JYU DISSERTATIONS 575

Jari Parkkinen

Dialogues with the Past

Transforming Political Concepts as Part of Revolutionary Discourse in the Soviet Music Politics of 1917–1930s

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

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This PhD dissertation examines changes in the Soviet music political discussions from the revolutions of 1917 until the 1930s. It focuses on the uses and transformations of political concepts in the Soviet discussions on music and culture. Political concepts created a shared discursive space among musicians, other cultural figures, and politicians, who negotiated and strove to construct a particular understanding of 'revolutionary music,' as demanded by the political changes after the 1917. The dissertation analyses histories and uses of such political concepts as *freedom* (*svoboda*), *democracy* (*demokratiya*), *Europe* (*Yevropa*), *Russia* (*Rossiya*), *East* (*vostok*), *West* (*zapad*), *people* (*narod*), *bït* and *realism* (*realizm*) in the context of Soviet discussions on music. The research data consists of central music journals published in the Soviet Union between 1917 and the 1930s, newspapers (*Pravda, Izvestiya*) and correspondence, and decisions of central politicians and political organs published in document collections. Theoretically and methodologically the work draws on the Bakhtinian understanding of the dialogical relationship between language and reality, as well as on conceptual history and discourse studies, both of which see language and central political concepts used in political discussions as constituting rather than merely reflecting political reality. Conceptual historical analysis of the Soviet music political discussion demonstrates how the understanding of 'revolution in music' was constructed in the intersection of new political demands on the one hand, and discourses and practices inherited from the Russian and European cultural history on the other. When the position of traditional practices and ideas of music in the new political demands were discussed, musicians and politicians alike strove to reconceptualize and reframe the traditions anew in order to adapt them to the ideas of revolution. Consequently, Soviet music politics is best described as adapting past traditions to a new political context by using and reformulating the meanings of central political concepts. Rather than being a direct continuation of or a decisive break from history, the process of bringing revolution into music was a creative transformation and adaptation of the political language into existing traditions – a process which in the dissertation has been conceptualized as "dialogues with the past."

Keywords: Soviet Union, Russia, music history, conceptual history, discourse studies, dialogism

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Parkkinen, Jari
Dialogeja menneisyyden kanssa: Poliittisten käsitteiden muutokset osana vallankumouksen diskurssia Neuvostoliiton musiikkipolitiikassa vuodesta 1917 1930-luvulle
Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2022, 203 s.
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Tämä väitöskirjatutkimus tarkastelee Neuvostoliiton musiikkipoliittisten keskustelujen muutoksia vuoden 1917 vallankumouksista 1930-luvulle. Sen keskiössä ovat poliittisten käsitteiden käyttö ja muutokset aikakauden musiikkia ja kulttuuria koskevissa keskusteluissa. Poliittisilla käsitteillä oli merkittävä rooli jaetun diskursiivisen tilan luomisessa musiikki-, kulttuuri- ja poliittisten toimijoiden välille, jotka pyrkivät rakentamaan käsitystä poliittisten muutosten vaatimasta vallankumouksesta musiikissa. Analyysin kohteena ovat *vapauden* (*svoboda*), *demokratian* (*demokratija*), *Euroopan* (*Jevropa*), *Venäjän* (*Rossija*), *idän* (*vostok*), *lännen* (*zapad*), *kansan* (*narod*), *arkielämän* (*byt*) ja *realismin* (*realizm*) käsitteet ja niiden historia ja käyttö neuvostoliittolaisessa musiikkikeskustelussa. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu keskeisistä aikakauden musiikkiin liittyvistä aikakauslehdistä, yleisemmästä sanomalehtiaineistosta (*Pravda, Izvestija*) sekä dokumenttikokoelmissa julkaistuista keskeisten poliittisten toimijoiden kirjeenvaihdosta ja päätöksistä. Teoreettisesti ja metodologisesti työ nojaa käsitehistoriaan ja diskurssintutkimukseen sekä Mihail Bahtinin dialogiseen käsitykseen kielestä ja todellisuudesta, joiden mukaisesti kieli ja poliittisessa keskustelussa käytetyt keskeiset käsitteet eivät ainoastaan heijasta vaan myös rakentavat poliittista todellisuutta.

Neuvostoliiton musiikkipoliittisen keskustelun käsitehistoriallinen analyysi osoittaa, kuinka käsitystä ”vallankumouksesta musiikissa” rakennettiin uusien poliittisten vaatimusten sekä venäläisen ja eurooppalaisen kulttuurihistoriasta periytyvien diskurssien ja käytänteiden ristipaineessa. Sekä musiikki- että poliittiset toimijat pyrkivät käsitteellistämään musiikkitraditiota uudella tavalla sovittaakseen sitä vallankumouksen ideoihin, ja tässä poliittisilla käsitteillä sekä niiden uudelleentulkinnoilla oli keskeinen rooli. Vallankumouksen tuominen musiikkiin ei siten ollut yhtäkkinen katkos tai historian suora jatkumo, vaan poliittisen kielen mukauttamista osaksi olemassa olevaa musiikkitraditiota. Tätä prosessia on kuvattu väitöskirjassa dialogiksi menneisyyden kanssa.

Avainsanat: Neuvostoliitto, Venäjä, musiikinhistoria, käsitehistoria, diskurssintutkimus, dialogisuus

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FOREWORD

The first word in the title of this dissertation is dialogue. I do not know if it is there because I truly think it is the most suitable theoretical concept for describing Soviet music politics or because of personal reasons. Probably it is both, and personal reasons have to do with the notion that you do not write academic texts alone. While there is only my name on the cover of this thesis, it is not a monologue, but a result of dialogues I have had the chance to have with numerous wonderful people. It is not possible to mention everyone here, but I am extremely grateful for everyone who has been part of my life and therefore part of this dissertation project for the last few years.

First of all I want to thank Professor Philip Ross Bullock and Associate Professor Rebecca Mitchell for agreeing to act as the preliminary examiners for the work. The research you have both carried out has been a major inspiration for this dissertation and it was an honour to receive your insights and encouraging feedback on my own work. The interest you showed in this thesis and your willingness to help is a great example of the support which a young researcher can receive from an international research community. Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to Professor Bullock for accepting the invitation to come to Jyväskylä to act as my Opponent in the public defence of the dissertation. I am sure it will be a fascinating discussion, although not an easy one for me. I am very much looking forward to it.

My supervisors, Mika Lähteenmäki and Simo Mikkonen, have shown great interest in this work as well as great tolerance in allowing me to conduct the research however I like. Indeed, the confidence you have had in this work from the very beginning is truly remarkable: from Mika's unhesitant answer to accepting me as a PhD student in Russian language and culture after I had majored from musicology, and Simo's offer for me to begin working as a project researcher at the Department of History and Ethnology. After the innumerable versions of research plans and extracts of manuscripts you commented on and the statements you provided in order to help to secure the funding for the work, I am glad to say that the work is now done so I will disturb you much less from now on (well, at least for the time being). The supervision you provided – being there when needed but at the same time giving me the freedom to do the work without too much interference – worked extremely well, and the dissertation benefitted greatly from the expertise of both of you as well as from moral general support you provided.

During the work on this doctoral dissertation I had the truly appreciated privilege of being a funded PhD researcher for practically the whole time. My gratitude for this goes to the Department of Language and Communication Studies and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for the employment they provided, as well as to the Cultura Foundation (Cultura-säätiö) for the grant I received at the end of the PhD. My superiors at the department, Arja Piirainen-Marsh and Esa Lehtinen, helped me and included me into the daily activities of the department, for which I am very grateful, as I am also for our department

head – Mika again – taking it as a guiding principle to help young researchers at the department the best he can.

Our subject of Russian language and culture at the university of Jyväskylä is a small one and at the same time a welcoming and open-minded section. Alexei Lobski, Vera Zvereva and Dmitri Leontjev have aided me whenever I have had troubles with the Russian language, and they have also been great company in the Russian room we occupy in the A building of the campus. Special thanks to you for giving me the opportunity to speak Russian almost every day and, at the same time, for patiently enduring my searching for words and far-from-perfectly constructed sentences which you to listened to almost on a daily basis. Огромное спасибо!

Working within a small subject and a less typical research topic has the clear advantage that you constantly need to communicate with people from different disciplines and backgrounds. During this process I have met wonderful people from different disciplines who have shown interest, provided support and offered valuable critical comments when necessary. Our great research community at the Department of Language of Communication Studies, especially the Discourse Hub and the Postgraduate Group, have created supportive and friendly places for presenting first drafts and practising conference presentations and to spend enjoyable time. For this, I want to thank Professors Sari Pietikäinen and Sigurd D'hondt in particular, as well as fellow postgraduates, some of whom have already defended their theses and therefore illustrated that a) it is possible after all to finish a PhD, and b) the outcome can be quite good. Many thanks to friends and colleagues Päivi Iikkanen, Hilkka Paldanius, Anna Puupponen, Reetta Ronkainen, Katharina Ruuska, Maiju Strömmer, Minna Tiainen, Polina Vorobeva, Anna-Maija Ylä-Mattila and everyone else!

The Department of History and Ethnology has been no less welcoming, and indeed the possibility to participate in the seminar of general history and the opportunity to go to international conferences and workshops as well as organize them with historians has given me invaluable experience and influenced this dissertation considerably. The positive neglect of disciplinary and department boundaries you have shown is remarkable, and it continuously provided opportunities for different ideas and views to be aired. For these opportunities I want to thank Professors Pasi Ihalainen, Pertti Ahonen and Antero Holmila and the whole research community of HELA: Zachris Haaparinne, Lauri Niemistö, Kenneth Partti, Silja Pitkänen, Juho Saksholm, Joonas Tammela and everyone else with whom I have had the possibility to discuss and debate research.

Through the Society of Finnish Slavists I have had the great opportunity to work together with fellow slavists from the other Finnish universities, and I want to express my gratitude to the whole society and its presidents during the past five years, Professors Johanna Viimaranta and Sanna Turoma and Dr. Saara Ratilainen. I particularly want to thank the society's active PhD group: Susan Ikonen, Eeva Kuikka, Hanna Määttänen, Mika Perkiömäki and Gustaf Olsson – planning and organizing academic events can indeed be both useful and great

fun! Furthermore, I want to thank Mika also for his role as Chief Editor of *Idäntutkimus* (The Finnish Review of East European Studies) for our collaboration on the journal, as well as the previous managing editor Ira Österberg and the whole editorial board who have taught me a lot about scientific publishing during my term as the managing editor.

Roger Noël Smith took up the laborious task of proofreading the whole manuscript (twice!) and I want to express my deepest gratitude to him. I think one quote from his comments at one particularly tricky place reveals something about the hardships faced by proofreaders: "This is like the verbal equivalent of some of Escher's staircases. The times seem to be the wrong way round, I give up. [- -] This is hurting my poor brain. You will be hearing from my doctor and my lawyer." I sincerely apologize, and humbly ask you to wait for me to secure a postdoc before sending any (completely justified) additional bills!

My parents, Auli and Juha, and my elder brothers, Jukka and Jarno, have been the supervisors too, of my life, and, appropriately enough, have followed the same principle of guidance as my academic supervisors: to be there when needed and at the same time to give me the freedom to pursue my own goals. Since the birth of Okko and Iisa you have shown the same affection and care as grandparents and uncles as you have as parents and brothers. I also want to thank my wife's parents and her other relatives – no less than a second family and homes where one is always welcomed. In terms of this dissertation, special thanks to my brother-in-law, Mikko Pohjola, with whom I have had long and thought-provoking discussions on discourse theory, language and consciousness, democracy and everything between and around those topics – whether around a beer, barbequing, or going out for a run. Apologies to everyone who has heard these discussions because indeed they have been absorbing and – while always respectful and friendly – occasionally quite intense!

Finally my deepest gratitude goes to my family. To our wonderful children Okko and Iisa and to my wife Hanna who, being married to me, was also married to this PhD project and who therefore had to hear about my new clever research ideas no matter when and where. While everyone else I have mentioned so far is part of this PhD through various and sporadic dialogues, our dialogue which began more than 15 years ago is the basis for everything else. It not only made this PhD what it is, but made me who I am today, and therefore this work is as much yours as it is mine.

Jyväskylä 7 November 2022,
as it happens, the 105th anniversary of the October Revolution
Jari Parkkinen

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration is based on the system used by *Grove Music Online*, which is commonly used in Anglophone research literature on Russian and Soviet music: https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/page/gmo-users-manual/grove-music-online-users-manual#transliteration

Transliteration of some names has been simplified in the body of the text: the ending -ый/-ий is consistently transliterated as -y and not -ïy/-iy (Myaskovsky instead of Myaskovskiy), the soft sign ь has been transliterated as i and not ′ in familiar names (Prokofiev instead of Prokof′ev), and in some cases an established transliteration has been used, if it is prevalent in both academic and popular literature (Tchaikovsky instead of Chaykovskiy). In the references, however, the names do not appear in the simplified form but are transliterated precisely according to the system in order to ensure the sources can be readily found.

Cyrillic	*Roman*	*Cyrillic*	*Roman*	*Cyrillic*	*Roman*
а	a	к	k	х	kh
б	b	л	l	ц	ts
в	v	м	m	ч	ch
г	g	н	n	ш	sh
д	d	о	o	щ	shch
е	e/ye	п	p	ъ	″
ё	yo	р	r	ы	ï
ж	zh	с	s	ь	′
з	z	т	t	э	ė
і	i	у	u	ю	yu
и	i	ф	f	я	ya
й	y				

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1 INTRODUCTION

When we look at history, our attention is drawn to particular key moments. These moments help us to organize the past, and if we look at Russia in 1917, we can indeed identify several important watersheds, which created boundaries between before and after. First, when the tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate, and then in early November when the Bolsheviks seized power and established the Soviet rule.[1] These changes often seem to later generations – as they did too to people at the time – as comprehensive and even total, which they are in the sense that the world seems changed after these moments. We cannot look back at the past without acknowledging the significance of these events. Despite this, most of people's activities continued more or less in the same ways after these momentous days, with the changes which these events launched gradually becoming part of people's lives. This dissertation sets out to explore how changes in Russia in 1917 started a process, which forced society to negotiate its relationship to the ongoing political changes. It investigates in particular the discussions about music in order to shed light on how differing in pace and dependent on pre-revolutionary history these negotiations could be.

Music discussions deserve special attention in exploring this political and cultural negotiation because music's dialogue with pre-revolutionary history – what from the past is worth of preserving and what should be discarded – was particularly conservative. Not only were the grand music institutions such as the main opera and concert houses as well as conservatories preserved, but the views as to what constituted valuable music of the past highlighted the canonical composers of Russian and European art music. While there were of course avant-gardists who voiced their disagreement against a preservationist policy, they mostly targeted particular composers rather than the art music tradition in its entirety. And even under this criticism, concert organizers did not face many

[1] In 1917 Russia used the Julian calendar, which was few weeks behind the widely used Gregorian calendar. Therefore the revolutions, which took place in early March and November according to the Gregorian calendar but late February and late October according to the Julian calendar, are generally known as the February and October Revolution respectively.

restrictions on their repertoires, especially in the 1920s. This dissertation observes how the canonical history of art music was translated into revolutionary discourse, so that the 'jewels' of European art music could be continued to be performed.

In the dialogue between the political and the musical, discussions tended to refer to central politicized concepts. These concepts, such as *freedom* (*svoboda*), *people* (*narod*), *democracy* (*demokratiya*), *east-west* (*vostok-zapad*) and *Europe* (*Yevropa*), were used to reconstruct the meaning of music in the new political situation. Political concepts are not, however, unambiguous, but rather their meanings are formed in particular historical and political contexts. The main task of this dissertation is to explore some of the central political concepts of Russian and Soviet history: what kind of meanings they involved in the pre-revolutionary period, how their meanings were re-negotiated after the revolutions of 1917, and how their application transformed as part of music and cultural discussions in the period between 1917 and the 1930s.

