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## 9 'Muddle instead of music' in 1936: cataclysm of musical administration

*Simo Mikkonen*

During the first eighteen years of Soviet power, music was never at the centre of attention in the way that literature had been. For several weeks, coverage of the first Writers' Congress in August 1934 practically filled the main newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, with articles on literature. Suddenly in 1936, music made it to the front pages of both *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, not just once but several times. This event looks, on the face of it, like a response to the attack *Pravda* launched against Shostakovich in January and February 1936. But it was not. In fact, this attack was never mentioned in *Izvestiya*; neither was it ever top news in *Pravda*. Even the initial article, 'Sumbur vmesto muziki [Muddle Instead of Music]' was only on page three. Instead, it was the Ukrainian music festival, the *dekada*, in Moscow in March 1936 that principally turned the attention of the Soviet media towards music. The idea that a festival of national music could be more important than Shostakovich's disgrace may seem surprising. But by taking a broad approach to Soviet musical life in the middle of the 1930s, and trying to place *Pravda*'s article 'Muddle Instead of Music' and those that followed it in context, I hope to explain why these articles were really written and what their true consequences were. My approach is broadly structural: that is, I perceive Soviet musical life through the workings of organizations rather than focusing on individual composers. Although it is individuals who remain of central importance, it is often forgotten, especially with regard to music, that the Soviet Union was a country where official organizations mattered. In musical life, there were many events that cannot be fully understood unless perceived through the machinations of Soviet musical administration.<sup>1</sup> This problem is especially acute with regard to Shostakovich and the general musical life of the 1930s, and a full and proper understanding of the relationship between music and the Soviet state in the 1930s is still lacking in Western scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

### The obscure nature of Soviet musical policy in the 1930s

Stalinist society has been commonly perceived as monolithic and sometimes as totalitarian. Nevertheless, there have been studies in which the totalitarianism

and the monolithic nature of the regime and their extent have been questioned.<sup>3</sup> It can be agreed, at least, that Soviet society was oppressive and that Stalin was its dominant figure from the start of the 1930s until his death in 1953. In Western research on Soviet art the totalitarian view has been more predominant, however; and the basic problem facing music historians is the lack of archival study in order accurately to measure the totalitarian nature of musical life. One of the first to address this issue was Leonid Maximenkov, whose outstanding research on Soviet archival material deconstructs many preconceptions of the Soviet musical scene. Maximenkov points out that Stalinist cultural policy was a series of chaotic and spontaneous initiatives rather than a consistent line.<sup>4</sup> Kiril Tomoff is another scholar who has questioned the totalitarian conception of Soviet musical life, and has shown how the workings of the Composers' Union during the Second World War (1941–5) and afterwards were continuously at odds with Party bureaucrats and art administration rather than meekly fulfilling Party guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

The principal focus in studies of art policy has generally been on literature. Approaches to the arts have mostly been adapted through literature, particularly with regard to the 1930s. The first Writers' Congress in 1934 alone points out how the attention of the Bolshevik leadership was fixed on literature. By contrast, the musical scene developed in an entirely different way. While Party discipline and structure were imposed on literature after 1934, music experienced corresponding changes only in 1948. Until 1939 the Composers' Union lacked any union-wide journals, and existed only in local branches.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, these branches, the most important of which were in Moscow and Leningrad, were semi-autonomous, and prior to 1936 there were no interventions on behalf of the Party.

Furthermore, traditional organs concerned with Soviet musical policy were numerous and overlapped each other, making it hard to define those responsible for certain operations. There were censorship bodies;<sup>7</sup> the Central Committee of the Communist Party had its own Department for Cultural and Enlightenment work, Kul'tpros, which was mostly concerned with the Writers' Union;<sup>8</sup> and there was the Commissariat of Enlightenment, Narkompros, which was a kind of Ministry of Education, with powers over art and culture.<sup>9</sup> However, Narkompros's work did not satisfy the Party. Many of its officials had been selected during the more liberal years of the early 1920s, and from the Party's viewpoint it did not work well enough. This gave way to a bureaucratic struggle, giving birth to a brand-new administrative unit.<sup>10</sup>

The artistic field was further centralized with the establishment of a new supervisory body, the Committee for Artistic Affairs, initially headed by the chairman of the Radio Committee, Platon Kerzhentsev. He was a long-serving apparatchik who had exercised worker control and introduced Taylorian ideals for Soviet factories in the 1920s. Effectively, Narkompros, Kul'tpros and their leaders were superseded by Kerzhentsev and this new

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committee in January 1936.<sup>11</sup> Although Kerzhentsev's task was not solely to govern music, the committee acquired wide powers and continued to extend them even more.<sup>12</sup> In effect, the committee represented the first major intervention in music by the Party since the resolution of April 1932,<sup>13</sup> which had set up creative unions and introduced the doctrine of socialist realism. Yet the Composers' Union had avoided the fate of the Writers' Union, and even socialist realism was present only in vague theoretical discussions engaged in by composers and musicologists.

The establishment of the Committee for Artistic Affairs has been overshadowed by two other musical events that occurred in January 1936. Both are also connected with opera and the Party. First, Joseph Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov, the figureheads of the Party, attended the staging of Ivan Dzerzhinskiy's opera *Tikhiy Don* [The Quiet Don], after the first part of Sholokhov's praised epic at the Bolshoy Theatre. After the performance, they discussed Soviet opera with the producer, Samuil Samosud from Leningrad's MALEGOT. The theatre was praised for hiring young Soviet composers and promoting Soviet opera in general.<sup>14</sup> As a result, *The Quiet Don* became the prototype for the Soviet 'song opera'.<sup>15</sup> Although Dzerzhinskiy's second opera, the sequel *Virgin Soil Upturned*, aroused great interest, he never managed to repeat the success, even though he composed eight operas over the next twenty-four years.

The second notorious event took place on 28 January, when *Pravda* published a negative review of Shostakovich's opera *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*, which had opened at the Bolshoy two days earlier. It is well known that this opera had received worldwide attention after it premiered in 1934 and that it was perceived as one of the most important representatives of Soviet music.<sup>16</sup> There has been much debate over who actually wrote the article. It is highly likely that Stalin gave the order for a review aimed at destroying the opera's reputation.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the importance attached to this article has been overstated. Events that followed its publication have often been perceived as a kind of witch-hunt for Shostakovich, which most certainly was not the case. The target was not even music alone, but rather the artistic front in general.<sup>18</sup> It was not the intention of Stalin or of the Party to destroy Shostakovich. This is illustrated by the fact that, while many writers and theatre personalities were arrested and even shot, Shostakovich remained untouched. He was allowed to compose and publish, and the fuss about him died down quickly.

Furthermore, what began as an attack on Shostakovich turned into a series of articles about formalism in the arts, showing that Shostakovich was merely the initial target in a far more extensive campaign. *Pravda* reported meetings arranged by the Composers' Union after its public criticism of Shostakovich, but these hardly were the main topic even in that newspaper. Apart from *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* and a few art magazines, the Soviet media

barely reported on the whole incident. Composers, however, realized that there would be at least some political consequences. In Moscow, the leader of the creative sector of the Composers' Union, Dmitriy Kabalevskiy, called a meeting on 31 January and admitted that they had not adequately supervised composers' work. The organ of the committee, *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* (Soviet art), confirmed that there was not enough self-criticism in the Composers' Union.<sup>19</sup> Several general meetings of composers followed in Leningrad and Moscow during the spring. Many composers even wrote to each other discussing the situation at length outside these meetings.<sup>20</sup>

Shostakovich, however, was not abandoned. For example, Genrikh Neuhaus, the celebrated piano pedagogue whose pupils include Svyatoslav Richter, wrote three weeks after the initial article that Shostakovich was one of the finest composers in the whole of Europe, thus boldly praising someone supposedly in political disfavour.<sup>21</sup> Shostakovich did, in fact, escape most of the criticism. He kept his membership in the Composers' Union and received commissions, even awards, just as before.<sup>22</sup> It was not, therefore, particularly surprising that Shostakovich would return to the limelight in November 1937, since he was never really meant to be in disgrace.<sup>23</sup> Others similarly accused of formalism (for example, Shostakovich's close friend, the musicologist Ivan Sollertinskiy) also evaded expulsion from the Composers' Union. Even the leadership of the union remained the same in both Moscow and Leningrad. In fact, the whole campaign against formalism had fizzled out by the end of spring 1937. What, then, was this spectacle really all about, and what were the real consequences of *Pravda's* articles?

