From 'Senseless Fancy' to 'National Legend':
Alexander Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden*, its Reception and Transpositions, 1873-1900

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the changing reception of Alexander Ostrovsky's play *The Snow Maiden* (1873) and its musical and artistic adaptations in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* draws upon a host of folkloric sources and presents a picture of a prehistoric pagan kingdom, "the Berendeyan land." Originally, the play was criticized in the press as a "senseless" fairy tale; however, over the course of the next three decades the subject of the play gradually came to be perceived as a representation of "ancient prehistoric Rus'" and became a source of important national symbols. This study situates the gradual transformation of the play's critical reception within the context of Russian society's evolving attitudes toward folk traditions and their incorporation into the culture of the elites.

Chapter One concentrates on the play's creation, first production, and immediate reception. Paying special attention to the reviewers' discussion of the folk component of the play, I show different trends in this discussion that are symptomatic of conflicting attitudes to folklore in the early 1870s. Chapter Two focuses on Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden* (1881) and its productions by the Mariinsky Theater in 1882 and Mamontov's Private Opera Theater in 1885; the latter production featured costumes and sets based on sketches by Viktor Vasnetsov. These musical and artistic transpositions changed the perception of the subject of the play: critics began to interpret it as a fictional representation of ancient Rus'. Chapter Three discusses the production of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* by Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater in 1900. This production, relying on amateur ethnographic research, presented a stylistically eclectic vision of "ancient Rus'"

and elicited an array of conflicting opinions in the press, analysis of which concludes this chapter.

The changing reception of Ostrovsky's play and its adaptations in theater, music, and the arts in the last decades of the nineteenth century offers unique insight into the process of the "invention of tradition" in Russia in the "age of nationalism," with its characteristic focus on the inclusion of "native" (Russian folk) traditions into modern, westernized Russian culture.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

I have followed the Library of Congress system of transliteration for all citations and inline quotations of Russian text. For Russian proper names in the body of the dissertation, I have mostly used their anglicized forms (e.g. “Ostrovsky” instead of “Ostrovskii”; “Afanasyev” instead of “Afanas’ev”) for the sake of readability. Exceptions were made for cases when a non-anglicized first or last name is more commonly used in scholarship (e.g. “Viktor Vasnetsov” instead of “Victor Vasnetsov”; “Stasiulevich” instead of “Stasyulevich”).

All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. Most of the originals come from journalistic writing or memoirs, many of which have never been translated. I have provided most Russian originals in the footnotes, except for short or very straightforward excerpts that did not appear to merit a closer look at the original Russian.

INTRODUCTION

Alexander Ostrovsky's fairy-tale verse play *The Snow Maiden* (*Snegurochka*) was written and first staged in 1873. The play draws upon a host of folkloric sources and is set in a prehistoric pagan kingdom, "the Berendeyan land." At the time of its creation *The Snow Maiden* was largely met with puzzlement and derision in the press. The play was deemed "trifling" and "senseless." However, in the course of the next three decades, thanks in part to Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, the subject of the play gradually came to be perceived as a potent representation of "ancient prehistoric Rus'" and became an important cultural symbol. These changes in the interpretation and overall reception of the play were symptomatic of larger transformations that were taking place in Russian cultural life in the late nineteenth century. In tracing the reception of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden*, this dissertation thus interrogates how the play reflected cultural transformations and provides crucial insight into their mechanisms.

Snegurochka is a household name in Russia. Everyone knows who she is. She is a figure inextricably linked with New Year's celebrations for Russian children and adults alike. Snegurochka, or the Snow Maiden, is a beautiful young lady in a blue fur-trimmed coat; on her head, she wears either a fur-trimmed Russian hat, or a *kokoshnik*, traditional Russian headdress. Together with Grandfather Frost (Ded Moroz), she visits New Year's parties organized in schools, kindergartens, and town-halls to entertain children by playing games with them, asking them to recite poems, rewarding them with candy and presents,

and singing New Year's songs while walking in circles around a big New Year's tree.[1] The characters, of course, are impersonated by hired actors. Some families invite these two characters to give their children New Year's gifts. Naturally, images of both the Snow Maiden and Grandfather Frost are omnipresent on New Year's ornaments, decorations, and holiday postcards, where the Snow Maiden is sometimes presented as a little girl, and sometimes as a beautiful young lady. Depictions of her are abundant in souvenir crafts, such as Palekh lacquer boxes, Dymkovo toys, Dulyovo porcelain figures, etc.[2] Her "portraits" created by famous artists—Viktor Vasnetsov, Mikhail Vrubel, Nikolai Roerich—are also well known.

Every Russian is also familiar with folk and literary stories about the Snow Maiden as well as their cartoon and film adaptions. Everyone knows the folk tale about a girl who was made out of snow by a childless couple, lived happily with them as their daughter (or granddaughter), but melted away when jumping over a bonfire during summer solstice festivities. This tale has been published in numerous children's books and collections of fairy tales[3]; the "Soiuzmul'tfilm" cartoons *Fairy Tale about the Snow Maiden* (*Skazka o*

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[1] For a history of Christmas and New Year's celebrations in Russia and the USSR, including a brief history of Grandfather Frost and the Snow Maiden as characters associated with winter holidays, see: Elena Dushechkina, *Russkaia elka: Istoriia, mifologiia, literatura* (St. Petersburg: European University Press, 2012); Elena Dushechkina, "Russkaia rozhdestvenskaia elka v zhizni i v literature," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 5-6 (1993-1994): 228-240; and Svetlana Adon'eva, "Istoriia sovremennoi novogodnei traditsii," *Mifologiia i povsednevnost.' Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii, February 24-26, 1999*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1999), 368-388. For a history of New Year's celebrations in the USSR, see: Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 85-109.

[2] In recent years the Snow Maiden became a popular tourist brand, as part of the "Fairy-Tale Map of Russia" project; see the community page, "Skazochnaia karta Rossii," on the social networking site VKontakte. Following the establishment of Grandfather Frost's "residency" in Veliky Ustiug, the Snow Maiden now has her residency in Kostroma, the administrative center of Kostroma Province. Kostroma claims to be the "birthplace" of the Snow Maiden, since Ostrovsky's estate Shchelykovo is located in the province. It is believed that his time spent at Shchelykovo influenced Ostrovsky when writing his *Snow Maiden*. Nowadays, the museum-estate Shchelykovo hosts exhibitions about the Snow Maiden and organizes programs for children led by a young woman dressed like the character.

[3] For example, recent editions released by Speech Press ("Rech'"), in the series *Mom's Favorite Book*, include: *Snegurochka. Russkaia narodnaia skazka* (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Rech', 2015), with illustrations by

Snegurochke, 1957, dir. Vladimir Degtyarev and Vladimir Danilevich) and *Snegurka* (1969, dir. Vladimir Degtyarev) are based on this folk tale. There are also a few films and cartoons based on Ostrovsky's play: in fact, most Russians are familiar with Ostrovsky's plot not by reading his play, but through watching Pavel Kadochnikov's feature film *The Snow Maiden* (1968), in which the characters speak in Ostrovsky's verse. Ivan Ivanov-Vano's 1952 animated feature film uses both Ostrovsky's text and music from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera (which is based on the play). Yury Tsvetkov's film *Spring Fairy Tale* (*Vesenniaia skazka*, 1971) and Maria Muat's animated feature *The Snow Maiden* (2006) adhere to Ostrovsky's plot, though do not employ his verse.

Russian opera theater-goers are likely to have seen Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, which has been a staple of many music theaters in Russia. Notably, the Mariinsky Theater's current production has been running since 2004, with a few performances every year.[4] The Bolshoi Theater, which has staged seven productions of the opera since 1893, offered its audiences a novel interpretation created by the director Alexander Titel in 2017.[5] There is also a ballet *The Snow Maiden*, which was created by the choreographer Vladimir Burmeister who used Tchaikovsky's music for the ballet (including his incidental music for Ostrovsky's play); this ballet has been on stage of the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Musical Theater since 1963, and its most recent production

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Aleksei Pakhomov; *Snegurochka* (Moscow and St. Petersburg: Rech', 2016); the latter uses illustrations by Marina Uspenskaya, who created her pictures in the 1950s for the publication of the tale by "Detgiz" (The State Children's Publishing House).

[4] See the Mariinsky Theater's website, www.mariinsky.ru. Usually, there are two or three performances during winter holiday season and a couple more in the spring.

[5] See the Bolshoi Theater's synopsis of the opera, which states that the production presents a post-apocalyptic world: https://www.bolshoi.ru/performances/1024/libretto (accessed May 25, 2018).

was staged in 2001.[6] Though productions of Ostrovsky's play are few and far between, productions of its musical transpositions are abundant.

There are a number of variations in different versions of the Snow Maiden story (for example, was she made out of snow? or is she Grandfather Frost's granddaughter? or is she his daughter?); however, such variations are just an accepted part of her image, as a folkloric character. Her costume, especially the ornate *kokoshnik*, signifies a connection with Russian traditional culture, and it is commonly believed that her origins lie in Russian fairy tales. However, it is not commonly acknowledged that she never would have attained her status of a cultural symbol without Ostrovsky's play, its productions and adaptations in various artistic media, and varied responses in criticism.[7] Additionally, without Ostrovsky, we might not even have had a famous folk tale about her. As I will discuss in Chapter One, the version of the folk tale that is now considered standard cannot be not found in Alexander Afanasyev's famous collection of folk tales at all; its plot occupies a mere two pages in the second volume of Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs*, a three-volume scholarly work on Slavic mythological beliefs, which nowadays is familiar only to specialists. Mikhail Maksimovich's publications of this fairy tale,[8] as well as Grigory Danilevsky's adaptation of it in verse,[9] predated Ostrovsky's play; however, these were

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[6] See the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Moscow Academic Musical Theater's website, https://stanmus.ru.

[7] Elena Dushechkina argues that Ostrovsky's text was "the first and decisive push" in the process of the Snow Maiden becoming a definitive New Year's symbol (Dushechkina, *Russkaia elka*, 318). Katia Dianina adds to this argument by pointing out that the visual representation of our modern Snow Maiden, with her lush fur-trimmed coat supplemented with either a hat or a *kokoshnik*, did not originate in folk culture, but is clearly influenced by Vasnetsov's and Vrubel's paintings (1899 and 1890 respectively) of Ostrovsky's Snow Maiden. See Katia Dianina, *When Art Makes News: Writing Culture and Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 251.

[8] Mikhail Maksimovich, "Snegurka: Russkaia skazka," in *Kievlianin*, bk. 1 (Kiev, 1840), 71-78; Mikhail Maksimovich, *Tri skazki i odna pobasenka, pereskazannye Mikhailom Maksimovichem*, 3rd edition (Moscow, 1867), 21-31 (the first two editions of the latter book came out in 1845 and 1859).

[9] Grigorii Danilevskii, "Snegurka," in *Iz Ukrainy: Skazki i pover'ia*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1860), 1-5.

minor authors and their publications were not widely known.[10] It is Ostrovsky's play that popularized the folk tale—even though the play's plot departs from the folk tale considerably.

While the Snow Maiden as a fixture of Russian culture would not exist without Ostrovsky, it is also true that Ostrovsky's play itself would not have been written were it not for specific developments in Russian culture, namely, the surge in folklore collection that started in the 1840s-1850s and continued through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Furthermore, the play might have remained in the cultural periphery if not for the rise of Russian cultural nationalism inaugurated by the epoch of Great Reforms.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Russian educated elites began to engage in the collection of folklore and research of native Russian traditions as a way of establishing connection with traditional peasant culture, which was increasingly perceived as a repository of Russian national spirit. Sporadic folklore collection and publishing had already begun in the eighteenth century; however, as Nathaniel Knight shows, throughout the eighteenth century folk songs and tales were published primarily for entertainment; only in the 1790s did there emerge a perception of folklore as a valuable link to the past, to old beliefs and to the lives of the forefathers.[11] Under the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder, in all European countries folklore gradually came to be perceived as a foundation of national identity. Authors of the Romantic period searched for sources of inspiration,

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[10] None of the reviews or memoirs discussed in this dissertation mention Maksimovich or Danilevsky.
[11] Knight, Nathaniel, "Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses: *Narodnost'* and Modernity in Imperial Russia," in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, ed. David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (Houndsmills: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 47. See the chapter on folklore collecting and publishing, as well as attitudes to folklore in the eighteenth century in M. K. Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), 42-111. Additionally, for a discussion of *narodnost'* see Uvarov's "Official Nationality" doctrine: Andrei Zorin," in *Kormia dvuglavogo orla…: Literatura i gosudarstvennaia ideologiia v Rossii v poslednei treti XVIII—pervoi treti XIX veka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 339-374.

among other things, in local folk legends. In Russia, this emphasis on origins and cultural identity is demonstrated by the term *narodnost'*, which was coined by Pyotr Vyazemsky in 1819. Since then, discussions about *narodnost'* abounded in Russian intellectual discourse, and the word acquired a variety of meanings, ranging from a special aesthetic quality that makes Russian literature unmistakably Russian, a combination of traits that make Russians a distinctive nation, or Russian native traditions preserved in peasant culture.[12] Collection and study of folklore was in turn often perceived as an exploration of Russian *narodnost'*—a uniquely Russian spirit preserved in peasant customs and lore.

The collection of folklore assumed organized forms after the establishment of the Russian Geographic Society (Russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo) in 1845. Though the Society was organized originally as an institution to support the Russian Empire's colonial enterprise[13]—the Society was charged with collecting materials about non-Russian populations of various parts of the empire—it soon took up the study of traditional Russian culture as well. The Society incorporated the study of folklore into its study of ethnography. "Programs" or questionnaires that contained detailed guidelines for collecting data about people's lifestyle, folklore, and dialects[14] were sent to ethnographers working in various

[12] There are numerous studies on the history of the uses of the term *narodnost'* in its various meanings. See especially the following: Knight, "Ethnicity, Nationality and the Masses"; M. V. Leskinen, *Poliaki i finny v rossiiskoi nauke vtoroi poloviny XIX veka: "Drugoi" skvoz' prizmu identichnosti* (Moscow: Indrik, 2010), esp. Chapters One and Two; for a discussion of the term *narodnost'* in contradistinction to the competing term *natsiia*, see Aleksei Miller, "Istoriia poniatiia *natsiia* v Rossii," in *Poniatiia o Rossii: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda*, ed. Aleksei Miller, Denis Sdvizhkov, and Ingrid Shirle, vol. 2 (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2012), 8-49.

[13] Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 1, 3; for a discussion about the establishment of the Society and the competition between the two visions on ethnography put forth by Karl von Baer and Nikolai Nadezhdin, see Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire, and Nationality: Ethnography in the Russian Geographical Society, 1845-1855," in *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 108-141.

[14] The first questionnaire ("Instruktsiia Etnograficheskaia") was created for the Kamchatka expedition in 1852 by Nikolai Nadezhdin; for a description and discussion of this questionnaire, see Azadovskii, vol. 2, 14-15. On Nadezhdin, his understanding of *narodnost'*, and his program, see Leskinen, *Poliaki i finny*, 66-71.

provinces. On the basis of the resulting data collected, a number of folklore collections were published in the 1850s and 1860s, including Alexander Afanasyev's *Folk Russian Fairy Tales* (*Narodnye russkie skazki,* 1855-1863), Leonid Maikov's *Great Russian Incantations*[15] (*Velikorusskie zaklinaniia,* 1869), and Ivan Khudiakov's *Great Russian Fairy Tales* (*Velikorusskie skazki,* 1861-1862) and *Great Russian Riddles* (*Velikorusskie zagadki,* 1864). Commenting on the volume of material about peasants' everyday life and lore that the questionnaires helped collect, Alexander Pypin, the author of the first monograph on the development of Russian ethnography, emphasized the groundbreaking nature of collected materials ("this was something previously unheard of in our literature"[16]).

Seminal publications of Russian folk songs appeared in the early 1860s; most notable among them were collections compiled by Pyotr Kireevsky and Pavel Rybnikov.[17] Songs in Kireevsky's edition were collected between the 1830s and 1850s with the aid of many Russian writers (such as Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Vladimir Dahl, Nikolai Yazykov, Aleksei Koltsov, Pavel Yakushkin, Pavel Melnikov-Pechersky, and others).[18] Following the publication of the first volume in 1860, subsequent volumes of the Kireevsky collection were published through 1874, and it became one of the most comprehensive collections of Russian folk songs, primarily of epic songs (*byliny*) and historical songs. Rybnikov collected his songs while in exile in the Olonest Province; his collection was

[15] "Great Russian" here means ethnically Russian, as opposed to "Little Russian" ("malorossiiskii"), that is, Ukrainian.
[16] A. N. Pypin, *Istoriia russkoi etnografii*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1890-92), 53.
[17] *Pesni, sobrannye P. V. Kireevskim*, in 10 volumes (Moscow: Obshchestvo liubitelei russkoi slovesnosti, 1860-1874); *Pesni, sobrannye P. N. Rybnikovym,* in 4 volumes (Moscow, 1861-1867).
[18] A. D. Soimonov, "Fol'klornoe sobranie P. V. Kireevskogo i russkie pisateli," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 79 (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 121-166. This entire volume of *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* is dedicated to Kireevsky's collection and songs that were contributed by various Russian authors.

mainly comprised of *byliny,* and it marked a true discovery of the Russian North.[19] By the 1860s, the collection of songs, folk tales, customs, rituals, dialects, and so on flourished beyond the auspices of the Russian Geographical Society.[20] Many Russian authors and musicians started collecting folklore either out of personal interest or as part of state-organized efforts, and Alexander Ostrovsky took an active part in this process, as will be discussed in Chapter One.

Early Russian scholars of folklore were strongly influenced by the German "mythological school," represented by such figures as Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, which drew upon Friedrich Schelling's philosophy of myth. Russian followers of the mythological school (Fyodor Buslaev, Alexander Afanasyev, Orest Miller) studied myth in connection with the study of language, folklore, peasants' everyday life, customs, and rituals.[21] The main premise of the mythological school was the idea that peasants' outlook on the world was reflected in a once consistent system of beliefs about nature. By the nineteenth century, this system disintegrated, but its remnants could still be identified, scattered across various folk genres and preserved in lexicon. The main goal of folklore studies, as followers of the mythological school saw it, was to reconstruct this system of ancient pagan beliefs. As A. L. Toporkov observes, "mythologists," just like many nineteenth-century scholars of folklore, operated under an assumption of a certain temporal shift: they connected poetic imagery of contemporary folklore with archaic mythologies, and they

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[19] Publication of Rybnikov's collection spurred further study of the Russian North and led to more publications, notably, E. V. Barsov's *Lamentations of the Northern Lands* (*Prichitaniia Severnogo kraia*, 1872-1885) and A. F. Gilferding's *Epic Songs from Onega* (*Onezhskie byliny*, 1871). See Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 2, 224-225.

[20] Of course, it is necessary to mention Vladimir Dahl's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* (*Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, 1863-1866).

[21] See A. L. Toporkov, *Teoriia mifa v russkoi filologicheskoi nauke XIX veka* (Moscow: Indrik, 1997), esp. 9-40; Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 2, 47-84.

presumed the worldview of contemporary Russian peasants to be almost identical to the worldview of ancient people.[22]

Developments in folklore studies and collection generated new ideas about the peculiarities of the Russian cultural path. In the introduction to his monograph, *Russian Epic Songs about Bogatyrs* (*Russkii bogatyrskii epos*, 1862),[23] Fyodor Buslaev expresses a particularly poignant view on the culture of the Russian educated class in its relation to "native" Russian traditions. He argues that two specific historical phenomena played a definitive role in the development of Russian written culture: religion and Peter the Great's reforms. First, Russian written culture took a heavily religious route at its origin, which meant that it shunned peasant folklore from the very start. Second, Peter the Great's reforms in the eighteenth century separated modern Russian "high" culture from its native roots, even though in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries peasant folklore began influencing written culture. Buslaev argues that it was particularly due to the westernizing reforms of Peter and his successors that contemporary Russian literature and high culture were completely divorced from the native tradition and became a conglomerate of elements borrowed from other cultures:

> Thus, that which was happening in Russia had not occurred in any of the civilized European countries: a secular literature appeared based on chance elements alien to us, snatched pell-mell from all over. The Russian native tradition [*russkaia narodnost'*] became not a foundation for this newly colonized literature in Russia, but a target, into which it [literature] directed from time to time its satirical shots, as into a savage barbarism that had to be eradicated altogether. [24]

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[22] Toporkov, *Teoriia mifa*, 39.

[23] The monograph is Buslaev's study of *byliny* published in Kireevsky's and Rybnikov's collections discussed above. I am indebted to Irina Shevelenko for directing me to this work by Buslaev; see her discussion of Buslaev in: Shevelenko, *Modernizm kak arkhaizm: Natsionalizm i poiski modernistskoi estetiki v Rossii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2017), 11-12.

[24] "Таким образом, на Руси совершалось то, чего не бывало ни в одной из цивилизованных европейских стран: явилась светская литература, созданная из случайных, кое-как и отовсюду нахватанных, чуждых нам элементов. Русская народность стала не основой для этой колонизованной

Buslaev thus presents modern Russian literary tradition as hostile to native traditions; ruminating on this relationship further, he compares Russian literature to a "foreign conqueror who subjects the aboriginal masses to himself" and an "egoistic plantation owner who, ignoring the customs and convictions of his slaves, gilds their chains with the luster of European comfort."[25] In Buslaev's perspective one can clearly discern a crisis of cultural identity and a yearning for a harmonious connection between the two cultures—the culture of educated elites and the culture of *narod*, a concept by then firmly linked with lower social classes, particularly peasants. Buslaev clearly sees the task of collecting and studying folklore as a mission that, among other things, would allow one to bridge a cultural divide between estates. This task is typical for the agenda of cultural nationalism that responds to the yearning for a common "national" identity brought about by long-term social changes associated with modernization of traditional societies.[26]

Buslaev's agenda put forth in this introduction was one of the responses to a crucial historical landmark, the 1861 emancipation of serfs, which granted freedom to millions of

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на Руси литературы, а мишенью, в которую от времени до времени она направляла свои сатирические выстрелы, как в дикое невежество, которое надобно искоренить в конец" (Fedor Buslaev, *Narodnyi epos i mifologiia* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 2003), 157). This and the following translations are taken from Irina Shevelenko, "Pan-Slavism Redux, or Speaking Russian in Modernist Tongues," in *Reframing Russian Modernism*, ed. Irina Shevelenko (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming).

[25] "Пришлый завоеватель, который силою покоряет себе туземные массы"; "эгоистический плантатор, который, игнорируя нравы и убеждения своих невольников, позолачивает их цепи лоском европейского комфорта" (Buslaev, *Narodnyi epos i mifologiia*, 157).

[26] Eric Hobsbawm's idea of "invented tradition(s)" as foundational for nation-building is especially pertinent to this study; see E. Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263-307. Ernest Gellner concentrates on the high culture's role as a principle agent of nation-creation, and the elite's appropriation of folk culture in an attempt to achieve cultural homogeneity, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), esp. 58. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006) and different approaches to the nation in the following compilations: Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Balakrishnan, Gopal, ed. *Mapping the Nation*, (London and New York: Verso, 1996).

peasants and inaugurated the epoch of the Great Reforms. The abolition of serfdom, on the one hand, gave a new boost to ethnographic study of Russian peasantry; on the other, having coincided with the literary epoch dominated by stark realism, it prompted an exploration of the ills of contemporary peasants' lives. Writer-ethnographers such as Nikolai Uspensky, Vasily Sleptsov, Alexander Levitov, Nikolai Pomyalovsky, and Gleb Uspensky used the genre of the ethnographic sketch to portray the life of the lower classes, including peasants, with all its hardships and bleakness; they did not shy away from exposing peasants' ignorance and superstitions, which often stemmed from peasants' traditional beliefs.[27] While these authors generally abstained from passing judgment and simply documented their observations on peasant life, some radical critics associated with the journal *The Russian Word* (*Russkoe slovo*) presented folk tales and beliefs as vestiges of peasants' ignorance, which originated in their social and economic conditions. Such radical critics did not see any value in folklore, customs, and folk belief, and expected them to be discarded and forgotten by peasants once they reached a certain level of civilization.[28]

Overall, in the 1860s and 1870s, the demand for realistic depiction of life dictated the limits of appropriation of folklore in literature. Mostly, folklore was used in order to create a truthful depiction of the described setting. For example, Pavel Melnikov-Pechersky utilized folk legends, songs, and dialectal speech in his novel *In the Woods* (*V lesakh,* 1871-1874), for a colorful presentation of Old Believers living in the Transvolga region; the novel, as well as its "sequel" *On the Hills* (*Na gorakh*, 1881), was immensely popular at the

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[27] See A. F. Nekrylova, "Ocherkisty-shestidesiatniki" and "G. I. Uspenskii" in *Russkaia literatura i fol'klor (vtoraia polovina XIX veka)*, ed. A. A. Gorelov (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982), 131-177, 178-230; S. A. Tokarev, *Istoriia russkoi etnografii (Dooktiabr'skii period)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 255-258.
[28] See Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 2, 97-99.

time.[29] Ostrovsky's own use of folklore in his dramas and comedies from contemporary life, as well as in his historical dramas, followed a similar pattern: he used folk songs sparingly and only in order to create the atmosphere of the place and the social milieu that his plays presented.[30] On the other hand, Nikolai Nekrasov created an entirely new poetic idiom to represent folklore and peasant speech in contemporary poetry;[31] however, he was highly regarded not because of his imaginative use of folklore, but thanks to the civic sentiment and compassion towards contemporary downtrodden peasants in his poems—a sentiment that strongly resonated with the civic-minded readers of the era of the Great Reforms.

In this context, Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* was an outlier, since it did not align with the demands of either realist aesthetics or a civic agenda. It is not surprising, then, that it was met with very little appreciation by critics and, presumably, audiences, and it quickly disappeared from the stage after its premier in 1873.

There were gradual changes in the interests of various groups of educated elites during the 1870s and 1880s that made possible a return of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* to the forefront of public interest. These new interests partially responded to a concern implied in Buslaev's critique of the modern Russian literary tradition—a need for a cultural idiom that would be "inclusive" with regard to cultural traditions of various estates and that would respond to a yearning for a unique ("authentic") "national" tradition. "Russian-ness" became a central focus in the aesthetic quests of a number of composers, artists, and

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[29] Z. I. Vlasova, "P. I. Mel'nikov-Pecherskii," in *Russkaia literatura i fol'klor (vtoraia polovina XIX veka)*, ed. Gorelov, 94-130.

[30] Chernyshev argues that Ostrovsky always used well-known songs, since he portrayed typical, recognizable phenomena of societal life. See V. I. Chernyshev, "Russkaia pesnia u Ostrovskogo," *Izvestiia otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti AN SSSR* 2 no. 1 (1929): 300.

[31] There are numerous studies of Nekrasov's folklorism; however, Kornei Chukovsky's *Masterstvo Nekrasova* remains the most insightful treatment of this topic: Kornei Chukovskii, *Masterstvo Nekrasova* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1962).

architects. Of central concern were the creation of a new musical or artistic language based on elements perceived as Russian and distinct from the Europeanized music, arts, and architecture of the previous period; the search for subjects from national history, real or imaginary; and the showcasing of ethnographic knowledge and the aesthetization of elements of the peasant cultural tradition, be it architecture, crafts, or lore—all of these efforts served the purpose of including previously marginalized "Russian" traditions into the realm of the culture of Russian elites.

These developments in various areas of Russian cultural production of the second half of the nineteenth century have received a great deal of scholarly attention. In fact, many scholars trace the interest toward national forms and the discourse of cultural nationalism to an earlier period, as Marina Frolova-Walker does in her book on Russian musical nationalism.[32] However, as she shows, it was only the activities of the New Russian School in the 1860s that invested the terms "Russian style" and "Russian school" with meaning.[33] Musicians of the New Russian School, their differences notwithstanding, indeed included a new examination of Russian folk songs into their search for a novel musical language.[34] Several books and articles by Richard Taruskin tackle the question of national style in music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, he explores heated discussions about Glinka's *Ruslan i Liudmila*[35] and the various ways in which Glinka's legacy was used by the members of the New Russian School in their search for

[32] Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).
[33] Ibid., 140.
[34] Ibid., 163-174.
[35] Richard Taruskin, "Glinka's Ambiguous Legacy and the Birth Pangs of Russian Opera," *19th-Century Music* 1 no. 2 (1977): 142-162.

principles of opera composition.[36] In his seminal monograph on Stravinsky, Taruskin discusses the musical trends and the discourse on nationalism in music in the late nineteenth-century criticism that predates Stravinsky's experimentation with the folk idiom.[37] Robert Ridenour looks at the formation of the Russian national musical school from the perspective of musical institutions that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, taking into consideration musicians' and composers' struggle for "power" within those institutions.[38] Laura Olson turns to the question of folk music revival that started in the late nineteenth century; while her book is mostly dedicated to the Soviet and post-Soviet period, in her first chapter she discusses the beginning of this trend, turning her attention to such inventions as "folk orchestras" and "folk choruses" that gained popularity in the late nineteenth century.[39]

The move toward exploration of the "Russian element" in architecture and arts and crafts receives an in-depth treatment in Evgenia Kirichenko's *Russian Style.*[40] Kirichenko traces the search for "Russian" elements in architecture and fine and applied arts from the Baroque to the early twentieth century, showing that the culmination of this search fell within the period of 1850-1900, when the demand for a "Russian style" inspired by a native tradition became ubiquitous in architecture, applied arts and crafts, and the fine arts.[41]

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[36] Richard Taruskin, *Opera and Drama in Russia as Preached and Practiced in the 1860s* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981).
[37] Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Tradition: A Biography of the Works Through* Mavra*,* in 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), especially vol. 1, 23-75.
[38] Robert C. Ridenour, *Nationalism, Modernism, and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Russian Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981).
[39] Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (New York & London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), esp. 16-34.
[40] Evgenia Kirichenko, *The Russian Style* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1991).
[41] Kirichenko, *Russian Style*, 91-92. Kirichenko's study is an encyclopaedic work that touches upon all artistic media; additionally, see V. G. Lisovsky on the national style in architecture and Iu. A. Nikitin on the usage of folk motifs in the architecture of exhibition halls: V. G. Lisovskii, *"Natsional'nyi stil'" v arkhitekture Rossii*

Interest in folk art prompted efforts not only in collection and preservation, but in revival and reinvention of folk arts and crafts; this process is well documented by Wendy Salmond and Alison Hilton.[42] Special attention in scholarship has been devoted to activities by the Abramtsevo circle and workshops established in Savva Mamontov's Abramtsevo estate and Maria Tenisheva's Talashkino estate, as well as to the artistic languages that emerged from engagement with decorative folk traditions in works by artists close to these circles.[43]

While the above studies mostly concentrate on the visual embodiments of the "Russian style" and the artists' activities of studying, collecting, and utilizing folk art and music in their quests for a "national" style, Katia Dianina underscores the importance of public discourse in the popular press in shaping the perception of these artistic experiments. As Dianina argues, "it was out of these discussions that the idea of a shared culture was born,"[44] and she maintains that artistic undertakings in and of themselves were not sufficient for creating a "national culture." Dianina points out that the actors on the cultural arena who took part in shaping the idea of national culture were not only artists but also critics and the reading public. Her book therefore focuses on the discursive nature of the phenomenon of "national culture."[45]

(Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2000); Iu. A. Nikitin, *Vystavochnaia arkhitektura Rossii XIX – nachala XX v*. (St. Petersburg: "Kolo," 2014).

[42] Wendy Salmond, *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia: Reviving the Kustar Art Industries, 1870-1917* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alison Hilton, *Russian Folk Art* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), esp. 197-244.

[43] See Kirichenko, Salmond, Hilton; also Elena A. Borisova and Grigory Sternin, *Russian Art Nouveau* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 22-83; Katia Dianina, *When Art Makes News: Writing Culture and Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2013), 225-243. See Chapter Two of the present study for further references regarding Abramtsevo.

[44] Dianina, *When Art Makes News*, 7.

[45] Ibid., 10. Note a similar approach in Irina Shevelenko's monograph on modernism, which focuses on the critical discourse that surrounded various artistic groups and events in the early 1900s: Shevelenko, *Modernizm kak arkhaizm*.

In this dissertation, I consider both the artistic products—be they the play itself, its productions, costumes, music, or art works it inspired—and their reception in contemporaneous criticism. I draw upon the work of many scholars, regardless of differences in approach. For example, one of the most detailed articles on *The Snow Maiden* belongs to Nikolai Kashin, a prominent Ostrovsky scholar.[46] On the basis of archival sources, he established the exact dates of Ostrovsky's work on *The Snow Maiden*; published Ostrovsky's two draft outlines of the play and discussed their differences; provided a brief analysis of Ostrovsky's manuscript of the play; discussed folk sources of the play, as well as Ostrovsky's indebtedness to Shakespeare; provided a survey of critical literature, from the first reviews to later scholarship; and finally, gave a brief overview of the play's productions from 1873 till 1938. Kashin's approach to the material is mostly descriptive; his goal is to explicate Ostrovsky's intentions and to assess the understanding or misunderstanding of Ostrovsky's play by later critics, scholars, and directors. Another scholar whose work has been invaluable to the present study is T. Shakh-Azizova, who studies the place of *The Snow Maiden* in Russian art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[47] In addition to discussing *The Snow Maiden*'s creation and sources, Shakh-Azizova also surveyed the play's performance history in 1873-1910s, with brief forays into Rimsky-Korsakov's eponymous opera productions.

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[46] N. Kashin, "*Snegurochka*. Vesenniaia Skazka v chetyriokh deistviiakh s prologom A. N. Ostrovskogo (opyt izucheniia)," in *Trudy Vsesoiuznoi biblioteki imeni V. I. Lenina*, vol. 4, *A. S. Pushkin. A N. Ostrovskii. Zapadniki i slavianofily* (Moscow, 1939), 69-120.

[47] T. Shakh-Azizova, "Real'nost' i fantaziia ('Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo i ee sud'ba v russkom iskusstve poslednei treti XIX i nachala XX veka," in *Vzaimosviaz' iskusstv v khudozhestvennom razvitii Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka: Ideinye printsipy. Strukturnye osobennosti* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 219-263.

This dissertation is a case study of a play whose reception underwent drastic changes in the course of the last three decades of the nineteenth century. *The Snow Maiden* grew out of Ostrovsky's interest in folk culture—but also out of a commission by the Directorate of Imperial Theaters, which meant financial gains for the playwright. In 1873, as I demonstrate, neither the author nor the Directorate could have anticipated the kind of resonance the play would enjoy in subsequent decades. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, musicians, artists, and theater directors interpreted the play as a representation of imaginary ancient Rus', and this interpretation was ultimately accepted and popularized by theater critics. This meaning was likely unanticipated by the author of the play; however, it turned out to be so potent that it has resonated with Russians for over a century. The gradual change in the general understanding of the play's meaning in the last decades of the nineteenth century makes it a fascinating case study of the mechanisms of the "invention of tradition" in the age of nationalism.

Chapter One, "Alexander Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* in 1873," discusses the creation, production, and immediate reception of *The Snow Maiden.* The first section of this chapter begins with a brief overview of Ostrovsky's biography and creative work. This overview highlights *The Snow Maiden*'s unique position in Ostrovsky's oeuvre, which to some extent explains the puzzlement of his first reviewers. I then trace the story of *The Snow Maiden*'s creation, connecting it to the playwright's interest in folklore and folklore collection. The second section of the chapter summarizes Ostrovsky's folk and literary sources that have been established by previous scholars and by my research. In the third, brief, section of this chapter I discuss the first production of the play in 1873. The brevity of this section is due to the meagerness of the available information on production preparation, which

necessitates drawing upon reviews as the primary sources of information. In the fourth section, I discuss the immediate post-production reception of the play, and in the fifth section I turn to the play's publication history and post-publication reviews. In the fourth and fifth sections, I analyze the play's critical reception in great detail, paying special attention to the reviewers' discussion of the folk components of the play. I uncover various trends in this discussion, which exemplify conflicting attitudes toward folklore and its use in literature in the first half of the 1870s.

Chapter Two, "*The Snow Maiden* in Musical Theater and in the Arts, 1880-1899," discusses the reception of Ostrovsky's play in the form of its transpositions in various artistic media in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It is in these transpositions, I argue, that the play acquires a uniform interpretation as a fictional representation of ancient Rus'. In the first section of the chapter, I discuss the creation of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden*. The second section analyzes the first production of the opera in 1882 by the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, paying attention to novel aspects in the treatment of the play's subject on stage, which reflected advances in archaeology. The third section of this chapter analyzes the opera's reception in 1882. Here, I mostly concentrate on the way the subject of the opera and the folk elements of the music were perceived and evaluated by critics. The fourth section of this chapter is dedicated to the staging of the play and then the opera by the Abramtsevo circle and Savva Mamontov's Private Opera Theater; both productions used costumes and sets sketched by Viktor Vasnetsov. Moving to the reception of the Private Opera Theater's production of *The Snow Maiden* in the fifth section, I focus on the perception of Vasnetsov's visual representation of the subject of the play/opera by the general public and by artists close to the Abramtsevo circle. Finally, in

my last section, I overview the discussion of Vasnetsov's sketches and sets for *The Snow Maiden* in the late 1890s, in connection with Vasnetsov's solo exhibition and the Private Opera Theater's performances in St. Petersburg.

In Chapter Three, "*The Snow Maiden* on the Moscow Art Theater Stage, 1900," I focus on the year 1900 as an important year in the play's production history: this is when *The Snow Maiden* returns to drama theater stages, after being on the periphery of theater repertoires for over twenty-five years. The brief first section of the chapter documents the play's popularity in 1900 and explains the reasons why the Moscow Art Theater's production is the main focus of this chapter. In the second section, I analyze the treatment of the play itself in the reviews of 1900, which provides insight into changes in the perception of the play and its subject resulting from the developments analyzed in Chapter Two. I highlight drastic differences between the play's reception in 1900 compared with 1873. The third section of this chapter discusses Stanislavsky's production of *The Snow Maiden*, drawing on letters, memoirs, and materials from the Moscow Art Theater archive. I show that this production presents an alternative to Vasnetsov's vision of ancient Rus' as discussed in the previous chapter, and I analyze the sources upon which the creators of the production drew for their vision. In the fourth and final section, I discuss the critical reception of Stanislavsky's production, focusing on the reviewers' efforts to find proper language for interpreting intentions and perceived shortcomings of Stanislavsky's vision of ancient Rus'. While opinions of critics varied, as did their competence in the discussion of the Russian folk tradition, I demonstrate similarities in their expectations from a production of *The Snow Maiden* as an exploration of "native" Russian traditions.

CHAPTER ONE: Alexander Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* in 1873

The Snow Maiden in Alexander Ostrovsky's career

Alexander Nikolaevich Ostrovsky (1823-1886) is widely recognized as the most prominent playwright in nineteenth-century Russia. He is considered the "father of Russian theater" since he wrote over fifty plays[48]—mostly contemporary comedies and dramas—for the Russian stage, which had been largely dominated by foreign plays up to that period.[49] Thanks to Ostrovsky's contribution and example, this situation gradually changed and dramas and comedies on themes from contemporary Russian life became the core of theater repertoires.[50]

Ostrovsky grew up in a family of a lawyer in Zamoskvorech'e, the part of Moscow mostly inhabited by the merchant class. His environment while growing up, as well as his work as a clerk in the Moscow courts in the 1840s, gave him plenty of material for his first comedies, which wittily depicted various aspects of life of the merchant estate. Russian literary critics and the reading public first noticed Ostrovsky in 1850, when his comedy *It's a Family Affair—We'll Settle It Ourselves* (*Svoi liudi—sochtemsia!*) was published in the

[48] Ostrovsky contributed forty-six plays to the Russian stage as well as an additional seven written in collaboration with various authors. He also produced about forty translations and adaptations of foreign plays, including unfinished ones. See the commentary in Aleksandr Ostrovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978): 601. Quotations from this edition are henceforth given by indicating volume with a Roman numeral and page number with an Arabic numeral (Ostrovskii, IX, 601).

[49] A cursory look at the repertoire of the Maly Theater in Moscow and the Alexandrinsky Theater in St. Petersburg published in *The History of Russian Theater* shows how outnumbered original Russian plays were by vaudevilles and adaptations of foreign plays. Many of these entertainment plays did not stay on stage longer than for one or two seasons, but some became staples of the repertoire for decades. See repertoire lists in: Efim Kholodov, et al., eds., *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 4, 1846-1861 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979): 285-418; vol. 5, 1862-1881 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980): 412-537.

[50] Anna Zhuravleva, "Russkaia drama epokhi A. N. Ostrovskogo," in *Russkaia drama epokhi A. N. Ostrovskogo*, ed. Anna Zhuravleva (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984), 6-7.

journal *The Muscovite* (*Moskvitianin*).[51] *The Muscovite* was a near-Slavophile journal edited by the historian Mikhail Pogodin. The tendency towards social criticism, present in Ostrovsky's first comedy, subsided in his oeuvre for a short while in the early 1850s, when Ostrovsky became a member of the so-called "young editorial board" ("molodaia redaktsiia") of *The Muscovite*. Ostrovsky's plays of this period—such as *Poverty is No Vice* (*Bednost' ne porok*) and *Keep to Your Own Sledge* (*Ne v svoi sani ne sadis'*)[52]—retreated from the harsh societal critiques that characterized his earlier plays and presented a quite idealized picture of the merchant class, with its family values, traditions and festivities, and singing of folk songs. *Keep to Your Own Sledge* was the first of Ostrovsky's plays to be staged, and it was received with overwhelming enthusiasm as a work marking a "new era" in the history of Russian theater.[53] Additionally, the play inaugurated a long history of collaboration between the playwright and the Imperial Theaters of Russia.

In the mid-1850s Ostrovsky became more aligned with the circle of Nekrasov's journal *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), both personally and professionally; social commentary became more pronounced in his oeuvre and became the staple of his work. Several of Ostrovsky's plays were later published in the journal.[54] Two well-known articles by Nikolai Dobrolyubov, "The Kingdom of Darkness" ("Temnoe tsarstvo," inspired by the first edition of Ostrovsky's plays in 1859) and "A Ray of Light in the Kingdom of Darkness"

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[51] The play became famous despite its being banned from the stage for a decade and was first produced in the capitals only in 1861. The play contained such harsh critique of the merchant estate and the judicial system in general that Ostrovsky was put under police surveillence until 1856. See L. M. Lotman, "Ostrovskii, Aleksandr Nikolaevich," in *Russkie pisateli, 1800-1917: Biograficheskii slovar'*, ed. P. A. Nikolaev, vol. 4 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1999), 466.

[52] Ostrovsky often used proverbs for the titles of his comedies, which presents a difficulty in translation. The title of this particular play has also been translated as *Don't Bite Off More Than You Can Chew* and *Paddle Your Own Canoe*; however, the translation *Keep to Your Own Sledge* is more common in Ostrovsky scholarship.

[53] A. I. Reviakin, ed., *A. N. Ostrovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), 49.

[54] For a comprehensive list, see Lotman, "Ostrovskii."

("Luch sveta v temnom tsarstve," dedicated to *The Storm* [*Groza,* 1859]), strengthened the playwright's reputation as an author of topical plays exposing vices society. Ostrovsky acquired a reputation as the leading progressive playwright of the time and the father of Russian Realist drama. After Nekrasov's *Contemporary* was closed, Ostrovsky collaborated with another journal under Nekrasov's editorship, *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*), where he published a new play almost every year from 1868-1884.[55]

In light of Ostrovsky's reputation, *The Snow Maiden* came as a complete surprise to his audience, readers and critics alike. Indeed, after providing the Russian stage with topical comedies and dramas on contemporary subjects, this time the playwright produced a fairy tale in verse, which contained no reference to contemporary issues whatsoever. The following synopsis and discussion of some formal qualities of the play should illustrate this point.

The Snow Maiden takes place "in the country of the *Berendeyans*, in pre-historic times."[56] The play shows various customs of the Berendeyans, a tribe living in harmony with one another and with their tsar. At the center of the plot is the story of the Snow Maiden, a fifteen-year-old daughter of the Bonny Spring ("Vesna-Krasna") and Grandfather Frost ("Ded Moroz"), the latter personifying winter. Yarilo, Slavic god of the sun, is angry with the Spring for her affair with Grandfather Frost, and he resolves to destroy the Snow Maiden, as well as to punish the land of the Berendeyans by making the climate colder and colder every year for as long as the Snow Maiden lives in their land. However, the Snow

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[55] In Nekrasov's lifetime, Ostrovsky published a total of twenty-two original plays and a translation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in Nekrasov's two journals—his *Contemporary* and later his *Notes of the Fatherland* of 1868-1877. See Nikolai Nekrasov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v piatnadtsati tomakh*, vol. 14 bk. 2 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), 333. However, Ostrovsky's methodic work and unflagging productivity prompted some caustic comments in the press (Lotman, "Ostrovskii," 469).
[56] Ostrovskii, VII, 365.

Maiden can be destroyed only if she falls in love—and she does not have a human heart. Her parents decide that she will be safest if she diguises herself as a human being and is adopted by the poorest family in the village. However, the disguise does not work out very well: due to the Snow Maiden's exceptional beauty, all the young men in the village fall in love with her and quarrel with their fiancées. A full-blown scandal arises between Mizgir, a rich Berendeyan from the capital, and his fiancée Kupava, daughter of the richest man in the village. During their engagement ceremony, Mizgir notices the Snow Maiden, instantly falls in love with her cold beauty, and dumps Kupava on the spot, accusing her of being too passionate and frivolous. Distraught, Kupava brings the matter to the court of Tsar Berendei, who realizes that the Snow Maiden's coldness might be the reason for the colder summers in his land, and after some consideration, Mizgir and a shepherd, Lel, are tasked with making the Snow Maiden fall in love with one of them. A series of complicated events ensue, which involve the Snow Maiden, Kupava, Mizgir, and Lel, who first falls in love with the Snow Maiden but ultimately prefers Kupava for her human warmth and passion. The Snow Maiden realizes that her coldness sets her apart from the people; at her request, her mother grants her "heart's warmth." As a result, the Snow Maiden falls in love with Mizgir—the first person she sees after her transformation. The Snow Maiden proclaims her feelings towards him in front of the whole community and instantly melts away under the rays of the rising sun. Like a character from an Ancient Greek drama, Mizgir condemns fate and the merciless gods and throws himself from a cliff. Meanwhile, the Berendeyans realize that the Snow Maiden's death marks the end of Yarilo's anger at their land, and they engage in the festive celebration of Yarilo.

Aside from the plot, the play is unusual in a few other respects. The play draws significantly on a variety of folk sources—fairy tales and songs, customs and rituals—which was not a common feature on the Russian dramatic stage at the time. The genre of the play is a fairy tale—Ostrovsky labeled it as "a spring fairy tale," and it features fantastic characters and portrays magical transformations. However, the meter in which Ostrovsky wrote it suggests a connection with the genre of historical dramas. The prevailing meter in *The Snow Maiden* is unrhymed iambic pentameter, with many enjambments; this was the tradition of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* and his "little tragedies," which Ostrovsky took on in his historical plays of the 1860s.[57] In addition to this principal meter, all songs and some monologues are written in meters imitating folk verse.

How could Ostrovsky, the ultimate realist, even conceive of such a play? The story of *The Snow Maiden*'s creation is quite remarkable. Unusual for Ostrovsky's career, his "spring fairy tale" was a commissioned play. In 1873, while the Maly Drama Theater was under renovation, the Directorate of Imperial Theaters wanted to find plays that would engage all three troupes of actors—the drama actors from the Maly, as well as the ensembles of ballet dancers and opera singers from the Bolshoi Theater. The Directorate commissioned a fairy-tale play from Ostrovsky that would match the above-mentioned criteria; the incidental

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[57] In Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, scenes written in iambic pentameter are interspersed with some scenes written in prose. Ostrovsky employed iambic pentameter in his historical dramas *Kozma Zakharyich Minin-Sukhoruk*, *The False Dmitry and Vasily Shuysky, Tushino,* and *Vasilisa Melentyeva;* he also used it in his comedies *The Voevoda* and *The Comic of the Seventeenth Century.* Even though these latter two plays are not technically historical dramas, their action takes place in the seventeenth century and they were based on Ostrovsky's study of history; thus, they could have been perceived by the playright as historical. Aleksei Tolstoy's trilogy (*Death of Ivan the Terrible*, *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*, and *Tsar Boris*) is also written in this meter, as well as Lev Mei's historical dramas *The Tsar's Bride* and *The Maid of Pskov*. According to Mikhail Gasparov, all historical dramas of this period are composed in iambic pentameter. See M. L. Gasparov, *Ocherk istorii russkogo stikha* (Moscow: Fortuna Limited, 2000), 173-174. The meter and its association with the genre of the historical drama could be one of the reasons why Ivan Goncharov put *The Snow Maiden* in the same category as Ostrovsky's historical dramas. See Ivan Goncharov, "Materialy, zagotovliaemye dlia kriticheskoi stat'i ob Ostrovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), 170-182.

music was commissioned from Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who had previously written an opera based on Ostrovsky's play *Voevoda*.[58] The choice of the subject was the playwright's, and, in all probability, he already either had some materials, or a plan for a play about the Snow Maiden.[59] The play came together very quickly: all of the writing, music composition, stage and costume design, and rehearsals were accomplished in just two months. The play was commissioned in early March; by March 9 Ostrovsky had already completed the first act, and the entire work was completed either on March 31 or April 4. On April 11, the play was already in St. Petersburg awaiting approval by the Directorate and the censor, and the first performance of the fairy tale took place on May 11, 1873, though Ostrovsky continued to make minor changes to the play throughout the spring and the summer.[60]

Pyotr Tchaikovsky must have written his music for the play even faster, taking only three weeks to do it. There are twenty-three musical numbers in the play; while some of the pieces are orchestral (such as the "Introduction"; the "Dance of the Skomorokhs" – often called the "Dance of the Tumblers"; and music accompanying the scene with the Snow Maiden's ghost in the woods), others are songs set to Ostrovsky's text (e.g., three of Lel's

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[58] On the relationship and correspondence between Ostrovsky and Tchaikovsky, see S. Popov, "A. N. Ostrovskii i P. I. Chaikovskii," in *A. N. Ostrovskii i russkie kompozitory. Pis'ma*, eds. E. M. Kolosova and V. Filippov (Moscow and Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1937), 141-171.

[59] Shakh-Azizova suggests that Ostrovsky likely started working on the play in early 1873, based on the January-February correspondence between Ostrovsky and his friend N. A. Dubrovsky, who was helping the playwright with collecting materials related to folklore and ethnography. See T. Shakh-Azizova, "Real'nost' i fantaziia ('Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo i ee sud'ba v russkom iskusstve poslednei treti XIX i nachala XX veka)," in *Vzaimosviaz' iskusstv v khudozhestvennom razvitii Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka: Ideinye printsipy. Strukturnye osobennosti* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 220; and *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 88, *A. N Ostrovskii. Novye materialy i issledovaniia*, book 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 313-314. Ostrovsky's *Encyclopedia* also gives early 1873 as the time of the play's conception (I. A. Ovchinina, ed., *A. N. Ostrovskii: Entsiklopediia* (Kostroma: Kostromaizdat, 2012), 406).

[60] Ostrovskii, VII, 588. For a detailed study of the drafts of *The Snow Maiden*, see Kashin, "*Snegurochka*."

songs and a few choral numbers).[61] By all accounts, Tchaikovsky worked enthusiastically on this commission; in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, he later called this music "one of my most beloved offsprings"[62] and reminisced about its composition in the following way: "I really liked Ostrovsky's play, so I wrote the music in three weeks without any effort. It seems to me that in this music, one should be able to feel the happy spring mood which filled me at the time."[63] Tchaikovsky finished his music on March 25, about a week earlier than Ostrovsky finished his play.[64]

The fact that *The Snow Maiden* was written so quickly attests, of course, to the playwright's professional skill. At the same time, the speed at which Ostrovsky composed the folklore-steeped play suggests that he had long had at his fingertips specific folk sources and distinct impressions of these materials in his mind. Indeed, while the scale and the mode of folklore usage in *The Snow Maiden* appear to be new for Ostrovsky's oeuvre, the playwright maintained a keen interest in folklore and peasant and merchant culture throughout his life and incorporated folk songs into many of his plays.[65] Indeed, in the late 1840s, Ostrovsky frequented the famous Pechkin's Coffeehouse ("kofeinia Pechkina"),

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[61] For a full catalogue of the musical numbers, see Alexander Poznansky and Brett Langston, eds., *The Tchaikovsky Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 125-131.

[62] "Одно из любимых моих детищ," P. I. Chaikovskii, *Perepiska s N. F. fon-Mekk, 1876-1890*, vol. 2, *1897-1881* (Moscow: Academia, 1935), 262.

[63] Ibid., 262-263. See also: M. I. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo*, vol. 1 (Moscow and Leipzig: P. Iurgenson, 1900), 404-407; S. Popov, "A. N. Ostrovskii i P. I. Chaikovskii," 153-155. Popov notes that the fast pace of work forced Tchaikovsky to reuse musical material from his earlier opera *Undine*, which was rejected by the Directorate in 1870 and never staged (ibid., 153).

[64] See Tchaikovsky's letter to P. A. Kavelin, an official from the Directorate, asking to issue him the 350 rubles promised for the commission (ibid., 163). Tchaikovsky sent the orchestral score to the theater on March 26, even though he still had to adjust the music to the words, which he yet had to receive from Ostrovsky. Popov suggests that in the case of some songs, Tchaikovsky and Ostrovsky agreed on the meter and length, but Tchaikovsky received the text from Ostrovsky later than he wrote the music. Such haste can be explained by the need for orchestral rehearsals (ibid., 164-165).

[65] For a comprehensive list of folk songs used by Ostrovsky in his major plays, see G. Siniukhaev, "Ostrovskii i narodnaia pesnia," *Izvestiia otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk* 28 (1923): 9-70.

where he met such proponents and avid performers of folk song as Terty Filippov and Apollon Grigoriev. In the early 1850s, the three of them formed the core of the so-called "young editorial board" of *The Muscovite*; the group included, among others, ethnographers and collectors of folk songs Mikhail Stakhovich and Pavel Yakushkin. A true "folk song cult" existed among the members of the group: they sought out good performers of folk songs everywhere, including in low-class taverns, and organized singing (and drinking) parties; allegedly, Ostrovsky himself was a very good singer.[66] Folk songs were part of Ostrovsky's family life as well: his common-law wife, Agafia Ivanovna, knew a lot of folk songs and masterfully sang them.[67] Possibilities to observe peasant life and folklore were ample every summer in Shchelykovo, the Ostrovskys' estate in the Kostroma province. Ostrovsky's father bought the estate in 1847, and since 1867, when Ostrovsky and his brother bought the estate from their stepmother, Ostrovsky's family spent every summer there, inviting numerous guests; a number of Ostrovsky's notes about collecting folklore come from his time in Shchelykovo.[68]

A very important point in Ostrovsky's career, as well as in his engagement with folklore, was his travels in the Upper Volga region in April–August 1856, when he was part of the so-called "literary expedition," or "expedition of men of letters" ("literaturnaia

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[66] The most well-documented account of the group's activities can be found in Robert Wittaker, "The Ostrovskii-Grigor'ev Circle Alias the 'Young Editors' of the *Moskvitianin*," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 385-412; Wittaker cites a host of memoirs and studies. See also Vladimir Lakshin, *A. N. Ostrovskii* (Moscow: Geleos, 2004), 91-93, 206-209; N. P. Barsukov, *Zhizn' i trudy M. P. Pogodina*, vol. 11 (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 58-73; A. I. Reviakin, ed., *A. N. Ostrovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966), 69-72 (memoirs by S. V. Maksimov).

[67] Reviakin, *Ostrovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 88 (memoirs by S. V. Maksimov); Lakshin, *A. N. Ostrovskii,* 119.

[68] On Ostrovsky's life and activities in Shchelykovo see: A. I. Reviakin, *A. N. Ostrovskii v Shchelykove* (Kostroma: Kostromskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1957); V. Maslikh, "A. N. Ostrovskii v Shchelykove," *Zveni'a: Sborniki materialov i dokumentov po istorii literatury, iskusstva i obshchestvennoi mysli XIX veka* 8 (1950): 359-396. In the collection of memoirs edited by Reviakin, there is a section containing recollections by Shchelykovo peasants, which describe Ostrovsky coming to peasants' festivities in Yarilina meadow and writing down folk songs in a special notebook (Reviakin, *Ostrovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 499).

ekspeditsiia") organized by the Sea Ministry.[69] While Ostrovsky spent most of his time gathering information about fishing and other trades in the region, he also collected folk songs together with the composer Konstantin Vilboa.[70] One of the results of the expedition was Ostrovsky's plan to write a series of plays, which never came to fruition, entitled *Nights on the Volga River* (his famous drama *The Storm* is usually considered the only part of this plan that was completed). During the expedition, Ostrovsky also collected a lot of materials for his *Dictionary of the Russian Folk Language* (*Slovar' russkogo narodnogo iazyka*), which he continued working on throughout his life.[71]

Ostrovsky's interest in folklore manifests itself in an ample use of folk songs, superstitions, customs, and rituals in a number of his plays.[72] Most often, however, folklore appears as a way to convey the mores of the social milieu that Ostrovsky depicted in the plays. To give some examples, *Poverty is No Vice* is permeated with songs and fortunetelling common for *sviatki.*[73] In *The Storm*, singing folk songs with a guitar accompaniment is shown as a quintessential part of the young merchants' culture. *The Voevoda* recreates the

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[69] Other participants of the expedition included S. V. Maksimov, M. L. Mikhailov, A. F. Pisemsky, and A. A. Potekhin.

[70] As a result of this expedition, two collections of songs were published in 1860: *Russkie narodnye pesni, zapisannye pod penie i aranzhirovannye dlia odnogo golosa s akkompanementom fortepiano* and *Sbornik 100 russkikh pesen, zapisannykh s narodnogo napeva i aranzhirovannykh dlia odnogo golosa s akkompanementom fortepiano*. In both collections, Apollon Grigoriev was the editor of the text (see V. Kiselev, "A. N. Ostrovskii i K. P. Vil'boa," in *A. N. Ostrovskii i russkie kompozitory*, eds. Kolosova and Filippov, 44). Composer Ippolitov-Ivanov recalls Ostrovsky telling him about this experience in conversation: if Ostrovsky heard a new song, he would try to learn it by heart to later sing it to Vilboa, so that the latter could write down the music (Reviakin, *Ostrovskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 431).

[71] See Ostrovsky, X, 464-522; 659-662. After Ostrovsky's death, his brother M. N. Ostrovsky donated his collection of 100,000 words to the Academy of Sciences (Lotman, "Ostrovskii," 469). See also: N. S. Gantsovskaia, *Kostromskoe narodnoe slovo* (Kostroma: Redaktsionno-izdatel'skii sektor Kostromskoi oblastnoi dumy, 2003); N. S. Gantsovskaia, "A. N. Ostrovskii i zhivoe narodnoe slovo: leksikograficheskaia deiatel'nost' pisatelia," *Shchelykovskie chteniia: A. N. Ostrovskii i sovremennaia kul'tura* (2000): 29-32; I. P. Pliusnina, "Kostromskaia dialektnaia leksika v 'Materialakh dlia slovaria russkogo narodnogo iazyka' A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Shchelykovskie chteniia: A. N. Ostrovskii i sovremennaia kul'tura* (2000): 33-36.

[72] For an overview, see L. V. Chernykh, "A. N. Ostrovsky," in *Russkaia literatura i fol'klor (Vtoraia polovina XIX veka)*, ed. Gorelov (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982), 369-416.

[73] In the Russian Orthodox tradition, *sviatki* are the days between Christmas and the Baptism of Jesus.

atmosphere of a seventeenth-century provincial city on the Volga by incorporating songs, superstitions, and stories about robbers.[74]

Creative Influences and Sources of *The Snow Maiden*

In *The Snow Maiden*, folkloric motifs are woven into the plot of Ostrovsky's own creation. At the basis of the play lie a number of folklore sources, both published and originating from Ostrovsky's own folklore-collecting activities, as well as conversations and correspondence with friends interested in folklore (E. E. Driansky, N. A. Dubrovsky, I. E Zabelin). Literary influences are also present, and some folkloric motifs could have been known to Ostrovsky from their previous use in literary sources. Most discussions of Ostrovsky's sources are tentative and based on the analysis of his text; in rare instances, one can identify a source with more certainty, based on Ostrovsky's own notes and drafts. What follows is a summary of potential sources, both folk and literary, of various elements in the play, which can be suggested with varying levels of certainty.

The title of the play suggests that one should look for the basis of the play's plot in folk fairy tales about the Snow Maiden.[75] In fact, by 1873, there were a few publications of

[74] Studies on Ostrovsky's use of folklore are numerous, and it would be impossible to list them all here. In fact, almost any book-length study on Ostrovsky touches upon this subject. Among studies more specifically dealing with the question of folklore, one should mention the chapter on Ostrovsky in *Russkaia literatura i fol'klor*, as well as the following articles and books: V. I. Chernyshev, "Russkaia pesnia u Ostrovskogo," in *Izvestiia otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti AN SSSR* 2, no. 1 (1929): 294-319; A. F. Lukonin, "Pesnia, ee istochniki i znacheniie v tvorchestve A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Uchenye zapiski Kuibyshevskogo ped. in-ta* 19 (1958): 147-192; A. F. Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie u A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Uchenye zapiski Syzranskogo gos. pedag. in-ta. Kafedra rus. iazyka i lit-ry* 1 (1956): 67-98; A. I. Orlov, *A. N. Ostrovskii i fol'klor Ivanovskoi oblasti* (Ivanovo, 1948); A. I. Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo," *Uchenye zapiski Ivanovskogo gos. ped. instituta* 1, no. 2 (Ivanovo, 1941): 77-100.

