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Cosmopolitan Connections: *Yevgeny Onegin* as realist *drame lyrique* in Nice

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In the build-up to the French premiere of Tchaikovsky's Yevgeny Onegin *in Nice in 1895, critics, speakers and writers on music were declaring the opera a masterpiece of psychological realism. Such a reading seems to resonate more with recent assessments of the opera; but in 1890s France, a combination of interest in the Russian realist novel and new trends in realist opera had led critics to make the literary link already. With the Franco-Russian Alliance recently finalized and hostility towards the Triplice mounting, many even suggested that the opera might form the lyric equivalent of the Russian realist novel and, in so doing, offer a morally and politically superior alternative to the so-called verismo operas of the new Italian school.*

The optimism surrounding Onegin, *I'd like to show, was part of a broader move in late nineteenth-century France to celebrate cosmopolitanism, if not in the sense one might expect. Tchaikovsky and* Onegin *were very much deemed representatively Russian. What was cosmopolitan, and in turn modern, was the act of cultural transfer – exploiting international personal networks – and the opera's realism: its evocations of ordinary life and of the contemporary psychological condition. As such, a Russian opera like this could be applauded not for its revelations of an exotic or disconnected country, but for the potential it posed to integrate with and revitalize French culture.*

Scouring the articles published around the time of *Yevgeny Onegin*'s French premiere in Nice in 1895, one might be surprised at the terms in which it was being described. *Onegin*, many critics declared, was an opera exhibiting the most modern initiatives in 'réalisme': a *drame lyrique* that would speak to French audiences and reinvigorate the operatic tradition. For one commenter, it was 'surely one of the most advanced operas ever written'.[1] Such readings may be familiar to those who have read the work of Emily Frey, Boris Gasparov and Richard Taruskin, who have fought in recent decades to rehabilitate *Onegin*'s conservative reputation by arguing for its realist devices.[2] And yet here we find, a century earlier, French

[1] 'C'est assurément un des opéras les plus "avancés" qui aient été écrits'. *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[2] Emily Frey, 'Nowhere Man: *Evgeny Onegin* and the Politics of Reflection in Nineteenth-Century Russia', *19th-Century Music* 36/3 (2013): 209–30; Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005): 58–94; and Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): 52–60. Contrary to what I have found in the Nice example, Julie Buckler argues that 'Western scholars', in contrast to Soviet ones who she states were first to inscribe *Onegin* into a realist literary aesthetic, 'have tended to see Tchaikovskii's opera as anything but realist'. See her *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 117.

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critics already praising the opera as realist and, by association, modern. One incentive for speaking so highly of a Russian opera was the newly finalized alliance between France and Russia against Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy. But, above and beyond this, these readings were prompted by the opera's resonances with the Russian realist novel and with newly conceived realist *drame lyrique*.

Drawing attention to these realist interpretations of *Onegin* can help recast our understanding of what it meant to be cosmopolitan in the late nineteenth century. So often when Tchaikovsky is described as a cosmopolite, it is in the pejorative sense used by his compatriots, the Mighty Handful and their propagandist, Stasov: to imply traditionalism, elitism and a lack of national consciousness. It is this term that has, in part, led to the relative neglect of research into how Tchaikovsky's music travelled; to be cosmopolitan connotes assumptions of easy, unremarkable movement. Critics in France did not directly call Tchaikovsky cosmopolitan – indeed, they treated him as characteristically Russian, despite what Taruskin has argued about the influence of César Cui's *La Musique en Russie* (1880), which declared Tchaikovsky an 'antagonist' of musical Russianness.[3] But by describing *Onegin* as realist, French critics were hinting at the benefits of writing music that could speak across borders. Realism, broadly conceived, was considered a decidedly cosmopolitan movement due to its preoccupations with ordinary human – rather than nationally specific – experience.[4] And by the 1890s, this psychological bent appeared to be rendering realist literature, art and opera uniquely mobile, with realist works spreading internationally at an unprecedented rate. To admire *Onegin* as realist, therefore, was to celebrate its cosmopolitanism.

My treatment of the term cosmopolitan is informed by scholarship of recent years that has confronted usual perceptions of the second half of the nineteenth century as an age of nationalism. Cristina Magaldi has posited that forging nationalist sentiments at this time was a 'challenge, rather than a given',[5] and that it was because of this challenge that these arguments were pronounced with greater force than those for the norm: the cosmopolitan. To be sure, with new political allegiances being forged and increasingly efficient communication systems afforded

[3] Quoted from Cui's *La Musique en Russie* in Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 49. Cui's text was first published as a series of articles in *La Revue et Gazette musicale* from 1878–80, and then in full by Fischbacher in Paris in 1880. Marina Frolova-Walker has equally argued that this publication strongly shaped foreign impressions of Tchaikovsky and other Russian composers in the late nineteenth century. See her *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): 45–6. While Cui's ideas certainly appear to have become more common currency in the early twentieth century, Tchaikovsky was often deemed an authentically Russian composer in the decades prior to Diaghilev's *saisons russes*: a time when his and Glinka's music far outweighed that of the Kuchka in concert halls and opera houses abroad.

[4] My association of realism with cosmopolitanism stems in part from Tanya Agathocleous's *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), though her monograph is more concerned with the nineteenth-century city as a place in which to reflect upon global community, and from Richard Bonfiglio's 'Cosmopolitan Realism: Portable Domesticity in Brontë's Belgian Novels' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40/ 2 (2012): 599–616, which explores the cosmopolitan mobility of domestic settings in realist fiction.

[5] Cristina Magaldi, 'Cosmopolitanism and Music in the Nineteenth Century', *Oxford Handbooks Online*, www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935321.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935321-e-62 (accessed 12 March 2017).

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by technological innovations, the late nineteenth century saw cosmopolitan encounters rise.[6] My study touches upon the numerous forms of connection that drove and shaped the performances of *Onegin* in Nice: political, personal and business ties, the sharing of ideas through movements of people and through translation, and the coming together of different nationalities in urban spaces. What I want to stress, however, is not just cosmopolitanism as a state of interconnectedness, but as an ethical notion of world citizenship. Cosmopolitanism, as Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley have outlined, was for many an ideological concept, whereby cultural exchange enabled increased mutual understanding and innovation.[7]

Nonetheless, nationalism and cosmopolitanism were unavoidably intertwined. A core challenge of modernity in *fin-de-siècle* France was that it enabled the rapid movement of peoples and objects, bearing testament to French global power and influence, while at the same time stimulating fears that such movement could lead to cultural dilution and decline. While some looked increasingly inward, rejecting foreign imports, many took the stance that imports could benefit the nation. And as Amanda Anderson has argued, cosmopolitanism that stretched beyond the usual spheres of influence was embraced for its potential to reinvigorate the waning West.[8] Thus, positive attitudes towards Tchaikovsky were part of a much broader (if often self-interested) discourse about the benefits of international cultural movement.

In what follows, I take the example of *Onegin*'s French premiere as a means of offering new perspectives on Russian opera's place on the world's stage at the end of the nineteenth century. The importance of this event is not to be measured by any shaking up of the repertory. After all, the Nice production lasted just three nights, and did not spark further French performances. What matters is the abundance of discussion leading up to the premiere, and the strength of optimism about Russia more broadly. Explorations of Russian music's international spread have, for the most part, so far indicated that the chief reason this repertoire had any success abroad was intrigue into the exotic. But, as I have suggested elsewhere, from as early as the 1860s, writers on music were excitedly discussing Russian composers' potential to shake up tired European forms – to integrate with, not sit outside, the European tradition.[9] In the case of *Onegin*, Russian realism in particular was framed as a highly desirable influence. The appeal of the opera's realism, I propose, was not that it might unveil the secrets of Russian life, but that it helped the opera travel and thus offered promise of fruitful international exchange. It was in this guise that Russian opera could be framed as a powerful force for renewal.

[6] Regenia Gagnier, 'Good Europeans and Neo-Liberal Cosmopolitans: Ethics and Politics in Late Victorian Contemporary Cosmopolitanism', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38 (2010): 62.

[7] For more on what they call 'new cosmopolitanism', as an 'ethical-political stance', see Sarah Collins and Dana Gooley, 'Music and the New Cosmopolitanism: Problems and Possibilities', *The Musical Quarterly* 99/2 (2017): 142–9.

[8] Amanda Anderson, *Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[9] See Tamsin Alexander, 'Decentralising via Russia: Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Nice, 1890', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 27/1 (2015): 35–62.

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Pushing for *Onegin*: Personal and Political incentives

A series of interventions by those who moved between Russia and France or had key contacts between the two facilitated *Onegin*'s French premiere. While the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 made efforts to have *Onegin* performed in France timely, it was these personal connections that pushed the premiere through. One crucial mediator was Mikhail Osipovich Ashkenazi (1851–1914), otherwise known by his penname, Michel Delines. Delines (as I will refer to him) was born in Odessa and settled in Paris in 1887. There, he became an assiduous propagator of Russian culture and an active supporter of the Franco-Russian Alliance. He translated Russian literature and opera libretti – including for the French publications of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in 1888 and *Onegin* in 1894 – and authored numerous pro-alliance books and essays.[10] It was in Paris that Delines first made the acquaintance of Tchaikovsky. The two met in February 1888, when Tchaikovsky was in the city to conduct a series of concerts of his own music, in the shop of the music publisher Félix Mackar. From this point, Delines became part of the circle of Russian émigrés whom Tchaikovsky met regularly on his Parisian visits.[11] It was also after this meeting that Delines joined forces with Mackar in promulgating Tchaikovsky's music in France: a project that would lead to the publication of *Onegin*'s French vocal score and, eventually, to the Nice premiere.

