

**The Spectacle of Russian Futurism:  
The Emergence and Development of Russian Futurist Performance,  
1910–1914  
Vol. I**

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## Abstract

In this thesis Russian Futurist performance is considered in the wider context of the emergence and development of the initial phase of the Russian Futurist movement, 1910-14. Futurism emerged at a time of increasing commodification and diversification within the arts. New commercial enterprises, private art galleries, publishing companies and the arrival of cinema, combined with a growing urban population and expanding middle class who sought new forms of leisure activities, provided fertile ground for new artistic ventures. As such, Futurism constituted a part of the newly forming art and entertainment market. Crucial to Futurism's survival in this competitive market was its need to secure a guaranteed source of funding. In many ways, then, the early phase of Russian Futurism, 1910-14, can be interpreted as a struggle to use all means and all artistic creativity possible to secure that funding.

Part I describes the competitive artistic situation, socio-economic context and cultural networks of the 1910s. It identifies the key figures who helped to shape Futurism's development, from patrons and impresarios to artists and critics, and analyses the various marketing strategies which they employed to engage an audience.

Part II examines the interaction between Futurist and audience. It focuses on the sites of Futurist performance, the public's perception of and associations with these sites, and questions of affordability and accessibility. The final two chapters deal specifically with the critical reception of Futurism: the public's attitude to the Futurists; the critics' interpretation of the Futurists and the public; and the Futurists' attitude to different sections of the public.

The final section explores the possibility of a socio-political subtext in Futurist art of this period and draws conclusions concerning the provocative nature of Futurist performance and its function as a medium to express the Futurist aesthetic, that is, to effect change in all aspects of daily life.

## Preface

My research into Russian Futurism has only been made possible through the generous support of fellow researchers and experts in the field, artistic associations and funding bodies.

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This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandmother,  
Pauline Augustus (née D’Rose)  
1916-2002

## Technicalities and Abbreviations:

Full Bibliographical details are supplied on the first mention of a work in each chapter.

References to a number of archives have been abbreviated as follows:

Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii archiv [Central State Archive of History], (St. Petersburg) – TsGIA

Gosudarstvennyi Russkii muzei [State Russian Museum], (St. Petersburg) – GRM

Tsentral'nyi arkhiv dokumental'nykh kollektzii Moskvyy [Central Archive of Document Collection] – TsADKM

Other abbreviations:

University Press – UP

Canadian-American Slavic Studies – CASS

Not stated – [n.s.]

No publisher – [n.p.]

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## Introduction

### Futurism, Theatre and the Power of the Press

‘Everyone goes to the theatre, just as everyone reads newspapers’, [newspapers and the theatre] – ‘are the most powerful factors influencing people’s ideas.’<sup>1</sup>

Russian Futurism was an artistic movement that coincided with the wave of provocative European artistic trends of the 1910s and 1920s which Peter Bürger, in his seminal work *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, termed the ‘historical avant-gardes’. According to Bürger, this era of European avant-garde movements ‘can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society’. Such movements negated the concept of an autonomous art and instead incorporated an ‘essential element of Aestheticism’ in order to ‘attempt to organise a new life praxis from a basis in art’.<sup>2</sup> Russian Futurism was, in this sense, integral to the European avant-garde. As Anna Lawton notes

Futurism, as the expression of a new sensibility, was an attempt to integrate all art forms with the reality of the big city, and ultimately to transform everyday life into an aesthetic performance.<sup>3</sup>

Futurism emerged and developed in Russia as the counterpart to German Expressionism and the *Die Brücke* group of artists, the artists associated with Vasiliï Kandinskii’s *Der Blaue Reiter*, the Fauvists Henri Matisse and André Derain, the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, the British Vorticists, and of course, the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘ “[В]се посещают театр – точно так же, как все читают газеты”, [газеты и театр] – “самые могущественные факторы идейных влияний.”” P. Iartsev, ‘Ulichnaia tsenzura’, *Teatr i iskusstvo*, 1903, No. 51, p. 988. Cited in I. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i zritel’ rossiiskikh stolits, 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). In particular, see Chapter 3, Part 3 ‘The Negation of the Autonomy of Art by the Avant-Garde’, pp. 47–54.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Lawton, ‘Futurist Manifestoes as an Element of Performance’, *CASS*, vol.19: 4 (1985), 473–91 (p. 474).

Italian Futurists. The Russian Futurists were also influenced by nineteenth-century Impressionism (principally Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, and Edouard Manet, among others) and members of the modern-day international theatrical milieu such as the American dancer, Isadora Duncan and the British theatre director, stage designer and writer Gordon Craig.

The emergence of Russian Futurism was equally dependent upon a specifically Russian artistic and intellectual heritage that stretched back to the reforms of the 1860s and the creation of the Peredvizhniki Society [The Wanderers] in 1870, the arts and crafts movement of the 1880s (which was concentrated on the estates of Talashkino and Abramtsevo in the Moscow region), Symbolism and artists from the turn of the century including Mikhail Vrubel' and Valentin Serov, and the Golubaia roza [The Blue Rose] and Mir iskusstva [The World of Art] groups. In addition, Russian Futurism was strongly influenced by arts associated with the provinces and the peasantry: *lubki* (woodcuts), colourful decorative arts (including painted interiors, textiles and embroidery) and icons.

The term Futurism, like avant-garde, is not easy to define in concise terms, and attempts to do so highlight contradictions and inconsistencies.<sup>4</sup> Gail Day's case study, 'The futurists: transcontinental avant-gardism', offers a good starting point. She specifies three different ways in which Futurism, in its broadest sense, refers to an 'art of modern life'. She acknowledges its reference to 'a range of modern motifs (cars, aeroplanes, telephones) or their associated qualities (speed)'. Secondly, she states that Futurism 'can refer to the experiential "sensations" of life in modern cities (experiences of speed and of "simultaneity" across time and space, as new methods of transport and communication make the world seem smaller, or the feeling of exhilaration produced by competing sensations in the city)'. Thirdly, Day writes that Futurism 'might refer to the technical and formal devices used by artists to "represent" any of the above (the fragmentation and fracturing of picture space, the juxtaposition or collaging of different materials/elements as a way of "expressing"

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<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the term 'avant-garde' during this era see Steve Edwards and Paul Wood, eds., *Art of the Avant-Gardes* (New Haven and London: Yale UP in association with The Open University, 2004), especially Gail Day, 'Art, Love and Social Emancipation: On the Concept "Avant-Garde" and the Interwar Avant-Gardes', pp. 307–37; and Paul Wood, ed., *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde* (New Haven and London: Yale UP in association with The Open University, 1999).

sensations of speed or simultaneity).<sup>5</sup> These characteristics are true of the generic European Futurism and certainly describe a dominant trend within Russian Futurism.

In her introduction to *Russkii Futurizm* V. N. Terekhina associates Futurism with the artistic challenge to ‘bourgeois taste’. She uses the term *obshchestvennyi vkus* where the noun *obshchestvo* [society] is interpreted in purely Habermasian terms. In other words Futurism challenged the dominant tastes of the newly created bourgeois public sphere which had evolved in Russia in the late nineteenth century as a result of modern industrialisation, increasing capitalism, the abundant availability of newspapers nationwide and increased readership, and most importantly the engagement of the middle classes in rational critical debate which took place in newly established venues such as cafés, salons or cabarets where private individuals could meet. The concept of the public sphere informs the entire emergence and development of Russian Futurism in the pre-1917 era and I will return to it throughout the thesis.

Terekhina represents the Futurists as an avant-garde movement in Bürger’s terms. She specifies how the Futurists were against the ‘ossified canon of a Classical heritage and “mystical ideals”’.<sup>6</sup> The impulse of the Futurists toward a free creation of new forms, which were able to express the essence of a future art and the creation of life [*zhizneustroistvo*], gave birth to a good number of innovative ideas [*nemalo novatorskikh idei*] and significant achievements in literature, painting, music, [and] theatre.’<sup>7</sup>

The existence of a definable Russian Futurism spanned a period of approximately two decades, from c.1908 to 1928. In 1908 Velimir Khlebnikov embarked upon his experimentation of *zaum*’ or ‘transrational’ poetry and wrote his well-known *zaum*’ poem *Zakliatie smekhom* [Incantation to Laughter] in 1909.<sup>8</sup> The poem included a

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<sup>5</sup> Gail Day, ‘The Futurists: Transcontinental Avant-Gardism’, in Wood, *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 204–25 (p. 206).

<sup>6</sup> “Mystical ideals” here refers specifically to the legacy of Russian Symbolism.

<sup>7</sup> V. N. Terekhina, ‘“Tol’ko my – litso nashogo vremeni...”’, in *Russkii Futurizm: Teorii. Praktiki. Kritiki. Vospominaniia*, edited by V. N. Terekhina and A. P. Zimenkov (Moscow: Nasledie, 2000), pp. 3–32 (p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Velimir Khlebnikov, ‘Zakliatie smekhom’, in *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, vol. 1, *Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001), pp. 115–16.

number of made-up *zaum* ' words, the implied or suggested possible meanings of which were based on associations and nuances of the letters 'sme-', the root of the verb 'to laugh'. The same year also witnessed three exhibitions (*Sovremennye techeniia v iskusstve* [Exhibition of Modern Trends], St. Petersburg, the first of three *Zolotoe runo* [Golden Fleece] exhibitions, Moscow, and the *Zveno* [Link] exhibition, Kiev), which included many of the new wave of young artists and soon-to-be prominent Futurists. The year 1928 marks the termination of the leftist publication *Novyi Lef* [The New Left] and the end of a phase in Russian theatrical history which had been characterised by experimentation and innovative synthetic avant-garde practices.

Russian Futurism can be roughly divided into three phases: the initial phase of 1908–1914–15 which culminated in the *Posledniaia futuristicheskaia vystavka kartin '0.10' (nol'-desiat')* [The Last Futurist Exhibition '0.10' (Zero-Ten)] which opened in Petrograd on 19 December 1915; 1914–1917 which marks the pre-Revolutionary war years; and finally 1917–1928 which, of course, correlates to the developments and creative hopes and experimentation of the post-Revolutionary era until the cultural restrictions that were brought about by changes in political and cultural policies from the late 1920s onwards. The initial phase of Russian Futurism emerged during a time of plurality and potential for change in many different aspects of daily life. In addition to the artistic context, Futurism also emerged during a period of intense social change. Critical changes in Russian social policies in the second half of the nineteenth century (from the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, industrialisation and large-scale urban migration to Russia's two 'capitals', enlightened initiatives which tried to address the problems of poor education and literacy of the peasant masses, to name but a few), began to alter many individuals' perception of society and their place within that rapidly evolving environment. Political and diplomatic policies which affected Central Asia and the Balkans, together with the failed Russo-Japanese War and the ill-fated Revolution of 1905, served to heighten the awareness of the individual in society, but also encouraged an interest in nationalism. The initial phase of Russian Futurism therefore emerged during a time of great social change, of urbanisation, increasing capitalism, a desire for social upward mobility of the lower and middle classes and a general commodification of the arts. The end of this era overlaps with the next. Although it is

true that experiments with abstract art, and Futurist exhibitions and performances continued into 1915, the outbreak of the First World War and the coincidental absence, then emigration of key Futurist figures narrowed the richness of the artistic diversity and the creative impetus which had propelled the first Futurist era.<sup>9</sup>

If the initial phase of Futurism is characterised by a search for artistic identity, artistic experimentation and changing attitudes to its public, the second phase is underlined by Futurism's need to rearticulate its identity and attitude to the public in relation to a European war. The war had a direct effect on the Russian public as a whole and on individual Futurists (e.g. Benedikt Livshits served in the war, Mikhail Larionov was wounded on active service, Vladimir Burliuk and Mikhail Le-Dantiu were both killed in action in 1917). It also compromised previous positive notions of international artistic trends and collaborations, in particular the close ties with German-based avant-gardists who had exerted a significant influence in the development of Russian modern art in the pre-war era. Many Russian Futurists turned their hand to agitprop activities (including Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Maiakovskii and Aristarkh Lentulov) whilst Natal'ia Goncharova created a cycle of works entitled *Misticheskie obrazy voiny* [Mystical Images of War] which drew upon the Russian traditions of icons and *lubki* (see figures 195a–d). The October Revolution of 1917 marks the end of the second phase of Russian Futurism. In general terms, the plural possibilities of art, its form, content and function in society became necessarily focussed towards an essentially binary relationship post-1917, either in favour or against the Revolutionary cause.

The third era of Futurism was bound up with the explicit exploration of the role of art in society in relation to the hopes and expectations surrounding the events of 1917. During this era art became explicitly and inescapably linked to contemporary politics and policies regarding the aesthetics of new art forms and the destruction of the old.

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<sup>9</sup> Natal'ia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov left Russia for Paris in April 1914. They had not intended to emigrate at this time. Instead they had travelled to Paris, via Rome, to oversee the opening of their exhibition in Rome and to work with Sergei Diaghilev and the *Ballets Russes* on the production of *Le Coq d'Or*. Larionov served in the army from 7 September 1914 and was wounded on 1 October of that year. He spent three months in hospital before being invalided out. Goncharova and Larionov both contributed to the Exhibition of the Year 1915, in Moscow, in March of that year, but were then lured to Switzerland following the constant pleadings from Diaghilev to contribute to *Ballets Russes* productions. They left Russia on 23 June 1915 never to return. See Anthony Parton, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), pp. 145–47.

Ideas which had been born during the early stages of Futurism contributed to the later developments in biomechanics, the expression of the relationship between man and the machine, abstract art, constructivism, and the integration of art in everyday life in the form of interior decorating, clothing and so on, absurdist literature (e.g. the Oberiuty), and the creation of the Formalist School.

This thesis concentrates on Futurism of the first era with particular emphasis on the period 1910–14. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the post-1917 era of Futurism has received a disproportionate amount of attention, in comparison to the earliest era. The later era has been researched in terms of early Soviet art, history, culture, politics, economic policies, personalities and as an appraisal of the degree of success and failure of the Revolution by Soviet, Russian and Western scholars. My own research fits into the revival of interest in the pre-Soviet history of the avant-garde which is part of the on-going process of re-mapping this period of Russian, Eastern and Central European social and cultural history.<sup>10</sup> Rather than view pre-1917 Futurism in relation to the Revolution, I will focus my attention on an appraisal of the emergence and development of this movement in relation to contemporary artistic trends and the dynamic socio-cultural and economic environment. I wish to explore the diversity within this phase of Russian Futurism, before it was forced to reposition itself by the onset of the war in 1914 and whilst all major contributors to the emergence of Futurism were still resident in the Russian Empire. All further references to Russian Futurism will therefore refer to the earliest phase of the movement, 1910–1914 unless otherwise stated.

Russian Futurism, like its Italian cousin, transgressed traditional artistic boundaries and classifications. It incorporated poets, dramatists, musicians, writers, artists, sculptors, theoreticians and performers, and what I would term ‘facilitators’, individuals who actively supported Futurism and instigated or aided the organisation of Futurist events. The idea of breaking down boundaries, which encouraged innovative creative collaborations between different types of artists, is a defining

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, D. Sarab'ianov, *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva: kontsa XIX - nachala XX veka* (Moscow: Galart, 2001); Yevgenia Petrova, ed., *Origins of the Russian Avant-Garde* (St. Petersburg: State Russian Museum, Trustees of the Walters Art Gallery and Palace Editions, 2003); or Oleh S. Ilnytskyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914–1930: A Historical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies, 1997).

characteristic of this early period of Russian Futurism. The implications of this crossing of artistic boundaries within Futurism are subtle, complex and far-reaching within the movement's history. As we shall see throughout this thesis, the collaborative nature of Russian Futurism was critical to its emergence and development as a recognisable artistic movement, both nationally and internationally.

The Futurist challenge to traditional artistic practices did have its drawbacks. The term Futurism itself was problematic. From its earliest public artistic expressions, contemporary newspapers underline the fact that confusion reigned over the meaning of the term and the artists associated with it. Today Russian Futurism is generally associated with the contemporary dominant sub-group of avant-garde artists, the Kubofuturisty [Cubo-Futurists] and Gileia [Hylaea]. However, the term is not representative of a single homogenous artistic group. Although I will be referring to those artists who collaborated, exhibited, performed and associated with the dominant trends within Futurism, namely the Bubnovyi valet [Jack of Diamonds] and Oslinyi khvost [Donkey's Tail] groups and many who were connected with the Soiuz molodezhi [Union of Youth], this dominant Futurist trend evolved in relation to Ego-Futurizm [Ego-Futurism], Mezonin poezii [Mezzanine of Poetry], Tsentrifuga [Centrifuge] and the Georgian group, 41°.<sup>11</sup> As we shall see, the combination of artistic transgression, strong personalities in leading roles, effusive rhetoric, questions and declarations of authenticity, issues of artistic independence and allegiance, and the interpretation of contemporary critics were all elements which fostered a rather fluid and dynamic Futurist identity.

Despite the many contentious issues and contradictions which the term Futurism attracts, there are certain elements and characteristics which, when considered collectively, can point towards a working definition of a movement which is distinct from other avant-garde movements and to some degree, from Italian Futurism too. This is not the place to examine all of the defining characteristics in detail, but for now, let me highlight a few of the more salient elements.

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<sup>11</sup> For a broad discussion of the different Futurist groupings, see Vladimir Markov, *Futurism: A History* (London: MacGibbon and Gee, 1968); and N. I. Khardzhiev, *Stat'i ob avangarde v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: RA, 1997).

At the heart of Futurism is the desire to look to the future for inventive ways of expressing the present in terms of dynamic progressive movement to the future, hence Day's assertion of Futurism as an art which expresses modern life. In her working definition of Futurism, written under the title *Ob "izmakh"* [Concerning "isms"], Goncharova underlined the mutual 'striving [of Futurism] toward the future' and the 'refutation, annihilation of the past' [*ustremenie k budushchemy (oproverzhenie, unichtozhenie proshlogo)*].<sup>12</sup> This anarchic approach to the tradition and institutions of art was established in the Futurists' negation of the past in their first bombastic manifesto of 1912, *Poshchetchina obshchestvennomu vkusu* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste]. The manifesto targeted the canon of classical Russian art and literature which formed the benchmark of bourgeois good taste.

*We alone – are the face of our times. [...]*  
 The past is overcrowded. The Academy and Pushkin are incomprehensible hieroglyphics.  
 Throw Pushkin, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi and so on, from the Ship of Modernity.<sup>13</sup>

The declamatory style and bombastic nature of the manifesto echoed the style of the Italian Futurist manifesto which had been published in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909. Futurism of this era embraced technological and medical advances, new philosophies and theories, new materials and new opportunities. Goncharova emphasised the dynamic element of Futurism, the need 'to depict forms in a state of motion (dynamics)'.<sup>14</sup>

Although Russian Futurism was undoubtedly involved in an artistic process which reflected the changes taking place in modern life, one factor distinguished it from its

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<sup>12</sup> N. S. Goncharova, 'Ob "izmakh" (1914)', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 37–38. These notes are part of the Nikolai Khardzhiev archive, Box 78. This document is of particular value as it was written by Natal'ia Goncharova, a prominent member of the Russian avant-garde and theoretician of Russian Futurism, but also because of the date of the document. Although only in note form, Goncharova is able to look at the recent developments in Russian art retrospectively. Her separation of individual artistic tendencies (Futurism, Orphism, Rayism, Simultaneity, and Everythingism) suggests a recognizable aesthetic for each respective tendency and offers a concise mapping of the rapid development of the Russian avant-garde which had become firmly established by 1914. The year 1914, of course, marks the onset of the First World War and, coincidentally, Goncharova and Larionov's first foreign exhibition as Russian Futurists (Paris, Galerie Paul Guillaume).

<sup>13</sup> The manifesto was signed by David Burliuk, Aleksandr Kruchenykh, Vladimir Maiakovskii and Viktor Khlebnikov and dated Moscow, 1912. December. See *Russkii Futurizm*, edited by Terekhina and Zimenkov, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> 'Изображать формы в состоянии движения (динамика)', Goncharova, 'Ob "izmakh"', p. 37.



Italian counterpart. Although Russian Futurism looked to the Future for artistic expression, it also looked to its own traditions of indigenous art and creative expression for artistic inspiration and sense of identity. Early stone carvings, motifs and techniques of provincial arts and crafts, *lubki* and signboards, colour combinations and countryside images all become dominant themes across the breadth of the Russian Futurist arts.<sup>15</sup>

Most importantly, Futurism, as Goncharova notes, has to be incorporated into daily life if it is to be effective, and she divides the activity of Futurism in life into three categories: political (here paralleled with a sense of nationalism which she attributes to Italian Futurism); aesthetic (art which looks to the future, is motivated by a feeling of modernity, and will bring about a rejuvenation and new perspective in all aspects of human activity); and social attitudes and daily life (struggle against philistinism). Crucially, as an artistic movement, Futurism attempted to go beyond the strictly aesthetic and affect a tangible change in the way the individual perceived modern life and his/her role within it.

Why focus on Russian Futurist performance? As Lawton suggests, performance exploited and integrated the diversity of Futurist artistic form in order to directly and deliberately engage a modern audience and to challenge perceived boundaries in all aspects of daily life. By 1913 Futurism had gained a foothold in the metropolitan public psyche and was debated in a broad cross-section of the press. Some critics hailed the Futurists' artistic innovation, but most interpreted them and their antics as an integral part of the growing hooliganism and decadence of urban life. Futurist performance appeared in all guises, in all city locations. As the following excerpt from the satirical political sketch by O. Savinich in the newspaper *Utro Rossii* shows, the influence of Futurism was said to have struck at the very heart of Russian governmental authority:

In the State Duma they have started to speak in the Futurist language, having unanimously and irrevocably acknowledged that each Speech-

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<sup>15</sup> Although this 'primitivism' may distinguish Russian Futurism from its Italian counterpart, it represented an area of common ground with other European avant-garde movements, such as Expressionism.

Creator [*rechetvoret's*] (in the old parlance Deputy) can speak without inhibition and not giving special significance to any individual word.

The Speech-Creator Miliukov got up onto the rostrum, which, by the latest Futurist demand, had been turned into a small stage, and having struck a pose that was appropriate to his thought, he said: Tutsia. Itutsia. Titutsia. Stitutsia... Kon-sti-tutsia.<sup>16</sup>

Purishkevich leapt up in indignation and, gesticulating appropriately, shouted in old Futurist jargon:

'Miliukov, get the hell off that rostrum!'<sup>17</sup>

The reception of Futurist performance can be viewed within the wider context of the spectacle of modern life.<sup>18</sup> It can be approached in terms of urbanisation, modern concepts of leisure, engagement in the new commodification of art, and concepts of performativity within an environment experiencing rapid social changes. In order to try to gauge the relationship between production and reception of Futurist arts, this thesis draws heavily upon contemporary commentary on Futurist events, in particular newspaper and journal articles. In view of the synthetic nature of Futurism and the fact that some forms of Futurist performance constituted little more than marketing strategies for art exhibitions and other events, I have broadened my analysis to include the contemporary reception of art exhibitions where it seems relevant. An analysis of Futurist art is also used as a tool to access Futurist politics in the broadest perspective, particularly where other documentary evidence is sparse. For example, artistic analysis is used to draw conclusions regarding the Futurists' attitude toward different sections of the public and the Futurist audience. Before we turn our full attention to Futurist theatre and performance, let us look briefly at the question of the status of theatre at the turn of the century, and in particular, its relevance to a contemporary audience.

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<sup>16</sup> The Futurist *zaumnyi iazyk* or 'transrational' language was based on a play of associations of different syllables or parts of a word. In this example the Russian word *konstitutsiia* or 'constitution' is finally pronounced only when the speaker has explored the sound and association of all its individual constituent parts. So, for example, 'tutsia' is very close to *Turtsiia* [Turkey] and therefore represented a very sensitive issue in the Russian government at the time because of the ongoing Balkan conflict.

<sup>17</sup> O. Savinich, 'Futur-Rossiia', *Utro Rossii*, No. 236, 13 October 1913, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Here I am referring to the analogous methodology and perspective taken by T.J. Clark in *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984).

## Theatre

As the statement by Iartsev cited as my epigraph suggests, theatre, and in particular new types of theatre, played a central role in metropolitan city life of the early twentieth century. Anthony Swift, in his *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia*, emphasises the social and cultural changes which were taking place during this period. Urban space was undergoing a process of redefinition as a result of urban migration, increased levels of literacy and new forms of popular culture. Swift states that '[a]n increasingly literate urban lower class was participating in Russian cultural life to a degree unthinkable in Pushkin's day, consuming a diverse offering of cultural products geared specifically toward a mass market'.<sup>19</sup> I. Petrovskaia's *Teatr i zritel' rossiiskikh stolits, 1895–1917* [Theatre and Audience of the Russian Capitals, 1895–1917] offers a wealth of contemporary criticism and information about the diversity of theatrical entertainment during this period.

Clearly, the emergence of new audiences demanded new modes of theatrical praxis, and new venues and pricing structures to allow greater access to live performance. However, not everyone approved of these new forms of entertainment (including the commercial pleasure gardens, cafés, cabarets and miniature theatres, People's Houses and cinema), or the audiences which they attracted. By the late 1900s a public discourse concerning the so-called 'crisis' in the arts had developed, attracting the attention of a surprisingly large number of people, many of whom, as Konstantin Rudnitsky writes, 'had either no links at all with the theatre or [...] had come into contact with the stage only accidentally, peripherally'.<sup>20</sup>

The recent changes within the structure of public theatre and entertainment and their publics dated back to 1882 and the abolition of the Imperial Theatre monopoly under Aleksandr III. As Swift points out, although Aleksandr Ostrovskii's 'Note on the Situation of Dramatic Art in Russia at the Present Time' (1881) did much to encourage the abolition of the monopoly, 'the government was to some extent legalizing what already existed'. Travelling theatre which performed at Russian

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<sup>19</sup> Anthony E. Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Russian and Soviet Theatre: Tradition and the Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 9.

*gulian'ia* [carnival and trade shows] had not been covered by the restrictions of the monopoly. Musical theatres and pleasure gardens, which had multiplied during the earlier period of reforms and industrialisation in the 1860s and 1870s, were also exempt. In addition, Swift notes that during the same period 'private amateur drama circles and club theatres' had also increased.<sup>21</sup>

A number of commercial enterprises emerged as a result of the repeal of the Imperial Theatre monopoly. Mikhail Lentovskii opened the Skomorokh Accessible Theatre in Moscow which was aimed at the low-wage mass market. He employed spectacular special effects to popularise the classic canon of Russian drama. Although his type of theatre was comparatively successful (Swift notes a profit of 45,000 rubles in the 1884–85 winter season) it was heavily criticised for not pursuing an aim of enlightenment. The liberal goal of enlightenment of the 'uncivilised' masses was at the heart of the later movement towards People's Theatres and the Guardianship of Popular Temperance which operated under the auspices of the Finance Ministry.

Many entrepreneurial theatrical figures welcomed the opportunity to take control of their own theatrical productions. Thus, Fedor Korsh opened his theatre in Moscow in 1882 and Aleksei Suvorin founded his in St. Petersburg in 1885. Meanwhile, the Moscow Merchant, Savva Mamontov, whose work had a great impact on the development of the Russian avant-garde, created the first private opera in Russia in 1885.<sup>22</sup> Located on his estate at Abramtsevo, it attracted a number of talented artists, including foreign singers. The much-celebrated bass and star of the Imperial theatres, Fedor Shaliapin, made his debut on the Mamontov stage in 1896.<sup>23</sup> In 1898 Konstantin Stanislavskii and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Public-Accessible Art Theatre, with the financial support of a syndicate headed by Savva and Sergei Morozov.<sup>24</sup> Despite original intentions to provide a national theatre for a broad audience, the Theatre was obliged to drop the term 'Public-Accessible' in

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<sup>21</sup> Swift, p. 58. For a fuller discussion of the contents of Ostrovskii's appeal to Aleksandr III, see Swift, pp. 58–61.

<sup>22</sup> Mamontov's contribution to the development of the Russian avant-garde will be discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on various early theatre companies see Nick Worrall, 'Historical Background', in *The Moscow Art Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 13–23.

<sup>24</sup> Stanislavskii and Nemirovich-Danchenko debated the name of the prospective theatre at length. As Worrall notes, Stanislavskii was initially overwhelmed by the responsibility of the word 'Art', although the term 'Public-Accessible' proved to be far more problematic. Worrall, p. 50.

1885.<sup>22</sup> Located on his estate at Abramtsevo, it attracted a number of talented artists, including foreign singers. The much-celebrated bass and star of the Imperial theatres, Fedor Shaliapin, made his debut on the Mamontov stage in 1896.<sup>23</sup> In 1898 Konstantin Stanislavskii and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko founded the Moscow Public-Accessible Art Theatre, with the financial support of a syndicate headed by Savva and Sergei Morozov.<sup>24</sup> Despite original intentions to provide a national theatre for a broad audience, the Theatre was obliged to drop the term 'Public-Accessible' in the third season 'because of the need to increase seat prices'.<sup>25</sup> Although the price of the ticket determined, to a large extent, the intended audience, Nick Worrall notes that what united new commercial enterprises such as the Anna Brenko, Korsh and Art Theatre and distinguished them from the Imperial Theatres was their efforts 'to cultivate serious-minded audiences with a taste for classic plays, as well as the new naturalist drama, which not only reflected social problems but also challenged conventional values'.<sup>26</sup> Contemporary criticism acknowledges the ideological changes that were taking place within the theatre world and the need for theatre to keep pace with new urban social realities. A. I. Bogdanovich, for example, notes how Russian art communicates 'a surfeit of realism, the thirst for something new, which could express the complexity of a new way of living'.<sup>27</sup>

Although 1882 was a pivotal year in the history of Russian theatre, the financial implications of new commercial enterprises ensured only limited public accessibility, as the case of the Moscow Art Theatre exemplifies. Large-scale democratisation in the theatre regarding all aspects of the performance, performers' working conditions, venue, and accessibility to a wide audience was a slow grinding process.

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<sup>25</sup> Worrall, p. 50.

<sup>26</sup> Worrall, p. 15. In his discussion, Worrall places the development of such theatres in their European context and compares the Moscow theatres with comparable situations such as London in the 1590s and the Patent House monopoly which governed public theatre and existed in England from 1660 until 1843.

<sup>27</sup> 'пресыщенность реализмом, жажда нового, которое помогло бы выразить сложность новой жизни', A. I. Bogdanovich, 'Kriticheskie zametki', *Mir bozhii*, No. 1, 1900, p. 5, cited in Petrovskaia, p. 36.

Attempts were also made to modernise the organisation and working conditions of artists of the Imperial theatres. However, the events of 1905 reinforced the problematic status of artists and performers as employees of the Tsar. The Imperial theatres were a symbol of Tsarist authority. Strict censorship ensured that they functioned as a vehicle for government ideology. This in turn meant that they also became appropriate targets for anti-government demonstrations. During the riots and bloodshed of 1905, employees of the Aleksandrinskii Theatre expressed their solidarity with their fellow workers with a restricted protest against the Tsarist policies. However, as Barbara Henry observes, the employees of the Imperial theatres operated within the contradictory system in which '[t]he Tsarist government was both the principal patron of the theatre and its chief censor'.<sup>28</sup> Given their vulnerable position as employees, and therefore dependants of the State, they eventually had to recant and the internal protest was temporarily quelled. Murray Frame also gives details of the Aleksandrinskii's failed attempt to gain autonomy from the State during this period. Although this was rarely enforced, employees of the Imperial theatres were forbidden to have any involvement with any political body, as most political parties were opposed to the Tsarist regime. Following the events of 1905, a circular was issued in 1906, which stated that as government employees, all theatre people had to comply with this instruction, and that failure to do so would result in instant dismissal.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, the commercial sector continued to evolve in response to the dynamic social situation. The Moscow Art Theatre had pursued an artistic policy of naturalism. Stanislavskii and Nemirovich-Danchenko's original aim included a rejuvenation of set design, special effects and acting techniques so that art imitated 'real life', rather than projecting a fantastical interpretation. Ultimately, however, it became a question of whose interpretation of 'real life' was being staged. The result

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara Henry, 'Theatricality, Anti-Theatricality and Cabaret in Russian Modernism', in *Russian Literature, Modernism and the Visual Arts*, edited by Catriona Kelly and Stephen Lovell (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 149–171 (p. 149).

<sup>29</sup> Murray Frame, *The St Petersburg Imperial Theatres: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia 1900–1920* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland, 2000), pp. 132–33. For a full description of the organisation of the Imperial theatres and the reaction to the events of 1905, see Frame, 'The Directorate and the Artists', pp. 44–64, and 'The 1905 Revolution and Its Aftermath', pp. 119–35.

was criticised for its lack of dynamism; it allegedly depicted a lifeless environment subservient to a superimposed mystical order. Possibly in response to such criticism and the growing trend of miniature theatres, Stanislavskii established the Theatre Studio which was attached to the main Moscow Art Theatre. The Studio was to provide a platform for more experimental theatre. Unfortunately the opening of the theatre coincided with the 1905 uprisings and it ended in failure. Despite its failure, the Studio represents an important entrepreneurial and artistic forerunner to the later celebrated artistic cabarets such as *Letuchaia mysh'* [The Bat] in Moscow and the *Brodiachaia sobaka* [The Stray Dog] in St. Petersburg.

In 1906 the actress Vera Kommissarzhevskaiia founded her own theatre in St. Petersburg. She immediately engaged some of the best known artists and theatrical figures and created a fashionable, intimate environment where the audience could experience high quality modern drama supported by creative, luxurious stage sets (see fig. 1).<sup>30</sup> In 1906 Kommissarzhevskaiia commissioned Vsevolod Meierkhol'd to direct a production of Aleksandr Blok's *Balaganchik* [The Puppet Show]. The production, which exposed the practical workings of the stage, elicited a mixed response from the audience and critics. Criticism of *Balaganchik* fuelled the growing contemporary debate on the place of theatre in society.

A crisis of the theatre was formally acknowledged by three publications, *Teatr: Kniga o novom teatre* [Theatre: A Book on the New Theatre], *Krizis teatra* [The Theatre in Crisis] and *V sporakh o teatre* [In Debate on Theatre]. This so-called crisis was an organic phenomenon which had been growing since the beginning of mass industrialisation and urbanisation of the 1860s and had become more intense in recent years.<sup>31</sup> In general, the intellectual debates on the 'crisis' centred upon the

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<sup>30</sup> The Imperial theatres were constantly criticised for the shamefully poor quality of their stage sets. For a number of years, the same sets had been wheeled out for different productions. Similarly, the costumes belonged to the artists themselves and it was frequently the artist who exercised his or her preference of costume for any particular production. For more commentary on the contemporary dissatisfaction with the poor quality set designs, see Worrall, pp. 16–20. See also Volume 3 of this thesis for a number of photographs and sketches of the set designs of small commercial theatres of the era in question, and those of the 1913 Futurist productions *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory Over the Sun] and *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* [Vladimir Maiakovskii: A Tragedy].

<sup>31</sup> A. Lunacharskii et al., *Teatr: Kniga o novom teatre* (St. Petersburg: Shipovnik, 1908) with contributions by A. Benua, Vs. Meierkhol'd, F. Sologub, G. Chulkov, S. Rafalovich, V. Briusov and

expansion of the negative influence of cheap commercial theatres on the minds of the masses. In addition, intellectuals were dismissive of the mediocre vulgarised drama and buffoonery that was being served up to satisfy bourgeois tastes. The debate drew in commentary from diverse corners of society. As Rudnitsky notes, the contributors to *Kniga o novom teatre* included just one professional theatre director, Meierkhol'd. 'The rest were critics, artists, prose writers and poets, more or less unconnected with theatrical practice.'<sup>32</sup>

The theatre debate was not restricted to closed intellectual circles but appealed to a receptive public. The editorial in the *Russkii artist* (1908) described the dark times which followed the failed revolution of 1905 and the lack of hope which prevailed in society. The author declared theatre's utilitarian role to be an expression of hope for a better future.<sup>33</sup> An advertised programme for a public lecture by M. Nevedomskii 'Iskusstvo sovremennosti i prognozy budushchego' [Art of Our Times and Visions of the Future] reinforces the very public nature of the debate (fig. 2). The first part of the advertisement involved an assessment of modern writers, including Viacheslav Ivanov, Valerii Briusov, Andrei Belyi and others, and a social criticism of art of the future based on Lunacharskii's collection *Krizis teatra*. The second section of the lecture was entitled 'Postanovka. Iskusstvo burzhuazii i iskusstvo "burzhuaznoe"' [Performance. Art of the Bourgeoisie and 'Bourgeois' Art]. It raised many questions concerning the definition of bourgeois art and contextualised it in terms of Symbolism, foreign and Russian writers (Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Ibsen, Maeterlink, Nietzsche and Maksim Gor'kii). The final advertised section dealt with the relationship between the evolution of aesthetic-philosophical ideas and social evolution, in which Nevedomskii impugned the work of Leonid Andreev. Although the lecture was relatively expensive (40 kopeks to 3 rubles), it was scheduled for a Saturday evening, which would have boosted audience numbers.<sup>34</sup> Futurist debates, therefore, exploited an existing model of public engagement with the arts and the willingness to pay for educational public lectures.

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A. Belyi; *Krizis teatra. Sbornik kriticheskikh statei* (Moscow: [n.p.], 1908) and *V sporakh o teatre* (St. Petersburg: [n.p.], 1912).

<sup>32</sup> Rudnitsky, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Petrovskaiia, p. 52.

<sup>34</sup> The Hall of the Society of Civil Engineers on Serpukhovskaia street (near Vitebskii vokzal) was the advertised venue. 'Literatura i iskusstvo', *Vecher*, No. 265, 4 March 1909, p. 3.



An article by Esha in December 1911 asked the question, 'What do we mean by miniature theatres and do we need them?' Esha identified the increased number of miniature theatres and linked this to the rapid changes which were taking place in society and the economy. He underlined the strong public support for such establishments but asked whether it reflected a lowering of standards, even down to the level of cinema.<sup>35</sup> The negative reference to cinema is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly it recognises the increasing dominance of cinema as the most frequented form of popular culture among the entire metropolitan population and the consequential threat that was felt in theatrical circles. Secondly, the introduction of cinema to Russia at the turn of the twentieth century had a profound effect on the use of public urban space. In short, it provided secluded public spaces where men and women of all classes had the opportunity to mix. For some the cinema signalled a democratisation of public space on a large scale (a result of the abundance of cinemas). For others it symbolised an environment which was less formal than the theatre, where seating arrangements were less formal and people felt less inhibited, and where the fact of men and women sitting in the dark in such close proximity encouraged lewd behaviour (see fig. 3). It is not surprising therefore that the cinema was frequently connected with low morals and the prostitute, although not necessarily prostitution. Yuri Tsivian argues that the cinema provided a secure and affordable place where all types of people, including prostitutes, could escape from the hardships of daily life and seek warm refuge and escapism.<sup>36</sup> If this was the case then it constitutes a positive contribution to the process of renegotiating the function of urban space that was slowly taking place during this period. An important factor in this argument would be the regularity of film showings. The films ran throughout the day and into the night and therefore maximised access to this new public space. That is not to say, however, that the cinema was used by the same clientele and in the same manner at all times of the day or night.

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<sup>35</sup> Esha, 'Chto takoe teatry miniatiur i nuzhny li oni?: Nasha anketa', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 166, 27 December 1911, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Yuri Tsivian, 'Cinema and the Prostitute', in *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception*, edited by Richard Taylor (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 35–38.

The reference to cinema is particularly intriguing for our analysis of Russian Futurism because it represented a dynamic art form which embraced modern technology and had the potential to replace 'man of the theatre' with 'man of the machine'. The Futurists' interest in performance naturally directed them toward the medium of cinema. Contemporary critics regularly debated the pros and cons of theatre versus the cinema. As an art form cinema dominated the market of contemporary popular entertainment and competed with other forms of popular entertainment in terms of audience, ticket price, venue and value for money. The influence of cinema and new forms of visual perception and technology is evidenced in much Futurist art of the period in question. Mikhail Larionov's concept of Rayism, for example (as in *Boulevard Venus* 1913, fig. 201), was influenced by the invention of the x-ray and Petr Uspenskii's writing on the fourth dimension.

In purely official terms, Rayonism [sic] proceeds from the following tenets:  
*Luminosity owes its existence to reflected light (between objects in space this forms a kind of coloured dust).*  
*The doctrine of luminosity.*  
*Radioactive rays. Ultraviolet rays. Reflectivity.*<sup>37</sup>

The technology of cinema undoubtedly encouraged the development of Futurist aesthetics and supported Futurism's identity as a modern artistic tendency which looked to the future for artistic inspiration. The young Vladimir Maiakovskii regularly contributed articles to a journal on cinema. In 1913 he wrote a piece, *Teatr, Kinematograf, Futurizm* [Theatre, Cinematography, Futurism], in which he asked 'Can modern theatre compete with the cinema?'.<sup>38</sup> The greatest testament to the Futurist interest in film during this period was the creation of the first Futurist film, *Drama in Cabaret No. 13* (1914), depicting a day in the life of the Futurists.

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<sup>37</sup> This excerpt is taken from a theoretical manifesto, *Luchistskaia zhivopis'* [Rayonist Painting] which appeared in the Futurist miscellany *Oslinyi khvost i Mishen'* [The Donkey's Tail and the Target] (Moscow, July 1913). Another version of the text entitled *Le Rayonisme Pictural* [Pictorial Rayism] appeared in French in the publication *Montjoie!* (Paris) No. 4/5/6, April/May/June, 1914, p. 15. The French version expanded the idea and the application of reality as the projected intersection of imperceptible rays of light. Both texts appear in translation in John E. Bowl, ed., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), pp. 91-100 and 100-02.

<sup>38</sup> Vladimir Maiakovskii, 'Teatr, kinematograf, futurizm', in *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh*, 13 vols, vol. 1, 1912-1917 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955), pp. 275-77.

Futurism, and Futurist performance in particular, emerged during a time of theatrical instability. As we have seen, attitudes towards the content and function of the theatre evolved in line with the changing social dynamic of a modernising Russia. For this reason historians of Russian theatre often interpret Futurist theatre as a staging-post in the development of the mass spectacle, educational theatre or Revolutionary theatre. This type of analysis predominantly focussed on the two Futurist performances at the Luna Park Theatre, St. Petersburg, 1913.<sup>39</sup> More recent research has turned towards questions of the artist-audience relationship, changes in popular culture, and issues of hooliganism and anti-social behaviour. This research tends to concentrate on the Futurists' engagement in public debate and the cult of Futurism.<sup>40</sup>

This thesis departs from foregoing studies in that it considers the collective analysis of different practices within Futurist performance. A premise of the argument is that it is possible to identify four distinct categories of Russian Futurist performance during the period of 1910–14. The categories are as follows: impromptu 'street happenings' which attracted the attention of the public and the press; advertised lectures and public debates (which discussed issues concerning new forms of art, literary works, music and theatre), and which frequently included recitals of Futurist work; advertised and impromptu performances which took place in cabarets, up-market restaurants and other venues generally restricted to the middle classes and above; and finally the more formal advertised traditional theatre which took place in the familiar 'estrada' setting of the Luna Park Theatre. Throughout my thesis, I will argue that these four categories of performance were aimed at different sections of the public, served different theatrical and social functions, and operated according to separate rules of theatrical praxis. The cumulative study of all four categories will

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<sup>39</sup> For further information on this topic see: James R. Von Geldern, *Festivals of the Revolution, 1917–1920: Art and Theater in the Formation of Soviet Culture*, Unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University (1987); Robert Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1994); Robert Russell and Andrew Barrett, eds., *Russian Theatre in the Age of Modernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>40</sup> See Jane A. Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde and Its Audience: Moscow, 1913', *Modernism/modernity: Politics / Gender / Judgement*, vol. 6: 3 (1999), 91–116; Elena Basner, 'La fortune critique de Nathalie Gontcharova dans la presse russe des années 1909–14', in *Natalie Gontcharova, Michel Larionov*, edited by Nicole Ouvrard, with the assistance of Martine Reyss (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1995), pp. 188–94; Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); Joan Neuberger, 'Culture Besieged: Hooliganism and Futurism', in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, edited by Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), pp. 185–203.

therefore give us a much greater insight into the aims, practice and broad underlying factors which shaped the development of Russian Futurism as an artistic movement. Futurist performance will be considered within its contemporary artistic and theatrical context. This approach will emphasise the synthetic nature of Russian Futurist theatre of this era, which, in turn, had such a profound effect on the development of twentieth-century Russian and European theatre.

The transgression of traditional artistic boundaries within the Futurist movement has rendered the appraisal of the early period of Russian Futurist theatre a complicated task. The focus of much valuable research has therefore been divided between the literary word, visual art, photography, cinema, music, theatre in its traditional sense, and Futurism as a social phenomenon and the Futurists as cult figures. (The latter approach has been particularly evident in the treatment of Maiakovskii.) Where Charlotte Douglas has offered comprehensive analyses of the Luna Park performances, Georgii Kovalenko's recent publications *Russkii Avangard 1910-kh – 1920-kh godov i teatr* [The Russian Avant-Garde of the 1910s–1920s and Theatre] (2000) and *Russkii Kubofuturizm* [Russian Cubo-Futurism] (2002) have addressed the question of theatre in thematic terms.<sup>41</sup> By contrast, the initial volume of Andrei Krusanov's *Russkii Avangard: 1907–1932* offers us a wealth of information presented chronologically and collated from a wide range of sources, with an emphasis on contemporary press. His interpretation of the avant-garde incorporates the different artistic modes, but as Krusanov notes in his introduction, he has approached the history of the avant-garde from a purely historical perspective, rather than an art historical position. Integrated analyses of specific art works and performances have therefore been omitted. Krusanov's focus on the avant-garde as a 'social phenomenon with a defined ideological artistic perspective' brings us back to

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<sup>41</sup> Publications by Charlotte Douglas include 'Birth of a "Royal Infant": Malevich and *Victory Over the Sun*', *Art in America*, vol.62 (1974), 45–51; *Swans of Other Worlds: Kazimir Malevich and the Origins of Abstraction in Russia* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1976); and 'Victory Over the Sun', *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol.8: 1–2 (1981), 69–89. Edited publications by G. F. Kovalenko include *Russkii Avangard 1910-kh–1920-kh godov i teatr* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2000) and *Russkii kubofuturizm* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2002). A number of publications contextualise Russian Futurism and this period of avant-garde within the broader picture of the art of the 1900s–1930. For example, John E. Bowlt, *Russian Stage Design: Scenic Innovation, 1900–1930. From the Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Nikita D. Lobanov-Rostovsky* (Jackson: The Mississippi Museum of Art, 1982).

the question of public reaction and interaction with the emergence and development of early Futurism.<sup>42</sup>

In order to examine the relationship between Futurist and audience, in its broadest sense (public, critic, fellow artists and patron), we need to assess contemporary public opinion. Here we turn primarily to newspapers and the influential role of the press as chief mediators of contemporary concepts of culture, opinion makers and disseminators of information to the masses. It is here, within this organ of mass media, that multiple and competing ideologies of the public sphere were produced and most clearly expressed. Although the relationship between the development of Futurism, audience and the press is a constant theme throughout this thesis, let us first consider the second half of Iartsev's epigraph, the question of the power of the press.

### The Power of the Press

The success of the Russian newspaper industry on a national scale was a thoroughly modern phenomenon which dated back to the literacy initiatives of the 1860s. The industry grew as technological advances, especially in the telecommunications and railroad networks, enabled news to be efficiently gathered, printed and distributed. Throughout Europe, the rise of the newspaper is commonly linked to the new audiences of the industrial era and the newly defined areas of public space, such as cafés, or in the Russian context, People's Houses, where people could gather to read the newspapers and discuss their contents. A large percentage of contemporary newspapers were therefore aimed at the new literate audience of the upper-working classes and lower-middle classes, or in Russian terms, the *meshchanstvo* or *poluintelligentsiia*.<sup>43</sup> The internal organisation of the newspapers also reflected the

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<sup>42</sup> Krusanov, Andrei V., *Russkii Avangard: 1907–1932 (Istoricheskii obzor) v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, vol. 1, *Boevoe desiatiletie* (St. Petersburg: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> My use of these terms follows the usage of Petrovskaia who devotes a considerable number of pages to their definition, pp. 14–16. *Meshchanstvo* is a rather baggy, 'catch-all' category, which encompasses any social element from skilled labourers to those overlapping with the lower rungs of the intelligentsia/bourgeoisie. The contemporary usage of the term was often derogatory and

upward mobility of the changing modern urban social structure. Louise McReynolds' *The News Under Russia's Old Regime* illustrates how newspaper employment strategies transcended the traditional boundaries of employment. Typical marginalized groups such as women, Jews and the poor were frequently able to secure employment with a newspaper and develop a stable career.<sup>44</sup>

The establishment of Futurism in the public consciousness coincided with the heyday of printed publications, periodicals and daily newspapers. According to Jeffrey Brooks, the number of titles of dailies rose from 506 in 1910 to 824 in 1914, before it fell back to 584 in 1915.<sup>45</sup> Russian art criticism had emerged in printed form as early as 1807 with publication of *Zhurnal iziashchmykh iskusstv* [The Journal of Fine Art]. However, it was not until the 1890s, the so-called 'decade of the reporter', that the popular magazine *Niva*, which enjoyed the largest circulation in

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employed as a synonym of 'обыватель' [inhabitant; (fig) philistine], or the 'other' of the intelligentsia, the 'grey masses'. Petrovskaia refers to *meshchantsvo* as a state of mind (of one who is concerned only with himself, not interested in his surroundings, vulgar, untrustworthy, indifferent and malevolent) which crosses all classes and geographical locations. Definitions also include a slavish following and passiveness of spirit, united with self-satisfaction, egoism, and understanding of prosperity as satiety, and one's own repletion being the purpose of life. Finally, other definitions refer to the concept of 'the masses', *massovyi chelovek*, *chelovek tolpy*, often with a synonym of *poshlost'* [common people, vulgarity, trite], but also in contrast to the peasantry [those with a spiritual foundation and a link with nature]. Petrovskaia's definition of *poluintelligentsiia* [lower rungs of the intelligentsia], encompasses primary school teachers, middle-layer technical and medical staff, post-office and railway workers, and office workers (see p. 11). This is equivalent to what some called the workers-intelligentsia [*rabochaia intelligentsiia*]. According to Petrovskaia capitalist proprietors were in need of engineers, technicians, bank workers, etc. The number of those who undertook specialist training in secondary and higher education increased, provoking a growth in the number of students and teachers. Specialist education became focused in industry and commercial activities. The number of the *poluintelligentsiia* increased and its members are quoted as forming the largest section of the educated public; however they remained economically on a level with the poorest *melkie khoziaeva* or proprietors of small businesses. Chapters 4 and 5 will return to the question of class distinctions in greater detail.

<sup>44</sup> Louise McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), pp. 145–67. McReynolds gives many examples which illustrate how traditional barriers of gender, ethnicity and social status dissolved in the face of tremendous demand for news. One consequence of this circumstance was that high profile Jewish reporters, publishers and editors were able to combat the strident anti-Semitism which prevailed in some sections of the press and the wider community.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), pp. 61 and 112, table 6. Norman Stone describes the comparable explosion in printed matter in Paris as follows: 'New printing techniques, cheap timber and a huge new reading public caused the four *journaux d'information* of Paris in the 1860s to develop into seventy daily newspapers a generation later'. This figure was maintained in 1914. Austria is said to have had 866 newspapers and periodicals in 1873, which rose to 1801 by 1891 and 3000 by 1914. Norman Stone, *Europe Transformed, 1878–1919* (London: Fontana, 1983), pp. 14 and 31.

the country, appointed its first professional art critic, the artist Igor' Grabar'.<sup>46</sup> According to Grigorii Sternin, Grabar' was 'responsible for writing essays on paintings, features of artists' jubilees, and exhibition reviews, and he also participated in selecting works of art to be reproduced in the magazine'. The reproduction of art in the press played a crucial role in educating the public in all forms of art, including modern art and Futurist art. The popularity of art reproductions in the press, including commemorative jubilee editions of art and literature, bears testament to the increasing commodification of the arts among the lower-middle classes. Just as Sternin writes that Grabar' had to operate within 'the general orientation' of *Niva*, that is 'toward the tastes of the lower-middle classes', so Gleb Pospelov recognised that the newspapers of the early Futurist era were also aimed at the same group, the *burzhuzno-meschanskaia massa*, which affected the overall tone of the newspaper.<sup>47</sup> The rapid development of newspaper art criticism, in its widest sense, was a response to the individual's growing interest in culture as an expression of his/her place in society. The interest in art was not restricted to metropolitan urban life. Sternin notes how '[p]ractically every art exhibition, as small as it was, gave rise to a lot of talk and discussion by newspaper reporters and professional critics. At times, a regular exhibition became the topic of the day and moved aside other news stories.'<sup>48</sup> The predominance of newspaper art criticism drew the discussion of the arts and their role in contemporary society out of the circles of the intelligentsia and fashionable salons and placed the discourse clearly within the realm of the public square.

Art criticism was practised by different types of critics, writers and journalists. The expanding newspaper art columns included serious artistic analyses by educated members of the artistic milieu, commentary on the social and moral impact of the work and the audience reaction, and more informal or even sensationalist columns which focused on the artist as a personality, rather than the art itself. There are two

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<sup>46</sup> Grigory Sternin, 'Public and Artist in Russia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Tekstura: Russian Essays on Visual Culture*, edited by Alla Efimova and Lev Manovich (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 89–114 (pp. 95–96). For an assessment and material sources related to the history of Russian Art Criticism see *Russian Visual Arts*, <http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/index.html>.

<sup>47</sup> G. G. Pospelov, *Bubnovyi valet: primitiv i gorodskoi fol'klor v moskovskoi zhivopisi 1910-kh godov* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1990), p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> Sternin, 'Public and Artist', p. 95.

main reasons why writers were attracted to the newspapers. Firstly, the newspapers paid a relatively good wage, and as noted above, this work was available to all sections of literate society, including those from generally disenfranchised sections of society. According to McReynolds, writers were paid per line. The average reporter earned 3–10 kopeks a line, whilst established writers earned up to 20 kopeks a line. Eminent literary figures are even said to have been paid up to 1,000 rubles an article. The average annual salary could range from between 2400 rubles to 6000–8400 for the top writers. However, some reporters had to spend up to 100 rubles a month to acquire their ‘top tips’, thereby forfeiting a significant proportion of their salary.<sup>49</sup> Theatre directors were regular contributors to the newspapers, including Nemirovich-Danchenko, who wrote for *Russkoe slovo*. This brings me to the second reason for the attractiveness of newspapers to writers. Reporters wished to be recognised as the modern embodiment of the intelligentsia. According to McReynolds, they associated with and praised well-known members of the traditional intelligentsia in their articles as a means of raising their own profile and social status.<sup>50</sup> As with all journalism, however, art critics were restricted by censorship, the audience and the political perspective of the publication.

The very essence of Futurism challenged institutional, social, economic and cultural boundaries. In response, many critics assumed a defensive perspective with the aim of protecting their own artistic, journalistic and moral integrity, and that of their publication. Some critics acted as ‘moral guardians’, concerned about the negative effect of avant-garde art on the gullible masses, reflecting the political bias of their publication. Others presented themselves as authorities on the institution and canon of art, what Patrice Pavis terms a ‘voice for the arts’. Here the critic has ‘at least partial freedom from the political assumptions underlying the newspaper or journal’, although, as Pavis notes, it [the need to look to an established authority] reflects ‘what Barthes called the bourgeois sense of the quantitative and the visible’.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> McReynolds, pp. 156 and 240. Comparative wages are stated as follows: female teacher – 200–900 rubles per annum; skilled labourer – 300; high-ranking bureaucrat – 6,000; doctors – 900–3,000 (female doctors were paid 30% less); professors – 1,500–5,500.

<sup>50</sup> McReynolds, pp. 227–28.

<sup>51</sup> Pavis’s work is paraphrased and cited in Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 44–45. Bennett also notes how modern



The plethora of newspapers aimed at the lower end of the social scale cared more about sales than it did about the factual integrity of the newspaper. The tone of such publications was sensationalist rather than sober, and melodrama was often preserved at the price of accuracy. Daniel Brower points to the economic reason underpinning this trend. He notes how the Penny Press, for example, relied on street sales alone, not subscriptions, to the point where the very survival of the newspaper depended upon ‘its ability to cajole a few kopeks every day from a fickle reader of modest means who was reached most easily through street sales (see fig. 4).’<sup>52</sup>

The ‘street press’, or more derogatorily, the ‘yellow press’ experienced the largest growth within the Russian press.<sup>53</sup> The sales of the St. Petersburg daily *Gazeta Kopeika* exceeded those of all other publications. Its circulation of 11,000 copies in its first year, 1908, rose to 150,000 in 1909, and it enjoyed a circulation of 250,000 between 1910–1913. Its sister paper in Moscow (founded in 1910) maintained a circulation of 150,000 by 1912.<sup>54</sup> The *Kopeika* would have been particularly popular among the newly literate metropolitan population, that is the young male worker, members of the *meshchanstvo*, but also the *poluintelligentsiia*, and students. The editors of the Moscow paper also boasted representation in the villages.<sup>55</sup> Brooks notes that on the second anniversary of the *Kopeika*, June 1910, the editors congratulated themselves ‘for reawakening interest in social questions, in civic problems, and in bright ideals. The editors claimed that the newspaper was “the heart of social conscience”’.<sup>56</sup>

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theatre criticism of the ‘alternative press’ has been ‘overtly linked to the political bias of the publication represented’, and this is equally true of the reception of Russian Futurist performance.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel R. Brower, ‘The Penny Press and Its Readers’, in *Cultures in Flux*, edited by Frank and Steinberg, pp. 147–67, p. 150.

<sup>53</sup> Brooks, p. 118.

<sup>54</sup> Brooks, pp. 130–31.

<sup>55</sup> Brooks, p. 132.

<sup>56</sup> Irrespective of the authenticity of this statement, Brooks notes the contents of the *Kopeika* in 1913 as follows: Foreign affairs (12%); entertainment and serial fiction (11%); police and court cases (8%); advertising (43%); and domestic politics, working and living conditions, issues concerning the countryside, culture and education (26%), p. 132. It is also worth noting that Gorodetskii’s joint stock company was responsible for printing propaganda posters [*Sovremennyi lubok*], by the likes of Kazimir Malevich and Vladimir Maiakovskii, during the First World War.

What is most noticeable about the introduction and success of the Penny Press is the melodramatic nature of the stories, together with the public manner in which they were read. Public attraction to sensationalist reporting is supported by Brooks's identification of the four dominant themes of the Penny Press and contemporary popular fiction: self-betterment; science and superstition; national identity; and freedom and rebellion, including the most popular bandit characters.<sup>57</sup> Undoubtedly due to issues of illiteracy and financial economy, Brower notes how 'stories were read aloud in family circles and in public meeting places such as taverns. These audiences turned newspaper articles into subjects of discussion and debate, revising the information to fit their own expectation and preconceptions.'<sup>58</sup> This rhetorical form of 'reading' and disseminating information, not only had the potential to engage the public in current affairs, but could simultaneously divert their attention from the factual matter in hand and focus on more amusing and less intellectual elements. Following the same logic, the reading of an article relating to a Futurist debate could focus entirely on the carnivalesque elements of humorous repartee, offensive language and behaviour, and outlandish clothing, and omit any reference to a Futurist aesthetic.

Caricatures and photographic reproductions also contributed to the theatrical reception of the Futurists and addressed the illiterate. Caricature was an integral part of the Russian journalistic tradition and it seems evident that a number of caricatures of Futurist individuals and events could be understood (correctly or otherwise) by an illiterate viewer.<sup>59</sup> The caricatures of figures 5–8 which satirise Futurist personalities, Futurist 'street happenings', and the way in which Futurist art was produced and poorly received, all demonstrate how an understanding of the image could be conveyed, even without the support of the words. Similarly, the photographs which

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<sup>57</sup> Brooks, pp. 134 and 166. See also the appendices in McReynolds's, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime* for further information regarding the breakdown of the content of contemporary newspapers.

<sup>58</sup> Brower, p. 148. Although Brower is discussing the tradition in which the stories and feuilletons were originally read in the 1860s onwards, it is possible that a degree of this tradition remained as rates of literacy improved, particularly among the urban lower-class population.

<sup>59</sup> In his opening editorial of the first issue of the journal *Zolotoe runo* [The Golden Fleece], 1906, Dmitrii Filosofov praised the topicality of illustration. He claimed that 'artistic life was frozen, not only in St. Petersburg but in the whole of Russia', and then continued to criticise the decadent nature of the majority of contemporary Russian art and the outmoded nature of the Academies. He writes how the area of illustration, political caricature and social satire are the only artistic forms which are able to keep pace with the changing times. Letter dated 22 December 1905, St. Petersburg. See *Zolotoe runo*, No. 1, 1906, pp. 106–11 (pp. 109–10).

depicted the Moscow Futurists with painted faces, such as figure 9, communicated a comprehensible pictorial narrative. Although further explanation would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the Futurist declared aesthetic, the photographs, like the caricatures, had an independent shock-value of their own and one which would surely have pleased the Futurists.

The newspaper column can be interpreted as an extension of the public square, albeit a mediated platform, where public opinion and ideology are in a state of constant flux. The art critic and journalist, who had direct access to this platform, played a key role in the emergence and development of Russian Futurism. Critics exercised an inordinate influence over the mindset of their readership. They had the choice of aiding the Futurists, communicating their artistic principles and aesthetic, creating personalities and celebrities on the one hand, or of taking the opportunity to mock, deride, ridicule, and topple individuals and artistic trends. The Futurists were sensitive to this balance of powers and, as this thesis will demonstrate, one can perceive a clear maturation in their ability to manipulate the press and adapt their marketing and rhetorical strategies over the five-year period in question. They gave interviews to the press, wrote articles and theoretical tracts, posed for photographs and published many of their manifestoes in the press. Futurism responded to and reflected the modern social dynamics of this transitory period in Russian history, and many parallels can be drawn between the organisation and public status of the artists as avant-gardists and the ambiguous status of journalists. Like many newspaper journalists, editors and owners, most Futurists were self-made and they were frequently criticised for their blatant self-promotion (see fig. 10). The combined identity of the Futurists was contradictory and transgressed traditional concepts of class, gender, education and artistic affiliation. The heterogeneous nature of the group meant that journalists and critics often found it difficult to write about the group or individual Futurists in a meaningful way. Like the journalistic profession, the Futurists were not accepted by the monied classes, and they too included prominent women, Jewish figures, members of the lower-classes and poverty-stricken artists among their ranks.

The extent to which the Futurists were able to harness the power of the press, influence, or even create their audience, and shape their future and public reputation is an underlying question throughout my thesis. Whilst self-promotion was a necessary ingredient of Futurist success, one should bear in mind that however popular they became, the Futurists remained a constituent part of the Russian avant-garde and by definition, therefore, continued to exist on the periphery of the main art market. As many lacked financial and social stability, and were unacknowledged or dismissed as charlatans by the more conservative art critics and state institutions of art, the press represented the one public institution through which the Futurists could attempt to legitimise their place in the artistic heritage of Russia and in European art history. To this end, their very existence became reliant, to a certain degree, on their relationship with the press, art critics and patrons of the arts.

As we have discussed, this historical era was defined by its fluidity in all aspects of life. Large sections of society struggled for a sense of identity, of self-awareness and a sense of their own destiny. The Futurists were no different, and in this sense, Krusanov is correct to consider them in their purely socio-historical context. The Futurist history of this era, 1910–14, was not only dependent upon the Futurists' creative talents, but also upon their ability to negotiate the networks of intellectual and artistic circles, artistic institutions, the press and ultimately the public, which included prospective patrons.

A comprehensive history of Russian Futurism is not the purpose of this thesis. This would involve a more extensive analysis and comparative study of the dialogic relationship between the structures, personalities and products of the European avant-garde, Italian Futurism and Russian Schools and institutions of art than there is room for here. Instead, I have chosen to use Futurist performance as a vehicle to explore the artistic, socio-economic and cultural conditions which affected the emergence and development of Russian Futurism as a recognisable artistic movement. After this initial period of Futurism, many who were associated with the movement, however temporarily, went on to achieve national and international fame, as either Soviet or émigré artists. Larionov and Goncharova were soon absorbed into the European

avant-garde through their collaboration with Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. David Burliuk continued to work in the USA, having first made his artistic mark on Japan, and Marc Chagall enjoyed a particularly successful career based in Paris. At the same time Maiakovskii, Ol'ga Rozanova, Liubov' Popova, Vladimir Tatlin, Kazimir Malevich and Aleksandra Ekster, to name but a few, made significant contributions to Soviet and world art and theatre, and pursued the principle of incorporating art into daily life. Their individual fates have been well-documented by Russian, Soviet and Western scholars. By contrast, much less has been published which focuses on the relationship between material aspects of the dynamic socio-economic climate and the art that was being produced during this very early period of the Russian avant-garde. Who financed the Futurists? Where did they exhibit? How much did they earn? Who exactly constituted their audiences? How were they received and did this dynamic change over time?

This thesis sets out to address some of these questions. In a sense, it explores the degree of Futurist success in its historical context. It seeks to establish those factors which had direct bearing on the emergence, existence and survival of the movement in its contemporary Russian context.

Part I identifies the individuals who were instrumental in supporting the emergence of Futurism and considers the strategies which the Futurists employed to promote their work and encourage the participation of an audience. Chapter 1 focuses on issues of finance and the institutional and cultural structures which facilitated or/and restricted Futurism's emergence and development. Emphasis is placed on the roles played by individual art collectors and contemporary artistic groups, as educators and facilitators, who afforded many Russian avant-gardists direct access to contemporary European art and social and intellectual circles. The Futurists, and Futurism in general, will be considered within the context of a developing Russian art market and the difficulties they encountered as a result of their respective financial, educational and social status. David Burliuk and Mikhail Larionov, will be considered in their role as impresarios of Russian Futurism and leaders of the two dominant Futurist groups *Bubnovyi valet* and *Oslinyi khvost*. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the funding of Futurist art exhibitions, performances and publications.

Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive evaluation of the marketing strategies adopted by different Futurist groups. Although it is widely acknowledged that Futurist performance was frequently used as a marketing tool for art exhibitions and other Futurist events, this chapter pays close attention to forms of printed marketing materials. Drawing on published and archival material, this chapter illustrates how Futurist marketing strategies evolved over the period in question according to the artists' financial situation, contemporary artistic competition, availability of new technologies, the level of public recognition and popularity and the changes in discourse. Attention is focussed on the Futurist use of the press as an affordable and effective method of dissemination of the Futurist aesthetic, and on the design and content of Futurist posters, fliers and exhibition catalogues. As Futurism became more declamatory and competitive, the artists produced a large number of manifestoes and theoretical tracts, which were published as pamphlets, press articles and interviews, literary collections and forewords to art exhibition catalogues. These will also be considered. An analysis of the function of performance as an effective marketing tool concludes the chapter.

Whilst the question of audience informs the entire thesis, Part II investigates the relationship between Futurist and audience more explicitly. It considers the sites of performance, where Futurists were able to interact with the public, and identifies the social groupings present in the audience and their respective reaction to the performances. Chapter 3 investigates the issue of the site of performance in relation to its affordability, location and accessibility, artistic and social associations, and current trends of fashion. In light of Futurism's challenge to social, spatial and artistic boundaries and its relevance to the creation of a Futurist audience *per se*, this chapter examines the venues of Futurist art exhibitions in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in addition to the sites and venues of performance of each of the four identified categories of Futurist performance: street 'happenings'; cabarets and miniature theatres; advertised public lectures and debates; and advertised theatre in a traditional theatre setting. This chapter will also identify private residences and art salons which offered a sympathetic environment for Futurist performance and artistic and social support.

The question of the identity of the Futurist audience and the reception of Futurism form the subject of Chapters 4 and 5. Taken together, the chapters identify different sections of the audience, give an indication of each section's attitude toward the Futurists and reaction to their work, and also analyse the Futurists' attitude to different sections of the public. Chapter 4 concentrates on the influence of individual art critics as arbiters of taste and observes their role in not only recording, but also contributing to the creation of the Futurist public image. The second half of the chapter analyses the presence of the bourgeoisie at Futurist events and the wider public sphere. Their relation to Futurism is considered in terms of contemporary stereotypes of bourgeois gullibility, their participation in cultural fashion, and the commodification of art which was prevalent in the growing capitalist environment. An analysis of selected Futurist paintings is given in order to draw more comprehensive conclusions regarding the Futurists' attitude to the bourgeoisie.

Chapter 5 turns to the negative connotations of Futurism as recorded in contemporary criticism and journalism. As Futurism was frequently associated with disenfranchised sections of the public, this chapter examines Futurism in terms of gender and of behaviour deemed to be characteristic of the lower-classes: hooliganism, fear, madness and laughter. Once again, because of the scarcity of textual or oral information regarding the Futurist attitude toward their audience and the wider public, the final section of this chapter uses artistic analysis to draw some conclusions regarding the political and nationalist undercurrent which existed within the early period of Futurism in question.

Certain themes are common to all chapters. These are general issues which define the social, cultural and economic make-up of this period in Russian history, and therefore affected the production and reception of the Futurist movement. First and foremost, although Russian Futurism constituted the Russian wing of the European avant-garde, it must be considered in its specifically Russian context, where the work was predominantly produced and received. Although some Futurists had travelled widely outside Russia, many had only a mediated view of Europe and their intellectual perspective and artistic heritage was primarily Russian. It is not

surprising, therefore, that Russian avant-garde intellectual discourse and aesthetics frequently echoed discussions which had taken place between the Slavophiles and Westerners in the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Russian art of the 1910s is distinguished from its nineteenth-century predecessors by one significant event, the failed 1905 Revolution. Russian Futurism emerged during a time of increased social unrest, institutional fear and sensitivity (reflected in the Stolypin reforms and increased social censorship) and fear of anarchy.

Having specified the Russian context, one should remember that industrialisation, urbanisation, commercialism, rapid growth in the size of the bourgeoisie and the increasing influence of modern concepts of taste, fashion and modern technology were common to many European countries. The Russian Futurist response to this dynamic social situation was informed by other European artistic expression (particularly French and German). Russian Futurism was specifically indebted to Italian Futurism on a number of levels. Each Futurist group was affected in its own way by its own national socio-economic, cultural, artistic and political environment. For the purposes of this thesis, comparable analyses of Italian Futurism will only be given where such information illuminates the Russian analysis or in instances when Russians and Italians have come into direct contact. Finally, Russian Futurism will be discussed as national artistic phenomenon in its own right, and as a product of an on-going discourse with the European avant-garde.

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<sup>60</sup> Slavophilism refers to the Russian intellectual movement which advocated that Russia's future development be based on values and institutions that were derived from her early history. The movement began c.1830s and was influenced by German philosophy. Debates over the basis of Russia's future continued between Slavophiles and Westerners (those who favoured European values and institutional structures) throughout the nineteenth century.



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## Chapter 1

### The Emergence of Russian Futurism: Patrons, Personalities and Poverty

Russian Futurism emerged at a time when the monopoly of producing art through state-sponsored art academies and the Imperial theatres was under threat. The state institutions were challenged by competition from new private commercial enterprises and also faced increasing public demands for greater accountability of public finances. The Aleksandrinskii Imperial Theatre in St. Petersburg, for example, was criticised for its reliance on state subsidies, in addition to its out-dated repertoire and general lack of innovation.<sup>1</sup> During the same period, a new generation of wealthy art and theatre patrons stepped forward to lay the groundwork for a potentially flourishing Russian art market. This chapter analyses the supportive role which these patrons played in the creation and development of the Russian avant-garde. It contrasts the opulence of the new patrons with the social and financial instability of many contemporary artists and illustrates the function and exceptional talents of the new Futurist impresarios. An analysis of the split between Bubnovyi valet and Oslinyi khvost in 1912 draws attention to the importance of the impresarios in the Futurists' search for artistic identity. The final part of the chapter addresses the specific question of funding and explores the issue of financing Futurist art exhibitions, performances and publications.

The majority of Russia's new art patrons, with the exception of a select few, such as Princess Mariia Tenisheva, were not from aristocratic backgrounds. Instead, they were typically members of industrialist families who had moved to the metropolitan capitals and made their money in the late nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> If the older generations

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the State Exchequer subsidised the St. Petersburg Imperial theatres by 2.6 million rubles during the 1899–1900 season. Murray Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia 1900–1920* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland, 2000), pp. 24–25.

<sup>2</sup> Although she was married to an industrialist, Princess Mariia Klavdievna Tenisheva was an aristocrat and artist who devoted much of her life to the revival and preservation of Russian folk and decorative arts. See Wendy Salmond, 'Princess Maria Tenisheva and the Talashkino Workshops', in *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia: Reviving the Kustar Art Industries, 1879–1917* (Cambridge:

had accumulated wealth, the following generations knew how to spend it. The opulent lifestyle of this new breed of patron, often referred to as the ‘merchant patrons’ or ‘Moscow Merchants’, was the subject of constant gossip and criticism in intellectual circles and the contemporary press. However, the patrons were not easily distracted by such criticism and continued to apply their entrepreneurial passion and daring to their collecting strategies. Fedor Shaliapin’s comments express the achievements of the patrons.

Yes, the Russian merchants liked victory, and they vanquished. They vanquished poverty, obscurity, the insults of uniformed *chinovniks* and the blank disdain of aristocratic snobs and dandies... I have never encountered anything to equal the lavishness of the Russian merchant. I do not believe Europeans could have any idea of its scale.<sup>3</sup>

The artistic colonies Abramtsevo (founded in the early 1870s near Moscow) and Talashkino (founded in 1892, near Smolensk), had initiated the concept of private patronage and the promotion of an art which was alternative to Academic art. In addition to the artistic colonies, Savva Mamontov (who owned Abramtsevo with his wife Elizaveta) and Princess Mariia Tenisheva (who with her husband, Prince Viacheslav Tenishev, was the force behind Talashkino) were also the initial patrons of the influential World of Art publication, *Mir iskusstva*.<sup>4</sup> Other patrons had a voracious and competitive appetite for collecting art. They founded art journals and miniature theatres, and funded exhibitions. The ambitious Nikolai Riabushinskii (whose brother owned the liberal newspaper *Utro Rossii*) published the sumptuous art journal *Zolotoe runo* [Golden Fleece] and financed and co-organised four major avant-garde exhibitions. He was an avid commissioner of art and even entertained the idea of building a Palace of the Arts in Moscow which, according to John Bowl, was to be based on a shareholder scheme of five hundred shares at 1,000 rubles per share. The project was never realised, due to Riabushinskii’s own financial collapse

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Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 115–43; Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983), pp. 37–46; Alison Hilton, *Russian Folk Art* (Bloomington: Indiana UP: 1995), pp. 239–42; Alison Hilton, ‘Domestic Crafts and Creative Freedom: Russian Women’s Art’, in *Russia, Women, Culture*, edited by H. Gosciolo and B. Holmgren (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), pp. 347–74 (pp. 361–63).

<sup>3</sup> Shaliapin, cited in Kean, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the artistic colonies, see Hilton, *Russian Folk Art*, in particular, ‘Artistic Renewal’ pp. 227–44; and Salmond, *Arts and Crafts*.

in 1909–10.<sup>5</sup> Savva Morozov bank-rolled the Moscow Art Theatre in its initial years, whilst Sergei Morozov's Impressionist and modern art collection was only equalled by that of his fellow industrialist, Sergei Shchukin. Other notable art patrons included Sergei Poliakov (editor of the literary magazine, *Vesy* [Scales]), Ivan Troianovskii, Vladimir and Genrietta Girshman, and Levkii Zheverzheev, who funded the activities and artistic association of Soiuz molodezhi [Union of Youth].

As ever, success bred jealousy and criticism and many of the new patrons were satirized for their allegedly vulgar bourgeois tastes and their gullibility when faced with charismatic, persuasive characters such as Sergei Diaghilev, or the hot-headed artists and impresarios of the new-age, such as Mikhail Larionov. The image of Princess Tenisheva being milked by Diaghilev for more funding was encapsulated in the notorious cartoon in the newspaper *Shut* ['Buffoon'] and became the talk of salons and gossip columns alike (see fig. 11).<sup>6</sup>

Researchers, including Anthony Swift, argue that self-made Russian patrons engaged in art patronage as a means of establishing their cultural credentials. This practice was widespread among the lower and middle classes. It was representative of the potential social mobility of the era as many people attempted to buy their way into the next social stratum. Although the Moscow Merchants were generally well educated (Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov, for example, had both furthered their solid Russian secondary education with practical training in Western European institutions), in this fervently class-ridden society, they were not always accepted as having the same social and cultural credentials as the existing Russian aristocracy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more details of this project and information concerning Nikolai Riabushinskii and other maecenae, see John E. Bowl, 'The Moscow Art Market', in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, edited by Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), pp. 108–28; Albert Kostenevich and Natalia Semyonova, *Collecting Matisse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); and Natal'ia Dumova, *Moskovskie metsenaty* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Kean notes how Prince Tenishev warned his wife of Diaghilev's interest in her money, not her artistic goals, pp. 45–46, footnote 30. 'The cartoon, entitled, "Idyll (World of Art)", was by Pavel Shcherbov, whom Aleksandr Benua called "the Old Judge". It appeared in the publication *Shut* [Buffoon] in 1900'. This incident is also referred to in N. Lapshina, "*Mir iskusstva*": *Ocherki istorii i tvorcheskoi praktiki* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> E. Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 152. For notes on Morozov's and Shchukin's education see Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *Valentin Serov: Portraits of Russia's Silver Age* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 2001), p. 195. Bowl also credits the erudition and expertise of a few

Kean has suggested that the patrons travelled to Paris and extended their collecting to artists from the Parisian exhibitions (considered to be the epicentre of European art), in order to further legitimise their status as prominent *maecenae* on an international level.<sup>8</sup> It was fortunate for the young artists of the emerging Russian avant-garde that the patrons concentrated on acquiring modernist European art, rather than earlier Russian masters. Although the boldness of their tastes varied, the patrons' collections included French Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism, Primitivism, Fauvism and Cubism. Their taste in modern art expressed a progressive, liberal tendency and even an arrogant self-confidence to set new trends, influence the Parisian art market and initiate a new art market in Russia.

### Patrons and *Kruzhok* Culture

The emergence of Futurism was indebted to the daring and encouragement of the new patrons of art. In 1904 Ivan Troianovskii bought ten pastels by Larionov. In doing so he became Larionov's first patron and continued to buy more than forty canvases over the course of the following five years.<sup>9</sup> Anthony Parton notes that Larionov also sold 'over one hundred paintings to more than thirty buyers' from 1904 to 1914, including the Tret'iakov Gallery, the Viatsk (now Kirov) Museum, and the collectors Ivan Morozov, Nikolai Riabushinskii, and Sergei Poliakov.<sup>10</sup>

The value of these patrons' contribution to the development of a Russian avant-garde did not lie solely in their financial role. Many opened their private collections for public viewings, which afforded the would-be Futurists the opportunity to learn about the latest European artistic trends from primary sources, and to mix with other key figures of the Russian art world. Patrons such as Sergei Shchukin, who opened his collection to the public on Sunday mornings, perfectly illustrate the function of

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patrons, such as Il'ia Ostroukhov, who 'were regarded as the ultimate scholarly authorities on particular areas of art history'. Bowlit, 'The Moscow Art Market', p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Kean, p. 153.

