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# THE IMPORTANCE OF SALONS IN MOSCOW AND ST. PETERSBURG IN THE FIRST THIRD OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL LINKS

*Значение салонов первой трети XIX в. г.г. Москвы  
и Санкт-Петербурга в развитии межкультурных связей.*

The first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the time when Russian culture recognized itself in the dialogue with Western-European cultures. Salons undertook an important task - to familiarize the nobility with the achievements in science and the culture of Western-Europe. The role of the salons of A. P. Elagina, E. A. Karamzina and E. P. Rostopchina are analyzed in the article. The article also reveals the role of the salons of Z. A. Volkonskaya, A. N. Olenina Mihail and Matvey Vielgorskiy which were visited at different times by P. Viardo, G. Berlios, Clare and Robert Schumann, A. Mitskevich, F. Liszt and others. The atmosphere of the salons created a unique environment, in which intellectual communication took place and the outstanding people from Europe and Russia could enrich their spiritual and intellectual potential.

*Keywords:* Russia, West-Europe, salons, intellectual conversation, education

It is possible to refer to the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the time of self-consciousness for Russia: keeping orientation to the Western authorities in town-planning, music, philosophy, belle-literature, education and training system. Russia recognized itself in a mirror of other European cultures, in dialogue with them. Synthesis of Russian spirit and Western European intelligence, Russian-French bilingualism of the nobles became the factors of Russian cultural development during that period.

Salons began to discuss major problems related to enlightenment – acquaintance of the nobility with the achievements of science and culture of Western Europe. The value of those saloons began to increase in private Russian life in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and reached its peak in the 20-30s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a great number of “conversations”, “musical meetings”, “assemblies” etc. appeared in capitals and province. Diversity of names reflected differences

in matter, way of life and public role of various drawing-rooms. Sensitive to the way of European life, salons emerged and developed, drawing to itself everything that is most creative and influential.

Typical properties of saloons are predetermined by traditions of aristocratic Europe. Receptions in drawing-rooms “grand monde” were a norm of the nobility existence in the world of court, diplomatic corps, patrimonial aristocracy etc. The issue of high receptions was universal and obeyed the ordered ritual of cultural dialogue: exchange of news, reading, playing music, performance, dances etc.

The way of life in a saloon was defined by a world position, court circle and family connections. The requirement of good behavior was common for receptions in Anichkov Palace and in P. Chaadaev’s small house in Moscow, in the private residence of princes Belozerskiy – Beloselskiy in Tverskaya Street in Moscow and in the study - “mouse trap” belonging to V. F. Odoevskiy. Interpretation of standards varied and depended on the variety of hobbies and differences in the intellectual level of each separate salon. That is why receptions at A. N. Olenin, E. A. Karamzina, A. F. Lvov, A. O. Smirnova, D. F. Finkelmon, Z. A. Volkonskaya, at Brothers Vielgorsky gave unique impressions to the contemporaries of A. S. Pushkin and M. I. Glinka.

It is important to emphasize the wide and multifaceted influence of the salons on the cultural process. The influence of etiquette gratefully helped to cultivate fashionable standard: modern (for that time) masterly music, Italian-French saloon style of romances of Blangini, Ferrari, Plantada etc. Salons beckoned by unpredictable meetings, events, novelty of impressions and diversity of momentary.

According to correspondences and memoranda, saloons were a vital habitat for most outstanding figures of Russian culture in the first half of the 19th century. The life of Moscow and St.-Petersburg’s “aristocratic nests” presented unique psychological value: it consisted of spiritually enriching dialogue, which enhanced one’s personality and in the romantic atmosphere presented a high “life-celebration”. All these gave an impression of “life completeness”.

In all, communities of the nobles were the original centers of the cross-cultural development; they realized the idea of Russian and European cultural fusion.

Women played a vast role in the progress of Russian saloons [5; 13]. They were “one of the sensitive barometers of the public life”, quickly and immediately absorbing all features of their time and substantially, leaving it behind [5: 46]. Women exclusion from the governmental duties contributed to more and more appreciable role of women in the life of the nobles, and “culture was completely delivered into women’s hands” [5:48]. Women’s entering to the world, which was earlier considered as “men’s”, began with literature. Under the influ-

ence of N. M. Karamzin and N.I. Novikov, they (women) became readers and created moral atmosphere of Russian society.

A. P. Elagina, E. A. Karamzina, A. O. Smirnova, E. M. Hitrovo, and E. P. Rostopchina are among the most interesting saloons of the 19th century.