### Music as envisaged by the Committee for Artistic Affairs

The Committee for Artistic Affairs came into existence prior to *Pravda's* attacks and was also active in raising the question of formalism from February 1936 onwards. In early April, the chairman of the committee, Platon Kerzhentsev, implied that one purpose of the campaign was to address problems in Soviet theatres. He stated that: 'the situation is bad. Ballets don't manage to depict the present, they are false and sickly-sweet.' He went on to observe that Soviet folk dances were world famous, but absent from Soviet ballet. He maintained that *Pravda's* articles had done well in eradicating all kinds of formalist works from opera houses' repertoires. The Bolshoy Theatre in particular was scorned for its errors and inability to stage Soviet opera.<sup>24</sup>

For four years prior to the establishment of this committee the Composers' Union had aimed to have more Soviet music performed. Only months before it was established, the official journal of composers, *Sovetskaya muzika* (Soviet music), lamented that opera houses rarely staged Soviet works and even when

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they did, they were only by local composers. The Composers' Union tried to propagate the performance of music by its members, but in truth it lacked the proper authority. Thus, the situation was that opera repertoires consisted mostly of nineteenth-century classics.<sup>25</sup> This explains why Leningrad's MALEGOT and its producer Samuil Samosud received official praise from Stalin in connection with Dzerzhinsky's *The Quiet Don*. MALEGOT was one of the few theatres that actively commissioned Soviet operas.

The Committee for Artistic Affairs was quick to deal with the situation and triumphed where the Composers' Union had failed. Repertoires were quickly restructured: many Western operas were replaced with Russian classics and more Soviet works were introduced. In general, the committee turned out to be a very active administrative body. It was especially keen on spreading the music of different nationalities and adding it to the canon of Soviet music. This is most clearly seen in the festivals of different nationalities organized from 1936 onwards, since the committee succeeded in bringing music into the general upswing of celebrations and festival culture in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> These festivals represented a new approach to music, especially in the publicity they received and in the complexity of their organization. Although there were previous efforts similar to these festivals, their publicity and extent were unmatched. *Pravda*, for example, had never before honoured music with front-page coverage. As noted, the first of these occasions was the festival of Ukrainian art dedicated to music in Moscow in March 1936, just two months after *Pravda* denounced Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth*.

The rise of the music of Soviet nationalities was a direct result of popularizing Stalin's famous remark about culture 'national in form, socialist in content'.<sup>27</sup> Moscow bureaucrats had their ideas of how best to manage the rebirth of musical nationalism in the republics, and opera was allocated a central role for the development of national musical cultures.<sup>28</sup> As a result, opera houses were built for each republic. Moreover, composers from Moscow were sent to those republics that lacked composers skilled enough to contribute to their national repertoire. These operas were usually either 'heroic dramas of the people' or national epics. The similarities with Russian nineteenth-century operas are apparent: although national musical cultures were emphasized, Russian culture was simultaneously perceived as pre-eminent, and local cultures were expected to acknowledge its superior nature. Moreover, Russian musical culture offered Soviet nationalities the possibility of distinction from Western musical culture. Rimsky-Korsakov and others had believed in the distinct nature of Russian music already in the nineteenth century, but eventually admitted this was mere fantasy, recognizing that, despite the possibly distinctive character of the 'Russian school of music', it was still based on 'pan-European harmony and melody'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviet state now sponsored a cultural policy that revived this mythology of

distinctively Russian music and used it as an ideological basis for Soviet music in order to distance it from Western bourgeois traditions.

The festival (*dekada*) of Ukrainian music in Moscow in March 1936 reinforces this picture. Stalin and the whole Party leadership attended every major spectacle during the ten-day cycle. All events, along with Stalin's attendance of them, were prominently reported in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, ensuring Ukrainian music's status as the main Soviet news topic for more than a week. Major events consisted of old and new Ukrainian opera classics as well as a spectacle of Ukrainian song and dance.<sup>30</sup> The pattern continued in connection with other similar festivals. The next was for Kazakh music in May where, after a staging of the opera based on a Kazakh epic, *The Silk Maiden*, at the Bolshoy, there was prolonged applause not only for the spectacle, but also a standing ovation for Stalin.<sup>31</sup> Georgian and Uzbek festivals followed in 1937.<sup>32</sup>

These festivals of national music were a success story for the Committee for Artistic Affairs, as well as for Kerzhentsev personally. After the initial Ukrainian festival, Kerzhentsev wrote in *Pravda* that musical works based on folk themes and folk songs were an answer to all those formalists about how to create works of good quality, thus connecting these two seemingly different topics.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, after his attacks in *Pravda*, Shostakovich had sought an appointment with Stalin, but saw Stalin's cultural overseer Kerzhentsev instead, who advised Shostakovich to calm down and seek inspiration from folk themes.<sup>34</sup> Shostakovich chose not to follow Kerzhentsev's advice. However, this does illustrate that Kerzhentsev had his own views about how Soviet music should develop, scorning the 'wasteful' policies of the Bolshoy Theatre compared to authentic productions by Ukrainian national theatre, and maintaining that 'pomposity' as such, though not wrong, should be 'explicit and strong like the parade in Red Square or in the May Day Parade'.<sup>35</sup> Such were the instructions given by the most prominent cultural official in the Soviet Union. Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* or his *Bright Stream* evidently fitted poorly into this scheme. Soviet musical life thus now had new focuses. As opera became more important, the committee was quick to take control over its production, giving music in general unprecedented publicity – something the Composers' Union had previously only been able to dream of. Still, this is not enough to explain what happened to Shostakovich. After all, he had been accused of formalism, yet he still managed to walk away and even to disregard Kerzhentsev's advice.

### Striving for hegemony in music

Although the initial objective of *Pravda*'s article 'Muddle Instead of Music' was perhaps to denounce Shostakovich's opera, the campaign that followed



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was used to tighten the committee's control over the musical 'front'. By autumn 1937 the committee's musical administration had sent its inspectors on eighty-nine missions of correction and instruction in different musical institutions. They were also responsible for all important nominations for prizes and awards on the artistic front, and their ratification of appointees to important music administrative posts was carried out in co-operation with the Central Committee of the Party. The institutions affected ranged from the Moscow Conservatoire and the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra to the Musicological Institute of Leningrad.<sup>36</sup> In short, the committee assumed wide powers over the musical front.

*Pravda's* hostile articles and the establishment of the Committee for Artistic Affairs threw the Composers' Union into disarray. But the Moscow branch of the union, at least, had had internal quarrels even before the committee emerged. Vissarion Shebalin had published a letter in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* in January 1936, practically simultaneously with 'Muddle Instead of Music'. In his letter, Shebalin impugned the work of the Moscow branch on grounds of favouritism, cliquishness and overall recklessness, and even concluded that he could not work in such a union.<sup>37</sup> Shebalin, who had been the head of the sector for autonomous art, would probably have abstained if he had known what consequences his action would have. Perhaps in the light of *Pravda's* article on *Lady Macbeth*, the Composers' Union quickly replied to Shebalin accusing him of 'deliberate sabotage'.<sup>38</sup> Kerzhentsev was alert to the opportunity this offered to him and would later use this incident against the Composers' Union, which, after all, was not under the committee's explicit control in 1936.

Shebalin was not expelled from the union, although he did not participate in their activities for almost two years, despite continuing cordial relations with many members, including Shostakovich.<sup>39</sup> The atmosphere in the union had soured and this triggered a search for scapegoats. Because *Pravda* had attacked formalism, one would have expected the 'formalists' to have been the next target; presumably Lev Lebedinskiy believed this would happen when he attacked formalism with vocabulary familiar from the era of proletarian art organizations. Lebedinskiy had been a chief ideologue of the Association of Proletarian Musicians, RAPM, abolished in 1932. But instead of formalists coming under attack, he and other proletarian musicians found themselves the butt of severe criticism in a three-day general meeting of the Composers' Union.<sup>40</sup> Though those criticized escaped further censure, this does underline how the Composers' Union, far from being a uniform institution, was full of contradiction and argument, which started to surface in 1936.