Mackar himself had been promoting Tchaikovsky in Paris since 1885, when he had secured the rights from Tchaikovsky's publisher Jurgenson to print his music in France and Belgium. In the hope of shifting these newly acquired scores, Mackar helped organize concerts of Tchaikovsky's music with the conductor Edouard Colonne at the Théâtre du Châtelet, as well as arranging for Tchaikovsky to conduct there in 1888.[12] That same year, he also attempted to facilitate various Franco-Russian opera projects. One idea was for an opera with Léonce Détroyat and Louis Gallet as the librettists and Tchaikovsky the composer; the other was to stage *Onegin* at the Opéra-Comique.[13] After all, making a Tchaikovsky opera

[10] Other libretto translations by Delines from Russian into French would include Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* (Leipzig: M. P. Belyayev, 1896) and Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (Paris: W. Bessel, 1908). As for literature, by 1895 his translations counted Tolstoy's *Childhood and Adolescence* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1886) and a collection of essays and short stories by Turgenev (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1892). His early writings promoting the alliance included *La France jugée par la Russie* (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1887) and *Nos amis les Russes* (Paris: L. Boulanger, 1887).

[11] Two letters between Delines and Tchaikovsky have survived (one from Tchaikovsky to Delines and vice versa). During a concert tour in Paris in 1891, Tchaikovsky wrote to Modest saying that he hoped to spend time with Delines along with other 'Russian Parisians', Sofie Menter, Vasily Sapelnikov and Yuly Konyus. See Vladimir Fédorov, 'Čajkovskij et la France (A propos de quelques lettres de Čajkovskij à Félix Mackar)', *Revue de musicologie* 54/1 (1968): 29.

[12] See Fédorov, 'Čajkovskij et la France', 66.

[13] On the collaboration, Mackar wrote to Tchaikovsky from Paris on 19 April 1888: 'Messrs. Détroyat and Gallet … have asked me to send you an outline libretto entitled *La Géorgienne* …. This libretto might be suitable for the opening of the season at the Opéra-Comique or the future Théâtre Lyrique', trans. Luis Sundkvist, http://wiki.tchaikovsky-research.net/wiki/Letter_3557 (accessed 8 November 2013). Although a libretto for an opera entitled *La Courtisane*, after Goethe's *Der Gott und die Bajadere*, was drawn up, Tchaikovsky never started the score. Two letters from Mackar to Tchaikovsky about staging

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popular in Paris would have been a most lucrative venture, with the potential to boost public demand for songs and fantasias based on favourite operatic themes, and generate income from theatres purchasing the score.[14]

It was also in 1888 that Delines began pursuing a French production of *Onegin*. In March, he wrote a lengthy article for *La Revue d'art dramatique* in which he stressed the importance of Paris broadening and reinforcing its international contacts. He began by declaring that two of France's greatest cultural heroes had been pioneering enthusiasts of Russian opera. 'It is France', Delines wrote, 'that had the honour of discovering Russian music first' – even before the Russians. When, in the 1840s, the Russian public was still flocking to *Norma* and *Lucia*, he insisted, Berlioz and Prosper Mérimée had already recognized the superior worth of Glinka.[15] Asserting that France and Russia enjoyed a long history of cultural interconnections was quickly becoming a routine method of drumming up support for the Franco-Russian alliance.[16] And evidence of the two nations' special understanding apparently remained in strong supply. *Onegin*, Delines assured his readers, was presently enjoying 'exceptional favour with the French colony in St Petersburg'.[17] He concluded by hinting at the future mutual benefits of bringing *Onegin* to France:

> [S]ince Paris alone has the power to consecrate great works of art, it must be hoped that it will not refuse Russian composers those laurels which it still so generously awards the old works of a nation [Italy] which is no longer even worthy to be a friend of France![18]

Onegin in Paris, dated 25 May and 27 October 1888, can be found in *Chaykovsky i zarubezhnïye muzïkantï*, ed. Nikolay Alekseyev (Leningrad, 1970): 159–60, cited in 'Michel Delines', http://wiki.tchaikovsky-research.net/wiki/Michel_Delines#ref4 (accessed 8 November 2013).

[14] Mackar was probably spurred to action in frustration at the losses he made from purchasing Tchaikovsky's operas from Jurgenson; on 2 November 1886 (N.S.), Tchaikovsky wrote to him: 'I am awfully sorry for the monetary losses that my operas are bringing you' (quoted in Fédorov, 'Čajkovskij et la France', 57).

[15] 'C'est la France que revient l'honneur d'avoir découvert en premier la musique russe. … En 1840, tandis que le public russe habitué aux *Lucia* et aux *Norma* faisait un accueil plus que froid aux œuvres de Glinka, qu'il traitait de "musique de moujik", Berlioz se déclarait l'admirateur passionnée de la *Vie pour le Tsar*, et proclamait Glinka un des premiers compositeurs du siècle. Prosper Mérimée de son côté, ce fin connaisseur en matière d'art, disait que cet opéra ouvrait une nouvelle ère dans l'histoire de la musique'. Michel Delines, 'Les Compositeurs russes: Pierre Tchaïkovski', *Revue d'art dramatique*, January–March 1888. Delines was mistaken in attributing this quote to Prosper Mérimée. It was in fact his cousin, Henri Mérimée, who had declared that *A Life* 'opened up a new era in the history of music' in his *Une année en Russie, lettres à M. Saint-Marc Girardin* (Paris: Amyot, 1847): 91–2.

[16] Debora Silverman, for instance, has explored how the alliance was celebrated through a rococo revival invoking the two countries' 'common cultural history of the mid-eighteenth century, when the first Franco-Russian alliance had occurred'. See her *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 159–71.

[17] 'Cet opéra serait-il goûte en France? Tout ce que nous pouvons dire, c'est qu'il jouit d'une faveur exceptionnelle dans la colonie française de Saint-Pétersbourg'. Delines, 'Pierre Tchaïkovski'.

[18] 'Puisque Paris a seul le pouvoir de sacrer les grandes productions de l'art, il faut espérer qu'il ne refusera pas aux compositeurs russes les lauriers dont il se montre encore si généreux à l'égard des œuvres vieillies d'une nation, qui n'a même plus le mérite d'être une amie de la France!' Delines, 'Pierre Tchaïkovski.'

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Paris thus needed to stage *Onegin* not only to maintain its position as a hub for the best of the world's culture, but also to articulate its new diplomatic allegiances.

But by 1894, the opera was still yet to be performed in Paris beyond a few extracts in concert form. Correspondence between Tchaikovsky's brother, Modest, and the violinist Aleksandr Ziloti reveals how hotly Delines pursued the project. 'Delines', Ziloti wrote in 1892, 'takes much trouble to try and stage *Onegin* in Paris; he is pestering everyone in such a way that I am starting to think that the thing will come to pass'.[19] Late in 1893, a staging really did seem on the cards when the Russian imperial fleet visited Toulon and Paris in a grand demonstration of friendship to authenticate the impending alliance. On the fleet's arrival in the capital in October, the city was inundated with Russian and pro-Russian entertainments, including a gala evening at the Opéra featuring extracts from *A Life for the Tsar*, a super-sized rendition of the Russian anthem and the Polonaise from *Onegin*.[20] Shortly afterwards, Ziloti informed Modest that due to Delines' persistence, Gailhard, the director of the Opéra, 'ha[d] the firm intention of staging one of [Tchaikovsky's] operas'.[21] But even in the early alliance years, when all things Russian were being headily embraced, the project remained unrealized.[22]

His plans for Paris thwarted, Delines shifted his attention to Nice. Rather like Paris, if in a different form, Nice offered a suitably international platform for *Onegin*: Each winter, the city filled with visitors from all over Europe and North America, particularly Russia, Britain, the USA, Germany and the rest of France. At some point between November 1893 and June 1894, when the first announcements for the premiere appeared in the papers,[23] Delines persuaded Nice's theatrical commission and mayor to schedule *Onegin* for the upcoming season at the Théâtre Municipal. While there is no record in the council meeting minutes or any local papers of how Delines managed this, it is likely that he used the leverage of Nice's prevalent Russian contingent, national pro-Russian feeling and

[19] Telegram from Ziloti to Modest (4 November 1892) quoted in Fédorov, 'Čajkovskij et la France', 44–5. Ziloti had toured with Tchaikovsky.

[20] To mark the new political balance, the first half was made up of extracts from French operas and ballets. The Russian anthem was sung by over 40 soloists and the Opéra chorus. See, for instance, a report in *Le Ménestrel*, 8 October 1893, 327.

[21] Telegram from Ziloti to Modest Tchaikovsky (1 November 1893) quoted in Fédorov, 'Čajkovskij et la France', 45. The memoirs of Czech composer Bohuslav Foerster further corroborate that Gailhard was considering staging *Onegin*. Foerster recalls Tchaikovsky talking in September 1893 'about his plans for a trip to Paris, where the Opéra was preparing to stage *Yevgeny Onegin*' (quoted in Peter Feddersen, *Tschaikowsky in Hamburg: Eine Dokumentation*, volume 8, *Čajkovskij-Studien* (London: Schott, 2006): 147–8).

[22] In the early to mid-1890s, music by Russian composers appeared more frequently in French concert programmes than ever before, Russian stories and allegories for the alliance became the subject of numerous stage spectacles, and swathes of pro-alliance music for domestic use were written using popular Russian tunes. These musical events and publications have been explored by Helena Tyrväinen, as in her paper, 'The Republican Nation Embraces Alterity: The Press of Third Republic France at the service of Franco-Russian Friendship and Music, October 1893', for the conference, 'Russia and the Musical World: Nineteenth-Century Networks of Exchange', Goldsmiths, University of London, 16 December 2016, and her 'Helsinki – Saint Petersburg – Paris: The Franco-Russian Alliance and Finnish French Musical Relations', *Finnish Music Quarterly*, 1 (2003): 51–9.

[23] The first announcement I have found was printed in *L'Attaque* on 16 June 1894.

