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The Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society: Formation and Summation

The activities of the Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS) during the years 1884–1917 comprises a special page of the musical history of Odessa. Relying on anterior experience of the Odessa musical traditions of the first half of the 19th century, during a short period of time the Odessa Section brought out the musical life of the city onto a higher degree on all levels (the concert-enlightening and entertaining), which made it possible for Odessa to take up a significant position not only in the social-cultural life, but also in the sphere of musical culture. As the result of the active efforts of the Odessa Section of the IRMS and the Musical Classes opened under its auspices, the Musical College was opened (1897) and, later, the Conservatory (1913), – the latter being the fourth in Russia and the first in Ukraine. The altruistic help, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the Odessa cultural activists, aristocracy and patrons, as well as the help of the metropolitan section of the IRMS and the most significant musicians of St. Petersburg and Moscow (the brothers Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Eduard Napravnik, Alexander Glazunov and others) made it possible to create a highly professional level of the musical life of the city. The traditions laid by the activities of the Odessa Section have been actively developed since that time (the ten-year Piotr Stolyarsky School, the concert life of the Philharmonic Society and the Opera Theater, the “Two Days and Two Nights of New Music” International Festival for Contemporary Music).

Keywords: The Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (IRMS), the Odessa Musical College, the Odessa Conservatory, the Musical Classes, Piotr Sokalsky, Odessa patrons.

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Одесское отделение Императорского Русского музыкального общества: становление и итоги

Деятельность Одесского отделения Императорского Русского музыкального общества (ИРМО) в 1884–1917 годах составляет особую страницу музыкальной истории города. Опираясь на предшествующий опыт музыкальных традиций первой половины XIX столетия, Одесское отделение за короткий срок выводит музыкальную жизнь города на новую ступень на всех уровнях (концертно-просветительском и образовательном), что позволило Одессе занять в Российской империи значимое положение не только в общественно-культурной жизни, но и в области музыкальной культуры. В результате активной деятельности Отделения ИРМО и открытых при нём Музыкальных классов была активизирована концертная жизнь города, открыты Музыкальное училище (1897) и консерватория (1913) – четвёртая в России, первая на Украине. Бескорыстная помощь, энтузиазм, самоотверженность одесских деятелей культуры, аристократии и меценатов, а также помощь столичного отделения ИРМО и крупнейших музыкантов Петербурга и Москвы (братьев Антона и Николая Рубинштейнов, Николая Римского-Корсакова, Петра Чайковского, Эдуарда Направника, Александра Глазунова и др.) позволили создать высокопрофессиональный уровень музыкальной жизни города. Традиции, заложенные деятельностью Одесского отделения, активно развиваются и в дальнейшем (школа-десятилетка имени Петра Столярского, концертная жизнь филармонии и оперного театра, Международный фестиваль современной музыки «Два дня и две ночи»).

Ключевые слова: Одесское отделение Императорского Русского музыкального общества (ИРМО), Одесское музыкальное училище, Одесская консерватория, Музыкальные классы, Пётр Сокальский, одесские меценаты.

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The Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society (OS IRMS) was founded in 1884 (the actual date of the beginning of its active functioning is 1886, which is still tied, first of all, with financial and organizational issues).

Let us note the rapid development of the events in connection with the Section's activity, the remarkable enthusiasm of the Directorate of the Odessa Section and the sympathizing Odessa dwellers, as well as the weighty utterance of the Odessa-based patrons, who during the most complex moments of the history of the Odessa Section contributed their aid in the further advancement of the idea of musical enlightenment and education. In aggregate, moreover, also taking into account the innate musicality of the Odessa dwellers, who were southerners, which was marked by the majority of visitors to Odessa, among them, Alexander Pushkin, and the efforts of the musical life of the preceding stage in the history of the city's musical life, provide a brilliant result. The time period from the moment of the establishment of the Odessa Section of the IRMS until the creation first of the intermediary (the Musical College – 1897) and then the higher educational institution (the Conservatory – 1913) lasted twenty-nine years. During this brief time span according to European standards in Odessa not only the concert performance and musical enlightenment aspects of the artistic life of Southern Palmyra were formed, but the Odessa school of composition was established, represented by Piotr Sokalsky, Witold Maliszewski, Vassily Zolotarev and others was established.

