

The Repino Hall (“Gergiev’s Villa”)

By Dr. Yasuhisa Toyota

As I began to write this article, I thought back to June 25, 2010. My wife and I, joined by another couple who are friends of ours, were vacationing in Russia’s St. Petersburg. We chose this time of year to coincide with the Stars of the White Nights Festival, an annual St. Petersburg event during May and June. The festival includes concerts at Mariinsky Theatre Concert Hall, a Nagata Acoustics project we completed 4 years prior, in November 2006 (and featured in our January, 2007 newsletter). We looked forward to enjoying the State Hermitage Museum by day and the many performance offerings at the Mariinsky Theatre and the new concert hall by night—a brief vacation steeped in luxury and the arts.

Maestro Gergiev’s Realized Vision for the Performing Arts in St. Petersburg

Fast-forward to 2014. The Mariinsky II Opera House has opened and St. Petersburg has nightly offerings across the two opera houses and the Mariinsky Theatre Concert Hall. During the Stars of the White Nights Festival, the program includes a dazzling number of programs. It’s not unusual to have the choice of 3 or even 4 different festival performances on any given date. Opera performances often last past 11:00 p.m. and, when you leave the opera house at that time, the sky is still waiting for twilight to arrive. Truly, these are evenings when one cannot sleep—or perhaps—when we rightly ask “Do I want to take the time to sleep?”

When Valery Gergiev first came to the helm as artistic director of the Mariinsky Theatre, before the concert hall was built and when the Mariinsky Theatre was the one, sole opera house, he spoke of his dream to build a performing arts complex where the highest quality productions and performances would be staged nightly for audiences gathered from all over the world. He referenced New York’s Lincoln Center, but his vision was grander and, by 2014, he had realized his goal. Now, the annual Stars of the White Nights Festival offers an unrivaled lineup of programs and virtuosity. For classical music lovers such as me, Maestro Gergiev’s achievement makes me want to make an annual St. Petersburg “pilgrimage” to savor the performances.

The Morning The Repino Hall Project Began

Now, back to the story of my 2010 St. Petersburg vacation. After the arrival of my wife and our friends, I received a brief phone call from Maestro Gergiev. He told me that he’d hired a car for me for the next morning, that he wanted to discuss something and that the car would pick me up to bring me to visit him.

The next morning, without knowing the destination of my ride, the purpose of the consultation or at what time I might return, I left my wife and friends at our hotel and took the car that came for me. I was the only passenger and the driver spoke only Russian. He drove me to a destination that was about one hour away from the hotel, a

resort area named Repino on the Gulf of Finland. The road from St. Petersburg to Repino hugs the coastline in the northwest direction. The feeling of the area might be compared to that of Japan's Karuizawa.

Upon arriving at the intended destination, I saw that Maestro Gergiev was waiting for me. (If my memory serves me correctly, this was the first time I was in a situation where the maestro waited for me to arrive and there's never been that situation in the years since then.) In short order and mostly dispensing with pleasantries, the maestro began explaining that he had acquired some real estate in Repino and wanted to build a chamber music hall and guest house. He continued that he wanted to create a place to educate more talented young musicians and that he wanted world-class guest performers who come to the Mariinsky Theatre to also come to Repino and spend time with the young musicians in an academic setting. The more the maestro explained his idea, the more he embellished it. He wanted the chamber music hall to seat an audience of 100 to 150 people, but he also said he wanted it to seat as many people as possible.



Figure 1: Exterior



Maestro Gergiev Speaking to Musicians in The Repino Hall

Then Maestro Gergiev said, "I leave the acoustics up to you." When I heard him say this, I also began my own dream with my own embellishments of what we might build. This would not be a publicly funded project, but, instead, a totally privately funded project, and this spurred the pace at which our ideas progressed.

Highlights of The Repino Hall Acoustical Design

I knew that if we limited The Repino Hall audience seat count to between 100 and 150, it would be difficult to design room acoustics that would support an even slightly large ensemble. The site in Repino was not expansive enough to build a larger spatial volume horizontally, so I decided to design the hall with a tall ceiling and thereby achieve the abundance of spatial volume that I desired.

