temporary community—for more reasons than one. Some prominent figures in emigration would leave Russia Abroad for the Soviet Union, such as Aleksandr Kuprin. In the 1930s, Kuprin returned to the Soviet Union—exhausted and fatigued by a life of poverty abroad. As important as the mission of Russia Abroad seemed to its members, it was still defined by the difficult material constraints that its members often faced. Although the community could sometimes band together, such as was the case for schools and the attention of the Russian Private Opera to hiring other émigrés for even menial and mundane work, it was not always sufficient for every member to survive. If figures that gained international acclaim, such as Ivan Bunin, could not find material success, how could the average
émigré? Most could not, and many members of Russia Abroad, well-known or not, lived in poverty. Figures such as Lady Deterding and Grand Duchess Vladimirovna were unique because of their foreign connections and the resources that these connections gave to them. While they did their best to share their good fortune, it would have been impossible to provide for everyone. The best that they could do was work to create some opportunities for a precious small portion of the émigré community. While most émigrés did live in poverty, due to the nature of Teatr i zhizn’ and its likely audience, however, the material situation of the average émigré was mostly glossed over. After all, even from a practical standpoint, the editors had a vested interest in making sure that the members of Russia Abroad were able to attend the theatrical productions. The magazine did not go out of its way to exclude those who were less fortunate within Russia Abroad, but it would not have been relatable to all of its members.

The community that Teatr i zhizn’ sought to reinforce, protect, and, perhaps, create was limited and temporary. This examination of the issues available from the 1928-1929 period has likewise been limited in its capacity, as it only examined a brief period of the magazine’s run and of the existence of Russia Abroad. However, despite its limited nature it provides invaluable insight into the Russian émigré community 10 years after the Revolution and Civil Wars. The longer that the Soviet Union managed to carry on its existence, the stronger the case that the émigrés had to make for the existence of Russia Abroad and the importance of their project. Their efforts in Teatr’ i zhizn’ in 1928-1929 illustrate that émigrés were still dedicated to the cause of celebrating what they saw as authentic Russian culture, years after the French government had officially recognized the Soviet Union. Through the pages of magazines such as Teatr’ i zhizn’, émigrés created and reinforced the social and cultural boundaries that allowed communities like Russia Abroad to exist during the Interwar period. Ten years after the Revolution, they had not forgotten the scars that momentous event had left on Russian culture. They actively pointed out what they perceived as Soviet damage towards Russian cultural heritage, and sought to counteract it through their artistic and cultural pursuits. This community, in many cases, was all that the émigrés had left to protect. Separated from their homeland, they could only look forward to the day that they may be able to return to Russia, and work to create something better. Although the magazine was nominally about theatre, its contents are richer in their analysis of émigré, Soviet, and worldwide arts movements.
Bibliography