[75] See discussions of the fairy-tale sources of the play in: F. D. Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki Ostrovskogo," *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* (May 1917): 47-66; Kashin, "*Snegurochka*"; Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie"; Shakh-Azizova, "Real'nost' i fantaziia." Kulish touches upon the question of sources very tangentially, concentrating instead on the question of how Ostrovsky artistically reworked the fairy tale. See

different versions of the tale about a girl made out of snow, or a girl named "Snegurochka" (also, "Snegurka" or "Snegurushka"). There were also some adaptations of this folk tale by Russian writers. We do not know with certainty which ones of them Ostrovsky knew.

Alexander Afanasyev included two tales about the Snow Maiden in his famous collection of Russian fairy tales, which was first published between 1855 and 1863 and reprinted many times since. In the tale entitled "Snegurushka and the Fox," a girl named "Snegurushka" lives with her grandparents; her name notwithstanding, there is no indication of her birth out of snow. One day Snegurushka gets lost in the forest, and a fox helps her find her way back to the village; the fox asks for a chicken as remuneration, but an old couple tricks her and gives her two sacks—one with a chicken, and another with a dog, and the dog chases the fox away. Snegurushka neither melts nor dies in the end; in fact, the tale ends happily for the heroine.[76] Vladimir Dahl also published a literary adaptation of this fairy tale.[77] Ostrovsky's rendering of the Snow Maiden tale, however, contains no remnants of this iteration.

Another tale from Afanasyev's collection features an old, childless couple. One day, the old man makes a snowball and puts it on the stove, under a fur coat, which results in the birth of a girl named Snezhevinochka ("Little Snow-Flake"). In the summer, she goes to the forest to pick berries with her girlfriends. She picks more berries than the others, and

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Zh. V. Kulish, "*Snegurochka* A. N. Ostrovskogo i narodnaia skazka," In *Russkii fol'klor: Materialy i issledovaniia*, no. 7 (1962): 106-114.

[76] Aleksandr Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki A. N. Afanas'eva: v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1984): 45. Interestingly, even though there is nothing in this tale that is reminiscent of Ostrovsky's play, the commentators to the volume note that "the folk tale about the Snow Maiden served as one of the creative sources of A. N. Ostrovsky's play *The Snow Maiden*" (ibid., 445). The note seems to have more relation to the versions of the tale that they list in the commentary than to the actual text of this tale.

[77] Vladimir Dal', "Devochka Snegurochka, Skazka," in Vladimir Dal' and Aleksandr Pushkin, *Chudesnyi larets: Skazki, zagadki, poslovitsy* (Moscow, 1994): 8-11. Neither the original publication, nor the date of it turned out to be possible to find; since Dahl died in 1872, his fairy tale was certainly written before Ostrovsky's *The Snow Maiden,* even if it is not possible to know whether Ostrovsky was familiar with it.

her girlfriends kill her out of jealousy. After her death, a reed grows at her grave; the reed sings of her fate; someone brings the reed to the old couple, they break the reed and Snezhevinochka appears again.[78] Here, the motif of the Snow Maiden being somehow "better" than the other girls and the motif of jealousy echo in Ostrovsky's play, but otherwise the plot is very different from Ostrovsky's.

One more version of a Snow Maiden story is given by Ivan Khudiakov in his collection, published in 1861–1862; this version is similar to Afanasyev's first version but contains a few more details. In the fairy tale entitled "Snegurushka" and collected in the Nizhny Novgorod province, a girl is born out of snow; in the summer she goes to the woods with her girlfriends; Baba-Yaga catches her, and the girl is supposed to play with Baba-Yaga's little son. In the end of the fairy tale, she is saved from Baba-Yaga by a bull.[79] It appears that Ostrovsky's play has no similarities with this tale.

It is the tale "Snegurka: A Russian Fairy Tale," first published by Mikhail Maksimovich and later republished by Afanasyev, that seems to be the closest to Ostrovsky's. Maksimovich published this tale in his almanac *The Kievan* (*Kievlianin*) in 1840,[80] and in fact, it is the earliest known publication of a fairy tale about "Snegurochka." Maksimovich later reprinted this tale, with minor changes, in the small collection of tales,

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[78] Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, vol. 2, 222.
[79] Ivan Khudiakov, *Velikorusskie skazki v zapisiakh I. A. Khudiakova* (Moscow and Leningrad: Nauka, 1964), 193-194.
[80] Mikhail Maksimovich, "Snegurka: Russkaia skazka," in *Kievlianin*, book 1 (Kiev, 1840), 71-78. Maksimovich was a Russian and Ukrainian (or, "Little Russian") ethnographer, poet, botanist, and man of letters; he was close to such figures as Gogol, Pushkin, and Pogodin. He was the first rector of the newly established Saint Vladimir University in Kyiv (now, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv) in the 1830s. He published three volumes of his almanac *Kievan* in 1840, 1841, and 1850; the almanac contained historical studies (especially of Kyiv and Ukraine) and works of Ukrainian authors. See a short biography of Maksimovich in: P. V. Mikhed, "Maksimovich Mikhail Aleksandrovich," in *Russkie pisateli*, 488-491.

Three Folk Tales and One Anecdote (*Tri skazki i odna pobasenka*).[81] A slightly shortened version of Maksimovich's fairy tale appears in the second volume of Afanasyev's monumental three-volume study, *The Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs* (*Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu*, 1865-1869).[82] The story goes as follows:

Once upon a time, there lived a peasant Ivan and his wife Marya. To their deep chagrin, they were childless. Once, in wintertime, they saw children playing in the snow and making a snowman. They decided to go play in the snow, too, and make a daughter[83] for themselves. To their surprise, the snow girl came alive! She grew into a young girl very quickly, and by the end of winter she was already thirteen years old. She was nice, sweet, and hardworking; she told tales and sang in a very sweet voice. Her appearance was somewhat unusual: she did not have any trace of color in her cheeks, her skin was very white; but other than that, she was very beautiful. When the spring came, the Snow Maiden became very sad and constantly hid from the sun in the shade. Once, on the Eve of Ivan Kupala (or Saint John's Eve), her girlfriends decided to go to the forest and perform the usual Ivan Kupala rites, and they took the Snow Maiden with them. They all gathered flowers, made garlands, and sang songs. In the evening they made a bonfire and started jumping over it, in accordance with the tradition observed on the Eve of Ivan Kupala. When it was the Snow Maiden's turn to jump, she jumped, but immediately melted away, turned into a cloud of steam, and flew to the skies.

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[81] M. A. Maksimovich, *Tri skazki i odna pobasenka, pereskazannye Mikhailom Maksimovichem*, 3rd edition (Moscow, 1867), 21-31. This book was first published in Kyiv in 1845, and later reprinted in Moscow in 1859 and 1867.

[82] Aleksandr Afanas'ev, *Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu,* vol. 2 (Moscow: Indrik, 1994), 639-641. In a footnote to this tale in his *Poetic Outlook* (ibid., 639), Afanasyev cites both publications by Maksimovich as his source, as well as a fairy tale published in Afanasyev's own collection of tales (it proved impossible to find out which one, since Afanasyev's original publication of fairy tales is a rare edition).

[83] In Maksimovich's text, the Snow Maiden is created as a daughter ("ditia") of the old couple, but later she calls Marya "grandma."

This tale became the "classic" version of the Snow Maiden fairy tale (popularized, no doubt, by Ostrovsky's play); however, a peculiar fact about it is that we do not even have the actual folk source for this particular tale. With its first publication in *The Kievan*, Maksimovich includes the following note (which is absent from later publications): "*The Snow Maiden* is an authentic work of Northern-Russian folk imagination. I heard this fairy tale about her in Moscow, and I retold it to my readers without adding anything to its content, and preserved many of the original's expressions, insofar as I could remember them."[84] The mention of Moscow suggests that Maksimovich did not record the tale from a peasant or person of a lower class, but most probably heard the tale from one of his folklore-minded friends (his circle in 1820s-1830s included Mikhail Pogodin, Ivan Kireevsky, and Stepan Shevyryov, among others).[85] Thus, the source of the tale that became the "canonical" version of the Snow Maiden fairy tale is obscure.

It has become commonplace to cite Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook* as Ostrovsky's source of the Snow Maiden fairy tale; however, Ostrovsky easily could have taken it from one of Maksimovich's publications as well. It is also likely that Ostrovsky was familiar with Grigory Danilevsky's literary adaptation of this tale, published in 1860 in his three-volume collection, *From Ukraine: Fairy tales and Superstitions* (*Iz Ukrainy: Skazki i pover'ia*).[86] In the introduction, Danilevsky presents his publication as a collection of "Ukrainian tales" and claims that he collected them himself.[87] However, his "Snegurka" is written in verse—in

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[84] Maksimovich, "Snegurka: Russkaia skazka," 71.
[85] See Mikhed, "Maksimovich," 488-489.
[86] Grigorii Danilevskii, "Snegurka," in *Iz Ukrainy: Skazki i pover'ia*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1860), 1-5. Danilevsky was a writer mostly of short stories and historical novels; according to *Ostrovsky Encyclopedia*, he was an admirer of Ostrovsky's works (even though, as will be shown later, he had a very negative opinion of Ostrovsky's *The Snow Maiden*). They met in December 1850, and a few letters from their correspondence are in existence (Ovchinina, *A. N. Ostrovskii: Entsiklopediia*, 132).
[87] Danilevskii, *Iz Ukrainy*, vol. 1, i-vi.

unrhymed trochaic pentameter (so it is clearly an artistic stylization of a folk source), and its plot repeats Maksimovich's tale almost exactly, including, for example, a passer-by who blesses the old couple when they are making the snowman (which is omitted from Afanasyev's version).[88] While keeping a Christian motif of blessing, Danilevsky strips the ending of any elements of pagan folk belief, such as the rituals of Ivan Kupala day. In his rendition, the Snow Maiden (who by the spring turns into a beautiful young woman and an object of desire of the village men) melts rather undramatically while carrying buckets of water home.[89] Even though its ending differs from Ostrovsky's, Danilevsky's poem pays considerably more attention to the Snow Maiden's physical beauty than any other version of the story before Ostrovsky. Ultimately, both Maksimovich's tale and Danilevsky's poem—versions of the tale which have hitherto been overlooked in textual analyzes of Ostrovsky's work—should be added to the list of potential sources for the play.[90]

While folk fairy tales are usually considered the main source of the image of the Snow Maiden, significant elements of the heroine's story are missing from folk sources. In contrast to Ostrovsky's Snow Maiden, the folk Snow Maiden perishes by jumping over the

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[88] If Danilevsky indeed took Maksimovich's tale as his basis, which is highly likely, he obviously did not use the version published in *The Kievan*, since otherwise he would have known that Maksimovich characterized this tale as "Northern Russian" and wrote it down in Moscow. If Danilevsky knew the preface to Maksimovich's original publication, then he consciously relabeled Maksimovich's "Northern Russian" tale as "Ukranian."

[89] It is worth noting that Vasily Perov's 1879 painting "The Melting Snow Maiden," which was created after the appearance of Ostrovsky's play both on stage and in print, appears to have been inspired by Danilevsky's version of the story in that it depicts the Snow Maiden melting by a well, with empty buckets next to her and the old couple looking at her with terror and concern. This picture vividly shows that Ostrovsky's Snow Maiden plot had not yet become the primary version of the story—as it would be for the artists beginning with Vasnetsov. Shtein, who discusses this painting in his book *Master of Russian Drama*, claims that Perov followed folk tales rather than Ostrovsky; this assertion is incorrect, because the Snow Maiden in the fairy tales never melts when doing domestic chores. See A. L. Shtein, *Master russkoi dramy: Etiudy o tvorchestve Ostrovskogo* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1973), 285.

[90] Kulish mentions Maksimovich, Danilevsky, and Dahl as writers who used the folk fairy tale about the Snow Maiden before Ostrovsky, but she does not discuss the question of Ostrovsky's indebtedness to Maksimovich and Danilevsky (Kulish, "*Snegurochka* A. N. Ostrovskogo i narodnaia skazka," 106-114).

fire; she exhibits no urge to acquire a human heart, no desire to experience love, and no spiritual growth. The central theme of his play—the desire of a supernatural being to become human (or to have a human heart) and her subsequent demise—is Ostrovsky's own creation, and it appears strikingly similar to Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's fairy-tale novella *Undine* (1811), translated into Russian, in verse, by Vasily Zhukovsky and first published in 1837.

Surprisingly, it appears that neither Ostrovsky's contemporaries nor later scholars have noted this similarity. However, Ostrovsky could hardly overlook de la Motte Fouqué-Zhukovsky's story, in which Undine, a water spirit, marries the knight Huldebrand and acquires a human soul, but is later betrayed by her husband, forced to destroy him, and becomes a peaceful brook by his grave. Vasily Zhukovsky's *Undine* was very popular in Russia throughout the nineteenth century. A few composers attempted to write operas on the subject of *Undine*, such as Aleksei Lvov, Alexander Serov, and Pyotr Tchaikovsky (and later Sergei Rakhmaninov and Sergei Prokofiev). Aleksei Lvov's opera was the only one that was completed and performed in 1848 in St. Petersburg.[91] Ostrovsky had a copy of Vladimir Sollogub's libretto to Lvov's opera in his home library.[92] There exists also an interesting musical connection between *Undine* and Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden*. In 1869, Tchaikovsky wrote his opera *Undine* using Vladimir Sollogub's libretto (previously used by Lvov); however, the opera was not accepted by the Directorate of Imperial Theaters, and

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[91] V. A. Zhukovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 4: *Stikhotvornye povesti i skazki* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2009), 489-490. Vladimir Sollogub wrote the libretto for Lvov's opera. For information about Lvov's, Serov's, Tchaikovsky's, Rakhmaninov's, and Prokofiev's respective works on the subject of Undine, see: E. V. Landa, "'Undina' v perevode V. A. Zhukovskogo i russkaia kul'tura," In Friedrich de la Motte Fouque, *Undina* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 511-525.

[92] A. N. Stepanov, ed., *Biblioteka A. N. Ostrovskogo (Opisanie)* (Leningrad: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1963), 126. The copy of the libretto contains marks by someone, possibly Ostrovsky, so it is safe to assume that Ostrovsky was familiar with this libretto.

only three numbers from it were performed in concert. Tchaikovsky burnt the score; however, he reused a few surviving musical numbers in his other works, notably, two of them in his incidental music for *The Snow Maiden*. The orchestral introduction to *Undine* became the introduction to *The Snow Maiden*; Undine's aria from Act 1, "The waterfall is my uncle, the streamlet my brother," with an added orchestral introduction and small changes of the vocal part, became Lel's first song.[93] This musical connection suggests that the composer might have perceived certain similarities between the two main heroines. Tchaikovsky's music thus provides an additional link between Ostrovsky's play and de la Motte Fouqué-Zhukovsky's *Undine*.

Besides the Snow Maiden's story, the second most important element of the play is the locus of the play—the "Berendeyan" land. There is no explicit evidence for why Ostrovsky chose precisely this name for his imaginary ancient tribe; neither in Ostrovsky's own letters and notes, nor in his contemporaries' memoirs can one find an indication or even a hint at where the name comes from. This lack of evidence leaves room for speculation, and scholars have indeed identified a number of sources from which Ostrovsky might have taken this name. The idea that gained most acceptance among scholars is that Ostrovsky heard the name himself sometime during his forays into collecting ethnographic materials. A. I. Orlov suggests that Ostrovsky might have heard about the Berendeevo swamp, located close to Pereslavl-Zalessky, while passing Pereslavl on the way to Shchelykovo in 1849. According to a folk legend, there used to be an ancient

[93] David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: The Early Years, 1840-1874* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 176. Brown also states that "it is not impossible that other movements in *The Snow Maiden* may be appropriations from *Undine*" (ibid., 288).

city of the Berendeyans, ruled by a certain Tsar Berendei, in the place of this swamp.[94] F. D. Batiushkov clearly refers to the same swamp and the same "ancient city of the Berendeyans" in his article, but he argues that Ostrovsky would have heard about it later, when he was collecting ethnographical material during the aforementioned "literary expedition" across the Volga River provinces in the 1850s.[95] The collected ethnographic information, Batiushkov continues, could have been supplemented by Ostrovsky's study of Russian chronicles, where one can find mentions of certain nomadic tribes called "Berendeyans, Turks, or Black Klobuks" ("Berendei, Tiurki ili Chernye Klobuki"),[96] which were of Turkic origin.[97] Batiushkov does stipulate that this idea is only his conjecture and clarifies that, contrary to the data from the chronicles, Ostrovsky chose to present the Berendeyans as a settled Slavic tribe which existed before Christianity came to Rus'. It is

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[94] A. I. Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo," 78.
[95] Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki," 51.
[96] Batiushkov erroneously calls the second tribe "Turks" ("tiurki"), when in fact they are called "Torks" ("torki") in the chronicles, so it really should be: "Berendei, Torki i Chernye Klobuki."
[97] Lukonin also gives a few references to the chronicles (Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie," 75). It is obvious, however, that Ostrovsky's Berendeyans have little to do with the Berendeyans from the chronicles, even though researchers argue that Ostrovsky could have been familiar with this tribe from the chronicles. "Berendei" (along with "torki") are mentioned only once in *The Primary Chronicle*, in the year 6605/1097; however, they are very often mentioned in Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* (*Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*), as a tribe that could be called upon by various Russian princes for help in their internal wars for power, and sometimes as a tribe that attacked princes themselves, in hopes of sizable loot. An analysis of references to the "Berendei" (along with the "Torki" and the "Chernye Klobuki") in the Russian chronicles was undertaken by I. Samchevsky and published in Kalachev's *Russian Archive*: I. Samchevskii, "Torki, Berendei i Chernye Klobuki," in *Arkhiv istoriko-iuridicheskikh svedenii otnosiashchikhsia do Rossii, izdavaemyi N. Kalachevym*, vol. 2, part 1 (Moscow, 1855), otdelenie 3, 83-106. Samchevsky shows that these three tribe names appear in chronicles often between the late tenth century and the early thirteenth century, and they are mentioned as neighbors of Kievan Rus, who in the earlier period sometimes raided Rus, but later were Kievan Rus's allies against the Polovtsians, and participated in the princes' internal wars usually on the side of the Kievan prince. Nikolai Kostomarov briefly talks about the "Chernye Klobuki, Torki, Berendei" in relation to the structure of political power in Kiev in the twenfth century; in Kostomarov's description, these tribes are clearly not Slavic, but they played an important role in supporting or subverting the power of Kievan princes. See N. I. Kostomarov, *Sobranie sochinenii: Istoricheskie monografii i issledovaniia*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1903), 42. Kostomarov's works were first published in 1863-1872, so they could be known to Ostrovsky (a few other works by Kostomarov were in Ostrovsky's library). Ostrovsky and Kostomarov met personally in 1865; Kostomarov was consulting Ostrovsky on some historical details for his historical drama *The False Dmitry and Vasily Shuysky* (Ovchinina, *A. N. Ostrovskii: Entsiklopediia*, 216-217).

interesting that Batiushkov claims that Ostrovsky perceived his Berendeyans as a Slavic tribe—even though nowhere in the play is there an indication of an "ethnic" origin of the Berendeyans.

Through the legend of the Berendeevo swamp, a connection can be established between Ostrovsky's play and a fairy tale by Vasily Zhukovsky. Indeed, "Tsar Berendei" had previously existed in Russian literature—in Zhukovsky's "Fairy Tale about Tsar Berendei, about His Son Ivan-Tsarevich, about the Tricks of Koshchei the Deathless, and about the Wisdom of Marya-Tsarevna, Koshchei's Daughter" ("Skazka o tsare Berendee, o syne ego Ivane-Tsareviche, o khitrostiakh Koshcheia Bessmertnogo i o premudrosti Mar'i-Tsarevny, Koshcheevoi docheri," 1831). Zhukovsky's fairy tale is based on a folk fairy tale recorded by Pushkin in Mikhailovskoe.[98] However, Pushkin's tsar did not have a name; the name "Berendei" in Zhukovsky's tale has been attributed to the same legend about the remnants of an old city on the Berendeevo swamp close to Pereslavl, which presumably Ostrovsky also used.[99] While there are no similarities between the plot and the style of Ostrovsky's play and Zhukovsky's fairy-tale poem, it is plausible that Ostrovsky remembered the name of Zhukovsky's character and deliberately used it in his play.

Yet another source of the word "Berendei" that Ostrovsky could have used is Vladimir Dahl's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* (*Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*), published in 1863-1866. Ostrovsky was well familiar

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[98] V. I. Chernyshev, *Skazki i legendy pushkinskikh mest* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1950), 282.
[99] Zhukovskii, *Polnoe sobranie*, vol. 4, 449-450. Chistov in his study of Russian utopian legends cites a number of recordings of this legend by local ethnographers, as well as studies of the Russian chronicles that mention the tribe of the Berendeyans. Chistov, however, points out that all recordings of the legend are short and only mention a city living in happiness and wealth under the rule of the Tsar Berendei, until something, possibly a war, destroyed the idyllic city. See K. V. Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy XVII-XIX vv*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), 19-20.

with Dahl's dictionary and at one point intended to write an article about it.[100] The following entry appears in the first volume of Dahl's dictionary:

> **Berendeika**, f. 1) A toy, a small trifle, a carved piece, a figurine, a rattle, the handle of a cane, etc. At the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, fifty versts from the village of Berendeevo, they carve certain toys, people and animals, out of wood. Merchants call them *berendeiki*; 2) *Pskov province*. A woven basket, a bast-basket for chaff; 3) *Obsolete*. A shoulder-belt worn over left shoulder, to which one would attach cartridges and shells wrapped in *berendeiki*, or little rolls. 4) *Obsolete*. A special kind of hat.
> **Berendeit'**. *To carve berendeiki*, to engage in trifling activities.
> **Berendeechnik** (m.), **berendeechnitsa** (f.). A person who makes toys.[101]

In this entry, one can see various motifs that might have appealed to Ostrovsky when he chose the name for his fictitious tribe: there is mention of a folk craft associated with an actual village in central Russia called Berendeevo; moreover, the craft is related to making toys, with a special word for people who specialize in making them, and there is a derivative verb that means "to engage in trifling activities." These meanings and associations indeed evoke Ostrovsky's idyllic Berendeyans, with their lighthearted and naïve attitude to life, their funny banter and childish concerns, and their ruler who regards them as his children rather than subjects. There is an additional indication that Dahl's dictionary could be one of Ostrovsky's sources: in a letter from N. A. Dubrovsky from February 1873, in which Dubrovsky suggests a song that could be "suitable for your *Snow Maiden*," Ostrovsky made a sketch of a hat and wrote "Berendeiki shapka" ("a hat of a

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[100] Ostrovsky's unfinished notes to this article are dated 1856. See Ostrovsky, X, 525, 662-663.
[101] "**Берендейка** ж. Бавушка, игрушка, бирюлька, точеная или резная штучка, фигурка, балаболка, набалдашник и пр. В Троицкой Лавре, в 50 верст. от с. Берендеева, режут из дерева известные игрушки, людей, животных; их в торговле зовут *берендейками*. // *Пск*. Плетушка, плетенка, зобница для мякины; // стар. перевязь через левое плечо, к которой привешены были патроны, заряды в *берендейках*, трубочках; // стар. особый род шапок. **Берендеить**, *берендейки строгать*, заниматься пустяками, игрушками. **Берендеечник м. –ница ж.** игрушечник." Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress, 1994), 204.

Berendeyan woman"); this drawing echoes the entry in Dahl's dictionary about "berendeika" being a kind of hat.[102]

Not only images of the Snow Maiden and the "Berendeyan land" can be traced back to certain sources. The character of Grandfather Frost, too, comes from a mixed "background" of both folklore and literature. The image of Frost personified as an old man existed in Eastern Slavic calendar rituals and fairy tales.[103] N. S. Tugarina mentions the folk tales "Morozko" and "Two Frosts" ("Dva Moroza") and their transpositions in the literary tradition: Vladimir Odoevsky's fairy tale "Frost Ivanovich" ("Moroz Ivanovich") from his 1841 collection *Grandfather Irinei's Fairy Tales* (*Skazki dedushki Irineia*) and Nikolai Nekrasov's narrative poem *Grandfather Frost, the Red Nose* (*Moroz, Krasnyi Nos*, 1863).[104] The character of the forest sprite ("leshii") is yet another popular creature from the mythology of the Eastern Slavs.[105] A. F. Lukonin cites a few instances of the forest sprite in Afanasyev's collection of fairy tales, but argues that Ostrovsky did not need to find this image in a printed source—the everyday life of peasants and other lower classes, with which Ostrovsky was familiar, could easily provide him with this image.[106]

Names for such characters as Bobyl, Kupava, Mizgir, and possibly Lel also could have come from Vladimir Dahl's *Dictionary.*[107] Nikolai Kashin suggests that Ostrovsky might have borrowed the name of Kupava from Rybnikov's collection of folk songs (*Pesni, sobrannye Rybnikovym*, 1862), and that he undoubtedly borrowed the name of Bermyata

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[102] *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 88, bk. 1, 314.
[103] L. N. Vinogradova, "Moroz," in *Slavianskie drevnosti: Etnolingvisticheskii slovar'*, ed. N. I. Tolstoi, vol. 3 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2004), 302-303; Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, vol. 1, 113-117.
[104] N. S. Tugarina, "Proobrazy personazhei *Snegurochki* A. N. Ostrovskogo," in Snegurochka *v kontekste dramaturgii A. N. Ostrovskogo. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kostroma, 2001), 15.
[105] E. E. Levkievskaia, "Leshii," in *Slavianskie drevnosti*, vol. 3, 104-109.
[106] Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie," 89-90.
[107] Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, vol. 1, 249; vol. 2, 564, 636, 847.

from the same collection, from *bylina* about Churila Plenkovich.[108] Mizgir also could have come from a folk fairy tale about a spider.[109] The words "mizgir" and "bobyl" can be found in the dialects of Kostroma and Ivanovo provinces (see below). The character of Elena the Beautiful ("Elena Prekrasnaya") also came from Russian fairy tales; for example, Kashin mentions a version published in Afanasyev's collection.[110] The character Lel, however, does not have any matches in folklore. Lel as a "Slavic god of love" was an invention of eighteenth-century writers, later used in Russian Romantic poetry, notably, in a number of Pushkin's poems.[111]

Ostrovsky's other folk sources for *The Snow Maiden* were discussed in detail by many scholars[112] as well as summarized by the commentators to the seventh volume of Ostrovsky's *Complete Works.*[113] They merit a quick mention here, to attest to the sheer vastness and complexity of the use of folk motifs in *The Snow Maiden*. In particular,

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[108] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 84. Kashin states that the name of Kupava appears not in the text of songs, but in Bessonov's notes to them, and that this is why Ostrovsky does not find Kupava's name right away—in the original plan for *The Snow Maiden*, the name of the betrayed bride is "Milega."
[109] Tugarina, "Proobrazy personazhei," 15; Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, vol. 1, 106-107.
[110] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 76; Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, vol. 2, 368-371. See also Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie," 76. Some reviewers of the play in the 1870s claimed that the character of Elena the Beautiful came from Offenbach's operetta *La belle Hélène* (*Prekrasnaia Elena*), based on the legendary events of the Trojan War (see below).
[111] E. E. Levkievskskaia lists Lel as an example of "study room mythology" ("kabinetnaia mifologiia")—one of Slavic mythological characters that never existed in folk beliefs but were a result of eighteenth-century attempts to imagine a unified Slavic pantheon. See E. E. Levkievskaia, "Nizshaia mifologiia slavian," In *Ocherki istorii kul'tury slavian*, ed. V. K. Volkov et al. (Moscow: Indrik, 1996), 175. See also: Iu. M. Lotman, *Pushkin* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 1995), 655 (a commentary on Pushkin's mention of the deity "Lel" in *Eugene Onegin*), and L. N. Vinogradova, *Narodnaia demonologiia i mifo-ritual'naia traditsiia slavian* (Moscow: Indrik, 2000), 7.
[112] See, for example: Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki," 47-66; Nikolai Kashin, "K voprosu ob istochnikakh Snegurochki," in Nikolai Kashin, *Etiudy ob A. N. Ostrovskom* (Moscow: Tipografiia T-va I.N. Kushnerev i K, 1912), 274-278; Kashin, "*Snegurochka*"; Siniukhaev, "Ostrovskii i narodnaia pesnia"; Chernyshev, "Russkaia pesnia u Ostrovskogo"; Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo"; Orlov, *A. N. Ostrovskii i fol'klor*; Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie"; Lukonin, "Pesnia"; Reviakin, *A. N. Ostrovskii v Shchelykove*; Zh. V. Kulish, "Elementy svadebnogo obriada v *Snegurochke* A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Uchenye zapiski Melekesskogo Gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta* 2 (1962): 137-162. See also articles by Lebedev, Tugarina, G. I. Lebedeva, and N. S. Gantsovskaia and I. P. Pliusnina in the collection Snegurochka *v kontekste dramaturgii A. N. Ostrovskogo. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kostroma, 2001).
[113] Ostrovskii, VII, 588-589, 595-597.

Ostrovsky's sources for depicting pagan calendar rituals and wedding ceremonies, including songs associated with them, merit attention.

Ostrovsky's knowledge of folk material, besides his first-hand experience with the culture of peasants and merchants, came from a number of folklore studies and song collections that were available by the 1870s. Both Batiushkov and Kashin assert that Ostrovsky must have been familiar with the works by Alexander Tereshchenko (*Everyday Life of the Russian People* [*Byt russkogo naroda*], 1848), Ivan Snegiryov (*Russian Folk Holidays and Superstitious Rites* [*Russkie prostonarodnye prazdniki i suevernye obriady*], 1837-1839), Ivan Sakharov (*Russian People's Tales of the Family Life of Their Ancestors* [*Skazaniia russkogo naroda o semeinoi zhizni svoikh predkov*] 1836, and *Russian People's Songs* [*Pesni russkogo naroda*] 1838-1839), and Alexander Afanasyev's collection of fairy tales and *Poetic Outlook*, already mentioned above.[114]

All of the above sources focus on Russian folk belief and rituals. Notably, the action of Ostrovsky's play is framed by two calendar rituals: it opens with Shrovetide (Maslenitsa), or the celebration of the end of winter, and ends with the beginning of summer, marked by the holiday of Yarilo, the sun god.[115] The description of the latter feast in the play can be traced back to a vast number of sources, and it reflects traditions associated with several holidays. One source is the already-mentioned letter from N. A. Dubrovsky from February 20, 1873, where he provides a description of a pagan holiday of the sun (celebrated on Saints Peter and Paul Day on June 29) and copies a song from

[114] Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki," 50; Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 71.
[115] Batiushkov talks about Ostrovsky's depiction of the Shrovetide very briefly in "Genezis Snegurochki" (53); see also Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo," 80-81.

Tereshchenko's collection, which could be "suitable for your [Ostrovsky's] *Snow Maiden.*"[116] As A. I. Orlov shows, the play's presentation of the cult of Yarilo interweaves traditions and songs associated with various spring holidays: "calling of the spring" ("zaklikanie vesny," which falls on the end of March), "Krasnaya Gorka" (the first Sunday after Easter), "Radunitsa" (the second Tuesday after Easter), "Semik" (seventh Thursday after Easter, three days before Pentecost [Troitsa]; Semik is associated with the end of spring and beginning of summer), and the holiday of Yarilo, which was the holiday of the beginning of summer still celebrated in the Kostroma province in Ostrovsky's time.[117]

However, Yury Lebedev points out that according to ethnographers who were contemporaries of Ostrovsky, the meaning of the holiday of Yarilo in Kostroma and the neighboring provinces was different from what it is in the play: on this day, peasants did not "greet" Yarilo, as they do in the play, but "buried" him.[118] Since the tradition of greeting Yarilo was already extinct in the folk rituals of the nineteenth century, Lebedev argues that Ostrovsky must have had an additional source—which, in Lebedev's view, was Melnikov-Pechersky's literary presentation of this pagan feast in his novel *In the Woods* (*V Lesakh*);

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[116] *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 88, bk. 1, 314. Shakh-Azizova lists this description as a possible source for the last scene of the play, where the Berendeyans greet the sun (Shakh-Azizova, "Real'nost' i fantaziia," 220).
[117] Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo." Many of these holidays originated as pagan celebrations related to the agricultural cycle and veneration of dead ancestors, but were later appropriated and reinterpreted by the Orthodox church. See also: Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki," 51, 55-56. Batiushkov notes that "Yarilo's funeral" and "Yarilo's holiday" ("Iarilino gulian'e") were still celebrated in Kostroma in the nineteenth century. For accounts of Ostrovsky's experiences with folk holidays in Shchelykovo, see A. N. Reviakin, *Ostrovskii v Shchelykove*, 163-168; Maslikh, "A. N. Ostrovskii v Shchelykove," 386; and G. I. Orlova, "Shchelykovskaia topografiia kak istochnik mifopoeticheskogo prostranstva *Shegurochki*," in Snegurochka *v kontekste dramaturgii A. N. Ostrovskogo. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kostroma, 2001), 21-25.
[118] Iu. V. Lebedev, "Ob istokakh 'vesennei skazki' A. N. Ostrovskogo *Snegurochka*," in Snegurochka *v kontekste dramaturgii A. N. Ostrovskogo. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kostroma, 2001), 8.

this particular chapter of the novel was published in 1872 in the journal *Russian Messenger* (*Russkii Vestnik*).[119]

Nikolai Kashin finds yet another influence on the depiction of Yarilo feast in an article from the newspaper *Tver Province News* (*Tverskie gubernskie vedomosti*), found in Ostrovsky's papers and undoubtedly collected during the "literary expedition"; the article describes an ancient, but still existing May holiday of "Koftyr'" (a word of unclear etymology), when young people of the village gather in a meadow for circle dances and singing ("khorovod") and sing the song "We were sowing millet" ("A my proso seiali"); the author of the article argues that in ancient times, this was the pagan marriage ritual, with sacrifices to the god Lado.[120]

In addition to calendar rituals, elements of folk wedding traditions have a strong presence in *The Snow Maiden*. For example, Zhanna Kulish analyzes Ostrovsky's incorporation of elements of song-laments ("pesnia-prichet") from collections by Ivan Sakharov and Pyotr Kireevsky, as well as his findings during the "literary expedition" into the scene between Kupava, Mizgir, and Kupava's girlfriends.[121] This whole exchange is reminiscent of the ancient folk perception of marriage as a transaction, reflected in traditions of the "buying of the bride."[122] In addition, some wedding-related folklore influenced parts of the play that were not even related to marriage. Kashin mentions three notebooks with notes on the wedding rituals of Kostroma and Yaroslavl provinces, which were found in Ostrovsky's papers; these notebooks belonged to local ethnographers and

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[119] Ibid., 8-9. See also Iu. V. Lebedev, "*Snegurochka*, 'vesenniaia skazka' A. N. Ostrovskogo (Zhanrovye istoki)," *Zhanr i kompozitsiia literaturnogo proizvedeniia. Mezhvuzovskii sbornik*, no. 1 (Kaliningrad, 1974): 69-70; and Iurii Lebedev, *V seredine veka. Istoriko-literaturnye ocherki* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1988), 307-308.
[120] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 88-89.
[121] Kulish, "Elementy svadebnogo obriada," 138-142.
[122] Orlov, "Obriady v p'esakh Ostrovskogo," 96-97.

were discovered by Ostrovsky during his "literary expedition" in the 1850s. Kashin asserts that entries in two of those notebooks influenced the heralds' summons call ("klich biriuchei").[123]

Ostrovsky's use of folk songs is an especially complicated issue due to the abundance of published sources that Ostrovsky had access to, as well as due to the fact that he used songs that he personally knew, which were often unpublished. When talking about songs, scholars generally discuss his sources tentatively, often listing versions that appear closest to Ostrovsky's text.

Siniukhaev, who published the first systematic study of Ostrovsky's use of folk songs in his plays, argues that Ostrovsky certainly knew collections of songs published by Kirsha Danilov, Mikhail Chulkov, Nikolai Novikov, Ivan Snegiryov, Ivan Sakharov, as well as other songbooks that could be in his father's library. However, Siniukhaev points out that Ostrovsky, as an avid singer of folk songs himself, always preferred songs that he heard performed in real life.[124] In the section of his article that is dedicated to *The Snow Maiden*, Siniukhaev analyzes twenty fragments from the play that have a meter different from that of the rest of the text and appear to be folk imitations,[125] and he identifies phrases and imagery similar to songs published in collections by Ivan Sakharov, Johann Pratsch, Ekaterina Avdeeva, Aleksei Sobolevsky, Pavel Shein,[126] as well as a few more songbooks of

[123] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 86-88.
[124] Siniukhaev, "Ostrovskii i narodnaia pesnia," 11.
[125] For some reason, Siniukhaev omits the monologue of Grandfather Frost from the Prologue.
[126] Ivan Sakharov, *Skazaniia russkogo naroda* (1836); Johann Pratsch (in Russian, Ivan Prach), *Sobranie russkikh narodnykh pesen s ikh golosami* (1790); Ekaterina Avdeeva, *Russkii pesennik* (1848); Aleksei Sobolevskii, *Velikorusskie narodnye pesni* (1895-1902); and Pavel Shein, *Velikoruss v svoikh pesniakh, obriadakh, obychaiakh, verovaniiakh, skazkach, legendakh, i t.p.* (1900). Songs collected by Shein were published in the journal, *Chteniia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rosskiiskikh*, in the late 1860s, and as a separate publication in 1870. Siniukhaev analyzes songs from collections that were published after 1873 because he believes that Ostrovsky could have heard these songs in person, performed by

the late eighteenth century. Ultimately, Siniukhaev concludes that only two of the songs that he analyzes (the *khorovod* songs "We were sowing millet" and "There is a linden tree in the field" ["Ai vo pole lipon'ka"]) are actual folk songs that Ostrovsky took from a known source and used almost verbatim, while the other eighteen "folk" fragments (songs) in the play are stylizations either based on identifiable sources or created in the spirit of folk tradition.[127] Siniukhaev also provides a comparative table of folk materials used in twenty-nine of Ostrovsky's plays; the table clearly shows that the number of folk songs or stylizations in *The Snow Maiden* is far greater than in the rest of Ostrovsky's dramatic oeuvre.[128]

It is worth mentioning that Tchaikovsky also drew upon folk sources for his incidental music. Twelve out of the twenty-three music numbers for *The Snow Maiden* were based on folk songs, with modifications made to the melodies and harmonies. While Ostrovsky's actual sources are not always known, in the case of Tchaikovsky all (or most) of his borrowings have been identified. Tchaikovsky himself disclosed seven of them in his letter to Rimsky-Korsakov from September 7, 1876,[129] and the rest have been identified later by music scholars.[130] The majority of folk songs come from Vasily Prokunin's collection of folk songs, published in 1872 with a piano accompaniment by Tchaikovsky

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peasants or his folklore-minded friends (this applies to the collection by Sobolevsky and to some extent to Shein as well).

[127] Siniukhaev, "Ostrovskii i narodnaia pesnia," 63.

[128] Ibid., 65. In most other plays, the range of folk songs used is between one and three. *Poverty is No Vice* is an exception: it has twenty-three songs, but only three of them are stylizations, while the other twenty are actual folk songs. Only the play *Voevoda*, which contains eight folk songs and five stylizations, approaches *The Snow Maiden* in terms of the amount of creative reworking of the folk material.

[129] In 1876, Rimsky-Korsakov was working on a collection of folk songs, and he wrote to Tchaikovsky asking permission to use folk songs that Tchaikovsky included in his works. Among other things, Rimsky-Korsakov asked which folk songs Tchaikovsky used in his *Snow Maiden*. See K. Iu. Davydova, V. V. Protopopov, and N. V. Tumanina, eds., *Muzykal'noe nasledie Chaikovskogo: Iz istorii ego proizvedenii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1958), 196-198; and P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii. Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Muzyka'noe Izdatel'stvo, 1961), 67-68.

[130] See Poznansky and Langston, *The Tchaikovsky Handbook*, vol. 1, 131; Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 287.

himself; three more come from Tchaikovsky's arrangement of fifty folk songs for a piano duet, two from the old collection by Johann Pratsch first published in 1790, and one from a collection by Konstantin Vilboa (Villebois) and Ostrovsky, published in 1850. Even though the sources are identifiable, the composer himself admitted that he had "somewhat modified" the melodies, and Brown argues that this is an understatement: in fact, Tchaikovsky modified most of the songs considerably so that they "suit the broader function in his work."[131]

The Tale of Igor's Campaign provides yet another source for *The Snow Maiden*. The rhythm and imagery for the song of blind psaltery players was, according to Ostrovsky's own admission, inspired by the old Russian text.[132] Kashin finds yet another scene possibly influenced by *The Tale*: he argues that Kupava's plea "Little Hops Plant" ("Khmelinushka, tychinnaia bylinka") is close to both the Russian folk charms (*zagovory*) and Yaroslavna's lament ("plach Iaroslavny") in *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*.[133]

Some scholarship has examined Ostrovsky's use of dialectal words and folk phraseology. N. S. Gantsovskaia and I. P. Pliusnina provide an overview of Ostrovsky's use of dialectisms from the Kostroma region, connecting the names of his characters ("bobyl," "mizgir") to local dialectal terms for animals, birds, agricultural tools, clothes, and

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[131] Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 287-288. Tumanina points out that in his choice of the source, Tchaikovsky's main criterion was the pure musical qualities of the songs, rather than their genre. Only the two *khorovod* songs ("Proso" and "Ai vo pole lipon'ka") were used in accordance with their genre; in the other cases, the genre of the folk sources does not coincide with the situation in which the song is performed on stage (e.g., the source of the Shrovetide chorus is a lyrical song about "Vanka the key-bearer" ["Van'ka kliuchnik"]; the source for Lel's second song is an epic song "About the Tatar Yoke" ["Pro tatarskii polon"], etc.). See N. Tumanina, *Chaikovskii: Put' k masterstvu: 1840-1877* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1962), 279-280.

[132] In a letter to Tchaikovsky from March 15, 1873, Ostrovsky writes: "I am sending you the song of blind psaltery players. It seems that the rhythm matches the words; I extracted it from a twelfth-century poem, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*. Even though it is commonly thought that this artifact does not have a specific meter, if you read closely, you can hear a particular rhythm—or at least that's how it seems to me" (Ostrovskii, XI, 420). See also: Popov, "A. N. Ostrovskii i P. I. Chaikovskii," 161-162.

[133] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 82-83.

meteorological phenomena. According to Gantsovskaia and Pliusnina, the text of the Prologue is especially saturated with words from Kostroma dialects.[134] Kashin points out that certain phrases in the play could be borrowed from Vladimir Dahl's *Proverbs of the Russian People* (*Poslovitsy russkogo naroda*) and Ivan Zabelin's *The Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (*Domashnii byt russkikh tsarei v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh*).[135]

Thus, folk sources of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* are numerous and varied, as are literary sources that served either as potential intermediaries between Ostrovsky and the folkloric sources or as inspiration in themselves. An additional example of the latter is William Shakerspeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* which, for many critics, cast an inescapable shadow over Ostrovsky's undertaking. Many contemporary reviewers compared the two plays, and a few of them even charged that Ostrovsky had outright imitated the English playwright. This perception of certain critics of the 1870s, as T. Shakh-Azizova notes, is not susprising: even though *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not yet performend on the Russian stage, other plays by Shakespeare were staged by the Maly Theater continuously since the mid-1860s, which prompted a number of imitations of Shakespearean plays, so the critics were prone to see imitations of Shakespeare even where they did not exist.[136]

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[134] N. S. Gantsovskaia and I. P. Pliusnina, "Kostromskaia narodno-razgovornaia leksika v *Snegurochke* A. N. Ostrovskogo," in Snegurochka *v kontekste dramaturgii A. N. Ostrovskogo. Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Kostroma, 2001), 27-32. This article is reprinted in the following volume, together with a few more articles about Ostrovsky's activities collecting dialectical words from Kostroma province for his project of a Russian language dictionary: N. S. Gantsovskaia, *Kostromskoe narodnoe slovo*. See also comparisons of the usage of the words "bobyl" and "mizgir" in the dialects of Viatka and Kostroma provinces in V. G. Dolgushev, "Viatsko-kostromskie leksicheskie paralleli k skazke A. N. Ostrovskogo *Snegurochka* (o leksemakh 'bobyl'' i 'mizgir'')," *Shchelykovskie chteniia* (2008): 196-198.
[135] Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 89-90.
[136] Shakh-Azizova," Real'nost' i fantaziia," 228.

A Midsummer Night's Dream first appeared on stage in Moscow only in the 1880s;[137] however, the play was very familiar to the public thanks to translations by Nikolai Satin and Apollon Grigoriev.[138] It is possible that Ostrovsky had Shakespeare's play in mind when writing his own "spring fairy tale," even though we do not have any documented proof of such an influence. Ostrovsky had a strong interest in Shakespeare; he translated Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and worked on a translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* (unfinished).[139] He was undoubtedly familiar with Grigoriev's translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and he could have read it in the original, as well.[140] Scholars have identified a few parallels between *The Snow Maiden* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the Bonny Spring's garland and the flower "love-in-idleness" (both inspired blind uncontrollable love); the quarrel between the Bonny Spring and Grandfather Frost and the quarrel between Oberon and Titania; Mizgir being brought before the tsar's court because of a marriage-related problem and Hermia being brought before Duke Theseus's court; and finally, the fact that both plays end in a big wedding ceremony which takes place in the forest. Scholars, however, disagree as to whether these are just parallels or direct

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[137] The German theater in Moscow produced it in 1883; more importantly, in 1889 it was staged by the Imperial Theaters in Moscow (on stage at the Bolshoi Theater, but by drama actors); see M. P. Alekseev, ed. *Shekspir i russkaia kul'tura* (Moscow and Leningrad: Nauka, 1965), 684-685.

[138] N. M. Satin translated the play in 1840; it was published by *The Contemporary* in 1851 (under the title *Son v Ivanovu Noch*), and it was later reprined in the *Complete Works* of Shakespeare published by N. Nekrasov and N. Gerbel (ibid., 389, 525). Apollon Grigoriev translated the play in the mid-1850s, and it was published in 1857 and 1860 in different journals (first in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, and then in *Dramaticheskii sbornik,* headed by Grigoriev himself). In 1856 Grigoriev read his translation to Druzhinin, Botkin, and Ostrovsky, to their complete approval (ibid., 491). There were other, less significant translations in 1840s as well. A translation by I. V. Roskovshenko was published in 1841 in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (ibid., 398-399). Alexander Veltman adapted Shakespeare's play into an opera libretto called *Volshebnaia noch (dramaticheskaia fantasia)*; it was published in 1844, but the music, started by Aliabiev, was not finished (ibid., 405-406).

[139] Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* was the first foreign play that Ostrovsky translated in 1850, but it was banned by the censor. In 1865 Ostrovsky published a new translation of the comedy in *The Contemporary* (ibid., 499-500).

[140] Ostrovsky had Satin's and Roskovshenkov's translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in his library, along with Shakespreare's *Complete Works* (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*) in Russian (he had the third edition from 1880, but it is safe to assume that he was familiar with earlier editions as well), as well as collections of Shakespeare's works in English, French, and German; see Stepanov, *Biblioteka Ostrovskogo*, 135, 191-192.

Shakespearean influences.[141] Plot parallels notwithstanding, Shakespeare's fairy-tale comedy in fact may have served as a stronger inspiration in terms of its genre, and a justification for writing something "not serious." In a conversation with Leo Tolstoy, who criticized *The Snow Maiden*, Ostrovsky allegedly defended his work by providing an example of Shakespeare, who wrote fairy-tale plays, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* alongside his "serious" dramas.[142]

At the same time, Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* is not just a fairy tale. Using various folk and literary inspirations, as well as his own imagination, Ostrovsky's play presents a certain mythological space—an ancient land, an idyllic kingdom, where love and admiration of beauty constitute the main forces of life and where the existence of a creature with a cold heart is a matter of state importance. It can be argued that in a certain way, Ostrovsky's undertaking in this play echoes Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs*—of course, with the important distinction that the former is a literary creation, while the latter is a scholarly work. To be sure, Afanasyev's influence on Ostrovsky goes beyond borrowing separate folk subjects or motifs.[143] Afanasyev's goal was to reconstruct a system of Slavic folk belief. He maintained that natural phenomena were personified in folk worldview, and that traces of folk imagination and creativity of the ancient people could

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[141] For example, see discussions of Ostrovsky and Shakespeare in: Batiushkov, "Genezis Snegurochki," 47-66; Kashin, "*Snegurochka*"; Shtein, *Master russkoi dramy*, esp. 269, 278-280; N. I. Ishchuk-Fadeeva, "'Rasskaz liubvi v prekrasneishei iz knig' (*Son v letniuiu noch'* Shekspira i *Snegurochka* Ostrovskogo)," *Shchelykovskie chteniia* (2005): 145-160.

[142] Of course, this is a very indirect indication of Ostrovsky's awareness of the closeness between his and Shakespeare's undertakings. We know about this conversation between Tolstoy and Ostrovsky from Dušan Makovický's *Yasnaya Polyana Notes*, in which Tolstoy reminisces about Ostrovsky in January 1907. See Dushan Makovitskii, *Iasnopolianskie zapiski*, in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 90, bk. 2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 350.

[143] In addition to the Snow Maiden tale, Kashin suggests that Ostrovsky borrowed yet another motif from Afanasyev. In his *Poetic Outlook*, right after the tale of the Snow Maiden summarized above, Afanasyev mentions a Serbian tale about King Troyan, who would always ride his horse at night, lest the day's Sun cause him to melt (Afanas'ev *Poeticheskie vozzreniia*, vol. 2, 641). Kashin argues that Ostrovsky borrowed this motif, since the Snow Maiden is also susceptible to melting by the sun (Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 81).

still be found in folklore, especially in legends and fairy tales. In *The Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs*, fairy tales and other folk genres are woven into a system of Slavic mythology recreated by Afanasyev on the basis of folklore and rituals. When Afanasyev recounts the tale of the Snow Maiden, he sees in it traces of an ancient legend—which presumably had existed in Slavic mythology—about the emergence of cloud fairies from thawing ice and snow. He argues that the folk fantasy turned the natural cycle (a mundane meteorological phenomenon) into an exquisite poetic tale: the snow girl melts and becomes a cloud in the spring, but then in the late fall and winter, she comes back as snow.[144] The idea of reconstructing a holistic system of Slavic folk belief could very well have appealed to Ostrovsky as he depicted an imagined ancient country with a harmonious system of beliefs and customs. In this sense one can argue about a larger impact of Afanasyev's study on Ostrovsky's creation.[145]

Considering the play's fairy-tale plot and folksy subject, other sources of influence are also plausible. While *The Snow Maiden* may appear to be an anomaly in Ostrovsky's dramatic corpus, it was actually not his first exploration of a fairly-tale plot. In 1868, Ostrovsky commenced work on a fairy-tale play *Ivan-Tsarevich*, though he never finished it. The play contains a motley mix of motifs originating from both folk fairy tales and literary sources.[146] Such motifs are realized in characters such as Ivan-Tsarevich, Tsarevna Milolika, Koshchei the Deathless, Baba-Yaga, the Firebird, Tsar Dodon, and Tsar Aggei. The action moves freely between a fairy-tale tsardom, Koshchei's palace, the Bakhchysarai

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[144] Afanas'ev, *Poeticheskie vozzreniia*, vol. 2, 639, 641.
[145] The connection between Afanasyev and Ostrovsky is later indirectly confirmed by Rimsky-Korsakov, who becomes interested in Ostrovsky thanks to the composer's fascination with Afanasyev's work, among other works on Slavic paganism.
[146] Lukonin highlights three main fairy tale motifs in the play and suggests their sources in collections by Afanasyev and Khudiakov. See Lukonin, "Skazka i predanie," 76-77.

palace of Kalin-Girei, India, and "the tsardom of cats" in a mix of prose and verse. In terms of genre, Ostrovsky marked it as a "fairy tale in five acts, sixteen scenes,"[147] and he intended to incorporate ballet and choral numbers. There is evidence that Ostrovsky wrote the play at the behest of the Directorate of Imperial Theaters.[148] From Ostrovsky's correspondence it is clear that the Directorate was interested in giving the play a luxurious production and even opening the 1868-1869 theatrical season with it, both in Moscow and St. Petersburg.[149] In these letters, the play is often called by its genre—either a "féerie" or a "fairy tale"—the Directorate pressured Ostrovsky to "strengthen the fantastical element in the fairy tale."[150] However, the plans for the production did not come through, which apparently did not upset the playright; he never finished the play, and in a letter to the Director of Imperial Theaters Stepan Gedeonov he confided that he considered his work on this play an important exercise: the verses could be used for a different play, and it would be easier for him to write a play of a similar genre in the future.[151]

The Snow Maiden indeed bears similarities with *Ivan-Tsarevich*: in the original plan for the former, Ivan Tsarevich was one of the characters, and he apparently was supposed to be the Snow Maiden's fiancé.[152] Both of these plays clearly demonstrate Ostrovsky's interest in the genre of féerie.[153] While féeries on the Russian stage were typically translations or adaptations of foreign plays, Ostrovsky's plays can be seen as an attempt to

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[147] Ostrovskii, VI, 513.
[148] See Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 69-71.
[149] See commentary in Ostrovskii, VI, 600.
[150] Letter to Ostrovsky from Nazarov, who communicates S. Gedeonov's wishes to Ostrovsky; quoted in Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 70.
[151] Ostrovskii, XI, 279.
[152] The plan is published in Kashin, "*Snegurochka*," 72-73. There was a plan for yet a third play connected to these two—*Skomorokh*, which listed such characters as Berendei and Bermyata (see Ostrovskii, VII, 493-494; commentary on 600-601).
[153] See Kashin; Shakh-Azizova, 229-230; Zh. V. Kulish, "O zamysle *Snegurochki* A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Nauchnye doklady vysshei shkoly: Filologicheskie nauki*, no. 1 (17) (1962): 161-163.

give a new boost to the genre by basing it on Russian folk fairy-tale elements. It is noteworthy that *Ivan-Tsarevich*, with its emphasis on magical transformations, tricks, and quick relocations of characters between various geographical spaces, real and imaginary, is close to standard traditional féerie as it was known in French and later Russian theater.[154] *The Snow Maiden*, however, departs from the féerie model quite a bit, while still drawing on some of its features. It puts greater emphasis on character development, on myth, and on creating a holistic vision of the depicted fantastic space.

Finally, traditions of the musical theater could be an important inspiration for Ostrovsky, especially considering that both of his plays discussed above incorporate dance and singing numbers. Composers of magic operas ("volshebnye opery") had been employing Russian and Slavic folk subjects since the beginning of the century,[155] the most famous examples of such works being, of course, Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Liudmila* (1842) and Alexander Serov's *Rogneda* (1865). No less instructive would it be to look at the ballet theater of the time. The late 1860s and early 1870s was a time when a number of ballets on "Russian" or "Slavic" subjects either appeared on stage or were planned[156] by the Directorate of Imperial Theaters. This was new for ballet of that time, since ballets on

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[154] "Feeriia," in *Teatral'naia entsiklopediia*, ed. P. A. Markov, et al., vol. 5 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1967), 438. See also Iu. A. Dmitriev, *Mikhail Lentovskii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978); Nikolai Popov, "Teatral'nye kudesniki (K stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia K. F. Val'tsa i k stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia M. V. Lentovskogo)," *Teatral'nyi al'manakh* 6 (Moscow, 1947): 328-344.

[155] Frolova-Walker lists Catterino Cavos's *Ilya the Mighty Warrior* (*Il'ia Bogatyr'*, 1806) and *The Firebird* (*Zhar-Ptitsa*, 1823) in addition to Aleksei Verstovsky's "Slavic operas," *Vadim* (1832) and *Askold's Tomb* (*Askol'dova mogila*, 1835), as precursors to Glinka's *Ruslan and Liudmila.* See Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 118.

[156] One such unrealized project was the ballet, or opera-ballet, *Mlada*, based on the fictitious subject from the history of Polabian Slavs. The opera-ballet was originally commissioned to Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Cui, and Borodin in 1869/1870. When that work was not realized, it was offered, already in a ballet form, to Alexander Serov. However, Serov's death in 1871 halted the project right at its beginning stages. See V. Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr vtoroi poloviny deviatnadtsatogo veka* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1963), 35-36. Rimsky-Korsakov returned to this subject in late 1880s.

national themes had not been staged since the early 1830s.[157] In 1864, *The Little Humpbacked Horse* (*Konek-Gorbunok*) had its St. Petersburg premier.[158] The ballet was very loosely based on Pyotr Ershov's fairy tale in verse (written in 1834). The creators were foreigners: Arthur Saint-Léon, a Frenchman, was the choreographer and author of the libretto, and Cesare Pugni, an Italian, wrote the music. The ballet contained numbers inspired by Russian folk dance and music, and the last act (the "grand divertissement") presented on stage a variety of ethnic groups native to Russia. While the ballet was heavily criticized by the press for its "pseudo-Russian" style, it proved to be very successful with the public.[159]

The ballet *Fern, or St. John's Eve* (*Paporotnik, ili noch na Ivana Kupalu*), which was produced in 1867 at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, was the first Russian ballet on a Russian topic, with the music composed by a Russian composer, Iu. G. Gerber, and with choreography by S. P. Sokolov.[160] This ballet inspired yet another heated polemic, especially on the "Russian" theme in ballet.[161] This ballet has even a biographical connection to Ostrovsky: it was conceived at the apartment of Vladimir Petrovich Begichev whose wife, Maria Shilovskaya, put forth the idea of this ballet. According to Karl Valts's memoirs, all discussions of the production of *The Snow Maiden* were also held at Begichev's apartment, and Ostrovsky took part in those discussions.[162]

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[157] The last ballet on the Russian subject, which appeared in 1832, was *Sumbeka, or the Conquest of the Kazan Tsardom* (*Sumbeka, ili Pokorenie Kazanskogo Tsarstva*), see Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 75.
[158] It was brought to Moscow in 1866.
[159] For a discussion of this ballet and its reception, see Krasovskaia, 74-83. See the ballet's libretto and excerpts from memoirs about its first production in Roland John Wiley, ed., *A Century of Russian Ballet: Documents and Accounts, 1810-1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 238-249, 269-275.
[160] For more on this ballet, see Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 138-145.
[161] Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 139.
[162] Karl Val'ts, *Shest'desiat piat' let v teatre* (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), 97. Another interesting connection is a comparison to Wagner: critic V. A. Sollogub called the choreographer S. P. Sokolov "a Wagner of ballet, the

Finally, the "ballet-féerie" *Kashchei* was staged in Moscow in September 1873, with the libretto by Karl Valts and choreography by the Czech choreographer Vaclav Reisinger. This ballet proved to be a complete flop.[163] Interestingly, it appeared on the playbills side by side with Ostrovsky's *The Snow Maiden*; this simultaneity of their appearances could have influenced the perception (and reception) of Ostrovsky's play.

It is likely that *The Snow Maiden* was created with the tradition of such ballets-féeries in mind.[164] In any event, the perceived connection between *The Snow Maiden* and féeries certainly shaped the immediate reception of the play.

The First Production of *The Snow Maiden,* 1873

As already mentioned, the first performance of *The Snow Maiden* took place on May 11, 1873. The cast of actors was quite impressive: Maria Ermolova as the Bonny Spring, Glikeria Fedotova as the Snow Maiden, and Ivan Samarin as Tsar Berendei. The cast also included two actors from the opera troupe of the Bolshoi Theater, for the singing roles of Lel and Grandfather Frost. The role of Lel was performed by Evlalia Kadmina, a famous young mezzo-soprano who was making a meteoric career on the stage of the Bolshoi at that time; in fact, Tchaikovsky wrote the part of Lel taking her voice into account.

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inventor of the ballet of the future." See Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 139. As will be shown below, comparisons between *The Snow Maiden* and Wagner's operas also emerged in the reception of Ostrovsky's play.

[163] Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 186.

[164] Kulish argues that Ostrovsky's turn to the fairy-tale genre in the 1860s and 1870s was related to his concern about theater repertoires during the Shrovetide period, when theaters were flooded with people from the lower classes. While this is a valid proposition, all of the evidence she presents in support of this claim comes from Ostrovsky's later articles (written in the early 1880s) as well as his letters to Anna Mysovskaya, which come from the mid-1880s. See Kulish, "*Snegurochka* A. N. Ostrovskogo i narodnaia skazka"; Kulish, "O zamysle Snegurochki A. N. Ostrovskogo."

Our knowledge about the preparation of the production and the production itself is quite limited.[165] However, what we do know about the production suggests that the play was staged as a féerie. Some of the accounts, to be sure, contradict one another. For example, Ostrovsky wrote in a letter to Fyodor Burdin: "I am staging the play myself, as the master of the entire enterprise; here, they understand very well that it [the play] will do well and will be successful only on this condition."[166] At the same time, it seems that Ostrovsky was mainly concerned with the actors' interpretation of the roles, but not the details of the production itself.[167] It appears that he was not even interested in the latter, leaving it to the Directorate to worry about sets, costumes, and most magic effects. In his memoirs, Karl Valts, who was responsible for the machinery, stage effects, and some stage designs, recalls that Ostrovsky did not give many instructions about the details of the scenery or costumes, and just accepted the models of the sets presented to him. The only aspects to which the playwright paid attention were the costumes of the birds in the Prologue (which were supposed to be—and apparently, were—executed in a realistic manner) and the last scene of the Snow Maiden's melting away, which Ostrovsky discussed

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[165] For a short description of the production, see N. G. Zograf, *Malyi teatr vtoroi poloviny deviatnadtsatogo veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960), 169-171. Zograf, however, mostly concentrates on the acting, and does not provide any information on the sets or costumes.