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Tchaikovsky's recent death to make his case.[24] Delines, what is more, had various journalistic connections in the city.[25] As well as writing for the local dailies, he was a regular contributor on musical matters to the bilingual *Messager Franco-Russe*, which had been established in 1893 and would go on to be the longest running Franco-Russian journal in the country.[26]

Nice, after all, was home to a significant Russian community, particularly when tourists (or *hivernants* – winterers) settled there during the winter season. Partly as a result, but also in keeping with programming across Europe at the time, the Musique Municipal and Casino de la Jetée-Promenade concert series regularly featured Russian music, mainly in the form of extracts from *A Life for the Tsar* and short concert pieces by Tchaikovsky.[27] The mid-1890s also saw various alliance-themed performances. In the same season as *Onegin* premiered, for instance, a ballet by Théophile Gautier (scenario) and Paul Vidal (music), *Une Fête russe*, featuring a *pas de deux* entitled 'France et Russie', was produced at the Jetée-Promenade.[28] Delines may well have used the memory of a similar event as a further tool in persuading the mayor and opera director to stage *Onegin*: in 1890, the Nice Théâtre Municipal had given the French premiere of *A Life for the Tsar*, prompting a patriotic demonstration on the night and nationwide acclaim in the press thereafter.[29] But while the alliance meant that efforts towards projects such as opera stagings gained momentum, it was the various pre-existing personal connections between France and Russia that had ultimately brought about *Onegin*'s French premiere.

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[24] One notice in *Le XIX^e siècle* reported that *Onegin* would be performed in memory of the late composer: 'In Nice, we know that the Opéra will honour the memory of Tchaikovsky this year by giving a performance of his best lyric drama, *Onegin*' (*À Nice, on sait que l'Opéra honorera cette année la mémoire de Tschaïkowsky en faisant représenter son meilleur drame lyrique*, Onéguine) (*Le XIX^e siècle*, 10 November 1894). Meanwhile, Delines himself told the story as follows: 'here in Nice, considering the size of the Russian colony, who will, no doubt, support their favourite opera by their native composer, I began to apply to the mayor and the theatrical commission about producing *Onegin* in the coming season, and was pleased that this [request] was soon taken into account. I even think that, in the future, the Russian colony would be entitled to, and should, ask the opera management for a small amount of Russian repertoire, since they do the same to please the Italians' ('no zdes' v Nitstse, imeya v vidu chislennost' russkoy kolonii, kotoraya bez somneniya ne otkazhetsya podderzhat' lyubimuyu operu rodnogo kompozitora, ya nachal khodataystvovat' u g. mera i v teatral'noy kommissii o postanovke v nastoyashchem sezone "Onegina", i moy dovodï bïli vskore prinyatï vo vnimaniye. Ya polagayu dazhe, chto i vpred' russkaya koloniya v Nitstse, podobno drugim inostrannïm koloniyam, imeyet polnoye pravo i dolzhna trebovat' ot direktsii Operï khotya nebol'shogo russkago repertuara; ved' stavyat zhe v ugodu italiantsam yezhegodno operï ikh kompozitorov), *Le Messager franco-russe*, 17 March 1895.

[25] The support of the local papers was key in stoking interest: Delines enlisted *Le Petit Niçois* and *L'Eclaireur* to the cause, as shown by a letter to the editor of *Le Messager Franco-Russe* on 23 December 1894 in which he thanked Leon Garibaldi of *L'Eclaireur*, and Victor Garcien and Philippe Casimir of *Le Petit Niçois* 'for the readiness with which they helped draw [Olive] Lafon's attention to *Onegin*'. Lafon was then director of the theatre.

[26] His first article for the paper, an obituary of Tchaikovsky, was published in the 5 December 1893 issue. *Le Messager Franco-Russe* ran until 1914.

[27] Data collected from notices in the Nice daily paper *Le Petit Niçois*.

[28] *Une Fête russe* was first performed at the Opéra in Paris on 24 October 1893 on the last day of a series of celebrations held for the Russian fleet's diplomatic visit to the city.

[29] See Alexander, 'Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Nice', 35–62.

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Onegin as *drame lyrique intime*

Staging *Onegin* in Nice was not presented as a glibly political gesture. Delines and others writing on the premiere were keen to outline *Onegin*'s deeper cultural significance for France. The grounds for one key strain of this argument had been laid in 1894 with Mackar and Delines' decision to replace Tchaikovsky's genre specification in the publication of the vocal score: *liricheskiye stsenï* (lyric scenes) became *drame lyrique intime* (intimate lyric drama).[30] This descriptor was consequently printed in advertisements, previews, announcements and reviews surrounding the premiere the following year. Through this change, *Onegin* was immediately associated with the burgeoning trend for realist opera. Although the term *drame lyrique* dated back to the eighteenth century, it had been revived and reinvented in the 1880s by French composers such as Jules Massenet, Alfred Bruneau and Gustave Charpentier to indicate a rejection of the spectacle and alleged superficiality of French grand opéra in favour of Wagnerism and operas that were more drama driven.[31] In the 1890s, *drame lyrique* also came to be attached more specifically to recent directions in operatic realism, or so-called *verismo*: new operas from Italy based on *verismo* texts, themselves strongly influenced by the French literary naturalism of the 1870s.[32] When Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890) reached Paris in 1892, it was billed as a *drame lyrique*, as was Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (1892) on its first French performances in 1894–95.[33]

To be linked with realism was to become embroiled in debates about cosmopolitanism. George Becker has argued that while elements of realism were detectable earlier, it was only from the mid-century that this aesthetic 'controlled a whole work'. Starting with literature and the visual arts, this meant apparently positivistic depictions of real life, and a movement away from Romantic idealism.[34] Realism made its mark all across the Western world, in the form of paintings by Gustave Courbet, novels by William Dean Howells and Leo Tolstoy, plays by Henrik Ibsen and operas by Mascagni. The flowering of this tradition in so many locations meant that realist works took on an aspect of cross-cultural hybridity. Writing in 1882, the German critics Heinrich and Julius Hart argued

[30] While it is unclear whether Mackar or Delines chose this genre title, it may well have been Delines, since he had described *Onegin* as a *drame lyrique* in his 1888 article for *La Revue d'art dramatique*.

[31] See M. Elizabeth C. Bartlet, 'Drame lyrique', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 3 November 2013).

[32] Although the term *verismo* was not used in the earliest reviews of these two operas, it was common parlance by 1895. See Arman Schwartz, 'Rough Music: *Tosca* and *Verismo* Reconsidered', *19th-Century Music* 31/3 (2008): 231. Though notoriously difficult to define in music terms, *Verismo* has often been used as a synonym for 'realist opera'. Andreas Giger has posited that the term *verismo* can be applied to any opera of the late nineteenth century showing a reaction against idealism, though he maintains the 1890s were a crucial turning point towards realism. See his 'Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60/2 (2007): 271–315.

[33] See notices for *Cavalleria*, for example, in *L'Univers Illustré*, 30 January 1892, and for *Pagliacci* in *Le Matin*, 15 September 1894.

[34] See George Becker, 'Introduction', in *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*, ed. George Becker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016): 4.

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that 'earth-fresh realism' was tied to 'cosmopolitan humanism', as opposed to idealist 'self-conscious' nationalism.[35]

It was not just realism's directness of style and investigations into the human condition that led observers to consider the movement highly cosmopolitan.[36] By the 1890s, realism was undergoing remarkably rapid material transference around the globe. Ibsen's plays were being published and staged in numerous languages simultaneously; Mascagni's *Cavalleria* enjoyed an unprecedentedly quick international dissemination after its premiere in Rome in 1890, reaching the far corners of Europe as well as cities across the Americas by the end of the following year.[37] One prominent French advocate of the particular freeness with which realist works apparently travelled was the writer and diplomat Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé. In 1895, he argued in an ongoing debate in *Le Revue des deux mondes* that the spirit of cosmopolitan exchange that welcomed these imports was a distinguishing feature of modern society. Not only did the very act of exchange reflect technological improvements in communications, but the interactions themselves offered the opportunity to share ideas in the pursuit of mutual improvement. Meanwhile the plots of recent realist works, which often featured the struggles of ordinary people in urban environments, could stoke discussions of common humanity and universal rights.[38]

For others, however, the flood of publications and performances of new realist works from abroad provoked defensive rhetoric and calls to look inward. Although *Cavalleria* was a hit with audiences, many French critics depicted this tale of murder and adultery as a kind of contamination. It was allowing works such as these to be performed, from a politically (and, for centuries, musically) antagonistic nation, they argued, that was to blame for the degeneration of French culture.[39] More positive critics hoped that French *drames lyriques* set to French realist or naturalist (a term associated with the harsher realism of writers like Émile Zola) fiction would take the best of new ideas from Italy without being compromised by their moral weaknesses.[40]

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[35] Heinrich and Julius Hart, 'For and Against Zola', in *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*, 260.

[36] Due to the limited areas of experience depicted in nineteenth-century realist works, in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality and location, there have been numerous challenges to the idea that realism truly represented universal emotions. See, for example, Donna M. Campbell, 'American Realism and Gender', in *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Realism*, ed. Keith Newlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 41–64.

[37] On the speed at which Ibsen was being translated at this time, see Tore Rem, 'Ibsen and Shakespeare: Insularity and Internationalism in Early British Ibsen Reception', in *Internationalism and the Arts in Britain and Europe at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Grace Brockington (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009): 209. And for a list of *Cavalleria rusticana*'s early international outings, see Alfred Loewenberg *Annals of Opera, 1597–1940* (London: Calder, 1978): 592–3.

[38] As discussed in Catherine A. Barry, '"La Revue des Deux Mondes" in Transition: From the Death of Naturalism to the Early Debate on Literary Cosmopolitanism', *The Modern Language Review* 68/3 (1973): 549.