Before their final confrontation in 1937, the Committee for Artistic Affairs and the Composers' Union had an illustrative engagement. On 2 December 1936 the committee called the Moscow branch of the union to a meeting



about its shortcomings. Representatives of the committee, Kerzhentsev and Moisey Grinberg, made keynote addresses. The chairman of the Moscow branch, Nikolay Chelyapov, ardently defended the autonomy of his union by summarizing its extensive work on Soviet music.<sup>41</sup> Chelyapov had edited *Sovetskaya muzika* from its beginning in 1933 and chaired the union's Moscow branch from the same year. He was a Party bureaucrat, and a lawyer, and had been in several administrative posts before the Composers' Union; he was also involved with the Academy of Sciences.

Grinberg vigorously attacked the union's deficiencies. He alleged that discussions on formalism were not as successful as Chelyapov tried to make out, and accused the union leadership of passivity. During Grinberg's inspection, no leadership had been present and Chelyapov, who claimed to be overworked, was, according to Grinberg, available only five times a month. He continued that bureaucracy was currently preventing creative work in the union. Also, he claimed, light genre composers such as Samuil Pokrass and Matvey Blanter were not accepted into the union. In all, Grinberg concluded that 'work of the Union was unsatisfactory'.<sup>42</sup> Grinberg himself had joined the Party in 1930, but ever since he had held prominent posts in music administration. He headed the state music publisher, oversaw musical radio broadcasts and at this time was the chief of the Music Administration Committee.

Some composers came to support Grinberg's points, especially accusations of cliquishness.<sup>43</sup> The previous secretary of the Composers' Union and long-standing Party member Viktor Gorodinskiy joined the critics.<sup>44</sup> Chelyapov was forced on the defensive; his final argument was that the union had been aware of most of the shortcomings the committee now presented, and even that the union had pleaded with the committee to help several times, but that calls had gone unanswered.<sup>45</sup> While many composers joined some of the criticism, they still defended their union's autonomy. For example, Nikolay Chemberdzhi suggested cutting back on bureaucracy, a proposal accepted by Aram Khachaturyan, who made even more concrete proposals about improving the union's future.<sup>46</sup>

Kerzhentsev paid little attention to Chelyapov's allegations. Instead, he concluded with a new round of accusations. He blamed the Moscow union for not keeping contact with other branches. The lack of an all-union structure meant, according to Kerzhentsev, that Moscow should act as an all-union organ. He also declared that the committee had had to arrange musical activity on behalf of the union: 'The Committee for Artistic Affairs has been active in regard to the Philharmonic, it has established orchestras and choirs – but what has the Composers' Union done?', he queried. Kerzhentsev mentioned that creating a repertoire of Soviet operas was the most important task, and yet the union had completely disregarded it. Kerzhentsev also boasted that, although it should have been the union's task to encourage

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Shostakovich, it was in fact after their personal meeting that Shostakovich had been able to work again.<sup>47</sup> Finally, he used Shebalin's statement as a weapon against the leadership of the Composers' Union: 'it is not normal that a composer cannot work in a creative union'. Kerzhentsev finally summed up the union as 'abnormal'.<sup>48</sup>

Kerzhentsev had an obvious aim. He envisaged a powerful Composers' Union, but one that would be below the committee in the hierarchy. He also lamented that the Composers' Union had not responded to the committee's work on festivals and folk songs. Finally, he set up a commission with himself, Shatīlov, Chemberdzhī, Chelyapov and a few others to work out a plan to restructure the union's work.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, nothing of this commission or its work has survived. It may even be possible that nothing ever happened, since the struggle between the committee and the union worsened during the spring.

### The final confrontation

The campaign against formalism, starting with *Pravda's* review of Shostakovich's opera, evolved into an attack on the Composers' Union. The Committee for Artistic Affairs sought to extend its authority over composers. It already controlled the repertoire of opera theatres and orchestras; extending its remit to the Composers' Union enabled it to choose and favour (or discipline) those who actually created the repertoire. This ambition is well illustrated in the final confrontation of these organizations, which took place in the spring and summer of 1937. Kerzhentsev called the Composers' Union to another meeting on 9–10 April 1937. Once again, he raised the issue of operas with genuine ideological content, celebrating themes such as youth, children, science, shock workers or physical culture.<sup>50</sup>

The committee tried one more trick to cause disarray among composers. I have already mentioned the soured atmosphere of the Composers' Union. When the Great Terror (1936–9) gripped Soviet society, one would have expected this to affect the union as well. Indeed, its internal quarrels escalated during 1937. In literature, the former leadership of proletarian writers was attacked in April 1937: Leopold Averbakh and Vladimir Kirshon were accused of being 'Trotskyites' and 'enemies of the people'. They disappeared over the following months and were soon executed.<sup>51</sup> Soon after the onslaught against proletarian writers started, the committee launched a simultaneous attack on former proletarian musicians. First, Grinberg called in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* for the eradication of all the remnants of RAPM.<sup>52</sup> A few days later, at a meeting with the Composers' Union, he linked Lebedinskiy and other proletarian musicians with proletarian writers.<sup>53</sup> This must have scared them badly. A week later, Gorodinskiy denounced

Lebedinskiy and Vinogradov and accused them of cliquishness.<sup>54</sup> An anonymous article in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* also accused two musical editors of maintaining the ideology of RAPM.<sup>55</sup> The committee made it clear that the Composers' Union was no longer incapable of handling the situation on their own: the committee's intervention was needed.

The campaign against RAPM reached its peak by the end of May, at a five-day meeting of the Composers' Union's Party cell. The report of the meeting was ominously titled 'The final eradication of RAPM'. It revealed that Gorodinskiy had drawn parallels between proletarian literature and music. Leopold Averbakh was linked with Lebedinskiy and other proletarian musicians. The chairman of the union, Chelyapov, was said to have protected Lebedinskiy and his kind and enabled them to 'invade' the Party cell. Proletarian musicians were also said to have arranged gatherings to reminisce about the 'good old RAPMist days'. Professor Nadezhda Bryusova from the Moscow Conservatoire was also accused of protecting proletarian musicians, and her actions were said to be under investigation.<sup>56</sup> Yet the true nature of this attack is revealed when Chelyapov was connected with the RAPM. The target was neither Lebedinskiy nor RAPM, abolished five years earlier, but Chelyapov himself. This is supported by the fact that the hunt for RAPM's leadership quickly fizzled out.<sup>57</sup> It is likely that proletarian musicians were attacked at least partly in order to cause confusion among composers.

The committee's real plans were revealed in mid-May. It arranged a meeting nominally about the festivities for the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The meeting was attended by representatives from different republics and was thus made more authoritative than any previous meeting in the musical world. The main discussion was not, however, about the anniversary festivities, but, as Grinberg's keynote address suggested, about restructuring musical life and about 'formalism'.

According to Grinberg, *Pravda's* articles encouraged several composers to abandon formalism. But then he mentioned Gavriil Popov and connected him with formalism, accusing him also of passiveness. However, this accusation met with shouts defending Popov. Grinberg's bombshell was delayed until the end of his speech, where he claimed that the biggest problem in the union's work was the lack of a working musical centre in the Soviet Union. He called for an all-union structure for the Composers' Union.<sup>58</sup> This would have meant a drastic reinforcement of the Composers' Union, both structurally and financially, and strongly suggests that Kerzhentsev aimed at having a powerful creative union under his control. This is also suggested by the way in which the meeting proceeded. Comments by representatives of the republics were mostly in accord with suggestions made by Grinberg and Kerzhentsev, indicating that a considerable degree of planning had gone into the meeting. Moreover, Chairman Chelyapov was not a composer, but an apparatchik:

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Kerzhentsev knew that few composers would support him if he were in difficulties. And so poor Chelyapov was attacked from all sides.

The committee had apparently already managed to infiltrate minor branches of the Composers' Union. This is suggested by addresses of certain representatives of the republics. The Ukrainian representative, Kozitskiy,<sup>59</sup> mentioned that their union had been led for several years by a Party member named Karpov, who eventually 'turned out to be' a Trotskyite spy. The same situation was described to have existed in Belarus as well, and one union head had been arrested for his anti-Party work.<sup>60</sup> Representatives from other minor branches called for an all-union structure for the Composers' Union and, since it was the committee that supervised all the important nominations, Chelyapov would surely have been excluded from this vote. The Armenian representative, Musheg Agayan, delivered a ten-point list that was said to offer a solution for the Composers' Union's problems, further supporting the theory that the meeting had been planned in advance. It included the establishment of an all-union musical fund and an organizing committee, something that had been rejected by the Party in 1932.<sup>61</sup> This list included all the prerequisites for the Composers' Union to become a union-wide organization. It was also put into effect in following years. It almost certainly originated from the committee rather than from Agayan himself.