<sup>9</sup> See Anthony Parton, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Parton, pp. 5 and 10. Kean also notes that in 1906, Ivan Morozov bought work by Larionov, Goncharova and Chagall, see p. 111.

‘circle leader’ which existed in the fin-de-siècle *kruzhok* culture. Barbara Walker describes the role of these leaders as follows:

*Kruzhok* leaders were not patrons in the classic economic sense of providing mere financial support to intellectual endeavour. Rather, they were skilful organisers of intelligentsia social, professional and emotional life – charismatic fathers, disciplinarians and mentors. Essential to intellectual life and to ambitious young aspirants to intellectual life [...]<sup>11</sup>

The Shchukins and Morozovs gave the young artists from the School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture [hereafter called the Moscow School of Painting], including Larionov, Natal’ia Goncharova, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Il’ia Mashkov, the Burliuk brothers, Kazimir Malevich and Vladimir Tatlin, a practical education which exceeded their official schooling. The young artists not only benefited from exposure to such eminent collections of new art forms, but also from the patrons’ experience of the European art market. Sergei Shchukin, for example, had direct access to the modern Parisian art scene through his brother Ivan who lived on Avenue Wagram. Through his brother’s substantial network of art contacts, Sergei Shchukin was able to buy from both dealers and directly from artists.<sup>12</sup> He had a passion for the innovative and was attracted to unrecognised names and styles, a personal preference which he no doubt communicated to his guests.

In keeping with Walker’s definition of *kruzhok* leaders, the patrons provided a meeting place where the young artists could network with other wealthy patrons in pursuit of concrete finance. It allowed the artists, many of whom came from relatively poor backgrounds, to penetrate and eventually learn to manipulate the strong oral tradition of gossip and theatricality which was prevalent in intellectual circles and *kruzhok* culture. Larionov, in particular, is said to have developed a close relationship with Sergei Shchukin. This experience would have armed the leader of Oslinyi khvost for his future encounters with members of the art world. The young

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Walker, ‘*Kruzhok* Culture: The Meaning of Patronage in the Early Soviet Literary World’, *Contemporary European History*, vol. 11: 1 (February 2002), 107–23 (p. 113).

<sup>12</sup> Natalya Semyonova describes how Ivan Shchukin was deeply embedded in Parisian intellectual life. He lectured on the history of philosophy at the School of Oriental Languages, and contributed articles for various Russian journals and newspapers. His ‘renowned “Tuesdays”’ are said to have ‘attracted Russian professors of philosophy and history, publishers, journalists, writers, actors and artists: the regular guests included Rodin, Degas, Renoir, Redon, Huysmans, and Durand-Ruel’. Kostenevich and Semyonova, p. 10.

artists also had the opportunity to discuss and defend their artistic understanding of the new styles of paintings with other poets, writers, artists, critics and professors. Whilst Ivan Morozov only allowed access to his collection through special appointment, Shchukin gave his visitors a personal tour of his opulent residence on Znamenka (see figs. 12 and 13) and he seems to have revelled in the curiosity of these 'outcasts':<sup>13</sup>

A touchy mixture of arrogance, aggressiveness and creativity, they were young, poor, frequently at odds with each other, but for the moment, united in their fascination with the new pictures. For Shchukin, their spontaneity provided a stimulating contrast to the years of hostility and polite reserve to which he had become accustomed.<sup>14</sup>

The Futurists were aware of their privileged access to the collections and the effect which the new art forms had on the development of their own art. The musician, Futurist composer and publisher, Mikhail Matiushin, later reminisced about the times spent with Shchukin and the irreversible effect that the new French art exercised over the group. David Burliuk reportedly confided in Matiushin, stating that if it was not for the education which Burliuk received from the maecenae and their collections, he would not have had the courage to embark on his new artistic path.<sup>15</sup> A letter from Voldemārs Matvejs [Vladimir Markov], exhibition co-organiser and theoretician of *Soiuz molodezhi*, to Larionov in 1910, also expresses the importance of the new collections to the young avant-gardists. Matvejs inquires about the opening times of Shchukin and Morozov's galleries because he has friends who wish to travel to Moscow with the specific intention of meeting with the two patrons.<sup>16</sup> As many others have observed, it is clear that later Futurist success was built upon these early artistic acquaintances, including influential members of *Mir*

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<sup>13</sup> Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> Iakov Tugendkhol'd, cited in Kean, pp. 176 and 229. Tugendkhol'd's use of the term 'outcast' no doubt refers to the students who had been expelled from the Moscow School of Painting, in addition to the general parallel between bohemian artist and outcast.

<sup>15</sup> '...это то, без чего я не рискнул бы начать работать', cited in V. N. Terekhina and A. P. Zimenkov, eds., *Russkii Futurizm: Teorii. Praktiki. Kritiki. Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> V. I. Matveis [V. I. Markov], 'Pis'mo k M. F. Larionovu (1910)', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 14. Vladimir Markov is the Russian form of his native Latvian, Voldemārs Matvejs. He was an artist, theoretician and organiser who played a very influential in *Soiuz molodezhi*, a registered artistic association which was founded in 1910 in St. Petersburg and fostered new trends within the Russian avant-garde. *Soiuz molodezhi* organised international art exhibitions, public debates, Futurist performances, and published three editions of a journal of Russian avant-garde work under its own name.

iskusstva, who extended a generosity of spirit and a network of support, intellectual stimulation and encouragement to the young artists.

### **The Artist's Precarious State**

However, although sporadic patronage for the young avant-garde was forthcoming, it was by no means guaranteed. In his analysis of the contemporary Moscow art market Bowlt states that the 'Moscow Merchants did not favour the extreme artistic manifestations of the avant-garde' and that 'the exhibitions and societies that propagated these art forms after about 1910, for example the Jack of Diamonds, were rarely patronised by the Girshmans, the Morozovs, the Riabuzhinskys [sic], and the Shchukins'.<sup>17</sup> A large number of those who are associated with Russian Futurism did not come from wealthy families and their art was produced against a background of poverty and hardship. Begging letters were frequently sent home. Jane Sharp has interpreted the Futurist debates as evidence of Futurism's 'inability to establish itself within a secure system of patronage'.<sup>18</sup> Valentin Serov's perception of the young avant-gardists' 'eagerness for change', coupled with a 'strange vulnerability' reflects the dichotomy of the Futurist position in the early 1910s.<sup>19</sup> Innovative, enthusiastic, and talented, their efforts were frequently curtailed because of their lack of social standing and financial security. One only has to consider the social, financial and artistic background of some Futurists to appreciate how hard it was for them to compete for public and artistic recognition with the well-heeled, well-educated and incestuously well-connected members of Mir iskusstva, or the stars of the Imperial theatres and darlings of the press, including Shaliapin, or the ballerinas Matil'da Kshesinskaia and Tamara Karsavina.

Artists, actors and ballerinas who progressed through the state system of the Academies of Art (including the Moscow School of Art) and the Imperial theatres were, to a large extent, protected from the sharper end of the world of commerce. In addition to the provision of their board and lodging, tuition and art supplies or theatre

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<sup>17</sup> Bowlt, 'The Russian Art Market', p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> Jane A. Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde and Its Audience: Moscow, 1913', *Modernism/modernity: Politics / Gender / Judgement*, vol. 6: 3 (1999), 91–116 (p. 96).

<sup>19</sup> Kean, p. 232.



costumes, all of the artists had the chance of being given a ready-made platform to exhibit or perform their work and a guaranteed, informed audience to receive it.<sup>20</sup> Although entrance to this public platform was generally obstructed by internal competition, this institutional infrastructure stood fast, as did the potential benefits it offered. In light of this relative security, one can appreciate the financial risk which Larionov and his contemporaries took when they protested against the increasing conservatism of the Moscow School of Art. Some of the fifty students involved were suspended for a term or one year, but Larionov, who led the protest, was expelled for good.<sup>21</sup>

The plight of the impoverished artist who tried to exist within a market economy was a constant theme in the contemporary press. In 1912, the journalist and art critic, Foma Railian, wrote a series of scathing articles in the liberal paper *Protiv techeniia* which highlighted this very point. He also launched an attack against the dynamics of the commercial market and the exploitative relationship between artist, middleman and art patron.<sup>22</sup> In one article dated 28 January 1912, he states that ‘what is

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<sup>20</sup> See the Introduction and Chapter 4 for information relating to newspaper coverage of art exhibitions.

<sup>21</sup> See Parton, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> Information concerning the conditions of sale of art outside the Academies and registered artistic societies is scant. Art which was exhibited through registered artistic associations generally, although not exclusively, had to pass a committee of judges. The artists were typically members of the artistic association. They paid an annual subscription and had their application supported by satisfactory recommendations. The society was then entitled to a percentage of the sales at any exhibition. Many applications for permission to hold exhibitions to the *gradonachal'nik's* [city governor] office stated that profits would go to the respective artistic association. Depending on the terms and conditions of the contract, the artist might be responsible for carriage and insurance costs, thereby limiting his/her prospective profit margin. In cases where an exhibition had specific sponsorship, one could expect these extra costs to be borne by the sponsor. A number of private galleries also existed. I shall return to this issue later, but suffice it to say that their role can be understood as a movement toward the Parisian art market, which was controlled by dealers, and one can be assured that the galleries took a percentage of the sales. There is nothing to suggest that the major art collectors such as the Tret'iakovs, Shchukins or Morozovs used specific art dealers, with the possible exception of specific well-known private gallery owners, but instead took pleasure in visiting individual artists in their studios or at other social gatherings. In an article dated 17 March 1912, Railian exonerates this class of patrons from any hint of impropriety in such matters. However, he writes that many mediocre artists, who could not afford to exhibit their work in galleries and did not attract the attention of the wealthy collectors, attracted instead the attention of so-called ‘middlemen’. It would appear that these middlemen sought out art to satisfy the increasing demand for the cultural accoutrements of the growing middle classes. This commodification of art correlates with the increasing bourgeois demand for other interior decoration, including wallpaper and art and craft items. As petit-bourgeois taste rarely favours the avant-garde, it is likely that bourgeois demand was responsible for the continued popularity of Academic art, ‘especially of the salon variety’, at the turn of the twentieth century, as noted by Dmitrii Sarab'ianov, see *Russian Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), p. 192. Contemporary newspaper caricatures and articles testify to the trade in imitations of popular art and photographic reproductions (I shall return to this topic in Chapter 4). It is most likely, therefore, that a

important at the moment is not to look at the art which is being produced, but rather, to take a closer look at the conditions in which artists create their works'.<sup>23</sup> Later in the same article, he highlights the effects of bad health and hardship on the artist's work. He contrasts this to the luxurious lifestyle of certain artists, including Vrubel' and Serov, who have never worn a 'sack cloth' [*deriugi ne imeet*]. Railian also wages a personal war against Mir iskusstva, and Aleksandr Benua in particular. The thrust of his criticism is focused on the burgeoning influence which such artists exercised over the art market and public opinion, both as artists and critics.<sup>24</sup> The vulnerability of the impoverished artist to manipulative middlemen and small-fry businessmen is the focus of another article in the same newspaper, ' "Free" creativity ["*Svobodnoe*" *tvorchestvo*]. Notes of an artist. IV. Artist and Maecenae', dated 17 March 1912. The journalist challenges those who criticise him for suggesting artistic talent is dying as a consequence of lack of pecuniary measures, one or two patrons [*metsenaty*] should take a look at the artistic community. He is not writing about the Tret'iakov rank of patrons, but rather those 'pseudo-patrons' who go directly to minor artists. He observes the disparity between the amount which the artists receive for their work and the amount for which the works are then sold on to a second buyer. If the 'patron' [inverted commas in the original] is a friend of the artist, then the patron will try to secure the picture either as a gift, or for kopeks, for his 'collection', even if he is rich enough to pay 200 rubles a month for his apartment and maintain three servants. The author claims that the artist earns 25 to 30 rubles a month [that is approximately the same as the working classes] and in pursuing his art often goes

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large percentage of the impoverished artists to whom Railian refers were caught up in this cycle of supply and demand.

<sup>23</sup> 'По-моему, не критиковать картины художников теперь нужно, а заглянуть поглубже в те условия жизни художника, при которых пишутся эти картины'. F. Railian, 'Armiia khudozhnikov. II: Ulitsa', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 20, 28 January 1912, p. 1. The debate concerning the conditions under which art was produced and the poverty of many artists had emerged in accordance with the general criticism of the Art Academies and the injustice of selective State subsidies. For example, see A. Rostislavov, 'Deiatel'nost' Akademii', *Zolotoe runo*, vol. 6 (1906), 88–90, or D. V. Filosofov, 'Iskusstvo i Gosudarstvo', *Zolotoe runo*, vol. 6 (1907), 31–40.

<sup>24</sup> Foma Railian, 'Vserossiiskii S'ezd Khudozhnikov: Mir iskusstva', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 17–18, 11 January 1912, pp. 1–2; F. Railian, 'Armiia khudozhnikov. III. Vesenniaia vystavka', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 21, 11 February 1912, pp. 1–2; F. Railian, 'Armiia khudozhnikov, V', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 23, 3 March 1912, p. 1. In the second article, Railian points to the ignorance of the public, and the dominant influence of critics, such as Diaghilev, Benua and Makovskii, to instruct the 'ignorant masses' and project onto them their own opinions. In this way, argues Railian, they perpetuate the ignorance which they perceive in the masses. Railian questions the authority of these artists and asks, 'what puts them in such a position of authority?'; E. Pskovnikov, [or possibly, Iv. Kruchin – the author is unclear in my copy], ' "Svobodnoe" tvorchestvo. Zametki khudozhnika. IV. Khudozhnik i metsenaty', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 25, 17 March 1912, p. 2.

without meals. The patrons, on the other hand, may earn 400 rubles a month and more, and consider it 'luxury' [*roskosh*] to own an oil painting. Thus, they strive 'on friendly terms' to procure a study for 3 to 5 rubles. The author claims that he knows patrons who have established collections through such means and proudly boast of their support for the arts to their friends. Another section of the article provides a long description of how a patron will turn up on the scene when he knows that an artist is destitute and take advantage of the situation. He demonstrates how the artist is forced to sell paintings for a fifth of their true price (i.e. the price that the artist would expect to settle for were he not in such desperate circumstances), in order to pay his rent the following day, or face being thrown out of his lodgings.

These articles are hardly unique. Many art critics and journalists also highlighted the pressures of the commercial market and the way in which artists were compelled to produce 'second-rate' work to match the market demands, rather than pursue their own aesthetic path.<sup>25</sup>

The fate of theatrical performers followed a similarly rocky path. With the exception of a select few, the public regarded actors, be they employees of the Imperial theatres, People's Theatres, cabarets and miniature theatres, or carnival theatre, with a certain suspicion, as outsiders from respectable society. An article by I. Nakatov, entitled 'Actors and Life' [*Aktery i zhizn'*] appeared in the liberal publication *Stolichnaia molva* in March 1913. It was a long article which covered many of the hardships faced by actors in public life. Like Railian, Nakatov underlined the dependent relationship between actor and patron, and ultimately public. The patrons or entrepreneurs are frequently accused of avarice and injustice. Nakatov is equally critical of a public that is happy to be entertained and charmed by the artist on the stage, but that then fails to accept the artist as a 'real' person once the curtain is closed. Nakatov writes that it is a question of the actors upsetting 'our' order. He also

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<sup>25</sup> For example, the above mentioned article, Railian, 'Armiia khudozhnikov. III.', pp. 1–2. Here, Railian notes the way in which artists are forced to produce art for an exhibition. He writes that an artist only reveals his soul in non-commercial art and describes a visit to a gallery as a form of entertainment. The visitor is said to pay his 50 kopeks in order to buy the 'soul' of the artist, as a way of indulging himself during his leisure time. Regarding these artists who 'play' the commercial market, Railian writes one [the 'true' artist] may be jealous of them, 'Они не страдают, не мучаются над любовью своей, но продают её фальшивую и в шантаны, и на выставках на деньги. Только деньги а остальное – хоть трава не расти!'

alludes to the exploitation of pretty young performers by men of higher rank (in this case, governors) who exact extra-theatrical services of the young ladies. Of course a similar public attitude toward actors existed throughout Western Europe. Nakatov, however, grounds his argument within the needs of changing times, the actors' contribution to the events of 1905 and their lack of representation in the Duma. Although he appeals to the public to recognise the actors as integrated members of society, he also urges the actors to break the traditional yoke of dependence on the patron and to take a greater, more integrated role in public life, in essence, to unionise and seek governmental representation.<sup>26</sup>

Although they were under-paid and had few employment rights, the State did offer workers of the Imperial theatres a degree of social protection. Amateur performers at the People's theatres and Temperance theatres echoed Nakatov's call for independence. In general, these actors supported themselves with a 'regular' job and enjoyed the ideology of self-betterment which motivated many People's Theatres. The *balagany* performers, by contrast, did not fare so well. Swift notes their sorry decline. By the end of the nineteenth century the carnivals had been displaced from the metropolitan centres and were a shadow of their former glory, before eventually dying out altogether.<sup>27</sup> This traditional form of popular entertainment was usurped by products of the new industrial age and technological wonders such as roller-coaster rides.

### The Futurists

It is within this context of vulnerability, financial instability, and stiff artistic and commercial competition that one must consider the existence of many artists who were associated with Russian Futurism. Whilst some members came from aristocratic or financially secure backgrounds (e.g. Goncharova, Elena Guro, Aleksandra Ekster, Nikolai Kul'bin and the Burliuk family), others, including Pavel Filonov, Velimir Khlebnikov, Malevich and Benedikt Livshits faced continual financial hardship.

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<sup>26</sup> I. Nakatov, 'Aktery i zhizn', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 297, 25 March 1913, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Swift, p. 153.

The artists associated with Russian Futurism were far from a cohesive, unified group. Their social and financial diversity was an important aspect of the movement's identity but also provoked mixed contemporary criticism. Their passion for both provincial arts and the dynamism of the city and modern technology was undoubtedly influenced by their collective artistic developments. Sharp notes how the majority of artists associated with the avant-garde 'came from the provinces or the borders of the [Russian] Empire to study in Moscow and St. Petersburg'.<sup>28</sup> Such Futurist artists included Larionov, the Burliuk brothers, Mashkov, Il'ia and Kirill Zdanevich, Maiakovskii, and the poets Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh. Natives of the metropolises included the Muscovites Robert Fal'k and Natal'ia Goncharova (who had moved to Moscow from the Tula Province at a young age and maintained this provincial association throughout her career), and Elena Guro who was born into a St. Petersburg General's family. Whilst this movement to the metropolitan institutions of art followed the traditional career path of the contemporary artist, it also reflected the general demographic trend of urban migration, particularly among the young of both sexes and the more educated members of the *raznochintsy* (typically lower-middle class educated members of provincial society). Many Futurists were educated in the metropolitan institutes (e.g. the aforementioned artists who trained at the Moscow School of Painting);<sup>29</sup> others had received no formal training (e.g. the naïf Georgian painter, Niko Pirosmanishvili) or enjoyed a more bohemian education in the provincial colleges (e.g. Kruchenykh).<sup>30</sup>

The differences in educational level and manners among Futurist members is frequently referred to in Futurist memoirs. Benedikt Livshits, for example, was quite shocked by David Burliuk, that 'beastlike man's' ignorance of the French *poètes*

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<sup>28</sup> Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde', footnote 12.

<sup>29</sup> These artists studied under the tutorship of Valentin Serov and Konstantin Korovin – themselves, in many respects, a product of the artist colony, Abramtsevo. Elena Guro graduated from the School of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts. There she studied under Tsionglinskii, Lev Bakst and Mstislav Dobuzhinskii. For more references to Guro, see Benedikt Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, edited by John E. Bowlit (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), p. 40, and Vladimir Markov, *Futurism: A History* (London: MacGibbon and Gee, 1968), pp. 14–22.

<sup>30</sup> Alexei Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival: From the History of Russian Futurism*, edited by Andrei Sarabianov and Vasily Rakitin (Moscow: RA, 1995), p. 34. Kruchenykh describes the bohemian nature of his college environment. 'My fellow students were long-haired indigent types, who fancied themselves "geniuses". However, they all worked ferociously hard and genuinely loved art. They starved, went short of everything, but believed in the future...'

*maudits*. Goncharova, on the other hand, won the Gold Medal in plastic arts in 1902 at the Moscow School of Painting, a considerable achievement for a woman of that era.<sup>31</sup> The heterogeneous make-up of the Futurists was also witnessed in their financial, and therefore social circumstances. As mentioned, many of the key female members of the avant-garde were financially independent. Aleksandra Ekster, for example, was married to a solicitor, Nikolai Evgen'evich. Livshits comments that Nikolai had a good practice, which would imply an income of at least ten to tens of thousands of rubles a year and a relatively high social status.<sup>32</sup> Other Futurists, however, were not so fortunate. Charlotte Douglas notes that whereas some were able to travel abroad to broaden their awareness and knowledge of the European modernist movement (e.g. the Burliuks, Goncharova, Larionov, Ekster, Nadezhda Udal'tsova and Aristarkh Lentulov), Malevich was 'constantly in need of money, [and] could not even think of travelling farther than Kursk or Petersburg. His familiarity with contemporary Western painting derived from a diligent perusal of books and journals, other people's lantern slides, travelling exhibitions, and Russian collections'.<sup>33</sup> Pavel Filonov's poverty is well documented. In order to eke out the monthly 30 rubles (or 50, depending on whom one believes) which his parents sent him, he maintained an almost puritanical regimen and his art was often hampered by his lack of art supplies. Kruchenykh explains how Filonov would use the same canvas to paint pictures over each other and commented, 'Yes... every picture I paint is a cemetery, the last resting place of many pictures. And I don't have enough canvas...'.<sup>34</sup> Il'ia Zdanevich's begging letters to his mother contain constant

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<sup>31</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 39. Livshits also refers to David Burliuk as a 'provincial lout', p. 38. Goncharova's teacher at this time was Prince Pavel Trubetskoi. Kean describes him as a 'rare aristocrat in the arts and a pupil of Rodin, whom Apollinaire called "the Michelangelo of miniatures"'. Once again, this association with Trubetskoi, and the favourable reviews which Goncharova was later to receive from more conservative art critics, point to the social network at the heart of the artistic metropolitan community. See Kean, p. 238.

<sup>32</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Charlotte Douglas, *Kazimir Malevich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), pp. 11–12. An undated letter from Malevich to I. S. Shkol'nik makes reference to a loan from Soiuz molodezhi to Malevich. Malevich offers his thanks to the society, particularly as the money came at a difficult time when one of his children was ill and he had had to borrow money. He enquires about the repayment arrangements. See Archive of the Gosudarstvennyi Russkii Muzei [State Russian Museum] (hereafter, GRM) f: 121; ed khr: 41, 'Pis'ma Malevicha, Kazimira Severinovicha – Shkol'niku, I. S. na 5 II'; l: 1.

<sup>34</sup> Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 71. Kruchenykh describes how Filonov spent his 30 rubles. It includes his monthly rent, daily expenses and art materials. Filonov is quoted as saying, 'for two years now I have been living on black bread, tea and cranberry juice'. Nicoletta Mislér suggests a sum of 50 rubles, but confirms Filonov's 'rigour of stern privations'. N. Mislér, 'David Burliuk and Pavel Filonov: an uneasy relationship', *CASS*, vol. 20: 1–2 (1986), 63–87 (p. 64).

references to his lack of money, his debts and the fines which he accrued.<sup>35</sup> Maiakovskii's correspondence home is similarly coloured with entreaties for money, even when he had gained a solid reputation and Russian Futurism was reaching its peak in the late autumn of 1913.<sup>36</sup> Velimir Khlebnikov's lack of funds seems to have been on a par with Filonov's. This almost mystical poet, whom many declared to be '*ne ot mira sego*' [not of this world], was constantly penniless.<sup>37</sup> Khlebnikov's attitude to money seems to have been somewhat ethereal. For example, Aleksandr Koloskov notes how Khlebnikov had been paid a sum of 20 rubles for his poem 'Nebo nebitsia' in the publication *Vesna*, a tidy sum in those days. Instead of paying for his food that evening, he gave it all to 'a singer who had a voice like a bird from the hills'. According to Koloskov's description, in Khlebnikov's room there was only a mattress, not even a table, and Khlebnikov had no money.<sup>38</sup>

The lack of financial security and social standing of the collective Futurist members had a direct impact on the development of their artistic movement. Although they had established contacts and allies in certain quarters (e.g. Sergei Shchukin's social circle), they could not avoid the harsh reality of the commodification of art in the growing market economy, and the competition of established, well-connected art groups such as the *Mir iskusstva* or *Peredvizhniki*. In November 1913 David Burliuk proposed a lecture entitled 'The selling and buying of paintings'.<sup>39</sup> One can only

<sup>35</sup> GRM f: 177 Zdanevichei Il'i i Kirilla; ed khr: 50 'Zdanevich I. M. Chernovye pis'ma raznym litsam'; l: 12, Letter to his mother, Valentina Kirillovna Zdanevich; ll: 15–16. Letter to his mother, 19 March [1913]; ll: 18–21ob. Letter to his mother, 26 March [1913].

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Maiakovskii to his mother, dated 23 November 1913, St. Petersburg. '...Мамочка, за свидетельством попросите зайти в училище Олю, а деньги, пожалуйста, перешлите мне сюда, а то я к первому весь выйду и сяду на мель.' Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh - Tom 13: Pis'ma i drugie materialy* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1961), p. 19.

Maiakovskii repeats the urgent request for his mother to send money, in a letter to his sister, Olia, also dated 23 November 1913. '...P. S. Попроси мамочку, чтобы мама обязательно переслала мне сюда как можно скорее деньги.', Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie*, Vol. 13, p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Cf TsADKM f: 80; op: 1; d: 24, 61pp. Koloskov Aleksandr Ivanovich, 'Druz'ia – poety Vladimir Maiakovskii – Velimir Khlebnikov – Vasili Kamenskii': Stat'ia.

<sup>38</sup> TsADKM, Koloskov, 'Druz'ia – poetu Vladimir Maiakovskii ...', pp. 6–7. Charlotte Douglas cites another example of Khlebnikov's bad luck with money at a time of poverty. He had written to Matiushin whom he wished to join at his residence in Uusikirkko, Finland, to contribute to the preparations for the Luna Park performances of December 1913. He requested 18–20 rubles for his travel, which he received, but lost it in the water whilst bathing, so he was unable to go. See Charlotte Douglas, '*Victory Over the Sun*', *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol. 8: 1–2 (1981), 69–89 (p. 69).

<sup>39</sup> GRM f. 121: Soiuz molodezhi; ed khr: 13 - Programmy, tezisy dokladov i disputov, ustraivaemykh 'Soiuzom Molodezhi' l: 39ob. This is a hand-written document, which appears to be the preparatory stages of the proposed programme for the public lecture (under the auspices of the Soiuz molodezhi), 20 November 1913, which was held at the Troitskii Theatre in St. Petersburg. The title of this lecture, 'О продаже и покупке картин', has been crossed out and does not appear in the printed version of

speculate that, in line with the general Futurist critique of institutional structures, this lecture sought to address the negative aspects of the contemporary market conventions for acquiring art. As Bowlt observed, despite the enormous effort exercised by the Futurist impresarios of the early 1910s the Futurists failed to establish a secure market for their work.<sup>40</sup> This lack of artistic independence restricted their ability to hire exhibition and theatre space, to publish their literary work and produce high quality theatre programmes and exhibition catalogues, to tour their art exhibitions, and on a very basic practical level, to acquire the art supplies necessary to create their work.<sup>41</sup> I will return to the issue of aesthetic, format and quality of marketing materials in the next chapter.

The Futurists' failure to establish a sustainable market for their art should not be taken as failure of Futurism in general. The onset of the First World War, followed by the events of 1917, undermined the advances made in the early years and terminated any hope of a contemporary Futurist art market. Although not as popular or profitable as their contemporaries, Mir iskusstva and the Peredvizhniki, Futurism had emerged rapidly to be recognised by the public and be commended in critical analyses by many illustrious art critics. Retrospectively, of course, one can appreciate the influence that these artists had on the development of twentieth-century Russian and international art. The importance of Futurist art of this period is reflected in its current market value.<sup>42</sup> The lack of secure patronage also had positive

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the programme (see GRM f: 121; ed khr: 13; l: 38). It is possible that its omission is due to censorship. However, the title has been crossed out in ink, rather than blue or red pencil, with pencil being the preferred medium of the censors.

<sup>40</sup> Bowlt, 'The Moscow Art Market', p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> A document in the Soiuz molodezhi fond of the GRM is the proposed budget for the maintenance and equipment necessary to fund an art school with 100 places in the provinces for six months. Projected expenditure taken from this document give us an indication of the contemporary price of art materials. For example, charcoal [*ugli*] – 25 sticks @ 5 rubles; watercolours [*akvarel'*] – 1 set @ 10 rbs; double-sided paintbrush [*Kistei po 1 dvukhstor.*] @ 3 rbs; water jug [*kruzhki dlia vody*] @ 1 rb; stretcher [*podramki*] @ 2 rbs; palette [*palitra*] @ 5 rbs; Set of oil paints [*masl. kraski*] @ 50 rbs; Set of brushes @ 10 rbs; and so on. To give one an indication of what these artists might have earned, had they worked as art-teachers, the proposed monthly salaries are stated as follows: Head of the school and teacher of fine art and drawing (groups of 25 people) – 1,200 rbs [although 2,200 is pencilled in above this figure]; teacher of fine art and drawing [groups of 25 for 4 hours daily] – 664 rbs; teacher of sculpture, and teacher of design also 664 rbs. By extension, as most of the Futurists were artists by primary training and many of them had trained at art schools and academies, in turning away from the establishment and expected conservative, pedagogical careers, they were also turning down the possibility of earning a comfortable salary. See GRM f: 121; ed khr: 110, 'Scheta "Soiuz molodezhi" i smety, na 138 ll; ll: 7–8.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the New York auctioneers, Sotheby's, estimated that Malevich's *Rectangle and Circle* (1915) would be sold for £5–7 million in May 2003. See Sotheby's, *Impressionist & Modernist Art*,



effects. It forced the Futurists to be more imaginative in the way they approached the issue of artistic development. It stimulated creative approaches to marketing and resulted in national and European artistic alliances and collaborations. Within a year of signing their Futurist manifesto, the Futurists had organised their own exhibitions, staged major theatrical performances, poetic and musical evenings, published innumerable illustrated collections and manifestoes, received critical acclaim (together with public outrage), and established positive collaborative alliances with other established groups. By 1914, for example, Natal'ia Goncharova had attracted the attention of the impresario of the Ballets Russes, Sergei Diaghilev, who contracted her to design the stage set for his Paris production of *Le Coq d'Or*.

The success of Futurism in the early 1910s was the result of a combination of factors. These included: the support of patrons as financial sponsors, educators, and facilitators; the enormous collective innovative talent of the young artists; and the initiative taken by certain members who quickly established themselves as impresarios of Futurism, such as Diaghilev or Nikita Baliev (the great impresario of the cabaret, *Letuchaia mysh'* [The Bat]). Mikhail Larionov, David Burliuk, and to a large extent, Nikolai Kul'bin, were key figures who were sensitive to their commercial, artistic and social environment.<sup>43</sup> Over the course of the five years in question, they developed and adapted their strategies of interaction with the public, critics, patrons, gallery and theatre proprietors, members of the artistic community, and other European avant-garde artists to promote their avant-garde aesthetics. In doing so, they succeeded in establishing their own identity (both as artists and personalities) within the artistic community and within a broader section of the metropolitan public. The prices of Futurist art in the annotated catalogues from the Soiuz molodezhi exhibitions of 1911 and 1913–14 (see Appendix) are testament to the avant-gardists' growing popularity. Although modest in comparison with the

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*Part One*, [http://search.sothebys.com/jsps/live/lot/LotDetail.jsp?lot\\_id=3Z5HK](http://search.sothebys.com/jsps/live/lot/LotDetail.jsp?lot_id=3Z5HK), accessed 4 December 2004.

<sup>43</sup> There are, of course, other Futurists who played key roles in the organisation and aesthetic development of the movement, such as Vladimir Markov and Levkii Zheverzheev, or Aleksandra Ekster who used her artist talent, and social and financial position to organise some of the earliest avant-garde exhibitions. Their personal contribution to the development of the Russian avant-garde can be found in a number of publications, including, Jeremy Howard, *The Union of Youth: An Artists' Society of the Russian Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), and John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt, eds., *Amazons of the Avant-Garde: Alexandra Exter, Natalia Goncharova, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, Varvara Stepanova, and Nadezhda Udal'tsova* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2000).

Peredvizhniki and Mir iskusstva, the Futurist paintings fetched a reasonable price, occasionally rising to a very respectable 800, 1000, 2000 and even 3000 rubles.

### The Arrival of the Impresario

The emergence of the impresario, like the Parisian art dealer or new breed of Russian patron, was very much a product of the emerging art market and a response to the competition between new independent art, theatre and music enterprises, in the wake of the fragmentation of the Academic and Imperial monopolies.<sup>44</sup> Russian Futurism benefited from the experience of other European modernist and avant-garde groups which had sought patronage, public recognition and artistic survival in recent years.<sup>45</sup> The short-lived German Expressionist group, Die Brücke, published their manifesto and opened their first exhibition in Dresden in 1906.<sup>46</sup> Soon after, Kandinskii took the reins and acted as impresario and theoretician to those artists associated with Der Blaue Reiter and by 1910 Herwarth Walden had begun to publish the weekly, *Der Sturm* which acted as a platform for Kandinskii's group to publicise their art. The development of the French schools (the Post-Impressionists, Fauves and then Cubists) were directed by artists, dealers and patrons, including Ambroise Vollard, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and the syndicate of La Peau de l'Ours.

The most manifest and prescriptive role models for the Russian impresarios were surely the Italian Futurists. The Italian impresario, Filippo Marinetti, had established his position in French intellectual and bohemian circles in the 1900s before the launch of Italian Futurism in 1909. Valentine de Saint-Point, who wrote two Italian

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<sup>44</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the workings of the Parisian art market, the commodification of art in the industrial era and an analysis of the roots of a Russian art market, see Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930* (New York and London: Garland, 1977); Michael C. FitzGerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995); T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), and Bowlt, 'The Moscow Art Market'.

<sup>45</sup> By public recognition I mean both critical acclaim and the sale of Futurist art at prices which reflected a suitable artistic standing.

<sup>46</sup> Gill Perry notes how 'all the founder members of the [Die Brücke] group came from educated middle-class backgrounds'. This educational and social status has clear economic implications, which contrast with the Russian Futurists' position. *The Open University Arts: A third level course. Modern Art and Modernism: Manet to Pollock. Two Exhibitions: The Fauves, 1906 and Die Brücke, 1906*, Prepared by Gill Perry (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1983), p. 41.

Futurist manifestoes and was famous for combining poetry and dance (known as Metachoric Dances), was also well connected in Paris. She hosted dance and recital evenings in her vast Paris studio and arranged notorious Monday evening events in the office of the art journal *Montjoie!* (which later published Larionov's manifesto, *Pictorial Rayism*, 1914).<sup>47</sup> De Saint-Point's guests included Italian Futurists and an international assembly of eminent modernists and avant-gardists including '[Igor] Stravinskii, [Maurice] Ravel, Manuel de Falla, Erik Satie, Blaise Cendrars, Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Léger, and Raoul Dufy'.<sup>48</sup> The would-be Russian Futurists could not have failed to hear of the Italian avant-gardists either during their own visits to Paris, or via their network of contacts in Parisian intellectual, cultural and bohemian circles.

Under the direction of Marinetti, the Italian Futurists established new models of marketing and performance. Marinetti had been involved in publishing since 1905 and understood the marketing potential of the press. His launch of Italian Futurism on the international scene was considered a major marketing coup for the avant-garde. Marinetti took advantage of his relationship with his fiancée's father, the 'extremely wealthy Mohammed El Rachi Pasha', who was a major shareholder in *Le Figaro*. El Rachi Pasha's intervention ensured that the first Futurist manifesto was published as a front-page editorial of the most influential Parisian newspaper, *Le Figaro*, 20 February 1909.<sup>49</sup> The manifesto was later translated into Russian and published in the second edition of *Soiuz molodezhi* (June 1912). The Italian launch was followed by a string of manifestoes, publications, public lectures and performances, and international tours of exhibitions. Marinetti was not only on first-name terms with many of the Parisian contemporary avant-garde, including Apollinaire, but he also had the personal finances to fund many of the Italian Futurist exploits and publications. In addition, he was able to fund visits to Paris and the *Salon d'Automne* for other members of his Futurist group, so that they too could be

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<sup>47</sup> 'Le Rayonisme Pictural', *Montjoie!*, No. 4/5/6, April/May/June, Paris (1914), p. 15. Bowlt notes that 'this was Larionov's first contribution to the French press and was printed just as the "Exposition de Natalie Gontcharowa et Michel Larionow" opened at the Galerie Paul Guillaume, Paris.' See John E. Bowlt, ed., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902-1934* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 100.

<sup>48</sup> Mirella Bentivoglio and Franca Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism - Almost Lost to History...* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1997), p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Bentivoglio and Zoccoli, p. 11.

educated by the ‘masters’ of modern art at first-hand.<sup>50</sup> This stable source of patronage enabled the Italians to consolidate their artistic identity from a relatively early stage, despite the usual spat of internal fighting which continued between the Florentine and Milanese groups. The Italians emerged as a sophisticated artistic group who crossed artistic boundaries and challenged concepts and practices of art in all aspects of daily life. The emergence and development of Russian Futurism should therefore be considered in relation to the Italian movement, borrowing and challenging its marketing strategies and its aesthetics.

Bowlt observed the essential role of the impresario within the context of the financial insecurity of the Russian avant-gardists and the inchoate Moscow ‘art market’. ‘Modernist painting in Moscow’, writes Bowlt, ‘could scarcely have developed without its complex artistic mechanism, especially the social and cultural “mixers” that brought together artists and collectors, sellers and buyers’.<sup>51</sup> The function of the impresario was to attract patronage<sup>52</sup> and disseminate the artistic aims of their respective group through the press, publications, artistic events (both in Russia and abroad), and through social networking. As Walker noted, the role of a *kruzhok* leader, in this case Futurist impresarios, ‘involved grasping the principles of a highly complex system of cultural norms’, and then acting upon them.<sup>53</sup>

Larionov, the leader of *Oslinyi khvost*, had gained invaluable experience under the guidance of Diaghilev.<sup>54</sup> Larionov had exhibited with the *Soiuz Rossiiskikh Khudozhnikov* [Union of Russian Artists] (which included some of the most illustrious figures of the *Mir iskusstva*) in 1905 and April 1906. In the summer of 1906 he received a letter from Sergei Diaghilev, who was in the throes of organising the *Salon d’Automne* in Paris. Diaghilev requested Larionov’s assistance with the

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<sup>50</sup> For a comprehensive picture of the roots of Italian Futurism and its entrance onto the European stage, see Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909–1915* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Bowlt, ‘The Moscow Art Market’, p. 115.

<sup>52</sup> Patronage here is to be understood in broad terms to include exhibition and performance space, publications, travel expenses, the financing of organising exhibitions and theatrical productions, including materials, venue fees, marketing, and city licence fees.

<sup>53</sup> Barbara Walker, ‘*Kruzhok Culture*’, p. 111.

<sup>54</sup> Larionov met Diaghilev during the winter of 1902–03. It was through Larionov’s teacher, Korovin, and his friendship with Diaghilev that Larionov was accepted into the artistic community of the *Mir iskusstva*. For more information on the early period of Larionov’s life, see Parton, ‘Tiraspol to Miasnitskaya Ulitsa, 1881–1908’, pp. 3–17.

organisation of the exhibition and his presence at the opening night, 6 October 1906. Larionov therefore travelled to Paris in the company of Diaghilev, Lev Bakst and Pavel Kuznetsov.<sup>55</sup> The young avant-gardists' association and perceived influence on Diaghilev had begun to ruffle feathers. According to Elizabeth Valkenier, Serov had been offended that one of his paintings for the *Salon d'Automne* had been rejected by Diaghilev. Correspondence between Bakst and Serov demonstrates how Bakst 'attributed Diaghilev's decision to pressure from "the young" (Kuznetzov, Larionov, Sergei Sudeikin), whom, Bakst admitted, "we now fear like fire and respect to excess"'.<sup>56</sup> Larionov's experience in the company of Diaghilev in Paris would have instilled in the ambitious Larionov an appreciation for the logistics of organising and transporting an exhibition. He gained an insight into the theories of the latest artistic trends which he would have experienced at first hand and which he then enthusiastically communicated to his friends in Moscow.<sup>57</sup> Equally important, Larionov would have learnt much about the power of the media, public opinion, the intricacies of patronage, and the workings of the artistic society. This valuable experience would have stood Larionov in good stead for his later role as a Futurist figurehead. (Larionov's relationship with the public and media will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.)

Larionov's networking was not restricted to exhibitions and artistic salons alone. From January 1908 until its closure in 1910, Larionov maintained the post of co-editor of the art section of the journal *Zolotoe runo*. This position strengthened his friendship with the journal's editor and patron, Nikolai Riabushinskii.

Despite the fact that Larionov, Burliuk and Kul'bin were frequently associated with their separate Futurist groupings (Oslinyi khvost, Bubnovyi valet, and Soiuz molodezhi respectively), these three artists had collaborated on artistic projects since

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<sup>55</sup> For more detailed information on Larionov's involvement with the exhibition of the *Salon d'Automne*, 1906, see Parton, pp. 9–10.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Bakst to Serov, dated 1 December 1906. Cited in Valkenier, *Valentin Serov*, p. 187 and footnote 7. Two articles in *Zolotoe runo*, No. 11–12 (1906), by A. Shervashidze, 'Vystavka Russkogo Khudozhestva v Parizhe', pp. 130–33, and Konstantin Siunnerberg, 'Parizhskie gazety o Russkoi Vystavke', pp. 133–34, both confirm the positive reception of the Russian artists in Paris and their increasing influence at the exhibitions. Vrubel', together with Benua, Bakst and the new generation, including Larionov, are all mentioned as having been met with great acclaim.

<sup>57</sup> See Kean, p. 236.

1908.<sup>58</sup> Also, although Larionov separated from the Bubnovyi valet in 1911, his artistic alliance with David Burliuk was re-ignited by the end of 1913.

Nikolai Kul'bin was the eldest of the three artists and has received much criticism, contemporary and retrospective, about the theoretical basis of his rather symbolist brand of avant-garde.<sup>59</sup> However, as a self-styled impresario, he served the vital functions of publisher, publicist and educator. Among his own publications were *Stefanos* (1907/8), *Impressionisty* (1909), *Treugol'nik* (1910), and *Studiia impressionistov* (1910), in which some of the Futurists made their first appearance.<sup>60</sup> Markov writes how Kul'bin was 'generally respected and even loved by those who surrounded him...' and how the 'Futurists also appreciated Kul'bin's ability to announce the highlights of their lectures on posters in so effective a way that a full house was guaranteed'.<sup>61</sup> Prolific promulgator of new trends in modern art, Kul'bin's list of public appearances at public debates, university lectures, in salons and artistic associations, is extensive.<sup>62</sup> He also collaborated with several Futurists of both Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet camps during their public debates and lectures.<sup>63</sup>

David Burliuk had much in common with Mikhail Larionov, a fact that may have contributed to their 'artistic' clash in 1911. Only a few months separated them in age and both had nurtured the roots of Russian Futurism and the development of the

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<sup>58</sup> Kul'bin also gave a range of 'freelance' lectures which were sponsored by various bodies, including Soiuz molodezhi, in which he spoke of the state of modern art, youth's role in the development of Russian art, and various matters pertaining to Futurism and the work of individual Futurists.

<sup>59</sup> Not all criticism was negative. For example, in his article 'Vystavka sovremennykh techenii v iskusstve', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 10473, 27 April 1908, p. 6, K. L'dov considers those works by Kul'bin which tend towards the decorative, when compared to the extreme naturalism on show, to be revolutionary. This comment relates to the eclectic exhibition held in Passazh (a shopping arcade) in April 1908 which was organised by A. F. Gaush. Those artists who are exhibiting under *Venok* and *Treugol'nik* are considered to be leftist. See also M. S., 'Sovremennye napravleniia v iskusstve', *Rech'*, No. 110, 9 May 1908, pp. 2-3, and, L'dov, K., 'Khudozhniki-Revoliutsionery', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 10478, 30 April 1908, pp. 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Kul'bin's contribution to the early phase of the Russian avant-garde, see Howard, 'The Prologue', in *The Union of Youth*, pp. 8-40.

<sup>61</sup> Markov, *Russian Futurism*, pp. 5-6. He also notes how Kul'bin (1868-1917) was honoured with a book, *Kul'bin* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie obshchestva Intimnogo Teatra, 1912) which contained a bibliography, a list of his paintings, reproductions of some of them and three short critical essays on his work by Sergei Sudeikin, Nikolai Evreinov and the poet, Sergei Gorodetskii.

<sup>62</sup> Kul'bin had close ties with members of Soiuz molodezhi which pre-dated the artistic association's formation in 1910.

<sup>63</sup> For example, the *Bubnovyi valet* debate, Polytechnical Museum, Moscow, 12 February 1913. The evening was chaired by Petr Konchalovskii; lectures were given by David Burliuk, Kul'bin and Kandinskii (in absentia); critical commentary by Goncharova, Larionov and Maksimilian Voloshin. See Howard, 'The Prologue', in *Union of Youth*, pp. 8-40, for a comprehensive description of Kul'bin's contribution to the early Russian avant-garde.

avant-garde in general.<sup>64</sup> Both were very efficient organisers and charismatic public speakers who knew how to ‘work’ a crowd. Burliuk was responsible for organising the famous Futurist tour of the provinces which took place from December 1913 to May 1914.<sup>65</sup> Although they were often portrayed as headstrong or arrogant, they were successful in realising many of their projects.<sup>66</sup> Where Burliuk had the financial means to fund many of the early Futurist publications, Larionov had a talent for securing sponsorship and patronage. Both artists were already exhibiting their work and receiving commendations from art critics (albeit for their impressionist works) from the mid-1900s and both exhibited works in the international exhibition for *Der Sturm*, in Berlin in 1913.<sup>67</sup> Most importantly perhaps, Larionov and Burliuk shared an amazing capacity for work and applied their talent to art, debates and theatrical events, theoretical works and manifestoes, and contributed to poetic publications. Burliuk boasted a personal output of 10,000 paintings between 1910–18, whilst Larionov’s search for innovation rocketed through the discovery and exploration of a

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<sup>64</sup> Kruchenykh refers to Burliuk as ‘papasha’, a ‘born organiser [...] [who] was much older than us, did all he could to make us [Maiakovskii and Kruchenykh] friends’. Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 43. Burliuk ‘discovered’ Maiakovskii in November 1911 and proclaimed him a literary genius. He also sponsored the primitive, naïf painter, Petr Timofeevich Kovalenko, who contributed to the exhibitions *Treugol’nik* and *Venok-Stefanos* (St. Petersburg 1910) and to Izdebskii’s *Salon* (Odessa, 1910–11). Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 53 and Bowlt’s footnote 27. It is very likely that Larionov had the upper hand in the early days of their artistic association, 1907–08. Although Burliuk had travelled and studied in Paris and Munich, Larionov was better acquainted with key Russian figures in the artistic community. In three short letters dated 1–5 December 1908, Burliuk presses Larionov for Vladimir and Liudmila Burliuk to be given the chance to exhibit with Larionov. This is likely to refer to the *Venok* series of exhibitions which took place in 1909. See RGALI. f: 1334 Kruchenykh Aleksei Eliseevich; op: 2; ed khr: 286 Pis’ma Burliuka Davida Davidovicha Larionovu Mikhailu Fedorovichu. One of the three documents is undated.

<sup>65</sup> For more information on David Burliuk the impresario, see Nicoletta Misler, ‘David Burliuk and Pavel Filonov’.

<sup>66</sup> By 1913, Larionov was so accomplished and professional an organiser that he arranged a host of events, across the arts, to mark the retrospective exhibition of Natal’ia Goncharova. These included Il’ia Zdanevich’s lectures on ‘Vsëchestvo’ [*Everythingism*], and a performance of Bol’shakov’s play *Pliaska ulits* [Jig of the streets], for which Larionov had designed the décor.

<sup>67</sup> Russian contributors to the *Der Sturm* exhibition, September – October 1913, included Larionov, Goncharova, the Burliuk brothers, Kul’bin, and from Paris, Aleksandr Archipenko, Marc Chagall and Georgii Iakulov. See Parton, p. 65. Larionov was receiving favourable reviews from the art critics as early as 1906. See Parton, pp. 6–10. David Burliuk (together with his brother Vladimir and sister Liudmila) is singled out for praise at the 1908 exhibition in Passazh, St. Petersburg. L’dov (‘Vystavka sovremennykh tehnik v iskusstve’, p. 6) writes that the Burliuk family received special recognition for their work, which is considered to be ‘unusual’ in every way, ‘revolutionary’, although there are precedents in the West, [‘Произведения их во всех отношениях представляют действительно нечто небывалое, хотя на Западе и в этом отношении уже были предшественники.’]; L’dov, ‘Khudozhniki-Revoliutsionery’, pp. 3–4; M. S., ‘Sovremennye napravleniia v iskusstve’, p. 3. David Burliuk receives praise for the soft [*miagkie*] and tender [*nezhnye*] tones of his deeply poetical landscapes. His tendency towards an original technique does not conceal his deep love of nature. His painting, *Tsvetushchii sad* [Garden in bloom], is considered to be one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful painting in the exhibition. It is noticeably the most delicate of all Burliuk’s works.

series of new artistic techniques and trends.<sup>68</sup> Their colourful personalities provided easily recognisable icons, which were frequently caricatured in the press (see figs. 6, 10, 14, 15 and 16). Commentary by Benedikt Livshits testifies to Burliuk's charisma and public persona. Livshits seems bewildered by what he considered to be an anomaly, Burliuk's perceived unattractiveness on the one hand, and yet his appeal to women on the other.

True to his catholic tastes, he rushed from one love affair to the next, ready to expend his amorous ardour with the first woman who came along. And the strange thing was that for all his physical ugliness, David had considerable success.

In a way David was even proud of this unattractive exterior. He emphasized its defects and made them a part of his own distinctive style.<sup>69</sup>

Larionov's forceful character was evident from his student days at the Moscow School of Art. One Larionov anecdote recounts how he refused to remove his one hundred and fifty paintings, which had disrupted his student exhibition in 1902 by taking up all the available space. Despite the appeals of staff and students, and Prince L'vov himself, Larionov stood firm and was later temporarily expelled.<sup>70</sup> Larionov's thirst for public recognition was acknowledged by art critics as early as 1906. In his review of the *Mir iskusstva* exhibition, N. Tarovatyi wrote that although Larionov's talent is undoubted, he is so keen to have his work on show that it is practically being seen simultaneously in other exhibitions.<sup>71</sup> Larionov's headstrong character is also demonstrated by his refusal to comply with Vladimir Markov's wishes, when Markov wanted to select Larionov's paintings which were to be exhibited with the *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibitions (St. Petersburg and Riga, 1910). Instead Larionov imposed his own preference for the selection of his paintings.<sup>72</sup> This is consistent with the artist Sergei Romanovich's description of Larionov's relationship with his

<sup>68</sup> Mislér, 'David Burliuk and Pavel Filonov', p. 66.

<sup>69</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup> Parton, p. 4. Parton notes that the School's archives 'record that Larionov was actually expelled for failing to complete the drawing, painting, and composition course which he was required to attend'.

<sup>71</sup> N. Tarovatyi, 'Na Vystavke: "Mir Iskusstva". Vpechatleniia', *Zolotoe runo*, vol. 3 (1906), 123–25.

<sup>72</sup> Parton, p. 30. In an undated letter, Vladimir Markov wrote the following about his trip to Moscow to gather paintings for the first *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition, 1910: 'Larionov isn't giving what I'd like, but is imposing his own choice. If I do take any of these, I take no responsibility for them. But as regards his wooden sculpture – I've selected two small but interesting works. The most interesting work that I've so far come across is Goncharova's. She has still not exhibited in Petersburg. [...]. The Golden Fleece has ceased to exist. Riabushinskii has gone bankrupt. So I won't go there for works, although I'll ask Larionov. Let me have Burliuk's address...' See Howard, *Union of Youth*, pp. 47–8.



patrons. Larionov is described as maintaining his uncompromising stance and his integrity towards his art, regardless of its perceived ‘marketability’ or not.<sup>73</sup>

Although Larionov’s forceful character was often interpreted as loutish (see figs. 6 and 15), it was an essential force which protected his fellow artists and enabled him to succeed in his plans. Jane Sharp, for example, records how Larionov’s deal to borrow ‘money to finance the publication of the “Donkey’s Tail” catalogue involved an agreement “to allow Jews into the exhibition”’.<sup>74</sup> Anti-Semitism was rife during the early 1900s (see fig. 17), and as a result, Larionov appears to have sought protection both for the many Jewish individuals who were associated with Futurism and for Jewish members of the public who patronised the exhibitions.<sup>75</sup> Personal correspondence between Larionov and other members of the avant-garde confirms his status as leader of Oslinyi khvost. For example, Vladimir Markov wrote to Larionov in November 1911 and invited him to exhibit his work in the Soiuz molodezhi exhibition to be held in St. Petersburg the following March. Markov added that, of course, Larionov had *carte blanche* to exhibit whatever he wished.<sup>76</sup> As Futurism progressed and the Oslinyi khvost group broke away from Bubnovyi valet, Larionov went full-steam ahead and organised six separate exhibitions. His efforts to establish Oslinyi khvost as a separate entity is reflected not only in his public appearances, publications and newspaper interviews, but also in his private correspondence. In a letter to the Soiuz molodezhi artist, Iosif Shkol’nik, dated 24 March 1913, Larionov writes of the need to keep Oslinyi khvost’s identity distinct from Bubnovyi valet, ‘regarding the Jacks, my advice is not to give a damn about them, don’t write or say anything about them, and don’t react to them’. He explains

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<sup>73</sup> Sergei Romanovich, ‘Kakim ego sokhranila pamiat’’, in *Natal’ia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov: vospominaniia sovremennikov*, edited by G. F. Kovalenko (Moscow: Galart, 1995), pp. 103–16, (p. 114).

<sup>74</sup> Sharp, ‘The Russian Avant-Garde’, footnote 21.

<sup>75</sup> I am not suggesting that Futurism was exempt from the prevalent anti-Semitism of the age. Correspondence between the Futurist members of Oslinyi khvost Viktor Bart and Mikhail Le-Dantiu is coloured with a degree of anti-Semitism, in this case, against members of the Soiuz molodezhi, Eduard Spandikov, Sergei Shleifer and Iosif Shkol’nik. See M. V. Le-Dantiu, ‘Pis’mo k V. S. Bartu (1912)’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 26–27, and a letter related to the same instance, V. S. Bart, ‘Dva pis’ma k M. F. Larionovu (1911)’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 19–21.

<sup>76</sup> Bart, ‘Dva pis’ma k M. F. Larionov’, pp. 19–21.

the shortage of exhibition venues in Moscow and does not miss the opportunity to state his lack of sufficient funds.<sup>77</sup>

Where Larionov had learned from Diaghilev's artistic experience, so Burliuk had learned from Kandinskii in Munich, and Vladimir Izdebskii and Aleksandra Ekster in Kiev. David Burliuk and his brother, Vladimir, had strengthened their relationship with the German-based *Der Sturm* through their mutual association with Anton Ažbé's studio in Munich. The Burliuks' practical and artistic education is marked by a strong international element. They had strong ties with the Ukraine and its artistic community. Their collaboration with Kandinskii would have given them valuable experience in organising an international groups of artists, whilst simultaneously trying to further a specific aesthetic.<sup>78</sup> David Burliuk was directly involved with the exhibitions which were organised by Izdebskii and Ekster in Odessa, Kiev and St. Petersburg in 1908. The Izdebskii Salon was a phenomenal artistic achievement which exhibited 700 works by 150 Russian and international artists. According to Dmitrii Severiukhin, Izdebskii had known Burliuk since 1902, and he too was associated with the German art scene (1904–09) in his capacity as a founder member of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung* in Munich. Burliuk wrote to his Moscow avant-garde friends and was responsible for the inclusion of their art in Izdebskii's salon. No doubt he also had a hand in the inclusion of work by Matiushin and Kul'bin. The exhibition also included children's work, a practice which was quite common in Neo-Primitivist groups and was later repeated in Futurist exhibitions. Izdebskii also wanted the exhibition to include an educational aspect and so he organised a series of lectures on contemporary art to accompany it. As a forerunner to the Futurist lectures, Izdebskii's use of the public lecture can be interpreted not only as a

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<sup>77</sup> '[...] относительно Валета мой совет плюнуть на них и ничего не писать там не о чем говорить ведь и не на что реагировать'. GRM f:121 Soiuz molodezhi; ed khr: 39 Pis'mo Larionova Mikhailova Fedorovicha – Shkol'niku Iosifu Solomonovichu; l: 1.

<sup>78</sup> Aleksei von Jawlensky and Mstislav Dobuzhinskii also studied under Ažbé. Kandinskii was an artist, theoretician and impresario in his own right. He had exhibited with Jawlensky in Paris as early as 1901 and 1905 as part of the newly formed group, *Groupe d'Art des Tendances Nouvelles*. His work appeared in their journal of the same name, in the group's own exhibition in Angers in 1907 and Kandinskii was also very strongly represented in both Izdebskii's *Salons* in Odessa. For more information on Kandinskii, see Susan Compton, 'The Spread of Information Leading to the Rise of Abstract Art in Europe', in *Towards a New Art: Essays on the Background to Abstract Art 1910–1920* (London: Tate Gallery Publications Department, 1980), pp. 178–98, (pp. 178 and 188–90).

marketing tool to encourage sales, but also as a genuine desire to explain the new art to a new audience and promote understanding.<sup>79</sup>

David Burliuk, whom Kandinskii named the ‘Father of Russian Futurism’ played a leading role in avant-garde circles throughout his life and his influence was felt in the Russian Empire, Japan, Western Europe and the USA. In his poem entitled *Burliuk* (1921) Khlebnikov describes Burliuk’s passion and energy and his influence that was felt across Russia and beyond. The excerpt below reinforces Burliuk’s association with the south and its people during a time of great political unrest in the Crimea.

You, fat giant, your laughter rang out across all Russia,  
And the stem of the Dneiper’s mouth grasped you in its fist,  
Campaigner for the People’s rights in the art of Titans,  
You gave sea coasts to Russia’s soul.<sup>80</sup>

Burliuk seems to have had a natural ability to bring people together. Innumerable memoirs and personal correspondence underline his ability as an organiser and hospitable host, in addition to his financial support for a number of early Futurist ventures. The lively Burliuk residence, Chernianka, near the Black Sea coast, seems to have been permanently open to members of the Futurist circle and many spent their summers there with the family of artists. One letter from Burliuk to Matiushin in June 1910 states that he has been in constant correspondence with Larionov that summer. He mentions that Khlebnikov spent time at Chernianka and writes that if Matiushin was to come (with his violin and old music), that perhaps Khlebnikov would return.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> For detailed information on the Izdebskii’s Salons, see Dmitrii Severiukhin, ‘Vladimir Izdebsky and His Salons’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 57–71. Izdebskii also organized exhibitions in 1911, but in doing so, he accrued debts of 5,000 rubles. This, effectively, terminated his hopes of any future exhibitions. It would also have been a valuable lesson for David Burliuk.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Ты, жирный великан, твой хохот прозвучал по всей России, | И стебель днепровского устья, им ты зажат был в кулаке, | Борец за право народа в искусстве титанов, | Душе России дал морские берега.’ Excerpt from Khlebnikov, *Burliuk*, in Velimir Khlebnikov, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, vol. 1, *Stikhotvoreniia* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001), pp. 360–61.

<sup>81</sup> D. D. Burliuk, ‘Pis’mo k M. V. Matiushinu (1910)’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 13. For further commentary on Futurist visits to Chernianka see Livshits, *The One and A Half-Eyed Archer*, and Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*. Livshits’ memoirs reflect the often contradictory feelings which he felt towards Burliuk, and the lack of methodology or theory in his approach to the arts. Bowlt notes that Kandinskii’s appellation of Burliuk as the Father of Russian Futurism was written in an exhibition catalogue, *Oils, Watercolors by David Burliuk* (NY: 8<sup>th</sup> St. Gallery, 1934), p. 34, in Bowlt [Boult], ‘David Burliuk’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 5 (1999), 10.

Before turning to the question of specific financial sponsorship for individual Futurist events, let us turn to the issue of the split between the two Futurist groups, Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet, and the impact that this split had on their development and on the Russian avant-garde in general. The separation affected issues of censorship, patronage, association with other contemporary artistic tendencies, artistic identity, and critical and public recognition, and also initiated the most colourful, inventive and provocative period in Futurist marketing and self-promotion.

### Divided Loyalties

Larionov, Goncharova and Viktor Bart decided to break away from the Bubnovyi valet in April 1911. Howard cites an article in *Obozrenie teatrov* which stated that ‘a group of artists were leaving the newly formed “Moscow Salon” [Bubnovyi valet] in order to organise their own exhibition under the name “Donkey’s Tail”’. However, Howard also notes that technically, Oslinyi khvost did not break away from Bubnovyi valet ‘as the latter was not yet an art society, simply an exhibition organised by Lentulov and funded by the businessman S. A. Lobachev at the end of 1910’.<sup>82</sup> Sharp states that those artists associated with Oslinyi khvost decided to leave when the ‘majority of the “Jack of Diamonds” artists voted to form a society [i.e. become a registered entity] in the autumn of 1911’. She suggests that Larionov’s decision was, to some extent, related to his concept of artistic censorship and state control. ‘The formal registration of a society (*obshchestvo*)’ writes Sharp, ‘guaranteed the continued state regulation of the cultural sphere. More insidiously, organising as a society all but required the complicity of the artist, since every step, from filing a statement of intent (the society’s programme) and statutes, had to be approved by the city governor’s (*gradonachal’nik*) office.’<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See *Obozrenie teatrov*, 30 April 1911, p. 11, cited in Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 88, footnote 62.

<sup>83</sup> Sharp, ‘The Russian Avant-Garde’, p. 99.

The question of state registration had a direct effect on the development of both strands of Futurism and I will return to this issue a little later. As Howard has noted, however, it is much more likely that the Oslinyi khvost artists' departure from Bubnovyi valet was primarily motivated by artistic differences, and no doubt by personal differences too.<sup>84</sup> Larionov already had a track record of sacrificing artistic security for artistic principle. In 1910 he had contributed to the seventh exhibition of the illustrious *Soiuz russkikh khudozhnikov* [Union of Russian Artists] but then ended his formal association with them in order to join *Soiuz molodezhi*. The former guaranteed critical attention and attracted over sixteen thousand visitors to each of their exhibitions. However, as Parton states, Larionov had grown uneasy with the conservative St. Petersburg organisation and decided to take the risk and throw in his lot with the first formal avant-garde association, *Soiuz molodezhi*.<sup>85</sup>

Declarations, and newspaper articles and interviews from 1911, state, quite vehemently, that the Oslinyi khvost artists considered the Bubnovyi valet to be too influenced by Western art.<sup>86</sup> As if to confirm their position, Bubnovyi valet invited a host of French artists to exhibit in their exhibition of January 1912. To this end, Matisse, Picasso, Le Fauconnier, Léger, Friesz and Robert Delaunay were represented, whilst works by Derain and Van Dongen were also to be included but allegedly became stuck somewhere en route and failed to arrive in time for the exhibition.<sup>87</sup> Bubnovyi valet held their first public debate at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, 12 February 1912. After lectures by Kul'bin and David Burliuk, Goncharova made a dramatic entrance and stated that henceforth, all of her art would be associated with Oslinyi khvost alone. She managed to control the unruly crowd (a point which we shall return to in Chapter 5), and stated that only those who had something [worthwhile] to say had the right to paint. In a letter which was published in *Protiv techeniia*, Goncharova explained the differences between Oslinyi

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<sup>84</sup> One can, of course, argue that the wish for independence in art is a factor in both issues: state censorship through adherence to the rules of the society's registration, and differences of aesthetic opinions between different Futurist groups.

<sup>85</sup> Parton, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> The *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition in Riga, 1910, for example, was subtitled 'The Russian Secession'. Howard notes the uncompromising subtext: '...the group emphasised not only its links with developments in Europe, Munich and Berlin in particular, but also the fact that the contributions were to be considered a break with the prevailing Russian academic tradition.' Howard, *Union of Youth*, p. 58.

<sup>87</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 72–74.

khvost and Bubnovyi valet more fully. In addition to their adherence to French tenets of cubism, Goncharova is particularly critical of Bubnovyi valet's reliance on theory. She declares that art itself, the creative process, should always precede theory and not vice versa.<sup>88</sup> Larionov had also appeared at the Bubnovyi valet, although he was not able to control the crowd. In the end, he was only able to accuse the Bubnovyi valet artists of conservatism, and of imitating the French (who he states are great [*veliki*]) and Larionov himself.

The status of a registered society was a double-edged sword for both Bubnovyi valet and Oslinyi khvost. On the one hand Oslinyi khvost's refusal to seek authorisation by the bureaucratic state process conformed to the general tone of the avant-garde and reinforced their anarchic public image. In an interview dated 6 January 1912, Larionov declared that '[w]e do not form any sort of association with a defined statute. We do not wish to pin ourselves down [with Bubnovyi valet], we wish to be free [...]'.<sup>89</sup> However, all public events (including exhibitions, debates, public lectures and theatrical events) required the permission of the *gradonachal'nik*, and Oslinyi khvost's lack of official status made the process of applying for the obligatory permission much more complicated. Larionov was therefore forced to go through a third party. This required a good deal of networking and had the potential to cause major upsets. For example, Oslinyi khvost held a public debate which accompanied its third exhibition, *Mishen'* [The Target] on 23 March 1913, in Moscow. The event turned into probably the most notorious and well-documented Futurist scandal to take place in the context of a public debate. The audience erupted, violence broke out and chairs, lamps and ashtrays flew. Larionov was accused of provocation and then physical abuse. He was arrested by the police and later fined 25 rubles. Permission for the debate had been acquired through the name

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<sup>88</sup> For one account of the *Bubnovyi valet* debate, see B. Sh[uisikii], 'Moskva, Khudozhestvennyi disput', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 22 (46), 18 February 1912, p. 3. N. Goncharova, 'Pis'mo N. Goncharovoi', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 23, 3 March 1912, p. 3. This is an abridged form of the original letter which Goncharova addressed to the editor of *Russkoe slovo*. *Russkoe slovo*, however, did not publish it. For an English translation of the full original, dated 13 February 1913, and further publishing details, see *Amazons of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt and Drutt, pp. 311–13.

<sup>89</sup> '[M]ы не составляем какого-либо общества с определенным уставом. Мы не хотим связывать себя, хотим быть свободными...' See B., '“Oslinyi Khvost” (iz besed)', *Rannee utro*, No. 5, 6 January 1912, p. 6. This is a short chatty interview with Larionov in which 'B' tries to discern the difference between Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet – something which the public has yet to understand. He notes that Oslinyi khvost have a theoretical basis to their art, which is perhaps lacking in Bubnovyi valet.

of the theatre director, M. M. Bonch-Tomashevskii. Bonch-Tomashevskii was outraged by the negative turn of events. Not only was he unable to contribute his own prepared lecture to the evening (as per the advertised programme), he was also pushed back by Larionov when he [Bonch-Tomashevskii] attempted to bring the proceedings to an early close. The newspapers fed off the scandal, interviews and accounts of the evening fleshed out the gossip columns and satirical sketches (see figs. 6 and 15). Bonch-Tomashevskii and Aleksei Arkhangel'skii wrote a joint letter to the editor of the newspaper *Utro Rossii*, absolving themselves of any responsibility for their participation in the Futurist debate, comprehensively dissociating themselves from the Futurists and withdrawing their support.<sup>90</sup> The seriousness of the scandal had a knock-on effect when the Futurists later applied for permission through the *Khudozhestvenno-artisticheskaia assotsiatsiia* [Artistic Association] to the *gradonachal'nik's* office in St. Petersburg. In a draft letter to Boris Nikolaevich Kurdinovskii, 29 March 1913, Il'ia Zdanevich informs Kurdinovskii that the *gradonachal'nik* has forbidden any debate to take place after Zdanevich's proposed lecture.<sup>91</sup>

By contrast, Bubnovyi valet was not dependent upon a third party. As a registered artistic association it was able to apply for permission for public events directly. They had already established a public image. The public associated Bubnovyi valet's name and signature design with the Russian avant-garde and these were used for advertisements and headed notepaper (see fig. 18).<sup>92</sup> Bubnovyi valet's more established public image made Oslinyi khvost's task to establish their own identity more difficult than the 'original' Bubnovyi valet, but, as we shall see, Oslinyi khvost accepted the challenge with customary boldness and creativity.

There were disadvantages to having an official registered status. Bubnovyi valet became an easy target for state censorship. Their name alone attracted the attention of the authorities. This meant that the association as a whole could be targeted for the action of an individual member. In this way, Oslinyi khvost's lack of state artistic

<sup>90</sup> M. M. Bonch-Tomashevskii and Aleksei Arkhangel'skii, 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu', *Utro Rossii*, No. 74, 30 March 1913, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 22–23, B. N. Kurdinovskomu.

<sup>92</sup> A more comprehensive assessment of the function and effectiveness of Bubnovyi valet's signature design is discussed in Chapter 2.

status aided them in avoiding police attention and some forms of censorship. For example, if it came to the attention of the police that certain individuals had been the cause of a public disturbance, the police would either have to physically apprehend the individuals or identify them in order to exercise their authority. They could not simply associate the individuals with a registered artistic association and then fine the association instead.

Bubnovyi valet's official status enabled the artistic group to raise money for its exhibitions through membership, in addition to patronage, catalogue and ticket sales. Their strength as a recognisable artistic association was greatly enhanced by their ability to finance their own publications and lend money to their artists when the artists were facing severe financial problems. Livshits quotes from a letter from David Burliuk, August 1912: 'I don't know whether I told you or not – the Knave of Diamonds has 2,000 rubles on hand. In October we will be publishing a miscellany – diverse polemical material and some poetry'.<sup>93</sup> However, the society's funds were not available for all artistic projects. Bubnovyi valet's formal structure dictated that the consent of the majority was required in order to publish individual works. The committee, for example, failed to give permission to publish David Burliuk's proposed *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste], the very manifesto which propelled the Futurists into the public consciousness.<sup>94</sup>

Funding for Oslinyi khvost events appears to have been a more delicate matter, where individuals rather than an association were called upon to keep accounts and make decisions on behalf of an envisaged group of artists. True to his role as impresario, personal correspondence between Larionov and Bart underlines Larionov's personal financial commitment to the development of Oslinyi khvost. On 8 December 1911 Larionov held a solo exhibition which was hosted by the *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki* [Society of Free Aesthetics] in Moscow. Larionov informed Bart that he would invest a proportion of any sales from this exhibition in

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<sup>93</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 98.

<sup>94</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 108. Livshits notes that Burliuk used the promise of a contribution by 'Khlebnikov and the Renaissance of Russian Literature [...] guaranteeing [...] eternal gratefulness of posterity' to lure G. L. Kuz'min and S. D. Dolinskii into publishing the manifesto.



Oslinyi khvost.<sup>95</sup> No doubt the restrictions of inadequate patronage resulted in Oslinyi khvost's desire to maintain their artistic contacts and associations with other exhibiting groups and share their venues whenever possible.

The catalogues from four Soiuz molodezhi exhibitions, in 1910, 1911, 1912, and 1913/14, illustrate how Oslinyi khvost used its geographical association with Moscow to establish a public identity as a separate artistic body. In the 1910 editions of the Riga and St. Petersburg catalogues, those artists who were from (or associated with) Moscow had the city's name *Moskva* written after their name in parentheses. These artists include I. F. and M. F. Larionov, Goncharova, Mashkov and A. M. Zel'manova.<sup>96</sup> The same technique is used for the second exhibition in spring 1911. Here other artists marked with the Muscovite identity include V. S. Bart, V. D. Burluk, D. D. Burluk (their names appeared in the previous catalogue but without the reference to Moscow), A. V. Fon-Vizen [Fon Vizin], Kuprin [sic], K. S. Malevich, A. A. Morgunov, N. I. Rogovin and V. E. Tatlin. Two separate catalogues were produced for 1912: one for St. Petersburg where Muscovite members of Oslinyi khvost were marked as such, again in parentheses after each (Oslinyi khvost) artist's name, and a second catalogue for the Moscow exhibition, where the Oslinyi khvost shared a venue with Soiuz molodezhi but exhibited their art separately. In correspondence leading up to this exhibition, Larionov informed Bart of Oslinyi khvost's need to establish a separate identity by holding an annual, specialised exhibition, regardless of its size.<sup>97</sup> The Moscow artists who bear the title 'Moskva "Oslinyi khvost"' after their names include: Goncharova, S. P. Bobrov, A. V. Fon-Vizen, M. F. Larionov, K. S. Malevich, A. A. Morgunov, V. E. Tatlin and finally A. V. Shevchenko. Two things are striking about the Soiuz molodezhi catalogue, November 1913 to January 1914. First is the absence of any specific reference either

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<sup>95</sup> Larionov, 'Tri pis'ma k V. S. Bartu', p. 23.

<sup>96</sup> See Appendix for full listings of catalogues and the prices where pencilled in on the GRM archival copies. See f: 121; ed khr: 9 Katalog vystavok 'Soiuz molodezhi' na 12 ekz. Items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11. [Each numbered item refers to a complete catalogue. The pages of each catalogue are then individually numbered.]

<sup>97</sup> Larionov, 'Tri pis'ma k V. S. Bartu', p. 24. According to the note by Kharzhdiev, the letter is dated 1 December 1911. Larionov's letter is a response to Bart's concerns that the artistic identity of Oslinyi khvost would be diluted by a few 'rogue' artists from Soiuz molodezhi. Larionov writes how it would be possible to show 100 artists to represent a broad scope of work, starting with Golubaia Roza, in the same way that Mir iskusstva presents its work. However, Larionov states that they (Oslinyi khvost) already have 20 artists with over 250 works to exhibit (at the Soiuz molodezhi exhibition in Moscow, 1912), and he suggests the annual, specialised exhibition.

to Moscow artists or to Oslinyi khvost. By this time Malevich, Tatlin and Morgunov no longer associated themselves strictly with the Oslinyi khvost and this is reflected in their inclusion in this Soiuz molodezhi exhibition. Secondly, the catalogue was divided into artistic styles. Malevich's work, for example, comes under the heading *zaumnyi realizm*, and *kubo-futuristicheskii realizm*. Ol'ga Rozanova's work is categorised under the sub-heading, *Puti – pis'mena dushevnykh dvizhenii (opyt analiza sobstvennogo tvorchestva)*.

The Futurist strategy was successful in that the press used the allegiance to either St. Petersburg or Moscow as a way to distinguish between the two Futurist groups. However, although this polarity may be true (to a certain extent) of the Futurist trends of exhibiting art during this time of 'conflict' (1912–1913/4), the geographical association starts to fragment when one considers the publishing collaborations which frequently and continually brought together artists from both 'capitals' over the same period. Bubnovyi valet was, of course, registered with the St. Petersburg *gradonachal'nik*'s office, and was associated (either legitimately or by the press) with poets, musicians and writers from the literary avant-garde groups, Guleia, Acmeists and Ego-Futurists.<sup>98</sup> As the founder members of Oslinyi khvost were associated with Moscow, so this group of Futurists was often referred to as the Moscow Futurists. However, although the literary groups, the Mezzanine of Poetry and the short-lived Centrifuge were based in Moscow, artists such as Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov were more involved with illustrating publications of St. Petersburg poets and writers. For example, during this period of competition and tension between Bubnovyi valet and Oslinyi khvost, Aleksei Kruchenykh, a key figure within St. Petersburg-based Futurist poetic circles, invited Goncharova and Larionov to illustrate two of his best known publications, *Igra v adu* [A Game in Hell], and *Starinnaia liubov'* [Old-fashioned Love]. As a non-registered group, artists came and went from Oslinyi khvost with greater frequency than Bubnovyi valet. Tatlin and Malevich's independence from Oslinyi khvost is borne out not only

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<sup>98</sup> There was much internal wrangling between the various literary and artistic groups who applied the term futurist to their work and/or their name. This resulted in the public's confused perception of the avant-garde. However justified each group may have been in the application of the term 'Futurist', one has to remember that the distinction between the groups was not fixed. There was a continual cross-over of artists between the various camps. Some changed their allegiance altogether, whilst other members maintained a more fluid relationship to 'avant-garde' art in general. What united all of the groups was participation in the new artistic avant-garde community.

by their inclusion in the *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition of 1914, but also by their collaboration with *Soiuz molodezhi* and the *Bubnovyi valet* for the Futurist productions which were created in the summer of 1913 and performed in December of the same year.

To confuse matters of identity and association further, one only has to take a brief glance at the disparity between the rhetoric of the Futurist manifestoes and the artistic networking and collaborations that were taking place simultaneously, such as the above mentioned collaboration with Kruchenykh.<sup>99</sup> As far as the public was concerned, *Oslinyi khvost* adopted a nationalistic and aggressive tone against their supposed adversaries, *Bubnovyi valet* and any lovers of Western art, such as *Mir iskusstva*. The first two independent *Oslinyi khvost* publications *Natalia Goncharova Mikhail Larionov* and *Oslinyi khvost i Mishen'* (both published by Miunster in July 1913) professed a healthy disregard for public opinion, and for any Russian art associated with the West. In addition, Larionov, as Parton notes, invented a new term *budushchniki* [futurepeople] to distinguish his form of Futurism from David Burliuk's, which preferred Khlebnikov's term *budetliane* ['people of the future']. The declamatory statement in the second *Oslinyi khvost* publication read as follows:

We, Rayists [*Luchisty*] and Futurepeople [*Budushchniki*], don't wish to speak about new or old art, and even less about contemporary western art... We, artists of art's future paths, offer our hand to the Futurists [*futuristy*], despite all their mistakes, but express our complete contempt for so-called ego-Futurists [*egofuturisty*] and new-Futurists [*neofuturisty*], talentless, banal people, the very same as the 'Jack of Diamonds' [*valety*], 'Slap in the Face' [*poshchechniki*] and 'Union of Youth'.<sup>100</sup>

In an article dated 13 December 1913, when Russian Futurism was enjoying unprecedented popularity and public interest, Liubov' Gurevich attempted to explain the evolving term 'Futurist':

<sup>99</sup> Aleksei Kruchenykh was most frequently associated with the St. Petersburg avant-garde, in particular 'Guleia'. However, one article of 21 October 1913 declares that the 'Moscovite Futurists are represented by the likes of Kruchenykh...'. Sar., 'V "Rozovom fonare"', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 333, 21 October 1913, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Parton's translation with my inserts, pp. 62–63. Full Russian text 'Luchisty i Budushchniki: Manifest' is cited in *Russkii Futurizm*, edited by Terekhina and Zimenkov, pp. 239–41.