The scope of the article does not make it possible to disclose the entire span of the forms of musical enlightenment and musical education in Odessa during the 19th and early 20th centuries, so we shall touch upon only some of the brightest pages of the city's musical life.

It is both easy and difficult to discuss the Odessa Section of the IRMS – on the one hand, a number of Odessa-based musicologists (Rimma Rosenberg, Svetlana Miroschnichenko [5; 7; 8]) have recreated bit by bit in general outlines the history of its genesis and gradual growth, while, on the other hand, during this discussion another stratum of signification of the local

section of the IRMS in the musical and cultural life of Odessa from the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century is touched upon. This is the stratum of the reflection of the specific features, that peculiarity in the formation of one of the provincial sections of the RMS which it is customary to call the Odessa spirit and soul. They are present in all the facts of the history and culture of Odessa, including the significance of musical culture in the city, in general, and the Odessa Section, in particular.

If we are to remember the first years of life of Odessa and of that role it was due to fulfill, then the reasons of the birth of the special spirit of the city become apparent. First of all, let us note that initially Odessa was conceived as the southern sister-city to St. Petersburg. These were the southern merchant gates of the Russian empire on which Catherine the Great anchored great hopes, which is what generated the description of the city as the Southern Palmyra, in correspondence with the Northern Palmyra, which was the country's capital. Also most distinctive was the initial makeup of the city, which included, on the one hand, representatives of the highest ranks of Russian aristocracy, who played an immense role in the history of the Russian state (the Vorontsovs, the Tolstoys, etc.)¹, and on the other hand – fugitive Ukrainian and Russian serf peasants, German colonists, Bulgarian, Serb, Walachian and Gagauz emigrants, Nekrasovian Old-Believers and Lipovans, and many others², who aspired to the broad liberty of the steppes near the Black Sea, who, nonetheless, possessed ardent ambition, diverse talents, great will to life and creative transformation to what initially presented not very attractive reality³. Such a motley in all senses cultural and ethnic constituency of the settlers of Odessa and its surrounding lands was also preserved in the successive decades, when historians counted over 130 nationalities, ethnic groups and subgroups living on the territory of Odessa up to the 1990s.

In the musical life of Odessa such an ethnic and social diversity had an impact on the formation of a special musical milieu which included a rich spectrum of folk song and instrumental musical culture of Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Germans, Greeks,

Italians, French, Karaites, Moldavians, Gagauzes, and other peoples, which combined in a fanciful manner with the diversity of religious-confessional musical traditions (the Russian Orthodox Christian Nikonian and Old-Believer, Greek and Moldovian-Rumanian Orthodox Christian, Catholic and Protestant, Jewish and Karaite, Armenian, etc.).

The prehistory of the creation in Odessa of the Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society is abundant with facts, events and, most importantly, brilliant personalities – the residents of Odessa without whose active participation this memorable fact could not have occurred. Let us mention, first of all, the immense significance for the dwellers of Odessa of the musical side of their lives. In the first half of the 19th century quite an active musical-theatrical practice could be observed in Odessa. Notably, the object for pride for the Odessa dwellers was the constantly functioning Italian private theatrical enterprise, especially if one is to keep in mind that Italian opera existed, besides Odessa, only in St. Petersburg and Moscow. In Odessa it played a different role from that of the two capitals, since, as R. M. Rosenberg emphasizes, “there were private theatrical enterprises working in Odessa, which set up contracts with the Theatrical Committee of the City Duma. The Italian theatrical enterprise was provided with a subsidy, and in the first decades – a monopoly, as well. The functioning of Italian opera companies within the city theater in the first quarter of the 19th century placed Odessa in a special position in comparison with other provincial cities,” in which “the musical-theatrical life was limited to productions in private homes and on stages of drama theaters of Russian comic operas and vaudevilles with the forces of serf actors or guest actors” [7, p. 16–17], while Italian companies, which performed periodically, appeared only towards the middle of the century (Kiev – 1847, Tiflis and Kazan – 1851, Saratov – the 1860s).

In 1821 the first Odessa factory for production of grand and upright pianos (of Karl Gaas) began its work, while in the 1830s several issues of the musical journal “*Odesskiy trubadur*” [“The Odessa Troubadour”] came out [Ibid.].

