The Russian artistic trend “Peredvizhniki”

"Art is difficult, transient is her reward”

F.Schiller

“Art is long, and Time is fleeting”

H.W.Longfellow

“Art is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness.”

Seneca.

I'd like to tell you about the Russian artistic trend “Peredvizhniki” (“Wanderers” or “Itinerants”) that appeared in the 19th century. The representatives of this trend were realist painters, who organized the Russian Democratic Artistic Union. They were against the academic style of painting; they wanted to depict the real world, scenes of ordinary hard life, history and the social problems of the time in a realistic way. These painters organized the travelling exhibitions of their pictures. The task was to promote the civic and aesthetic education of the people.Peredvizhniki denounced the aristocracy and the vices of Russian society. They protested against the evil of contemporary social and economic life. The foundation of the travelling artists' society is one of the most important and bright achievements of our culture of the second half of the 19th century. The main representatives of this trend are Kramskoy, Repin, Perov, Makovsky, Myasoedov, Yaroshenko, Polenov, Savrasov, Shishkin, Vasnetsov and Levitan. The Russian artistic trend existed for 50 years .

Moscow is the largest cultural centre of Russia. There are more than 80 museums in Moscow. The largest museums are the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts and the State Tretyakov Gallery. The State Tretyakov Gallery is a major research, artistic, cultural and education centre of Russia and a museum of Russian Art. Founded as a private collection in 1856 by the entrepreneur Pavel Tretyakov, a patron of the arts, it was donated to the city of Moscow in 1892. P. Tretyakov wanted to help poor Russian painters, to suppot them and to bring art close to the people. Tretyakov began his collection with the works of the “Peredvizhniki”, so the gallery has an excellent collection of the best works by Shishkin, Surikov, Vasnetsov and Kramskoy. The Tretyakov Gallery houses a unique collection of remarkable works of art. Almost all famous Russian painters of the Wanderers group are on display there.

Levitan's landscapes are known all over the world. How colourful and Russian his landscapes are: “Golden Autumn”, 'After the Rain”,”Autumn Day in Sokolniki”. If you look at the *Autumn Day in Sokolniki* -everything seems to bring out the loneliness of the figure in the centre:the trees losing their leaves, the remote, indifferent sky, the path going into the distance. The picture shows a broad path in Sokolniki on an autumn day. It must be the beginning of October. The maple trees lining the path on both sides are tinged with gold. The time on the day is probably late afternoon. The air is damp, as it usually is in autumn. In the foreground there is a figure of a woman dressed in black. She is walking lightly along the path towards the spectator. She is looking down, and her face looks thoughtful and perhaps a little sad, in keeping with the rest of the scene, because there is suggestion of sadness in the picture of autumn. The masterly use of colours, as well as the figure of the woman, all serve to create a forcefully expressive, sad but very beautiful picture of the country-side. It is difficult to take one's eyes away from the picture. It catches our imagination. People can stand for hours in front of his picture and admire it. The whole atmosphere of the picture is full of lyricism and, although autumn is shown here as a sad time of the year, there is a promise of spring and rebirth. The artist has created here a very charming image of his native land, which he loved so well.

For his life and painting Levitan chose Plyoss- a small beautiful town on the Volga. In the closing years of his life Levitan made journeys abroad to France, Italy and Germany where he painted a number of landscapes, although his best works of the period were devoted to Russia. He was only 40 when he died in 1900.

Levitan's influence on the painters of lyrical landscapes was great. Levitan's feeling for nature, his great love for his native land, his ability to reveal and depict the poetry of the Russian land have won his paintings the love of people.

The poetic images of Russian women from folk tales were very dear to Vasnetsov. Look at Vasnetsov's picture “Alyonushka”. The events depicted by the artist unfold against the background of the Russian country-side. The way the artist shows the country-side creates the mood of the picture. The bright autumn foliage of the trees on the banks of a dark pond, and the sombre lighting emphasize the feeling of anxiety. The girl is sitting on a large stone near the water, looking thoughtfully and sadly into the dark depths. The sitting emphasizes the loneliness of the girl. Her pose suggests that she is unhappy about something. Judging by her tattered clothes and her bare feet she is probably a poor girl. Yet here is a lot of charm in her sad figure. She is beautiful.

Vasnetsov's love for Russia , his admiration of the valour of the Russian people, may be clearly seen in his picture “The Warriors”. It is a huge picture depicting three warriors. Their figures are more then life-size. The three riders are portrayed against the background of the vast open steppe, sloping hills, woods, and grassy meadows. In the foreground there are little fir-trees. Taken together , this creates a complete image of the Motherland close to every Russian heart. In his most beloved picture Vasnetsov showed his three favourite epic heroes: the hot-tempered Dobrynya Nikitich, the powerful Ilya Muromets and the cunning Alyosha Popovich. The character of each warrior is echoed in the image of his horse. This interesting detail, as well as the subject of the picture, corresponds to the spirit of the epic poems.

Repin is one of the best-known Russian painters. Repin's collection consists of portraits and historical genre painting. Repin's first large canvas was “Volga Boatmen”. It reflects the hard life of the Russian people. One can see poor men who are tired out by their inhuman job as they pull a barge up the river. Everybody knows his picture “Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan”; November 16, 1581 is Repin's second historical painting. It reflects the historical event that happened on November 16, 1581. Tzar Ivan is shown holding the body of his eldest son- Prince Ivan whom he had killed. The tsar's eyes in a pale face reflect his soul and the horror of what he had done.

My favourite painter is Vasily Surikov. He belonged to the historical trend and depicted historical events. His paintings were a brilliant innovation in the 19th centuryRussian Art. Surikov was born in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, and travelled a great deal. To his brush belong pictures: “Boyarinya Morozova”, “Menshikov in Beriozov”, “The Morning of the Strelets Execution”. Look at Surikov's pictures. They are full of movement and very expressive. They are filled with the mood and tension of those times. The colours are bright and vivid.

Surikov's picture “Boyarinya Morosova” is a very large canvas showing boyarinya Morosova being taken in a sledge to prison. Her figure is depicted facing the spectator. She is wonderful in her readiness to die for faith. Her face and her desture suggest that she is not brocken. She will stand up for her faith till the end. Her face is pale, her eyes are burning with fanatic passion. On both sides of the sladge we see crowds of onlookers. Each face has individual personality, and we can tell what they feel about the event. Most people sympathize deeply with the boyarinya, and their gestures are meant to show their support. The way the artist has depicted the sledge moving across the picture, and the marks that the sledge is leaving behind, give the feeling of movement and speed. This is emphasized by the figure of a lad running abreast with the sledge. The picture is striking for its wonderful use of colour, which skilfully renders the atmosphere of the event while at the same time creating a colourful though tragic scene. The picture impresses greatly. It conveys to me the idea of the power of the human spirit and gives much food for thought. The picture evokes the feeling of compassion.

I'd like to write a few words in conclusion. I suppose no one is born an art lover, but you can become one. And it's good when somebody encourages you in this. I would be glad if this information devoted to art widened your scope and enriched your knowledge and understanding of the world of beauty. If it helped you to feel the excitement of meeting masterpieces and made you more tolerant of those trends of art that do not impress you yet. I hope that the world of art with its charming mysteries will change something in your soul for the better. The influence of art is really powerful and I think you felt that.