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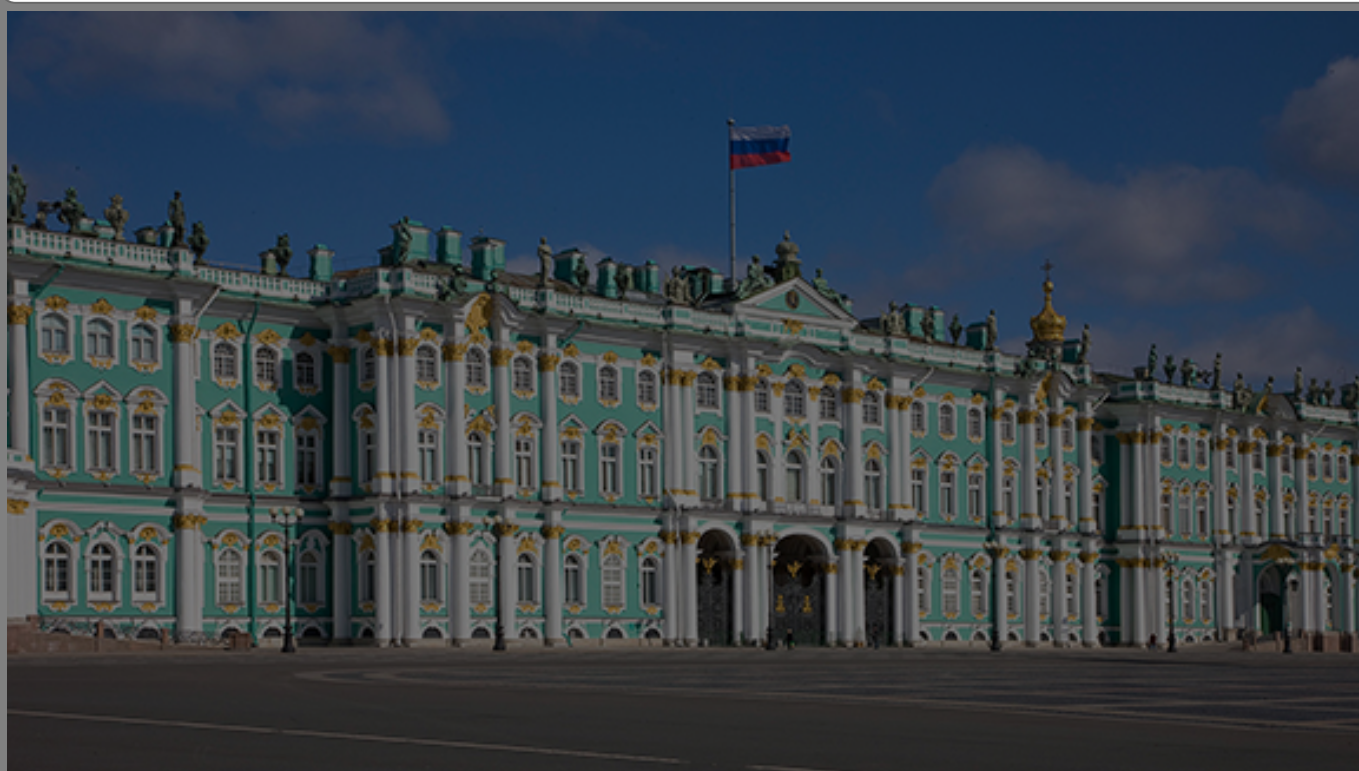
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The State Hermitage is a museum of art and culture in Saint Petersburg. One of the largest and oldest museums in the world, it was founded in 1764 and has been open to the public since 1852. Its collections, of which only a small part is on permanent display, comprise **over 3 million items**, including the **largest collection of paintings in the world**, and artefacts of the world culture. Among them are **paintings, graphic works, sculptures and works of applied art, archaeological finds and numismatic material**.

The main architectural ensemble of the Hermitage situated in the centre of St Petersburg consists of the Winter Palace, the former state residence of the Russian emperors, the buildings of the Small, Old and New Hermitages, the Hermitage Theatre and the Auxiliary House. The museum complex also includes the Menshikov Palace and the Eastern Wing of the General Staff building, the Staraya Derevnya Restoration and Storage Centre and the Museum of the Imperial Porcelain Factory. The Hermitage has also launched several dependencies abroad.