The theoretical basis of the dissertation rests on conceptual history and discourse studies, which both take (political) language not as mere reflection of political reality, but as a central component in producing reality and change. In addition, I employ the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue in order to analyse and bring out the multiple threads, through which meanings of political concepts were formed. The meaning of a concept cannot be dictated from one direction only. In the context of this dissertation, the particular dialogues through which I approach the analysis of political concepts are between political and musical discourse and between the present and the past. This dialogical approach helps the multifaceted, complex and even contradictory nature of Soviet music politics to be seen, and more broadly it helps us to see revolution not as a particular event, but as an open-ended process. While the meaning of historical events which this process involved cannot be undermined, for the society more broadly it was the following dialogues about the meaning of these events which defined the directions of change.

In this work I seek an answer to the following research question: *How was music reconceptualized as part of revolutionary discourse in the Soviet Union between 1917 and the 1930s*? I will specifically investigate the dynamics of the meanings of the concepts of *freedom, democracy, Europe, Russia, people* and *realism,* which were key political concepts in Soviet music discussions during the period. More precisely, the analysis will focus on 1) historical meanings these concepts involved and drew on, and 2) transformations in the use and meanings of these political concepts in Soviet music discussion between 1917 and the 1930s. By answering these questions, the dissertation aims to understand the formation of early Soviet music and cultural politics, the historical roots affecting this formation, and more generally how historical events initiate change which at the same time is dependent on dialogues with the past.

1.1 Soviet Music History as an Object of Study

Soviet music politics of the 1920s has not been studied as widely as that of the 1930s which has received extensive scholarly attention due to dramatic events of the latter decade and the central role of few key composers, Shostakovich and Prokofiev in particular. While the events of the Soviet 1920s were certainly also dramatic, individual composers or compositions were not a target of political decision-makers in the same way as during Stalinism.[2] Music was not, however, any less political in the Soviet 1920s than it was in the 1930s, and indeed in order to contextualise later events, understanding the early years of Soviet music life is crucial. While the 1920s have been the subject of a few excellent studies,[3] and the decade has been studied as part of longer timespans,[4] there is still much that needs to be covered in order to match the interest devoted to the 1930s.

A very welcome addition to more general histories of Soviet music has been an increasing interest towards the intellectual history of Russian and Soviet music. After Richard Taruskin's works, Marina Frolova-Walker made a profound contribution to the idea of 'Russianness' in music from the 19th century to the time of the Soviet Union.[5] The transition from late Imperial Russia from the perspective of music has been discussed by Rebecca Mitchell, Marina Raku and Elina Viljanen, and their works are central in understanding the intellectual history of music in the early Soviet period.[6] These works point to the direction of this thesis as well, i.e. how in the midst of new circumstances and political changes the role of music became re-negotiated and how the tension between preserving tradition and creating bold revolutionary ways to understand music was handled. While the language and ideas of Soviet music politics had been studied before these works, they turn the emphasis from the language and doctrines of high politics to the level of music specialists who navigated between practices, tradition and new political views in their times. At the same time, they

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[2] The events of the 1930s included for instance the restructuring of the artistic institutions and the foundation of the Composers' Union, which became the main music organization until the disintegration of the Soviet Union (see especially Mikkonen 2009; Tomoff 2006); beginning of the anti-formalist campaign centring around Shostakovich (Fanning 1995; Maksimenkov 1997; Fairclough 2010); Stalinist terror (impact on music, see Klause 2017); and the doctrine of socialist realism (in music see Herrala 2012).

[3] Neil Edmunds's book *The Soviet proletarian music movement* (2000) was pioneering in the Anglophone research literature, and later books by Amy Nelson (2004) and Marina Frolova-Walker & Jonathan Walker (2012) are central sources for this thesis.

[4] See Fairclough (2016), who extends the discussion from the revolutions until the death of Stalin in 1953. Approximately similar timeline is used by two central Russian-language studies by Raku (2014) and Vlasova (2010). An overview on music for the whole Soviet period are offered by Schwarz (1983, excluding the final years, of course) and Hakobian (2017). For an overview of studies on Russian music in and outside Russia, see Zuk & Frolova-Walker (2017).

[5] Frolova-Walker 2007; From Taruskin, see especially his *Defining Russia musically* (1997).

[6] Mitchell 2015; Raku (2014) approaches the formation of Soviet music politics from the perspective of "myth-creation," and Viljanen's (2017) work is the most extensive study on Boris Asafiev, who became to be known as the "father of Soviet musicology." See also Olga Panteleeva's article (2019) on transition of 19th century scientific ideas into early Soviet musicology.

blur the rigid boundaries of eras, especially of the year 1917, by showing how political changes bring about changes in cultural discussions, but the effects are not straightforward nor easily placed on a timeline.[7]

Perspectives from discourse studies have been made use of before to analyse Soviet culture and music politics.[8] Often these works have had a rather unidirectional view on music and cultural political language: phenomena like socialist realism come to be seen as imposed from high politics down to the practitioners of art, whose role is to cope with the language of socialist realism and to do their best to 'mask' their true artistic interests with the political jargon of the time. This interpretation goes often hand in hand with the uncomplicated view of artistic freedom of the 1920s which is seen to be ended abruptly and violently by Stalinist socialist realism.[9] Without denying there was intense interference by political actors in the works and lives of Soviet artists from the 1930s onwards, the formation of Soviet music politics was more complicated than this. A considerable number of musicians, composers, critics and theorists did not call for a complete revolution for music but insisted on preserving the pre-revolutionary tradition and institutions as well as the state's major role in this enterprise. While doing this, these actors recycled, reinterpreted and re-negotiated concepts, which later came to define the rather stiff and rigid language of Soviet cultural politics. Theoretical discussions, as we will see, contributed considerably to this discursive formation, making it hard to argue that the political jargon was somehow imposed on practitioners of art from above. It also reveals how this politically correct language was not something disconnected from artistic discussions and aspirations but constituted them.

When studying the history of Soviet music and listening to the actual music, one is confronted with the question of how much 'politics' we are hearing or if we are hearing 'just' music. It is obvious that a clear separation of the political and historical context from the music we hear is impossible, but an even more serious scholarly question is, how we analyse these differing elements. When talking about Soviet music, it is easy to succumb to clear-cut interpretations about

[7] See also the special issue of *The Slavonic and East European Review* 2019, Vol. 97, No. 1 on "Continuity, Rupture and Memory in Russian Music" – especially Bullock (2019), who looks beyond the division of 1917 from a genre perspective, namely how the tradition of Russian art-song was incorporated into Soviet context.

[8] Robin 1992; Smrž 2011.

[9] One of the first works to challenge this view outside Russia was Boris Groys's *Total art of Stalinism* (2011), originally published in German in 1988. Groys reminded the readers of the political views of avant-garde artists of the early Soviet Union, which included for instance elimination of pre-revolutionary art and creating new society from the scratch, where arts and politics would merge. This led Groys to the provocative conclusion that Stalin with his merging of politics and art completed the avant-gardist art project, rather than rejected it.

the political nature of certain composers and works.[10] More broadly, there lies a danger of normative and anachronistic evaluation of Soviet music history if the institutional, discursive and conceptual context is not sufficiently taken into account. An example of such a glib reading is when performing Beethoven in totalitarian regimes is interpreted as the "call for freedom."[11] As becomes clear in Chapter 2, this kind of view within the Soviet context would be absurd, because Beethoven was hailed as the central figure of 'freedom' in the Soviet Union as well. It was, however, a very differing interpretation of freedom, which Beethoven was made to represent to the Soviet state.

The position of this thesis remains to some extent outside of the division between musical and political, because it does not even attempt to deal with Soviet music *per se* but focuses on music political discussions and the broader question of the formation of Soviet cultural politics. In order to analyse the 'political,' I have included a broad range of texts in the analysis, but including also analysis of actual music would be an over-reaching task – not only because of the amount of work, but also because of the methodological problems in analysing the political quality of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena side by side.

While the number of explicitly conceptual historical studies of Soviet (music) history is limited, arguably the studies on Soviet history and especially those focusing on intellectual history have a certain kind of intrinsic conceptual awareness in them.[12] This is owing to at least two reasons. First, the studies written in other languages than Russian face the need to translate central concepts, and as some concepts might not have direct equivalents in other languages – such as *narodnost'* – the complex and multifaceted nature of political concepts is quickly revealed. The second and more important reason is that the line between the political and non-political was always very different in the Soviet Union from other (non-communist) countries, because Marxist theory highlighted the interconnectedness of different activities to political and economic conditions. Studies of Soviet history are aware of the political nature of cultural discussions because they were defined as such in the Soviet Union. As a

[10] This has been especially the case with works of Shostakovich, whose 'politicality' became a much debated issue after the publication of the controversial 'testimony' by Solomon Volkov (1979). Since then, discussion on Shostakovich has been difficult without studying and thinking about the composer's political position, so much that "we have tended to stop listening to the actual music," as Marina Rakhmanova (2017, 41) notes. On the other hand, Marina Frolova-Walker (2017) illustrates the teaching of music history in Russian conservatories, where Soviet narratives are still maintained surprisingly often, and the political context of the works might be completely ignored.

[11] From the discussion between Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said, quoted in Street (2017, 889). Relevant here is not the original non-academic discussion, but its uncritical reproduction in an academic text discussing music and political communication.

[12] Studies on Soviet history with explicit conceptual historical premise include works by Jänis-Isokangas 2016; Kharkhordin 2005; Petrov 2006 as well as partly David-Fox 2015. Common with these studies (as with this thesis) is that they take inspiration especially from works of Reinhart Koselleck but include other methodological tools in their analysis as well. More 'traditional' conceptual history, i.e. collections of key political concepts of a certain longer time period has been done in the Russian context for the concepts of the 19th century (Miller et al. 2011; 2012).

result, researchers of Soviet history generally avoid the trap of taking the language and concepts of Soviet culture at face value or as somehow external to the political realm and they do not need conceptual history to remind them that the language of Soviet culture was indeed political.

On the other hand, this does not mean that conceptual history would be unnecessary for studies of Soviet history, and there are four reasons for that. First, avoiding a simplified understanding of the 'political' in the Soviet context, that is, seeing all the phenomena subordinated to the political system, is important. In research literature there has been less of this simplification for decades, as the so-called totalitarian paradigm of the Cold War era gave way to more nuanced interpretations of Soviet history, but it can be disputed how outmoded this thinking is in popular discourse.[13] Secondly, while there is generally a good understanding of the complex nature of certain concepts of Soviet cultural history (such as *socialist realism*), the analysis of these too rarely extends to the historicity of these concepts. As a result, the year 1917 still becomes the dividing line, and political language of the Soviet Union becomes analysed as separate from the pre-1917 discussions and some concepts are interpreted only through their Soviet formulations. There are however some notable works which have transcended the border 1917 by looking at the repercussions of the pre-revolutionary discussions, concepts and discourses in the Soviet era,[14] but this should be the standard starting point for any study concerned with the origins of Soviet cultural history. Thirdly, conceptual history enables researcher to be more cautious when talking about historical concepts, that is, concepts picked from the research data, and when employing their own analytical concepts in order to create description of a phenomenon. For instance the concept of 'revolution' and its use in Soviet music politics can be approached with the help of conceptual history as an empirical question without pre-defined normative assumptions on what kind of music is qualified as 'revolutionary' and what 'non-revolutionary.'[15]

The fourth point on the importance of extending conceptual history to the particular cases of Russia and the Soviet Union is the possibility to contribute to the discussion of the meaning of the 'political' itself in different fields, including discourse studies and political history. The political nature of Soviet cultural history is self-evident – in fact so self-evident that it is easy to forget to think more broadly about *how* and *why* cultural discussion can be considered as political discussion. Soviet cultural history begins to look like an exception, an extreme

[13] On the "totalitarian" and "revisionist" schools of Soviet historiography in the 1970s and 80s, see Fitzpatrick 2000.
[14] In the case of socialist realism, see especially Gutkin 1999.
[15] This is a historical approach to the question – we can of course classify music/art works according to our understanding of 'revolutionary works,' but this demands in advance the definition of 'revolutionary art.' Consequently, we lose the possibility to reach contemporaries' own understanding and conceptualizations of 'revolution' and 'revolutionary art.' See also the discussion between Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael David-Fox on the concept 'cultural revolution,' which is both historians' analytical concept and a historical concept in itself. Fitzpatrick and David-Fox paid attention how these two uses should not be confused (David-Fox 1999a & 1999b; Fitzpatrick 1999).

end and a warning about the entanglement of the cultural and the political – something else than a 'normal' relationship between art and politics. While in the Soviet Union – in contrast to many other countries – the interference of the political leadership in artistic matters was at times intense and even violent, it is worth studying the Soviet case not as an isolated aberration, but as an illuminating example of the dialogue between the cultural and the political in the early 20th century. The combination of conceptual history and discourse studies is a good way to do this because with them it is possible to avoid a predetermined understanding of the 'political' and instead to analyse how this (cultural) political field was constructed discursively - besides institutionally. This will in turn feed back to understanding of the 'political' in different fields and help to define objects of our studies.

This new perspective to see the relationship between the political and the cultural in the Soviet Union not as completely different than in other countries continues the persistent discussion of 'modernity' and the Soviet Union. The crucial point in this discussion has been if the exclusion of the Soviet Union (like Nazi Germany) from the understanding of 'modernity' of the 20th century, reserving the concept solely for liberal democracies, has been warranted.[16] Did the Soviet Union represent its own path of modernity, partly different but partly utilizing 'modern techniques' of social control, or was it 'anti-modern' or 'failed modernity,' which toppled as a result of its own archaic social structures?[17] While the interconnectedness between Russian/Soviet and European cultural and musical life in the early 20th century has been analysed before from the perspective of particular ideas – such as "social Darwinism" [18] or "biopsychology"[19] – focusing on shared political concepts provides another way to examine the transnational and historically specific context in which the Soviet Union turned to its cultural, societal and political modernization. Historical analysis of the shared political concepts, such as *democracy* or *East-West*-dichotomy, provides a concrete way to evaluate both the familiar and distinctive aspects of Soviet modernity.

Rather than giving definite answers, this thesis further problematizes the concept of modernity by looking at the discussions on music instead of the more common governing practices of political institutions. The history of Soviet music is no doubt part of the history of modern music, but its position in this is far from clear. This canon still rests on composers of Western Europe,[20] and while for example music of the Soviet Union's most famous composer Dmitri Shostakovich

[16] See especially the review article on the 'modernist' and 'neo-traditionalist' schools in Russian studies by David-Fox (2015, 21–47).
[17] David Hoffmann has pointed out to the origins of state-practices on population management and intervention, which go back to the 19th century Europe and in its more coercive forms, such as deportations and internment camps, to the World War I. These techniques were not thus specifically 'Soviet' or 'anti-modern.' (Hoffmann 2017.) Quite extreme interpretation of the 'archaic' quality of Russia/Soviet Union, which persists through centuries, is given by J. Arch Getty (2013), for whom Stalinist repressions and Putin's autocracy are but natural continuation of ruling Russia in a despotic and violent way.
[18] Raku 2014.
[19] Taylor 2019.
[20] Frolova-Walker 2018.

is performed very often, it is his works from the late 1930s onwards, after the introduction of socialist realism, which are the most popular, especially the 5th and the 7th (Leningrad) symphonies. Rather than typical representatives of modernity with bold innovations and soundscapes unheard of as the term is commonly understood in music, they are in their accessibility arguably 'anti-modern.' By analysing the discussion of old and new, tradition and modern in the Soviet music, we can relate this discussion to broader conceptualizations of 'modernity' and engage in a dialogue between our own understandings on the relationship between the cultural and the political in modern societies.

I do agree with the criticism of Walter Sperling that conceptual history in itself is not an exhaustive answer to the study of Russian or Soviet history.[21] Extending the methodology of *Begriffsgeschichte* simply to new contexts does not automatically yield any new answers and there is no need to reproduce encyclopaedic histories of certain concepts for Russia. But conceptual history in the broader sense as defined in the context of new political history does provide more than simply awareness of the political and contingent nature of concepts. It provides the possibility to work with a specific set of words (such as *freedom* or *people*) but due to their complexity it allows at the same time a constant contact with broader social, political and historical contexts. The definition of concepts themselves is not the point of interest (such as in philosophical analysis of concepts), but how these concepts mark, are part of and bring changes to political discussions and events in which they are used.