'*Budetliane*' is a synonym for the Futurists: initially the word 'Futurist' was translated as '*budushchnik*', but then, as the well-known N. Kul'bin recently explained to the public, the word '*budushchnik*', excessively reminiscent of the '*budochnik*' [policeman on duty/Bobby on the beat], with its unpleasant connotations, so the word was scrapped, and the Futurists became known as '*budetliane*'.<sup>101</sup>

Although this explanation contradicts Larionov's, it testifies to the growing public awareness of the existence of different Futurist groups. Significantly both Futurist camps publicly reject the Italian associations of '*futuristy*', although they use the term liberally in their private notes and correspondence.

Despite his anti-Western rhetoric, Larionov was also busy networking and maintaining a good relationship with members of the international avant-garde, artists associated with *Mir iskusstva* and even Symbolists. For example, Parton refers to a letter, written by Larionov to Kandinskii in Munich, 'offering to collaborate on a proposed second volume of the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter*'.<sup>102</sup> Wendy Salmond points to the collaboration of 'Russia's "left" and "moderate" artistic camps' for an exhibition of Russian folk art organized by the Société des Artistes Russes as part of the Eleventh Paris *Salon d'Automne* of 1913, in a manner that 'perhaps no other occasion could have done at this period'.<sup>103</sup> The publication *Oslinyi khvost i Mishen'* also expounded upon *Oslinyi khvost*'s latest artistic concept of '*vsëchestvo*' ['everythingism']. This seemingly 'all-inclusive' term promoted the value of many styles of art, past and present. The disparity between public rhetoric and private conduct is witnessed in a draft letter from Il'ia Zdanevich to Valerii Briusov, dated 2 May [1913].<sup>104</sup> It is a friendly letter in response to Briusov's of 30 March. In the letter, Zdanevich makes positive reference to Konstantin Bal'mont, who had

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<sup>101</sup> '“Будетляне”, это – синоним футуристов: сначала слово “футурист” было переведено “будущником”, но потом, как выяснил недавно публике известный Н. Кульбин, - слово “будущник”, черезчур напоминающее неприятного по ассоциациям “будочника”, было упразднено, и футуристы стали называть себя “булетлянами”.' Liubov' Gurevich, 'Teatr Futuristov', *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 287, 13 December 1913, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> Parton, p. 63.

<sup>103</sup> The exhibition comprised 'icons, toys, lubki, prianiki, and naboika prints from the private collections of Ivan Bilibin, Sergei Chekhonin, Mstislav Dobuzhinskii, Aleksandra Exter, Nikolai Kulbin, Larionov, Georgii Barbut, Roerich, and Sergei Sudeikin, [...]'. See Wendy Salmond, *Arts and Crafts*, p. 168.

<sup>104</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 34ob–35. Valeriiu Iakovlevichu Briusovu.

previously been the focus of Futurist attack in their original manifesto, *Poshchchina*.<sup>105</sup>

Where, I think, one does perceive a difference between the more radical edge of the *Bubnovyi valet* and *Oslinyi khvost* and their public images, was in the way each group greeted the arrival of Filippo Marinetti during his visit to Russia in January 1914. In Moscow the Russian Futurists welcomed Marinetti and when the opportunity arose seemed keen to engage in an exchange of modern artistic principles. In order to preserve their public image as a distinguishable artistic group with a robust avant-garde aesthetic agenda it was essential that *Oslinyi khvost* were seen to participate in the events surrounding Marinetti's visit. In stereotypical fashion, the Russian press were fascinated by the visit of this notorious European and covered his every move. In fact, it would appear that Larionov and Goncharova cemented relations, which they later developed after their emigration in 1915, when they spent time with their Italian counterparts in Rome. In St. Petersburg, however, Marinetti was initially met with a degree of protest. Khlebnikov and Livshits burst into the lecture hall where Marinetti was 'performing' and did their best to hand out a brief statement of defiance against the perceived Italian 'impostor'. Kul'bin was utterly shocked. He pounced on them, seizing their anti-Italian declaration. Although Livshits and Khlebnikov expressed a sense of hurt to their nationalistic artistic pride, Marinetti enjoyed warm hospitality from Nikolai Kul'bin and his circle (see also Chapter 4 on this subject).

*Oslinyi khvost*'s status as an unregistered body of artists, in direct competition with *Bubnovyi valet* (whose public image was relatively more established), forced them to find ways to communicate their 'new' or 'distinctive' identity to the public. To this end, the declamatory structure of the artistic public debate was probably their most effective tool. Correspondence between Il'ia Zdanevich and Larionov in the spring of 1913 emphasises Zdanevich's wish to communicate *Oslinyi khvost*'s most recent artistic trends and Futurist theories (e.g. *Luchizm* [Rayism] and *vsëchestvo*) and their attitude to Italian Futurism. In a draft letter to Larionov dated 12 March [1913], Zdanevich discusses his proposed contribution to their forthcoming debate.

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<sup>105</sup> 'Кто же, трусливый, устрасится стащить бумажные латы с черного фрака воина Брюсова?', in Terekhina and Zimenkov, p. 41.

He repeats the need for *Luchizm* to be advertised separately from Futurism, with a separate lecture to be devoted to it at a later date. Zdanevich feels that he does not have the time to talk on the East [comprehensively], but could discuss western civilisation. He can reiterate the demands of individuality [*samobytnost*] and talk on Marinetti. However, Zdanevich also wishes to clarify how Igor' Severianin [of the Ego-Futurists] and Burliuk and company have nothing in common with Futurism, and will finish by stating 'in what sense Futurism [is needed]'.<sup>106</sup> Declarations of Oslinyi khvost's and Bubnovyi valet's independent artistic identities became the frequent subject of much contemporary Futurist correspondence and public rhetoric.<sup>107</sup>

By no means was this intention of clarity of aesthetic position the sole preserve of Oslinyi khvost. The proposed lecture notes, entitled, 'Lecture by Vladimir Maiakovskii (about painting) [*"Babushkam akademii"*] ' ["To the Old Women of the Academy"] are broken down into the following sections and demonstrate the explicit intention of Bubnovyi valet to declare its definition of its artistic principles and its differences from Oslinyi khvost:

- 1) Yesterday's achievements and today
- 2) Group artistic strengths in Russia
- 3) Bubnovyi valet
- 4) Goncharova, Larionov (bi-ba-bo luchizm)
- 5) Soiuz molodezhi
- 6) Knowledge of foreigners
- 7) Matisse, Picasso, Boccioni
- 8) Stories about Russian imitators
- 9) Parallelism in art
- 10) Tomorrow – the Futurists!<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 11–11ob. References to other correspondence to Larionov, related to this debate, include: f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll. 7 and 9.

<sup>107</sup> For example, Goncharova's *Letter to the Editor*, which was written after her dramatic appearance at the Bubnovyi valet debate, 12 February 1912, stated that '[...] in many cases, here [Bubnovyi valet] are hopeless academics, whose fat bourgeois faces peep out from behind the terrifying mugs of innovators'. Cited in Thea Durfee, 'Natalia Goncharova', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 159–67, (p. 162).

<sup>108</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 50 Raspiska Maiakovskogo, V. V. v poluchenii deneg i programma doklada 'Babushkam akademii', l. 2 (a different document in the file is dated 20 November [1912]). Under the archival reference f: 121; ed khr: 13 Programmy, tezisy dokladov i disputov, ustraivaemykh "Soiuzom Molodezhi"; pp. 6 and 7 are notes for the advertising programme for David Burliuk's speech, 20 November 1912, 'Razgovor o zhivopisi', to be held at the Troitskii Theatre. It bears the *gradonachal'nik's* stamp of approval on the reverse. Page 7 is a similar hand-written document but with a few additions which are omitted from the printed flier. Added to part IV is a list, 'Soiuz "Mir Iskusstva"', 'Bubnovyi Valet', 'Oslinyi khvost', 'Mishen'.

Whilst the majority of art critics failed to recognise or refer to any substantial difference between Bubnovyi valet and Oslinyi khvost (not to mention each group's individual internal differences and development of artistic styles), there were a few discerning minds which sought to illuminate the public. F. Mukhortov, for example, published an interview with Larionov in *Vecherniaia gazeta*, as early as 28 November 1911. Mukhortov contextualises the contemporary Russian events within the broader European avant-garde. He refreshes the reader's memory of the previous year's scandal in Paris when people went to the exhibition out of a sense of curiosity but got more than they bargained for. He draws attention to Larionov's daring use of colour, of foreshortening and the lack of status of these paintings as art, and makes many references to paintings from a 'mad-house'. Mukhortov then seems supportive of Larionov when the latter refuses to get drawn into an explanation of his work but instead explains how 'they' [Larionov and his fellow artists] took up the gauntlet that was thrown to them in Paris the previous year, which is why they use the name Oslinyi khvost. Mukhortov reports that Larionov is dismissive of a public which does not understand their work or recognise it as art but acknowledges that all new schools of art started in this manner.<sup>109</sup>

The most effective marketing initiative undertaken by Oslinyi khvost was the appearance of Larionov and Goncharova at the Bubnovyi valet public lecture at the Polytechnical Museum [1912], a popular venue for public lectures and debates. This dramatic event not only stirred up the crowd, but also established both groups as separate identities in some newspaper reviews. Sh[uisikii], in his article in *Protiv techeniia*, for example, uses the terms Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet, rather than referring to the Moscow or Petersburg Futurists/avant-gardists.<sup>110</sup>

The following year Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet turned their attention to theatrical projects which stimulated competition and creativity between the two groups. Larionov gave numerous interviews concerning the preparations for the Moscow avant-gardists' theatrical venture, 'Teatr Futu'. Bol'shakov's *Pliaska ulits* [Jig of the Streets] had already given the Moscow audience a taste of what was to

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<sup>109</sup> F. Mukhortov, 'Lider "Oslinogo khvosta"', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 162, 28 November 1911, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Sh[uisikii], B., 'Moskva, Khukozhestvennyi disput', p. 3.

come. Meanwhile, in St. Petersburg, Soiuz molodezhi agreed to sponsor two productions, the opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory Over the Sun],<sup>111</sup> and the play *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* [Vladimir Maiakovskii: A Tragedy].<sup>112</sup> As preparations went ahead, public expectation increased in the press, a fact reflected in the quick sale of the tickets.

In July 1913, the artists involved with *Pobeda nad solntsem*, Malevich, Kruchenykh, and Matiushin, held a conference which they called ‘The First All-Russian Congress of Poets of the Future (The Poet-Futurists)’. They produced a manifesto which was then published. It could be argued that during this time of increased artistic competition between the two Futurist groups the ‘Peterburgers’ wished to project an image of a more consolidated avant-garde group. A more formalised, and perhaps less extreme, avant-garde public image may have contributed to the high level of attendance of the middle classes at the Luna Park Estrada, itself a familiar Petersburg venue, particularly among the *poluintelligentsiia* and *meshchanstvo*.<sup>113</sup> However, even during this summer of competition, all was not cut-and-dried. Maiakovskii, a major figure in the Luna Park productions, is quoted as working with Larionov, Goncharova, Il’ia Zdanevich, Lotov and Bol’shakov on the new Moscow ‘Rayonist theatre’ which was also planned for the autumn of 1913.<sup>114</sup> So yet again, the division between the two camps was perhaps never quite what it seemed. Perhaps, as Livshits wrote, the artistic differences between the two groups were too difficult to comprehend and he saw more ‘points of convergence than of divergence’ and that the temporary artistic ‘separation’ was a result of clashes of personality, rather than artistic creativity alone.<sup>115</sup>

The emergence and sustainability of all strands of Russian Futurism was dependent upon the artists’ ability to attract adequate funding. We have discussed the issues involved in this process, including the central role played by the Futurist impresarios, but let us now focus on the question of who exactly financed specific

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<sup>111</sup> Kruchenykh wrote the libretto, Matiushin composed the music and Malevich designed the sets.

<sup>112</sup> The play was written by Maiakovskii and the sets were designed by Iosif Shkol’nik and Pavel Filonov.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4 for a discussion of these productions in terms of venue and reception.

<sup>114</sup> Parton, pp. 66–67.

<sup>115</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 90. For a more detailed discussion of possible artistic distinction between the Bubnovyi Valet and Oslinyi khvost, see pp. 88–92.



Futurist events and publications. The following information is by no means comprehensive. It does, however, give some indication of how little profit was made by the patrons of these Futurist activities and raises the issue of why they supported them at all. Additional information concerning the amount of money earned by the Futurists through their participation in their artistic ventures will also illustrate their continued financial vulnerability.

### Financing Art Exhibitions

The artistic foundations of Russian Futurism were set down in early avant-garde exhibitions which were financed by David Burliuk himself. He used his father's money to finance the following three exhibitions: *Venok-Stefanos*, in the Stroganov Institute, Moscow 27 December 1907 – 15 January 1908; *Venok Stefanos*, St. Petersburg, March-April 1909 [Bowlit notes that the exhibition then opened in Kherson in September]; and *Venok* which was organised as a sub-section of the *Treugol'nik* exhibition by Kul'bin in St. Petersburg, April 1910.<sup>116</sup> Nikolai Riabushinskii financed and co-organised four major exhibitions: *Golubaia roza* [Blue Rose] (1907), and three *Salons of Zolotoe Runo* (1908, 1909, and 1910), of which the first two were international exhibitions. His valuable contribution to the nurturing and advancement of the avant-garde in its early stages is undeniable.<sup>117</sup>

The *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki* hosted many Futurist events. Bowlit describes it as 'the most international and the most sophisticated' of all the Moscow clubs. It was frequented by all the major Moscow art patrons and boasted what Andrei Belyi described as an 'excess of lady millionaires'. The Symbolist poet Valerii Briusov sanctioned Goncharova's solo exhibition at this popular venue on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka in 1910, and Larionov held an exhibition there in 1912.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 90, footnote 37.

<sup>117</sup> Through his journal and exhibitions, Riabushinskii not only support the Russian avant-garde, but also helped to bring the wider European avant-garde directly to the Russian audience.

<sup>118</sup> Bowlit, 'The Moscow Art Market', pp. 118–20 for all references to the *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki*.

Soiuz molodezhi was a major financial force based in St. Petersburg. It principally supported the St. Petersburg avant-garde, but it also represented Moscow artists, hosted its own exhibitions in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and collaborated on international exhibitions. Although the society did not make a great profit from its art exhibitions, its direct patronage through Zheverzheev, together with membership, ticket, catalogue and book sales, and sales of reproductions, not to mention art sales, ensured that it had enough funds to pay exhibition costs in advance. The large sums involved in such exhibitions would have been prohibitive for groups of artists of more modest means. For example, the accounts of the fourth exhibition of *Soiuz molodezhi*, 4 December 1912 – 10 January 1913, reveal the financial commitment that an exhibition necessitated. Tickets and merchandise sales totalled 1681.44 rubles. The out-goings, however, totalled 1555.78 rubles, which only left a profit of 125.66 rubles.<sup>119</sup> The Soiuz molodezhi archive in the State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, confirms that a large number of the artists who contributed art to the Soiuz molodezhi exhibitions were financially protected. Many receipts indicate payments to artists, either for lectures or travel expenses. Other receipts appear to be unspecified payments to artists, or details of loans to artists. Further receipts that refer to marketing, hiring of premises, and so forth, also illustrate the professionalism and the financial stability of the artistic association.

In addition to the exhibitions, Futurist work was also publicly accessible at certain private galleries. The doyennes of Russian artistic society, Nadezhda Dobychina and Klavdiia Mikhailova, owned prestigious art galleries in St. Petersburg and Moscow respectively and both actively supported the Russian avant-garde. Dobychina's Art Bureau on the Moika, which Livshits refers to as 'a real museum of leftist painting', exhibited, bought and sold avant-garde works (see fig. 19). Bowlit notes that it also hosted solo exhibitions including Natan Al'tman in 1913, Goncharova 1914 and

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<sup>119</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113 – Raznye finansovye dokumenty 7/9 – 1910–1914 na 198 ll. Pages 42–50 relate to this exhibition which was held at the usual location of 73, Nevskii Prospekt. The income from the exhibition is broken down as follows: 1774 full-price visitors; 938 students and 289 free visitors. Total of 3002 visitors [this is the figure printed in the accounts, but the number actually totals 3001]. In addition there were merchandise sales of 1310 catalogues, 121 books and 290 reproductions. There does not appear to be any mention of profit from picture sales. The out-goings are minutely detailed. All the references are accounted for except for one payment to Larionov (p. 50) 21.98 rbs. Another receipt in the Soiuz molodezhi archive (GRM f: 121; ed khr: 110; l: 123) notes expenses of 867 rubles to transport paintings by train for an exhibition. This would have been an inconceivable sum for the Futurists to find.

Abram Manevich in 1916. ‘The Bureau [also] maintained a permanent exhibition of works by Sofiia Baudouin de Courtenay, [Sergei] Chekhonin, [Boris] Grigoriev, Lentulov, Petrov-Vodkin, [Ol’ga] Rozanova, Shkol’nik, etc.’<sup>120</sup> Published materials from the Nikolai Khardzhiev archive confirm Dobychina’s close relationship with Marc Chagall. Bowlt adds that Dobychina, a Jew herself, ‘was the foremost dealer in modern Russian and Jewish art in the 1910s’.<sup>121</sup> The Mikhailova Art Salon (or simply the Art Salon), located on the fashionable Bol’shaia Dmitrovka, also hosted a number of key avant-garde exhibitions, including Goncharova’s solo show and Oslinyi khvost’s exhibition, *Mishen’* [Target] in 1913. Personal correspondence between Larionov (Paris, 1914) and Mikhailova confirms the latter’s active curatorial role in promoting avant-garde work in Moscow within a solid theoretical context. Equally, it confirms Larionov’s role as impresario or facilitator, which is legitimised through his network of art dealers and contacts.<sup>122</sup>

### Financing Futurist Performance

Public lectures and debates were a regular public phenomenon in the Russian capitals by the 1910s. However, they too were dependent on a large investment and personal support. The other major artistic club in Moscow, the Literary and Artistic Circle (the ‘Circle’), also on Bol’shaia Dmitrovka, sponsored some of the later Futurists meetings in the Polytechnical and Historical Museums. Bowlt also notes that the Polytechnical Museum itself sponsored ‘all kinds of public lectures, from

<sup>120</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 116 and footnote 29. A photograph of the building in which Dobychina’s gallery was located, can be found in Charlotte Douglas, *Kazimir Malevich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), p. 22.

<sup>121</sup> John E. Bowlt, ‘Marc Chagall and Nadezhda Dobychina’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 251–54. Bowlt also notes that although Dobychina’s Art Bureau was closed in 1919, she continued to support the cause of Jewish music and musicians in the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>122</sup> Bowlt notes that ‘Konstantin Kandaurov’s panorama of contemporary trends called “Exhibition of Painting, 1915” in 1915, and the first and second “Exhibitions of Contemporary Decorative Art” in 1916 and 1917’ also took place in the Mikhailova Art Salon. A well-known photograph of members of the *Mishen’* exhibition, housed in the GRM, is entitled *Vystavka ‘Mishen’*, *Moscow, 1913. Salon Mikhailova*. The names of the artists are handwritten on the reverse: (from left to right): M. F. Larionov 2. Sergei Mikhailovich Romanovich 3. Vladimir Andreevich Obolenskii ili Mikhail Vasil’evich Le-Dantiu (?) 4. N. S. Goncharova 5. Moris Fabbri 6. Aleksandr Shevchenko. See *Vystavka ‘Mishen’*, *Moscow, 1913. Salon Mikhailova*, f. 158 - Romanovicha Sergeia Mikhailovicha; ed khr: 4; l:2. See also John E. Bowlt, ‘Mikhail Larionov and The Primitive’, *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 169–81, which includes an exchange of letters between Larionov and Klavdiia Mikhailova, pp. 175–76.

Belyi's "Art of the future" in 1907 and the Cubo-Futurist escapades of 1912–1913 to M. Lapirovo-Skobl's discussion of interplanetary travel in 1924'.<sup>123</sup>

In St. Petersburg the artistic salons were equally active patrons of debates and public lectures. For example, Il'ia Zdanevich's aforementioned lecture, which was organised by Boris Kurdinovskii and the *Khudozhestvenno-artisticheskaia assotsiatsiia*. Further correspondence with his mother confirms that Zdanevich was to be paid the not inconsiderable sum of 50 rubles for the lecture. Noting how profitable such debates could be, Zdanevich writes that if the hall is half full, then it would make 500 *chistykh* [i.e. rubles net] and the organisers would pocket 400 rubles for not really doing very much. Regretfully, Zdanevich's fee would remain unchanged.<sup>124</sup>

Soiuz molodezhi also sponsored many Futurist public lectures and debates in St. Petersburg. The lecturers were paid their expenses and also received, generally, from 15 to 25 rubles for their 'performance'. Any profit from the debate or lecture was ploughed back into the Society's funds.<sup>125</sup> The Soiuz molodezhi accounts for the lecture evening of 20 November 1912 show a profit of 163.03 rubles. Ticket sales amounted to 281.23rbs, and the cost of advertising and theatre services totalled 118.20rbs. The hiring of the Troitskii Theatre and use of electricity, and so forth, were given free of charge.<sup>126</sup> Soiuz molodezhi made a tidy profit from the two public lectures which they sponsored on 23 and 24 March 1913. Income totalled 1111.95rbs, expenditure 512.05rbs, which meant a profit of 599.90rbs.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, the profit from the Soiuz molodezhi sponsored evening of lectures, *O noveishei russkoi literature*, where Maiakovskii, David Burliuk and Kruchenykh all gave

<sup>123</sup> Bowlit, 'The Moscow Art Market', p. 119.

<sup>124</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 15–16. Letter dated 19 March 1913. See also another letter to his mother, p. 13, dated 15 March 1913.

<sup>125</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 13, ll: 39/39ob. See also RGALI f: 336; op: 5; ed khr: 4; l: 36.

<sup>126</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113; l: 21.

<sup>127</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113, ll: 85–119 Otchet po ustroistvu disputov. 23 i 24 marta 1913g. Income for these debates was broken down in the accounts as follows: (p. 85ob) prikhod ot prodazhi biletov 1081.50; prikhod ot prodazhi programm 16.95; prikhod ot prodazhi knigi [20%], 49 ekz. S. M. No. 3 po 20k 9.80; No 1 i 2 po 10 k 3.70. Total of 1111.95. The total expenditure includes: advertising in newspapers 92.63 rbs; poster 40 rbs; theatre services for two days 97 rbs. On page 54 it is confirmed that D. Burliuk, Maiakovskii, Kruchenykh and Malevich were paid 25 rbs each.

lectures, totalled 352.26rbs.<sup>128</sup> Clearly, without the expense of long leases of premises, transportation of art, the publication of catalogues and other related expenses, the debates proved to be a relatively quick and painless way to make a profit.

The question of theatre patronage was a slightly different issue because it had as much to do with entertainment, the financial success of the Futurist debates, and the sudden increase in the number of cabarets and miniature theatres, as with the patron's genuine support of Futurist Art. Richard Schechner observes that a theatre has to be enjoying a certain level of 'popularity' and 'stability' (which is generally reflected in the subscription audience) 'before it becomes the darling of philanthropist and chambers of commerce'.<sup>129</sup> By 1913, the Futurists were enjoying a recognisable level of public popularity. Futurist-related news appeared in the press on a daily basis, the price of Futurist art had increased, and members of the more conservative upper-middle classes, including military officers and members of the Duma, paid up to 9 rubles to attend an organised, advertised Futurist performance.<sup>130</sup> This increased level of popularity no doubt contributed to the Futurists' ability to acquire funding for their theatrical exploits.

According to Aleksei Kruchenykh's memoirs, Soiuz molodezhi's decision to commission the Futurists to create *Pobeda nad solntsem* and Maiakovskii's *Tragediia* was based on the Futurists' growing success.

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<sup>128</sup> f: 121; ed. khr: 113; ll: 120–155 – 'Otchet po lektsii 20 noiabria 1913'. Ticket sales totaled 823.85rbs; Expenses – 471.59rbs, thereby giving a profit of 352.26 rbs. The cashier's record shows that 556 tickets were sold. Expenses included 61.72 rbs for advertising (11 receipts have been collected); 70.00 rbs for the hanging [*raskleika*] of posters; 63rbs for theatre services; 91.15 for lecturers [there is a question mark in my notes for this figure. It may refer to expenses for the lecturers]; 12.00 rbs for the advertising posters; 25 rbs for Maiakovskii and Kruchenykh (probably their lecture fee); and 15rbs for Maiakovskii (which I believe is for expenses).

<sup>129</sup> Richard Schechner cited in Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 110. For example, by 1914, Baedeker notes that all the seats at The Moscow Art Theatre were taken by subscribers. See Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Russia 1914* (London, Newton Abbot: George Allen & Unwin, and David & Charles, 1971), p. 273.

<sup>130</sup> Issues of audience and price structure will be discussed in Chapters 3–5. For more information on the staging of the Luna Park performances, see Howard, *The Union of Youth*, pp. 202–08; and Charlotte Douglas, *Swans of Other Worlds: Kazimir Malevich and the Origins of Abstraction in Russia* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1976), pp. 35–47.

The 'Union of Youth' association seeing the domination of the theatrical old men and taking account of the extraordinary impact of our evenings, decided to put the whole business on a proper footing and show the world the 'First Futurist plays'. In the summer of 1913 Mayakovsky and I were both commissioned to write a play, to be submitted by the autumn.<sup>131</sup>

Charlotte Douglas, however, accounts for the patronage in a rather less rosy fashion. In July 1913 Malevich and Kruchenykh visited Matiushin at his Finnish residence in Uusikirkko where they began work on the productions.<sup>132</sup> Following the 'The First All-Russian Congress of Singers of the Future (Poet-Futurists)', Douglas notes that Malevich later returned to Moscow with Maiakovskii, 'to seek to inaugurate the new Futurist theatre under the auspices of the Union of Youth'.<sup>133</sup> In a letter to Matiushin [July 1913], Malevich wrote about the interest which the Congress's proposal of Futurist theatre had provoked in Moscow and hoped that the same would be true of St. Petersburg. The letter continues,

Maiakovskii and I have a suggestion for you, I hope that Kruchenykh and you will join us. Namely, we are commissioning you to make a written application on behalf of all our theatrical work to the Union of Youth for backing us in the first show.<sup>134</sup>

Soiuz molodezhi later agreed to take full financial responsibility for both productions, although Jeremy Howard notes how Soiuz molodezhi had to overcome many 'difficulties and discussions' and that Zheverzheev confirmed how 'only the recent poor takings of the Luna Park Theatre led its management to allow the Futurist performance for four days'.<sup>135</sup> It would appear, then, that although they were ultimately successful, the path to funding Futurist theatre was fraught with difficulties.

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<sup>131</sup> Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 59.

<sup>132</sup> Khlebnikov had also intended to travel to Uusikirkko, but according to Douglas, 'while swimming he had lost the train fare that Matiushin had sent him'. Douglas, *Kazimir Malevich*, p. 17.

<sup>133</sup> Charlotte Douglas, 'Birth of a "Royal Infant": Malevich and *Victory Over the Sun*', *Art in America* 62 (1974): 45–51, (pp. 46–47).

<sup>134</sup> Douglas, 'Birth of a "Royal Infant"', p. 47.

<sup>135</sup> Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 202 and footnote 60. M. Matiushin, 'Futurizm v Peterburge', *Futuristy: Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov*, St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 155. Footnote 60 refers to 'Vospominaniia', V. Azarov and S. Spasskii, ed., *Maiakovskomu* (Leningrad, 1940), pp. 133–34. The circumstances for the hiring of the Luna Park Theatre will be taken up in Chapter 3.

When the productions were staged in December 1913 there was much criticism in the newspapers regarding the exorbitant price of the tickets. On 3 December 1913, 'R' published an article in *Peterburgskaia gazeta* entitled 'The Futurist Performance. Who are the Madmen? The Futurists or the Public!'. As the title suggests, he was critical of the Futurists' exploitation of the public. The hall was packed to overflowing, with seats sold at 9 rubles a piece.

The hall, packed to overflowing, awaited a cheerful performance, but it was idiotic and painful.

Painful for the public, who filled the theatre and paid 9 rbs a seat in order to see ugly set designs and some sort of freaks, dressed in strait-jackets, and to hear a senseless collection of words that were clearly designed to provoke whistles and curses.<sup>136</sup>

It is, however, difficult to gauge whether Soiuz molodezhi did make a profit from the four performances. On the one hand, many sources confirm how the first performance of *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* was sold out in a day, despite the high price of the tickets. Although the same journalist, 'R', in an article dated 4 December 1913, observed that there were empty seats in the second production, *Pobeda nad solntsem*, many contemporary articles note the growing popularity and fashion for the Futurists, so it is unlikely that they failed to sell a large number of tickets for the other two performances [i.e. 4 and 5 December].<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Kruchenykh insisted that Zheverzheev was not interested in commercial gains and that the Luna Park productions were run at a loss.<sup>138</sup> One entry of the Soiuz molodezhi archive at the State Russian Museum lends some credence to this opinion.<sup>139</sup> The entry reads as follows:

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<sup>136</sup> 'Переполненный зал ждал весёлого спектакля, но было глупо и больно.

Больно за публику, которая наполняет зрительный зал и платит 9 руб. за кресло, для того, чтобы видеть безобразные декорации и каких-то уродов, одевшихся в горяченные рубахи, и слышать бессмысленный набор слов, явно рассчитанных на свистки и ругань.' R., 'Spektakl' Futuristov - Kto Sumasshedshie? Futuristy ili Publika!', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 3 December 1913, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> For example, see Gurevich, , 'Teatr Futuristov', p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> 'Some newspapers, choking with fury, squealed that the Futurists were swindling easy money out of the public by fooling them and pulling the wool over the eyes of the credulous, and that profit was the only thing the Futurists were worried about.

L. Zheverzheev, the former president of the "Union of Youth", who knew perfectly well that the Union received nothing but unpleasantness and financial loss from the performances, pointed out quite rightly (*Construction*, No. 1, 1931):

"Of course, it never occurred to us to look on this [sic] enterprises from the commercial point of view. We wanted to give public opinion a box round the ears and we succeeded", in Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 69.

<sup>139</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113; l: 137, 'Raskhody po spektakliam "Luna Park"'.

	R K
Paints and cardboard for posters	,80
Director's payment to Maiakovskii	54 <sup>140</sup>
Director's payment to Kruchenykh	54
Maiakovskii – travel Petersburg-Moscow return	15
Lecturer's payment to Maiakovskii	33
Kruchenykh	25
Malevich	15
Malevich	30
Filonov	50
Shkol'nik	35
Travel and misc. expenses	12,00
	2,80
Paid 4 Dec. 1913	<u>326,60к</u>

191,60 Box office

This list gives an indication of the expenses incurred for the performances. Although it is by no means comprehensive, it does imply that the performances were not cheap to stage. In addition, if all of the seats cost 9 rubles each, then this list would appear to suggest that there was a maximum of only 21 in the audience, which was definitely not the case. What one can conclude is that it is unlikely those artists involved in the Luna Park productions would have been able to finance the performances independently. The Soiuz molodezhi's patronage was testament to both the Futurists' popularity and success, and the Union's courage in taking the financial and artistic risk to support the emerging avant-garde art.

Theatre patronage was also sought in Moscow. In the late summer of 1913, Moscow was a hotbed of rumours and newspaper articles which focused on the proposed forms of Futurist theatre. In addition to the interest which the Uusikirrko Congress had stirred up, Larionov and his associates announced a new theatrical venture, the 'Teatr Futu'.<sup>141</sup> Sets had allegedly been designed (by Larionov and Goncharova),

<sup>140</sup> A letter from Maiakovskii, addressed to Soiuz molodezhi, dated 16 November 1913, St. Petersburg, confirms Maiakovskii's conditions of payment for his participation in the staging of his *Tragedy*. His payment has been agreed at 50 rbs per performance. See Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie*, Vol. 13, p. 19.

<sup>141</sup> Anon, 'Teatr "Futu"', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, 9 September 1913, p. 5. This article gives a detailed description of the theatrical innovations which would define the new Futurist theatre. See Chapter 4



plays written and music composed. Malevich was so protective of the Petersburg projects, that he wrote to Matiushin on 11 September 1913, urging him to complete the productions in time, so that their performances would not be up-staged by an earlier Rayist performance.<sup>142</sup> An article entitled ‘Teatr “Futu”’ in *Moskovskaia gazeta*, 9 September 1913, stated that the theatre would open no later than October, that some patron or other had been found [‘*Nashelsia kakoi-to “metsenat”*’] who would lend the necessary money, and that premises had been found on Tverskaia.<sup>143</sup> Parton confirms the location was the Pink Lantern cabaret [‘*Rozovyi fonar*’]. Unfortunately, he also states that ‘it is not known whether any performances took place at the “Futurist Theatre”’. They cannot, therefore, be assessed independently, or compared with the St. Petersburg Luna Park performances. This is particularly disappointing, in light of the successful production of Bol’shakov’s play, *Pliaska ulits*, which was performed on 6 October 1913. One critic had reported that it was to be staged ‘at the proposed “Futurist Theatre” in Moscow’.<sup>144</sup> It is possible that the well-documented scandal which took place in the Pink Lantern cabaret on 20 October 1913 between the participants of the proposed ‘*kabare futuristov*’ (including Maiakovskii, Larionov and Goncharova) and Konstantin Bal’mont was enough to jeopardise future ‘Teatr Futu’ productions.<sup>145</sup> The unnamed *metsenat* may have decided to pull out of the venture rather than risk association with these so-called trouble-makers, who continually contravened etiquette of censorship and attracted the attention of the police. (The memory of Larionov’s arrest at the *Mishen*’ debate in March 1913 would have remained fresh in the public and prospective patron’s

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for more information. The article opens with a reference to the Uusikirko Congress, ‘Угроза, произнесенная футуристами на съезде Усикирки, — основать свой собственный театр, осуществляется. Театр футуристов открывается в Москве.’ The author then continues by talking about a new concept of theatre in which Goncharova and Larionov are involved. It seems unlikely that this could be anything other than Larionov’s proposed Futurist theatre at the Pink Lantern cabaret. This article states that the proposed premises are located on Tverskaia, near the Governor General’s residence. Parton refers to the cabaret’s location on Mamonovskii Pereulok (Parton, p. 66). Mamonovskii Pereulok, however, joins Tverskaia less than one hundred metres away from the Civil Governor’s building and approximately 800 metres north-west of the Governor General’s residence [*dom general-gubernatora*], so I presume that both Parton and the anonymous journalist are talking about the same theatrical venture, i.e. Larionov’s *Teatr Futu* to be staged in the Pink Lantern cabaret.

<sup>142</sup> Parton, p. 66.

<sup>143</sup> Anon., ‘Teatr “Futu”’, p. 5.

<sup>144</sup> Parton, p. 66. Parton’s footnote refers to ‘Futuristicheskaia drama’, *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 331, 7 October 1913, p. 5.

<sup>145</sup> For example, see Sar., ‘V “Rozovom fonare”’, p. 6. or the cartoon, [iz gazet], ‘Pozhelal osla blizhnego svoego’, *Rannee utro*, 30 October 1913, p. 5 (fig. 134).

psyche.) Or, as Mark Konecny has suggested, perhaps the whole 'Teatr Futu' venture constituted yet another Futurist 'hoax played on a gullible public'.<sup>146</sup>

If plans for a *Teatr Futu* did exist, but failed due to Oslinyi khvost's inability to secure sufficient funding, this failure would emphasise Oslinyi khvost's continual financial vulnerability, even at a time when their public identity and popularity were at their peak. In contrast to Bubnovyi valet, Oslinyi khvost were never able to express their full creative potential in the field of contemporary Futurist theatrical innovation. This potential was realised only later by artists such as Liubov' Popova (e.g. *The Magnanimous Cuckold* [1921]) and Aleksandra Ekster (e.g. *Salomé* [1917]).<sup>147</sup>

### Financing Futurist Publications

Although the Futurists experienced great difficulty in financing their theatrical exploits, they had much more success in funding their Futurist publications. There are a number of reasons for this success. Firstly, the pattern of the increase in the number of Futurist publications mirrors that of the general trend in newspaper sales and sales of popular literature, as explained in the Introduction.<sup>148</sup> Secondly, a number of Futurists were able to fund a range of publications. In this respect, David Burliuk deservedly earned the appellation, 'Father of Russian Futurism'.<sup>149</sup> In keeping with his role of impresario, he published many Futurist editions, either under his own name, or one of the names of his publishing enterprises, *Futuristy*

<sup>146</sup> Mark Konecny, 'Mikhail Larionov: Futurist Performance in Moscow', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 183–99.

<sup>147</sup> See also Konecny's note, 'Mikhail Larionov'.

<sup>148</sup> If one takes the Judith Rothschild Foundation's collection of Russian avant-garde books (now housed in the Museum of Modern Art, New York) as an example of the trend of Futurist publications and their contemporary popularity, the number of Futurist publications in the collection for the period 1910–1915 is as follows: 1910–4; 1911–2; 1912–12; 1913–40; 1914–38 and 1915–20. Obviously, one has to take into account such matters as the collection policy, but what is also noticeable is that all of the publications which have a run of 750 or more date from 1913 onwards, with the exception of Kul'bin's *Studiia impressionistov*, which had an incredible 2000 copies in this particular edition, demonstrating great confidence in the modern art market by the publisher, N. I. Butkovskaia. See Margit Rowell and Deborah Wye, eds., *The Russian Avant-Garde Book 1910–1934*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002).

<sup>149</sup> For example, see Evgeniia Petrova, ed., *Russkii Futurizm i David Burliuk*, 'Otets Russkogo Futurizma' (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2000).

'Gileia' and *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov*.<sup>150</sup> Aleksei Kruchenykh and Mikhail Matiushin both published a number of Futurist publications, either under their own names, or under that of their respective small publishing enterprises, *EUY*, and *Zhuravl'* and *Mirovyi raztsvet* [sic]. Kruchenykh was prolific in his publishing activities, as publisher, poet, artist, theoretician and caricaturist. It has been noted that his publishing house published approximately fifteen miscellanies of his own work and that of Khlebnikov.<sup>151</sup> Matiushin funded his own publishing activities with his earnings as first violinist with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra.<sup>152</sup> From 1910 to 1915 he published works by Elena Guro, Pavel Filonov, Malevich, Kruchenykh, Livshits, Khlebnikov, David and Nikolai Burliuk, Maiakovskii, Igor' Severianin, Vasilii Kamenskii, Sergei Miasoedov, and Ekaterina Nizen, in addition to collective works, including two editions of *Sadok sudei* (1910 and 1913). Other individuals who were associated with Futurism and published Futurist works included the Neo-Primitivist, Aleksandr Shevchenko, and the writer and poet Osip Brik. Shevchenko published theoretical tracts under his own name, whilst Brik published Maiakovskii's long poem *Oblako v shtanakh: Tetraptikh*.<sup>153</sup>

Other significant publishers of Futurist work of this period include N. I. Butkovskaia (who, in addition to Kul'bin's *Studiia impressionistov*, also published works by Elena Guro and Nikolai Evreinov); Soiuz molodezhi (who published under their own name and in conjunction with 'Gileia'); Ts. A. Miunster (who published iconic works associated with *Oslinyi khvost*); K. i K. (who published Larionov's theoretical

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<sup>150</sup> Misler notes that 'it was Burliuk who first published, at his own expense, a separate edition of Khlebnikov's tract on number and chronology, *Teacher and Pupil*, in Kherson, in 1912' [V. Khlebnikov, *Uchitel' i uchenik* (Kherson, 1912)], in Misler, 'David Burliuk and Pavel Filonov', p. 68. In addition, the collection from the Judith Rothschild Foundation includes twelve publications printed under the auspices of David Burliuk during the period 1910–15. These include four editions in the name of *Gileia*; four by *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov*; two under Burliuk's own name and two under the joint names of David Burliuk and Samuil Vermel'. For full publication details, see Rowell and Wye, pp. 250–54. See also Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>151</sup> See Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, footnote 71, p. 180, and publication details from *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 250–54.

<sup>152</sup> Douglas, 'Birth of a "Royal Infant"', p. 46. See also Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 47 and p. 180, footnote 71.

<sup>153</sup> E.g. Aleksandr Shevchenko, *Neo-primitivizm: Ego teoriia, ego vozmozhnosti, ego dostizheniia* [Neo-Primitivism: Its Theory, Its Potentials, and Its Achievements] (Moscow: Aleksandr Shevchenko, 1913). This edition had a relatively ambitious run of 1,000 copies and also included 12 plates. See also, Aleksandr Shevchenko, *Printsipy kubizma i drugikh sovremennykh techenii v zhivopisi vsekh vremen i narodov* [Principles of Cubism and Other Modern Trends in Painting of All Ages and Peoples] (Moscow: Aleksandr Shevchenko, 1913). Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Oblako v shtanakh: Tetraptikh* (Petrograd: Osip Brik, 1915). Another ambitious run of 1,050 copies. For full publication details, see *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 251 and 253.

work *Luchizm* in 1913), and G. L. Kuz'min and S. D. Dolinskii, who published a variety of Futurist work, including the famous *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu*.

There is little evidence to suggest that Mikhail Larionov and/or Natal'ia Goncharova, or those artists associated with Oslinyi khvost, invested their own money in Futurist publications. In his memoirs, Kruchenykh describes the poor circumstances in which prepared and published *Igra v adu* and *Starinnaia liubov'*.<sup>154</sup> He records that Goncharova and Larionov gave their illustrations for free, but that he still had trouble in finding the six rubles necessary for the printer's services.<sup>155</sup> Although we cannot take Kruchenykh's words at face value, this situation raises a number of issues. Once again, it illustrates the Futurists' financial vulnerability. On the other hand, the fact that those Futurists who collaborated on a large number of projects (notably Goncharova, Larionov, Il'ia Zdanevich, Malevich and Ol'ga Rozanova, to name but a few) were able to find some form of funding for their publications demonstrates great resourcefulness on their part to attract the necessary patronage.

Kruchenykh's memoir also shows how little money the Futurists earned through their publications, a fact which is supported by a short letter from Maiakovskii to Zheverzheev, dated 7 June 1913. Maiakovskii writes that his book *Ia* with its lithographs has been published. If Zheverzheev would like Maiakovskii to send him some copies to sell in St. Petersburg, then the cost per item will be 50 kopeks, and discounted copies at 25%–30% cheaper.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the record of accounts for a Soiuz molodezhi sponsored evening of debates, held on 23 and 24 March 1913 shows the total income through book sales [I think, including 20% discount] as follows: 49 copies of *Soiuz molodezhi*, No.3 @ 20 kopecks = 9.80rbs; No. 1 and 2 @10 kopecks = 3.70rbs. This total of 13.60rbs is negligible in comparison to the income from ticket sales, 1081.50rbs, and the total income for both debates, which was 1111.95rbs.<sup>157</sup> These figures suggest to me, therefore, that those artists who

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<sup>154</sup> Kruchenykh published *Starinnaia liubov'* but the publisher for *Igra v adu* is not stated in the publication details. See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 250 and 252.

<sup>155</sup> Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival*, p. 46.

<sup>156</sup> Maiakovskii, *Polnoe sobranie*, Vol. 13, p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 133; l: 85ob.

were involved in Futurist publications were primarily interested in their aesthetic and intellectual contribution to the strengthening of the contemporary Russian Futurist identity and movement, rather than any pecuniary gain.

To conclude this question of funding Futurist publications, I would like to draw attention to the size of the print-run of various publications. Turning, briefly, to the collection of avant-garde books from the Judith Rothschild Foundation for the period 1910–1915, one becomes aware of a clear distinction between trends of publication in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Of the twenty publications with a print-run in excess of 1,000, sixteen were published in St. Petersburg [or Petrograd], and only four were published in Moscow.<sup>158</sup> This tendency is reversed for publications of print-runs of 300 or less copies. I would conclude that this reflects a combination of greater stability of patronage in St. Petersburg for printed material, in addition to the existence of a printing industry in St. Petersburg, where it was more financially viable to print in larger quantities. Moscow would appear to be more sympathetic to experimental work and smaller print-runs. The experimental work of Moscow publishing establishments also included many luxurious and therefore expensive methods of publication, sometimes incorporating wallpaper or illustrations mounted on gold-leaf within the design of the publication.<sup>159</sup> This tendency towards smaller print-runs in Moscow would suggest that it was possible to find funding for publications, but simply to a more restricted financial degree. Half of the publications which have a print run in excess of 1,000 were monographs of the most established artists and poets (Kruchenykh seems to have been particularly capable of attracting patronage, outside his own publishing concerns). I would argue that this confidence in the market value of individual artists was symptomatic of both the increasing stability of publication patronage in line with the general increase in

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<sup>158</sup> Of these 20 publications, two journal editions published by Strelets had a print run of 5,000 (St. Petersburg); one publication pub. by N. I. Butkovskaia had a print run of 2,000 (St. Petersburg); of the publications which list 1,000 copies, three were published in Moscow and twelve in St. Petersburg; Kuz'min and Dolinskii issued one publication in Moscow with 1,100 copies and Osip Brik published one work by Maiakovskii with 1,050 copies in Petrograd. *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 250–54.

<sup>159</sup> For example Vasilii Kamenskii and Andrei Kravtsov, *Nagoi sredi odetykh* [Naked Among the Clad] (Moscow: Rossiiskie futuristy, 1914). 300 print-run, all pages printed on verso of wallpaper leaves. Illustrated by Kamenskii (see fig. 72). Also, Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Pomada* [Pomade] (Moscow: G. L. Kuz'min and S. D. Dolinskii, 1913), 480 print-run. The edition includes 11 lithographed illustrations, 7 with watercolour additions mounted on gold-leafed paper. Illustrated by Mikhail Larionov. See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 251–52.

contemporary popular printed material, and also, more specifically, a reflection of the strengthening identity of contemporary Russian Futurism. One should note, however, that once published, the books could be sent wherever the market was most favourable. It would be wrong to assume that just because certain editions were published in larger quantities in St. Petersburg, the market was particularly buoyant in the city. This point is demonstrated by Larionov's appeal to Iosif Shkol'nik in a letter dated 1913. Larionov requested that Shkol'nik send him more copies of his [Larionov's] books [to Moscow] as they were selling very well and he could sell them at twice the usual price.<sup>160</sup>

This chapter has demonstrated how the emergence of Futurism and its ability to develop was dependent upon two major factors: funding and the resourcefulness of certain individuals. The Moscow Merchants had accumulated wealth and had the talent and inclination to invest it in European modern art. They then had the generosity of spirit, and no doubt breadth of ego, to make these collections accessible to the hungry young artists. They offered the would-be Futurists a valuable education which consisted of artistic education on the one hand, but also experience in artistic debate with one's peers and superiors, and social networking. This intimate *kruzhok* culture was complemented by practical experience of facilitating and organising international exhibitions in Paris, Munich, Kiev, Odessa, Riga, St. Petersburg, Moscow and elsewhere. The 'movers and shakers' of the Russian avant-garde exercised a mixture of creative thinking and force of character to promote their specific Futurist aesthetic aims. The degree of their contemporary success is evidenced in the sheer number of Futurist publications, exhibitions and art sales, and performances of every description which took place and reached an audience. Funding, however, did remain a problem and as I and others have shown, the Futurists were unable to either find a secure source of funding or to fund themselves.

The third factor which had a major effect on the development and survival of Futurism was, of course, the audience: the critics, fellow artists, journalists, and the public at large. As Schechner observed, the more popular the art and the wider the

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<sup>160</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 39; l: 1.

paying public, the greater the possibility for more secure funding. In order to increase their public identity in this environment of increasing artistic and cultural competition, the Futurists turned their creative skills to marketing. They needed to find ways in which they could maximise the potential of new marketing strategies with minimum financial investment, and thereby compete with other artistic tendencies for contemporary critical acclaim and finances. The following chapter, then, explores the innovation and business-minded character of the Futurists as they approached the question of marketing and marketing strategies.

## Chapter 2

### Marketing: Printed Materials and Marketing Strategies

By the beginning of the twentieth century advertising and marketing had become a European cultural phenomenon which had filtered through to every aspect of daily life. In Russia, the combination of new printing technologies, coupled with a boom in newspaper sales, increased rates of literacy, and a dynamic socio-economic environment in which the lower and middle classes sought upward social mobility created favourable conditions for the new wave of advertising which dominated newspapers and the street (see figs. 20 and 21).

Since the time of Peter the Great advertising had taken the form of the colourful painted shop-fronts, window displays and three-dimensional hanging shop-signs which advertised a shop's wares or an establishment's services. These modes of advertising had appeared regularly in nineteenth-century depictions of the urban landscape, so it seems only natural that the avant-garde artists of the twentieth-century continued this tradition. For example, shop-signs, displays and hanging signs are a constant emblem in Mstislav Dobuzhinskii's works of the early 1900s and were celebrated by Vladimir Maiakovskii in his poem *Vyveskam* [To Shop Signs], (1913).<sup>1</sup> As subject matter or stylistic influence, shop-signs and hanging signs were absorbed into Russian avant-garde art on two levels: as part of the revival of Russian Primitivism and a celebration of Russian arts and crafts; also, as a form of critical commentary on the increasing capitalism and bourgeois participation in the new commodification of daily life.<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Larionov used the shop-sign motif in his work as early as 1904 in *Fruit Shop* (fig. 22). These traditional forms of advertising formed a constituent part of early Futurist art and influenced the work of Natal'ia Goncharova, Aleksandr Shevchenko, Il'ia Mashkov, David Burliuk, Marc Chagall, Vladimir Tatlin, Kazimir Malevich, and Niko Piroshmanashvili (artist and sign

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, *Glass Street in Vilnius* (1906) or *Okno parikmakherskoi* [Barber's Window] (1906), Tret'iakov Gallery, Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis for a detailed discussion of the artistic expression of Futurist attitudes to the bourgeoisie and effects of the market economy.



painter) to name but a few. Larionov later acknowledged the Futurist interest in these traditional crafts when he invited shop-sign painters to exhibit their work alongside Futurist art in 1913. In later years agitprop posters and ROSTA windows, work by Malevich and the UNOVIS group, Pavel Mansurov, and art from the DETGIZ publishing house in Leningrad in the 1920s prioritised the shop-sign tradition and ensured that it remained a dominant theme in both pre- and post-1917 avant-garde art.<sup>3</sup>

Futurism emerged at a time of increasing cultural and artistic competition. Futurist impresarios understood the relationship between public recognition and sources of patronage. An individual group's survival depended on its ability to create and maintain an audience. As the journalist Liubov' Gurevich observed, 'the Futurists, like the true children of this century, are well aware of the strength of advertising and they know how to use this strength.'<sup>4</sup> The identity of the targeted audience is central to the question of marketing. The period 1910–14 witnessed multiple discourses between Futurists and different sections of the public which were expressed through different artistic mediums (including performance, art, and personal interaction). The complex question of audience clearly warrants a separate discussion and is the subject of Chapters 4 and 5.

This chapter, then, explores the diverse range of marketing strategies which the Futurists employed in terms of format, function and effectiveness as a marketing tool. Its main focus is directed towards printed forms of marketing material, including an analysis of the Futurist association with commercial enterprises; the use of newspapers and journals; advertising posters, fliers, and invitation cards; exhibition catalogues; and the printed manifesto. Attention will be paid to the ways in which the Futurists' marketing strategies evolved in relation to their financial position and developing public image, but also in relation to a dynamic audience. The public became more sophisticated and discerning as they became more familiar with Futurism, and the Futurists were forced to reassess their marketing strategies

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the rise of the tradition of the shop-sign and its influence on Russian avant-garde art, see Alla Povelikhina and Yevgeny Kovtun, *Russian Painted Shop Signs and Avant-Garde Artists* (Leningrad: Aurora, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> [...] футуристы, как истинные дети века сего, хорошо знают силу рекламы и умеют использовать эту силу.' Liubov' Gurevich, 'Teatr futuristov', *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 287, 13 December 1913, p. 6.

accordingly. Non-literary forms of marketing were also used to promote and define the Futurist aesthetic<sup>6</sup> and public debates and street-happenings were frequently scheduled to promote Futurist art exhibitions or reinforce a public image. As this form of 'live marketing' comprises the subject of much existing research on Russian Futurist performance,<sup>5</sup> this chapter concentrates on printed forms of Futurist marketing. Discussion of the reception of all marketing strategies will be taken up in Chapters 4 and 5.

Although Futurism clearly gained momentum and popularity over the period of 1910–14, one should not overestimate its contemporary success. In comparison to the stars of the Imperial theatres, such as Fedor Shaliapin, well-known artists like Il'ia Repin, or theatrical enterprises such as the Moscow Art Theatre, Futurism remained on the artistic periphery. Consider, for example, the cartoon by Shipa which reflected Shaliapin's overwhelming popularity (fig. 23). It appeared in the conservative daily *Peterburgskaia gazeta* in April 1913, at a time of increased Futurist activity; the Moscow public was responding to Oslinyi khvost's *Mishen'* exhibition and debate, and Bubnovyi valet were busy promoting their debate and exhibition in St. Petersburg. The cartoon is entitled 'There are victims...' and the caption reads 'Shaliapin's concert was a great success.' It depicts a man, sitting at a restaurant table, with a scarf around his neck and huge hands, swollen from clapping. The caption reads, 'I can't write or talk today: yesterday I was at a Shaliapin concert.' Although there is an obvious light-hearted comical element to the style of the drawing, the rather large 'victim' is not really being mocked, but seems to have grown in stature as a result of the concert. The overall positive effect of the concert is reinforced through the first caption, which is a direct quotation taken from the newspaper. The caption becomes an authoritative statement and affirmation of Shaliapin's celebrity status.

Other newspaper reports reinforce the immense popularity of other individuals and artistic enterprises, such as the prima ballerinas, Matil'da Kshesinskaia and Tamara Karsavina or the Moscow Art Theatre. In December 1911 the newspaper *Protiv*

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Jane A. Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde'; Paul Schmidt, 'Some Notes on Russian Futurist Performance', *CASS*, vol. 19: 4 (1985), 492–96; or Anna Lawton, 'Futurist Manifestoes as an Element of Performance', *CASS*, vol. 19: 4 (1985), 473–91.

*techeniia* reported that the ballerinas were appearing for a charity event. The tickets were taken up a long time in advance and were oversubscribed by seventy-five percent. The reporter noted, that '[t]ickets are highly priced, but the public is obviously not skimping on the name day of their darlings'.<sup>6</sup> Another article in the same newspaper noted the changes to the proposed programme for the coming season at the Moscow Art Theatre. Although the changes may be contrary to some people's wishes, the anonymous journalist stated that the subscriptions were being taken up and would continue to be bought up.<sup>7</sup> In the same article, but under the sub-heading '*Khronika*', the journalist informed the public of the forthcoming sale of Il'ia Repin's painting *Russkie kompozitory* [Russian Composers], which had been valued at 40,000 rubles, an incredible sum for its day.<sup>8</sup> All of the above artists were not only popular in their respective artistic roles, but they also had the capacity to attract crowds in whichever environment they appeared, be it a Temperance theatre, charity event, cabaret or restaurant. In other words, they had 'star' status and any association with these celebrities guaranteed any patron a good return on his investment.

These few examples illustrate the chasm of cultural tradition, public opinion and level of funding which separated the Futurists on the extreme artistic left from established artists, mass public appeal and, therefore, guaranteed sources of patronage. In order to gain public recognition in this competitive artistic and cultural sphere, it was essential that the Futurists set out their aesthetic principles and used any means available to communicate them effectively to the public and critics. In addition they needed to project a confident public personal identity (group and individual) so that they would be recognisable to the public on a more general level. This in turn would bolster their social standing. Despite their frequently ambivalent

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<sup>6</sup> '[...] не скупится на именинный день своих любимцев'. Anon, title omitted in my copy, *Protiv techeniia*, No. 13, 10 December 1911, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> '[...] абонементы раскупаются и будут раскупаться'. 'Khudozhestvennaia letopis' Moskvy: Sredi gazet', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 13, 10 December 1911, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> French Impressionist paintings had commanded the same level of pricing over a decade earlier. It is ironic that Repin himself spoke out against the commercialism of art, which had been stimulated by *Mir iskusstva*, who in turn had manipulated the market and made Western art fashionable. He derided the sale of a Degas, *Jockeys*, for 40,000 rubles, and declared that it should have commanded a maximum of 400 rubles. See Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983), p. 52–53 and footnote 48, citing Il'ia Repin, 'Po adresu "Mira iskusstva" – Pis'mo v redaktsiiu zhurnala "Nivy"', *Mir iskusstva*, No.10, 1899, pp. 1–4.

or hostile projected attitude to the public, the Futurists were acutely aware of the relationship between critical and public notoriety, and artistic and financial success.<sup>9</sup> Henceforth, the Futurists focused their creativity and organisational skills on marketing strategies.

### Commercial Sponsorship

The absence of secure sources of funding during the early period of Futurism meant that the Futurists had very limited resources to devote to marketing. One method of subsidising marketing costs was to link up with commercial enterprises and offer them advertising space on the marketing material for particular events. The Futurists had been taught this lesson by *Mir iskusstva* and the group of artists who exhibited under the title of *Nezavisimye* [Independent] in Moscow 1907. In 1899, the journal *Mir iskusstva* ran into financial difficulty and Princess Tenisheva became the sole investor. Sergei Diaghilev then supplemented the journal's income with 'a series of advertisements for leading Russian business firms: the Morozov warehouses, phonographs, pianos, high button shoes and the latest ladies' fashions, wasp-waisted, lavishly embroidered and trimmed with fur'.<sup>10</sup> The ten-page exhibition catalogue for the *Pervaia vystavka kartin "Nezavisimykh"* [First Exhibition of Paintings of the Independent Artists], 1907, includes work by Goncharova, Malevich, K. I. Mikhailova (the Moscow gallery owner), and Boris Takke who later exhibited in the *Bubnovyi valet* exhibition of 1910–11. The catalogue for the *Nezavisimye* included three one-sided adverts: one was for an art dealer, B. Avantso, who also sold artist's materials and whose shop was located on the fashionable Kuznetskii Most area of Moscow; another advert was for an atelier, O. I. Bogach, who specialised in gold-leaf, iconostases, and [picture-]framing; and the final advertisement was for the department store Muir and Mirrieles.<sup>11</sup> In later years, even the Imperial Theatres

<sup>9</sup> This opinion is borne out in a large number of Futurist documents, correspondence, and interviews. See, for example, the collection of draft letters by Il'ia Zdanevich, dated 1913: GRM f: 177, 'Zdanevichei Il'i i Kirilla'; ed khr: 50, 'Zdanevich I. M. Chernovye pis'ma raznym litsam'; including ll: 2–5, 18–21, 25, 26ob and 28.

<sup>10</sup> Kean, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> The catalogue is housed in RGALI: f: 2951, 'Mikhailova Klavdiia Ivanova'; op: 1; d: 28, 'Katalogi vystavok. N. S. Goncharovoi, V. A. Serova, 1-i vystavki 'Nezavisimykh', obshchestv khudozhnikov 'Moskovskii Salon', 'Soiuz molodezhi', 'Oslinyi khvost', 'Mishen'', i dr. v khudozhestvennom salone K. I. Mikhailovoi'; ll: 9, 9ob, 10. On page 14 of the catalogue there is a reference to *Maiolika*

turned to commercial advertising in their performance programmes as a means of compensating for their wartime deficit.<sup>12</sup>

The collaboration between the emerging Russian avant-garde and commercial interests was made explicit in 1908 when A. F. Gaush organised the exhibition of *Venok* and *Treugol'nik* which was located in the St. Petersburg shopping arcade, Passazh, on Nevskii Prospekt. It was here that David Burliuk's work received critical acclaim.<sup>13</sup> By 1913 Futurism was enjoying almost daily newspaper coverage and greater public notoriety. As such it became a more attractive proposition for commercial ventures which sought advertising space in Futurist catalogues, theatre programmes and advertising posters. However, two references reveal the desire on the part of at least some Futurists to keep art separate from what they perceived as mass culture, and instead to seek other mediums through which they could promote their work and preserve its reception as high quality art.

In the spring of 1913, Il'ia Zdanevich lectured at length about the modern *bashmak* [boot]. In a draft letter to his mother, dated 19 March, he explained how a company that produced *bashmaks* approached him and offered him 100 rubles to include their name on the advertising poster. Zdanevich claimed the higher moral ground (despite his relative poverty) and declined the offer because he felt that every commercially sponsored lecture would be coloured with the character of a paid advert.<sup>14</sup> Zdanevich was instrumental in the production of many advertising posters for Oslinyi khvost

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[ceramic tiles] and the name of S. I. Mamontov (Abramtsevo). One assumes that this too is an advert for the craftwork from the Abramtsevo art colony. This was a large exhibition which included 60 artists and 230 works. The catalogue has a very elegant art nouveau design on a pale sage green cover which has been embossed with a geometrical pattern. The ten-page catalogue, 11.2 x 18 cm, was priced at 10 kopeks.

<sup>12</sup> Murray Frame, *The St Petersburg Imperial Theatres: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia 1900–1920* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> For reviews of this exhibition see M.S., 'Sovremennye napravleniia v iskusstve', *Rech'*, No. 110, 9 May 1908, pp. 2–3; and K. L'dov, 'Khudozhniki-Revoliutsionery', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 10478, Evening, 30 April 1908, pp. 3–4. This exhibition will be discussed in terms of venue and its commercial resonance and targeted audience in Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>14</sup> f: 177; ed. khr: 50; l: 15ob. '...одна фирма предлагает устроителям доклада сто рублей за то, чтобы на афише было написано: Башмаки из фирмы такой то, как пишут: Рояль фабрики Беккер, но хотя мне получить сто и соблазнительно, я от этого предложения отказался. т.к. могут попасть сведения в печать тогда весь доклад получит характер оплаченной рекламы'.

and seems to have been continually haunted by the fear that Futurist posters would look cheap or commercial.<sup>15</sup>

In another draft letter, dated 25 February 1913, to his father, Mikhail Andreevich, Il'ia Zdanevich wrote of Mikhail Vasil'evich [Le-Dantiu]'s proposal of a collaboration between Oslinyi khvost artists and a St. Petersburg cinema, Mirazh. The proposed contract put forward the idea that a permanent exhibition of paintings from Oslinyi khvost would be hung in the spectator's hall for a period of six months. The paintings would be replaced bi-weekly and entrance would be granted upon receipt of any ticket bought at the cinema. The cinema's management would be obliged to print catalogues, posters and newspaper adverts. The owner of the cinema hoped that by hanging works by Mikhail Vasil'evich's camp [Oslinyi khvost], he would 'inculcate a taste for good painting in the simple, unpretentious public'.<sup>16</sup> Zdanevich expressed the wish that his brothers, Kirill and Nikolai, would be able to exhibit some of their work there.

Despite the access to a wider public which this arrangement would surely have guaranteed, Mikhail Larionov spurned the idea. In a letter to Le-Dantiu he wrote:

I don't think that the cinema theatre is worth it, since we have to pay for transportation, and it is a cinema house, after all, and paintings are just casual there.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting that Larionov was not prepared to compromise the reception of Oslinyi khvost's art, particularly given his confirmed interest in the film medium. Le-Dantiu's proposal of a combined ticket for cinema and art gallery would have represented a significant development in the way in which the Futurists approached the issue of reaching a wider public. It would have created an association with the most exciting artistic medium, born of the technology of modern times, but also it

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<sup>15</sup>GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; l: 23 Letter to B. N. Kurdinovskii, dated 29 March [1913]. Zdanevich writes that he has seen the advertising poster which was printed when he was in Moscow. He was therefore unable to check it over and this has resulted in its unpleasant and cheap look [у неё неприлично бульварный вид].

<sup>16</sup> '...привить простой неснобствующей публике вкус к хорошей живописи', see GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 2–3. Mikhail Vasil'evich Le-Dantiu was a central figure in the development of Oslinyi khvost during this period.

<sup>17</sup> GRM f: 135; ed khr: 7; ll: 7–7ob, cited in the English translation in Povelikhina and Kovtun, p. 186.

would have created affordable access to avant-garde art. Larionov's decision demonstrates his understanding of the art market and legitimises his position as leader of Oslinyi khvost. His purist perspective concerning the ideal reception of art suggests that he did not wish to jeopardise the low level of public recognition which Oslinyi khvost had earned by March 1913. It would appear that he understood if Futurist art was to compete on an equal footing with other schools of art then it needed to gain authoritative favourable critical attention. If there was a possibility that Futurist art would be downgraded through its association with the popular entertainment of cinema, then Larionov was not prepared to take this risk. Instead, he kept art and cinema separate. The following year, however, he pursued his interest in film and collaborated on the first Futurist film *Drama in Cabaret No. 13*.

### **Printed Marketing Materials: Newspapers**

Printed materials including newspaper adverts, fliers, posters, programmes and exhibition catalogues, were all traditional forms of marketing which were associated with the arts and employed by the Futurists. Although some Futurist printed marketing media targeted specific sections of society, or particular critics or artists (including manifestoes, artistic statements in journals, exhibition catalogues, and newspaper interviews), in general, Futurist advertising strategies were aimed at a wider audience and did not differentiate between public and critic. To examine the Futurists' approach to marketing strategies we need to ask: who is the targeted audience? How do the strategies position the viewer? Where detailed information related to the nature of a Futurist event was given (as opposed to the basic practicalities of location, date and time), was this information comprehensible to the targeted audience? Which elements of the advert are highlighted, and does this emphasis evolve in relation to the popularity of individual and artistic group? To what extent did censorship influence the design and content of marketing material? Was the design an aesthetic statement in itself? If so, did this prove informative to the audience and how does this strategy compare with those of the Futurists' peers, for example Mir iskusstva, or the Italian Futurists? These are just a few of the core issues which must be borne in mind when approaching the question of advertising.

Advertising helped to finance newly established liberal newspapers and constituted a large percentage of the newspapers' contents, sometimes as much as 43% (see Introduction). The newspapers represented a public medium through which most entertainment enterprises could afford to compete in order to attract their targeted liberal audience, typically the bourgeoisie, *poluintelligentsiia* and the *meshchantsvo*. The Futurists were no exception. When advertising key events from 1912–14 they typically targeted approximately five liberal newspapers and would run the same advert in each of the newspapers for two to five days. The advert for the Luna Park performances (see fig. 24) appeared on the front page of the newspaper *Rech'*. It was surrounded by advertisements for all types of entertainment, including intimate theatres, the circus, operettas, cinemas and restaurants, all vying for the public's money.

Presumably, decisions about advertising were made according to the cost of placing the advertisement, circulation of the newspaper and the targeted audience. If one takes a few examples of key Futurist events, one can see that newspaper advertising comprised a good percentage of the overall event expenses. The *Soiuz molodezhi* accounts from 1912 show an outlay of 43.20 rubles, out of a total 118.20 rubles for all event expenses, on newspaper advertising for David Burliuk's lecture, *Chto takoe kubizm (Razgovor o zhivopisi)* [What is Cubism (?) (Conversation about Painting)], 20 November. Advertisements were placed in the following liberal newspapers: *Birzhevye vedomosti* (10.05 rbs); *Den'* (6.05 rbs); *Sovremennoe slovo* (3.00 rbs); *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (12.05 rbs) and *Rech'* (12.05 rbs). (An extra 40 rubles was also spent on posters.)<sup>18</sup> The following year, *Soiuz molodezhi* invested 92.63 rubles in newspaper advertising for the two Futurist public debates of 23 and 24 March. This represented nearly one fifth of total event expenditure 512.05 rubles.<sup>19</sup> A further 92.63 rubles was invested in the newspaper advertising for A. V. Grishchenko's lecture '*Russkaia zhivopis' v sviazi s Vizantie i Zapadom*' [Russian Painting and its

<sup>18</sup> GRM f: 121, 'Soiuz molodezhi'; ed khr: 113, 'Raznye finansovye dokumenty 7/11 1910–14 na 198 ll'; l: 21, 'Otchet lektsii 'Soiuz molodezhi', 20-go noiabria 1912 g'.

<sup>19</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113; ll: 85–119, 'Otchet po ustroistvu disputov. 23go i 24 marta 1913g'. p. 113. One should note that *Soiuz molodezhi* also distributed copies of their own manifesto at these debates. It is possible that they therefore had heightened motivation to maximise the potential audience at the debates.



Connections with Byzantium and the West], 2 May 1913.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this was an attempt to maximise audience numbers as the lecture concluded Soiuz molodezhi's spring season. *Rech'* is clearly the preferred newspaper for advertising Futurist events. It is not surprising, then, that the Futurists chose it to advertise their Luna Park productions on 3 and 5 December 1913 (fig. 24).

The expenditure for the Futurist lectures of 20 November 1913 shows a marked decrease in the percentage of outgoings spent on newspaper advertising.<sup>21</sup> Only 61.72 rubles, of a total 471.59 rubles, that is approximately 13 percent, was spent on newspaper advertising.<sup>22</sup> There are a number of possible explanations for this. The most likely is that increased public popularity and unprecedented daily media coverage across a wide range of newspapers in late 1913 meant that the same breadth of advertising was not required. For example, an article in *Russkie vedomosti*, 29 September 1913, gives notification of Goncharova's forthcoming solo exhibition, which will showcase the past thirteen years of her work, comprising over 700 individual pieces. The same article also informs the public that Oslinyi khvost, whose previous exhibition was entitled *Mishen'*, will hold an exhibition in the coming season, which will simply be called *No. 4*.<sup>23</sup> The newspapers, with their ever-increasing readership, offered the Futurists an affordable means of addressing a cross-section of the public. As we shall see later in the chapter, the Futurists soon learned to use the press to their advantage, and through a range of interviews, Futurist events and blatant publicity stunts, they encouraged their own free publicity. The decrease in expenditure on newspaper advertising enabled the Futurists to direct their limited funds on other modes of advertising and in December 1913 Soiuz molodezhi spent 70 rubles on advertising posters for the Luna Park productions.

<sup>20</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 110 'Scheta i smety'; l: 69, '*Rech'* – 30.05 rbs (5 printings of an advert 'Soiuz molodezhi', text 10/2 lines, 27,28,30 April, 1,2 May 1913); *Den'* – 12.05 rbs (4 printings of an advert, 27,28 April, 1,2 May); *Rech'* – 5.05 rbs (1 printing 8/2 lines, 27 April, [26/4/1913]); *Sovremennoe slovo* – 7.55 rbs (5 printings of adverts, 27,28,30 April, 1,2 May [1913]); *Birzhevye vedomosti* – 8.05 rbs (26/4/1913)'. Pages 16–68 are various receipts including a few telegrams, but are mainly for advertising in newspapers from 1912–14. The receipts range from 5–16 rbs. Unfortunately I do not have details of the cost of advertising in *Rech'* for 3 and 5 December for the Luna Park Futurist opera.

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Maiakovskii, Aleksei Kruchenykh and David Burluk gave lectures under the title *O noveishei russkoi literature* [The Very Latest Russian Literature] in the Troitskii Theatre, St. Petersburg. It was organised by the Soiuz molodezhi and coincided with the Artistic Association's exhibition. This connection was emphasised by the joint advertising of the lectures and exhibition. See figs. 73 and 109–110.

<sup>22</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113; ll: 120–155 'Otshet po lektsii 20 noiabria 1913'. On page 155 it is written that 70 rbs was spent on the printing and distribution of posters [*raskleika plakatov*].

<sup>23</sup> Anon, 'Khudozhestvennye vesti: Vystakvi', *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 224, 29 September 1913, p. 7.

## Futurist Posters

Despite the importance of the design of marketing materials to many Futurists, an examination of Futurist posters and other marketing material indicates an adherence to traditional models of advertising rather than an exposition of avant-garde ingenuity. The innovation and creativity which the Futurists demonstrated in their art and their book illustrations was rarely transferred to their printed marketing material during the period 1910–14. (This is surprising when one considers the Futurists' major involvement with agitprop posters during the First World War, in addition to their specialisation in graphic design in the post-1917 era, which established their international reputation and identity.)

Unlike some of their artistic contemporaries who had the finances to create highly stylised and multi-coloured advertising posters on good quality materials for art exhibitions and theatrical events (see figs. 36–42), the Futurists were unable, because of their financial circumstances, to produce equally flamboyant advertising material. Of course, a conscious rejection of luxurious mediums and sophisticated techniques of advertising and publishing would have communicated a specific ideological position in line with other European avant-garde practices, including German Expressionism.<sup>24</sup> There is scant information to suggest that this was the case with Futurism, rather than a response to lack of sufficient funds. As we shall see later in the chapter, advertising material and Futurist publications became more inventive, more colourful and seemingly more expensive as the movement gained momentum and public support. In Susan Bennett's discussion of the marketing of theatre she notes the importance of the advertising flier to advertise low-budget performances, 'particularly for touring companies in non-traditional places' (e.g. public parks) 'and for those who establish strong ties with a particular community'. Although information indicating the chosen locations for Futurist advertising (posters, fliers,

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<sup>24</sup> Aleksandra Ekster, Larionov, Goncharova and the Burliuk brothers, David and Vladimir, had all established a firm contact with Kandinskii's *Der Sturm* group. Many European artistic movements, including the later French Surrealists, used the public rejection of luxurious printing and publishing techniques to express their dissatisfaction with previous art schools, institutions and artistic trends. In many cases, however, their approach to their own designing, printing and publishing became more sophisticated and more expensive as the respective movements developed. One should not, however, discount the defining role played by the financial circumstances of each European avant-garde group.

etc.) is sparse, one can be sure that the distributors of the printed advertising materials would have maximised their marketing potential. The material would have been posted or handed out in areas of the metropolises which seemed sympathetic to the Futurist cause, or to people who were simply curious about the latest form of entertainment on offer.<sup>25</sup>

Let us consider the following advertising posters and flier for Futurist events between 1912 and 1918 in Moscow and St. Petersburg: David Burliuk's lecture, *Chto takoe kubizm* [What is Futurism] (fig. 25); *Posledniaia futuristicheskaia vystavka kartin "0.10" (nol'-desiat')* [The Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings "0.10" (Zero-Ten)] (fig. 26); the charity Matinee Concert in the Zon Theatre (fig. 27); Il'ia Zdanevich's lecture, *O Natalii Goncharovoi* (fig. 28); *Nash otvet Marinetti* [Our Answer to Marinetti] (fig. 29); *Futuristy. Pervyi v Rossii: Vecher rechetvortsev* [The Futurists. For the First Time in Russia: Evening of Speech Creators] (fig. 30); the *Mishen'* [Target] Debate (fig. 34), and David Burliuk's lecture, *Pushkin i Khlebnikov* [Pushkin and Khlebnikov] (fig. 35).<sup>26</sup>

All of them follow a very similar model. The design employed echoes the conventions of newspaper advertisements or street advertising (see figs. 20 and 21). However, variation within the chosen type faces suggests an attempt to modernise the overall look of the materials within the Futurists' limited budget. In comparison to later Futurist publicity (for example, Ol'ga Rozanova's poster for *Pobeda nad solntsem* [Victory Over the Sun], see fig. 56), the design of these promotional materials conveys a very limited sense of artistic identity with the advertised Futurist event. They do not express the slightest hint of Futurism. Conventions related to stating the venue, date, time, price of tickets and stating where one could buy the tickets have generally been adhered to. Two main characteristics distinguish the individual posters from each other. The first are those elements which have been chosen specifically to attract attention and which have therefore been given a bold and more striking font (typically sans serif, see figs. 26–29), be this the speaker, the

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<sup>25</sup> Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> Omissions of this data in my illustrations occur where the illustrations have been 'cut' in their published versions.

subject, or the name of the artistic group. The second is the degree of printed information which relates to the expected content of the Futurist event.

The materials of figures 25 and 26 are rudimentary on both levels. The viewer's attention is guided towards the subject 'Cubism', printed in the most prominent type face. This would suggest that the flier's designers considered the subject, Cubism, to be popular with a potentially wider paying public than the references to Futurism (David Burliuk and Soiuz molodezhi). Recent acquisitions of Cubist work by Russian art collectors, Russian international art exhibitions, and the general discussion of modern artistic trends which took place in intellectual circles, public debates and through the press had raised Cubism's public profile. Since the public split between *Oslinyi khvost* and *Bubnovyi valet* in February 1912 Cubism had also become a major point of contention between different Futurist camps. By contrast, the poster for the '0.10' exhibition illustrates Futurism's confidence in that its name alone would attract the public. By 1915, Russia had been at war for a year and the bold title of this exhibition, 'The Last Futurist Art Exhibition', emphasised the feeling of a passing era., perhaps representing the last chance for the public to experience Futurist art. Only passing reference is given to the contributing artists (participants of the *Tramway V* exhibition). The list of useful trams to enable the public to attend the exhibition, printed at the bottom of the poster, is an interesting development. Not only does it acknowledge the newly installed mass transport system as an aspect of modern city life, which enabled those who could afford the tram easier access to the venue, but the reference could also be interpreted as a play on the title of a previous Futurist exhibition, *Tramway V*.

On occasion the Futurists performed with non-Futurists, possibly with the aim of increasing their public exposure. On 24 March 1913, a number of Futurists collaborated with non-Futurist performers in a charity matinee concert. The most striking element of the advertising poster (fig. 27) is the name of the theatre, ZON, and the status of the event as a 'DNEVNOI KONTsert' [matinee], printed in the clean sans serif font. Next in order of typographical emphasis is the recipient of any profits, the unemployed members of the Union of technicians and designers of Moscow's industrial region, and the date of the concert. The concert participants are listed in relatively large but traditional font, and are labelled with their respective

artistic identities. Hence David Burliuk, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Vladimir Gol'tsshmidt and Vasiliï Kamenskii are labelled as Futurists. There is an equivalence between the identity of artist as 'Futurist' or prima ballerina, pianist, singer, and artists from other artistic bodies, including the Russian opera, Nikitskii theatre or Narodnyi Dom [People's Theatre]. The Futurists have been legitimised through this official public collaboration with traditional artists.

The word 'Futurists' and the name of individual artists constitute the primary focus of the advertising posters of the three Futurists lectures (figs. 28–30) which took place between October 1913 and March 1914. The use of the Futurist identity and individual names is a reflection of Futurism's growing popularity during this period. The poster designers appropriated the traditional marketing conventions of the Imperial theatres, which gave prominence to the names of performers with 'star' status in their advertising material. All three posters contain information regarding the content of the lectures. The information functions as an expression of Futurist aesthetic which might encourage the curious viewer. The playful arts and craft look of the word 'Futuristy' (fig. 30) reinforces the Futurist attempt to convey their artistic identity through the graphic design of marketing material. The emboldened terms *Večer rechetvortsev* [An Evening of Speech-Creators] and *disput* [debate] emphasise the potential theatricality, anarchy and scandal which had come to be associated with Futurist events. These terms had become buzz words and signify a development which had taken place between the Futurist product (the debate or performative event) and the public. By autumn 1913 the public had become familiar with Futurist theatrical 'conventions' of offensive declarations and transgressive behaviour. According to several journalists and Futurist interviews, many members of the audience attended Futurist events purely for this popular entertainment element. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Zdanevich poster (fig. 28) turns this public preference to its advantage and heavily emboldens the term *disput*.