[166] "Пьесу ставлю я сам, как полный хозяин; здесь очень хорошо понимают, что только при этом условии она пойдет хорошо и будет иметь успех," Ostrovskii, XI, 424.

[167] To be sure, the idea of unity between all elements of the production—the acting, the costumes, the set designs, the *mise-en-scènes*, the music, and others—did not yet exist in the 1870s. Costumes and sets were often taken from other productions and reused; if new costumes and sets were created, they often belonged to several different artists and were not informed by research of the concrete stylistic features representative of a historical epoch or milieu. See a discussion of the staging principles in Russian theater of the time in Laurence Senelick, ed., *National Theater in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 377, 381-384. Senelick provides excerpts from Vladimir Nelidov's memoirs on Russian theater; see the original in V. A. Nelidov, *Teatral'naia Moskva: Sorok let moskovskikh teatrov* (Moscow: Materik, 2002), 94-95. The figure of a director in the modern sense, as a person whose artistic vision underlies a production and helps bring all its elements into a unified whole, did not exist until Konstantin Stanislavsky and his Moscow Art Theater, while Savva Mamontov, with his work in the Moscow Private Opera, can be seen as Stanislavsky's precursor of sorts. See the discussion of Mamontov and Stanislavsky in later chapters.

with particular zeal.[168] The fact that Karl Valts played a major role in the creation of the sets and stage effects clearly shows that the play was conceived as a féerie; Valts specialized in stage designs for féeries and ballets-féeries and was famous for his ability to create dazzling stage effects and magical transformations.[169]

For details on this production, we have to rely on the reviews. It is noticeable that a number of reviews mention rumors about large sums of money spent by the Directorate on the production, meaning new sets and machinery. The reviewer of the newspaper *Voice* (*Golos*) notes rumors that the production cost 12,000 rubles, and lauds the "lavish" production; the same reviewer claims that the sets, and especially Tsar Berendei's palace, "left nothing to be desired"—but does not give any details about their style.[170] Another reviewer, from *St. Petersburg News* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*), mentions that 14,000 rubles was spent on the production; however, he notes, the execution of the sets and machinery could have been better. This review includes a note about the magic components of the production: the reviewer says that the creators of the production used all kinds of tricks—fountains, electric lighting, presentation of the movement of clouds—to enhance the show.[171] From the same reviewer, we also learn that the costumes and sets were eclectic: Tsar Berendei's palace looked gothic, Tsar Berendei himself was dressed like a "Venetian doge," and Lel's costume reminded the spectators of Paris of Troy from *The*

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[168] Val'ts, *Shest'desiat piat' let v teatre*, 97-98.

[169] See Valts's memoirs. In his memoirs, Nikolai Popov states that Valts was one of the most popular figures of the theatrical world of the time; the Moscow public called him "a magician and a wizard" ("mag i volshebnik," or "mag i charodei"). See Popov, "Teatral'nye kudesniki," 328. As a matter of fact, the ballet-féerie *Kashchei*, based on Russian fairy tales, was produced in Moscow approximately at the same time as *The Snow Maiden*, and Valts was the main person behind that production (Krasovskaia, *Russkii baletnyi teatr*, 186).

[170] "Moskovskie zametki ('Snegurochka')," *Golos*, May 26, 1873, 1.

[171] X. [Aleksei N. Veselovskii?], "Iz Moskvy (Pis'mo v redaktsiiu)," *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, May 23, 1873, 1. Rpt. in V. Zelinskii, ed., *Kriticheskie kommentarii k sochineniiam A. N. Ostrovskogo. Khronologicheskii sbornik kritiko-bibliograficheskikh statei*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Moscow: Tipo-litogragiia V. Rikhter, 1904), 152. Hereafter, for all articles reprinted by Zelinsky, quotations are provided from the Zelinsky edition, unless otherwise specified.

Ilyad.[172] Three extant photographs from the production (one of Fedotova as the Snow Maiden and two of Kadmina as Lel; see figures 1-3) provide a glimpse of the performers' costumes. Lel's costume consisted of a loose tunic with a sash, loose, knee-length pantaloons, white stockings with criss-crossed lace over them, elegant heeled shoes, and a cape. In one picture he also appears to wear a hat. Interestingly, the shirt has an off-center collar typical in a Russian peasant shirt, or *kosovorotka*. However, the rest of the costume is reminiscent of a generic bucolic shepherd (and certainly not a Russian peasant). The costume of the Snow Maiden is vaguely reminiscent of a peasant dress: it has an apron and is embroidered on the hem and the sleeves. While it is clear that no attempt was made to make the characters look like real Russian peasants, some folk motifs in their dress point to the likely awareness of costume designers that the play had a strong folkloric component. It is possible that the Directorate even planned this production as a fantasy based on Russian folk motifs, especially if we consider Ostrovsky's previous commission of the fairy-tale play *Ivan-Tsarevich*. In any case, if the inclusion of Russian folk motifs in the costume designs was part of the plan, then it was done in a conventional manner, without actual study of any regional versions of peasant costume.

Ballerinas dressed in standard tulle dresses often performed the dance numbers. In one of the opening scenes in the Prologue, Ostrovsky's text clearly asks for a dance of birds,[173] but in the production this dance was performed by dancers in tulle, while birds

[172] Ibid., 153-154.
[173] In Ostrovsky's stage directions, the birds were supposed to dance: "*Some birds take up musical instruments, others start singing, and still others dance*" – "*Одни птицы принимаются за инструменты, другие запевают, третьи пляшут*" (Ostrovskii, VII, 367).

only sang and pretended to play musical instruments. A few reviewers harshly criticized this substitution, and in general, the ballet numbers were repeatedly described as banal.[174]

From these meager comments, one can conclude that the Directorate perceived and staged Ostrovsky's play as a féerie, and the style of the production was quite eclectic. Judging from the sources available, there is no indication that Ostrovsky himself minded the eclecticism of the production, or made any specific requests in terms of the style (apart from the costumes of the birds). A closer look at the reviews suggests that the mixture of styles, the addition of routine ballet dances, and the lack of unity between scenes hampered the intended aesthetic effect. A number of reviews refer to the play as a féerie, a ballet-féerie, and even a vaudeville.[175]

After the first performance on May 11, three more performances took place, on May 14, 18, and 21, 1873 (and five more performances ensued in the next season).[176] At the end of May, four reviews of the production and one feuilleton about it appeared in Moscow and Petersburg newspapers, followed by more responses to the play after its publication in September 1873.

Reception of *The Snow Maiden* in 1873

When discussing *The Snow Maiden*'s reception, the following topics and questions are important. The first set of questions refers to the reviewers' evaluation of the task that, in their opinion, Ostrovsky set for himself. What did they see as central for the play in

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[174] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 155; "Moskovskie zametki (Snegurochka)," *Golos*, May 26, 1873, 2.
[175] The following reviewers refer to *The Snow Maiden* as a féerie: Veselovsky (see previously discussed article); "Teatral'nye novosti," *Novosti*, September 4, 1873, 3; and W. [Vladimir Chuiko], "Literatura i zhizn.' (Po povodu 'Snegurochki.' – Shekspir i Ostrovskii. – Fantastichnost' i drama. – Ostrovskii i Offenbakh. – Frantsuzskaia feeriia)," *Golos*, September 20, 1873: 1-2.
[176] Kholodov et al., *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 5, 515.

terms of style and ideas? What was the reviewers' attitude toward the subject of the play? How did they describe the subject? What were their impressions of the play's setting, the Berendeyan land? The second set of questions relates to reviewers' attitudes toward the representation of folklore and peasant culture in *The Snow Maiden*. Did the reviewers pay attention to the folkloric elements of the play? Was it important to them that Ostrovsky's play had a substantial folkloric subtext? Did they recognize the folk sources of the play? Did they exhibit familiarity with folk culture? What was their attitude toward the use of folklore in the play? Since the question of genre appears often in the reviews, one more question is essential: How did Ostrovsky's use of folklore influence the reviewers' perception of the play's genre?

The first review of the production was published in *St. Petersburg News* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*) on May 23, 1873.[177] The review was anonymous, but judging from the penname ("X."), the author might have been Aleksei Veselovsky—a literary scholar and professor at Moscow University and brother of the famous literary scholar Alexander Veselovsky.[178] In the first paragraph the reviewer calls the play "a grand féerie with all possible tricks."[179] However, he also differentiates the play from other works in the genre due to its incorporation of Russian folklore:

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[177] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 151-157.

[178] It is hard to say with certainty who the author of this article is, but everything suggests that it could be Veselovsky. For some reason, neither Zelinsky, nor Denisiuk (editors of the collections of criticism on Ostrovsky) provide the name of the author behind the penname (while they do for Burenin and others). Judging from Masanov's *Slovar' psevdonimov russkikh pisatelei*, "X" could stand for Aleksei Veselovsky—if we think that in the review a Russian "X" is meant. Masanov also says that in 1873-1874 Veselovsky was in charge of news from Moscow ("Moskovskie korrespondentsii") and feuilletons in *St. Petersburg News*, and this article is precisely "a report from Moscow," which can be an additional indication allowing one to attribute this article to Veselovsky. See I. F. Masanov, *Slovar' psevdonimov russkikh pisatelei, uchenykh i obshchestvennykh deiatelei*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsesoiuznoi knizhnoi palaty, 1958), 209.

[179] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 152.

> Ostrovsky and Tchaikovsky's *Snow Maiden* transports us to the fantastic world of the Russian fairy tale, to the world of the people's naïve poetic outlook on nature—an outlook reflected in the people's mythology.[180]

Veselovsky thus attests to a combination of Russian fairy tale, mythology, and folk beliefs in the play. His mention of "the people's naïve poetic outlook on nature" ("naivnykh poeticheskikh vozzrenii naroda na prirodu") alludes to the title of Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs* (*Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu*). Further evidence that Veselovsky sees Ostrovsky's play through the lens of Afanasyev's study and of the mythological school in general is evident in his representation of the plot and the content of the play:

> The Snow Maiden is the daughter of the Spring and Grandfather Frost; she is pursued by her ardent lover, Yarilo the Sun-god, and she melts under his burning rays. She is a poetic embodiment of one of the familiar occurrences of the harsh Northern climate. Thanks to the vital connection of such embodiments with mythology and customs, [in this play] we see a procession not only of fairy-tale characters, but also of mythological creatures. We see the Bonny Spring and Frost, who is covered with snow and has a beard down to his elbows, and red cheeks; we also see a number of folk celebrations at the top of the mountain—a procession bidding farewell to Shrovetide; we see the singing of spring songs and the making of garlands, and so forth.[181]

Veselovsky's explanation of who the Snow Maiden is ("a poetic embodiment of one of the familiar occurrences of the harsh Northern climate") echoes Afanasyev's, who interpreted folk tales about the Snow Maiden as ancient people's attempt to explain and poeticize the natural water cycle.[182] Veselovsky identifies the connection that the play makes between

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[180] Ibid., 152.

[181] "Снегурочка—дочь Весны и дедушки-Мороза, преследуемая пламенным любовником Ярилой-солнцем, и тающая под его жаркими лучами, - является поэтическим олицетворением одного из привычных явлений суровой северной природы, и, благодаря живой связи подобных олицетворений с мифологией и миром обрядности, перед нами проходят один за другим не сказочные только лица, но и мифические существа. То является Весна-красна, то весь засыпанный снегом, с бородой по локоть и раскрасневшимися щеками Мороз, то на вершине горы мы видим ряд народных обрядов: то проводы масляницы (sic), то веснянки и заплетания венков, и т.д." (ibid., 152).

[182] Afanas'ev, *Poeticheskie vozzreniia*, vol. 2, 641.

fairy tales, calendar songs, and ancient mythology. Having established Ostrovsky's intentions, as he understands them, he discusses the criteria that a folklore-inspired work of art should meet in order to be successful and, finally, assesses both Ostrovsky's play and its production on the basis of these criteria:

> And so, we are situated in the very thick of Russian fairy-tale antiquity. The work of art tasked to depict it should radiate with it; this antiquity should be reflected in the accompanying music, and in all the details of the production. The simpler and more naïve the general atmosphere is, the more truthful the atmosphere will be: one cannot transplant Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*,[183] with its world of light fantasy and mischievous, frolicsome elves, to the Russian provincial hinterlands. In place of these airy creatures, a shaggy forest sprite will appear […] Any step away from simplicity and naturalness should shock the spectator, because it sounds a false note.[184]

Significantly, in emphasizing the importance of simplicity and cohesiveness of style for productions of this kind, Veselovsky essentially aligns the Russian fairy-tale world with historical ancient Russia, demanding a kind of authenticity from representation of this world. He also equates ancient Russia with a (presumably, contemporary) distant Russian village. He presents Ostrovsky's play as set in distant history or in a distant village: temporal and spatial remoteness appear interchangeable and suit equally as a locus of Russian antiquity.[185]

Veselovsky then focuses on the criteria to which a folk-inspired work should adhere:

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[183] It should be noted that this review started a comparison of *The Snow Maiden* with Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was recurrent in many reviews; this comparison was always made to the detriment of Ostrovsky. This reviewer goes only as far as to say that a work on a Russian fairy-tale subject should differ from Shakespeare; in many other reviews, Ostrovsky was actually accused of stealing elements of his plot from Shakespeare's play.

[184] "Итак, мы находимся в самой средине русской сказочной старины; ею должно веять от произведения, задающегося его изображением; она должна отразиться и в звуках музыки, ее сопровождающей, и во всех мелочах постановки. Чем проще и наивнее будет общий колорит, тем он будет вернее: в русскую деревенскую глушь не перенесешь Шекспирова «Сна в летнюю ночь» со всем его светлым фантастическим мирком и шаловливой возней эльфов. На место этих воздушных существ явится косматый леший <…> Всякое отступление от простоты и естественности должно поражать зрителя, потому что звучит фальшивой нотой" (Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 152).

[185] The reviewer does not say that a search for ancient Russian history can be done in a remote Russian village, but this is a step that the later producers of the play will take.

> Nothing can be done about the fact that our climate is simple and harsh, and our life is poor and bleak. It is not possible to make it more colorful with the help of exquisite fantastical patterns. One must take whatever this life provides, and, if the elaboration is masterful, the depiction will be dear to everyone. One should not shy away from the fantastical element; in Russian demonology, there are enough colors for that. But in this respect, the main rule is the same: one step astray and all is lost. If a writer saturates his work with allegories, innuendos, subtle digressions; if he engages in poetic license, then, instead of a true-to-life work, a tendentious and unnatural one results.[186]

At the center of Veselovsky's argument is the idea of truthfulness and authenticity in the representation of Russian nature and Russian mythology. This translates into, among other things, a demand for simplicity, since a Russian folk-inspired play needs to be devoid of literary devices that a sophisticated audience is used to; but at the same time, it has to catch readers' and spectators' attention. The key word that defines this reviewer's sensibilities is "authenticity": for a folk-inspired work of art to be successful it has to be "authentic" and match an unidentified but presumably existing "original." However, meeting the two-fold challenge of being authentic (that is, "natural," truthful to the "original," simple, and austere) and satisfying the sophisticated tastes of the educated public proved to be a difficult task.

After laying out his standards for a play depicting ancient customs, beliefs, and stories, Veselovsky evaluates *The Snow Maiden* in terms of those standards. In his view, Ostrovsky's play is based upon a very promising idea and could be a wonderful play on a Russian folk subject: "Let us note in passing that the means this play employs are incredibly rich. This play combines speeches, singing, and dancing, and gets close to the ideal dramatic

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[186] "Нечего делать, что наша природа незатейлива и сурова, что жизнь бедна и угрюма, и не расцветишь ее изящными фантастическими узорами. Надобно взять то, что дает жизнь, и под умелой обработкой изображение станет всем симпатично. Нечего чуждаться фантастического элемента; в одной русской демонологии достаточно для того красок. Но и в этом отношении основное правило то же: шаг в сторону—и все пропало. Стоит лишь насытить все аллегорией, намеками, тонкими рассуждениями, стоит принести несколько жертв поэтической вольности—и, вместо живого правдивого произведения, окажется тенденциозное, рефлективное" (ibid., 152-153).

work repeatedly described by Wagner."[187] Veselovsky thus appreciates the richness of the play's material and the theatrical means employed by *The Snow Maiden*'s creators (including Ostrovsky, Tchaikovsky, and others involved in the production); he alludes to Wagner's idea of Gesamtkunstwerk, or "total work of art," in which all elements—text, music, dancing, acting, visual representation—combine to create a unified whole. Veselovsky highly praises some characters and scenes in the play, especially the character of Tsar Berendei and the scene with Kupava, as well as the scene when the Bonny Spring gives the Snow Maiden the gift of the heart's warmth (despite the fact that this last scene, he believes, is spoiled by clichéd ballet numbers). While he does not comment specifically on the folk sources of Ostrovsky's poetry, he does notice the originality of the meter: "The poetry in general flows very well and the meter is often original."[188]

However, even though Veselovsky admits that "the author's idea was original and not lacking in poetic inspiration,"[189] he finds a number of flaws in the play itself and its production, and therefore deems this attempt of a folk-inspired play unsuccessful. The most important flaw he notes is the language of characters. Instead of "simplicity," everywhere he sees falsities and incongruities in the style of the characters' speech. The most disappointing in this regard is Tsar Berendei; while the idea behind this image—the tsar sensitive to the beauty of art and human emotions—seems very promising to the reviewer, Ostrovsky spoils this character by bestowing him with an unnatural, elaborate way of speaking; the tsar, as Veselovsky puts it, mostly engages in "rhetorical orations

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[187] "Средства ее, заметим мимоходом, чрезвычайно богаты. Она, приближаясь несколько к неоднократно обрисованному Вагнером идеалу драматического произведения, совмещает в себе и речи, и пение, и пляски" (ibid., 153).
[188] Ibid., 157.
[189] Ibid., 156.

about the beautiful, which sound out of place in the given environment."[190] Veselovsky also criticizes the long monologues of the Spring due to her "bookish words" and "Heine-like style."[191] The fact that not only the Spring and the tsar make such exalted speeches, but literally every character, including the Shrovetide effigy[192] and the forest sprite, leads the reviewer to conclude that Ostrovsky is unable to use stylistic registers properly. Ultimately, Veselovsky argues that even though the playwright's vision was promising, his endeavor to blend the folk and the literary turned out to be unsuccessful since he could not find an alternative to his bookish, high-flown style of writing.

In addition to noting the flaws in the style of the play, Veselovsky criticizes the production itself for its eclecticism and lack of attention to authenticity in the details of the scenery, costumes, and staging of certain scenes. Veselovsky also often emphasizes that clichéd ballet numbers (*baletnaia rutina*) have diminished the originality of the production. For example, he notes that the creators of the production failed to break from the old ballet standards and experiment with a new, folk-inspired style of dancing.

Among the scenes that depict folk rituals, Veselovsky was particularly dissatisfied with the conventional, unenergetic execution of the last scene:

> The concluding scene of the entire play depicts the commencement of festivities in Yarilo's honor, when at dawn the old and the young go to greet the first rays of the Sun. This scene in the play is performed quite limply, and the music of the chorus sounds too calm and regular, when in reality, the production should have conveyed the true spirit of this wild celebration, and turned it into a scene of real bacchanalia. There were still Yarilo celebrations not long ago (in the previous century, Tikhon of Zadonsk did away with them in Voronezh), and there are still stories in circulation about the bawdy and uproarious character of these festivities. Those stories depict,

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[190] Ibid., 153-154.
[191] Ibid., 154.
[192] During Shrovetide celebrations (Maslenitsa), one of the traditions was to make a straw effigy representing Shrovetide and burn it on the final day of the festivities.

> often hyperbolically, scenes of unbridled passion. It would have been easy to avoid this blunder.[193]

Veselovsky argues that the celebration of Yarilo could have been done in a much more authentic manner if only the creators of the production did their ethnographic research. This expectation of realistic representation in a fairy tale production points to the unsatisfied desire to see "authentic" Russian antiquity on stage, freed from aesthetic conventions.

Similarly, Veselovsky criticizes Tchaikovsky's incidental music for its lack of authenticity. While he considers certain musical numbers, such as the songs of the shepherd Lel and the song "Little Strawberry-Berry" ("Zemlianichka-iagodka") to be truthful to the naivety of the depicted world, in many other instances, he insists, the composer departs from that naïve and simple musical idiom and either overindulges in the imitation of folk tunes or imparts his music with foreign elements stylistically similar to that of Schumann or Mendelssohn.[194]

All in all, according to Veselovsky, neither Ostrovsky's play itself, nor the music, nor the production conform to the criteria of a successful play on a folk subject. At the same time, it is significant that the critic perceives *The Snow Maiden* as an attempt to recreate "Russian fairy-tale antiquity" on stage, albeit a failed one. It is the same perspective that the Abramtsevo circle artists would eventually appropriate when staging *The Snow Maiden*.

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[193] "Заключительная сцена всей пьесы, изображающая начало празднества в честь Ярилы, когда на рассвете и стар и млад идут встречать первые лучи солнца, проходит очень вяло, и музыка хора звучит слишком спокойно и мерно, тогда как на деле следовало бы передать настоящий характер этого разгульного празднества, переходившего в настоящую вакханалию. Празднества в честь Ярилы совершались еще недавно (в прошлом веке Тихон Задонский уничтожил их в Воронеже), и рассказы о неудержимо-буйном и развеселом их характере, передающие часто в гиперболических размерах сцены разнузданных страстей, еще живы: и избежать промаха было легко" (ibid., 155).

[194] X. [Aleksei N. Veselovskii?], "Iz Moskvy (Pis'mo v redaktsiiu Spb. Vedomostei)," *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, May 23, 1873, 1. (This part of the article is not included in the Zelinsky edition.)

Another review that similarly devotes a lot of attention to the question of the possibility and importance of folk-inspired literature was published in Prince Meshchersky's newspaper *The Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*), which in 1873-1874 was edited by Dostoevsky.[195] A reviewer under the penname "Moskvich" ("A Muscovite")[196] welcomes the appearance of *The Snow Maiden*, interpreting it as an effort to bridge the divide between "high culture" and peasant culture. This critic, however, does not delve very deeply into Ostrovsky's play or the details of its theatrical production. Instead, he uses the appearance of *The Snow Maiden* as a pretext to talk about the folk tradition in general and the problem of its incorporation into the culture of the elites. Presenting his argument, the author alludes to a number of important debates—about folklore, about education, and about art—that were going in the Russian press of the time.

The "Muscovite" begins by discussing Johann Gottfried Herder's views on how works of folk art should be published and treated. When providing a translation of an Estonian folk song about a peasant being exploited by his German master, Herder, in his collection, *Voices of the Peoples in Their Songs* (*Stimmer der Völker in Ihren Liedern*),[197] claims that shortening this song would make it more artistically pleasing, but that the song nevertheless should not be shortened since "the sincere sigh of a moaning people, a sigh not poetically conjured but produced by a truly experienced situation, should sound exactly

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[195] Moskvich, "Moskovskie zametki," *Grazhdanin*, May 28, 1873, 635-7.
[196] Masanov's dictionary of pennames does not contain any reference to someone under the penname "Moskvich" who published in *The Citizen*. However, there is a note that Filipp Diomidovich Nefedov published in *St. Petersburg News* under the penname "Moskvich" in 1874-1876 (Masanov, *Slovar' psevdonimov russkikh pisatelei*, vol. 2, 200). Nefedov was an ethnographer and a writer close to the *Narodniki* movement, so he plausibly could be the author of this article; however, there is no indication that he ever published in *The Citizen*, so his authorship can be suggested only very cautiously.
[197] The reviewer calls the book *Stimmer der Völker in Liedern.*

as it does in real life."[198] Herder's statement, the critic argues, establishes the right approach to the treatment of a work of folk art, since there is nothing superfluous or unnatural in works created by the people's imagination.[199] The authenticity of the folk songs is more important than artistry as the latter is understood by a person of culture.

The reason for appreciating and revering folk art lies in its ability to provide insight into the history of the people. Every detail of folk poetry can give us a glimpse into the everyday life of the people in the past, which is why it is invaluable for any "true" poet, writer, or scholar.[200] Comprehension and appreciation of folk culture requires both scholarly expertise and artistic creativity. Folk poetry, which is a repository of folk culture, by itself does not provide a cohesive picture of the history of a people; it has only preserved fragmentary pieces of that people's outlook and wisdom. In order to reconstruct the whole (as, for example, Afanasyev does in his *Poetic Outlook*), systematic research into folk culture, ethnography, and history is necessary.

The next step is the incorporation of folk traditions into the culture of the elites. Only an "artist-poet" ("khudozhnik-poet") can accomplish this task. The reviewer calls on writers to study folklore ("narodnaia slovesnost'") and "get inspired by it," since "a specific image, diverse traits, or some motif can be picked up by the artist, developed and transformed into creative works that breathe Russian thought and Russian feeling."[201] Citing Dante and Cervantes as exemplary artists who created folk-inspired monumental

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[198] "Искренний вздох стонущего народа, вызванный не поэтически вымышленным, а действительно прочувствованным положением, должен звучать так, как он звучит в самом деле" (Moskvich, "Moskovskie zametki," 635).
[199] Ibid., 635.
[200] Ibid., 635.
[201] "Отдельный образ, разбродные черты, какой-то мотив могут быть подхвачены художником, развиты и преобразованы в творческие создания, дышащие русской мыслию, русским чувством" (ibid., 635).

pieces of Western European literature, the reviewer bemoans the fact that in Russia folk poetry "is almost exclusively the domain of scholarship and scholars," even though it could be a source of inspiration "for the unspoiled and receptive intuition of a Russian artist with a fresh perspective."[202] However, this situation is bound to change:

> The time will come, when it [folk poetry] will leave that realm [scholarship] and become a source of sustenance and inspiration for Russian poets and writers. After it has passed through the hands of poets and writers, our society—which is slowly becoming more truly Russian—will embrace it.[203]

Thus, the reviewer deems the inclusion of the folk tradition in Russian literature inevitable, which is both a harbinger and a consequence of a larger process—the movement of Russian society towards being more "truly Russian." Expressing these views, the "Muscovite" notes that they are not entirely his own—in fact, he admits that he is a proponent of Alexander Buslaev's ideas.[204] In contemporary Russian literature, the reviewer sees signs that testify to the effort of some authors to make Russian culture more "nationally minded," yet all of them seem still "accidental," being "almost exclusively the result of personal, individual efforts."[205]

Turning to Ostrovsky's play only at the very end of his article, the "Muscovite" argues that *The Snow Maiden* is exactly such a sign, and he defends Ostrovsky from the negative criticism that the press and, supposedly, audiences have poured on him. Confronting the critics who accused Ostrovsky of distorting a Russian folk fairy tale and

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[202] Ibid., 635.
[203] "Придет время, когда из этой области она выйдет и станет источником пищи и вдохновения для русских поэтов и беллетристов, когда с нею, прошедшею через их руки, сроднится преобразующееся мало по малу в истинно русское и наше общество" (ibid., 635).
[204] While the "Muscovite" does not provide the exact works by Buslaev to which he refers, similarities in the views that he puts forth and Buslaev's ideas discussed in the Introduction are evident.
[205] Ibid., 635.

making "something impossible, some kind of fantastic drama"[206] out of it, the reviewer argues that the writer only needed the plot of the fairy tale, supplemented with some ethnographic knowledge, in order to creatively transform this knowledge into a fairy-tale drama.

However, while lauding Ostrovsky's attempt to engage with the folk tradition, the reviewer criticizes the way the play uses folklore, calling it "decorative," that is, superficial: "While there are excellent passages in the fairy tale, overall it exhibits, so to speak, a decorative attitude toward peasants, toward their life and views."[207] In the opinion of the "Muscovite," Ostrovsky does not engage on a deeper and more meaningful level with the aspirations and interests of the people as expressed "in the rich collection of Russian folk fairy tales," where in the naïve, almost childish, fairy tales, a talented writer could find sources for a true drama.[208]

Even though Veselovsky and the "Muscovite's" respective reviews do not assess *The Snow Maiden* entirely positively, their attitudes to the folkloric core of the play are generally enthusiastic. Though they do not deem Ostrovsky's attempt entirely successful, they cheer the appearance of a folk-inspired work on the Russian stage and in Russian literature. For both reviewers, the play served as a pretext for discussing the desirability of including the folk tradition in "high" culture and for presenting their opinions on the effective (and ineffective) ways of doing so. The issue of cultural authenticity was crucial for both of them, be it the authenticity of the folk sources themselves, the ways those sources are incorporated into a literary work, the presentation of the folk component on

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[206] Ibid., 635.
[207] "Хотя есть места превосходные в сказке, но вся она представляет, так сказать, декоративное отношение к народу, к его жизни и воззрениям" (ibid., 636).
[208] Ibid., 636.

stage, or, especially for the "Muscovite," the ability of folk sources to infuse modern literature with a "national character." For both reviewers, the skill of a modern artist to integrate an ancient native tradition scattered across various sources and to aesthetically adjust the material for a contemporary audience is of paramount significance. Veselovsky is particularly clear in formulating this demand: while a contemporary folk-inspired work should be "close to the original" and, therefore, simple and naïve, it should still be interesting and engaging for an educated audience. Though it had the right idea at its core, *The Snow Maiden* did not meet these criteria. Still, as a result of his interest in folk culture, Veselovsky pays close attention to the subject of the play and tries to find in the play "ancient fairy-tale antiquity." As will be shown below, in 1873-74 he was the only reviewer who expressed the idea of "antiquity" lying at the core of the play.[209] The "Muscovite," on the other hand, does not address the play's subject (though he does laud Ostrovsky's attempt to create a folklore-inspired play), nor does he attempt to understand Ostrovsky's endeavor in its own right.

[209] It should be noted that he is the only reviewer who put forth this idea seriously. Echoes of this article can be found in a feuilleton published in the St. Petersburg satirical newspaper *The Spark* (*Iskra*): "Vesennie zametki 'Iskry' (Vchera, segodnia i zavtra)," *Iskra*, May 27, 1873, 7-8 (Katia Dianina names Dmitry Minaev as the author of this article, see Katia Dianina, "'Our Berendeevka': The Invented Tradition of Russian Modernity," *Canadian – American Slavic Studies* 46 (2012): 449. Feuilletons and parodies published in *The Spark* expressed criticism towards various figures and journals of the 1860s and early 1870s; the newspaper's criticism came from democratic positions, including expectations of literature's social engagement. It is not surprising then that Ostrovsky's new play, being so far from the contemporary social issues, received a derisive treatment from the anonymous reviewer of *The Spark,* who did not even see the play, but took the mere genre of the play as enough basis to mock it. The reviewer contrasts the Ostrovsky of the past, as the author of topical comedies and a playwright worthy of respect, to the Ostrovsky of the present, as the author of *The Snow Maiden*, which is perceived as an opera libretto rather than a play in its own right. Notably, the reviewer calls the play a "Wagnerian old-Russian fairy tale" ("starorusskaia volshebnaia vagneriada") ("Vesennie zametki 'Iskry'," 7). It is highly likely that the reviewer of *The Spark* took both ideas—*The Snow Maiden*'s closeness to Wagner's operas and its "old-Russian" character—from Veselovsky. However, unlike Veselovsky, the journalist from *The Spark* likens Ostrovsky's play to a work of Wagner in order to denigrate it rather than to praise it.

Indeed, as the rest of the reviews demonstrate, audiences generally were not ready to appreciate the folk-inspired fantasies of Ostrovsky's fairy-tale play. The overall positive assessments of the play by Veselovsky and the "Muscovite" were minority opinions. In the majority of reviews, the folk element of Ostrovsky's play was either overlooked completely or criticized severely as being inappropriate and boring.

A review by P. Akilov[210] seems to have set the derisive tone typical for the majority of reviews of *The Snow Maiden* at that time. Akilov comments favorably on some of the actors and lauds the staging—calling it "brilliant" and "magnificent"[211]—but, as a striking contrast, denies Ostrovsky's play itself any artistic quality. According to the critic, even such a lush staging "did not help" the play, which, in his opinion, was a complete fiasco. He laments Ostrovsky's waning talent and inability to successfully carry out the project he undertook:

> Our famous playwright decided to create a poetic representation of the *desire* for that sublime, inspiring feeling called *love*; for this purpose, he took a most rich plot from the fairy-tale domain. However, he did not manage to master this plot, and in his dramatic elaboration, the splendid subject became a *most meager* one and, in addition, extremely *anti-theatrical*.[212] (Emphasis in the original – V. K.)

Akilov thus presents the depiction of love as Ostrovsky's main goal. Interestingly, as evidence of the decline of Ostrovsky's abilities as a writer, Akilov points out his failure to make good use of the "splendid subject" he chose for the play. The reviewer seems to assume that Ostrovsky simply borrowed the material from fairy tales. However, Akilov then demonstrates complete ignorance of Ostrovsky's actual sources. First, he talks about

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[210] P. Akilov, "Teatral'nye zametki," *Razvlechenie*, May 25, 1873, 314-320.
[211] Ibid., 315.
[212] "Наш знаменитый драматург, задавшись идеей поэтического воспроизведения *потребности* того высокого, вдохновенного чувства, которое зовется *любовью*, взял для себя самый богатый сюжет из сказочного мира; но не смог с ним справиться и роскошное содержание превратилось в его сценическом развитии в *самое скудное,* и, вместе с тем, в крайне *антисценичное*" (ibid., 315).

Ostrovsky's "sources" in very general terms, without mentioning which fairy tales—Russian or foreign—he has in mind. Secondly, if Akilov indeed knew that folk tales about the Snow Maiden existed, he fails to notice that the love story in Ostrovsky's play does not correspond to any previous versions of folk fairy tales about her. More likely, Akilov was not familiar with those fairy tales at all and was simply making an assumption.[213] Even though he was not aware of the differences between the folk source and Ostrovsky's transposition of it, he had no qualms about criticizing Ostrovsky for "spoiling" the fairy tale.

On the other hand, Akilov is very enthusiastic about the love story told in Ostrovsky's play, claiming that "it is hard to imagine anything more exciting that the main idea expressed in the Snow Maiden fairy tale," in which "a girl, far from any passions, becomes a passionate young woman, ready to sacrifice her whole life for the sake of one moment of love's pleasures."[214] The reviewer believes, however, that Ostrovsky "managed" to spoil this beautiful plot with various unnecessary details and characters, such as Grandfather Frost, the Bonny Spring, the forest sprite, and all the various birds in the Bonny Spring's entourage in the Prologue. Everything related to Tsar Berendei's court, including the tsar himself, is also deemed unnecessary and boring to such an extent that

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[213] It is interesting that in early 1880s similar accusations—and with much stronger consequences—were directed at Nikolai Leskov for his story "The Leftie" ("Levsha"). Leskov was accused of being simply a "transcriber" and a "secretary" who wrote down an actual "gunsmith's legend" and published it under his own name without having the right to do so. In Leskov's case, the writer himself inadvertently provoked such reactions because in his own preface to the story he presents the story as a folk legend that he simply wrote down. The readers of the 1880s were not used to such literary games and took Leskov's words in earnest; the reaction of the critics forced Leskov to engage in numerous public explanations in print, trying to reclaim his authorship by explaining his device. For a detailed account of this incident see Hugh McLean, *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and His Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 393-395. To give an example closer to Ostrovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov was accused of lacking creativity due to his overuse of folk melodies in his opera *The Snow Maiden*. Rimsky-Korsakov had to intervene and explain that the reviewers erroneously took folk-inspired melodies that he wrote for actual folk melodies, and thus showed their own ignorance of folk culture (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

[214] Akilov, "Teatral'nye zametki," 315.

they cause "*sleep-inducing exhaustion*" [215] (emphasis in the original – V. K.). Akilov talks about the folk elements of the Prologue in an especially derogatory tone:

> Here, Grandfather Frost and the Bonny Spring ought to have quickly disappeared, but our playwright thought it fit to add some hallooing with forest sprites, and after that, to present an exaggerated scene depicting the tradition of bidding farewell to Shrovetide—a straw effigy. During this scene one of the Berendeyans, played by Mr. Lavrov, sings some ditties, while the choir mournfully repeats a dozen times, "Goodbye, Shrovetide! Goodbye, Shrovetide!"—whereupon the author has Bobyl begin to dance. However, this dance and the choral repetitions, as well as all the rest of the scenes (except for those featuring the Snow Maiden), *vividly* produce not *living* pictures of life or life-like fantasy, but rather a most vulgar *lubok* daubing, which I consider highly unworthy of description.[216] (Emphasis in the original – V. K.)

Also inciting the critic's wrath is Ostrovsky's presentation of another folk holiday, the festival of Yarilo, at the play's conclusion. In the reviewer's opinion, Ostrovsky should have concluded the play with the melting of the Snow Maiden—especially since the scene was so beautifully executed by Glikeria Fedotova. However, the author again "spoils" the play with Lel's final song, which crowns the festival of Yarilo. Akilov claims that because of such an ending, "the quasi-poetical little fairy tale lost even its last claim to poetry, turning completely into a vaudeville with a concluding jingle."[217] Here we again see that Akilov completely overlooks the mythological element of the play. Ostrovsky's presentation of folk belief and customs repeatedly makes Akilov compare his play with a work of a lower genre (vaudeville) or a lower quality ("*lubok* daubing").

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[215] "*Снотворно[е] изнеможень[е]*" (ibid., 315).

[216] "Тут бы следовало Деду-Морозу с Весною-Красною поскорее исчезнуть, но наш драматург заблагорассудил воспроизвести еще ауканье с лешими; а после него представить карикатурную картину прощания с Масляницею—соломенным чучелом. В продолжение этого прощания один из берендеев, в образе г-на *Лаврова*, поет какие-то присказки, а хор раз десяток заунывно повторяет: «Прощай масляница! Прощай масляница!» При этом Бобыль, по авторской воле, пускается плясать, но в этой пляске и в хоровых припевах, а за тем и во всех остальных сценах (за исключением только сцен с участием Снегурочки) *живо* воспроизводятся не *живые* картины жизни, или жизненной фантазии; а самые пошлейшие *лубочные малевания*, описывать которые считаю трудом в высшей степени непроизводительным" (ibid., 318).

[217] "…[М]нимо-поэтическая сказочка утратила через-то даже последнюю дозу своей поэзии, превратившись окончательно в водевиль с заключительным куплетом" (ibid., 318).

Akilov's article does not provide a detailed analysis of the play or its staging. It inaugurated, however, two trends characteristic of many critics' approach to Ostrovsky's play in the 1870s. One of them emphasized Ostrovsky's non-originality and his failure to make good use of a borrowed source; another relegated *The Snow Maiden* to a "lower" genre and regarded the play as a testimony to the decline of Ostrovsky's talent as a playwright.

Though an anonymous reviewer from the Petersburg newspaper *The Voice* (*Golos*) treats the playwright and the play with more respect, he similarly expresses confusion about the play's genre, and his criticism of the folklore-inspired scenes echoes Akilov's assessment.[218] Like Akilov, this reviewer finds the love story to be the most interesting element of the play. Everything else—the characters unrelated to the love story, as well as the presentation of traditions and customs of the Berendeyans—he deems superfluous.

To separate the "important" from the "superfluous," the anonymous reviewer provides two summaries of the play, which differ in their choice of plot features, as well as in style. The first summary concentrates on the Snow Maiden's story, barely mentioning any mythological elements or rituals. It begins thus:

> Grandfather Frost and the Bonny Spring once had a daughter. From her mother, the Bonny Spring, this Little Snow Girl inherited her maidenly beauty, and from Grandfather Frost—her little heart, cold and icy. Nothing could she feel with her little heart; the girl had everything that people had, but her heart was not human. This little girl lived in the woods, protected by Frost's servants—forest sprites, wolves, and foxes. Dull was the life of the Snow Maiden, and it became even duller when she once inadvertently saw that people do not live alone, that among them there are maidens like her, but there are also others who are different from maidens. The Snow Maiden was surprised, and she asked her mother, the Bonny

[218] "Moskovskie zametki (Snegurochka)," *Golos*, May 26, 1873, 1-2. Most probably, this reviewer did not read Akilov's article, because he claims that there have not been any articles or reviews dedicated to the new production. If this is the case, similarities between their opinions are even more striking and indeed more indicative of the more typical views on the play.

> Spring, to let her live among people and see what their life was like. Her mother agreed, but strict Grandfather Frost opposed this idea strongly: he had an enemy—the Sun, the bright one, and he was afraid that this enemy would do something to his dear child.[219]

In this summary, the reviewer slightly but noticeably reinterprets Ostrovsky's plot, stressing that the Snow Maiden wanted to live with people because she became curious about "others who are different from the maidens"—that is, men. However, in the play the Snow Maiden wants to live among the people because she is attracted to their songs, particularly the ones sung by the shepherd Lel.[220] The style of the summary is especially noteworthy: it is written in the past tense and in a noticeably "folksy" manner, with a generous use of folk and quasi-folk combinations of words and syntactic inversion, such as "sun the bright" ("solntse iasnoe"), "little heart, the cold one" ("serdechko kholodnoe"), "beauty, the maiden's" ("krasa devich'ia").[221] The author obviously tries to imitate the folkloric idiom—which is striking in light of his criticism of folklore-inspired scenes in the play discussed below. Interestingly, although the reviewer calls this narrative a "well-known plot" ("izvestnyi siuzhet"), he does not explain where this plot comes from. His summary retells the entire play, omitting scenes of folk celebrations and everything related to Tsar Berendei and his court—apparently, these are the details the reviewer finds superfluous.

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[219] "Есть у Мороза и Весны дочка. Наследовала эта Девочка-Снегурочка от красной Весны красу девичью, а от деда Мороза сердечко холодное, ледяное; ничего этим сердечком она чувствовать не могла—все, как у людей, было у девочки; но сердце было у нее не людское. Жила эта девочка в лесу, под охраною слуг морозовых—леших, волков, лисиц. Скучно было Снегурочке и еще скучнее стало, как пришлось увидеть ей как-то ненароком, что люди не в одиночку живут, что есть на свете такие же, как она, девушки, но есть и такие, что на девушек непохожи. Удивилась Снегурочка и стала просить мать свою, Весну-красну, пустить ее с людьми пожить, людскую жизнь посмотреть. Согласилась мать, но долго упирался суровый дед Мороз: был у него враг—солнце ясное, и боялся он, не сделал бы чего этот враг с его милым детищем" (ibid., 1).

[220] Also, it is the Bonny Spring who first suggests letting the Snow Maiden live with the people, and not the Snow Maiden who asks her parents to let her go.

[221] Not all instances of syntactical inversion could be preserved in the English translation provided above.

Having described the only worthy material of Ostrovsky's play, the reviewer then proceeds to give a second synopsis, which is strikingly different from the first. This time, he emphasizes all the "strange" details that Ostrovsky adds to what supposedly was his source, and he expresses his puzzlement at what the play is supposed to mean. The reviewer regards many of these details as superfluous and boring—particularly those showing the customs and lifestyle of the Berendeyan people—and yet these are the episodes based on the research done by Ostrovsky himself or borrowed from published sources and consultations with folklorists and historians.[222] The synopsis of the second act is especially telling:

> The second act is set in the palace of Tsar Berendei. Tsar Berendei is sitting and painting something… He paints for a long, long time. The chorus of blind psaltery players sings. Two *skomorokhi* are lying around… The *skomorokhi* have begun arguing about whose leg the tsar is painting, and then start to brawl… The tsar has scolded them, explaining that he was painting an "auroch's leg," and kicked them out… Finally, the psaltery players left, too… The tsar painted for a little bit and got up… A long monologue follows; the monologue says that things are not going as well as before in his Berendeyan land: winters have become long, the sun is not as bright and warm as before, and all of this is happening because people have become worse, and the god Yarilo has become angry with them. <…> All of this is terribly long and boring…[223]

With ellipses after almost every sentence, the style of the description is meant to convey the atmosphere of boredom, which by this time, according to the reviewer, is all too sharply felt by the audience. In Act III, the entire opening scene depicting a folk holiday lacks

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[222] He does praise two instances where folk materials were used: Kupava's plea to Tsar Berendei in Act Two and Lel's second song in Act Three. These, however, were songs put to Tchaikovsky's music and performed by actresses who were the stars of this production. Notably, no mass scene receives his appreciation.

[223] "Второе действие—в палатах царя Берендея. Сидит царь Берендей и что-то рисует… Долго, долго рисует. Хор калек поет. Два скомороха лежат… Заспорили скоморохи про то, чью ногу рисует царь, и разодрались… Царь выругал их, объяснил, что "турью ногу" рисует он, и прогнал… Ушли, наконец, и калеки… Царь порисовал и встал… Длинный монолог о том, что не так все хорошо идет, как прежде шло в его берендеевом царстве: зимы стали длинные, солнце светит и греет не попрежнему, и все это оттого, что люди хуже стали, и что бог Ярило разгневался за то. <…> Все это ужасно длинно, скучно…" ("Moskovskie zametki (Snegurochka)," *Golos*, May 26, 1873, 1).

anything interesting, according to the reviewer, and the dance of the *skomorokhi* makes it even worse:

> Act three. A big folk festival. Traditional dancing and singing. It's already long and boring, and as if that is not enough, here the tsar has arrived and made his *skomorokhi* dance. In order to imagine the "charm" of this scene, think about fifty bad male dancers from the chorus line who perform some ugly, awkward moves in front of you for a long, very long time.[224]

While the reviewer critiques this particular episode for the way the dance was staged, the fact that the entire scene of a folk festival is called "boring" tells a lot about this reviewer's standpoint. Ultimately, all scenes that involve the representation of Russian folk traditions that he lists in his second synopsis only contribute to making the play seem bizarre and unengaging.

Such were the reactions to the original production of Ostrovsky's play. More reviews appeared after the play's publication, and they mostly followed the trend of rejecting Ostrovsky's work and displaying a mocking attitude to the folkloric element in it.

Publication History and Post-Publication Reviews

The Snow Maiden was published in the September issue of Stasiulevich's journal *The Herald of Europe* (*Vestnik Evropy*). The publication itself could have led—although ultimately did not lead—to a split between Ostrovsky and Nekrasov, in whose journal *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*) appeared the majority of Ostrovsky's other plays. It was expected that *The Snow Maiden* would be published there as well, as the letters between Nekrasov and Ostrovsky in the spring 1873 attest. According to circulating

[224] "Действие третье. Народное гулянье. Хороводы, пение. И без того длинно, скучно, а тут еще пришел царь да заставил плясать своих скоморохов. Чтоб вообразить себе прелесть этой сцены, стоит представить полсотни плохого мужского персонала из кордебалета, проделывающего долго, очень долго перед вами какие-то некрасивые, незатейливые па" (ibid., 1).

rumors, Nekrasov disliked Ostrovsky's new play to such a degree that he eventually refused to publish it.[225] In fact, Nekrasov never straightforwardly refused, but he offered Ostrovsky only 1,000 roubles as an honorarium for his play, which was lower than what he normally paid the playwright. Ostrovsky was humiliated by this offer, pointing out in a letter to Nekrasov that the latter had paid him generous honoraria even for his mediocre plays, but did not seem to value *The Snow Maiden*, with which Ostrovsky felt that he embarked upon a new artistic path.[226] Nekrasov tried to appease the playwright, explaining that the reason for such low offer was not the quality of the play but rather the financial circumstances of his journal; however, he never provided a straightforward response to Ostrovsky's inquiry about his opinion of *The Snow Maiden*. In his second, appeasing letter to Ostrovsky, Nekrasov simply said that he could elaborate in the next letter, if Ostrovsky indeed still wished to hear his opinion, especially since he would "say more positive than

[225] Grigory Danilevsky, whose poem "Snegurka" was one of the potential sources for the play, circulated this rumor in his letter to Aleksei Suvorin and expressed a very negative opinion of the play: "If there is something to criticize, it has to be Ostrovsky's new play, *The Snow Maiden*. Every page of it begs to be parodied; it's terribly boring. He piled together some raw material from folk songs, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, and even from Aleksei Tolstoy and Mei—loads and loads. There are a couple of nice verse passages, but even those recall the poetry of our great grandmothers… How could one publish a program for a ballet, a feérie, as is Ostrovsky's new play? Nekrasov had enough intuition: in spite of his friendship with Ostrovsky, he read half of his play, did not finish, and returned it with the words: "How boring!" And I will add: it is such a motley hodge-podge of songs collected by Rybnikov and Co. that it lacks any congruity." ("Уж если что ругать, то новую пьесу «Снегурка» Островского. Там каждая страница просится в пародию, скука непроходимая. Сырья навалено из народных песен, «Слова о полку Игоря» и даже из А. Толстого и Мея – видимо-невидимо. Есть два стихотворных отрывка недурных, да и то отзываются стихами наших прабабок… Ну можно ли было печатать программу балета, феэри, как новая пьеса Островского? У Некрасова хватило чутья: несмотря на дружбу с Островским, прочел половину его пьесы, бросил и возвратил, сказав: «Скука!». А я прибавлю—крошево из песен Рыбникова и К—крошево, да еще недоваренное….") Quoted in Vladimir Lakshin, *A. N. Ostrovskii* (Moscow: Geleos, 2004), 627. At the end of the quote, Danilevsky gives a culinary metaphor, comparing Ostrovsky's play to "nedovarennoe kroshevo"—a half-cooked soup. Danilevsky considers *The Snow Maiden* a "raw" presentation of folk motifs, lacking artistic elaboration of them into a unified whole.

[226] Ostrovskii, XI, 425-426. In the same letter, Ostrovsky asks Nekrasov to return the manuscript of the play to the actor Fedor Burdin, who often took care of the playwright's errands in St. Petersburg.

unfavorable about it."[227] It appears that after that Ostrovsky never pressed for more on *The Snow Maiden* from his friend and publisher.

In the meantime, Ostrovsky asked his friend, actor Fyodor Burdin, to hint to Mikhail Stasiulevich that his play was available for publication in Stasiulevich's journal *The Herald of Europe*.[228] Stasiulevich was enthusiastic about this offer, expressing his admiration for Ostrovsky's knowledge and imaginative treatment of Russian fairy tales, which made the fairy-tale world appear like a "real world."[229]

Stasiulevich and Ostrovsky's friends' admiration of the play notwithstanding, *The Snow Maiden*'s publication provoked a whole stream of negative reviews that lambasted the subject matter, the style, the meter, the character development, and other elements of the play. While theatrical production reviews were often confused about the genre or suggested that *The Snow Maiden* was more an opera or ballet than a play, post-publication reviews often argued that the subject matter of the play, and especially Ostrovsky's

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[227] Nikolai Nekrasov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 15, bk. 2 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2000), 20.
[228] Ostrovskii, XI, 427.
[229] "The other day, I. A. Goncharov and A. N. Pypin came over to my place, and we spent a most pleasant evening thanks to *The Snow Maiden*. We were amazed both by the power of its vision and by its responsiveness to the language. You have studied our fairy-tale world so splendidly and reproduced it with such mastery that one sees and hears some kind of real world. Glory to you!" ("На днях у меня собрались И. А. Гончаров и А. Н. Пыпин, и мы, благодаря «Снегурочке», провели вечер как нельзя приятнее. Мы удивлялись: и силе фантазии, и покорности ей со стороны языка. Вы превосходно изучили наш сказочный мир и воспроизвели его так искусно, что видишь и слышишь какой-то реальный мир. Исполать вам!"). Letter from May 5, 1873; see A. A. Bakhrushin, N. L. Brodskii, and N. A. Popov, eds., *Ostrovskii. K stoletiiu so dnia rozhdeniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo teatral'nogo obshchestva, 1923), 18. Goncharov perceived *The Snow Maiden* as a piece pertaining to Russian history; he discussed the play as a piece pertaining to the same trajectory as Ostrovsky's historical chronicles. In his materials for his article about Ostrovsky (never completed), Goncharov presents Ostrovsky's entire oeuvre as "a thousand-year-old monument to Russia" (no doubt playing on the name of the monument "Millennium of Russia," which was erected in Novgorod in 1862). At one end of this project are Ostrovsky's depictions of contemporary Russia, and at the other—the "prehistoric time" of *The Snow Maiden.* See Ivan Goncharov, "Materialy, zagotovliaemye dlia kriticheskoi stat'i ob Ostrovskom," in *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), 179. Though Goncharov's article was never finished, and thus never joined the critical discourse, it does show that *The Snow Maiden* was sometimes perceived as a portrayal of ancient Russia.

unskilled verse, placed the work outside of serious literature. The play, they argued, could only belong to a "lower" genre of musical theater.[230]

The review that was the harshest in tone appeared in *St. Petersburg News* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*) on September 11, 1873,[231] and belonged to Viktor Burenin—a prolific literary critic and satirist who in the 1860s and early 1870s was close to the democratic circles and published in *The Spark*, *The Contemporary*, *Notes of the Fatherland*, and *Russian Word*, among other publications.[232] Burenin frames his critique of Ostrovsky's play by stating that every literary work is a product of the "spirit of the time." Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* is a vivid example of this, and Burenin writes about

> the very fresh and telling example of Mr. Ostrovsky, who recently fell under the influence of our splendid times to such an extent that his realistic pen, which had

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[230] A few numbers from Tchaikovsky's score were also published in September 1873 by Iurgenson (the full score was published only in 1895). The only two critical responses to Tchaikovsky's score belong to Cesar Cui, who was scathing in his criticism. In the first article from November 1873, Cui accuses Tchaikovsky of imitating Offenbach, and of choosing "bad" folk songs and "spoiling" them even further (***[Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki (Piat' numerov iz 'Snegurochki')," *Peterburgskie vedomosti*, November 7, 1873, 3). Cui's overall assessment of the music is as follows: "The most banal ideas, the tritest harmonies, a rough finish—or rather, an absence of finish of form—clumsiness, lack of taste of refinement; these are the characteristic features of the music to *The Snow Maiden*" (ibid.; translated by Brown, see Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 285). In a later review from July 1874, Cui is no less derogatory and mostly repeats his accusations; however, this time he does mention two folk imitations positively and, surprisingly, concludes that Tchaikovsky's music to *The Snow Maiden* is better than his opera *Oprichnik* because "almost all of the music for *The Snow Maiden* is written in the same style—in the Russian folk [*narodnom*] style, and it lacks the mixture of Russian and Italian that makes *Oprichnik* so ugly" (*** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki. Muzykal'naia bibliografiia," *Peterburgskie vedomosti*, July 9, 1874, 1). However, not everyone shared Cui's opinion; Nikolai Rubinstein, who conducted the first performance, later chose to perform the entire score at one of the Russian Musical Society's concerts in March 1878 (Brown, *Tchaikovsky*, 285; Poznansky and Langston, *The Tchaikovsky Handbook*, vol. 1, 130). Tchaikovsky himself was very fond of his music, as his previously quoted letter to Nadezhda von Meck shows, and was disappointed that Rimsky-Korsakov "stole" the subject for his opera; see Tchaikovsky's letter to Iurgenson quoted in M. I. Chaikovskii, *Zhizn' Petra Il'icha Chaikovskogo*, vol. 1 (Moscow and Leipzig: P. Iurgenson, 1900), 407.

[231] Z. [Viktor Burenin], "Zhurnalistika," *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, September 11, 1873, 1-2. Rpt. In Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 161-173.

[232] Burenin's collaboration with Nekrasov's *Notes of the Fatherland* ended in 1872, when he published a feuilleton about Saltykov-Shchedrin (whom he presumably had venerated before) in *St. Petersburg News*, and Nikolai Mikhailovsky polemicized with Burenin in *Notes of the Fatherland*. For an account of these polemics, see V. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *N. A. Nekrasov i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1930), 320-326). Later in the 1870s, Burenin acquired the reputation of a cynical feuilletonist who ignored the boundaries of common decency and morality in his criticism of literary works that he disliked; however, his reviews were widely read (see V. P. Stepanov, "Burenin," *Russkie pisateli,* vol. 1, 365-367, esp. 366).

> pictured so many true-to-life images of the "dark kingdom," started to produce illusory and meaningless images of Snow Maidens, Lels, Mizgirs, and similar characters who inhabit the bright kingdom of the Berendeyans—a people that are as stupid as they are fantastic.[233]

Burenin thus attributes Ostrovsky's new play to the spell of the general atmosphere of the time.[234] He juxtaposes Ostrovsky's earlier dramas on contemporary subjects to *The Snow Maiden*, and the division between "the old Ostrovsky" and "the new Ostrovsky" persists in the article. Burenin states that while Ostrovsky used to convey "a Gogolian truth in art," in *The Snow Maiden* he approaches "the falsehood and mediocrity of Panaev's idylls."[235] Burenin also compares the play to a vaudeville (since it contains "vaudeville ditties"[236]) and an operatic libretto. Like an earlier reviewer (the author of "The Moscow Notes" in the newspaper *The Voice*), Burenin claims to be confused about the genre of the play, and he notes that his confusion is exacerbated by the fact that Ostrovsky decided to publish it. Without the publication, the play could be considered an operatic libretto, since it was produced with Tchaikovsky's music. Burenin suggests that the play should indeed be put into the same category as Ostrovsky's libretto to Kashperov's opera *The Storm* (based on Ostrovsky's play), because both of them are simply "vinaigrettes in verse" ("stikhotvornyi

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[233] "…[O]чень свежий и яркий пример г. Островского, в последнее время до такой степени поддавшегося веяниям наших прекрасных дней, что из-под его реального пера, нарисовавшего столько жизненных образов «темного царства», начали выходить прозрачно-бессмысленные образы Снегурочек, Лелей, Мизгирей и тому подобных лиц, населяющих светлое царство Берендеев—народа столько же глупого, сколько фантастического" (Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 161).

[234] A similar argument was made somewhat later by Aleksandr Skabichevsky, who stated that, in comparison to the 1840s and 1860s, literature of the 1870s became completely disconnected from the issues of contemporary life. Skabichevsky identifies Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Turgenev's *Punin and Baburin*, and Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* as examples of such "disengaged" literature and claims that the appearance of such works, especially coming from the most talented writers of the time, reflects the miserable state and degradation of society itself. See Pargolovskii mizantrop [Aleksandr Skabichevskii], "Mysli i vpechatleniia, navevaemye tekushcheiu literaturoi," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 215 (August 1874): otdelenie II, 216-241.

[235] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 163. Vladimir Panaev was an author of sentimental idylls, criticized for their "saccharine" quality as early as by Pushkin.

[236] Ibid., 162.

vinegret").[237] Burenin confesses to be completely confused about Ostrovsky's motivation in both writing the play and publishing it.

By associating *The Snow Maiden* with an idyll—which was a long obsolete genre by the 1870s—and with operatic libretti and vaudeville, Burenin effectively denies *The Snow Maiden* any real literary value. Burenin does clarify, however, that the reason for his harsh criticism is not the fantastic quality of the play *per se*; rather, it is the fact that the fantastic in *The Snow Maiden* does not have any relation to the "real questions," which for him is the essential demand for any literary work. Juxtaposing *The Snow Maiden* with many other fantastic works by Goethe, Shakespeare, Edgar Poe, Hoffmann, Pushkin, and Gogol, Burenin concludes that while in the works of those writers "everywhere you will find a real idea and a reflection of real human life in fantastic images,"[238] Ostrovsky's play belongs to a different kind of fantastic work—to "the category of fantastic plays that have a wonderous and, at the same time, a completely nonsensical content as their basis."[239] Curiously, Burenin puts Ostrovsky into the category of authors like Afanasy Fet, whom he calls proponents of "non-realistic and senseless" art.[240]

While Burenin finds hardly anything positive about the play in general, he takes an especially negative stance toward the fictitious Berendeyan people and the representation of their world. He disparages the artistic quality of folk imitations, consequently expressing his negative stand toward folk culture in general: "The Berendeyans deserve the name of fools rather than people. They are a tribe standing only a few steps higher than gorillas.

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[237] On Kashperov's opera *The Storm*, its creation, productions, and reception in the press, see: V. Kiselev, ''A. N. Ostrovskii i V. N. Kashperov," in *A. N. Ostrovskii i russkie kompozitory*, eds. Kolosova and Filippov, 75-79.
[238] "Везде вы отыщете реальную идею и отражение реальной человеческой жизни в фантастических образах" (Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 165).
[239] "К категории фантастических пьес, в основу которых положено чудесное и вместе с тем совершенно вздорное содержание" (ibid., 165).
[240] Ibid., 163.