The most influential and well-known saloon in Europe was the house of the countess A. G. Laval. “Saturdays and Wednesdays” in the palace of the English Quay in St.-Petersburg attracted imperial families, ladies in waiting, politicians, diplomats, among others. Many of the visitors were carried away by the singing of A. Katalan and P. Bijo’s violin. There were also famous musicians and scientists: J. de Stal was received there in 1812, N. M. Karamzin read some chapters from the “Russian State History”, and A. S. Pushkin acquainted guests with some new scenes from “Boris Godunov”.

Over a twenty years period, the house of E. A. Karamzina, the widow of N. M. Karamzin, was one of the most attractive salons of St.-Petersburg. Members of the society met there “not to gossip, but to converse and exchange views”, – recollected Princess A.V. Meshcherskaya [5:101].

The salon of A. P. Elaguina in Moscow, a house near the Red Gates was some kind of “school” for young men, where they were brought up and trained for the subsequent literary and scientific activity” [3:121].

Among absent-minded Moscow,  
In rumours of whist and boston,  
In dancing prattle of some talks  
You like the games of Apollo.  
The queen of muses and beauty,  
You hold in your gentle hands  
The magic sceptre of inspiration... –

A. S. Pushkin devoted these enthusiastic words to Z. A. Volkonskaya, P. A. Vjazemsky, E. Baratynsky, A. Delwig and many other writers and musicians of that time who often visited her saloon. Representatives of highly respected groups and the youth also gathered in that house.

“Her house was like a music world of a magic castle, when you cross the threshold, you can hear consonance. When you touch something, you can hear thousands of words responding harmoniously. The walls were singing, thoughts, feelings, conversations and movement – everything was singing there” – remembered P. A. Vjazemsky.

A wonderful woman, singer and actress opened her salon in 1824 at the corner of Tverskaya Street and Kozitsky Lane in Moscow. She popularized Italian music, and contributed to “Ladies’ Magazine”. She wished to create an association of “Patriotic Conversation” for introducing homeland’s achievements to Western Europe. I. Tsvetaev noted that the first idea of the foundation of the Mu-

seum of Fine Arts belonged to Z. A. Volkonskaya. A. Mickiewicz, whose poem “Dzjady” and “Crimean” were very popular at that time, also visited her house from time to time. In his letters addressed to Z. A. Volkonskaya, the Polish poet remembered their meetings in her house in Moscow and noticed that the letters of the “dear princess” made the same impression on him. They breathed the same cordiality and radiated the same light as it was in her house... Indisputably, Z. N. Volkonskaya’s saloon, as well as the others mentioned above strengthened Russian-Italian, Polish and French literary and musical communications.

Among other “meetings” of the nobles, we can mention the house of the Director of the Public Library A. N. Olenin, who was a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (1763-1843). V. A. Sologub was one of its constant visitors. He remembered that the houses of Olenins, Karamzins, Vielgorskys played an important role in his life. “In the first one I started to respect art, in the second one I began to love it, in the third one I understood it” [9:5]. According to the contemporary evidence (F. Vigel, M. Pyljaev) A. N. Olenin’s house united everything “remarkable in St.-Petersburg’s literature and art” [7: 410]. I. A. Krylov, O. A. Kiprensky, N. I. Gnedich and A. S. Pushkin also visited that salon. Literary news, news about pictures and books were sent there. A. Gumboldt, who visited Olenin, listened with pleasure to that unique atmosphere of the house. Gonzago, who painted his wonderful decor and the Italian mechanic, Brigantsy, who built theatrical cars were also among the visitors [7: 410].

“On Saturdays all creams of St.-Petersburg’s society met in that quiet sanctuary of knowledge, thoughts, harmony and hospitality” [9: 96] – they wrote about the saloon of V. F. Odoevsky in St.-Petersburg. There it was possible to meet baron Shilling, who just came back from Siberia, A. S. Pushkin, M. I. Glinka and the Professor of chemistry, Gess, N. V. Gogol and the singing-master from Rome - Chiabatta, Prof. P. A. Pletnev and the publisher of “Legends of Russian People” I. P. Saharov, as well as the confessor Iakinif (Bichurin), who had stories about China.

No doubt, all the saloons, as well as societies and evenings, were aimed at the preservation of the national culture. This remark can also be applied to the Polish culture, which was carefully kept by its representatives in Russia. This long-term friendship connected V. F. Odoevsky with a well-known Polish pianist - Maria Shimanovskaya. Russian writer and critic met her in Warsaw. In his “Letters about music” V. F. Odoevsky remembered when Shimanovskaya was playing the piano. It was that perfect, so she had already the right to be called as one of the best outstanding actor. Creams of Russian and Polish cultures such as A. Orlovsky, J. Oleshkevich, T. Dashkevich met at Shimanovskaya’s place. But the central figures were A. S. Pushkin and A. Mickiewicz, maximizing rapprochement of the advanced circles of the Russian-Polish public.