Not only was the poster format a relatively cheap way of advertising to a large audience, it also avoided the financial, political and editorial concerns associated with advertising in the press (see also Chapter 4). In fact, Benedikt Livshits notes in his memoirs how the distinctive poster for the *Večer rechetvortsev* was printed on toilet paper, and not out of the perceived hunger for originality but as a result of the

artists' poverty.<sup>27</sup> (The design of the poster, however, suggests that Livshits is being disingenuous.) In a draft letter to Larionov dated 3 April [1913], in the wake of the scandal of the *Mishen'* debate, Zdanevich, noted the problems which he was encountering with the posters for his forthcoming lecture in St. Petersburg. They were constantly being torn down by the public who were preparing missiles to throw at the [Futurists'] faces, as had happened [previously] in the Tenishevskii Hall. The posters had to be put behind glass. They [the public] then broke the glass. The posters were then put behind bars. In the *gimnaziia* [high school] [Nikolai] Rerikh ordered the posters to be taken down. But in spite of this, the tickets were selling like hot cakes.<sup>28</sup> A number of reasons might explain the public's attitude toward the posters. One could speculate that the posters had assumed a symbolic value and that the public's action of tearing them down represented an active engagement with the Futurist aesthetic. Similarly, Futurism may have become so fashionable among a section of society that the posters were taken as a trophy. Or perhaps the posters simply constituted a free source of paper. It would seem that Nikolai Rerikh, at least, considered them inappropriate for his *gimnaziia*. This incident demonstrates a level of public interaction with Futurism and at the same time confirms how the Futurist marketing strategies were reaching the public and stimulating a genuine reaction, if not interest.

It is worth noting that despite the Italian Futurists' solid financial base, their advertising posters barely veered from standard advertising conventions. Like their Russian counterparts, they rarely integrated elaborate Futurist art practices into the design of the poster. For example, the poster advertising Marinetti's visit to the London Coliseum, 15 June 1914, only incorporates standard typographical practices (fig. 32). The names of Marinetti and Luigi Russolo are printed in bold type and only minimal information describes the content of Marinetti's lecture. With the exception of variation in font, artistic reference to Futurism is largely absent from the design of the newspaper advert announcing the second Futurist *soirée* in Rome, 9 March 1913, at the Teatro Costanzi (fig. 31). The most striking element of this advert is the name

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<sup>27</sup> See Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglazi strelits* (New York: Chekhov Publishing Corporation, 1978), p. 106. 'И, отпечатанная на клозетной бумаге (все по той же проклятой бедности, которую публику считала оригинальничанием), афиша "Первого в России вечера речетворцев" красовалась на перекрестках среди обычных в то время реклам и объявлений: ...'

<sup>28</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; l: 26ob.

'Futurista', printed in an art nouveauesque font. Like the Russians, the Italians had consolidated their public identity by 1913, so that the word Futurist provided sufficient excitement to draw the crowds. The third poster relating to Italian Futurism (fig. 33) was produced for Marinetti's first lectures on his visit to Moscow in 1914. Significantly, there is no reference to Futurism or the subject matter of Marinetti's proposed lectures. Marinetti's name dominates the billboard style poster, which has been stripped down to its bare essentials, and the only information that the reader is given (other than time, location, price and date) is that the lecture will be given in French. There had been much speculation in the Russian press concerning Marinetti's visit to Moscow and his meeting with the Russian Futurists. One can only presume that either the poster designers were unaware of Marinetti's chosen topic for discussion, or, more convincingly, that Marinetti had become so popular in Moscow, that his name alone was enough to attract an audience and fill an auditorium. Contemporary news articles testify to Marinetti's overwhelming popularity in Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>29</sup>

By contrast, the remaining two posters (figs. 34 and 35) include detailed information relating to the proposed content of the Futurists' lectures.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the information is so detailed, that in both cases, the posters read like artistic manifestoes. This attention to detail is a reflection of the competition which arose between the artists associated with *Oslinyi khvost* and the *Mishen'* events, and those artists associated with David Burliuk and Bubnovyi valet in 1913.

The *Mishen'* debate became a pivotal event in the development of *Oslinyi khvost*, as the group had hoped. Broad coverage of the event in a cross-section of the press provided the group with a place in the ephemeral public consciousness of popular

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<sup>29</sup> The delivery of the lecture in French immediately excluded large sections of the new theatre-going public who may have been interested in participating in this cult fashion of Futurism, typically those from the *meshchantsvo* or *poluintelligentsiia*. Instead Marinetti's persona as a cultured European artist was reinforced by his choice of language and appealed more readily to the middle classes and elitist sections of society. See also Chapter 4.

<sup>30</sup> This style of poster was by no means unique. For example the advertising poster for *Soiuz molodezhi's* production of *Tsar Maksem'ian i ego nepokornyi syn Adol'fa [sic]*, 27 January 1911, had adopted a similar mode of advertising. This lengthy poster was comprised of a long list of participants, in addition to instructions for the audience. See GRM f: 121; ed khr: 10, 'Raznye pechatnye ob' 'iavleniia i afishi, undated and 1911-17'; l: 3.

culture.<sup>31</sup> In other words, Oslinyi khvost's work may not have earned the respect of the institutions of art and other more conservative artistic groups, but the group and their antics had become the subject matter of newspaper gossip columns. Certain sections of the public bought tickets for their events with the expectation of witnessing or even participating in some sort of scandal, rather than any other higher aesthetic purpose. Burliuk's lecture *O Futuristakh* [Concerning the Futurists] is advertised as a response to Kornei Chukovskii (who had given a lecture 'Art of the Days to Come', 5 October 1913)<sup>32</sup> and is subtitled 'Pushkin and Khlebnikov'. The coupling of Pushkin, the 'Father of Russian Literature', whom the Futurists had previously declared should be 'thrown overboard the ship of modernity' in their first manifesto *Poshchchina obshchestvennomy vkusu* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste] with the mystical Futurist Khlebnikov represented a challenge to critics and the public alike. It was a bold title, as was Oslinyi khvost's *Mishen'* or 'Target'.<sup>33</sup> Both threw down the gauntlet to their respective detractors. In addition both titles attracted the attention of the public who could then read the proposed contents of their lectures. In short, the Futurists gave the audience the opportunity to learn about the avant-garde groups' aesthetic perspectives and future goals before they bought tickets to attend the lecture. This free and direct access to the Futurist aesthetic opened up the debate to an audience beyond those who were able to attend the Futurist event and encouraged this wider audience to visit Futurist art exhibitions and other Futurist events. Admittedly, the Futurist nature of the terms and text may have rendered much of the 'detailed information' incomprehensible to the uninitiated reader.

### **Bubnovyi Valet and the Resonance of an Insignia**

The format of printed advertising for avant-garde events had not always imitated the style of commercial or billboard advertising. A colour lithograph which advertises an

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<sup>31</sup> See correspondence between Il'ia Zdanevich and other members of Oslinyi khvost, and his mother in GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 11/11ob, 16ob, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Howard, *The Union of Youth: An Artists' Society of the Russian Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), p. 200.

<sup>33</sup> Jane Sharp discusses the significance of the titles of Larionov's Futurist exhibitions at length in Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde'. I shall return to the subject of the rhetoric of debate and Futurist discourse in Chapters 4 and 5.



art exhibition for Soiuz molodezhi was executed in a Symbolist style with Greek-like figures kneeling forward, depicted in flowing robes, under a fruit-laden tree (fig. 43). The concept of the love of art is encapsulated in the pulsating heart in the centre of the picture.<sup>34</sup> The early avant-garde exhibition of *Impressionisty*, St. Petersburg, 1910, which included works by *Treugol'nik* and *Venok* was advertised by a poster with a very simple design by Liudmila Schmidt-Ryzhova (fig. 44). It included the triangle symbol above the title of the exhibition on the left side of the poster and a large circular lithograph on the right in the contemporary *style moderne*. The symbol which Bubnovyi valet adopted for their exhibition of December 1910–January 1911 echoed this elegant style. This symbol can be seen on the exhibition invitation card (fig. 45) and catalogue (fig. 65). It comprises the cursive upper case letters of 'B' and 'V' in the upper left of the card, with a small sheaf of corn resting between the letters. However, the elegance of this symbol failed to communicate Bubnovyi valet's cutting-edge avant-garde aesthetic. It seems to have more in common with the social convention of 'high art' and the artistic salons and Mir iskusstva aestheticism, than the anarchic nature of the so-called wild beasts of Futurism.

Bubnovyi valet then adopted the visual representation of their chosen name, the Jack of Diamonds playing card, for their insignia. This symbol evoked multiple possible interpretations. In fact the Jack of Diamonds playing card was a symbol traditionally stamped on the back of a prisoner or convict, and therefore denoted an outcast or low-life.<sup>35</sup> By adopting this symbol Bubnovyi valet were publicly expressing their non-alignment with the artistic elite and their anarchic character. The insignia appeared on all Bubnovyi valet official publications, correspondence, and advertising.<sup>36</sup> This continual reinforcement of their presence encouraged the consolidation of their public identity at a much earlier stage, and to a greater degree, than Oslinyi khvost were ever able to achieve. Many new fashionable cabarets and

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<sup>34</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 10; l: 1. Although this poster (a little smaller than A3 size) is undated, I suggest that it relates to the first Soiuz molodezhi exhibition which took place on 8 March 1910 in St. Petersburg at the advertised location. See Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Gleb Pospelov gives a number of associations with Jack of Diamonds dating back to the French seventeenth-century usage, denoting scoundrel or rogue. Pospelov explains how the prisoner-convicts were actually stamped with the Ace of Diamonds, but how Larionov later appropriated the association, and replaced the Ace for the Jack for a number of reasons. See G. G. Pospelov, *Bubnovyi Valet: Primitiv i gorodskoi fol'klor v moskovskoi zhivopisi 1910-kh godov* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1990), pp. 99–102.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 1.

centres of entertainment had adopted similar marketing strategies to great effect, such as the cabarets *Brodiachaia sobaka* [The Stray Dog] (fig. 46) and *Letuchaia mysh'* [The Bat].

The four Bubnovyi valet posters in figures 47–50 demonstrate the increasingly prominent position which the group's insignia was given in the overall design of the advertising posters during the period in question. The predominance of the insignia reflects the group's growing popularity and public recognition but also coincides with their attempt to distinguish themselves from Oslinyi khvost and other Futurist and avant-garde groups. The insignia has little prominence in the programme for the first Bubnovyi valet debate, held in Moscow, 12 February 1912 (fig. 47). Positioned at the top of the programme, the insignia provides the sole reference to an avant-garde aesthetic. In fact, the style of the programme is reminiscent of the elegance of earlier artistic styles; it refers to the past and not to the future. The art nouveau style resonates through the chosen font of those details printed in bold type: the name, Bubnovyi valet; the title, 1<sup>st</sup> Debate; name of the lecturer, Voloshin, and the word 'Programme'. The insignia is cut off from the rest of the programme with an elegant typographical separator. A similar device has been employed below the word 'Programme'. The proposed subject matter of Voloshin's lectures is included. The information presented in the programme is written in plain, accessible Russian, with no reference to Futurist linguistic constructions. Like the chosen font, the proposed lectures refer to artistic tendencies and personalities which the Futurists considered to be firmly in the past, such as Il'ia Repin, Konstantin Bal'mont and Leonid Andreev. This is in contrast to later Futurist lectures which sought to explain contemporary artistic tendencies such as Cubism, Italian Futurism, Rayism, or explore (or decry) the public's and critic's attitude to modern and Futurist art. This latter point is the subject of the debates of 24 February 1913 and 19 February 1914 (figs. 48 and 50).

By 1913 Bubnovyi valet's insignia had assumed a more prominent advertising role. In the three posters (figs. 48–50), the insignia takes up between one fifth and one third of the total height of the posters. Although partially separated from the rest of the text by a typographical device, the insignia still assumes a central point of focus. The poster for the Bubnovyi valet art exhibition of 2–28 April 1913 gives

approximately equal prominence to the name of the Futurist group, its insignia and the advertised fact that an art exhibition is to take place. A large portion of the remaining space on the poster is taken up by the names of the participants, which raises two important questions. Firstly, despite the established international reputation of the featured Western European artists (including Pablo Picasso, André Derain and Georges Braque), Bubnovyi valet had decided to emphasise their own name as the first trigger to the viewer's attention. An international exhibition on this scale would have been very expensive to organise and it would have been vital that the exhibition was well attended and sufficient paintings were sold to cover the considerable costs. In choosing to market the exhibition in their own name, rather than that of the better known international artists, Bubnovyi valet were expressing a high degree of self-confidence. Secondly, by integrating the artists' names in one standardised list, rather than distinguishing between Russian and Western artists, Bubnovyi valet was integrating the Russian avant-garde within the context of the European modernist movement. The status of some of the lesser-known Russian artists was therefore raised to that of their European contemporaries. The poster represents an example of how Bubnovyi valet was proactive in its efforts to control its own public image.

The word 'debate' is clearly given the greatest prominence on the three posters which are advertising Bubnovyi valet lectures and debates (figs. 46, 47 and 49). The advertisements for all three sets of lectures also contain the phrase *posle doklada preniia*, that is, the promise that debate will follow the lectures. As mentioned earlier, the terms *disput* and *preniia* were highly charged words which promised the audience carnivalesque scenes of public scandal and entertainment. The concept of debate, rather than lecture, also emphasised the interaction of multiple participants and served as an invitation, inciting the public to enter the discussion. The prominent position of these words in the advertisements acknowledge the Futurists' marketing strategy and their sensitivity to the audience's tastes. The words function as advertising tools with optimum marketing value, guaranteed to lure the crowds, regardless of the advertised topic of discussion.

The choice of a specifically provocative title in the poster of February 1914 (fig. 50) *Otnoshenie publiki k iskusstvu* [The Public's Attitude to Art] is another interesting

development in Bubnovyi valet's marketing technique. Integral to the title is a direct challenge to the reader. Although one could argue that this is little more than the standard avant-garde practice of *épater les bourgeois*, the poster is accessible to the entire viewing public. Chapters 3 and 5 will argue that the Futurist art exhibitions were accessible and affordable for a much broader section of society than the bourgeoisie alone. The marketing value of the poster itself works on a number of levels. One could argue that the viewer's attention is initially caught by the prominent typography of the word 'debate'. The viewer's attention is then drawn to the Bubnovyi valet insignia. In one glance, then, the viewer is aware that a Bubnovyi valet debate is to take place. One must remember that this debate was scheduled just after Marinetti's departure from Russia. Marinetti had brought a European dimension to the public's appreciation of the Futurist movement. He had been feted by well-known artistic figures and artistic associations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and Futurism had become so popular that it was being discussed across the whole political breadth of Russian newspapers and journals.

By setting up the framework of the debate in this challenging manner, as 'The Public's Attitude Towards Art', the Futurists were engaging in a process of audience creation or categorisation. By this, I mean that in reading the challenging title, the viewer is encouraged to go through the following thought process: 'Do I have an opinion of art? If so, then I am part of this community of 'Public' referred to in this poster. Do I have an opinion of Futurist art? If I am in favour of Futurism, then I may support the artists and attend this debate. If not, then I will look to the members of the debating panel (in this case the Futurist artists Aleksei Morgunov, Petr Konchalovskii, Malevich, and the art critics Iakov Tugendkhol'd and A. M. Efros) and if I think they will put forward solid arguments and challenge the Futurists, then maybe I will attend the debate to witness the debacle.' In either case, the title of Bubnovyi valet's debate encouraged literate viewers to engage in the contemporary artistic and cultural debate and position themselves in relation to art and Futurist art in particular. Although a similar title is given in the poster for the second *Bubnovyi valet* debate, February 1913, *Novoe iskusstvo v Rossii i otnoshenie k nemy khudozhestvennoi kritiki* [New Art in Russia and the Art Critic's Attitude Towards It], the title does not target the viewer's perception of him/herself in the same manner. In addition, the lecture title in the 1914 poster is given greater prominence

in the poster's overall typographical design. It is on this level that there are some very striking parallels to be drawn between the 1914 poster and the poster for the Luna Park performances of December 1913 (fig. 51).

### **The Luna Park Productions**

At first glance, there is a similarity in the overall design of the posters of the two events. This is not wholly surprising as both follow the conventions of the traditional billboard layout. However, I would argue that many other similarities operate on a more subtle level. The choice of bold font for the name of the company of performers features in both posters and is a dominant focal point. Hence *Obshchestvo khudozhnikov* [The Society of Artists] mirrors *Pervye v mire* [The First (Four Performances) Ever in the World], and *Bubnovyi valet* mirrors *Futuristov teatra* [of Futurist Theatre]. The emphasis on the Futurist identity of the performers and the company encourages the public perception of the Futurist Theatre as an established and ongoing concern. One imagines that behind the title of the theatre is an established theatre group, rather than the motley group of students who actually comprised the main body of Futurist performers. The printed names of Maiakovskii, Malevich, Iosif Shkol'nik and Pavel Filonov, as writer and set designers, distract the viewer from the anonymity of the actors. By 1913 the term Futurist had gained sufficient public notoriety that the status of Futurist Theatre could be written with as much authority as *Bubnovyi valet*. Although the participants are associated with Futurism, there is no specific reference to *Bubnovyi valet*. However, a dialogue in the Moscow and St. Petersburg press concerning the development of a Futurist theatre had continued throughout the summer of 1913. Those critics and members of the public, who were culturally literate, would have been aware of the different personalities involved in the productions.

The venue for each of the two events is stated below the artistic associations. Both are emphasised and this again suggests a heightened level of attraction to the viewer. The Luna Park Estrada and Polytechnical Museum were familiar venues which were associated with public events and lectures. By 1914, the Polytechnical Museum had already hosted a number of Futurist events, and was frequented by a broad section of

the public, including the lower classes (see Chapter 3). The use of a stylised border to emphasise the Luna Park venue is echoed in the stylised border used to highlight Bubnovyi valet's name in the 'debate' poster. The challenging titles on both posters *Vladimir Maiakovskii*, 'Victory Over the Sun' and 'Debate "Modern Art": "The Public's Attitude to Art"' jump off the page. 'Victory Over the Sun' challenges the public's understanding of the title's potential meaning. The title of the debate challenges the public's self-consciousness. They feel the Futurist finger firmly pointed at them and become immediately engaged in the debate. Vladimir Maiakovskii was not only the author and director of the tragedy which used his name, but was also one of the most theatrical and best-known Futurists of his time (see fig. 53). He had not intended to use his name in the title of his tragedy. However, through a misunderstanding during the censorship process, the play was authorised with this title.<sup>37</sup> As it turned out, it was to the advantage of the play's marketing strategy. Maiakovskii was a talented, charismatic and provocative orator who had attained a certain level of public recognition. Famous for his yellow and black striped jacket, his theatrical entrances, Futurist antics and success with women, he had the reputation of being a daring and confident contributor to any Futurist event. It was genuinely fortuitous, therefore, that his name was incorporated into the title of his play because it was as much a guarantee of spectacle, and in turn public attraction, as the status of the Bubnovyi valet debate.

What one begins to perceive in these two posters is how a mature Futurist marketing strategy had begun to emerge by the end of 1913, a time when Futurism was at the peak of its popularity. Although the posters and advertisements were seemingly *bul'varnyi* or commercial at first glance (here reinforced by the use of conservative fonts, rather than the modern looking sans serif), the Futurists had begun to incorporate artistic elements of Futurism in their printed advertising. The use of red ink and mix of text and image was presumably more expensive than earlier rudimentary designs, and again confirms the increasingly level of Futurist popularity and success.<sup>38</sup> Here, the large printed name of Maiakovskii might lure the viewer to the poster to read the details of the list of actors. However, this convention of

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<sup>37</sup> Alexei Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival: From the History of Russian Futurism*, edited by Vasily Rakitin and Andrei Sarabianov (Moscow: RA, 1995), p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Success because sponsors were prepared to invest money on more expensive forms of advertising in the hope of a good return on their money.

dramatic advertising has been subverted by a strong reference to Futurist imagination, illogicality and use of *zaum*' or transrational language. The printed list of characters turns out to be meaningless. They appear to be fantastical inventions, for example: an old man with black dry cats which are a few thousand years old; a man without eyes or legs; a headless man; women with *slezi*n'k[i] and *sleza*n'k[i] — an example of *zaum*' and a play on the words '*sleza*' [a tear drop or a bead] and '*slezanie*' [descent]. In addition, a Futurist picture has been incorporated into the frame of the poster. This reminded the viewer of the diversity of Futurist art which included graphic design, visual art, and performance. Like the Jack of Diamonds insignia, the inclusion of a visual artistic motif aimed to reach beyond the realms of the literate. The same artistic motif could appear in an advert or poster, and also be included in a literary or artistic miscellany and an art exhibition. For example, David Burliuk's design of the man and horse was incorporated into the design of the poster and newspaper advert (fig. 24) for the Futurist performance, and was also published in lithographic form in the 1913 edition of *Sadok sudei II* (fig. 52).

Despite the individual reputations which a number of Futurists had gained by 1913 (including Maiakovskii, David Burliuk, Larionov and Goncharova), their images were not incorporated into advertising posters, either in the form of photograph, drawing or caricature (e.g. fig. 53). This is surprising, given the proliferation of Futurist publicity photographs which appeared in the press (e.g. see fig. 9) and individual Futurists' hunger for recognition. It is possible that given the Futurists' limited funding the cost was simply prohibitive. The images of other internationally renowned Russian artists were often incorporated into advertising posters. For example, a photograph of Vaslav Nizhinskii was used in the advertising poster for the 'Saison Nijinsky' at The Palace, in Shaftesbury Avenue, London, 2 March 1914. Similarly, Valentin Serov depicted a very demure Anna Pavlova in *Les Sylphides*, for his poster of the 'Saison Russe' for the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, May-June 1909 (figs. 54–55).

I would speculate, however, that the painted figures included in both Luna Park posters (see also fig. 56) represent the Futurist person of a future era. Burliuk has borrowed from the traditional Russian *lubok* or woodcut in order to depict a triangulated and segmented representation of a man. This style, of course, had great

resonance in Malevich's set designs for *Pobeda nad solntsem* and the future development of abstract art. Ol'ga Rozanova's design is one of the rare exceptions of contemporary graphic design in posters, in which the entire poster is an illustration of Futurist work and communication of the Futurist aesthetic. This large [100 x 68 cm] colour lithograph embodies the very heart of Futurism. A person (the figure could be male or female) is racing into the Future and takes with him/her a combination of the positive aspect of the Russian tradition (evidenced in the primitivism of the *lubok* style) with the cutting edge of modernity as expressed by the Cubist-Rayist pictorial references. The letters FUT and TEATR have been worked into the fabric of the person's clothing. The possible presence of a top hat and stripes on the cuffs of the shirt or jacket sleeve may also be considered veiled references to the eccentricities of Futurist attire and the performance costume designs.<sup>39</sup> One should note that many artists made use of the *lubok* style in their paintings and how this style seemed to create the impression of a poster and communicate some sense of an ideal of man fused with a notion of national identity – e.g. Larionov's *Yellow Autumn*, 1912 (fig. 57) or any of his paintings from the *Seasons* series (see fig. 58).

Other posters for Futurist events which took place in the latter stages of the pre-Revolutionary era are characterised by a ludic quality in the typography. This echoes the same ludic quality of typography and content which characterised Vasilii Kamenskii's ferroconcrete poems, and other illustrated Russian and Italian Futurist literary publications (see fig. 59). The posters still conveyed some information about the proposed lectures. Another strand of advertising, however, demonstrates how the Futurists clung to traditional modes of advertising. The Futurist lecture, *Chugunnye kryl'ia* [Cast-Iron Wings], by Dmitrii Petrovskii, with the participation of Vladimir Tatlin, 25 May 1916, was advertised by two completely different poster designs. The first (fig. 60) demonstrates skilful typographical setting. The lecture programme is printed in considerable detail, but it is the word Futurist which reads vertically from the bottom right to almost the top right that dominates the entire poster and attracts

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<sup>39</sup> The absence of any details of the quantity of both styles of Luna Park posters prevents me from drawing any conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the poster. I have no specific details regarding the cost of printing and location where the posters were posted. It is therefore difficult to argue the case that one type of poster was created to appeal to one section of the public (possibly more conservative), whilst the other was created for another section (possibly a public which was attracted by Rozanova's theatrical interpretation of Futurist avant-garde). Nevertheless, it is tempting to speculate that this might, indeed, have been the case.



the viewer's attention. The second poster (fig. 61) assumes a more traditional format, although it conveys exactly the same information. As with the Luna Park posters of 1913, one might speculate that the two different versions of the poster were produced to appeal to two different sections of the public. However, in view of the absence of concrete information regarding the cost of printing and the location where both advertisements were posted, it is impossible to explore this argument further.

The final example of a Bubnovyi valet poster for an art exhibition, Moscow 1917, shows a return to a rudimentary design (fig. 62). The name Bubnovyi valet dominates the poster. One sixth of the poster in the bottom right corner is taken up by a list of the participants. Brief practical details of the time, date (from 16 November) and location of the exhibition are stated in the bottom left of the picture. No other information, not even the Jack of Diamonds insignia is given. Again, in the absence of hard evidence, one can only speculate that the conservatism of this poster was due to the recent historical events in October and further financial restrictions during wartime. The style of this poster can be contrasted with Larionov and Zdanevich's lithography design for the invitation card to the lecture *Nouvelles Ecoles Dans La Poésie Russe* [New Schools of Russian Poetry], Paris 1921 (fig. 63). The invitation card makes reference to the later Futurist schools, such as 41° from Tiflis, Georgia, which grew out of the original Futurist tendencies. It demonstrates a return to typographical innovation and possibly the influence of Apollinaire's *calligrammes* and is an illustration of the type of creative design which was possible with adequate funding, during peacetime.

### **Exhibition Catalogues**

The design of exhibition catalogues presented the Futurists with another opportunity to demonstrate their avant-garde artistic style and reinforce their public identity. However, like the majority of Futurist posters, the format of the catalogue largely followed the traditional layout. Materials were cheap, typographical innovation was largely non-existent and content, in general, adopted conventions of name of exhibition, followed by a list of the artists, their addresses and the titles of their paintings. As Sharp notes, catalogues were expensive to produce and patronage was

scarce.<sup>40</sup> The Futurists' limited finances meant that having coped with the necessary expenses of organizing and marketing an art exhibition, they probably had insufficient funds to produce a lavish catalogue. On a point of aesthetic principle, one could argue that the Futurist choice of a catalogue with a simple layout also expressed their desire to move away from the decadent publications which were associated with the Academies, the Symbolists, *Mir iskusstva* and other contemporary artistic associations.<sup>41</sup> Other forms of Futurist printed marketing material (event programmes, journals, manifestoes, and publications) support this argument. Where deluxe catalogues appealed to their audience from the middle and upper classes, the Futurist catalogue could be bought by students and the less well-off. This is not to say that all Futurist catalogues followed the same pattern. Subtle changes in the catalogue's layout, cover design and quality of material used reflect the subtle changes which were taking place between the different avant-garde groupings and their relationship with the public and art critics.

The catalogues from the earliest exhibitions associated with the Russian avant-garde adopted a visual symbol to reinforce the artistic group's public image. The cover of the catalogue for the *Treugol'nik* exhibition in Vilnius (which included work by Vladimir Burluk (Nos. 45–56); David Burluk (57–69) and Nikolai Kul'bin (117–143)) featured a triangle with the dates 1909–1910 and the city's name *Vil'na*.<sup>42</sup> The name of the larger exhibition, of which *Treugol'nik* was a subsection, *Katalog*

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<sup>40</sup> Sharp, *The Russian Avant-Garde*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Schmidt noted how 'part of the Futurist aesthetic was to degrade the "thingness" of literary creation. Cheap printing, books on wallpaper, mimeographed editions: all these aspects of Futurist presentation attacked the bourgeois values of limited editions, fine bindings – the whole approach, [...] of the World of Art movement and of the journals *Apollo*, *Golden Fleece*, and *Libra*'. Paul Schmidt, 'Some Notes on Russian Futurist Performance', p. 493.

John Bowlt has noted that the runs of exhibition catalogues for *Mir iskusstva* were 'modest, i.e. small, with very few illustrations, but carried elegant covers'. Personal correspondence dated 10 May 2004.

<sup>42</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 9, 'Katalogi vystavok "Soiuz molodezhi" na 12 ekz' d: 1. This section [ed khr] of the GRM archive [Soiuz molodezhi exhibition catalogues] is divided into numbers for each catalogue [d]. The pages of each catalogue are then individually numbered. References made to specific page numbers within this file [d] will therefore have 4 reference points – i.e. f: 121; ed khr: 9 [Soiuz molodezhi exhibition catalogues]; d: individual catalogue number; l: page number of specified catalogue. This catalogue for *Treugol'nik*, 1909–1910, Vil'na measures approximately 17 x 10.5 cm. No prices have been marked. The contributors to the exhibition are listed alphabetically and include Lidiia Iv. Arionesko-Bal'er (Nos. 1–2); Avg. Iv. Baranov (3–8); A. D. Baranov (9–37); Genrietta K. Blank (38–41), S. Boduen-de-Kurtene (42–44); E. P. Vashchenko (70–85); L. Gerst-Ryzhova (86–87); L. M. Gorodetskii (88); A. L. Dunichev-Andreev (89–99); K. I. Evseev (100–107); V. I. Kozlinskii ('O forty') (108–111); N. N. Krukovskaia (112–116); V. I. Nechaev (144–147); A. A. Nikolaev (148–155); N. M. Siniagin (156–159); Liudmila F. Shmidt-Ryzhova (160–164); N. A. Shmidt (165–168) and I. G. Ryzhakov (169–172).

*Vystavki Impressionistov* [Catalogue for the Exhibition of the Impressionists] is printed in upper-case in a standard font. However, the triangle expresses the group's intention to prioritise their own identity within the larger whole. The triangle logo was an effective marketing tool. Kul'bin explained the triangle's symbolism in a series of lectures. Several journalists engaged in Kul'bin's aesthetic and did their best to explain its meaning to their readership. They provided free marketing for Kul'bin and his exhibition, but also alerted the public to the need to look for aesthetic meaning in an artistic logo. The triangle symbol was duplicated throughout the exhibition venue as a marketing strategy. The critic N. Breshko-Breshkovskii, describes how the triangle was 'everywhere – on the signboard, on the catalogues, on the coat-hanger tags, on the ceiling of the exhibition premises'.<sup>43</sup>

Visual symbols alone were used on the cover of the exhibition catalogues for *Treugol'nik-Venok-Stefanos*, 1910, and *Soiuz molodezhi*, 1910. The *Treugol'nik-Venok-Stefanos* catalogue designer duplicated the wreath logo of the corresponding exhibition poster (see figs. 44 and 64). The cursive letters 'S' and 'M' are incorporated in the small, elegant art nouveau style of design on the grey card cover of the *Soiuz molodezhi* catalogue (approx. 16.6 x 21.6 cm). The overall impression of the catalogue is one of relative luxury and European taste. 'Goncharova, N. S. (Moscow) (Nos. 25–34)', 'Larionov, M. F. (Moscow) (71–79)' and 'Filonov, P. (186–205)' were all represented in the exhibition. The relatively luxurious design of the catalogue seems to reinforce *Soiuz molodezhi*'s desire to be identified with Russian and Western European artistic trends.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> N. Breshko-Breshkovskii, 'Pod misticheskim treugol'nikom (Vystavka impressionisty)', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 11002, 11 March 1909, p. 5. The article was continued in the same newspaper, No. 11004, 12 March 1909, p. 6. Cited in Jeremy Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 22. Howard gives a detailed analysis of all exhibitions related to *Soiuz molodezhi* during the period in question. See also Andrei V. Krusanov, *Russkii Avangard: 1907–1932 (Istoricheskii obzor) v trekh tomakh, 3 vols, vol. 1, Boevoe desiatiletie* (St. Petersburg: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), pp. 14–17 for reviews of the exhibition.

<sup>44</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 9; d: catalogue 5, 'Vystavka Kartin Obshchestva Khudozhnikov Soiuz molodezhi 1910 [Art Exhibition of the Society of Artists Union of Youth]', on 15 pages. Other artists included in the catalogue include Afanas'ev-Kokel' (Nos 1–4); Bystrenin, V. I. (5–10); Boduen-de-Kurtene (11–20); Verkhovskii, G. E. (21–23); Gaush, A. F. (24); Evseev, K. I. (35–60); Zheverzheev, L. U. (61–66); Zel'manova, A. M. (Moscow) (67–68); Mashkov (Moscow) (69–70); Larionov, I. F. (Moscow) (81); L'vov, P. I. (82–104); Matvei, V. I. (105–125); Mitrokhin, D. I. (126–128); Nagubinkov (129–138); Nalepinskaia (139–141); ); Spandikov (142–153); Sagaidachnyi, E. Ia. (154–157); Shleifer (206–212) Gel'dvein-Baulin (213–228).

Soiuz molodezhi produced three small catalogues (approx. 6.5 x 8.5 cm) printed in Russian, German and Latvian for their exhibition in Riga, 1910. They have a thin semi-transparent cover, but the catalogue is printed on good quality beige paper and is single-stapled. The covers are plain, except for the exhibition title, *Soiuz molodezhi*, g. Riga [Union of Youth, Riga] – 1910g. Artists and their works are listed in alphabetical order and include: Burliuk, V. (Nos. 8–13); Burliuk, D. (14–18); Goncharova, N. S. (Moscow) (42–58); Larionov, I. F. (Moscow) (75); Larionov, M. F. (Moscow) (76–92); Mashkov, M. (Moscow) (103–113); Petrov–Vodkin (Nos. 154–177); Shkol’nik (Nos. 208–212) and A. Ekster (Nos. 217–219) among others.<sup>45</sup> The implications of the convention for naming the individual artist’s city of residence is explained in Chapter 1. In essence it helped to form the artist’s and artistic group’s public image. At this early stage in the development of the Russian avant-garde, all members of the would-be Futurists exhibited together. After the split between Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet in 1912, journalists and critics often referred to different groups as the Moscow or Petersburg Futurists.

Art nouveau rather than avant-garde resonates in the design of the cover for the catalogue of the Bubnovyi valet exhibition of December 1910–January 1911, Moscow, which Bowlt attributes to Goncharova (see fig. 65).<sup>46</sup> As Bowlt has noted, ‘[t]he restrained, conventional design gave little indication of the historical importance of the exhibition in the evolution of the Russian avant-garde’.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately I have been unable to locate any catalogues for Bubnovyi valet art exhibitions during the course of the following years, so I have been unable to compare the designs of catalogues with the previously mentioned posters. However, a reproduction of part of the Bubnovyi valet catalogue, Moscow 1916, shows a return to a simpler, albeit rather elegant design for the cover (fig. 66).

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<sup>45</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 9; d: catalogues 2,3 and 4. Other artists included in the catalogue include Afanas’ev-Kokel’ (Nos 1–3); Boduen-de-Kurtene (4–6); Bubnova, V. D. (7); Bystrenin, V. I. (19–23); Verkhovskii, G. E. (24–30); Gaush, A. F. (31–41); Dydysko (59–62); Zheverzheev, L. U. (63); Zel’manova, A. M. (64–69); L’vov, P. I. (70–74); Matvei, V. I. (93–102); Mitrokhin (114–122); Mitel’man (123–126); Nalepinskaia (127–131); Nagubinkov (132–140); Sagaidachnyi, E. Ia. (178–181); Severin (182–185); Spandikov (186–190); Tsarevskaia, V. K. (191–194); Shitov (195–207); Shkol’nik (208–212); Shleifer (213–216) and Zaretskii, N. V. (220–222).

<sup>46</sup> *Amazons of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt and Drutt, fig. 52.

<sup>47</sup> John E. Bowlt, ed., *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism 1902–1934* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 40.

Copies of the *Soiuz molodezhi* art exhibition catalogue (1911) indicate the importance of catalogue sales, the rising value of individual Futurists' work, and the a reference to the presence of censorship.<sup>48</sup> One copy of the archived catalogue includes pencilled-in prices for some of the paintings; prices range from 5.30 rbs to 3,000 rbs - the latter for a triptych by Goncharova. This sum confirms Goncharova's status as a prominent member of the Russian avant-garde. The stamped dates on the inside back cover, '13 Apr. – 10 May 1911', and the figures next to these dates, suggest that 862 catalogues were sold over the course of the exhibition. One-and-a-half years later 1310 catalogues were sold at the fourth *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition, 4 December 1912–10 January 1913 (St. Petersburg). This suggests increased popularity for *Soiuz molodezhi* and also the willingness of the public to spend extra money to acquire the exhibition catalogue. One would presume that even if the catalogues were sold for as little as 10 kopeks (and I would hazard that they were more expensive), then the sales of the catalogues would at least cover their printing costs, if not gain a little profit for the artistic association.<sup>49</sup> Many artists associated with Futurism, including Konchalovskii, Mashkov, Rozanova, Vladimir and David Burliuk, Goncharova, Larionov, Malevich, Tatlin and Pavel Filonov are featured in the catalogue. Another copy of the same catalogue bears the stamp of approval of the *gradonachal'nik* [city governor] dated 11 April 1911 on the inside back cover. This confirms how all publications, including art catalogues were subject to State censorship before they could be made available to the public.

The catalogues for *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibitions 1912–13 and 1913–14 share the same basic format (see fig. 67).<sup>50</sup> They are large single sheets of paper which have been folded in half to give a large pamphlet of approximately 42 x 30 cm. The society's

<sup>48</sup> GRM f: 121, ed khr: 9; d: catalogues 6 and 7. There is a question over the title of this catalogue, 2<sup>d</sup> *Vystavki kartin obshchestva-khudoznikov, Soiuz molodezhi 1911*. As I have written the first terms [2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibition] in the genitive case in my notes, I presume that I have omitted the initial word 'Katalog'. See Appendix for full listings with marked prices.

<sup>49</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113, 'Raznye finansovye dokumenty, 7/IX – 1910–1914 na 198 ll. '; l: 49 This page shows the sales of exhibition and small merchandise sales which totalled 1681.44 rbs. A total of 1310 catalogues were sold, 121 books and 290 reproductions. These sales may suggest an element of consumption and the wish of perhaps half of the visitors (3002 in total) to take a memento away with them from the exhibition. Catalogues from other avant-garde exhibitions cost between 10 and 35 kopeks. I would suggest that it is likely the *Soiuz molodezhi* catalogue cost more than the basic rate because of the high quality card cover and paper.

<sup>50</sup> GRM f: 121, ed khr: 9; d: catalogues 8 and 9 are for the exhibition 4 December 1912 – 10 January 1913. Catalogue 8 measures approximately 42 x 30 cm and catalogue 9 is a little smaller, approx. 32 x 22.5 cm. They both follow the same format of catalogue 12, of the *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition, 10 November 1913–10 January 1914.

artistic identity is absent from the design. Minimal information is given and only the artists' names and their paintings are listed. It is unclear why the Soiuz molodezhi chose this specific format of publication, particularly given the increasing standardisation of printed forms of marketing material. It is likely that this represented one of the cheapest methods of producing a catalogue. The Futurist contributors to the 1911–1912 exhibition largely coincide with those of the previously mentioned exhibitions, but with the addition of Mikhail Matiushin (nos. 44–48), Maiakovskii (49) and Aleksandr Shevchenko (92–94).<sup>51</sup> The catalogue for 1913–14 includes hand-written prices and addresses for some of the artists and their paintings. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this catalogue attempts to categorise some painters under specific artistic tendencies. Fierce competition between the different factions of the Russian avant-garde had taken place in the previous year. During this period, Malevich, who had exhibited with *Oslinyi khvost* (*Mishen'* exhibition, Moscow 1913), defected to Soiuz molodezhi. It is likely that his work, together with Ol'ga Rozanova's, was singled out for specific artistic categorisation in order to reinforce his new affiliation. The reference to past and present artistic trends informs the public that Soiuz molodezhi is also at the forefront of innovative Russian avant-garde art.

Futurist exhibition catalogues in 1915 and 1916 use the same basic format but attempt to incorporate a sense of their modern artistic identity in its design. For example, the title on the cover of the catalogue for *Posledniaia futuristicheskaia*

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<sup>51</sup> Catalogues 8 and 9 from 1912–1913 show a total of 123 works of art in their exhibition. The artists were as follows [order of surname and initials of the original has been preserved]: Ball'er, Av., (Nos. 1–3); Burliuk, Vladimir D. (4–6); Burliuk, David, D. (7–10); Voinov, Rostislav Vlad., (11–13); Goncharova, N. S. (14–19); Dydyshko, K. V. (20); Larionov, M. F. ((21–27); Lermontova, N. V. (28–29); Aiubavina, N. (30–31); Malevich, K. S. (32–23); Matiushin, Mikh. Vasil'ev. (44–48); Maiakovskii, V. V. (49); Mostova, Z. Ia. (50–51); Nagubinkov, S. A. (52–55); Potipaka, P. (56–66); Puni, I. (67); Rozanova, O. V. (68–78); Spandikov, E. K. (79–83); Tatlin, V. E. (84–91); Shevchenko, Aleksandr Vas. (92–94); Shkol'nik, I. S. (95–109); Shleifer, Ts. Ia. (113–123). Another catalogue of similar format, measuring 16.4 x 12.7 cm, from a Soiuz molodezhi exhibition dated Moscow 1912 is also to be found in the same archive, f: 121; ed khr: 9; d: 10. A total of 110 works are noted in the catalogue. These include: V. D. Bubnova (1–7); K. V. Dydyshko (8–10); A. M. Zel'manova (11–21); L. N. Kurchaninova (22–25); P. I. L'vov (26–42); V. I. Matvei (43–45); Mitel'man (46–47); S. Nagubinkov (48–49); Novodvorskaia (50–54); Potipaka (55–67); O. V. Rozanova (68–75); E. K. Spandikov (76–84); I. S. Shkol'nik (85–96); Ts. Ia Shleifer (97–106) and M. Iasenskii (107–110). As if to emphasize his role as patron of Soiuz molodezhi it has been noted that three of the paintings on view have come from Zheverzheev's own collection. One presumes, therefore, that all the rest (except the one owned by 'Kniaz' III') are up for sale. A copy of the catalogue for the same Soiuz molodezhi exhibition, Moscow 1912, is also held at RGALI, f: 2951; op: 1; d: 28, ll: 24–27. The contributors and list of paintings are the same as the GRM reference.

*vystavka kartin 0.10 (NOL'-DESIAT')*, 1915, has been typeset along the diagonal. (figs. 68a–b). The layout retains the convention of list of artists, their addresses and name of the works. The catalogue for the *Futuristicheskaia vystavka "Magazin"*, 1916, has simplified the format further and removed the separate cover altogether (fig. 69). Instead, the listing of artists, addresses and works begins on the first page. The use of sans serif and uncluttered typeset contributes to the catalogue's modern appearance.

The catalogue from the third *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition held in St. Petersburg (4 January – 12 February 1912, fig. 70) represents a departure by Soiuz molodezhi in their format of the art exhibition catalogue. Here is the strongest statement of their artistic preference. They have repeated the deer design which was used in the advertising poster of the second *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition, St. Petersburg, 1911 (fig. 71). The catalogue cover depicts a deer that is trying to bolt, whilst two, presumably naked, figures latch onto its rear leg, antler and neck. The picture is printed on dark brown card and this neutral colour has the effect of increasing the primitive character of the narrative. The design is reminiscent of Ancient Greeks or Minoan images, or possibly Scythian culture. Although the design may have been influenced by the traditional *lubok*, its elegant style distinguishes it from the cruder, more modern Neo-Primitivist style employed by the Futurists, and instead seems to reinforce Soiuz molodezhi association with European artistic trends. The inside title page repeats the information on the cover, *Katalog vystavki kartin Obshchestva khudoznikov "Soiuz molodezhi" 1912* and this is printed in a standard, art nouveau style of lettering. In contrast to the previously mentioned pamphlets, the Soiuz molodezhi have used good quality thick paper for the inner pages of the catalogue (29 pages in total). This contributes to the concept of exhibition catalogue as souvenir or consumer item.

Only eight artists from the Oslinyi khvost camp exhibited with Soiuz molodezhi at this, the Soiuz molodezhi's smallest exhibition. The Oslinyi khvost artists, whose identity was clearly labelled in the catalogue, contributed thirty-five of the total one

hundred and thirty-nine exhibition paintings.<sup>52</sup> A few weeks later, Oslinyi khvost exhibited over three hundred paintings at their Moscow exhibition, which was held jointly with Soiuz molodezhi.

An analysis of the art exhibition catalogues related to the Oslinyi khvost group of artists reveal a different approach to the function of the art catalogue as a marketing device to promote aesthetic principles. The first catalogue has a plain cover in cream-coloured paper which is slightly thicker than the inside pages. The title of the exhibition *Katalog Vystavki Kartin gruppy khudozhdnikov "Oslinyi khvost"* is printed in a standard font, and this information, together with the address of the venue, (*Miasnitskaia, uchilishche Zhivopisi, Vaianiia i Zodchestva*), the telephone number and the date of the exhibition (Moscow 1912), is printed on the inside title page. Full listings of artists and their works are given, and also the address of each artist.<sup>53</sup> The same conservative format is used for the next catalogue, *Katalog vystavki kartin gruppy khudozhdnikov Mishen'* [Target], Moscow 1913, B. Dmitrovka, Khudozhestvennyi salon, 11.<sup>54</sup> The price of the catalogue is stated as 10 kopeks, so we now have a definite indication of its affordability. One significant difference distinguished this catalogue from previous Futurist and Soiuz molodezhi catalogues, the inclusion of a foreword by Mikhail Larionov. In fact the foreword is more accurately described as a printed manifesto of Oslinyi khvost's aesthetic principles. Larionov places *Mishen'* as the third in the series of *Oslinyi khvost* exhibitions, which started with the Bubnovyi valet exhibition of 1911. He espouses the group's total independence (from existing artistic groups and regulations) and declares that

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<sup>52</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 9; d: 11, 'Katalog vystavki kartin Obshchestva Khudozhdnikov 'Soiuz molodezhi', 1912'. The contributing artists to this exhibition included: Dydysko, K. V. (1–15); Kuprin, [A. V.] (16); Kurchaninova, L. N. (17–20); L'vov, [P. I]. (21–42); Mitel'man, S. (43–44); Nagubnikov, S. (45) Novodorskaia (46–50); Potipaka, P. (51–63); Pangalutsi (64–66); Rozanova, O. V. (67–68); Spandikov, E. K. (69–86); Shleifer, Ts. Ia. (87–96); Iasenskii, M. (97–100); Filonov, [P.] (101–03); Goncharova, N. S (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (104–12); Bobrov, S. P (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (113); Fon-Vizen, A. V. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (114–16); Larionov, M. F. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (117–22); Malevich K. S. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (123–26); Morgunov, A. A. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (127–30); Tatlin, V. E. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (131–33); Shevchenko, A. V. (Moscow "Oslinyi khvost") (134–39).

<sup>53</sup> RGALI f: 2951, 'Mikhailova Klavdiia Ivanovna', op: 1; d: 28, 'Katalogi vystavok N. S. Goncharovoi, V. A. Serova, I-i vystavki "Nezavisimyykh" obshchestv khudozhdnikov "Moskovskii Salon", "Soiuz molodezhi", "Oslinyi khvost", "Mishen'" i dr. v khudozhestvennom salone K. I. Mikhailovoi'; ll: 28–35. The catalogue measures 12.4 x 18.8 cm. For full listings of the catalogue see G. G. Pospelov, pp. 245–48. It is noticeable that 12 of the 18 artists have a Moscow address, thereby lending credibility to the association of Oslinyi khvost with Moscow, i.e. the 'Moscow Futurists'.

<sup>54</sup> RGALI f: 2951; op: 1; d: 28; ll: 36–43. Paper, 17.3 x 13 cm.



further exhibitions will be scheduled according to the readiness of new material, new tendencies in art, be this many exhibitions in one year, or one over the course of many years. He declares that future exhibitions will be numbered, with the title of the next exhibition *No. 4 [Katalog vystavki kartin gruppy khudozhdnikov 'Oslinyi khvost']*. A thirteen-point list of Oslinyi khvost's artistic principles follows Larionov's statement. These are vehemently nationalistic, or at least Slavophile in character, seeking independence from the West in pursuit of ever new tendencies in modern Russian art and the intersection of that art with life. The 'foreword' is signed by more than twenty artists who participated in the exhibition.<sup>55</sup>

The *Mishen'* catalogue with its manifesto-style foreword signals confirmation of the change in direction between the artists associated with Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet, as stated by Goncharova during her appearance at the Bubnovyi valet debate in February 1912 and her letter which was published in a newspaper a few days later. The Oslinyi khvost group of artists needed to consolidate its public identity if they were to compete successfully with the better-known, more-established Bubnovyi valet. Oslinyi khvost's tone became more declamatory. Larionov and his fellow artists attacked the status of art in Russia, anyone who showed a preference for Western art over Russian art, and who did not wish to harness the dynamic environment of the present and look to the future for inspiration.<sup>56</sup>

The reported scandal of the *Mishen'* debate took place the day before the *Mishen'* art exhibition opened. The debate undoubtedly fulfilled a marketing function to the benefit of the exhibition. Once at the exhibition, the public were faced with a printed version of Oslinyi khvost's manifesto. Unlike the debate or the art, this printed version represented a permanent record of the group's aesthetics, which could be taken away as a memento. It represented a growing trend of consumption of the now

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<sup>55</sup> The list of artists included A. I. Abramov, Iu. P. Anisimov, S. P. Bobrov, V. S. Bart, A. N. Beliaev, T. N. Bogomazov, Nataliia [sic] Goncharova, K. M. Zdanevich, I. F. Larionov, Mikhail [sic] Larionov, M. V. Le-Dantiu, V. V. Levkievskii, M. Mikhailov, S. M. Romanovich, V. A. Obolenskii, O. D. Ol'gina, E. Ia. Sagaidachnyi, I. A. Skuie, Niko [sic] Pirozmanashvili, T. E. Pavliuchenko, Moris Fabbri, M. Shagal [Chagall], A. V. Shevchenko, A. S. Iastrzhembskii, and others. Many of these artists had previously exhibited under *Bybnovyi valet* and other avant-garde exhibitions. See Pospelov, pp. 248–251 for full listings, including the foreword.

<sup>56</sup> The latter point is expressed in points 9 and 10 of the foreword, 'Надо прежде всего знать свое дело' and 'Надо признавать все'. [Above all, one has to know one's own work. One has to acknowledge everything], See Pospelov, p. 249. One presumes that Oslinyi khvost are addressing both artists and critics.

fashionable avant-garde. Those who were unable to purchase a Futurist work of art but wished to be involved in this new Futurist culture would be able to buy the catalogue, complete with manifesto, as a souvenir. The title *Mishen'* [Target] correlated to the combative strategy of combining debate, exhibition and manifesto/exhibition catalogue. Pospelov states that the title of the exhibition had been decided in 1911 when Larionov was serving his national service. In retrospect, the term 'Target' was an ingenious name. It described not only the negative attitude of the media and other commentators toward the avant-garde (see fig. 15) and Oslinyi khvost's readiness to make themselves the target of such negative commentary, but simultaneously turned the tables on those commentators and made them the 'Target' of Oslinyi khvost's vitriol.<sup>57</sup> If this was artistic war, then Oslinyi khvost were happy to mark out the targets. In effect, Oslinyi khvost had taken advantage of some of the cheapest forms of marketing in order to bring their work, and their personal and artistic identity, to the public's attention. The number of news articles which were devoted to the *Mishen'* events confirms that the strategies worked.<sup>58</sup> Through the introduction of new marketing strategies, combined with good organisation skills, Oslinyi khvost had raised the struggle for artistic recognition to a new level.

Larionov organised a second exhibition entitled *Vystavka ikonopisnykh podlinnikov i lubkov* [An Exhibition of Original Icon Paintings and Woodcuts], which took place on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka at the Khudozhestvennyi salon, 11, from 24 March to 7 April 1913. Again, the sans serif font contributes to the uncluttered modern look of the catalogue cover (fig. 72).<sup>59</sup> This catalogue also contained forewords by Larionov, and Goncharova (for the Indian and Persian section).<sup>60</sup> The exhibition showed examples of Persian, Chinese, Japanese, and Tartar, French and Russian *lubki* from

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<sup>57</sup> Pospelov, p. 103.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, N., 'Khudozhestvennye Vesti. Disput "Mishen"', *Utro Rossii*, No. 70, 24 March 1913, p. 5; M. M. Bonch-Tomashevskii and Aleksei Arkhangel'skii, 'Pis'ma v Redaktsiiu', *Utro Rossii*, No. 74, 30 March 1913, p. 6; Sergei Glagol', 'Po Vystavkam – 'Mishen'', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 297, 25 March 1913, p. 5. Sharp also draws attention to Oslinyi khvost's strategy of naming its exhibitions. She places great emphasis on the dialogic relationship between the names of the exhibitions and the attitude of Oslinyi khvost to the public and vice versa. This point is reinforced by an interview with Larionov, [F. M., 'Luchisty (V masterskoi Larionova i Goncharovoi)', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 231, 7 January 1913, p. 2] which Sharp cites. See Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde', pp. 99–103.

<sup>59</sup> Here the sans serif font has been used for all of the text on the cover, with the exception of the title.

<sup>60</sup> RGALI f: 2951; op: 1; d: 28, ll: 73–89.

the collections of A. I. Pribylovskii, N. V. Bogoiavlenskii, Mikhail Larionov and N. M. Bocharov. The vast number of works on display (over 600) confirms Larionov and Goncharova's genuine nationalist interest both in preserving the Russian primitive heritage and in aligning it with other Eastern parallel artistic and cultural tendencies.

If the *Mishen'* exhibition catalogue evoked an aggressive, belligerent Larionov, the *lubok* catalogue revealed a deeper and more subtle side of his nature and his erudition. Those critics who praised the element of Primitivism in Futurism (and particularly in the works of Goncharova, e.g. the *Peasant* series), but denounced more modern tendencies, welcomed this exhibition.<sup>61</sup> The exhibition catalogue was not too expensive at 20 kopeks.<sup>62</sup> It conveyed the artists' understanding of the value and function of the *lubok*, regardless of its country of origin, and emphasised its symbolic status as a reflection of the direct relationship between art and the people. The catalogue constituted an accessible and informative tract to the public. The *Mishen'* exhibition had originally been scheduled for an earlier date in February 1912. However, the delayed scheduling worked out to Oslinyi khvost's advantage. As the *Mishen'* and Icon and *lubki* exhibitions took place after the Bubnovyi valet exhibition (January–February 1913), this meant that Oslinyi khvost were able to upstage Bubnovyi valet. A mixture of scandal, performance, an enormous volume of art, supported with theoretical tracts and an alignment with traditional Russian arts and crafts helped to consolidate Oslinyi khvost's public image at the end of the spring 'season'.

Goncharova's remarkable solo retrospective show of 1913, which continued Oslinyi khvost's mission of self-definition, was accompanied by a catalogue that combined an artistic statement on the cover with another strongly-worded foreword by the artist herself.<sup>63</sup> Entitled *Vystavka kartin Natalii Sergeevny Goncharovoi, 1900–1913*, the

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<sup>61</sup> Anthony Parton, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 56. Parton refers to Tugendkhol'd's review of the exhibition in *Apollon*, No. 3, March 1913, p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> The price was noted on the back cover of the archival copy.

<sup>63</sup> RGALI f: 2951; op: 1; d: 28; ll: 44–72. The venue of the exhibition, Khudozhestvennyi salon, B. Dmitrovka, d. No. 11, was also printed on the catalogue. Goncharova, Natal'ia, *Vystavka kartin Natalii Sergeevny Goncharovoi 1900–1913* [Exhibition of Paintings by Natal'ia Segeevna Goncharova 1900–1913] (Moscow: Ts. A. Miunster, 1913) [print run unknown], 12 pages, plus 3 plates, 19.6 x 14.6 cm. See Margit Rowell and Deborah Wye, eds., *The Russian Avant-Garde Book 1910–1934* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002), p. 250 for the catalogue details.

catalogue included black and white reproductions of a number of her recent works and a comprehensive list of all the exhibitions in which she had participated. There were at least three different editions of the catalogue for the Moscow exhibition. One version gives minimal information. It lists the paintings and their owners, and contains three reproductions. Another more luxurious and comprehensive catalogue contained a foreword by Goncharova; an annotated list of her paintings (and their owners) with some attempt to categorise them; a list of all her past exhibitions; and thirteen reproductions. The reproductions increased the value of the catalogue as a consumable item and this second catalogue was priced at 35 kopeks. The sheer volume of the work exhibited, combined with details of Goncharova's international representation and collaboration with international artistic associations, contributed to the justification of Goncharova's prominent place in contemporary Russian and Western European art.

The exhibition stimulated a serious reappraisal of Goncharova's art and her position within the modern art world. Many of her previous detractors and highly influential art critics, such as Aleksandr Benua, Iakov Tugendkhol'd and Rosstsi [A. M. Efros] repudiated their earlier comments and instead showered praise on 'the most gifted, the most able and the most 'cutting edge' among Russian Modernists.<sup>64</sup> (See also Chapter 5.) The *lubok*-style picture of a cow on the cover of the catalogue anticipates and reinforces the contents of Goncharova's foreword. Like Larionov, she challenges her critics and explicitly identifies the rapid developments in modern art which are taking place in Russia and seeks to continue to pursue these tendencies within the realm of her own work. She roots all contemporary Russian and Western art in the primitivism of the past and declares that artistic inspiration originated in the East and it is therefore the East that has taught the West and not vice versa. The West may

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<sup>64</sup> 'Если бы среди русских модернистов нужно было назвать самого одаренного, самого работоспособного и самого «модернистичного» – пришлось бы назвать Гончарову.' Rosstsi [A. M. Efros], 'Vystavka kartin N. S. Goncharovoi. 1913', *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 225, 1 October 1913, p. 3. Goncharova's foreword and a range of reviews of the exhibition by Ia. A. Tugendkhol'd, A. N. Benua, Rosstsi, F. M. [Mukhortov], Iu. Bocharov, N. V. Denisov, and A. Rostislavov can be found in full, in Russian, in *Nataliia Goncharova: Gody v Rossii*, edited by E. B. Basner et al. (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennyi Russkii muzei, 2002), pp. 291–300. An English translation of the foreword to the catalogue can be found in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 54–60. As Bowlt notes, p. 54, the 'exhibition displayed 768 works covering the period of 1900–1913 and ran from August until October 1913; at the beginning of 1914 it opened in St. Petersburg, but on a smaller scale'. Undoubtedly transporting the pictures to St. Petersburg and finding a venue large enough to exhibit all of them would have proved to be very expensive.

have appropriated these artistic influences, from which the Cubist movement was derived, but Goncharova now rejects any influence of the West on Russian art. Her foreword, although declamatory in tone, is more theoretical and more considered than Larionov's previous foreword to the *Mishen'* catalogue, and would therefore have been more accessible to the uninitiated reader. Coupled with the events which were scheduled to coincide with Goncharova's exhibition, (such as Zdanevich's lecture, *Vsëchestvo* [Everythingism] which was reported in *Russkoe slovo*, No. 256, 6 November 1913), the catalogue proved to be a pivotal piece of mature marketing which contributed significantly to the critics' legitimisation of her work and that of Futurism in general.

### Sophisticated Marketing

By 1913 all the Futurist groups had adopted a more sophisticated approach to marketing. For example, Soiuz molodezhi used a piece of double-sided purple card to advertise their art exhibition on Nevskii Prospekt, November 1913 on one side and an evening of lectures entitled, *O noveishei russkoi literature*, for Wednesday, 20 November 1913 printed on the other (see fig. 73a–b).<sup>65</sup> The card was folded in half to produce an advertising card. The elegant conservative typography printed in black on the purple background creates a luxurious effect. This is enhanced by the choice of font and the balanced, well-defined layout of the individual sections of information. The information related to the debate (to be held at the Troitskii Theatre at 8pm) is stated on the right-hand side of the advert:

I  
Vladimir Maiakovskii.

Those who speak about us. The city and poetry.  
Egyptians and Greeks, stroking black, dry cats. New  
fashions.

II.  
Aleksei Kruchenykh.

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<sup>65</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 13; ll: 37–38.

The discussion concerning Creativity and the Sciences. The inaccuracies in words. Ego-Futurists and Acmeists. From Pushkin to the grey-haired masters. Peredonov – a positive sort. Gogol's humorous anecdotes and future wits. New language. Dictionary of neologism and rhymes. Our Present.

III.  
David Davidovich  
Burluk.

The Critics and Us. Tradition and its role. The Past and Us. Characterisation of the past. The same for the Present.

A second look at this seemingly conservative advert raises the following questions: Are the three Futurists going to give a talk on their chosen subjects? Will they appear in person or will their papers be delivered by a third party? What does any single part of Maiakovskii's intended 'speech' mean? What could 'dry' cats possibly refer to? The subject of 'dry cats' also appeared in Maiakovskii's *Tragediia*, which was staged two weeks after this lecture. The lecture of 20 November may have been organised with a view to maintain public interest in preparation for the Luna Park performances. Who are the grey-haired old masters if not those associated with the classical Russian canon of Pushkin onwards? What do most of the themes for discussion have to do with new Russian literature? If this is an evening of lectures, à la Futurist performance, will a debate follow the lectures, and if not, why not? How much will the event cost? Where can one buy the tickets and are they on sale now? These are but a few of the questions which this piece of ambiguous marketing raises. As an attractive marketing device, its offer of information raises awareness of the proposed Futurist evening, but further investigation only leads to confusion. The Futurists have subverted the normal relationship between word and meaning. The subversion is more subtle but also more effective because it has not been signalled by the use of Futurist *zaum*' language. The mention of 'the city' together with 'Egyptians and Greeks, stroking black, dry cats' would appear absurdist to most readers. As Futurism progressed, and the public and critics became more

sophisticated and were able to outmanoeuvre the Futurists, the Futurists, in turn, adopted a more absurdist approach to aspects of their marketing (See Chapter 5).<sup>66</sup>

As we shall see in Chapter 4, a culture of consumption of theatre souvenirs was already established in the Russian capitals by the turn of the century. Lev Bakst, for example, produced a series of lithographic postcards with costume designs for the ballet *Die Puppenfee* [The Fairy Doll], 1903.<sup>67</sup> Howard also notes that Soiuz molodezhi sold photographs of paintings by Matisse, Van Dongen, Gauguin, Cézanne, Van Gogh and others at their St. Petersburg exhibition in 1911.<sup>68</sup> With this growing consumer culture in mind, it is possible to interpret the printed libretto for the opera *Pobeda nad solntsem*, and the play *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* as forms of consumable Futurist marketing media (see figs. 74 and 75). For the same reasons of insufficient funding and aesthetic principle as applied to the art exhibition catalogues, the publications could not match the sumptuous quality of their artistic contemporaries and predecessors (for example, see fig. 76). However the libretto and play-script constituted a Futurist aesthetic statement in themselves. The title of the opera is printed as *Pobeda nad solntsem: Opera A. Kruchenykh muzyka M. Matiushina* on the cover of the libretto. It contained an illustration by Malevich on the front cover and one by David Burliuk on the back cover, and was sold at 60 kopeks. The publication had a print-run of one thousand, which was a sizable number for an avant-garde publication in 1913. The large print-run and relatively high price demonstrates a certain confidence in the market in addition to the necessary funds to finance the production of the publication. One source suggests that Kruchenykh's publishing company 'EYBI' [EUY] published the programme.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> It is also possible that detailed information was omitted from the advertising card in order that it survive the censorship process. Giving too much information in advance may have left the advertiser hostage to fortune.

<sup>67</sup> See Alla Rosenfeld, ed., *Defining Russian Graphic Arts 1898–1934: From Diaghilev to Stalin* (Piscataway: Rutgers UP and The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1999), plate 18.

<sup>68</sup> Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 87. Howard writes that Soiuz molodezhi sold the photos to show their 'respect for and debt to French Post-Impressionist and Fauves'. I would suggest that the photographs were also sold as a public statement to emphasise Soiuz molodezhi's identity as an integrated part of the European modernist movement, but also to boost exhibition revenue.

<sup>69</sup> The information about this publication which is given by Rowell and Wye notes that the publisher is not stated (see pp. 74 and 250). However, Rosenfeld writes that the edition of *Pobeda nad solntsem* featured in her book was published by EUY. See p. 111. Sixty kopeks would generally have been beyond the modest means of the *meshchanstvo*. It is likely that a member of this class would have needed to have saved up, and therefore been quite motivated, if he/she wished to buy a copy of the libretto.

The artistic groups *Oslinyi khvost* and *Bubnovyi valet* did not have a regular journal or other official organ in which to promote their ideas during this period, unlike their Italian counterparts or their Impressionist and Symbolist predecessors (see figs. 77 and 78). The required funding alone would have been prohibitive within the avant-garde budget.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to the Italians, whose own journals progressed through Symbolist to avant-garde designs (figs. 79 and 80), we are unable to plot the artistic development of Russian Futurist typographical innovation in the context of a specifically Russian Futurist journal during the period in question. In spring 1914 there was an attempt to unite all strands of Futurism in the journal, *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov* [The First Journal of Russian Futurists], which was published by the Burliuk brothers, but it folded after the first issue.<sup>71</sup> The Futurist journal *Strelets* [Archer] (published by Aleksandr Belenson, fig. 81), published the following year, also failed to go beyond its initial issue.<sup>72</sup> The onset of war in 1914 curtailed any immediate hopes of sustaining a Futurist journal.

In the post-Revolutionary era, David Burliuk, Vasiliï Kamenskii and Vladimir Maiakovskii co-wrote the first edition of the *Gazeta futuristov* [Futurist Gazette] 1919 (fig. 82). Many Futurists were, however, associated with *Soiuz molodezhi* and contributed to the three editions of its journal. Without being drawn into a discussion of the contents of the journals (which were financed by Levkii Zheverzhev), one can perceive a transition in artistic tendency from the choice of design of the covers alone. The second journal from 1912 depicts a rather elegant 'Oriental' miniature of a kneeling man (fig. 83).<sup>73</sup> By contrast, the cover of the third and final issue of the journal in 1913 used a design which had a much cruder primitive character (fig.

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<sup>70</sup> Even the wealthy Nikolai Riabushinskii had encountered financial difficulties with his publication *Zolotoe runo*. The first edition was particularly luxurious in format in order to compete with other contemporary art magazines. However, this proved to be too expensive and he soon 'simplified' the format for the following editions.

<sup>71</sup> V. N. Terekhina and A. P. Zimenkov, eds., *Russkii Futurizm: Teorii. Praktiki. Kritiki. Vospominaniia* (Moskva: Nasledie, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 87 and 253.

<sup>73</sup> Although John Bowlt has identified the illustration as Persian [*Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, p. 24], the miniature bears a striking resemblance to the Japanese style. Many Russian avant-gardists had an interest in foreign miniatures, and, as mentioned above, Persian and Japanese miniatures were both represented in Larionov's *Icon and Lubok* exhibition of March-April 1913.



84).<sup>74</sup> The illustration is much more in keeping with the style of David Burliuk's *lubok*-style images, such as the one used for the advertising for the Luna Park performances. Nikolai Kul'bin's design for the cover of *Svobodnaia muzyka* [Free Music], 1912, also shows a definite influence of Primitivism and perhaps that of German Expressionism (fig. 85). At the very least, all three Russian covers can be clearly distinguished from their Symbolist and Impressionist contemporaries.

The work of many members of *Bubnovyi valet* and *Oslinyi khvost* gave Russian Futurist its visual identity in graphic design during the period 1910–14. From the collaborations between Goncharova, Larionov, Mikhail Rogovin, and Tatlin (1912) to Kul'bin, Rozanova, Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh (1914) to the colourful combination of wallpaper and concrete poems of the Burliuk brothers with Vasili Kamenskii and Andrei Kravtsov (1914) (see figs. 86–89) the Futurists left an indelible mark on the development of Russian graphic art. Why then, was this innovation not transferred to the other forms of printed marketing that we have discussed above? I can only speculate that perhaps those patrons who were prepared to fund literary Futurist publications were willing to do so because they were supporting 'high' art in the form of poetry (albeit in the Futurist fashion) and this was considered to be more worthy of a patron, and the product more enduring, than a simple marketing device of exhibition catalogue, invitation card, poster or even journal. A one-off literary work was an attractive proposition in comparison to a journal because the patron would only have to commit to funding one individual and completed product, not a long-term investment. The risks involved in a long-term funding commitment had already been demonstrated by Diaghilev's journal *Mir iskusstva* and his relationship with his patron Princess Mariia Tenisheva.

Although Futurist literary publications did not attract the same level of patronage as more traditional schools of literature, they nonetheless attracted sufficient funding for the Futurists to experiment as graphic designers and demonstrate their artistic innovation. By contrast, whether out of avant-garde aesthetic principle, or through their inability to attract sufficient funding, the Futurists did not use high quality

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<sup>74</sup> Rowell and Wye (*The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, p. 251) state that the cover consisted of purple construction paper with a letterpress illustration. The image on the cover appears to be either a woodcut, or has been designed to look like one, and in so doing, reinforcing the Primitive character of the publication.

materials and expensive forms of graphic production to create their printed marketing products. The Futurists' limited funding did have a positive effect in that it compelled the Futurists to create more inventive marketing strategies which combined printed materials with performance. This, in turn, initiated one of the most creative periods in avant-garde performance of the twentieth century.

### **Futurist Manifestoes**

Futurist public debates, street happenings, social networking, and the use of the manifesto represent modes of Futurist marketing. The manifesto was a powerful and multi-functional tool which could be used to the Futurists' advantage in printed form, and then reinforced through performative marketing. Many historians, including Anna Lawton and Marjorie Perloff, have identified the integral role played by performance in the creation, communication and public reception of both Russian and Italian Futurist manifestoes.<sup>75</sup> Whilst a strong performance may be dynamic and effective in leaving a lasting mark on the public's memory, it still only constitutes a momentary act, witnessed by a limited number of people. The final part of this section on the use of printed materials in Futurist marketing strategies will therefore analyse the graphic design of a selection of printed Futurist manifestoes and collections of theoretical tracts in terms of their effectiveness as a marketing tool, together with the Futurist manipulation of the press, as a means of disseminating the Futurist aesthetic and determining the Futurist identity.

The manifesto was a literary genre which swept through Europe in the 1900s. By the early 1910s it had already evolved and established itself as a performative and literary phenomenon whose influence undermined and renegotiated popular perceptions of the arts in major European artistic centres. Ernst Kirchner's woodcut manifesto of the German Expressionist group Die Brücke, 1906, which accompanied the Dresden exhibition of the same year, represents the first manifesto to be written by a visual artist (fig. 90). The short manifesto reads:

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<sup>75</sup> Anna Lawton, 'Futurist Manifestoes as an Element of Performance'; Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986).

With faith in progress and in a new generation of creators and spectators we call together all youth. As youth, we carry the future in us and want to create for ourselves freedom of life and of movement against the long established older forces. We claim as our own everyone who reproduces that which drives him to creation with directness and authenticity.<sup>76</sup>

The manifesto was published as a woodcut broadsheet but had originally been planned as part of an exhibition catalogue.<sup>77</sup> It set the tone and style and establishes tropes for many European manifestoes of the arts to come: the use of series of statements (often numbered) which express the group's struggle against the unjust present; a call to youth; a denial of an established but defunct order; a selective sense of history; a positive appeal to the masses, and by extension creation of an audience; a concept of future success being rooted in modern progress and the development of new technology, although vague in specific strategies of how this might be achieved; legitimisation of the group's position and implied solidarity with the public through the use of the pronoun 'we'; and finally an ambiguous closure which uses empowering language to challenge the reader, but also implies that the reader's refusal to take up this challenge will lead to an apocalyptic end.<sup>78</sup>

Three years later, 20 February 1909, Filippo Marinetti achieved one of the greatest marketing coups of the early twentieth century when he used the front page of the most influential contemporary European newspaper, *Le Figaro* (Paris), to print his 'Manifeste du Futurisme', and launch Italian Futurism on an international level (fig. 91). As patron and impresario of Italian Futurism he did not lack the funds or the influence to make such an audacious gesture.<sup>79</sup> In fact, contrary to the manifesto's content, a Futurist school was not yet fully formed. Although Italian interest in modern European art had been expressed in Marinetti's publication *Poesia* since its inception in 1905, George Heard Hamilton claims that specifically Futurist paintings were not seen until May 1911 at the Mostra d'Arte Libera in Milan.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Gill Perry, *Modern Art and Modernism: Manet to Pollock. Two Exhibitions: The Fauves, 1906 and Die Brücke, 1906* (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1983), p. 50.

<sup>77</sup> This was not Die Brücke's first exhibition. That was held in Leipzig in 1905.

<sup>78</sup> For a full discussion of the function and the format of the manifesto genre, see Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1999), in particular chapter 1, 'Manifestoes and Public Spheres: Probing Modernity', pp. 9–45.

<sup>79</sup> Marinetti was able to secure the front-page position of his manifesto through his fiancée's father, who was a major shareholder in *Le Figaro*. See Chapter 1 of this thesis.

<sup>80</sup> George Heard Hamilton, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1880–1940* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 282. The Italian Futurist artists who were represented at this 'Free Art Exhibition' in Milan

A number of practical and stylistic elements maximised the impact of the notorious first Italian Futurist manifesto. Firstly, Marinetti was personally able to finance the expensive front-page publication. Secondly, the brief editorial which introduced the manifesto emphasised the newspaper's principle of supporting new schools of art and urged the reader to do the same, even though the editorial was quick to point out its relative objectivity to the new Futurist school. Thirdly, although the manifesto (which Marinetti describes as 'ce manifeste de violence culbutante et incendiaire' [this manifesto of destructive and incendiary violent nature]) consisted of eleven numbered militant points, the content itself echoed conventional anarchic tropes akin to the central points of Die Brücke's manifesto of 1906. What encourages the reader to engage with the manifesto, however, is Marinetti's own sensationalist introductory narrative. He attracts the attention of the reader, narrates the story of a group of young artists, of their passion for modernity and compulsion towards action, a near-death experience in a car-crash, followed by their metaphorical rebirth and a new life perspective in the form of this very manifesto. It was an inspired strategy which served to attract public attention, define personal identity and passion for a new art, and incite the public to join in.<sup>81</sup> Finally, as Marianne Martin notes, the most influential contemporary European art critic, Apollinaire, had 'included Marinetti and *Poésia* in his important survey of recent poetic activity given at the 1908 *Salon des Indépendants*', thereby substantiating Marinetti's place within the European arts.<sup>82</sup> The strength of the public's reaction to the manifesto was reflected in Marinetti's claim that he received more than ten thousand letters and articles in response to the publication. As Perloff notes, 'the response tells us a great deal about manifesto art' and its ability to engage the public.<sup>83</sup>

The bombast of Marinetti's publicity stunt reverberated through producers, consumers and assessors of trends in modern art in Europe, including Russia. The manifesto was translated into Russian and published in the newspaper *Nasha gazeta*,

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included Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Giacomo Balla and Luigi Russolo. This point is echoed by Perloff, 'Violence and Precision', in *The Futurist Moment*, pp. 81–115, p. 90.

<sup>81</sup> See Perloff, 'Violence and Precision', pp. 81–115 for a comprehensive analysis of Marinetti's manifesto.

<sup>82</sup> Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909–1915* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), p. 36.

<sup>83</sup> Perloff, 'Violence and Precision', p. 89.

6 March 1909.<sup>84</sup> The Russians received regular information and translations of the many Italian Futurist manifestoes which ensued (nearly fifty between 1909–15).<sup>85</sup> For example Paulo Buzzi, who reported on the Italian Futurist's activities for the Russian journal *Apollon*, reviewed and translated sections of the Italian Futurist leaflet *La Pittura futurista. Manifesto tecnico* [Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto] in 1910. Soiuz molodezhi also published translated parts of the *Technical Manifesto*, 'The Exhibitors to the Public', in their second journal, June 1912.<sup>86</sup> In his memoirs, Livshits confirms the Russian avant-garde's awareness of the European manifestoes when he quotes from a letter from David Burliuk in the summer 1912, 'Ja poluchaiu vse manifesty futuristov...' [I receive all the Futurist manifestoes].<sup>87</sup> Many Russians who were associated with the Russian avant-garde in some way or other (either artists themselves, or collectors or critics) travelled frequently to Paris and other European cities and were well connected in the European art scene (see Chapter 1). In view of these many links with the European avant-garde, there can be little doubt that the Russian Futurists were familiar with both the identity of their Italian counterparts and the Italians' use of the manifesto as an effective marketing tool at the time the first *bona fide* Russian artistic manifesto was published, 18 December 1912 (fig. 92).

In comparison to the Italian marketing coup, the Russian manifesto was a relatively moderate affair. It was published as the introduction to a collection of works entitled *Poshchchina obshchestvennomu vkusu. V zashchitu svobodnogo iskusstva. Stikhi, proza, stat'i* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste: In Defence of Free Art. Verse, Prose, Essays] with a print run of 600 copies, a number incomparable to the circulation and market potential of *Le Figaro*. It is not clear why *Poshchchina* was not published in a Russian newspaper, as was the case for some of the later Russian

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<sup>84</sup> E. Sem-v, 'Futurizm (literaturny manifest)', *Nasha gazeta*, No. 54, 6 March 1909, p. 4, cited in Parton, p. 114, footnote 9.

<sup>85</sup> Perloff, 'Violence and Precision', p. 90.

<sup>86</sup> P. Buzzi, "Pis'ma iz Italii: Zhivopis'", *Apollon*, No. 9, July-August 1910, pp. 16–18. Parton also notes (p. 114, footnote 10) the other articles in the same issue of *Apollon*, V. Sh., 'Futuristicheskiia [sic] dramy na Florentyskoi [sic] stsene', pp. 18–20, and M. Kuzmin, "Futuristy", pp. 20–21.

<sup>87</sup> Livshits, *Polutoraglazi strelets*, p. 57. There can be no doubt that those artists who were associated with the Russian avant-garde and who travelled to Europe would have been acutely aware of the increasing European publicity and influence which the Italians were whipping up during the period 1910–15. On returning to Russia they would have been a valuable source of information and creative inspiration and criticism for the other Russian avant-garde artists who lacked the necessary funds to travel in Europe.

Futurist manifestoes. Livshits devotes a section of his memoirs to the circumstances in which *Poshchetchina* was created. He narrates the increased artistic impetus of the group who surrounded David Burliuk and the latter's insistence that Livshits '[b]e our Marinetti!' and write a manifesto.<sup>88</sup> Although Livshits declined and had serious reservations concerning the content of the manifesto, he acknowledged its design and its potential to shock a bourgeois public: 'Anticipating the kind of newspaper used in 1912, the grey and brown wrapping paper, the open cloth cover and the very title of the miscellany, calculated to shock the philistine, were right on target.'<sup>89</sup> Livshits's disappointment with the wording of the manifesto, which he felt to be unsophisticated and lacking in theory, was balanced by his appreciation of the inclusion of poetry by Khlebnikov and Maiakovskii, and theoretical tracts which were attributed to Nikolai Burliuk.<sup>90</sup>

This point highlights the advantages and disadvantages felt by many regarding the manifestoes and points to the tensions which existed within the groups. Although Livshits recognised that the manifesto as a genre was effective in attracting public attention, he also recognised that if the critics and the wider public were to understand the Futurists' artistic intentions and take them seriously, then the manifesto needed to be supported by more comprehensive theoretical writing. For the most part, that is exactly what happened. The year 1913 became the year of the manifesto (in Russia and other European countries) and the Futurist aesthetic was supported by a plethora of published theoretical tracts, publicised public lectures and newspaper interviews.