To continue the line of research, which contests the idea of changes in Soviet (music) history being straightforward and discusses the relationship between modernity and tradition as something other than one determining the other, I propose an approach which employs Bakhtinian dialogue, conceptual history and methods from discourse studies. In this way Soviet music political discussion's relationship to the historical context of the time can be better understood, and a new perspective on the relationship between the musical and the political in the early Soviet Union becomes possible.

1.2 Theoretical Background: Extending Dialogue between Discourse Studies and Conceptual History

While the interplay between linguistically oriented history and socially oriented linguistics might have lasted long, it can be said to have been sporadic and uneven. There have been common points of interests as well as shared philosophical influences from Ludwig Wittgenstein, Friedrich Nietzsche, J. L. Austin, Michel Foucault and others. Despite the possible common ground, links between discourse studies and conceptual history have been both pointed out as

[21] Sperling 2012.

well as questioned strongly – if they have been acknowledged at all in the first place.[22]

The rubric 'conceptual history' includes different kind of emphases and ways to study history, and in the broadest sense, it can be conceived as a research attitude, which 'takes the language of the past seriously.'[23] Originally, this meant a break from the previous history of ideas and a call to analyse language use in its historical context,[24] but since then the ways to do this have included a wide range of different approaches.[25] The approach this thesis suggests takes its inspiration from Reinhart Koselleck's theoretical work,[26] but is more in line with newer understanding of history of political language(s),[27] as well as conceptual and methodological approaches stemming from discourse studies and nexus analysis.[28] Before outlining the analytical perspective, however, I will propose a theoretical starting point, which serves the aims of both discourse studies and conceptual history – namely the Bakhtinian idea of dialogue.

Bakhtinian dialogue, which has inspired linguists and literary theorists for decades, is less well-known within history. I take dialogicality as one, still underexplored theoretical opportunity to work between discourse studies and conceptual history, as well as a way to answer criticism, which has been brought up in discussions on similarities and differences between these fields.[29] Criticism

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[22] Conceptual history has been interpreted both as belonging and not belonging to the broader linguistic turn in humanities (Pernau 2018, 6) or discourse studies/analysis and conceptual history have been interpreted to have "profoundly different objects of study, differing philosophies of language, and, at least in some cases, different normative background assumptions and goals." (Müller 2014, 77). On the other hand, conceptual history is not widely used or even widely known within discourse studies (exceptions to this include for instance Ifversen 2003 and Krzyzanowski 2010).

[23] From this point of view, conceptual history has been interpreted as the linguistic turn in historiography (Müller 2014), or as one of the linguistic turns in the field (Partti 2020).

[24] Central text in the development of the Anglophone conceptual history (or 'Cambridge contextualism') in contrast to previous history of ideas was Quentin Skinner's *Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas* (1969). In Germany, approximately at the same time began a research project studying the historical development of central political concepts in Germany. This resulted into seven volume collection of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, published between 1972 and 1992. *Begriffsgeschichte* as a theory and method was developed by Reinhart Koselleck, one of the series's editors and contributors.

[25] On discussion between commonalities and differences of different kinds of conceptual histories, especially between the so-called Cambridge school and the German *Begriffsgeschichte*, see for instance Müller (2014) and Palti (2014). Discussions on the position of conceptual history today is offered e.g. by Steinmetz & Freeden (2017) and Marjanen (2018), who includes newer possibilities, such as using digital corpuses, into discussion as well.

[26] Koselleck 2002; 2004.

[27] Palti 2014.

[28] Ihalainen & Saarinen 2019.

[29] Central sources for the following interpretation of Bakhtin's dialogue have been especially *Slovo v romane* (Bakhtin 2012, 9–179), translated into English as *Discourse in the novel* (in Bakhtin 1981) and *Problema rechyovïkh zhanrov*, translated as *The problem of speech genres* (in Bakhtin 1986). Besides Bakhtin's original texts, I have drawn from later interpretations of his work, especially by Holquist (1990). This kind of approach is sometimes criticized for taking Bakhtin (1895–1975) anachronistically to later poststructuralist contexts. On the other hand, my point is not to answer questions such as "what Bakhtin could have meant" but rather draw inspiration from his ideas. Works by Brandist & Lähteenmäki (2010) and Lähteenmäki (2009; 2010) offer much more historically informed reading of Bakhtin's work in the intellectual context of his time.

has addressed the overt normative views of (critical) discourse studies, claims of discourse studies being 'only' about language with no reference to material reality, disappearing of the role of historical actors under the all-embracing power of discourse, and the somewhat fuzzy labelling of everything 'postmodernist' as incompatible with history as a science.

To begin to understand the Bakhtinian view of language and reality, we can first take up his central concept of *word* (*slovo*).[30] Word is for Bakhtin a practical metaphor for any occurrences in language which do not appear randomly but come into being in relation to everything else uttered before. The word "finds the object to which it is directed, always, so to speak, already spoken, disputed, evaluated, covered in smoke or, conversely, in light of the already spoken foreign words about it."[31] We do not invent and use words or any other feature of language as if they were completely novel: the novelty is in relation, in *dialogue*, with everything we have done with language(s) before. It is important to note the strength of the concept of dialogue already at this point because it refers to the two-directional character of language-use. Every novel word and novel use of a word (new meaning in a new context) is not completely predetermined by the earlier use of the word, but on the other hand, we are forced to take it into account. At the same time, novel uses of a word imbue the word with new meanings and contexts, which need to be taken into account later on.

With what, then, are we in dialogue? Besides being a specific property of language itself (words/utterances in dialogue with earlier uses of words/utterances), I take up here three different objects of Bakhtinian dialogue, which are the dialogue with the social, dialogue with the material and dialogue with the self/other (subjectivity).

In discourse studies and other socially oriented language studies, dialogue with particular values and ideas that words and discourses carry with them are often emphasized. Bakhtin points to this direction in his remark on how every word carries social contexts with it – how every word "smells of profession, genre, trend, party, particular work, particular person, generation, age, day and hour."[32] The social and ideological context has an even more central place in the work of Bakhtin's contemporary and member of the same circle of researchers, Valentin Voloshinov, whose *Marxism and the philosophy of language* from 1929 also has served as a starting point for several discourse analytical studies.[33] Thus, when we are using certain words, we enter into a dialogue more broadly with the worldviews they represent. This is particularly so with politicized concepts and phenomena, such as *immigration*, *feminism, democracy* etc. It is hard, if not

[30] Sometimes translated as "discourse," as in *Discourse in the novel* (in Bakhtin 1981). Original title is *Slovo v romane* – Word in the novel.
[31] Bakhtin 2012, 30. Translation by the author. I read Bakhtin's understanding of a limited space of utterances, where new utterances come into being only in relation to what has been said before analogical to Foucault's understanding of discourse from his 'archeological' period, i.e. as a field, which "is made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them." (Foucault 1972, 27).
[32] Bakhtin 2012, 46.
[33] Voloshinov 1986. See for instance Fairclough 1992; Pietikäinen & Dufva 2006.

impossible, to speak about them and not be part of a dialogue with values and connotations inscribed to them – whether one wants to have this dialogue or not.

Secondly, the potential of Bakhtin's theory to deal with the 'materialistic' critique of discourse studies has been underemphasised, i.e. the claims of overt emphasis on language and semiotics without considering enough the material conditions and consequences of language-use (or the lack of any theorizing of the material whatsoever). This criticism has gained ground especially from the so-called posthumanist and new materialistic perspectives, although gender studies for instance has raised this question already a while ago.[34] As dialogue for Bakhtin is not simply a theory of language and literature, but extends to more fundamental ontological questions, and as Voloshinov from the same intellectual circle addressed the question of materialism directly, it is possible to frame the relationship between the material and the discursive from a dialogical perspective as well. Similarly as we do not encounter words as completely novel, but "in light of the already spoken words," we do not encounter the material world directly, but make sense of it with our language, which we have not invented by ourselves but which has been given to us. Very importantly, however, the discursive does not determine 'what we see,' but rather we reflect what we see in relation to the experience we have had and the symbolic system we have been given and which we have built up before.[35] New experiences feed and alter the discursive, but it is only in light of the discursive that we experience new things. I should stress that here (and perhaps always) dialogicality is such a fundamental principle, that it can be questioned how far we can distinguish the material and the discursive in the first place, because there is not one without the other. Reality is seen as a tightly interwoven material and discursive complex, and the analytical distinction between the material and the discursive should not obscure their indivisible entanglement.

Thirdly, Bakhtin's dialogicality can be used to conceptualize identity, self and individuality, which helps us to position historical actors in relation to their discursive context while maintaining the agency of individuals. The first part of the dialogicality of the self comes intuitively: in the world we are in a dialogical relationship with others, i.e. we constantly negotiate about our being in the world (who we are) with others dialogically. But Michael Holquist (1990) for instance has taken the question of the dialogical self much further than this: we do not negotiate about ourselves only with others, but we negotiate about ourselves with ourselves. Holquist sees on the basis of Bakhtin that there are two ways of being in the world. There is the impersonal and un-completed I-for-myself, which lives and acts in the constant flow of time; and there is the not-I-in-me – the way to make sense who we are and what we are doing, for which the time is closed and whose position is fixed. Being is both of these. We live and look at the world from the I-for-myself, a material position, which I occupy in the world, in

[34] Pennycook 2018; Butler 1999.
[35] Or alternatively, as Ron Scollon formulates drawing on Roy Bhaskar's critical realism: "discourses do, indeed, work to some extent and, in some cases, in a dialectical relationship with the real world but, on the other hand, [- -] reality puts up rather steady resistance to our discursive constructions of it." (Scollon 2003, 79.)

time which flows on constantly. But in order 'to make sense,' in order to perceive ourselves, we "appropriate the vision of others," make use of categories of our language and make sense of – or even create – ourselves.[36] Quite literally, we *stop to think*, that is, we stop the flow of time artificially in order to understand, and this understanding is creating meanings for our actions, through which we become who we are. Instead of looking at self and the other, where self is understood as a Cartesian stable point of reference for everything outside the self, there is a dialogical constellation self/other. It is only through the outside vision, i.e. language and discourse, from where we can stop time, look at ourselves and figure out who we are. But, similarly to the relationship between the material and the discursive discussed above, we are not simply 'discursive creation,' because there is no predominance of the not-I-in-me over the I-for-myself (the discursive over the non-discursive). Instead, we are here physically and materially as well, and in order to 'be' as being is understood, we need to create meanings, make sense of our physical selves in relation to everything else. And we have to do this: we cannot jump off from the constant need to create meanings. There is no alibi for being, as Bakhtin declared.[37]

This understanding of dialogicality can be taken as a way to answer the criticism pointed towards discourse studies. First, we can take the role of historical actors. The Foucauldian-inspired view of history in particular has often been criticized as diminishing the role of historical actors, through which history is often written. If and when similarities between conceptual history and discourse studies are noted, the role of historical actors in making history is seen as the crucial distinguishing factor between the two.[38] The dialogical perspective promoted here can serve as a move forward from this dichotomy, because it does not deem individuals unnecessary for historiography, but quite the contrary. Even though we would have a theoretical view of the self, which is actually not self in the traditional understanding of an individual thinking and acting completely in isolation from everything else but rather a self formed through the other, it nevertheless maintains *positionality*. The question 'who said what' remains relevant, because the position from which a particular statement is pronounced is very important in order to understand the statement: from where it stemmed and what consequences it had.[39] The dialogical view is in conflict with claims of 'intentionality,' which has been maintained by Quentin Skinner, but it is not in conflict with common historical research on individuals, their background, influences they had had etc. This is not done for the sake of understanding an individual and their 'inner psychological states' or something similar, but in order to understand their position in a particular historical, political and social context.

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[36] Holquist 1990, 22–29.
[37] ibid., 28–29.
[38] Marjanen 2018, 100.
[39] Comparative to *enunciation* – a concept from poststructuralist theory, which refers to statement's position in a discourse without claiming any authority to its speaker in the traditional sense of an 'author-subject' (Beetz 2016, 100).

The second critical point, which is often used as a way to distinguish conceptual history from discourse studies, is the notion of 'criticality.' Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and its normativity has been seen as incompatible with the understanding of 'criticality' in historical research.[40] While discourse studies has broadened its scope significantly since CDA's practical dominance of the field in the 1990s and early 2000s, the notion of criticality has influenced the field considerably as well as my own understanding of discourse studies. I would argue that the notion of criticality does not pose insurmountable problems for conceptual history but can instead be beneficial for it as well.[41]

Criticality condensed in the key texts of CDA into three viewpoints. First, that language and power in society are not separate but intertwined; second, that researchers as any other members of society are not detached from the social structures (including power structures) of the society they are living in; and third, that researcher should not pretend to be 'neutral' observers, but become conscious of their role and use science to affect the society.[42] The last point on the role of researchers in society is a broader societal question and less important for the theoretical discussion at hand, although reflection on how we come to study certain things in the first place and how we use the knowledge gained from research is not an irrelevant question.

The first point about the entanglement of language and power is actually an idea which Koselleck already promoted in conceptual history. The original point of *Begriffsgeschichte* was to see political concepts as legitimate objects of historical study, because "[w]ithout common concepts there is no society, and above all, no political field of action."[43] Moreover, concepts which not only described the current social and political reality, but which were increasingly used to describe future changes and aspirations (isms) gained ground from the late 18th century, and the "struggle over the 'correct' concepts became socially and politically explosive."[44] There is thus hardly a conflict between these approaches about the need to understand language and political power as not separate but intertwined. But the second point I listed above, that researchers are themselves intertwined in the power structures of the society and the normativity of CDA, which arose from this notion, is however a more relevant point. This is because it has been interpreted as a claim for the impossibility of writing (impartial, objective) history and turning history into a specific form of narration or literature – a view associated most strongly with Hayden White.[45] Historical scholarship does not, however, turn into mere fiction, though we would

[40] Steinmetz & Freeden 2017, 29; Müller 2014.
[41] Achugar (2017) discusses relationship between history and CDA and, as it happens, suggests "intertextual positionings and dialogism" as a way forward. This is the perspective I employ.
[42] Fairclough 1992; On newer ways to map criticality within discourse studies, see for instance Pietikäinen 2016.
[43] Koselleck 2004, 76.
[44] ibid., 79. Skinner interestingly pondered in retrospect, that he saw it as a common assumption both for him and Koselleck that they treated normative concepts "less as statements about the world than as tools and weapons of ideological debate." He interpreted this to stem from Foucault's Nietzschean views. (Skinner 2002, 177.)
[45] See Ghasemi 2014.

recognize that our understanding of concepts like *democracy* or *freedom* affects how we see their history (or why we come to study these concepts in the first place). When reconstructing meanings of familiar concepts in a different historical and political context we are, again, in a dialogue with today's meanings of these concepts – in fact, 'translating' past meanings into the language of today is the only way to make these concept intelligible to the reader of today.

Criticality in this thesis stems from a dialogical perspective which acknowledges that descriptions emerge from a dialogue between the sources, earlier literature and the position of a researcher, including experience one has had in relation to the objects of study (for instance, earlier understandings of particular concepts, layman's experience or stories about Russia/ Soviet Union, music, art etc.). My account of Soviet music politics – although influenced by my personal experiences – is not random or purely subjective, because it is based on sources which anyone can check and therefore dispute my interpretation if necessary. In historiography, the primary sources have a permanent right to veto, as Koselleck famously stated.[46] On the other hand, Markku Hyrkkänen aptly formulated how historians often do not come to think in their everyday work about how much they need to think, and they also do not come to imagine how much they have to imagine.[47] While primary sources have a privileged position in historical scholarship, it is only through thinking and the imagination of the researcher through which they become meaningful for the reader of today.

All in all, rather than vaguely rejecting everything 'postmodern' as incompatible with conceptual history, as sometimes seems to be the case,[48] an open dialogue with ideas concerning criticality, knowledge production, materiality and the subject developed within discourse studies would be highly beneficial for all the fields dealing with language, history and politics. The Bakhtinian metaphor of dialogue with the social, with the material and with the self/subjectivity offers a good theoretical starting point for this. Luckily, there are new dialogues emerging which aim to develop concepts for studying political languages of the past. I now take up this discussion and through that, introduce the analytical concepts and the methodological approach of this thesis.