[39] See Clair Rowden, '*Werther, La Navarraise* and *Verismo*: A Matter of Taste', *Franco-British Studies* 37 (2006–7): 8–11. *Cavalleria* did however face similar critical derision in Italy. See Matteo Sansone, 'Verga and Mascagni: The Critics' Response to "Cavalleria Rusticana"', *Music & Letters* 71/2 (1990): 204–6.

[40] See Rowden, '*Werther, La Navarraise* and *Verismo*', 11; and Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the* Fin de Siècle*: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 402–3.

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While the performance and influence of foreign works continued to be a topic of controversy, French composers of realist *drames lyriques* openly absorbed ideas from abroad. Massenet's *La Navarraise* (1894) was closely modelled on *Cavalleria*,[41] while Bruneau's *Le Rêve* (1891) and *L'Attaque du moulin* (1893), with libretti by Zola, displayed a clear debt to Wagner. French approaches to and opinion on realism in *drames lyriques* were thus by no means unified. But to be labelled a *drame lyrique* conjured certain expectations: a libretto based on a realist text, which would produce psychological, rather than spectacle-driven drama and loosen operatic forms;[42] and, due to its associations with cosmopolitan mobility, a subject that could speak across national borders.

Delines' decision to replace Tchaikovsky's 'lyric scenes' with '*drame lyrique*' when such operas were gaining popularity may have simply been a ploy to attract impresarios. But it also indicated that *Onegin*, composed in 1877–78, had prefigured this new operatic turn. The addition of 'intime' bore further implications: first, that *Onegin* would be more intimate, more intensely psychological than any *drame lyrique* so far; and second (as it was put in a front-page preview article for *Le Petit Niçois*), that Tchaikovsky had 'invented a new genre'.[43]

Tchaikovsky did share certain aims with the *drame lyrique* composers of the 1890s – on composing *Onegin*, he had written to Sergey Taneyev: 'I would gladly compose an opera which was completely lacking in startling effects, but which offered characters resembling my own, whose feelings and experiences I shared and understood'.[44] The opera itself includes realist features in the form of diegetic parlour songs and ballroom dances, conversational text set as continuous arioso and, as Taruskin has argued, the employment of *romans*' forms to recreate the sound-world of the 1820s Russian drawing room.[45] And yet, like Verdi's *La traviata* or Massenet's *Manon*, which comprise similar realistic elements, *Onegin* remains couched in a conventional operatic framework, replete with arias and extractable numbers.[46] What is more, Tchaikovsky's intention was not, in contrast to *drame lyrique* composers such as Bruneau, to make any social commentary. Nevertheless, with the encouragement of Delines' genre specification, *Onegin* would come to be judged by 90s criteria, leading its reception in Nice to be bound up with contemporary debates about realism and associated cosmopolitanism on the lyric stage.

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[41] See Sylviane Falcinelli, 'Massenet et l'Italie: influences croisées', in *Le naturalisme sur la scène lyrique*, ed. Jean-Cristophe Branger and Alban Ramaut (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2004): 95–128.

[42] The desire to escape formulaic opera through more realistic declamation and structures was by no means new (see Giger, 'Verismo', 297–300). For further discussion of prose in opera, see Thomas Grey, 'Opera and Music Drama', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 407–8; Huebner, *French Opera at the* Fin de Siècle, 135–46 and 398–9; and Hugh Macdonald, 'The Prose Libretto', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1/2 (1989): 155–66.

[43] 'à innover un genre, le drame lyrique intime'. *Le Petit Niçois*, 7 March 1895.

[44] In Rosa Newmarch, trans. and ed., *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky* (London: J. Lane, 1905): 203 and 256.

[45] See Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 53–60.

[46] Taruskin has described *Onegin* as 'a chef d'oeuvre of stylized operatic realism: the Russian counterpart to *Traviata* or *Manon*'. See his 'Yevgeny Onegin', *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 3 November 2013).

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Literary Opera

It was not only the genre label, however, that would direct critics to realist readings of *Onegin*. Many assumed, in the knowledge that *Onegin* was based on a piece of Russian literature, that the opera would reflect the tenets of the lately popularized Russian realist novel. While Turgenev had been translated and widely read since the 1850s, it was from the 1880s that interest in Russian realist novelists boomed in France (as elsewhere in Europe).[47] Although novelists such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky shared certain characteristics with the French naturalists – attention to detail, in-depth exploration of character, the exposure of human vice – it was largely due to the backlash against French naturalism that the Russian novel became so successful in France.[48] In 1886, de Vogüé, again espousing the benefits of cosmopolitanism, this time in his bestselling study *Le Roman russe*, criticized authors such as Gustave Flaubert for their scientific 'pitilessness' and 'impassiveness', and argued that they should take heed of the emotionality of the Russian realists, particularly Tolstoy.[49] After all, it was the psychological depth and social conscience of the Russian novel, de Vogüé claimed, that had made it so appealing to French readers – not superficial intrigue into the exotic:

> The Russian novel has taken deep root in the minds of studious youth in every condition of life, which has been fascinated not by its local colour or its foreign flavour, but by the "breath of life", the sincerity and compassion which animates all these books. That youth found in them the intellectual food it was craving and which

[47] For a discussion of European-wide interest in Russian literary realism, including France, see Martin Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes*: *From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum* (London: Belknap, 1999): 205–31. On the first French translations of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, see Frederick W.J. Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France, 1884–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950): 49–52, Vladimir Boutchik, *Bibliographie des œuvres littéraires russes traduites en français: Tourguénev, Dostoevski, Léon Tolstoï* (Paris: Messages, 1948), and Michel Aucoutourier, 'La découverte de *La Guerre et la Paix* par la critique française', in *L'ours & le coq: trois siècles de relations franco-russes: essais en l'honneur de Michel Cadot*, ed. Francine-Dominique Liechtenhan (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2000): 115–26. The 1880s also saw numerous French stage adaptations of Russian novels and first productions of Russian plays, including at André Antoine's Théâtre Libre (founded as a platform for Zola's realist stage works). See Michel Autrand, *Le Théâtre en France de 1870 à 1914* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006): 168–70.

[48] See Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes*, 208, Hemmings, *The Russian Novel in France*, 32, Philip Bullock, *Rosa Newmarch and Russian Music in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010): 22, and Georges Nivat, 'La Rencontre franco-russe au XIX^{e} siècle', *Esprit* 11/369 (2010): 66–8.

[49] Writers like Zola made their characters subjects of objective observation, whose fate and personalities were decided by their biological makeup and environmental factors. For de Vogüé's criticisms, see *The Russian Novel*, trans. Herbert Anthony Sawyer (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913): 311–12. The French original was published as *Le Roman russe* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1886), having first appeared as a series in *Revue des deux mondes* from 1883–1886. As testament to the strength of interest in the Russian novel around the turn of the twentieth century, *Le Roman russe* was reprinted in 1888, 1892, 1910 and 1912 by Plon-Nourrit, and translated in the United States as *The Russian Novelists*, trans. Jane Loring Edmands (Boston: D. Lothrop, 1887), in Britain as *The Russian Novel* (see above) and in Russia as *Sovremennïye russkiye pisateli: Tolstoy – Turgenev – Dostoyevsky* (Moscow: V. N. Marakueva, 1887).

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> our fanciful literature does not provide any more …. I am convinced that the influence of the greater Russian writers will be beneficial to our exhausted art.[50]

In voicing hope for the future through France's 'youth' recognizing the importance of Russian literature, de Vogüé positioned Russia in the increasingly familiar role of the upcoming nation. De Vogüé's call to the country's maturing generation equally reflected anxieties over the current state of France. Where the Third Republic following its crippling defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 seemed lacking in distinctive national character, Russia, according to observers like de Vogüé, possessed a powerful 'soul'. De Vogüé's depiction of French literature as 'exhausted' and desperate for a 'breath of life' spoke to these fears. In the ensuing paragraphs, he described literature using the metaphor of a living organism in constant need of nutrition from outside sources. The French, he wrote, had entered a 'time of famine and anaemia' and were in desperate want of revival; after years of borrowing from Germany, Italy and England, it was time to infuse fresh 'blood'.[51] It was in the national interest, therefore, to reject Flaubert and Zola's pessimistic tales of depravity, which only fuelled fears of moral and social decay, and to embrace instead the novels of Russia. Indeed, Russia was the basis for de Vogüé's arguments through the 1890s and into the early twentieth century that cosmopolitanism, rather than parochial nationalism, was the key to artistic progress.

It was likely in full awareness of the popularity of Russian literature in France that Delines, in his 1888 *Revue d'art dramatique* article, suggested that Tchaikovsky was closely linked to the Russian novelists, describing 'Russian musical drama and literature' as having 'developed simultaneously and in the same manner'.[52] When it came to *Onegin*'s French premiere in 1895, Delines discussed the equivalency of Russian literature and music again in a lengthy preview article for a leading Nice daily, *L'Eclaireur*. Now debate was rife among French critics about how best to adopt realism in opera, Delines could add, in rhetoric reminiscent of de Vogüé, that French composers needed the Russians to show them the way. Delines framed his *L'Eclaireur* article not as a preview of *Onegin*, but as a piece about French opera. In the article (titled 'l'Opéra de demain', playing on the fact that the opera was forthcoming and that it might herald the opera of the future), Delines argued that it was time for French composers like Bruneau to start looking beyond Wagner for sources of inspiration. Like the Italian *véristes*, Wagner was viewed by some as an undesirable foreign influence; what is more, having peaked in the 1880s, Wagnerism was already becoming old-hat.[53] 'We are all Wagnerians now', Delines announced, but 'we forget that nearly half a century already stands between us and the epoch when the master proposed the fundaments of the new school'.[54] Wagner, in other words, was not the key to the musical future; he was not even modern.