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<sup>88</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, edited by John E. Bowlt (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 121, '...And I found the text of the manifesto quite unacceptable. [...] I was particularly vexed by the style of the manifesto or rather by the absence of any style. [...] I did not succeed in discovering from David who had composed the notorious manifesto.'

<sup>90</sup> Bowlt recognises that although the theoretical tracts, including 'Kubizm', were attributed to Nikolai Burliuk, their style and the fact that David Burliuk had been lecturing extensively on 'Kubizm' during this period, would suggest that David was the author of both tracts. For a full English translation of the text and more details, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 69–77. See also my earlier comments in this chapter regarding David Burliuk's lecture, 'Chto takoe Futurizm'. The miscellany also included verse by Livshits and four prose sketches by Vasilii Kandinskii. The manifesto was signed by David Burliuk, Kruchenykh, Maiakovskii and Khlebnikov. Livshits notes that the other three contributors to the miscellany, Kandinskii ('who was incidental to the group'), Nikolai Burliuk and Livshits (who were unable to get to Moscow) did not sign the manifesto, and for this, in retrospect, Livshits is glad. Bowlt states in a footnote (Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 135, footnote 1) that Kandinskii 'was quick to dissociate himself from the venture [i.e. the manifesto]' and refers to Kandinskii's letter in *Russkoe slovo*, No. 102, 4 May 1913.

The exhibition catalogue to the art exhibition *Zveno* [Link] represents one of the Russian forerunners to *Poshchechina*. *Zveno* was organised chiefly by Aleksandra Ekster and David Burliuk in Kiev November 1908. Parton identifies it as the ‘first exhibition of a self-conscious avant-garde group in Russia’ with ‘a provocative manifesto’.<sup>91</sup> Bowlt attributes this manifesto, *Golos Impressionista – v zashchitu zhivopisi* [The Voice of an Impressionist. In Defence of Painting] to David Burliuk.<sup>92</sup> Although the tract did not follow the format of many later manifestoes (i.e. it was not a series of numbered points), it was didactic and revolutionary in tone. Burliuk categorised groups of artists as either out-dated or tolerable. Then, in March 1910, Nikolai Kul’bin edited the miscellany *Studiia Impressionistov* [Impressionists’ Studio] which included a number of essays including his own *Svobodnoe iskusstvo kak osnova zhizni. Garmoniia i dissonans* [Free Art as the Basis of Life. Harmony and Dissonance]. The miscellany fulfilled a valuable marketing function in that it sought to consolidate the group’s public identity. The print run and format of the miscellany confirm its value as a major step forward in avant-garde marketing and publishing. Kul’bin persuaded the publisher, N. I. Butkovskaia, to print two thousand copies of the book (a large print-run in comparison to most other avant-garde publications of the period), thereby making it accessible to a wide audience. At 127 pages in length, including 5 plates, and measuring 28.5 x 19 cm, it was a significant publication.<sup>93</sup>

The catalogue for the international art exhibition, *Salon 2*, organized by Vladimir Izdebskii in Odessa, December 1910–January 1911, contained a number of theoretical tracts including *Soderzhanie i forma* [Content and Form] by Vasiliï Kandinskii.<sup>94</sup> The cover of the catalogue (see fig. 93) incorporated a woodcut design

<sup>91</sup> Parton, pp. 16–17. See also his footnotes, Chapter 1, nos. 33 and 34.

<sup>92</sup> For a translation of an extract of Burliuk’s manifesto, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 8–11. The *Zveno* exhibition took place 2–30 November 1908 in Kiev. Bowlt also notes that part of the manifesto was printed in *V Mire Iskusstva* [In the World of Arts], Kiev, No. 14/15, 1908, p. 20 and in *Kievlianin* [The Kievan], No. 332, 1908.

<sup>93</sup> Other contributors to the miscellany included Aleksandr Andreev, A. A. Nikolaev, Liudmila Shmidt-Ryzhova, N. M. Siniagin, and Evgenii Vashchenko. It also contained Khlebnikov’s famous *zaum’* poem *Zakliatie smekhom* [Incantation by Laughter] (1909), which attracted much critical commentary. For full listings see *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 250.

<sup>94</sup> According to Bowlt, the catalogue ‘included articles by Izdebskii, Nikolai Kul’bin, a certain “Dr. phil. A. Grinbaum, Odessa (perhaps the philosopher Anton Grünbaum), a discourse on “Harmony in Painting and Music” by Henri Rovel, a long poem by Leonid Grossman (later to achieve fame as a

by Kandinskii.<sup>95</sup> It not only pointed to the style of the exhibited art (including Neo-Primitivism of David and Vladimir Burliuk, Larionov, Tatlin and others) and the nature of the theoretical tracts included in the catalogue, but also underlined the strong ties which existed between the Russian avant-garde and the German avant-garde at this time.<sup>96</sup> Soiuz molodezhi published their manifesto in 1910.<sup>97</sup> An article by Rostislavov, 8 January 1910, brought the identity of Soiuz molodezhi to the attention of the public for the first time. The article was as succinct as it was perceptive and in essence communicated an insightful interpretation of the group's aims and justified its creation.<sup>98</sup> The proliferation of the newspaper articles proved that the manifestoes had served their purpose. The manifestoes had successfully provoked critical engagement, which led to free exposure in the press, which by extension, encouraged public interest in the avant-garde art.

By 1912 the Russian avant-garde were making great efforts to establish their artistic identities and to communicate these to the public. In addition to *Poshchetchina*, the first two journals from Soiuz molodezhi were also published in 1912. Although the second *Soiuz molodezhi* was almost twice the size of the first edition (42 pages, rather than 24), this could not compare with the 112 pages of *Poshchetchina*.<sup>99</sup> *Poshchetchina* received public critical attention for its design and format:

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literary critic), and Kandinskii's translation of Arnold Schoenberg's "Parallels in Octaves and Fifths", in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, p. 18.

<sup>95</sup> The cover design appears to be a lithograph, after a woodcut design by Kandinskii. This is supported by Bowlt's information in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Bowlt goes so far as to suggest that this catalogue 'might well have formed the prototype for *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac itself. *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 42. From my current research, I am unable to specify how this manifesto was presented to the public. Although it may have been published in leaflet form and distributed at the Soiuz molodezhi art exhibitions of 1910 onwards, it may also have been included in the first Soiuz molodezhi journal (St. Petersburg: Soiuz molodezhi, 1912), which had a print-run of 500 and had 24 pages plus 6 plates. It measured 23.2 x 16.4 cm. The authors included Vladimir Markov, Iosif Shkol'nik, and Eduard Spandikov. See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 250. Markov's manifesto may also have formed the basis for the later Soiuz molodezhi manifesto of 1913.

<sup>98</sup> For a full translation of the article, A. Rostislavov, 'Soiuz molodezhi', *Rech'*, 8 January 1910, p. 5, see Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 42. He also notes many other articles in which the journalists interacted with and commented upon the work and development of Soiuz molodezhi.

<sup>99</sup> *Obshchestvo khudoznikov "Soiuz molodezhi"* [The Union of Youth Artists' Society], No. 2, by various authors (Elie Faure, Vladimir Markov, et al.), (St. Petersburg: Soiuz molodezhi, 1912) [print run - 500], 42 pages, plus 6 plates, 24.2 x 15.5 cm. See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 250. For more information concerning the theoretical contents of Soiuz molodezhi 2, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, p. 23.



Grey paper, of the sort they use in general stores to wrap polish and grain, the canvas cover the colour of 'a fainting flea', the title, printed in a dirty brick-coloured ink, — it's all deliberately distasteful, obviously designed to shock the reader.

The journalist continues that *Poshchetchina* represents the textual justification of these wild innovations.<sup>100</sup> Other journalists interpreted the publication as a reflection of the lowering of morals of society and a demonstration of modern hooliganism. This reaction is significant because, in the press, Futurism came to be increasingly identified with hooliganism and transgressive public behaviour (see Chapter 5). There were other commentators, and here Terekhina refers to Aleksandr Blok, who perceived in *Poshchetchina*, the 'genuine problem of [Russian] literary tradition and [the need for] its rejuvenation'.<sup>101</sup> Although *Poshchetchina* was not an immediate and direct marketing coup on the scale of Marinetti's manifesto of 1909, the combination of the publication's design, its content, the manifesto's uncompromising title, and the support of the other theoretical tracts and illustrations, contributed to the impression of a fully functioning group of artists, writers and thinkers. Unlike the newspaper format of the Italian Futurists, the Russian avant-gardists had created an independent, self-defining artistic product, which, through its anarchic format and content, boldly expressed the artistic intentions and innovation of its members. Marinetti had preached the need to produce anti-bourgeois, anti-establishment works. The Russian Futurists had launched their identity by creating just such a work. This in itself represents a critical new direction in marketing strategy, even if this fact was generally more widely appreciated in retrospect.

Three collections of theoretical works were published in spring of 1913. Bubnovyi valet published a collection under their own name, Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov published *Slovo kak takovoe* [The Word as Such] (fig. 94), and artists associated with Soiuz molodezhi published the second *Sadok sudei*. Bowlt states that the Bubnovyi valet collection was published in February [to coincide with their Moscow

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<sup>100</sup> 'Серая бумага, в какую завертывают в мелочной лавке ваксу и крупу, обложка из парусины цвета «вши, упавшей в обморок», заглавие, тиснутое грязной кирпичной краской, - все это, намеренно безвкусное, явно рассчитано на ошеломление читателя.' '[Д]ана словесная мотивировка этих диких новшеств' [textual justification of these wild innovations], *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 25 January 1913, cited in *Russkii Futurizm*, edited by Terekhina and Zimenkov, p. 8.

<sup>101</sup> 'подлинную проблему литературной традиции и её обновления', Terekhina and Zimenkov, p. 8. Rather than rejecting the Classics, such as Pushkin, Blok argued that *A Slap* encouraged a reappraisal of the Russian literary canon.

exhibition] and consisted of a collection of articles by international artists, including Henri Le Fauconnier and Guillaume Apollinaire. Although Bowlt states that the Bubnovyi valet did not publish a manifesto per se, this collection did include the essay by Ivan Aksenov, *K voprosu o sovremennom sostoianii russkoi zhivopisi* [On the Problem of the Contemporary State of Russian Painting]. The publication was also illustrated with reproductions by Le Fauconnier and members of Bubnovyi valet. The illustrations represented direct, non-textual examples of their theories and produced a more attractive item for the consumer.<sup>102</sup>

Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov's manifesto *Slovo kak takovoe* was printed as a leaflet and dated 19 April 1913 and also as a fifteen-page book.<sup>103</sup> Although details concerning the presentation of the leaflet are sketchy, Terekhina's transcription of the text reveals a document in three sections: the first by Kruchenykh, the second by Khlebnikov, and the third (what may be considered to be the foreword) by Kul'bin. Kruchenykh's section is a series of numbered statements about *zaum'* and Futurist poetry. The statements are not printed in a logical ascending manner, but instead proceed from 4, to 5, then 2 and so on. Khlebnikov provides substantiation for the claim that Futurism appeared in Russia in 1910 and implies that the roots of Russian Futurism pre-date the emergence of Italian Futurism. Kul'bin's contribution contains a series of short, sharp statements which, like Kruchenykh's sentences, are characteristic of the manifesto genre. Unfortunately, it is not clear how these leaflets were distributed. The published book, *Slovo kak takovoe*, was printed in a different manner. The cover was illustrated with a lithograph by Malevich, *Woman Reaping*, which was mounted on pale green paper and the miscellany included one more illustration by Rozanova (fig. 94). This was a relatively cheap method of including illustrations in publications. The edition had a print-run of 500 which was in line with other avant-garde publications of the era, and according to one advert, it cost 30 kopeks.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup> All information cited in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 60–61. Bowlt also notes the titles of Le Fauconnier and Apollinaire's essays, 'Sovremennaia vospriimchivost' i kartina' [Modern Reception and the Painting] (pp. 41–51) and 'Fernan Lezhe' [Fernand Léger] (pp. 53–61). Reproductions of illustrations included works by Le Fauconnier, Ekster, Robert Fal'k, Petr Konchalovskii, Aleksandr Kuprin, Aristarkh Lentulov, Il'ia Mashkov, and Vasilii Rozhdestvenskii.

<sup>103</sup> Details of the contents of both versions are taken from Terekhina and Zimenkov, pp. 44–49.

<sup>104</sup> For full publishing details, see *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 251. Terekhina and Zimenkov, state the following publishing details for the leaflet version, 'Впервые – Листовка, 19 апреля 1913 г. Печатается по: Грамоты и декларации русских футуристов. Свиток,

In Terekhina's edition, Kul'bin's foreword is placed before a piece which has been jointly signed by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov. At first glance, Kul'bin's text seems to be more a literary work than a manifesto because it is presented in two paragraphs. On closer inspection, however, one soon realises that each paragraph is made up of a juxtaposition of disconnected statements, anticipating the later French practice of automatic writing. Although Kul'bin's 'foreword' may be an attempt to inform the reader of the Futurist aesthetic, the reader would need to be familiar with the concepts of Futurist linguistic theory in order to understand the text, even on a very superficial level. In short, information is not made available to the uninitiated, and therefore access to the Futurist aesthetic is selective. In this sense, it cannot be argued that Futurist texts such as this one did much to open intellectual access to their art. As such, these collections of theoretical tracts can be considered as literature in their own right, as they are examples of Futurist work, not simply explanations of it. One may speculate that the numerous public lectures and debates afforded the Futurists the opportunity to explain their work and enter into dialogue with the public in simple, traditional language, should the avant-gardists have so desired. In his review of the first Bubnovyi valet debate in February 1912, B. Sh[uisikii] stated that the debate was the 'perfect opportunity [for the Bubnovyi valet] to develop their artistic principles, whatever they are, and to bridge the gap between their [artistic] aims and the public's understanding'.<sup>105</sup>

The piece by Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov *Slovo kak takovoe* includes names of other Futurist artists, thereby reinforcing the collective identity of the artists associated with Bubnovyi valet. The text does not read like a manifesto as such, and contains humorous references to their critical reception. The poets attempt to give some explanation of the Futurist understanding of the links between language and painting. Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh maintained their declamatory style in the

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[Пб.], изд. «Свирельга», 1914 г. '. They also state that 'ЕУЫ' are vowels which are taken from Kruchenykh's surname and which were used as the name for his publishing company. The final page of the Chadwyck-Healey microfiche reproduction of Malevich, David Burluk, and Khlebnikov, *Ryav! Perchatki!* (St. Petersburg: EUY, 1914) state that an edition of *Slovo kak takovoe*, by A. Kruchenykh, ill. K. Malevich, is available from the EUY publishing house for 30 kopeks. If all the information is correct, this would suggest that different publishers printed separate editions of *Slovo kak takovoe*.

<sup>105</sup> Им представлялся отлично выбранный случай развить какие-либо принципы своего искусства, перекинуть мост между своими целями и пониманием публики'. B. Sh[uisikii], 'Moskva, Khudozhestvennyi disput', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 22, 18 February 1912, p. 3.

short piece *Bukva kak takovaia* [The Letter as Such]. According to Terekhina, it was drafted in 1913 but was not published. Although exclamation marks are prevalent, the tone of the piece is both informative and playful. Again, self-determination of the group identity is reinforced through references to other Futurists (e.g. Larionov and Rozanova).<sup>106</sup>

The publication *Sadok sudei II* was prefaced by an introduction, in the form of a manifesto, which was signed by David and Nikolai Burliuk, Elena Guro, Maiakovskii, Ekaterinia Nizen, Khlebnikov, Livshits and Kruchenykh. It was a thirteen-point manifesto which stressed the collection's connection with the first edition of *Sadok sudei* in 1910. Ten out of the thirteen points commence with a form of the first person plural pronoun (e.g. 'my', 'nami'), and the other three points make reference to a collective identity. The manifesto can be seen as a wish for these writers and artists (generally those associated with Gileia) to justify their position as the original innovators and implementers of the avant-garde. *Sadok sudei II* was published by Matiushin's company, *Zhuravl'*. It had a print-run of 800, and consisted of 107 pages, including 15 letterpress illustrations, including work by Larionov and Goncharova. Where the whole of *Sadok sudei I* had been printed on the verso of wallpaper, only the cover of this second edition used wallpaper (see. fig. 95). The pages were printed on pale green paper. Where the first edition contained examples of Futurist work only, the second edition was supported by aesthetic declarations. The authors of the manifesto were keen to emphasize their artistic development from one issue to the next and implied future publications. The emphasis on continuity supported their declaration of authenticity and relative longevity (in avant-garde terms).

One of the most influential publications in terms of self-definition to be produced in 1913 was the collection of works entitled *Oslinyi khvost i Mishen'* which reinforced Oslinyi khvost's aesthetics of the earlier exhibition and debate. The collection was published in Moscow in July. It had a print-run of 525 copies and comprised 151 pages, including 10 lithographed illustrations. It was a large publication at 30.1 x 22.5 cm and the cover bore an illustration in the primitive/shaman style of Mikhail

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<sup>106</sup> See *Russkii Futurizm*, edited by Terekhina and Zimenkov, p. 49 for full Russian transcription.

Larionov (see. fig. 96).<sup>107</sup> The collection reinforced Larionov's and Oslinyi khvost's views on the latest forms of modern art, in particular his concept of Rayism. The publication included one manifesto and one essay on this topic. The manifesto *Luchisty i Budushchniki. Manifest* [Rayists and Futurists. A Manifesto] by Larionov and Goncharova coined the term *budushchniki*. It confused the public's perception of the Russian avant-garde and it is therefore not surprising that the term did not really catch on.<sup>108</sup> The manifesto projected a declamatory style and made good use of the pronoun 'we'. This strong use of self-determining language was to be expected as the manifesto was written at a time when Oslinyi khvost was in the process of defining its independence from other Futurist and avant-garde groups. Bowlit also notes how all the signatories of the manifesto, except Morits Fabri and Vladimir Obolenskii, took part in the *Mishen'* exhibition and that the publication *Oslinyi khvost i Mishen'* also included reproductions of some of the exhibits.<sup>109</sup>

The publication also included the theoretical tract by Larionov *Luchistskaia zhivopis'* [Rayist Painting]. It was dated Moscow, June 1912 and had appeared previously in an abbreviated version in a booklet format in April 1913, in order to coincide with the interest stimulated by the Moscow debates and the *Mishen'* exhibition. As a marketing tool, the book edition of July 1913 functioned as a means of maintaining interest for the literate public interested in modern art and cultural fashions during the extended period between the 'cultural seasons'. In addition, the expanded essay version of the theoretical tract presents a more considered aesthetic, with greater subtlety than the spring booklet version. The essay would have provided a more sophisticated platform from which Larionov could develop his previous arguments in the light of the comments which he had received from the 1912

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<sup>107</sup> For an illustration of the cover and full publishing details, see *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, pp. 88 and 251.

<sup>108</sup> Mark Konecny has inferred that Oslinyi khvost had attempted to be known publicly as the 'Targeters' but that despite the name changes, the audience persisted in referring to the group as Oslinyi khvost. The continual experimentation with names shows the need for self-definition on the part of Oslinyi khvost during a time of avant-garde artistic competition, but also the limited attention or interest of the public who were not concerned with such subtleties. See Mark Konecny, 'Mikhail Larionov: Futurist Performance in Moscow', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 183–99 (p. 183).

<sup>109</sup> Bowlit also notes that the manifesto was signed by Goncharova, Larionov, the Timofei Bogomazov, the artists Morits Fabri, Ivan Larionov, Mikhail Le-Dantiu, Viacheslav Levkieskii, Vladimir Obolenskii, Sergei Romanovich, Aleksandr Shevchenko, and Kirill Zdanevich. For more information and a full English translation of the text, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlit, pp. 87–91.

version, and present a more mature aesthetic position for the art critics and other cognoscenti of the avant-garde circles.<sup>110</sup>

The summer of 1913 witnessed even greater competition between Oslinyi khvost and Bubnovyi valet as both groups directed their avant-garde creativity to developing Futurist theatre projects: Bubnovyi valet were preparing the Luna Park productions (Uusikirkki, Finland), and artists associated with Oslinyi khvost, the Teatr Futu (Moscow). Rumours and snippets of information concerning both projects circulated in the press and the public were primed for a colourful opening to the autumn season.

In autumn 1913, the artists associated with Oslinyi khvost took the marketing initiative and used the press to launch a series of Futurist manifestoes. In a series of articles and interviews they sought to create, project and shape their artistic and personal identities. These manifestoes, coupled with their own performances (on the street, debates and cabarets) created an atmosphere of heightened theatricality and expectation, at least among those interested in Futurism.

In an article of 9 September 1913 entitled *Raskrashennyi Larionov* [The Painted Larionov], Larionov is reported to be bored with being an innovator of art alone and is therefore introducing a new fashion for men, based on Rayism.<sup>111</sup> Although this is not a printed manifesto, it includes so much reported detail and intention on Larionov's part, it is so informative that it served the marketing function of a manifesto and represented a very cost-efficient method of disseminating the Futurist concept. Larionov is reported as wishing to popularise the practice of face-painting

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<sup>110</sup> A separate publication entitled *Luchizm* [Rayism], which was written by Larionov and also illustrated by him and Goncharova, served to consolidate and maintain interest in Larionov's concept of Rayism. This edition was small in size, measuring only 14.7 x 11.8, but consisted of 21 pages, including 6 plates and ran to a print-run of 1,000 copies (see *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 250). If one follows the logic of supply and demand, one could speculate that this relatively high print-run, by avant-garde standards, was testimony to the group's popularity and the public's interest in Oslinyi khvost's artistic principles. This edition of *Luchizm* was published by K. i K. in Moscow in 1913. It is possible that this is the same booklet to which Bowlt refers in *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde* (see footnote 214). Unfortunately the publisher in Bowlt's reference has been omitted, so it has not been possible to cross-reference in this instance.

<sup>111</sup> Anon, 'Raskrashennyi Larionov', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 272, 9 September 1913, p. 3.

with Rayist symbols and is presented as serious about the whole affair.<sup>112</sup> His intentions are summarised in the article. The informative, objective tone of the anonymous narrator is a persuasive device that encourages the reader to accept Larionov's artistic suggestions at face-value. It is reminiscent of the role played by the editor of *Le Figaro* in relation to the Italian Futurist manifesto. The reader does not search for a subtext to his proposed fashions. He/She does not have to cope with Futurist declamatory rhetoric or incomprehensible Futurist *zaum*' constructions. Instead, the simplicity of the language reads almost like a set of instructions. It is accessible and encourages the type of person who would feel uncomfortable at a Futurist performance or unable to afford the ticket, but who is interested in the current trend of Futurism, to engage with the modern cultural movement. As if to support this reported 'manifesto', *Moskovskaia gazeta* included another article, 'Teatr "Futu"', in the same edition of the newspaper.<sup>113</sup> It discussed Larionov and Goncharova's plans for their latest Moscow theatrical project.

Three days later, the liberal paper *Ranee utro* published another interview with Larionov, in which he explained the 'ideal scenario' for his new work of Rayist face-painting and the Theatre 'Futu'. The article is little short of a full declaration, a manifesto. Larionov is reported as saying

It is beautiful to be able to change our faces [...] You see it is not only women, but men too now make themselves up. They really do make themselves up: they outline their eyebrows, their eyes, they colour their lips and their cheeks. They strive to get closer to the type of person who is considered to be beautiful. In short, no more than an imitation of life, to mislead people.

Meanwhile, art can be created out of all of this. Our faces need to stimulate a feeling of the aesthetic order, rather than the animal one. In

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<sup>112</sup> Advice is given regarding the type of designs to be painted and in which colours. We are told that Larionov himself will appear in the latest fashions at the up-coming meeting of the Aesthetics. Larionov assures us that it will all be quite beautiful. As with any manifesto, Larionov invites the public to join in and he advertises the fact that he will be demonstrating these latest Rayist fashions in a series of walks in central Moscow. A curious, almost caring note is struck as advice concerning the best types of paint to use, those which are easiest to remove and so on, is given. Finally, we are told that Rayist fashion is part of Larionov's [artistic] programme. He is seeking to out-do [опередить] western trends of fashion where Parisian women paint their legs and wear nose rings, and the likes of Baudelaire dyed their hair blue.

<sup>113</sup> 'Teatr "Futu"', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 272, 9 September 1913, p. 5.

order to achieve this, one has only to paint the designs which suit the shape of one's face.<sup>114</sup>

Larionov then continues to expound on his ideas for the *Teatr Futu* and preparations for the exhibition *No. 4*. Larionov's reported tone is explanatory, creative, and encouraging to the public, who hopefully, as a result of the interview, will participate in Futurist fashion and frequent the forthcoming *Teatr Futu* and *Oslinyi khvost* exhibition.

On 15 September, another newspaper, *Stolichnaia molva*, alluded to a published manifesto on Rayist fashions, entitled “*Manifest k muzhchine*” i “*manifest k zhenshchine*” [A Manifesto for Men and a Manifesto for Women].<sup>115</sup> The journalist asserts that asymmetry is the cornerstone of the manifesto and this is extended even to suggestions that men only shave one side of their beards. The journalist underlines the popularity of the new Futurist fashion and confirms how several Moscow ladies have already offered their chests [as a canvas] for Larionov's brushes. People with painted chests will be present for the opening of Goncharova's forthcoming exhibition.

Through articles like this one and those discussed above, the *Oslinyi khvost* artists were able to disseminate their Futurist message, without personal expense, to an audience far beyond the realm of the print-run of their published manifesto, or those able to attend their public debates and exhibitions or witness their theatrical street and cabaret antics. What is clear from these and many other articles concerning Futurist manifestoes and aesthetic statements is how, by autumn of 1913, the journalist or critic had come to acknowledge the existence of separate avant-garde

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<sup>114</sup> 'Futuristy i predstoiashchii sezon', *Rannee utro*, No. 211, 12 September 1913, p. 5. Russian text as follows: 'Красиво изменить наше лицо, [...]—Ведь подкрашиваются же теперь не только дамы, но и мужчины. Подкрашиваются, конечно, реально,— подводят брови, глаза, подкрашивают губы, щеки. Стремятся приблизиться к типу, который считается красивым. В итоге — не больше, как копия жизни, обман других.

Между тем, из всего этого можно сделать искусство. Нужно, чтобы наше лицо возбуждало внимание эстетического порядка, а не животного. Для этого надо только делать на лице рисунок соответственно формам лица.'

<sup>115</sup> “*Manifest k muzhchine*” i “*manifest k zhenshchine*”, *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 327, 15 September 1913, p. 4. Unfortunately, I only have an excerpt of this article and am therefore unable to supply the full details. It is possible that the name of the journalist is stated in the full article. Giacomo Balla also published a manifesto on 'Anti-Neutral Clothing' [*Le Vêtement Antineutraliste: Manifeste futuriste*]. However, this was not published until 11 Sept 1914, a year after the Russian manifestoes of fashion. (fig. 97) See Perloff, p. 100.



groupings. The combined reporting of these manifestoes seems to have struck a conciliatory tone and accepted the Futurists as artists with a defined artistic agenda. In general, earlier articles only ridiculed or dismissed Futurist art. For example, the presentation of the information contained in the manifestoes to men and women in the article of 15 September 1913 is prefaced with the following statement:

The head and bulwark of Moscow 'Rayism', the artist Mikhail Larionov, is publishing a pamphlet. 'A Manifesto for Men', in which he preaches on the revolution [taking place] in the realm of men's fashions. Leaving the general debates of this book to one side, let us note its most curious elements...<sup>116</sup>

This short introduction directs the reader, despite his/her degree of familiarity with Futurism. Larionov's identity and that of his artistic group is clearly stated. The legitimate existence of both is reinforced by the published manifesto and loaded term 'revolution' reinforces the manifesto's impact. The target of the revolution, men's fashion, attracts not only those readers who are interested in contemporary art, but also the wider public who are interested in following contemporary fashion and culture. By stating that 'general debates of this book' be put to one side, the journalist is implying that Rayism does have a place in the wider artistic and/or contemporary cultural environment. He is recognising the fact that Rayism has already stimulated much critical attention and this also serves to legitimise Futurism's identity within the public psyche. Finally, the journalist's invitation to his readership that they 'take a look' at the contents of the manifesto only encourages the readership to read the article and familiarise themselves with the Futurist aesthetics. This article is immediately followed by another on the same page of the same newspaper, entitled 'Yesterday's Futurist Walk' which confirms how Futurist fashion was spreading in Moscow. It describes an episode when some of the Moscow Futurists painted their faces and took to the streets of Kuznetskii Most in central Moscow.<sup>117</sup> Another article on the same subject suggests that the Futurists coordinated their 'walk' with the newspaper's photographers. The artists were initially photographed at the artistic salon where they were in the process of

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<sup>116</sup> Глава и оплот московского «лучизма», художник Михаил Ларионов издает брошюру – «Манифест к мужчине», в которой проповедует революцию в области мужской моды. Не касаясь общих рассуждений этой книжки, отметим её наиболее курьезные стороны...'

<sup>117</sup> Anon, 'Vcherashniaia progulka futuristov', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 327, 15 September 1913, p. 4.

completing their preparations (including face painting) for their excursion. Later, unsatisfied with the mild response from passers-by, the Futurists go, with the photographers, to the Café Filippov. This is another example of the Futurists' sophisticated approach to their attempt to influence their public image.

The example of Futurist fashions demonstrates the extent of the potential marketing power of the Futurist manifestoes. At first glance their marketing potential may seem to have been restricted by relatively small print-runs, poor quality materials or their small physical size. However, when one takes into consideration the combined Futurist marketing strategy which encouraged maximum dialogue with the public and critical commentators, one begins to appreciate the manifestoes' defining function as a marketing device which gave textual support to Futurist debates, exhibitions and performances. The manifesto was popular because its production, and then the critical attention which it attracted, confirmed the very existence of the avant-garde group in question.

On 16 September 1913 *Moskovskaia gazeta* published another article relating to the latest Futurist fashions, entitled '*Raskrashennye moskvichi*' [The Painted Muscovites].<sup>118</sup> In addition to the popularity and development of face and body painting, the journalist reports how Larionov is thinking up reforms to rejuvenate all aspects of daily life and has therefore put forward the idea of Futurist food. For example, he is said to have claimed that one should not be restricted in the type of meat that one eats. Meat should mean any type of meat and, according to the article, can include dog, cat, rat, bat, hedgehog, crow, grass-snakes and so on. Larionov suggests that meat be cooked with a wide range of fruits and vegetables and the reader is told that a collection of Larionov's recipes, 'A Gift to Rayist Housewives' will be available in the forth-coming Futurist almanac, *Kirpich* [Brick]. The cartoon of 22 September 1913 in the newspaper *Rannee utro* calls Larionov and Oslinyi khvost's bluff and accuses the group of issuing all of these manifestoes simply as an exercise in self-promotion (see fig. 10). The cartoon is entitled '*V chem sushchnost' "Luchizma"*' [The Essence of Rayism]. It crudely depicts Larionov hand-painting, then putting a dog through a mincer, followed by an episode of face-painting in a

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<sup>118</sup> Anon, 'Raskrashennye moskvichi', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 274, 16 September 1913, p. 5.

somewhat debonair fashion in front of a mirror. The final frame depicts Larionov and another Futurist (presumably the poet Konstantin Bol'shakov or Il'ia Zdanevich) with painted faces, as they search through the newspapers for articles referring to themselves. The cartoon has been drawn with light-hearted humour and irony. The cartoonist seems to recognise that Larionov is engaging in the European avant-garde artistic game. Although Larionov and his colleagues do have serious aesthetic and social principles which underpin their artistic work, the cartoonist correctly perceives that much of their performance and rhetoric is merely symbolic of the need to question one's perception of art and that which can constitute art.

Possibly the best known Russian Futurist manifesto which was printed in the press is '*Pochemu my raskrashivaemsia. Manifest Futuristov*' [Why We Paint Ourselves. A Futurist Manifesto], printed in the Christmas issue of *Argus*, December 1913 (see figs. 98a–c).<sup>119</sup> The manifesto was spread across five full pages of the journal. It incorporated photographs of the central figures of Rayism (Goncharova, Larionov, Il'ia Zdanevich, and Le-Dantiu), which were framed in various Rayist designs, in addition to a Rayist sketch by Larionov for the newspaper. The text itself was interspersed with a selection of Rayist designs which could be applied to the left and right cheek and the chest.<sup>120</sup> The title of the manifesto was decoratively hand-written and incorporated a Rayist design. The title design itself occupied one third of the page. The balance of Rayist designs, photographs, titles and text created a professional dramatic and alluring effect which could not have failed to attract the attention of the reader. However, what is most notable is that *Argus* decided to print the manifesto at all. *Argus* was a rather conservative publication, so it is not surprising that they chose to print the Rayist-related text only after the Rayists themselves had gained sufficient notoriety. Although the manifesto was published three months after its main points had been printed and discussed in more liberal papers, the fact that *Argus* printed it at all is testament to the Rayists' growing popularity (and no doubt that of Russian avant-garde in general), even among the more conservative readership.

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<sup>119</sup> Bowlt notes the similarity between the Russian text and certain passages of the 'Italian futurist manifestoes *La pittura futurista* and *Gli espositori al pubblico*, both of which had appeared in Russian translation in *Soiuz molodezhi*, St. Petersburg, no. 2, 1912, pp. 23–28 and 29–35'. See *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, p. 79.

<sup>120</sup> For a brief analysis of these designs, see Parton, pp. 67–68.

The press also kept the public informed of developments in Europe. For example, a rather long article, '*Futuristskaia muzyka*' [Futurist Music], appeared in *Moskovskaia gazeta*, 7 October 1913, during the most intense period of publication of Futurist manifestoes. It discussed the Italian concept of Futurist music at length, in not particularly favourable terms, and concluded that in comparison to their European brothers, Igor' Severianin and his pupils were being left further and further behind. 'Their "Slaps in the Face of Public Taste" and "poesies" amount to pitiful children's babble in comparison with the hysterical wailing of the raging Western Europeans', 'B' reported.<sup>121</sup> Through critical reviews and articles like this one, the public was encouraged to view the Russian Futurist practices as an integral part of a wider European context.

Although the Russians often borrowed marketing initiatives from the Italian Futurists, the Russians' relationship with the press was less stable than their Italian contemporaries'. The Italians not only had influence in other Western European newspapers but actually owned entire publications in Italy.<sup>122</sup> From the outset, it is notable how the development of Italian Futurism was closely aligned to their presence in the local press. Key figures in the Italian press were keen to support the Italian Futurists and therefore provided them with a platform to air their views. The Russians did not enjoy such security. Marinetti had set up the publication *Poesia* in 1905 with the aim of acquainting the Italian public with contemporary foreign poetry and was therefore aware of the power of the press to market art-related issues. However, Italian Futurism was most commonly associated with the publication *Lacerba*.

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<sup>121</sup> В, 'Futuristskaia muzyka', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, no. 277, 7 October 1913, p. 2. Их "Пощечины общественному вкусу" и "поэзы" только жалкий детский лепет по сравнению с истерическими воплями западно-европейских бесноватых'.

<sup>122</sup> The Italians' influence in Western European newspapers is demonstrated by the original Futurist marketing coup in *Le Figaro*, the series of caricatures by André Warnod in *Comoedia* (see fig. 99), and their exposure in the German press through their association with *Der Sturm*, in addition to their reception by London newspapers (e.g. F. T. Marinetti, 'The Music Hall', *Daily Mail*, November 1913. See Perloff, p. 97). Herwath Walden's *Der Sturm* was published from 1910 and enjoyed an impressive weekly circulation of approximately 30,000. It therefore played a seminal role in publicising the works of the Der Blaue Reiter group, in addition to the Italian Futurists and the Russian avant-gardists (albeit predominantly in their Primitivist phase) to the German reading audience.

According to Tisdall and Bozolla, *Lacerba* was financed and printed by Attilio Vallechi, who also published *La Voce* and other periodicals, which were supported by his ‘considerable publishing empire in Florence’.<sup>123</sup> The first issue of *Lacerba* was printed in January 1913 and it soon became the favoured location for the Italians to publish their manifestoes. At its peak, *Lacerba* is said to have enjoyed a circulation of 20,000 with a strong readership among the working classes. *La Voce* and *Lacerba* could be bought together with a discount and the Futurist books which were advertised in *Lacerba* were distributed by *La Voce* shops. Thus, the Italians maintained not only a secure platform from which to declaim their ideas, but they also enjoyed a much more positive critical reception than the Russian Futurists could have hoped for from their own liberal and conservative press. Although *Lacerba* was never the official organ for Italian Futurism, for the period of 1913 to its closure in May 1915 the Italian public could turn to the newspaper as a source of information for all issues connected to Italian Futurism. It printed manifestoes with a diverse range of typographical and artistic formats such as the Manifesto of Futurist Architecture, or the Interventionist Manifesto (see figs. 100–101). The Russians never had the luxury of such a secure public medium as *Lacerba*.

In 1913 the leading French modern poet and critic, Guillaume Apollinaire, published his own manifesto, ‘L’Antitradition futuriste’.<sup>124</sup> Marinetti is said to have composed the typographical arrangement of the Apollinaire ‘manifesto’ for the 15 September 1913 edition of *Lacerba* (fig. 102). The presentation of the text has the appearance of something more poetic than a declamatory manifesto. *Lacerba*’s decision to publish the manifesto expressed the Italians’ own self-confidence, as Apollinaire’s text was in danger of being ‘misinterpreted’ (i.e. that the text would be understood as a challenge to Futurism and its use of the manifesto). Apollinaire’s genuine interest in

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<sup>123</sup> Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozolla, *Futurism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 166. See chapter 9, pp. 164–75 for more details concerning the publication *Lacerba*. Over seventy issues of *Lacerba* were published 1 January 1913 – 22 May 1915. It cost 4 soldi and was reduced to 2 soldi during the interventionist period. According to Tisdall and Bozolla, it is during this time that the newspaper boasted a circulation of 20,000, of which 4/5 were workers, many of whom bought the paper on subscription. The newspaper was outspoken and defended its authors. It successfully defended two court cases concerning the articles, ‘In Praise of Prostitution’, by Italo Tavolato and ‘Jesus the Sinner’, by Giovanni Papini.

<sup>124</sup> Opinion among scholars is divided over the question of Apollinaire’s intention, whether he wished to support the growing use of the manifesto, or whether he composed the text with irony as a call for the cessation of the cult of the excessive manifesto. Perloff notes that Apollinaire scholars favour the former opinion, *The Futurist Moment*, pp. 97, but see also pp. 96–100.

Futurism became more vital to the Russian Futurists when Mikhail Larionov made his first contribution to the French press in 1914. This coincided with the opening of the *Exposition de Natalie Gontcharowa et Michel Larionow* at the Galerie Paul Guillaume, Paris. Apollinaire wrote the preface to the exhibition catalogue and then wrote positive critical reviews of the exhibition, thereby providing the essential artistic credentials which the Russians needed in order to exist within the competitive French avant-garde environment.<sup>125</sup>

By 1913, the manifesto and other aesthetic statements became the staple diet of a large number of Russian Futurist publications. For example, the Futurist publication *Troe* [The Three] contained the extended theoretical tract by Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Novye puti slova (Iazyk budushchego – smert' simvolizmu)* [New Directions of the Word (Language of the Future – Death to Symbolism) (fig. 103).<sup>126</sup> The declamatory tone of the piece and its typography makes it a manifesto in all but name: it contained a number of single-sentence statements and numbered points. Kruchenykh attacked the critics and various members of the Symbolists. The tract projected a consolidated identity and contained poetry from Elena Guro and Khlebnikov, and references to the *Soiuz molodezhi* collections *Sadok Sudei II* and *Mirskontsa* [The Worldbackwards]. The text was attractively packaged in *Troe* which was illustrated in a lively manner by Kazimir Malevich. The cover depicted an angular person of the type that was to feature in the designs for *Pobeda nad solntsem* and paintings from his Cubo-Futurist period. *Troe* was published by Matiushin's publishing company *Zhuravl'* in 1913.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Mikhail Larionov, 'Le Rayonisme Picturale', *Montjoie!*, Paris, No. 4/5/6, April–June 1914, p. 15. Apollinaire wrote the preface to the catalogue for the Goncharova-Larionov Paris exhibition, June 17–30 1914. The preface was incorporated into the review written by Apollinaire and published in *Les Soirées de Paris*. A full English version of this text can be found in *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902–1918* by Guillaume Apollinaire, edited by Leroy C. Breunig (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 412–14. On 18 June 1914 Apollinaire is said to have announced the exhibition in *Paris-Journal*, quoting the preface in its entirety. See footnote 45, p. 412 of the above publication.

<sup>126</sup> For the Russian text see *Russkii Futurizm*, edited by Terekhina and Zimenkov, pp. 50–54. I have not seen an original copy of the text and am therefore unable to comment on its layout in any detail.

<sup>127</sup> All of the 96 pages were printed on pale green paper and in addition to the lithographed cover, it contained four photo-mechanical reproductions. It also had a relatively healthy print-run of 500.

Two editions of Kruchenykh's meditation on *zaum'* language, *Vzorval'* [Explodity] were published in 1913.<sup>128</sup> Half-manifesto, half-exposition of *zaum'*, and dramatically illustrated by Kul'bin, Malevich, Natan Al'tman, Goncharova and Rozanova, the publications were nothing short of a theatrical artwork in themselves. The illustrations echoed the title and quite literally exploded onto the page, spewing out Kruchenykh's words, vowels and sounds. The Primitivist character of Kul'bin's cover for the first edition is reminiscent of his cover for *Free Music* (see figs. 85 and 104). It depicts people in some kind of rage, gathered with flaying arms at the top of a high building or stadium. There seems to be an air of war or at least protest in the air, as figures are depicted tumbling down from the turrets with what appears to be a collection of limbs and a decapitated head below. Rozanova's cover for the second edition (fig. 105a) depicts a confused but modern, dynamic urban scene which is dominated by the scale of the angular buildings and the depth of the black ink. Both editions therefore contained alluring covers (and titles) to catch the eye of the reader. The illustrations within the book were no less dramatic. Kul'bin's illustrations sent the *zaum'* poetry tumbling down the page. These were balanced with rubber-stamped typography by Kruchenykh, the precision of Malevich's lithograph *Molitva* [Prayer], a portrait by Kul'bin, in addition to the more primitive illustrations by Rozanova (see figs. 105, b–g).<sup>129</sup>

Market confidence in the Futurist publications increased and this was reflected in the increased print-runs of many (but by no means all) of the new publications. Ol'ga Rozanova's *Osnovy novogo tvorchestva i prichiny ego neponimaniia* [The Bases of the New Creation and the Reasons Why It is Misunderstood] was included in the third issue of the *Soiuz molodezhi* collection in 1913, which had a print run of 1,000 (fig. 84).<sup>130</sup> Aleksandr Shevchenko published and illustrated his own theoretical tract, *Neo-Primitivizm. Ego teoriia, ego vozmozhnosti, ego dostizheniia* [Neo-Primitivism: Its Theory, Its Potentials, Its Achievements], 1913. The cover was illustrated with a reproduction of Shevchenko's *Muzykanty* [Musicians] (1913) and the book ran to 31 pages, plus 12 plates and also enjoyed a healthy print-run of 1,000

<sup>128</sup> For an English translation of the last part of *Vzorval'*, see Anna Lawton, ed., *Russian Futurism through Its Manifestoes, 1912–1928* (Ithaca, New York; London: Cornell UP, 1988), pp. 65–66. Lawton's translation retains some element of the original's unconventional typography.

<sup>129</sup> Although the publisher is not stated, the combined print-run for the two editions totalled 800 copies.

<sup>130</sup> For an English translation, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 102–10.

(fig.106).<sup>131</sup> Il'ia Zdanevich even managed to publish a monograph on Goncharova and Larionov, under the pseudonym Eli Eganbiuri. It was an expression of their contemporary popularity and status within the avant-garde and wider artistic circles. Although it had a more limited print-run of 525 copies, it did have the highly commercial benefit of including 54 plates in the relatively large-format publication, 30 x 23 cm.<sup>132</sup>

The strength in the Futurist market and the popularity of the manifesto and aesthetic statement continued into 1914 and on through 1915. This would suggest that Futurism had become sufficiently well-known that it had become more popular or acceptable, and possibly affordable, to a broader audience than in its earlier days of 1912 to spring 1913. One could also speculate that acceptance and popularity of the Futurist Arts depended on a degree of explanation, in a manner that was accessible and comprehensible to the reader. If this was the case then it may explain why the Futurists were able to secure funding to continue publishing theoretical tracts and manifestoes through the war years. On a cursory level, their ability to find funding during this period reflects Futurism's achievement and at least a minimal degree of stability. Theoretical tracts of 1914 included Benedikt Livshits's theoretical essay, '*Osvobozhdenie slova*' [The Word Set Free] which was included in the expanded 1914 edition of *Dokhlaiia Luna. Sbornik edinstvennykh futuristov mira!! Poetov Gileia. Stikhi, proza, stat'i, risunki, oforty* [The Croaked Moon: Collection of the Sole Futurists of the World!! The Gileia Poets: Verse, Prose, Essays, Drawings and Etchings]. Although the print-run is unknown, at 132 pages with 19 plates and

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<sup>131</sup> For an English translation, see *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, pp. 43–54. Shevchenko also published another publication, *Printsipy kubizma i drugikh sovremennykh techenii v zhivopisi vseh vremen i narodov* [Principles of Cubism and Other Modern Trends in Painting of All Ages and Peoples] (Moscow: the author, 1913). The print-run is unknown. The book contained 24 leaves, 9 plates and measured 16.5 x 11.9 cm. The cover incorporated a lithographed manuscript text and illustration by Shevchenko on the front; 9 lithographed illustrations (2 by Shevchenko, 2 by Viktor Bart, 2 by Illarion Skuie, 1 by Goncharova, 1 by Larionov, and 1 by an anonymous child. Lithographed typed text. Details cited in *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 251.

<sup>132</sup> Eli Eganbiuri [Il'ia Zdanevich], *Natal'ia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov*, illustrated by Goncharova and Larionov (Moscow: Ts. A. Miunster, 1913) [525], 39 pages, xxi [additional] pages, plus 54 plates, 30 x 23 cm. Cited in *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 250.



published by *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov* [The First Journal of Russian Futurists], it can still be considered a significant Futurist contribution.<sup>133</sup>

*Idite k chertu!* [Go To Hell!] constituted another unofficial manifesto in which the signatories vented their spleen at the decadence of out-dated literary schools, modern critics and other pretenders to the Futurist throne, such as the Mezzanine of Poetry and called for a united Futurist body. It was signed by David Burliuk, Kruchenykh, Livshits, Maiakovskii, Igor' Severianin and Khlebnikov and published in the Futurist almanac, *Rykaiushchii parnas. Futuristy* [Roaring Parnassus: Futurists].<sup>134</sup> It was a wide-ranging collaboration of Futurists, with contributions from all of the signatories to *Idite k chertu!*, except Khlebnikov, and also included work by Nikolai Burliuk and Elena Guro. The almanac was illustrated by David and Vladimir Burliuk, Pavel Filonov, Ivan Puni and Ol'ga Rozanova. Puni designed the rather eerie illustration for the cover, which as usual attracted the reader's attention (fig. 107). This edition was printed on a combination of cream, rough brown, and blue paper, thereby affording an even more unconventional feel to the book. It was published by Zhuravl' and had a healthy print-run of 1,000.

The Futurist manifestoes, aesthetic statements and essays discussed here represent only a small sample of the many Futurist texts which were published during the period in question, 1910–14. New manifestoes and new editions of previous Futurist theoretical tracts continued to be published in 1915. The genre of the manifesto and its accompanying rhetoric represents a central artistic element that links pre- and post-Revolutionary Russian Futurism. Whilst this is not the place to list the entire Futurist theoretical oeuvre, it is worth noting the remarkable achievement of the ill-fated Futurist journal *Strelets* [Archer] whose single issue was published in 1915 (see fig. 81). It drew together founding members of Futurism with some of its rising stars. In addition it included one illustration by Vrubel', and one by the English Vorticist, Wyndham Lewis. Kul'bin designed the cover, which was printed on

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<sup>133</sup> The 1914 expanded edition of *Dokhlaiia luna* included a variety of authors, Konstantin Bol'shakov, David and Nikolai Burliuk, Vasili Kamenskii, Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Benedikt Livshits, Vladimir Maiakovskii, and Vadim Shershenivich (Moscow: Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futuristov, 1914) [unknown], 132 pages, plus 19 plates, 23.6 x 18.3 cm. See *The Russian Avant-Garde Book*, edited by Rowell and Wye, p. 252.

<sup>134</sup> For English translation see *Russian Futurism Through its Manifestoes*, edited by Lawton, pp. 85–86.

orange construction paper, but it was the scale of the project which outstripped all previous Futurist publications. Published in St. Petersburg by Aleksandr Belenson, the journal ran to 242 pages with an exceptional print-run of 5,000. In many ways, the combination of the publication of the journal, together with the exhibition '0.10' The Last Futurist Exhibition and its accompanying manifesto, *Ot kubizma k suprematizmu. Novyi zhivopisnyi realizm* [From Cubism to Suprematism. The New Painterly Realism] defined a pivotal moment in the history of the Russian avant-garde.<sup>135</sup> The breadth and size of the journal represented an undeniable Futurist achievement which legitimised the movement's very existence within the Russian contemporary artistic environment, and also in the public psyche. The '0.10' exhibition and manifesto, however, underlined the dynamic nature of the Russian avant-garde and demonstrated quite clearly in painterly and textual format how Futurism had moved on and truly abstract art had now occupied the centre-stage of the most forward-thinking Russian avant-garde. Visitors to the exhibition were able to avail themselves of a copy of the manifesto in its leaflet form (one of the cheapest means of reproduction). In simple Russian, Malevich gave a concise and accessible history of the roots of modern Russian art as he understood it and then proceeded to educate the reader in the theories underlying the present move towards Suprematism and abstract art. In this way, visitors had every opportunity to acquaint themselves with the new avant-garde school at first hand and to understand its principles and realise in what manner it was setting out a new departure from the now familiar Futurism.

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<sup>135</sup> The third version of the '0.10' exhibition manifesto, printed Moscow 1916, incorporated an illustration of Malevich's *Black Square* on the cover. This robust artistic statement gave artistic resonance to the text of the manifesto. See fig. 108. Although the text was indeed written in relatively accessible Russian, as Bowlt has observed, '[t]he style is typical of Malevich's writings, and the grammatical eccentricities and somewhat arbitrary italicising create occasional ambiguities. Certain ideas and expressions used in the text recall the writings of Nikolai Kul'bin, Vladimir Markov, and Olga Rozanova, which Malevich undoubtedly knew.' See *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde*, edited by Bowlt, p. 116.

## Advertising the Debates

To conclude this discussion of printed marketing materials, let us turn briefly to the advertising material designed for the Futurist debates of 1913. In March 1913, Soiuz molodezhi advertised two public debates at the Troitskii Theatre in St. Petersburg. The first, Saturday 23 March was advertised as *O sovremennoi zhivopisi* [Modern Painting] and the second, the following evening, was titled *O noveishei russkoi literature* [New Russian Literature]. What is noticeable about the advertised programme for each debate is the abundance of information which has been included in each programme (see figs. 109a–c and 110a–d). The title page of each programme uses the same traditional format as the Soiuz molodezhi exhibition catalogues which we discussed earlier. The essential information is given: title, date and time, sponsor and location. However, on closer inspection, the contents of the other pages read rather like manifestoes; certainly they provide lots of information regarding the aims of Futurism and the proposed topic for discussion. Taking the programme for 23 March first, one is presented with the programme for David Burliuk's proposed lecture, *Iskusstvo novatorov i akademicheskoe iskusstvo v XLX i XX vv.* [Art of the Innovators and Academic Art in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries]. It was clearly written in reaction to the events which followed the slashing of Il'ia Repin's painting, *Ivan The Terrible and His Son Ivan* by Balashev in January 1913. Repin had blamed David Burliuk and his band of Futurists for igniting chaos and therefore stimulating the violent action. In his defence, Burliuk chose to address this question in his lecture. In addition, the programme is used to state Burliuk's opinion concerning old-fashioned art, and the recent promulgators of innovative art. He closes his statement with a list of those avant-garde artists whom he considers to be innovators of modern times. These include Western Cubists, members of Bubnovyi valet, representatives associated with Soiuz molodezhi and 'Savages' [*dikie*], essentially those associated with Oslinyi khvost. The programme functioned as David Burliuk's personal manifesto and a textual record of his opinions at that time. The reader is therefore prepared for Burliuk's delivery of the lecture itself. The detailed advertisement invites supporters and critics to engage in a specifically vital and current debate.

The second advertised lecture is by K. S. Malevich. Unlike Burliuk's speech, the advertised programme for Malevich's lecture is reduced to the names of those artists

he will discuss: Serov, Surikov, Vasnetsov, Somov; Western Artists: Gauguin, Van Gogh, Cézanne, Matisse, in addition to Bubnovyi valet and what has been titled '*Protokol gruppy russkikh futuristov*' [Report from the Group of Russian Futurists]. Finally the reader is informed that debate will follow the lectures and the following artists will be participating: D. D. Burluk, M. F. Larionov, N. S. Goncharova, V. V. Maiakovskii, E. K. Spandikov, N. D. Burluk, A. I. Ball'er, and others. This list of participants brings our attention to another issue, what might be called 'trading standards'. Larionov may have initially agreed to contribute to the debate, but correspondence between Larionov and Matiushin confirm that Larionov had agreed to be in Moscow for the *Mishen*' debates at this time.<sup>136</sup> Needless to say, the detailed information produced for this programme was sure to excite a public who yearned for scandal, in addition to those critics who wished to see more explanation from the Futurists for their actions and their art.

The programme of the publicised debate of 24 March gave even greater detail on the proposed lectures. Nikolai and David Burluk, Maiakovskii and Kruchenykh were all included in the programme and each of their lectures was abbreviated to long lists of points. True to his nature, David Burluk's advertised lecture read like a manifesto. All of his eight points commenced with the pronoun 'We'. Kruchenykh's lecture, by contrast, was of a much more abstract nature and 'promised' to confuse the average spectator. Again post-lecture debate was advertised with the participation of David Burluk, Maiakovskii, Kruchenykh and other poets, and by extension, again, the public were invited to engage with the debate. Both programmes were highly informative, and in some cases were more descriptive and explanatory than some of the published Futurist manifestoes. One should bear in mind that all information advertised in the programmes had undergone and survived the censorship process of the conservative St. Petersburg *gradonachal'nik*. This meant that the more detailed

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<sup>136</sup> Howard, *The Union of Youth*, pp. 157–58. Howard's printed translated excerpt from Larionov's letter is curious in that it expresses Larionov's growing intolerance of the wrangling with Bubnovyi valet, 'In Moscow two debates are proposed with my participation, but I doubt that I'll appear – as I'm sick of all this, especially after the chewed straw of the Knave of Diamonds'. (Originally cited in N. Khardzhiev, K. Malevich, and M. Matiushin, *K istorii russkogo avangarda: The Russian Avant-Garde* (Stockholm: Hylaea Prints, 1976)). Perhaps this was a passing disillusionment because the *Mishen*' debates were a marketing success and represent a pivotal moment in the development of Oslinyi khvost's public image and popularity.

the advertisement, the more accurate and disciplined the ensuing lecture would have to be.

Despite their sponsorship of Futurist events Soiuz molodezhi also used public lectures to establish their own participatory role in the development of the avant-garde. A document in the archive of the Russian State Museum, dated 23 March 1913, is clearly a manifesto printed and signed by the Soiuz molodezhi. The typography is conventional and no illustrations or excerpts of poetry have been inserted into the document. The use of standard Russian language suggests that Soiuz molodezhi was genuinely interested in communicating its aesthetic in a manner accessible to the public. Hence, the manifesto opens with a short paragraph which invites those members of the public who are interested in familiarising themselves with the state of 'Modern Youthful Painting' to turn to this 'technical Credo'. Soiuz molodezhi stated that '[b]y organising an actual debate today, and not [merely] a lecture on art and inviting all of our opponents to participate in it, we are declaring our militant artistic Credo'.<sup>137</sup> Soiuz molodezhi's war cry is for the 'continual innovation of Future Art!' and a general invitation to the youth for them to join with Soiuz molodezhi in this vision of a future art. The single page flier was an inexpensive means of publishing the manifesto. In distributing it at a Futurist debate, which is assured public and media attention, Soiuz molodezhi are not only reaching a maximum audience (the audience members and then the newspaper readers the following day), but their manifesto carries extra credibility because it is associated with a well-advertised and well-attended public performance by some of the central and contentious figures of contemporary Russian Futurism.

This chapter, then, has given a broad overview of many of the marketing techniques and strategies employed by the Futurists over the course of the five years in question, 1910–14. It has illustrated, that despite their limited funds, the Futurists were able to negotiate their ever-changing circumstances and audiences, and produce effective marketing material. Fractures within Futurist circles provoked artistic competition which resulted in the increased need for self-definition. This crucial necessity motivated innovative collaborative work and inventive forms of marketing.

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<sup>137</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 13; ll: 17–17ob. See Appendix for a full transcription of the original text.

Although forever on the periphery of Russian art circles, the Futurists strove to implement marketing strategies and shape the development of their public image.

Subtle developments in Futurist printed marketing materials reflect shifts in marketing strategies as both the Futurists and their audience became more sophisticated and better able to predict each other's reaction or critical perspective. The boundaries between marketing and performance blurred as the Futurists gained popularity and grew in confidence. Their increased exposure in the mass circulation press afforded them free access to a wide readership. Their marketing strategies were then directly affected by the critical engagement of the public and journalists. Ephemeral methods of marketing such as posters or 'street happenings' were complemented by theoretical tracts and manifestoes which could be found in exhibition catalogues, newspapers or 'hybrid' publications which can be viewed as part marketing, part literature and part artistic product. The larger print runs of specific Futurist publications, journals and collected works in the latter stages of the period in question confirm the increased confidence in the market (at least by the patrons), the increased level of public engagement with the Futurism, and ultimately point towards the Futurist marketing success.

These two chapters which comprise Part I of the thesis have focused on the individuals who were responsible for the emergence of Russian Futurism and influenced its development in its early period 1910–14. We have considered their social, educational and artistic status and the various strategies which they employed to further the Futurist aesthetic and sustain the movement's development. All of these factors represent the framework of Russian Futurism. In Part II our attention will be drawn to the actual interaction of Futurist and public, the site of Futurist events and breadth of audience reception.

## PART II

### Futurism Meets its Public: The Question of Access to Art

On 13 October 1913, in the liberal newspaper, *Utro Rossii*, O. Savinich declared that

[f]or a long time and with difficulty, Futurism has been trying to establish itself, and at last, it has become established.

Everything in Russia has become Futurist: Literature, art, politics, life, fashion and so on.<sup>1</sup>

Savinich perhaps overstated the Futurists' position, as the avant-gardists clearly did not command the high degree of artistic and social influence that those associated with, for example, the Imperial theatres, the Academies, the Peredvizhniki, the Mir iskusstva group, and members of prominent new theatrical enterprises, such as the Moscow Art Theatre or the Komissarzhevskaja Theatre enjoyed. However, taken together, the accumulation of the contrasting activities and art forms which were performed, displayed and sold by the Futurists, ensured that the broadest possible range of publics was exposed to Futurism during the period in question, 1910-1914. The Futurist tour of the provinces, December 1913-May 1914, extended this principle beyond the metropolitan centres. By the autumn of 1913, the almost daily newspaper coverage of Futurist events and the implied influence (often negative) of Futurism in contemporary society bore witness to increased public awareness, if not popularity, of contemporary Futurism across a broad section of the Russian metropolitan population.

The Futurist day might start with the arrival of the morning newspapers.<sup>2</sup> In addition to commentaries and reviews which made reference to the Futurists, these might contain a manifesto or interview with a Futurist. As figure 10 shows, Futurist

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<sup>1</sup> O. Savinich, 'Futur-Rossia', *Utro Rossii*, No. 236, 13 October 1913, p. 5. 'Долго и туго прививался футуризм в России и наконец привился.'

Все в России стало футуристическим: Литература, искусство, политика, жизнь, мода и проч.'

<sup>2</sup> The following paragraph is a generalised account of Futurist activity extrapolated from a large number of news articles published in the period 1910-14.

commentary was not limited to articles alone. Cartoons such as this one mocked the Futurists and their artistic exploits, which many commentators dismissed as marketing stunts. At ten o'clock in the morning the art galleries opened. The public could pay a relatively small sum (equivalent to the price of a standard city-centre cinema ticket) to drop in to any Futurist venue to view an exhibition. A lady of leisure or an individual who was not restricted by the constraints of the working-day might be tempted to visit one of the modern art galleries and dealers, such as Nadezhda Dobychnina's on the Moika, St. Petersburg. The Futurists themselves might frequent the galleries too. That is, if they were not too busy causing mayhem in the streets with their painted faces and wooden spoons in their button-holes, taking on the role of carnival barker for an evening performance. As the day progressed they may have been sighted dining with a prospective patron or even one of the Symbolist 'enemy', or simply posting advertising bills and fliers. Or perhaps they were busy creating their next Futurist event, be it artistic, literary or theatrical. By five o'clock the galleries had closed and as evening approached and industrial shifts ended, the choice of city entertainment on offer to all sections of society contributed to the heightened social atmosphere in the city centres. Public lectures and theatrical performances would commence around eight o'clock. Evening strollers in Moscow's Kuznetskii Most area may have found themselves confronted with women with painted bosom, or a young man in a black and yellow striped jacket, black cape and top hat. For those interested in the aesthetics of avant-garde art or in search of public scandal and who could also afford a ruble or two, a Futurist debate might be on offer – perhaps in the Troitskii Theatre in St. Petersburg or the Grand Auditorium of the Moscow Polytechnical Museum. Futurist performance would ignite audience reaction, under the watchful eye of the police and censors, and all proceedings would be recorded by the assembled body of journalists. It is likely that many in the audience, workers or members of the *meshchanstvo*, would have to take the late evening public transport and return home after such an event. Those who were not restricted by time or finance may have preferred to follow the Futurists to one of the many fashionable cabarets. A fee of a few rubles or more would gain entrance to intimate venues such as the *Brodiachaia sobaka* [The Stray Dog], or *Krivoie zerkalo* [Crooked Mirror] in St. Petersburg, or *Letuchaia mysh'* [The Bat] or the *Rozovyi fonar'* [The Pink Lantern] in Moscow, where the post-theatre revellers would gather and the fun, theatrical antics and witty repartee would continue throughout the night.



Or perhaps the Futurist preferred the intellectual stimulation and more exclusive atmosphere of the private club or salon. Bleary-eyed on the tram in the early hours of the morning, as Benedikt Livshits recollects, the Futurist in his evening attire, top hat, and rouged cheeks, on his way home at the end of his day, would find himself confronted by the elderly face of a worker in a sheepskin coat on his way into work.<sup>3</sup>

Futurism and the Futurists, then, could be encountered in a variety of social spaces and by extension, by a variety of audiences. The short description above demonstrates the way in which Futurist performance was experienced in terms of 'street happenings', advertised public debates, the intimate atmosphere of cabarets and salons, and the more traditional theatre setting, such as the Luna Park Theatre. These correspond to the four categories of theatre that were established in the Introduction. The three chapters which comprise this section of the thesis will outline the issues relating to the question of the venues in each of these categories; the audiences which the different social spaces attracted; the rules of social etiquette expected in each venue; the symbolic associations with each theatrical environment; the many ways in which the Futurists and the audience were restricted in their ability to perform and attend a performance and how these restrictions affected the decisions taken by both Futurists and audience, before, during and after the performance.

Futurism and public interest in Futurism transgressed many of the traditional boundaries (artistic, social, spatial and contractual) which were generally associated with theatrical companies or artists who were attached to one particular venue or theatrical event, such as the Imperial Theatres, the Moscow Art Theatre, Temperance theatres or seasonal pleasure gardens and fairground theatres. This transgression was the product of Futurism's ability to move from one socially specific environment to another, coupled with the varying educational, class and social backgrounds of individual Futurists, and the response which their actions elicited from all sections of

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<sup>3</sup> See Benedikt Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, edited by John E. Bowlt (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), pp. 229–30.

the press and society. These chapters will explore the different venues, social spaces and expected audience for Futurist performances in order to try to understand whether this mixture of formats led to increased public interest and attendance at Futurist events and provided understanding of the Futurist aesthetic. Chapter 3 explores the subject of the Futurist venue, in the context of contemporary popular entertainment, with the aim of understanding why the Futurists performed in different public social spaces and how they were able to attract a paying public. It will focus on those practical issues, which facilitated or restricted the audience's presence at each event (such as geographical location of the performance space, the timing of the Futurist event, ticket prices, social and artistic association of each venue and so on), in order to draw some conclusions as to who constituted a Futurist audience. Chapters 4 and 5 will then focus on the audience and the reception of the performances themselves, the question of aesthetic access to Futurist art, the Futurists' and critics' attitude towards the audience, and the interaction of all three parties. Attention will be paid to those contextual factors which either facilitated the acceptance of or stimulated resentment towards Futurism and individual Futurists, and which ultimately affected the way in which Futurism was received. An analysis of paintings by Futurists is used to bring greater clarity to their attitude toward different sections of the public and to explore the issue of a possible socio-political aesthetic which might form a subtext to the early phase of Russian Futurism as a whole.

## Chapter 3

### The Sites of Futurist Performance

#### Viewing Futurist Art

In Part I we established that Futurist art and literature (in its broadest sense) helped to shape the Futurist public image, promote the Futurist aesthetic and create a Futurist theatrical audience. Some Futurist theatrical events coincided with Futurist art exhibitions, others functioned as specific marketing devices for the exhibitions. It is useful, therefore, in this analysis of the sites of Futurist performance to consider first the issues surrounding the venue of Futurist art exhibitions.

Despite the frequent references to provincial life and the marginal aspects of city life, prostitutes, barber shops, bars and the life of workers in the subject matter of Futurist art (e.g. Larionov's *Hairdressers* in figures 181 and 182), it is notable that the Futurists consistently participated in exhibitions which were located in the very centre of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The Petersburg galleries were typically situated along main thoroughfares such as Nevskii and Admiralteiskii Prospekts or Morskaia Ulitsa. Nadezhda Dobychina's Art Bureau was located on the fashionable Moika, at No. 63. In Moscow, the art galleries, as indeed the majority of Futurist venues, were situated within the north and north-western sections of the boulevard circle, with a concentration of artistic salons along the fashionable Bol'shaia Dmitrovka (see fig. 111) just north of the Kremlin and the Kuznetskii Most area of the city. Klavdiia Mikhailova's Art Salon (or simply the Art Salon) was one of the notable artistic venues that hosted Futurist events on the Bol'shaia Dmitrovka. The Art Salon hosted Goncharova's solo retrospective in 1913 and the Icon and Lubok exhibition, 1913, which was part of the Oslinyi khvost series of exhibitions. Other fashionable art venues on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka included Dom Levisson, the location of the 1910 and 1913 Bubnovyi valet exhibitions, and the *Obshchestvo liubitelei khudozhestv* [Moscow Society of Art Lovers] which hosted the 'First Evening of Speech-Creators', 13 October 1913. All of the salons and galleries held regular or

periodic exhibitions throughout the period in question and were predominantly patronised by a mixture of intellectuals and artists of different traditions (e.g. the Symbolists and the *Peredvizhniki*), art patrons, and members of the aristocracy and the merchant classes.<sup>1</sup>

The fashionable venues of the early exhibitions to which the Futurists contributed had the natural effect of excluding the engagement of the lower classes. This is evident in Beverly Kean's description of the Moscow *Zolotoe runo* [Golden Fleece] exhibition of 1908, which was organised by Sergei Diaghilev and held in Dom Khludov on the corner of Ulitsa Rozhdestvenka and Teatral'nyi Prospekt. Natal'ia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Pavel Kuznetsov and Martiros Sar'ian all contributed to the exhibition. The exhibition 'featured music and a buffet. Flanking the staircase, which was banked with fresh flowers and shrubs, was a dramatic circular bas-relief, *Adam and Eve* by Niederhausern-Rodo, opposite Rodin's marble *Walking Man*'.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a photograph of the Mir iskusstva exhibition a few years later, 1914, in St. Petersburg, communicates an air of luxury, in a room with a sofa, cushions and only two paintings on display.<sup>3</sup>

### Art Exhibitions in St. Petersburg

In April 1908, the Venok group of artists (which included key members of the emerging Futurists: David and Vladimir Burliuk, Aleksandra Ekster, Aristarkh Lentulov and the sculptor, Vasilii Kuznetzov) exhibited their work, along with members of the Treugol'nik and Mir iskusstva groups, on the premises of the shopping arcade Passazh, Nevskii Prospekt, 48.<sup>4</sup> The exhibition as a whole received mixed criticism, but K. L'dov's positive reviews of 30 April 1908, 'Artist-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Benedikt Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, edited by John E. Bowlit (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), p. 72, footnote 9.

<sup>2</sup> Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983), p. 98. See also <http://www.ruslit-xx/ruslit2/guest/?Mival=/person.html&id=1214>, accessed 31 May 2004.

<sup>3</sup> TsADKM: Photo archive: Box: 140; Iashchik: d; item: 8268, 'Vystavka kartin, 'Mir iskusstva', 1914, Petersburg.

<sup>4</sup> Information regarding the venues, events, dates and ticket prices recorded in this thesis are collated in a table in the Appendix.

Revolutionaries', not only highlighted the new talent in the Venok camp, but was also focused and informative for any reader who wanted to familiarise him/herself with the new trends in modern art.<sup>5</sup> The decision to exhibit art in a department store, which was situated in the heart of St. Petersburg, along the main thoroughfare, was an interesting development in the search for new exhibition space. Perhaps this was the result of the shortage of available exhibition space which Benedikt Livshits and Larionov commented on in later years.<sup>6</sup> To exhibit art in a palace of consumerism, rather than a shrine of art, solely dedicated to the purpose of viewing 'high' art (an Academy, Museum or Art Salon), could change the way in which the art was viewed. It is difficult to imagine how the viewer might disassociate the contextual element of consumption from the process of artistic appreciation. One could argue that the exhibition received greater visitor numbers due to the number of 'chance' visitors who spontaneously chose to view the paintings, who might otherwise not make a special trip to an art exhibition. One could also pursue a democratic line and argue that as the exhibition took place within the confines of a department store in the city centre, where daytime public transport was both relatively cheap and frequent, then anyone was at liberty to view the paintings and this, in turn, had the effect of increasing public access to art. However, the question of fully democratised space in the context of Passazh, and the creation of a Futurist audience, which incorporated all elements of society in the early 1900s, is a more complex issue.

Tony Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum* draws parallels between the architecture of the new museums of the nineteenth century in reference to their new public function and that of new department stores and other exhibiting spaces. He notes the following principle which also distinguishes the architecture of the Imperial theatres, People's theatres and other traditional theatre on the one hand from the cabaret environment of the early 1900s on the other:

Relations of space and vision are organized not merely to allow a clear inspection of the objects exhibited but also to allow for the visitors to be the objects of each other's inspection – scenes in which, if not a citizenry, then certainly a public displayed itself to itself in an affirmative

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<sup>5</sup> K. L'dov, 'Khudozhniki-Revoliutsionery', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 10478, 30 April 1908, pp. 3–4. See also M. S., 'Sovremennye napravleniia v iskusstve', *Rech'*, No. 110, 9 May 1908, pp. 2–3. See Chapters 1 and 4 for further commentary on this exhibition.

<sup>6</sup> See Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 72, footnotes 9, 11–13.

celebration of its own orderliness in architectural contexts which simultaneously guaranteed and produced that orderliness.<sup>7</sup>

If we look at the two photographs of Passazh (figs. 112 and 114) we are immediately struck by the rather grand scale of the building, the imposing façade, and then the impression of civility which is conveyed by the well-dressed visitors. Like a traditional theatre, a balcony circling the interior of the building affords ample viewing opportunities throughout the arcade. The small bridge which links the two sides of the balcony serves to amplify the theatrical character of the setting. Although the picture of the interior dates back to the 1860s, one can assume that during the rise of the consumerism which characterised the industrial age, the strong representation of 'respectable' women in this controlled environment continued at the turn of the twentieth century. This accords with Bennett's assertion that the department store constituted a 'sanitized urban area' where such women 'could recreate themselves in public free from fear that their sensibilities might be assaulted or their conduct misinterpreted'.<sup>8</sup> The theatre-like setting of the department store created an environment in which women (both the ladies of leisure who formed the clientele and the sales girls who served them) were free to look and not just be looked at.<sup>9</sup> The predominance of women in department stores, such as Passazh, was not only presumed to have a civilising effect on other visitors, following the general principles of the Enlightenment era, but also put extra pressure on the authorities to exclude undesirable elements from this environment. Although urban migrants from the provinces constituted 69 % of St. Petersburg's population of 1.906 million in 1910, it is unlikely that the stereotypical urban migrant, attired in poor working clothes, and whose hygiene would be dubious if he/she had come directly from the factory or workshop, would be welcome or feel comfortable in this allegedly democratic setting.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 52.

<sup>8</sup> T. Bennett, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the evolving practices of women in a leisure environment at the turn of the twentieth century, see David Scobey, 'Nymphs and Satyrs: Sex and the Bourgeois Public Sphere in Victorian New York', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 37:1 (Spring, 2002), 43–66.

<sup>10</sup> James H. Bater, *St. Petersburg: Industrialisation and Change* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), pp. 254–55.

In 1908 the Russian avant-garde was still in its infancy and a ‘fashion for Futurism’ had yet to develop across different social classes. The theatricality of women painted in the Rayonist fashion, or the presence of the flamboyantly dressed Vladimir Maiakovskii — elements which would later become synonymous with Futurist events — were still absent in 1908. Instead, the exhibition experience was bound by historically established codes and norms of spectatorship which, as Michael Shapiro notes, were applied to the ‘uplifting influence of culture’ in museums, art galleries and, in the Russian context, the Imperial Theatres. Bennett summarises their effect as schools of correct comportment:

Middle-class audiences learned that the restraint of emotion was the outward expression of the respect for quality, the deference to the best demanded of those who viewed objects in public places. Exhibitions thus became textbooks on public civility [...].<sup>11</sup>

Whilst Bennett and Anthony Swift<sup>12</sup> both emphasize the ability of provincial urban migrants to adapt to city culture and imitate the codes of dress, and social behaviour of the middle classes, I would suggest that it is very unlikely that many members of the working and peasant classes would have felt comfortable enough to socialise in the more fashionable areas of St. Petersburg and Moscow and visit any of the avant-garde and Futurist exhibitions of the early years, 1908–1912. Certainly, the lower classes would not be shopping in this department store.<sup>13</sup> It is also very unlikely that the provincial working class, constituting sixty-nine percent of St. Petersburg’s population, would have been able to take a break from their eleven-and-a-half-hour working day to visit the galleries during the working week. As the majority of workers lived in close proximity to their place of work, it is most likely that the average worker would have had to make a special trip to visit Nevskii Prospekt if he/she wished to view the exhibition. This in turn would have necessitated travel expenses of at least 60 kopeks, which most workers could ill afford.<sup>14</sup> These are the

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<sup>11</sup> T. Bennett, citing Michael Shapiro, p. 169.

<sup>12</sup> T. Bennett, p. 169; E. Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> It is quite likely, however, that certain members of the upper-*meshchanstvo* or the *poluintelligentsiia* worked in Passazh.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on trends of the working day, public transport and levels of commuting, see Bater, pp. 254–58 and 280–95.

very people who constituted the subject matter of much early Russian avant-garde and Futurist art, but more on this point in the following chapter.

The *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibitions in St. Petersburg were held exclusively in rather up-market and elegant locations. The elegance of the 1910 *style moderne* poster is reflected in the fashionable address of the venue, Morskaia 28, on the corner of Gorokhovaia (see fig. 43). The venue was situated a short walk from the Admiralty end of Nevskii Prospekt, on the banks of the Moika canal, which continued its way south, towards Teatral'naia Ploshchad' [Theatre Square] and the location of the Mariinskii Imperial Theatre. The entrance fee was 40 kopeks for adults and 20 for students, and public transport, in the form of the modern tramway, provided a service to within easy walking distance of the exhibition hall. The *Soiuz molodezhi* 1911 venue was located just a couple of streets further north on the corner of Admiralteiskii and Voznesenskii Prospekts. The exhibition was open from 10am to 5pm and tickets cost 50 kopeks, or 20 kopeks for students. Nevskii 73 was a regular venue for *Soiuz molodezhi* events and was the venue for the exhibition of December 1912 – January 1913, and November 1913 – January 1914, when the popularity of pre-Revolutionary Futurism was at its peak. Although Aleksandr Benua referred to the venue as a 'humble apartment', the building itself, No. 73, was an impressive structure, in a shopping area where the clients were generally of the middle and upper classes (see fig. 114).<sup>15</sup> The exhibition was open from 10am to 7pm, thereby giving some members of the public the opportunity to visit the exhibition after work.

Many of the above comments concerning the possible audience for the Passazh exhibition also apply to all of the *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibitions. Not only would these exhibitions have been intimidating environments for the working classes to stray into, the price alone would have precluded their participation, at least on a regular basis. One could speculate that the majority of daytime visitors to such events were middle-class women who could afford the time to be 'entertained' by art, or students, who were prominent among the supporters of Futurist and other modern Russian art. If one adds up the cost of public transport to cross the city and return, together with the entry fee and a reasonable amount for a catalogue, another 10 kopeks for the

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<sup>15</sup> For Benua's comments see Jeremy Howard, *The Union of Youth: An Artists' Society of the Russian Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), p. 141.



cloakroom if necessary, and a few kopeks for a light snack en-route, then one could easily be counting upwards of 3 rubles to visit the exhibitions. This would have been far beyond the financial capabilities of most of the working classes. One must presume then that the visitors to the exhibitions, indeed to all the Futurist exhibitions, did not generally include the working and lower classes.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to exhibiting with the *Soiuz molodezhi*, Bubnovyi valet also exhibited independently, and in April 1913 they held a large exhibition, with representatives of other European avant-gardes, in the Concert Hall of the Swedish Church of St. Ekaterina, which was situated on Malaia Koniushennaia 3. Again this was a very central location. It was a popular venue for both Futurist events (the lecture, ‘Our Answer to Marinetti’ was delivered here in February 1914), and other fashionable events which were connected to various cabarets, summer balls and so on (see fig. 115). Tickets were 50 kopeks, 25 for students and the exhibition was open from 10am until 6pm.