Instinctive, almost animal-like feelings govern them, and the Berendeyans express those feelings in senseless songs about 'a wet-tailed Shrovetide'."[241] He also singles out the folk songs, with their alleged lack of meaning, as an indication of the Berendeyans' intellectual poverty. Proceeding to a discussion of various representatives of this people and providing some quotations from the play, Burenin demonstrates that all of them, regardless of their social standing, exemplify "one common quality—stupidity."[242]

Furthermore, "the most stupid of all the Berendeyans is their ruler Tsar Berendei," Burenin declares.[243] Burenin finds everything about Tsar Berendei ridiculous and nonsensical, listing the following as proof: the fact that he himself decorates his palace and is probably a bad painter, since his *skomorokhi* could not understand that what he painted on the wall was an auroch's leg; Berendei's discussion of the meaning of "palace wall-painting" ("palatnoe pis'mo") with his *skomorokhi*;[244] the fact that his main concern as a tsar is the cold-heartedness of his subjects, which has angered the god Yarilo; and his proposition to alleviate Yarilo's anger by marrying all the single young men and women on Yarilo's Day. It is not clear what kinds of qualities and interests Burenin would instead want to see in a fairy-tale tsar, but Ostrovsky's Tsar Berendei is nothing short of idiotic for

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[241] "Берендеи заслуживают скорее названия дураков, чем людей. Это народ, стоящий немногими степенями выше гориллы. Берендеи руководятся самыми инстинктивными, почти животными чувствами и выражают их бессмысленными песнями о маслянице-мокрохвостке" (ibid., 167).
[242] Ibid., 168.
[243] Ibid., 168.
[244] It is worth noting that Ostrovsky likely took the idea for this motif from Ivan Zabelin, who provided a detailed description of the decorations of the tsar's palace in his 1862 work *The Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (*Domashnii byt russkikh tsarei v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh*). It is known that Ostrovsky consulted with Zabelin when writing his *Snow Maiden*. Burenin was most probably not acquainted with Zabelin's research on old-Russian decoration of dwellings, or if he was, then for some reason he made sure to express contempt towards this question: "We'll note in parentheses that this 'meaning' [of palace wall-painting] is just as clear and interesting as is the meaning of many recent works of our literature" (ibid., 168).

him: "Such is the ruler of the Berendeyans, such are his stately concerns, and such is his wisdom."[245]

The character of the shepherd Lel and his songs receive an especially scathing critique from Burenin: "This shepherd is a half-animal, he is almost a cretin, even though the author puts into his mouth various supposedly poetic songs"[246]; Lel's songs are characterized by "an abundance of stupid phrases."[247] Throughout his discussion of Lel, Burenin keeps repeating the idea that Lel is more of an animal than a person. Finding similar promiscuity and animal-like qualities in Mizgir, Burenin concludes that the Berendeyans "in no way resemble rational creatures, but rather apes."[248] Burenin's rhetoric concerning the Berendeyans, with his constant emphasis on their stupidity, their animal-like qualities, their closeness to primates, and therefore, their belonging to a very low stage of evolution, makes one wonder if he was influenced by ideas of Darwinism here—of course, employing a very crude and simplistic application of these ideas. In the 1870s, Darwinism was welcomed in Russia, both in the natural and social sciences. As a matter of fact, in 1864 Dmitry Pisarev published a very influential essay, "Progress in the World of Animals and Plants" ("Progress v mire zhivotnykh i rastenii"), which contained an analysis of Darwin's *On the Origins of Species*;[249] Pisarev's essay was published in *The Russian Word* (*Russkoe slovo*), a radical journal to which Burenin himself contributed.[250]

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[245] Ibid., 168.
[246] "Этот пастух какое-то полуживотное, почти кретин, хотя автор влагает ему в уста всякие, якобы поэтические песни" (ibid., 168).
[247] Ibid., 169.
[248] "совсем на разумных существ не походят, а скорей на обезьян" (ibid., 170).
[249] D. I. Pisarev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Nauka, 2003), 7–175.
[250] For overviews of reactions to Darwin in nineteenth-century Russia, see Alexander Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) and the chapter on Darwinism in Loren R. Graham, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1993), 56-75.

It is worth noting that even though Burenin never makes a connection between the Berendeyans and Russian peasants, his attitude toward the Berendeyans and their songs echoes some radical publicists' view of the Russian peasants as an uneducated, uncultured mass, with their lore being indicative of their ignorance and spiritual "darkness." For example, Varfolomei Zaitsev, one of the publicists of the journal *The Russian Word*, commented negatively on the collections of Russian fairy tales published by Chudinsky and Erlenvein in the 1860s; using the same "method" as Burenin—that is, quoting parts of fairy tales from those collections without providing any context or commentary on the tradition of such tales—Zaitsev led his readers to the conclusion that all the fairy tales are "similarly feebleminded" ("odinakovo skudoumny") in their content and "extremely clumsy" ("kraine neukliuzhi") in their style.[251] Another review in *The Russian Word*, which might have belonged to Zaitsev as well, discussed the epic songs published in one of Khudiakov's collections of folklore as pieces that "may interest collectors of various rubbish, but no person with at least some level of education would need such things."[252] Such a perception of folklore was, of course, completely antithetical to the view of folklore as a repository of national culture.

Several reviews of *The Snow Maiden* were written from a similar perspective. S. T. Gertse-Vinogradsky in *The Odessa Herald* (*Odessky Vestnik*)[253] echoes Burenin, stating that *The Snow Maiden* is "some kind of a fantastic caprice, devoid of any tinge of reality."[254] Gertse-Vinogradsky brushes off the folklore sources of the play altogether: although he

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[251] Quoted in Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoi fol'kloristiki*, vol. 2, 98.
[252] "Могут интересовать собирателей разного хлама, но никому не нужны из мало-мальски образованных людей" (ibid., 99).
[253] S. G. V. [S. T. Gertso-Vinogradskii], "Ocherki sovremennoi zhurnalistiki," *Odesskii Vestnik*, Septempber 28, 1873, 937-938. Rpt. in Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii,* 173-180.
[254] "[К]акой-то фантастический каприз, рафинированный от всяких реальных примесей…" (Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii,* 174).

mentions that "they say that [Ostrovsky took it] from the materials of primitive Slavic poetry," he also emphasizes that the actual sources are "a profound secret of the author," and asks "from what kind of Scheherazade" Ostrovsky has taken his images.[255] In any case, Gertse-Vinogradsky proudly declares that he himself does not know anything about folklore and proclaims that Ostrovsky's sources are not worth knowing. The comparison of *The Snow Maiden* to *A Thousand and One Nights* that the reviewer makes a few times betrays his attitude to Russian folklore as something exotic, bizarre, and alien to the contemporary educated Russian.

Not surprisingly, Gertse-Vinogradsky speaks about the Berendeyans in a way very similar to Burenin, calling Tsar Berendei "the stupid tsar of stupid subjects";[256] the reviewer's description of the Berendeyan land contains a hidden comparison to the town of Glupov, a satirical creation of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin: "This country is called 'the country of the Berendeyans,' an incredibly stupid people, more stupid than 'gluptsy,'[257] whose highest psychological activity is expressed in the sounds 'He-he-he!' and 'Ho-ho-ho!' etc."[258]

An anonymous reviewer of the newspaper *Son of the Fatherland* (*Syn Otechestva*)[259] also expresses his puzzlement with Ostrovsky's decision to engage with folk mythology. Enumerating such mythological actors of the play as the forest sprite, the dancing birds,

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[255] Ibid., 174.
[256] "[Г]лупый царь глупых подданных" (ibid., 176).
[257] Saltykov-Shchedrin's satirical "chronicle" *A History of a Town* (*Istoriia odnogo goroda*) was published in 1870, a few years before Ostrovsky's play; Gertse-Vinogradsky does not mention Shchedrin, but his comment "glupee gluptsov" appears to be an allusion to Shchedrin's popular novel.
[258] "А страна эта называется страною Берендеев, глупого-преглупого, еще глупее глупцов, народа, высшее психическое проявление которого высказывается в звуках: «Хе-хе-хе! Хо-хо-хо!» и т. п." (ibid., 175).
[259] "Russkaia literatura ('Snegurochka.' Vesenniaia skazka v 4 d. s prologom A. N. Ostrovskogo)," *Syn Otechestva,* September 18, 1873: 1-2. Rpt. in Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 157-161.

and the magic forest, the reviewer exclaims that the play was too full of "cheap theatrics" ("balaganshchina"), "devilry" ("chertovshchina"), and other elements that are "out of place in a serious work of art."[260] Wondering why Ostrovsky decided to "resurrect" folk mythology, the reviewer likens the play to a "balagan," or lowly street theater.[261] Continuing with his discussion of the play's genre, he notes that while the subject matter could be suitable for a ballet or an opera, as a dramatic work it is "perfect nonsense, a senseless fancy, and a repository of fantastical images."[262] From the reviewer's comments one can infer that he considered the subject unsuitable for a "serious" drama largely because of the play's reliance on folk motifs and especially on fantastic motifs from fairy tales and mythology. Such motifs seemed to befit ballet and opera, which did not require social commentary and served mostly as entertainment.

It is not surprising that a few reviewers believed that *The Snow Maiden* would fare better as a ballet. As mentioned earlier, the ballet-féerie was a genre that heavily influenced the production of the play; it is clear that the Directorate commissioned the play from Ostrovsky with the genre of the féerie in mind, and it is also highly likely that this was one of Ostrovsky's genre models. Additionally, as noted earlier, ballets-féeries were in the repertoire side by side with *The Snow Maiden* and must have influenced the spectators' perception of the play.

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[260] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 159.
[261] Ibid.
[262] "В такой форме она вышла превосходной ерундой, бессмысленным вымыслом и поглощением [sic] фантастических образов" (ibid., 158).

A. P. Chebyshev-Dmitriev's review published in *Stock Exchange News* (*Birzhevye Vedomosti*)[263] is the only post-publication review that discusses the representation of "Russianness" in *The Snow Maiden.* In the first, longer part of the review, Chebyshev criticizes Ostrovsky's endeavor from a theatrical point of view, pointing out that the main subjects of the play—such as the Snow Maiden's inner development and the spring's arrival—are impossible to convey on stage, and it was Ostrovsky's blunder to bring this subject to the theater. In the second part of this review, Chebyshev indicates that the Berendeyan rituals and customs are a hindrance to the play's dramatic development. Bemoaning the lack of dramatic action in *The Snow Maiden*, he argues that all the numerous characters, scenes, choirs, etc. create too much "hustle and bustle" ("suetnia"). An example of the latter, according to Chebyshev, is the scene of Mizgir's trial at the tsar's palace. This episode—Kupava's plea ("chelobitnaia"), all the formalities of the trial, and the tsar's verdict—takes up a large part of Act Two, and almost fifty lines are given to the ditties of the heralds.[264] Chebyshev is surprised by Ostrovsky's choice to dedicate so much space to a scene that significantly slows down the action of the play and contributes to the play's tediousness.

Chebyshev's surprise at this choice of Ostrovsky's leads him to make an interesting comparison. He notes that the presentation of customs in *The Snow Maiden* reminds him of another Russian play—*The Russian Wedding in the Late Sixteenth Century* (*Russkaia svad'ba v iskhode XVI veka*) by Pyotr Sukhonin. It is worth paying special attention to the comparison he draws between the two plays. Chebyshev describes Sukhonin's play as "a

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[263] Ch. P. [A. P. Chebyshev-Dmitriev], "Zametka o russkoi zhurnalistike. (Ostrovskogo 'Snegurochka,' skazka v 4 deistviiakh)," *Birzhevye vedomosti*, September 16, 1873: 1-3. Rpt. in Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 180-194.

[264] Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 192.

very bad, now completely forgotten, but at some point, extremely famous play."[265] This play is a melodrama, and it contains a very basic love plot, involving a rescued maiden, a forced arranged marriage, and an unexpected happy ending. Sukhonin's play belonged to the genre of the so-called *"obstanovochnaia p'esa"* (a nineteenth-century version of a costume drama). In such plays, the minimal and trite plot was secondary and served only to show old rituals, costumes, and settings (*obstanovka*) on stage. In fact, Chebyshev's assertion that *Russian Wedding* was "completely forgotten" by 1873 was not accurate. *The Russian Wedding in the Late Sixteenth Century* appeared in the repertoire of the Moscow Maly Theater in 1852 and remained there until 1882; in Petersburg, the play was staged until 1889.[266] The play was lavishly staged and was immensely popular, especially at the time of its first appearance.[267]

Chebyshev points out that while plays like *Russian Wedding* "have nothing to do with art," they are still valuable: such "archaeology in a dramatic form" introduces the spectators to old Russian traditions and lifestyle, and can be good substitutes for reading scholarly studies about Russian customs and folklore. However, Chebyshev denies *The Snow Maiden* such educational value: "[W]hat would be the point for anyone to get

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[265] Ibid., 192.

[266] During its first year on stage, in the 1852-53 theatrical season, the play was staged over twenty times both in Petersburg and Moscow; there were many performances the following year as well, but then the number of performances slowly falls to two or three times per season, and begins to skip seasons in the 1870s. However, the play remained in the repertoire into the 1880s (*Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 4, 385; vol. 5, 507). The play was not forgotten later, either: In fact, one of the very first Russian silent films was made in 1909 on the basis of this play, by director Vasily Goncharov, in Alexander Khanzhonkov's film studio. For more information on this film, see *Velikii Kinemo: Katalog sokhranivshikhsia igrovykh fil'mov Rossii* (1908-1919) (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 16-19.

[267] For an example of a review of this play, accompanied by pictures of the production, see *Russkii khudozhestvennyi listok, izdavaemyi V. Timmom*, January 10, 1853. The author of this booklet lauds Sukhonin's idea to show old Russian wedding rituals on stage and praises the lavish production given to the play by the Directorate. He then argues that all Russians have patriotic feelings towards everything Russian, and that the Russian society has a quintessential national ("narodnyi") quality, even notwithstanding the fact that many everyday customs and objects have been taken from the West. According to this author, the success of such plays as *Russian Wedding* is the best proof of the " true Russianness" of Europeanized Russian society.

acquainted with the details of the never-existing laws of the never-existing Berendeyan land?"[268] Chebyshev thus appears to deny Ostrovsky's Berendeyan land any connection to actual Russian traditions. However, his word choice from this point on suggests that he recognizes the existence of Russian folk sources of the play and, thus, realizes that the presentation of the Berendeyan land relies on Russian folklore.

Chebyshev clearly states this idea only at the very end of his article, acknowledging that *The Snow Maiden* was an attempt "to create an artistic work of modern drama out of the materials of primitive poetry."[269] Thus, quite unexpectedly, Chebyshev's argument aligns with ideas expressed by Veselovsky and the "Muscovite," who exhibited an overall positive disposition to the use of folklore in contemporary literature, even if they were not entirely satisfied with Ostrovsky's attempt. Chebyshev is not satisfied with it, either. In the scene in Tsar Berendei's palace, he maintains, "there is no Russian spirit, except for some Russian words, folksy expressions, and a few lines that try to imitate folk poetry."[270] Ostrovsky's folk imitations are, thus, not sophisticated enough to make the inner core of the play, its "spirit," "Russian." And yet, at this point of his analysis Chebyshev starts equating the Berendeyans with Russians. For example, he remarks that the trial of Mizgir, who is guilty of betraying the trust of a woman in love and thus deserves a most severe punishment, "is appropriate only in some kind of Arcadia, but not at all in the land of the Russian Berendeyans."[271] Tsar Berendei himself, with his Shakespearian speeches about

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[268] "Какой интерес для кого бы то ни было может иметь ознакомление с подробностями небывалых юридических порядков несуществовавшей Берендеевской земли" (Zelinskii, *Kriticheskie kommentarii*, 192).
[269] "Создать из материалов первичной поэзии художественное произведение современной драматургии…" (ibid.,195).
[270] "Русского духа, кроме русских слов, простонародных выражений, да некоторых стихов, подделывающихся под склад произведений народной поэзии, - нет" (ibid., 193).
[271] "Уместен разве в какой-нибудь Аркадии, но отнюдь не у русских берендеев…" (ibid., 193).

the diminishing feeling of love in his subjects and his excitement about feminine beauty, is a bad fit for a Russian fairy tale, the reviewer maintains.[272]

Chebyshev thus seems frustrated precisely because the Russian element in the play does not match his preconceived idea about the representation of Russianness. He concludes that the entire worldview expressed in Ostrovsky's fairy-tale play is in fact "alien" ("chuzhdo") to the spirit of Russian folk poetry. In order to emphasize the lack of Russianness and authenticity in the play, Chebyshev resorts to the image of a masquerade:

> Ostrovsky's entire fairy tale is not a national [*narodnoe*] work, but rather a foreign and modern product, dressed in Old Russian dress. This dress does not suit it and, not at all concealing its foreign and recent origin, it only makes a strange and unpleasant impression by its contrast with the whole composition and spirit of the fairy tale.[273]

What does Chebyshev mean when he calls *The Snow Maiden* "a foreign product," which unsuccessfully tries to disguise itself as Russian? It turns out that the main sources for *The Snow Maiden*, according to Chebyshev, are Shakespeare's plays, and especially his *Midsummer Night's Dream*.[274] Chebyshev sees Shakespeare's influence everywhere in *The Snow Maiden*: in the choice of subject, in the florid quality of the monologues, and even in the way the play ends. Tsar Berendei's speech in the play's finale reminds Chebyshev of Shakespeare's habit of presenting his audience with a promise of a happy future in order to lessen the effect of a tragic ending in his dramas. (He argues that this device was employed by Shakespeare in his tragedies *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear.*) Ultimately, Chebyshev

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[272] Ibid., 193.

[273] "Вся сказка Островского—это не произведение народное, а чужеземный и современный продукт, переряженный в древнерусское платье; это платье к нему совсем не пристало и нисколько не скрывая его иностранного и недавнего происхождения, только производит странное и неприятное впечатление своей противоположностью со всем складом и духом сказки" (ibid., 193).

[274] It is not clear why Chebyshev calls the play "a foreign and modern product," if the only foreign influence he sees is Shakespeare. Perhaps he refers to the fact that Shakespeare had only recently been translated into Russian.

proclaims that the entire play is "a copy, and sometimes a slavish copy, from Shakespeare."[275] The folk sources that Ostrovsky employed turn out to be just an "old Russian dress"—a disguise.

The idea that Ostrovsky imitated Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* in his *Snow Maiden* is repeated by Vladimir Chuiko, who elaborates on this point extensively in an article published in *The Voice* (*Golos*) a few days after Chebyshev's article.[276] Stating that the only "original" feature of *The Snow Maiden* is that its plot is taken from a folk fairy tale (remarkably, a borrowing from a folk source is not even considered a borrowing), Chuiko identifies a host of characters and plot elements of the as mere imitations of Shakespearian motifs. He then adds that while some elements of the play come from Shakespeare, still others are borrowed from Offenbach's operetta *La belle Hélène* (*Prekrasnaia Elena*).[277] This comparison with Offenbach is truly far-fetched: the plots of Ostrovsky's play and Offenbach's operetta have very little in common. Obviously Chuiko is trying to interpret *The Snow Maiden* based on the theatrical conventions with which he is familiar. The example of operetta, with its mixture of spoken word, singing, and dancing, appears the most relevant, but ultimately confuses the reviewer, since *The Snow Maiden* is allegedly too

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[275] Ibid., 194.

[276] W. [Vladimir Chuiko], "Literatura i zhizn.' (Po povodu 'Snegurochki.' – Shekspir i Ostrovskii. – Fantastichnost' i drama. – Ostrovskii i Offenbakh. – Frantsuzskaia feeriia)," *Golos*, September 20, 1873, 1-2. Masanov does not provide any potential explanation of this penname. However, a comparison of this article with a later article by Vladimir Chuiko (V. Chuiko, "Teatr i muzyka. Shekspirovskie predstavleniia Rossii," *Novosti* February 15, 1877, 2; there is a typo in the title of the article: it should be "predstavlenia Rossi," as this article is about a tour of the Italian actor Ernesto Rossi in Russia in 1877) shows that Chuiko's later article repeats some sections of the article by "W" verbatim. Masanov does not list "W" as one of Chuiko's pseudonims, but it obviously needs to be added to the list he provides (Masanov, *Slovar' psevdonimov russkikh pisatelei,* vol. 4, 517). In fact, Chuiko later repeated the same ideas about Ostrovsky's indebtedness to Shakespeare and Offenbach in his monograph on Shakespeare: V. Chuiko, *Shekspir, iego zhizn' i proizvedeniia* (St. Petersburg: Izd. A. S. Suvorina, 1889), 265-269.

[277] *La belle Hélène* (*Prekrasnaia Elena*) was translated from the French by V. Aleksandrov (V. A. Krylov) and was a staple of the theater stage exactly at the time when Ostrovsky's play came out. *La belle Hélène* was staged numerous times in Petersburg from 1868 till 1878, and fewer times in Moscow, from 1870 till 1872. See Kholodov, et al., *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 5, 499.

serious for an operetta. Chuiko then suggests yet another genre model for Ostrovsky's play: he argues that Ostrovsky wanted to write something similar to "contemporary French féeries," which are "plays for your eyes, for magnificent production, for amazing set designs, and for stage trickery."[278] Yet again, Chuiko criticizes Ostrovsky for taking his subject too "seriously" and thereby violating the conventions of the genre. The reviewer thus tries hard to apply frameworks of various theatrical genres to his interpretation of Ostrovsky's play, and ultimately fails to find appropriate ones.[279]

The result of Chuiko's elaboration is emblematic of the general confusion that the appearance of *The Snow Maiden* caused among critics in 1873-1874. The play was both staged and perceived as a light fairy tale, on a par with "ballets-féeries" that abounded on the Russian stage. Attitudes toward the subject and to the folklore-inspired core of the play varied. A small number of reviewers lauded the idea of infusing "high culture" with elements of the "native" tradition derived from folklore. However, even these reviewers were not satisfied with the results of Ostrovsky's attempt. At the same time, reviewers seemed to have a hard time explaining what mode of incorporating the folk tradition would be exemplary for a work of contemporary literature: models for emulation were obviously

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[278] W. [Chuiko, V. V.] "Literatura i zhizn'," 2.

[279] Chuiko does yet one more peculiar thing in his review: he applies the word "Berendeyan" to various phenomena in contemporary Russian life and coins it as a derogatory term. First he applies it to *The Snow Maiden* itself: since in his play Ostrovsky "neglected the most basic rules of logic and aesthetics," what resulted from his efforts turned out to be "extremely Berendeyan" ("chudovishchno berendeevskoe") (ibid., 2). Curiously, the reviewer then dedicates the entire second half of his article to discussing a few examples of "Berendeyanism" ("berendeevshchina") in the Russian press and contemporary social life. Even though Chuiko never explains what he means by "Berendeyanism," one can surmise from the examples he gives that "Berendeyanism" ("berendeevshchina," "berendeistvo") for him is a synonym for a combination of such qualities as stupidity, lack of common sense, but at the same time conceit, short-sightedness, and unwarranted belief in one's intelligence, common sense, and importance. To my knowledge, this is the first example of the usage of the "Berendei" root as a term. Katia Dianina in her article on the "Berendeevka tradition" in the late 1890s-early 1900s talks about a completely different usage of this root: to describe whimsical folk-inspired forms in architecture and crafts (Dianina, "'Our Berendeevka'").

not available, and even discussions about the purpose of incorporating the native tradition into modern art and literature seemed to lack common ground.

Not surprisingly, then, the majority of reviewers rejected the play and its folkloric component. For some reviewers the latter was unacceptable and betrayed a backwardness that should have no place in literature and theater. Others saw the play as trifling and belonging to a lower genre, while still others simply expressed their puzzlement about what exactly this play was supposed to represent. Most reviewers clearly exhibited no interest in the scenes representing folk rituals and found Ostrovsky's presentation of the Berendeyan land boring and unimportant for the plot. Reviewers largely perceived the play as being far from contemporary concerns and, for that reason, devoid of any literary value; thus they relegated it to the sphere of lower entertainment.

When looking at the reception of Ostrovsky's play in 1873-1874, it appears that nothing in this reception predicted that, only a few years later, important cultural figures would find in the play an inspiration to explore their visions of Russian antiquity and to experiment with presenting ancient Rus' on stage. It seems even less likely that the play would ultimately be celebrated in the press as an embodiment of a Russian legendary past. The next chapter is dedicated to this transitional period, during which the play initially associated with eclectic "ballets-féeries" came to be admired as a representation of ancient Russia.

CHAPTER TWO: *The Snow Maiden* in Musical Theater and in the Arts, 1880-1899

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and His Opera *The Snow Maiden*

The history of the reception of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* would most certainly be different if Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov had not taken up its plot as the basis for his eponymous opera, which was composed in 1880-1881 and premiered in February 1882 at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. Unlike Ostrovsky, who left very meager commentary on his play and said nothing of its origins and his intentions, Rimsky-Korsakov described changes in his attitude toward Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* and its subject as well as the process of the opera's creation in detail. In his memoir *My Musical Life* (*Letopis' moei muzykal'noi zhizni*), he linked the subject of the opera to ethnographic studies of ancient Slavic pagan beliefs, and he endeavored in his work on the opera to introduce a new musical idiom associated with ancient Slavic paganism to art music.

In the late 1870s, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov was one of the more prolific and successful composers of the New Russian School.[280] He was the author of a number of symphonic works and the opera *The Maid of Pskov* (1872), written under the tutelage of Mily Balakirev. The opera was steeped in the aesthetics of the New Russian School, with its search for a unique Russian national style based on Russian folk songs and orientalist motifs. In 1871, Rimsky-Korsakov became a professor at the Saint Petersburg

[280] In Russian scholarship, this group of composers is most commonly referred to as "The Mighty Handful" ("moguchaia kuchka"). In Western scholarship, the terms "the New Russian School" and "the Five" are more common. In this dissertation, I will be using the term "the New Russian School." The group consisted of Mily Balakirev, Alexander Borodin, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. The group's existence as a close-knit association falls on the late 1850s-1860s; starting the 1870s, each composer essentially followed his own path, and the group did not exist as an entity. However, the perception of the group's shared aesthetic persisted in musical criticism, as testified by the reviews discussed later in the chapter.

Conservatory, which made him reevaluate his musical training; the composer undertook a rigorous course of self-education to master Western methods of composition. This explains his unique position among the composers of the New Russia School: while he still upheld their nationalizing aesthetic, he strove to combine this aesthetic with knowledge of principles of conventional Western harmony. Such an intermediary position influenced both the cooling relationship between Rimsky-Korsakov and the other members of the New Russian School and the inconclusive assessment of his music in the press.

Mily Balakirev, initially the leader of the New Russian School, was an avid collector of authentic folk songs who sought to preserve the folk musical tradition and to create a uniquely Russian musical idiom in art music on the basis of folk melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic features. Balakirev authored a famous collection, *Forty Russian Folk Songs* (*40 russkikh narodnykh pesen*, 1866), which was the result of his travels around the Volga region to collect folk songs from peasants.[281] Composers of the New Russian School were often criticized for overusing songs from Balakirev's collection in their compositions—a habit that was attributed to a lack of originality.[282]

Rimsky-Korsakov's work on *The Snow Maiden* grew out of his own folklore-collecting activities, which were influenced by Balakirev. In 1875-1876, Rimsky-Korsakov worked on a collection of folk songs with Terty Filippov. Filippov, a close friend of Balakirev (and Ostrovsky), was a connoisseur, collector, and performer of Russian folk songs. He asked for Rimsky-Korsakov's help in writing down the songs that he learned by

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[281] Balakirev made a point of collecting his songs from rural, not urban, populations; as he rightly believed, folk songs popular in urban environments were contaminated by later influences. See Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 37-38.
[282] For an example of such accusation in relation to Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*, see K. Galler, "Muzykal'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka,' opera N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, February 1, 1882, 1.

listening to peasants and lower-class urban dwellers. Rimsky-Korsakov also helped him harmonize the songs and publish them with a piano accompaniment. In his memoirs, Rimsky-Korsakov notes that the majority of Filippov's songs were lyrical (*protiazhnye*), with only a few dance (*khorovodnye*, *igrovye*) and ritual (*obriadovye*) songs. By this point, the composer became more and more interested in calendar songs,[283] believing them to be the most ancient layer of musical folklore. While working with Filippov, Rimsky-Korsakov conceived of his own song collection, which would include mostly ritual songs related to calendar and family rituals. He describes his work on this collection, which took two years (1875-1877, published in 1877), in his *My Musical Life*.[284]

The work on that collection introduced the composer to a number of studies of folk culture specifically dedicated to customs and songs related to the calendar cycle. Among ethnographers and other scholars who influenced him, Rimsky-Korsakov lists Sakharov, Tereshchenko, Shein, and Afanasyev.[285] Through his readings, the composer became enamored with the pagan cult of the sun, and he searched for the remnants of this cult both in the texts and the music of folk songs.[286] He regarded the sun cult as the most ancient layer of folk belief, traces of which were still preserved in songs related to calendar rituals. While Rimsky-Korsakov lists a number of folklore scholars, his views align most closely

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[283] "Calendar songs" is a more general term that denotes songs that came in the form of dance and ritual songs performed at different times of the calendar cycle, that is, seasonal agricultural activities.
[284] N. A. Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis' moiei muzykal'noi zhizni* (Moscow: Gos. muz. izd-vo, 1955), 95-96. In the discussion that follows, citations from the Russian original are taken from Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis'*, and all translations from Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, *My Musical Life*, trans. Judah A. Joffe (New York: Vienna House, 1972).
[285] While he does not list the exact works, Rimsky-Korsakov is most likely referring to the following: Ivan Sakharov's *Russian People's Tales of the Family Life of Their Ancestors* (*Skazaniia russkogo naroda o semeinoi zhizni svoikh predkov*, 1836) and *Songs of the Russian People* (*Pesni russkogo naroda,* 1838-1839); Alexander Tereshchenko's *Everyday Life of the Russian People* (*Byt russkogo naroda*, 1848); Pavel Shein's *Russian Folk Songs and Epic Songs* (*Russkie narodnye byliny i pesni*, 1859), and Alexander Afanasyev's *The Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs (Poeticheskie vozzreniia slavian na prirodu,* 1865-1869).
[286] Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis*', 96.

with the central idea of Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook*: he sees a cohesive system of pagan beliefs underlying folk songs and rituals still popular among peasants, who themselves do not even realize what their customs are based on:

> [T]he whole cycle of ceremonial songs [*obriadovye pesni*] and games to this very day rests on the ancient pagan sun-worship which lives unconsciously in the people. The people […] sing their ceremonial songs by force of habit and custom, neither understanding nor suspecting what really underlies these ceremonies [*obriady*] and games.[287]

Rimsky-Korsakov saw his project of sorting through folk songs and finding the ones that were most ancient as a preservationist project; there was a sense of urgency to it, because, as Rimsky-Korsakov states, "today, however, the last vestiges of ancient song and, with them, all signs of ancient pantheism are evidently vanishing."[288] He wanted to capture those remains and preserve them by publishing the most ancient songs.

However, Rimsky-Korsakov's other interest was to use his research on folk songs to further his musical composition. By his own admission, his infatuation with the Slavic pagan sun cult found realization in four of his operas: *May Night*, *The Snow Maiden*, *Mlada*, and *Christmas Eve*.[289]

While *May Night* (1879) was Rimsky-Korsakov's first opera that grew out of his newfound excitement about Slavic paganism, the composer considered *The Snow Maiden* his most successful elaboration on this subject. It is instructive to see the composer reflect upon his changing attitude to Ostrovsky's play in *My Musical Life*:

> I had first read *Snyegoorochka* in 1874 or thereabouts, when it had just appeared in print. At that reading I had liked it but little; the kingdom of the Byeryendyeys had appeared queer to me. Why? Were the ideas of the sixties still alive in me, or did the

[287] Rimsky-Korsakov, *Chronicle*, 207; in this translation, I have omitted the words "as a nation," since they are not in the original.
[288] Ibid., 207-208.
[289] Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis'*, 119.

> demands, current in the seventies, that subject-matter be taken from so-called *life* hold me in their grip? Or had Moussorgsky's naturalism carried me away on its current? Probably all three together. In a word, Ostrovsky's wonderful, poetic fairy-tale had made no impression on me.[290]

Notably, the composer's attitude toward Ostrovsky's play in the mid-1870s was the same as that of the positivist critics (see Chapter One). It appeared too fanciful and far from "real life." Its subject was very far from Lev Mei's historical drama *The Maid of Pskov*, the basis for Rimsky-Korsakov's first opera, which had premiered in the same year as Ostrovsky's play.

However, in a matter of a few years the composer's attitude toward Ostrovsky's play changed dramatically:

> During the winter of 1879-80, when I re-read *Snyegoorochka*, its wonderful, poetic beauty had become evident to me. At once I conceived a longing to write an opera on the subject; and the more I pondered my intention, the more enamoured I felt of Ostrovsky's fairy-tale. My warmth towards ancient Russian custom and pagan pantheism, which had manifested itself little by little, now blazed forth in a bright flame. There was no better theme in the world for me, there were no finer poetic figures for me, than Snyegoorochka, Lyel, or Vyesna (Spring); there was no better kingdom than the kingdom of the Byeryendyeys with their wonderful ruler; there was no better view of world and religion than the worship of Yarilo-Sun.[291]

In Ostrovsky's play, Rimsky-Korsakov now saw a perfect match for his new sensibilities, and therefore, a perfect subject for a creative endeavor. A striking feature of the quoted passage is the intensity of the composer's identification with the play's subject and (pre)historical setting; he also casts himself as a devotee of the newfound cult the play presents.

Rimsky-Korsakov started working on the opera in the spring of 1880, after discussing his plans with Ostrovsky. He used Ostrovsky's play as a libretto, omitting some

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[290] Rimsky-Korsakov, *Chronicle*, 228-229. The transliteration of the Russian in this passage reflects that of the translation, and not the ALA-LC Romanization system used in this dissertation.
[291] Ibid., 229.

minor characters and their lines altogether, cutting some passages, and altering some lines to better suit his musical ideas; he consulted with Ostrovsky about these cuts, and was happy that Ostrovsky easily agreed to all of them.[292] In terms of the music, he employed folk melodies as building blocks as well as inspiration; most of these melodies came from his own collection of folk songs. Additionally, he used snippets of folk calls and melodies that he remembered from his childhood or heard in the village of Stelyovo, where the opera was mostly written; some melodies were based on bird songs or other sounds of nature.[293] Rimsky-Korsakov wrote *The Snow Maiden* in record time: he indicates the dates of composition as June 1 – August 12 of 1880; these dates, of course, do not include orchestration, which was completed by March 26, 1881.[294] The composer was thoroughly satisfied with the opera and believed it to be an innovative, groundbreaking work. He always considered this opera his biggest compositional breakthrough, and in connection with its Moscow production in 1893 asserted, "I also had become convinced not only that *Snegoorochka* was my best opera, but taken all in all—as to its idea and its execution—possibly the best of contemporary operas."[295] The composer's special attitude to this opera also manifested itself in his plan to write a thorough musical analysis of its form and motivic development in 1909.[296]

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[292] Correspondence between Ostrovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov about *The Snow Maiden* is reproduced in V. Kiselev, "A. N. Ostrovskii i N. A. Rimskii-Korsakov," in *A. N. Ostrovskii i russkie kompozitory. Pis'ma*, ed. Kolosova and Filippov (Moscow and Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1937), 172-185.
[293] Rimsky-Korsakov describes his sources in his *Chronicle* (Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis',* 136-137). See also Richard Taruskin, "The Snow Maiden," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol. 4 (London: Macmillan Reference; New York: Grove's Dictionaries, 1999), 428-430.
[294] Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis',* 134-135.
[295] Rimsky-Korsakov, *Chronicle,* 330.
[296] The work was left unfinished. See the unfinished draft in Rimskii-Korsakov, "Razbor *Snegurochki*," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska,* vol. 4 (Moscow: Gosudarstvnnoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1960), 393-426.

For Rimsky-Korsakov, *The Snow Maiden* exemplified an innovation in musical language through employment of folk songs, particularly calendar ritual songs, upon which composers of art music did not previously draw. This innovation, he believed, established a crucial link between contemporary music and the most ancient songs of the Slavic folk musical tradition.

The First Production of the Opera: The Mariinsky Theater, 1882

The production of the opera by the Mariinsky Theater in 1882 largely followed the standards of operatic productions of the time. Different artists worked on different aspects of the production: nature sets were created by Mikhail Bocharov, sets with buildings and interiors by Matvei Shishkov, and designs for the costumes were sketched by Mikhail Klodt. Rimsky-Korsakov himself exhibited a peculiar attitude toward the production: he seemed almost uninterested in the visual aspect of it, and never expressed any ideas about what style would be appropriate for a production. In his retrospective discussion of the production by the Mariinsky Theater, he focused on the musical side, lamenting the cuts that were made in the opera and listing the singers.[297] While he did not comment on the visual aspect of the production, he likely believed that it was beautiful and therefore, satisfactory. In his later comments on the first Moscow production in 1893, he mentioned that he found the sets and costumes in Moscow less impressive than the ones in the Mariinsky Theater production.[298] However, he still preferred the Moscow production due to the more careful and respectful attitude toward his music. Rimsky-Korsakov thus took

[297] Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis'*, 143, 145-146.
[298] Ibid., 185.

serious interest only in the musical aspect of the production of his opera, having no ambition to turn it into a Gesamtkunstwerk.[299]

The Snow Maiden happened to be the first Russian opera produced under the new Director of Imperial Theaters, Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolozhsky, who promised to promote the national musical theater.[300] The Directorate seemed to go to great lengths to give *The Snow Maiden* a magnificent production. It was lavish and cost about 30,000 rubles,[301] a fact well known to reviewers and the public. Reviewers mention the cost very often, since it was an exorbitantly large sum unheard of for productions of Russian operas.[302] The production received brand new sets and costumes. However, given that different artists worked on different parts of the sets, the production did not exhibit stylistic unity. There is no consensus among scholars about the quality of the sets: Syrkina argues that Mikhail Bocharov's sets for the Prologue presented a beautiful picture of a typical Russian landscape,[303] while Giliarovskaya notes that Rimsky-Korsakov's student and friend, I. F. Tiumenev, who attended the performance, bemoaned the clichéd character of Bocharov's

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[299] Even though he does talk about Wagner in his *My Musical Life*, he does so only from a strictly musical standpoint, in order to emphasize that he uses leitmotifs differently from the German composer (Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis'*, 138).

[300] On Vsevolozhsky's activities as the Director, see Ianina Gurova, *Ivan Aleksandrovich Vsevolozhskii i ego znachenie v istorii russkogo muzykal'nogo teatra* (St. Petersburg: Sfifia-print, 2015).

[301] Eduard Napravnik, the leading conductor of the Imperial Theaters in St. Petersburg, wrote in his diary that "the production is luxurious, costing more than 30,000 rubles." See Napravnik, E. F. *Avtobiograficheskie, tvorcheskie materialy, dokumenty, pis'ma,* ed. L. M. Kutateladze and Iu. V. Keldysh (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1959), 90.

[302] See, for example, "Teatr i muzyka," *Novoe vremia*, December 3, 1881, 3. In the context of this time period, even the fact that new sets and costumes were created for a Russian opera represents a certain departure from the usual practices. Russian operas and dramas were usually staged on very limited budgets, and old sets and costumes were reused. Giliarovskaya touches on this in her article on the productions of Rimsky-Korsakov's operas by citing Tchaikovsky's complaint to Nadezhda von Meck about the staging of his opera *The Maid of Orleans* (February, 1881), which he calls "beggarly" (*nishchenskaia*), since all sets and costumes were reused from various old productions. See N. V. Giliarovskaia, "Rimskii-Korsakov i khudozhniki (Materialy k stsenicheskoi istorii oper Rimskogo-Korsakova)," in *Rimskii-Korsakov: Issledovaniia, materialy, pis'ma*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1954), 262.

[303] F. Syrkina, *Russkoe teatral'no-dekoratsionnoe iskusstvo vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1956): 194; see image of the nature set, 99.

sets.[304] Indeed, for the set of Tsar Berendei's palace, Matvei Shishkov created a rather generic pavilion with a colonnade. Even though the colonnade bore Russian ornaments, they were not well integrated with the overall architecture of the palace.[305] These sources indicate that there was no unified conception in the set design.

The costumes for the production present a more interesting case. It appears that the artist Mikhail Petrovich Klodt, who made sketches for the costumes, had a certain vision in mind. He based his sketches on visual elements of Scythian artifacts, which Klodt studied at the Hermitage Museum. Scythians were Iranian-speaking nomads who inhabited large areas of the central Eurasian steppes from the 9th century BC to the 4th century AD. Burial mounds of Scythian culture were found in regions of Southern Russia, Crimea, and the Caucasus starting in the mid-eighteenth century, and some of the artifacts found there were placed in the Kunstkammer Museum in St. Petersburg. Scythian antiquities had been studied systematically since the excavation of the Kul-Oba burial mound near Kerch in 1830; the study was intensified with the establishment of the Imperial Archaeological Commission (Imperatorskaia Arkheologicheskaia Komissiia) in 1859.[306] Artifacts of Scythian culture were preserved in the New Hermitage Museum (which opened in 1852), with the Kul-Oba artifacts being the nucleus of the collection.[307]

It is not clear what exactly prompted Klodt, in agreement with the Directorate, to present the Berendeyans as Scythians. This decision was likely a combination of personal and institutional factors. In 1869-1871, Klodt worked as a sketch artist on the expedition of

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[304] Giliarovskaia, 270.
[305] Syrkina, 203; see image of the palace, 122.
[306] Boris Piotrovsky, Liudmila Galanina, and Nonna Grach, *Scythian Art* (Leningrad: Aurora; Oxford: Phaidon, 1987), 5.
[307] Caspar Meyer, *Greco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia: From Classical Antiquity to Russian Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

the Imperial Archaeological Commission on the Taman Peninsula, where the Commission was studying ancient burial mounds;[308] thus, Klodt had firsthand knowledge of archaeological sites associated with Scythian culture. There were ongoing excavations and research on Scythian (and Greco-Scythian) culture at the time of *The Snow Maiden*'s first production, and it is possible that the Directorate's interest in presenting the Berendeyans as Scythians was influenced by the new advances in archaeology.[309] At that point, no ethnic or cultural connection between the Scythians and the Slavs had yet been made; as Caspar Meyer points out, scholars of the early nineteenth century established that Scythians spoke Iranian languages and were too distinct from Slavs in terms of their culture to be considered ancestors of Russians.[310]

Information about the Scythian element in the production was available to the public. Indeed, an article published before the premier mentions that Klodt had based his costumes on the depictions of Scythians found on vases at the Hermitage.[311] The most famous of these vases is the electrum flask from the Kul-Oba burial mound, which contains relief figures depicting Scythian warriors; this vase has been reproduced in various publications on Scythian art.[312]

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[308] "Klodt fon Iurgensburg," in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, vol. 15 (St. Petersburg, 1895): 415-416. Very little information is available on M. P. Klodt; the only short monograph on the artist (by V. A. Grigor'eva) could not be located.

[309] See Caspar Meyer's discussion of this research: Meyer, *Greco-Scythian Art*, esp. Chapters One and Two.

[310] Meyer, *Greco-Scythian Art*, 88. Meyer briefly touches upon the ideas of "Scythianism" in Russian poetry and art during the revolutionary years, when Scythians were mythologized as direct ancestors of Slavs; Meyer shows that such sentiments did not exist in the nineteenth-century Russian scholarly establishment (Meyer, 90-93). Other, less direct indications that Slavs and Scythians were perceived as different entities in the nineteenth century include, for example, Viktor Vasnetsov's painting of 1881, *The Battle between the Scythians and the Slavs* (*Boi skifov so slavianami*), which clearly differentiates the two as separate ethnic groups.

[311] "Teatr i muzyka," *Novoe vremia*, December 3, 1881, 3.

[312] See black-and-white reproduction in Meyer, *Greco-Scythian Art*, 13; a detailed reproduction in color can be found in Piotrovsky, Galanina, and Grach, *Scythian Art*, plates 184-187.

A closer look at Klodt's sketches[313] confirms that Scythian motifs[314] were used in the costumes of Tsar Berendei and Bermyata, the tsar's minister (see Figures 4 and 5): both of them boast lavish metal decorations (gold on the tsar's costume, and silver on Bermyata's costume), with animalistic motifs, which were common in Scythian art. Their boots look very similar to those worn by Scythian warriors on the Kul-Oba vase. Women's costumes also feature animalistic motifs in the embroidery and lavish gold and silver jewelry, as on the costume of the *boyarynia* (Fig. 6). The costume of Bobylikha features a headdress similar to a Russian "kichka with horns" (*rogataia kichka*), but covered with golden disc-shaped plaques, a common motif in Scythian art (Fig. 7).

However, not all of the costumes in the sketches feature Scythian patterns. Of course, one would not expect supernatural characters from Ostrovsky's play to look like villagers. Still, it is remarkable that Klodt's Grandfather Frost wore a white toga and a cloak (Fig. 8) and resembled Moses descending from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. The Snow Maiden's embroidered tulle ballroom dress in the Prologue, on the other hand, was strikingly modern (Fig. 9). There are also obvious departures from the Scythian style in the costumes of the villagers. For example, the costume of Mizgir in the sketch does not have any Scythian motifs and resembles a generic "Eastern" costume, with its curved

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[313] These illustrations were taken from a calendar issued by the St. Petersburg State Theater Library, which was where Koldt's sketches were originally published. However, a correction is in order: the calendar attributes these sketches to Mikhail Konstantinovich Klodt, when in fact they belong to his cousin, Mikhail Petrovich Klodt, who was a less famous painter. It is not clear why the publishers made this mistake; the signature on the sketches is not Mikhail Konstantinovich's (his paintings, with his signature, are widely available for comparison), but Mikhail Petrovich's. Additionally, Stasov in his article on Vasnetsov mentions that the pictures were commissioned from the baron M. P. Klodt. See V. V. Stasov, "Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov i ego raboty," in V. V. Stasov, *Stat'i i zametki, ne voshedshie v sobraniia sochinenii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954), 208.

[314] For examples of Scythian artifacts that were housed in the Hermitage, could have been known to the artist, and resemble the costume elements and decorations on the sketches, see Piotrovsky, Galanina, and Grach, *Scythian Art*, plates 19-22 (golden plaques with animalistic motifs), 124-127 (golden torques—a kind of necklace), 130-134 (golden ear ornaments).

dagger and pantaloons (Fig. 10).[315] Among Klodt's sketches, there is a "female *skomorokh*" who looks like an Ancient Greek Maenad, dressed in a short dress with one shoulder strap and a cape made of panther's hide with twines of ivy leaves around her waist and head; in fact, Klodt even refers to the character as a *vakkhanka* (Russian for "Maenad") in his sketch (Fig. 11). One can assume that there were a few characters dressed in such costumes who participated in the dance scenes and represented villagers. We also know that a dance of Khmel and Khmelikha (male and female Hops Plants) was added, to provide a role for the famous prima ballerina Marie Petipa; judging from the sketch of the costume of Khmel (Fig. 12), these two costumes were meant to look plant-like, without any Scythian motifs.

It is hard to know to what extent the actual costumes adhered to the sketches. For example, a photograph of Maria Dolina in the role of the shepherd Lel shows her wearing a Phrygian cap that is somewhat similar to the caps worn by Scythians on the Kul-Oba vase (Fig. 13). However, the rest of the costume contains no Scythian elements at all and consists of a short dress decorated with a sun-shaped print and a cape.

The costumes were thus quite eclectic. However, the fact that at least an attempt was made to include several costumes that would follow a single historical pattern (based on Scythian artifacts) suggests that an idea of a historically informed and stylistically unified production of the opera had started to germinate. Klodt's idea to dress the Berendeyans as Scythians indicates a new interest in imagining the historical "prototype" for the fictional Berendeyans.

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[315] When Stanislavsky later turned his Mizgir into a "guest from the East," he was widely reproached for the choice, but no disgruntled reviewer remembered that this interpretation of Mizgir's image had first been done in opera.

However, it is clear that the Berendeyans were not yet perceived as ancient Russians or Slavs. In this regard, it is instructive to take into consideration the opinion of Vladimir Stasov, who was involved in the 1882 production.[316] On December 20, 1881, Ilya Repin wrote an ecstatic letter to Stasov, lauding the sketches that Viktor Vasnetsov had just created for a performance of Ostrovsky's play at Savva Mamontov's house.[317] Repin was eager to recommend Vasnetsov's sketches for the production of the opera at the Mariinsky: "Vasnetsov did sketches for the costumes; he created such marvelous types, it's just delightful!!! <…> These are simply *chefs d'oeuvre*. If no costumes have yet been made for the opera *The Snow Maiden*, notify me as soon as possible, and we will send you this wondrous collection of Berendeyans."[318] Repin added that if the Mariinsky Theater already had sketches for the costumes lined up, then at least Stasov could let Rimsky-Korsakov know about Vasnetsov's sketches, since the composer would be "delighted" to see them.

Strangely, there is no indication that Stasov paid any attention to this information; he apparently never responded to the letter, and appears to have disregarded Repin's offer—even though he claims otherwise in a later article, which will be discussed shortly.[319] Rimsky-Korsakov never mentions Vasnetsov in his *My Musical Life*, which makes

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[316] It is not exactly clear what Stasov's involvement in the production was; most probably, judging from his own brief comments, he was involved as an artistic consultant. Gozenpud makes no mention of Stasov's participation. See chapter on *The Snow Maiden* at the Mariinsky Theater in A. Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka. 1873-1889* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1973), 251-277. In 1882, Stasov was a librarian in the Public Library in St. Petersburg (since 1856); in 1872, he became Head of the Art Department. This is not the only production that Stasov consulted; to give another example, in 1870, he was invited to provide historical consultation for the production of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* at the Mariinsky Theater (Syrkina, *Russkoe teatral'no-dekoratsionnoe iskusstvo*, 114-115).

[317] The performance took place on January 6, 1882.

[318] "Васнецов сделал для костюмов рисунки; он сделал такие великолепные типы, просто восторг!!! <…> Это просто chefs d'oeuvre. Если к опере «Снегурочка» не сделаны костюмы, то уведомьте меня поскорей, и мы Вам вышлем эту дивную коллекцию берендеев," I. E. Repin, *I. E. Repin i V. V. Stasov. Perepiska*, vol. 2, 1877-1894 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1949), 72.

[319] Stasov's disregard of Repin's praise for Vasnetsov was likely due to the fact that Stasov strongly disapproved of Vasntetsov's turn to mythological and fairy tale subjects in the late 1870s-1880s. See

one wonder whether he indeed saw the sketches and they made no impression on him, or if he never saw them at all. We only know Stasov's later representation of this incident. Reminiscing about Repin's letter in his 1898 article on Viktor Vasnetsov, he notes that while he would have liked to satisfy Repin's wish in 1882, the sets had already been made and the costumes had been commissioned from Klodt. Stasov defended Klodt's idea:

> Our sets were quite good, and the costumes as well. In terms of the latter, something new and original appeared. Baron Klodt thought to give the Berendeyans Scythian-style costumes, which could be easily studied at the Hermitage where so many marvelous objects made of gold, stone, bone, terra cotta, and other materials are housed. This idea did not quite historically accurate, because the Berendeyans were neither Scythian nomads nor an agricultural Slavic people (as Ostrovsky had wished), but some kind of distinct Turkic savage tribe. But that was fine. Baron Klodt's idea was original and was well executed for the stage. Everyone was satisfied.[320]

In his defense of Klodt's costumes Stasov thus acknowledges the historical Berendeyans, who indeed must have been a Turkic tribe mentioned in Russian chronicles between the late tenth century and the early thirteenth century (see the discussion of the historical Berendeyans in Chapter One). Though Stasov claims that Ostrovsky wanted them to be depicted as a Slavic agrarian tribe, we in fact have no evidence of Ostrovsky's specific interpretation of his Berendeyans. At the same time, it is safe to assume that Stasov knew about Rimsky-Korsakov's interest in Slavic pagan cults that informed his work as composer of *The Snow Maiden*.

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discussion of Stasov's attitude toward Vasnetsov in V. I. Plotnikov, "Fol'klornaia tema i problema naslediia v ideino-khudozhestvennoi bor'be 1870-kh nachala 1890-kh godov. V. V. Stasov i V. M. Vasnetsov," in *Problemy razvitiia russkogo iskusstva. Tematicheskii sbornik nauchnykh trudov,* vol. 2 (Leningrad, 1972), 69-88.

[320] "Декорации наши были довольно недурны, костюмы тоже. В этих последних являлось нечто новое, оригинальное. Барон Клодт вздумал дать берендеям костюм скифов, для узнания которого в Эрмитаже есть столько чудесных материалов из золота, камня, кости, терракоты и иных материалов. Такая затея не вполне соответствовала истории потому, что берендеи были вовсе не скифы-конники и не славяне-земледельцы (последнего желал Островский), а какое-то особое тюркское дикое племя. Но нужды нет. Мысль барона Клодта была своеобразна и выполнена на сцене хорошо. Все и остались довольны," (Stasov "Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov i ego raboty," 208).

In his memoirs, Rimsky-Korsakov describes how he played the entire opera for Stasov, Balakirev, and Borodin upon his return from Stelyovo to Petersburg.[321] Undoubtedly, the composer told his listeners about the ancient Slavic component of the opera. However, Stasov's later comment quoted above indicates that he did not then consider it important for the visual representation to match the musical one. Stasov's attitude in this case looks even more surprising if we consider his own work on the costumes for the opera-ballet *Mlada* ten years earlier in 1872. For that quasi-historical Slavic phantasy, commissioned from Rimsky-Korsakov, Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, and César Cui, but never completed, Stasov researched historical sources in order to create "ancient Slavic costumes."[322] Apparently, he did not think such archeological meticulousness was necessary in the case of *The Snow Maiden*. What seemed thus absent from either Stasov's or Rimsky-Korsakov's concerns in 1882 (or, for that matter, from the concerns of other sides involved in the staging) was an interest in the stylistic unity of the production that would encompass set designs, costumes, text, and music. Such stylistic unity was not attempted until the Abramtsevo circle's production of

[321] Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis'*, 139. This is the time, however, when there is a strong sense in Rimsky-Korsakov's memoirs that his musical aspirations were not understood by other members of the circle, with the exception of Borodin. Rimsky-Korsakov notes here that Stasov and Balakirev mostly liked fantastical scenes and scenes of everyday life (*bytovye*), but that they did not understand the hymn to Yarilo (ibid., 139). A question arises: if Stasov was especially fond of the *bytovye* parts of the opera, why did he not think that the Berendeyans should be presented on stage as ancient Slavs?

[322] Stasov discusses *Mlada,* which was an unrealized joint project of Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Borodin, and Cui, in his article on Borodin, published in 1887. According to Stasov's account, those involved in making the sets and costumes strove to base them on the historical sources. Sets were intended to be ancient Slavic in style; Stasov especially praises a sketch for the set of an ancient Slavic pagan temple by M. Shishkov and notes that he, together with Nikolai Lukashevich, was "inventing ancient Slavic costumes in accordance with historical sources" ("сочиняли, по историческим источникам, древнеславянские костюмы"). See V. V. Stasov, "Aleksandr Porfir'evich Borodin," in V. V. Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 354.

the play in 1882 and the Moscow Private Opera's production of the opera in 1885, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Reception of the Opera *The Snow Maiden* in 1882

As demonstrated in Chapter One, the subject of Ostrovsky's play in 1873-1874 was perceived as trifling and suitable only for a work of musical theater (ballet, vaudeville, or maybe opera). Viewers and readers alike were confused about what this play intended to represent. While a few reviewers were sympathetic to the folkloric component of the play, most reviewers were critical or dismissive of that aspect.

Reviewers' reactions to Rimsky-Korsakov's opera in 1882 were strikingly similar to those elicited by Ostrovsky's play ten years earlier. As a matter of fact, when the play was turned into an opera, the theme and setting of *The Snow Maiden* still seemed an awkward fit: it was not serious enough for a serious opera, but it was too monotonous for a fairy-tale opera (or "magic opera," *volshebnaia opera*, as this genre is often called). The fact that the opera strove to represent the mores and customs of a certain kingdom was perceived as its flaw: comparing the opera to Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Liudmila*, reviewers gave strong preference to the magic transformations and geographical variations of Glinka's work over the single geographical location, the Berendeyan land, of Rimsky-Korsakov's.

Moreover, Rimsky-Korsakov's association with the New Russian School made him a target in the eyes of reviewers who opposed the school, and this undoubtedly colored the reception of *The Snow Maiden*. For example, one anonymous reviewer notes wryly that the only enthusiasts among the audience were supporters of the New Russian School; for the rest of the public all the interest in the opera "melted away" just like the Snow Maiden

herself at the end of the opera.[323] Since no one would ever want to listen to this opera again, it would surely "*melt away* in the repertoire of Russian opera."[324] Another anonymous reviewer asserts that, while the Mariinsky Theater was making cuts to the opera to make it fit into an evening, the public "request[ed] just *one* cut—the cut of the entire opera [from the repertoire]."[325] The opera was repeatedly criticized for being too long and boring,[326] just as Ostrovsky's play was a decade before.

Criticism of Rimsky-Korsakov's style came not only from opponents of the New Russian School, such as Konstantin Galler, Nikolai Soloviev, and Mikhail Ivanov, but also César Cui, once a member of the New Russian School. Cui criticized the opera for what he saw as a lack of long, developed melodies; an imbalanced preference given to orchestral rather than singing parts; and a lack of dramatic development. Cui, a composer and prominent critic, published these criticisms in a veiled critique of *The Snow Maiden* in *The Voice*. While he lauded Rimsky-Korsakov's command of orchestration and inventive harmonies, he harshly criticized the short melodies based on excessive repetition. Overall, Cui argued that instrumental music in the opera, especially in the fantastical scenes, was

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[323] A. V., "Teatral'nyi kur'er," *Peterburgskii listok*, January 31, 1882: 3.
[324] Ibid., 3, emphasis in the original.
[325] "Teatral'noe echo," *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, April 10, 1882, 3.
[326] "Teatral'noe echo," *Peterburgskaia gazeta,* February 2, 1882, 3 (this reviewer also claimed that all three operas by Rimsky-Korsakov had shown that the composer had no talent for opera composition); [Partially: V. V. Stasov] "'Snegurochka' (Vesenniaia skazka)," *Golos*, January 31, 1882: 2. This second article presents a very curious case. Scholars of Vladimir Stasov have identified the beginning of this article as belonging to Stasov; it is reprinted in: V. V. Stasov, *Stati'i o muzyke*, vol. 3: 1880-1886 (Moscow: "Muzyka," 1977), 115. This first part of the article only refers to the bestowal of a festive wreath to Rimsky-Korsakov at the end of the concert. See E. N. Viner, M. V. Kal'fa, and V. L. Kandel', eds., *Vladimir Vasil'evich Stasov: Materialy k biografii. Opisanie rukopisei* (Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo Kul't.-Prosvet. Literatury, 1956), 69; see also 11 and 211. The second part of the article is critical of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, calling the opera "quite boring" and insisting that there should be even more cuts in its performance, since it lacks "almost any dramatic movement" and the long musical numbers "are especially tiring for the public," "'Snegurochka' (Vesenniaia skazka)," *Golos*, January 31, 1882, 2. Even if Stasov was indeed not the author of the second part of the article, why did he write the beginning of an article that criticizes the opera of his friend and member of the circle that Stasov always defended? Or should we be suspicious of the Soviet scholar's attribution of this article and suggest that Stasov himself might have been not so fond of this opera as a whole, notwithstanding his praise of some numbers in personal letters to Rimsky-Korsakov?

the opera's strength. The critic concluded that Rimsky-Korsakov's talent was much stronger in the realm of instrumental symphonic music than in opera, and he called *The Snow Maiden* "barely satisfactory."[327]

Opinions of the opponents of the New Russian School were strikingly similar to Cui's. For example, Konstantin Galler characterized Rimsky-Korsakov's music as a "kaleidoscopic rotation of motifs, poor melodic inventiveness, and exquisiteness of harmonies and finishing touches."[328] The critic further claimed that the composer was incapable of inventing his own melodies, which explained his frequent borrowings from folk tunes. He concluded that this opera was, like the previous two (*The Maid of Pskov* and *May Night*), "stillborn."[329] Mikhail Ivanov and Nikolai Soloviev echoed this sentiment, repeating that Rimsky-Korsakov's music paid more attention to details than to the overall dramatic development and therefore could be interesting to a music theorist, but not to theater audiences.[330] The preponderance of orchestral inventiveness and alleged lack of developed vocal lines led some reviewers to compare Rimsky-Korsakov to Wagner, who was a contentious figure at the time; Ivanov evoked this comparison to discredit both Rimsky-Korsakov and Wagner as operatic composers.[331] Ivanov cited the short musical

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[327] *** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki. 'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Golos*, February 3, 1882, 3.
[328] K. Galler, "Muzykal'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka,' opera N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, February 1, 1882. 1.
[329] Ibid. Galler expresses similar ideas in a later review, where he notes Rimsky-Korsakov's interest in peculiar orchestral effects, but lack of melody and, therefore, lack of "thought" in his works. See Galler, K. "'Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova, predstavlennaia na stsene Mariinskogo teatra v Peterburge 29 ianvaria," *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, February 13, 1882, 134-135.
[330] N. Solov'ev, "Muzykal'noe obozrenie. ('Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Peterburgskie vedomosti*, February 6, 1882, 1-2; M. Ivanov, "Muzykal'nye nabroski. ('Snegurochka,' opera N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Novoe vremia*, February 8, 1882, 2.
[331] Ivanov, "Muzykal'nye nabroski," 2. Cui touches upon the question of Wagner and Rimsky-Korsakov in his article as well, claiming that Rimsky-Korsakov does not repeat Wagner's mistake and does not give his leitmotifs to the orchestra only; rather, Rimsky-Korsakov gives his characters certain characteristics that are developed both in the vocal part and in the orchestra; see *** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki.

phrases and the abundance of recitatives as the main reasons for the opera's "dullness" and derided the New Russian School's demand for "truth": "If one has to banish singing because it is unnatural, then why not discard the orchestra, sets, electricity, etc. in the theater—in effect, everything that is called falsity and conventionality?"[332] Ivanov claimed that *The Snow Maiden*'s "failure" testified to the overall failure of the New Russian School's approach to composition.

This is but a brief outline of the reception of the music of Rimsky-Korsakov to *The Snow Maiden* at the time of the opera's first staging. For the purposes of this study, it is the reception of the theme of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera and of Ostrovsky's play as the opera's libretto that is of particular importance.