The proffered solution to the union's financial problems was presumably intended to encourage composers to abandon Chelyapov. It actually worked, despite the committee's clumsy attempts to make it look like the composers' own initiative. Moreover, prominent composers such as Shebalin, Prokofiev, Shostakovich or Myaskovskiy, as well as leading musicologists, were all absent.<sup>62</sup> Either the meeting was a haphazard event or Kerzhentsev wished to arrange the meeting more propitiously in order to ensure matters went as planned. However, the committee did not escape without criticism. Ivan Dzerzhinskiy questioned Grinberg's proficiency as a music critic:<sup>63</sup> Grinberg had failed to name any recent works by Shostakovich in his list of unfinished compositions. Khristo Kushnarev from Leningrad defended Shostakovich and mentioned him as having two projects, a theatre score and a ballet, under his belt.<sup>64</sup> Later, Tikhon Khrennikov continued Shostakovich's defence by commenting that the latter was working on a film score for *Maxim's Return* and that he had completed the first movement of his Fifth Symphony, which promised to be a brilliant success.<sup>65</sup>

The solidarity of composers was striking. It appears that Grinberg had declared a particular composition to be of debatable quality without hearing it first. Vano Muradeli stated to him that 'one shouldn't talk of compositions one hasn't even heard'. Grinberg replied, 'I didn't say why I hadn't heard it', to which Muradeli retorted, 'so . . . you heard what Beliy wrote about it?' There was general applause for Muradeli's remark. Composers were still united

enough to confront authorities with mockery.<sup>66</sup> Even so, some took the opportunity to defend the committee's viewpoint, such as Nikolay Chemberdzhi, who concentrated on formalism. He accused the union's leadership for failing to struggle against formalism and named several composers, including Prokofiev, whose music he accused of eclecticism.<sup>67</sup> Both Chemberdzhi and Beliy, whose addresses came after this one, lavished praise on Dzerzhinskiy's *Virgin Soil Upturned*, which they regarded as an exemplary Soviet opera.<sup>68</sup> There are two interesting points here. First, Chemberdzhi was soon to follow Chelyapov as chairman in Moscow; and second, *Virgin Soil Upturned* merely rode upon the success of its predecessor, *The Quiet Don*. It premiered six months after these comments after being heavily revised. Obviously, Beliy and Chemberdzhi were trying to ingratiate themselves with the authorities.

### Composers' personal finances targeted?

In the summer of 1937, work in the Composers' Union seized up altogether. Shortly afterwards, Chelyapov resigned and disappeared. A few months later, a letter was sent to Premier Molotov underlining the fact that nothing had happened about the Composers' Union, mentioning several failures committed by Chelyapov. Chelyapov's successor, Chemberdzhi, was denounced as well. Said to have been signed by many prominent composers, this letter has an interesting origin.<sup>69</sup> It was poorly written and full of misspellings. Upon examining the letter, no signatures of 'prominent composers' can be found, but only a claim that it was 'from composers and musical figures'. Yet we know that the letter was circulated to prominent composers for them to sign. The composer of popular music Matvey Blanter described how composers were approached by anonymous people who gave them a letter and asked them to sign it. If anyone queried them, they simply answered that most prominent composers had already signed.<sup>70</sup> Blanter did not sign. But the professor of piano Alexander Goldenveizer did, although he could not tell who was behind the letter either.<sup>71</sup> Blanter, however, hinted in his address that the musicologist Alexey Ogolevets would have initiated the letter, yet no one ever commented on this allegation.<sup>72</sup> Tomoff has described in detail an affair that took place in 1947 where Ogolevets attacked the leadership of the Composers' Union, an event that shows him to be a very independent figure, even a fiery character with strong ambitions.<sup>73</sup> Thus there is a possibility that he might have been behind the letter in 1937. This far, we can only guess.

We can, however, be much more certain about whose idea this letter originally was. Moisey Grinberg implied something about this in his address. He tried to restrain discussion about the letter's origins and underlined that it

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was not important who wrote or signed it, claiming that the only matter of importance was its content.<sup>74</sup> Chelyapov had disappeared only weeks prior to this letter's circulation. For the committee, it was important to have the composers' blessing for the change in leadership. Therefore, it is likely that the committee itself was behind this letter, a suspicion reinforced by the bizarre way in which signatures were collected.

Kerzhentsev was a Party bureaucrat and seems to have thought accordingly. He must have believed that by superseding the leadership of the Composers' Union he would be able to control composers and their creative activity. He did manage to displace Chelyapov and drive the Composers' Union into disarray. Yet he failed to tame the composers, whose solidarity only deepened. A meeting between the committee and the union in November 1937 illustrates this point. This time, it was about the evaluation of the results of the festivities for the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. As before, Kerzhentsev tried to keep everybody on their toes with some general accusations of formalism. But once again those accusations were directed at the Composers' Union's bad leadership instead of individual composers. It appears that Kerzhentsev still envisaged a nationwide Composers' Union, but perhaps lacked the support of the Party leadership, since matters did not proceed further.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, the Composers' Union remained paralysed as an organization, but not just because Chelyapov was missing. The Committee had done something more radical.

Perhaps in order to oust Chelyapov, the committee drove the union into an economic crisis by cutting off funding. Finances mattered: right from the start the Composers' Union had as a part of their remit the improvement of composers' personal finances. Maximenkov has pointed out how strongly economic factors affected the musical scandal of 1948. Attacks were camouflaged with ideological viewpoints, such as formalism or cosmopolitanism, but it was financial factors that actually led to many of these accusations. Maximenkov has presented evidence of large sums received and distributed by accused composers, such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich in the years preceding 1948. Moreover, Vano Muradeli's opera, which opened the events of that year, was in fact a financial catastrophe.<sup>76</sup>

The economy played an important role in 1937 as well. When Composers' Union branches were established in 1932, they started to act as brokers for composing contracts and also paying salaries to its members.<sup>77</sup> The sums involved amounted to hundreds of thousands of rubles every year.<sup>78</sup> In 1937, the distribution of funds was brought to an end by the committee. The union's costly administration was the focus of harsh criticism: the Moscow branch was said to have about 200 members, of which 50 were involved in administration, draining funds. Their system of contracts, an important source of funds, was especially criticized. Contract applications were said to be approved no matter



how bad they were. In many cases, the board found them artistically poor and simple, even bad, but approved them anyway. Lack of financial control was said to make composers indifferent.<sup>79</sup> The committee's accusations about mismanagement of finances had, therefore, a degree of truth in them.<sup>80</sup> Loans were being made without proper regulation, and the whole system was in complete disarray.<sup>81</sup> It seems plausible that one of the original tasks of the committee had been to stop the mismanagement of government funds. This is supported by the fact that the Composers' Union accounts for 1935 were forwarded to the committee as soon as it came into being.<sup>82</sup>

The committee used financial sanctions to oust Chelyapov. Already in May, when the committee attacked proletarian musicians, it urged Narkomfin, the Commissariat of Finances, to conduct an inspection of the Moscow branch of the union. Eventually, Narkomfin found the situation very unsatisfying.<sup>83</sup> Kerzhentsev managed to reduce financial support, and Chelyapov was compelled to plead for extra funding from the Soviet of National Commissars in his letter of 14 June 1937. Chelyapov obviously did not receive an answer, since he wrote again to another person in the Soviet stating that all activity in the Composers' Union would stop within a month and a half without additional funding.<sup>84</sup> He did not mention the establishment of the musical fund, which had been suggested by several representatives of the republics only months earlier, but simply pleaded for extra funds for the Moscow branch. He probably knew his destiny was tied to Moscow and that there was no room for him in the all-union structure of the Composers' Union.

Chelyapov's calls went unanswered and the Composers' Union lost its financial security. He was arrested in August.<sup>85</sup> The Composers' Union did not start to function properly until its organizing committee and musical fund were set up more than a year later, in the spring of 1939.<sup>86</sup> For composers, Chelyapov was not especially intimidating, although he was a Party bureaucrat, but they were not willing to defend him. Kerzhentsev probably used a carrot-and-stick approach in order to get composers to abandon their chairman. It is possible that he implied that the Composers' Union would be led only by composers, for this is how events turned out. After Chelyapov vanished, the Composers' Union was never again led by a non-composer. In Leningrad, Isaak Dunayevskiy was chosen as the chairman;<sup>87</sup> in Moscow, Chemberdzhi was soon followed by Reinhold Glière.<sup>88</sup> What is certain is that Kerzhentsev promised composers that he would establish a musical fund, similar to those writers and architects already had. His committee subsequently made this recommendation, which was approved by Molotov in autumn 1937.<sup>89</sup> Yet another year and a half would pass until it was finally established. During this time, composers must have become weary of promises. By November 1937 they were ready to demand their share.