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[50] De Vogüé, *The Russian Novel*, 23.

[51] De Vogüé, *The Russian Novel*, 24.

[52] 'En Russie le drame musical et la littérature se sont développés simultanément et dans le même sens'. Delines, 'Pierre Tchaïkovski'.

[53] See Gerald D. Turbow, 'Art and politics: Wagnerism in France', in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics*, ed. David Large, William Weber and Anne Dzamba Sessa (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984): 134–66.

[54] 'Nous sommes wagnériens aujourd'hui, et nous oublions qu'un demi-siècle à peu près nous sépare déjà de l'époque où le maître a posé les fondements de la nouvelle école'.

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Delines proposed that, in order to establish a fresh school of opera, French composers needed to base their operas on texts by French authors and playwrights. (Either Delines was unaware of recent operas based on French literature by composers like Bruneau and Massenet, or he was implying that these were insufficient.) He illustrated his point by pitting the subjects of French grand opéra and Wagner's music dramas against those of French realist literature:

> Is our modern life less dramatic than that of the Turanians [in Massenet's 1891 grand opéra, *Le Mage*]? Why does the love of Zarâstra and Anahita [of the same opera] excite more interest than that of Madame Bovary and of the young apprentice pharmacist [in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*]? Why does the suffering of Salammbô [of Reyer's opéra, *Salammbô*, 1890, set in Carthage] touch [composers] more deeply than the torture of Catherine, than a vivid underground explosion with her lover in the depths of a mine [in Zola's *Germinal*]? Why can't the artist who found a musical motif to express the state of the Magus' [of *Le Mage*] soul render, with equal power, the moral character of a Souvarine [a Russian émigré anarchist in *Germinal*]? … Opera composers … must live the subject that they want to illustrate: they must penetrate it, feel it, and I think that it will always be easier for a man of our time to identify with the character of Musotte [of Guy de Maupassant's play by the same name] for example, that with that of Brünnhilde [of *The Ring* cycle].[55]

Delines' alternatives to existing opera subjects are a series of increasingly contemporary French novels and plays – Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), Zola's *Germinal* (1885) and Maupassant's *Musotte* (1891) – generating the feeling that a dynamic potential new direction lay in store for French opera. What France needed, Delines implied, was the influence of a modern operatic school that was already deeply entwined with its own literary heritage.

Russia, of course, was that suitably modernizing and literary force. The conviction that Russian composers might offer an alternative 'new school' to that of the Germans had been voiced by French writers on music since the 1860s and was being pronounced with increasing vigour in the 1890s.[56] Victor Garcien of *Le*

L'Eclaireur, 27 February 1895. Delines went on to further undermine Wagner's claims to newness by arguing that his ideas were borrowed from Gluck. French critics since the 1860s had been juxtaposing Gluck and Wagner: the anti-Wagnerians to show that he was not as innovative as supposed, and the pro-Wagnerians to position Wagner in tandem with a composer considered by many to be 'the greatest composer in pre-Revolutionary France'. See William Gibbons, 'Music of the Future, Music of the Past: *Tannhäuser* and *Alceste* at the Paris Opéra', *19th-Century Music* 33/3 (2010): 232–46.

[55] 'Est-ce que notre vie moderne est moins dramatique que celle des Touraniens? Pourquoi ces amours de Zarâstra et d'Anahita m'intéresseraient-elles plus vivement que celles de Mme Bovary et du petit apprenti pharmacien? Pourquoi les souffrances de Salammbô me toucheraient-elles plus vivement que les tortures de Catherine, qu'une explosion enterre vivante avec son amant dans les profondeurs d'une mine? Pourquoi l'artiste qui trouvera un motif musical pour exprimer l'état d'âme du Mage ne pourrait-il pas rendre avec une égale puissance la physionomie morale d'un Souvarine? … Les compositeurs d'opéras … faudra vivre le sujet qu'ils veulent illustrer, le pénétrer, le sentir, et je pense qu'il sera toujours plus facile à un homme de notre temps de s'identifier avec le personnage de Musotte, par exemple, qu'avec celui de Brunehilde'. *L'Eclaireur*, 27 February 1895.

[56] For a fuller discussion of French writings on Russian music in the nineteenth century, see Alexander, 'Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in Nice' and Elaine Brody, 'Russians in Paris (1889–1914)', in *Russian and Soviet Music: Essays for Boris Schwarz*, ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984): 157–83.

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Petit Niçois in his preview of *Onegin*'s premiere reaffirmed this belief by quoting a passage from Arthur Paroisse's entry for *La Revue encyclopédique* of 1891: 'The Russian school … which is now in full bloom, seems called to a truly glorious future and, who knows, perhaps to renew the forms of this mobile art and to take, victoriously, the head of the great European musical movement.'[57] Combining this frequently voiced position on Russia's future promise with his own previous arguments about the interconnections between Russian literature and music, Delines neatly concluded his preview for *L'Eclaireur* by suggesting that what France needed was Russia:

> If I have taken it upon myself to make Russian *drame lyrique* known in France, it is because Russian composers, with Tchaikovsky at the helm, have long understood that an opera, if it claims to be a work of art, must, at the same time, be a literary work: that is to say, a work from human life, a work in which the orchestra is intimately entwined with the libretto in order to provide the psychology of the drama and to paint, symphonically, the personality of each character.[58]

This lauding of 'symphonically' plotting out emotions might sound highly Wagnerian. But Delines combines this with a set of far less Wagnerian traits: literariness, real-life situations and ordinary characters. In so doing, he implies that Russian composers, who had 'for a long time' seen opera as 'literary', could lay claim to a method of synthesizing music and drama that was both independent from and more advanced than that practiced by Wagner. These final comments thus suggested that it was Russia, rather than Wagner, who could show France 'l'opéra de demain'.

Pushkin and Tchaikovsky as Psychological Realists

Tchaikovsky's opera, though – which the article implied was a model realist *drame lyrique* – was not based on the type of prose Delines recommended French composers turn to. It was this mismatch between what was expected of Russian realist literature and what audiences found in Tchaikovsky's *Onegin* that would play a part in its short run on the French stage.

Pushkin's *Onegin* (1825–32) long preceded the Russian realist texts French readers so enjoyed and, what is more, was in verse. It seems that few in France were familiar enough with Pushkin to make the distinction.[59] De Vogüé had argued in *Le Roman russe* that Pushkin's Romanticism and his Italian and English influences made him less instructive than Russia's more recent writers. Not only this,

[57] 'L'école russe, … en plein efflorescence, semble appelée à un avenir vraiment glorieux, et qui sait? peut-être à renouveler les formes de cet art si mobile et à prendre victorieusement la tête du grand mouvement musical européen.' *Le Petit Niçois*, 28 February 1895.

[58] 'Si je me suis donné pour mission de faire connaître en France le drame lyrique russe, c'est que les compositeurs russes, Tchaïkowsky en tête, ont depuis longtemps compris que l'opéra, s'il a la prétention d'être une œuvre d'art, doit être en même temps une œuvre littéraire, c'est à-dire une œuvre de vie humaine, une œuvre dans laquelle l'orchestre s'unit intimement au poème pour donner toute la psychologie du drame et peindre symphoniquement le caractère de chaque personnage.' *L'Eclaireur*, 27 February 1895.

[59] See David Baguley, 'Pushkin and Mérimée, the French Connection: On Hoaxes and Imposters', in *Two Hundred Years of Pushkin*, vol. 3, ed. Joe Andrew and Robert Reid (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004): 178.

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but foreign poetry, he insisted, was fundamentally untranslatable.[60] While French translations of *Onegin* had been made, three of the four were adaptations into prose.[61] It may have been as a result that, when mentioning Pushkin's text, most critics at the time of the operatic *Onegin*'s premiere used the term 'novel' (*roman*) or 'psychological novel' (*roman psychologique*) rather than Pushkin's term, 'novel in verse' (*roman en vers*).

There was also the added complication that, among the more initiated in Pushkin and Pushkin scholarship, *Onegin* was considered the prototype for the later psychological realist novel. Such arguments had been made initially in Russia and were soon repeated in France by Russian émigré and French writers. Paul Béesau in the preface to his 1868 French translation of *Onegin*, for instance, echoed the argument made in 1844 by Vissarion Belinsky – one of the first Russian litterateurs to explore the philosophy of realism – that *Onegin* was an encyclopaedic depiction of Russian life.[62] After Belinsky, Russian novelists and writers on literature began to draw out connections between Pushkin and the later realist works in earnest, their goal being to frame Pushkin as the father of modern Russian literature. Despite the ironic, detached tone of Pushkin's novel in verse, it became common to suggest that *Onegin* had pre-empted Tolstoy's moralism, as reflected in Wladimir Mikhaïlow's preface to his 1884 French translation: 'the dominant idea is of high moral significance: the inadequacy and vanity of a debauched egoist', he writes, set against 'the nobility and strength of the tender, strong woman who sacrifices everything in the name of duty and honour'.[63]

Above all, it was the figure of the superfluous man, a term popularized by Turgenev's *Diary of a Superfluous Man* (1850), whose origins were traced back to *Onegin* by Russian writers on literature.[64] Turgenev's 1860 speech, 'Hamlet and Don Quixote', theorized that there were two superfluous Russian types: the world-weary pessimist (Hamlet) and the Romantic optimist (Quixote). This binary could easily be read back onto the two male leads in *Onegin*: Onegin and Lensky. Turgenev's essay was not translated into French until 1879, but, perhaps through his presence in Paris, his views were transmitted earlier; the 1874 entry on *Onegin* in the first edition of the Larousse *Grand dictionnaire universel*, for instance, alluded to Turgenev's two Russian 'types'.[65] Later, Dostoyevsky, in his famed 'Pushkin

[60] See Philip Bullock, 'Untranslated and Untranslatable? Pushkin's Poetry in England, 1892–1931', *Translation and Literature* 20 (2011): 348–72.