Overall, there was no agreement about the suitability of Ostrovsky's play for an opera libretto. When reviewers lauded the play and its poetic qualities, they often used this praise as a way to justify their criticism of Rimsky-Korsakov's music. For example, according to Galler, Rimsky-Korsakov chose Ostrovsky's fairy-tale libretto due to the composer's "innate talent… for peculiar harmonies and sophisticated instrumentation,"[333] which are well justified when applied to a fairy-tale subject. However, the reviewer argued that "this poetic libretto, borrowed from Ostrovsky's play, is beyond N. Rimsky-Korsakov's talent."[334] N. Soloviev expressed a similar opinion, arguing that Ostrovsky's play "provides extremely rich material for an opera composer,"[335] but that Rimsky-Korsakov's music, with

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'Snegurochka,'" 2. Rimsky-Korsakov himself claims that at that point he did not know Wagner well enough to imitate his methods; however, he does admit that he used leitmotifs in all his early operas, while pointing out differences in his use of leitmotifs from Wagner's; Rimskii-Korsakov, *Letopis*', 138.

[332] Ivanov, "Muzykal'nye nabroski," 2.

[333] Galler, "'Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova,"134.

[334] Ibid., 135.

[335] Solov'ev, "Muzykal'noe obozrenie. ('Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova)," 1.

its lack of melodic inventiveness, hampered the dramatic development in the opera and made it unsuitable for the stage.

At the same time, reviewers who delved into the plot generally did not view it as particularly suitable for an opera. They put forth two main reasons for its unsuitability: either an absence of action and dramatic contrasts, or a lack of serious content.[336] Reviewers mostly paid attention to the love story and neglected everything else in the plot. For example, Pavel Zinoviev deemed the plot "exquisite and highly poetic for reading," but "somewhat unsuitable" for opera, due to its lack of contrasts and the "preponderance of the idyll" on stage. The critic's opinion stemmed from his seeing the "search for love"[337] as the only mover of the plot; neither "the Berendeyan land" nor uses of pagan mythology in the opera attracted Zinoviev's attention.

Cui's review provides particular insight into the interpretation of the plot by the critics of the first production. The review begins with a restatement of the plot. Like Zinoviev, Cui stresses that a search for love is the main driving force in the opera's libretto. Cui's discussion of the Berendeyans, however, contains noticeable irony: when saying that the opera transports the audience into the "prehistoric kingdom" of the Berendeyans, he describes the Berendeyans as "frivolous" and gently mocks their naïvety and laziness. He

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[336] Eduard Napravnik, the principal conductor of the Mariinsky Theater, expressed similar criticisms of the libretto in his "Evaluation" ("Otzyv") of *The Snow Maiden* (as the principal conductor, he submitted such evaluations to the Directorate regarding the operas planned for productions): "It is hard to explain why the author got interested in this fairy tale, which not only poorly answers the demands of the stage, but is not notable in terms of its substance or the typicality of the characters" ("Трудно объяснить, почему автор увлекся этой сказкой, не только так мало соответствующей требованиям сцены, но и не отличающейся особенным содержанием и типичностью действующих лиц"). Further on, Napravnik criticizes Rimsky-Korsakov's music along the same lines as Cui in his review, claiming that the short melodies, too-intricate harmonies, and monotony of the music were influenced by the "naivety, lifelessness, and unstageability of the libretto" ("Наивность, безжизненность и несценичность либретто оперы «Снегурочки» наложили невольно печать и на музыку"), Napravnik, *Avtobiograficheskie, tvorcheskie materialy,* 66.

[337] P. Z. [Pavel Zinov'ev], "Teatral'noe ekho," *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, January 31, 1882, 3.

goes on to deride the "practical philosophy" of Mizgir, who tells Kupava that there is no return to a lost love, and Tsar Berendei, who states that the death of the Snow Maiden and Mizgir "should not bother" his subjects. Regarding the plot, Cui concludes:

> This universal chase after love, this tsar with his "wise and learned" councilor, this Panglossian philosophy and meager plot contribute to the fact that *The Snow Maiden* is a wonderful subject for a comic operetta. The entire talent of Ostrovsky and all the attractive charm of folk tales and myths were necessary to make this subject more noble and poetic. And yet, while it is full of charming, beautiful details, in general it lacks any interest. The spectator is indifferent to the characters; he does not care about the fate of the Snow Maiden, or Mizgir, or Kupava; the spectator only waits for more miracles, magic, and transformations in the next act.[338]

Cui does not see "folk tales and myths" as the core of the play or libretto; for him, they are only a decorative addition to the love plot. Like Ostrovsky's critics, who deemed the subject matter of his play worthy only of lower genres, Cui here claims that serious opera is too "high" a genre for such a plot, and he suggests that the operetta would be a more suitable musical genre for it. The last sentence of the quoted passage betrays yet another connection with a lower genre: the féerie, where indeed the primary interest of the spectators lies in the magical transformations and dazzling effects. Cui's assessment of the opera thus shares many similarities with critics' attitudes toward Ostrovsky's play. While he does see value in folk myths and customs (in contrast to the critics of Ostrovsky's work), he does not perceive them as central to the opera, and he frames the opera as a féerie due to magical aspects of its plot.

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[338] "Эта всеобщая погоня за любовью, этот царь со своим премудрым советником, панглосовская философия и скудная фабула делают из «Снегурочки» превосходнейший комический опереточный сюжет, и нужен был весь талант г. Островского, и вся привлекательная прелесть народных сказаний и мифических вымыслов, чтобы сюжет этот облагородить и опоэтизировать. И все же он только полон прелестных, красивых деталей, но в целом интереса не представляет. Зритель безучастен к действующим лицам; его не занимает судьба ни Снегурочки, ни Мизгиря, ни Купавы; его занимает только, не будет ли в следующем действии еще каких-нибудь декоративных чудес, волшебства, превращений," *** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki. 'Snegurochka'," 2.

While Cui implies that *The Snow Maiden* bears similarities with the genre of the féerie, M. Ivanov feels that its subject falls short even of a féerie, let alone a serious dramatic opera: "First of all, *The Snow Maiden*'s plot is not suitable for the stage: it is not fitting for a féerie, and yet one definitely cannot take its magic seriously."[339] Belonging to a different camp than Cui, Ivanov nevertheless perceives the opera very similarly.

Whereas reviewers of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* had a hard time finding what to compare the play with, reviewers of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera found the composer's precursor right away. Both Cui and the opponents of the New Russian School confidently named Mikhail Glinka's opera *Ruslan and Liudmila* (1842) as *The Snow Maiden*'s only precursor. Critics of both "camps" were in agreement about the superiority of *Ruslan and Liudmila* over *The Snow Maiden*, and they referred to different aspects of Glinka's opera in order to prove the precursor's advantages. Cui argued that *Ruslan* was more interesting on stage due to the fact that its plot transported the viewer to various different localities, which were juxtaposed with one another. By contrast, *The Snow Maiden*'s action took place only in the Berendeyan Kingdom, and therefore, Cui argued, the opera's concentration on the life of just one tribe, sustained throughout a prologue and four acts, was too long, monotonous, and static.[340] Cui's comparison of *The Snow Maiden* to *Ruslan* betrays his attitude to both of these operas as pertaining to the genre of féerie—since he attributes the main interest of such operas in changing surroundings and depicting various magical worlds; essentially, Cui relegated both of these operas to the lower genre of musical theater.

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[339] "Прежде всего сюжет «Снегурочки» отнюдь не сценический; к феерии он не подходит,—серьезно же отнестись к его волшебствам решительно нельзя" (Ivanov, "Muzykal'nye nabroski," 2).
[340] *** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki. 'Snegurochka,'" 2.

It is clear that both Ostrovsky's play and Rimsky-Korsakov's opera were perceived in the context of the lower genres of theater and musical theater. In 1873, critics wondered if Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* was not a play in its own right, but a libretto for a ballet or opera, and frequently called it a féerie; in 1882, reviewers of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera questioned the subject's suitability for "serious opera" and suggested its closeness to the genre of féerie as well. However, against this background of similarities in the reception of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera and Ostrovsky's play there was also a remarkable difference. The reviewers of the opera in 1882 were very enthusiastic about the use of folk sources in it; some deemed the folk component the only worthy element of the opera and praised its "*narodnost',*" i.e., its national character borne out of the "native," grassroots traditions it incorporates.[341]

Praise for the use of folklore in the opera is scattered across the vast majority of reviews, even those whose assessment of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera is predominantly negative. Such praise, however, usually concerns individual musical numbers, not the opera as a whole. Cui, for example, singles out the music of the Shrovetide celebration as being "full of folk character [*narodnost'*]," as well as the chorus of blind psaltery players as being "marked by folk character" and possessing "a purely epic, calm beauty."[342] Generally, however, Cui remarkably ignores the prominent place of folk tunes in the music of the opera in general.

Notably, praise of the folk-inspired numbers often was often commensurate with reviewers' obvious lack of knowledge of folk music and culture. A previously quoted

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[341] For a discussion of music in this period, the translation of the word *narodnost'* as "folk character" is perhaps most appropriate.
[342] *** [Kiui, Ts. A.]. "Muzykal'nye zametki. 'Snegurochka,'," 2-3.

anonymous reviewer, who claimed that the public's interest in the opera "melted away" as the performance progressed, argued that the music generally did not befit the text of the play; still, he found a few successful musical numbers—all of them written in the style of Russian folk songs. The reviewer singles out Lel's song "Strawberry-Berry" as having "a mournful Russian tune"; the maiden's chorus, "We Will Not Give Away Our Girlfriend," written in "the old-Russian wedding style"; and the "choruses of the Berendeyans written in the style of *podbliudnye* Russian songs, bidding farewell to the Shrovetide effigy."[343] The latter commentary reveals the reviewer's ignorance about the subject: *podbliudnye* (from the word *bliudtse*, "saucer") songs are fortune-telling songs performed during the *sviatki* season; they have no relation to the Shrovetide season whatsoever. Moreover, for all his praise of folk-style music, the language he uses to describe the folk elements would in fact align them with something generically "antique" and not with the native Russian tradition per se. Thus, speaking about the dance numbers, the critic notes that the only good dance is the duet of the "Hops Plant" and "Female Hops Plant" ("Khmel'" and "Khmelikha"), performed by Felix Kshesinsky and Marie Petipa, "who performed the bacchian dance exquisitely." [344] The fact that this reviewer does not see the bacchian dance as incongruous with the rest of the opera shows that in his mind, Russian folk melodies can easily coexist with other stylistic elements.[345]

While praising folk and folk-inspired numbers of the opera, some reviewers used such praise as a lead-up to criticizing Rimsky-Korsakov—and all other composers of the New Russian School—for overusing folk tunes and for their inability to write their own

[343] A. V., "Teatral'nyi kur'er." 3.
[344] Ibid.
[345] In fact, no one in 1882 sees those characters and their "bacchian dance" as incongruous with the subject of the opera; several reviews praise the dance.

original melodies. Such an opinion is expressed, for example, in articles by Galler and Ivanov. Galler claims that all representatives of the New Russian School use Balakirev's collection of folk songs to make up for their lack of creativity.[346] Similarly, Galler states that "all the best parts of *The Snow Maiden* […] are borrowed from folk songs or inspired by them,"[347] thereby charging Rimsky-Korsakov with a lack of imagination or creative talent.

One remarkable aspect of the reception of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera is that its setting and characters are almost never discussed in relation to "native antiquity," even though individual musical numbers are praised for their use of Russian folk tunes. Only one reviewer, Nikolai Soloviev, connects Rimsky-Korsakov's use of folk material with his ability to present a vivid picture of ancient Rus'. Soloviev makes special mention of the "archaic" chorus of psaltery players as well as the fanfare and calls of the heralds, and states that those musical numbers show Rimsky-Korsakov "as an author who has come to see and depict remote antiquity."[348] Criticizing the opera overall, the reviewer notes that the opera is significant for its "depiction of ancient, pre-historic Rus',"[349] and he later repeats that "the author in this work has uttered a new word in the depiction of ancient Rus'."[350]

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[346] Galler, "Muzykal'naia khronika," 1. As we know, the source is not even correct: most folk melodies used by Rimsky-Korsakov in this opera came from his own collection, which emphasized calendar songs.
[347] Ibid., 1. Apparently, Rimsky-Korsakov's imitations of folk songs were so successful that they were mistaken for original folk songs. Once such episode in print occurred with regard to Lel's third song, performed by the singer A. A. Bichurina at a concert on December 26, 1881 (before the first performance of the opera). M. Ivanov wrote in his review of the concert in *Novoe vremia* that this song was based on a folk motif. Rimsky-Korsakov wrote an article refuting this claim (as well as other claims made by the same reviewer regarding the use of folk songs in the composer's First Symphony). The composer stated that the melody of Lel's song was not folk, but was composed by him, and added an ironic request that if the reviewer knew the song that could be the source, he should inform the composer. See Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov, "Pis'mo v redaktsiiu," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska,* vol. 2 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1963), 238. Of course, Ivanov never presented the composer with any folk melody identical to Lel's song.
[348] "На автора, прозревшего для изображения глубокой старины" (Solov'ev, "Muzykal'noe obozrenie," 2).
[349] Ibid.
[350] "Автор в этом произведении сказал новое слово в изображении древней Руси" (ibid).

This appears to be the first time in a review when a connection was made between the Berendeyan land of the opera or play and ancient Rus'. Over the years, this connection would be made more frequently, however. It is instructive to look, for example, at the changes in the reception of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera in later articles by César Cui and Vladimir Stasov. Cui published a second review of *The Snow Maiden* in 1885, by which time the opera had remained in the repertoire for some time and was gaining public approval. The differences between Cui's two articles are remarkable. In his second review, his earlier lukewarm tone has become verily enthusiastic; he hails the opera as "one of the greatest works of Russian art, one of our best operas, Rimsky-Korsakov's masterpiece, and the equal of Glinka's *Ruslan and Liudmila* in terms of scenes of the everyday life [*bytovye stseny*] and magical scenes."[351] Notably, this time Cui talks about both *The Snow Maiden* and *Ruslan and Liudmila* not as féeries, but as operas that combine the everyday (*byt*) and the fairy tale. He calls the subject of *The Snow Maiden* "very fortunate" precisely because it allows for such combination. In 1885, Cui dedicates much more attention to the *narodnost'* of the opera, and he lauds Rimsky-Korsakov as a connoisseur of Russian folk music.[352] Turning to the composer's skill in depicting everyday life, Cui provides an entire list of such "*bytovye stseny*" and argues that they are marked both by the high quality of the music and by the "local color of astonishing truth."[353] While Cui never mentions "ancient Rus'" in his article, he clearly uses the term "local color" in reference to Rimsky-Korsakov's musical depiction of Russian peasant life.

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[351] *** [Tsezar' Kiui], "Muzykal'nye zametki," *Nedelia,* February 10, 1885, 245.
[352] Ibid., 245.
[353] Ibid., 246.

It is interesting to trace Vladimir Stasov's opinions of the opera as expressed in his articles of 1882-1883, 1890, and 1901, because the changes observable in Stasov's formulations align closely with general changes in the reception of both the play and the opera in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Stasov never wrote an article dedicated specifically to *The Snow Maiden*. In his seminal work "Twenty-Five Years of Russian Art," written in 1882-1883, he briefly praises the opera[354] and lists its best scenes, noting that the scene of bidding farewell to the Shrovetide effigy ("provody Maslenitsy") is "a depiction of ancient paganism amazing in its strength and talent."[355] Stasov also mentions *The Snow Maiden* is his 1890 tribute to Rimsky-Korsakov on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the composer's career. In this article Stasov provides a list of "amazing depictions of ancient pagan Rus'," including the previously mentioned Shrovetide scene, as well as the chorus of the psaltery players, the "magic scene in the woods," the Bonny Spring's arrival, and others.[356] Noticeably, "Rus'" or "ancient Rus'" now make frequent appearances in the critic's language in reference to the opera's subject. Stasov expressly gives credit to Nikolai Soloviev, whom he otherwise characterizes as a reactionary critic, for noting that Rimsky-Korsakov "said a new word" in "depicting Ancient Rus'."[357]

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[354] Stasov's phrasing is convoluted, but it suggests that he ranks *The Snow Maiden* higher than Glinka's *Ruslan*: "*The Snow Maiden* contains a few such parts, some of which are worthy of Glinka and his *Ruslan*, while others stand alongside the highest musical creations altogether." ("«Снегурочка» заключает несколько таких частей, из которых одни достойны Глинки и «Руслана», другие вообще стоят на одной степени с наивысшими музыкальными созданиями".) V. V. Stasov, "Dvadtsat' piat' let russkogo iskusstva," in Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 559.
[355] Ibid., 559.
[356] Stasov, "Nikolai Andreevich Rimskii-Korsakov," in Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia,* vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 383.
[357] Ibid., 383.

In his seminal article, "Art of the Nineteenth Century," first published in 1901, Stasov praises *The Snow Maiden*'s "national" subject even more strongly. He names *The Maid of Pskov* and *The Snow Maiden* as Rimsky-Korsakov's best operas in which "depictions of ancient Rus', its people, its various personalities and characters, events, pictures, and scenes rise to the highest level of characterization, strength, beauty, and talent."[358] Here Stasov joins two operas that were often opposed to one another in the 1880s (as historical drama vs. fairy tale) as works encapsulating one and the same thing—the fairy tale is now reinterpreted as a reflection of the historical past. Stasov's interpretation of the opera in 1901 was of course a reflection of a larger transformation in the perception of artistic representations of "Russianness" that had been occurring since the early 1880s. However, changes in the reception of *The Snow Maiden* by Stasov and others are specifically attributable to Viktor Vasnetsov's sketches of sets and costumes for the play, made initially for the staging of Ostrovsky's play at Abramtsevo.

Before taking a closer look at this latter production of *The Snow Maiden*, it is worth noting that the reception of the sets and costumes for the Mariinsky staging in 1882 confirmed that the general consensus of the public was to interpret Rimsky-Korsakov's opera as a fairy tale set in an unspecified mythological location. Reviewers typically mention rich sets and new costumes, but do not elaborate on their style. It was standard practice in Russian theater and especially musical theater at the time to reuse sets and costumes from a production of one work in another. Entirely new sets and costumes were considered a luxury. It is therefore not surprising that many reviewers mentioned the new

[358] "Изображения древней Руси, ее народа, ее разнообразных личностей и характеров, событий, картин и сцен возносятся до высочайшей степени характеристики, силы, красоты и талантливости." Stasov, "Iskusstvo XX veka: Muzyka," in Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 736.

sets as a sign that the production standards were outstanding; many reviewers, including Cesar Cui, lauded the Directorate, and the director Vsevolozhsky, for their dedication to giving the opera a beautiful and lavish production. The stylistic unity of sets and costumes or lack thereof was not, however, seriously discussed. The only reviewer who discusses the sets and costumes in greater detail laments the unsuitability of most of them for other productions. He confirms that the overall "theme" of the costumes is Scythian, and he feels they would hardly fit any other spectacle:

> In this case, a luxurious production is a sheer loss for the Directorate. Let's assume that the sets can be useful for some other operas; however, all these costumes, which pertain to the realm of some peculiar mythology, will not be suitable for any other work when *The Snow Maiden* has fallen into the Lethe, which will definitely happen in the nearest future![359]

To conclude, in 1882, the critical discussion of the opera's subject, its music, and its visual representation on stage did not presume any interconnectedness between these three planes. However, an attempt to connect them would be made very soon: in the productions of the Abramtsevo circle and the Moscow Private Opera in the 1880s.

The Abramtsevo Circle and Viktor Vasnetsov's *Snow Maiden*

The Abramtsevo colony of artists formed in the 1870s around a wealthy industrialist and patron of the arts, Savva Mamontov. At his estate Abramtsevo, in the Moscow province, Mamontov hosted famous artists of the time, including Ilya Repin, Viktor Vasnetsov, Vasily Polenov, Elena Polenova, Valentin Serov, Mikhail Nesterov, Mikhail

[359] "В данном случае, роскошная постановка составляет чистый изъян для дирекции; положим, декорации пригодятся и для каких-нибудь других опер, но ведь все эти костюмы, относящиеся к области своеобразной мифологии, не будут применимы ни к какому другому произведению, когда «Снегурочка» канет в Лету, что неминуемо воспоследует в ближайшем будущем!.." ("Teatral'noe ekho," *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, February 2, 1882, 3).

Vrubel, and others. Artists of the Abramtsevo circle explored various artistic media: painting, drawing, sculpture, architecture, theatrical staging, and decorative arts and crafts. Many members of the Abramtsevo circle were fascinated with Russian traditional arts and crafts—architecture, embroidery, wood carvings, and ceramics. Members of the circle engaged in various activities aimed at reviving folk arts and crafts: they organized expeditions to nearby villages to collect exmples of folk handicrafts for the Abramtsevo museum; they established workshops in collaboration with local peasants to create handmade furniture, ceramic tiles, and fabrics imbued with traditional Russian patterns and themes; they built a church on the estate based on a twelfth-century Novgorodian church, as well as a few other buildings inspired by folk forms. Artists of the circle sought ways of incorporating motifs and principles of folk and medieval Russian art in their work.[360]

In 1881, Savva Mamontov decided to stage Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* in the Mamontovs' house in Moscow. He suggested that Viktor Vasnetsov create the sets and sketches for the costumes. Vasnetsov's early artistic career was typical for a Russian Realist artist of his generation. In the 1870s, he created a number of paintings that depicted peasant "types" and presented genre scenes from the lives of peasants and low-class urban

[360] Activities of the Abramtsevo circle are well documented and studied. The following works are especially informative: Eleonora Paston, *Abramtsevo: Iskusstvo i zhizn'* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 2003); E. V. Paston, G. S. Kislykh, and N. N. Mamontova, eds., *Stil' zhizni—stil' iskusstva. Razvitie natsional'no-romanticheskogo napravleniia stilia modern v evropeiskikh khudozhestvennykh tsentrakh vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereia, 2000); *Abramtsevo: Khudozhestvennyi kruzhok. Zhivopis'. Grafika. Skul'ptura. Teatr. Masterskie* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1988); Eleonora Paston,"The Abramtsevo Circle: Founding Principles and Aesthetic Direction," in *From Realism to the Silver Age: New Studies in Russian Artistic Culture*, ed. Rosalind P. Blakesley and Margaret Samu (DeKalb: NIU Press, 2014), 59-78; Wendy Salmond, *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia: Reviving the Kustar Art Industries, 1870-1917* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1996); Stuart Grover, *Savva Mamontov and the Mamontov Circle, 1870-1905: Art Patronage and the Rise of Nationalism in Russian Art*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1971); Kirichenko, *The Russian Style*, 135-170. On Mamontov's Private Opera productions, in which many artists of the Abramtsevo circle were involved, see Olga Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera: The Search for Modernism in Russian Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

dwellers. His genre paintings were lauded by Stasov and the *Peredvizhniki* artists.[361] However, in the late 1870s Vasnetsov started to turn to themes from Russian epos, mythology, and fairy tales, creating such works as *The Knight at the Crossroads* (*Vitiaz' na rasput'e*, one version in 1878[362] and a second version in 1882), *The Flying Carpet* (*Kover-samolet*, 1880), *The Battle between the Scythians and the Slavs* (*Boi skifov so slavianami*, 1881), and others. While many of his *Peredvizhniki* colleagues and art critics did not appreciate his departure from Realist art and genre painting to fanciful depictions of Russian ancient history and mythology,[363] he found full support for his new artistic ideas within the Abramtsevo circle.

Given Vasnetsov's interests and experience, Mamontov naturally turned to him for sketches of the sets and costumes for the production of *The Snow Maiden* at his house. The play appealed to the artist's sensibilities—his love for folklore and his desire to "rediscover" the world of ancient Rus' in his art. Vsevolod Mamontov (Savva Mamontov's son) reminisced that Vasnetsov "was not only himself inspired by the poetry of this wonderful fairy tale, deeply felt its Russian spirit, and appreciated its inimitable, pure, truly Russian language, but, it seems to me, he also infected all the participants in this production with his enthusiasm."[364]

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[361] See A. K. Lazuko, *Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov*, (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1990), 20-23. *Peredvizniki* were a group of Russian realist artists of the nineteenth century; the name is often translated into English as "Wanderers" or "Itinerants."

[362] Vasnetsov's mentor, Ivan Kramskoi, criticized Vasnetsov for this painting, arguing that the artist should continue working on genre paintings since he had a unique talent for understanding and artistically representing realistic "types" (Lazuko, 30).

[363] See a discussion of attitudes to Vasnetsov in Plotnikov, "Fol'klornaia tema," 69-88.

[364] "Не только сам проникся поэзией этой дивной сказки, прочувствовал ее русский дух, оценил несравненный чистый, подлинно-русский язык ее, но, думается мне, заразил своим увлечением и всех участников этого спектакля." Quoted in Paston, *Abramtsevo*, 88.

The home performance of the play took place on January 6, 1882, and was later repeated a few more times.[365] It could have remained a mere instance of informal entertainment in Mamontov's house, if not for its later life. When Mamontov opened his Private Opera in 1885, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Snow Maiden* became one of the theater's first productions on October 8, 1885.[366] Vasnetsov reworked his old sketches for this production and made new ones; the artists Konstantin Korovin and Isaac Levitan created the actual sets based on his sketches, as Vasnetsov himself left for Kyiv to start his work on the interior design of St. Vladimir Cathedral. Scholars Nikolai Morgunov and Natalya Morgunova-Rudnitsakaya argue that a comparison of the sketches from 1881-1882 and 1885 shows that earlier sketches were simpler and "less colorful," as well as not entirely stylistically unified. However, Vasnetsov found his overall style in earlier works, and later he only added details and made the sketches even more colorful and fanciful.[367] Vasnetsov himself reminisced that he created *The Snow Maiden* on the basis of his memories of a *khorovod* [folk circle dance] that he had seen in Sparrow Hills in Moscow, and that the vision of Tsar Berendei's palace came to him when he saw a model for the palace in

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[365] Two photographs of this performance, along with a few sketches, are reproduced in Paston, *Abramtsevo*, 88; 90-91. The production was later revived, with performances on December 29, 1883; January 3, 1886, and January 6, 1897. See V. D. Polenov, E. D. Polenova, and E. V. Sakharova, *Vasilii Dmitrievich Polenov, Elena Dmitrievna Polenova: Khronika sem'i khudozhnikov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), 746.

[366] Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 295.

[367] N. Morgunov and N. Morgunova-Rudnitskaia, *Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo*, (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1962), 231-232. Sketches for the home production of the play mostly belong to the Abramtsevo museum, while sketches for the opera are housed in the Tretyakov Gallery. For a longer discussion of Vasnetsov's work on the production and for an analysis of his sketches, see Morgunov and Morgunova-Rudnitskaia, 216-232. Vasnetsov's sketches have been reproduced numerous times and can be easily found on the Internet; for that reason, I am not including any illustrations here. For some reproductions of Vasnetsov's sketches in print, see, for example, N. F. Shanina, *Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov, 1848-1926* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1975), plates 19-28; in English: N. Shanina, *Victor Vasnetsov*, trans. V. Friendman (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1979), 71-81. Sketches from 1885 are the most commonly reproduced; the following book includes a few sketches from 1881-1882: Lazuko, *Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1990), 60-65 and plates 64-72.

Kolomenskoe.[368] He also mentioned observing many folk fairs [*narodnoe gulian'e*] in Vyatka (his home town) and Moscow where he saw traditional women's clothes—*kokoshniki*, *telogrei* (a kind of traditional warm women's jacket), fur coats, and accessories made of pearls and semi-precious stones.[369] There is no doubt that the items of folk art housed in the Abramtsevo collection were also an important source of folk designs and decorative patterns for Vasnetsov.[370]

In his sets and costumes for *The Snow Maiden*, Vasnetsov created an imaginary idyllic ancient Russia, a country of beauty and harmony. His sets and costumes offered a colorful depiction of Russianness. Though folk arts and crafts served as the basis for Vasnetsov's creations, he did not strive to faithfully reproduce any model or models, and he often borrowed decorative patterns typical of one particular folk craft and applied them to a different kind. For example, in her study of Mamontov's Moscow Private Opera, Olga Haldey notes that the ornaments that decorated the walls of Tsar Berendei's palace in Act Two were not typical for Russian traditional wall painting; they were taken from traditional embroidery.[371] Such "transfer" of designs onto different artistic media was not

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[368] A residency of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich on the outskirts of Moscow (now a Moscow museum).
[369] Quoted in V. Lobanov, *Viktor Vasnetsov v Moskve* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1961), 124.
[370] In her memoirs, Natalya Polenova (wife of the artist Vasily Polenov; née Yakunchikova) writes that this collection was started in summer 1881, when Polenov and Repin found an old carved wooden window decoration in one of the neighboring villages. The collection grew through addition of various items of peasant art work discovered by members of the Abramtsevo circle in the areas close to the estate. These items started the idea for the creation of the woodworking workshop; they also inspired Vasnetsov to build the little "Hut on Chicken Legs" house-pavilion in Abramtsevo (1883). See N. V. Polenova, *Abramtsevo: Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo M. i S. Sabashnikovykh, 1922), 39, 44. Polenova's book contains reproductions of peasant objects from the Abramtsevo museum, as well as pieces from the Abramtsevo workshop.
[371] Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 119. Janet Kennedy also emphasizes that elements for the sets of Tsar Berendei's palace came from various media, and the palace is therefore "a spectacular fantasy of ancient Russian architecture: the ceiling and walls are packed with decorative patterns adapted from peasant furniture, distaffs, and folk prints, all theatrically exaggerated in scale and certainly far more dazzling than any genuine example of folk art." See Janet Kennedy, "Pride and Prejudice: Serge Diaghilev, the Ballet Russes, and the French Public," in *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, ed. Michell Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 96. In Vladimir Stasov's article on

only characteristic of Vasnetsov's work on *The Snow Maiden*; this was a general principle underlying folk-inspired arts and crafts of Abramtsevo artists.

Elena Polenova worked on sewing the costumes for the production of *The Snow Maiden* at the Private Opera. In addition to using Vasnetsov's sketches, Polenova added elements from traditional peasant clothes and various embroidered items. In a letter to Elizaveta Mamontova from August 6, 1885, Polenova asks her to bring everything that could be useful for the costumes, including "Mordvin shirts (for embroidery)"[372] and "anything suitable for *The Snow Maiden* that you can find in Khot'kovo and the surrounding villages. In the villages, ask for embroidered towels and aprons; maybe you'll stumble upon something interesting."[373] Thus, the search for authentic items as sources for inspiration and emulation in the opera production did not stop with Vasnetsov, but was carried on by other members of the circle as well. According to an account by Natalya Polenova (Yakunchikova), creators of the Private Opera production used authentic peasant dress, some of which came from the Abramtsevo collection and some of which was brought specially for the occasion by Savva Mamontov's estate steward Alekseich from the Tula province. These pieces were used both as inspiration for costumes and as actual costumes for the chorus and the crowd.[374]

Vasnetsov, published in 1898 in the journal *Art and Artistic Industry*, we can see that Stasov fully recognizes that the visual elements for Tsar Berendei's palace came from non-architectural objects, but he does not see this transposition as a problem: Stasov says that the ornaments on the palace's wall and ceiling look "like a woman's *povoinik* [type of headdress] or an apron, like an ancient embroidered shirt, like an ancient painted carved spindle or a sleigh" ("как женский повойник или передник, как древняя расшитая рубашка, как древнее разукрашенное резное веретено или сани"). See V. V. Stasov, "Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov i ego raboty," 211.

[372] Mordvin embroidery was especially colorful. I do not have information on the common perception of Mordvin embroidery in Polenova's time, but I would like to suggest that Polenova here does not perceive Mordvin embroidery as part of an ethnic culture distinct from Russian; she probably encountered examples of such embroidery in Russian peasant households.

[373] Polenov, Polenova, and Sakharova, *Vasilii Dmitrievich Polenov*, 359.

[374] Polenova, *Abramtsevo*, 84.

Polenova's memoir makes it clear that the production included peasant costumes. It is also noteworthy that the theater did not hide but specially publicized this fact. The playbills announced that in the production "costumes from the Ryazan and Smolensk provinces have been reproduced."[375] Since a playbill not only gives information to the spectators, but also advertises the production, it is obvious that the company saw the ethnographic component of their production as a potential draw for the public. No less important was the playbill's description of the play's setting and characters, suggesting that they represent the Russian village and thereby establishing a link between the Berendeyan land and ancient Russia.

A preview of the production that came out a month before the first performance touted Vasnetsov as a "first-rate connoisseur of Slavic mythology" and a talented artist who made "inimitable" sketches for the opera.[376] Along with the playbill, the preview was intended to prepare the audience for a spectacle that celebrated Slavic mythology and provided insight into authentic Russian antiquity. Yet it remained to be seen whether the audience, and the critics in particular, would be receptive to these hints.

Reception of the Moscow Private Opera's Production of *The Snow Maiden*

The Snow Maiden happened to be the first opera by Rimsky-Korsakov to be produced in Moscow, and Mamontov's Private Opera production thus introduced the Moscow public not only to a new opera but to Rimsky-Korsakov as an operatic composer in general. It is no surprise, then, that the reviews of the production devoted far more

[375] Abram Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka. 1873-1889* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1973), 270.
[376] "Khronika," *Teatr i zhizn'*, September 5, 1885, 2.

attention to Rimsky-Korsakov's music than to other aspects of the staging, including the sets and costumes.

Overall, these reviews showed more appreciation for Rimsky-Korsakov's work; they did not contain outright disparaging comments like those seen in the reviews of the Mariinsky production in 1882. Reviewers emphasized and praised Rimsky-Korsakov's knowledge of various musical traditions, as well as his skillful incorporation of those traditions, which ranged from folk music, Glinka, and a variety of Western composers. The folk character of Rimsky-Korsakov's music received even more appreciation in 1885 than it did in 1882.[377] However, reviewers still tended to discuss the folk-inspired music of the opera separately from consideration of the opera's subject.

Reviewer Osip Levenson praises Rimsky-Korsakov's "composition on the basis of Russian folk tunes" and the composer's knowledge of folk song; he even emphasizes that Ostrovsky's play provided the composer with "everyday folk scenes," thus allowing the composer to showcase his knowledge of folk music. However, the reviewer still finds the fairy-tale plot of the opera uninspiring: "One has to tell the truth: it is hard to squeeze from this plot something which would truly captivate us, something that has the pulse of life beating in it. The plot exudes coldness, just like the Snow Maiden."[378]

Herman Laroche devotes a lot of space to the discussion of folk motifs in the opera and to the tradition of folk music in general. While he finds the New Russian School's

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[377] There were still comments about his lack of creativity, however, as in V. Baskin's review: "[T]here is no creation here, but only a good, faithful photograph of folk tunes" ("[3]десь нет творчества, а только хорошая, верная фотография народных мотивов"). See V. Baskin, "Sovremennoe iskusstvo. (…'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Russkaia mysl'* 11 (1885): 196.

[378]"Нужно правду сказать—трудно из такого сюжета выжать нечто такое, что захватывало бы нас всецело, в чем бился бы пульс жизни. От него веет холодом, как от самой Снегурочки". O. L-n [Osip Levenson], "Muzykal'naia khronika. (Opera 'Snegurochka' Rimskogo-Korsakova …)," *Russkie vedomosti*, October 12, 1885, 1.

compositional ideas too radical, Laroche nevertheless hails their use of folk motifs, which he saw as their desire to permeate their music with "Russian spirit."[379] Laroche even remarks that the subject of the opera is mythological, and he notes its closeness to Wagner's ideals. Taking these aspects of his article into account, it is surprising that Laroche says nothing else about the plot, or even acknowledges the Slavic mythology as its basis. When talking about the production, Laroche praises the conductor Bevignani, but does not devote any attention to the sets and costumes. This omission is striking, since it would be quite natural to expect Laroche, who was attuned to Wagner's ideas and clearly sensed something similar to them in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, to notice the Private Opera's attempt to combine music, dramatic action, and decorations in the spirit of Wagnerian *Gesamkunstwerk*.

An anonymous reviewer (signed as "R.") dedicated an entire series of articles to a close analysis of various aspects of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera.[380] In these articles, "R." expresses deep appreciation for the composer's musical technique; even though he maintains that Rimsky-Korsakov's melodies are brief and uninventive, he praises the composer's knowledge of folk songs and the principles of their harmonization, the theoretical correctness of his compositions, and his unique talent for orchestration and instrumentation. However, the reviewer repeatedly laments that Rimsky-Korsakov applied all his vast knowledge to such an unworthy subject as *The Snow Maiden*: "isn't it frustrating that such vastness of knowledge and taste has been wasted on a task as undeserving as *The*

[379] Larosh, "Novaia opera molodoi russkoi shkoly. (Po povodu 'Snegurochki' Ostrovskogo i Rimskogo-Korsakova na stsene Chastnogo opernogo teatra)," *Russkii vestnik* 179 (October 1885): 872-890. Reprinted in: G. A. Larosh, *Izbrannye stat'i*, vol. 3 (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1976), 279-294. See in particular Laroche's discussions of Wagner (284) and the "Russian spirit" of the New Russian School (287-288).
[380] See R., "Khronika," *Teatr i zhizn',* October 10, 1885, 1; R., "'Snegurochka' Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 20, 1885, 2; R., "'Snegurochka' Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 21, 1885, 1-2; R., "'Snegurochka' Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 22, 1885, 1.

Snow Maiden!"[381] The reviewer does not even attempt to make a connection between the opera's subject and the musical language used by the composer. He simply rejects the subject of *The Snow Maiden* as "cold and soulless, like the heroine of the opera herself."[382] The reviewer expresses a strong preference for Rimsky-Korsakov's first opera, *The Maid of Pskov,* precisely because it portrays a "real life" story and characters, which he finds sorely lacking in *The Snow Maiden.*

Among the reviews of the production, Semyon Kruglikov's articles present a particularly interesting response. Kruglikov was not only a close friend of Rimsky-Korsakov, but, since Kruglikov lived in Moscow, he was also an intermediary in the correspondence between the composer and Ostrovsky in the process of the opera's creation. We can therefore assume that Kruglikov was very familiar with Rimsky-Korsakov's vision for the opera. However, when looking at his articles in 1885, one sees many striking similarities to the sentiments expressed by Cui in 1882.[383]

In his articles Kruglikov discusses the folk scenes of the opera in detail. Like many other reviewers, he stresses Rimsky-Korsakov's knowledge of folk music and his skillful use of folk elements. He especially singles out the Shrovetide scene in the Prologue, which is permeated with "both life and an archaic, epic [*bylinnaia*] beauty."[384] In another article, he calls this scene "a most talented page from some *bylina* where the colors of folk epos and

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[381] R., "'Snegurochka' Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 22, 1885, 1.
[382] R., "Khronika," *Teatr i zhizn',* October 10, 1885, 1.
[383] Molodoi muzykant [Semen Kruglikov], "Muzykal'naia khronika ('Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Sovremennye izvestiia*, October 19, 1885, 1-2; S. Kruglikov, "'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Muzykal'noe obozrenie*, November 14, 1885, 59-62; S. Kruglikov, "'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Muzykal'noe obozrenie*, November 28, 1885: 76-78.
[384] "и жизнью, и архаической, былинной красотой" (Molodoi muzykant [Semen Kruglikov], "Muzykal'naia khronika ('Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Sovremennye izvestiia*, October 19, 1885, 2).

Russian ancient rituals are laid thickly and powerfully."[385] He underscores the ancient character of other scenes as well: for example, he describes the music to the psaltery players' chorus as "ancient folk" [*drevne-narodnaia*][386] and hails the spirit of the last hymn to Yarilo, where he discerns "so much folk Russian [*narodno-russkii*] spirit—but in an ancient sense rather than a contemporary sense—an ancient, fairy-tale, pagan spirit."[387] These examples demonstrate that Kruglikov clearly sees the pagan and the ancient components of the opera, probably thanks to his close interactions with the composer.

Taking this into account, it is strange to see that in many respects both of Kruglikov's articles seem to have been influenced by Cui's article of 1882. Kruglikov repeats a number of Cui's ideas, particularly those about the Berendeyans and about the genre of the opera. In his first article, he speaks of the Berendeyans with a great deal of irony, stating that "this fairy-tale people is filled with a remarkable naiveté" and stresses that their main goal in life is to engage in romantic pursuits.[388] Kruglikov's comments about Ostrovsky's play proper present a mixture of appreciation and condescension: the play is "all woven from the artless charm of ancient folk beliefs, from the poetic naivetés of unsophisticated Slavic mythology."[389] Ultimately, his treatment of both folk mythology and the Berendeyans as characters betrays a view of the play's subject as childish.[390] It is thus

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[385] "талантливейшая страница из какой-то былины, где краски народного эпоса и русской обрядовой старины набросаны густо и сильно" (S. Kruglikov, "'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Muzykal'noe obozrenie*, November 14, 1885, 60).
[386] Ibid., 60.
[387] "так много народно-русского духа, но древнего, не теперешнего, сказочного, языческого," S. Kruglikov, "'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Muzykal'noe obozrenie*, November 28, 1885: 77.
[388] Molodoi muzykant [Semen Kruglikov], "Muzykal'naia khronika ('Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Sovremennye izvestiia*, October 19, 1885, 1.
[389] "вся сотканная из безыскуственной прелести древних народных верований, из поэтических наивностей нехитрой славянской мифологии" (ibid., 1).
[390] In his second article, the same attitude persists: he describes the plot of the opera and summarizes it as "все эти нехитрые образы наивной русской мифологии" (S. Kruglikov, "'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova," *Muzykal'noe obozrenie*, November 14, 1885, 59).

not surprising that, while Kruglikov defends Rimsky-Korsakov in his choice of subject, he also stresses that the subject itself is not so important, so long as it provides a framework for beautiful music.

Another similarity to Cui's review of 1882 can be seen in Kruglikov's second article, where he claims that in order to attract viewers and make up for a lack of dramatic development, a fairy-tale subject needs to have some "diversity" to it. While *The Snow Maiden* is beautiful in its presentation of "pictures of ancient Russian paganism,"[391] it is too monotonous, since the setting does not change. Like Cui, Kruglikov argues that *Ruslan and Liudmila* is a more successful magical opera, because it transports viewers to various locations. Such statements suggest that Kruglikov, like Cui, essentially treats the opera as a féerie and fails to appreciate the depiction of an ancient Slavic kingdom on stage.

This then begs the question of the reception of the sets and costumes. Since critics in 1885 still did not reflect upon the connection between the folk character of the music and the subject matter of the play, it is not surprising that, overall, the aims of the Private Opera's production remained incomprehensible to them. Kruglikov, who expressed deep concern about the quality of the musical performance, notes that the only reason why the company decided to tackle this opera is the fact that "the artist Vasnetsov, a close friend of the theater's directors, managed to draw sketches of the sets and costumes for *The Snow Maiden.*"[392] Notably, Kruglikov shows no interest or appreciation for Vasnetsov's work; it appears that for him, Vasnetsov is just an artist who is "close" to Mamontov and therefore

[391]Ibid.
[392] Molodoi muzykant [Semen Kruglikov], "Muzykal'naia khronika ('Snegurochka,' opera N. Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Sovremennye izvestiia*, October 19, 1885, 2.

happened to work on the sets and costumes.[393] Kruglikov also never mentions the peasant costumes, which, as we know, were an important element of the production.

In a later article, Kruglikov speaks about Vasnetsov's sets and costumes with more appreciation; however, his praise is very generic: "The costumes and sets are fresh, distinctive, and beautiful"; "good sets, typical costumes."[394] These comments by Kruglikov exemplify the way in which the sets and costumes were discussed in the press in general. The sets and costumes for the opera were mentioned in many reviews, and most reviewers spoke positively of them, albeit very briefly: the costumes were said to exhibit a "richness of imagination, taste, and luxury in the production" and "sparkle with astonishing beauty";[395] "the luxury, as well as the artistic taste and knowledge with which *The Snow Maiden* is produced, continue to make a strong impression";[396] "the poetic setting, the splendid sets (made by Leviton [sic] and Korovin), as well as the fresh costumes based on the sketches by the talented V. M. Vasnetsov, contribute to the good impression";[397] "the production of this fantastical opera is luxurious; it is implemented by well-known artists according to the sketches by Vasnetsov";[398] "*The Snow Maiden* is staged well; the sets and

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[393] Interestingly, Rimsky-Korsakov maintained a very similar attitude to Mamontov's staging of his opera. As I point out above, he never discusses Vasnetsov in his memoirs; to my knowledge, he also does not talk about the artist in his letters. Letters between Rimsky-Korsakov and Kruglikov in 1885 show that Rimsky-Korsakov was mostly concerned about getting payments from Mamontov for each of the performances (he continually asks Kruglikov how many performances there have been so far). Even though Rimsky-Korsakov received an invitation from Mamontov to come for the last rehearsals and the premier, his other duties kept him in St. Petersburg. His inability to come to the premier of his opera in Moscow apparently did not upset him in the least: he writes to Kruglikov that he is sure that "*The Snow Maiden* will go horribly" ("«Снегурочка» пойдет отвратительно"). Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov, *Polnoe sobraniie sochinenii: Literaturnye proizvedeniia i perepiska,* vol. 8A (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1981), 152. In his later letters Kruglikov reports that the opera is indeed going badly, but Muscovites like it anyway (ibid., 155, 156).
[394] Article from *Sovremennye izvestiia*, 1885, issue 277. Quoted in A. Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka. 1873-1889* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1973), 271.
[395] "Khronika," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 10, 1885, 1.
[396] "Khronika," *Teatr i zhizn'*, October 17, 1885, 1.
[397] "Teatr i muzyka. 'Snegurochka' na Chastnoi stsene v Moskve," *Novoe vremia*, October 21, 1885, 3.
[398] "Letopis' iskusstv, teatra i muzyki," *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, October 26, 1885, 318.

costumes are new and beautiful."[399] It is clear from the above comments that the reviewers, who were all musical critics and journalists, gave scarce attention to the production's sets and costumes. They did not mention the costumes' Russian, Slavic, or folk style, nor did they discuss how well the sets and costumes fit the opera in terms of theme and style. Neither the playbill that hinted at the ethnographic component of the production, nor the preview that highlighted Vasnetsov's expertise in Slavic mythology, seem to have resonated with reviewers.

There seem to have been only two exceptions in the response to the production's decorations. Levenson expresses a negative opinion about the costumes, claiming that their style does not match the subject of the opera: "In the costumes, there is too much "Byzantium" and "Tatary," which are completely out of place in a play that takes place in the prehistoric epoch."[400] It is not clear whether the reviewer here refers to the peasant costumes or the costumes based on Vasnetsov's sketches. However, one can assume that he considered the Russian motifs in the sets and costumes too "historically specific" for a representation of a fairy-tale plot from "prehistoric" times.

Only one review discusses the costumes and the ethnographic component of the production in depth. A reviewer from the newspaper *News* (*Novosti*) praises the costumes, saying that some of them amazed the viewer with their "luxury," and others—with their

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[399] Baskin, "Sovremennoe iskusstvo. (…'Snegurochka,' opera Rimskogo-Korsakova)," *Russkaia mysl'* 11 (1885), 198.

[400] "В костюмах слишком большую роль играет «Византия» и «татарщина», которые совершенно неуместны для пьесы из доисторической эпохи". See O. L-n [Osip Levenson], "Teatr i muzyka," *Russkie vedomosti*, October 10, 1885, 3.

"realistic quality, unusual for the eye."[401] Regarding the realistic quality of the costumes, he notes,

> For example, the female chorus is dressed in the authentic costumes of peasants from the Ryazan and Smolensk provinces [*gubernii*]. The men also have on wrinkled, worn-out pants and shirts. No one has heels… We saw before us a crowd of real peasants, and not those semi-fantastical *paysans*, whom we are so used to seeing on stage not only in opera (*A Life for the Tsar*, *Rusalka*, *Eugene Onegin*), but also in the ballet *The Little Humpback Horse*, *The Fern*, and even in the theatrical productions of *The Snow Maiden*, especially in the theater.[402]

The first sentence clearly indicates that the reviewer took his information about the sources for the costumes from the playbill (and, indeed, he appears to be the only reviewer who actually paid attention to that playbill). Interestingly, his depiction of the worn and wrinkled peasant clothes presents a stark contrast to other reviews, all of which emphasize the "luxury" of the production. The presence of such realistic elements either went unnoticed by other reviewers or confused them to such an extent that they chose not to comment on these elements. Indeed, if one believes that the opera presents a conventional world of the fairy tale, removed as far from "real life" as possible, then the singers' mundane peasant clothes must have seemed bizarre and incompatible with the viewers' expectations.

The reviewer from the *News* clearly valued the ethnographic dimension of the Private Opera production and appreciated the innovative nature of the representation of peasants (*narod*) on stage. It appears that this was the only review that responded to the

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[401] Quoted in Gozenpud, *Russkii opernyi teatr XIX veka. 1873-1889*, 275. Gozenpud gives lengthy quotations from this article, which appeared in the St. Petersburg newspaper *News* (*Novosti*), 1885, issue 273. Unfortunately, I do not have the original of this article, and cannot find out who the author was; Gozenpud does not mention how the article was signed, and he clearly does not know who the author was.

[402] "Женский, например, хор одет в подлинные костюмы крестьянок Рязанской и Смоленской губерний. На мужчинах тоже помятые, ношеные портки и рубахи. "Каблуков" ни у кого… Перед нами была толпа настоящих крестьян, а не тех полуфантастических пейзан, которых мы привыкли видеть на сцене не только в опере ("Жизнь за царя", "Русалка", "Евгений Онегин"), но и в балете "Конек-горбунок", "Папоротник", та же "Снегурочка" в драме, особенно в драме" (ibid., 275).

sensibilities of the Abramtsevo circle. Elena Polenova mentions this review in her letter to her friend P. Antipova, saying that she was "very happy" with this article, which showed that "finally, good taste and a search for truth are starting to prevail over trifling luxury and routine."[403] The production is seen by Polenova as a search for "truth" and "authenticity" on the stage and as the beginning of a new era in Russian theater. In letters to Vasnetsov (who was in Kyiv in October 1885) from various friends who saw the production, one can sense that they experienced an intense moment of recognition of something dear to them on stage. On October 21, 1885, Elena Polenova writes to Vasnetsov,

> …The production of this opera is indeed unprecedented. The chorus looks like real peasants, and not just a dressed-up crowd of extras, and these choruses create such an illusion in the presence of this truly Russian note in music, a note which runs so skillfully and subtly through the entire opera—it's marvelous, truly good![404]

Similar sentiments are expressed in a letter to Vasnetsov from Konstantin Artsybushev, an art collector and a relative of Mamontov's: "The production and the music made an awfully strong impression on me. Both are so life-like and truthful that it seems more true than real life <…> There is no better artist for *The Snow Maiden* than Vasnetsov, and it cannot be otherwise."[405] Just like Polenova, Artsybushev underscores the strong affinity between the music and the visual aspect of the production. Yet another correspondent of Vasnetsov, artist Nikolai Nevrev, reports that fourteen *Peredvizhniki* went to see the spectacle and

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[403] Polenov, 362.

[404] "…Постановка этой оперы в самом деле небывалая. Хор—это действительно настоящий народ, а не наряженная толпа статистов, и до такой иллюзии доходят хоры эти при той истинно русской ноте в музыке, которая так умело и тонко проведена через всю оперу,—чудесно, совсем хорошо!" *Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov: Pis'ma. Dnevniki. Vospominaniia. Suzhdeniia sovremennikov*, ed. N. A. Iaroslavtseva (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), 268-269.

[405] "Постановка и музыка произвели на меня страшно сильное впечатление. То и другое так жизненно и правдиво, что кажется правдивей настоящей жизни. <…> [Н]ет другого художника для Снегурочки, кроме Васнецова, и иначе нельзя." Quoted in Paston, *Abramtsevo*, 129.

"were enraptured by the production thanks to your sketches."[406] It is remarkable, indeed, how little the reviews of the production were concerned with Vasnetsov's contribution, given how valued it was by an artistic community—a fact that underscores the traditionally auxiliary nature of sets and costumes in operatic productions and the unpreparedness of music and opera critics to treat them as works of art.

Natalya Polenova describes the production in her later memoirs, and she notes the ecstatic reaction of one of *Peredvizhniki*, Vasily Surikov:

> The impression was grandiose. I recall how the painter Surikov, who was present at the first performance, was beside himself with rapture. When Bobyl and Bobylikha came out, and with them the crowd of the Berendeyans with the Shrovetide effigy and an authentic old-style goat [*koza*],[407] when the *babets*[408] in a man's peasant jacket [*armiak*] started dancing, Surikov's broad Russian nature [*shirokaia russkaia natura*] could not contain itself anymore, and he burst into wild applause, and the entire audience joined in.[409]

Thus, it is thanks to the costume designs and the presence of recognizable objects not commonly seen on stage that Surikov sees an unmistakable "Russianness" in the production. These elements create a sense of "realism" and prompt the spectator to recognize the depicted world on stage as an unconventional representation of Russianness.

Later accounts that come from artists and art critics spell out the Russianness of the production even more distinctly. When Igor Grabar in the first volume of his *History of Russian Art* (1910) describes the influence of Vasnetsov on the artists in the 1880s, he

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[406] Ibid., 131.
[407] "Koza" here can denote either a person dressed as a goat, or the elaborate mask of a goat that a person could wear. The goat, as a symbol of fertility, was a common symbol used during *sviatki* or the Shrovetide masquerades [*riazhen'e*]. See O. V. Belova, "Koza," in *Slavianskie drevnosti*, vol. 2, 522-524.
[408] Most probably, a woman dressed as a man.
[409] "Впечатление получилось грандиозное. Помнится, как художник Суриков, присутствовавший на первом представлении, был вне себя от восторга. Когда вышли бобыль и бобылиха и с ними толпа берендеев с широкой масляницей, с настоящей старинной козой, когда заплясал бабец в белом мужицком армяке, его широкая русская натура не выдержала, и он разразился неистовыми аплодисментами, подхваченными всем театром" (Polenova, *Abramtsevo*, 84).

stresses that Vasnetsov's works spurred the study not only of contemporary folk culture, but also of antique folk artifacts:

> In the mid-1880s, Vasnetsov made such an impression on everyone with his production of *The Snow Maiden* that many artists went crazy over the "Russian motifs." Russian patterns and crafts became fashionable; young artists would spend days sitting in the Historical Museum and studying the old carvings, printed clothes, and embroidery.[410]

Grabar here captures the collective infatuation with folk arts and crafts, inspired by Vasnetsov, particularly by his sketches for *The Snow Maiden* production. Interestingly, Eleonora Paston argues that this is an aberration in Grabar's memory. She points out that, contrary to what Grabar claims, the trend of studying Russian crafts had already started earlier, in 1870s.[411] However, Grabar's memory lapse is significant: it is the generation of Russian modernists, to which Grabar belonged, that would not only make Vasnetsov's achievements as a decorator employing Russian folk traditions central to his artistic career, but a most meaningful inspirational source for the modernists themselves. Vasnetsov's work on *The Snow Maiden* would thus become both an emblem of a broad trend as well as its culmination.

Writing retrospectively about the production, Vladimir Alekseev, Konstantin Stanislavsky's brother, notes, "It was a revolution in theater, a wonderful discovery of our old, ancient life. After this production <…> everyone began to imagine old Rus' only in the way Vasnetsov had conceived it."[412] Here *The Snow Maiden* is seen as a vehicle for the

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[410] "Васнецов своей постановкой «Снегурочки» в половине восьмидесятых годов произвел такое огромное впечатление на всех, что многие только и бредили русскими мотивами. В моду стал входить русский узор, кустарные изделия; молодые художники целые дни просиживали в Историческом музее и усердно изучали там старинную резьбу, набойки и вышивки." See Igor' Grabar', *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva*, vol. 1 (Moscow: I. Knebel', 1910), 98.
[411] Paston, *Abramtsevo*, 341.
[412] Quoted in V. Lobanov, *Viktor Vasnetsov v Moskve* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1961), 125.

discovery of Russian antiquity, which is larger than the play—but which finds its perfect embodiment in the play's subject and in Vasnetsov's aesthetic rendition of it.

The ultimate recognition of Vasnetsov's vision of prehistoric, ancient Rus' that was presented in his sketches for *The Snow Maiden* came in the late 1890s. This is when Vasnetsov's visual representation of the story becomes canonical. It is also in this last decade of the nineteenth century that the play's subject becomes unequivocally associated with ancient Rus'.[413]

Attitudes toward Vasnetsov's *Snow Maiden* in the Late 1890s

In the late 1890s Vasnetsov was at the height of his artistic influence. It is noteworthy that in late 1898, a series of his works were featured in the first issues of two journals with drastically different artistic agendas: *Art and Art Industry* (*Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost',* published by The Imperial Society for the Encouragement of the Arts) and Sergei Diaghilev's *World of Art* (*Mir iskusstva*).[414] His work

[413] Reviewing the production of the opera by the Bolshoi Theater in 1893, Nikolai Kashkin criticizes the eclectic aesthetic of the production. In his review, Kashkin points out that, while the production creators seemingly had no idea where to locate the action of the opera, the "entire tone" of *The Snow Maiden* clearly indicates that "the action takes place in Northern Russia." See N. Kashkin, "Sovremennoe obozrenie. (Moskva. Bol'shoi teatr)," *Artist*, no. 27 (February 1893): 118. Kashkin does not mention Vasnetsov or the Private Opera Theater production, but his insistence on the nationally authentic sets and costumes stems from a sentiment akin to that of the Private Opera Theater's, and could have been influenced by Mamontov's production. Interestingly, Rimsky-Korsakov himself seemingly did not care about the "national quality" of this production, as mentioned above. Kashkin's comment also provides an interesting echo to Stanislavsky's decision to look for "the Berendeyan land" in the North. Stanislavsky and his theater believed that Northern Russia could give them visual materials for their production.

[414] In the former, Vladimir Stasov was the most influential figure; in the first two issues of the journal, Vasnetsov's pictures accompanied Stasov's lengthy article about the artist: V. V. Stasov, "V. M. Vasnetsov i ego raboty. (Vospominaniia i zametki)," *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost'*, no. 1-2 (October-November, 1898): 65-96; no. 3 (December, 1898): 166-172. The entire article is reprinted in Stasov, *Stat'i i zametki, ne voshedshie v sobraniia sochinenii*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954), 154-220. The first issue of *World of Art*, which came out in November 1898 (even though it was marked as issue 1-2 of 1899), was supposed to contain an article about Vasnetsov written by Adrian Prakhov, but for reasons unclear, Prakhov did not write the article, so in the journal Vasnetsov's pictures accompanied Diagilev's article "Complicated Questions": Sergei Diagilev, "Slozhnye voprosy," *Mir iskusstva*, no. 1-2 (1899): 1-16. On the polemics over

on *The Snow Maiden* (both his sketches and the sets and costumes based on them) became more widely known thanks to two events: in February-April of 1898, Mamontov's Private Opera went on tour to St. Petersburg,[415] bringing their *Snow Maiden* with Vasnetsov's sets and costumes to the capital for the first time; and, in February 1899, Vasnetsov held his first solo exhibition in St. Petersburg. The Private Opera's tour was a great success, and Vasnetsov's sets to *The Snow Maiden* were praised by Vladimir Stasov and Nikolai Roerich.[416] Many articles dedicated to his 1899 exhibition also mentioned his work on *The Snow Maiden* with particular warmth.[417]

Stasov, who neither heeded Repin's suggestion to show Vasnetsov's sketches to Rimsky-Korsakov in 1882, nor went to Moscow to see *The Snow Maiden* in 1885 (at Mamontov's invitation), in 1898 seemed completely enthralled by Vasnetsov's vision. Regarding the set for Tsar Berendei's palace in the Private Opera's production, he writes:

> No one's imagination has ever gone so far and so deep in recreating the architectural forms and ornaments of ancient Rus', that is, the ancient Rus' of fairy tales, legends, and epic poems. Everything that we still have preserved in fragments

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Vasnetsov and his special status in late 1890s-early 1900s see: Chapter Two in Shevelenko, *Modernizm kak arkhaizm*, especially 82-86.

[415] Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera*, 293.

[416] V. V. Stasov, "Moskovskaia chastnaia opera v Peterburge," *Novosti i Birzhevaia gazeta*, April 4, 1898, 2; reprinted in V. V. Stasov, *Stat'i o muzyke*, vol. 5A: 1894-1906 (Moscow: "Muzyka," 1980), 210-220; V. V. Stasov, "Tsar' Berendei i ego palata," *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost'* no. 1-2 (October-November 1898): 97-98; reprinted in: V. V. Stasov, *Stat'i o muzyke*, vol. 5A, 220-222; R. Izgoi [Nikolai Rerikh], "Nashi khudozhestvennye dela, III: S.-Peterburg, 4-go fevralia 1899 g. (Postanovka 'Snegurochki' na stsene; vystavki)," *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost'*, no. 6 (March 1899): 479-492. Stasov also discusses the pictures to *The Snow Maiden* in his first article on Vasnetsov in *Art and Artistic Industry*, mentioned above.

[417] S. Makovskii, "Vystavka kartin V. M. Vasnetsova," *Mir Bozhii*, no. 3 (1899): 14-16; R. Izgoi [Nikolai Rerikh], "Vystavka kartin V. M. Vasnetsova," *Iskusstvo i khudozhestvennaia promyshlennost'*, no. 6 (March 1899): 491-492; A. Rostislavov, "Kartiny V. M. Vasnetsova," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 11 (1899): 221-223; Sergei Diagilev, "K vystavke V. M. Vasnetsova," *Mir iskusstva*, no. 7-8 (1899): 66-67; reprinted in I. S. Zilbershtein and V. A. Samkov, eds., *Sergei Diagilev i russkoe iskusstvo. Stat'i, otkrytye pis'ma, interv'iu. Perepiska. Sovremenniki o Diagileve*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1982), 85-86); V. Stasov, "Moi adres publike," *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, February 12, 1899, 2; reprinted in: V. V. Stasov, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), 264-267.