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In the meeting, Kerzhentsev tried to discuss ideological features of music, but composers turned the discussion to finances and their living conditions. Several composers stressed that the committee must act, since some composers were living practically in the streets.<sup>90</sup> Although Kerzhentsev managed to get Molotov's blessing for the musical fund, his time was running short and he was soon ejected from the committee. Thus the situation remained unclear and in summer 1938 the Composers' Union was still without financial means, as Glière's apology to union members suggests.<sup>91</sup> This situation would change significantly only in 1939 with the establishment of the all-union structure and musical fund for the Composers' Union.

### **Composers and the terror exercised by the committee**

We need to consider one more feature illustrating composers' peculiarity as a group in the Soviet Union. It also explains why Shostakovich was not actually in danger during 1936 or 1937. Considering how the terror operated in 1936–8 and adding to this the quarrelsome atmosphere in the Composers' Union in 1937, one would expect several composers to have been arrested and executed. However, not a single prominent composer was arrested, let alone shot. This does not mean, however, that the musical front escaped the whole terror, and there are some additional factors linking it to the campaign against formalism and to the Committee for Artistic Affairs.

At the first congress of Soviet composers in 1948, there were 908 members.<sup>92</sup> In 1936, the Composers' Union had fewer than 400 members in Moscow and Leningrad. The Writers' Union's membership, by contrast, was many times larger. A purge in the Composers' Union would have caused critical problems in musical production, which had at the moment started to generate just the kind of Soviet repertoire the authorities desired. This is not, perhaps, sufficient explanation as to why composers largely escaped the terror. But when we take into account the fact that the Committee for Artistic Affairs held practically all the official authority over the musical front, it was perhaps not interested in ruining its achievements in music.

If we look at the actual victims, we find that almost all of them were administrative figures. Nikolay Chelyapov was the only one with actual connections to the Composers' Union. Other victims of the musical world were usually linked to other musical organizations, and in most cases the committee's blessing for their arrest can be found. But rather than Kerzhentsev, it was his deputy, Shatilov, who was particularly active in identifying culprits and scapegoats. Shatilov kept Kerzhentsev informed of his misgivings, for example, about the work of the Moscow Variety Agency, which he found to be 'highly unsuccessful'. The 'cure' was to appoint between

fifteen and twenty Party members to the agency's administration and replace its leader. Kerzhentsev's decision followed Shatilov's proposal, as in most cases.<sup>93</sup> Caroline Brooke has also described an assault on the Moscow Conservatoire, where several 'enemies of the people' were identified in a purge reminiscent of a witch-hunt. Some professors were displaced, but none was arrested. Most of them even kept their posts. However, some of the displaced professors had relatives arrested, which had made them vulnerable in turn.<sup>94</sup>

The fact that the committee was responsible for the terror in the musical world is supported by a memorandum with a chilling title: 'On the Measures for Liquidating Consequences of Wrecking in Musical Institutions of the [Soviet] Union'. Several administrative figures were mentioned as 'enemies of the people', which in practice meant an arrest and the risk of a death sentence. Most of those named worked in the committee itself, especially in its local offices, or in different musical organizations of Moscow and Leningrad. Names on the list include Chelyapov and his predecessor as the chairman of the Moscow branch, Mikhail Arkad'yev. Yet Arkad'yev was identified with his current post as the director of Moscow Arts Theatre, MKhAT. He was an old Narkompros official, as was Boleslav Pshibishevskiy, who had led the Moscow Conservatoire when the Association of Proletarian Musicians, RAPM still existed. Some were accused of spying; others were simply dubbed 'wreckers'. Those I have been able to identify were Party bureaucrats, without a single composer among them.<sup>95</sup> There is no doubt that most of those mentioned were arrested. Arkad'yev was arrested in 23 June and shot on 20 September 1937.<sup>96</sup> Pshibishevskiy was arrested as early as 1 March, although his trial and immediate execution took place only on 21 August 1937.<sup>97</sup> His German/Polish origins might have played a role in his fate; he was expelled from the Party possibly as early as in 1933. By 1934 he was in the small Karelian town of Medvezhegorsk, organizing theatre activity in an NKVD camp. Medvezhegorsk was part of the notorious White Sea canal project.<sup>98</sup>

The accusations laid against these 'enemies of the people' are tragically trivial, whether there was any truth in them or not. They mostly concerned discrediting Soviet music, heroic classical music or music based on folk themes; opposing the committee's policies; failures to hire young talented musicians; or failures to include music of the Soviet republics in orchestral repertoire. The misuse and disappearance of government funds was mentioned in connection with some names in the list. Some of the accused were also said to have sabotaged the use of folklore and folk themes in composers' work, that of Shostakovich and Prokofiev being mentioned. These accusations reveal something important. The committee either could not or (more likely) was unwilling to attack composers physically. Rather, it attacked those administrators who could affect composers.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the committee was

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actively engaged in purging, but it left composers untouched. Only the non-composer Chelyapov and the foreign Narkompros official Pshibishevskiy were arrested.<sup>100</sup>

In the end, Kerzhentsev was forced to resign. Already in the spring of 1937, he had subjected himself to self-criticism because of his actions in the committee. He stated that it had been a mistake to adopt the model for the committee from Narkompros, since many Trotskyites and enemies of the people were brought in as well. After this statement, the purges started and several previous Narkompros officials, such as Arkad'yev, were arrested. Kerzhentsev also observed that too much attention had been paid to art at the expense of politics and that the campaign against formalism should have been more intensive, citing his mistakes and promising to improve matters.<sup>101</sup>

Kerzhentsev was undoubtedly warned about his political activity in the committee, which must have been seen as inadequate. Although it appears that he was given another chance, he was toppled in the end. The first session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 1938 must have been a nightmare for him. Andrey Zhdanov cruelly attacked his policies in the committee, declaring his leadership to be 'invisible' and pointing out his enormous political mistakes: 'this is a parody of leadership ... Is he a chairman or a travelling salesman?' Kerzhentsev was totally humiliated. Zhdanov's speech aroused laughter, chilling shouts endorsing the condemnation of Kerzhentsev, and applause.<sup>102</sup> Nazarov was later appointed as the new chairman of the committee, after which Molotov made a statement affirming the failures of Kerzhentsev.<sup>103</sup> Kerzhentsev, however, somehow managed to avoid arrest and the worst possible fate. Afterwards he became the vice-chairman of the *Great and Small Soviet Encyclopaedias* until he died in June 1940. This biographer of Lenin was a real survivor.

## Cataclysm of musical life in the mid- 1930s

In January 1936 *Pravda* published a notorious article that is often interpreted as an attack on Shostakovich. However, what seemed to start in this manner as an attack against Shostakovich was never meant to cause him serious trouble. This is supported by the events that followed. The article gave way to a campaign against formalism and for a struggle over musical administration that was waged during the following years. Shostakovich was hardly at the centre of this struggle. Rather, the Committee for Artistic Affairs established in January 1936 inaugurated a fierce campaign for gaining authority over the whole artistic field, music included. It tightened control over several musical organizations, one of which was the Composers' Union. But it also campaigned on behalf of ideological and political themes in music, such as the

music of the Soviet republics. It appears that, in connection with the Composers' Union, Kerzhentsev's aim was to reshape it as a strong organization comparable to the Writers' Union. However, he was toppled before he could fulfil this ambition. Nonetheless, in 1939 composers managed to get their way in financial matters, and the Composers' Union's status and authority were dramatically enhanced. The interference of the Party in musical matters also increased as a result, culminating in the tragic events of 1948. Even so, it must be admitted that composers escaped many of the political difficulties experienced by writers during the 1930s. The committee was unwilling to sacrifice composers for the terror, leaving them mostly unharmed. Rather, it directed the heaviest blow upon musical administration, i.e. the Party bureaucrats.