[61] These prose translations were as follows: Henri Dupont, *Œuvres choisies de A. S. Pouchkine* (Paris: au Comptoir des imprimeurs unis, 1847); Ivan Turgenev and Louis Viardot, *Onéguine* in *La Revue nationale* 12 and 13 (1863); and Paul Béesau, *Eugène Onéguine* (Paris: A. Frank, 1868). The first verse translation was Wladimir Mikhaïlow's *Eugène Onéghine* (Paris: Auguste Ghio, 1884).

[62] See Vissarion Belinsky, 'Eugene Onegin: An Encyclopaedia of Russian Life', in *Russian Views of Pushkin's* Eugene Onegin, ed. and trans. Sona Stephan Hoisington (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988): 26–7, as compared to Béesau, *Eugène Onéguine*, 5: 'une galerie de tableaux pris çà et là dans l'existence russe'.

[63] 'L'idée dominante est d'une haute portée morale: insuffisance et vanité d'une de dissipation égoïstes, – noblesse et grandeur de la femme tendre et forte, qui sacrifie tout au sentiment du devoir et à sa dignité'. Mikhaïlow, *Eugène Onéguine*, iii.

[64] For more on the retrospective transformation of Pushkin's Onegin into the superfluous man, see Frey, 'Nowhere Man', 213–15.

[65] 'L'auteur a personnifié, dans les deux types principaux du roman, deux tendances de l'aristocratie russe; dans l'un, la lassitude et l'énervement qui conduit d'une manière fatale à la débauche; dans l'autre, les vagues aspirations de l'espérance qui soutiennent la vie en

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Speech' of 1880, remoulded Onegin in his own image by arguing that he was 'the unhappy wanderer', 'the sufferer of history', seeking out 'consolation away from the confused and pointless life of our Russian intellectuals' and 'happiness, not for [himself] alone, but for all mankind'.[66] French-language endorsements of such interpretations were found in the writings of another émigré who translated and wrote widely on Russian literature, Ely Halpérine-Kaminsky. In an 1887 article for the russophile *Nouvelle revue*, Halpérine-Kaminsky quoted Dostoyevsky before reasoning that Onegin was the first in a long line of tortured Russian antiheroes, from 'Lermontov's Pechorin, Turgenev's Rudin and Lavretsky, Leo Tolstoy's Bolkonsky' to 'Dostoyevsky's Karamazov and Raskolnikov'.[67]

And it was this Onegin – the superfluous man or tortured antihero of Russian realist literature – that French previewers detected in Tchaikovsky's opera. To be sure, such views may well have been inspired by the opera itself. Gasparov and Frey have argued that Tchaikovsky's setting of Pushkin, particularly his musical characterization of Onegin, was influenced by currents in Russian realist literature of the 1850s–70s.[68] Whether stemming from preconceptions about Russian literature, the musical setting or a combination, one article that made the realist, literary link with particular enthusiasm in 1895 was by the pseudonymous 'Pontarmé', writing in absentia from Paris in the widely read national paper, *Le Petit Parisien*.[69] Pontarmé praised Pushkin's *Onegin* as 'neither an adventure novel, nor a sentimental tale, but a psychological study'.[70] Echoing interpretations of Pushkin's Onegin by Dostoyevsky and Halpérine-Kaminsky, the critic positioned Tchaikovsky's Onegin as a world-weary hero, and the opera as the tale of his tragically unfulfilled psychological journey:

> Onegin [–] this is a man of the disenchanted type, consumed and tormented by *ennui* [–] suffers from the triviality of existence. Life and society no longer interest him. His soul is prematurely worn and, in order that love, which he once detested, can resuscitate it, disasters must occur …. He declares to Tatyana that, for him, love is dead, that his romantic life is over … nothing moves him anymore. [71]

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faisant croire à un avenir meilleur'. 'Onéguine', *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*, vol. 11 (Paris: Larousse, 1874): 1,349. The translation of Turgenev's speech was first printed in the *Bibliothèque universelle et revue Suisse* (1879).

[66] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, trans. Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky and John Middleton Murry (London: Maunsel, 1916): 48–9.

[67] 'Aleko et Onéguine sont, en effet, les prototypes des Petchorine de Lermontov, des Roudine et des Lavretsky de Tourgueneff, des Bolkonsky de Léon Tolstoï, des Karamazov et Raskolnikov de Dostoïevsky etc.'. Halpérine-Kaminsky, 'La mouvement littéraire en Russie', *La Nouvelle revue* (May–June 1887). These characters appear, respectively, in *A Hero of our Time*, *Rudin*, *Home of the Gentry*, *War and Peace*, *Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment*.

[68] See Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony*, 58–95, and Frey, 'Nowhere Man', 209–30.

[69] 'Pontarmé' was a group pseudonym. Although the article, which appeared two days after the premiere, was framed as a review, it was undoubtedly written in absentia, since there were no references to the performance or the audience reaction.

[70] 'Il choisit naguère ce poème d'Oneguine, de Pouschkine, qui n'est ni un roman d'aventures, ni un conta sentimental, mais une étude psychologique'. *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[71] 'Oneguine, c'est le type de l'homme désenchanté, possédé et tourmenté par l'ennui, souffrant de la trivialité de l'existence. La vie et la société ne l'intéressent plus. Son âme s'est prématurément usée, et, pour qu'il revive à l'amour, qu'il a méprisé, il faudra que

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Elsewhere, Pontarmé adds that Onegin is 'tired of everything', and living out 'an empty existence, the futility of which weighs him down'.[72] At first glance, this description may seem to match features of the typical Byronic hero, to whom Pushkin's *Onegin* is indebted. But Pontarmé is careful to make Tchaikovsky's Onegin a victim in a manner akin to the tragically superfluous man of later realist novels. Throughout, abstract nouns, rather than Onegin himself, are the subjects: 'love is dead', '[his] romantic life is over', '*ennui*' torments and consumes him, thus removing Onegin's agency in order to suggest that his tragic inability to love is not of his own making but of some cruel outside force.

Not only did such readings promise that audiences would find in *Onegin* similar characters to those they had enjoyed in Russian novels, but they also spoke to concurrent cultural movements in France. The world-weary aesthete had become an object of close study for the French symbolists of the 1880s and 1890s. The real-life Bohemian or 'dandy' of contemporary Paris was often portrayed as a troubled gentleman whose dreams were thwarted by the banalities of everyday existence, as, for example, in Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours* (1884). Small wonder, then, that another warm endorsement of Tchaikovsky's *Onegin* on literary and realist grounds came from the symbolist writer and orator, Georges Vanor (1865–1906), in a lecture given during the interval of the second performance of *Onegin* in Nice.[73] In his speech, Vanor informed his audience that Tchaikovsky's opera was an 'intimate psychological drama', 'a work of great musical psychology, sincere and strong', and Onegin was a suffering 'modern-day hero':[74]

> His sickly egoism, this *mal du siècle* from which he suffers, this restlessness over the end of life and the death of love; all this is conveyed in the libretto and in the music … Hamletic doubt can reside even in a breast adorned with a pleated bib, and Shakespearean passions often stir a man disguised in the most mundane smoking jacket.[75]

References to 'sickly' anxieties over 'the end' and 'death' sculpted Onegin into a man of the late, rather than early, nineteenth century. Vanor's juxtaposition of Onegin's inner turmoil against his well-dressed exterior further hinted at connections with the symbolists' dandy.[76] At the point of the speech when Vanor makes the comparison to Hamlet, Onegin becomes not just a figure from Russian

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des catastrophes se soient produites …. Il déclare à Tatiana que l'amour est mort en lui, que sa vie sentimentale est finie … rien ne l'émeut plus.' *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[72] 'Si las qu'il soit de tout' and 'Oneguine traine une existence vide, dont l'inutilité lui pèse'. *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[73] Vanor, for example, wrote the manifesto *L'Art symboliste* (Paris: Vanier, 1889).

[74] 'M. Vanor … a défendu *Onéguine*, œuvre d'une grande psychologie musicale, sincère et forte'. *L'Eclaireur*, 13 March 1895. The speech was printed in *Le Phare du littoral*, 13 March 1895: '*Onéguine* … met en scène l'âme intime des personnages, c'est-à-dire, psychologiquement … que Onéguine est un héros moderne'.

[75] 'Son égoïsme souffrant, ce mal du siècle dont il sent les atteintes, cette inquiétude de la fin de la vie et de la mort de l'amour, tout cela est transposé dans le poème et dans la musique … Le doute hamlétique peut résider dans un cœur paré d'un plastron plissé, et des passions shakespeariennes agitent souvent un homme déguisé du plus banal smoking.' *Le Phare du littoral*, 13 March 1895.

[76] Hamlet had become for the symbolists the very embodiment of late-nineteenth-century doubt and disillusionment. See Helen Philips Bailey, *Hamlet in France: From Voltaire to Laforgue* (Geneva: Droz, 1964): 152.