> of ancient life—in embroidery, popular paintings, ginger cookies, ancient wood carvings—all of that came together here in a wonderful, unsurpassable picture.[418]

Vasnetsov's undertaking is interpreted here as a combination of archeological and artistic endeavors. Praising Vasnetsov's sketches again in a different article, Stasov then turns to the Berendeyan land per se. He repeats his statement from an earlier article that historical Berendeyans were a Turkic tribe and that Ostrovsky's presentation of Berendeyans as Slavs was just a whim of the playwright. Here, Stasov maintains an ambivalent attitude to the Berendeyans: he calls them "false Berendeyans" (*fal'shivye Berendei*), since they are Ostrovsky's creation and lack historical accuracy.[419] This ambivalence, however, does not prevent Stasov from stating that the Berendeyans represented by Vasnetsov are a "truly ancient Russian people."[420]

In his next article on Vasnetsov, dedicated to the 1899 exhibition, Stasov rejoices over finally having seen the original sketches instead of reproductions. In this article, the critic's ambivalence toward the Berendeyans appears to have faded. His evaluation of Vasnetsov's rendering of the Berendeyan land is unequivocal. He hails it as "an amazing gallery of ancient Russian people," "a whole gallery of pictures of Russian life," and "amazing creations of old Russian architecture."[421] Stasov thus appears to have fully accepted the ancient-Russianness of the Berendeyans.

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[418] "Никогда еще ничья фантазия <…> не заходила так далеко и так глубоко в воссоздании архитектурных форм и орнаментистики Древней Руси—сказочной, легендарной, былинной. Все, что осталось у нас в отрывках бытовых от древней русской жизни в вышивках, лубочных рисунках, пряниках, деревянной древней резьбе—все это соединилось здесь в чудную, несравненную картину." Stasov, "Tsar' Berendei i ego palata," reprint, 222.
[419] Stasov, "Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov i ego raboty," reprint, 212.
[420] Ibid., 213.
[421] Stasov, "Moi adres publike," reprint, 267.

A similar sentiment can be seen in Alexander Rostislavov's review of Vasnetsov's exhibition.[422] Even though Rostislavov calls the Berendeyans "a fictional people" (*vydumannyi narod*), his article repeatedly underscores the evocative and realistic quality of their "life" in Vasnetsov's sketches. Noting "antiquity" and "a historical element"[423] in the depiction of these people, Rostislavov continually identifies the Berendeyans as close to "us": there is "something amazingly close and dear to us" in these images; the landscape is "native and dear to us"; and, overall, the artist presents such a truthful vision that he "almost makes us believe in the reality of the existence"[424] of these characters. While Rostislavov's comments can be taken as simply an appreciation of Vasnetsov's sketches, it appears that something else is also at work here. Rostislavov's very strong sense of recognition when he talks about Vasnetsov's pictures points at the critic's solidarity with the artist's vision—an admission that these images, with their "historical element," tap into his sense of Russian identity.

In 1899, Nikolai Roerich dedicated one enthusiastic article to Vasnetsov's art and another to a comparison of the Moscow Private Opera's production of *The Snow Maiden* and a new production of the opera by the Mariinsky Theater. In the latter article,[425] Roerich criticizes the Mariinsky production for its eclecticism and inability to create a work steeped in the "Russian style." Roerich suggests that the Mariinsky Theater should have consulted with Vasnetsov as a "universally recognized connoisseur of this style."[426] Roerich concludes his article with the following statement:

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[422] Rostislavov, "Kartiny V. M. Vasnetsova," 221-223.
[423] Ibid., 222, 223.
[424] Ibid., 222-223.
[425] R. Izgoi, "Nashi khudozhestvennye dela," 479-483.
[426] Ibid., 483.

> The production of such operas, which are meaningful for every Russian person, in which a broadly understood "Russian style" is on display, and the highly poetical world of antiquity is resurrected—the production of such operas is an important matter that has enormous educational significance and demands extensive discussion.[427]

Such discussion followed one year later, in 1900—but it was focused not on the opera, but on the play *The Snow Maiden*, brought back to the dramatic stage by three theaters that had very different artistic visions.

[427] "…Постановка таких значительных для русского человека опер, в которых есть возможность щегольнуть широко понятым русским стилем, в которых воскресает высоко-поэтичный мир старины,—постановка таких опер дело важное, имеющее огромное образовательное значение, и требует большого обсуждения" (ibid., 483).

CHAPTER 3: *The Snow Maiden* on the Moscow Art Theater Stage, 1900

The Snow Maiden in 1900

The year 1900 turned out to be a remarkable year for Ostrovsky's play. Since the last performance of *The Snow Maiden*'s original production by the Maly Theater in August 1874, the play had virtually disappeared from the stages of the two capitals.[428] Only two productions of the play seem to have taken place between 1874 and 1900: a private performance at Savva Mamontov's house in Moscow in January 1882 (repeated three more times afterwards), with sets and costumes by Viktor Vasnetsov (as discussed in Chapter Two), and a production by Mikhail Lentovsky's Theater of the Nineteenth Century (*Teatr XIX stoletiia*) in January 1891.[429] At the same time, Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, which was not so favorably received in 1882, had been a fixture in capital theater repertoires for almost twenty years[430] by the turn of the century.

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[428] I do not have any information about whether *The Snow Maiden* was produced in provincial theaters; if there were such productions, they did not produce a discussion. Nikolai Zograf in his monograph on the Maly Theater briefly mentions that scenes from the play were performed at theatrical evenings organized by The Society of the Lovers of Russian Letters (Obshchestvo liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti); a number of actors from the Maly Theater were members of the Society and participated in its events. See N. G. Zograf, *Malyi teatr vtoroi poloviny deviatnadtsatogo veka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960), 418. Zograf does not specify which scenes those were, how often they were performed, or what sets and costumes were used, if any.

[429] See Iu. A .Dmitriev, *Mikhail Lentovskii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), 184-185. Little is known about this production; from Dmitriev's description, it appears that Lentovsky staged the play as a féerie, paying closest attention to stage effects; however, mass scenes were also staged very well. The only review that I have been able to find praised Lentovsky's production but lamented the fact that it was not very popular with the public. See V., "Teatr XIX stoletiia. ('Snegurochka' Ostrovskogo, muzyka Chaikovskogo)," *Artist*, no. 13 (February 1891): 144.

[430] In St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre since 1882, in Mamontov's Private Opera in 1885 and 1896-98, and in Moscow's Bolshoi Theater since 1893. For example, the Moscow Bolshoi Theater performed it on September 5, 1900, right before the premieres of the play in the Novy and the Moscow Art Theater. However, as the music critic Nikolai Kashkin laments, the Bolshoi staged the opera very rarely; the performance on September 5th was only its nineteenth performance since 1893. See N. Kashkin, "'Rusalka' i 'Snegurochka,'" *Moskovskie vedomosti* September 8, 1900, 3.

In 1900, the play returned to the dramatic stage—all of a sudden produced by several theaters at once. September 1900 was marked by two "competing" productions by Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater and Alexander Lensky's Novy Theater[431] in Moscow, respectively. These productions sparked a genuine frenzy about Ostrovsky's play in the press, generating a heated discussion about the qualities and significance of the play itself, as well as about the principles that should be employed in its staging. In late December 1900, the Alexandrinsky Theater in St. Petersburg staged the play as well.[432] *The Snow Maiden* was also produced by some smaller theaters: by the Tavricheskii Theater of the Municipal Board of the Guardians of Public Sobriety[433] in May-June 1900 and by the People's House[434] in December 1900 (both in Petersburg).[435] In the first decade of the twentieth century, *The Snow Maiden* was also staged in Vilna (February 1902) and in Kiev (September 1904).[436]

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[431] The Novy (New) Theater, an affiliate of the Imperial Maly Theater in Moscow, was created in 1898 to provide more acting opportunities and training for the younger members of the troupe. Most of the productions in the Novy Theater were directed by Alexander Lensky. On Lensky's production of *The Snow Maiden*, see: N. G. Zograf, *Malyi teatr v kontse deviatnadtsatogo—nachale dvadtsatogo veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 192-199; N. G. Zograf, *Aleksandr Pavlovich Lenskii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1955), 297-305; S. Ia. Shikhman, "Novoe o postanovke A. P. Lenskogo 'Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo," *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia: Ezhegodnik 1978. Pis'mennost'. Iskusstvo. Arkheologiia* (Leningrad, 1979), 150-157.

[432] Judging from reviews, the quality of this production was abysmal; see, for example, N. Kh-ov, "Teatral'noe ekho. (Benefis Varlamova)," *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, December 28, 1900, 4; Iurii Beliaev Iurii, "Teatr i muzyka." *Novoe vremia*, December 29, 1900, 4; Old gentleman [Aleksandr Amfiteatrov], "Teatral'nyi al'bom," *Rossiia*, December 31, 1900, 4; Arsenii G. [Il'ia Gurliand], "'Snegurochka,'" *Teatr i iskusstvo* no. 1 (1901): 6-8.

[433] Tavricheskii teatr gorodskogo popechitel'stva o narodnoi trezvosti.

[434] Narodnyi dom.

[435] One reviewer humorously claims that in the present season he already saw four *Snow Maidens*, not counting two opera versions and one circus performance; he adds that since the season is not yet over, then "a whole number of *Snow Maidens* threatens to appear in the near future" (Arsenii G. [Il'ia Gurliand], "'Snegurochka,'" 6).

[436] There are also indications that the play might have been produced in Serbian by the Royal Theater in Belgrade; the following article mentions that a translation is underway and the production is planned: "Za granitsei," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 47 (1900): 854. To my knowledge, this would be the first production of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* abroad and in a foreign language; however, I do not have information on whether this production indeed took place.

This series of productions of *The Snow Maiden* generated a great deal of enthusiasm about the play in the press; the play had never before enjoyed such popularity. Nikolai Efros remarked that no play had been so much in the spotlight in recent years and observed that *The Snow Maiden* was the main topic of conversation, theater reviews, and feuilletons.[437] Critic Sergei Flyorov confessed that the new productions inspired him to re-read the play multiple times, to study its sources (Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs* and Jacob Grimm's works), and to reflect upon the theatrical adaptations.[438] Judging by N. Rakshanin's review, the play was quickly garnering a cult following: "*The Snow Maiden* is being torn to pieces; people look at this play as if it were sustenance from heaven, their daily bread; people want to live off of it; they place all their hopes on it."[439]

The groundwork for *The Snow Maiden*'s sudden popularity was, of course, laid by gradual changes in the reception of its subject and aesthetic components, explored in Chapter Two. These changes themselves were part of a larger-scale shift that gave Russian "native" traditions a more secure place within the system of "high" culture. This shift had diverse agents, whose efforts were not necessarily coordinated—from the imperial state to popular press to artists.[440] Certainly, the reputation of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera

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[437] -f- [Nikolai Efros], "'Snegurochka,'" *Novosti dnia*, September 27, 1900, 3.
[438] S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka' na Khudozhestvenno-obshchedostupnom teatre. Teoriia i praktika)," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, October 9, 1900, 3.
[439] "«Снегурочку» рвут на части, на нее смотрят, как на манну небесную и хлеб насущный, ею хотят жить, на нее возлагают надежды". See N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Iz Moskvy (Ocherki i snimki)," *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, September 30, 1900, 2. The image of *The Snow Maiden*'s being literally "torn into pieces" by Lensky, Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko and a few other people working in theater, opera, ballet, and circus, was presented in a feuilleton in verse by V. Ashkinazi: Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "'Snegurochka.' (Sezonnaia skazka)," *Novosti dnia*, September 10, 1900, 3.
[440] See chapters, "Alexander III and the Inception of a National Myth" (159-305) and "Nicholas II and the Search for a National Persona" (307-523) in Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Olga Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire: Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855-1870* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); Evgenia Kirichenko, *The Russian Style*; Katia Dianina, *When Art Makes News.*

contributed significantly to the rekindling of interest in the play. Sergei Flyorov stated that it was as though the play "seemed to open the eyes of the public."[441]

Also contributing to the hype surrounding the play in the press was certainly its simultaneous staging by two charismatic theater directors—Alexander Lensky, who had been interested in staging the play for a long time and finally had the chance to do so with young actors from his Novy Theater,[442] and Konstantin Stanislavsky, whose theater had been the center of attention for Russian theater-goers since its opening in 1898. Compared to the Imperial Theaters, which upheld a traditional approach to staging focused on highlighting individual star actors, the Moscow Art Theater stressed the importance of ensemble and the director's vision. The theater's novel approach to directing generated a lot of excitement and interest, as well as controversy and heated discussions. Flyorov remarked that the main point of interest in the 1900-1901 season was the Moscow Art Theater's production of *The Snow Maiden*. However, the play was also being staged at the Novy Theater, which belonged to the Imperial Theaters system. The Novy Theater opened in 1898 as a means to provide more acting opportunities for the younger actors of the troupe; it was led by Alexander Lensky, a famous actor who by this point also worked as a director and pedagogue. Similarly to Stanislavsky, Lensky emphasized director's vision in the production, promoted actors' education, and attempted to procure higher quality sets

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[441] "<…> как бы открыла глаза публике". S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. (Novyi teatr. 'Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo, s muzykoi P. I. Chaikovskogo. Teoriia i praktika)," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, September 18, 1900, 3. Flyorov repeats a similar thought in a different article, stating that *The Snow Maiden* was "lucky" in 1900 thanks to Rimsky-Korsakov's opera, which "advertised" the play for a number of years and made the public eager to see Ostrovsky's original on the stage. See S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, October 2, 1900, 3.

[442] Judging from a letter from Lensky to his wife Lidia dating from November 1896, Lensky was already working on sketches for a potential production at that time. See N. Abalkin, V. Kanaeva, and E. Strutinskaia, eds., "A. P. Lenskii. Pis'ma," in *Gosudarstvennyi ordena Lenina i ordena Oktiabr'skoi revoliutsii akademicheskii Malyi teatr SSSR, 1824-1974*, vol. 1: 1824-1917 (Moscow: Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1978), 410.

and costumes for his productions.[443] However, the routine staging principles, when several artists worked on the set designs and costumes without following a unifying artistic will of the director, still prevailed in the Novy Theater production of *The Snow Maiden*.[444] It is clear from the reviews that the public juxtaposed the two productions and perceived Stanislavsky's production as novel and Lensky's production as adhering to traditional principles of staging and acting.[445]

The Moscow Art Theater's production of *The Snow Maiden* will be the main focus of this chapter. There are two reasons for this choice. First, Stanislavsky's production was undoubtedly at the center of reviewers' attention: the vast majority of reviews are dedicated either specifically to that production or to a comparison between it and Lensky's, while very few reviews treat Lensky separately. Secondly, and most importantly, the Moscow Art Theater interpreted the world depicted in *The Snow Maiden* as pre-historic ancient Rus'. Stanislavsky's production was indeed an attempt to present ancient Rus' on stage—as opposed to the production by Lensky, who allegedly concentrated on conveying the fairy tale atmosphere of the play. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, in the late 1890s, Vasnetsov's presentation of the Berendeyan land and its inhabitants in his stage design and costume sketches, used in the Private Opera's production of *The Snow Maiden*, was perceived as a visual "discovery" of ancient Rus'. Stanislavsky and the costume and set designer, Viktor Simov, strove to find a new approach to depicting the Berendeyan land and to present an alternative, "research-based," vision of ancient Rus'. Thanks to memoirs,

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[443] Lensky created his own sketches for the set design of the Prologue and for a few costumes; see L. N. Pazhitnov, *A. P. Lenskii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1988), plates 41-44; it is not clear, however, if his sketches were used in the actual production.

[444] See a discussion of Lensky's attempts to introduce staging and acting innovations in the Novy Theater in N. G. Zograf, *Malyi teatr v kontse XIX—nachale XX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), 151-152, 168-176.

[445] See, for example, S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. (Novyi teatr. 'Snegurochka'), 3.

letters, and materials in the Moscow Art Theater archive, a considerable amount of information is available about the preparation to this production; these materials reveal the complexities of the vision of ancient Rus' that informed the Moscow Art Theater production.

Before the discussion of the latter subject, an overview of the reception of Ostrovsky's play in 1900 is in order, because the properties of Stanislavsky's production were largely an outgrowth of contemporaneous attitudes to the play. A separate section will then be devoted to the process of preparation for the Moscow Art Theater production. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the critical reception of that production, with special attention given to the reviewers' evaluation of the theater's vision of ancient Rus'.

Reception of Ostrovsky's Play in 1900

Between 1873 and 1900 critics' views of Ostrovsky's play underwent drastic changes. If the majority of reviewers in 1873 derided *The Snow Maiden* as a nonsensical and meaningless fairy tale or "vinaigrette in verse,"[446] critics in 1900 praised Ostrovsky's poetic genius. The reviewers of the new productions stressed that the poetic artistry of *The Snow Maiden* undermined the commonly held opinion that Ostrovsky was solely an author of topical plays.[447] *The Snow Maiden* was now perceived as something the playwright wrote "for his soul," as a reprieve from his socially engaged plots. A reversal occurred in the

[446] This particular phrasing belongs to Viktor Burenin.
[447] Nikolai Efros exclaimed that a "big poet" was hidden in the Ostrovsky whom everyone saw as just "a writer of the everyday lives of merchants and functionaries" ("в бытописателе купеческих и чиновничьих буден, каким преимущественно рисуется каждому Островский, притаился большой поэт"), Starik [Nikolai Efros], "Iz Moskvy," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 38 (1900): 670.

appraisal of Ostrovsky's topical comedies and dramas in comparison to *The Snow Maiden*: in 1900, *The Snow Maiden* appeared to reviewers as the play closest to Ostrovsky's deepest creative aspirations. This opinion was repeated by many critics, and a new narrative about the playwright emerged: supposedly, Ostrovsky suppressed his poetic inclinations for the sake of his dedication to the betterment of society, which he tried to achieve through his dramas and comedies on contemporary topics. However, *The Snow Maiden* represented the "true" Ostrovsky.[448] For example, Vladimir Ashkinazi eloquently expressed this opinion in his feuilleton in verse, wherein "Ostrovsky's shadow" addresses the Snow Maiden with an affectionate speech stating that she served as a "delightful" "respite from the dark kingdom," from "vulgar [*poshlyi*] hustle and bustle," and from the prose of life.[449]

Praising the poetic qualities of the text, critics interpreted *The Snow Maiden* as Ostrovsky's reminiscence about his youth and his "swan song," thanks to both the perceived youthful energy of the text and the play's folkloric motifs. In the play's folklorism, critics discerned a link between *The Snow Maiden* and the "Slavophilism" of Ostrovsky's early years, when he was part of the *The Muscovite* circle (as discussed in Chapter One). Critics saw Ostrovsky's deep appreciation for folk fairy tales and songs as an art form, an attitude the playwright allegedly must have inherited from the members of that circle; they claimed that after a long period of hiding that love due to the prevailing preference for social engagement in literature at that time, the playwright finally succumbed to it in *The Snow Maiden*.[450]

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[448] It should be noted that this opinion is not based on any indications by Ostrovsky himself or by his contemporaries.
[449] Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "'Snegurochka,'" 3.
[450] For example, Efros calls the play "a wonderful reflection of Slavophilism." See Starik [Efros N. E.], "Iz Moskvy," 670. Efros also claims that Slavophilism had always been Ostrovsky's heartfelt sentiment, and not a learned tendency. Alexander Amfiteatrov notes that even though this play comes from Ostrovsky's later

Discussing the fact that the play was negatively received and then virtually forgotten for almost thirty years, a review by Nikolai Efros hints at the inability of the Russian public to cherish its cultural and artistic treasures. While Russians did not appreciate this "pearl of Russian drama," Efros claims that if a German wrote a play like *The Snow Maiden*, it would be studied at high schools and learned by heart in its entirety.[451] Establishing the value of Ostrovsky's plays for future generations, Efros predicts that theaters will "live on" the plays for a long time. He notes that while many of the scenarios and relationships depicted in Ostrovsky's realistic, topical plays had already become anachronistic, *The Snow Maiden* would retain its value and likely prove to be more long-lived than the rest of Ostrovsky's works—even "immortal": "True immortality <…> is guaranteed to *The Snow Maiden*. As its action is outside space and time, so is its beauty and its glory."[452] Regardless of his view that the play occurs "outside space and time," Efros calls it an "apotheosis of [Russian] antiquity,"[453] and he obviously interprets the play's subject as related to the Russian past, which simultaneously reflects a timeless national tradition—a vision common for the nationalist imagination of the time.

Efros then turns from an assessment of the play to an assessment of the play's audience. It turns out that failing to "enjoy the company of the Snow Maiden, Lel, Kupava, Mizgir, the Bonny Spring, Grandfather Frost," signifies the audience's "great coldness of heart."[454] The lack of appreciation for *The Snow Maiden* also indicates an indifference to

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years, it was written as if in memory of his youth as one of the young editors of *The Muscovite*, encircled by other lovers of folklore and folk song. See Old gentleman [Aleksandr Amfiteatrov], "Teatral'nyi al'bom," 4.

[451] Starik [Nikolai Efros] "Iz Moskvy," 670. This remark is akin to Fyodor Buslaev's statements about Russians' lack of appreciation for Russian folklore, discussed in Introduction.

[452] Ibid., 670.

[453] Ibid., 670.

[454] "великая остуда в сердцах" (ibid., 670). Here Efros quotes Ostrovsky's play: Tsar Berendei is concerned about the "coldness" ("ostuda") in his subjects' hearts (Ostrovskii, VII, 413).

one's national roots: "One has to become completely numb and submerged in everyday trivialities [*poshlost'*], to be torn away from one's own people, with their past and lore, to be deaf and unable to hear the sounds of life, in order to look at the characters of this fairy tale, delightful in its naivety, with boredom and indifference."[455] Thus, the critic turns *The Snow Maiden* into a measuring stick of the audience's "Russianness." He also places a high value on folklore as the repository of the Russian past, and a keen interest in folklore emerges here as an essential part of modern aesthetic sensibilities.[456]

Alexander Rostislavov from *Theater and Art* (*Teatr i iskusstvo*) echoes Efros's sentiment in foretelling *The Snow Maiden*'s longevity. Speculating about the current renewed interest in *The Snow Maiden*, Rostislavov observes that the play is close to the sensibilities of Symbolism and therefore appeals to contemporary artists and the public. In his interpretation, the play symbolically presents the forces of nature and the connection between man and nature.[457] Simultaneously, Rostislavov emphasizes the appeal of the play to the Russian individual, arguing that the play is "one of the most national among the poetic works in our literature," and that it is "a historical play from our Russian prehistoric

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[455] "Нужно слишком зачерстветь, по уши увязнуть в повседневной пошлости, оторваться от своего народа, с его стариной, оглохнуть и не слышать звуков жизни, чтобы глядеть на героев этой прекрасной в своей наивности «сказки» со скукою и равнодушием" (Starik [Nikolai Efros], "Iz Moskvy," 670).

[456] In the previously quoted feuilleton in verse, Ashkinazi echoes the idea that the national past and folklore are beautiful by giving his "shadow of Ostrovsky" the following words: "When creating your features, I immersed myself in the depths of beauty" ("Творя твои черты, я погрузился весь в пучину красоты") (Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "'Snegurochka,'" 3).

[457] "[«Снегурочка»] вполне отвечает требованиям самого современного искусства, требованиям самых ярых современных символистов, хотя удивительно ясный, прозрачный символизм ее, как все истинно художественное, не нуждается в гадательных объяснениях, не возбуждает бесконечных споров. Вся она, в чрезвычайно удачных поэтических образах, воплощает могучие силы природы, художественно рисует непостижимую, но глубокую связь между жизнью природы и всей душевной жизнью человека." See A. Rostislavov, "O khudozhestvennoi postanovke 'Snegurochki,'" *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 41 (1900): 722.

epoch."[458] In Rostislavov's interpretation, *The Snow Maiden* reflects views and beliefs that are organically connected with Northern Russian nature, and are thus common to all Russian people, both prehistoric and modern Russians alike: "In *The Snow Maiden*, the impact of our Northern Russian nature on a person is wonderfully reflected; it is as though the character of a modern Russian, formed under nature's influence, and many surviving aspects of his worldview, become clearer."[459] Nature thus helps establish a connection between all Russian generations, as well as between all estates in modern society. The latter is particularly important for the nationalist imagination, presuming the existence of a shared tradition that unites the elites and the people.

A few other reviewers similarly elaborate on the "national" quality of *The Snow Maiden* and, by extension, on the "truly Russian" nature of Ostrovsky's oeuvre in general. Some reviewers, such as Efros and Alexander Amfiteatrov, emphasize and praise Ostrovsky's lifelong interest in folklore and the study of the folk tradition. Amfiteatrov specifically notes Ostrovsky's reliance on Afanasyev's work and aligns the works of the two men, observing that "it is as though the play is a poetic illustration to Afanasyev's *Poetic Outlook on Nature by the Slavs*, an illustration that is inspired, vivid, clever, and permeated with purely Russian spirit and intuition."[460]

Most reviewers do not discuss the specific sources of Ostrovsky's play as evidence of its reliance on folk traditions. Rather, they postulate the latter as a proven fact, and they

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[458] Ibid., 722.
[459] "В «Снегурочке» удивительно сказывается воздействие на человека именно нашей северной русской природы, как бы выясняются весь склад современного русского человека, образовавшийся под ее влиянием, многое еще далеко не отжившее в его мировоззрении" (ibid., 722).
[460] Old gentleman [Aleksandr Amfiteatrov], "Teatral'nyi al'bom," 4.

elevate the play to the status of a quasi-folkloric text in which the role of the author has been subjugated to the imperatives of tradition:

> *The Snow Maiden* is a *national fairy tale* which objectively reproduces images from the national epos. This is its main, fundamental background. Here, the author's goal is limited to showing how Northern nature, in its various manifestations, became reflected in the imagination of the Slavs. The author here, so to speak, withdraws himself, and using the style of national poetry, revives pictures and images of old Russian mythology.[461] (Emphasis in the original – V. K.)

The Snow Maiden here ceases to be simply a literary creation and becomes a repository of national history and heritage as folklore itself. It is clear that this reviewer equates the Berendeyan land either with ancient Rus', or with a folkloric image of an idyllic ancient land. He praises "a host of purely national traits, sparks of purely folk humor"[462] in the characterization of various personages; he asserts that Tsar Berendei conforms to "the folk idea of a patriarchal tsar."[463] Having lauded Ostrovsky's "objective" portrayal of most of the characters and scenes, the reviewer then criticizes Ostrovsky for not maintaining his objectivity throughout:

> At times, when depicting the Berendeyan kingdom, the author yields to his personal imagination, portrays this kingdom with subjective, idealistic, or humorous color, and puts into the mouths of his characters speeches and individual phrases that, to a certain extent, detach the characters from their surroundings.[464]

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[461] "«Снегурочка»,—*национальная* сказка, объективно воспроизводящая образы национального эпоса. Это—ее главный, основной фон. Здесь цель автора ограничивается лишь тем, чтобы показать, как северная природа в ее многоразличных проявлениях отразилась в фантазии славянина. Тут автор, так-сказать, устраняется сам, и стилем национальной поэзии воссоздает картины и образы старорусской мифологии." See V. P., "'Snegurochka,'" *Novosti dnia*, September 10, 1900, 3.

[462] Ibid., 3. Since the reviewer uses two different words—*natsional'nyi* and *narodnyi*, it is logical to translate *narodnyi* as "folk" here.

[463] Ibid., 3.

[464] "Но временами, рисуя царство Берендеев, автор дает простор и личной фантазии, придает ему субъективную идеалистическую или юмористическую окраску, влагает в уста своих героев речи и отдельные фразы, до известной степени отрешающие их от окружающей среды" (ibid., 3). The reviewer then proceeds to list these "subjectively" created scenes: the dialogue between the tsar and his minister Bermyata about the cooling of love's passion in his people seems unbecoming of Tsar Berendei's stature; Elena the Beautiful sometimes is "frivolous" in dissonance with the "Russian spirit"; Mizgir can be "too passionately dramatic" (ibid., 3).

Here the reviewer talks about "personal imagination" as if it were a pattern that appears in the play only from time to time. What he tries to capture is the coexistence in Ostrovsky's text of a folkloric subtext with the perspective of a modern author who engages with the legacy of the folk tradition but also distances himself from it. Critics do not seem to have the language adequate to describe this phenomenon yet, nor the sensibilities to appreciate it.

The boom in archaeological research[465]—another aspect of the general context in which Ostrovsky's play was read at the turn of the twentieth century—contributed to a remarkable tendency to discuss the world of Ostrovsky's fairy tale as if it were a real ancient civilization. Sergei Flyorov's article exemplifies this tendency particularly well.[466] He discusses the Berendeyan land, its ruler, and its customs as if he believes that this is either a real tribe that at some point existed or a mythical land created by folk imagination—but certainly not a literary creation of a nineteenth-century author. He draws comparisons between the Berendeyan land and other ancient peoples and countries. For example, speaking about the sun cult as the most important characteristic of the Berendeyans, Flyorov points out the importance of the sun cult for many peoples of the world in various historical epochs. Comparing the Berendeyans and Babylonians, he notes that while Babylonians allegedly had a similar cult of the sun, the sun represented a destructive, terrifying entity. For the Berendeyans, on the other hand, the sun is a life-giving entity, and the principal rivalry in their land is between heat, personified by Yarilo, and cold, personified by Grandfather Frost. Flyorov also sees several connections between

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[465] See Michael Kunichika, *"Our Native Antiquity": Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Culture of Russian Modernism* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2015), esp. Introduction and Chapter 1.
[466] S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka' na Khudozhestvenno-obshchedostupnom teatre)," 3-4.

the Berendeyan land and Ancient Greece. However, while he compares the Berendeyans to the Babylonians without any caveats, he applies caution in his comparison between the Berendeyans and the Phaecians, a legendary people from Homer's *Odyssey*. There is nothing negative about the Phaecians in *The Odyssey*, and the comparison would not in any way be deprecating for the Berendeyans; Flyorov himself admits that the Phaecians were "also mythical"; however, for some reason he states that he would make this comparison only "if [he] were not afraid of being misunderstood."[467] Similarly, he adds disclaimers and caveats when comparing the paternalistic, father-like Tsar Berendei to Oedipus Rex. Evidently, Flyorov is reluctant to draw too strong of a correlation between the Berendeyans and the Pheacians or Oedipus Rex due to the latter's ancient Greek literary origins. In contrast to the ancient Greek figures, he perceives the Berendeyans as a real pre-historical people. In that case, a comparison with literary creations would potentially "downgrade" the Berendeyans.

At the same time, Flyorov is fully aware of the legendary character of Tsar Berendei and traces his "lineage" to various folkloric and literary "tsars." "First of all," he notes, "this is a legendary creature, from the same realm as the fairy-tale tsars Gorokh, Dadon, Saltan, Bova Korolevich, and Eruslan Lazarevich."[468] Such figures indeed provide fruitful parallels. Tsar Gorokh is a folk character often mentioned in Russian proverbs and fairy tales to denote that something happened a very long time ago ("pri tsare Gorokhe" – "in the times of Tsar Gorokh").[469] Tsar Dadon appears in the popular seventeenth-century *lubok* tale

[467] Ibid., 3.
[468] Ibid., 3.
[469] *Slavianskie drevnosti*, vol. 1, 526; Afanas'ev, *Narodnye russkie skazki*, vol. 1, 195.

"The Tale about Bova-Korolevich."[470] According to Vladimir Dahl, the word "dadon" (or "dodon") existed in some dialects,[471] and Alexander Pushkin uses this name for the main character of his satirical fairy tale "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel."[472] For the modern reader, the name bears more connection to Pushkin than to "The Tale of Bova Korolevich," and this was probably true for educated readers at the turn of the century as well. Tsar Saltan is yet another name that originally appeared in "The Tale of Bova Korolevich" (as "Tsar Saltan Saltanovich"). It is well known, again thanks to Pushkin's use of the name in his "Fairy Tale about Tsar Saltan"; the plot of Pushkin's fairy tale is related to folk fairy tales written down by Pushkin rather than to "The Tale of Bova Korolevich."[473] Both Bova and Eruslan Lazarevich were popular characters in Russian *lubok* literature; however, their sources were not Russian.[474] Ultimately, Flyorov's list is a very interesting mixture of folk and literary characters of various origins. Curiously, no character in his list resembles the deeply moral and patriarchal Tsar Berendei. The only aspect that unites them is that all of them are perceived as "folksy" (even if not all of them, strictly speaking, pertain to Russian folklore) and, for that reason, also "ancient."

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[470] *Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi. XVII vek*, bk. 1 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), 275-300.

[471] It appears both as "dodon" and "dadon" in Dahl's dictionary and even has a female version. See Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, vol. 1, 1122; also 1021, as "dadon." Dahl claims that Tsar Dodon existed in fairy tales, but it is possible that Dahl here refers to "The Tale about Bova Korolevich."

[472] Aleksandr Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia Aleksandra Pushkina*, ed. Iu. M. Lotman and S. A. Fomichev (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997), 610. Tsar Dadon also appears in Pushkin's early unfinished poem "Bova," which, as far as one can tell, reveals more plot similarities to "The Tale about Bova Korolevich" than "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel."

[473] Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 595-597; *Putevoditel' po Pushkinu* (St. Petersburg: Gumanitarnoe agentstvo "Akademicheskii proekt," 1997), 350, 357.

[474] "The Tale about Bova-Korolevich" came from a medieval French novella about a knight's adventures; see *Pamiatniki literatury Drevnei Rusi*, 641-642. "The Tale about Eruslan Lazarevich" originated in the Middle East (ibid., 643-645). Both tales, however, were popular in Russia since at least the seventeenth century, and both were influenced by Russian folklore.

Flyorov provides this list in order to emphasize the idea that Tsar Berendei is not a literary character, but also a folk personage created by the people's imagination: "Tsar Berendei is a legendary creation of folk imagination, a personification of an ideal, a fairy-tale type."[475] Again, there is no mention of Ostrovsky in this part of the article; Flyorov talks about Tsar Berendei as if he were a folk character, created by the people's imagination centuries ago.[476]

To conclude, an important aspect of the reception of Ostrovsky's play in 1900 was an unstable, oscillating view of the Berendeyan land as a semi-legendary, semi-historical place—and not as a recent literary creation. The association between the Berendeyan land and ancient Rus' was emphasized by reviewers, which invited a view of the play as an ethnographic reconstruction. Judging from the materials available about Stanislavsky's production of *The Snow Maiden*, that production intended to respond to this invitation.

The Production of *The Snow Maiden* at the Moscow Art Theater

Today, the early period of Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater (MKhAT) is strongly associated with the names of Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky, and with the genre of contemporary drama. Chekhov indeed had a special relationship with the theater; the Moscow Art Theater gave new life to his *Seagull* in its first season (1898-1899); staged *Uncle Vanya* in its second season; and premiered *The Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry*

[475] S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka' na Khudozhestvenno-obshchedostupnom teatre), 3.
[476] Flyorov also adds that even though the tsar is an old man, he is not decrepit—instead, "he is a rosy-cheeked, fresh, cheerful, and handsome old man, the likes of which there are so many in our Rus'" ("Он румяный, свежий, жизнерадостный красавец-старик, каких так много встречается у нас на Руси") (ibid., 3). Here, Flyorov seems to bring Tsar Berendei to the present, claiming that this type of old man is common in present-day Russia. The use of present tense together with the denominator "Rus'" normally used for ancient Rus' ("Kievan Rus'") conflates the past and the present.

Orchard (1904). However, the theater began its existence with a play of a very different genre: Aleksei Tolstoy's historical drama *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* opened the theater's first season and became its first big success.[477] The theater continued its exploration of Russian history the following year, when it staged another drama by Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*. Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* was the opening production of the theater's third season, and its place in the repertoire suggested a certain thematic closeness to the previous opening plays—plays devoted to Russian history.[478]

There are additional reasons to believe that the staging of *The Snow Maiden* was perceived by the theater as a project akin to their work on Aleksei Tolstoy's historical dramas. For both *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* and *The Snow Maiden*, the theater organized expeditions to collect materials for the productions: in the case of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*, the expedition's destination was Rostov Veliky, and for *The Snow Maiden*—the Arkhangelsk and Vologda provinces.[479] Another significant connection between *The Snow Maiden* and Tolstoy's historical plays was the music: Alexander Grechaninov, who composed the psaltery players' song in the scene on the bridge over the Yauza River in *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* as well as the music for *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, was invited to write the

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[477] During the 1898-1899 season, which lasted from October 14 until February 28, the play was performed fifty-seven times; the newspaper *Russian Word* (*Russkoe Slovo*) wrote on February 13, 1899, that the first fifty performances were sold out; see O. A. Radishcheva, ed., *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike, 1898-1905* (Moscow, 2005), 22. *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* endured in the repertoire of the theater until October 1949 with a total of 920 performances; see *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr,* vol. 1, *1898-1917* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo izobrazitel'nogo izkusstva, 1955), 301.

[478] Editors of the first volume of *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike* speak about this continuity in the theater's repertoire in more general terms. According to them, *The Snow Maiden* continues the "Russian" line in the repertoire, or the line of "Russian everyday life" ("russkii byt"). See Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike,* 129. It is hard to agree with M. N. Stroeva, who believes that *The Snow Maiden* was a detour for Stanislavsky and an unexpected "step in a different direction"; see M. N. Stroeva, *Rezhisserskie iskaniia Stanislavskogo, 1898-1917* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 59.

[479] Viktor Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," *Ezhegodnik Moskovskogo Khudozhestvennogo Teatra, 1943* (Moscow, 1945): 290.

music for *The Snow Maiden*, which was supposed to seamlessly accompany the action. For all three productions, Grechaninov employed folk melodies and harmonies and strove to imitate the sound of old instruments.[480] Finally, Viktor Simov, the artist who created the sketches for the costumes and sets of *The Snow Maiden*, notes in his memoirs that everyone in the theater was hoping that *The Snow Maiden* would be "no less of a triumph" than *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*.[481] This remark suggests that the association between the two plays was in the minds of those involved in the production.

There are a number of sources that help reconstruct the theater's work on the production of *The Snow Maiden*, and they provide important, albeit often conflicting, details about the original idea, the preparatory stages, and the final product. The most easily accessible and comprehensive materials are comprised in a chapter about *The Snow Maiden* in Stanislavsky's memoirs *My Life in Art*[482] and the memoirs of the artist and stage designer Viktor Simov,[483] which were partially published in 1945.[484] A similar text by Simov can be found in the Moscow Art Theater archive; it is a typewritten manuscript under the title *My Work with Directors*.[485] These texts differ slightly; the unpublished version is longer and provides more details about the production. Both of them, however,

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[480] Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike, 1898-1905*, 485.
[481] Viktor Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami." Chapter IV: "Snegurochka." Muzei MKhAT, fond 320, opis' 1, ed. khr. 107, list 93.
[482] Konstantin Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1962). For the most recent English translation of the memoir see Konstantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London, New York: Routledge, 2008).
[483] Simov was the chief stage designer at the Moscow Art Theater between 1898 and 1912, and then again between 1925 and 1935. He worked with Mamontov's Private Opera as a theater designer before moving to the Moscow Art Theater. See biographical information about Simov and a discussion of his artistic method in Cynthia Marsh, "Design on Drama: V. A. Simov and Chekhov," in *Russian Literature, Modernism and the Visual Arts*, ed. Catriona Kelly and Stephen Lovell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000), 172-196, esp. 173-181.
[484] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika."
[485] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami." Chapter 4: "Snegurochka." Muzei MKhAT, fond 320, opis' 1, ed. khr. 107.

mention that the events described happened "thirty-five years ago,"[486] which means that the memoirs were written in the 1930s.[487] Stanislavsky's memoirs were written in the mid-1920s, a quarter of a century after the production of *The Snow Maiden*. Thus, the two most accessible and detailed sources on the production are significantly removed in time from it. This must be taken into account, and there are instances when contemporaneous sources contradict these memoirs.

Snippets about the production and its reception can be found in letters by Stanislavsky, Maria Lilina (Stanislavsky's wife and an actress in the company who played the role of the Snow Maiden), Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Maxim Gorky, and Leonid Sobinov.[488] Additional unpublished letters from the archive are quoted or paraphrased in Vinogradskaya's *Chronicle* of Stanislavsky's life and work.[489]

Certain visual materials related to the production can be found in published sources. Some of Simov's sketches and a few photographs of actors and scenes are published in his memoirs mentioned above. The volume *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr* contains the most comprehensive selection of photographs pertaining to the production, along with

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[486] Ibid., list 92; Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 289.
[487] Notes to *Ezhegodnik* state that Simov dictated lengthy memoirs on his work with various directors to his nephew, but World War II stalled their publication. See *Ezhegodnik Moskovskogo Khudozhestvennogo Teatra, 1943* (Moscow, 1945): 311.
[488] See Konstantin Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh*, vol. 7 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1995); *Mariia Petrovna Lilina* (Moscow: Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1960); V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Teatral'noe nasledie,* 2 vols (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952-1954); V. E. Meierhol'd, *Stat'i. Pis'ma. Rechi. Besedy. Chast' pervaia: 1891-1917* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968); Maksim Gor'kii and Anton Chekhov, *Perepiska, stat'i, vyskazyvaniia. Sbornik materialov* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozh. lit-ry, 1951); *Leonid Vital'evich Sobinov. Tom pervyi: Pis'ma* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970). Some of the letters are translated and can be found in Jean Benedetti, ed., *The Moscow Art Theater Letters* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Laurence Senelick's *Stanislavsky: A Life in Letters* does not contain any letters pertinent to the production.
[489] I. Vinogradskaia, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo K. S. Stanislavskogo. Letopis'*, vol. 1, *1863-1905* (Moscow: Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo, 1971).

photographs of actors and scenes from a number of other pre-1917 productions by the Moscow Art Theater.[490]

The Moscow Art Theater archive holds some materials that are contemporaneous with the production. Of particular note is Stanislavsky's director's copy of *The Snow Maiden*,[491] which contains his remarks on the *mise-en-scènes*, sounds, costumes, movement on stage, the general character of the scenes, and other aspects, and provides a glimpse into the director's vision of the production.[492] There are also two letters to Stanislavsky from that time period: Simov's letter from the expedition to Vologda and Arkhangelsk, dating from February 29, 1900,[493] and Alexander Sanin's letter to Stanislavsky dating from August 10.[494] Sanin was Stanislavsky's co-director for *The Snow Maiden* and for a number of other productions. Stanislavsky's director's copy of the play and Simov's and Sanin's letters are the only written documents that are contemporaneous with the production.

In the archive, there are also numerous visual materials related to the production: photographs of the actors and the *mise-en-scènes*; Simov's "travel album" containing sketches presumably made during the Northern expedition;[495] and a folder with a host of various materials.[496] The folder contains a book of Simov's sketches of the costumes that he

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[490] N. N. Chushkin, ed., *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1, 66-73.
[491] Konstantin Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia."/ Rezhisserskii ekzempliar vesennei skazki Ostrovskogo Sneg[urochka] /1900 g., fevral' – do avgusta, 2-go/ Muzei MKhAT. KS №18945/1-5.
[492] In his thirty years of being at the head of the Moscow Art Theater, Stanislavsky wrote a number of such director's plans for various productions. Some of them were published, but not the one for *The Snow Maiden*. See *Rezhisserskie ekzempliary K. S. Stanislavskogo, 1898 – 1930*, 6 vols (Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1980-1994).
[493] Viktor Simov, Pis'mo k Stanislavskomu. 1900, fevr. 29. Po puti v Vologdu—Moskva. Muzei MKhAT. KS №10298.
[494] A. A. Sanin, Pis'mo k Stanislavskomu. 1900 g., avg. 10. Moskva—Alupka. Muzei MKhAT. KS №10182.
[495] V. A. Simov, Al'bom risunkov. Putevye zarisovki s natury dlia postanovki "Snegurochki." Arkhitekturnye detali, peizazhi, kostiumy, predmety obihoda. [Arkhangel'skaia guberniia]. Muzei MKhAT. Eskiznyi fond, №4764 (E-4764).
[496] V. A. Simov, S. N. Sud'binin, A. A. Protopopova, "Snegurochka," 1900 g. Tetrad' s eskizami kostiumov, zarisovkami iz raznykh izdanii i muzeev—kostiumov, ornamenta i pr., a takzhe otkrytok i foto. Muzei MKhAT. Eskiznyi fond, №4749 (E-4749). KP-9909.

made in museums and copied from published books on costume history. Judging from the inscriptions, most or possibly all of the museum sketches were completed in the Dashkov Museum (an ethnography department of the Rumiantsev Museum in Moscow).[497] In the same folder, there is also an envelope with a few postcards featuring various nationalities of the Russian empire in their national costumes. Sheets with Alexander Grechaninov's incidental music for the production can also be found in the archive.[498]

Though one can extract some information about the production from the reviews, the wealth of other materials about this production produce a much richer picture. This chapter will therefore rely on the information scattered in the reviews to a lesser extent than the previous ones. The sources sometimes complement, and sometimes contradict each other, but ultimately they create a detailed picture of the preparation for the production and of the production itself.

Regarding the staging of *The Snow Maiden* in his memoir, *My Life in Art*, Stanislavsky cites his interest in the world of fantasy as the primary reason for choosing this play:

> Fantasy in the theater has long been a passion of mine. I will do a play because of it. It is joyful, beautiful, funny. It is a rest, a joy, which artist needs. <…> For me, fantasy is like drinking a glass of champagne.[499]

However, Stanislavsky immediately adds that it was not only the fantasy element that attracted him to the play, but also the "quite exceptional beauty of Russian epos"[500] that it conveyed. "*The Snow Maiden* is a fairy tale, a dream, a national legend, written and

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[497] See references to this in Stanislavsky's letters. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh*, vol. 7, 374.
[498] Muzei MKhAT, fond 1 (spektakli). Materialy spektaklia "Snegurochka." Noty.
[499] Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, 186 (in Russian: Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 265).
[500] Ibid., 186 (Russian edition: 265). This is mostly Benedetti's translation; however, he translates the word "epos" as "epic literature," which is misleading; "epos" clearly refers to folklore, while "epic literature" suggests a connection with high literary culture.

recounted in [Ostrovsky's] wonderful, resounding verse," he notes.[501] Clearly, Stanislavsky sees *The Snow Maiden* as a perfect subject due to its seamless combination of fantasy and historical epos. For Stanislavsky, the excitement of producing the play stemmed from a peculiar tension between fantasy and truth: "It's a joy to invent something that never happens in life but is nonetheless true, something that lives in us, in our people—in their beliefs and imagination."[502]

Asserting his interest in the realm of the imaginary, Stanislavsky remarkably declares it a realm of common fascination between "us" and "the people" (*narod*), the educated classes and the simple folk—a sentiment that was also expressed by Rostislavov in his review discussed above.

Viktor Simov's memoirs contain the most comprehensive information about all stages of the theater's work on the production. Simov echoes Stanislavsky in addressing *The Snow Maiden*'s peculiar combination of the real and the imaginary. Simov states that the theater leaders perceived *The Snow Maiden* as a cross between two genres that the theater staged in the first years of its existence: the historical play, represented by Aleksei Tolstoy's two dramas, and the fantastic, represented by the fairy tale *The Sunken Bell* by the German writer Gerhart Hauptmann.[503] A mixture of history and fairy tale always underlies Simov's discussion of the play. Simov perceives the work on the fairy-tale aspect of *The Snow Maiden* as more challenging than the work on *The Sunken Bell*, because this time the

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[501] Ibid., 186 (Russian edition: 265).
[502] "Весело придумывать то, чего никогда не бывает в жизни, но что тем не менее правда, что существует в нас, в нашем народе—в его поверіях и воображении" (Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 265). This translation is mine, since Benedetti's translation significantly departs from the original here.
[503] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 62-63. *The Sunken Bell* was part of the 1898-1899 season; it was transferred to the Moscow Art Theater stage from the Society of Art and Literature, which Stanislavsky co-founded in 1888 and where he directed a number of plays before founding the Moscow Art Theater and taking the most talented actors and a few productions with him.

stakes are higher: this fairy tale is Russian, "our old grandma's fairy tale, both close and distant, familiar and mysterious."[504] This quote betrays the spirit that permeates Simov's memoirs: in his narrative on the theater's work on the production, one senses a constant oscillation between looking for something familiar and something exotic, something distant and at the same time recognizable.

According to Simov, presenting an image of the Berendeyan land—or ancient Rus'—that would be recognizable and exotic at the same time, was indeed the main challenge for those in charge of the production. In his early conversations with Simov about staging *The Snow Maiden*, Stanislavsky allegedly enticed him with a picture of "dream and reality, miracles and the everyday life of a village."[505] Simov describes his immediate enchantment upon hearing Stanislavsky's vision: "I am listening, and I also imagine sleeping meadows, impassable wilderness, lakes with reeds by the shore, festive colors of the crowd in holiday dress, vanished rituals."[506] Here, the fantasy of a world that does not exist anymore, but must have existed in the past, evokes in the artist's imagination an illusion of familiarity. However, Simov admits that while it was natural and exciting to imagine this world as real, it proved very difficult to depict it with paint and tools in the physical reality of the stage:

> A strange thing: daydreams "about the enchanted country" were very coherent, but when I tried capturing them, a concrete depiction would not turn out, it seemed to

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[504] "Наша старая бабушкина сказка, близкая и далекая, знакомая и загадочная" (ibid., list 62). It is interesting here that Simov appears to be talking not about Ostrovsky's fairy-tale play, but about the folk fairy tale about the Snow Maiden: in his description, the story starts as "There once lived a man and a woman" ("Жили-были дед да баба"), and he claims that he knew this story when he was only five years old (ibid., list 62). Simov was five in 1863 (born in 1858), which is ten years earlier than the publication of Ostrovsky's play; it is actually unlikely that he knew this tale in his childhood, unless he read Maximovich's or Danilevsky's publications. Most probably, he is asserting his familiarity with this fairy tale retroactively; it is so familiar to him when he writes his memoirs that he cannot imagine he did not know it in his childhood.
[505] "Сон и явь, чудеса и разом деревенские будни" (ibid., list 62).
[506] "Я слушаю, и мне тоже мерещатся поляны спящие, глушь непроходимая, озера с прибрежными камышами, праздничный колорит цветисто-нарядной толпы, обряды исчезнувшие" (ibid., list 63).

> slip away. Either there is a fairy tale, or there is reality, but I need to mix the fairy tale into a real atmosphere of festivities and everyday life.[507]

The challenge was thus to combine the imaginary and the realistic; to present a subject from the realm of myth with the means of naturalistic staging, which was the Moscow Art Theater's primary method. Thus came the desire to discover the "prototype" of the Berendeyan land. The theater decided to apply the same principle to staging *The Snow Maiden* that it applied when producing Aleksei Tolstoy's *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* two years earlier. In case of Tolstoy's historical drama, the theater organized an expedition to Rostov Veliky in order to be able to reconstruct the atmosphere of sixteenth-century Russia on stage.[508] For *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich,* this "ethnographic" method proved immensely successful. In case of *The Snow Maiden*, however, it was unclear where to look for the "prototype" of the Berendeyan land on the axes of either space or time.

In his memoir, Simov goes to great lengths to describe the process of choosing the real-life model for the Berendeyan land, the actual place that would provide material and inspiration for reviving "fairy-tale ancient Rus'" on stage. Ideally, it would be a Russian village little affected by modernization and with old customs still in place. For example, the village Ivankovo, where Simov had his country-house and where he often worked in the summer, did not provide him with sufficient amount of "fairy-tale" material—probably because it was not "ancient" enough. A village called "Berendeevka"[509] and located not far

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[507] "Но странное дело: грезы «об очарованной стране» вырисовывались удивительно складно, а когда я попробовал их поймать, конкретное воплощение мне не удавалось, словно ускользало. Либо одна сказка, либо одна действительность, мне же надо сказку растворить в подлинном круге празднования и повседневности" (ibid., list 63).

[508] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 290.

[509] Perhaps it was the same village (usually described as "close to Pereslavl-Zalesskii" or "in Vladimirskaya guberniia") that supposedly inspired Ostrovsky to call his imaginary land "Berendeyan."

from Moscow originally excited Simov's curiosity, but was soon rejected without serious consideration:

> I was happy to find out that somewhere close to Moscow there is a village with the name "Berendeevka." I was even planning to go there, but then changed my mind, having realized that the enticing name would not help my cause: I would see just a usual mundane village, which would not add anything to my search. Now, I regret that I did not go then; there are some indications that it is precisely in this village that old customs have been preserved almost intact for a long time.[510]

It is interesting how the location and the name play out in Simov's discussion of this village. Simov rejects the village of Berendeevka for fear that its name could be misleading. Due to its proximity to Moscow, he surmises, the village would likely look too contemporary and would not resemble the "old Russia" that the creators of the production sought to resurrect on stage.

After some initial struggles and many lively discussions in the theater, the model for The Berendeyan land was "found" by the theater leaders—presumably, by Stanislavsky himself:

> Where would the mysterious domain of Tsar Berendei be? In order to not make unsubstantiated guesses, one needs to encroach upon his domain—but where? Guesses were offered, disputes were held. Finally, our leaders decided that Berendei was a sovereign of the vast Northern lands. What about the borders? These lands began, roughly, north of Vologda and extended to the White Sea. The theater organized a real expedition to the North.[511]

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[510] "Я обрадовался, когда узнал, что под Москвой где-то есть селение с названием Берендеевка. Собрался даже туда поехать, но потом отдумал, сообразив, что заманчивое прозвище мало поможет делу: увижу я самую обыкновенную деревню, которая ничего не прибавит к моим исканиям. Задним числом я жалею теперь об этом; есть сведения, что именно здесь старинные обычаи долгое время сохранялись почти нетронутыми" (Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 63).

[511] "…Где залегли таинственные владения царя Берендея? Чтобы не мудрить беспочвенно, надо проникнуть в его владения, но куда? Высказывались догадки, возникали споры. Наконец, наши руководители признали Берендея владыкой обширных северных пространств. Границы? Начинались они, примерно, за Вологдой и упирались в Белое море. Театр организовал настоящую экспедицию на север" (Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 63). In the published version of Simov's memoirs, he quotes Ostrovsky to corroborate the idea that the Berendeyan land should be in the far North: "'Without joy and coldly, the gloomy country greets its Bonny Spring.' Thus, this is far North" ("'Нерадостно и холодно встречает Весну свою угрюмая страна.' Значит, крайний север") (Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 290).

The expedition party consisted of Simov himself, Boris Alekseev (Stanislavsky's brother), and the painter Klavdy Sapunov. The goal of the expedition was to acquire traditional peasant clothes, as well as to study and sketch the architecture of peasant homes in addition to household objects, and to collect as many traditional and old-looking household items as they could find. Production creators believed that in central Russia peasant dress and homes were already quite different from the old pre-Petrine style, but in the North they might still be preserved in their more "ancient" state. The travelers were looking for something old, archaic, or with an "archaic touch"; something exotic and different, but at the same time perceived as "ours," belonging to Russian cultural inheritance—no matter that a modern urban Russian dweller would only see it in a museum at present.[512]

Starting out their trip, the travellers experienced mixed emotions. In Simov's account, they were "joyful and eerie."[513] This was not just a trip to some distant villages—the participants of the expedition perceived this trip as a travel in time to Russia's long-forgotten past:

> We were eagerly absorbing the austere beauty and the wondrous forms of everyday culture still preserved here. This was the land of old songs, old *byliny* [epic songs], and *pribautki* [humorous rhymes], with people's manners and clothes corresponding to them—an unchanging guise of a pre-Petrine, or maybe even a pre-Romanov village.[514]

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[512] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 64.

[513] "и радостно и жутко" (ibid., list 64).

[514] "Мы жадно глотали суровую красоту с диковинными формами сохранившегося здесь быта. То был край старых песен, старых былин, прибауток, чему соответствовали и повадка и костюмы, устойчивое обличье до-Петровской, а может и до-Романовской лесной деревни" (ibid., list 64). The note about a "pre-Petrine" village is not surprising: Peter the Great westernized Russian culture to such an extent that throughout the nineteenth century there existed a conviction that one needed to study the pre-Petrine period in order to see the authentic, unadulterated Russian culture (see discussion of Buslaev's attitude to Peter the Great's reforms in the Introduction). Simov in this passage claims to have found not just the pre-Petrine, but the pre-Romanov, that is, pre-seventeenth century Russia during the expedition. The origins of this landmark are not very clear. Possibly, Simov simply tries to claim knowledge of a very remote time period, and uses "pre-Romanov" not in a strictly historical sense, but more to convey the meaning of "very old." It would be hard to claim to have traveled to "pre-historic" times from Ostrovsky's stage directions for *The Snow Maiden*.

This is no wonder that during their "time travel," the travelers "tried on" or imagined different identities for themselves. For example, at the start of the expedition, Simov says, they felt like "ushkuiniki"—Old Novgorodian pirates who engaged in both trade and looting: "The three of us <…> felt like we were no less than 'ushkuiniki,' raiding some foreign lands in hopes of sizable loot."[515] Later in his memoir, describing the travelers' interaction with Northern villagers, Simov remarks that they imagined themselves to be merchants from the pre-Petrine Russia—or from Ostrovsky's play: Boris Alekseev reminded Simov of Mizgir, a replica of the merchant from *The Snow Maiden*.[516]

Feelings of excitement and absolute certainty that the expedition would be successful permeate the beginning of Simov's memoir. Even if these emotions are partially a product of retrospective dramatization, a contemporaneous source, Simov's letter to Stanislavsky sent from their route to Vologda, confirms the same sentiment—an anticipation of the imminent discovery of the Berendeyan land in the North:

> The Northern expedition sends you greetings and wishes you rich imagination. We passed Troitsa safely, tomorrow we will be in Vologda, and then it won't be too far to the Berendeyans, whom we will try to deliver in the largest of numbers.[517]

The pre-Romanov epoch could be perceived as the oldest time period that anyone could realistically "encroach upon"—therefore, Simov here claims knowledge of the time period closest to Ostrovsky's imaginary time.

[515] "Мы трое <…> чувствовали себя по меньшей мере «ушкуйниками», предпринимающими набег в чужие земли с надеждой на богатую добычу" (ibid., list 64). The choice of this word and image ("ushkuiniki") contains exactly that combination of estrangement and connection with the "ancient" world that permeates the entire search for a "prototype." In this particular case, through the choice of the archaic word "ushkuiniki," Simov makes the travellers part of the world of "ancient Russia" (as "ushkuiniki," they too belong to the medieval times that they are trying to infiltrate; at the same time, with the same term he signifies the "otherness" of the travellers, their difference from the world of the Northerners—since they, as outsiders, are "raiding" the "foreign lands."

[516] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 293.

[517] "Северная экспедиция шлет Вам привет и пожелание обильной фантазии. Миновали благополучно Троицу, завтра будем в Вологде, а там недалеко и до Берендеев, кот[орых] постараемся доставить в самом большом количестве" (Simov, Pis'mo k Stanislavskomu. 1900, fevr. 29. Po puti v Vologdu—Moskva. Muzei MKhAT. KS №10298). One can infer that when Simov talks about "delivering" the Berendeyans, he means bringing back clothing and household items that will be suitable for the production.

Judging from Simov's account, the expedition indeed proved very successful. In fact, it resulted in two discoveries for the participants: discovery of Russian antiquity and the discovery of the "true Ostrovsky" (*nastoiashchii Ostrovskii*), as Simov often repeats throughout the memoir. Impressions from the trip reminded Simov of various images and even lines from Ostrovsky—and in the memoirs Simov often cites *The Snow Maiden*, as if to give more weight to his impressions.

In Simov's memoir a lot of attention is given to the travelers' encounter with the inhabitants of a certain village Podosharikha. The snow-covered environs themselves remind Simov of Ostrovsky's Prologue: "Here it is—the Prologue! It stands live right in front of me, shrouded in pre-spring slumber…"[518] Once the travelers reach Podosharikha, their impressions of the majestic wooded surroundings are supplemented with those of "epic," fairy-tale qualities of household items:

> Icons decorated an unusual corner: round, like an armchair, shiny and glossy from the rubbing of backs against it. A skillful carpenter made it from a log almost a meter wide. The icon-corner—made for Ilya Muromets! One could sense something cyclopean in this huge log structure, with its tiny windows. I immediately thought: "This is indeed the realm of Berendei [*berendeevshchina*]; the true Ostrovsky is here!"[519]

The massive houses of the northerners are so imposing that they evoke the epic warrior hero, Ilya Muromets. Simov stresses that everything in the North is reminiscent of a central Russian village, except much bigger, more austere, as if it is populated by epic giants. Ostrovsky's text, to be sure, does not portray the Berendeyans as epic heroes; even though

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[518] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 292. The expedition left Moscow in mid-February, right before Lent, which is approximately the time when Ostrovsky's play starts.

[519] "Образа украшали какой-то необычайный угол: круглый, вроде кресла, лоснящийся и засаленный спинами. Плотничье искусство вырубило его из венца, толщиной в добрый аршин. Красный угол—по меньшей мере для Ильи Муромца! Что-то циклопическое чувствовалось в бревенчатой громаде с малюсенькими продольными окнами. Сразу пронеслось в мыслях: 'Да ведь это и есть берендеевщина; тут—настоящий Островский'" (ibid., 293).

Simov suggests recognizing the "true Ostrovsky" in a house of a villager, his vision is apparently mediated by Russian epic songs about mighty warriors (*bogatyri*).