The **Hermitage Theatre** is one of the oldest in St. Petersburg and the whole country. The first season of the Hermitage Theatre opened before the finishing work was completed on 16 November 1785, and now it is the venue for the Saint Petersburg Camerata Orchestra. The Hermitage Music Academy programme includes all forms of music presentation, ranging from chamber concerts and master classes to grandioso gala concerts.

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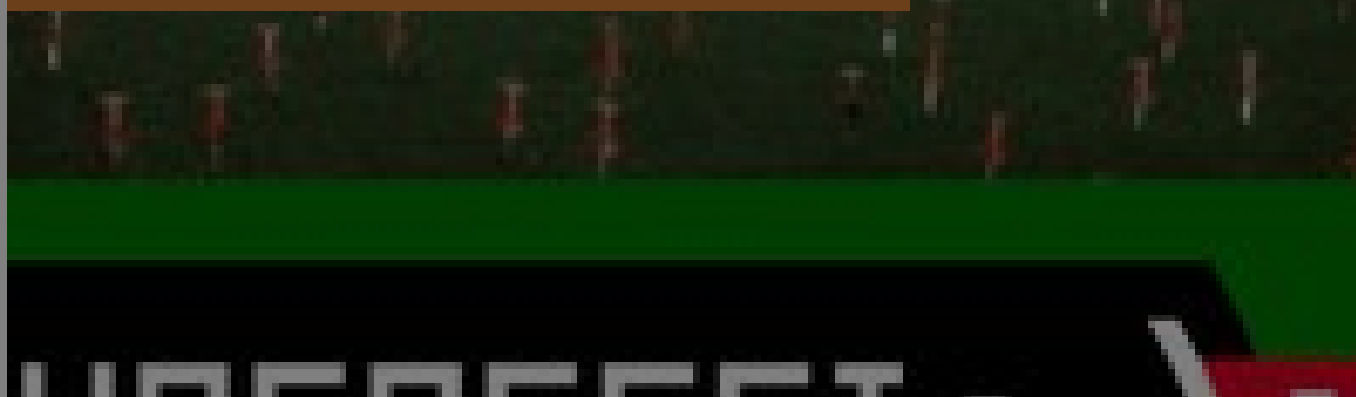
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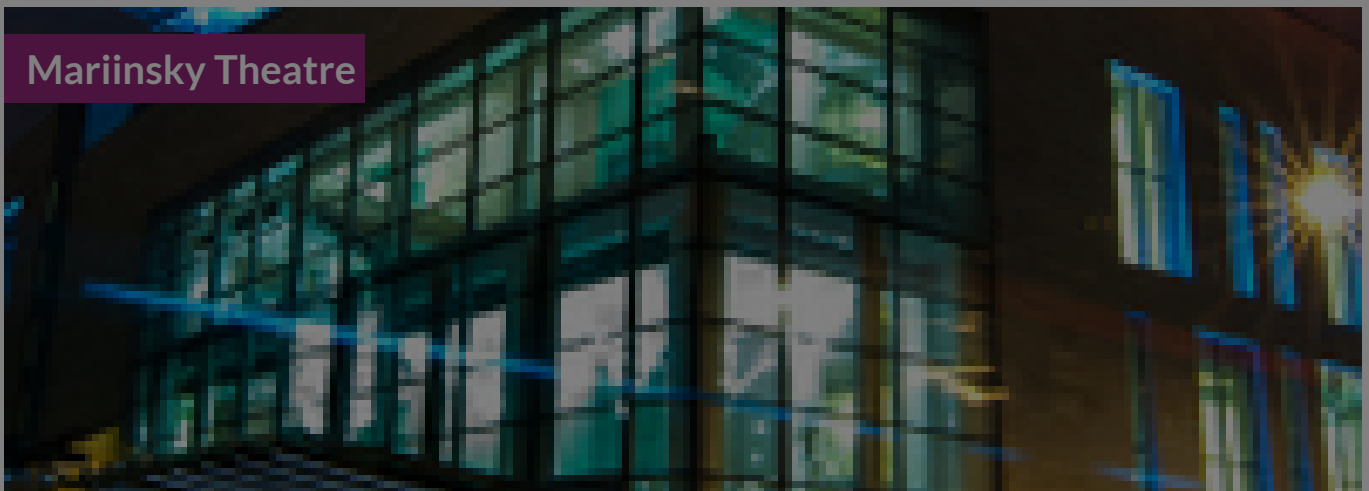
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