1.3 Methodology and Analytical Concepts

The theoretical framework presented above already directs this work to see and treat political concepts in a certain way as well as guides the methodological choices. First of all, a major methodological choice already is that political concepts themselves – practically a narrow set of words – are a relevant way to describe the history of Soviet music politics. Moreover, the thesis implies that exactly this choice of concepts, namely *democracy, freedom, Europe-Russia, West-*

[46] Quoted in Marjanen 2018, 99.
[47] Hyrkkänen 2002, 218.
[48] Partti 2020.

East, people (narod), everyday life (bït) and *realism*, is particularly apt for studying tradition as part of revolutionary discourse in early Soviet music politics. Why concepts and why these concepts?

Conceptual history traditionally has focused on "basic," "defining" or "key" concepts that have had a central place in societies at different times and through which it is possible to track historical change.[49] These formulations have been criticized since then,[50] and I agree with the criticism: we cannot expect to know what was important for people in certain historical times and contexts or even assume that "everyone" had congruent (or any) view on the importance of certain political words. The starting point for choosing the concepts in this thesis was provided by earlier research literature, where the centrality of such concepts or ideas as *people* (*narod*), *Europe* (*Yevropa*), *freedom* (*svoboda*) and *bït* (*everyday life*) have been widely identified.[51] By analysing the uses and transformations of these concepts particularly in the context of Soviet music, this thesis contributes to the earlier studies on the intellectual history of Russia. Moreover, in the process of analysing the research data, I noticed connections between different discussions which allowed me to link particular concepts together and treat them under a broader topic – for instance intelligentsia in relation to the concept of people, or *bït* connected to later discussions on *realism*. Concepts do not live in isolation but within webs of meanings, and it is only through their position in this web, that they can be understood in the first place. While conceptual historical analysis needs to differentiate fine details in historical and political meanings of concepts, it needs to recognize their fluid nature too and – in the end – indefinable borders. Therefore the final choice of concepts selected for analysis, the connections made between them, and the interpretations of their roles and significance in history, necessarily reflects preferences originating from the researcher's subjective position.

It is thus clear that other concepts for analysis could have been chosen, some of them different, others closely related to the chosen ones (such as *republic* and *anarchism* in relation to *democracy* and *freedom*). The concepts here reflect the traditional research objects of conceptual history (*democracy* and *freedom*), as well as newer ideas such as thinking about geographical areas as historical and political concepts (*Europe* and *Russia*),[52] and some are very context-specific (*bït* – life or 'everyday life'). While different choices could have been made, I doubt that this would have in the end resulted in drastically different conclusions, however. The political concepts are here no more and no less than an entry point to a broader discursive field of Soviet music politics, and it would have been and is possible to enter the field from different conceptual entry points.

The concept of 'concept' has been a much-studied issue in linguistics, and much debated within conceptual history. Whereas in Saussurian linguistics the signifier (sound pattern) and the signified (concept) are indivisible, we read from

[49] See Koselleck 2011.
[50] E.g. Sarasin 2012, 103–105, for whom "any use of *Grundbegriffe* is bad metaphysics."
[51] See for instance Leatherbarrow & Offord 2010; Miller et al. 2011 & 2012; on *svoboda* in relation to the revolutionary year of 1917, Steinberg 2017; on *bït* Gutkin 1999.
[52] Cf. Mishkova & Trencsényi 2017.

Koselleck for instance that "[t]he concept is connected to a word, but is at the same time more than a word: a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word."[53] Or from Skinner that we can study and identify concepts before corresponding words for them appeared.[54] Without going into differences between the *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Anglophone conceptual history, part of which derives from different understanding of the concepts *Begriff* and *concept*,[55] I maintain that there is no need to preserve the status 'concept' only for certain words. Instead, the distinction can be made between political and non-political, or politicized and non-politicized concepts. This is an analytical differentiation, and also an empirical question, about which concepts in which cases are seen as political and which not. The main point is that focusing on particular concepts tells us something about the political discourse and the political and social context of the society and time being studied.

Close to conceptual history's view of political concepts as not possessing any stable or 'core' meaning, is Ernesto Laclau's conceptualization of "empty signifiers."[56] For Laclau, certain political concepts (such as 'order') can become empty signifiers if the concept's function is to oppose something (the perceived 'disorder') and this function is shared even by people of very different political persuasions, making the actual concept hard or impossible to define.[57] Such a case occurred in Russia in 1917, when politically differing groups found they had a common denominator in opposing the perceived 'unfreedom' of the tsarist regime. Therefore Chapter 2 begins with the analysis of Russia's revolutionary year from the perspective of the concept of freedom: how freedom was an empty signifier uniting people to oppose the tsarist regime, and how the struggle for the definitions of freedom marked political changes in Russia in 1917. In other parts of the thesis the analysis of the data is carried out by examining at the *historical dialogue* of concepts, and looking at how concepts are *recontextualized* within music and cultural discussions as well as analysing concepts and their use as *nexuses* in a broader discursive field.

In Palti's formulation, for Koselleck a concept "does not refer to any fixed object or set of principles that can be identified, but to its own history."[58] From

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[53] Koselleck 2004, 85.
[54] Skinner gives an example of this by referring to the 'originality' of John Milton (1608–1674), who recognized himself that in his *Paradise lost* he was doing "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." Skinner states that Milton recognized the concept of 'originality,' although the word itself did not exist in Milton's times. (Skinner 2002, 159.) This seems to presume some kind of 'authentic' idea of originality behind the term 'originality,' which from a linguistic perspective is hard to accept. 'Originality' might be an apt term for Milton's work, but it is nevertheless a retrospective designation not free from understandings of 'originality' as it became understood after Milton's times.
[55] See discussion on this in Marjanen 2018, 104–105.
[56] Laclau 2007[1996].
[57] ibid., 44. The term 'empty signifier' can be seen as a somewhat misleading, since no concept is devoid of meaning. The 'emptiness' in this case, however, refers more to the impossibility to to denote one particular meaning for a concept.
[58] Palti 2014, 390.

this principle stems what I call the *historical dialogue* of concepts: using a concept like freedom positions the concept as well as the situation into dialogue with earlier uses of the concepts, and it is through these earlier uses that we deem new uses of concepts right or wrong, apt or misguided. This does not mean that novel use of concepts is impossible – quite the contrary. It follows that every particular use *is* a novel use of a concept, though novelty might be minimal or it would not have any major impact on understanding the concept at a broader societal level. On the other hand, even a single use of a concept in a novel way can bring broader changes to political discourse if the speaker is influential. Concepts discussed in this thesis were not invented in the Soviet era, and their centrality to Soviet music history and to (cultural) political discourse highlights how discursive, artistic and institutional novelty was built in close dialogue with pre-revolutionary understanding of these concepts.

On the basis of Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva introduced the concept of intertextuality in the 1960s, and it has become a salient analytical concept of discourse studies.[59] The concept has gained new meanings from Kristeva's text analytical perspective of tracing links between texts into a broader understanding of re-semiosis: how texts, discourses and practices are relocated into new contexts and what kinds of new meanings they induce in the process. At the same time, the conceptual field has broadened with CDA's distinction between intertextuality and interdiscursivity, [60] mechanisms of de- and recontextualization of discourse-historical approach,[61] and entextualization.[62] The basic idea of Bakhtinian dialogue has been retained in these different approaches: when we use certain words or texts or portray certain activity in new contexts, previous meanings might change, some layers of meaning might disappear and new layers might emerge. Thus, while some cultural practices in the Soviet Union remained from the pre-revolutionary times, their meaning had to be re-negotiated in the new context. The same was true, however, for the means of this negotiation, namely concepts in this case. For instance, there was a strongly rooted practice to organize symphony concerts with particular programmes, and these practices had to be reframed with such important concepts like *democracy* or *people*. This dialogue influenced the understanding of both the practices and the concepts, which were used to describe these practices. From the perspective of intertextuality, I examine especially the processes of the *recontextualization* of both concepts and practices in the new political context and try to understand what resulted from this dialogue.

Adopting the concept of *nexus* in analysis of historical data offers interesting new possibilities to situate particular texts into the intersection of discourses, possibilities of action and historical actors.[63] Originally developed as a tool for ethnographic discourse analysis,[64] the concept with its synthesis of the discursive,

[59] See Kristeva & Moi 1986, 34–61.
[60] Fairclough 1992, 84–85.
[61] Reisigl & Wodak 2009, 90.
[62] Silverstein & Urban 1996.
[63] Ihalainen & Saarinen 2019; see also Halonen et al. 2015.
[64] Scollon & Scollon 2004.

material and the social offers a way to form a bridge between the political history of actions and conceptual history.[65] Central in Scollon's & Scollon's original approach was seeing meaning emerging from an intersection of discursive and social conditions through individuals, which they conceptualized as discourses in place, interaction order and historical body. A spatial and temporal dimension was added with the concept *discourse cycle*, which viewed how observed discourses "relate to past discourses and discourses which anticipate the future," as well as how they "extend geographically beyond the site of the current engagement, at the historical bodies of the social actors with their past experience and future aspirations."[66] From this perspective, we can see the usage of political and politicized concepts as nexuses which evoke discourse cycles from earlier use of these concepts, discourses and conditions which surround the utterance, as well as placing a particular historical actor in evoking these meanings. While this thesis' emphasis is on broader discursive changes of Soviet music politics, there are points where it is important to highlight the role of particular historical actors. Leonid Sabaneyev (1881–1968) is an example of such an individual, because his position as an active intellectual already before the revolutions, his close relationship with Alexander Scriabin, his visible role as a music critic in early Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, and his later emigration and publishing activity in Europe and USA, tie together many relevant discourses of the time. In Chapter 3, his role is discussed especially in relation to *Europe, Russia* and *West-East*, as he pursued the creation of new interpretations from previous understandings of these contexts within the new political circumstances.

1.4 Research Data

The primary sources used in the thesis can be divided into three entities. The first and at the same time the most central body of sources consists of heterogeneous group of journals and newspapers related to music and arts published between 1917 and 1930s. Secondly, I have made use of more general newspaper material, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* in particular, as questions of music and culture were widely discussed there as well. Thirdly, I have included material from political decision-making and correspondence of decision-makers with the help of document collections.

I have included approximately 25 journal and newspaper titles relating to music and art in the analysis. Many of these had a brief life span as in the unsteady circumstances of the revolutionary years only few issues of a new publication might have appeared. On the other hand, some publications established before the October Revolution survived for years in the Soviet context as well. I collected this material for the most part on a data collection visit to St. Petersburg in the summer of 2019 by going through these publications in the

[65] Ihalainen & Saarinen 2019, 14.
[66] Scollon & Scollon 2004, 14–15.

National Library of Russia and the Russian Institute of Art History (RIII, *Rossiyskiy institut istorii iskusstv*) and photographing relevant articles. In addition, some of these primary sources have been published online, either completely or partly.[67]

These journals and newspapers were often published as an organ of a certain artistic organization, state institution or a trade union, and the authors were generally professional artists, while occasionally politicians contributed to them as well. They were mainly for specialists in the field, or in the case of state institutions and trade unions, to inform both specialists and the broader public about the activities of these institutions. Publications directed at a broader audience might have had a circulation of tens of thousands, but by and large the publications analysed in this category had a circulation of a few thousand at best. While the publications were thus minor in size in this regard, they nevertheless were the main arena for professionals to discuss the role of music and art in the new political context. Because of that, I treat them as the main source for the thesis.

Secondly, I have included more general discussion on the pages of widely circulated newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* in particular, but also more minor newspapers, such as *Novaya zhizn'* (1917–1918). [68] The papers included permanent cultural sections, and sometimes in other sections issues related to culture were discussed more extensively by leading political figures. In contrast to the art journals, it was not possible to go through these daily papers issue by issue due to the sheer amount of material, but I was able to locate relevant news and articles with different approaches. First of all, sometimes these articles initiated a broader cultural discussion and the *Pravda* or *Izvestiya* articles were commented on in the art journals. After encountering this discussion in the art journals, it was possible to go back to the original article in the main newspapers. Secondly, earlier research literature had pointed out to several key texts published in the newspapers. Thirdly, as this material is available online, it was possible to use the search engine of the service provider EastView. It was possible to search for particular words or word combinations in the newspaper discussions, though this had its limitations. The search might leave out results if the quality of the scanned material is poor or the searched word is divided by two separate lines, while on the other hand searches with concepts like *narodnost'* include also search results with the same root word, such as the often used *narodnïy* (*national* or *people's,* such as in *Narodniy komissar, People's commissar*).

While these search results were therefore partial at best, they helped me to find new material from this data set as well. They did not, however, allow exploration of the data with the help of quantative methods, which are being rapidly developed within conceptual history as well as in other areas of digital humanities.[69] Problems identified more generally with the digitized sources in

[67] These include the very central *Sovetskaya muzika*, *Muzikal'naya nov'* and partly *Muzika i revolyutsiya*.
[68] *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, as well as the literary newspaper *Literaturnaya gazeta* are avaible online in http://www.eastview.com
[69] On conceptual history and digitized sources, see Marjanen 2018.

Russian studies[70] concern EastView as well: the material is in the form of scanned pages of differing quality and not in text format, which would make it easier for a computer to process. Furthermore, while EastView contains almost complete collections of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, the material is in separate files, which forces the user to rely on the database's own search engine and download only individual files and not complete data sets.

As the search results were 'unclean' in the sense that they did not contain all the occurrences of the searched word and included many unrelated results, the results had to be processed manually and it was not possible to draw any quantitative results from the frequency and possible changes in occurrence of certain concepts. Even if this had been possible, the results would have concerned only the newspapers and not the main source base of this thesis, because the music and art journals still remain mostly in undigitized form. When collecting these journals, it was not possible to construct whole corpuses from complete volumes but only articles relevant to the research topic at hand could be photographed. While digital methods will no doubt bring new possibilities for the studies on Russian and Soviet history, in this study – as in many others – the research data had to be collected from different source bases in order to create an overall picture of the Soviet music discussions. This meant that quantitative methods could not be applied since their basic requirement is a homogenous, machine-readable corpus of texts.[71]

Thirdly, I leaned on invaluable document collections on the arts, compiling decisions of the Communist Party, correspondence of political leaders and newspaper articles.[72] While this thesis would have benefited from further archival work, the discussion on journals and newspapers already constituted a sizeable amount of data and it was not possible within the limitations of the dissertation to extend the data collection into archives.

The amount of data found online is increasing all the time, and this includes Soviet publications on music and art. The problem with these sources is that the work, which transferring the printed material into the requirements of electronic form, is not systematic and is motivated by differing needs and interests of organizations and sometimes individuals. While every new source is welcome and the (often unpaid) work by these organizations and individuals deserves praise, the critical question is, on what premises this kind of material is compiled. Is the point to transfer whole archives to the internet or only selected parts of it? And if the latter is the case, on what grounds are the selections made and what is omitted? While I have used material found online as well, this has been used as an auxiliary method and when the authenticity of the sources was possible to

[70] Oiva 2021, 438–440.
[71] Kopotev et al. 2021.
[72] The document collections include Artizov & Naumov (1999), which concentrates on the arts. It has been partly translated into English by Marian Schwartz and supplemented with commentaries by Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko (2007). In addition, there is a collection related directly to music (Maksimenkov 2013) and to literature and press (Maksimenkov 2005).

verify.[73] The problems with online material have not disappeared, but at the same time they have become now – first after the outbreak of Covid and restrictions in travelling and then after Russia's attack on Ukraine – even more important than before.

I compiled all the photographed and downloaded articles into ATLAS.ti 9 software, which makes it possible to handle different kind of file formats as well as to organize and code both files and parts of texts.[74] The total number of articles, the length of which ranged from small news and ads to lengthy musicological articles, exceeded a thousand pieces. Naturally, not everything from these large data sets got equal analytical treatment. While going through the data, I coded important themes and concepts related to the articles, and after that, grouped and constructed data sets according to the conceptual focus of the thesis.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The chapters of the thesis are structured around a few key concepts in a partly chronological manner of representation. Chapter 2 with the focus on concepts *freedom* (*svoboda*) and *democracy* (*demokratiya*) begins with the events of the revolutionary year 1917 and then introduces the organizational structure of music life in the early Soviet years. While the timeline here extends already to the 1930s and breaks the chronological exposition, the organizational background is needed in order to understand the discussion in the following chapters. Besides introducing organizations and the NEP context, the chapter focuses on the concepts of *freedom* and *democracy* in music discussions in Sections 2.3 and 2.4.