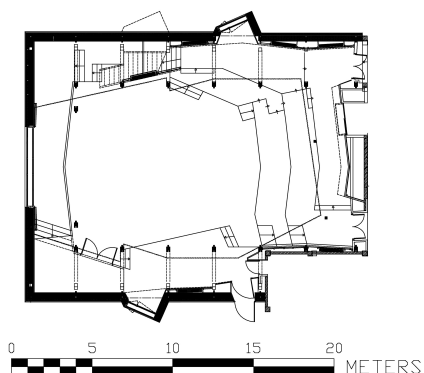


Figure 2: Plan in Main Floor Level

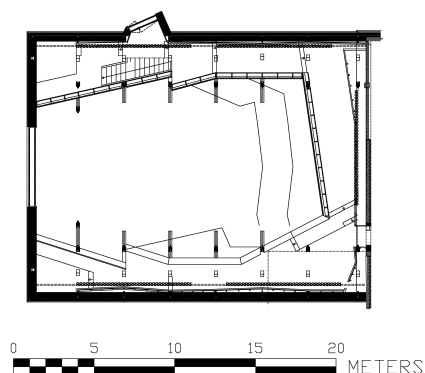


Figure 3: Plan in Balcony Level

For the class of halls that have 100-to-150 seats, the ceiling is usually not more than several meters high. A hall with this number of seats that has a 10 m. (33 ft) would be considered to have a significantly high ceiling. I wanted to aim for an even greater abundance of acoustics and—in the end—achieved a 12 m. (39 ft) height ceiling for the hall. Visually, the space may look less like a chamber music hall and more like a mini-cathedral.

True to his word, Maestro Gergiev did not raise any concerns during the room acoustics design process and I am profoundly grateful for his total trust in me. Rather, Maestro Gergiev took interest in the tall ceiling I designed and expressed the desire to use it to give the hall the greatest number of audience seats. In response, I added 2 balcony levels to my original design. As a result, The Repino Hall has about 500 audience seats in total.

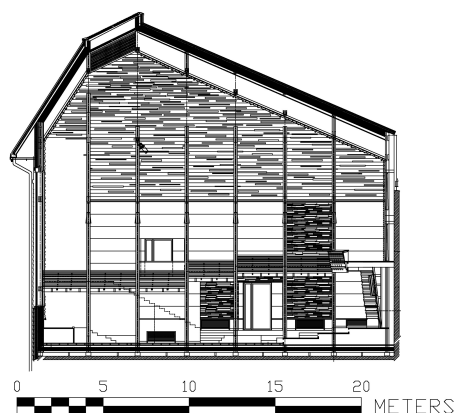


Figure 4: Longitudinal Section

The Project Schedule, Construction and Opening

The project began in 2010 and we expended a significant amount of time on both the design and construction phases. The hall opened in May, 2017. Neither Maestro Gergiev nor I could wait until construction completed to hear music in the hall, so in December, 2016 we invited a number of violinists and cellists to come play in the hall and test its acoustics for the first time, even though there was still scaffolding in the hall. When we heard the beautiful acoustics fill the tall-ceilinged space, we knew the project was a success. My impression of the hall was like being inside a musical instrument—the entire room resounded and filled with sound. Maestro Gergiev likewise was beside himself with happiness and showed exuberant joy. He officially named the hall “The Repino Hall” because of its location. We who worked on the project affectionately refer to it as “Gergiev’s Villa”.

On May 31, 2017, The Repino Hall held its official opening. The timing coincided with the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and many politicians and dignitaries were invited to the event. A 35-piece orchestra opened the evening with Debussy’s *Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune*. The program then continued with piano and violin solo performances. In particular, the audience was treated to a solo violin performance by Daniel Lozakovich,

the rising star virtuoso who had just turned 16 years old. Maestro Gergiev also delivered a strong message to the audience in which he shared his hope that young musicians will proactively come and use The Repino Hall.