The travelers' encounter with the northerners produces a lot of interest and excitement on both sides. Right away, the travelers are encircled by a host of people from the village, of both genders and of various ages; villagers stare at them, while the travelers observe the exotic bright colors and shapes of the villagers' attire—especially the women's dresses and headdresses: "Women in all kinds of *kikas*,[520] headdresses with pendants, and kerchiefs. A most interesting collection of clothes, faces, styles, a picturesque combination of colors. Again, a living Berendeyan land!"[521]

The travelers' task was to take pieces of this "living Berendeyan land" to Moscow to help create an artistic Berendeyan world on stage. According to Simov's memoirs, the travelers inquired with the villagers about the possibility of buying old traditional clothes and household objects, or for that matter, anything that the villagers might have inherited from their grandparents. When Boris Alekseev started encouraging the villagers, seeing their shyness, Simov did not miss the chance to make another connection with Ostrovsky's play calling Alekseev Mizgir, who appears in the Berendeyan village in the play.[522] Encouraged by the travelers, village women brought them various traditional items, such as home-spun fabrics, *sarafany* (traditional Russian jumper dresses), *dushegrei* (lit. "soul-warmer," women's outer attire similar to a short jacket), bast (birchbark) shepherd's

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[520] *Kika*, or *kichka* was a married woman's headdress, which covered her head and hair and often had little "horns" (a "horned kika"—"kika s rogami").
[521] "Бабы в разнохарактерных киках, уборах с подвесками, в платках с убрусом. Интереснейшая лента одежд, лиц, покроев, живописное смешение цветов. Опять живая берендеевщина!" (Ibid., 293.)
[522] Ibid., 293. Simov here forgets that in the play, Mizgir was also a "Berendeyan," and not a "foreign merchant"—he was simply a traveling tradesman, but essentially belonged to the same Berendeyan community. Simov was probably under the influence of Stanislavsky, who for some reason imagined Mizgir as a foreigner, and not a Berendeyan.

pipes,[523] mosquito nets, knit socks with peculiar ornaments and color combinations, and bast milk jars. The travelers were overwhelmed with the quantity and variety of goods. Simov's depiction of the villagers, their houses, household items, and the surrounding landscape, culminated in the conclusion that "probably, nowhere would we have found a more colorful distinctness, which came to us almost intact from remote antiquity."[524] This experience seemed to confirm for Simov that the realm of Berendei ("berendeevshchina") belonged to the culture of the Russian North.[525]

In the unpublished version of his memoir, Simov emphasizes the Northern influences on his sets, which he had to modify on the basis of what he saw in the North. He made his sets appear more massive and austere, but also lavishly decorated with motifs found on Northern peasant clothes.[526] While Simov's original aspiration must have been to get as close to the "true" Ostrovsky as possible, in reality he would very often "correct" Ostrovsky and find creative solutions that, according to him, were even closer to the "true berendeevshchina" than Ostrovsky himself could have envisioned. One such correction is noticeable in the representation of the Snow Maiden and her father, Grandfather Frost. Simov admits that he purposely deviated from Ostrovsky's depiction of the Snow Maiden as a *boyaryshnya*—a boyar's daughter; instead, Simov makes her look like a snow-flake, a "little savage" (*dikarka*), a simple girl from the woods, who differs from the Berendeyans by the simplicity of her clothes and complete absence of jewelry.[527] Her father is a strong

[523] Simov notes that this is a great find that can be used for the shepherd Lel (ibid., 294).
[524] Ibid., 294-295.
[525] Ibid., 298.
[526] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 76.
[527] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 302.

Northern Samoyed who can easily fell a huge pine tree.[528] Another correction concerns the decoration of the palace. Simov mentions that according to Ostrovsky's text, he would have had to draw a leg of an auroch (*tur*) on the column's base;[529] however, Simov asserts that for the Far North, a deer's head is a much more characteristic ornament.[530] Here, it is almost as if Simov reproaches Ostrovsky for not knowing his "sources" sufficiently.

Simov becomes so convinced that the North is the true Berendeyan land that he begins to assume that Ostrovsky used the North as his source as well (which, as far as we know, is not true). For Simov, the Berendeyan land stops being a literary creation and becomes a mythical land that at some point existed in reality. According to Simov, Ostrovsky tried to recreate this half-mythical, half-real land—but the playwright did not do all the necessary research; it was thus necessary to "correct" Ostrovsky in accordance with the Northern expedition findings.

Simov's memoir suggests that the area of the expedition's research for this production was geographically limited: the ideas for the stage design were found mostly in one Northern village, Podosharikha. The travelers found a few other villages they visited to be too typical of what could be found in central Russia.[531] Podosharikha, on the other hand, offered an "island" of antiquity, miraculously preserved in the mostly modernized world. It

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[528] Ibid., 302. In contemporary usage, the word "Nenets" is used for this ethnicity, since the word "Samoyed" means "self-eater" and is considered derogatory. In this chapter, I will be using the word "Samoyed" because in the nineteenth century the word "Samoyed" was often indiscriminately applied to the entire group of Northern peoples speaking Uralic—or Samoyedic—languages. It is most probable that Simov (and later Stanislavsky) used the word "Samoyed" in this broader way.

[529] In the play, Tsar Berendei paints a column in his palace; the *skomorokhi* quarrel about what animal's leg he is painting, and he tells them that it is a leg of an auroch (*tur*) (Ostrovskii, VII, 411). There is nothing surprising in Ostrovsky's mention of this animal: *tur* was an ancient type of bull (auroch) that was mostly extinct by the nineteenth century, but it appears in many folkloric texts, Russian chronicles, and memorably, in *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*.

[530] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 76, footnote.

[531] Simov describes the second village that they stopped in: "Compared to Podosharikha, here the atmosphere of fairy tale was much weaker. We spent just a little time there and returned somewhat disappointed" (Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 297).

was the only village that met the criteria of both antiquity and exoticism and therefore passed as a real-life model for the "ancient Rus'" of the production. Having found nothing similar in a few other villages, the travelers quickly became discouraged and headed home, only making a quick stop in Arkhangelsk and Vologda in order to buy more old-fashioned clothing from the townspeople. Simov's memoir suggests—even though he never states it clearly—that many of the actual clothing items the expedition bought or exchanged in the North were used in the production. If this is indeed the case, the clothes were used not in their original form, but with additions and alterations: from the letters we know that, just like for the productions of historical dramas, a few actresses—M. P. Lilina, M. P. Grigorieva, and O. P. Norova—worked on sewing and embroidering the costumes.[532]

Simov's memoir offers a seemingly comprehensive picture of the production preparation. The unpublished version in particular goes into great detail about the initial conception, the expedition, the correction of that conception, and the modifications made to the expedition's findings for the stage. Simov presents this story as a discovery of a remote community in the Russian North, which somehow preserved Russian antiquity almost intact, and which provided the theater with a solution for stage design.

However, other sources suggest that the process of the preparation for the production and the ultimate result were much more complicated than Simov's memoir leads us to believe. For example, he does not even mention a few of the sources that he

[532] See references to this process in the letters: Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 342, 352, 367, 375, 378 and commentary on 651, 652, and 655; see also *Mariia Petrovna Lilina*, 182. While Stanislavsky's letters contain some commentary regarding the costumes, he never mentions that the theater took the clothes from the North—rather, he constantly mentions that actresses worked on embroidering those costumes. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the base fabrics were not from the North—they could be embroidering the clothes that Simov brought. In a letter to Olga Knipper from July 1905, Stanislavsky does mention that the furs for the costumes for *The Snow Maiden* were indeed brought from the North (Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 595).

must have used for the production. Indeed, visual materials from the Moscow Art Theater archive as well as Stanislavsky's director's copy of the play, with his handwritten notes, point to a much wider range of sources used for the production. Stanislavsky's notes and visual materials from the archive not only complement the picture drawn by Simov, but considerably complicate the question of the creators' conception of the production and the kind of vision of "ancient Rus'" it presented.

In his director's copy of the play, Stanislavsky does not comment on the costumes of the villagers at all (probably relying on Simov's choice), but he does provide comments on the costumes of other characters. Grandfather Frost for Stanislavsky is a Samoyed, just as he is for Simov (most probably Simov's vision originated from Stanislavsky's idea); he wears a huge fur hat and Samoyed-style shoes, and he has brightly decorated skis.[533] The Snow Maiden also becomes a Samoyed girl in Stanislavsky's vision—specifically, she wears "original Samoyed boots" and a "little hat, Samoyed style." At the same time, she is dressed in a Russian peasant shirt (*rubakha*) embroidered with silk and beads. Stanislavsky adds a note indicating that the collar of her shirt should be embroidered in Byzantine style.[534] As a result, the Snow Maiden's costume becomes deliberately eclectic, bringing together a variety of influences.

While Grandfather Frost and the Snow Maiden are disguised as non-Russian inhabitants of the Russian North, the costume for the Bonny Spring, the Snow Maiden's

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[533] Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia," KS №18945/1, list 10. In his memoir, Stanislavsky gives conflicting information and describes Grandfather Frost's costume differently—there is no mention of Samoyeds, but Grandfather Frost's costume is called "Eastern": it is "embroidered with colorful furs in Eastern style" ("расшитом по-восточному разноцветными мехами"), Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 268. However, this note might have less credibility than the references to Samoyeds in Stanislavsky's director's copy, which was contemporaneous with the production, and in Simov's memoir, which provides the same information as Stanislavsky's director's copy.

[534] Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia," KS №18945/1, list 21.

mother, in Stanislavsky's plans contains South Slavic motifs: "She is a beautiful, swarthy South Slavic woman (in a costume from Herzegovina, or Bulgaria, or maybe Serbia)."[535] This turn in Stanislavsky's fantasy, a desire to include a South Slav as an inhabitant of his imaginary Rus', was likely prompted by the political climate of the time: for decades, Russia had been supporting South Slavic nations in their fight for independence, and references to the South Slavs as "brothers" of Russians figured prominently in the public discourse of the late nineteenth century, following the Slavic Congress of 1867 in Moscow and Petersburg[536] and especially the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878.

Another "non-Russian" costume described by Stanislavsky belonged to Mizgir, the unfaithful fiancé of Kupava. Stanislavsky specifically notes the "Eastern" style of Mizgir's clothes, as well as the clothes of his servants:

> Mizgir approaches: clad in expensive clothes, he is swarthy, of the Eastern type, with an earring in his ear; he is either a Tatar, or an Indian. His *kaftan* [coat] is of a Byzantine cut, but sewn from Eastern fabrics; his sash is tied according to Eastern style. […] The sash is wide, in the Eastern style; there are daggers tucked behind the sash.[537]
>
> Mizgir's servants, clad in Eastern-style clothes, are either Kalmyks or Bashkirs, or Indians, or Turks.[538]

The mixture of styles in Mizgir's costume is striking: if he is a Tatar or an Indian, why does he have a kaftan "of a Byzantine cut"? Notably, this is a second time when a Byzantine motif

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[535] "Это красивая, смуглая славянка-южанка (в костюме или герцеговинки, болгарки, сербском, может быть)" (ibid., list 3).

[536] Inspiration for the Bonny Spring's costume could have come from the Dashkov Museum of Ethnography (part of Rumyantsev Museum). The Dashkov Museum was founded as a result of the First Ethnographic Exhibition in 1867, which furnished exhibits featuring traditional clothes and household items of many ethnicities living in the Russian Empire, as well as other Slavic nations. See N. M. Kalashnikova, ed., *Slaviane Evropy i narody Rossii: K 140-letiiu Pervoi etnograficheskoi vystavki 1867 goda* (St. Petersburg: Slaviia, 2008) for a discussion of this exhibition and pictures of the exhibits.

[537] "Идет богато разодетый Мизгирь, смуглый, восточного типа, с сережкой в ушах, не то татарин, не то индиец. Кафтан покроя византийского, но сшит из восточн. материй, кушак завязан по-восточному <…> Кушак широкий, по восточному, за кушаком заткнуты кинжалы" (Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia," KS №18945/2, list 59).

[538] "Слуги Мизгиря, одетые по восточному, не то калмыки, башкиры, не то индийцы (?) турки" (ibid.).

is mentioned (we recall that the Snow Maiden's costume had Byzantine-style embroidery). In the costumes of Mizgir and his servants, Stanislavsky is obviously not looking for ethnographic specificity, but rather for broadly understood oriental motifs, among which Byzantine motifs carry an additional significance as a reminder of Russia's claim to the Byzantine legacy. In the play, Mizgir is a Berendeyan, just like the rest of the villagers. That Stanislavsky turns him into "either a Tatar, or an Indian" likely reflects the influence of the Russian operatic tradition, in which "oriental guests" served as a pretext for including oriental motifs popular with the audience (for example, the Indian guest's aria in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*, which premiered in 1898, comes to mind). Being a merchant, Mizgir is an excellent candidate for such role. In *My Life in Art*, Stanislavsky calls Mizgir "an Eastern guest."[539]

In his notes, Stanislavsky also provides some specifics with regard to the play's imaginary geography by indicating countries with which the Berendeyan kingdom presumably traded. On Stanislavsky's drawing of the stage plan for Act Two (Tsar Berendei's palace), the front part of the stage is filled with boxes and barrels, which, according to Stanislavsky's notes, should bear Indian letters and Chinese characters on them,[540] with the clear goal of signaling that Berendei's kingdom maintained vibrant trade connections with those faraway countries. In Ostrovsky's text, there is no mention of India or China, so this is a detail added by Stanislavsky. It is clear that such anachronistic details[541] (if we assume that the theater's goal was to portray ancient pagan Rus') do not

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[539] Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 269.
[540] Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia," KS №18945/3, list 77.
[541] Attempts to establish trade between India and Muscovy were undertaken only in the sixteenth century (and they were not entirely successful); trade between Muscovy and China, via Siberia, was started only in the mid-seventeenth century. See N. I. Kostomarov, *Ocherk torgovli Moskovskago gosudarstva v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh* (St. Petersburg, 1862; reprint: The Hague: Europe Printing, 1966), 51-55. It is possible—even

bother Stanislavsky. Attempts to establish trade between India and Muscovy were undertaken only in the sixteenth century (and they were not entirely successful); trade between Muscovy and China, via Siberia, was started only in the mid-seventeenth century.

Written sources, published or unpublished, do not mention other ethnic motifs to be incorporated into the costume designs. However, photographs of the production reveal a number of patterns in the Berendeyans' clothes that are not traditionally Russian. Two elements of the costumes are especially striking: chest decorations made of coins, most prominent in the costumes of *biriuchi*, Tsar Berendei's heralds (Fig. 14); and the headdress of Kupava, the mistreated fiancée of Mizgir (Figs. 23-24).

Chest decorations with coins do not exist in any regional versions of Russian traditional costume.[542] At the same time, various versions of such chest decorations were common for women's festive costumes of such ethnic minorities of the Volga region as Tatars, Bashkirs, Upper and Lower Chuvashs, Mari (Figs. 15-20), and Mordvins.[543] The Upper Chuvash version of such chest decoration (Fig. 15) appears the most similar to the

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though we do not have any documented proof—that one of Stanislavsky's inspirations for this detail could be Afanasy Nikitin's *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas*, travel notes by a Tver merchant written in the late fifteenth century and first discovered by Nikolai Karamzin.

[542] See *Russkii narodnyi kostium. Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989); N. Sosnina and I. Shangina, *Russkii traditsionnyi kostium: Illiustrirovannaia entsiklopediia* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo—SPB, 1998). On Northern Russian traditional clothes specifically, see L. F. Kislukha, *Narodnyi kostium Russkogo Severa XIX – nachala XX veka v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo muzeinogo ob''edineniia "Khudozhestvennaia kul'tura Russkogo Severa"* (Moscow: Severnyi palomnik, 2006).

[543] See chapter on chest decorations in Nina Gagen-Torn, *Zhenskaia odezhda narodov Povolzh'ia* (Cheboksary: Chuvashgosizdat, 1960), 76-98. V. N. Belitser describes types of chest decorations in Mordvin costume, analyzing their functionality, regional differences and influences, and possible origins in V. N. Belitser, *Narodnaia odezhda mordvy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 111-127. There are numerous examples of coin usage in chest and other decorations in Mordvin costumes in T. P. Prokina and B. A. Tishulin, *Mordovskii narovnyi kostium* (Saransk: Mordovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2007). For examples of the chest decoration *siulgam*, which Mordin women used to fasten two sides of a shirt on their chest, see 406-409; 432-433; and 418-419; for examples of *siulgam* made of shells and bells, see 422-425, 428.

heralds' costume in Stanislavsky's production; a very similar chest decoration also existed in the costume of Mountain Mari.[544]

Another archival finding confirms that ethnic costumes of diverse populations of the Russian Empire served as material for costume designs in the production of *The Snow Maiden*. In the folder containing sketches and notes to the production,[545] there are a few postcards from the series entitled "Types of Russia," issued by the publishing company "Scherer, Nabholz & Co." The series depicts various ethnic groups living in Russia, in their national costumes.[546] In this folder, the following images are included: a postcard with a woman in a Russian costume; a number of postcards that feature ethnic costumes of the Caucasus (which may have influenced Mizgir's "Eastern" costume); one postcard with a man from "Northern Russia" (maybe a Samoyed/Nenets); and a few more cards with other non-Russian peoples of the Russian Empire, in which ethnic groups are not identified. A woman shown on one of these cards has a decoration on her chest that is almost identical to that of Tsar Berendei's heralds (Fig. 21); her ethnicity is not identified on the card, but most probably, she is a Chuvash woman. On another card, we see a woman in traditional costume with a chest decoration made of coins; she is depicted with a man who wears more typical peasant clothes (Fig. 22). According to an additional source, this couple is

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[544] T. L. Molotova, *Mariiskii narodnyi kostium* (Yoshkar-Ola: Mariiskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1992), 45-46; the chest decoration on p. 46 is called a "shirkama." See also Gagen-Torn, *Zhenskaia odezhda narodov Povolzh'ia*, 83-84. Gagen-Torn shows that this element of women's clothes is the same in the costume of Upper Chuvash and Mountain Mari and originated from the fastener similar to the Mordvin *siulgam*.

[545] Simov, Sud'binin, Protopopova, "Snegurochka."

[546] See information on ethnographic photography and numerous examples of pictures in Elena Barkhatova, *Russkaia svetopis': Pervyi vek fotoiskusstva, 1839-1914* (St. Petersburg: Al'ians – Liki Rossii, 2009). Ethnographic photography was becoming more and more popular after the First Ethnographic Exhibition in 1867 (Barkhatova, *Russkaia svetopis'*, 135). Information about ethnographic photography is scattered throughout the book but can be found especially on pp. 160-184.

Udmurt.[547] The shape of the chest decoration, which is more round or oblong, differs from the one used for heralds' costumes. However, the fact that decorations made of coins can be a pattern in different ethnic costumes might have influenced the choice of this detail.

It is noteworthy, of course, that the costumes from which Simov evidently borrowed this element were worn by women. One can only speculate about why exactly Simov made such a "gender transfer." This choice, however, aligns well with all the other inconsistencies and eclecticism that the costume designs for this production exhibited in order to help create the fantastic essence of the world created on stage—even though the building blocks of this imaginary world were borrowed from real sources.

In his memoir, Simov particularly admires the quaint headdresses of the Northern women, and one would expect that women's costumes in the production would be inspired by those findings. However, a look at the headdresses of female characters reveals that this was not the case. Probably the biggest puzzle is Kupava's headdress (Figs. 23-24): the most quaint of all headdresses in the production, it does not look Russian at all and thus could not have come from the North. It is very tall, becomes narrower towards the tip, and it is decorated with shells, coins, and even little bells—decorations not common in traditional Russian clothes, including those of Northern Russia. The shape of the headdress does not resemble any known types of Russian traditional peasant headdresses.[548]

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[547] A fragment of this same photograph (only the photograph of the woman, without the man) is published in Belitser's *Traditional Clothes of the Udmurts*, and it is stated that the picture was taken in 1889. See V. K. Belitser, *Narodnaia odezhda udmurtov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1951), 61.

[548] See: G. S. Maslova, "Narodnaia odezhda russkikh, ukraintsev, belorusov v XIX – nachale XX v.," in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, ed. S. A. Tokarev (Moscow: Nauka, 1956), 541-757; G. A. Grigor'eva, ed., *Golovnye ubory Russkogo Severa v sobranii Gosudarstvennogo museinogo ob'edineniia "Khudozhestvennaia kul'tura Russkogo Severa"* (Arkhangelsk: Vserossiiskii khudozhestvennyi nauchno-restavratsionnyi tsentr imeni akademika I. E. Grabaria, 1999); Kislukha, *Narodnyi kostium*; and *Russkii narodnyi kostium. Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei*. Specifically, *Golovnye ubory Russkogo Severa* provides a host of examples of women's headdresses, both for unmarried women (*podchelok*, *venets*, *poviazka*, and

Kupava's headdress appears somewhat similar to the headdress of the Udmurt woman depicted on the previously discussed card from the archive (Fig. 22),[549] even though their similarity is only in shape, and not in decoration or overall appearance. The Udmurt headdress on the picture is completely covered with coins and consists of two parts—the tall conical base and an additional piece at the top, while Kupava's headdress consists of just one tall conical base covered with a number of rows of various decorations: four rows of bells, then two rows of shells, then a few rows of coins, and another row of bells at the top. The similarity of shape between Kupava's headdress and the Udmurt headdress on the card suggest that the Udmurt headdress served at least as one of the models; however, they are different enough to suggest that there must have been other models as well. Indeed, it turns out that variations of a tall woman's headdress, made of some stiff material, were commonly worn by betrothed or newly married women in the river Volga region: Udmurt women wore a variation called "aishon," Mari women wore a "shurka," and Mordvin (Erzya) women wore a "pango."[550] Looking at the items from the exhibit in the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg (many of which were

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pereviazka) and for the married ones (*soroka*, *kokoshnik*—the headdress that is usually most associated with traditional Russian clothes—*povoinik*, and some less common ones). A number of such examples can also be found in Kislukha's *Narodnyi kostium Russkogo Severa XIX – nachala XX veka.* None of the types presented in those authoritative publications even remotely remind one of Kupava's headdress. Regarding the decorations of women's headdresses, Sosnina and Shangina explain that *poviazka* (an unmarried woman's headdress popular throughout Russia, including in the Russian North) was usually decorated in the North with golden embroidery, pearls and beads, as well as colored glass pieces (Sosnina and Shangina, *Russkii traditsionnyi kostium*, 223). In the South, the *poviazka* was decorated somewhat differently, but still not with elements that we see on Kupava's headdress: scholars mention spangles, lace, colored beads, and, depending on the region, horse hairs, feathers of duck, peacock, turkey, or rooster, and artificial flowers (ibid., 224-225). It is certain that the decorations on Kupava's headdress were not common for Russian traditional costume in any regions of the Russian Empire.

[549] Simov, Sud'binin, Protopopova, "Snegurochka."

[550] Gagen-Torn, *Zhenskaia odezhda narodov Povolzh'ia*, 180-205; Belitser, *Narodnaia odezhda udmurtov*, 61-65; Molotova, *Mariiskii narodnyi kostium*, 34-35; Belitser, *Narodnaia odezhda mordvy*,147-150; Prokina and Tishulin, *Mordovskii narovnyi kostium*, 52-54, 64-66, etc. (in Prokina and Tishulin, there are many examples of a high headdress).

collected and first exhibited in the late nineteenth century), one can see similarities between Kupava's headdress and that of the Mari and Mordvins (Figs. 25-26). Moreover, decorating clothes with shells, as can be seen on many costumes from the production, was typical of Mari, Mordvin, and Udmurt traditional clothes. Bells as a decoration could also be found on Mordvin clothes, while they were not used in traditional Russian costumes.[551]

Another costume design source for *The Snow Maiden* can be found in the materials used for the production of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*. One would not expect to find many stylistic connections between the two productions, considering that *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*'s action takes place in boyars' houses and the tsar's palace in the late sixteenth century, and *The Snow Maiden*, of course, is set in a mythological "ancient Rus'." However, a rarely reproduced photograph of the costumes from *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* reveals a possible connection between the costume designs for the two productions. In the volume *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr* (1955), which contains comprehensive information on

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[551] On Mari, Mordvin, and Udmurt costumes, respectively, see N. F. Mokshin, T. P. Fedianovich, and L. S. Khristoliubova, eds., *Narody Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia: Komi-zyriane. Komi-permiaki. Mariitsy. Mordva. Udmurty* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 241-253, 366-375, 451-454. On Mari costumes specifically see Molotova, *Mariiskii narodnyi kostium*, 13; shells (along with coins) are present on a number of pictures in the section of the book entitled "Photoreproductions" (the section has no page numbers). Also see corresponding articles in V. A. Tishkov, ed., *Narody Rossii: Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Bolshaia Rossiiskaia Entsiklopediia, 1994). On Mordvin women's traditional costumes see T. P. Fedianovich, *Mordva: Materialy mordovskoi etnograficheskoi ekspeditsii, 1953-1969. Etnograficheskii al'bom* (Moscow: Nauka, 2011), 45-55. There are numerous examples of shells and bells as Mordvin clothes decorations in the following album: Prokina, Tishulin, *Mordovskii narovnyi kostium*; see especially 38-39, 116-117, 138-140, 146-148, and 182-183. The pictures published in the above-mentioned studies suggest that these elements were rarely used in decorating the headdress; rather, shells and bells were reserved for decorations worn on the chest (sometimes in the *siulgam*, or chest pin) and over the hips. However, Gagen-Torn does mention that these tall headdresses were decorated with shells, beads, and coins (Gagen-Torn, *Zhenskaia odezhda narodov Povolzh'ia*, 191). At the same time, it is clear that Simov and other creators of the costumes were not concerned with exactly following a certain ethnic tradition; ethnographic accuracy appears less important to them than creative appropriation of exotic ethnic motifs. In contrast, in *Russkii narodnyi kostium. Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei*, which provides a host of pictures of traditional Russian costumes and headdresses, one cannot find coins or bells on any of the costumes. There is only one example of a headdress with a row of shells: the women's headdress *povoinik s pozatyl'nikom* from the Penza province (*Russkii narodnyi kostium*, 213, fig. 217). The Penza province had a sizable Mordvin population, so it is possible that non-Russian costume decorations had some influence on the Russian clothes in this region.

the repertoire of the theater in 1898-1917, as well as photographs of select productions, one finds a photograph of two "Mordvin women" (Fig. 27).[552] Of course, Aleksei Tolstoy's text does not feature any "Mordvin women"; this is Stanislavsky's addition.[553] The costumes of the "Mordvin women" in the photograph are strikingly similar to the costumes of the villagers in *The Snow Maiden* (Figs. 28-30). These costumes consist of an undershirt covered by a looser shirt with shorter and wider sleeves. The costumes for *The Snow Maiden* appear to be made of a similar material and similar colors to that of the costumes of the "Mordvin women." The whimsical decorations hanging on the chest of some villagers (especially Bobyl; see Fig. 29) are of the same shape and are made of similar materials as well. Finally, there are some similarities between the headdresses of the "Mordvin women" and some of the village girls, especially the pompoms that one of the Mordvin women and many of the Berendeyan girls wear (though the shapes of the headdresses are different). Overall, the close connection between the costumes from the two productions and the indebtedness of the costumes from *The Snow Maiden* to the costumes of the "Mordvin women" in *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* are undeniable. It is very likely that the costumes of

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[552] N. N. Chushkin, ed., *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1, 23.

[553] In Act Four of Tolstoy's tragedy, there is a scene entitled "The Bank of the Yauza River" ("Bereg Iauzy"), where a crowd of simple folk gather in support of the captive Shuisky family. Tolstoy's text provides only a very short indication of the look of the scene; in terms of the crowd, there is only the following indication: "People of different estates walk across the bridge" ("По мосту проходят люди разных сословий"). A. K. Tolstoi, *Dramaticheskaia trilogiia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1939), 258. Tolstoy also wrote a note to his play providing detailed instructions on how to perform all the roles, as well as very short instructions on the scenery. In this note, there is nothing about ethnicities of people on the bridge over the Yauza River (ibid., 491-520). In Stanislavsky's director's note to this play, he provides very detailed directions to this scene, adding a number of colorful characters: in terms of ethnicities, we see a Jew, a German and his wife, and Mordvin women; there are also various characters marked by their trade, age, and gender; see Iu. A. Zavadskii et al., eds., *Rezhisserskie ekzempliary K. S. Stanislavskogo*, vol. 1, *1898-1899* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980), 211-214. This is a very peculiar detail of the production of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*, and one that, to my knowledge, has not been discussed to any great degree in scholarship. Discussing this scene, Stroeva only points out Stanislavsky's mastery in creating an epic picture of the people's rebellion; she does not discuss the reasons for adding specific ethnicities, and does not mention costumes. See Stroeva, *Rezhisserskie iskaniia Stanislavskogo, 1898-1917*, 27-28.

"Mordvin women" were reused in *The Snow Maiden*; however, additional costumes had to be created in the same style for the latter production.

There is more evidence that corroborates the likelihood that many elements in the villagers' costumes in *The Snow Maiden* did not come from the Northern expedition, as Simov later claims in his memoir. Simov's sketchbook[554] to the production contains a number of sketches—mostly of shoes and ornaments—that are accompanied by a note, "Dashkov Museum of Ethnography" (Fig. 31).[555] There are additional indications in Stanislavsky's letters that the production team used exhibits in the Dashkov Museum as models and inspiration.[556]

Costume designs for *The Snow Maiden* thus relied on a wide range of sources and reflected a variety of ethnic influences. It appears that the production creators actively sought to include non-Russian costume elements in *The Snow Maiden*. However, neither Simov nor Stanislavsky mention this fact in their later memoirs. Instead, they emphasize the conception of the production as a revival of ancient Rus' on stage. In reality, their work on the production amounted to a construction of a visually striking, exotic world that could be perceived both as ancient and fantastic. Nevertheless, they certainly presumed that this world was a suitable representation of Russianness, an intrinsically confusing concept that was debated in the late imperial period. By including ethnic minorities of the present-day Russian Empire and their traditions into the microcosm of the Berendeyan land, the

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[554] Simov, Sud'binin, Protopopova, "Snegurochka."
[555] Later, the collection was transferred to St. Petersburg, and nowadays it is part of the Russian Museum of Ethnography.
[556] In Stanislavsky's letter to Sanin from Alupka dated August 20, 1900, he writes to ask someone from the production crew to go to the Dashkov Museum and look at the shoes of some tribe; Stanislavsky is not sure which tribe and suggests the Zyrians, while requesting confirmation from Savva Morozov (Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* vol. 7, 374). The editors' note to this letter states that Morozov planned to order shoes from Perm, but ultimately they were brought from Arkhangelsk (ibid., 656). In any case, the mention of Zyrians (Komi), a Uralic people, extends the production's geography even further.

production team of *The Snow Maiden* spontaneously took a particular stance in this debate. The perceived "ancient Rus'" of Stanislavsky and Simov was a conglomerate of ethnic groups, with their traditions purposefully interwoven, a Russian Empire in the making.

One more influence on Stanislavsky's production worthy of consideration is that of Viktor Vasnetsov. As shown in Chapter Two, by 1900, *The Snow Maiden* had become very closely associated with Vasnetsov, and his visual depictions of the play's characters and settings had become canonical. Stanislavsky and Simov were familiar with Vasnetsov's sketches. Simov remarks in his memoirs that Stanislavsky showed him Vasnetsov's sketches that had been recently published (no doubt referring to the publication in the *Art and Art Industry* discussed in Chapter Two). According to Simov, Stanislavsky also saw Savva Mamontov's private production of *The Snow Maiden* in the latter's house in the 1880s.[557] No doubt, Stanislavsky and Simov were aware that critics would compare their production with Vasnetsov's visual representations. However, in *My Life in Art*, Stanislavsky does not mention Vasnetsov's sketches, and Simov, in his unpublished memoir, stresses that the version of the Moscow Art Theater was drastically different from Vasnetsov's. First, he reasons, it would be pointless to repeat the latter; and secondly, they "could not agree" with some aspects of Vasnetsov's representation, since they interpreted the Berendeyan land as "Northern."[558]

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[557] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 76. Stanislavsky dedicates a chapter of *My Life in Art* to Savva Mamontov's private home productions, where he briefly mentions Vasnetsov's *The Snow Maiden*, even though he does not directly state that he saw that production. See Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 118-121. In fact, Stanislavsky had used Vasnetsov's costumes prior to 1900 when he was one of the organizers of the big costumed ball of the Society of Art and Literature in February 1889: a few members of the Society and Stanislavsky's students were dressed as Berendeyan women, in Vasnetsov's costumes lent by Savva Mamontov. See Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 93.

[558] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 76-77.

However, while the Moscow Art Theater did not use Vasnetsov's *Snow Maiden* sketches, Vasnetsov's paintings for Vladimir Cathedral in Kyiv loom large behind some elements of their stage design. In *My Life in Art*, Stanislavsky describes the scene in Tsar Berendei's palace, in Act Two of the play. He explains that he wanted to complete full-scale renovations in the palace, thereby altering Ostrovsky's text, where the tsar just touches up the painted ornaments in his chambers. Per Stanislavsky's vision, two actors were to dangle in cradles suspended from the ceiling and to pretend to paint; however, the actors "revolted" against doing this for the entire period of rehearsals. When the scene was rehearsed without them, Stanislavsky felt that his imagination was stalled; it appeared that the actors hanging from the ceiling were essential for him.[559] Stanislavsky realizes after visiting Vladimir Cathedral a few years later that his earlier visit to Vasnetsov at the cathedral, where he could observe painters work, must have served as his creative inspiration for this scene. After a description of fresco painters in the church, which echoes his earlier description of Tsar Berendei's palace, he exclaims: "Here is where I took the atmosphere for the scene at Tsar Berendei's in *The Snow Maiden*!"[560]

Two things are remarkable in this passage. First, Stanislavsky does not even mention Vasnetsov's work on *The Snow Maiden*: he avoids the topic of a creative dialogue with Vasnetsov as a stage designer for Ostrovsky's play entirely. Secondly, Stanislavsky does acknowledge Vasnetsov's influence on his creative imagination, yet he connects it to a different project of Vasnetsov and presents this influence as subconscious, one that he realized only much later.

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[559] Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 270.
[560] Ibid., 270-271.

However, there is evidence that Vasnetsov's paintings for Vladimir Cathedral were used in the production in very conscious way. In the Moscow Art Theater archive, there is a letter to Stanislavsky from Alexander Sanin, who was the second director of the production responsible for mass scenes. In shorthand fashion, Sanin notes that the production will feature "Princes, Berendei based on the images in Vasnetsov's cathedral, [and] the people [*narod*] based on Simov's sketches."[561] This letter reveals that the images of saints from Vladimir Cathedral were the actual inspiration for some costumes and maybe also for the make-up of actors. Sanin's shorthand style indicates that Stanislavsky was well aware of this choice of a model, and there was thus no need to discuss it further. In fact, in Stanislavsky's response letter we find no reaction to this note in Sanin's letter at all.[562] Sanin's letter provides convincing evidence of the indebtedness of the production creators to Vasnetsov's paintings in Vladimir Cathedral.

There might have been a very practical reason why Stanislavsky mostly abstained from talking about this, even in letters. In Stanislavsky's earlier letter to Sanin, from July 5, 1900, we find the following remark: "We should abstain from saying that costumes and gestures in *The Snow Maiden* are taken from icons. I learned that *Hannele* was banned because of choristers who overheard that the teacher was called Christ."[563] Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hannele*, which the theater intended to produce in its opening season (and which Stanislavsky had already staged in the Society of Art and Literature) was banned by the Metropolitan of Moscow right before the first performance, for reasons that are not

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[561] "Князья, Берендей по ликам Васнецовского собора, народ по рисункам Симова," A. A. Sanin, Pis'mo k Stanislavskomu. 1900 g., avg. 10. Moskva—Alupka. Muzei MKhAT. KS №10182. Sanin uses the word *liki* ("faces"), thereby possibly indicating icons or frescos from the cathedral.
[562] Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 374-377.
[563] Ibid., 342.

entirely clear.[564] It seems plausible that the ban of *Hannele* made Stanislavsky very cautious; as a result, Sanin's letter is the only direct evidence of the impact of Vasnetsov's images from Vladimir Cathedral on the "costumes and gestures" in Stanislavsky's *Snow Maiden*.

It appears that Vasnetsov's paintings from Vladimir Cathedral inspired not only the costumes, but the whole atmosphere of Berendei's palace. According to Stanislavsky's descriptions in both his memoir and his director's copy of the play, this atmosphere was to be religious and pious. Interestingly, he never comments on the contradiction between this pious atmosphere and the pagan atmosphere of other acts of the play. This focus on piousness contradicts Ostrovsky's text as well, since scenes in the palace are comical rather than pious there. In Stanislavsky's descriptions of palace scenes, on the other hand, there are numerous religious associations. He describes Berendei's courtiers as "smiling elders, cheerful and soft," with "tender smiles" and "outstretched arms" and notes that "such elders are depicted in old icon-painting."[565] The same motifs appear in Stanislavsky's *My Life in Art*: Tsar Berendei is compared to a priest, who paints a beautiful flower on the wall of the palace "as if anointing it with oil."[566] The two painters hanging in the construction cradles have long grey beards "like saintly elders," and they also paint "as if anointing."[567]

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[564] The widespread story of the ban, narrated by Nemirovich-Danchenko in his memoirs, states that the reason was the Metropolitan's confusion over which translation of the play the theater used. See Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 81. Nick Worrall mentions the church ban and calls it "inexplicable" in Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theater*, 30 and 56. Stanislavsky's letter to Sanin provides another possible reason for the ban: very likely, the theater interpreted the role of the Wanderer in the last act of *Hannele* as Christ, and one of the choristers informed the church authorities about this "blasphemy." This interpretation of the ban can be found in Ol'ga Abramova, "Zagadka *Gannele*, ili 'odin iz samykh zlykh epizodov istorii Khudozhestvennogo Teatra'," *Voprosy teatra*, no. 3-4 (2016): 197-215.

[565] "Все во дворце Берендея – светлые, благообразные, улыбающиеся старцы, жизнерадостные, мягкие. Всегда ласковые улыбки на лицах, протянутые руки"; "Такие старцы изображ[аются?] в старинной иконописи" (Stanislavskii, "Snegurochka. Rezhisserskaia," KS № 18945/3, list 78, reverse side).

[566] Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 268.

[567] Ibid., 269.

The tsar's minister Bermyata takes part in the renovations as well, having rolled up the long sleeves of his "Byzantine mantle."[568] Byzantine clothes certainly evoke an association between regality and religiousness, and this association is particularly emphasized in the clothes of the tsar: while Kupava complains about her unfaithful fiancé at the tsar's feet, he "like a priest, puts on his splendid regal robes."[569] Stanislavsky's vision of the palace as a "temple" apparently influenced the acting. Describing the Berendeyans who enter the palace, Stanislavsky remarks: "People came in as if entering a temple, piously holding their palms together, like saints on icons."[570]

In his memoirs, Viktor Simov provides more details about this scene, adding that the actors who played the crowd members were so excited about this vision that they visited old churches and studied saints' gestures on the icons to find their own, unique gestures of pious adoration; some actors even studied paintings of the catacomb period.[571] However, even though Simov appreciates the beauty of the scene, he gives a very different assessment of it—and this is probably the only time when Simov talks about Stanislavsky's choice negatively. For Simov, the idea of such religious adoration of the tsar by his subjects seems unnatural and ill-suited for a Russian fairy tale, as well as contradicting the spirit of the Russian North, where peasants had a strong sense of personal dignity due to the non-existence of serfdom.[572] At the same time, Simov notes yet another source for the depiction of Tsar Berendei—an icon of St. Zosima of Solovki, which he discovered in a northern

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[568] Ibid., 268. This is yet another Byzantine motif; other Byzantine references appear in Stanislavsky's director's notes when he talks about the Snow Maiden's and Mizgir's costumes (see earlier in this chapter). Possibly, Byzantine associations for those costumes also came from Vasnetsov's cathedral.
[569] Ibid., 269. Stanislavsky also mentions that the tsar's gold-embroidered clothes were made by the actresses Lilina and Grigorieva.
[570] Ibid., 270.
[571] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 87.
[572] Ibid. In fact, the reviewer Sergei Flyorov also considers these gestures to be inappropriate for the fairy tale (see below in the section on criticism).

church during the expedition.[573] Simov thus offers an alternative explanation for the religious associations in Tsar Beredei's image. It appears that Simov intentionally downplays the role of Vasnetsov's images for the production, while stressing the importance of the Russian North as the only source of inspiration for it.

The Vasnetsov connection, however, is very important. This connection shows that, while claiming to move beyond Vasnetsov's interpretation of ancient Rus', the Moscow Art Theater was still incorporating elements of the Vasnetsovian aesthetic into their production, thereby affirming the pertinence of Vasnetsov's vision of Russian antiquity to their project. Their inclusion of a religious (Christian) theme in a spectacle devoted to ancient pagan Rus' attests to the spirit of the time, nurtured in part by the sensibilities of the young emperor, Nicholas II. Indeed, the production's framework reflects the way in which the diversity of the imperial population was counterbalanced with the absolute spiritual authority of the tsar.

Reception of the Moscow Art Theater Production

Scholarship on the Moscow Art Theater generally agrees that the production of *The Snow Maiden* was a flop. It is usually listed as Stanislavsky's failure and very rarely discussed in any detail.[574] The production lasted only twenty-one performances, from

[573] Simov, "Iz vospominanii khudozhnika," 298, 302.
[574] Nick Worrall dedicates a page to *The Snow Maiden* but says next to nothing about the production itself; his discussion consists of describing the plot and noting a few reactions to the production (Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theater*, 121-122). Studies by M. N. Stroeva and I. N. Bazilevskaia are simply descriptive, and they mention almost none of the details discussed here. See Stroeva, *Rezhisserskie iskaniia Stanislavskogo,* 59-65; I. N. Bazilevskaia, "*Snegurochka*, *Vlast' t'my* i *Na dne*: Materialy k tvorcheskoi biografii rezhissera (1900-1902)," in *K. S. Stanislavskii. Materialy, pis'ma, issledovaniia*, ed. I. E. Grabar', S. N. Durylin, and P. A. Markov (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1955), 553-569.

September 24, 1900 until February 10, 1901, before being discontinued.[575] The number of performances was abysmally lower than the number of rehearsals—a hundred and two.[576] Considering the financial resources and efforts expended on research, the expedition, and the costumes and sets, the production indeed appears extremely unsuccessful.

Reasons for the failure, however, had little to do with the ethnographic vision of "ancient Rus'." According to Simov and Stanislavsky, technical difficulties with the transition between the last two acts were the biggest contributors to the play's premature departure from the stage.[577] Ostrovsky's text had to be cut in order to accommodate Stanislavsky's elaborate mime scenes, which served either to elaborate on Ostrovsky's stage directions or to vividly portray the Berendeyans' everyday life. Even with the cuts, however, the production turned out to be exceedingly long.[578] Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko opined that the last two acts were "too naturalistic" and broke the overall harmony of the production, which disappointed audiences, many ingenious details notwithstanding.[579] Vsevolod Meyerhold, who originally praised the production in a letter to Anton Chekhov, in a post-production letter criticized Stanislavsky for overloading the play with distracting details and generally overcomplicating it (Stanislavsky "peremudril"); he also felt that the play might be too trifling for the contemporary times, despite its

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[575] Compare the 920 performances of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* (October 14, 1898–October 27, 1949), or even the fifty performances of *The Death of Ioann the Terrible* (November 29, 1899–February 24, 1902) (Chushkin, N. N., ed., *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1, 301).

[576] Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 79.

[577] Stanislavsky writes that the sets of the last two acts were two big for the small stage of the theater and took too long to change; for that reason, they used the same sets for Acts Three and Four, which spoiled the original vision (Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 271). See also Simov, "Moia rabota s rezhisserami," list 77-78.

[578] Simov discusses the cuts in ibid., list 78-79.

[579] Quoted and discussed in O. A. Radishcheva, *Stanislavskii i Nemirovich-Danchenko. Istoriia teatral'nykh otnoshenii. 1897-1908* (Moscow: Artist. Rezhisser. Teatr, 1997), 111-112.

aesthetic beauty.[580] As Laurence Senelick notes, fairly positive reviews notwithstanding, audience numbers dropped off quickly, affecting box-office revenues and the morale of the troupe.[581]

The editors of the three-volume collection of reviews of the Moscow Art Theater productions claim that the staging of *The Snow Maiden* was a failure precisely because critics disliked Stanislavsky's "fairy-tale ethnographic fantasy."[582] This claim is a simplification, if not an outright mistake. There was no consensus about the vision of "ancient Rus'" presented by Stanislavsky, and his attempt elicited some enthusiastic responses[583] as well as lively discussion: reviewers attempted to square the meaning of Ostrovsky's play with the style of the Moscow Art Theater production.

The Moscow Art Theater's production premiered on September 24.[584] By that time, the Novy Theater's production, which premiered on September 8,[585] had already been on stage for over two weeks with six performances and counting. The perception that the two theaters were in competition is palpable in many reviews,[586] and this only intensified the hype around the Moscow Art Theater's production. A few days before the premier the

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[580] V. E. Meierhol'd, *Stat'i. Pis'ma. Rechi. Besedy. Chast' pervaia: 1891-1917* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968), 81. In English see Jean Benedetti, ed. and trans., *The Moscow Art Theater Letters* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 83. Chekhov expressed similar sentiments about *The Snow Maiden* in his letter to Olga Knipper, where he repeatedly argues that the Moscow Art Theater should concentrate on staging contemporary plays, and not anything like *The Snow Maiden*. See A. P. Chekhov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 18 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1949), 400, 405.
[581] Laurence Senelick, ed. and trans., *Stanislavsky: A Life in Letters* (London: Routledge, 2014), 129-130.
[582] Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 130.
[583] Interestingly, the positive reviews that the editors included in the volume contradict their assertion of the production's lack of success.
[584] Chushkin, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1. 301.
[585] *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, ed. Efim Kholodov et al., vol. 7, *1898-1917* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), 493.
[586] This perception is clear already in a review published prior to both productions. See "K postanovke 'Snegurochki'," *Novosti dnia*, September 7, 1900, 3.

production had already sold out.[587] The opening night drew huge crowds, with people sitting in the aisles; some telegrammed from Petersburg to book seats.[588] The premier attracted the crème-de-la-crème of the Moscow educated public, including actors from all of the Moscow theaters and representatives of all Moscow newspapers, as well as journalists sent from Petersburg specifically for the performance.[589]

In 1900, the Moscow Art Theater had only been in existence for just over two years. As in the previous years, reviews contained a lot of conflicting opinions as well as general critique of the new artistic principles upon which the theater operated. Since there was a lot of resistance to the theater's innovations, a number of feuilletons ridiculing the theater appeared in the first days after the premier.[590] An analysis of reviews shows that very often a critic's support or rejection of the production corresponds to his support or rejection of the Moscow Art Theater's artistic principles in general. In other words, many reviewers penned their reviews of *The Snow Maiden* in the same spirit as their reviews of the theater's previous productions.[591] This time, the simultaneous productions of the same play by an

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[587] Flyorov mentions the hype around tickets for the premier, adding that the Moscow Art Theater's production was clearly at the center of everyone's attention, while the interest in the Novy Theater's production was spurred only by the competition itself, not by that production per se. See S. Vasil'ev [Flerov, S. V.], "Teatral'naia khronika. (Novyi teatr. 'Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo)," 3.

[588] Maxim Gorky was in Moscow to see the dress rehearsal and attend the first performance and later wrote to Chekhov about it ecstatically (Gor'kii and Chekhov, *Perepiska*, 78-80). He calls the production "an event" and claims that it is worth going even to the North Pole just to see it. For a translation of this letter into English, see Benedetti, *The Moscow Art Theater Letters*, 82. Meyerhold also wrote to Chekhov praising the production and trying to convince him to come see it. See Meierhol'd, *Stat'i*, 80; English translation in Benedetti, *The Moscow Art Theater Letters*, 81.

[589] See a typical description of the opening night in "Vtoraia 'Snegurochka'," *Novosti dnia* September 25, 1900, 2.

[590] Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "Uf!... (Fel'eton)," *Novosti dnia*, September 26, 1900, 3; Lolo [Leonid Munshtein], "Na pervom predstavlenii. (Stenogramma)," *Novosti dnia*, September 26, 1900, 3; A. Pazukhin, "'Snegurochka.' (Kartinki i stsenki). Fel'eton," *Moskovskii listok*, September 28, 1900, 3. Pazukhin's feuilleton ridicules Stanislavsky as "too charismatic" a leader surrounded by a faithful retinue, by using the lines describing Peter the Great in Pushkin's narrative poem *Poltava.*

[591] Nikolai Efros vividly describes the attitudes toward the theater among the public and critics in the theater's first years of operation. See Nikolai Efros, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr: 1898-1923* (Moscow,

Imperial theater and by Stanislavsky's theater brought the competition between the "old" and the "new" principles into higher relief, with the Novy Theater's production serving as an example of the traditional principles.[592] As noted earlier, what differentiated Stanislavsky's theater from the theatrical tradition was the predominance of the director's will and vision in creating a spectacle.[593] In the case of *The Snow Maiden*, supporters of the theater lauded Stanislavsky for being able to create a production in which all elements were well coordinated.[594] At the same time, however, there was a persistent perception that the "old" theater provided more freedom to individual actors to develop their talents and their own interpretations of their roles, while in Stanislavsky's theater, actors had to succumb to the director's vision for the sake of creating a holistic ensemble. With the exception of very few commentaries that express admiration for the ensemble, and not of

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Petersburg: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), 132-138. See also Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*.

[592] Many reviewers commented on the competition not just between two theaters, but between two different principles, with Lensky embodying the old one and Stanislavsky embodying the new. See, for example, Iurii Beliaev, "Snegurochka," *Novoe vremia*, September 27, 1900, 2; Ia. A. F—in [Iakov Feigin], "Pis'ma o sovremennom iskusstve. (Novye veianiia v teatre i drame)," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 10 (1900), 278.

[593] Worrall writes, "Stanislavsky was the first in the history of the Russian theater fully to appreciate the role of the director" (Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theater*, 18). Nikolai Efros, who originally was skeptical of the new theater, but soon became one of its most ardent supporters, explains the theater's innovations in his monograph on the theater (Efros, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, 119-123). Efros's account is especially valuable since it comes from a theater historian who was a contemporary of the changes in theatrical practices that the Moscow Art Theater was introducing. For modern accounts, see Efim Kholodov, ed., *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, vol. 7, especially 101-124 of the chapter "Rezhisserskoe iskusstvo"; Jean Benedetti, "Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theater, 1898-1938," in *A History of Russian Theater*, ed. Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 254-277. Worrall provides a concise history of the theater's pre-revolutionary years (op. cit.).

[594] A few reviews that praise the atmosphere created by Stanislavsky on stage include R., "Po teatram," *Moskovskii listok*, September 25, 1900, 2; "Vtoraia 'Snegurochka'," *Novosti dnia*, September 25, 1900, 2-3; Ia. A. F-in [Iakov Feigin], "'Snegurochka' na stsene Khudozhestvenno-Obshchedostupnogo teatra"; Beliaev, "Snegurochka"; N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin] "Iz Moskvy"; P. Iartsev, "'Snegurochka' na stsene Khudozhestvenogo teatra. (Pis'mo iz Moskvy)," *Teatr i iskusstvo*, no. 40 (1900): 708-709; Sergei Glagol' [Sergei Goloushev], "U rampy. Kotoraia iz dvukh?" *Kur'er*, October 3, 1900; reprinted in: Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 136-138; Ia. A. F—in [Iakov Feigin], "Pis'ma o sovremennom iskusstve. (Novye veianiia v teatre i drame)," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 10 (1900): 278.

individual acting,[595] the majority of reviewers considered the actors of the Moscow Art Theater inferior to those of the Novy Theater, with the former being commonly called "artistic automatons" (*khudozhestvennye avtomaty*).[596] Reviewers emphasized that Stanislavsky as a director suppressed actors' creativity and made them slaves to his own imagination.[597]

An especially controversial aspect of the Moscow Art Theater's production was the multiple liberties that Stanislavsky took with Ostrovsky's text, including stage directions. Many reviewers praised Lensky for keeping the original text intact and following Ostrovsky's stage directions faithfully,[598] while Stanislavsky's staging ideas appeared to distort the text. The most polarizing additions included the renovations of Berendei's palace (as described above); the scene with multiple heralds loudly summoning people from various parts of the stage (instead of just two heralds in Ostrovsky's text); and the mime scene between Acts Three and Four, where the Berendeyans, as well as the Snow

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[595] For example, Iartsev admired the ability of the Moscow Art Theater's actors to unanimously reject the "realistic" manner of acting and, as an ensemble, convey the sense of fairy tale (Iartsev, "'Snegurochka'," 708).
[596] This is, of course, a play on the word "khudozhestvennyi": "khudozhestvennye avtomaty" can mean both "artistic automatons" (which seems to be a contradiction) and "automatons from the Moscow Art Theater." For examples of critical reviews of the acting, see "Teatr i muzyka. (Khudozhestvenno-Obshchedostupnyi teatr)," *Russkoe slovo*, September 25, 1900, 3; M. G., "Teatr i muzyka. ('Snegurochka' v Khudozhestvennom teatre)," *Russkii listok*, September 26, 1900, 3-4; Beliaev, "Snegurochka," 2; -f- [Nikolai Efros], "'Snegurochka'," 3.
[597] Worrall explains Stanislavsky's and Nemirovich's idea behind their approach to actors in their "star-free" theater: "A saying coined by Stanislavsky and Nemirovich during their first meeting, which was postulated as a norm for the typical actor of the proposed 'star-free' theater, ran something like this: 'Today Hamlet, tomorrow a spear carrier, but even when carrying a spear, the actor must still be an artist.' It became a rule that any actor could be called upon to play any role and understudying was adopted from the onset" (Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theater*, 54). See also Stanislavskii, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 235. Leonid Andreev defended actors from the Moscow Art Theater, stating that the theater's multiple successes would not be possible without the theater's actors, and the reason that the company was seen as lacking in acting talent lay in the fact that all of the actors were good, without a clear division into stars and supporting actors. See James Lynch [Leonid Andreev], <Untitled article> *Kur'er,* October 1, 1900; reprinted in: Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 136. In a personal letter to Chekhov, Maxim Gorky writes ecstatically about the acting in *The Snow Maiden*, calling the actors "angels" (Gor'kii and Chekhov, *Perepiska*, 78).
[598] See, for example, N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Iz Moskvy," 2.

Maiden, were depicted as falling asleep and then waking up and washing themselves in the river. The textual cuts that were necessary in order to accommodate these additions were perceived as an act of unpardonable disrespect toward the author.[599] The word "vychura"—"pretentiousness, fancifulness"—appears in some reviews with strong negative connotations.[600] However, others perceived this "vychura" and "vychurnost'" as qualities best suited for a presentation of a Russian fairy tale and praised Stanislavsky's imaginative rendition of the play.[601]

Even though Stanislavsky's theater had existed for only two seasons before *The Snow Maiden*, it was already well known for being very "research-oriented" with regard to its sets and costumes.[602] In this respect, Stanislavsky was inspired by the Meiningen Ensemble and its director, theatrical reformer Ludwig Chronegk.[603] In fact, Stanislavsky's theater was often accused of "Meiningenism" ("meiningenstvo") during its first years because of the naturalism in their productions, which some viewers perceived as excessive.[604] Even before seeing *The Snow Maiden*, Nikolai Efros, who clearly knew about the theater's expedition to the North, noted that ethnographic study was ill-suited for the

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[599] See, for example, Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "Uf!... (Fel'eton)," 3; "Vtoraia 'Snegurochka,'" *Novosti dnia*, 3; -f- [Nikolai Efros], "'Snegurochka'," 3. See also V. A. Teliakovsky's diary comparing Lensky's faithfulness to Ostrovsky with Stanislavsky's distorting liberties, as quoted in: S. Ia. Shikhman, "Novoe o postanovke A. P. Lenskogo 'Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo," in *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia: Ezhegodnik 1978. Pis'mennost'. Iskusstvo. Arkheologiia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 152.

[600] "Vtoraia 'Snegurochka'," *Novosti dnia*, 3; Rostislavov, "O khudozhestvennoi postanovke 'Snegurochki'," 722, 724.

[601] R., "Po teatram," 2; N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Iz Moskvy," 2.

[602] Viktor Simov's designs were of utmost importance for the theater's vision of realism on stage. Out of the theater's "ethnographic" productions, *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* received numerous praises for the authenticity of its costumes and sets, as well as the theater's ability to capture the atmosphere of sixteenth-century Russia. See Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 27, 29, 33-34.

[603] The Meiningen Ensemble toured in Russia in 1885 and 1890; Stanislavsky dedicates a chapter of his *My Life in Art* to their 1890 tour and the theater's profound influence on him as a director (Stanislavskii *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve*, 171-174, see also notes on 537-538).

[604] See comments reproduced in: Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theater*, 101. Later Worrall quotes Leonid Sobinov, who accused the production of *The Snow Maiden* of "Meiningenitis" (ibid., 121). Worral translates "meiningenstvo" as "Meiningenitis" to convey the sense of excessive attitude to detail, perceived almost as an illness.

preparation of a production of this particular play. Efros wondered why the theater decided that the action of the play should take place in the Russian North and argued that "all this ethnography has too little connection" to *The Snow Maiden*, whose action takes place "beyond time and space, in the foggy tsardom of reveries."[605] Even though, as shown earlier, Efros calls *The Snow Maiden* an "apotheosis of Russian antiquity" in the same article,[606] he considered the ethnographic realia to be unnecessary for creating a basis for the visual representation of antiquity on stage, preferring the director's vision to be "poetic" and "elusive" instead.[607]

Efros's skepticism regarding the Moscow Art Theater's fascination with ethnography predates the premier of *The Snow Maiden*. After the premier, when reviewers could evaluate the actual production, opinions about Stanislavsky's rendition of the Berendeyan world on stage varied considerably. The reviewers understood that Stanislavsky's goal in this production was quite different from Lensky's at the Novy Theater. Reviews of the Novy Theater production mostly focused on the fairy-tale atmosphere and fairy-tale quality of the sets—or the lack thereof, depending on a given reviewer's perspective.[608] While some reproached Lensky for insufficient knowledge of folk customs and mythology,[609] Lensky's production was generally not approached as an attempt to represent antiquity. Reviews of the Moscow Art Theater production, on the

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[605] "Вне времени и пространства, в туманном царстве грёз" (Starik [Nikolai Efros], "Iz Moskvy," 670).
[606] Ibid., 670.
[607] In fact, in this article Efros lauds the Novy Theater's production, thanks to its good balance of "the fantastic quality of fairy tale and the reality of the stage" ("между фантастичностью сказки и реализмом сцены") and its closeness to Ostrovsky's text, in its "tenderness and fairy-tale elusiveness" ("нежность и сказочную неуловимость") (ibid., 670).
[608] See, for example, "K postanovke 'Snegurochki'," 3; "Teatr i muzyka," *Russkoe slovo*, September 9, 1900, 3; N. R-n [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Po teatram," *Moskovskii listok*, September 10, 1900, 3.
[609] N. R-n [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Po teatram," 3; S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. (Novyi teatr. 'Snegurochka' A. N. Ostrovskogo)," 3-4.

other hand, constantly turned to the question of representation: reviewers discussed the production as an attempt to revive Russian antiquity on stage. At the same time, reviewers used different wording to express this idea: while the sentiment that the play presents a subject from the "Russian past" was very strong, there was no commonly accepted language to define what exactly this Russian antiquity was.

The vast majority of reviewers stressed the theater's ability to recreate an imaginary ancient world on stage. For example, in a review published on September 25, right after the premier, an anonymous author (signed as "R.") ecstatically praised the atmosphere of the production: "The performance, taken in its entirety, is a realized fairy-tale epos, magically rendered in flesh and blood."[610] The fact that the reviewer liberally applies the term "epos" to the play signals the perception of this production as a foray into Russia's pre-historic, mythological past, and not just into the domain of magic fairy tales.

Interpretations that conflate the fairy tale and the Russian past abound in other reviews. Such conflation, it should be noted, was not typical for reviews of *The Snow Maiden* in 1873. However, as the first section of this chapter demonstrated, the construal of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* as an insight into the Russian pre-historic past was common for many reviews in 1900. However, of the three productions of the play in 1900, it was only Stanislavsky's that invited comments pertaining to the reconstruction of national antiquity on stage; productions by the Novy Theater and the Alexandrinsky Theater were not seen by the reviewers as engaging with such an agenda.

While the reviewer "R." only alludes to the presence of Russian antiquity on stage with one word ("epos"), Yakov Feigin overtly states that the task Stanislavsky set for

[610] "Весь спектакль, взятый целиком – это осуществленный, волшебно превращенный в плоть и кровь сказочный эпос…" (R., "Po teatram," 2).

himself in this production was "to recreate the pagan fairy tale of ancient Rus' for the spectators."[611] It is not entirely clear from Feigin's review whether he believes that Stanislavsky's theater accomplished this task successfully or not.[612] However, he restates the same idea a number of times, especially praising the set designer, Viktor Simov, for striving "to recreate the remote antiquity of fairy-tale Rus'."[613]

The idea that the production presents a "recreation" of an ancient world appears in reviews also in connection with the discussion of the music of the production. A reviewer under the penname "Giusto" compares music for *The Snow Maiden* by Tchaikovsky, Grechaninov, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Contrasting Tchaikovsky and Grechaninov, Giusto argues that while Tchaikovsky's music was mostly of a "generic character" ("obshchego kharaktera") and only at times included music of a "Russian character" ("mesta russkogo sklada"), Grechaninov purposefully imitated Russian folk music, basing his themes and harmonies on the latest ethnographic research on the genre. Guisto saw Grechaninov's agenda as being in accord not only with Stanislavsky's and Simov's, but also with Ostrovsky's:

> To the best of his ability, the composer here strives to recreate the musical antiquity of the Berendeyans—of course, without breaking basic artistic standards. Similarly, Ostrovsky does this [i.e., recreation – V. K.] for the Berendeyans' language and inner life, and the directors and set designers of the Moscow Art Theater—for the Berendeyans' everyday surroundings and nature.[614]

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[611] "<…> воссоздать перед зрителями языческую сказку древней Руси <…>" (Ia. A. F-in [Iakov Feigin], "'Snegurochka'," 3).