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literature, but a man who transcends historical periods and geographical borders, finding echoes in the plays of Shakespeare as much as in the streets of modern-day Paris. The implication was that this was an opera that encouraged reflection on common humanity. As the critic Jean Riquier phrased it in *Le Petit Niçois*, Tchaikovsky seemed to have placed 'human beings like us [*humains comme nous*] on the stage'.[77]

Drame Lyrique and Operatic Innovation

Elements of the opera also prompted comparisons with recent practices in realist *drame lyrique* itself. One of the attractions of setting new realist prose texts was the opportunity they posed for loosening traditional operatic formulae. Tchaikovsky's once potential librettist Louis Gallet was particularly invested in the realist opera aesthetics of the 1890s, having worked with Bruneau on *Le Rêve* and *L'Attaque du moulin*, and having penned a prose libretto for Massenet's *Thaïs* (1894). Writing (in absentia) on *Onegin*'s French premiere in *La Nouvelle revue*, Gallet presented realism as facilitating musical and dramatic innovations:

> In this work, there is a clear effort to withdraw from the conventional forms of old operas, to recreate real life, as far as the language of music can permit. Certain details in the mise-en-scène openly put this mission to task. In the first act, for example, the curtain rises on a household scene, showing the *bonne bourgeoisie* Mme Larina manning a large tub and assisted by Niania, the old nurse, making jam. In the second act, the waltz, the cotillion, the cackle of mothers at their needlework, the babbling of young ladies …. Nothing is left out, not even the banal "lovely evenings" of the indifferent guests. Then, next comes the duel, very correctly regulated and with perfect attention to detail.[78]

In admiring Tchaikovsky's inclusion of household tasks, small talk and duel regulations, Gallet brings the opera in line with realist efforts to faithfully recreate real-life environments through depicting even the most mundane details.[79] Gallet's onomatopoeic descriptions of the '*caquet*' (cackle) and '*babil*' (babble) of women at Tatyana's name day celebrations suggests further that Tchaikovsky had not only included everyday talk, but had captured it in sound.

Later in the review, Gallet also points to Tchaikovsky's employment of quasi-folksong and dance as realist devices. 'His realism is coupled with the picturesque', he writes, before citing the 'dancing chorus of the second scene of Act I' as one such moment.[80] In the opera's realist dramatic context, in other words, these were not

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[77] *Le Petit Niçois*, 7 March 1895.

[78] 'Il y a dans cette pièce un parti pris manifeste de renoncer aux formes conventionnelles de l'ancien opéra, de faire de la vie réelle, autant que le langage musical le peut permettre. Certains détails de mise en scène accusent franchement ce parti pris. Au premier acte, par exemple, le rideau se lève sur une scène de ménage nous montrant cette bonne bourgeoise qu'est Mme Larina, maniant une bassine et aidée de la Niania, la vieille nourrice, en train de faire ses confitures. Au second acte, la valse, le cotillon, le caquet des mamans qui font tapisserie, le babil des jeunes filles … Rien ne manque, pas même le banal "Charmante soirée" des indifférents. Puis, à la suite, vient le duel, très correctement réglé et avec un parfait souci de la vérité.' *La Nouvelle revue*, March 1895.

[79] Gasparov has made a similar observation to Gallet in his *Five Operas and a Symphony*, 75–7.

[80] 'Son réalisme se double de pittoresque. Le chœur dansé de la seconde scène du premier acte est charmant.' *La Nouvelle revue*, March 1895.

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divertissements or attempts at local colour, but lifelike sound effects. Pontarmé of *Le Petit Parisien* equally allowed the dances to be indicative of realist tendencies, declaring: 'there is a "ballet" in *Onegin*, but this ballet is also modern …. It is a ball, and it must be danced like the balls of today'.[81] The emphasis on 'balls of today' (and not the 1820s in which the opera is set) suggests that Tchaikovsky's subject was contemporary life.[82] Indeed, throughout his review, Pontarmé insists on the opera's present-day relevance, describing Onegin as a modern man, and writing that Tchaikovsky 'was an innovator' because 'it [was] from modern life that his lyric dramas took their inspiration'.[83]

Even the melody-driven, often somewhat conservative musical language of *Onegin* was framed as resonating with the latest international advances in operatic realism. When *Cavalleria rusticana* was first performed in Paris, its musical conventionality divided critical opinion. Marcel Fouquier of *Le XIX^e siècle* bemoaned its 'well-known formulas' (*formules connues*),[84] while others argued that by employing an accessible musical language but retaining an earnestness of subject, Mascagni was drawing the growing literate urban population to serious opera.[85] The potential for realism to help in the democratization of opera became a key theme of debate in the 1890s and into the 1900s.[86] Tchaikovsky's direct musical style, therefore, could be treated as evidence of his contemporary relevance. Gallet argued that he was a composer who spoke 'to the soul of the masses',[87] and A. Woisard, writing in *L'Eclaireur*, praised Tchaikovsky's music for being 'strong, without affectations and complications, without virtuosic runs or embellishments: it is not lacking in charm and is melodious throughout, without any of the audacity of the new school'.[88] By alluding to apparently lesser, overly complex foreign imports, this passage paints *Onegin* as representative of a healthy third way; this was an opera that could communicate to mass audiences by avoiding the selfish indulgences ('runs or embellishments') of Italian opera, and by not making pretences to the intellectualism ('complications') of the new German school.

In Performance

It was largely previews, pre-prepared talks and reviews completed in absentia, however, that spoke of the opera's promise as realist and modern. Many who actually attended the performances gave more lacklustre accounts. For the Parisian

[81] 'Il y a dans *Oneguine* un "ballet", mais ce ballet, lui aussi, est moderne …. C'est un bal, et on y doit danser comme dans un bal d'aujourd'hui.' *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[82] It is possible that Tchaikovsky's dance music was heard as contemporary because it had become so synonymous with the late nineteenth-century Russian Imperial style. See Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically*, 284–92.

[83] 'Tchaïkowsky … fut un novateur. C'est dans la vie moderne que ses drames lyriques puisèrent leur inspiration.' *Le Petit Parisien*, 9 March 1895.

[84] *Le XIX^e siècle*, 21 January 1892.

[85] See Rowden, '*Werther, La Navarraise* and *Verismo*', 7–12.

[86] Charpentier, discussing his realist *drame lyrique*, *Louise*, in 1900, particularly espoused opera that could speak to all classes. See Huebner, *French Opera at the* fin de siècle, 436–7.

[87] 'L'auteur d'*Onéguine*, qui parle mieux et plus familièrement à l'âme de la foule'. *La Nouvelle revue*, March 1895.

[88] 'Elle est forte, sans mièvreries et sans complications, sans cascades ni enjolivures: elle ne manque pas de charme et reste constamment mélodieuse, sans avoir aucune des hardiesses de la nouvelle école'. *L'Eclaireur*, 8 March 1895.

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critics who travelled down to Nice for the premiere, this may have been in part owing to centralist disinterest. But *Onegin* met with the added problem that its composer's nationality, its supposedly psychological-realist libretto, its classification as *drame lyrique intime* and the preview articles had all indicated that it would fall in line with the realist aesthetics of the 1890s – a premise that would lead supporters of this operatic turn to be disappointed, and would provoke negative reactions among its dissenters.[89]

The production contributed to the feeling that *Onegin* was not the operatic revelation audiences had been primed to expect. The theatre director, Olive Lafon, left the premiere until 7 March, by which time most of the winter tourists had already vacated the city; and according to reviews, he assigned the parts to the 'worst … of the troupe'.[90] Although the premiere performance was a financial success, attendance dwindled in the following nights and *Onegin* was given just three times.[91] The staging, what is more, conflicted with the realist readings in the previews. The dances were transformed into grand balletic interludes for the full corps and solos were inserted into the first ballroom scene (at the Larins') for two guest ballerinas: Labounskaya and Barriaux. These ballets were advertised prominently on the theatre posters, with 'Danses des paysannes russes' (Russian peasant dances), 'Mazurka', 'Polonaise' and the dancers' names all in large print – larger and more central than the name of 'Tschaikowsky' or any of the singers.[92] In this form, audiences would struggle to detect balls 'danced like the balls of today' as promised by Pontarmé.

Various critics appeared to base their negative responses on the divergences between preview materials and the performance. Lucien Alekan of *Le Guide musical*, for instance, lamented that the opera fell short of psychological drama by conforming to operatic convention in scenes such as the duel and the quarrel between Lensky and Onegin at the Larins' ball.[93] He complained also that, while the opera claimed to be '*intime*', the characters' motivations were only ever 'vaguely outlined'.[94] The critic for *Le Phare du littoral* similarly condemned *Onegin* for its

[89] Evidence of how formative previews were can be found in Pontarmé's 'review', which lifted a phrase directly from Delines' preview article: 'peindre symphoniquement le caractère de chaque personnage'.

[90] 'Nous retrouvons groupés dans l'interprétation d'*Onéguine* les moins bons éléments de la troupe'. *Le Guide musical*, 31 March 1895.

[91] *Onegin* took 2,064.75 francs on its first night. The average nightly receipt for the 1894–5 season was 1,232.98 francs. Numbers calculated from the records of nightly takings in 'Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra de Nice', VM DOS-5 (1), BNF.

[92] The Théâtre Municipal's poster for *Onegin* can be found in 'Recueil factice programmes et affichettes concernant les spectacles donnés au grand Théâtre de l'Opéra de Nice', 4-RF-81874, BNF.

[93] 'You want some action on the stage? It is banal and superficial action, such as that of a quarrel or a duel; it is a partial return to those conventions that were alleged to have been broken down' (*Veut-on du mouvement sur la scène? c'est une action banale et toute de surface, comme celle d'une querelle ou d'un duel; c'est un retour partiel à ces conventions que l'on prétendait briser*). *Le Guide musical*, 31 March 1895.