Chapter 3 takes up the process of the re-conceptualization and re-structuring of geographical and cultural spaces of *Russia, Europe, East* and *West* by looking at how the 'European,' 'Western' and 'Russian' music traditions were negotiated in the Soviet context. This includes 19th century discourses of 'backward' Russia and the 'developed' West, the position of 'developed' art forms such as opera in revolutionary society as well as the case study of Leonid Sabaneyev's letters from his business trip/emigration published in the Soviet press. All this informs us on the preservation of and the modifications to pre-revolutionary understandings of Russia's place and role next to/as part of Europe. The chapter also points out transnational discourses of modernity, and the dialogical roles of Europe and Russia in them.

In Chapter 4, the focus is on *people* (*narod*). A particularly important concept for the Soviet political discussion, it also strongly influenced the discussion on music and music tradition. The chapter begins by examining the dialogue with the 19th century understandings of the concept especially in relation to the *narodnik* tradition and the distinction between *people* and *intelligentsia*, that

[73] One of the great achievements is the complete archive of the journal *Sovetskaya muzïka* (first publication in 1933, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the journal continued with the name *Muzïkal'naya akademiya*) in https://mus.academy/
[74] www.atlasti.com

survived well into Soviet times, and then analyses the role of the folk music tradition as well as the nationality politics of the Soviet Union. Section 4.3 looks at a peculiar revival of the 19th century concept of *narodnost'* in Soviet art and music discussion in the 1930s. The chapter highlights the *longue dureé* history of the concept of *narod* in its specific Russian context and views its Soviet understanding in relation to this pre-revolutionary history.

Lastly, Chapter 5 aims for a conceptual contextualisation of socialist realism, which became the way to conceptualize Soviet art policy in 1934. While socialist realism as a term was not used before the 1930s, the ideas it involved were discussed through other concepts throughout the 1920s. One such discussion was around the concept *bït,* often translated as 'everyday life' or 'mode of life' – the focus of Section 5.1. Section 5.2 looks more closely at the concept of *realizm* (*realism*), which naturally has a long art historical tradition including in music. By looking at how *realism* was portrayed against other historical artistic currents and how musical realism was a constant feature of Soviet music discussion, the chapter describes how the discussions led to socialist realism and how it was taken up in the music political discussions.

2 FREEDOM – DEMOCRACY

This chapter approaches the Soviet music political discussion from the perspective of two major concepts of 20th century political discourse, *freedom* (*svoboda*) and *democracy* (*demokratiya*). It starts with the events of the February Revolution of 1917, which was strongly marked by the concept of *freedom*, and then follows the different interpretations given to freedom and democracy throughout the year. Central in this discussion was the Bolshevik alternative for interpreting these concepts, and from the perspective of this thesis, reactions of artistic journals to the revolutionary events. This set up the basis for later development of the relationship between the artists, institutions and political power. Section 2.2 discusses the formation of Soviet institutions around art and culture, whereas Sections 2.3 and 2.4 engage with the music discussion from the perspective of freedom and democracy and sees how the music of the past was reframed by the particular Soviet interpretation of these political concepts.

2.1 Two Revolutions – Multiple Freedoms: Reactions of the Art World to the Revolutionary Events of 1917

The year 1917 is no doubt the most extensively researched year in Russian history, and while it is possible to criticize the emphasis placed on this one year, it continues to structure our thinking of Russian and more broadly world history.[75] More importantly, however, the events of the year 1917 played an essential role in the self-perception of the Soviet state, as the political legitimation of the Bolshevik party was constructed in relation to the necessity of the October Revolution. While not a clear-cut boundary, 1917 in Russia was a new reference-

[75] The centrality of 1917 was further emphasized few years back, as the 100-year anniversary saw numerous new books and thematic issues, adding to the already extensive research literature on the topic. Out of these 'anniversary publications,' books by Engelstein (2018) and Steinberg (2017) have been central sources for this part of the thesis.

point in relation to which the later revolutionary process in society, including in music and culture, was portrayed.[76]

From the perspective of political concepts, a closer inspection of the year 1917 is interesting, because while the political discourse changes all the time at a slower or quicker pace, it no doubt faces more intense redefining as the political structures turn into new ones. In this restructuring, some concepts like 'freedom' (*svoboda*) prevail no matter the political position of the speaker, forcing actors to conceptualize their desirable mode of action through the shared words. Freedom is in the center of this chapter, because indeed it was the concept in Russia in 1917 behind which everyone claimed to stand and which everyone pursued to interpret from their own perspective in order to steer the political changes into a desirable direction from their point of view. The second conceptual focus of this chapter, *democracy* (*demokratiya*), was closely tied to understanding political freedom, and the discussion of freedom and democracy in 1917 laid ground for later cultural political discourse as well.

In order to trace 'freedom' in art political discussions of 1917 and to demonstrate how the changes in the interpretations of freedom were part of the wider political changes, I employ Ernesto Laclau's idea of "empty signifiers."[77] An empty signifier according to Laclau is an absence, a lack of something. For instance, the vague concept of 'order' can be defined in multiple ways (there are multiple ways to realize 'order' in society) but in case of perceived 'disorder' in society, different political actors can find common ground by demanding 'order' – change in the current situation but with an only apparent unity about what would be the right outcome of the change.[78] Similarly, before the February Revolution there was a broad consensus about the tsarist autocracy as being 'unfree,' and thus the concept 'freedom' (*svoboda*) was an empty signifier, around which different political forces could gather, including not only striking workers, but also intelligentsia, peasants and the upholders of the regime – the military forces. After achieving this 'freedom,' however, it became crucial and politically charged to decide which would be the new regime to realize this desired 'freedom' and bring 'democracy.' Discussions about the roles and significance of different art institutions followed this broader political debate, which is why these concepts serve as an appropriate entry point into the cultural political discourse of the time.

[76] Michael David-Fox (2017) has for instance suggested a "life-cycle" thinking on the Russian Revolution, where the time-span of the revolution is defined from the perspective of the research objective, so that the revolution could be understood extended for example from 1914 to 1922 or from 1905 to 1939.
[77] Laclau 2007[1996], 36–46.
[78] Laclau 2007[1996], 44.

2.1.1 The February Revolution

A series of strikes and demonstrations beginning on 23 February 1917,[79] which led a week later to the abdication of Nicholas II and the instalment of the Provisional Government as the governing body, are known as the February Revolution. The Revolution had gathered widespread support due to the catastrophic economic situation, the ongoing First World War and the unpopularity of the scandal-filled tsarist court, and soon after the demonstrations had begun, unsatisfied army troops started to join the demonstrators. The old regime lost control of the situation, and Nicholas II saw no other choice than to step aside and pass the crown to his brother, Mikhail Aleksandrovich. The brother refused, ending 300 years of Romanov rule in Russia.[80]

A shared understanding by historians of the atmosphere of the February Revolution is a strongly experienced liberation and even ecstasy in front of a substantial and irreversible change in the society. Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii in their book on symbolic sides of the Russian revolutions emphasize the roles of symbols for the crowds, including moments when political life merged with even theatre-like performances – such as rallying around red flags, singing revolutionary songs and creating new rituals.[81] This merging of the aesthetic or artistic together with the political created opportunities for leaders to communicate the emotional side of the revolutions. This was one factor behind the popularity of the most important politician of the time, Alexander Kerensky, who was famous for his inspiring and feverish speeches. A sense of extraordinary times and the artistic quality of events is visible also in contemporary commentaries:

> Art of revolutionary epochs merging with life is always somewhat crude, straightforward, clear. The life of revolutionary epochs merging with art is always elevated, heroic, imbued with idealism. Art gives its idealism to life, life gives its real love (*real'nuyu lyubov'*) to art. Because of this, the art of revolutionary epochs is seldom significant. Because of this, vice versa, the life of revolutionary epochs is always an intoxicating poem, a miracle of transformation and creative energy.[82]

When reading contemporary comments, one notes the widely shared support for the February Revolution not only among the workers and soldiers, but also among artists. In the leading theatre journal of the time, *Teatr i iskusstvo* (*Theatre and art*), the editorial of the first published number after the beginning of the strikes greeted the Revolution with enthusiasm:

> The events, which have taken place in the past two weeks, are so exceptional and tremendous, that we contemporaries can hardly give a clear account of all that has

[79] 8 March 1917 in the Gregorian calendar. The dates given in this section are according to the old (Julian) style calendar, which was in force in Russia until February 1918. The degree from January 1918 by the Sovnarkom made the transfer from Julian to Gregorian calendar, and 31 January 1918 was followed by 14 February 1918 in Soviet Russia.
[80] Engelstein 2018, 103–130; Steinberg 2017, 69–70.
[81] Figes & Kolonitskii 1999.
[82] Homo novus: Zametki. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 13–14, 234.

> happened. [- -] In front of the breadth (*pered razmakhom*) of the Russian revolution, the great English and French revolutions turn pale.[83]

Notable in the attitude of *Teatr i iskusstvo* was that the journal could hardly be accounted as 'progressive' according to later, socialist standards.[84] Similarly, the editorial of a rather unpolitical journal *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* (*The Russian Musical Journal*) called 27 February 1917 as "the day of joy."[85] But the journals had reasons to accept the ousting of the Tsar, namely censorship and the role that the Church had played in society. Indeed, the journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* showed not only bafflement in front of turbulent events, but had its demands ready for the new power:

> The revolution should bring with itself to the theatre: 1) Liberation from all kinds of constraints of censorship, which has forced either cowardly concealment of one's thoughts or the rejection of plans to portray many sides of life. [- -] 2) Theatre should be liberated from clerical and church-related limitations in relation to fasting and the eves of the twelve great Feasts. [- -] Who takes it as a sin to go to the theatre during the fast – and will not go. [- -] 3) Theatre should receive the right and legal capacity defined by the law and be liberated from the system of decisions by political power, [which has not been] based on anything definitive and [has been] completely arbitrary.[86]

After the February Revolution, the journal was looking for a more clearly marked autonomic position for theatre. One recurring key concept here was *osvobozhdeniye* ('liberation' or 'setting free'), deriving from the word *svoboda* – freedom. As Mark Steinberg has noted, *svoboda* was the key term for the February Revolution,[87] and the journal embraced the concept wholeheartedly. And not only in texts, but visually as well, as can be seen from this cover image from the issue few weeks later. In the cover, where there was usually a portrait of a well-known actor, an "Allegory of freedom (*svoboda*)" appeared:

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[83] Velikaya russkaya revolyutsiya i teatr [The great Russian revolution and theatre]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 10–11, 188–189.

[84] The journal appeared between 1897 and 1918 with Aleksandr Rafailovich Kugel' (pseudonym *Homo novus*) as its chief editor. The journal had a firm stand against symbolistic and decadent experimental theatre of the time, hailing for realist art.

[85] *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* 1917, No. 10, 225–225. Interestingly, the journal called the old order as "never harsh, but [which had become] powerless" (*starïy – nekogda gronïy, no stavshiy bessil'nïm – stroy*). On 27 February 1917, Duma members refused to obey Tsar's order of dissolving the Duma and formed the Provisional Committee to replace the old cabinet of ministers.

[86] Velikaya russkaya revolyutsiya i teatr [The great Russian revolution and theatre]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 10–11, 188–189; also B. Nikonov: Novaya sistema nadzora. *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3395, 11–12.

[87] Steinberg 2017, 16. The pervasiveness of the concept is visible for instance in the war loan campaign of the Provisional Government, which was dubbed as "Freedom loan (*Zayom svobodi*)" in the propaganda.

"Freedom". (Allegorical image). *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 13–14.

This is illustrative of the way freedom was taken up right after the February Revolution. It was clearly marked as 'liberation from' (*osvobozhdeniye ot*) the earlier 'unfree' tsarist government towards 'freedom' in a very abstract and idealized sense, best captured not with clear political objectives but visually by familiar metaphors: a female figure with a determined look holding a flag in a headwind.

The concept of freedom was used not only in this kind of abstract and highly idealized form, however. Right after the aforementioned editorial, which hailed the liberation of theatre, an unsigned report from events in Petrograd gave the caution that "We cannot but advice the theatres to use freedom with due care, avoiding its misuse."[88] It is not clear from the text what exactly this possible "misuse of freedom" could be, but the message is that the theatres should continue to work in an orderly fashion, even if events surrounding it might not do so. B. Nikonov on the other hand related the idea of 'limited' freedom to the programme of the theatres: the writer also greeted the abolition of tsarist censorship which made the theatre "[f]ree in its aspirations towards genuine (*istinnoy*) artistic beauty." But the theatre should not be free "in its 'aspirations' of pornography, impudence and the spoiling of good manners."[89]

[88] Teatr v revolyutsionnïye dni. Petrograd. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 10–11, 190.
[89] B. Nikonov: Novaya sistema nadzora [New system of supervision]. *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3395, 11–12.; also B. Nikonov: "Blagodat'" ["Blessing"]. *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3415, 8.

For many representatives of the cultural elite, loosening the control of the established institution was a positive change, but it came with the fear of lowering the quality or 'decency' of the performances. These writers looked with contempt as the erotic-coloured stories (especially about the Romanov family and Rasputin), which had earlier circulated orally or only in limited copies, rushed into censor-free markets after the February Revolution. These stories were highly marketable in the new situation, but besides attracting wide audiences, they raised much criticism.[90] Commentators were doubtful how much 'freedom' there should be in a society, as it conflicted with the views of 'uncultured masses' not ready for this freedom:

> One is seized with joyful vigour at the thought of the glorious offensive towards the enemy of humanity, which has already long time ago abandoned lawful and acceptable means of war. And at the same time,—one feels a pinch in the heart due to internal disorder, discord, which develops because of the unculturedness (*nekul'turnosti*) of society's broad lower stratum.[91]

On the other hand, not everyone accepted this view of 'uncultured' masses. For example Fyodor Sologub in his text "Protection of art" criticized the way the "protectors of art" depicted "simple people [- -] as some kind of bloodthirsty and wild bigots" from whom the artworks need to be protected. Much more profound restructuring of state-protected institutions was needed if real change and true freedom was to be achieved:

> Protecting theatres, museums, statues and artwork more generally with burdensome state resources is necessary only for the vanity of the few people who wish for it and are able to make a career out of it. [- -] herds of officials will write unnecessary papers and herds of young women will rewrite these institutional creations with typewriters and there will be plenty of superfluous but well-paid work. After this it will be even worse: the Ministry of Art will begin to manage tastes, promote talents, patronize one course and not patronize other. It will be exactly the same as in the time of the old regime, exactly the same academicism, only more detrimental, because it will be supported by the high moral authority of a free regime, although no freedom of any kind will be realized in it.[92]

This commentary shows, how problematic a concept like 'freedom' could be, as any kind of change (or in this case no change at all) could be legitimized by it. It is a prime example of a vague key political concept structuring the political discourse as defined in conceptual history. A shared understanding of achieved freedom after the February Revolution hid behind it a complexity of differing political ideas on what should happen after the achieved liberation.

Closely tied to the concept of 'freedom' were the concepts of 'democracy' (*demokratiya*) and 'republic' (*respublika*), which also clearly marked tsarist autocracy as 'undemocratic' and directed the political action during the revolution with promises of building a republic, a 'democratic' regime. In reality, soon after the successful February Revolution it was clear that there were multiple different understandings of 'freedom' as the socialists and

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[90] Figes & Kolonitskii 1999, 11–12.
[91] Veritasov: Mïsli o muzïkal'noy zhizni v period revolyutsii [Thoughts on musical life in the period of revolution]. *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* 1917, No. 25–26, 418–419.
[92] F. Sologub: Okhrana iskusstv. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 16, 259–260.

constitutionalists (as well as many groupings between and within these broad groups) viewed the concept rather differently – while for many citizens democracy and republic were completely unfamiliar concepts.[93]

Echoing Laclau's[94] idea of empty signifiers we can say that first, it was possible for concepts like 'freedom' and 'democracy' to gather different sides to oppose the tsarist regime because autocracy could be described convincingly as 'unfree' and 'undemocratic' (the conservative rule of Nicholas II did not even pretend to be or desire to be a 'free' and 'democratic' government). Secondly, these concepts were empty in the sense that they did not project any clear alternative to the 'unfree' society. As long as there was no need to decide on an alternative regime, different sides could gather to oppose the shared opponent, and so even state-dependent actors such as theatres could grab the flag of revolution, expecting a more independent or even autonomic position – indeed, 'freedom' from their perspective – for their future. Much more controversial was the process of filling the emptiness of these concepts, i.e. building a regime, which would meet the various understandings of 'freedom' and 'democracy.' This explains why not only the artistic world but the whole society split up much more deeply during the next Revolution.

