

Additions to the building were made over the years, and a large facility was completed in 1998 on Moskovsky Prospect. By virtue of its long-standing role as custodian of Russia's cultural heritage, the library holds a unique place in Russian history and is recognized as one of the foremost cultural institutions of the Russian Federation.

*See also:* ARCHIVES; CATHERINE II; EDUCATION; GOLDEN AGE OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE; RUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY

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## NATIONALISM IN THE ARTS

After the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, artists throughout Europe increasingly turned their attention to defining national identities. Although art and culture had performed this task prior to Napoleon, the events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provided a focus for a renewed attention to nationalism in the arts. Russia proved no exception to this cultural trend, and particularly after 1812, Russian cultural figures began to articulate ideas about Russianness. These definitions were varied in nature, but all sought to depict what made Russia unique. During the century after Napoleon's defeat, Russian culture came into its own, as literature, art, music, architecture, decorative arts, and popular culture experienced profound changes. The attempt to articulate Russian nationalism provided a dominant theme of these diverse products, and the figures who addressed it include a who's who of Russian artistic giants: Pushkin, Repin, and Mussorgsky are just a few of the names associated with Russian nationalism in the arts.

#### SOURCES OF NATIONALISM

Like the other European artists who responded to the Napoleonic era with an outburst of nationalism, Russians defined this identity in terms of Rus-

sian uniqueness. Artists looked to Russia's past and its present situation to find inspiration. In particular, several events shaped the way in which Russian nationalism developed in the arts. Peter the Great's "cultural revolution" loomed large in the minds of nineteenth-century Russian cultural figures. At issue was whether or not Peter's attempts to Westernize Russia placed it on the right historical development or destroyed a more organic culture. After the war against Napoleon, this debate heated up, for many Russians came to think that the West, and particularly France, no longer served as a model worth imitating. Russian elites began to look to the period before Peter the Great as a source of inspiration. Old Muscovy represented a more authentic Russia, one idealized by some as a time when the country remained unspoiled by Western influences. This debate crystallized after Peter Chaadayev published his *First Philosophical Letter* in 1836, a momentous year for Russian culture and for the expression of nationalism within it. In the letter, Chaadayev argued that Russia's position between East and West created a state that had contributed nothing to the world. Russia, in Chaadayev's view, had no history. The letter in turn gave birth to the Westernizer-Slavophile debate that dominated Russian philosophy for several decades, and it also added fuel to the search for Russian nationalism expressed in the arts.

A second important theme that helped to give shape to Russian artistic nationalism was the "peasant question." In part this query stemmed from the debate over Petrine reforms, for Russian intellectuals after 1812 began to turn their attention to the peasantry as the repository of authentic Russian culture. Other events and debates that provided inspiration for Russian artists included the role of religion in Russian life; the wars against Turkey throughout the nineteenth century; Russian expansion into the Caucasus and Central Asia; the Crimean War and Great Reforms; and debate over the role of classical versus traditional forms of culture. In short, Russian nationalism in the arts developed at the same time as that of other European countries, but took the forms it did because of Russian events, traditions, and intellectual debates.

#### FORMS AND FIGURES OF NATIONALISM: LITERATURE, ART, AND MUSIC

From art to popular culture, Russia's nineteenth-century culture gave expression to ideas of Russianness. Although eighteenth-century writers and

intellectuals developed ideas about Russian national consciousness, it took events such as Napoleon's 1812 invasion to fuel a nationwide, century-long explosion of art in the search of nationalism. Literature in many respects took the lead in this quest.

The work of Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) helped to establish Russian as a literary language and the idea that the writer should play a social role. Pushkin's importance in the expression of Russian national identity rested as much with the myth associated with him as with his verses and writings themselves. Russia's cultural self-definition in many respects centered on the figure of Pushkin, and the cult surrounding him lasted through the Soviet period and beyond. Of his numerous writings, his epic poem "The Bronze Horseman" (1833) dealt the most directly with Russian identity, and it captured many of the ambiguities of Peter's legacies. By the time of his 1837 death, Pushkin had helped to inspire other writers to search for definitions of Russian nationhood.

Important literary figures that featured prominently in the evolving articulation of Russianness include some of the giants of nineteenth-century world literature. Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841) wrote about Russian expansion in the Caucasus in his novel *A Hero of Our Time* (1840), while his earlier poetry such as "Borodino" (1837) captured the importance of the 1812 battle. Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852) became famous for stories of his native Ukraine, but his tales of St. Petersburg and its bureaucracies helped to establish the "Petersburg myth" central to debates about Peter the Great's legacy. His play *The Inspector General* was hailed as a masterpiece when it appeared in 1836, when even Nicholas I praised it. Ivan Turgenev's (1818–1883) *A Hunter's Sketches* (1847) caused a sensation when it first appeared for its frank portrayal of Russian serfs. These writings in turn inspired the "age of the novel," which was associated above all with Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) and Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881). *Tolstoy's War and Peace* (1869) became the defining literary expression of the war against Napoleon, while his *Anna Karenina* (1877) dissected the important society issues of its time. Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) furthered the "Petersburg myth," while his works such as *The Possessed* (1871–1872) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) described the revolutionary movements in Russia and their impact. These writings motivated the next great wave of literature that explored Russian society after the Great Reforms, particularly in the works of Anton Chekhov

(1860–1904), whose plays capture the rural gentry's problems coping in the postemancipation era; and Andrei Bely's symbolist masterpiece, *Petersburg* (1913), which again redefined the Petrine capital as an apocalyptic site struggling with modernization.