The Futurist exhibition which marks the closing stages of pre-Revolutionary Russian Futurism and the introduction of abstract art, *Posledniaia futuristicheskaia vystavka kartin “0.10” (nol’-desiat)* [The Last Futurist Art Exhibition, “0.10” (Zero-Ten)], opened 19 December 1915 on the edge of the *Marsovo Pole* [Field of Mars], House No. 7. The *Marsovo Pole* was a popular site for public entertainment and attracted many different sections of the now Petrograd society, as a pleasure garden with new technological inventions such as a wooden ‘roller-coaster’, or to use Russian terminology, ‘American hills’ (see. fig. 116). In view of the proximity of the exhibition to the *Marsovo Pole*, one might assume that many were aware of the public transport which serviced this area. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the numbers of the tram which could be used to visit the exhibition were printed at the bottom of the advertising poster, possibly with the intention of maximising visitor potential.<sup>17</sup> The exhibition itself, however, was as expensive to the lower classes as all the other

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<sup>16</sup> Estimation of transport costs on based on the figures provided by Bater (see footnote 12) and Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's Russia 1914* (London, Newton Abbot: George Allen & Unwin, and David & Charles, 1971), pp. 90–91.

<sup>17</sup> By 1915 it had become common practice to include details or relevant public transport on advertising material for many public events. See, for example, the newspaper advertisements in figure 118.

avant-garde exhibitions. Tickets were 1 ruble for the opening night, and then 50 kopeks, or 30 kopeks for students, for the usual hours of 10am to 5pm thereafter.

### Art exhibitions in Moscow

The practicalities and issues involved in attending Futurist exhibitions in Moscow were very similar to those in St. Petersburg. Again the working and peasant classes, frequently the subject matter of the Futurist art, were socially excluded from the fashionable venues and art salons which exhibited Futurist work. Only a limited number of exhibition venues were available and it is not surprising that the majority of them were in the centre of the cities where cultural activities within the so-called 'high' arts were most concentrated. Whatever the avant-garde artist's attitude to his/her subject matter, the fact remained that if the Futurists wished to create a public image that was recognised by both the artistic community and the wider public, then the work needed to be legitimised through the process of being exhibited, reviewed and hopefully sold. In order to do this, the avant-gardists were reliant on established artistic centres, such as the salons on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka, which attracted both the intelligentsia and patrons of the arts. The *Bubnovyi valet* exhibition of 7 February – 7 March 1913, for example, was held on the premises of the *Obshchestvo liubitelei khudozhestv*. Although the critical reception of the exhibition was generally negative, Livshits notes that 'about ten thousand people visited it within the space of a month and paintings sold for over ten thousand rubles [...]'.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, this apparent hypocrisy of an artist who on the one hand considers himself to be a 'leftist' or anarchist and aligns himself with the more marginal or bohemian figures in society (the frequent subject matter of his paintings), but on the other hand needs to socialise or network among the middle and upper classes in search of wealthy patrons was not unique to Russia. Indeed it was a key element in the

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<sup>18</sup> These visitor numbers were greater than those of the *Zolotoe Runo* exhibition of 1909–1910. The Moscow *Zolotoe Runo* exhibition of January – February 1909 attracted 8,000 visitors. See Anthony Parton, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), pp. 21 and 28. For contemporary reviews of the exhibition see Andrei V. Krusanov, *Russkii Avangard: 1907–1932 (Istoricheskii obzor) v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, vol. 1, *Boevoe desiatiletie* (St. Petersburg: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), pp. 74–75; see also Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 75.

development of the avant-garde in many different European countries, not least in France where the relationship between avant-garde artist and dealer was so established and influenced the development of twentieth-century European avant-garde markets. The Futurists were frequently criticised in the press for their unhealthy influence on youth and gullible or uneducated members of society. As we shall see in Chapter 5, contemporary critics regularly associated Futurism with hooliganism and madness and claim that Futurist art had a negative effect on society, in particular on the lower classes. To justify this criticism one first needs to establish in what way the lower classes were exposed to Futurist art. If they could not afford to visit the art exhibitions or most forms of Futurist theatre, then their engagement with Futurism (for the small minority who may have been interested), will have been based on 'situational' theatre and 'street happenings', or newspaper commentaries for those who were literate or had access to someone who was, and urban myth or word of mouth.

There are a couple of notable exceptions to the general trend of hiring art salons and fashionable galleries for Futurist exhibitions. The first is the Oslinyi khvost exhibition of 11 March – 8 April 1912 held on the premises of the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which was located towards the north-east of the boulevard ring, on Ulitsa Miasnitskaia 21. Oslinyi khvost only had limited funds, and exhibition space was both scarce and expensive. To share the burden of the costs Oslinyi khvost agreed to share the exhibition with Soiuz molodezhi. The two groups, however, exhibited in separate rooms and produced separate catalogues (see Chapter 2). Although the exhibition occupied many halls, Livshits notes that the administration of the institute would not allow Oslinyi khvost to hang their advertising banner above the entrance to the building. The alternative was to risk losing their exhibition contract altogether, so they had no choice but to agree. Despite the fact that many members of the Moscow avant-garde graduated from (or at least followed some courses at) the Moscow School, this point demonstrates the precarious relationship that some Futurists had with the proprietors of art venues, even their own art school, and the subtle presence of censorship. The refusal to allow the advertising notice, however, did not prevent the rising interest in Oslinyi khvost. Oslinyi khvost's public image had been growing ever since their dramatic public split with Bubnovyi valet at the latter's public debate in the Polytechnical Museum

in February 1912 (see Chapter 2). In addition, Livshits writes that a fire took place on the exhibition premises the evening before the opening night. This was reported in the newspapers and would have added to the exhibition's marketing. He sardonically added the newspapers' comments that any damage to the canvases could be rectified within twenty-four hours. The exhibition also received more public attention before its opening night as a result of a visit by the censors, who, as Livshits records, 'turned up and forbade the showing of Goncharova's Evangelists and some of her other pictures on the grounds that the name Donkey's Tail was incompatible with the treatment of religious themes'.<sup>19</sup> While all other factors related to location and the restriction of the working day apply to this exhibition, the Moscow School may have been a less intimidating environment for certain sections of the lower classes than the socially exclusive bastions of high, intellectual culture, such as the Moscow Art Salon. This is suggested by the large number of visitors to the exhibition which, according to Evgenii Kovtun, amounted to approximately ten thousand people.<sup>20</sup>

### Art and Cinema

Another significant deviation from the tendency to exhibit in fashionable art venues and explore sites which were potentially more accessible to a wider public was Il'ia Zdanevich's description of the proposal to set up a contract with the owner of the Mirazh cinema on Ofitserskaia, St. Petersburg. The proposed contract involved an exhibition of Oslinyi khvost art in the spectators' hall for a period of six months, with the paintings changing every two weeks. Admission to the exhibition would be upon receipt of any cinema ticket. Although the Futurist collaboration with the Mirazh did not eventually take place (see Chapter 2), the proposed initiative is testament to the Futurists' exploration of non-traditional art venues and also their acknowledgement of the popularity of cinema. By 1913, cinema had become the dominant form of entertainment, in which nearly all sections of society could afford to participate. Swift states that in 1913 there were 134 cinemas in St. Petersburg and

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<sup>19</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 88–89.

<sup>20</sup> Evgenii Kovtun, *Mikhail Larionov, 1881–1964* (St. Petersburg: Avrora, 1998), p. 55.

107 in Moscow. Regarding the ability of the lower classes to frequent the cinema, he notes how

[t]he factory theatres, temperance theatres, cinemas, and miniature theatres had come to occupy roughly the same territory in the urban cultural landscape by 1914.<sup>21</sup>

Yuri Tsivian notes that seat prices ranged from approximately 30 kopeks in the stalls, to 1 ruble for a seat in a box in the more luxurious city-centre cinemas, such as the Tivoli on Nevskii Prospekt.<sup>22</sup> Prices would have been considerably cheaper at more modest local cinemas in the outlying areas of the cities. The fact that films were often shown throughout the day and into the evening also meant that they constituted an accessible form of entertainment for factory workers, artisans and other members of the working classes. The Mirazh-Oslinyi khvost collaboration would undoubtedly have promoted greater accessibility for the lower classes to Futurist art. The proposal had been put forward in February 1913, a time when Futurism was receiving unprecedented exposure in the newspapers and beginning to take root in the public psyche. If members of the lower and working classes decided to drop into the cinema to watch a film, they could also have had the opportunity to view the Futurist art at no extra cost. One should note, however, that the Mirazh cinema was located in a well-to-do area of St. Petersburg, in close proximity to Teatral'naia Ploshchad', the Mariinskii Imperial Theatre, the Krivoie zerkalo [Crooked Mirror] Cabaret, Dobychina's Art Gallery and other notable establishments of high and fashionable culture, so it is likely that the price of the cinema ticket would have been expensive for a member of the working classes. Hypothetically speaking, as the proposal did not come to fruition, it is possible that certain upwardly-mobile members of the city-centre working class may have been tempted by the combination of the latest urban fashions — Futurism and cinema — to save up enough money to be able to participate in the latest artist trends, even on this cursory level.

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<sup>21</sup> Swift, pp. 138–39.

<sup>22</sup> Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*, edited by Richard Taylor (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 29–34.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Larionov did not approve the Mirazh proposal because he felt that the popular culture of the cinema environment would jeopardise the serious reception of the art, at a time when Futurism was struggling to be publicly recognised as a bona fide artistic movement. It is not clear whether Larionov's view of the cinema as an inappropriate location for exhibiting art was based on the clientele of the cinema, or simply on the fact that the dual-function of the exhibition space compromised the reception of the art. Larionov embraced the cinema, both as a dynamic combination of modern art and technology, and as a new urban space where different classes could congregate in close proximity and traditional forms of social etiquette could be transgressed.

Larionov's interest in the cinema auditorium as a highly gendered public location of social interaction is clearly expressed in his painting *Scene – The Cinema* (1912 – see fig. 117). Here, for example, we see a man and woman seated in the foreground. The man is leaning towards the woman and his gaze looks downwards in front of her. The picture is infused with ambiguity which is typical of Larionov's paintings of people of this era. Is the man trying to engage the attention of woman or is he simply tired or drunk? The woman, by contrast sits upright, but with her legs apart in a dress which has a tight-fitting bodice and only reaches down to her knees. Her identity is sexualised but ambiguous, her hand-gesture is not. The faceless woman pushes the man away with her left hand and appears to look directly ahead of her, that is, at the screen. The ambiguity of the woman's social status (possibly ranging from prostitute to respectable wife) underlines Larionov's understanding of the social diversity that existed in the cinema auditorium. It is at this point that we become aware of another woman who is standing behind the man. Although she looks as if she is walking away from him, her right arm stretches across the man's left arm. Again the identity of the second woman is unclear, this time because the picture plane has cut her off at the shoulders. Is the woman's arm the authoritative presence of a wife? She is, at least, more modestly dressed in a long skirt. As is often the case, the viewer remains 'in the dark'. The painting raises many more questions than it answers. It does, however, suggest a number of readings: that Larionov was very much aware of the social conventions of the cinema; that he was aware of the question of gender and the difficult position in which women found themselves in contemporary public life. For example, it is notable that the seated woman in the painting is unable to voice

her opinions to fend off the man verbally because she is depicted without a mouth. We shall return to this discussion of Larionov's paintings which depict scenes of public life in Chapters 4 and 5.

The Futurists pursued their interest in cinema and in January 1914 Goncharova, Larionov and, according to one advert, up to 130 Futurists took part in the Futurist cinematic production *Kabare Futuristov No. 13*. Although only scant information exists concerning the content of the film, contemporary newspaper advertisements reveal how the film was shown in Moscow city-centre venues. Two adverts in the newspaper *Rannee utro* (fig. 118) state that the films were shown in the 'Teatr Kontinental' on 'Teatral'naia Ploshchad' at the very heart of the Moscow Imperial theatre environment, in the 'Elektro-teatr "Uran", on Sretenka 19. The "Uran" cinema was created in what Tsivian calls the 'Long Auditorium Period', when former residential premises and other buildings were renovated to produce a large hall in which many more people could gather for a film. The space was functional and, unlike the later cinemas, had nothing in common with deluxe theatre architecture (fig. 119).<sup>23</sup> In 1913, the architects P. Dukhovenskii and A. Fol'baum had 'contrived to build an auditorium in an ancient [...] two-story house'.<sup>24</sup> Tsivian also notes how the 'city centre cinemas were more deluxe [than those located on the periphery of the metropolises] and associated with a broad social range, but in particular with the merchant classes and the "intelligent classes"'.<sup>25</sup> The different cinema settings, locations and price structures had the potential to introduce Futurism to a new audience. It is possible that the combination of the location of the 'Kontinental', together with the new sanitised format of Futurist performance, would have lured the inquisitive member of the middle and upper classes to experience the latest artistic fashion, but without the risk of being verbally, or indeed physically, abused. The format of continuous play in the cinemas (whereby films were repeated throughout the day without any advertised schedule), and the lack of need to 'dress up' for a performance also enabled individuals to act spontaneously and either slip into cinemas surreptitiously (fig. 120), or to go with friends.

<sup>23</sup> Tsivian, p. 23. The photograph in figure 119 depicts the Bol'shoi Parizhskii electric theatre on Ulitsa Piatnitskaia, Moscow, at the turn of the twentieth century. The Parizhskii was also located in a two-storey building and is a similar construction to the Uran electric theatre.

<sup>24</sup> Aleksei Rogachev, 'Kvartira, Dacha, ofis', N105, 15.06.01, in [http://www.babylon-reality.ru/info/k3d105\\_2.htm](http://www.babylon-reality.ru/info/k3d105_2.htm), accessed 31.05.04.

<sup>25</sup> Tsivian, p. 26.

## Street ‘Happenings’ and Futurist Antics

### St. Petersburg Antics

One form of Futurist theatre served to bridge the financial gap between the various class categories. Futurist ‘street incidents’ or ‘situational theatre’ provided free theatre to all bystanders or witnesses. The Futurists argued that art was a vital element in life and should not be restricted to the ivory tower of the establishment, but, instead, that ‘[it] should be taken to the street’ (see p. 180). This sentiment was supported by the wave of Futurist manifestoes published in autumn 1913 (as described in Chapter 2), which constituted an open invitation to the public, irrespective of their pecuniary status, to join in the trend of Futurist fashions (face and body-painting, male and female clothing, even Futurist culinary fashion!). The ability to participate in or be associated with the latest fashionable trend may have given interested members of the city-centre working classes a sense of empowerment. This sentiment is communicated through the cartoon in figure 121. A seemingly provincial urban migrant is depicted in a checked jacket (reminiscent of Vladimir Maiakovskii’s striped jacket), with large foppish bow tie and boater, striking a pose which conveys the desire to communicate a sense of respectability and dignity. The caption reads, ‘The Artist’s Pride. Since I became a Futurist, I address myself as ‘Sir’’’.<sup>26</sup> Although the caption is laced with deprecating irony, and could be targeted at the struggling artists as described in the articles of Railian, I would argue that it also reflects a possible trend among the upwardly-mobile city-centre urban lower classes to participate in the popular culture and high fashion, and integrate more fully with their environment, in the struggle for social advancement.<sup>27</sup>

The occurrence of situational theatre can be divided into three categories: incidents which involved individual Futurists and took place within closed public quarters, such as cabarets and restaurants; unpublicised, seemingly spontaneous street theatre, which was carried out by individual Futurists and which also served as marketing stunts for other Futurist events; and ‘street happenings’ which were theatrical

<sup>26</sup> ‘Гордость художника. С тех пор как я стал футуристом, я сам с собой на “Вы” разговариваю.’ See ‘Gordost’ khudozhnika’, *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 250, 1913, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 1 for Railian’s commentary on the poverty of the artist and the exploitative art market.



imitations of the Futurist style, but carried out by members of the public alone. Since the summer of 1913 rumours had circulated through the press and undoubtedly in private too, concerning the proposals for a Futurist theatre. These rumours concerned the summer meeting of the Petersburg Futurists at Mikhail Matiushin's Finnish residence, Uusirkirkki, where the performances which were later held in the Luna Park Theatre in December 1913 were planned. Other rumours were given greater credibility by Larionov's proposals for a Moscow-based 'Teatr Futu' and his flurry of Futurist performative manifestoes, whose declared aim was to incorporate Futurism into daily life.<sup>28</sup> Futurism was gaining public strength and this, in turn, attracted more attention and inspired members of the public to participate in the latest carnivalesque extravaganza. The majority of recorded happenings of Futurist situational theatre, especially of the third category, took place in autumn-winter 1913.

Futurist events of the second category were witnessed in St. Petersburg throughout the autumn of 1913. Andrei Krusanov has recorded the following reports of the theatrical events:

29 September, around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, two Moscow Futurists appeared on Morskaia [Street] among the loafers, one with gilded nails, which he displayed from time to time, the other with bright-green eyebrows and moustache. Peterburgers only looked askance at them, but they [the Futurists] didn't pay any attention to them. As five o'clock arrived both Futurists vanished in a taxi.<sup>29</sup>

A similar incident was recorded in November 1913:

3 November, two Futurists appeared on Morskaia Street with painted faces: the first one had green circles drawn on his cheeks, the other had his clean-shaven chin stained in minium [vermilion]. Both wore top-hats,

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 2, for further details on the Futurist manifestoes.

<sup>29</sup> '29 сентября около 4 часов дня на Морской появились в числе «гранитящих мостовую» два московских футуриста, один с позолоченными ногтями, которые он время от времени показывал, другой с ярко-зелеными бровями и усами. Петербуржцы только косились на них, но никакого внимания им не оказывали. В начале 6 часа оба футуриста скрылись на таксомоторе.' Anon, 'Futuristy na Morskoï', *Rossia*, No. 2418, 2 October 1913, p. 4, cited in Krusanov, p. 144. Although the liberal papers published most of the Futurist-related commentaries, it is significant that Krusanov classifies *Rossia* as a conservative publication. This supports the argument that, by 1913, the popularity or at least public awareness of Futurism had spread to many different sections of society.

and had white chrysanthemums in the left buttonhole of their coats. Oncomers rewarded these Futurists with epithets, from which even the healthiest of people would have suffered. The day before these Futurists had been spotted on Kamennostrovskii.<sup>30</sup>

An article of 10 December 1913 records another Futurist venture, but this one was not so innocent and ended badly for the Futurists concerned (Krusanov suggests that they were Ego-Futurists). At three in the afternoon, two young men with painted faces took to the streets at the corner of Vladimirkii and Zagorodnyi Prospekts. Instead of eliciting amusing comments or support, at least from some quarters, the Futurists attracted jokes and sarcasm. One by one a crowd grew and followed them. The crowd hurled abuse at them and the Futurists finally jumped into a cab and escaped the crowd who were roaring with laughter.<sup>31</sup> More commentaries relate other incidents which took place on Nevskii Prospekt and involved the youth, who comprised the dominant section of Futurist supporters.

The first thing to note about all of the Futurist incidents above is that they took place in mid-afternoon. The timing itself is interesting, in that it corresponds to that of the traditional carnival. Carnival which took place during the daytime was seen to be a positive, colourful form of entertainment. It was only as the evening drew in that the carnival assumed a more sinister and grotesque character, when mere entertainment had the potential to metamorphose into subversion. Although it had been moved from the Admiralteiskii area to the outskirts of the city, the traditional Russian carnival continued in St. Petersburg until its final ungracious demise in the early 1910s.<sup>32</sup> As the concept of carnival would still have been current in the public psyche in 1913, it is likely that a section of the public would have been receptive to the Futurist tropes of carnivalesque clothing and behaviour.

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<sup>30</sup> '3 ноября появились на Морской улице два футуриста с раскрашенными физиономиями: у одного на щеках нарисовано было по колцу зеленого цвета, у другого выбритый подбородок был выпачкан суриком. Оба были в цилиндрах, с белыми хризантемами на левом локте их пальто. Встречные награждали этих футуристов эпитетами, от которых не поздоровилось бы здоровому человеку. Накануне этих футуристов видели на Каменноостровском.' Anon, 'Demonstrirovanie Futuristov', *Kolokol*, No. 2260, 5 November 1913, p. 3; Anon, 'Nenormal'nye na svobode', *Rossia*, No. 2447, 5 November 1913, p. 4, cited in Krusanov, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> Anon, 'Futuristy na ulitse', *S. Peterburgskie vedomosti*, No. 278, 12 December 1913, p. 3; Anon, *Kolokol*, No. 2290, 12 December 1913, p. 4; Anon, 'Futuristy na ulitse', *Den*, No. 336, 11 December 1913, p. 3, all cited in Krusanov, p. 144.

<sup>32</sup> Swift notes that the Shrovetide and Easter fairgrounds had disappeared entirely before World War I. Swift, p. 85.

Censorship laws were applied to all theatrical performances. However, the authorities did allow some degree of leniency and this was dependent upon the scheduling of the performance. Hence, the censors tolerated an aspect of potential subversion in daytime carnival and even theatre matinees. The same level of tolerance did not extend to evening performances. Matinees were not taken as seriously as full evening performances as the audience were not so impressionable, nor their attention so intense. Murray Frame observes how the same pattern of repertoire and censorship was prevalent in the establishment of the Imperial theatres. He writes: '[m]atinee performances tended to be staged for charitable causes or for children'. Of the 120 performances of Nikolai Gogol's *Revizor* [The Government Inspector], and 68 performances of Aleksandr Griboedov's *Gore ot Uma* [Woe from Wit], roughly one half to two-thirds of the performances were matinees. 'This is significant', notes Frame, 'because it reduces the contemporary profile of two of the potentially most political dramas in the repertoire [...]'.<sup>33</sup>

Futurist street theatre was played out by individuals and small groups who would seem to have appeared from nowhere and who were equally adept at slipping briskly away when necessary. Livshits noted how he and Maiakovskii had been forced 'to turn off into one of the quieter side-streets [in Moscow]' to avoid 'police interference'.<sup>34</sup> Whilst an awareness of, and desire to avoid, censorship played an integral role in this style of performance, it should be noted that it would have been difficult for the authorities to enforce any real censorship on these performances. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the police would not have been able to press charges retrospectively without prior knowledge of the individual Futurist's identity. As it was unlikely that bystanders would have been any the wiser, the Futurists were relatively safe and continued their antics.<sup>35</sup> The individuals in the examples above are noted as being Muscovites. If they were associated with *Oslinyi khvost* then the fact that their artistic association was not registered would have meant that they were even safer from the censorship authorities because the police were unable to

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<sup>33</sup> Murray Frame, *The St Petersburg Imperial Theatres: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia 1900–1920* (Jefferson, N. Carolina: McFarland, 2000), p. 93.

<sup>34</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 141.

<sup>35</sup> Although the Futurists had been gaining more public recognition, only a few artists had achieved individual notoriety (including David Burliuk, Mikhail Larionov, Goncharova and Maiakovskii), and a recognisable public image among those who were interested in Futurism and could only follow it through these instances of situational theatre, and the press.

approach the society to account for an individual's acts. In other notorious court cases, individuals, such as Mikhail Larionov, were charged with 'disturbance of the peace', following their so-called scandalous behaviour at various public lectures and debates (see fig. 6).

The Futurist incidents that Krusanov reported took place in four distinct areas of St. Petersburg: Nevskii Prospekt, Morskaia Ulitsa, the corner of Vladimirskii and Zagorodnyi Prospekts, and finally Kamennyi Ostrov. We have already noted the class associations with Nevskii Prospekt in our discussion of the department store Passazh. Nevskii Prospekt was lined with middle-class shops, galleries, hotels and restaurants, offices (and printing offices in particular), and institutes, although the street itself entertained a more diverse mix of society (see, for example, D. N. Kardovskii's sketch for Nikolai Gogol's *Nevskii prospekt*, 1904 – fig. 122). Morskaia, as discussed above, was an elegant but also vibrant part of the city. It was a thoroughfare which linked the cultural sights of the city centre with peripheral industrial locations, and therefore entertained a broad mix of society. Nikolai Lapshin's Futurist depiction of the Moika, 1914, reveals a bustling evening environment, where carriages and the crowds of people who line the river (i.e. Morskaia Street) are lit up in the glare of the phosphorescent lights (fig. 123). James Bater's maps of the 'location of industry, 1913' (figs. 124a and 124b) illustrate the preponderance of printing works in this area too. One report mentioned that the Futurists had also been spotted on Kamennyi Ostrov. This was one island of a small archipelago in the north of the city which was exclusively untainted by factories or industry, as Bater's maps indicate. These islands were, and remain, chiefly covered by parkland. They were therefore sparsely populated with a mixture of family mansions and small wooden houses during this period.<sup>36</sup> The newspaper report fails to give any details regarding the reception of the Futurists on Kamennyi Ostrov. However, the lack of reported scandal suggests that the Futurists did not encounter any major problems, but were perhaps tolerated as a carnivalesque form of entertainment.

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<sup>36</sup> I am indebted to Robert Russell for this information.

Kamennyi Ostrov appears to have been an environment which was practically untouched by the filth and danger of the city centre, including Vladimirskii and Zagorodnyi Prospekts, the area in which the alleged Ego-Futurists ran into difficulties and escaped the cackling crowds and threatening behaviour. Bater's maps show that light and heavy industry was located in this particular area of the city including printing and paper works, chemical products, canvas and cotton textile industries, glass-wares, general food stores, silk and knitted wares and clothing, but also ferrous and non-ferrous products, alcohol, carriage manufacturers, agricultural and shipbuilding machinery).<sup>37</sup> Here, the civility of the Moika and Nevskii Prospekt were absent and in their place were the Dostoevskian slums and evidence of the contemporary housing crisis and urban suffering, which were so prevalent in contemporary works of Pavel Filonov. Figure 125, for example, shows a laundry on Ulitsa Marata 48, just a couple of streets away from Vladimirskaia Ploshchad'. The trades-people and establishments of these slum areas (cafés, bars, hairdressers, and prostitutes) became frequent motifs in Futurist art, particularly in Mikhail Larionov's works. The threatening audience which the Futurists encountered in this area would have consisted, predominantly, of members of the urban worker and peasant classes. Their treatment of the Futurists is akin to the coarse heckling of Petrushka at the carnival, the difference being that these Futurists did not have the all-powerful and aggressive character of Petrushka. It is unclear from the report whether the Futurists were recognised as members of the group of artists who had recently been causing scandals and grabbing the newspaper headlines. Whether the crowd was aware of the Futurists' identity or not, it is implied that they took great delight in seeing off the 'young dandies'. One wonders whether their reaction would have been the same had they viewed the Futurists in a traditional theatre setting. For example, painted faces and cross-dressing may have been acceptable to the liberal audience of a cabaret where theatrical conventions included expressions of, or a play on, different sexualities. However, the inhabitants of the Petersburg slums may have reacted unpleasantly to such open displays of ambiguous sexuality or transsexuality. In Krusanov's example, the negative Futurist experience was the equivalent of having rotten eggs and tomatoes thrown at them on stage: that is, of a theatrical failure.

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<sup>37</sup> See also Maps 35 and 36 'Location of industry, 1913 II and III' in Bater, pp. 232–33, for a more comprehensive picture of industry in St. Petersburg, 1913.

Although we do not know why these particular Futurists took to the street (but assume that they were following the Futurist credo of incorporating art into daily life), it is quite clear that the incongruity of modern avant-garde artists in a working-class environment was enough to stimulate a severe reaction from the crowd. In her discussion of the non-traditional theatre setting, Susan Bennett notes how this ‘incongruity’ can ‘make a particular political statement’. She continues that ‘this can apparently confuse the spectator’s horizon of expectations [...]’.<sup>38</sup> The Futurists may have simply been enacting a Futurist prank or dare, or perhaps they were genuinely trying to market their new aesthetic of ‘art into life’, thereby increasing public access to their art. As early as April 1912, at the opening evening of the *Khudozhestvenno-artisticheskaia Assotsiatsiia*, Zagdevich had criticised individuals such as Aleksandr Benua and the exclusivity of the art exhibition and concluded that it was necessary to go to the streets and that art had to serve a useful purpose, a sentiment echoed by Il’ia Zdanevich a year later. Thus, Zagdevich is reported as having ‘invited all the artists to draw posters, signboards, to lower themselves, where they will find the real joy of creativity.’ He stated that it was time to paint the streets with artistic signs, and that there was no shame in this for the artist, quite the opposite. ‘Where snobbery reigns, there is no joy. Go and be useful artists!’ he declared.<sup>39</sup> If artists then decided to take up the democratic baton, it would appear that one of the most vital questions was forgotten: Did the inhabitants of the street actually want the recognition by and association with exhibition actors, and were they aware of the artists’ potentially revolutionary intentions when they encountered them?<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 126.

<sup>39</sup> E. Pskovitinov, ‘‘Vecher Khudozhestvenno-Artisticheskoi Assotsiatsii’ (Ot Redaktsii)’, *Protiv techeniia*, No. 27–28, 21 April 1912, pp. 4–5.

<sup>40</sup> One should not forget that many of the Futurists were familiar with the less salubrious parts of St. Petersburg. They would feel comfortable and (without their Futurist garb) inconspicuous in the environment and would be able to predict the behaviour and reactions of their neighbours. Filonov’s art, for example, shows great understanding toward the suffering and hardship that so many of the urban migrants faced on a daily basis. Indeed Velimir Khlebnikov named him ‘The superior suffering Filonov, little-known singer of urban suffering’ [Прекрасный страдальческий Филонов, малоизвестный певец городского страдания]. See commentary by Elena Basner in *Russkii Futurizm i David Burliuk, ‘Otets russkogo futurizma’*, edited by Evgeniia Petrova (St. Petersburg: Palace Editions, 2000), p. 53. Other Futurists also lived in the area, such as Mikhail Le-Dantiu. According to the *Oslinyi khvost* exhibition catalogue, Moscow 1912, Le-Dantiu resided at Gorokhovaia, 68, St. Petersburg, which is a stone’s throw from Zagorodnyi Prospekt See G. G. Pospelov, *Bubnovyi Valet: Primitiv i gorodskoi fol’klor v moskovskoi zhivopisi 1910-kh godov* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1990), p. 248.

## Moscow Antics

In autumn 1913 Moscow became the target of *Oslinyi khvost* manifestoes and street antics related to Futurist fashion. A cartoon of 18 September depicts a Futurist who is covered from head to toe in tattoos or drawings (see fig. 7). He has trouser-cuffs but no trousers, is wearing gloves and carries a stick over his shoulder which is bedecked in ribbons. An array of appendages are attached to his head and various foliage hangs from his waist. As he strolls, bare-footed, across the cobbled stones, a rotund policeman blows his whistle. Meanwhile people, including the more well-to-do gentlemen with their top- and bowler-hats and walking canes, flee from the scene. The caption reads, ‘The end goal’ [*Konechnaia tsel’*], and underneath is the short ditty, ‘A warning whistle is heard./ Uproar in the streets:/ A Futurist performs/ a walk to the madhouse’.<sup>41</sup>

Mid-September 1913 is the best-known and most documented stage of ‘situational theatre’ in Moscow. Among the Futurist manifestoes and interviews given by Larionov and his group in September was the promise that Larionov would be wearing the latest Futurist fashions at the up-coming meeting of Aesthetics, but also an invitation for the public to join the Futurists and adopt the fashions. Larionov explains how the Futurist fashions will be displayed during a series of day-walks in the central streets of Moscow. The details were as yet unknown; all was to depend on the police. In the interview of 9 September 1913, Larionov explained that he would have enough time, from the moment he left his home to the time he was carted off in an ambulance to the psychiatric hospital, to ‘show himself’.<sup>42</sup> Add to this the reference to a nose-ring, and one starts to understand how the cartoon of the Futurist might possibly be referring to Larionov himself. Although other cartoons, such as figure 126, “‘Fashions’ of the near future’, suggest an element of spontaneity in public participation in Futurist antics [this is an example of the third category of ‘situational theatre’], the difference between the St. Petersburg examples of

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Тревожный слышен свист. На улицах – содом: Свершает футурист Прогулку в желтый дом...’, *Rannee utro*, No. 215, 18 September 1913, p. 6, cited by Elena Basner, ‘“Eto my slepy, a oni vidiat novoe solntse” – Futurizm i Futuristy v zerkale russkoi pressy 1910-x godov’, in *Russkii Futurizm i David Burluk*, edited by Petrova, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Anon, ‘Raskrashennyi Larionov’, [Commentary], *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 272, 9 September 1913, p. 3.

‘situational theatre’ and Larionov’s antics is that the latter’s were advertised, and the police and general public, therefore, warned.<sup>43</sup>

An article of 15 September 1913 describes the now notorious Futurist event when Larionov, the poet Konstantin Bol’shakov and Mikhail Le-Dantiu gathered to paint their faces with Futurist designs (with Goncharova’s help) before heading off to the fashionable Kuznetskii Most area of Moscow. The most significant aspect of this event is that Larionov appears to have organised his own publicity and invited photographers to the Art Salon, thereby removing the element of public spontaneity and imposing a degree of control on the public perception of *Oslinyi khvost*. The article describes the evening as follows: various newspapers took photographs before the Futurists went in a taxi to Neglinnaia in the Kuznetskii Most area. From here they walked almost to Lubyanka. Members of the public they encountered regarded their faces with surprise. The artists were aware of unflattering comments, but their painted faces did not create a ‘sensation’ or newspaper scoop [*bum*] and the Futurist gentlemen [were able to] walk relatively modestly along Kuznetskii Most, almost reaching the Lubyanka. Here they turn around, and again take a taxi, accompanied by photographers, to the Café Filippov. Here, the reaction [of the clientele] was one of surprise, but still rather low key. Someone remarked that it was original, another that they were idiots. The Futurists [chose to] sit in the window where their painted cheeks could be seen by passers-by. But really, claims the anonymous journalist, the Futurists were not successful. ‘The Futurists have to admit’, he writes ‘that they were not understood!’ (fig. 9).

Although the event is contemporaneous with the St. Petersburg Futurist incidents, the Moscow event was reported in a more sophisticated and perceptive manner. Whilst it is true that Larionov continued to impose a degree of control over the proceedings, the journalist is quick to note the public’s over-riding reaction of incomprehension, that is, their failure to decode the Futurist actions as performance or an expression of alluring fashion. The lack of public outrage on the one hand, and

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<sup>43</sup> ‘“Mody” nedalekogo budushchego’, *Golos Moskvy*, No. 215, 18 September 1913, cited in Elena Basner, ‘La fortune critique de Nathalie Gontcharova dans la presse russe des années 1909–14’, in *Natalie Gontcharova, Michel Larionov*, edited by Nicole Ouvrard, with the assistance of Martine Reyss (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1995), pp. 188–94, p. 190. The title of the cartoon also plays on another meaning of ‘nedalekii’, and could therefore be read as ‘“Fashions” of a dim future’.



participation in the Futurist antics on the other, suggests that the public were either uninterested in or ignorant of Larionov's artistic agenda. The Café Filippov was situated on the corner of Tverskoi Boulevard and Glinishchevskii Pereulok [alley], just one street away from Bol'shaia Dmitrovka. Sharp notes that the Filippov was 'a locale noteworthy for the absence of members of the intelligentsia, and its preponderance of lackeys, shopkeepers, and prostitutes'.<sup>44</sup> In an attempt to decipher the degree to which the Futurists tried to control the development of their movement and market a political and aesthetic agenda, one could speculate that Larionov's decision to go to the Filippov was motivated by his egalitarian wish to draw attention to the more marginal figures of artistic society and to extend Futurist art to them. In return Futurism would acknowledge the positive presence of these marginal figures in society, not only through Futurist art, but also through the Futurists' reported association with venues such as the Filippov. This argument is supported by the actions of the Futurists, in that on this occasion they did not actively seek to cause a scandal, there was no reported bad language or circus-like antics, but instead the Futurists appear to have simply taken their meal like everyone else in the café. Alternatively, one could side with the reporter and suggest that the episode was nothing short of a marketing ploy.

Another notable distinction between the Petersburg and Moscow Futurist incidents was that there seemed to be little difference between the expected response of the up-market clientele of Kuznetskii Most, especially Neglinnaia and the Lubiianka, and the frequenters of the Filippov, despite the implied difference of social class. Moscow was a vibrant, sophisticated, modern city in 1913, compared to the conservatism of St. Petersburg. It is possible, therefore, that by autumn 1913 Futurism was already becoming accepted by the wider community, so that the Futurist actions were not perceived as shocking, but merely in line with the street audience's expectation. In an article dated 1 October 1913, '-dov' gave a detailed description of the atmosphere and the visitors to the Goncharova retrospective exhibition in Moscow. He illustrated Futurism's popular entertainment value with the following quotation, presumably fictional: 'They were looking for those who had

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<sup>44</sup> Jane A. Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde and Its Audience: Moscow, 1913', *Modernism/modernity: Politics / Gender / Judgement*, vol.6, 3 (1999): 91–116, p. 106 and footnote 50.

been painted. “Why are they not here today? You see, we promised to get ourselves painted?”<sup>45</sup> Maiakovskii was among the Futurists who attended the exhibition in Futurist garb. As Larionov was a dynamic, creative organiser and propagandist, it is likely that his disappointment with the lack of strong public reaction to events on the 14 September motivated him to give another interview (reported 16 September 1913), in which he is quoted as suggesting that:

it would be more effective if [the fashion of] painted faces was taken up in enclosed buildings alone – theatres, concert halls and so on. In order to test the effect of the individuals under the new conditions, appointed followers of Larionov will be going to the theatre with painted décolleté in the very near future.<sup>46</sup>

If this is true, then Larionov was seeking to target his audience more accurately. In an extension of the avant-garde practice of ‘épater les bourgeois’, Larionov was suggesting that he would attempt to challenge Moscow’s *beau monde* in a more direct manner, by bringing them face-to-face with examples of his Futurist art, in the form of painted female bosoms.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned above, theatres and concert halls were venues which excluded the lower classes on a number of different levels. On the one hand, we have identified a potential egalitarian side to Larionov’s aesthetic, with an invitation to the general public to participate in the Futurist fashions. This invitation was supported by the Futurist visit to the Filippov and suggested a broadening of the practical access to Futurism to a wider audience. However, if Larionov pursued his aim of targeting theatres and concert halls, and failed to return to less grandiose venues, such as the Filippov, could his actions be interpreted as indicative of a less egalitarian stance? As will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the publicised Futurist attitude to the public was shot through with contradictions.

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<sup>45</sup> ‘-dov’, ‘V publike’, this is a subsection of the article by E. Korsh, ‘Vystavka N. S. Goncharovoi’, *Golos Moskvy*, 1 October 1913. The articles are part of the collection in RGALI: f: 2951; op: 1; ed khr: 29, l: 35.

<sup>46</sup> Anon, ‘Raskrashennye Moskvichi’, *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 274, 16 September 1913, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> The issue of gender will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## Cabaret: a Bohemian-Middle-Class Cocktail?

### Cabaret in St. Petersburg

Futurist 'situational theatre' was not exclusive to the city street and as mentioned above, some of the most outrageous, well-documented Futurist events and scandals took place indoors, within the intimate setting of a cabaret or restaurant, or the more open setting of a public lecture or debate. The emergence of cabaret towards the end of the nineteenth century played an instrumental role in nurturing the young shoots of the avant-garde throughout Europe. In essence, cabaret's most significant contribution to the development of the avant-garde was that it provided a venue in which bohemian and often penniless artists could mix with fashionable high-society and prospective patrons, thereby creating an environment which was mutually beneficial. As Richard Stites observed, '[c]abaret held up a "crooked mirror" to high society and its art, encouraged the mixing of ethnic, class, and gender orientation (including homosexuals), and possessed a fringe of the disrespectful'.<sup>48</sup> The degree of social mixing was, of course, dependent on the entrance fee, location of venue and expected codes of etiquette. The same eclectic audience and 'fringe of the disrespectful' was at the heart of the boom in Russian cabaret and intimate theatres. The heady mixture of famous names, money, theatricality, sharp wit and overt sexuality fed public imagination and newspaper columns. This atmosphere is conveyed by Georgii Iakulov's painting *Kafe-shantan* [Café Chantant] (1912, fig. 127). Iakulov was temporarily associated with Russian Futurism. He was well travelled and had lived in France from 1911 to 12, where he undoubtedly became acquainted with French bohemian life. His painting communicated the sense of glamour, theatricality associated with the more exclusive cabarets. As early as 1911, serious debates concerning the rapid development of miniature theatres were played out in the press. These debates attracted commentary from illustrious theatre and art celebrities such as S. S. Mamontov, F. A. Korsh and F. F. Kommissarzhevskii.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Richard Stites *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, N. Shebuev, 'Miniatiury', *Vecherniaia gazeta*, No. 97, 29 November 1911, p. 1, and Esha, 'Chto takoe teatry miniatiur i nuzhny li oni?', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 166, 27 December 1911, p. 6.

Public interest in the cabarets was also supported by a sense of potential accessibility to the venue. Unlike certain social gatherings and artistic salons, the cabarets were not exclusive in the absolute sense. Although a pricing-tier system was in place, entrance could generally be gained through money alone.<sup>50</sup> The rapid growth of these new forms of public entertainment coincided with the heyday of pre-Revolutionary Russian Futurism, and the Futurists took advantage of these venues as havens of social, theatrical and intellectual intimacy.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the cabaret played such a significant role in the Futurists' cultural life that Benedikt Livshits devoted a whole chapter of his memoirs to the most famous St. Petersburg cabaret during the Futurist era, the Brodiachaia Sobaka [The Stray Dog], and other literary 'salons'.

The Brodiachaia Sobaka was situated in the basement of Ploshchad' Iskusstv 5 [Art Square] in the centre of fashionable St. Petersburg, between the current State Russian Museum, Griboedov [formerly Ekaterinskii] Canal and Nevskii Prospekt. Founded by key figures of the contemporary theatre world, Nikolai Evreinov, Boris Pronin and Nikolai Kul'bin on 31 December 1911, the Brodiachaia Sobaka maintained its reputation as the premier cabaret where Acmeists, Symbolists, Futurists, and other artists, musicians, actors, and writers gathered, with St. Petersburg's nouveau-riche, until the cabaret's forced closure in the spring of 1915.<sup>52</sup> During this period, the cabaret hosted poetry readings, lectures, theatrical interludes,

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<sup>50</sup> Although entry to the more exclusive cabarets was by membership or as a guest, it was rare that one had to seek the approval of a committee or have an official invitation, as was the case with some social and artistic circles. Instead, the patron of the cabaret would use his discretion and charge the visitor accordingly. Certain events, such as the 'Evening of Lenten Magic organized by the fakir Khadzi-Fezir', Sunday 23 February 1914, were advertised as follows: 'Вход исключительно по письменным рекомендациям гг. Действительных членов О-ва. Плата 3 рубля. Актеры, поэты, художники, музыканты и "друзья Собаки" - 1 руб.' [Entrance exclusively by written recommendations from the full members of the Society. Price 3 rubles. Actors, poets, artists, musicians and "friends of the Dog" – 1 rouble]. The purpose of this evening, which was Livshits's idea, was to raise enough money to enable the Ego-Futurist, Vasilisk Gnedov, who was heavily afflicted with tuberculosis, to travel south to the Crimea. The evening attracted a packed audience, and although it had to be closed early (due to the shocking nature of the act which entailed sticking pins into the fakir's cheeks, and swallowing burning kerosene), the Brodiachaia Sobaka raised enough funds for Gnedov to travel south. See Benedikt Livshits, *Polutoraglazi strelits* (New York: Chekhov Publishing Corporation, 1978), pp. 182–83, and *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 222–23. See 'Brodiachaia sobaka i literaturnyi "salony"', in Livshits, *Polutoraglazi strelits*, pp. 174–91, for further information on Futurist activity in the Brodiachaia sobaka.

<sup>51</sup> Swift notes how 'commercial enterprises were eager to cash in on the fashion for miniature theatre', which had been motivated by the elite venues such as the Krivoie Zerkalo [The Crooked Mirror] or the Letuchaia Mysh' [The Bat], and states that 'by 1912 there were some 125 [commercial enterprises] operating in Moscow and St. Petersburg, having lost both their elite cachet and their intimate atmosphere'. Swift, p. 137.

<sup>52</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 214, footnote 1.

musical evenings and charity events, all under the watchful eye of the compère, Pronin. Entry to the cabaret was not cheap. The flier for a musical evening, 9 April 1913, states entrance as 2 rubles for artists, poets, actors, musicians, and ‘friends’ of the Brodiachaia sobaka, and 5 rubles for guests (see fig. 46). An advertising flier for *Večer Maiakovskogo* [An Evening of Maiakovskii], 20 February 1915, states the price as 3 rubles, but with a discount, 2 rubles, for actors, poets, artists and musicians.<sup>53</sup> Livshits noted Pronin’s lack of conscience and his blatant profiteering from the nouveau-riche (who were pejoratively known as the ‘pharmacists’), as he charged them an extortionate 25 rubles to attend a reception in honour of the ballerina Tamara Karsavina.<sup>54</sup> Evenings at the Sobaka generally commenced about eleven o’clock at night and would continue into the small hours of the morning. The cabaret consisted of two small rooms with low, arched ceilings which were decorated with murals by the artist Sergei Sudeikin and, according to Livshits, could accommodate a maximum of 100 people.<sup>55</sup> The low, vaulted basement provided an intimacy and a sense of seclusion within the smoky, alcoholic vapours, which was the antithesis to the experience of attending the Imperial theatres. The combination of location, limited size of venue, timing, price and social association with the avant-garde had the natural effect of excluding the working classes who comprised the largest percentage of the St. Petersburg population. Instead, the cabaret encouraged the post-theatre revellers, including cast-members of many theatre performances.<sup>56</sup>

Although the audience was comparatively select, it was by no means homogeneous. Futurist memoirs and correspondence reveal how artistic differences between frequenters were both exaggerated and forgotten during the evening’s proceedings. In addition there existed the dichotomy between the creators of art (essentially members of the artistic world who received entry at the discounted price), and the consumers of art. Livshits’s interpretation of the pharmacists’ wish to see the literary and artistic bohemia “on home ground” and to meet it informally’ reflects the

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<sup>53</sup> TsGIA: f: 569, ‘Kantseliarii Petrogradskogo gradonachal’nika’; op: 13; ed khr: 1349, ‘Prosheniia, zaiavleniia raznykh lits ob ustroistve sobranii, lektsii za fevral’ mesiats (03–20 February 1915)’, p. 268.

<sup>54</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 215. Bowl’s footnote 5 (p. 231), explains how this reception was given upon Karsavina’s return from the 1914 London season of Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*.

<sup>55</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 220.

<sup>56</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 215.

communal dismissive attitude of the artistic bohemia toward the consumers.<sup>57</sup> For the nouveau riche consumer group, as Richard Stites writes:

[a]s a social margin, cabaret offered escape from the rigours of upper class life, a passage to adventure, an arena of controlled chaos, and a nearby exit back to normality. It combined the contrived menace of the circus with the trendy sheen of in-group company and high-toned entertainment.<sup>58</sup>

The relationship between bourgeois patron and true bohemia is made perfectly clear, the bourgeoisie were kept 'on the fringe of the fringe'. Stites's observation that 'the consumption of culture is part of a people's biography and popular culture can be a means of bonding for most people in a way that high culture cannot', brings into question the ambiguity inherent in the venue of elite cabaret. Clearly, the aforementioned dichotomy between the attitudes of the creators and consumers of art reflects Stites's definition of a bonding experience between like-minded people. Inevitably, however, the artists required the consumers' finances as much as the consumers sought the fashionable association with the artistic bohemia. Despite the tension between them, the two groups' very association with the Brodiachaia Sobaka gave them a sense of communal identity in the eyes of the public. Although the cabaret accommodated the often penniless 'literary and artistic youth' [including the Futurists] to the point at which they 'felt at home',<sup>59</sup> it also welcomed a high number of visitors who represented Russian and foreign 'high arts'. The cabaret's comparative exclusivity and status as Petersburg's premier night-time venue underlined its identity as a place where high culture invaded popular culture, and popular culture, in turn, informed high culture.

Despite Livshits's claim that the Futurists were tolerated rather than welcomed by Boris Pronin at the Brodiachaia Sobaka, it is clear that certain Futurist individuals were regular frequenters of the cabaret and many cherished their association with the

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<sup>57</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 215. See also, Livshits, *Polutoraglaziye strelets*, p. 175, 'Борис Пронин, отлично учитывая интерес, проявляемый "фармацевтами" к литературной и артистической богеме, особенно их желание видеть ее в частном быту, встречаться с нею запросто, драг с посторонних посетителей сколько взбрело на ум [...]'.  
<sup>58</sup> Stites, p. 22.  
<sup>59</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 217.

establishment.<sup>60</sup> On one occasion Il'ia Zdanevich wrote to Aleksandr Kul'bin to request his help because Zdanevich was in Moscow and sought an introduction from Kul'bin for two of his friends in St. Petersburg, in order that they would be able to visit the Brodiachaia Sobaka (presumably at the discounted price for members and friends of the club).<sup>61</sup> In another draft letter to his mother, dated 7 April [1913], Zdanevich mentions how he had been at the Brodiachaia Sobaka the previous evening with 'Marina Alekseevna'. There he was able to give out free tickets for his lecture of 7 April 1913. He described how they drank Curaçao and Benedictine [alcohol frequently associated with the Parisian avant-garde and bohemia] and how Marina Alekseevna was surrounded by young poets who tried to engage her in conversation.<sup>62</sup> This description of the atmosphere of the cabaret, which emphasises the cocktail of sexual attraction, intellectual stimulation of the artist, and abundance of exotic drinks, is reflected in S. Zhivotovskii's sketch which depicts the opening of the Brodiachaia Sobaka (fig. 128) and Blaise Cendrars' erotic fantastical interpretation of 'A Visit to the Stray Dog, St. Petersburg'.<sup>63</sup>

The visit of internationally renowned artists such as Max Linder, the French actor and so-called 'King of the Stage', and the head of Italian Futurism, Filippo Marinetti, to St. Petersburg in November 1913 and February 1914 drew the attention of the Russian Futurists. These two modern, foreign celebrities were lauded by the Russian public and metropolitan press. After their official engagements, and having been the object of public adulation, both celebrities ended up in the smoke-filled rooms of the Brodiachaia Sobaka in the company of the Russian Futurists. In this situation the Futurists gained the upper hand and became the focus of the public

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<sup>60</sup> Livshits's memoirs state that the Futurists tried to win Pronin's trust, but that the latter simply did not respect them. Livshits ascribes this lack of trust to Pronin's constant fear of the police and censorship, and I would add, ultimately, closure. (See Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 218–19.) However, I would suggest that Livshits's claim that the Futurists constituted a particular worry to Pronin and the authorities, within the effervescent, theatrical and intellectually sophisticated environment of the Brodiachaia Sobaka, was an exaggeration of the Futurist anarchic character and their social importance in comparison to poets such as Anna Akhmatova or Gumilev. It is more likely that Pronin was frustrated with the Futurists because he felt the need to accommodate them, although many were too poor to spend very much money.

<sup>61</sup> GRM: f: 177 – Zdanevichei Il'i i Kirila; ed khr: 50 – 'Zdanevich I. M. Chernovye pis'ma raznym litsam'; l: 14, Letter to Aleksandr Nikolaevich Kul'bin, [March 1913].

<sup>62</sup> GRM: f: 177; ed khr: 50; l: 27.

<sup>63</sup> Blaise Cendrars, 'A visit to The Stray Dog, St. Petersburg' (from *Le Plan de l'aiguille*) 1927, in *Cabaret Performance*, vol. 1, *Europe 1890–1920: Sketches, Songs, Monologues, Memoirs*, edited by Laurence Senelick (New York: PAJ, 1989), pp. 180–82.

attention, including Pronin's attention. Livshits described the meeting of Maiakovskii (fig. 129) with Linder as follows:

[t]he home-spun striped jacket eclipsed the [Parisian's] stupendous morning-coat; and in the duel of the two top-hats — the "top-hat as such" and the budetlianin top-hat — the defeat of the former could not be explained by the patriotism of the Russian public, which was always ready to give preference to things foreign.<sup>64</sup>

This is a clear statement which reveals how comfortable the Futurists felt within the environment of the Brodiachaia Sobaka. It exposes a discernible level of Futurist popularity, particularly within the context of the clientele of the cabaret, and in comparison to the mainstream audience. Livshits's narrative of the way in which Linder was outwitted by Maiakovskii also serves to emphasise the insider-outsider psychology which was prevalent among the artistic avant-garde of the Brodiachaia Sobaka. Marinetti was fêted at the Brodiachaia Sobaka and seems to have exhibited an agility of mind and character in the presence of so many different cabaret interlocutors. Livshits communicates a begrudging admiration for Marinetti and notes how the Italian Futurist leader spent several nights at the cabaret and managed to respond to a diverse range of comments in a charming fashion and educate the assembled audience without once feeling the need to leave his chair and take centre-stage on the rostrum.

Figure 115 is a photograph of the first ball of the Brodiachaia Sobaka which was held in a central location, in the hall of the Swedish Church of St. Ekaterina, on Malaia Koniushennaia, 3, February 1914. Marinetti is identified as the man in the centre of the right-hand group.<sup>65</sup> The hall was obviously much larger than the cabaret and could accommodate a much bigger audience, thereby maximising the cabaret's public exposure and making the occasion potentially more profitable for the organisers. Interestingly, the occasion does not appear to have required full evening dress. The participants are dressed in fashionable, but relaxed attire, and some of the

<sup>64</sup> Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 158, and Livshits, *Polutoraglazyi strelets*, p. 117.

<sup>65</sup> The picture appears in *Peterburg: Khudozhestvennaia Zhizn' 1900–1916 Fotoletopis'*, edited by A. A. Golovina et al (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo - STB, 2001), figs. 127 and 128, and is dated 1913. However, as Marinetti was only in St. Petersburg in February 1914, either the date or the identification of Marinetti in the audience is incorrect. Another copy of the photograph is to be found in the photography section of TsADKM [ref. No. B1010 622]. This copy is dated February 1914, St. Petersburg.



men have arrived in their military uniforms. Compare, for example, the audience from the ball at the Brodiachaia Sobaka with that of the inauguration of the new hall of the Emperor Nicholas II People's House, 1912 (fig. 130). In the supposedly more democratic, less exclusive setting of a People's House (with a capacity of 1500 seats), the audience is in full evening dress.<sup>66</sup> The ladies are sporting ermine stoles and feathered hats, while the gentlemen are in full military dress uniform or black tie. The use of the hall at the Swedish church demonstrates how the organisers at the Brodiachaia Sobaka did not feel the need to restrict their social enterprise to the venue on Ploshchad' Iskusstv alone, but successfully transferred their artistic association when financially viable.

Roman Jakobson mentions a Moscow version of the Brodiachaia Sobaka, where he spent the New Year (1913/14) with Khlebnikov and former schoolmate, Isaak Kan. He described an event which again illustrates how popular, and even fashionable, the Russian Futurists had become, how they engaged with their audience and how they gave impromptu performances. According to Jakobson, an elegant young lady approached Khlebnikov and said some said that he was a genius, others a madman, and she wanted to know which was true. Khlebnikov smiled weakly and quietly replied that he did not think that either was true. It turned out that the young woman was holding a copy of Khlebnikov's book, *Riav!* and so she asked him to sign it. Having thought a moment he wrote, 'I know neither to whom, or for what purpose' [*Ne znaiu komu, ne znaiu dlia chego*]. The audience begged him to perform something and he initially refused. However, encouraged by Jakobson and Kan's insistence, Khlebnikov recited his poem *Kuznichika* [The Little Smithy] in an atmosphere of complete silence.<sup>67</sup>

The popularity of cabaret and the Futurists' participation in it — either as performers or audience, or occasionally as the parodied subject matter of the performance —

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<sup>66</sup> See I. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i zritel' rossiiskikh stolits, 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), p. 77 for more details of the Nicholas II People's House.

<sup>67</sup> Bengt Jangfel'dt [Jangfeldt], ed., *Jakobson-Budetlianin: Sbornik Materialov* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), pp. 20–21. Izrail' L'vovich Kan (1895–1945) was Jakobson's classmate at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages. Kan was editor of the school journal, *Student's Thought*, in which Jakobson published his first literary experiments. See Roman Jakobson, *My Futurist Years*, edited by Bengt Jangfeldt and Stephen Rudy, translated with an introduction by Stephen Rudy (New York: Marsilio, 1997), p. 5, footnote 2.

extended far beyond the boundaries of the Brodiachaia Sobaka. In St. Petersburg, for example, the Krivoie zerkalo [Crooked Mirror] was among the best-known miniature theatres which specialised in one-act plays. It enjoyed a relatively healthy longevity in private theatrical terms. Initially situated on the wide boulevard of Liteinyi 42 (an approximately 10-minute walk north of Nevskii Prospekt) from 1908 to 1910, it then moved to the more modish address of Ekaterinskii Canal 90, just off Teatral'naia Ploshchad' from 1910 to 1913.<sup>68</sup> The increased capacity of the newly refurbished 750-seat theatre reflects the growing commercialism and popularity of the miniature theatres during this period. Harold Segel notes that the Krivoie zerkalo staged one production, *The African Princess*, more than one thousand times during the theatre's lifetime and the heroine's name, Vampuka, entered contemporary parlance.<sup>69</sup> The photograph of the performance in figure 131 shows the cast and the elaborate costumes.

### Cabaret in Moscow

The fashion for cabaret had been developing with the same fervour in Moscow. The most famous of the Moscow cabarets was undoubtedly Nikita Baliev's *Letuchaia mysh'* [The Bat]. As Bowlt notes, *Letuchaia mysh'* was opened on 29 February 1908 by Baliev and fellow actors of the Moscow Arts Theatre. It was situated just off Red Square, on the banks of the River Moscow and served as a private venue for associates of MKhAT to unwind after an evening's performance. In 1910, however, *Letuchaia mysh'* moved to a location within the north-eastern section of Moscow's Boulevard Circle, Miliutinskii Pereulok, 16. According to Bowlt, the space resembled a European cabaret (see figs. 132 and 127) with 'a small stage [...] built at one end of the room and small tables seating eighty people [which] occupied the

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<sup>68</sup> Documents relating to the Krivoie Zerkalo are to be found in TsGIA, St. Petersburg, f: 569; op: 13; d: 739; ll: 39, 45, 78–80, among others. These follow the miniature theatre's application for registration as a private department [*otdel*] of the Imperial Russian Theatre society. For further information on the Krivoie Zerkalo, see Laurence Senelick, 'Boris Geyer and Cabaretic Playwriting' in *Russian Theatre in the Age of Modernism*, edited by Robert Russell and Andrew Barrett (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 33–65; John E. Bowlt, 'Cabaret in Russia', *CASS*, vol.19, 4 (1985): 443–63; 'Cabaret in Russia: More Bats, Crooked Mirrors, and Stray Dogs', in Harold B. Segel, *Turn-of-the-Century Cabaret: Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Zurich* (New York, Guildford: Columbia UP, 1987), pp. 255–320; and Petrovskaia, pp. 99–101.

<sup>69</sup> See Segel, 'Cabaret in Russia', pp. 283–85.

remaining space'. '[S]trictly speaking, the cabaret was still open only to MKhAT employees (non-members were allowed in, however, if they could produce a petition signed by twelve MKhAT actors)'.<sup>70</sup> The Letuchaia mysh', like the Brodiachaia sobaka, did not come to life until midnight. As Segel notes, the late hour was not dictated by fashion, but rather by practicalities, as many of the participants were theatre people who could only arrive at the Letuchaia mysh' once they had completed their own theatrical obligations.<sup>71</sup>

As early as 1911, however, Baliev's plans to bring his exclusive cabaret to a wider audience were being reported and decried in the local press. N. Shebuev, for example, acknowledged the greatness of Baliev's ambition and the fact that Letuchaia mysh' was not just an artistic environment, but a business enterprise, '*firma*', with the potential to attract a much wider, although less informed audience.<sup>72</sup> Shebuev seems to bemoan the passing exclusivity, the intimacy and sharp wit of the cabaret, which was a product of the interaction between the performers, Baliev's own personality, and the calibre and wit of the informed audience. To compensate for the lack of high-calibre theatrical regulars (such as Stanislavskii or Nemirovich-Danchenko) Shebuev reports that Baliev has had to redouble his efforts. On a mission of self-marketing, Baliev is said to be appearing everywhere and 'showering witticisms'. In 1913, Baliev realised his ambition, and Letuchaia mysh' moved to new premises on Tverskaia and was opened to the public for the princely admission charge of 12 rubles. Specific changes were made to the cabaret's format which reflect Baliev's recognition of the cabaret's growing popularity and its commercial potential. Performances now began at half-past-eight, instead of the previous bohemian midnight. A fashionably decorated buffet and foyer were added, and the cabaret's status was reinforced through the many pictures and photographs of the 'Bat' company which adorned the walls. The previous intimate layout of table and chairs was now replaced with chairs arranged in rows, in the tradition of a miniature theatre. The photograph in figure 133 depicts the stage curtain and central aisle of the auditorium. Segel notes that there were even boxes in the auditorium, reinforcing the cabaret's modern commercial bourgeois character,

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<sup>70</sup> Bowlt, 'Cabaret in Russia', p. 448.

<sup>71</sup> Segel, 'Cabaret in Russia', p. 259.

<sup>72</sup> N. Shebuev, 'Miniatiury', p. 1.

rather than its previous intimate artistic atmosphere.<sup>73</sup> Baliev's enterprise was successful, in terms of attracting audience and maintaining its reputation as the premier cabaret in Moscow. It remained on Tverskaia until its closure in 1919.<sup>74</sup>

The history of Brodiachaia sobaka and Letuchaia mysh' illustrates how the artistic evolution and success of the establishments were dependent on their financial stability. The success of both enterprises was based on the provision of a permanent venue in which to hold the performances, the maintenance of a good reputation (in terms of performance, entertainment, high-calibre personalities and celebrities, and the potential for gossip), and relative exclusivity, balanced with relative public access (social and geographical). Both enterprises provided fertile environments in which established performers and patrons could form artistic collaborations and associations.

### **'Kabare Futuristov'**

As Futurism gained popularity, Futurist theatre in cabaret settings became more commonplace and began to reach a wider, predominantly middle-class audience. Larionov, Goncharova and Maiakovskii, for example, all took part in the reported events of the 'kabare futuristov' which offended Konstantin Bal'mont, but delighted the assembled crowd in the Rozovyi fonar' café.<sup>75</sup> As Larionov's plans for a Teatr Futu at a fixed address did not come to fruition, he and his group of Futurists were forced to resort to an array of venues. According to one journalist, Dogle, the organisers had marketed the opening of the cabaret as a 'kabare Futuristov'. However, Dogle and other journalists also note that the Futurists had been invited as guests, rather than performers.<sup>76</sup> No doubt the combination of a new cabaret and the

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<sup>73</sup> Segel, 'Cabaret in Russia', pp. 255–65.

<sup>74</sup> Baliev left Russia in 1920. He had been arrested in Moscow the previous year. He regrouped members of his troupe in Paris and performed at the Théâtre Femina, under the French name of Chauve-Souris. Baliev later enjoyed great touring success in France, Germany, England and the USA.

<sup>75</sup> Note that at the same time that Maiakovskii was enjoying his participation in the evening's events in Moscow with the Oslinyi khvost group, he was also committed to his own 'Tragedy' with the St. Petersburg Futurists and Soiuz molodezhi at the Luna Park Theatre, St. Petersburg.

<sup>76</sup> Dogle., 'Shabash Futuristov. Skandal v kabare "Rozovyi Fonar"', Larionov vyzvan na duel'', *Rannee utro*, No. 243, 22 October 1913, p. 6; Anon, 'Sud'ba "Rozovogo Fonaria"', *Rannee utro*, No. 243, p. 6.

presence of the Futurists, who had recently been advertising their manifestoes for Futurist fashion, was alluring to the middle classes who followed the latest cultural trends and also had sufficient funds to participate in them. The event itself caused a stir and was reported in a number of newspapers. We shall discuss the evening in terms of audience reaction and Futurist interaction in Chapters 4 and 5, but for the purposes of this chapter, let us consider the layout of the cabaret and the format of the evening.

An article by Sar-, 21 October 1913, in *Stolichnaia molva*, describes the scene and the sense of near chaos which pervaded the restaurant.<sup>77</sup> The restaurant is packed out. People are standing by the windows and in the entrance. It is impossible to breathe or move. Trays of food sail above people's heads from the buffet. The [bourgeois] public are described negatively, both in terms of their appearance and their propensity for squandering money. Among the heckles and crude comments the unexpected cry was heard, 'Gentlemen, this is not a cheap restaurant [*traktir*]! Please respect the art!' Doble writes how the public were bored with the programme on offer and so, after persistent requests, Maiakovskii in his yellow jacket took to the stage to recite three lines of poetry:

Над вами шевелится  
Стоглавая вошь

Above you is writhing  
A one-hundred-headed louse.

Я плюну в ваши лица!

I spit in your faces!

This, of course, elicited a general uproar from the crowd, who, Sar- writes, 'applauded like young psychopaths'. The performers are reported to be of the most leftist variety, 'viktor'ianty' [possibly a reference to the forthcoming *Pobeda nad solntsem*] and 'luchisty' [Rayonists]. The cabaret was so packed and the noise so overwhelming that many could not see the stage or even hear the proceedings clearly. Doble notes that the atmosphere became more intense and the audience continued to demand the Futurists, often using the term *ryzhii* [clown]. At two o'clock in the morning, a programme for a Futurist performance was given out. Finally Goncharova and Larionov took to the stage, but they were forced to stand on chairs, in order to be seen. Even the well-mannered Bal'mont climbed on to his chair

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<sup>77</sup> Sar-, 'V "Rozovom fonare"', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 333, 21 October 1913, p. 6.

to direct the following comments at Larionov: ‘Everything that you do is beautiful. Everything that you paint is splendid [*prekrasno*]!’ The Symbolist was snubbed by Larionov and exited the restaurant offended (see fig. 134). Sar-, however, wonders why the celebrated Symbolist poet decided to come to such a shameful event [*pozorishche*]. The scandalous evening continued into the night. It is not clear from this report whether the establishment itself and its clientele are of dubious character, or whether it is the Futurists who are degrading the cabaret’s reputation.

Interestingly, Sar- notes that during the shenanigans, it was announced that Larionov was not taking any money from the cabaret. If this were true, then it supports the statement that the Futurists were invited purely as guests. The lack of payment may have been a tactical decision to avoid the attention of the police, so that if there was any disturbance of the peace, the Futurists could then argue that they had not planned to perform, but did so only at the behest of the management. The evening at the ‘Rozovyi fonar’ café gives us a sense of how the Futurists managed to interact with the public. Clearly, Oslinyi khvost’s lack of an established venue for Futurist theatre and the absence of a collaborative partner, association or patron, such as Soiuz molodezhi and Levkii Zheverzheev meant that Larionov’s group were at the mercy of restaurants and cabarets. The packed restaurant in this instance would suggest that the Futurists were considered as potential ‘money-spinners’ for the proprietor of the establishment. The tone of the journalist seems to suggest that the Futurists were received as entertainers to accompany the meal, rather than independent artists with a specific aesthetic agenda. It is likely that the frenzied atmosphere was fuelled by the mixture of the activity of the restaurant, copious amounts of alcohol, and the wealthy bourgeois seeking entertainment in the exclusive setting. One wonders whether the Futurists would have been received in the same manner, had they performed at a miniature theatre or any other venue which did not involve eating or drinking in the same space as the performance? That is, in a venue where the audience’s primary reason for gathering was the Futurist performance itself.

Indoor public displays of Futurist performance, as we have seen above, were not restricted to advertised performances alone, but frequently took the format of impromptu poetry readings, hecklings, or public affronts. Benedikt Livshits, for example, recorded an incident which took place at a vegetarian restaurant in Moscow

and involved Vladimir Maiakovskii. Livshits describes contemporary vegetarianism as a militant sect which represented something akin to the meeting of Tolstoyism and occult doctrines forbidding the use of meat. The purity of the doctrine was reflected in the whiteness of the tablecloths, the waitresses' kerchiefs and the all-pervasive sense of hygiene. Livshits describes how Maiakovskii's top-hat and striped jacket clashed 'with the super-dietetic grandeur of these walls (whence even timid thoughts of mustard were expelled as something sinful)'. Maiakovskii is said to have stood up and 'bellowed as if belching after eating something vegetarian' a verse which he had just written:

<p>В ушах обрывки теплого бала, А с севера снега седей— Туман с кровожадным лицом каннибала Жевал невкусных людей. Часы нависали, как грубая брань, За пятым навис шестой, А с неба смотрела какая-то дрянь Величественно, как Лев Толстой.<sup>78</sup></p>	<p>Snatches of the warm ball still sounded, And from the north, hoarier than snow— Fog with the bloodthirsty face of a cannibal Was masticating tasteless people. The hours were suspended like vulgar abuse, Six o'clock after five, And a good-for-nothing looked down from heaven, Majestically like Lev Tolstoi.</p>
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Livshits noted how this provoked an aggressive reaction from the 'vegetarianating Maenades'.<sup>79</sup> However, having pushed their way through the crowds to safety, Maiakovskii added insult to injury and whilst impersonating the Ego-Futurist, Severianin, hurled verses at the crowds comparing them to the 'ladies' cavalry'. Retaining his composure, Maiakovskii exited the restaurant with Livshits. The latter claims that the incident did not appear in the following day's newspapers because the restaurateur was on good terms with the police and did not seek any scandal. Without a police report there was no scandal, and therefore no news.

### Social Networking

Private residences, intellectual circles and society salons provided a more exclusive environment in which the Futurists could mix with other artists, intellectuals and

<sup>78</sup> Livshits, *Polutoraglazi strelets*, pp. 103–05. Translation of the 'vegetarian verse' is based on Bowl's in *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 145.

<sup>79</sup> Bowl's translation of *vegetarianstvuiushchie menada*.

patrons of the arts. Levkii Zheverzheev's home, for example, functioned as the headquarters of the *Soiuz molodezhi* and provided a venue for the bi-weekly meetings of the avant-gardists. These meetings provided much needed support, societal and artistic camaraderie and intellectual stimulation for the young avant-gardists. The exclusive circles often provided a sympathetic platform from which the Futurists could try out their poetry, before facing the onslaught of the general public. For example, in a draft letter to his mother dated 8 March 1913, Il'ia Zdanevich noted that he was going to 'read' at Beata Andzhelika's for an 'intimate group' [in Moscow] for a fee of 50 rubles. The following day, he was to perform at the Polytechnical Museum.<sup>80</sup> In his memoirs, Livshits mentions the salon of Valerian Chudovskii and his beautiful wife, Anna Zel'manova, as a regular meeting place for Futurists with Acmeists and other members of the literary and theatrical world.<sup>81</sup> Livshits also points to the attic of Ivan and Ksana Puni on Gatchinskaia as the true 'salon' of the 'budetliane'. The Punis had recently returned from Paris (1913) and are said to have 'transferred the Montmartre *joie de vivre* and freedom of spirit to their attic'. Khlebnikov (who is said to have been quite taken with Ksana Puni), Kolia [Nikolai] Burliuk, Mikhail Matiushin, Maiakovskii and Igor' Severianin are all said to have gathered at the Punis and enjoyed the intellectual rigour of the environment and the wit and beauty of the hostess. Ksana Puni (née Boguslavskaia) also funded the publication of the Futurist edition, *Rykaiushchii Parnas* [Roaring Parnassus]. However, following their departure to Marseilles in February 1914 (because of Ivan's poor health), the Futurist publication was confiscated by the authorities and the meetings at Gatchinskaia came to an end.

Nikolai Kul'bin's residence, on Maksimilianovskii, St. Petersburg was a natural gathering place for Futurists and other members of the literary and theatrical society. Marinetti was received there as an honoured guest during his visit to St. Petersburg in February 1914.<sup>82</sup> In Moscow, following his lecture at the Conservatory, Marinetti was spirited off to the *Literaturno-Khudozhestvennyi Kruzhok* [Literary Artistic Circle], on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka. This was an important social and intellectual

<sup>80</sup> GRM: f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 9ob-10.

<sup>81</sup> Bowlt provides the following information in Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 223, footnote 24: 'Valerian Adolfovich Chudovskii (1872-1919), short story writer and literary critic, member of the editorial board of *Apollon*. His wife Anna Mikhailovna Zelmanova [dates unknown] was an associate of the *Union of Youth* and contributed to some of its exhibitions as a painter.'

<sup>82</sup> Krusanov, p. 172.



society in Moscow with its own restaurant, large library and large billiard-hall. According to Bowlit, Bal'mont, Valerii Briusov, Viacheslav Ivanov, and Leonid Sobinov were included in its membership.<sup>83</sup> Marinetti's status as a bone fide artist was therefore greatly enhanced by a visit to this artistic society. Undoubtedly, much discussion did take place between the Futurists and other literary, artistic and theatrical figures within the confines of salons and private meetings, but such gatherings were exclusive. If we wish to explore a more democratic form of Futurist aesthetic, performance and direct interaction with the public, then we must turn our attention to the Futurist debate.

### Public Lectures and Debates: Moscow

Public lectures and debates were commonplace in the early 1910s. As a result of the humanitarian concern for public well-being and improvement, which had been growing since the implementation of new social policies of the 1860s, concerned industrialists and philanthropists organised a wide range of public lectures. The purpose of many of these lectures was to educate the predominantly illiterate workforce and help the migrant population adjust to life in the city in a responsible manner. The lectures took place in People's Houses, factories and other city venues.<sup>84</sup> The combination of an established audience for public lectures in the metropolises, together with the attention of the press and other forms of marketing, ensured that the Futurist debates were an immediate success. Although the Futurists were not always able to complete their programme and set out their aesthetic aims (because of strong audience reaction or police intervention), they were always capable of attracting a lively audience and indulging in an exercise of self-promotion. The venues in which their lectures took place were typically city-centre

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<sup>83</sup> See Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 182, footnote 6.

<sup>84</sup> For example, applications to the St. Petersburg *gradonachal'nik* to hold public lectures include an application for a lecture entitled 'The Keys to Happiness: A. Verbitskaia and modern ethics of feminism'. It was scheduled to take place on 7 April 1913 at the Russian Merchant Society for Mutual Assistance', on Vladimirskii Prospekt, 12, (the same area where the Ego-Futurists had encountered problems with the locals during their afternoon stroll) [see pp. 130–33 of the archive reference]. Another application was made, 1 April 1913, for a lecture entitled 'The influence of alcohol on the human organism', by Dr. Romanov (p. 38). For details of these and many other applications for public lectures, see TsGIA: f: 569: op: 13, d: 1032 'Perepiska o razreshenii sobranii i lektsii raznykh obshchestv (23 March 1913 – 30 April 1913)'.

locations. These included the Polytechnical Museum, the Conservatory, the Moscow Literary Circle and the Society of Art Lovers in Moscow, and the Troitskii Theatre, Tenishevskii Hall, the Swedish Church of St. Ekaterina, the Kalashnikov Exchange in St. Petersburg, and a number of different schools and university venues.<sup>85</sup> As with all Futurist performances, the audience and procedure for each of the Futurist events was dependent upon a number of factors which included the marketing for each event, the timing of the performance, its location, the size of the venue, the price of the tickets and the number of seats sold, the expected social etiquette at each performance, and the social and theatrical associations of the venue.

The first major Futurist debate was organised by Bubnovyi valet and took place on 12 February 1912, at 8pm, in the Grand Auditorium of the Polytechnical Museum. An article by B. Sh[uisikii] in *Protiv techeniia* noted how the debate attracted over one thousand people, many more than the hall could accommodate. Sh[uisikii] also suggests that the fact that it was only the first week after the closure of the theatres [for Lent] accounted for the popularity of the Bubnovyi valet event as people did not know what to do with themselves (and were, therefore, more receptive to new or unfamiliar forms of public entertainment).<sup>86</sup> According to Livshits's account, such was the popularity of the event, including a large number of people without a ticket, that the police had to be called to restore order. Figure 135 is a photograph of the impressive building of the Polytechnical Museum and figure 136 is a photograph of the interior of its Grand Hall, taken in 1914 during Marinetti's public lecture. The latter photograph gives us an indication of how close the speakers were to the members of the audience, and in this case, as in many other lectures, how the audience were crammed into the hall so that they lined the aisles and the walls. The staggered seating of the auditorium meant that segregation of the audience was minimal. Each individual was not as visible as he/she would have been in a traditional Imperial theatre setting, nor were they as concealed as the cabaret environment. The close proximity of the audience to each other and to the speakers, with minimal boundaries, had a bonding effect on the audience. It promoted their sense of identity and gave them a greater sense of confidence, which was witnessed

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<sup>85</sup> Il'ia Zdanevich's lecture 'On Natal'ia Goncharova', 31 March 1914, took place in the Concert Hall of the Petropavlovskoe Uchilishche [School], on Bol'shaia Koniushennaia, 10. The price of the tickets for this city-centre location is not stated on the advertising poster, see fig. 28.

<sup>86</sup> B. Sh[uisikii], 'Moskva, Khudozhestvennyi disput', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 22, 18 February 1912, p. 3.

in the level of heckling which accompanied the debates. Of the 1912 lecture, Livshits wrote:

In the huge hall there wasn't room to swing a cat. The choirs, the benches in the amphitheatre, the sides of the walls, the aisles and even the stage on which sat the presidium headed by Konchalovskii were filled 'to overflowing' with people.<sup>87</sup>

This debate was followed by a second, also at the Polytechnical Museum, 24 February 1912. An article by 'B' in *Ranee utro* states that the scandal of the first debate (in which Larionov and Goncharova had appeared and publicly split with Bubnovyi valet) lured the audience to the second debate, so that it was a sell-out event. More scandals and heckling ensued and the dispute continued until nearly one o'clock in the morning.<sup>88</sup> Although there is no price stated on the advertising poster for the first debate (fig. 47), the advertising posters for the Futurist debates of 24 February 1913 (fig. 48) and 19 February 1914 (fig. 50) both show ticket prices of 30 kopeks to 3 rubles. In light of my earlier comments regarding targeted audience, working hours and the price of tickets for Futurist exhibitions, and Livshits's note that many of those seeking tickets were students, I would say that the debate was affordable for those members of the working classes who were particularly interested in attending a Futurist performance, especially those who lived locally.

The Museum was situated on Ploshchad' Novaia [New Square] in the very heart of central Moscow. The link between geographical accessibility and audience attendance is reinforced by Anthony Swift, who refers to a survey which analysed the leisure and cultural activities of the workers of Moscow's Tsindel cotton mill in 1900. Although the percentage of unskilled and semi-skilled workers who attended public lectures, the circus or a city theatre performance was negligible, 43% of these workers visited the Polytechnical Museum. The survey states that only a few of them visited the Tret'iakov Gallery and the Rumiantsev Museum despite their close proximity to the factory. The degree of interaction with city cultural life was far greater among the skilled workers. Visitors to the Polytechnical Museum explained that they visited it regularly because it was situated near the flea market where they

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<sup>87</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 78.

<sup>88</sup> B., 'Na dispute "Bubnovogo valeta"', *Ranee utro*, No. 47, 26 February 1912, p. 5.