2.1.2 Towards the October

Laclau describes the "filling" of empty signifiers as a hegemonic process.[95] To seize the concept of 'freedom' and arriving at one's own understanding and view of how 'freedom' will be achieved, is to gain a hegemonic position. Similarly in conceptual history political concepts are viewed as arenas of political battle, where different sides strive to seize the meaning of widely shared ambiguous concepts, so that striving for 'democracy' for instance becomes a realization of a particular political program.[96]

When 'freedom' was achieved after the February Revolution, it indeed became crucial to decide what this freedom actually is and what kind of political regime would be the best for realizing it. The Provisional Government gathered together from the participants of the State Duma was not in itself an answer to this. There had been no time for the parliamentary system to gain an independent position in its mere 11 years of existence under tsarist rule still holding on to his autocratic position and, moreover, the franchise system was heavily biased favouring the propertied classes, making the mandate of the Duma members questionable. The role of the Provisional Government was to hold power only temporarily and in the end to make itself unnecessary by organizing free

[93] Thus, there were several statements, which blended the ideas of republicanism and monarchism, such as "We need a democracy with a good tsar." (Figes & Kolonitskii 1999, 72); Boris Kolonitskii suggests that one reason for this could be the proximity and inseparability in people's minds of the concepts of *gosudarstvo* (state) and *tsarstvo* (kingdom/tsardom) (Kolonitskii 1998, 104). The Russian word for state (*gosudarstvo*) stems from the word *gosudar'* (ruler/sovereign).
[94] Laclau 2007[1996].
[95] Laclau 2007[1996], 44.
[96] Koselleck 2004, 75–92.

elections for the Constitutional Assembly, where the structure of the new political order would be agreed upon.

To do this in the situation Russia found itself in in 1917 and hold on to popular support at the same time was not easy. Russia was a country in the middle of the world war, and the Provisional Government did not want to break the country's commitments to its allies by withdrawing from the war. Yet the war and its effects on the country were one of the main, if not the most important reasons why the Tsar had been forced to abdicate. Increasingly it seemed that the new government was not ready to bring in the change demanded in the Revolution. Aware of its weak mandate, the Provisional Government shared power with the once again legalized workers' soviets, creating a situation of so-called dual power.[97] Particularly in Petrograd the soviets gained support quickly, and here alternative understandings of 'freedom' took root at the time when for many 'parliamentary freedom' seemed only to continue the unpopular political course of the tsarist Russia. It was in the end the Petrograd Soviet where the Bolsheviks were able to seize power, and through which the outcome of the revolutionary year 1917 was decided.

The evaporation of revolutionary hope after the February Revolution was as swift within the leading art journals as it was in the rest of the society. The first sign of this was the criticism aimed at "indecent" plays, as noted above, but much more profound pessimism towards any change was visible from the summer onwards. In June the *Obozrenie teatrov* (*Theatre review*) editorial noted the loss of revolutionary pathos, stating how "[t]he pathos has died, the belief has died, the religion of liberation and the fight for freedom have died."[98] It is noteworthy how early on after the February Revolution different sides of society lost their positive attitude towards the revolution – not in the sense that they regretted it, but in the sense that it did not seem to change things enough, leaving all sides in some kind of limbo and waiting for further changes. This no doubt helped the Bolsheviks come to power because even those not supporting the Bolshevik coup were not ready to oppose it in the name of the current situation.[99] All that was left were future prospects, the Constitutional Assembly most importantly, but nothing substantial – nothing worth fighting for – in the current situation.

The vague situation with political authority in the country was reflected in the discussions about art institutions as well. There was a need to reorganize the old imperial art institutions, such as the very influential Imperial Russian Musical Society and its conservatories, and at first eyes were turned to the State Duma and its Provisional Government: its ministries should take control in the new

[97] Steinberg (2017, 71) notes that the dual power in Petrograd was only the most visible aspect of the political system in the country: the formation of different kinds of soviets and councils to challenge the established order was a prominent feature within the army, schools and workplaces all over the country.
[98] B. Nikonov: Bez pafosa. *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3451, 7–8.
[99] See Wade (2004, 234) who notes that the actual coup in October was almost bloodless probably because neither the few defenders of the Provisional Government nor the armed revolutionaries saw any sense to start shooting: "no one was eager to die for the Provisional Government."

situation and guarantee autonomy for the state institutions.[100] Some institutions indeed gained autonomic position, but this did not necessarily make the institutions view the Government as the legitimate power in the country. In the spring of 1917, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow announced that in protest against administrative orders from Petrograd (still the capital of the country), which it saw hindering its autonomy, the Theatre would go on strike for one day. It is noticeable that the Bolshoi viewed "the right to decide the question of state theatres' future existence to belong to the constitutional assembly"[101] – that is, not to the current government or the soviets, but the new body not yet in place. In a sense, Constitutional Assembly became an empty signifier, replacing 'freedom,' which after the February Revolution had been achieved. In order to oppose the current situation, one needed some kind of conceptual backing, and the Constitutional Assembly – though much more concrete than vague 'freedom' – came to fill this void. Not all agreed with the view of Bolshoi, and an article titled *Nerazberikha* (*Mess*) made the comment that it seemed that there was not even dual power in the theatres, but "multi power or, even more correctly, no power" and ended ironically with the proverb: "each fellow goes his own way."[102] Only a few months after the February Revolution, all eyes were already fixed on the Constitutional Assembly, and the legitimacy of the Provisional Government stood on a very unfirm footing.

As political power was shared with the Petrograd Soviet, its position to interpret the 'freedom' of the February Revolution was strong as well. The Petrograd Soviet with a majority of Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and Mensheviks viewed the February Revolution as a necessary "bourgeois-liberal" revolution and the time after that as a transition period, when civil rights and democracy would be established in Russia. The role of the soviets from this perspective was not to take over the country – Russia was thought to be far from ready to jump into a socialist revolution – but to balance the power of the Provisional Government and make sure that it would not start to slip from its historical task:

> An aristocratic or plutocratic, oligarchical republic is where the highest authority is nationalized only into the hands of a few landowners or holders of capital [- -] If the Provisional Government would stay in power alone, such an oligarchical republic would occur also in Russia, as long as the monarchy hated by the workers would not be restored.[103]

The soviets viewed 'democracy' or 'republic' strongly from the point of view of the class struggle. The aforementioned writer highlighted that the universal, direct, equal and secret voting system of a representative republic would not

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[100] K Glavnoy Direktsii bïvshago imperatorskogo Russkogo Muzïkal'nogo Obshchestva. *Russkaya muzïkal'naya gazeta* 1917, No. 11–12, 257–259.
[101] *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* 1917, No. 19–20, 380–381.
[102] "Vsyak molodets na svoy obrazets." Nerazberikha. *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3411–3412, 9; Also Nikolay Malkov described the situation in the Mariinski Theater in September 1917 as worse than it was before the February Revolution: "Before there was a poor master. Now it [Mariinski Theater] does not have any kind of master." N. Malkov: Nash "gosudarstvennïy" opernïy teatr [Our "state" opera theater]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 40, 689–690.
[103] Respublika. *Izvestiya* 15 March 1917, 2–3.

automatically lead to a democratic republic, if "the majority of the members of the supreme representative assembly would turn out to be representatives of the ruling classes, and not representatives of workers and peasants."[104] Another anonymous writer stated that a democratic republic "makes the working people more prosperous, raises the material well-being of peasants and workers [- -] but will not wipe out poverty, eradicate man's dependence on another man, nor turn people into brothers." This will be achieved only in socialism, which, however, cannot be established directly: "Its preparation [is] a slow and difficult thing."[105]

As Boris Kolonitskii has brought up, the understanding that 'democracy' related to 'common people' (*narod*) was widely shared in Russia in 1917: interpretations which highlighted democracy covering all the social classes, the rich and the poor, were very few. Accordingly, democracy was not opposed to concept like 'dictatorship' or 'police state,' but to concepts like 'privileged elements' (*tsenzovïye elementi*), 'ruling classes' (*pravyashchïye klassi*) and the 'bourgeoisie' (*burzhuaziya*).[106] This understanding of the new rule was tightly intertwined with the concept of 'freedom,' which no one opposed as a concept, but which was defined from the class viewpoint especially by the soviets:

> Revolution can be saved only when democracy is standing as an unconquerable wall behind it – workers, peasants and soldiers of Russia. [- -] while opening unlimited possibilities, revolution has yet given little to the broad masses of people, such, which they could feel with their own hands, as a direct improvement to their position. Revolution has not yet given peace to soldiers, not bread to workers, not land to peasants. We know very well, that all this it will give to them, if we are able to maintain and strengthen the conquered freedom (*zavoyovannuyu svobodu*).[107]

This text, which hails for the "unconquerable wall of democracy" (not all the citizens, but workers, peasants and soldiers) was not directed against the Provisional Government, but the propertied classes. A different kind of 'democracy' than the one including all the citizens with equal suffrage is promoted, and "maintaining and strengthening the conquered freedom" and "saving the Revolution" could happen only by making sure that workers, peasants and soldiers will not lose ground in relation to the propertied classes.[108]

Although the soviets strongly represented workers, peasants and soldiers, they were willing to co-operate with the Provisional Government. This raised growing dissatisfaction and created demands for a more radical change. Even though the Bolsheviks were a relatively minor socialist faction at the beginning of 1917, it was the only party which was not willing to co-operate with the

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[104] Ibid. 2–3.
[105] Chto takoye demokraticheskaya respublika [What is democratic republic]. *Izvestiya* 25 March 1917, 2.
[106] Kolonitskii 1998, 100.
[107] C narodom ili protiv naroda? [With the people or against the people?] *Izvestija* 14 July 1917, 2–3.
[108] For a comparative perspective on different understandings of 'democracy' in Europe during the time, see Ihalainen (2017). Ihalainen sees a difference in thinking and actions of many European socialists, who were willing to govern together with the "bourgeoisie" parties in comparison to the Russian socialists, especially the Bolsheviks, for whom the dividing line between left and right was insurmountable.

'bourgeois' government.[109] When other socialist parties had one leg in the government and another in the soviets, maintaining the system of dual power, the Bolsheviks were ready to abolish the Duma and the Provisional Government. From the summer onwards their slogan "All power to the soviets" was seen more and more in the demonstrations, and in July an armed revolt of soldiers, sailors and workers openly challenged the leaders of the soviets to quit working with the government and take full control of the country. Not without reason Bolsheviks were blamed for the events, and several hundred Bolsheviks were arrested, including Trotsky, and Lenin had to go underground.[110] In August, the army commander Lev Kornilov attempted a military coup and Kerensky was forced to ask for the Bolsheviks' help to counter the uprising. After this, Kerensky's legitimacy evaporated decisively.[111] In a commentary, Platon Kerzhentsev turned the conceptual bundle of democracy-parliament-soviets into an even more complicated curve:

> Democratic parliament or—more accurately the Soviets in a wider composition—is required at the moment not only for a correct and energetic political action of a united democracy, but also as a systematic preparation for a technical apparatus on an all-Russia scale, which could not only advance economic and political politics locally, but also be constantly prepared to act as an organ to fight the counter-revolution.[112]

Understanding 'democracy' as meaning only a certain part of the population had pervaded political discussion in Russia for the whole year, but here Kerzhentsev included the concept of parliament in the discussion. For Kerzhentsev a democratic parliament is not the State Duma, but a coalition of left parties working through the soviets. As the Provisional Government had not been able to handle the Kornilov affair on its own, a unity of soviets was needed to prevent the possible future counter-revolution.[113] This interpretation already anticipated a situation where the "democratic parliament" (the soviets) would be "forced" to seize governmental functions related to security from the State Duma in order to fight counter-revolution. This would basically mean transferring the monopoly of violence from the parliament to the soviets – in Kerzhentsev's interpretation the "democratic parliament" – and a de facto new government.

The transfer of power from the Duma to the soviets happened less than two months later. In the autumn, as the Bolsheviks had become the strongest party in the Petrograd Soviet, it decided to launch a secret operation on the night of 24–25 October to take over strategic infrastructure of Petrograd and on 25 October to announce to the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets convening that day

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[109] E.g. Steinberg 2017, 74.
[110] It is unclear to what extent the uprising was initiated or controlled by the Bolsheviks, whether the leaders had plans beforehand, were there only rank-and-file members involved without coordination with the leaders, or if the events were initiated for some other reason and the Bolsheviks just jumped along as the things evolved.
[111] See for instance Smith 2004; Wade 2004.
[112] V. Kerzhentsev: "Demokraticheskiy parlament." *Svobodnaya zhizn'* 3 September 1917, 1.
[113] Platon Kerzhentsev was an influential Bolshevik, but the text was published in a relatively moderate socialist newspaper, which often criticized the hard line of Bolsheviks. The paper was actually *Novaya zhizn'* (*New life*), but as it was temporarily banned, it appeared under the name *Svobodnaya zhizn'* (*Free life*).

that a coup was underway. Only the left faction of the SRs supported the Bolsheviks' actions, and the Mensheviks and the right SRs walked out of the Congress. Thus, in comparison to the February Revolution, support for the October Revolution was not wide – even among socialists.[114] It is true that Kerensky's government had gathered wide-ranging opposition, but there were considerable disagreements on how to change the situation. Support to wait for the elections of the Constituent Assembly was strong – in fact so strong that the Bolsheviks despite the coup had to allow the elections and let the Constituent Assembly convene. As the Bolsheviks did not get a majority in the Assembly, they dissolved it when it convened for the first time in January 1918.[115] Unlike in the February Revolution, there was not a widely shared sense of living in an 'unfree' society and even though criticism of the current situation before the October Revolution was strong, the Bolsheviks' plan to change the situation – their version of 'freedom' – did not gather as wide support as the February Revolution.

For many working in the art world, the Bolsheviks indeed represented the opposite of 'freedom.' If the February Revolution was greeted with enthusiasm even by the state theatres, quite the opposite could be said about reactions to the October Revolution. During 1917, the Bolsheviks were not the most popular political force in the ranks of established cultural and musical figures,[116] and after the October Revolution the journal *Theatre and art* described the attitude of the new regime towards theatres as "coarse, uncultured, [and] to be blunt, ignorant." The disasters in Russia were "innumerable [out of which] one of the most substantial is devastation and plundering of culture" and the socialist paradise promised by the Revolution is nowhere to be seen, but "our past, great and powerful Russia" is no more.[117]

The disruption to the work of art institutions was much more substantial after the October than the February Revolution. Rumours of the Bolshevik uprising had started to circulate in Petrograd already a few weeks before the Revolution, disturbing ticket sales in the theatres. When the Second Congress of

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[114] Daring operation of the Bolsheviks was not supported even all the members of the party: Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinovyev were against the coup, and Trotsky disagreed with Lenin on the timing of the operation. Trotsky saw it important not to start armed insurrection before the Congress, so that the transform of power could be first legitimized with the decision by the Congress and armed action would be launched only after this in order to make it seem like "defending the democracy." Although the Bolsheviks formed the majority with the left SRs and such a decision could have been pushed through in the Congress, Lenin supported quick action in order to wipe out the possibility that the Congress would support some kind of coalition government – whether together with the liberals or even with other socialists, both of which did not fit into Lenin's plans. An all-socialist coalition government would have possibly gained support also among more moderate Bolsheviks. (See Wade 2004.)

[115] See Protasov 2004.

[116] See for instance the text from July 1917 by pseudonym Veritasov [Korganov]: "If one of such *isms,* the most cowardly, but which has also become the most impudent (bolshevism [--]) plays the role of the savior of the Fatherland, then that means only, that the organism of the state is seriously ill…" Veritasov: Mïsli o muzïkal'noy zhizni v period revolyutsii. *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* 1917, No. 25–26, 417–421.