Thus Shostakovich was not, in retrospect, in mortal danger. His music was popular – even Stalin was fond of his film scores – and he was building an international reputation at a time when his country needed international prestige. Shostakovich was not pressed too strongly by the Committee for Artistic Affairs. Kerzhentsev did speak to Shostakovich after *Pravda*'s articles, but Shostakovich never followed the line proposed to him. Far from blaming Shostakovich, Kerzhentsev and his minions accused Chelyapov and other administrators for failures in the musical 'front'. Yet the committee did not manage to extend its authority permanently over the Composers' Union. Composers remained active and, what is more important, after Chelyapov's removal from post, top administrative posts were always filled with composers rather than Party bureaucrats. Although the committee managed to bring music closer to the Party after 1936, composers repelled the advance of bureaucrats. Their relative autonomy inside the Soviet system was preserved and even enhanced in 1939. Even if Shostakovich and other composers were not wholly 'triumphant', they did emerge victorious after a serious confrontation with the Party bureaucracy in 1936–7.

## Chapter 9

I am indebted to Leonid Maximenkov's and Caroline Brooke's studies on the subject before me. Both have used formerly unpublished archival material, and studies of them both have guided me in finding yet even more previously uncharted documents, some of which I utilize in this article.

1. In recent years, a number of outstanding books on Soviet music have been published which use this kind of structural approach. Neil Edmunds's *The Soviet Proletarian Music Movement* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000) was one of the first to do so. Amy Nelson continued with the same subject from a slightly different viewpoint: Nelson, *Music for the Revolution*. Kiril Tomoff takes a sociological approach to musical life in an examination of the Composers' Union in 1939–53: Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). See also Simo Mikkonen, *Music and Power in the Soviet 1930s: A History of Composers' Bureaucracy* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2009).
2. The most commonly quoted source with regard to Soviet music in the 1930s is still without question Boris Schwarz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia 1917–1981*, rev. edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). This book was originally published in 1971. Unsurprisingly, given the inaccessibility of Soviet archives, the book is mostly based on published Soviet sources and reminiscences rather than archival material.
3. Robert Conquest has been one of the most active defenders of the totalitarian view, regarding Stalin's personal role as critical in most areas of life. One of the most prominent historians who places emphasis rather on his subordinates and to lower-level activity in the terror and society in general is Sheila Fitzpatrick. See, for example, Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (London: Hutchinson, 1990); Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*. Nowadays, however, few researchers choose to perceive the Soviet totalitarian system from top-down or bottom-up, but rather acknowledge the simultaneous existence of both trends.
4. Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*. In my view, the inconsistency of Stalinist cultural policy is the core message of this book.
5. Tomoff, *Creative Union*, pp. 25–6 and ff.
6. 'Postanovleniye politbyuro TsK VKP(b) o meropriyatiyakh po sozdaniyu Soyuza sovetskikh kompozitorov, 3.5.1939 [The Politburo's decision on measures to establish the Union of Soviet Composers, 3.5.1939]', in A. N. Yakovlev, A. Artizov and O. Naumov (eds.), *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: dokumenty TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b), VChK–OGPU–NKVD o kulturnoi politike. 1917–1953 gg.* [Power and the artistic intelligentsia: documents of TsK RKP (b)–VKP (b), VChK–OGPU–NKVD on cultural policy] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniy fond 'Demokratiya', 2002), p. 429; see also RGALI, f. 2077, op. 1, d. 21, ll. 1–3. While the Organization Committee of the Writers' Union was established in 1932, it was decided not to establish a similar body within the Composers' Union: 'Postanovleniye orgbyuro TsK VKP(b) o meropriyatiyakh po vipolneniyu postanovleniya politbyuro TsK VKP (b) "O perestroyke literaturno-khudozhestvennikh organizatsii", 7.5.1932 [Orgburo's decision on

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- measures to enforce the decision of the Politburo “On restructuring literary and artistic organizations, 7.5.1932”], in Yakovlev *et al.* (eds.), *Vlast*, pp. 175–6. This Orgburo commission was to study the establishment of a composers’ Organizational Committee, and in the end it rejected this proposal: RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 300, l. 5.
7. Glavrepertkom, the Main Repertoire Committee, was responsible for approving whatever was performed in any theatre or concert hall. See Herman Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature: 1917–1991* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), p. 54; Arlen Blyum, *Sovetskaya tsenzura v epokhu total’nogo terrora 1929–1953* [Soviet censorship during the era of total terror 1929–1953] (St Petersburg: Akademicheskii proyekt, 2000), pp. 28, 48.
  8. Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*, p. 55.
  9. Anatoliy Lunacharskiy’s politics are perhaps best depicted in Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1970). See also Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life*, pp. 11–13.
  10. In spite of the totalitarian view of Soviet society, these confrontations of bureaucrats were quite common. See for example Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Ordzhonikidze’s Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study in Soviet Bureaucratic Politics’, *Soviet Studies* 2/37 (1985), 145.
  11. Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*, pp. 10, 54–5, 58–61.
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
  13. ‘O perestroyke literaturno-khudozhestvennikh organizatsii: postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) 23.4.1932 [On restructuring literary and artistic organizations: resolution of TsK VKP(b) 23.4.1932]’, in Yakovlev *et al.* (eds.), *Vlast*, pp. 172–3.
  14. Moisey Grinberg openly stated that this production of Leningrad’s MALEGOT was a historic occasion and a landmark for Soviet opera because of the visit and remarks made by Stalin and Molotov. See Moisey Grinberg, ‘Sekret uspekha [Secret of success]’, *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 22 January (1936), 3. This occasion and the events preceding it are described in detail in Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*, pp. 72–87.
  15. Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life*, p. 145.
  16. Opera had been a subject of heated discussions in the Composers’ Union’s meetings, as described in V. Gorodinskiy and V. Yokhelson, ‘Za bolshevistskuyu samokritiku na muzikal’nom fronte [For Bolshevik self-criticism in the musical front]’, *Sovetskaya muzika*, 5 (1934), 6. Despite some critical views, mostly over the choice of subject, it was received well. Only weeks before it was denounced, the music critic Grinberg, a Party member, hailed it along with *The Quiet Don* to be the best example of Soviet opera: Grinberg, ‘Tikhiy Don [The Quiet Don]’, *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 11 January 1936, 3. See also Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, pp. 74–5.
  17. See, for example, Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*, pp. 97–9.
  18. Articles that followed in *Pravda* and *Komsomol’skaya pravda* inaugurated a campaign against formalism in art in general. It was extended, for instance, to architecture, applied arts and children’s literature. See particularly *Komsomol’skaya pravda* 14, 15 and 18 February and 4 March 1936; *Pravda*, 13 February 1936.



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19. 'Za podlinnuyu samokritiku [For explicit self-criticism]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 5 February 1936, 3.
20. In some cases, the correspondence of the composers in the 1930s has not found its way to the archives. Boris Asaf'yev's correspondence with Roman Gruber, however, shows how both were aware of the prevailing situation. They discussed the roles of the Party, Bolshevik self-criticism, Narkompros and Shostakovich in Soviet music: GTsMMK, f. 285, d. 663, ll. 1–2; continuing in dd. 664, 866.
21. G. Neigauz [Neuhaus], 'O prostote v iskusstve [On simplicity in the arts]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 17 February 1936, 1.
22. Shostakovich composed the scores for the *Maxim* trilogy (1936–8) and for *The Great Citizen* (1937–9). Furthermore, he received the Order of Lenin and the Red Banner of Labour for these scores (Maximenkov, 'Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to a "Friend"', in Fay (ed.), *Shostakovich and his World*, pp. 48–9).
23. See, for example, Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, pp. 99–100.
24. P. M. Kerzhentsev, 'Problemy sovetskogo teatra (rech' na teatral'noy diskussii)' [Problems of Soviet theatre (speech for theatre discussion)], *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 5 April 1936, 2.
25. I. Shishov, 'O repertuare nashikh opernikh teatrov [On the repertoire of our opera theatres]', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 9 (1935), 64–5.
26. Massive festivals had been a part of Soviet life from the revolution onwards, but became state-sponsored and more common in the mid 1930s. See Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 14.
27. I. V. Stalin, *Marksizm i natsional'no-kolonial'nyy vopros* [Marxism and the national-colonial question] (Leningrad: Gospolitizdat, 1939), pp. 245–54. The speech was originally given at the 16th Party Congress in summer 1930. It was about the national question and against great-Russian chauvinism. Later, Stalin's notion became famous in connection with socialist realism.
28. Platon Kerzhentsev chaired a meeting about the work of the opera houses in March 1936 which was attended by the leadership of the Russian and Ukrainian opera houses along with several important composers. At this meeting, Kerzhentsev underlined the importance of *Pravda's* articles and assured attendees that the committee would help in the staging of Soviet opera in all possible ways ('Soveshchaniye o sovetskoy opera [Meeting about Soviet opera]', *Pravda*, 11 March 1936, 6).
29. See Marina Frolova-Walker, "'National in Form, Socialist in Content": Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 2/51 (1998), 339, 342.
30. See, for example, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* from 11 to 24 March 1936.
31. 'Spektakli Kazakhskogo muzikal'nogo teatra prokhodyat s bol'shim uspekhom: na spektakle "Kyz-Zhibek" prisutstvovali tovarishch STALIN, rukovoditeli partii i pravitel'stva [Spectacle of the Kazakh musical theatre staged with great success: Comrade STALIN and the leadership of the Party and the state participated in the spectacle "The Silk Maiden"]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 23 May 1936, 1.
32. In connection with the Georgian festival, Stalin allowed a photograph of himself in his personal box to be published: 'Slava artistam gruzinskogo naroda! [Glory to the artists of the Georgian people!]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 11 January 1937, 1.