[612] In fact, Feigin criticizes a number of details added by Stanislavsky to the production—such as the scene of renovations at the palace and the additional heralds, who made the summons scene too noisy. However, in a later review where he compares Lensky's and Stanislavsky's productions, he clearly gives preference to Stanislavsky for being able to convey the "*inner* spiritual life of the fairy-tale world" of the Berendeyans (Ia. A. F—in [Iakov Feigin], "Pis'ma o sovremennom iskusstve," 278).

[613] "Воспроизвести седую старину сказочной Руси <…>" (Ia. A. F-in [Iakov Feigin], "'Snegurochka'," 3).

[614] "По мере сил композитор стремится здесь, не нарушая, конечно, элементарных художественных требований, воссоздать музыкальную старину берендеев, как это делает Островский относительно их языка и внутренней жизни, а режиссеры и декораторы «Художественно-общедоступного» театра—относительно их бытовой обстановки и природы" (Giusto, "'Snegurochka' v trekh teatrakh," *Kur'er*,

Ascribing the same intentions of the creators of the production to Ostrovsky was, of course, problematic; however, it is remarkable how strongly the production colored this reviewer's understanding of Ostrovsky's goal. It attests to Stanislavsky's ability to seamlessly coordinate all aspects of the production.

The reviewer Nikolai Rakshanin (under the penname "Rok") was more uncertain about how to describe Stanislavsky's undertaking. On the one hand, he argues that presenting *The Snow Maiden* in a dramatic theater is impossible, since the fairy tale genre is better suited for opera or ballet, where music helps the audience imagine the fairy tale world. Rakshanin claims that, for this reason, Stanislavsky decided to concentrate on the "everyday life" (*bytovoi*) element of the play, instead of capturing its fairy-tale quality:

> From here comes [Stanislavsky's] aspiration to recapture not so much the magical fairy-tale element [*skazochnyi element*] and its peculiar poetry, but instead the side of this work that deals with the everyday; he does so by trying to offer a theatrical rendition of scenes from Russian epic songs [*bylinnyi epos*], in general.[615]

While the previously discussed reviewers often use the words "fairy tale" ("skazka") and "epos" ("epos") as closely related, Rakshanin here appears to do something different: he separates the terms, interpreting epos as "everyday life" and making it synonymous with *byt*, or the everyday life of a people from a historically distant time. *Bylinnyi epos* has, of course, a completely different meaning as a genre of folklore (epic songs about bogatyrs) that has no relation to *The Snow Maiden* and its folk sources. In attempting to articulate what he perceives as the production's distinctive feature—the depiction of something

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October 28, 1900, 2). Later in the article, Giusto ascribes the same intention of recreating Russian antiquity to Rimsky-Korsakov in his opera.

[615] "Отсюда его стремление осуществить не столько волшебный сказочный элемент и своеобразную его поэзию, сколько бытовую сторону произведения, постаравшись дать воплощение на сцене картин русского былинного эпоса, вообще" (N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Iz Moskvy," 2).

ancient—the reviewer thus resorts to terminology that strongly connotes antiquity, but is otherwise unsuitable for the material.[616]

However, when Rakshanin moves to a discussion of concrete scenes, those fairy-tale qualities turn out to permeate the depictions of the everyday. Rakshanin praises Stanislavsky's "fanciful" ideas ("vychurnost'") and claims that many of them are "in the style of a fanciful Russian fairy tale" ("v stile prichudlivoi russkoi skazki").[617] At this point the distinction between *byt*, epos, and fairy tale falls apart, and the next time the reviewer returns to his idea of "epos" in Stanislavsky's production, there is a noticeable change in his word choice:

> Mr. Stanislavsky set himself the task of presenting our fairy-tale epic poetry [*skazochnyi bylinnyi epos nash*] on the stage. And to a large extent, he fulfilled this task: his production of *The Snow Maiden* is a realization of Viktor Vasnetsov on stage.[618]

This time, Rakshanin does not separate "fairy tale" and "epos," as he attempted in the beginning of his article, but merges them together, as was the case in previously discussed reviews. The reviewer seems unable to articulate what it is exactly that he sees in Stanislavsky's production. Notably, he finds that the best way to convey that Stanislavsky's attempt was successful is to compare his production to Vasnetsov's paintings. Here, the reviewer is not necessarily referring to Vasnetsov's sketches for *The Snow Maiden*; rather, he sees Vasnetsov's work as emblematic of the endeavor to capture a Russian mythical past in art, and Rakshanin argues that in his production, Stanislavsky's endeavor is on par with Vasnetsov's in both their goal and the execution.

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[616] See a similar evocation of "Kievan epic tales" in Pek [Vladimir Ashkinazi], "'Snegurochka'," 3.
[617] N. Rok [Nikolai Rakshanin], "Iz Moskvy," 2.
[618] "Г. Станиславский в основу своей задачи положил стремление воплотить на сцене сказочный былинный эпос наш. И он в значительной степени выполнил эту задачу: его постановка «Снегурочки»—это Виктор Васнецов, осуществленный на сцене" (ibid., 2).

In a review by Sergei Goloushev (under the penname "Glagol'"), a comparison between the productions by the Novy and the Moscow Art Theaters is largely informed by the consideration of their success in recreating a historical past. Goloushev contends that the spectacle by the Novy Theater lacked cohesion and harmony between the different aspects of the production. He also states that it was too conventional; its elements seemed easily transferable to other shows, depicting different time periods and even countries. Therefore, spectators could not perceive the world recreated there as the concrete and specific world of Russia's (pre-)historical past.[619] The Moscow Art Theater, on the contrary, brilliantly accomplished the task of transporting the viewer to the past:

> …From beginning to end, you see before you a wonderful, enchanting fairy-tale, enshrouded in the mystical atmosphere of pagan Rus'. It is as if someone lifted a corner of the curtain of the past and showed you the real "carefree Berendeyans" along with their whole everyday life. Before your eyes, there is such a "grandfather frost," such forest sprites—one could not have conceived them any better. The entire time, you see pagan Rus' in front of you, and you smell Rus'…[620]

Incidentally, Goloushev does not mention Ostrovsky in his review; for him, the spectacle put on by the Moscow Art Theater is a depiction of a pre-historic pagan past and a Russian fairy tale. This world has no authorship—it is real, in the sense that it existed at some point, somewhere.

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[619] Sergei Glagol' [Sergei Goloushev], "U rampy"; reprinted in: Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 137.

[620] "[П]еред вами с начала и до конца дивная, чарующая сказка, затянутая дымкой мистического настроения языческой Руси. Перед вами точно приподняли уголок завесы прошлого и показали вам настоящих «беспечных берендеев» со всей их жизнью. Перед вами такой «дед-мороз», такие лешие, что и не выдумаешь лучше. Все время перед вами языческая Русь и Русью пахнет…" (ibid., 138). The idea of "smelling Rus'" is, of course, an allusion to Alexander Pushkin's *Ruslan and Liudmila.* Here one can see another connection with *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*. In his earlier review of that production, Goloushev uses very similar language, arguing that in the production of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*, spectators constantly saw "a picture as if taken from the sixteenth century […] the whole time before the spectators there is a picture of old Rus', which never disappears" ("Перед зрителями прошла картина, точно выхваченная из XVI века <…> все время перед зрителями, ни на один миг не исчезающая, старая Русь"). See review from October 15, 1898, published in the newspaper *Kur'er*; reprinted in: Radishcheva, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr v russkoi teatral'noi kritike*, 27.

The majority of the reviewers who commented on the "national" aura of the production expressed high praise for Stanislavsky's work and his ability to convincingly capture the spirit of Russian antiquity. However, there were also dissenting opinions. Pyotr Kicheev, who compares the two productions and is very critical about both, begins by noting that Stanislavsky's production seems "more original and luxurious" than that of the Novy Theater.[621] However, he then immediately moves on to criticism:

> The leaders of the theater could not have come up with anything more absurd than to make Ostrovsky's poetic invention "realistic" [*obrealizovat'*] and to reduce all the characters of the play to the level of most un-poetic Russian *muzhiki* from pre-historic times, headed by some "peasant tsar," resembling a modern-day sentimental *volost* leader.[622]

Here Kicheev mostly refers to the acting ("ispolnenie") in the productions of both the Novy Theater and Stanislavsky's theater. However, it is very likely that peasant costumes also contributed to his negative impression that the play was rendered in too "realistic" a fashion. To Kicheev, the Berendeyan land created by the Moscow Art Theater looked too similar to a mundane Russian village. While he does mention the "prehistoric epoch," he sees contemporary realia and people in this prehistoric disguise. Thus, for Kicheev, Stanislavsky's "ethnographic" and "realistic" representation of the Berendeyan land means a "depreciation" of the fairy-tale world of Ostrovsky's play.

Sergei Flyorov's review concentrates on a different aspect of the production. Flyorov criticizes the Berendeyans' reverent "hieratic" gestures in the presence of the tsar, as well

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[621] P. Kicheev, "Dve *Snegurochki*," *Russkoe Slovo*, September 26, 1900, 3.

[622] "Гг. хозяева театра ничего нелепее не придумали, как взять и «обреализировать» поэтическую выдумку А. Н. Островского и низвести всех действующих лиц сказки в самых непоэтичных российских мужиков доисторической эпохи, во главе с каким-то «мужицким царем», на манер чувствительного волостного старшины нашего времени" (ibid., 3). *Volost'* was a unit of the peasants' local self-rule in post-1861 Russia. *Volostnoi starshina* was an elected leader of the *volost'*.

as the tsar's own priestly pose.[623] Finding these gestures similar to those depicted on Ancient Egyptian tombs, catacomb frescoes from the first centuries of Christianity, and Russian icons,[624] Flyorov deems them too "modern" and unsuitable for the pre-historic time of the Berendeyans. He argues that this signifies "a lack of concrete style" ("besstil'nost'"), that would actually benefit a fairy-tale production, since the world it presents should be unrecognizable.[625] Flyorov admits, however, that, when a fairy tale is staged or illustrated, it needs to draw upon national motifs. However, he seeks to offer a middle ground, suggesting that these motifs should be most generic in nature, without overwhelming the viewer with "archeological concreteness."[626] From Flyorov's as well as some other reviews, one gets the impression that critics both wanted to laud the "national" element in Ostrovsky's play and yet simultaneously express discomfort with the concrete and specific forms of the national that the production offered in place of what they would have preferred to see—more familiar and conventional representations of folk culture.

One of the most detailed—and critical—reviews of Stanislavsky's production was written by Alexander Rostislavov for the journal *Theater and Art*. Instead of comparing the Moscow Art Theater's production to the Novy Theater's production, Rostislavov compares Stanislavsky's production to Vasnetsov's *Snow Maiden* sketches and proclaims Vasnetsov the winner. Such a comparison is problematic, however, and Rostislavov acknowledges this: while in Vasnetsov's case the critic concentrates on the sketches for the sets and costumes, in the case of the Moscow Art Theater he discusses an actual production, where

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[623] S. Vasil'ev [Sergei Flerov], "Teatral'naia khronika. ('Snegurochka' na Khudozhestvenno-obshchedostupnom teatre)," 4.
[624] Notably, these were the gestures that, as demonstrated above, were influenced by images in Vasnetsov's Vladimir Cathedral.
[625] Ibid., 4.
[626] Ibid., 4.

the sets and costumes are only part of the viewers' experience. Clearly, the critic was under the spell of Vasnetsov, and he simply could not imagine an execution of *The Snow Maiden* that differed from Vasnetsov's sketches. He not only argues that Vasnetsov's sketches are closer to the play than Simov's representation, but even claims that those sketches, paradoxically, make a fuller impression than a theatrical production: "Vasnetsov's sketches for *The Snow Maiden* give completely the same comprehensive, holistic impression as Ostrovsky's play itself, even though the artist conveyed only the appearance of the characters and their surroundings in a remarkably typical and truthful manner."[627]

Rostislavov mentions Vasnetsov a number of times in his article; in his assessment, Vasnetsov becomes almost Ostrovsky's co-author, not just a painter who provided one of the possible visual representations of Ostrovsky's characters and the setting of his play. For example, Rostislavov observes that "Yarilo's valley" is "a miracle of fantastic charm in Ostrovsky and Vasnetsov";[628] Vasnetsov's and Ostrovsky's names appear together again in the discussion of Tsar Berendei: "Ostrovsky and Vasnetsov vividly portray a very simple, kindhearted, typically fairytalish figure of an old tsar, the father for his people."[629] When speaking about Simov's sets, Rostislavov finds them beautiful but significantly inferior to those of Vasnetsov, because they "don't quite match Ostrovsky's text."[630] However, Rostislavov does not clarify in what respect Simov's sets deviate from Ostrovsky's play—he simply postulates Vasnetsov's superiority, because for him Vasnetsov's visual representation of the play is already inseparable from it. The way Rostislavov writes about

[627] Rostislavov, "O khudozhestvennoi postanovke 'Snegurochki'," 722.
[628] Ibid., 723.
[629] Ibid., 724.
[630] Ibid., 722.

Vasnetsov attests to the reputation the latter had gained by 1900: that of *the* artist who knows how to depict "the national," be it folkloric or historical.

Rostislavov harshly criticizes the appearance and costumes of the characters in the Moscow Art Theater production, again proclaiming Vasnetsov as the standard-bearer for their representation:

> The appearance, the costumes of this fantastic tribe, of course, can be completely fantastical, but in this fantastical quality there should be something close to us and at the same time something very simple, beautiful and fairy-tale-like—exactly as we see it in Vasnetsov's sketches.[631]

Rostislavov does admit that the Berendeyan people are fantastic; however, he simultaneously requires that the depiction of the Berendeyans be somewhat "close to us." The very vagueness of this expectation makes it impossible to match, while reinforcing the position of Vasnetsov who, according to Rostislavov, already offers a perfect solution for this inconceivable task.

As for the Moscow Art Theater's costumes, they did not match Rostislavov's criteria. He speaks positively only about the appearance of Grandfather Frost and the costume of the Snow Maiden in the first act,[632] seeing a special "fairy-tale" quality in them. The critic finds other costumes "too heavy, too convoluted," with "little beauty and unity" to them.[633] Rostislavov goes into great detail about the eclecticism of costume styles discussed earlier in this chapter:

> Why, for example, do the Berendeyans, who are dressed almost like some Northern minorities, have boyars with faces of Biblical elders in ancient Russian Byzantine

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[631] "Внешность, костюмы этого фантастического народа, конечно, могут быть совершенно фантастичны, но в этой фантастичности должно сказываться нечто очень близкое нам, одновременно очень простое, красивое и сказочное, что мы и видим в рисунках Васнецова" (ibid., 723-724).
[632] Ibid., 723.
[633] Ibid., 724.

> cloaks from the times of St. Vladimir, copied in their entirety from plates of ancient Russian costumes, as though from Sipovsky's *Native Antiquity*?[634]

Rostislavov's comment about Berendeyans looking "almost like some Northern minorities" (*inorodtsy*) is curious.[635] Though the costumes he discusses look different from the Russian peasant clothes he is used to seeing (and imagining), he is not certain what ethnic costumes they mimic—and so he adds "almost" to his description. As discussed earlier, certain patterns of non-Russian traditional costume were indeed used in the production, but they did not come from the North. Unable to attribute these folk costume motifs to a specific ethnic minority, Rostislavov makes an *ad hoc* attribution of sorts.

One thing is clear: the lack of stylistic unity that Rostislavov—correctly—perceives in the production makes the production incomprehensible to him and prompts him to reject the theater's vision without an attempt to understand it. Notably, Rostislavov is the only reviewer who comments extensively on the costumes and their eclecticism. However, he does not consider the potential reasons for the theater's choice of stylistics; instead, he postulates that the perfect embodiment of *The Snow Maiden*'s subject—Vasnetsov's—already exists, and he appears completely closed to alternative renditions.

To conclude, the discussion of *The Snow Maiden*'s production by the Moscow Art Theater in many respects mirrored the discussion of the play itself in 1900. The reviewers

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[634] "Почему, напр., у берендеев, одетых почти какими-то северными инородцами, бояре—с лицами библейских старцев в древне-русских византийских плащах времен Владимира Святого, целиком скопированных с изображений древне-русских костюмов чуть ли не из «Родной Старины» Сиповского?" (ibid., 724). V. D. Sipovsky was an educator and historian; *Rodnaia starina* was his very popular edition on pre-Petrine Russian history for children and youth, originally published in 1879. The book contains stories on Russian history and old Russian customs; the stories are accompanied by pictures of costumes, weapons, scenes from Russian history. A few pictures are copies from old engravings. The book also contains two original drawings by Viktor Vasnetsov: a scene of the Christianization of the Kievan people ("Крещение киевлян") and the Battle of Kulikovo ("Битва на Куликовом поле"). See the modern reprint of the book: V. D. Sipovskii, *Rodnaia starina: Otechestvennaia istoriia v rasskazakh i kartinakh (S IX po XVI st[oletie])* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1992).

[635] Kicheev calls them "Russian *muzhiki* from pre-historic times," Kicheev, "Dve *Snegurochki*," 3.

who discussed the play tended to approach it with an underlying assumption that the action of the play was set in the world of pre-historic ancient Russia. In contradistinction to the earlier reception of the play, it was perceived in 1900 as an important piece of Russian literature that contained potent symbols of "Russianness." However, the representation of that "Russianness" on stage proved a difficult task for the Moscow Art Theater, which chose to apply an archeological and ethnographic approach to the staging. While such an approach proved successful in prior productions of Aleksei Tolstoy's historical dramas, *The Snow Maiden* did not appear to lend itself to such strict historicism. The creators of the production thus deliberately mixed ethnographic realia of various provenances with the fantastic plot of the original play, adding anachronistic details and diverse ideological and aesthetic influences to the mix. Even though the success of this production with the public was short-lived, it made its creators, critics, and the audience aware of the complexity of recreating Russia's "national antiquity" by means of contemporary art—a task that increasingly preoccupied the minds of artistic elites in the late imperial period.

CONCLUSION

The story of the creation and reception of Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* presented in this study takes place in the period when, in the words of Olga Maiorova, the Russian nation was emerging "from the shadow of empire." It prompted the invention of traditions that, in the view of Eric Hobsbawm and other scholars, help nations define their uniqueness. Throughout this period, one can observe a growing desire on the part of writers, musicians, artists, and stage designers to look for inspiration in the native folk tradition, and to find—or invent—national symbols that would be perceived as growing out of that tradition. The changing reception of Ostrovsky's play and of its adaptations in theater, music, and the arts in the last decades of the nineteenth century serves as a remarkable case that allows us to trace the reevaluation of "native" (Russian folk) traditions and the search for ways to include them in modern Russian culture.

During the period analyzed in this study Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden*, a fantasy play, which grew out of Ostrovsky's interest in experimentation with folk motifs and was commissioned by the Directorate of the Imperial Theaters, came to be perceived as a "truthful" artistic representation of "ancient Rus'," a revival of a Russian mythological past by means of modern art. This fascinating process has never been studied with such close attention, on the one hand, to the individual agendas of various musicians, artists, and theater directors involved in the adaptations of the play, and, on the other hand, to the spectrum of reactions and uses of language in order to interpret these adaptations by critics. This dissertation strove to present the changes in the play's critical reception in all their complexity, while situating them within a historical framework.

At a cultural moment demanding national symbols, Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* appeared to be uniquely well-suited for adaptations and reinterpretations, due to its presentation of a mysterious pre-historic land steeped in elements of Russian folklore. This study investigated the evolution of attitudes to the play and its subject from 1873, when the play was written and first staged, to 1900. While Chapters One and Three of this dissertation analyzed two distinct moments in time—the years 1873 and 1900, respectively—Chapter Two traced the process of the transformation of the interpretation and evaluation of the play.

In 1873, there were barely any signs suggesting the future place of the play and its characters in the Russian national imagination. The overwhelmingly negative reception of the play was to a large extent symptomatic of the demand for realism in literature and theater at that time, as well as by the indifferent or negative attitude toward the use of folklore in modern art. The early reception of the play, however, was not exactly uniform: some critics did express general appreciation for folklore-inspired works, even though they deemed Ostrovsky's attempt at creating such a work inadequate. While the play would be unequivocally seen as representing the world of Russian antiquity only by 1900, the first suggestions of such an interpretation of the play are noticeable already in 1873, albeit expressed by a minority of critics. Occasional demands for an "authentic" presentation of the subject on stage, which would rely on ethnographic research, and the subjugation of all elements of the production to a unified vision, were put forth in 1873 as well.

The meager signs of appreciation of the play in 1873, however, could not have predicted its future fate. The last two decades of the nineteenth century brought Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* to the fore of experimentation with "native" Russian musical and

artistic forms, thanks to the eponymous opera by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and the activities of the Abramtsevo circle. The stage designs and costumes created by Viktor Vasnetsov for the productions of the play and the opera by the Abramtsevo circle and the Moscow Private Opera, respectively, were a crucial part of the process of the play's reinterpretation. Ultimately, it is primarily thanks to Viktor Vasnetsov's growing reputation as an artist that the play's subject came to be perceived as pertaining to the realm of a Russian mythological past. While Vasnetsov's importance for this process is not a new discovery, this study's contribution lies in the close analysis of the critical discourse that surrounded the opera and its first production by the Mariinsky Theater, and later, its production by the Moscow Private Opera. This analysis allows us to draw a nuanced picture of the reinterpretation of *The Snow Maiden*'s subject as "ancient Rus'," which was not a straightforward process. In the case of the opera, even Rimsky-Korsakov's friends did not instantly appreciate his opera as a celebration of the ancient Slavic pagan cult, contrary to the composer's intentions. In the case of Vasnetsov's sets and costume designs for the Moscow Private Opera, the artistic community came to appreciate his vision right away and saw the production as a discovery of "authentic" visual representation of Russian antiquity. However, it took over ten years for the critics and, presumably, for the general public to appreciate Vasnetsov's vision and hail his sketches as an uncontested model for reviving national antiquity.

By 1900, the vague folksy theme of *The Snow Maiden* was transformed into a firm conception of the play as a fictional representation of the ancient Slavic world. The main question important to the directors, stage designers, and critics, as discussed in the third chapter of this study, was not *what* the play represented—since that question was "decided

upon" in the previous period—but *how* to stage a play on a subject from the national mythological past. The analysis of the play's treatment in criticism in 1900 confirms that, indeed, reviewers almost universally perceived the play as a representation of Russian antiquity. It is also clear, however, that reviewers struggled to define what exactly this "Russian antiquity" meant, and their language of analysis contains many contradictions, as well as a very liberal use of the vocabulary pertaining to folklore that betrays the writers' unpreparedness for discourse in that domain. Stanislavsky's attempt to stage *The Snow Maiden* exemplifies a unique endeavor to present an imaginary national past with the means of naturalistic staging based on ethnographic research. This study analyzed the conception of the production developed by Stanislavsky (as director) and Viktor Simov (as stage designer), introducing some previously unknown archival sources. This production was an experiment drawing upon various sources of visual representation of folk traditions, both Russian and non-Russian (but all within the Russian Empire). While it was the director's vision that informed every aspect of the production (contrary to the 1873 production by the Maly Theater), the eclectic nature of the sources resulted in a production that some justifiably perceived as lacking stylistic unity and others blamed for excessive naturalism. Still, the enthusiastic reaction of many reviewers to Stanislavsky's "ancient Rus'" confirmed the persisting demand for visions of Russian traditions in modern art.

While this dissertation concentrated on the process of the transformation of the play's interpretation and therefore limited itself to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the subsequent fate of the play and the eponymous opera is equally fascinating. In particular, it is Nikolai Roerich's participation in a later production of the play in St. Petersburg (1912), as well as in productions of the opera in Paris (1908), London (1919),

and Chicago (1921), that deserves closer attention. Additionally, two recent productions of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera—Alexander Titel's production at the Bolshoi Theater, and Dmitry Cherniakov's production in the Opéra Bastille in Paris—exemplify two drastically different approaches to the opera's folkloric and mythic components and testify to the interest in reinterpreting such subjects by the means of contemporary art. While Ostrovsky's *Snow Maiden* is rarely read today, the story of its reception and transposition in other media provides the play's plot and its characters a symbolic significance that insures their continued presence as points of reference in contemporary Russian culture.

APPENDIX: Illustrations

Figure 1. Glikeria Fedotova as the Snow Maiden, *The Snow Maiden* (Maly Theater, 1873). http://kineshma.bezformata.ru/listnews/snegurochka-shelikovskaya-skazka/62140324/ (accessed May 27, 2018).

Figure 2. Evlalia Kadmina as Lel, *The Snow Maiden* (Maly Theater, 1873). http://kineshma.bezformata.ru/listnews/snegurochka-shelikovskaya-skazka/62140324/ (accessed May 27, 2018).

Figure 3. Evlalia Kadmina as Lel, *The Snow Maiden* (Maly Theater, 1873).
A. P. Al'shvang, *P. I. Chaikovskii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1959), 229.

Figures 4-12 are from a calendar published by St. Petersburg State Theater Library in 2008: *Opera N. A. Rimskogo-Korsakova "Snegurochka." Kostiumy i butaforia M. K. Klodta*[636] *k spektakliu Imperatorskogo Mariinskogo teatra* (St. Petersburg: Sankt-Peterbursgskaia gosudarstvennaia teatral'naia biblioteka, 2008).

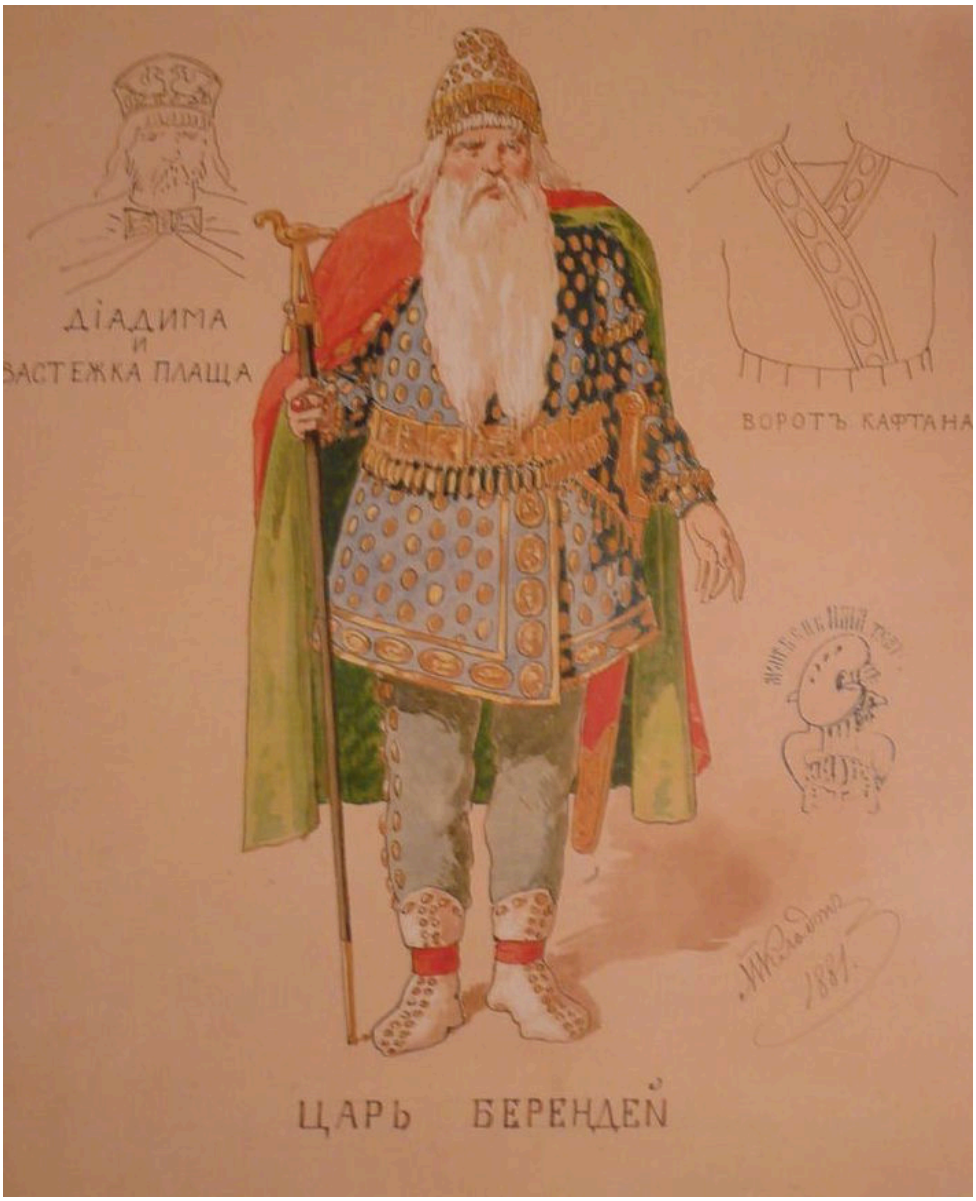


Figure 4. Mikhail Petrovich Klodt, a costume sketch for Tsar Berendei, *The Snow Maiden* (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

[636] As explained in Chapter Two, these sketches belong to the artist M. P. Klodt, not M. K. Klodt.

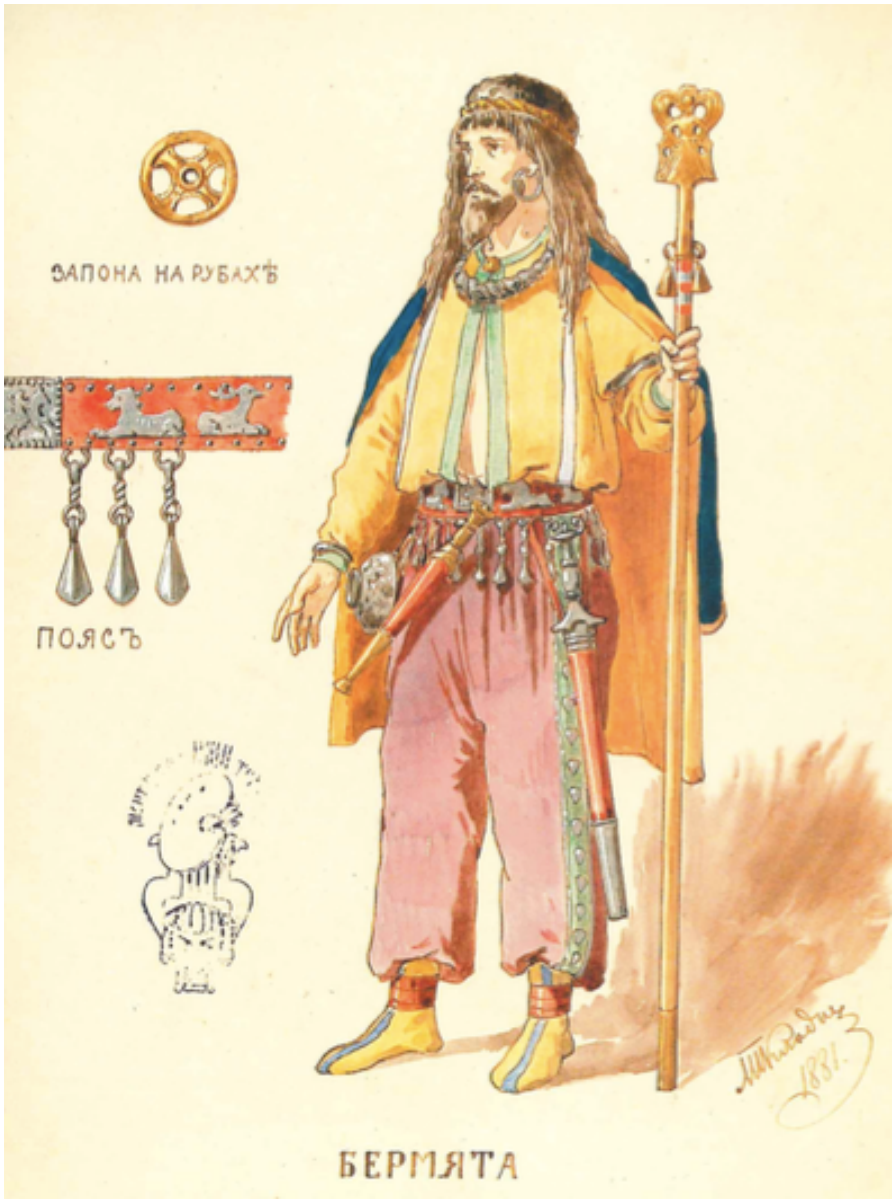


Figure 5. Klodt, a costume sketch for Bermyata (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

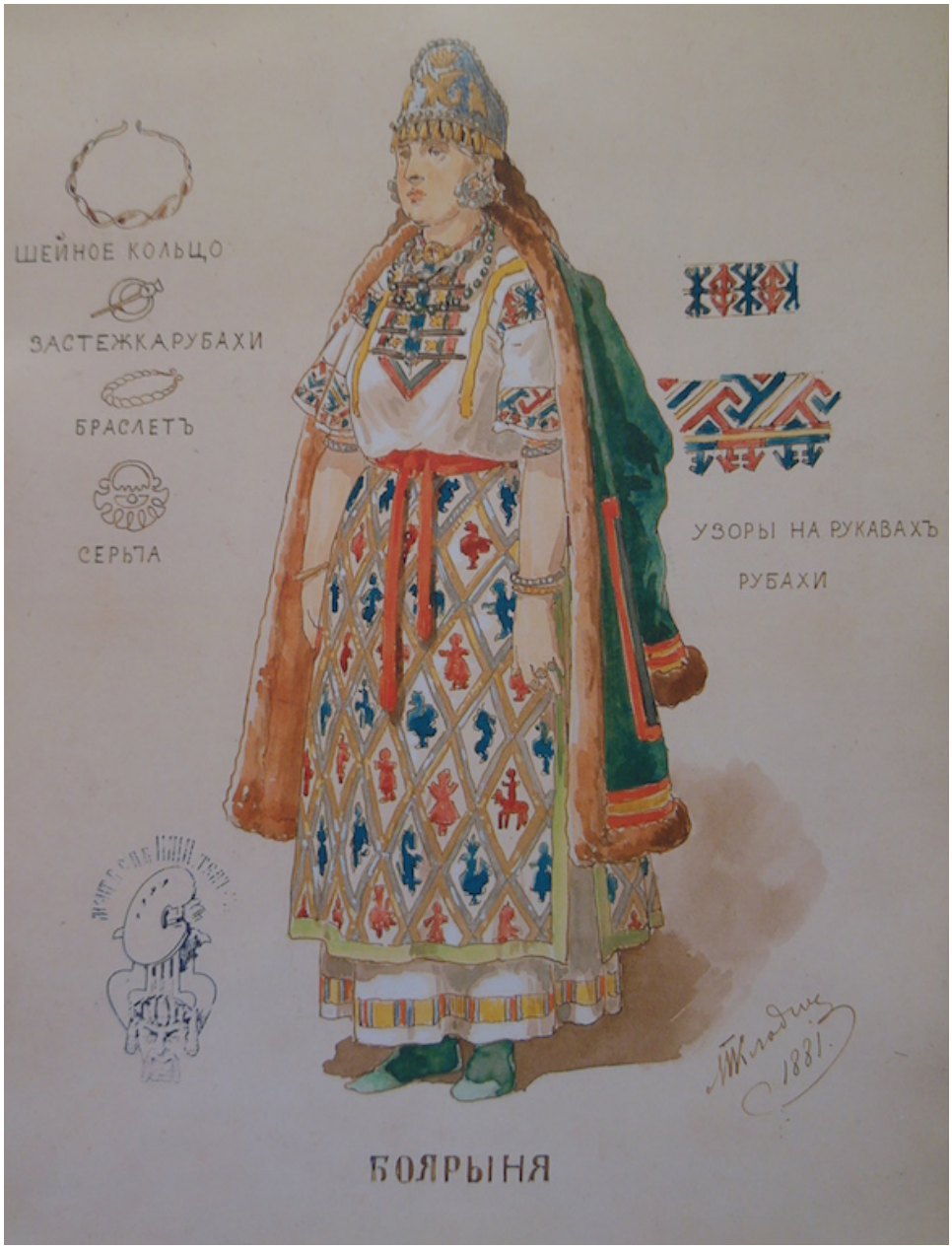


Figure 6. Klodt, a costume sketch for “boyarynia” (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

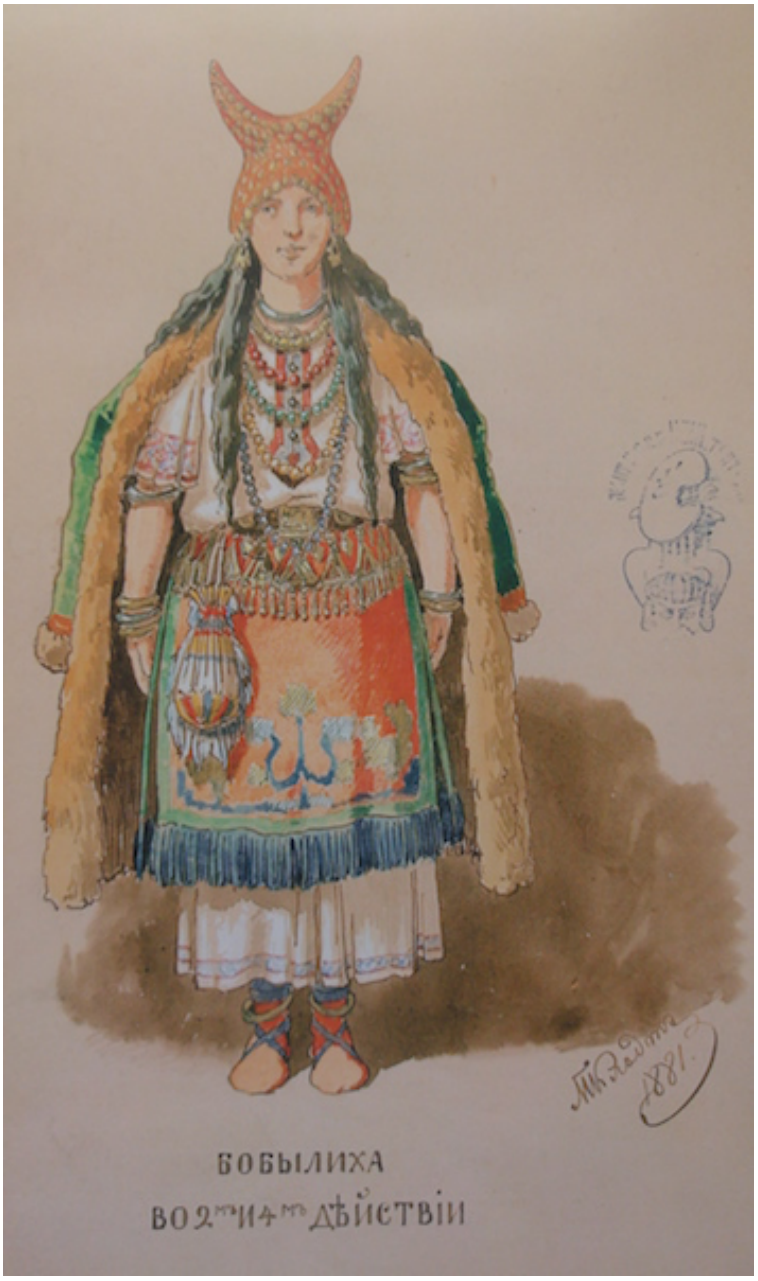


Figure 7. Klodt, a costume sketch for Bobylikha (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

Figure 8. Klodt, a costume sketch for Grandfather Frost (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

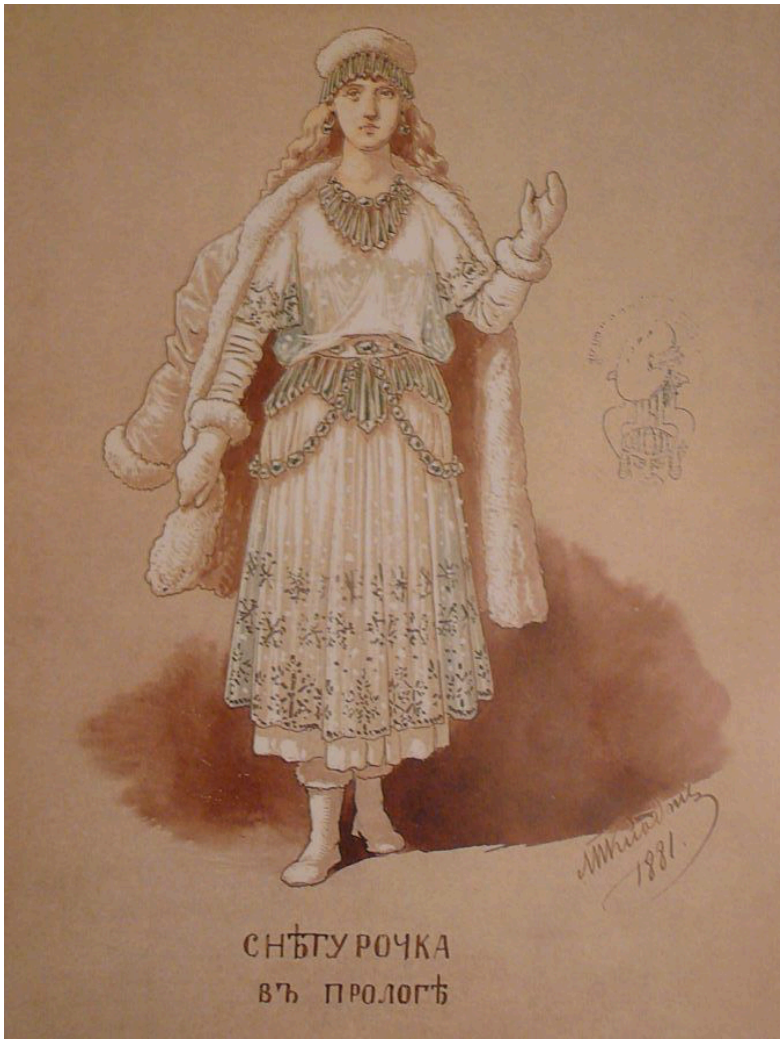


Figure 9. Klodt, a costume sketch for the Snow Maiden (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

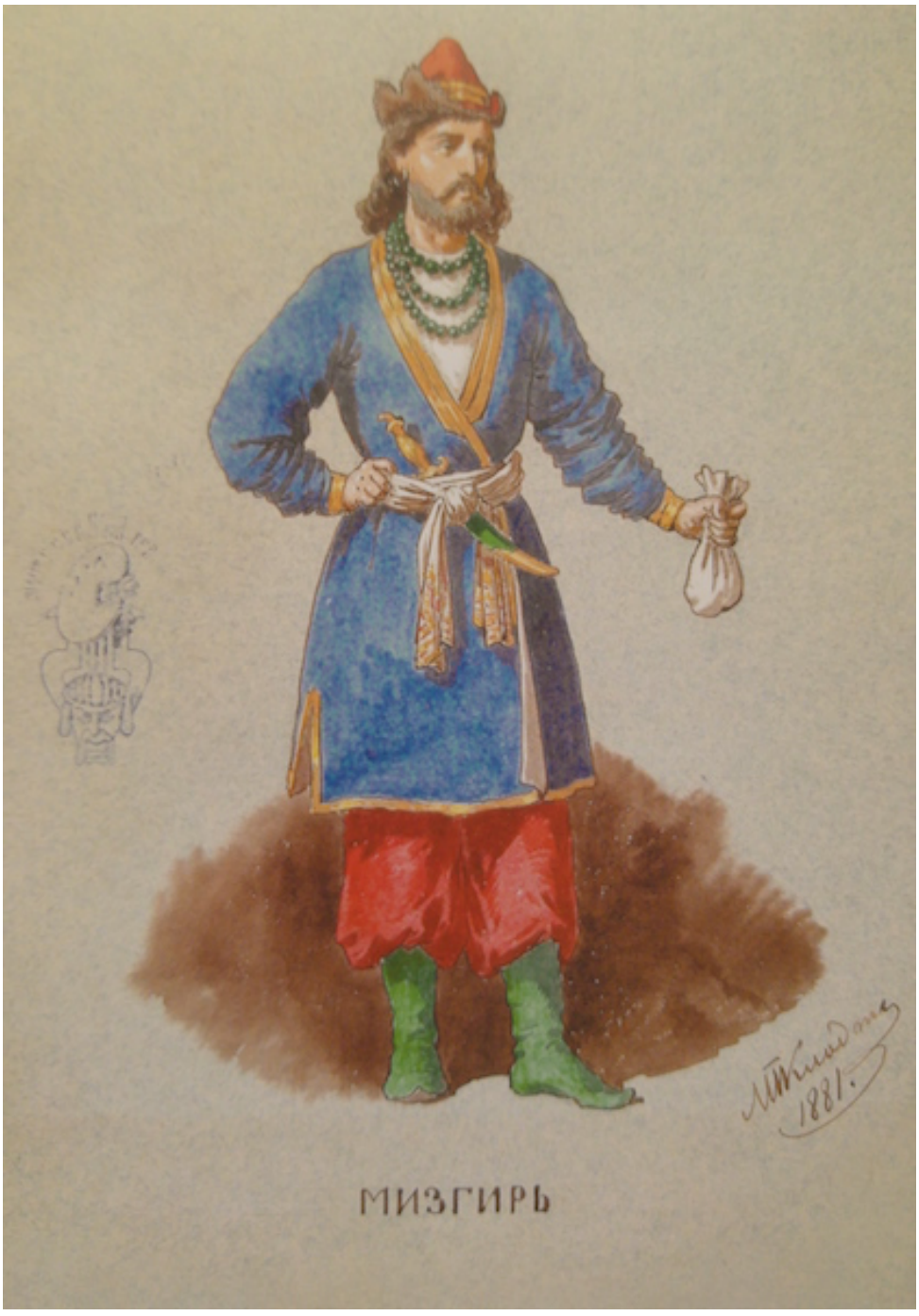


Figure 10. Klodt, a costume sketch for Mizgir (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

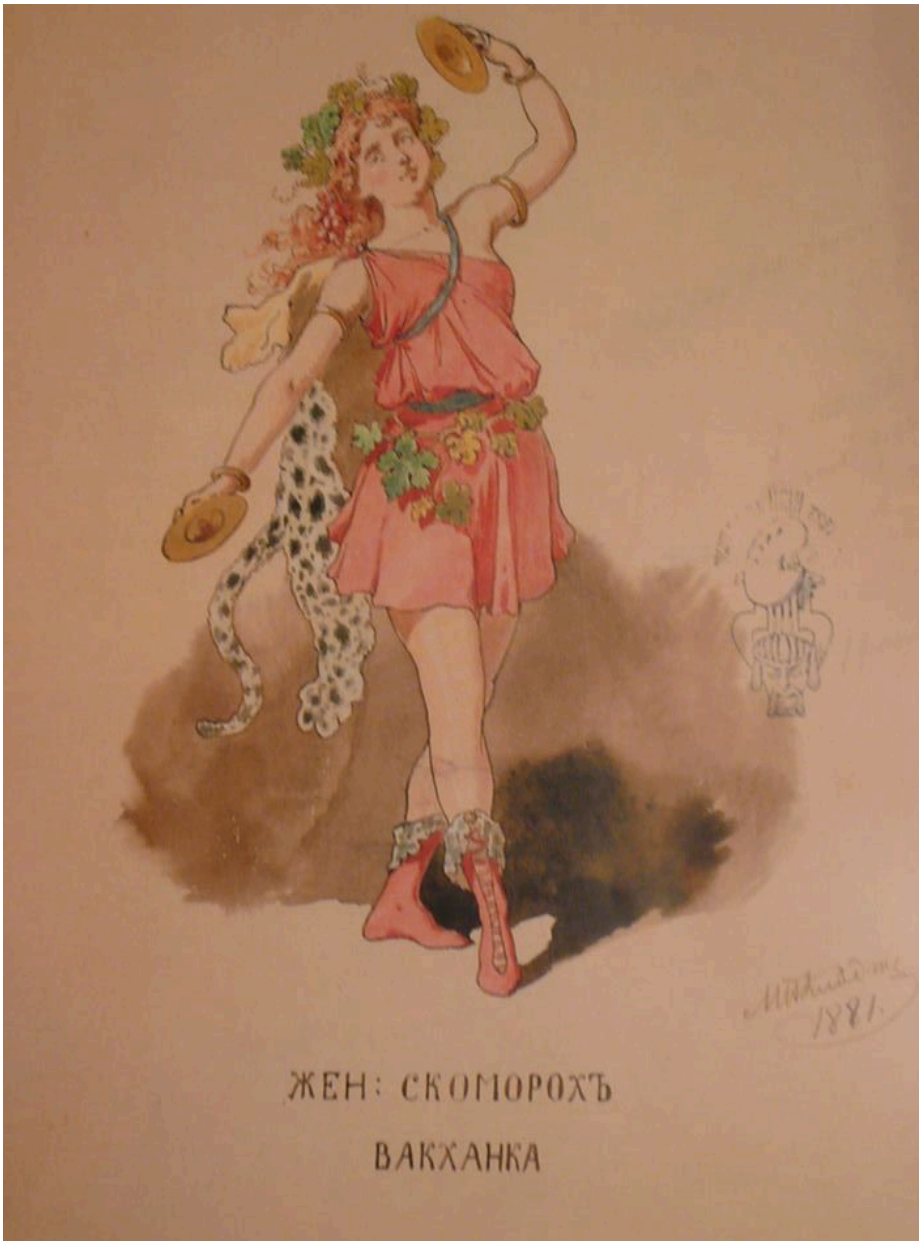


Figure 11. Klodt, a costume sketch for a “female skomorokh: Meanad” (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

Figure 12. Klodt, a costume sketch for Khmel—"Hops Plant" (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).

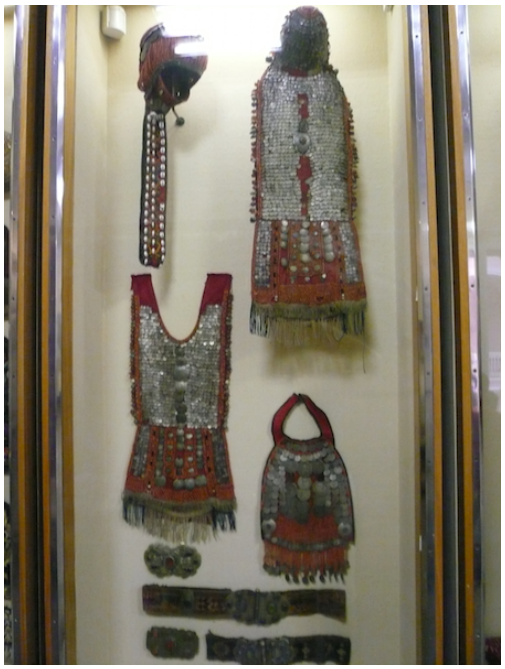
Figure 13. Maria Dolina as Lel, *The Snow Maiden* (Mariinsky Theater, 1882).
Exhibition "How Not to Melt: The Myth of the Snow Maiden in Art and on the Screen" ("Как не растаять: Миф о Снегурочке в искусстве и на экране"), gallery "On Solianka" ("На Солянке"[637]), Moscow December 2013-January 2014. Photo by author.

[637] This gallery is now known as "Solianka VPA."

Figure 14. *The Snow Maiden*, Act Two (Moscow Art Theater, 1900); Vasily Kachalov (right)—Tsar Berendei.
Moscow Art Theater archive, *Snegurochka* folder.

Figure 15. An Upper Chuvash woman's traditional costume.
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 16. A Tatar woman's traditional costume.
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.



Figures 17 and 18. A Bashkir woman's traditional costume.
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photos by author, June 2013.

Figure 19. A Lower Chuvash woman's traditional costume.
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 20. A Mari woman's traditional costume.
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 21. Photograph of a Chuvash woman from the series “Types Russes.” Card from the Moscow Art Theater archive, *Snegurochka* folder.

Figure 22. Photograph of an Udmurt couple from the series “Types Russes.” Card from the Moscow Art Theater archive, *Snegurochka* folder.

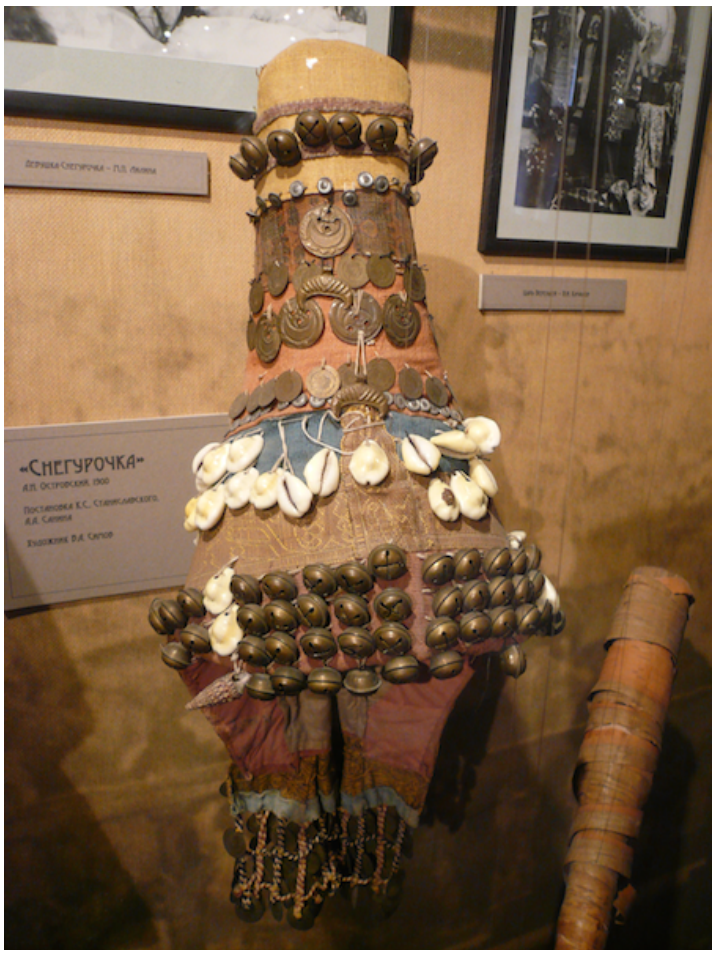


Figure 23. Kupava's headdress, Moscow Art Theater, 1900.
Moscow Art Theater Museum. Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 24. *The Snow Maiden*, act 1 (Moscow Art Theater, 1900); Maria Roksanova—Kupava, Alexander Vishnevsky—Mizgir.
Exhibition "How Not to Melt: The Myth of the Snow Maiden in Art and on the Screen" ("Как не растаять: Миф о Снегурочке в искусстве и на экране"), gallery "On Solianka" ("На Солянке"[638]), Moscow, December 2013-January 2014. Photo by author.

[638] This gallery is now known as "Solianka VPA."

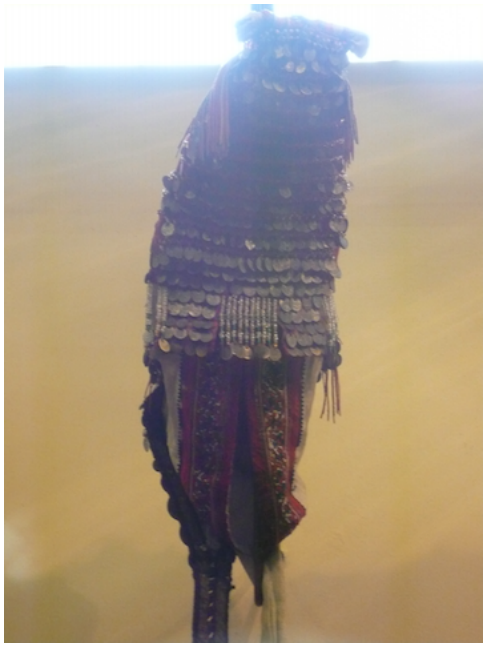


Figure 25. A Mari woman's headdress, "shurka."
Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 26. A Mordvin woman's traditional costume, with headdress "pango." Russian Museum of Ethnography (St. Peterburg). Photo by author, June 2013.

Мордовки

Figure 27. “Mordvin women,” *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*, Act Four (Moscow Art Theater, 1898).
Chushkin, N. N., ed., *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1, *1898-1917* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo izobrazitel’nogo iskusstva, 1955), 23.

Figure 28. *The Snow Maiden*, Act One (Moscow Art Theater, 1900).
Moscow Art Theater Museum. Photo by author, June 2013.

Figure 29. Ivan Moskvin as Bobyl, *The Snow Maiden* (Moscow Art Theater, 1900). http://library.mxat.ru/bsources/40/ivan_moskvin-web-resources/image/066_fmt.png (accessed April 27, 2017).[639]

[639] See an inferior quality reproduction of the same picture in Chushkin, *Moskovskii Khudozhestvennyi Teatr*, vol. 1, *1898-1917*, 72.

Figure 30. *The Snow Maiden*, act 1 (Moscow Art Theater, 1900); Ekaterina Munt—the Snow Maiden, Maria Samarova—Bobylikha.
Exhibition "How Not to Melt: The Myth of the Snow Maiden in Art and on the Screen" ("Как не растаять: Миф о Снегурочке в искусстве и на экране"), gallery "On Solianka" ("На Солянке"), Moscow, December 2013-January 2014. Photo by author.

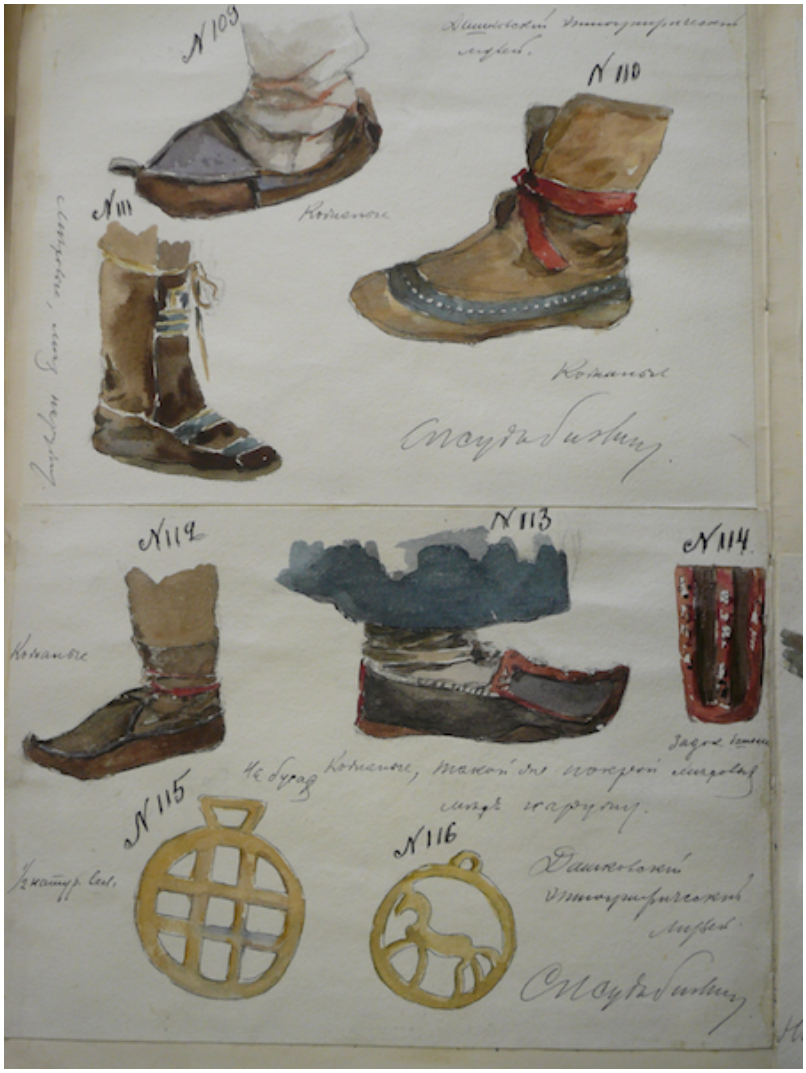


Figure 31. A page from: Simov, V. A., Sud'binin, S. N., Protopopova, A. A. "Snegurochka," 1900 g.
Muzei MKhAT. Eskiznyi fond, №4749 (E-4749). KP-9909.[640] Moscow Art Theater Museum.

[640] Notes to #110 and #116 say "Дашковский этнографический музей." Judging by the signature, these sketches belong to Serafim Sudbinin—an actor of the Moscow Art Theater who played Grandfather Frost in *The Snow Maiden*. As shown in Chapter Three, Moscow Art Theater actors were at times tasked with visiting the Dashkov Museum to colleting sketches of objects that could be useful for the production.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[In theater and music criticism of the nineteenth century, it was common practice to publish reviews unsigned or under a pseudonym. Under the heading "Books and Articles," the main alphabetized section of the bibliography is preceded by a section containing newspaper and journal articles published anonymously or under pseudonyms. The order of entries in this section is as follows: 1) articles published anonymously; 2) articles published under *** (all of them belong to César Cui); 3) articles published under initials or a name fragment; and 4) articles published under a pseudonym that consists of at least one full word. Entries within each of these sub-sections are in alphabetical order. The real name, when known, is provided in square brackets. In the main body of the bibliography, I provide the real names alphabetically, with cross-references to pseudonyms. Articles published under the authors' real names are located in the main body of the bibliography.]

Archival materials

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