[117] Editorials in *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917 nos. 42; 44–46 & 47.

Soviets assembled on 25 October, many theatres in Petrograd had already ceased working due to "a catastrophic drop in [ticket] sales."[118] In Moscow, theatres did not work between 28 October and 7 November[119] – a notion which contrasts with the popular notion of the theatre world continuing its daily life almost uninterrupted by the revolutionary events.[120] Already after the February Revolution there had been an increasing number of announcements by artists looking for work, but after the October Revolution, even entire theatre buildings were put up for sale.[121]

However, the relationship between the musical intelligentsia and Bolshevik rule turned out to be more complex than outright opposition of the former towards the latter. Although there was downright hostility towards the new regime and a substantial part of the musical elite emigrated after the October Revolution, many saw the need to maintain and protect cultural institutions and practices. At the same time, some saw a genuine possibility to transform these practices and create a new culture to replace pre-revolutionary cultural life which many saw as at least partly obsolete. It is noteworthy that the outcome of the February Revolution had been in terms of cultural life a disappointment for many because it did not fundamentally seem to change anything – and not only the most radical avant-gardists but also representatives of the cultural establishment seemed to have thought so.[122]

Despite the tense relationship between the Bolsheviks and a large part of the cultural intelligentsia, they had quite a lot in common. As has been pointed out, the two had a common history: the cultural elite's criticism of tsarist autocracy found some resonance in the second half of the 19th century in socialism and Marxism, and the Bolshevik leaders did not come from the proletariat but were part of the educated and European-minded elite.[123] Both conceived their status as different from the *narod* or the 'common people,' which for both was at a rather low phase of development and the target of their actions. The Bolsheviks saw *narod* being underdeveloped in economic and political terms (the people were not 'politically conscious'), and the intelligentsia saw *narod* as

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[118] A report on events from the perspective of theaters: Sobïtiya i teatrï. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 44–46, 762–763.
[119] ibid.
[120] The most famous example are the memoirs of Fyodor Shalyapin, according to which the shots from the cruiser Aurora only briefly interrupted the performance of *Don Carlos*. The performance continued after a short pause.
[121] For instance in the journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* appeared this kind of announcement in mid-November. "Theater for sale, large (500 seats), well equipped, electric lighting, equipment also for cinematography; theater [building] completely of timber, warm. Around the theatre large **garden and mansion** with all services and water pipes. Land 250 square fathoms. Gross yield for summer season 1917 was 28 thousand for 26 performances." (*Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 44–46.)
[122] See Homo novus: Zametki. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 13–14, 233–235; N. Malkov: Nash "gosudarstvennïi" opernÿi teatr. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 40, 689–690.
[123] E.g. Fitzpatrick 1992, 4–5.

underdeveloped in cultural terms (the people was *nekul'turnïy*).[124] The need for 'developing,' 'educating,' or 'enlightening'[125] the people was a common mission for both the Bolsheviks and the intelligentsia even though the objectives were different. 'Democracy,' if understood in terms of equal suffrage, was an outrage for many of the representatives of both elites, since *narod* was far from being considered ready to use political power.

There was already a tradition of different cultural enlightenment projects among the intelligentsia. Mili Balakirev had opened up a "people's music school" in 1862, and the second half of the 19th century saw also the establihment of several "people's houses.".[126] By the beginning of the First World War more than two hundred people's houses had been established, offering places for workers to gather together, read and learn to read, hear lectures as well as experience cultural programme, including concerts. The ideological subtext of their founders might have not always matched the increasingly class-conscious mindset of some of the houses' working-class visitors, but, as Adele Lindenmeyr demonstrates, this was secondary to the shared ethos of enlightenment and, even more importantly, to the shared perceived enemy in the form of the repressive Imperial state.[127] While the history of these houses was criticized in the Soviet era due to their "bourgeois" nature, some of them were turned in the Soviet Union into workers' "palaces of culture," which continued to offer more or less similar activities with more or less same staff.[128]

Thus, political activity after 1917 adapted into already established forms of cultural work. For instance, after the February Revolution different kind of "concert-meetings" were arranged, where a musical program was coupled with presentations by governmental actors. The pen name Veritasov criticized this kind of action by stating that these meetings were arranged in a completely Russian style in the traditional spirit of a charity concert: "the main aim being to collect the harvest from inquisitive fools."[129] Many who had been active in the People's music school before the revolutions soon found their place in the educational departments of the Bolshevik government – the most famous

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[124] See for instance the composer Nikolay Myaskovsky's letter from 1916, in which he expressed his doubt about the masses getting rid of their philistinism or being able to "become less base," no matter how much one would rage at them or upbraid them (Zuk 2021, 130). As Zuk notes, these kinds of views were more a norm than an exception in the cultural atmosphere of the early 20th century Russia and Europe (ibid., 131).

[125] Education, knowledge of (high) culture, being 'enlightened' all come together in the Russian concept of *prosveshcheniye,* often translated as *enlightenment* (thus the often used translation of Anatoli Lunacharsky's post People's commissar of Enlightenment' – *Narodnïy komissar prosveshcheniya*, although the less pompous People's commissar of Arts and Education is used as well). There is no direct translation for the concept in English.

[126] Fairlough 2016, 13.

[127] Lindenmeyr 2012.

[128] For instance, while the founder of Ligovsky people's house in St. Peterburg, Countess Sofia Panina joined the anti-Bolshevik movement and fled the country in 1920, the teachers who helped her to establish the house and had worked there since its foundation in 1903, continued their work in the house (now turned into the "Railroad workers' palace of culture") and even received the titles "Heroes of labour" from the Soviet government (ibid.).

[129] Veritasov: Mïsli o muzïkal'noy zhizni v period revolyutsii. *Russkaya muzïkalnaya gazeta* 1917, No. 25–26, 417–421.

example being Nadezhda Bryusova. As Pauline Fairclough points out, one should not automatically interpret those who were willing to cooperate with the new government in order to 'educate the masses' as being strong supporters of Bolshevism.[130] In many cases, the aims of the intelligentsia and the Bolsheviks simply happened to coincide.

Of course, the musical intelligentsia was not itself a monolithic entity: for many working in the cultural institutions their position after the revolutions was rather unclear. Emphasis is often put on the highest cultural elite (in musical life composers, conductors, directors, the most famous soloists etc.), but a large part of artists and support personnel in the cultural institutions could be described more as rank-and-file cultural workers. Adopting practices from industrial workers after the February Revolution, such as re-arranging power relationship by creating soviets among the members of the orchestra and choir, gave a sense of "proletarian identity" for the artists as well. How strong this identification in fact was or if it was just a expected way to act in a new political situation is of course debatable: it is hard to think that persons with notable cultural capital would identify themselves truly with uneducated, often illiterate workers' masses.[131] The penname Homo novus gave his own sarcastic interpretation of the "proletarian quality" of the theatre actors: "The actor is proletarian in the sense that he always or almost always, or very often, sits without money. There is nothing more proletarian in him, because the work of an actor, and the actor himself, in all his ways, is profoundly individualistic."[132]

As Bolshevik rule arrived after the October, some institutions openly questioned the legitimacy of the new government and refused to obey its instructions. The theatregoers tried to maintain their higher position and own practices, and when the leaders of the Moscow Soviet walked to the royal box of the Bolshoi Theatre in November 1917, the audience started to throw things at them and the militia was needed to protect the representatives of the new regime.[133] On an institutional level, the Alexandrinsky Theatre and Mariinsky Opera and Ballet Theatre in Petrograd openly criticized the new rule. By looking at this dispute more closely, it can be seen how the political discourse examined so far affected the understanding of art in the new political situation. Here, the role of the concept of 'freedom' was again prominent.

2.1.3 Harmful Liberal Ideas and Freedom of Artists under the Workers' Rule

Less than a month after the Bolshevik coup, the newly appointed People's Commissar of Arts and Education Anatoli Lunacharsky invited "all the painter, musician, author and artist comrades" to the Winter Palace.[134] Apparently, only

[130] Fairclough 2016, 15.
[131] Figes & Kolonitskii point out, that when in 1917 there was some kudos in belonging to 'working class,' officials could describe themselves as "intellectual workers", soldiers as "vanguard of the international working class" and the intelligentsia as "proletariat of intellectual labor." (Figes & Kolonitskii 1999, 105.)
[132] Homo novus: Zametki. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 12, 214.
[133] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 4.
[134] *Pravda* 18 November 1917, 3.

five artists showed up.[135] A union formed by artists of the Alexandrinsky Theatre replied to Lunacharsky's invitation by stating that it "considers it impossible to deviate from the selected path and take orders, instructions or directives from political parties, ruling without the authority of publicly (*vsenarodno*) recognized supreme power."[136] The artists of the Mariinsky Theatre brought forward three theses, out of which two claimed autonomy for artists in matters related to art, and the third demanded that art should be "apolitical and neutral in case of any changes in governmental order." Lunacharsky answered these statements by demanding an instant clarification on the position of artists in relation to the fact, that "some [artists] have become victims of counter-revolutionary politics and spiteful agitation." Refusal to do so would lead to dismissals. Representative chosen by the meetings of Alexandrinsky and Mariinsky Theatres, F. D. Batyushkov replied to Lunacharsky saying that there were no profound disagreement among the artists, even though Lunacharsky had claimed so, and that he is not used to replying to threats. Batyushkov was dismissed, on the grounds that the post of main representative was deemed unnecessary, and Batyushkov was blamed for "attracting artists to defend liberal ideas against the core principles of democracy and social revolution." Lunacharsky ended the discussion with following:

> We do not demand from you [- -] any kind of oaths, any kind of declarations of loyalty and obedience. You [are] free citizens, free artists, and no one infringes your freedom. But there is now a new master in the country – the working people. Working people cannot support the state theatres, if it will not have assurance that they exist not for the amusement of lords, but to satisfy the great cultural need of the working population. That is why democracy of the republic should be agreed with artists.[137]

When Lunacharsky blamed Batyushkov for "attracting artist to defend liberal ideas against the core principles of democracy and social revolution" and right after this highlights "freedom of artists," there is no contradiction of any kind. For the Bolsheviks, and in fact for socialists in Russia more generally, 'liberal ideas' (*liberalnïe idei*) and 'liberalism' were ideas or ideology related to capitalism and they had nothing to do with 'freedom' (*svoboda*) or 'democracy.' Indeed, the liberals in the Provisional Government (the members of the Constitutional Democratic Party known as the Kadets) were constantly attacked by Bolsheviks for their liberal i.e. 'bourgeois' politics and, notably, the other socialist parties working together with the Kadets did not deny this criticism. This was because they did not essentially disagree with the Bolsheviks: the liberal forces in the government indeed represented the bourgeoisie, but the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks saw this cooperation as necessary in the current historical phase before the socialist revolution could take place in Russia. This gave backing to the Bolshevik agenda, because fundamentally the Russian socialists agreed on the necessity of the socialist revolution and a classless society – the dividing question among the socialists was 'only' the timing of the

[135] Vlasova 2010, 8.
[136] This and the following statements are from an account of events in the article Konflikt v Gosudarstv. teatrakh [Conflict in the State theaters]. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 51, 847–848.
[137] ibid.

revolution. When there was no left-wing party denying the need for socialist revolution, other socialist parties started to look weak in comparison to the Bolsheviks: if no one really disagreed about pursuing a socialist society, why not do it straightaway and stop making concessions to the 'bourgeoisie'?

From the point of view of 'freedom,' the conflict between Lunacharsky and a few of the state theatres demonstrates the need to hang on to this key concept as well as redefine it. In an open letter to Lunacharsky from December 1917, the representatives of the artists of the Mariinsky Theatre used 'freedom' in a purely rhetorical way. The eloquent letter, in which the artists wished that they would be heard, started with the sentence: "The free feeling of artists' conscience, free in their service of art, calls us to answer to you in all sincerity with an open heart."[138] The artists wished to legitimize their position in opposition to the Bolshevik government with *svoboda*, which the new government could not deny: the strategy of the government, as can be seen from Lunacharsky's way to answer to mutinous theatres, was to recognize their 'freedom' but to delineate some forms of 'freedom' as infected by liberal and bourgeois ideology. The new freedom was freedom under the rule of the working class. It is worth noting that Lunacharsky could have used another strategy and simply stated that the ideals of free art and free artists were a bourgeois fabrication of the capitalist society, where the artists served the need of their ruling class without even realizing what they were doing.[139] Instead, Lunacharsky seemed to acknowledge the (conditional) freedom of artists and even invited them to agree upon a "democracy of the republic." This is an important example, because it shows how the new rule needed to try to adjust to the situation by redefining important concepts such as freedom in a way which would not conflict with the views of artists too much.[140]

After the Bolsheviks had come to power, many representatives of the intelligentsia expected and/or hoped that they would not hold power for long – that there would be some kind of return to 'normality' after this bad dream,

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[138] "Свободное чувство совести артистов, свободных в своем служении искусству, призывает нас ответить вам со всею искренностью открытого сердца." Pis'mo artistov Gos. Mariinskogo teatra k nar. komissaru A. V. Lunacharskomu. *Izvestiya* 24 December 1917, 8.

[139] Lenin had argued about "false freedom" of artists in capitalist society already in 1905 in the journal *Novaya zhizn*. This writing was used in later art political discussions. See for instance Em. Beskin: Lenin i iskusstvo [Lenin and art]. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1924, No. 1–2, 4–5.

[140] One can criticize this interpretation from two points. First, Luncharsky, as has been widely noted, was a special case among the Bolshevik leaders, as he had much understanding towards the preservationist policy of art institutions. This is true, but it does not change the fact that Lunacharsky maintained his position long to the 1920s having a strong influence for the formation of Soviet art policy. Although his legacy did not remain unchanged, the art political lines and conceptualizations, which were taken up when Lunacharsky was the Commissar responsible of these questions had a strong influence long past Lunacharsky's time. Secondly, one could argue that this was mere rhetoric, and after the Bolshevik rule became established together with its repressive politics, it did not matter what was said because artists were controlled by violence or threat of violence. This is a point, which my dissertation pursues to problematize more broadly, but regarding the concept 'freedom' we will see in the following chapters how the interpretations treated in this chapter in fact were used by art institutions and artists to gain autonomy for themselves.

although the political situation in Russia had not been 'normal' in many years.[141] The passiveness of the musical intelligentsia towards the Bolsheviks is well documented, and can be seen for instance in the difficulties to get specialists to run governmental music organizations.[142] Gradually the musicians started to take a more active role – not necessarily because they became more supportive of Bolshevik politics, but because it simply started to seem that the Bolsheviks were not going anywhere. Already before this, however, the critics of the Bolsheviks did not necessarily support a politically active role of the artistic institutions but saw that the institutions should keep working and serve the people, no matter the political circumstances. When the Alexandrinsky Theatre announced that it would go on strike, it was criticized for taking the theatre into political battle.[143] And when the same theatre started to run performances in private theatres in addition to its own premises and thus collect a double income, the editorial of the journal critical towards the Bolsheviks condemned the theatre with the following:

> The State is not Tsar Nikolai, not Kerensky and not Lunacharsky – it is that which is still called Russia, and its interests in cultural-theatrical terms are represented by the Alexandrinsky Theatre. [This kind of s]tate-private venture [- -] is, probably, a very profitable thing, but the state cannot tolerate this, no matter, who is leading the theatres.[144]

This quote seems to comment on the freedom or autonomy of the state theatres as well: no matter how unpleasant a regime, the state theatres should not give away their task of "serving Russia," i.e. they should continue the work designated for them without interfering too much in politics. The freedom of state theatres is the freedom to pursue artistic goals, but not to act however they like.

As we have seen, the concept of *svoboda,* which in the beginning of 1917 was an empty signifier creating a sense of unity among different political actors, lost this function soon after the February Revolution and became a focal point of political debate. The discussions about the role of art in society echoed this broader political debate. One central observation from this discussion is that the

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[141] See Editorial in *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 47, 782. "One can of course believe in "social revolution" [- -] But it appears, [that one] has to preserve as much composure and reasonability, not to give "social revolution" and comrade Kollontai longer life span than to the "Snow Maiden" [*Snegurochka*]." Also Homo novus: "And when all this is over,—and it will, of course, be over—it is possible to write a number of "psychological studies" on this theme, and find a host of refined explanations…" (*Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 51, 854).