[94] 'Is all the action intimate? Then it is devoid of sufficient explanation, a succession of unsubstantiated feelings and actions, such as the love of Tatiana for Onegin, whose nature is so different from hers; Tatiana's marriage later on; Lenski's provocation; even the ennui of the main character' (*L'action est-elle tout intime? c'est alors, faute d'explications suffisantes, une succession de sentiments et d'actes trop peu justifiés, tels l'amour de Tatiana pour une nature*

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insufficient realism, stating that the opera's 'sacrifices to convention' were at the expense of 'reality'.[95]

For others, the opera was not modern enough for a Russian composer. Henry Dupuy of Nice's *La Vie Mondaine* declared that Tchaikovsky was one of the consecrators of Russian art music, but others like César Cui, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Aleksandr Glazunov were the true '*modernistes*' working towards its reform.[96] Even Victor Garcien's enthusiastic preview in *Le Petit Niçois* only granted Tchaikovsky an intermediary position between Russian music's awakening with Glinka and new developments among composers such as Cui.[97] Gallet meanwhile ended his review by suggesting that now the French public had heard *Onegin*, they might advance to Russian operas that better fitted the concept of a modern realist *drame lyrique*, such as Rebikov's *The Storm* (1894), which he described as 'a short rustic drama, in the mould of the quick-pace, vivid and violent works of which *Cavalleria rusticana* has established the type', and 'a work of … an unreservedly modern temperament'.[98]

Then there were those who disapproved of the realist turn in opera and were thus quick to condemn comparable features in *Onegin*. Where the opera's simplicity and lack of action had been lauded by Delines and others as verisimilitude and emphasis on the psychological, for many in attendance, the story was merely mundane.[99] Even before the performance, Antonin Proust, writing for the national paper *Le Matin*, described the plot as the stuff of operetta; *Onegin*, he quipped, was simply about a man (Onegin) who refuses to marry a woman (Tatyana) because he is too old for her, only for her to marry someone even older

aussi différente de la sienne que l'est celle d'Onéguine, le mariage ultérieur de Tatiana, la provocation de Lenski, l'ennui même du héros principal). *Le Guide musical*, 31 March 1895.

[95] 'Mais il reste encore dans *Onéguine* le manqué de réalité et les sacrifices à la convention que j'ai signalés, dans certaines scènes'. *Le Phare du littoral*, 9 March 1895.

[96] 'Le tentative présente d'autant plus d'intérêt qu'un mouvement musical caractéristique se dessine actuellement en Russie, auquel participent une pléiade des rénovateurs parmi lesquels César Cui, au premier rang, puis Rimsky-Korsakoff, Sokolonoff, Glazunoff et quelques autres. Ces artistes de tendances modernistes travaillent à une réforme de l'art musical russe donc Tchaïkowsky est un des représentants officiellement consacrés.' *Le Phare du littoral*, 9 March 1895.

[97] '*Onéguine* … appartient à une période intermédiaire dans le développement de l'art musical chez les Russes'. *Le Petit Niçois*, 28 February 1895. The frequent references to Cui as a better example of a modern Russian composer would have been prompted not only by his literary presence in France, but also by his opera *Le Flibustier*, which premiered in Paris in 1894. *Le Flibustier* was a near verbatim setting of Jean Richepin's 1888 play of the same name and, like *Onegin*, was discussed as a modern *drame lyrique*. Although the opera was poorly received (Howard Sutton gives a summary of its reception in *The Life and Work of Jean Richepin* (Paris: Minard, 1961): 172–4), some critics, such as Camille Bellaigue, thought it a fine example of literature opera, and a more faithful musical setting of the French language than most French composers had achieved to date (see Bellaigue's review in *Revue des deux mondes* (1894): 705–9).

[98] 'Petit drame rustique, dans le goût des œuvres rapides, pittoresques et violentes, dont *Cavalleria rusticana* a fourni le type … l'*Orage* est un ouvrage … d'une tendance bien franchement moderne'. Gallet, *La Nouvelle revue*, March 1895.

[99] These complaints echoed those made in Russia in 1879, when critics had deemed *Onegin* a frivolous tale of cuckoldry befitting of operetta. See Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette*, 120–23.

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(Gremin).[100] 'H.C'. of *Le Phare du littoral* in Nice, meanwhile, doubted whether Onegin was the profound, Hamletic character Vanor's speech made him out to be. After quoting Vanor's description of Onegin as an enigmatic modern-day dandy, H.C. commented that such figures may well exist, but to suggest that music could express 'this doubt and these passions' was farfetched.[101] And Alekan aligned *Onegin* more with dubious *verismo* than French *drame lyrique* by echoing a familiar accusation lobbied at *Cavalleria rusticana*: the libretto was no poignant work of psychological prose, he argued, but merely 'a mix of vulgarity and poetry' (*un mélange de vulgarité et de poésie*).[102]

Others doubted the viability of psychological realism for the lyric stage altogether. Although *Le Petit Niçois* had printed glowing previews of *Onegin*, one of its reviewers, signed 'A.V.', was less positive. He argued that opera was already ridiculous in its conventions, but these appeared all the more absurd in realistic or contemporary settings.[103] Alekan, having at first expressed his disappointment that the opera was not psychological enough, changed tack to argue that attempting such a thing was ill-informed in the first place:

> Readers of Paul Bourget, admirers of the purely psychological novel, be honest with yourselves. Don't you sometimes skip ahead a few pages on the sly and find … that the continual, exhaustive descriptions of states of the soul are rather long? Don't be afraid to admit it; you will not be reproached by those who have heard Onegin; they understand your boredom all too well.[104]

Not only does the alignment with the novelist Bourget enforce the idea that this was a misguided realist opera, but it also highlights the connections between realism and cosmopolitanism. The novel to which Alekan was most likely referring was Bourget's widely read realist novel *Cosmopolis* of 1893, which features (like *Onegin*) engagements, love affairs and duels. Neatly fitting with Alekan's aversion to the appearance of the opera in Nice, *Cosmopolis* offers a condemnation of cosmopolitanism. The story follows a group of émigrés whose lives become entwined through various romantic intrigues in cosmopolitan Rome, but eventually

[100] 'Tatiana s'éprend d'Onéguine, qui a des scrupules et ne veut pas l'épouser à cause de son âge trop avancé … il trouve Tatiana mariée au prince Gremine, beaucoup plus âgé qu'elle et que lui Oneguine'. *Le Matin*, 27 February 1895.

[101] 'Mais de là à faire qu'une œuvre musicale exprimant ce doute et ces passions soit captivante, il y a loin. Le talent ne consiste pas à exprimer ces sentiments sous un vêtement plutôt que sous un autre; il consiste, ce nous semble, à les bien exprimer. Ce dernier cas est-il celui d'*Onéguine*? *That is the question!*' *Phare du littoral*, 13 March 1895.

[102] *Le Guide musical*, 31 March 1895.

[103] 'Le ridicule devient encore plus grand. Vous voulez supprimer la convention au théâtre? Alors supprimez le théâtre lui-même, puisqu'il ne vit que de cela; supprimez l'opéra où des gens se chantent ce qu'ils pourraient parfaitement se dire.' *Petit Niçois*, 13 March 1895. Buckler has summarized how Russian critics similarly 'thought that operatic works depicting a more or less contemporary reality violated established generic norms'. See *The Literary Lorgnette*, 120.

[104] 'Lecteurs de Paul Bourget, admirateurs du pur roman psychologique, soyez francs avec vous-mêmes. Ne vous êtes-vous pas surpris parfois à tourner d'un seul coup quelques pages à la dérobée, et à trouver un peu longues, à part vous, ses descriptions continues d'états d'âme plus ou moins réels? Ne craignez pas d'en faire l'aveu; ce n'est pas des auditeurs d'Onéguine que vous avez à redouter des reproches; ils compatissent trop bien à votre ennui.' *Le Guide musical*, 31 March 1895.

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disperse, indicating that they have failed to integrate. Later on in his review, Alekan points out that Wagner's *Lohengrin* had been dropped from the Théâtre Municipal's repertoire shortly before *Onegin* premiered, and wonders whether this was done 'in order to spare the sensitive patriotism of a certain sector of the public the sight of an unfortunate showdown between Tchaikovsky, the Russian, and Wagner, the German'.[105] The implication is that the bringing together of different nationalities in Nice was more likely to stir hostility than the fruitful exchange of ideas promised by the likes of Delines and de Vogüé.

Although the 1895 Nice interpretations of *Onegin* as a modern, realist *drame lyrique* did not stick, they help complicate usual assumptions about how Russia was perceived abroad, and about late nineteenth-century cultural exchange. For one, they show a willingness to consider Russian music in its cosmopolitan, rather than simply national, context. The Russian realist novel may have been a firm point of comparison, but the opera was also linked with realism more widely conceived. And while not ignoring *Onegin*'s Russian origins, critics drew attention to realist elements that enabled the opera to transcend national restrictions: the familiar figure of the disenchanted hero; the 'people like us' on the stage; the dances from modern life; the music that spoke to the crowd. Such an approach – seeking out commonality rather than difference – indicates that, in this decade so often described as being dominated by fears over national deterioration, cosmopolitanism was a powerful cultural aspiration.

Finally, this episode reveals a shift towards the end of the nineteenth century in views on Russia's place in the musical world. As I have indicated, Russia had already been positioned in the second half of the 1800s as a potential source of revival. And yet, while seemingly positive, these speculations that Russia would eventually be the future insinuated that its composers had not yet reached artistic maturity. The much-repeated declaration that Russia would one day invigorate the musical world, what is more, generally amounted to a call for the introduction of exotic raw materials (folksongs) to which Russian composers had allegedly unique access. But writers such as Delines and Gallet implied something different of *Onegin*. In focusing on Tchaikovsky's realist techniques, they indicated that Russian composers had the potential to reconfigure existing genres. That, through these techniques, Tchaikovsky had anticipated by over a decade an operatic trend that was currently in full swing, thus became evidence – for some at least – that Russia really could be the musical future.

[105] 'Nous concluons, La commission municipale, en même temps qu'elle ratifiait le choix d'*Onéguine* comme nouveauté à créer au cours de cet hiver, rayant du programme de la saison le *Tannhäuser*, connu ici depuis l'an dernier seulement, voulait-elle épargner ainsi au patriotisme chatouilleux d'un certain public la perspective d'une fâcheuse rencontre entre le Russe Tschaïkowsky et l'Allemand Wagner?' *Le Guide Musical*, 31 March 1895.

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