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33. Platon Kerzhentsev, 'Itogi ukrainskoy dekadī [Results of the Ukrainian festival]', *Pravda*, 22 March 1936, 4.
34. Kerzhentsev reported this meeting on 7 February to Molotov and Stalin: RGALI, f. 962, op. 10s, d. 14, l. 16. This document has been published by T. M. Goryayeva, *Istoriya sovetskoy politicheskoy tsenzurī: dokumentī i kommentarii* [History of Soviet political censorship: documents and commentary] (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997), 480–1.
35. Kerzhentsev, 'Itogi ukrainskoy dekadī.
36. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 190, l. 50.
37. V. Shebalin, 'O Soyuze kompozitorov [On the Composers' Union]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 29 January 1936, 3.
38. 'O soyuze kompozitorov [On the Composers' Union]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 5 February 1936, 3. The letter was signed by the composers Aram Khachaturyan, Dmitriy Kabalevskiy, Viktor Beliy and Nikolay Chemberdzhi, among others.
39. 'Letter from Shostakovich to Shebalin, 17th April 1936', in V. I. Razheva (ed.), *V. Ya. Shebalin: zhizn' i tvorchestvo* [V. Ya. Shebalin: life and work] (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 2003), pp. 225–6.
40. 'Diskussiya v soyuze kompozitorov [Discussion in the Composers' Union]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 17 February 1936, 3.
41. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 1–11. Chelyapov described how several Soviet composers had followed the call to abandon formalism and turned to music of Soviet nationalities. He boasted that 155 visits to nearly twenty-five kolkhozes (collective farms) of the Moscow region had been made by members of the Moscow branch. He also presented a long list of symphonic and chamber music composed by the union's members.
42. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 11–18.
43. Alexander Goldenveizer and Alexander Veprik were examples of this criticism. Goldenveizer thought that soloists were almost completely abandoned by the union. Veprik then spoke again about the bad atmosphere that made work very difficult: RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 30–30ob., 57ob.
44. Gorodinskiy worked as a musical expert for Kul'tpros, i.e. for the Central Committee of the Party. Thus he was associated with a different organization than Kerzhentsev was. See Maximenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki*, pp. 72–4.
45. For Chelyapov, see RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, l. 22; for Gorodinskiy, ll. 32ob.–39; Chelyapov again ll. 61–61ob.
46. For Chemberdzhi, see RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 23–25ob.; for Khachaturyan's remarks, see ll. 41–3.
47. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 61ob.–66.
48. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 65–9.
49. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 107, ll. 65–69.
50. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 268, ll. 1–3. He concluded his lengthy address with a call for the political maturity of composers. See l. 17.
51. E. J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928–1932* (New York: Octagon, 1970), p. 223; Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Stalin and the Literary Intelligentsia, 1928–1939* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1991), p. 218.

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52. M. Grinberg, 'Rapmovskiye perepevi' [The return of RAPM], *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 5 May 1937, 4. In the next issue the criticism of RAPM continued. RAPM was then blamed for the poor state of the research on Russian folklore: A. Groman, 'Istoriya russkoy muziki i RAPM [History of Russian music and RAPM]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 11 May 1937, 3.
53. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 270, l. 22.
54. V. Gorodinskiy, 'O RAPM ... [On RAPM ...]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 17 May 1937, 5.
55. 'Plokhaya gazeta [Poor magazine]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 23 May 1937, 5. The editors were Lev Kal'tat and David Rabinovich, who had written favourably of RAPM in the first issues of *Sovetskaya muzika* in 1933.
56. A. Kut, 'Do kontsa vikorchevat rapmovshchinu [Pull up the RAPMist tendency by the roots]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 29 May 1937, 4.
57. RAPM members were named in a sinister letter sent to Premier Molotov in October 1937. However, RAPM was not the main target in the letter. See RGALI, f. 2954, op. 1, d. 885, ll. 16–16ob.; this is also mentioned in Caroline Brooke, 'Soviet Musicians and the Great Terror', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 3/54 (2002), 397–413. After the summer of 1937, RAPM went unmentioned in official contexts, which suggests that it was not the committee's real target.
58. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 270, ll. 27–34.
59. Presumably the Ukrainian composer and professor, Filipp Kozitskiy.
60. For the situation in Ukraine, see RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 270, ll. 47–57; for Belarus, l. 59.
61. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 273, l. 7.
62. 'Vsesoyuznoye soveshchaniye kompozitorov [All-union meeting of composers]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 23 May 1937, 6.
63. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 271, l. 12. Grinberg had written two reviews of Dzerzhinskiy's opera, *The Quiet Don*, one before Stalin's remarks, another one afterwards. The latter was a rave review.
64. The theatre score Kushnarev referred to was music for the play based on Nikolay Ostrovskiy's *How the Steel Was Tempered*. According to Fay (*Shostakovich: A Life*, p. 114), Shostakovich signed a contract to compose this incidental music, but later opted out of it. Fay claims that this had happened in October, but the meeting at which the mention was made occurred in late November.
65. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 270, l. 43. For Khrennikov's comment, see d. 271, l. 38.
66. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 271, l. 29.
67. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 272, ll. 14–17. Prokofiev was also criticized by another composer, Boris Shekhter, a former proletarian musician: 'There is a big gap between [Prokofiev's] music and what he says about it.' He was in line with Grinberg in this: RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 273, l. 37.
68. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 272, ll. 16, 22.
69. RGALI, f. 2954, op. 1, d. 885, ll. 16–16ob. See also Brooke, 'Soviet Musicians', p. 401, where the letter was first mentioned. This letter is located in the *fond* of the composer Mikhail Gnesin. We can only guess if he was one of those behind this letter. Proletarian musicians were attacked in this letter and Gnesin was himself criticized on many occasions by proletarian musicians in 1929–31. Therefore he