It is necessary to mention the salon of two brothers – Michael Jurevich and Matvej Jurevich Vielgorskys, which brought the best of modern Europe to Russia and gave a certain creative orientation to its musical life. Mih. Vielgorsky, the talented organ and clavier player of I. S. Bach's music, left an appreciable trace in the development of musical tastes of the Russian public, popularizing and strengthening public consciousness in almost all influential art directions of Europe. Emphasis was more on German and Austrian music of the 17th-18th centuries which dominated everyday life in Russia. So, during the concerts in Kursk village Fateevka ("Luizino") one could hear: Mozart – Symphony in G Minor, an interlude from the opera "Faniska" of Kerubini, some fragments from the oratorio "Christ on the Olive mountain" of L. van Beethoven, musical compositions of German and French composers: P. Lafon, L. Shpor, F. Krejsler, etc.

In the 1820s John Fild, K. Lipinsky and A. Atro played in the house at Mihajlovskaya Square in St. Petersburg, in 1830 S. Talberg, L. Meyer, F. Byom and Z. Gijo appeared there, in 1840 P. Viardo, G. Berlioz, Clara and Robert Schuman and F. List performed at Mihajlovskaya Square etc. All Beethoven's symphonies were played there for the first time in Russia. V. F. Odoevsky studied the dynamics of the art tastes in Russia and concluded that the musical atmosphere of Brothers Vielgorsky's house promoted the most important changes of Russian public relations and criticism to the music of L. van Beethoven.

Being the author of symphonies and overtures, vocal ensembles and choral greetings, Michael Jurevich strengthened vigorously the music power, expanding a circle of its judges. After visiting their house, European musicians G. Berlioz, F. List and F. Schuman wrote about the human and musical advantages of Vielgorsky with deep respect, appreciated their "exclusive love for music and erudition" [2: 648]. G. Berlioz expressed the unique atmosphere of that house, feelings that excited musicians in his letter to A. F. Lvov (1848): "Oh, Russia! And its warm hospitality, its literary and art customs. Why are you so far? ..." [10: 89].

During musical "evenings" well-known figures of Europe learnt different compositions of Russian composers: Mich. Vielgorsky, A. A. Alyabyev, A. E. Varlamov, A. L. Gurilyova, young M. I. Glinka, etc. It is important to know that F. List arranged M. Vielgorskij's romances for the piano "It used to be" ("Byvalo"), A. A. Alyabyev's "Nightingale", M. I. Glinka's "Chernomor's march". The Hungarian musician fascinated the public by playing in one of the concerts some improvisations of Gipsy songs heard in Moscow.

It is difficult to overestimate historical and cultural importance of Vielgorskys's salon. "When both Russian public and musicians – their craft mass – were little prepared for the present art life, love for art glimmered in the houses of such outstanding and educated patrons of art as Brothers Vielgorsky and V. F. Odoevsky" [12: 788].

In conclusion, it should be noticed that the attractive atmosphere of Moscow and St.-Petersburg's salons created a unique environment in which there was an intellectual dialogue and enrichment of outstanding figures of Russian and West European culture, confirming thereby humanitarian value of art.

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### *Значение салонов первой трети XIX в. г.г. Москвы и Санкт-Петербурга в развитии межкультурных связей*

В начале XIX в. синтез русского духа и западно-европейского интеллекта, русско-французское двуязычие дворянского общества стали факторами развития российской культуры. В ознакомлении дворянского общества с достижениями науки и культуры Западной Европы важную роль играли салоны. Их значение в русском быту стало возрастать с середины XVIII в. и достигло расцвета в 20-30гг. XIX в., в первую очередь, в следующих областях общественной жизни: обмен новостями, чтение, музицирование, спектакль, танцы.

В статье упомянуты выдающиеся культурные деятели и дворяне, салоны и приёмы которых были известны в своё время: П. Чаадаев, кн. Белозерские – Белосельские, В. Ф. Одоевский, А. Н. Оленин, Е. А. Карамзина, А. Ф. Львов, А. О. Смирнова, Д. Ф. Финкельмон, З. А. Волконская и др. Работа подчеркивает возрастающую роль женщин в дворянском быту и в культурной жизни, что объясняется с их исключённостью из мира службы того времени. В салонах русской аристократии встречались разные представители русской и мировой культуры, такие как: А. С. Пушкин, Н. В. Гоголь, Г. Берлиоз, Ф. Лист, К. и Ф. Шуман и мн. др.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Западная Европа, салоны, научное общение, образование