No less active in the first decades of the selfsame century was the musical enlightening activity of the assemblies and aristocratic salons of the most eminent noble families of Odessa – the Vorontsov couple, the Tolstoys, Platon Rodzyanko, Ivan Argutinsky-Dolgorukov, Pavel Gagarin, etc., which featured performances of vocal and instrumental music by European, first of all, by Italian and German

composers. An important role was played by numerous musical circles with the participation of high-level public officials, conspicuous scientists, professors and teachers of lyceums (including the Richelieu Lyceum, the second in importance in the Russian Empire after the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum, later transformed into the Novorossiysky University), gymnasiums, the Institute for Noble Maidens, and private boarding schools in which performance on musical instruments was taught on a rather high level.

We must also highlight the vigorous activities of three musical societies which played a crucial role in the creation of the foundation for the establishment of the Odessa Section of the IRMS in the city. It was the “Society of Music Lovers” (1864), the “Society of the Refined Arts” (1865) and the “Odessa Musical Society” (1870), as well as the Musical Classes established under their auspices the vigorous musical-educational and concert activities of which deserves a separate discussion.

As a consequence, the diverse forms of musical life in Odessa from the 1810s to the 1890s prepared the ground for initiation of the demand for the formation of a professional level of a system of performance and musical pedagogy, which was clearly felt by the forefront musicians in Odessa already from the middle of the century.

The transfer of the musical life of Odessa onto a new level took place with the establishment in 1884 of the Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society. In the Odessa Section that aim which the IRMS placed before itself became fully manifested: according to the Statute in the edition of 1885, the Society was required to “assist the spread of musical education in Russia, to promote the development of all the branches of the art of music and encourage skillful Russian artists (composers and performers) and instructors in musical subjects. For the achievement of the designated aim, the Society has the right to establish musical classes, musical colleges and conservatories in various cities of Russia” (cit. from: [3, p. 77]). Most remarkable is the fact that regional directories which correlated with the Main Directorate were rather independent in their decisions and acted in correspondence with the conditions of their regions [10, p. 82]. A considerable impediment for an earlier creation of a basis for professional musical education in Odessa, notwithstanding all of its extreme necessity, was the lack of financial means, which was noted as an immense problem in the other provincial cities of the Russian Empire as well⁴. And only the constant patronage of wealthy and educated residents

of Odessa (Nikolai Shcherbinsky, Vassily Orlov and many others) made it possible for the Odessa Section to continue its active work.

The Odessa Section of the IRMS acquired the status and the level of a professional musical network which was clearly on demand as an organizational center for concert activity in all the diversity of forms for highly professional musical education of the South of the Russian Empire on the level of performance and theory-composition departments. The results of the active work of the Odessa Section ended up being more than impressive: on the basis of the Musical Classes of the section, a highly professional foundation for the musical education of Odessa was formed – first the Musical College (1894), and then the Conservatory (September 8, 1913). It must be observed that this was the first conservatory to be opened in the Ukraine (the Kiev Conservatory was opened two months later) and the fourth in the Russian Empire (after the ones in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Saratov). The demand for specialized musical educational institutions of intermediary and advanced levels was high. During the course of less than ten years after the founding of the Odessa Section the music theory pedagogy was established represented by Piotr Sokalsky, Porfiry Molchanov, Felix Mironovich, Ivan Labinsky, Witold Maliszewski and others. For the most part they were alumni of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Graduates of European conservatories (such as the ones in Leipzig, Vienna, Berlin and Prague) were also invited as faculty members.

Such bright figures of world art as Antonina Nezhdanova, Vassily Sapelnikov, Piotr Stolyarsky, Emil Gilels, David Oistrakh, Konstantin Dankevich and many, many others were raised in the energy field of the creative activities of the Odessa Section. Thereby, the artistic community created quite a significant role in the formation of musical professional education in the Ukraine.

The dissertational research of Tatiana Zima specially emphasized the “gender factor in the organization of the activities of the IRMS and *defined* the role of women in concert management of the Russian Empire and, most notably, in the country’s pedagogy” [3, pp. 28–29]. Regarding the role of women in Odessa in the activities of the OS IRMS we must highlight the names of *Natalia Zelyonaya*, who headed the Odessa Section from 1886 to 1897; *Anna Charnova*, who formed a part of the Directorate of the Odessa Section from the moment of its establishment – from 1884 (who worked gratuitously as a piano teacher, she rejected the offer to become the head

of the Directorate in 1886 [5, pp. 119–120]); *Sofia Rubinstein*, the sister of Nikolai and Anton Rubinsteins, who was for a certain amount of time a member of the OS IRMS, who worked at the Odessa Musical College and the Conservatory, and also who gave Antonina Nezhdanova her initial vocal education [4]⁵.