Art proved no less important to the articulation of nationalism in nineteenth-century Russia. The driving force behind all artistic production in Russia was the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg. The Academy stressed classical themes, and as a result, very few paintings with exclusively Russian subjects appeared before the 1850s. The major exception to this trend was Alexei Venetsianov (1780–1847), who first came to prominence through his nationalist caricatures published during the war of 1812. Although not trained in the Academy, Venetsianov was influenced by it in his early artistic life. After the war, however, he painted idealized scenes of Russian rural life, including such works as *The Threshing Floor* (1820). Venetsianov's work and the school he founded, along with the writings of Pushkin, Gogol, and others, helped to inspire future artists who depicted Russia's landscape as a source of its identity. Alexei Savrasov (1830–1897), Ivan Shishkin (1832–1898), and Isaak Levitan (1860–1890) all painted scenes from Russia over the course of the century, and their works defined the landscape on its own terms.

Outside of landscape art, the dictates of the Academy ruled over Russian artistic life. Although classical imagery dominated, works such as Karl Briullov's *The Last Days of Pompei*, which was exhibited in 1836 and much discussed as a symbol of Russian decline, were hailed as harbingers of a new national art. In 1863, however, a group of Academy students refused to follow the rigid demands of the school and broke away from it, revolutionizing Russian art and its articulation of nationalism in the process. The group called themselves the *peredvizhniki*, or "the wanderers," and they dedicated themselves to painting scenes from Russian contemporary and historical life. Ilya Repin (1844–1930), the most famous, was a former serf whose depictions of peasant life such as *Barge Haulers on the Volga* (1870) redefined the "peasant question" in the wake of the 1861 emancipation. Other artists, such as Vasily Surikov (1848–1916), painted scenes from Muscovy and the Petrine era. The work of the *peredvizhniki* found support from powerful patrons such as Pavel Tretyakov, whose private gallery became the basis for the museum of Russian art in Moscow that bears his name.

Music was the third part of the cultural troika that defined Russian national identity during the nineteenth century. Musical life revitalized itself after 1812 and took off during the 1860s. Romantic and patriotic tunes developed during the first half of the century and found their greatest expression in the works of Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857). Glinka's opera *A Life for the Tsar* debuted in 1836 and told the story of the peasant Ivan Susanin, who sacrificed his life during the Times of Troubles to save the young Mikhail Romanov. The opera was hailed as the beginnings of a national school in Russian music.

Glinka's works paved the way for the foundation of the Russian Musical Society in 1859. The society, founded by the brothers Nikolai and Anton Rubinstein, in turn established conservatories in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The conservatories stressed European musical techniques and training, and their most famous student was Petr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893). Almost immediately after the founding of the conservatories, a group of composers known as the Mighty Handful, or just "the five," rebelled against the stress on European music. Their musical scores instead included folk songs and Russian religious music. The most famous and consistent practitioner of this approach was Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881), whose best-known works are the historical operas *Boris Godunov* (1869) and *Khovanshchina* (1886), which told the stories of the tragic Muscovite tsar and events early in the reign of Peter the Great, respectively. Mussorgsky used the work of Pushkin as the libretto for the former and claimed that the paintings of Repin inspired the latter. Tchaikovsky, although derided as not Russian enough by the Mighty Handful, also composed works that in turn became associated with the musical expression of Russianness. His ballets *Swan Lake* (1875–1876), *Sleeping Beauty* (1888–1889), and *The Nutcracker* (1891–1892) remain among the most popular and most performed in Russia and abroad, while his "1812 Overture" (1880) is synonymous with patriotic music throughout the world.

Although literature, art, and music served as the most important media through which Russian artists articulated their views on national identity, other cultural forms did the same. By the early twentieth century, the Russian ballet of Sergei Diaghilev, featuring music by Igor Stravinsky and sets designed by artists of the Russian avant garde, became an important tool for expressing ideas of Russianness, particularly abroad. Throughout the century, churches, monuments, and other architectural sites literally

built upon ideas of Russian history and culture, from the Alexandrine column dedicated to 1812 in St. Petersburg to the millennium memorial in Novgorod that commemorated the founding of the Russian state. Even decorative arts, including jewelry and porcelain, helped to pioneer the "Russian Style" (*russky stil*) by the late 1800s.

Popular culture also dealt with themes of Russian nationalism and Russia's past. *Lubki*, prints and chapbooks that originated during the seventeenth century, circulated throughout Russia and served as important sources for the expression of national identity and for the dissemination of ideas promoted in other artistic forms. Russian folk art and music was rediscovered by numerous artists over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and helped to inspire works from Mussorgsky's melodies to Wassily Kandinsky's canvases. Moreover, the works of all the artists mentioned above became more widely known through the growth of newspapers, journals, museums, and cultural life throughout Russia.

Russian nationalism expressed in the arts contained a multitude of ideas. For some, "Russia" represented a European state that had developed its own sense of identity since Peter the Great. For others, "Russia" had produced a unique culture that blended East with West. Although no consensus on Russian national identity existed, Russian cultural figures from Pushkin to Tolstoy to Mussorgsky all strove to define it in their own way and all left important manifestations of Russianness in their works.

*See also:* ARCHITECTURE; BALLET; CHAADAYEV, PETER YAKOVLEVICH; MIGHTY HANDFUL; MUSIC; SLAVOPHILES; WESTERNIZERS

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