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Acknowledgements

As with many edited essay collections, this book's genesis is associated with an academic conference. In this case the event concerned was especially exciting, for it was linked to a groundbreaking exhibition that would show, for the very first time, one of the most significant private collections of Russian art in the west—that of the British monarchy. "Russia, Royalty and the Romanovs" was organised by Royal Collection Trust and held in The Queen's Gallery in Buckingham Palace from November 9, 2018 to April 28, 2019 and subsequently in the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh from June 21, 2019 to November 3, 2019. Taking place at a time when Britain and Russia were experiencing a period of heightened diplomatic tension, the exhibition was a reminder of the continuing potential held by culture in matters of diplomacy, and this was witnessed by the positive response from its diverse audiences—the public, visiting tourists, and the art, business, and academic communities.

Having spent much of the past decade researching the history of British-Russian artistic relations, I kept a close eye on news of the exhibition. Then, in 2018, when Caroline de Guitaut, Deputy Surveyor of the Queen's Works of Art for Royal Collection Trust, invited the Cambridge Courtauld Russian Art Centre (CCRAC), of which I am a member, to organise a one-day academic conference, I was delighted to accept the opportunity to co-convene this together with Professor Rosalind P. Blakesley of the University of Cambridge. A committee to oversee the project was established, comprising De Guitaut, Professor John Milner of the Courtauld Institute of Art, and Michael Hall of *The Burlington Magazine*, along with Blakesley and myself. Some months later, on March 22, 2019, a diverse set of papers was presented to a packed auditorium in The Queen's Gallery, with attendees from locations as far away as Russia and California.

Many thanks are owed to those who were involved in the conference organisation and book preparation. For the former, I thank the staff at Royal Collection Trust, especially Emily Bourne, Alexandra Drayton, Matthew Morgan, and Tim Knox, as well as the curators De Guitaut and Stephen Patterson. Additional thanks are due to Anthony Cross, Simon Dixon, Galina Mardilovich, and Emma Minns, who chaired panels. Lastly, I owe an especial debt of thanks to my co-convenor, Rosalind Blakesley, whose wise counsel was always on hand.

Turning to the book, my thanks go first to the eleven authors who have shared their wide-ranging and insightful scholarship. Next, thanks are due to Marti Huetink, former Slavic Studies editor at Brill, who was enthusiastic when