(unskilled and semi-skilled workers) ‘purchased clothing, shoes, and other necessities’.<sup>89</sup> In the early 1910s, the Polytechnical Museum became a cultural reference for the lower-working classes through default, rather than strictly on its own merits alone. This notwithstanding, by the turn of the century, the Polytechnical Museum is said to have become the main scientific, cultural and educational centre in Russia.<sup>90</sup>

The status of the venue would have been a contributing factor to the popularity of the debates which took place at the Polytechnical Museum. This and other factors may have tempted a member of the working classes with limited funds to save up and buy a ticket to a Futurist performance. Susan Bennett, for example, observes the connection between the pleasure of the experience of being in a theatre, the theatrical pleasure of attending, in addition to the performance itself – all in relation to the price and availability of the ticket. She also quotes the work of Stanley Kauffman, who ‘has argued that the high price of theatre tickets is not only an economic necessity but part of the theatre-going thrill’.<sup>91</sup> Many other artistic and specifically Futurist debates took place at the Polytechnical Museum. These included the Bubnovyi valet debate which was dedicated to the ‘Artistic Value of the vandalised [*postradavshei*] painting by Repin’ (a reference to Repin’s painting of Ivan IV killing his son, which had recently been slashed by the mentally ill Balashov at the Tret’iakov Gallery);<sup>92</sup> Kornei Chukovskii’s anti-Futurist lecture of 24 February 1913; the *Mishen*’ debate of 23 March 1913 which ended in chaos and the arrest of Larionov; Marinetti’s first lecture on Russian soil, 27 January 1914, and the general debate concerning the so-called crisis in modern theatre that was held on 30 January 1914 and chaired by Fedor Sologub.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> According to Swift, the ‘1900 survey of over 1,200 workers found that only 2 percent had ever been to a public lecture, 9 percent to a circus, and 11 percent to a performance at one of the city’s theatres.’ Swift, p. 132.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Можно сказать, что в конце XIX — начале XX веков музей стал главным научным, культурным и просветительным центром России’, <http://www.deol.ru/culture/museum/politeh/politeh.htm>, accessed 27 July 2004. According to Bowlt, the Polytechnical Museum had hosted Andrei Belyi’s public lecture, ‘Art of the Future’ in 1907. See John E. Bowlt, ‘The Moscow Art Market’, in *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, edited by Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), pp.108–28 (p. 119).

<sup>91</sup> Susan Bennett, p. 118.

<sup>92</sup> See Krusanov, pp. 77–79.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Anon, ‘Disput o sovremennom teatre’, *Rannee utro*, No. 25, 31 January 1914, p. 5.

The growing popularity of Russian Futurism and the increased demand for the Futurist debate as a form of public entertainment is reflected in the increased ticket price of Futurist events that took place from March 1913 onwards. According to a draft letter by Il'ia Zdanevich, tickets for the Mishen' debate of 23 March 1913 were priced at 50 kopeks to 5.10 rubles.<sup>94</sup> It is not clear whether this was the decision of the Futurists or their patron. The advert for Marinetti's lecture in 1914 stated that tickets were priced at 60 kopeks to 5.50 rubles (fig. 33). In the case of Marinetti's lecture, the high ticket prices may also be an indication of the Russian obsession with foreign artists. Both debates, however, echo Kauffman's argument. Many journalists criticised the high price of tickets for Futurist debates. Nikandr Turkin, for example, sought a quantifiable concept of value for money and wrote that first row seats [at debates] were not dissimilar to premier prices at the theatre, 5.10 rubles, but that this price did not guarantee the spectator anything.<sup>95</sup> The well-dressed audience in a photograph of Marinetti's lecture (reproduced in Krusanov's *Russkii avangard*) also reveals a change in the type of audience which the debates were attracting, certainly for this particular debate.<sup>96</sup> A higher class of audience would suggest the potential for higher ticket prices and therefore greater profit for the patron.

### Public Lectures and Debates: St. Petersburg

In St. Petersburg, the Troitskii Theatre on Troitskaia, 18 [now Ulitsa Rubinshteina], was established as a major venue for Futurist debates as early as 20 November 1912 when David Burliuk gave his lecture *Chto takoe kubizm (Razgovor o zhivopisi)* [What is this Cubism (A Conversation about Art)].<sup>97</sup> Situated just south of Nevskii

<sup>94</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 16ob–17.

<sup>95</sup> Nikandr Turkin, 'Obshchestvennost', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 243, 25 March 1913, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> A photograph from Marinetti's lecture of 1 February 1914 in St. Petersburg, which is reproduced in Krusanov, p. 171, depicts a gathering of well-dressed people. Krusanov has noted the many Russian Futurists and their associates who were present and prominent in the gathering. These include A. Lur'e, B. Livshits (who were both responsible for the Russian Futurists later 'Reply' to Marinetti, in the form of a series of counter-lectures and debate), N. Kul'bin, V. Gnedov, F. Dolidze, N. Burliuk, O. Rozanova and B. Pronin.

<sup>97</sup> According to Bowlt, Burliuk gave many versions of this lecture from December 1911 through to 1913. See Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 78, footnote 20.

Prospekt, between the Fontanka and Vladimirskii Prospekt, the theatre was surrounded by printing and paper works and was close to the rather down-market areas which are so frequently depicted by Dostoevskii. Despite its unremarkable location, the Troitskii Miniature Theatre was a popular venue which hosted a wide range of events and could seat over 300 people. It was managed by A. M. Fokin, brother of Mikhail Fokin the choreographer,<sup>98</sup> and in December 1913 was used to rehearse the Luna Park productions. As the auditorium was not as large as that of the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, the atmosphere was more intimate and even more conducive to creating a strong audience identity and encouraging audience participation. The photograph of the interior of the theatre, figure 137, and the seating plan in figure 138, gives us a concrete picture of the layout and capacity of the theatre. The photograph depicts a banquet which was held at the Troitskii to celebrate its anniversary in 1912. The guests are in formal attire and include eminent figures from the theatre world, such as the actor Vladimir Davydov from the Aleksandrinskii Imperial Theatre (the rather corpulent white-haired gentleman who is seated second from the right in the first row). They are seated on wooden chairs which would ordinarily be facing the small stage at the far end of the hall. Burliuk's debate was scheduled for 8pm, thereby giving the public enough time to reach the theatre after work. Tickets were priced from 50 kopeks to 2.5 rubles. Fifty kopeks would have been rather expensive for a member of the lower working classes, but again, for those who were not travelling, it may have been possible for them to save up for one of the cheap tickets. A remarkable 312 seats were sold for this evening, including 33 extra seats.<sup>99</sup> Some of the seats, as in all theatres, would have been

<sup>98</sup> See Petrovskaia, p. 102.

<sup>99</sup> GRM: f: 121, 'Soiuz molodezhi' ; ed khr: 113 'Raznye finansovye dokumenty 7/9–1910–1914, na 198 II; l: 29. This is the Troitskii Theatre cashier's record of ticket sales for 20.11.1912. The record is as follows:

as follows:	Row	No. of seats sold	Price	Total
	1	3	2.50	7.50
	2	11	2.00	22.00
	3	7	1.50	10.50
	4	40	1.25	50.00
	5	76	1.00	76.00
	6	48	0.80	38.40
	7	48	0.50	24.00
	box seats	46	0.80	36.80
	extra seats [ <i>dobav</i> ]	33	0.50	16.50
Total		312		281.70

Other financial matters related to this lecture are discussed in Chapter 2.

assigned to representatives of the police and other authorities. All the same, this was a very impressive turnout for the first major Futurist lecture in St. Petersburg.

The Troitskii was frequently used for Futurist events over the following year. On Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 March 1913, Soiuz molodezhi organised two public debates, the first *O sovremennoi zhivopisi* [On Modern Painting] (see figs. 109a–c), the second *O noveishei russkoi literature* [The Very Latest Russian Literature] (see figs. 110a–d). Although the prices were not stated on the programmes, the Soiuz Molodezhi Archive shows ticket sales which ranged from 50 kopeks to 3 rubles. The allocation of these prices and their respective seats is also shown on the cashier's seating plan of figure 138. Such was the popularity of the Futurists by the Easter of 1913 that the two evenings sold 851 seats, far exceeding the usual capacity of the theatre. The seating plan shows how the most expensive seats were located in the centre of the auditorium, whereas the cheapest seats were to be found in the stalls area, in front of the stage.<sup>100</sup> Other documents in the Soiuz Molodezhi Archive show that tickets for A. V. Grischenko's lecture of 2 May 1913, and an evening of lectures which the Soiuz molodezhi also organised on 20 November 1913 (with advertised lectures by Maiakovskii, Kruchenykh and David Burluk) were sold for 50 kopeks to 3 rubles, and 60 kopeks to 3 rubles respectively.<sup>101</sup> Following the tradition of all Russian theatres, visitors to the Troitskii were requested to remove their coats and place them in the cloakroom for a charge of 10 kopeks. In essence, this meant that the cheapest seats in the theatre were no less than 60 kopeks.

The Concert Hall of the Tenishevskii School was another popular venue for experimental theatre and Futurist events in St. Petersburg (fig. 139) and hosted a number of artistic debates during the pre-Revolutionary era. The school was established in 1910 by the Moscow patrons, Princess Mariia Tenisheva and her husband Prince Viacheslav Nikolaevich Tenishev, in an elegant building at Mokhovaia Ulitsa 33, north of Nevskii Prospekt, close to the Fontanka, and a short distance from Marsovo Pole [Field of Mars] and Mikhailovskii Sad. The school was

<sup>100</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 113; l: 104. Over the course of the two performances 24 seats were sold at 3.00 rubles; 46@ 2.50rbs; 46@ 2.00; 48@ 1.75rbs; 86@ 1.50rbs; 114 @ 1.25rbs; 160 @ 1.00 rb: 80 @ 0.80 rb; 68 @ 0.50 rbs; 40 @ 1.25 (seats in the orchestra pit); and 139 @ 1.00 in the aisles by the exits.

<sup>101</sup> See GRM f: 121; ed khr: 13 'Programmy, tezisy dokladov i disputov, ustraivaemykh "Soiuzom Mokodezhi"; undated, 20.11.1912–20.11.1913'; ll: 34 and 39–39ob.

founded on liberal principles and the patrons' desire to maximise the potential of the promotion of the arts and expression of literary and artistic creativity. The school attracted famous names from the literary, artistic and theatrical world, such as Vsevolod Meierkhol'd, Aleksandr Blok and Nikolai Rerikh. As early as 31 March 1912, Nikolai Kul'bin, under the auspices of the Khudozhestvenno-Artisticheskaia Assotsiatsiia, gave a lecture in the Concert Hall entitled 'Modern Painting and the Role of the Youth in the Evolution of Art'. A debate was advertised to follow the lecture.<sup>102</sup> With the help of Boris Kurdinovskii and the Khudozhestvenno-Artisticheskaia Assotsiatsiia, Il'ia Zdanevich repeated his Moscow Mishen' lecture at the Tenishevskii Hall on 7 April 1913. Draft letters to Kurdinovskii and Mikhail Larionov attest to the difficulty of having the lecture approved through the *gradonachal'nik's* [City Governor] office.<sup>103</sup> It is possible that this difficulty arose from the anticipated student participation during the lecture (due to the nature of the proposed venue), in addition to the scandal which accompanied the Moscow lecture. There were also problems with the marketing. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the posters which were pasted at the Tenishevskii Hall were continually being pulled down by the public, so that they had to be put behind glass (which was also broken), and then behind metal bars. Yet Zdanevich wrote that the tickets sold like 'hot cakes', and despite the fact that he received warnings from the police (i.e. censorship) during the lecture, and that the police had to break up a student gathering after it, the lecture passed off relatively peacefully.<sup>104</sup> The archive of the Petersburg *gradonachal'nik* holds documents which include the application for and eventual refusal of a proposed evening of debates on modern art in March-April 1913 which was to be organised by Bubnovyi valet in the Tenishevskii Hall.<sup>105</sup> This again indicates the conservative attitude of the St. Petersburg *gradonachal'nik* and the fragile relationship between his office and the Futurists.

With a guaranteed student audience, diluted with members of the intelligentsia, bourgeoisie and working classes, and situated in central Petersburg, the Tenishevskii Hall remained a popular venue. According to newspaper reports, David Burliuk's

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<sup>102</sup> GRM f: 121; ed khr: 10 'Raznye pechatnye ob''iavlennii i afishi [1911–1917]; p. 4. This document is an advert for the lecture, printed on very fine blue A4 paper.

<sup>103</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 12ob, 22–23, and 26ob.

<sup>104</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; l: 28. Draft letter to his mother dated 8 April 1913.

<sup>105</sup> TsGIA f: 569; op: 13; d: 1032; ll: 153–59.



public lecture on Sunday 3 November 1913 attracted a lively crowd who were so keen to enter the hall that one reporter, E. Adamov, wrote that they would have broken the doors to have done so.<sup>106</sup> The scheduling of evening weekend debates, particularly on Sundays, maximised the potential for members of the working classes to attend the public lectures and debates, although accessibility was always dependent on affordability. There is no mention of the price of the tickets for performances in Tenishevskii Hall for David Burliuk's lecture. However, the caricaturist A. Lebedev obviously took great delight in depicting the thug-like Burliuk as he sprayed his spittle across his 'adoring' and 'guffawing' audience (see fig. 14). This particular audience are depicted as rather foppish, with doglike facial features, most likely bourgeois and therefore able to afford a couple of rubles or more to attend the latest fashionable form of urban entertainment.

Tenishevskii Hall was the venue for a poetry recital by Kruchenykh and lectures by the Ego-Futurists, Viktor Khovin and Dmitrii Kriuchkov, which took place 4 December 1913. The period of 2–5 December 1913 marks the apotheosis of the Russian Futurists in St. Petersburg, as the Luna Park sell-out performances were reviewed by a large cross-section of the press. It is therefore notable that Kruchenykh and the Ego-Futurists chose the Tenishevskii Hall as the venue for their Futurist lectures. According to one dismissive report, the lectures and poetry recital played to an audience of only 150.<sup>107</sup> The Tenishevskii Hall continued to be used for public lectures and performances, including a conference on modern art with Kazimir Malevich and Ivan Puni in 1916, but unfortunately the school was closed down in the wake of the 1917 Revolution.

Other venues which were chosen in St. Petersburg for Futurist events included the Kalashnikovskaia Birzha [The Kalashnikov Stock Exchange] and the Concert Hall of the Swedish Church of St. Ekaterina. The Kalashnikovskaia Birzha was located on Khar'kovskaia Ulitsa, 9, and was the venue for Marinetti's two Petersburg lectures, on 1 and 4 February 1914. Figure 140 reveals the traditional setting of the hall with its classical proportions and military busts, all presided over by an

<sup>106</sup> E. Adamov, 'Na Burliuke', *Den*, No. 299, 4 November 1913, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Anon, 'Futuristskii kontsert', *Den*, No. 331, 6 December 1913, p. 5; see also Anon, 'Chto takoe Russkii Futurizm?', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 5 December 1913, p. 14.

imposing full-length portrait of Tsar Nicholas II. In comparison to the Tenishevskii Hall or Troitskii Miniature Theatre, the Kalashnikovskaia Birzha would appear to be a somewhat conservative choice of environment in which to host Filippo Marinetti, the creator of Futurism. However, one must bear in mind the location of the hall and the nature of the audience. The hall was not situated in the centre of fashionable St. Petersburg. Far from the Moika and central Nevskii Prospekt, the hall was situated equidistant between modern-day Ploshchad' Vosstaniia [Insurrection Square] and Ploshchad' Aleksandra Nevskogo [Aleksandr Nevskii Square], a few streets south of lower Nevskii Prospekt. Heavy industry in this area consisted primarily of printing and paper-making works.<sup>108</sup> The industrial environment may have encouraged a less conservative local audience for Marinetti's lecture, particularly the Saturday performance, which as usual, was scheduled for 8pm. However, although Marinetti was a Futurist icon, as noted above, it is very likely that the bourgeoisie responded positively to the arrival of this most notorious European whose reputation as a ladies' man and man of action preceded him. The fact that his lecture was delivered in French would have discouraged some members of the lower classes from trying to attend, whilst encouraging the higher classes of cultural Petersburg society, who spoke French and were willing and able to spend more money on a ticket.<sup>109</sup> The more conservative setting and the intervention of more conservative members of Russia's cultural society, such as the Count G. Tasteven who organised the event and whose signature accompanied the application to the *gradonachal'nik's* office, perhaps signalled a change in the nature, or at least the potential nature, of a Futurist audience.<sup>110</sup> The status of the venue of the Kalashnikov Stock Exchange influenced and increased the public standing of Futurism. It is perhaps for this reason that the Petersburg public were duped by fraudsters posing as Futurists in early 1914. According to Andrei Krusanov, a notice for a Futurist evening to be held at the

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<sup>108</sup> Marinetti's second and third lectures in Moscow, 28 and 30 January, had taken place in the Small Hall of the Conservatory. The Conservatory was situated on Bol'shaia Nikitskaia, just a few minutes walk west of the Kremlin.

<sup>109</sup> The price of the tickets is not stated on the application to the *gradonachal'nik's* office, see TsGIA f: 569 Kantseliariia Petrogradskogo gradonachal'nika; op: 13; d: 1149 'Prosheniia zaiavleniia raporta i udostovereniia raznykh lits o razreshenii ustroistva sobranii, vecherov i lektsii, 10 January – 15 February 1914; l: 46.

<sup>110</sup> Other documents in the *gradonachal'nik's* archive point to a successful application by E. I. Iakobson to hold a public lecture, at his own expense, 'Concerning Modern Literature', on 20 January 1914, in the concert hall of the Kalashnikovskaia Birzha. The after-lecture discussants included major figures from the Symbolist movement (including Solugub, Blok, Vengerov), and Meierkhol'd, among many other notable individuals. TsGIA f: 569; op: 13; d: 1030; l: 233.

Kalashnikov Stock Exchange was pasted in city trams. Having bought all the tickets, the public congregated outside the venue on the intended evening of performance, only to find that the hall had not been hired and that they had been duped.<sup>111</sup> This example attests to the increasing fashion for Futurism by 1914.

The evening of lectures and debate that was organised by the Petersburg Futurists in reaction to Marinetti's lectures, 'Nash otvet Marinetti' [Our Reply to Marinetti] was held in the Concert Hall of the Swedish Church in Petersburg at eight o'clock in the evening. It was a spacious hall (as we have already seen in figure 115) with associations with fashionable venues such as the Brodiachaia Sobaka. With advertised participants including well-known public figures such as Baudouin de Courtenay, Kul'bin, Livshits, Nikolai Burluk, Kruchenykh, Matiushin, V. Piast, Khlebnikov and Viktor Shklovskii, and tickets at 50 kopeks to 3 rubles, the patron stood to make a sizeable profit.<sup>112</sup>

### Artistic Societies and Futurist Performance

In Moscow, the fashionable artistic societies and clubs provided valuable venues for public lectures and cultural debate and were responsible for organising a number of key Futurist debates. The First Evening of Speech-Creators, for example, was held 13 October 1913 in the Hall of the *Obshchestvo liubitelei iskusstv*, at Dom Levisson on the Bol'shaia Dmitrovka (see fig. 30). Although this was billed as a public lecture, the rather expensive cheaper tickets, priced at 75 kopeks, would have been beyond the reach of the average member of the working classes. The up-market address, as mentioned above, would have also put off a number of prospective spectators. The upper limit was 3 rubles a ticket, well within the grasp of many of the middle classes and above. This suggests that the organisers did not wish to make

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<sup>111</sup> Krusanov, p. 190. There is no evidence to suggest that the real Futurists had anything to do with this incident of fraud.

<sup>112</sup> Although the printed advertising poster omitted the ticket price (see fig. 29), it was included on the application for the evening, TsGIA f: 569; op: 13; d: 1149; l: 205. According to Livshits, Baudouin de Courtenay did present himself as the chair for the evening. However, upon arrival and seeing a Futurist on the rostrum dressed in a 'brocaded blouse sewn from a priests' chasuble' he is reported to have felt cheated and left the stage. Thereupon, Nikolai Kul'bin took the helm. Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 207–10.

the lecture exclusive and confirms the society's wish to encourage new art forms. The scheduling of the lectures for 8pm also made the evening accessible to those who had a working day. The journalist Sh-'s description of the event attests to the popularity of the event:

Expecting to be 'slapped in the face', or in search of scandal, the public filled the hall of their favoured artists on B. Dmitrovka. Cars and carriages were at the entrance, crowds of people without tickets filled the stairs. There wasn't enough room in the cloakroom which was built to accommodate 200 people, and there were more than 500 there. Latecomers were consoled with the promise that the evening would be repeated.

The same journalist, however, likened the participating Futurists to American charlatans and accused the metropolitan audience of being as gullible as those from the provinces.<sup>113</sup>

The eminent *Literaturno-Khudozhestvennyi Kruzhok* which had its premises in Vostrianovskii Dom, also on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka, hosted an evening for Konstantin Bal'mont on 7 May 1913. This particular evening was interrupted by Vladimir Maiakovskii. The other pre-eminent club on Bol'shaia Dmitrovka was the *Obshchestvo Svobodnoi estetiki* [Society of Free Aesthetics]. Belyi paints a luxurious picture of the club: 'You come in on to a staircase covered in blue-grey carpet, you turn into three or four rooms given over to us for conferences; the same blue-grey walls; the carpets beneath your feet, the sofas, the armchairs and the little tables are of the same colours: blue-grey and blue-green; the light is dull.'<sup>114</sup> Although allegedly a public venue, this was clearly an exclusive urban environment. On 13 February 1914, and following his return to Moscow, Marinetti was invited to give a lecture at the *Obshchestvo Svobodnoi estetiki* and to enter into discussion with Moscow Futurists, something which had been denied to him during his initial stay in Moscow. His lecture was entitled *O samykh krainikh iskaniiakh futurizma v poezii i zhivopisi* [The Most Extreme Explorations of Futurism in Poetry and Painting]. Maiakovskii, David Burliuk and Il'ia Zdanevich all appeared (an interesting mix of

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<sup>113</sup> Sh-, 'Lzhe-Futuristy', *Utro Rossii*, No. 237, 15 October 1913, pp. 5–6. Livshits also notes how the tickets were 'snapped up in about an hour' with 'Full House' signs. Livshits, *One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 148.

<sup>114</sup> Translation from Bowlt, in 'The Moscow Art Market', pp. 118–19. For a more comprehensive description of the Moscow literary societies, see pp. 116–20.

Moscow and Petersburg Futurists) and were invited to respond in French. Burliuk initially protested, preferring to speak in Russian. However, Marinetti did not speak Russian and, after a brief interlude, Zdanevich stepped forward and read out his manifesto in French. He declared the Moscow Futurists' solidarity with Marinetti and their support for him as an excellent leader [of Futurism].<sup>115</sup>

Although these more exclusive meetings within literary societies did not receive the same attention from the press as the more explosive public debates which did so much to market Russian Futurism and expose it to a broader public, one can still categorise the exclusive meetings as public events. Although less theatrical than some debates, they played a constructive role in the struggle to legitimise the identity of Russian Futurism and the Russian avant-garde in general, on both a national and international level. Once again, the reputation of the venue as a prime city-centre location in which to socialise with the 'movers and shakers' of the artistic world and *beau monde*,<sup>116</sup> its international and sophisticated outlook, its intellectual rigour, its opulence and its sheer ability to impress the foreign visitor all contributed to the genuine strengthening of ties between the Russian Futurists and Marinetti, a relationship which became so vital in the wake of the (unintended) emigration of Larionov and Goncharova in 1915.

### **Traditional Theatre Settings: Luna Park and Teatr Futu**

The final category of venue to be discussed here is the 'traditional' theatre, that is, Futurist performance that took place in a form which was recognisable as theatre, in a venue which was intended to deliver drama, and received by an audience who expected to be spectators at an advertised theatrical performance. For the pre-Revolutionary period of Russian Futurism, we are primarily concerned with the Luna Park performances which took place on four consecutive evenings of 2–5 December 1913, but also Oslinyi khvost's aspirations for what was called the Teatr

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<sup>115</sup> See Krusanov, p. 174, and an article from *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 300, 17 February 1914, pp. 2–3, quoted therein.

<sup>116</sup> See the discussion of Barbara Walker's research on the function of the *Kruzhok* in the development of Russian intellectual and artistic trends in Chapter 1.

Futu.<sup>117</sup> According to various newspaper reports, the opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* and *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* were sell-out performances, with tickets being sold for 9 rubles. In fact, such was the popularity of the performances that one journalist, Liubov' Gurevich, noted that despite the ridiculously expensive price of the tickets, she could not procure one for the premier of *Tragediia*, so she went to Kruchenykh's opera on the second evening instead.<sup>118</sup> The use of a traditional theatre, with galleries, boxes and stalls, and an embroidered stage curtain (fig. 141), marked a clear departure in the selection of venue for Futurist performances. The chosen venue, price of ticket and guaranteed audience (which included women in furs, officers in their shining stripes, literary people, artists and actors, and members of the Duma) confirms Futurism's growing popularity by the end of 1913, and the potential for movement away from marginal theatre to participation in the more stable urban theatre of the middle classes.<sup>119</sup>

According to Zoia Veis and Viacheslav Grechnev, the Luna Park performances were financed by Soiuz molodezhi and the owner of the Troitskii Theatre, A. M. Fokin. They had responsibility for the organisation, marketing, distribution of tickets and the staging of the play. Although Veis and Grechnev state that the scandalous reputation of the Futurists made it difficult for them to procure a venue for the performances, it would seem evident, at least in retrospect, that by December 1913 the Futurists had become sufficiently popular as to attract both patronage and a well-heeled audience. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Levkii Zheverzheev was only able to secure the Luna Park Theatre for the four performances as a result of the theatre's recent poor takings.<sup>120</sup> Veis and Grechnev provide us with the following information regarding the Luna Park Theatre itself. It was built in 1882 and represented one of the first buildings to be designated for the people's entertainment, a cultural trend which had been emerging in the 1880s in St. Petersburg. It was located next to the

<sup>117</sup> Although plans for a Teatr Futu in Moscow were discussed by Larionov, Maiakovskii and other Futurists who were primarily associated with Oslinyi khvost, the theatre itself was never realised.

<sup>118</sup> Liubov' Gurevich, in 'Teatr Futuristov', *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 287, 13 December 1913, p. 6, wrote how only 2–3 days following the printed advert, all the seats in the gallery and the balcony were sold out for all of the performances. See also R., 'Spektakl' Futuristov: Kto sumasshedshie? Futuristy ili publika!', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 332, 3 December 1913, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> The question of audience will be discussed in the following two chapters. For a description of the audience which attended the Luna Park performances, see Gurevich, 'Teatr Futuristov'; and Zoia Veis and Viacheslav Grechnev, 'Tragediia 'Vladimir Maiakovskii'' in *S Maiakovskim Po Sankt-Peterburgu* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie nauchno-populiarnoe, 1993), pp. 31–56, p. 39.

<sup>120</sup> See Chapter 1 and Howard, *The Union of Youth*, p. 202, footnote 60.

Demidov Gardens, which contained a summer theatre and Estrada. Prior to the Luna Park, the theatre had been named after the various acting companies who had rented it. These included Lanskaia-Nemetti, Shabel'skaia, Nezlobin and Komissarzhevskiaia. The latter had moved there from premises at Passazh on Nevskii Prospekt in 1906. In 1912, a whole new set of buildings for public entertainment were installed in the Demidov Gardens. These included a *Dom smekha* [House of Laughter], *chertovo koleso* [Big Wheel], *grot s vrashchaiueisia estradoi "dlia zhivykh kartin"* [grotto with a revolving stage for "tableaux vivants" (and the most important bait for the public) *amerikanske gory* [roller coasters]. The gardens are said to have become very popular and to have been frequented by workers, the bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia. Blok is said to have been a regular visitor. A large cement archway was constructed on the Ofiterskaia Ulitsa side of the theatre with the name LUNA-PARK, and so the theatre adopted this name from that time onwards.<sup>121</sup> In fact, the theatre's location on Ofiterskaia Ulitsa, 39, was but a few minutes' walk from the centre of St. Petersburg's courtly theatrical environment of Teatral'naia Ploshchad' and the Mariinskii Imperial Theatre.

The location and the symbolic and theatrical associations of the venue are of utmost importance as both contributed significantly to the Futurists' ability to attract an audience who were prepared to pay 9 rubles for a ticket. As we have discussed earlier in the chapter, this area of St. Petersburg was one of the premier city environments for both courtly and fashionable cultural events.<sup>122</sup> It is likely, therefore, that newcomers to Futurist performances, particularly those from the middle classes, would have felt more comfortable at the Luna Park, in a traditional open theatre setting, than in some of the less salubrious cabaret locations which hosted Futurist performances. The proximity to the Demidov Gardens and the theatre's association with the People's entertainment, may also have encouraged those people who were in the habit of frequenting the gardens and the cultural and holiday events which were held there. Many critics and members of the public often drew parallels between features of Futurist performance and the *balagany*

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<sup>121</sup> See Veis and Grechnev, p. 34. A photograph of the cement archway with its columns and LUNA-PARK lettering, taken by Bulla 1912, can be found in TsADKM Photo Archive, Box 158; Iashchik: 6; item: E/11118. The photo is inscribed, 'Entrance to the theatre's grounds from Ofiterskaia Ulitsa.'

<sup>122</sup> The proposed Futurist art exhibition which was to be held at the *Mirazh* Cinema, was also located on Ofitserkaia and the Krivoe zerkalo cabaret was also nearby.

[fairground booths]. The association of the Park with the tradition of Russian carnival may, therefore, have had an influential role in attracting interest in the Futurist productions from all sections of society.

This new fashionable status of Russian Futurism meant that there was also potential overlap between the audience of the Luna Park performances, and both the Imperial theatres (for those who were prepared to pay 9 rubles a ticket) on the one hand, and the productions of the People's Theatres and *balagany* (which also attracted members of the lower classes) on the other.<sup>123</sup> Although tickets for the stalls, boxes, circles and lower balcony tiers of the Imperial theatres were sold by subscription, and therefore only to those who could afford to pay upfront, all of the *raëk* seats [seats in the upper-most tiers, in the 'Gods'] were sold on a per-performance basis only. Contemporary sketches show how people queued for tickets, up to several hours for a popular performance.<sup>124</sup> Although this is not the place to discuss the audience in detail, a general note can be made concerning the relationship between the layout of the theatre and the social hierarchy among theatre-goers.

In Russia, possibly more than any other European country at the turn of the century, a visit to the theatre was as much a social as a cultural event. From the courtly etiquette and opulence of the Mariinskii Imperial Theatre to the informed heckling at the ten-kopek *balagany* Lenten performances, codes of conduct were established and maintained. Whatever one's station in life, one visited such theatres not only to see, but also to be seen. The spectator derived pleasure not only from possessing the knowledge of such implicit theatrical codes, but also from being able to display his/her knowledge to others. Susan Bennett explains how '[t]heatrical pleasure [...]

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<sup>123</sup> I am not suggesting that members of the *meshchanstvo* or *poluintelligentsiia* would be able to afford a ticket at 9 rubles. For many this sum would represent nearly half their monthly salary. However, the venue and its associations may have encouraged individuals from these lower classes to engage in the Futurist fashion, follow coverage in the local press, and so forth.

<sup>124</sup> I am grateful to Murray Frame for confirmation of the information relating to the ticketing geography of the auditoria of the Imperial Theatres, personal correspondence, May 2004. For further information related to the layout of the auditoria, the segregation of the audience and expected theatre etiquette, see Frame, pp. 65–84. The lowest priced ticket for the Imperial theatres coincides with the price of tickets for most Futurist performances (see Appendix for list of comparable entertainment venues and ticket prices). This suggests that the same section of society who were able to engage in theatre by means of the cheapest tickets could also afford to attend the Futurist performances if they wished.



is the pleasure of the sign; it is the most semiotic of all pleasures'.<sup>125</sup> An architectural feature which is common to the Imperial theatres, many of the theatres of People's Houses (fig. 142) and *balagany*, and the Luna Park Theatre is the way in which the seating-plan has been designed to express hierarchy and maximise the visibility of each individual spectator within the auditorium. The panoptic principle not only maximised visibility of spectators (who were at times more visible to each other than the performance which was taking place on stage), but also instilled a sense of security and an awareness of one's neighbours. I would speculate that for certain members of the audience the Luna Park Theatre was their first encounter with a live Futurist performance. This being the case, I would suggest that not only the new *mode* for Futurism, but also the theatrical normality of the venue helped to persuade these bourgeois newcomers to part with their 9 rubles. Leaving the actual performances to one side, newspaper references to the brightly-lit entrance, the opulence of the well-dressed audience, identification of certain celebrities in the audience, and one journalist's surprise that the cloakroom procedure was perfectly normal rather than his expected incomprehensible Futurist farce, all point to the normality of the theatre-going experience and the concept that the venue itself played a contributory role in the success of the performances.

The Futurist collaboration with the Troitskii Theatre was equally important because the Troitskii performed two major functions. Firstly, it provided ample secure rehearsal space. Rehearsal space was vital for performances which relied heavily on both amateur performers and a new style of set design and theatrical aesthetics. According to Aleksei Kruchenykh, Maiakovskii had been forced to add a second act to his Tragedy in order to match the audience's expectation of a full evening's entertainment and justify the ticket price.<sup>126</sup> Secondly, as discussed above, the Troitskii Theatre enjoyed a positive and fashionable reputation for experimental theatre, cutting-edge artistic lectures and debates, and other celebratory cultural events. According to the advertising poster (see fig. 51) the Troitskii Theatre was the sole outlet for tickets to the Luna Park performances, except for the Luna Park box office, which was only open on the actual day of the performances. The fashionable

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<sup>125</sup> Susan Bennett, p. 73.

<sup>126</sup> Aleksei Kruchenykh, *Our Arrival: From the History of Russian Futurism*, edited by Vasily Rakitin and Andrei Sarabianov (Moscow: RA, 1995), p. 59.

status of the Troitskii Theatre may also have enhanced the status of the forthcoming Futurist performances.

All available evidence suggests that the tickets for the performances were not sold by subscription, but were openly available from the Troitskii and the Luna Park Theatre box offices. This is another factor which increased the accessibility of Futurism to a broader audience and encouraged first-time spectators. Compare the question of accessibility with, for example, the popularity of the Moscow Art Theatre. Contrary to the theatre's original intention to be accessible to a broad section of the public, tickets for performances at the Moscow Arts Theatre were almost exclusively sold by subscription.<sup>127</sup> Although the Futurists had secured the premises of the Luna Park Theatre for their four performances, they still enjoyed the luxury of independence of repertoire and choice of actor. Unlike the Moscow Arts Theatre, whose establishment and development had been incontrovertibly locked into the question of patronage, premises, subscription, actor and employee contract, shareholder satisfaction, public reputation and the threat of censorship leading to closure, the Futurists did not have any long-term contract with the Luna Park Theatre and were therefore not beholden to anyone, except the laws of censorship.<sup>128</sup> In essence, this meant that once they had received approval from the censors the content and performance of their advertised productions could be much more daring, to the point of outlandish or offensive. The authorities may also have been more lenient in view of the very limited run of performances. Of course, it would appear that many of the spectators had come to participate, if not indulge, in an unruly Futurist spectacle. The larger, more imposing venue in many respects represented the potential for an even bigger spectacle than those which had already caught the public's imagination.

One important factor distinguishes the Futurist performances in the Luna Park from all previous Futurist performances. The traditional theatre setting provided a sizeable stage which afforded the Futurists an unprecedented opportunity to express their

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<sup>127</sup> See Baedeker, p. 273; Swift, p. 33; Nick Worrall, 'The Hermitage Theatre on Carriage Row', in *The Moscow Art Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 49–57.

<sup>128</sup> For a full description of the development of the Moscow Arts Theatre and the problems of patronage and contract, see Worrall. He notes how one report from the Palace Ministry linked the success of a theatre company to a strong and able director and ownership of the building itself. Any alternative would necessitate the intervention of the State in terms of subsidies [and therefore affect the theatre's independent status] or the loss of money from the director's own pocket, p. 33.

creativity and avant-garde aesthetics. The stage was complemented by the traditional auditorium which, in turn, ensured that the audience were able to appreciate the action. In previous performances the Futurists had generally been restricted by the size of the venue, and the limited audience frequently had only a partial view of the stage.

Contemporary reviews underline the fact that the audience were particularly struck with the look and sound of the performances. For A. Koptiaev of the *Birzhevye vedomosti* the music, which had been composed by Mikhail Matiushin, was the most original element of the opera *Pobeda nad solntsem* but was also a source of confusion.<sup>129</sup> The opera was accompanied by an ‘out of tune’ piano which had been found at the last minute, rather than the usual orchestra. Koptiaev notes how Borodin was followed by a series of scales. More confusion ensued. Then Puccini was played. The journalist concludes that ‘even the most leftist of our musicians’ would have found the music incomprehensible.

Liubov’ Gurevich, who reviewed Maiakovskii’s *Tragediia* for *Russkie vedomosti*, found the set and costumes to be the most interesting element, a ‘flight of fantasy’ for the audience.<sup>130</sup> What is clear from many reviews of the Luna Park performances is how the audience responded to them as true, and sometimes overwhelming, spectacles. Even though many critics wrote of the Futurists as charlatans and dismissed the productions as incomprehensible gobbledegook, many recognised that the performances represented an historical moment in Russian theatre. The most lucid review of *Tragediia* was written by P. Iartsev in *Rech’*, who concluded that Futurist theatre ‘is unusual – and people came to see it, searching instinctively for something that would suddenly flash in it, something that would be a refreshing change from routine theatrical theatre, both “old” and “new”’.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> A. Koptiaev, ‘U rampy: na “opere” futuristov’, *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 13890, Morning, 5 December 1913, p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Liubov’ Gurevich, ‘Teatr Futuristov’, *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 287, 13 December 1913, p. 6.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Но их театр, необычаен – и люди пришли смотреть его, ища инстинктивно того, что вдруг сверкнет в нем что-нибудь, что их освежит от рядового – старого и “нового” — театрального театра.’ P. Iartsev, ‘Teatral’nye ocherki. Teatr Futuristov’, *Rech’*, No. 335, 7 December 1913, p. 335.

The plot and the set designs have been analysed in detail by Charlotte Douglas and others.<sup>132</sup> An analysis of design features which exemplify the visual aspect of the Luna Park productions will help to explain the impact of the performances on the assembled audience.

Douglas writes how *Victory Over the Sun* swamped the senses and saturated the intellect with irreducible objects in order to stimulate the viewer to another level of intuitive and emotional understanding of reality.<sup>133</sup> The apparent lack of causal relationships in both productions gave greater poignancy to the visual and sound effects, thereby prioritising action over narrative. In *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia* the only 'live' actor was Maiakovskii himself. Without make-up, he played himself and for the greater part of the production he declared his lines from a podium in the centre of the stage (fig. 143). All other characters were represented by oversized figures constructed out of cardboard panels, designed by Pavel Filonov, with *papier-maché* masks. Iartsev noted the parallel between the panels used in Meierkhol'd's *Balaganchik* and *Don Juan* and Maiakovskii's *Tragediia*. However, whereas Meierkhol'd's actors had put their hands and faces through holes in their characters' panels, Maiakovskii's actors were concealed by theirs. According to Iartsev, the actors were forced to move sideways slowly across the stage and their movements were severely restricted by the size of the panels. The backdrop was created by a number of panels, designed by Iosif Shkol'nik, which had been created by stretching calico over a frame (figs. 144a–b). The overall effect is described by Iartsev as 'bright, warm with colours, cheerful – and reminiscent of Christmas-time', 'as if painted by children'. Another critic, Aleksandr Mgebrov, described the eerie effect that the opening scene had on the audience, as the 'living dolls' filed out from behind the curtain. Contrary to the expectation of comedy, Mgebrov writes that 'when in that first moment the laughter died... immediately one sensed the audience was strangely alert'.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> See for example, Charlotte Douglas, 'Victory Over the Sun', *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, vol. 8: 1–2 (1981), 69–89; Charlotte Douglas, 'Birth of a "Royal Infant": Malevich and *Victory Over the Sun*', *Art in America*, vol. 62 (1974), 45–51; Charlotte Douglas, *Swans of Other Worlds: Kazimir Malevich and the Origins of Abstraction in Russia* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1976); Jeremy Howard, *The Union of Youth*, chapter 7; and Robert Leach, 'A Good Beginning: *Victory Over The Sun* and *Vladimir Mayakovsky, A Tragedy Reassessed*', *Russian Literature*, vol. 13 (1983), 101–16.

<sup>133</sup> Douglas, 'Victory Over the Sun', pp. 78–79.

<sup>134</sup> A. Mgebrov, cited in Robert Leach, 'A Good Beginning', p. 109.

A new technological development that transformed both performances was the use of projected light. Malevich designed and painted the sets and costume panels for *Pobeda nad solntsem*. He had originally expected greater financial support from the organisers, Soiuz molodezhi, and had planned a three-dimensional stage set.<sup>135</sup> Instead, he painted two-dimensional backdrops but incorporated a sense of depth in their design. Light was then continuously projected across the set to increase the perspective along the depth axis. In fact, according to Douglas, the backdrops were designed in such a way as to emphasise not only the recessive elements, but also to somehow give the effect of projecting elements of the designs forwards, as if ‘to mingle with the similar shapes of the costumes and volumes’.<sup>136</sup> Livshits described the use of projected light as follows:

Out of the primordial night the tentacles of projectors seized on parts now of this object, now of that, and saturating it with colour, gave it life. [...] These figures [the panels] were cut up by the blades of lights and were deprived alternately of hands, legs, head, etc. because, for Malevich, they were merely geometrical bodies subject not only to disintegration into their component parts, but also to total dissolution in painterly space.<sup>137</sup>

Malevich’s sketches in figures 145a–c and printed on the cover of the opera’s libretto (figure 74) illustrate the artist’s technique of creating depth by placing a box within a box. Malevich’s sketches for the characters reveal a simplified and cruder use of the geometrical shapes which characterised many of the subjects in his contemporary paintings. If the designs had followed the sketches, then they would have incorporated cones, triangles and other colourful geometrical shapes (see figs. 146 and 147). Again, Douglas notes the towering size of the costumes, such as the one belonging to the Strongmen, whose shoulders were placed at the same height as the actors’ mouths. The sets and costumes had been designed as a visual interpretation of the dissonance of Kruchenykh’s libretto, which was based on *zaum*. The continual movement of geometrical shapes in front of the seemingly dislocated backdrops, all under the light and shadow of the mobile projected light must have produced a

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<sup>135</sup> See Nancy Van Norman Baer, *Theatre in Revolution: Russian Avant-Garde Stage Design 1913–1935* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 38.

<sup>136</sup> Douglas, ‘*Victory Over the Sun*’, p. 81.

<sup>137</sup> Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, pp. 163–64.

thoroughly modern, fantastical spectacle on a scale which was only possible in a venue as large as the Luna Park Theatre.

Audience reaction and contemporary criticism underline the effect which the lighting had on the spectators. Two articles by 'R' note how the audience liked the cheap lighting effects, but also engaged with the carnivalesque atmosphere in the auditorium, declaring that the light (which represented the sun) was too bright and shouting out 'Take your sun away!'.<sup>138</sup> Undoubtedly, the physicality and modernity of both performances made a strong impression on the audience. For the first time in the development of Futurism an audience had paid a high price for the sole purpose of attending a truly Futurist spectacle in a traditional theatrical setting. Their engagement with the performance was not diluted by the presence of a restaurant or other expected performers on the programme. These performances represent a pivotal moment in Russian theatre history and the development of Futurism.<sup>139</sup>

To conclude this chapter, let us turn to Oslinyi khvost's plans for the Futurist theatre which was to be called the Teatr Futu. As discussed in Chapter 2, in September 1913 Larionov and his co-artists published a number of manifestoes related to Futurist performance and the parading of Futurist fashions in public places. One anonymous article, dated 9 September 1913 in *Moskovskaia gazeta*, however, stated that in the wake of the Futurist meeting in Uusikirkko, a Futurist theatre would be opening in Moscow, no later than October, and that some 'patron' or other [*kakoi-to 'metsenat'*] had been found.<sup>140</sup> Readers are told that plays had been written, a troupe had been put together and that Larionov and Goncharova were busy painting the sets. The anonymity of the journalist and the timing of the article to coincide with several other manifestoes written or declared by members of Oslinyi khvost would suggest that Larionov himself was possibly the author. As Mark Konecny points out, the whole detailed account of the proposed Teatr Futu may well have been nothing more than an

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<sup>138</sup> R., 'Spektakl' Futuristov - Kto sumasshedshie? Futuristy ili publika!', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 332, 3 December 1913, p. 5; and R., 'Opera futuristov. Muzyku zamenial svist publiki', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 333, 4 December 1913, p. 5.

<sup>139</sup> It is most unfortunate that Larionov's plans for a Teatr Futu did not come to fruition as these too represented revolutionary ideas in theatre design. The ideas are discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>140</sup> Anon, 'Teatr "Futu"', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 272, 9 September 1913, p. 5.

Oslinyi khvost publicity stunt intended for the gullible public,<sup>141</sup> and no doubt intended to rankle the Petersburg Futurists too. However, the theatrical innovations detailed in this article warrant our attention because they predict later developments in twentieth-century theatre practice.

The innovations detailed in the article represent a total break with theatrical conventions on many levels: narrative, set and costume design, music, direction and acting techniques, and role of the audience. First of all, the action is to take place where the stalls would usually be in a non-Futurist theatre. 'The spectators themselves will be positioned according to the action taking place, either from a high vantage point in the middle of the auditorium, or in wire netting which will be suspended from the ceiling.' The audience in the wire netting can either lie or squat and will watch the action through the wire. This degree of audience participation raises many issues: firstly, Oslinyi khvost would require a large venue in order to accommodate the audience in this way, and as we have seen, this would be tremendously expensive; secondly, Larionov, if we presume he is the author, has invited the audience to participate in and not just view the spectacle; and in this case, Larionov is reliant upon an audience that is particularly adventurous and compliant, and no doubt wealthy too. The concept of placing the audience in the middle of the action and viewing it from different vantage points was later developed in the early Revolutionary period in the mass spectacles such as *The Storming of the Winter Palace*, which was enacted on the square in front of the Winter Palace, November 1920 in Petrograd.<sup>142</sup>

Larionov then describes the set design and the direction. In short, he states that during the action, the floor, the set design and the actors will be in constant motion. The rhythmic movement of the actors would be something like a dance. The emphasis on continual motion predicts later developments in biomechanics and the dynamic stage constructions, such as Liubov' Popova's design for the 1922 performance of *The*

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<sup>141</sup> Mark Konecny, 'Mikhail Larionov: Futurist Performance in Moscow', *Experiment/Eksperiment*, vol. 1 (1995), 183–99. Konecny's article includes a translation of the Russian article 'Teatr Futu'.

<sup>142</sup> *The Storming of The Winter Palace* involved six thousand actors, five hundred musicians and some one hundred thousand spectators. See John E. Bowlt, 'The Construction of Caprice: The Russian Avant-Garde Onstage', in Baer, *Theatre in Revolution*, pp. 72–73.

*Magnanimous Cuckold*. In true Futurist style, the music will not be like any normal music, but will be a 'cheerful cacophony'.

Larionov's concepts of costume design and directing went even further than those of the Petersburg Futurists and the Luna Park productions. In addition to the moving set design, the actors will each have their own costume which will convey their very character. Something like a decorative leitmotif. Actors are to play the roles of these 'decorative-leitmotifs'. They will assume the role of props-man, costume and the props. So, for example, one will have: a hat-actor; a trousers-actor; a handkerchief-actor; a boots-actor; a table-actor; a door-actor, and so on. This system represents the antithesis of Stanislavskii's naturalism and can be considered as a forerunner to European absurdist drama and debates on semiotics and the audience-artist relationship.

Diversity and the potential to change or to metamorphose at any moment seem to be the underlying principle of the Futurist theatre. Actors will have three to four noses, two to three pairs of eyes and several ears painted on their faces. In addition, we are told that they will wear a system of wigs, that is, one on top of the other, presumably with a view to switching them during the action. In short, the reader is informed that the Futurist theatre will not stage plays, but will stage theatre.

This final statement defines the significance of Futurist theatre of this period to the development of Russian theatre in general. Futurist theatre challenged and sought to redefine all aspects of the theatre, from the form and content of the narrative, to the location, the set and costume design, the direction, the sound and, of course, the audience's role. Futurist theatre was not presentational but creative and dynamic.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that the artists' choice of venue specifically informed the development of Russian Futurist theatre, from the manner in which it was produced, to the way in which it was perceived. Different sections of society responded differently to the questions of site of performance, public access to venue (in terms of public transport and financial issues), and the social and theatrical associations of the venues. In terms of public access to Futurist theatre, the accumulation of different environments of performance maximised the potential



breadth of the Futurist audience to include all sections of society. In this respect the Futurist actions surpassed the democratic, enlightened principles of groups such as the Peredvizhniki, and even celebrities such as Fedor Shaliapin who performed in the Imperial Theatres, at charity events and People's Houses alike. It is important to note that although one can interpret the emergence of Russian Futurist theatre in either populist or democratic terms, there is scant contemporary evidence from the Futurists themselves to suggest that this sense of democracy was intentional. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the audience that frequented each theatrical site of Futurist performance will give us greater insight into the relationship between Futurism and its audience and the factors which affected the emergence of Futurism in general during this inter-Revolutionary period. The complex issues related to the Futurist audience, therefore, comprise the subject of the next two chapters.

## Chapter 4

### The Futurists and Their Public: The Critics and the Bourgeoisie

During the early 1910s the Russian Futurists challenged the very concept of what constituted theatre. The Futurists, as Joan Neuberger points out, 'used public space in ways that precluded passive responses'.<sup>1</sup> For every artistic and theatrical gauntlet which was thrown down by the Futurists, there was a public and often a published response. The history and development of the early era of Russian Futurism can be seen as a dialogue between artist and audience, where the artistic developments were matched by the audience's ability to understand them, or not, as was often the case. Russian Futurism emerged during an era of social, economic and cultural transition. Often thinking on their feet and adapting rhetorical and artistic strategy as circumstances changed and the movement developed, Russian Futurists were necessarily sensitive to the demands of this transitional period: an emerging independent art market, based on the new European models; increased literacy and the boom in sales of newspapers, journals and cheap literary publications; rapid urban migration in line with industrial growth, increasing capitalism and a broadening and strengthening of the middle classes; the creation of new skilled and professional classes; a plethora of social reforms designed to protect the middle classes and educate and enlighten the 'ignorant masses' who constituted the lower classes; increased nationalism and anti-Semitism; and also technological, scientific and medical advances. Just as modern technology began to replace national folk traditions and roller-coasters displaced the traditional *gulian'e*, so the Futurists demanded that the public perceive art, theatre and even reality in a new, abstract, and often illogical manner.

As the public began to pay to enter Futurist art exhibitions and witness Futurist performances, Futurism entered not only the artistic stage but also the world of popular culture. In the words of Richard Stites, the nature of popular culture can be

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Neuberger, 'Culture Besieged: Hooliganism and Futurism', in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, edited by Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994), pp. 185–203 (p. 201).

‘not only contemporary but very often temporary’.<sup>2</sup> As Futurism evolved through changing artistic styles and negotiated new strategies of marketing and performance, so the audience responded and evolved. Far from passive onlookers, the audience were encouraged to engage with all the Futurist arts. The public’s increased confidence led to increased vocal participation and expectation, and a dynamic relationship which was ultimately co-dependent. Nicoletta Misler asserts that ‘[a]udience reaction was vital to the practice of the Russian Futurists, especially to [David] Burliuk, since like their Western colleagues at the Café Voltaire, later, they relied substantially on public response’.<sup>3</sup> Although never free from their early accusations of being ‘talentless daubers’ and ‘imitators of the French’, by the autumn of 1913 the Futurists had gained such a strong following that military officers were prepared to pay to be insulted and have tea thrown at them from the stage of a notorious Moscow club, and military, members of the Duma and the intelligentsia of St. Petersburg society were prepared to hand over nine rubles to attend the Futurist performances at the Luna Park.

This and the final chapter seek to explore the changing identity and attitudes of the public who attended Futurist events over the period of 1910–14. Arguing that Futurism developed through a process of continual interaction with the public, I will draw some conclusions regarding the Futurists’ attitude to them. This chapter focuses on two audiences: art critics and the bourgeoisie. Both had assumed a more prominent role in the cultural life of the new capitalist era. Art critics acted as mediators between artist and public with the power to influence the art market and modern concepts of taste. The bourgeoisie comprised the largest section of the public who were willing and able to engage in different forms of popular culture and entertainment.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, newspapers were generally aimed at the bourgeoisie and upper layer of the working classes [*burzhuazno-meshchanskaia massa*], a fact which influenced the tone and content of the newspapers. Journalists and art critics wrote from a specific ideological and political perspective which was

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Nicoletta Misler, ‘David Burliuk and Pavel Filonov: An Uneasy Relationship’, *CASS*, vol. 20: 1–2 (1986), 63–87 (p. 70).

generally in accordance with the preference of the editorial board. Contemporary newspapers and journals, therefore, provide a rich source of material which reflects the spectrum of public opinion, impressions and concepts of taste. The analysis of contemporary opinion in the press communicates a sense of the spectacle of Russian Futurism and helps to plot trajectories of popularity, audience expectation of and participation in Futurist events, and most importantly, the wide spectrum of critical and contradictory reception which Russian Futurism of this era attracted.

## The Critics

### The Power of the Art Critic

The sensationalist nature of much of the contemporary press has been noted by Gleb Pospelov. Qualified critics were also quick to pass judgement on the Futurist art exhibitions and antics. No one individual art critic personified the ‘voice of the arts’ and ‘defender of institutions’ [social and artistic] more readily than Aleksandr Benua.<sup>4</sup> It would appear that at almost every opportunity Benua, one of the founders of *Mir iskusstva*, would use his social and artistic status to comment on the state of modern art, be it Russian or international. One conservative Petersburg commentator at the first *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition wrote the following derisory review:

The works hanging on the walls are so repulsively third rate that even those with a distorted sense of taste and a poor understanding of beauty will recoil from this outrageous daubing with a sour grimace and feel that, really, there is not even a faint resemblance to art here.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> G. G. Pospelov, *Bubnovyi Valet: Primitiv i gorodskoi fol'klor v moskovskoi zhivopisi 1910-kh godov* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1990). Pospelov discusses the role of Benua at length in his introduction, and refers to him again (pp. 112–13) in response to the Moscow Bubnovyi valet exhibition of 1911–12. Page 111 gives multiple examples of the sensationalist reporting which accompanied the same Bubnovyi valet exhibition.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Произведения развешанные по стенам, так отвратительно бездарны, что даже лица с извращенными вкусами и болезненным пониманием красоты отвернутся с кислой гримасой от этой безобразной мазни и почувствуют, что действительно здесь нет даже намека на искусство’, *Duble-ve*, ‘Vystavka mazni’, *Peterburgskii listok*, No. 67, 10 March 1910, p. 2, cited in Andrei V. Krusanov, *Russkii Avangard: 1907–1932 (Istoricheskii obzor) v trekh tomakh*, 3 vols, vol. 1, *Boevoe desiatiletie* (St. Petersburg: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), p. 31.

Benua countered the extreme article with a more considered and magnanimous approach. 'I even welcome those [avant-gardists], who race about and lead a wild life [*gudiat i povesnichaiut*], like Mashkov and Larionov because their jokes egg on the others, incite the shy ones to be daring and audacious [*derzost' i smelost'*]. Although Benua is unable to hide his disappointment in Larionov, who is said to be capable of injecting a higher spirituality in finished works, rather than these affectations of the soul in some sort of new 'primitivism', he praises the work of some of the other newcomers, such as Aristarkh Lentulov, Natal'ia Goncharova, Petr L'vov and Sviatoslav Nagubnikov.<sup>6</sup> Benua's attitude to the Futurists appears to have been complex. On the one hand, Benua was part of the establishment and, as a critic and artist, would have wished to protect the integrity and finances of his own artistic group and journal, *Mir iskusstva*, in the face of new artistic competition and the emergence of a new independent art market that was increasingly dependent upon private patronage. Although a product of the metropolitan educated elite, Benua embraced pictorial symbols of traditional Russian provincial life and folklore, which he expressed in his own art and which he appreciated in the work of Goncharova. As we have seen in Chapter 1, other critics such as Foma Railian felt that this interpretation of the beauty of traditional Russia was patronising and exploited the lower classes.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, Benua could not ignore the link between the Moscow artists and the Moscow merchants, who had become the most significant source of artistic patronage in Russia, with obvious influence in Western Europe too. Benua would have known Larionov through his association with Sergei Diaghilev and their contribution to the *Salon d'Indépendents* in 1906.<sup>8</sup> As Andrei Krusanov writes, Benua 'continually invited many avant-garde artists to participate in the exhibitions of the *Soiuz russkikh khudozhnikov* [Union of Russian Artists] and later in the *Mir iskusstva*'.<sup>9</sup> One feels that Benua, who was brought up in the

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<sup>6</sup> A. Benua, 'Khudozhestvennye pis'ma. Itogi', *Rech'*, No. 83, 26 March 1910, p. 2, cited in Krusanov, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Railian has some justification for his opinion. The same opinion could not be applied to Pavel Filonov's depictions of city-dwellers and the urban landscape. Unlike Benua, Filonov was a poet-painter from the streets who painted from direct knowledge, which had been gained through his own experience of poverty and a frugal existence. Although Filonov's paintings conveyed a universal other-worldliness about them, he did not romanticise or sanitise his street scenes in the way that Benua did.

<sup>8</sup> David Burliuk's changing attitude to Benua was highlighted in Chapter 1. Although Burliuk's initial correspondence is characterised by an ingratiating tone and the wish to exhibit with Benua, it is not long before the tone switches to one of arrogance and offensive rhetoric.

<sup>9</sup> Krusanov, p. 31, footnote 116.

decorum of conservative St. Petersburg, was always fascinated by the sheer energy, daring, flexibility of style and breadth of subject matter which the Futurists expressed in their work. It is not surprising, therefore, that the same author of the scathing attack on Burliuk's Futurism, *Kubizm ili kukushizm*,<sup>10</sup> was later to embrace the work of Natal'ia Goncharova so wholeheartedly that he wrote how Goncharova was 'a great talent and genuine artist' from whom one needed to learn, as from all great artists.<sup>11</sup>

Benua was not the only subtle art critic. A. Rostislavov, who wrote for the liberal press (including *Rech'*), and the young Iakov Tugendkhol'd, who reported for the luxurious art journal *Apollon*, frequently brought a critical art historian's eye to the spectacles that constituted Futurist events.<sup>12</sup> Their articles were not only informative and instructive at the time, but remain a useful prism through which we can evaluate, more comprehensively, the specialist reception of the Futurist arts. Tugendkhol'd, for example, attested to the new sense of theatricality which had invaded the Moscow atmosphere and the Futurist arts. Pospelov cites the following:

Moscow [...] just loves it when they [the Futurists] make her laugh and mock her [*epatirovali*], and so a sort of unique, risible atmosphere has been created and surrounds the 'Bubnovyi valet' performances, in which one is struck by the original and [now] familiar 'absence of the footlights' and the 'cooperation' between audience and artists.<sup>13</sup>

Rostislavov notes the 'strength and beauty of the colours' in the work of the Moscow artists, at the *Soiuz molodezhi* exhibition, 1910. He states that some artists, including Spandikov, show a tendency toward decadence, and this perhaps suggests the trace

<sup>10</sup> Benua, 'Kubizm ili kukushizm', *Rech'*, 23 November 1912.

<sup>11</sup> See A. N. Benua, 'Iz dnevnika khudozhnika', *Rech'*, No. 288, 21 October 1913, p. 4, cited in *Nataliia Goncharova: Gody v Rossii*, edited by E. B. Basner et al. (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennyi Russkii muzei, 2002), pp. 293–95. This sea-change in Benua's attitude to Goncharova's association with Futurism was a response to his impressions of her solo exhibition of October 1913 (Moscow), which then moved to St. Petersburg, on a smaller scale, in March the following year.

<sup>12</sup> Both contributed focussed evaluations of Goncharova's solo exhibition: Ia. A. Tugendkhol'd, 'P. S. Eshche o Goncharovoi', *Apollon*, No. 9, 1913, pp. 84–85; and A. Rostislavov, 'Sverkaiushchii talant (Vystavka kartin N. S. Goncharovoi)', *Rech'*, No. 80, 23 March 1914, p. 5. Both articles, with articles by Rosstsi [A. M. Efros], F. M. [Mukhortov], Iu. Bocharov, and N. V. Denisov, are printed in full in *Nataliia Goncharova*, edited by E. B. Basner et al., pp. 295, 298–99. Tugendkhol'd's article, and other reviews of the exhibition, can also be located in RGALI f: 2951, Mikhailova Klavdiia Ivanovna; op: 1; d: 29, Stat'i i zametki o vystavkakh M. A. Vrubelia, A. S. Golubinoi, N. S. Goncharovoi, N. N. Sapunova, V. A. Serova, i dr. v 'Khudozhestvennom salone' K. I. Mikhailovoi; ll: 37–38.

<sup>13</sup> Ia. Tugendkhol'd, 'Moskovskie vystavki', *Apollon*, No. 4, 1913, p. 86, cited in Pospelov, p. 23.

of Symbolism in St. Petersburg at this stage. In general he is positive about the 'more or less talented, skilful and refreshing artists', but also expresses the ignorance of the public who 'laugh in the Moscow room and indiscriminately bad-mouth the exhibition'. He asserts that the paintings can only shock the decadent, those who are really only vehement followers of [conservative] Petersburg tendencies.<sup>14</sup>

Rostislavov's condescending attitude to the public exemplifies the perceived differences which divided conservative Petersburg from the more modern, dynamic Moscow (as we saw in Tugendkhol'd's article). His depiction of the public also illustrates how many critics, like the Futurists themselves, preferred to distance themselves from the predominantly 'bourgeois' paying public. Neither Futurist nor critic appears to be interested in the actual views of the paying public.<sup>15</sup> It is as if the public are a necessary evil, used purely as a means to enable the staging of theatrical events. Spectators are either used as a target for Futurist rhetoric (or for flying lampshades and hot tea!), during Futurist debates, or as a tool to illustrate the negative reception of the Futurist arts by journalists and art critics alike.

What we see during this early development of Futurism is an intellectual discourse which was played out through the medium of the newspapers, where Futurist and critic engaged in direct dialogue. Many of the critics were deeply embedded within social and intellectual circles, which, as we established in Chapter 1, played a key role in the development of contemporary independent art in Russia. The newspaper column, therefore, became an extension of the public square, through which the Futurists sought public recognition, critical appraisal and ultimately artistic legitimisation. One should always remember, when discussing the question of the Futurists and the public, that Futurist events operated on multiple levels. The

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<sup>14</sup> A. Rostislavov, 'Levoe khudozhestvo', *Rech'*, No. 85, 28 March 1910, p. 2, cited in Krusanov, pp. 32–33.

<sup>15</sup> Superiority of art critic over the 'plebeian public' had long been *de rigueur* in newspapers and journals (but less so in the Penny Press or the new publications which upheld a more egalitarian perspective). In 1906, for example, N. Tarovatyi wrote a review of an exhibition of watercolours in Moscow, in which he praised the members of the *Mir iskusstva*. However, the article concludes with an attack on the [enlightened] system of asking each person who bought a ticket to write down the title of the paintings which pleased him/her the most. Tarovatyi is outraged by the mere suggestion that the value of any work of Art can in any way be judged by a 'vulgar plebiscite' ['Безполезно доказывать всю неуместность этой попытки применить принцип вульгарного плебисцита к оценке художественных достоинств созданий Искусства'], *Zolotoe runo*, No. 1, 1906, pp. 123–24 (p. 124).

Futurists knew that they were part of an artistic community and were competing with other artistic tendencies, for both public recognition and more practical factors, such as exhibition space and theatrical venues. Futurist events were therefore directed towards an immediate expected response of the audience and an anticipated response in the press and intellectual circles.

### **Futurist Attitude to the Critics**

What of the Futurist attitude to the critics? So much rhetoric accompanied Futurist theatrical pursuits, newspaper interviews and publications that it is not always possible to identify actual Futurist opinion. For example in the Futurist manifesto, *Poshchetchina obshchestvennomu vkusu* [A Slap in the Face of Public Taste], the Futurists denounced Pushkin, Tolstoi and Dostoevskii, but Livshits admits he ‘slept with Pushkin under [his] pillow – and who didn’t?’<sup>16</sup>

As early as March 1910, Goncharova was to feel the full negative force of the art critic. According to Anthony Parton, Goncharova had been invited to exhibit her work at the *Obshchestvo svobodnoi estetiki* [Society of Free Aesthetics] to accompany their conference. A reporter from the newspaper *Golos Moskvy*, who had witnessed the exhibition, had taken offence at art that he was later to call ‘completely decadent and indecent’ and ‘exceeding all the pornography of dirty postcards’. As Parton notes ‘the entire exhibition was subsequently sequestered by the police, three of the paintings were confiscated and Goncharova was charged with “an offence against public morality”.’ In her defence, Mikhail Larionov published an article entitled ‘Newspaper Critics in the Role of Morality Police’. In the end, Goncharova won her case in court.<sup>17</sup> This was not the only time that critics accused Goncharova’s work of being either sacrilegious or pornographic and forced it to be sequestered.

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<sup>16</sup> Benedikt Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, edited by John E. Bowlit (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1977), p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> All quotations cited in Anthony Parton, *Mikhail Larionov and the Russian Avant-Garde* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 31. Parton notes that Larionov’s article appeared in a delayed November-December 1909 issue of *Zolotoe runo*, which was not published until April 1910.



David Burliuk, the so-called ‘Father of Russian Futurism’, also made good use of the press to advance his opinions. He responded to Benua’s harsh criticism of the new avant-garde with a three-and-a-half page rebuttal entitled ‘Concerning the “Artistic Letters” of Mr. A. Benua’, printed in *Zolotoe runo*.<sup>18</sup> Burliuk lambasted Benua for calling the avant-gardists ‘imitators of the French’, ‘charlatans’, ‘insincere’, ‘mad’ and prophesying their artistic burial, on the one hand, but claiming to be ‘the friend of young Russian art’ on the other. Benua is attacked for seeking the limelight of artistic attention and insisting that his judgement is always correct. Burliuk concludes that however much Benua tries to ignore them, they, the so-called enemy, will stand young, powerful and strong. Only one year previously, Burliuk had written to Benua in an ingratiating manner, with the hope of exhibiting his work in a forthcoming exhibition of the *Soiuz russkikh khudozhnikov* [Union of Russian Artists].<sup>19</sup> Burliuk’s new defiant tone, exercised through a public medium, represents the measure of the confidence among the new wave of Russian avant-gardists.

This public battle between Futurist and critic continued throughout the 1910s. However, as humour, parody and linguistic ingenuity were the tools of the Futurist literary trade, it is not surprising that the critics found themselves the subject of Futurist parody in the 1913 manifesto, *Slovo kak takovoe: O khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniakh*. With a light-hearted and humorous touch, the authors Aleksei Kruchenykh and Velimir Khlebnikov parodied the literary critic’s understanding of the ‘proper’ use of language. The excerpt below was presented as a two-hander where, as Anna Lawton has remarked, the comments in parenthesis were sarcastic asides aimed at the audience.

...and we notice that their [the critics] requirements (oh, horror!) apply more to womanhood as such than to language as such.

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<sup>18</sup> Anon, ‘Po povodu “Khudozhestvennykh pisem” G-na A. Benua’, *Zolotoe runo*, No. 11–12, 1909, pp. 90–93. Krusanov has identified David Burliuk as the author of this letter. See Krusanov, p. 34 and footnote 132. Burliuk’s article included an excerpt from Benua’s offensive article which had been printed in *Rech’*. Benua had written the aforementioned negative review in *Rech’*, 26 March 1910, and the previous year a scathing review of the *Venok-Stefanos* exhibition (‘Vystavka “Venok”’, *Rech’*, No. 79, 22 March 1909, p. 3). His harshest criticism had been aimed at David Burliuk’s works. Benua’s article is cited in Krusanov, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 1, and Yevgeny Kovtun, *Mikhail Larionov 1881–1964* (Bournemouth: Parkstone Press, 1998), p. 86.

In fact: clear, pure (of course!), honest (Ahem! Ahem!), melodious, pleasant, tender (absolutely right!), finally: juicy, colourful, you... (who's there? come on in!)<sup>20</sup>

The double-voicing in this excerpt is typical of all Futurist performances. In this instance, the sense of the poetic spiralling into the erotic, before being 'interrupted', plays to the perceived melodramatic audience but also serves to heighten the playful ironic humour.

As we have noted previously, the popularity of Russian Futurism peaked during the 1913/1914 season and this is evidenced by the sheer volume of newspaper columns dedicated to the large number of Futurist events. The high level of popularity was demonstrated by the success of the linguistic play on the names of Futurist individuals in newsprint which was predicated on the assumption that the Futurists in question were already well-known. So we have, for example, '*Futuristy burliukaiut*' [The Futurists Burliuk around] (see fig. 14).<sup>21</sup> The Futurist theorist, Benedikt Livshits, also wrote that the 'ocean of vulgar abuse, the ridicule, the juggling with facts, the insinuations and slander' which the critics aimed at the Futurists, had reached such proportions that David Burliuk suggested that he [Livshits] compile a record of them. Livshits 'attempted to systematise the individual statements and [...] juxtaposed the most characteristic attacks of [their] opponents in such a manner that they accused and refuted each other.'<sup>22</sup> Although the Futurists grew increasingly virulent and sensationalist, in 1913 it is noticeable that many of the tropes applied to the Futurists during this period had already been formed by critics during the very early phase of the Russian avant-garde, 1906–10. Futurists were referred to as 'Revolutionaries', 'imitators of the French', 'charlatans', 'hooligans' and illiterate. They were accused of instigating scandal, turning the theatre into a carnival, and

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<sup>20</sup> Translation taken from Anna Lawton, ed., *Russian Futurism through Its Manifestoes, 1912–1928* (Ithaca, New York, London: Cornell UP, 1988), p. 61. See also Anna Lawton, 'Futurist Manifestoes as an Element of Performance', *CASS*, vol.19, 4 (1985), 473–91 (p. 481). The original Russian text is published in V. N. Terekhina and A. P. Zimenkov, eds., *Russkii Futurizm: Teorii, Praktiki, Kritiki, Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 2000), pp. 46–49.

<sup>21</sup> In his memoirs Benedikt Livshits also attests to the contemporary play on the root of the name 'Burliuk': 'бурлюкать, бурлюканье, бурлючье' and so on. See Livshits, *Polutoraglazi Strelets* (New York: Chekhov Publishing Corporation, 1978), p. 124. See also Pospelov, p. 111 for more commentary on the play on Futurist names.

<sup>22</sup> Translation by John Bowl. This compilation of criticism was called *Pozornyi stolb rossiiskoi kritiki* [A Pillory of Russian Criticism] which was later published in *Pervyi zhurnal russkikh futurist* [The First Journal of the Russian Futurists]. Livshits, *One And a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 75.

inciting a public who were stupid, gullible or hysterical. A brief analysis of a selection of criticism during this period will help us to understand how the public image of Russian Futurism was created and give us some indication as to why the audience developed a specific expectation (scandalous or otherwise) of later Futurist events.

### Early Criticism and Image Creation

In 1908 a group of artists (including the Burliuk brothers and Aleksandra Ekster) exhibited under the title of *Venok* as a subsection of the *Treugol'nik* exhibition, on the premises of the shopping arcade 'Passazh', on Nevskii Prospekt. K. L'dov's review in the liberal newspaper *Birzhevye vedomosti* served two important purposes. Firstly L'dov offered a comprehensive and subtle evaluation of the work on show and identified specific tendencies within each artistic group. His most important observations in this respect were the comments on Vladimir Burliuk's contribution. L'dov explains how Burliuk attempted to create a type of hallucination for the spectator. 'According to this curious theory, the real artist is not the artist himself, but the viewer, or more accurately, the viewer's imagination.'<sup>23</sup> In other words, L'dov noted the modernist element in Burliuk's work which demanded the active participation of the viewer. Secondly L'dov coined many buzz-words which would later be applied to the Futurists. The title alone communicates L'dov's overall opinion of the artists as 'Revolutionaries'. In the wake of the 1905 failed revolution, L'dov would have been aware of the multiple interpretations of this term. It was a term which symbolised a fresh approach, the throwing over of the old in search of the new, a rejection of establishment and a renewed link with the people, despite the fact that the Futurists did not present themselves in an explicitly political context at this stage. Essentially it was an appellation which was sure to attract the attention of a broad readership.

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<sup>23</sup> '[...] т. е. старается дать такое изображение, которое вызвало бы особого рода зрительную галлюцинацию. Настоящим живописцем, по этой любопытной теории, является не сам художник, а зритель, или, вернее сказать, воображение последнего', К. L'dov, 'Khudozhniki-Revoliutsionery', *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No. 10478, 30 April 1908, pp. 3–4. One should note, however, that L'dov also mentioned how Burliuk's work did not convey any sense of beauty, with or without the viewer's participation.

The issue of titles of newspaper articles is an interesting point. In her analysis of the shift of Futurist artist-audience relations of this period, Jane Sharp has noted how Larionov ‘accentuated [the] shift through a novel strategy of provocation’. She argues that what linked the ‘pre- and post-Revolutionary practice in the Russian avant-garde’ was ‘a probing engagement with the conditions of rhetorical and representational empowerment’.<sup>24</sup> I would argue that the use of more daring, more outrageous newspaper titles was an integral part of the changing dynamics within artist-critic relations. In producing declamatory, eye-catching, often offensive titles, the critics were mirroring, to some extent, the Futurist rhetorical strategy of the manifesto. These newspaper titles were absorbed into the Futurist discourse and in many cases, the Futurists reacted to them directly. As temporary ‘sound-bites’, such titles immediately created a striking image of the Futurists. The image was reinforced as the frequency of the titles increased and certain tropes were regurgitated. As the Futurists’ popularity increased and they became associated with scandal, so the papers repeatedly included Futurist names, but also the word ‘debate’ in their titles. The concept of an artistic debate seemed to take on a magical, urban-mythical life of its own.<sup>25</sup> The titles became more creative: ‘*Ne nado zdravogo smysla*’ [‘Commonsense not required’], accompanied the review of a lecture given by Il’ia Zdanevich;<sup>26</sup> “‘*Publika*’ (*fokus svobodnogo teatra*)’ [The Public (The Trick of Free Theatre)] was the title to one commentary on the Moscow Futurist walks through the Kuznetskii Most area of the city, complete with painted faces;<sup>27</sup> ‘*Shabash Futuristov. Skandal v kabare “Rozovyi Fonar”*’, *Larionov vyzvan na duel*’ [Futurist Orgy: Scandal in the ‘Pink Lantern’ Cabaret, Larionov Challenged to a Duel] shows a dynamic shift in the audacity of the critic. The shocking element of the descriptive melodramatic title mimics the audacity of the Futurists themselves;<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Jane A. Sharp, ‘The Russian Avant-Garde and Its Audience: Moscow, 1913’, *Modernism/modernity: Politics / Gender / Judgement*, vol.6, 3 (1999), 91–116 (p. 94).

<sup>25</sup> Sh[uisikii]’s review of the first notorious Bubnovyi valet debate which took place at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow in 1912 used this as its title. B. Sh[uisikii], ‘Moskva, Khudozhestvennyi disput’, *Protiv techeniia*, No. 22, 18 February 1912, p. 3. See also B., ‘Na dispute “Bubnovogo Valeta”’, *Rannee utro*, No. 47, 26 February 1912, p. 5, and numerous other articles over this period.

<sup>26</sup> Spectator, ‘Ne nado zdravogo smysla’, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 96, 8 April 1913, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Anon, ‘“Publika” (*fokus svobodnogo teatra*)’, *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 327, 15 September 1913, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Dovle., ‘Shabash Futuristov. Skandal v kabare “Rozovyi Fonar”’, *Larionov vyzvan na duel*’. *Rannee utro*, No. 243, 22 October 1913, p. 6. It should be noted that ‘shabash’ has multiple meanings. ‘Shabash’ can mean a holy ‘sabbath’, or can be used figuratively as ‘orgy’; ‘Shabash’ ( a meaning

the Futurists' authenticity is questioned in the title '*Lzhe-futuristy*' ['Pseudo-Futurists] which accompanied a review of the First Evening of Speech-Creators. Meanwhile '*Spektakl' futuristov: Kto sumasshedshie? Futuristy ili publika!*' [The Futurist Spectacle: Who's Mad? The Futurists or the Public!] was an accusatory insult which was hurled at the Futurists after the journalist, 'R', attended the Luna Park production *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia*. 'R' concluded that although the Futurists were exploiting the audience by selling tickets for 9 rubles, the audience were equally stupid to pay such a price, particularly for such nonsense.<sup>29</sup>

In the aforementioned article, L'dov introduced certain adjectives and opinions into his evaluation of the avant-gardist paintings. These phrases were later used by Futurists and critics alike to present a positive aesthetic interpretation of Futurist art and to counter the onslaught of negative criticism. 'This is the art of the Future', writes L'dov, 'art of the daring, and in essence, inevitable strivings for innovation in artistic forms'. A continual reproduction of the old forms of art will not satisfy the need to express life and the spiritual questions which have both become more complex. For this reason, L'dov's praise for new artistic forms which represent the modernity of his times, also reflects the contemporary view that art should maintain a modern social, egalitarian principle and look to the future, rather than take classical antiquity as its point of reference (as Benua so frequently argued in *Zolotoe runo* and other journals). Larionov and Goncharova contributed to the *Zolotoe runo* exhibition, Moscow, April-May 1908, which was attended by over six thousand visitors. The June 1908 edition of the journal *Zolotoe runo* reinforced public awareness of new trends in Russian art. Larionov was the co-editor of its art section at the time. In a move which demonstrates a positive marketing strategy, the July-September edition included 'no less than ninety-four reproductions of French paintings' which had been on exhibition, a handful of scholarly theoretical essays and a translation of a selection of Van Gogh's letters.<sup>30</sup> The journal therefore provided an insight into the latest trends in modern art for those who were literate

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which is now obsolete) can mean 'end of work, knocking-off time' in the vernacular, or as a predicate, can mean 'that's enough!, that'll do!'

<sup>29</sup> Sh, '*Lzhe-Futuristy*', *Utro Rossii*, No. 237, 15 October 1913, pp. 5-6, and R., '*Spektakl' futuristov: Kto sumasshedshie? Futuristy ili publika!*', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 332, 3 December 1913, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> All information related to the 1908 *Zolotoe runo* exhibition is drawn from Parton, pp. 13-16.

but were unable to visit the exhibition. The journal also constituted an attractive souvenir of the exhibition.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the *Zveno* [Link] art exhibition (Kiev, 1908) was accompanied by a manifesto attributed to David Burliuk. The manifesto denounced many artists as ‘hooligans of the palette’ and praised Gauguin, Van Gogh and Cézanne. Parton writes that, in response to the exhibition manifesto, the critics accused Burliuk of being incapable of painting and of being simply ‘illiterate’.<sup>31</sup>

The *Zolotoe runo* exhibition of 1909 included a French section, which consisted of those artists who were generally associated with the Fauves and a strong Russian contingent, which included Larionov, Goncharova, Kuznetzov and Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin and Lentulov.<sup>32</sup> During the five weeks, over eight thousand visitors are said to have attended the exhibition.<sup>33</sup> However, the increased public interest, as reflected in the visitor numbers, was paralleled by increased and scathing critical reviews and even a public protest. The conservative critics could not disguise their outrage. They were particularly disturbed by what they termed the destruction ‘of founding artistic traditions and the understanding of true beauty’.<sup>34</sup> Reviving a term which had been applied to the Fauves and the new generation of artists, N. Kochetov referred to the exhibition as ‘artistic anarchy’.<sup>35</sup> The label ‘anarchist’ was increasingly applied to the Futurists, not in a positive socialist-revolutionary manner, but more as a sign of the perceived destructiveness of their art, which would only lead to an artistic vacuum.