The “formula of triunity” in the activities of the metropolitan and provincial sections of the IRMS, highlighted by Tatiana Zima, which was comprised of three components “ideas – social mandate – finances” [3, p. 13], was reflected in full measure in the activities of the Odessa Section.

Thus, the activities of the Odessa Section of the Imperial Russian Musical Society comprises a special page in the music history of the city.

Accumulating the positive sides of the preceding period of the development of the musical traditions of 19th century Odessa culture (the multi-ethnic folk musical settings; instruction of performance on musical instruments and singing in educational institutions, and also creation of choral ensembles and orchestras as part of them; continuously active Italian private theatrical enterprises of the first quarter of the century; the concert life of the Odessa musical-theater organizations; tours of Russian performers and those from other countries; the musical educational activities of the musical salons, clubs, circles and assemblies of music lovers; the efforts of the members of the “Society of Music Lovers,” the “Society for Refined Arts” and the “Odessa Musical Society” and the creation of Musical Classes, a music school and many other components of the motley culture of Southern Palmyra), within a short period of time the Odessa Section was able to bring out the city’s musical life both in relations of the system of musical education, and the relatively diverse concert and musical theater forms of artistic creativity, which made it possible for Odessa to take a significant position in the social and cultural life of the country in terms of the musical culture as well (towards the end of the 19th century, in terms of its population and economic position Odessa was the fourth city of the Russian Empire after St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw).

As the result of the vigorous activities of the OS IRMS and the musical classes established by it (the most brilliant representatives of which were Vladimir Orlov, Dmitri Klimov, Witold Maliszewski and others) the city’s concert life was activized, the Musical College and the Conservatory were established – the latter being the fourth in the Russian Empire and the first in the Ukraine. The inauguration of the Odessa Section and the musical educational institutions was

greatly furthered by the most prominent musicians of St. Petersburg and Moscow (the Rubinsteins, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Napravnik, Glazounov, and others). The traditions established by the activities of the Odessa Section have subsequently been actively developed (by the musical educational institutions, the philharmonic society, the opera theater, the musical festivals⁶, etc.).

The Odessa spirit, which combined in itself an innate musicality, the Ukrainian-Italian melodiousness, the Russian greatheartedness, the French legerity

of being and finesse, the Greek temperament, the Jewish entrepreneurial spirit, as well as the unity of the aristocratic singleness of purpose of the Odessa nobility and the unselfishness of the patrons with the remarkable aid of the activists of the metropolitan and the provincial Sections of the IRMS, the greatest Russian musicians, made it possible at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries to enhance the musical life of the Southern Palmyra to the level of the largest cities of Europe.

NOTES

¹ Svetlana Mirosnichenko writes: “These were families of the most well-known aristocratic lineages of Russia, and it was particularly they who brought into the life of Odessa their understanding of education, aristocratism, culture, salon qualities and musical inclinations” [5, p. 5].

² About the diversity of the ethnic makeup of the territories around Odessa see: Kaplun, T. M. *K probleme izucheniya fol'klornykh traditsiy Odesskoy oblasti na sovremennom etape* [Concerning the Problem of Studying the Folklore Traditions of the Odessa Region at the Present-Day Stage]. *Muzykal'nyy folk'lor i etnomuzykologiya: vek XXI* [Musical Folklore and Ethnomusicology: 21st Century]. Compiled and edited by N. N. Gilyarova, E. V. Biteryakova. Moscow, 2016. Publication No. 82, pp. 189–196.

³ The settlement Khadzhibey, on the foundation of which Odessa was subsequently built, was a small-scale Turkish fortress on the high and desolate Black Sea coast, where in the summer people languished from heat and sultriness, and in the winter they suffered from the cold due to the excessive moisture.

⁴ This problem is noted, to cite one example, in connection with the Rostov Section of the IRMS [9, p. 90].

⁵ Each of these enumerated women, similarly to those remarkable women of the preceding period who did a lot to enlighten Odessa, deserves a separate publication all about herself.

⁶ About the international contemporary music festival “Two Days and Two Nights of New Music” see: [12].

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