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- might have had old scores to settle. The letter itself was hastily compiled and very blunt. In Molotov's *fond*, there is no sign of this letter whatsoever.
70. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 310, l. 12ob.
  71. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 310, l. 16.
  72. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 310, l. 12ob.
  73. Tomoff, *Creative Union*, pp. 106–19.
  74. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 310, l. 27ob.
  75. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 273, ll. 42, 44–6.
  76. Maximenkov, 'Letters to a "Friend"', pp. 43–4, 51–3. Maximenkov made these remarkable discoveries in the RGASPI archive.
  77. Composers were occupied with improving their economic circumstances and housing status rather than being engaged in ideological discussions. See, for example, the report from the first plenum: Levon Atovmyan, 'K plenumu SSK: god raboti Soyuza sovetsskikh kompozitorov [In the SSK plenary session: year of work of the Composers' Union]', *Sovetskaya muzika*, 5 (1933), 132. Levon Atovmyan was a crucial figure in distributing funds, goods and other amenities for composers.
  78. In 1935, the union's Moscow branch distributed 1,321,66 rubles and 53 kopeks: RGALI, f. 2077, op. 1, d. 4, l. 19.
  79. A. Volozhenin, 'Soyuz ili posrednicheskaya kontora? [A union or a brokers' office?]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 17 February 1937, 4.
  80. In the union's bulletin, poor accounting was admitted, but changes were expected to take place. See 'Osnovniye materialy iz doklada finansovo-pravovogo sektora na prezidiume SSK [Materials from the financial and juridical sector of the SSK presidium]', *Byulleten Soyuza sovetsskikh kompozitorov*, 1 (1933), 5.
  81. The loan-giving was actually described as 'wild': 'Postanovlenie prezidiuma Soyuza sovetsskikh kompozitorov s aktivom ot 25/X 1933 g. po dokladu orgsektora (t. Atovmyan) [Resolution of the Composers' Union's presidium and activists from 25 October 1933 based on Comrade Atovmyan's report]', *Byulleten soyuza sovetsskikh kompozitorov*, 3–4 (1933), 5.
  82. The Leningrad branch's accounting can be found in RGALI, f. 962, op. 19, d. 19; Moscow's in d. 20.
  83. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 188, l. 1.
  84. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 188, ll. 9–10. The actual amount that the branches in Moscow and Leningrad needed was, according to the calculations of the Composers' Union, more than 1.5 million rubles: l. 18.
  85. Chelyapov was presumably arrested on 14 August 1937: see [www.memo.ru/memory/communarka/chapter3.htm](http://www.memo.ru/memory/communarka/chapter3.htm). Although the date of his arrest is not currently verified, it is a fact that he faced the court on 3 January 1938 and was shot within a few days. See 'Chelyapov, Nikolai Ivanovich', in '03.01.38 Spisok lits – Moskva-tsentr; Moskovskaya oblast; Moskva.zh.d.im.Dzerzhinskogo', AP RF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 414, l. 188, published on-line by Memorial: [www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg06188.htm](http://www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg06188.htm).
  86. This is described by Tomoff, *Creative Union*, pp. 24–5.
  87. Matthias Stadelmann, *Isaak Dunaevskij – Sanger des Volkes. Eine Karriere unter Stalin* (Cologne: Bohlau Verlag, 2003), pp. 221–2.

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88. RGALI, f. 1929, op. 1, d. 802, l. 2. The invitation for the first meeting of the new board was received by Prokofiev on 16 February 1938.
89. RGALI, f. 962, o. 3, d. 188, ll. 3–4; Molotov's approval is in l. 5.
90. Composers seem to have been unsure about what the aim of the meeting was. One comment reveals that some of them thought it would be about elections of the union's leadership: RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 310, l. 14ob.; for comments about living conditions, see ll. 6, 9, 13ob.
91. RGALI, f. 1929, op. 1, d. 802, l. 22. Glière had to announce that all contracts made after 15 August 1937 (the day after Chelyapov vanished) were to be cancelled. Obviously, the Composers' Union had tried to honour its previous commitments, but Narkomfin did not allow this. Furthermore, Prokofiev tried to collect his debts from the Composers' Union, which, however, could not pay him as it lacked the necessary funds. See RGALI, f. 1929, op. 2, d. 331, l. 4.
92. A. I. Shchiglik, 'Tvorcheskkiye soyuzi v sisteme sovetskoy demokratiy [Creative unions in the Soviet democratic system]', in Ts. A. Yampolskaya (ed.), *Tvorcheskkiye soyuzi v SSSR (organizatsionno-pravovye voprosi)* [Creative unions of the USSR (organizational and judicial questions)] (Moscow: Yuridicheskaya literatura, 1970), p. 45.
93. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 190, ll. 1–4. For Kerzhentsev's decision following Shatilov's letters, see l. 5.
94. Brooke, 'Soviet Musicians', 402–3; see also RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 190, ll. 19, 20; 'Chuzhaki v Konservatoriy [Hack-work in the Conservatoire]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 23 September 1937, 3; R. Zverina, 'Chuzhaki v Moskovskoy konservatoriy [Hack-work in the Moscow Conservatoire]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 29 December 1937, 6; R. Zverina, 'Na partiinom sobranii s Moskovskoy konservatoriy [In the Party meeting of the Moscow Conservatoire]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 12 January 1938, 4.
95. This document was first mentioned in Brooke, 'Soviet Musicians', p. 400; the document is located in RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 190, l. 47.
96. 'Arkad'yev, Mikhail Pavlovich,' in '15.09.37, spisok lits: Moskva-tsentr, Moskovskaya obl.', AP RF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 411, l. 88, published by Memorial: [www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg03088.htm](http://www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg03088.htm). See also [www.memo.ru/history/arkiv/op1004.htm#op1-190](http://www.memo.ru/history/arkiv/op1004.htm#op1-190).
97. 'Pshibishevskiy, Boleslav Stanislavovich,' in '20.08.37. Moskva-tsentr. i moskovskaya oblast', Spisok lits: podlehashchikh sudu voyennoi kollegii verkhovnogo suda Soyuzs SSR', AP RF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 410, l. 224, published by Memorial: [www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg02228.htm](http://www.memo.ru/history/vkvs/spiski/pg02228.htm). See also [www.memo.ru/memory/donskoe/d37-8.htm#\\_DNI\\_1051](http://www.memo.ru/memory/donskoe/d37-8.htm#_DNI_1051).
98. GTsMMK, f. 285, d. 1030, l. 1. It is highly likely that he was not working there voluntarily, but as an exile or an actual prisoner.
99. RGALI, f. 962, op. 3, d. 190, ll. 47–8.
100. There is also Dmitriy Gachev, whom Neil Edmunds associated with the Association of Proletarian Musicians. According to Edmunds, Gachev was Bulgarian and thus arrested. See Edmunds, *Soviet Proletarian Music Movement*, p. 299. Gachev was a musicologist and member of the Bulgarian Communist Party. I have been unable to find dates for his persecution. But like

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- Pshibishevskiy, he was a foreigner, and as such was in special danger during the Great Terror. Furthermore, Irina Vinokurova ('Trizhdi rasstrelyannii muzikant [A thrice-executed musician]', *Muzikal'naya akademiya*, 1 (1996), 79–84) has presented the case of the musicologist Nikolay Zhilayev, who was associated with Marshal Tukhachevskiy. After the marshal was arrested and tortured, Zhilayev was also arrested and eventually executed. Apart from these few, I have not found information of prominent composers or musicologists being executed. Levon Hakobian mentions that the musicologist Pavel Vul'fius and music critic Viktor Del'son were arrested and sent to camps. See Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, p. 173. Both survived and eventually died in the 1970s.
101. 'Na sobraniiy aktivy rabotnikov iskusstv Moskv: doklad tov. P. M. Kerzhentseva [At the activists' meeting of the Moscow art workers: report by P. M. Kerzhentsev]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 29 March 1937, 4.
  102. 'Rech' deputata A. A. Zhdanova [Speech of the deputy A. A. Zhdanov]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 18 January 1938, 2; see also RGALI, f. 962, op. 10, d. 31, l. 1–3.
  103. 'Rech' Molotova [Molotov's speech]', *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, 20 January 1938, 3.

## Chapter 10

1. Grigoriy Shneyerson (ed.), *D. Shostakovich: stat'i i material'i* [D. Shostakovich: articles and materials] (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1976).
2. The most famous incident connected with the songs is probably Flora Litvinova's hostile reaction to the composer after the premiere, during which the composer reportedly agreed with her that the poems were 'simply very bad'. See Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, p. 311.
3. Dolmatovskiy also published some interesting memoirs: *Bilo: zapiski poeta* [How it was: a poet's notes], final edn with new material (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1988), and *Zelyonaya brama: dokumental'naya legenda ob odnom iz pervikh srazheniy Velikoy otchestvennoy voyni* [Zelyonaya brama: documentary tales about one of the first battles of the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoy literatury, 1985). Both are anecdotal, informal accounts of his life and career, but contain no mention of his work with Shostakovich.
4. The best-known of these is perhaps his 1946 poem 'Frost', describing a Russian soldier's homesickness in the warmer European climate during the war.
5. See 'I Didn't Sleep All Night Because of You', *Russian Studies in History*, 38/4, Spring (2000), 7–20.
6. 'Trudniy razgovor [A difficult conversation]', *Oktyabr'* [October], November (1962), 6.
7. Dolmatovskiy, *Bilo*, p. 275.
8. Ol'ga Dombrovskaya guesses that this refers to Shostakovich's giving Dolmatovskiy a copy of the Four Songs op. 86, just published that year (personal communication, 12 August 2009).
9. Dombrovskaya notes that Shostakovich was in hospital at that time, so this entry denotes a visit by Dolmatovskiy.