A second outspoken article by Kochetov began, ‘Madness or mystification?’ ‘The public’, he writes, ‘are either perplexed, or indignant or guffaw – they guffaw due to the unrestrained desire to laugh or be indignant when they see the outrageous mockeries of themselves, and are perplexed when they don’t know what to do about

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<sup>31</sup> Parton, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> The avant-gardists exhibited alongside other ‘modernist’ artists P. Utkin, N. Ul’ianov, V. Miliotti, and others. See Krusanov, p. 17, and Parton, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Parton, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> M. Sokol’skii, ‘Khudozhestvennye vesti. Vystavka “Zolotogo Runa”’, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, No. 12, 16 January 1909, p. 4. Cited in Krusanov, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> N. Kochetov, ‘XVI vystavka moskovskogo tovarishchestva’, *Moskovskii listok*, No. 14, 18 January 1909, p. 3. The term ‘anarchist’ was prevalent in much contemporary conservative art criticism. See, for example, the discussion concerning the new generation of artists in A. Shervashidze, ‘Individualizm i traditsiia’ (to Aleksandr Benue and Maurice Denis), *Zolotoe runo*, No. 6, 1906, pp. 64–72.

it: to be enraged or to laugh?’<sup>36</sup> He writes that over half of the works on show are simply tomfoolery [*klounstvo*], and draws the conclusion that the ‘artists are converting the circus into a theatre. Something which we are seeing a lot of these days’ [*Tsirk prevrashchaiut v teatr. Eto my i vidim chasto teper*’]. Interestingly, Kochetov switches tactics from general abuse of the artists as failed imitators of the West to a sense of ‘value for money’: ‘when visiting an exhibition, we wish to receive an artistic impression; having paid our entrance fee, we do not want our money to contribute to the encouragement of [this] illiteracy [*bezgramotnost*], talentlessness [*neumenie*], ignorance [*neznanie*] and coarseness [*grubost*]’. This points to the growing commodification of art as opposed to art’s aesthetic benefit to one’s soul.<sup>37</sup> As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the commodification of the arts was bound up in the growing capitalism of the era and increased competition for social status among the classes. Art was bought as a symbol of culture and social status and was increasingly quantified and qualified in terms of price and the status of the artist. Finally, Kochetov advises resistance, concluding that any ‘serious-minded person can do is to protest against such exhibitions.’

Many reviewers gave precise descriptions of individuals and the social types that constituted the Futurist audience. S. Mamontov reported the outraged reactions of the public in his review. He wrote how a grey-haired man with a kind face pointed to the canvases and exclaimed, ‘They are ill! They are infectious! They need to be cured [...] What are they teaching our children?’ The old man laughs at these works, but is worried because the young people do not. Fearful that they have been taken in, he claims that ‘What we need to do, our duty – is to protest!’ Last year was enough, but [predicting the Futurist manifesto to come] ‘this slap has been too well-aimed’. Even the ‘highest echelons of society’ [*pervogil’ diiskaia publika*], writes Mamontov, became involved in the protest’. ‘At the exit I overheard a luxuriously-dressed older lady say in a suitably loud voice: I’m terribly dissatisfied by [this] exhibition! They

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<sup>36</sup> N. K[ochev], ‘Vystavka ‘Zolotogo Runa’, *Moskovskii listok*, No. 23, 29 January 1909, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> For further commentary on the link between class distinction and the consumption of art in Russia’s growing capitalist economy see Chapter 1, especially the discussion of articles by Railian, and Chapter 3, particularly the commentary on the art exhibition in the shopping arcade Passazh and the discussion of the possible art exhibition at the cinema Mirazh.

are some sort of misogynists. For what mysterious aims do they pervert female beauty [...].<sup>38</sup>

Mamontov has used the alleged opinions of these select individuals to allude to the social status of the audience, and presumably, to support his own or his newspaper's own socio-political bias. The grey-haired older man and the luxuriously-dressed older woman represent the hegemonic structures of the establishment. The critics associate them with a sense of maturity, knowledge and understanding, of good taste and a respect for the institution of artistic tradition. This sense of eminent judgement is conveyed in the caricature of the exhibition of the progressive Svaneva School, 1910, to which Marc Chagall contributed (fig. 148).<sup>39</sup> As representatives of the institution of Russian Art, they became the symbolic enemy of Futurism; ready to be 'thrown overboard from the ship of modernity', along with Pushkin, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi. Also a symbolic enemy in the sense that the conservatives personify opposition to Futurism in the critics' play of characters and positions. From the perspective of the Establishment, the Futurists became their symbolic Other, symptomatic of the hooliganism and debauchery which was associated with the lower classes (see Chapter 5). Mamontov and Sergei Glagol', for example, were in agreement that if this was art at all, then art was not just in a poor state of health and suffering, but was utterly perverted, a sham, an affectation of narcissism or self-interest.<sup>40</sup>

Kochetov's attitude to the public and his interpretation of the Futurists' attitude towards them is also quite telling. His own negative opinion of the avant-gardists is clear. The public, however, are depicted as incapable of thinking for themselves. References to their particular class are absent, but as they are described neither as hooligans nor from the upper classes (as noted in Mamontov's article), one can presume that they are from the bourgeois-*meshchanstvo* classes. As we shall discuss later, the bourgeoisie and aspiring professional and semi-professional classes were

<sup>38</sup> S. Mamontov, 'Vernisazh "Zolotogo Runa"', *Russkoe slovo*, No. 9, 13 January 1909, p. 3. Cited in Krusanov, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> The Svaneva School is said to have been the most progressive school in all Russia. See Christoph Vitali, ed., *Marc Chagall: The Russian Years 1906–1922* (Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle, 1991), p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> 'Если все это искусство, то искусство больное, или, лучше сказать, совершенно извращенное. Да, именно не больное, а извращенное, потому что здесь больше притворства, а не болезни, не страдания, а кривляния, самовлюбленности или самообожания, а не грандиозного помешательства', Sergei Glagol', 'Moi dnevniki: Kartinye vystavki. "Zolotoe Runo"', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 41, 2 February 1909, pp. 1–2; 3 February 1909, pp. 1–2. Cited in Krusanov, p. 19.



frequently stereotyped by artists and critics in terms of this combination of gullibility and ignorance.

The most poignant critical observation for our discussion of the development of Futurist theatre is Kochetov's comment on how the circus was being converted into a theatre. This seemingly innocent observation has multiple meanings. Firstly, the relationship between the theatre and the circus was being hotly debated in the contemporary press and intellectual circles and constituted much of the subject matter of the book *Krizis teatra: Sbornik statei* (1908).<sup>41</sup> It is not surprising that Kochetov borrowed from this current discourse when describing the Futurists. Secondly, it suggests that as early as 1909, the act of visiting an avant-garde exhibition became something akin to a performative event. It was a public place where different classes who could afford the entrance fee or justify the expense could mix. The exhibition was an opportunity for the urban spectacle of different sections of society to express their own identity: the lower classes could wear their 'Sunday best', adopt civil manners and prove their level of modern sophistication; the broad spectrum of the bourgeoisie, ever-conscious of the thin boundary that separated them from other members of society, could show off the latest fashions and express an artistic opinion of the work on offer, however well informed or misguided it might be; the higher classes need only arrive in their luxurious, impeccable attire and bestow their own 'informed' opinion in order to impose their social status, whilst students and others who sided with the artists were immediately perceived as either easily influenced, or rebels and young tear-aways. Note, for example, Mamontov's grey-haired old man, who bemoaned the naivety of the youth. As time progressed, adjectives such as 'militant' and 'rebellious' became synonymous with the critical depiction of the Futurist support among the young and student population.<sup>42</sup> The public, as Kochetov noted, expected a positive, uplifting if not enlightening artistic experience from this alleged cultural event, which was predicated on the public's ability to understand the art on show. Incomprehension led to dissatisfaction, and in turn, the feeling that one had been cheated. This resulted in declarations of protest, across all classes, and the desire to hold the artists to account.

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<sup>41</sup> *Krizis Teatra: Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Problemy iskusstva, 1908).

<sup>42</sup> On the association of specific adjectives which were prominent in the critical reception of Futurism, see Jane Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde', p. 92.

As criticism and accusation was met with defence and counter-attack, it is easy to see how Kochetov applied the term 'theatre'. The combination of grotesque, distorted beauty, misogyny and 'clown-like' artists with smiles on their faces but armed with offensive declamatory language seems to have produced a carnivalesque environment. Circus-like street elements entered the house of 'art' and this clearly unnerved both public and the critics. In true carnival tradition, it would appear that a colourful environment was created in which the usual social hierarchy was inverted, the concept of 'high' art temporarily desecrated, many members of the public offended, whilst others remained perplexed and did not know whether they should be laughing or crying.<sup>43</sup> Underpinning a large proportion of the criticism of the *Zolotoe runo* exhibition was a sense of fear that previously unacceptable artistic and social elements were now finding their way into public spaces which had previously been reserved for the cultural benefit of polite society. The mixture of carnival fear and fun is summed-up in the following verse which appeared in a contemporary feuilleton. It provides colourful imagery which would have attracted a broad section of the public:

Мчатся краски, вьются краски,	Colours fly, colours writhe,
Без системы, без идей...	Without a system, without any thought...
Упыри, уроды, маски,	Ghouls, freaks, masked beings,
А нормальных нет людей!	But no normal people! <sup>44</sup>

This brief glance at the early critical reception of the Russian avant-garde is sufficient to acknowledge the strong impact that the avant-garde had on critics and the wider public during this period. The second half of this chapter will focus on the critical reception of the Futurists in the context of an increasingly bourgeois public. In addition to an analysis of the public opinion, reaction and expectation of a Futurist

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<sup>43</sup> Another quotation from Glagol' (in 'Moi dnevnik', *Stolichnaia molva*, no. 42, 3 February 1909 p. 1) reinforces the reference to the circus, this time in relation to Larionov. He is described as "a talented and innate realist" who stubbornly refuses "to proceed on his own two feet without first walking on his hands or crawling on all fours and then standing on his head". Cited in Parton, p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> *Rannee utro*, No. 17, 22 January 1909, p. 4. Cited in Krusanov, p. 19.

performance, I will also consider Futurist expressions of opinion of the bourgeoisie. The artists' relationship with their critical audience had evolved from engagement on a predominantly intellectual level, to passionate and emotional bombast, offensive rhetoric and absolute judgement. Models of rhetorical strategy, artistic evaluation and Futurist-audience dynamics had been firmly established. Most importantly, the Futurists had shaped the beginnings of a public image and the audience was engaged.

### The Bourgeoisie

When we talk of the bourgeoisie in Russia in the 1910s, whom are we talking about? There is no simple, concise answer. James Bater's identification of a 'slowly emerging ill defined middle class' reflects the dynamic nature of the contemporary Russian metropolitan population.<sup>45</sup> The term '*burzhua*' [bourgeois] was prevalent in contemporary newsprint and was almost exclusively coloured with a derogatory element, be it ignorance and lack of 'proper' education, more money than sense, or most pertinently in the case of St. Petersburg, a lack of social status and the 'Other' to the classes of the nobility, clergy and honoured citizens. *Burzhua* often implied new money which had been earned on the back of modern industrialisation. Integral to the term, therefore, was a sentiment of upward social mobility, and as a consequence, a threat to established class distinctions. The most successful examples of this upward social and financial mobility were, of course, the merchant classes.<sup>46</sup>

The usage of 'bourgeois' in newsprint and art criticism could include any or a combination of the following class categories: the petit-bourgeois

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<sup>45</sup> James H. Bater, *St. Petersburg: Industrialisation and Change* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), p. 370.

<sup>46</sup> An analysis of the theatre-going practices of the merchant classes, *poluintelligentsiia*, *meshchantsvo*, and so on, can be found in Murray Frame's research on the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres (*The St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres: Stage and State in Revolutionary Russia, 1900–1920* (Jefferson and London: McFarland, 2000)). The Aleksandrinskii Theatre, for example, was associated, primarily, with the merchant classes. As tickets ranged from 6–12 rubles (box seats) to 10–20 kopeks in the gods (see p. 68), and the audience were more disposed to a repertoire which reflected the modernity of their times than other Imperial theatre audiences, I would suggest that it is likely there was some overlap between the Aleksandrinskii audience and the Futurist audience.

[*melkoburzhuznaia publika*] (primarily the *poluintelligentsiia*);<sup>47</sup> the merchant classes; sections of the intelligentsia; the bourgeois-intelligentsia which I. Petrovskaia defines as academics of tertiary education, lawyers, literati, and the higher echelons of the medical profession and the artistic intelligentsia,<sup>48</sup> and ‘honoured citizens’.<sup>49</sup> The issue of class was not absolute and, in terms of art criticism and journalism, depended very much on the ideological and political perspective of the publication in question. Bater, for example, notes the strong difference in perceptions of society between Moscow and St. Petersburg. In conservative St. Petersburg ‘social mobility depended as much upon civil or military rank as it did upon wealth’. ‘[I]n the tightly knit world of position and privilege the status of a merchant had normally counted for relatively little. This was quite different from Moscow [...], where the entrepreneurial elite was not only accepted but usually set the tone among the upper classes.’<sup>50</sup> Bater is quick to point out the tactics employed by members of the St. Petersburg classes who did their best to rid themselves of the derogatory label of merchant and therefore bourgeois. ‘Just as in the past, “the sons of considerable merchants are pretty sure to be found abandoning the business of their sires in order to take to scribbling in some Government department”’.<sup>51</sup>

One common characteristic united all the factions of the bourgeoisie – they all had leisure time and participated in the daily spectacle of social life in the public sphere, be this shopping, dining in restaurants and cafés, attending institutions and locations of high and popular culture, or taking trips out to the suburbs. As class boundaries

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<sup>47</sup> See Introduction, for a definition of *poluintelligentsia*, and I. Petrovskaia, *Teatr i Zritel’ Rossiiskikh Stolits, 1895–1917* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1990), pp. 10–17 for a comprehensive discussion of the class structure of the theatre-going public at the turn of the nineteenth century.

<sup>48</sup> Petrovskaia noted how contemporary newspapers found it difficult to distinguish the ‘class of intellectual workers’ from the bourgeoisie (Petrovskaia, p. 11). She stated that intellectuals tended to fall into one of three categories: bourgeois; those who wished to sever any association with the bourgeoisie, but instead upheld a more democratic position; and finally those intellectuals who were essentially bourgeois, but who purported to be part of the ‘intellectual elite’ and defined themselves against the bourgeois-*meshchantsvo* masses (Petrovskaia, p. 11).

<sup>49</sup> Bater defines the class of honoured citizens as follows: ‘Traditionally, the status of honoured citizen meant that there had been some particularly meritorious contribution to city life. In 1910 over 77,000 people were assigned to this class. Like others, it included dependants and was heterogeneous. Nobles, diplomats, industrialists, bankers, brokers, merchants, professionals such as doctors and teachers, and a host of others were represented.’ Bater, p. 371.

<sup>50</sup> Bater, p. 369.

<sup>51</sup> Bater, p. 369. Bater had pointed to the same anti-commerce phenomenon in the mid-nineteenth century, ‘Among the upper classes, [...], prevailing values placed little weight on achievement in the business world. Far better was it for the sons of nobles and the gentry to take up a career in government or the army than resort to commerce and industry’, p. 113.

began to erode, or at least blur, the public spectacle of leisure enabled all sections of society to engage in the process of self-identification. The journalists' and critics' portrayal of the public, and the bourgeoisie in particular, was as much an exercise in their own self-identification as an expression of the public. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the experience of being a member of the theatre audience in Russia was as important as the spectacle of the performance itself. Auditoriums, with their hierarchical seating-plans and established etiquette, provided public spaces where the audience was firmly on display and in competition with each other. As I. Petrovskaja noted, 'it was generally recognised that the core public for all theatre, except the "People's [Houses]", was composed of the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia'.<sup>52</sup> The financial considerations as discussed in previous chapters give no reason to presume that Futurist performance was any different.

The character of the Futurist bourgeois audience, as depicted in newspapers, was almost universally negative. Its determining qualities included the audience's inability to apply itself to the 'high' arts (e.g. classical theatre or a symphony concert) and to the long attention span that they demanded; social and educational ignorance; gullibility; a tendency towards unruly behaviour and an attraction to consumerism. The first point is related to the increased popularity of cabaret and miniature theatre among the growing middle classes. In his article of 1911, the reporter Esha suggests that the increased popularity is the result of changes in society and the economy, but asks whether the miniature theatre is a reflection of lowering standards, even down to the level of the cinema?<sup>53</sup> S. S. Mamontov's contribution to this article reinforces this opinion. He writes how the modern viewer is unable to cope with a lengthy Wagnerian opera or a two-day presentation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. 'They need short, clear, ever-changing impressions. Only then can their heads enjoy some respite, before having to return to work.' He stresses the essential need to pay attention to the artistic appearance of the performance, which he admits is a very difficult task, but it is the only element which distinguishes the miniature theatre from the *varieties*. He draws a parallel between the movement from multi-tome novels to the compressed clarity of Chekhov and concludes that 'one storyline [*fabula*] cannot hold the attention of the modern viewer in the theatre

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<sup>52</sup> Petrovskaja, p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> Esha, 'Chto takoe teatry miniatur i nuzhny li oni?', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 166, 27 December 1911, p. 6.

for a whole night, and must give up its place to a range of artistically diverse miniatures'. Mamontov clearly underlined the distinction between miniature theatre, as bone fide theatre, from more commercial forms of entertainment such as cabaret and *café-chantant* which were increasingly popular among the middle classes. F. F. Kommissarzhevskii counters this tendency and declares quite clearly that the Nezlobin Theatre has no intention of staging any 'trickery' [*fal'sh*'] of modern opera but will continue to stage a Classical repertoire.

Again, in the same article the director F. A. Korsh explains the blossoming of modern miniature theatre in terms of a European phenomenon which encompasses all sorts of theatre for a variety of audiences, where audiences are at liberty to choose their time and their taste. Korsh understands the popularity in terms of increased consumerism and potential artistic independence and concludes that the new theatres are giving competition to the big theatres.<sup>54</sup> S. F. Sabunov is even more candid and considers miniature theatre to be mere entertainment, but not for the serious spectator, and he notes the cheap price of the ticket as a determining factor in its rising popularity.

Petrovskaia's research also suggests that the audience frequented the miniature theatres and cabarets purely for entertainment rather than for artistic purposes. People enjoyed the escapism from the humdrum of daily life and lost themselves in a repertoire that broke with the usual theatrical canon. Petrovskaia observes how the newspapers influenced the new theatrical repertoire. Sensationalist reportage had the effect of stirring the audience up, so that they were more ready to supplement a theatrical performance with their own vivid imagination. In effect, the audience, she claims, was similar to that of a cinema. The cheapest ticket for any performance at a miniature theatre or cabaret in 1913 is said to have been 50 kopeks, a price which would have been affordable to the upper layer of the *meshchantsvo* or *poluintelligentsiia* and above. Performances might last one hour, with two to three performances an evening. According to Petrovskaia, women, the military, students, clerks, office workers, shop assistants, and all those classified as the "middle-rung"

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<sup>54</sup> By 'big theatres', Korsh is referring to the Imperial theatres and the other dominant theatres which drew a large proportion of their audiences from the bourgeoisie: the Moscow Art Theatre, the Kamernyi Russian Dramatic Theatre, and the Malyi (often referred to as the Suvorin Theatre) which boasted a well-educated audience, drawn from the intelligentsia, university teachers, and so on. See Petrovskaia, pp. 79, 107, 108, 114, 124 and 131.

could be found in the audience.<sup>55</sup> As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the more exclusive cabarets, such as Letuchaia mysh' or the Brodiachaia sobaka, were considerably more expensive, and therefore exclusive, and provided the semi-bohemian environment which Stites termed a controlled chaos for businessmen.<sup>56</sup> The expansion of Letuchaia mysh' from an intimate location for the exclusive use of artists and theatre people, to a larger venue which could accommodate Moscow's 'golden public' [the wealthy bourgeoisie], was a response to the buoyant commercial environment.<sup>57</sup>

In view of the ticket price, location and theatre-going practices, it is most likely that the largest section of the audience at Futurist debates overlapped with the cabaret and miniature theatre-going audience, that is people from the upper end of the *meshchanstvo*, some sections of the intelligentsia, to the more wealthy merchants, with a small number of adventurous members of the upper classes. It is possible, therefore, that the diverse range of reported audience reactions at Futurist events, from enjoyment and light-hearted humour and engagement with the Futurist aesthetic, to bawdy behaviour and physical violence, or personal affront, was a reflection of the instability and diversity between the growing middle classes, and also the journalists.

Two reviews of Il'ia Zdanevich's lecture at the Tenishevskii Hall, 7 April 1913, illustrate the journalist's bias and his portrayal of the audience. As we established in Chapter 3, the typical audience at the Tenishevskii Hall was comprised of students, intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie and the working classes. One journalist, Spectator, wrote an article entitled 'Commonsense not required: The debut of the Futurists, the Cubists, the Rayists and ... the Rubbishists [*erundistov*] – amid outbursts of laughter and whistling' for the conservative paper, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*. The theatrical title presages the tone and content of the article itself. The article begins judgementally: 'The Futurists continue their scandalous behaviour' [*Futuristy prodolzhaiut bezchinstvovat*']. After a short introduction concerning the content of Zdanevich's speech, Spectator describes the audience reaction as follows: 'The lecture was continually interrupted by laughter and light-hearted heckling from the audience,

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<sup>55</sup> Petrovskaia, p. 98.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>57</sup> See Chapter 3.

whistling and applause. The public laughed the most at Larionov's paintings, which were shown on the screen. According to the lecturer, one particular painting was supposed to depict a street. But when such nonsense [*kasha*] appeared on the screen, laughter resounded through the audience. [...]'. 'It was clear that the lecturer was simply mocking the audience...', declares Spectator. 'The public began to get agitated. In response to the next painting, which depicted some sort of childish sketch, someone wittily asked, "So how old is the artist?" "Thirty-two years old", replied the lecturer. "And has he really been let out?", shouted out another voice. The atmosphere intensified and a police officer arrived and gave a warning that he would close the meeting.' The audience calmed down a little after the break and Zdanevich began the second half of his lecture. Spectator communicates Mr. Rubbishist's [*g. erundist*] declaration as Hater of love (of all types), women and so-called beauty.<sup>58</sup> In short then, Spectator seems to describe a carnivalesque evening, where extremes of position and potential depths of depravity and audience provocation were only forestalled by the presence of the police. It is clear that he finds Zdanevich, his aesthetics, and the progression of Futurism in general, ridiculous. He uses his depiction of the audience to support his argument.

A. Rostislavov's article, 'Art News: A Lecture On Futurism' appeared in the liberal daily, *Rech*'. It was at least double the size of Spectator's article and gave a detailed description of the content of Zdanevich's lecture. Rostislavov writes of the 'prerequisites of amusing incidents and the punitive measure of the police', and Zdanevich's impassioned tone. Melodrama, however, is absent from Rostislavov's tone as he lists various points from the lecture. Zdanevich calls his colleagues 'drivers' [of the new art], 'titans in jackets' [presumably a reference to Maiakovskii], and he 'used the usual tropes of "hatred and spite" towards the 'highly respectable' [*pochtenneishaia*] public', writes Rostislavov. 'The public were completely innocent and enjoyed themselves, but were [also] indignant [*negodovala*]. Not one illicit word was spoken.' Rostislavov's interpretation of the evening is altogether much less sensationalist than Spectator's and the article focuses on Zdanevich's declared Futurist aesthetic. Rostislavov recognises that there was a pattern to Futurist evenings and understands the many seemingly offensive Futurist declarations to be

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<sup>58</sup> Spectator, 'Ne nado zdravogo smysla. Debiut futuristov, kubistov, luchistov i... erundistov – pod vzryvy khokhota i svista', *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 96, 8 April 1913, p. 3.



merely symbolic, not literal. Although he suggests that the public came for something more entertaining than an artistic lecture, Rostislavov does place the blame firmly on Zdanevich's shoulders for inciting the crowd with his slides and therefore causing chaos and provoking police intervention, an action detrimental to both lecturer and audience. Although the slides had passed the stringent preliminary censorship, the police were at liberty to forbid their showing in the context of a potentially riotous auditorium. Rostislavov asks, 'how is it possible to arrange a meeting such as this one, which is completely and uncontrollably dependent upon the chance disturbance of people [the public], who are not interested in and do not completely understand the essence of the topic in question [Futurist art], but instead, whose actions are only motivated by their [the public's] understanding of the 'noise'?'<sup>59</sup> In other words, Rostislavov is claiming that the public are gullible and therefore innocent. Although they do not come to the lecture to cause trouble, even if they expect to witness some scandal, they are easily led astray by the types of pictures which Zdanevich is showing. In this instance, Zdanevich, and not the public, is responsible for any public disturbance.

Zdanevich's own commentary on this evening is brief, and concentrates on the police presence and the actions of a small group of students who gathered after the lecture, bent on causing trouble. Zdanevich claimed that they threatened to write to the editor, and report Zdanevich to the conciliatory, referring to statute 135 (which carried a five-month jail sentence) because they were slandered in the manifesto of St. Petersburg.<sup>60</sup> This remark points towards the layers of censorship which underpinned all public performance, for both performer and audience. On this particular evening, Zdanevich had been warned by the police and ran the risk of being charged for disturbance of the peace. Members of the audience, in this case the group of students, felt that they had the power to report Zdanevich. If charged, Zdanevich could potentially be given a jail sentence. Zdanevich wrote that the police were quick to deal with the students who had gathered at the exit of the [Tenishevskii] hall. Students were obliged to remain in their college uniform during term time, even for social and public events. Many students attended the Futurist

<sup>59</sup> A. Rostislavov, 'Khudozhestvennye vesti: Doklad o futurizme', *Rech'*, No. 97, 9 April 1913, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> GRM f: 177 'Zdanevichei II'i i Kirila; ed khr: 50, 'Zdanevich I. M. Chernovye pis'ma raznym litsam'; l: 28, Draft Letter to Mikhail Larionov, dated 8 April [1913]

events without the knowledge or approval of their school masters and would have faced punishment, even exclusion from the school, were they to be found out.<sup>61</sup>

### Gullibility and Ignorance

Let us return to Rostislavov's article with its portrayal of the audience as gullible or naïve. According to many journalists and art critics, anyone who was willing to pay to attend a Futurist event or purchase a Futurist painting was either culturally naïve or lacking in good taste. Clearly, as Futurism gained ground, this perceived naivety was transformed into a following of the latest fashion, and fashion, particularly fashion that was supported by the bourgeoisie, was generally considered to be trite.

Ignorance, gullibility and bad taste are at the heart of the criticism in the two caricatures in figures 149 and 150 which were published on the same page of *Moskovskaia gazeta* in April 1913.<sup>62</sup> The first caricature, entitled 'At a Futurist exhibition', shows a portly man in bowler hat and glasses, as he leans over and squints at a painting depicting abstract geometrical shapes. A woman with an hour-glass figure in modest contemporary fashions keeps her distance from the painting and peers down at it. Their dress suggests that they belong to the upwardly mobile working middle classes. 'I don't understand a thing', reads the caption, 'I must buy this painting'. The second caricature, entitled 'Connoisseur of Art' depicts a couple who are staring at a statue of a centaur. The caption reads, 'Truly, life must have been tough for the centaur, the poor fella has two bellies'. The caricaturist is poking fun at the ignorance of the couple, who are dressed more opulently than the first, but not necessarily more tastefully. The woman's hat with feather and her flowery full-length dress, in comparison to the simple hat and cut of the dress of the first woman

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<sup>61</sup> In 1910 Larionov led a student protest against the new conservatism of his Moscow School of Art. According to Parton, many of the fifty students who took part in this demonstration 'against the existing system of teaching and rules of behaviour' were suspended for a term or a year. As Larionov had been suspended before, he was 'expelled without any possibility of future reinstatement'. This eventuality was disastrous for any student, because the absence of a first-class diploma meant that the student would be eligible for military service or future involuntary conscription. See Parton, p. 32.

<sup>62</sup> 'Na vystavke futuristov', and, 'Tsenitel' iskusstva', No. 248, *Moskovskaia gazeta*, 22 April 1913, p. 2. These caricatures may have been a response to the Bubnovyi valet Exhibition in St. Petersburg, in the Concert Hall of the Swedish Church, St. Ekaterina, which took place 3 April – 1 May 1913, or the Art exhibition from the *Mishen'* group of artists, Moscow 1913, B. Dmitrovka, Khudozhestvennyi salon, 11, which had just taken place in Moscow, 24 March – 7 April 1913.

suggests a vulgarity which was associated with the *nouveau riche*. The irony of the blatant obesity of the man and his comment is not lost on the viewer. The absence of any recognition of the centaur as a classical symbol of the arts, but an insistence on the base comment concerning digestion, invites the opinion that ‘one can take the *muzhik* [peasant] out of the provinces but one cannot take the *muzhik* out of the man’. This mockery of the so-called connoisseur of art was by no means an original gibe. A caricature, dating from 1859, shows a presumably wealthy man in top-hat and tails, standing in front of a painting. Disregarding any hint of artistic merit, the man decides that it must be a good painting because the artist has used such a lot of paint.<sup>63</sup>

One of many contemporary reviews of the spring *Bubnovyi valet* exhibition, St. Petersburg, 1913, was utterly disparaging of both Futurist artist and public. The journalist, Metsenat, stated that the public are so used to the ‘impossible density of colours, such artistic gibberish and such ugliness, that nothing surprises them any more’. ‘The public do not look for something better, but for something worse. The more ridiculous, the more incomprehensible, the more the public is interested in them.’<sup>64</sup>

A theatrical caricature published in *Peterburgskaia gazeta* during the same period gives a humorous illustrative suggestion of how Cubist paintings were created (fig. 151). The caricature is entitled, ‘How the Cubists Work (A Small Deviation from the Truth)’.<sup>65</sup> The illustration is so descriptive and theatrical, that the text is not required to understand the meaning of the caricature. In a feat, part carnival, part circus, a thug-like man explains to the well-dressed, trusting man in a top hat that he must subject himself to the artist’s rules if he wishes to have his portrait painted. The trusting man is then subjected to a series of violent measures involving heavy mallets and a spirit level, until the artist has succeeded in knocking the sitter’s head into the shape of a cube. At this point, the artist places a flower in the sitter’s hand

<sup>63</sup> P. Kurenkov, ‘*Znatok v kartinakh*’ [A Connoisseur of Paintings], *Iskra*, 1859. Reproduced on website: <http://hri.shef.ac.uk/rva/images/iskra1859/344b.html>, Accessed 22.10.04.

<sup>64</sup> Metsenat, ‘Vystavka “Bubnovogo valeta”’, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 92, 4 April 1913, p. 13 ‘Публика ищет здесь не лучших, а худших вещей. Чем нелепее, чем непонятнее картина, тем больше ей интересуются.’

<sup>65</sup> ‘Как rabotaiut kubisty (Malen’koe otstuplenie ot istiny)’, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, No. 92, 2 April 1912, p. 14.

and attacks the canvas with his paintbrush, to the accompanying caption 'I begin'. The caricaturist is mocking the personality and the artistic methods of the avant-gardist, in addition to emphasising the gullibility of the middle-class sitter. One cannot help but feel that the caricaturist, like Rostislavov, understood the lighter, more playful side of the Futurist aesthetic. Here the act of transforming life itself is acknowledged as one of the many avant-garde antics, which often constituted little more than carnival acts of self-advertisement (see also fig. 10).

### The Fashion for Futurist Scandal

The argument that the Futurist audience was either naïve or taken in was countered by the more prevalent claim that the public attended a Futurist performance in the hope of witnessing a scandal or drama. As the Futurists gained popularity, the tone of the criticism of the audience points to two trends within the audience. One trend suggests that the audience was becoming more confident in its role as heckler and participant in a Futurist event (a point that we shall return to in Chapter 5), and the second suggests that the audience attended the Futurist performances because they had become fashionable events. The audience who tended towards the second category were portrayed as having little knowledge or interest in the arts, but instead preferred to participate in the spectacle of the latest form of modern popular entertainment. This tendency was witnessed at the very first Futurist debate of 12 February 1912 which took place at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow. Nikolai Kul'bin and David Burliuk both delivered lectures to a full-house. The critic S. Mamontov observed the reaction of the public during the interval between the lectures.

The public [...] looked utterly confused, as if they had tried to understand the inexplicable, but, as we all know, it's not pleasant for any person to recognise his own incomprehension.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> S. Mamontov, 'Disput "Bubnovykh valetov"', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 36, 14 February 1912, p. 7, cited in Krusanov, p. 51. 'Публика в антракте после доклада имела вид довольно растерянный, как будто ей пытались объяснить необъяснимое, а, как известно, всякому человеку неприятно сознавать себя непонимающим.'

This debate was famously interrupted by the arrival of Natal'ia Goncharova and ended in a public scandal. The second Bubnovyi valet debate took place two weeks later. It was also a sell-out, but by this time many journalists were already saying that people were coming because of the popularity of the first debate and in expectation of another scandal. The event as a whole was said to have been more measured than the first. David Burliuk substituted the provocative term *meshchantsvo* (guaranteed to stir up the crowd) with derisory comparisons of photographs of various works by well-known and respected artists.<sup>67</sup> The category of *meshchantsvo* would have been a doubly bitter pill to swallow. On the one hand socially upwardly-mobile members of that class would have preferred not to be reminded of their station. As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have noted, the middle classes worried away at the hybridisation of the marketplace and the blurring of binary social poles.<sup>68</sup> They would therefore have been very sensitive to the mixing of classes in new public spaces and terms which identified the presence of individual classes. Secondly, it was a public insult to apply the term *meshchantsvo* to much loved Russian artists such as Repin, Serov and Levitan.<sup>69</sup>

Although many journalists abhorred the rise of the Futurists and their public who could not get enough of this 'chicken language' [*kurinyi iazyk*],<sup>70</sup> their rise in popularity among the middle classes continued and was demonstrated by increased ticket prices and the use of more upmarket venues (see Chapter 3). One journalist, Nikandr Turkin, repeated this claim. He pointed to the development of the debate, in line with the development of the public, who were now willing to pay 5 rubles 10 kopeks for a front-row seat. Initially, only hacks and trainee journalists covered the lectures as they were a rare event which did not attract much attention. Also, as

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<sup>67</sup> Referent, '2-i disput bubnovykh valetov', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 24 (48), 10 March 1912, p. 4. Cited in Krusanov, p. 54.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1986), p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Another review by B. ('Na dispute "Bubnovogo valeta"', *Rannee utro*, No. 47, 26 February 1912, p. 5) stated that the audience came to the second debate because they were in search of scandal and the debates had become the fashion. The audience was kept entertained with heckling and rejoinders, whilst one person said that Bubnovyi valet represented Bacchanalia of every sort, nature as the anti-Christ, and intelligence as a psychiatric illness. Although the debate continued until nearly 1am, B. stated that 'nothing was really understood by anyone'.

<sup>70</sup> The journalist ITO launched a fierce attack on the Futurists, following their appearance at the First Evening of Speech-Creators. See ITO, 'Vecher futuristov', *Rannee utro*, NO. 237, 15 October 1913, p. 6.

reporters could neither hear what was being said and failed to grasp its meaning, they often created their own interpretation of the evening's events.<sup>71</sup>

A cartoon entitled 'The Public (The Trick of Free Theatre)', published in *Stolichnaia molva*, September 1913, illustrates how the middle classes were taken for a ride by the artists (fig. 152). The first frame of the cartoon depicts a hand, as it places a top-hat on a small round table. Below is the caption, 'It is easy to do. We take a top-hat and set it down on any empty space on a table and ...'. The second frame shows a flood of middle-class people, well-dressed women and men in bowler and top-hats, as they race towards the hat in a seething frenzy. One man has fallen down the stairs, but it looks as if the rest are about to trample him down. To the right of the frame is the welcoming gesture of the previous hand. The caption reads: 'Let's all say in a confident voice: "One, two, three – Take out a subscription". I ask you to see [for yourselves] – the trick has worked'.<sup>72</sup> The cartoon may be read as a parody of the avant-garde forms of theatre and the seemingly incomprehensible popularity that they were enjoying among sections of the middle classes by autumn 1913.<sup>73</sup> Larionov had been busy marketing his new concept of street theatre, face-painting, and 'Teatr Futu' during this period. However, his presence in the daily press was balanced by the continual refrain from many critics: the Futurists were nothing short of charlatans.

The characterisation of the Futurists as 'charlatans' was particularly prevalent after the *Pervyi v Rossii vecher rechetvortsev* [First Evening of Speech-Creators in Russia], which had taken place on 13 October in the plush environment of the *Obshchestvo liubitelei khudozhestv* [Society of Art Lovers], at Dom Levisson, Bol'shaia Dmitrovka. The venue and the upper-middle-class audience marked a new level of popularity. One hesitates to say 'success', because there is something contradictory in an avant-garde group whose aesthetics and conduct had originally been perceived as rebellious, and whose main strategy of *épater les bourgeois* had become so acceptable that it had almost become neutral entertainment. This new

<sup>71</sup> Nikandr Turkin, 'Obshchestvennost', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 243, 25 March 1913, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> 'Publika. (Fokus Svobodnogo teatra)', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 328, 22 September 1913, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Although Petrovskaia refers to a 'Free Theatre' which took place in the 'Ermitazh' and performed from October 1913 until spring 1914, I have no evidence to confirm that the cartoon of fig. 152 refers to the same theatrical enterprise. See Petrovskaia, p. 130.

fashion of paying to witness a scandal, rather than being educated in and affected by the Futurist aesthetic, is summed up in Anna Lawton's view that '[t]he performer was no longer interesting for what he represented, but for what he did.'<sup>74</sup> Livshits gives a clear description of the 'brilliant cavalry-men', the 'military gentlemen' with their shoulder straps, swords and 'glossy partings' who exclusively occupied the front row and listened, open-mouthed, to the velvet tones of Maiakovskii (see fig. 182).<sup>75</sup> 'Sh.', however, is scathing of the whole evening. 'Expecting to be 'slapped in the face', or in search of scandal, the public filled the hall of their favoured artists on B. Dmitrovka. Cars and carriages were at the entrance, crowds of people without tickets filled the stairs.' He noted how the public 'cackled continually, even when they failed to hear or understand anything'. His most scathing attack was reserved for the charlatanism which undermined the whole evening. 'Sh.' remarked upon the shabby appearance of the venue and suggested that the organisers were more concerned with profit than the impression which they were making. He associated the Futurists with groups of youths in the provinces who get together under the pseudonym of a famous company, such as 'Letuchaia mysh'' in order to rip off the unsuspecting public. More comparisons are made with American charlatans. Finally, 'Sh.' wonders at the public who are prepared to hand their money over to these tricksters because they are not in Cheboksary [i.e. from the provinces] but are in the capital.<sup>76</sup>

While many commentators accused the Futurists of exploitation and the audience of gullibility if not stupidity, some of the more perceptive commentators acknowledged that a change had taken place and the Futurists had now assumed a more fashionable status among certain paying sections of society. P. Iartsev's review of the Luna Park

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<sup>74</sup> Anna Lawton, 'Futurist Manifestoes as an Element of Performance', p. 477. It is interesting that Murray Frame observed how the audience of the Aleksandrinskii Imperial Theatre 'did not want to be exposed to ideas or scenarios which challenged their prejudices' (Frame, pp. 93–94). If parallels can be drawn between the audience of the later Futurist performances and the Aleksandrinskii, as I suggested above (see footnote 46) then it would appear that a transition has taken place, where the audience was no longer paying attention to the anti-establishment, rebellious nature of the Futurist aesthetics, conduct and language. Instead, a section of the public (those from the middle classes who attended the First Evening of Speech-Creators, and later the Luna Park performances) seem to have interpreted the Futurist performances in the same way they would a carnival. Far from being offensive, the Futurist antics, throwing tea over the first row of officers, 'offensive' talk, and outlandish clothing, were now accepted as the expected tropes of the Futurist performance. Having enjoyed the carnival spectacle, the audience knew that it was free to return to a more familiar level of civility.

<sup>75</sup> See Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 150.

<sup>76</sup> Sh., 'Lzhe-futuristy', *Utro Rossii*, No. 237, 15 October 1913, pp. 5–6.

performance, *Vladimir Maiakovskii: Tragediia*, for example, refutes the notion that the audience were duped. The audience, which included members of the State Duma, military officers and ladies in glittering evening dress, writes Iartsev, 'didn't go to the theatre out of a great love of Futurism'. They attended the event as a form of fashionable entertainment, not a purely artistic event. It is also worth noting, in light of my previous comments, that Iartsev did not accept that the performance constituted theatre because it failed to challenge the public and nothing happened that was not already expected.<sup>77</sup>

What we begin to see during this popular era of early Russian Futurism is a discernible commodification of the Futurist arts, particularly among the middle classes who had disposable income to hand. This development was linked to the spectacle of public life and fashion. A number of events and factors laid the foundation for this gradual commodification. Take for example, the arrival of Henri Matisse in Russia in October 1911. Although many conservative critics had been hostile towards Matisse and his colleagues, the famous Moscow merchant and art collector, Sergei Shchukin, had long championed Matisse's cause and was one of his most supportive patrons. Matisse had arrived in Moscow to oversee the hanging of his paintings at Shchukin's Trubetskoi Palace. Under the influential wing of Shchukin, Matisse became the toast of artistic circles. Undoubtedly his popularity was boosted by the Russian attraction to anything foreign. Although Matisse's work had caused shock waves at the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris, it is clear that much effort was made in the Russian press to underline his status as a truly great artist of modern times. An article which appeared in the publication *Zerkalo* included photographs and a reproduction of a *Self-Portrait* (1906). Informing the public of Matisse's influence on the young artists of today (and thereby reinforcing a sense of legitimate artistic heritage of modern Russian art), and the influential role which the banker, Stein, had played in Matisse's success, the reporter pointed implicitly to Shchukin's own influential role. Shchukin's status as principal patron and Matisse's own celebrity were expressed through the two photographs, one with a smartly-dressed Matisse seated under one of his paintings in Shchukin's residence, the second with

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<sup>77</sup> P. Iartsev, 'Teatral'nye ocherki. Teatr futuristov', *Rech'*, No. 335, 7 December 1913. 'Спектакль был не настоящий, потому что из него не вышло никакого вызова и потому что в нем не было ничего невиданного'.



Matisse seated on a sofa with Shchukin's grandson.<sup>78</sup> The marketing of Matisse's visit not only served to increase the artist's status in the Russian art market, but also created a printed souvenir in the form of the newspaper coverage which may have encouraged the engagement of the wider audience.

The attendance of well-known literary and public figures at Futurist events would also have encouraged the public to take the Futurists seriously. Ever class-conscious, the bourgeoisie would have looked to such figures for artistic guidance and judgement. It is therefore significant that journalists frequently observed the presence of influential figures at Futurist events, particularly debates, and often in the capacity of official 'opponents' to the discussion. As early as April 1912, E. Pskovitinov noted the presence of Benua, Rostislavov, Nikolai Rerikh, Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin and Dmitrii Kardovskii at Kul'bin's public lecture 'Modern painting and the Role of the Youth in the Evolution of Art', which took place in the Tenishevskii Hall.<sup>79</sup> All of these men were well-respected, well-connected figures in contemporary Russian metropolitan society: their presence, without doubt, would have had a legitimising effect on the Futurist cause.<sup>80</sup>

The arrival of the head of Italian Futurism, Filippo Marinetti, in Moscow in January 1914 signalled a clear change in the Futurist audience and the reception of Futurism in the Russian press. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Marinetti attracted a more eminent audience than his Russian counterparts and became the centre of attention at the fashionable *Brodiachaia sobaka*. From the moment that Marinetti arrived in Moscow, he was associated with eminent public figures of the art world, rather than Russian Futurists. A photograph of Marinetti's reception at the Aleksandrovskii train station depicts an impeccably dressed Marinetti, surrounded by students, a well-dressed woman, and Genrikh Tasteven and Count Aleksei Tolstoi who had helped to organise his visit (fig. 153). According to Livshits, the only

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<sup>78</sup> See Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (London, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Barrie and Jenkins, 1983), p. 224.

<sup>79</sup> E. Pskovitinov, 'Večer Khudozhestvenno-Artisticheskoi Assotsiatsii (Ot Redaktsii)', *Protiv techeniia*, No. 27–28, 21 April 1912, pp. 4–5.

<sup>80</sup> See previous comments on the influence of the art critics, in particular the series of articles by Foma Railian, Chapter 1.

representative of Futurism present was the poet Vadim Shershenevich.<sup>81</sup> The tone of the article is generally magnanimous and therefore inviting to the readership. The newspaper *Ranee utro* ran a series of articles with photographs that covered Marinetti's visit. The photographs presented a very noble, enigmatic-looking Marinetti (see. figs. 136 and 153 and 154). One photograph (fig. 136) which showed the profile of Marinetti at the rostrum of his first major lecture at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, was positioned opposite a photograph of the celebrity singer, Fedor Shaliapin, with the highly respectable Kuindzhi Circle.<sup>82</sup> The positioning of these two photographs seems to have endowed Marinetti with the associative values of Shaliapin and the Kuindzhi Circle. It is also not by chance that an article entitled 'A Woman in Love', was placed beneath the photograph of Marinetti. Unlike the Russian Futurists who were frequently aligned with hooliganism and anarchic behaviour and were mocked through caricatures in the press as such (see figs. 6, 10, 14 and 15), the Italian Futurists were often presented as highly-cultured, well-dressed, fashionable members of high society (see. figs. 153 to 156). In Russia, Marinetti gained a reputation as a ladies' man, despite his declared misogyny. Marinetti's success in this area was also detailed in the press and to humorous effect in Nero's caricature, 'Marinetti's Triumph' (fig. 157). Indeed the press was so overwhelmingly in favour of the Italian Futurist that Benedikt Livshits accused it of double standards.<sup>83</sup>

The commodification of art is also witnessed in the market of contemporary reproductions of Futurist art, in addition to Futurist literary publications. Parton notes, for example, that in the summer of 1912 Kruchenykh published a series of postcards by Oslinyi khvost. Contributing artists included Goncharova, Ivan Larionov, Aleksandr Shevchenko, Vladimir Tatlin and Mikhail Larionov. Parton states that Larionov supplied over a dozen drawings for the reproductions which were based on his recent paintings. Two of his postcards included *Sonia kur-* [Sonia the Whore] (1912) (fig. 158) and a portrait of Aleksei Kruchenykh (1912) (fig. 159). Not only are these clear examples of Larionov's artistic style at that time, but they

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<sup>81</sup> The article by Ave which accompanies the photograph in figure 153 ('Marinetti v Moskve', *Ranee utro*, No.22, 28 January 1914, p. 5) states that Bol'shakov was also present. This may have been Konstantin Bol'shakov the Futurist poet.

<sup>82</sup> 'Marinetti v Moskve', *Ranee utro*, No. 23, 29 January 1914, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> See Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, Chapter 7.

also crossed social, artistic and market boundaries: they appealed to any audience that was interested in both Futurism and/or contemporary eroticism or pornography. Kruchenykh's portrait provided a souvenir of the poet and Larionov, who both appeared regularly in the press. *Sonia kur-*, however, strikes a different chord. The depiction of the young prostitute with angular, graceful Matisse-like limbs is contrasted with the lecherous gaze of the voyeur or prospective client. The graffiti in the top right corner spells the name Sonia and includes the letters 'kur'. These letters form the root of the Russian verb 'to smoke' *kurit*, but also represent the beginning of various words meaning prostitute, including *kur-tizanka* and *kur-va*. The play on the word is exaggerated by the pipe which is thrust into the voyeur's mouth and is pointing directly at the prostitute. Although the highly-charged eroticism and grotesque interpretation of the voyeur's role in prostitution can be understood as a gibe at the morals of the bourgeois male, it is more likely that it was interpreted as a scandalous picture which both offended and titillated the buying public.<sup>84</sup>

The fashion for buying postcards related to theatre productions had already been established in Russia. Figure 160 shows a set of twelve postcards with reproductions of Lev Bakst's costume designs for the production of *La Fée des Poupées* [The Fairy Doll], 1904, which had first been performed at the Ermitazh Theatre, St. Petersburg in 1903.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Nick Worrall points to the commercialism that was exercised in the Moscow Art Theatre. Photographs of characters from a selection of productions were on sale in the foyer with 20% of the profit being invested in the theatre. 'The photographs of *Tsar Fedor*', writes Worrall, 'were used to produce a sheet of drawings offered for sale at twenty kopecks a sheet. The hundreds which were made sold out very rapidly.'<sup>86</sup> Newspaper editors were also aware that reproductions from art exhibitions, particularly when accompanied by an informative article, sold newspapers. Newspapers were not only used as a medium to transmit news, but also

<sup>84</sup> See Parton, p. 43 for a more detailed analysis of the postcards and a list of the works contributed by Larionov.

<sup>85</sup> Catalogue of 'Ballet and Theatre Material', to be sold at Auction by Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co., 28 October 1982.

<sup>86</sup> Nick Worrall, *The Moscow Art Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 56. Further evidence for the pattern of public consumption of artistic reproductions was witnessed by the many celebratory goods which were produced to mark the jubilee of Aleksandr Pushkin in 1899, which included a special issue of *Mir iskusstva* (No. 13/14, 1899). See, for example, Grigory Sternin, 'Public and Artist in Russia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in *Tekstura: Russian Essays on Visual Culture*, edited by Alla Efimova and Lev Manovich (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 89–114 (p. 99).

functioned as a cultural tool to educate the newly literate population and provide advice and information on issues concerning the cities and metropolitan lifestyle. It was to the Futurist advantage that publications such as *Ogonek* included numerous reproductions of their paintings (see figs. 161 and 162). Such reproductions helped to cultivate the contemporary fashion for Futurism.

A rather amusing cartoon in *Stolichnaia molva* draws attention to the industry of imitation which has always existed in the art world (fig. 163). In this case, the cartoonist has sketched a painting which depicts a collection of sagging and collapsing bottles of various sizes. The caption reads, 'Still lifes (Free imitation of Mashkov, Konchalovskii and Co.)'.<sup>87</sup> The cartoon's message is ambiguous. It could be reinforcing the sentiment that the Futurists were charlatans and that none of their work was original. Equally, the cartoon may be referring to a potential emergence of fake Futurist work. If this was the case, then I am sure that the cartoonist, like many commentators, would remark that an imitation of a Futurist painting could only be as valueless as its original.

Wallpaper designs by Goncharova and Larionov constitute a more curious testament of the interaction between Futurist and bourgeois market (figs. 164 a–d). Although the designs display artistic qualities which typify Goncharova's work, strong graphic quality of the flora and fauna, a strong sense of colour, reference to village life and folktale, the product of wallpaper symbolised the new commercial wealth that was found in the capitals, and incidentally, Maiakovskii's family house in Moscow too.<sup>88</sup> The Futurists may have mocked the bourgeoisie, but these products were clearly designed for their needs. As an artistic creation for bourgeois consumption, it also calls into question the issue of transgression of artistic boundaries and the perceptions of 'high' or 'low' art.

Another commercial activity which Goncharova participated in was dress design. According to art historian Evgeniia Iliukhina, Goncharova was invited to create designs for the most esteemed designer of her time, Nadezhda Lamanova. Lamanova

<sup>87</sup> Anon, 'Na "Bubnovom valete"', *Stolichnaia molva*, No. 292, 18 February 1913, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Livshits records his first visit to Maiakovskii's family home in Moscow and the 'tasteless wallpaper of the cosy little bourgeois flat' [*aliapovatye oboi mechshanskoi kvartirki*]. See Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer*, p. 142, Livshits, *Polutoraglazi streets*, p. 100.

was not only associated with the wives and daughters of the richest Moscow merchants, but also dressed the theatrical bohemia and produced designs for Stanislavskii's productions. Iliukhina brings to light evidence which suggests that Goncharova had been preparing her own fashion label and the creation of a clothing factory. Goncharova's designs, which Iliukina has reproduced (see figs. 165a–b), are primarily slender silhouettes of classical proportions which incorporate her typical motifs of strong graphic lines, bold colours, decorative flower motifs and the introduction of modern urban lines.<sup>89</sup> The wallpaper and dress designs clearly presage the work of Liubov' Popova, Aleksandra Ekster and others in the fields of interior and clothes design. At this stage, however, Goncharova's clients could only have been the wealthier members of the bourgeoisie and merchant classes.<sup>90</sup>

### **Futurist Commentary on the Bourgeoisie**

But what did the Futurists actually say about their bourgeois audience? The majority of Futurist public verbal discourse was negative and served to reinforce the polarity of 'them' the 'philistines' and us the 'true artists'. This attitude is witnessed in nearly all of the Futurist manifestoes. Livshits's memoirs also provide us with a wealth of purported evidence which demonstrates this mutually adversarial attitude. His opinion of the middle classes is at its most acerbic when he talks of them in relation to the St. Petersburg cabaret, the *Brodiachaia sobaka*. Of course, Livshits's descriptions of the vulgar 'philistines' may well be attributed to the Futurists' own ambivalent reception at the cabaret. Goncharova referred to the public as 'philistines' in a diary entry of 1912, the public's response to the visual arts is described in almost primordial terms:

In general, music is an art form which the people can understand and which they confuse less with life. In painting, sculpture, and architecture, the public are like savages [*dikari*] and if they are not savages, then they are very limited philistines [*meshchane*].<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Evgeniia Iliukhina, 'Goncharova i moda', in *Nataliia Goncharova*, edited by E. B. Basner et al., pp. 246–55.

<sup>90</sup> Both ventures underline Goncharova's talent in applied arts and predict her future success as a theatre designer with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in Sharp, 'The Russian Avant-Garde', p. 98 and footnote 25.

It is obviously impossible to take any of the Futurist pronouncements about their public literally, as the strategy of *épater les bourgeois* was a central ingredient in all contemporary trends of European avant-garde aesthetics. For example, following the colourful scandal of the *Mishen'* debate of 23 March 1913, Larionov declared his innocence in a newspaper interview, published under the title 'They didn't want a scandal'. Larionov reiterated his innocent intentions of wishing to speak on questions of the new art and categorically refuted the idea that he had organised the artistic debate with the sole aim of creating a scandal. Instead, Larionov put the blame firmly on the Moscow audience:

Throughout the whole time, despite the fact that the audience, as became clearly evident, didn't have any serious attitude toward the business in hand, and were expecting a scandal, I tried to be an irreproachable chair.<sup>92</sup>

Il'ia Zdanevich's account of the same evening in a draft letter to his mother, dated 28 March 1913, is so melodramatic that it becomes almost farcical. In a bid to absolve himself of blame and his parents' judgement, Zdanevich launches into a carnivalesque account of an evening which turned into an all-out attack by the audience on the 'innocent' Futurists who were fearful for their own safety. Zdanevich refers to the aggressive uncontrolled crowds as 'enemies'. One cannot help but smile at his description of the women who are intent on attacking him personally with a glass, which they did. The Futurists, he claims, were only acting out of self-defence. 'I've never heard or seen such a frenzy or bad language. It is a surprisingly stormy thing, the Moscow public.'<sup>93</sup>

An archival record gives details of an advertising flier for a lecture by Nikolai Burliuk, organised under the auspices of *Soiuz molodezhi*. Although the lecture title was stated as 'P. N. Filonov – Defender of Psychological Intimacy [*Intimnizma*], a wide range of topics were set to be discussed. Among them was 'the artist and the public'. This would suggest that Nikolai, who was generally more sensitive and less

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<sup>92</sup> Anon, 'Oni ne khoteli skandala. (Ob''iasneniia ustroitelei disputa "Mishen'")', *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 243, 25 March 1913, p. 6. 'Всё время, несмотря на то, что аудитория, как было до очевидности ясно, вовсе не хотела серьёзного отношения к делу, а жаждала скандала, я старался быть безупречным председателем.'

<sup>93</sup> GRM f: 177; ed khr: 50; ll: 18–21ob. 'Такой ярости и таких ругательств я никогда не слышал и не видел. Удивительно бурная вещь – московская публика.'

bombastic than his brother, David, had given some consideration to the relationship between artist and public. Although we cannot presume to guess the content of the proposed lecture, we know that it was priced at 2 rubles 60 kopeks and would therefore have been targeted at the *poluintelligentsiia* and above.<sup>94</sup>

As with all avant-garde artists, the Futurists had a precarious relationship with their patrons. The Futurist discourse and artistic identity was based on a criticism of the very people who bought their works, and therefore afforded them a degree of success. As early as 1908, a rather cunning David Burliuk wrote the following in his article ‘The Voice of an Impressionist – In Defence of Painting’, which was published in the exhibition catalogue, *Zveno*, Kiev, 1908: ‘Complacent bourgeois, your faces shine with the joy of understanding. You have fathomed the profound meaning of the pictures’.<sup>95</sup> Many artists, of course, were embittered by the injustice of a system which seemed to prioritise the commercial aspect of a work of art over its artistic value. In a direct attack on the system of influential critic and speculator of art, Malevich wrote a vituperative letter to Benua, dated May 1916:

This [declaration] is the spiritual poverty of someone who cannot be bought. But what do they care for spirit, so long as they can get on with buying pictures? You, as president of the critics, will always cover with your dressing gown the dandy’s trust, pawning his last diamond and drinking away his last pair of trousers.<sup>96</sup>

A more light-hearted interpretation of the success of Futurist art and its speculative worth among the bourgeoisie is seen in the tongue-in-cheek cartoon in figure 166. The cartoon is entitled, ‘La Peau de L’Ours’, referring to the syndicate of investors who were responsible for the increasing the market value of work by the Fauves, the Cubist and Post-Impressionists. A whimsical, fashionably dressed young girl stands

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<sup>94</sup> GRM f. 121: Soiuz molodezhi; ed khr: 13, Programmy, tezii dokladov i disputov, ustraivaemykh “Soiuzom Molodezhi”’, Undated, 20.11.1912 – 20.11.1913; l: 5.

<sup>95</sup> Kean, p. 233, footnote 39. David Burliuk, ‘Golos impressionista – v zashchitu zhivopisi’, Catalogue to the ‘Link’ exhibition, Kiev, November 1908.

<sup>96</sup> K. S. Malevich, *Essays on Art, 1915–1933*, translated by edited by Troels Andersen Xenia Glowacki-Prus and Arnold McMillin, Vol.1 (London: Rapp & Whiting, 1968), pp. 42–48. The letter is signed and dated May 1916, Kuntsevo. It includes the postscript ‘since the doors of the press are closed to us I am writing to you personally.’ A second declaration, ‘The Problems of Art and the Role of Its Suppressors’, 23 March 1918, Moscow, was signed by Malevich and the painters A. Morgunov and Al. Gan. It points to the continued frustration of the artist, his/her continued precarious position in the early post-Revolutionary era. Malevich riles against the injustice of the system which is controlled by critics, collectors and galleries. See pp. 49–50.

in the far right corner. In the foreground, her mother discusses the girl's possible fortune with a potential suitor, who is perched on the sofa, top-hat in hand. The caption below reads, 'We can't give her a dowry, but she has a lovely little Futurist collection!' [*Nous ne pouvons pas lui donner de dot, mais elle a une jolie collection futuriste!*]. The cartoonist is reflecting the confidence felt in the modern art market and, in particular, the guaranteed value of Futurist work connected with 'La Peau de L'Ours'.

### The Bourgeoisie in Futurist Art

The most informative evaluation of the Futurists' attitude toward the bourgeoisie can be gleaned from an examination of their art. Futurist visual commentary has the advantage of perhaps being more objective than Futurist verbal comments. The latter were given under duress, during a newspaper interview or during the course of a Futurist performance when the Futurists were either playing the role of rebellious or playful, superior artist or were under public fire to produce statements and opinions and be accountable for their art.

Depictions of the bourgeoisie at leisure constitute the subject matter of some of Larionov's earliest paintings. In contrast to the gentle Impressionistic style that he employed for contemporary paintings of landscapes and provincial scenes, Larionov's depictions of the bourgeoisie reveal a more perceptive, satirical and ludic style, and his confidence as the painter. Let us turn our attention to four works by Larionov, *A Walk in a Provincial Town* (1907–8, fig. 167),<sup>97</sup> *Provintsial'nyi frant* [Provincial Dandy] (1907, fig. 168), *Provintsial'naia frantikha* [Provincial Lady of Leisure] (1907, fig. 169) and *Restoran na beregu moria* [Restaurant on the Sea Front] (1905–5, fig. 170). Camilla Gray referred to the 'doll-like caricatures' as 'little more than skits on an easily recognizable type' which were to be found in the *Walk in a Provincial Town*. She explained how the narrowness of the frieze, the dominance of the horizontal and the figures seen in silhouette give the effect of a

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<sup>97</sup> Parton dates this painting at 1909 (Plate 6), whilst Camilla Gray dates it earlier at 1907–8, *The Russian Experiment in Art, 1863–1922* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 103.



'strip-cartoon' with 'child-like indifference to conventional rules'.<sup>98</sup> Compare Larionov's painting, for example with Fedor Rerberg's *On the Boulevard* (1903, fig. 171). Both contain the same social types, the young dandy with trilby, women in the latest fashions, pale blouses with wide sleeves, fitted dresses and straw boaters. There the similarities end. In Rerberg's painting the characters move freely into depth and this is emphasised by the rear view of the woman in the foreground who is likely to pass the two women in the centre of the painting who are advancing towards the viewer. Larionov's characters, however, are not only static, caught in what Gray terms 'a brief moment arbitrarily cut short', but seemingly inanimate. The two male dandies have struck ridiculous poses, while the women have been twisted into almost impossible stances. In fact, the only natural animate figure is the pig, usually a symbol of degradation, but here happily walking along going about his business (fig. 167). Exemption might also be made for the waiter, who bears a remarkable resemblance to Larionov's hairdresser (fig. 182). The playful ridicule seems to focus specifically on the bourgeoisie. Larionov aims his satirical gaze most directly at the central female figure. She may consider herself to be pretty in pink and high heels, in the latest fashions and bearing a fan, a symbol of decorum, but her contorted posture which would see her topple over at any moment and her position to the rear of the pig negates any sense of elegance or grace.

The two men in the pictures are taken from a painting by Evgraf Krendovskii, (*Aleksandrovskaiia Square in Poltava*, early 1850s). Larionov was indebted to Krendovskii for both the subject matter and the style of his painting.<sup>99</sup> In Krendovskii's painting, a banker in top-hat and cane converses with his client in the centre of the painting. Larionov has divided the men and set them apart, looking away from each other in the corners of his painting. Through their inability to engage with the reality of their environment, in their two-dimensional plane, they no longer command the respect that their station would usually afford them. Compare the presentation of these men with the more conventional presentation of people at leisure in *Gulian'e pod Novinskim* [Festival on Novinskii Boulevard], by an unknown artist, from the mid-nineteenth century (fig. 172). Here there is no doubt about the class and status of every individual on the canvas. The height of the

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<sup>98</sup> Gray, p. 105.

<sup>99</sup> See Parton, pp. 26–27 for further explanations of Larionov's and Krendovskii's paintings.

gentlemen's top hats is equal to that of the officers' hats with their brilliant red uniforms and golden epaulettes. Rather like Edouard Manet's commentary on the contradiction of the restriction of leisure in *La Musique aux Tuileries*, 1862, this unknown artist has reflected the social etiquette which bound all participants of the spectacle of leisure within the public sphere. Here, the upper classes are suitably stuffily dressed. Each civilised female is wearing a bonnet and is chaperoned according to established decorum. The proportions and elegance of the gentlemen are reflected in that of their steeds, whilst little children are trussed up like Victorian adults. The only true hint of leisure comes from the groups of people who are sitting in relaxed groups and are obviously not part of *le beau monde*. The photographs in figures 173–177 provide us with a record of the sorts of leisure activities which the middle classes engaged in, in the outdoors and away from the strictly urban environment. They also provide us with a record of the clothing worn during such events. See for example the straw boaters and trilbies which appear in Larionov's paintings. As Evgenii Kovtun observed, there is also a reference to the new industry of mass-market clothing which was being established in Russia at the turn of the century. The availability and affordability of such mass-market clothing for members of the *meshchanstvo* and *poluintelligentsiia* neutralised some of the salient class-distinctions between the lower and middle classes and, in turn, enabled the lower-classes to gain entry into previously inaccessible civilised public spaces, including art exhibitions (this may be the case in figs. 149 or 207). In referring to mass-produced clothes, Larionov is therefore pointing to the motivation of the upwardly-moving population who were always in search of entry and acceptance on the next social rung.<sup>100</sup>

Let us now look more closely at the two studies, *Provintsial'nyi frant* (fig. 168) and *Provintsial'naia frantikha* (fig. 169), which later found themselves in *Walk in a Provincial Town* (fig. 167). In the study, the dandy wears a top-hat and well-tailored suit of a banker of the professional classes, rather than the trilby and grey tones of a slightly loosely-fitting suit which are featured in the *Walk in a Provincial Town*. In fact, Larionov has paid great attention to the man's clothing, which is associated with status, wealth and etiquette. Such connotations are emphasised by the man's

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<sup>100</sup> I will return to this issue of signs of upward social mobility in Chapter 5.

confident pose, which is outlined in black and stretches from the top to the bottom of the canvas. However, when one takes a look at the man beneath the hat, as it were, the viewer is aware of a swarthy man which is not usually associated with the cultural etiquette of a man of this supposed status. The man has dark featureless eyes which are turned away from the viewer. Instead they gaze into a distant space to the right of the frame. Rather than a provincial banker, Larionov is presenting the viewer with a provincial flâneur. The only other character in the painting is represented by the woman in the advertising signboard in the top right corner, that is, located directly above the man's gaze. We have already mentioned the influence of fashion and advertising in the new commercial environment of industrial Russia. Hats such as the one advertised on the signboard were only worn by wealthy members of society and therefore symbolised a respected social status (see, for example, fig. 177). Here, however, the woman is wearing the sort of heavy bright red makeup which was usually reserved for prostitutes, cabaret and circus performers, and so on. The hint of prostitute is emphasised by the seemingly naked flesh of the full breasts on display. In the detached manner of the prostitute, the woman's gaze challenges that of the man, although their eyes do not meet. Finally, one is aware of the fencepost in the bottom right corner. In this study, the dimension and bright golden colour of the fencepost dominate the picture plane. Planted firmly in the ground, it seems literally to fence in or obstruct the path of the dandy. There is also a suggested eroticism as this phallic symbol points directly to the picture of the advertised woman in a hat and is positioned where her legs should be. The grey tones of the painting are only relieved by the woman's makeup, the light through the trees and the golden fencepost. An uneasiness creeps into the viewer's mind as he/she is faced with the presence of an authoritative swarthy man, whose gaze looks coldly through or beyond the brightly made-up woman. She is alone, imprisoned and fragmented in a frame within the picture frame, threatened by the phallic symbolism of the fencepost. Larionov has created an environment in which nearly every detail is ambiguous and cannot be taken at face value, where silent games are played out on the street.

The other study, *Provintsial'naia frantikha*, requires a sharply contrasting reading. Larionov uses a simple palette of gold, deep blues and white which are instantly pleasing to the eye. These primary colours, so frequently used in icon painting, here exude a sense of harmony and femininity. The viewer is engaged by the

complementary colours of the painter's palette and the young woman's inclination of the head. Upon closer analysis, however, the harmony begins to disintegrate. The initial impression of supple graceful curves is so exaggerated that it is clear the woman has been contorted into an impossible pose for any healthy person. Her finely laundered modern clothing cannot hide her lack of normal proportions. Her right arm is heavy and angular and concludes in a heavy hand which would be more appropriate or useful in a potato field than an urban setting of polite etiquette. The left arm seems to have disappeared altogether and instead the arm of the blouse is left hanging by the woman's side. Most shocking of all is the realisation that the woman does not have a mouth and therefore a voice. Instead Larionov has given her imploring eyes which connect instantly with the viewer. The waves of golden curls, which initially seemed luxurious and healthy, now seem two-dimensional and false like every other aspect of the woman. The hair is also one-sided and perhaps reflective of the falsity of modern fashion. The woman's body assumes the two-dimensional felt shapes of a children's game. She is not of this world, as is suggested by Larionov's use of the iconic gold and blue, but has been stuck together with left-over, ill-fitting components. Finally, one becomes aware of the kite-like pale image in the top right corner. The woman's blouse takes on the characteristics of a boat's sails. She bends towards the kite in her exaggerated pose, the wind reflected in the flowing tie around her neck, and it is as if she is so unreal that, like a Chagall figure, she is about to float off. However, despite the absence of feet to hold her down, Larionov has weighed her down by outlining her heavy skirt in a thick black line. The overall impression is of a voiceless, vulnerable woman who is trying to escape her present enforced situation.

Larionov's *Restoran na beregu moria* (fig. 170) depicts a scene of public leisure in which people are engaged in conversation or out walking or playing in the sun. In the background, figures at a restaurant, which overlooks the sea, can barely be made out. Larionov's painting has clearly been influenced by French Neo-Impressionism. One is particularly struck by the similarity of Georges Seurat's *Un Dimanche après-midi à l'île de La Grande Jatte*, 1884–86 (fig. 178) and possible references to the work of

Auguste Renoir.<sup>101</sup> Timothy Clark observed the lack of connectedness between the characters of Seurat's work, which appears to be a criticism of the enforced etiquette of leisure that was played out in public spaces and by a cross-section of the public.<sup>102</sup> Although Larionov has allowed his characters more movement in his picture, they still appear to be caricatures of recognisable social types. Could this be the same woman in the pink dress as in *Walk in a Provincial Town*? The woman in pink with her back to the viewer, her almost identical equivalent in yellow facing the viewer, and the man who is striding in from the left of the picture plane with his cane in hand and relaxed Sunday attire, all seem to be headed in different directions, and there is nothing to suggest that they are connected with each other. The couple in the foreground on the right seem to be deep in conversation. They are well dressed, and once again Larionov has paid attention to the detail of dress so that the viewer is in no doubt about the social status of the characters. However, behind the couple is another woman who is equally well-dressed, perhaps even a little coquettishly so, and she has turned round to gaze at the couple — or is she staring at the viewer? Who are these women: wife, lover, or prostitute? Both are dressed in the hat from the signboard. The only figures who seem to be enjoying a degree of supervised freedom are the children and the dog and monkey-like figure, just as they do in *Un Dimanche*. The animal figures strut and parade in contorted positions as if parodying the humans.

There is a striking difference between Larionov's presentation of the bourgeois classes at leisure and that of his non-Futurist contemporaries. Larionov's satirical wit and perception is absent from K. F. Iuon's *Troitskaia lavra zimoi* [Trinity Seminary in Winter] (1910, fig. 179) and Boris Kustodiev's *Kupchikki* [Merchants' Wives] (1912, fig. 180). Both paintings are infused with a sense of idealism. Iuon depicts a civilised procession of people of all classes as they make their way along the snowy track. There is no sign of conflict or dangerous ambiguity of status between the

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<sup>101</sup> I have yet to establish whether Larionov actually viewed Seurat's iconic avant-garde painting when he was in Paris in 1906. *La Grande Jatte* was rarely exhibited until it was bought for the Helen Birch Bartlett Collection in 1926. Although this is not the place to discuss the issue at length, attention should be drawn to a possible dialogue which existed between Larionov's and the Impressionists' and Post-Impressionists' depictions of the public at leisure. A more comprehensive investigation of this possible intertextual link would bring greater clarity to Larionov's, and Russian Futurism's, perspective on the public and audience.

<sup>102</sup> T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), pp. 259–68.

classes, despite the fact that the upper classes are muffled up under blankets on sledges whilst the lower classes make their way along the snow under the burden of their shopping. The open panorama, harmony of pale gentle colours, presence of people chatting and children playing, and absence of visible vice suggest a clean and sinless environment in which the civility of the procession prevails. Kustodiev's painting is characteristically full of colour and decoration. Here the wealthy women of ample proportions (fig. 177/180) are engaged in conversation. Although their station in life is evident in their luxurious clothing and the monumentalism of their physical size and shape, Kustodiev does not show them any bitterness, rancour or satire. Instead he has imbued the whole picture with an idealistic decorative quality which is more suited to a children's illustration or a theatre design than to portraits of wealthy commercial wives. This is communicated through the exuberance of primary colours, the folk motifs which are reflected in the stylised advertising signboards and the women's shawls, the couple who are relaxing in the background, and the gazes of this couple and the woman in the centre of the painting which draw the viewer's perspective beyond the picture frame.

A number of Futurist paintings which depict the bourgeoisie in indoor settings provide us with more expressions of Futurist opinion towards the much maligned class. Let us take for example, the setting of the barber's shop. Larionov's two paintings *Parikmakher* [The Hairdresser] (1907, fig. 181), *Oficerskii parikmakher* [The Officers' Hairdresser] (1910, fig. 182), and Marc Chagall's *At the Barber's* (1912, fig. 183). Larionov's *Parikmakher* had a shocking effect on one critic, M. P-rov, who reviewed the *Mir iskusstva* exhibition of December 1911, Moscow, which included a section devoted to Bubnovyi valet. M. P-rov writes how Larionov's *Parikmakher* (exhibition No. 133), held the record for utter 'shamelessness' [*bezzastenchivost*]. 'Words are not strong enough to describe this masterpiece; you need to see it with your own eyes to appreciate the very depths of man's fall. The cheerless spectacle!' declares P-rov.<sup>103</sup> No doubt this opinion was fuelled by Larionov's use of crude brushstrokes as well as his choice of subject matter. The theatricality of the action in both Larionov's 'Hairdressers' is emphasised by the

<sup>103</sup> 'Однако, рекорд беззастенчивости остается за Ларионовым, который, под № 133, выставил картину «Парикмахер». Слова бессильны охарактеризовать этот шедевр; нужно видеть его воочию, чтобы ощутить всю глубину человеческого падения. Невеселое зрелище!' P-rov, "Mir iskusstva", *Moskovskaia gazeta*, No. 163, 5 December 1911, p. 5.

presence of the luxurious curtain. The waiter character from *Walk in a Provincial Town* is here transformed into the groomed officer's hairdresser. Flouting convention of perspective and proportion, Larionov has again created caricatured figures. Thus the officer has been presented with a diminutive head, which is emphasised by the size of the scissors that are hovering above it, the breadth of the hairdresser's shoulder and his solid, upright pose. The status of the officer, who was later to attend the *Vecher rechetvortsev* with his glossy parting, is witnessed in his officer's uniform, his posture and his sword. The officer admires his appearance in the mirror. But something is not quite right here. Larionov has given the officer a puffed-up, oversized chest, a sword of claymore proportions which is challenged by the precarious florid ironwork that is supporting the mirror, and a mouth whose action is parodied by the dominance of the scissors. The officer's posture and the pattern on the flat surface on his chest are echoed and parodied in the arabesques of the ironwork.

References to the circus or carnival are present in Larionov's *Parikmakher* and Chagall's *At the Barber's*. In both paintings the client-victim is at the mercy of the hairdresser, despite the clients' superior position in society. Both hairdressers appear to be executing a trick for the audience. The element of theatricality is communicated through the presence of the curtain in Larionov's picture. The golden floor and improvised golden proscenium arch suggest a stage with footlights. With calm control and fluid expert action, Larionov's hairdresser draws his victim's head back into an impossible angle. Although the client has raised his hand, he seems powerless. Chagall's hairdresser, however, dances around his victim who is pinned down under a long white sheet and looks shocked at the vision of the comb and scissors in the hairdresser's hand. In the background a third man observes the scene, possibly a friend of the hairdresser, possibly a client planning his escape. The hairdresser seems oblivious to his 'victim'; instead he addresses the viewer. Facing the viewer directly, the hairdresser's gesture invites the viewer to spectate, to follow the action. Chagall, the master of circus painting, exhibited with *Oslinyi khvost* in Moscow in 1912 and 1913, so it is very likely that he was aware of Larionov's earlier paintings.

Larionov's 1911 painting, *Kel'nersha* [The Waitress] (fig. 184) has nothing of the ludic or circus qualities which were inherent in the hairdresser paintings. Using a subdued palette of white, grey and beige tones, Larionov has created an almost photographic image of a couple who have been caught during a brief moment of potentially shocking interaction. Their presence dominates the picture plane and stretches from top to bottom. The perspective is slightly ambiguous. Although the waitress seems to be positioned behind the man, Larionov emphasises the potential closeness of the man's right arm and hand to the waitress's well-defined buxom curves. The clothing, and again the hats of the two figures in the background possibly suggest that this is a restaurant or café of some status. Both background figures look shocked, as if they are captivated by an event. It is possible that they are watching a stage performance, or perhaps they are witness to something shocking which is taking place between the suited man and the waitress in the foreground. There is a lecherous air about the man which is communicated through his smile, the charged zone which exists between the close proximity of the well-defined profiles, and in particular the almost intimate placement of the man's hand in relation to the waitress. Although the waitress is impeccably dressed and presentable and keeps her hands hidden away in her pocket and behind her, Larionov has clearly given a suggestion of the shape of her legs under her long grey dress. Waitresses of this era were frequently perceived as potential prostitutes by restaurant clients, regardless of their own proper conduct. In this case, the waitress seems to be gazing into an undefined space ahead of her, past the man, and resisting interaction with him (or maybe telling him to clear off), other than her duties as a waitress. The situation of a curvaceous waitress with blank stare, who appears vulnerable and exposed under the gaze of both the dominant male presence and the spectator, combined with the ambiguous painterly perspective, is reminiscent of Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1882. Parallels can be drawn between both artists' exploitation of the concept of ambiguity. Ambiguity underlines the painterly perspective, the level and meaning of interaction between the main characters, the status of the girl, the way in which the bourgeois man perceives her role, and finally, for the purposes of this section, the artists' attitudes to the public, including the bourgeoisie and prospective patrons.



These few examples of Futurist paintings depicting bourgeois subjects cast a critical eye at the presence of the bourgeoisie within the public sphere. Voiceless and vulnerable women encounter the gaze of sinister-looking men. In the setting of the barber shops, the bourgeois men are reduced to victims. However, in all the Futurist paintings the bourgeoisie have been reduced to two-dimensional figures, who are placed like puppets on the public stage. And yet it was predominantly this section of the public, together with the critics and journalists, who patronised Futurist performances and exhibitions, and whose opinions were voiced in the press. As the Futurists became more popular and extended their performances to fashionable venues, cabarets and the Luna Park Theatre, so the patronage of the bourgeoisie increased. Despite the constant abuse directed at them, perhaps the bourgeoisie were stimulated by the subversion of the familiar or enticed by the Futurist spectacle which offered a new and exciting perspective of art, music, literature, performance and life!

Despite their prominence, however, the bourgeoisie were not the only consumers of Futurist art. The final chapter will focus on the participation of the lower classes in Futurist events. It will explore the scope of the negative criticisms of the early avant-garde exhibitions (as raised in the first part of this chapter) and the popular opinion that the Futurists constituted a bad influence on society.