[142] The modernist composer Arthur Lourié was nominated as the leader of the one of the most influential musical organizations of the time, the Music Section of the Narkompros (MUZO), because he happened to ask from Lunacharsky permission to hold a concert in the Winter Palace. He did not decline, when Lunacharsky offered the post to him in the meeting. (Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 5–6.)

[143] See M. Murav'yov: Sokhranite teatrï! [Save the theaters!] *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 44–46, 764. "After all from their [artists'] announcement on strike, [which] stopped the working of the Alexandrinsky Theater, depriving from citizens cultural nutrition, the wheel of governmental vehicle, which at the moment is being turned by the hands of the Bolsheviks, not only does it not turn back, but will not even slow down the pace. [- -] I appeal to all theater personnel with a strong plea: do not bring the theaters into political battle and save them from the destruction of dark masses of ferocious people, but each separately, as free citizens, join the parties, which fight for the salvation of the motherland."

[144] Editorial. *Teatr i iskusstvo* 1917, No. 52, 862.

uses and interpretations of the concept of freedom did not follow one-to-one changes in the regime. When the Bolsheviks came to power, this did not mean a complete redefinition of artistic freedom as a bourgeois fabrication, but rather it brought in the class perspective while maintaining the claim that freedom of art would be preserved. As the following sections show, this was not a mere rhetorical trick but a definition which left the relationship of the artists and the state more open and debatable, and through which there was more possibility for artists themselves to define their role in the new situation.

2.2 Organizing Musical Life in the 1920s

Organizing political power after the October Revolution was not a simple task for the Bolsheviks, and while they gained political control with Lenin as indisputable leader of the early Soviet state, it took several years of civil war until the new power had control over the entire country. In the unstable early years, many institutions simply tried to continue their work amidst the revolutionary turbulence.

Creating everyday lines of authority at a local level was not only a practical but also an ideological question, because the Bolsheviks emphasized the self-organizing inclination of the people, especially in the early years of Soviet Russia. This section will examine how the Soviet state began to organize cultural political structures through the Commissariat of Arts and Education (*Narkompros*) and how the relationships between this state structure and other organizations played out in the first years after the revolutions. The focus is particularly on the musicians' trade unions and the relatively short-lived but significant initiative of proletarian culture – the Proletkul't. After this, the transition to the time of *New economic policy* (NEP, 1921–1928) will be discussed and lastly, how in the time of NEP, music political discussion centred around music organization with differing ideological programmes. Different interpretations of *freedom* and *democracy* in relation to music surfaced again between these competing organizations.

2.2.1 Structures for Organizing Cultural Life after the Revolutions: Narkompros, Trade Unions and Proletkul't

In the new organizational structure of the Soviet state, questions of music and art fell under the Commissariat of Arts and Education (*Narkompros*)[145] with Anatoly Lunacharsky appointed to lead this work. Under Narkompros, there were special sections for instance for music (*MUZO*) and for theatres (*TEO*), which included opera theatres as well.[146] There was also a separate section called "Department for Museum Affairs and Protection of Monuments of Art and Antiquity," which

[145] Narkompros is an abbreviation of *Narodnïy komissariat prosveshcheniya,* translated often also as Commissariat of Enlightenment.
[146] "Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'". *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1919, No. 1, 1.

highlights well the political stance of Narkompros and its commissar Lunacharsky. Indeed, in research literature, the personal role of Lunacharsky in supporting the preservation of pre-revolutionary institutions and buildings is often emphasized.[147]

While preservation of cultural heritage from revolutionary turbulence and excessive iconoclasm was the first and personally important task for Lunacharsky, he endorsed co-operation with a broad range of artists, including pre-revolutionary avant-gardists. This was also the group of people who followed the political turbulence with interest because they saw that true artistic change is not an intra-artistic question, but comes with profound societal, political and spiritual transformation. Indeed the artists and philosophers of the Russian Silver Age (approx. 1890–1915) thought that art would lead this change. For some of the Silver Age writers and composers, the poet Andrey Bely and composer Alexander Scriabin in particular, it was specifically music which would transcend the old dichotomies (spiritual-material, masculine-feminine etc.) and guide the world to a new form of existence.[148] At first, these ideas were visible in Narkompros and its music section (*MUZO*), thanks to the newly appointed head of MUZO, the modernist composer Arthur Lourié.

Lourié with his broad visions of new music was an unlikely administrator and his appointment to head Narkompros's music section was possibly more an accident than a carefully planned recruitment.[149] The first issue of MUZO's publication called *Lad*[150] included a cubist-inspired logo on the cover (this was hardly an exception in early Soviet art journals), but also a "Declaration" signed by the "Musical collective" with Lourié as the chairman.[151] The text stated for instance how "only when being in the state of *music* does the human exist," how "*music* is the world of highest reality," and, following the Silver Age philosophy, how:

> [i]n universal cataclysm together with renewal of humankind in the epoch of transformation of the foundations of being [- -] *music* [- -] governs invisibly all forms into which life pours itself, marking boundaries and destroying them.[152]

After highlighting the unique role of music in the transformation of the world, the text stated how "Music Section DECLARES henceforth *music free* (*svobodnoy*) from all false canons and rules of musical scholastics in all its manifestations

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[147] See the central work by Sheila Fitzpatrick (1970).
[148] See Mitchell 2015 on music and philosophy in early 20th century Russia.
[149] As mentioned already earlier, it seems that Lunacharsky offered the position to Lourié when he came to ask for a permission to hold a concert in the Winter Palace (Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 5–6). According to Nelson (2004, 20), the renowned conductor and double-bass player Serge Koussevitzky (Sergey Kusevitsky) was the first alternative to run MUZO, but he declined.
[150] *Lad* can be translated as 'scale' or 'mode,' but the word has a broader, music philosophical bearing in Russian in comparison to rather technical definition of other European languages.
[151] Other members of the collective were Boris Asafiev, Stepan Mitusov, A. P. Vaulin and Vsevolod Pastukhov (*Lad* 1919, No. 1, 2–5). The declaration is translated into English in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 29–31.
[152] Declaration. *Lad* 1919, No. 1, 2–3. Emphases original.

which have existed so far [- -]."[153] Freedom of music advocated here was quite different from the discussions we saw in the previous sections, where freedom was negotiated in relation to political structures and freedoms of artistic institutions. Here freedom is something which simply emerges, when the constraints of the old world (false canons and scholastics) are discarded. The result is total freedom of music to guide the transformation of the world.

This kind of declaration did not of course give much guidance on how the practical questions of music life would be organized in the new state structure. In addition to giving declamatory visions, Lourié did not seem particular interested in creating contacts and collaborating with people who dealt with these practical questions. An example of this is provided by a meeting of one musicians' trade union in December 1918 at which Lourié was also present.

The first All-Russian Congress of Orchestral Musicians' Deputies was organized on 10–18 December 1918, and while the number of participants (35) was rather modest, Lourié's presence as representative of Narkompros added extra weight to the meeting. The official organ of the Moscow Trade Union of Music Artists, the journal *Artist-muzïkant*, provided reports from the meeting and the journal brought up more broadly trade unions' perspective on organizing artistic matters in the new Soviet state. From the perspective of the journal, communist rule did not render trade unions unnecessary because the state also needed to take into account voices other than proletarian ones.[154] The trade unions, by contrast, were purely proletarian organizations, and the editorial stated that "from the class perspective" the politics of the Soviet organs would not always "coincide and be identical with the [politics of] professional unions." The journal proposed the role of social economic organization for the trade unions, whereas the Soviet organs would be the instruments of political power.[155] The Congress of Orchestral Musicians in its part emphasized how its activities should not be seen as counterrevolutionary, though the Congress saw that musical questions are currently led in different parts of the country by people unfamiliar with art and that stronger trade unions were needed.[156]

When it was Lourié's turn to talk to the audience, he did not spare his words. Lourié stated that in the current historical moment the trade unions do not need to fight for the economic position of their members because their enemy, the capitalist, has been eliminated. Instead, they should focus on raising the level of music workers, because currently an average music worker is ignorant, their work discipline is impaired and the whole social sphere is saturated with

[153] ibid., 3. Emphases original.
[154] See editorial: Ogosudarstvleniye coyuzov. *Artist-muzïkant* 1918–1919, No. 3, 1–2.
[155] ibid.
[156] Pervïy Vserossiyskiy Delegatskiy C"ezd Orkestrantov. *Artist-muzïkant* 1918–1919, No. 3, 6.

philistine ideology.[157] Not only did Lourié's claim offend the participants of the congress, as they themselves represented the "social sphere" Lourié was lashing, but he truly succeeded in hitting the nerve of the trade union by deeming its basic function – protecting its members' interests – unnecessary. The tense atmosphere spilled over to the resolutions of the Congress, with the Congress for instance demanding a "fundamental reform of the music section of Narkompros" and a collegium of the trade union to be incorporated next to the new music section, which would participate in "controlling and directing all the activities of the music section." In another resolution, the Congress insisted on full control of all musical activities in the country to be assumed by Narkompros, but, again, "the closest participation of the all-Russian professional union of musical proletariat" was demanded.[158]

This rather small convention did not have sufficient weight to change the current situation in Narkompros, but it was not only trade unions which were dissatisfied with Lourié's ways of handling things. Lourié actively promoted modern music, which many saw as being in conflict with Narkompros' idea of approaching the broader masses, and while the resources for printing were scarce, this did not prevent MUZO from publishing Lourié's own works relatively extensively.[159] The musical elite criticized Lourié as well, and even questions of corruption were raised.[160] It became clear that Lourié had to go, as he did, and quite soon after leaving his post he emigrated as well, but this was a rather minor change in the more substantial re-organization of Narkompros. This re-organization resulted from criticism according to which Narkompros spent too much money and it was too easy for Lunacharsky to choose single-handedly what kind of activities Narkompros supported.[161] Narkompros had to face substantial cuts in 1920 and the managing of artistic questions was split between different main sections of Narkompros – the so-called 'glavkas.' Instead of one central organ within Narkompros, which would have handled the artistic matters, the matters were decided for instance in *Glavpolitprosvet* (Main Committee for Political Education), *Glavnauka* (Main Committee for Science) and *Glavprofobr*

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[157] ibid. Lourié's speech was published entirely in *Lad* 1919, No. 1, 14–18. Lourié stated for instance that from the outset the situation in music field is bad due to aforementioned reasons, but also that "at the moment, the activity of musicians' trade union lowers the artistic level, both in the sense of artistic level of newly appearing orchestral collectives, and in the sense of complete looseness of discipline in relation to performance and to work." (ibid.) Thus, trade unions were not guilty of making the situation as bad as it is, but further worsening it.

[158] Pervïy Vserossiyskiy Delegatskiy C"ezd Orkestrantov. *Artist-muzïkant* 1918–1919, No. 3, 7.

[159] Nelson 2004, 37. List of works accepted to be published by MUZO in the beginning of 1919 included works from composers such as Schubert, Bach and Bizet as well as from contemporary composers Nikolay Medtner, Sergei Prokofiev and Albert Coates – one work from each. In contrast to these, list of Lourié's works to be published included a string quartet, four piano pieces, four songs for solo voice and a choral work. (Izdatel'stvo muzïkal'nogo otdela. *Lad* 1919, No. 1, 26.)

[160] Nelson 2004, 37–38. Boris Asafiev was Lourié's co-worker in MUZO, and while he respected him as a composer, he was critical to Lourié's leadership as well (Viljanen 2017, 268–269).

[161] Nelson 20004, 36–37.

(Main Committee for Professional Education).[162] It was only in 1928 that a short-lived *Glaviskusstvo* (Main Committee for Arts) was established, but the timing for this was unsuccessful, as this was the time when Narkompros' authority over cultural policy was hampered by the strengthening of proletarian art organizations.[163]

What resulted from the re-organization was a blurring of areas of responsibility in handling artistic questions, and the problems of parallelism were frequently raised.[164] Not everyone thought that a strong centralized political control of arts was necessary in the first place,[165] for these demands had rather surfaced after incidents which had to do as much or even more with wider political questions than art as such. One important incident in this regard was the fate of Proletkul't.

Proletarian cultural movement or better known as *Proletkul't* was founded in the midst of the revolutionary autumn of 1917 before the October Revolution, but the discussions about proletarian culture, the role of culture in revolution, as well as attempts to have organized education on these issues went further back. After the failed 1905 revolution, the Russian communists found themselves in an increasingly divided situation, and not only because the split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks was underlined more strongly than before. Factionalism was growing within the Bolsheviks as well, and one of the most influential groups opposing Lenin, the so-called "left faction," gathered itself around Alexander Bogdanov. Bogdanov's cultural orientation to revolution, as opposed to Lenin's materialist version of Marxism, attracted many, most notably Anatoly Lunacharsky, Maxim Gorky, and Pavel Lebedev-Polyanski.[166]

It was no surprise that on its foundation Proletkul't demanded an autonomic position in cultural work in relation to the state, because the state was still at that point led by Kerensky's provisional government. More surprising was that it did not step back from insisting on an autonomic position in relation to the state after the October Revolution either. One explanation for this is the often-mentioned personal rivalry between Bogdanov and Lenin and the fact that Bogdanov never himself joined the Bolshevik party, but also in early Soviet Russia the party and the state were not yet seen necessarily as one and the same thing. Rather, proletkul'tists (out of whom many were also members of the Bolshevik party) saw themselves as advocates of communism in culture and the

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[162] See the organizational chart of Narkompros in Nelson 2004, 127.
[163] See Fitzpatrick 1971.
[164] E.g. L. Sabaneyev: Ocherednïye zadachi muzïkal'nogo stroitel'stva. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 16–20. M. Miklashevskiy: O parallelizme. *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1920, No. 3, 35–36; Reorganizatsiya Narkomprosa i Vserabis. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1921, No. 4–5, 1–7.
[165] For instance Leonid Sabaneyev, while complaining of parallelism of different organizations, did not consider independence of different sections as problematic *per se*, but the competition and even hostility between different sections and organizations (L. Sabaneyev: Ocherednïye zadachi muzïkal'nogo stroitel'stva. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 20.)
[166] See Mally 1990, especially 2–10.

party as an advocate of communism in politics, thus pursuing the same goals via separate means.[167]

From the perspective of the newly formed Soviet state, the independence of Proletkul't was not necessarily a problem in principle. Especially in the early years of Soviet Russia, the Bolsheviks emphasized the self-organizing inclination of the people once they are freed from the restrictive chains of capitalist society. This affected organizing the cultural sphere as well and became part of the founding document of Narkompros. In the document, there is a mention which states that "[t]he independent work of class-based – workers', soldiers', peasants' cultural-educational (*kul'turno-prosvetitel'nïkh*) organizations must have full autonomy in relation to both governmental and municipal centres." In addition, a section to help the "independent class[-based] educational (*prosvetitel'nïm*) organizations" was founded within Narkompros.[168] Thus, there was in principle much freedom for active citizens to organize their own cultural activities, if the activities consisted of cultural and educational work by/for appropriate classes, and Proletkul't was no doubt such an organization. The support of Narkompros for independent class-based organizations materialized after the revolution as well, as almost one third of Narkompros' budget for adult education went to Proletkul't in the first half of the 1918.[169]

Rather than a clearly structured organization, Proletkul't was an overarching concept for a variety of local cultural initiatives from workers' clubs and theatre activity to educational groups, and as such a loose organization it spread fairly quickly across the Soviet state.[170] The extent of Proletkul't's activities and the autonomic position it had gained became in the end a problem for the political leadership. In August 1920 Lenin began to enquire after the juridical position of Proletkul't and its funding,[171] and when Lunacharsky appeared in a Proletkul't meeting guaranteeing autonomy for Proletkul't,[172] Lenin was disappointed and demanded the central committee of the party reconsider the position of Proletkul't.[173] The central committee made the decision of making Proletkul't part of Narkompros in November 1920, thus erasing the autonomy Proletkul't had enjoyed so far.[174]

This decision was a major step in defining the lines of organizational autonomy and freedom in Soviet cultural policy. When commenting on Proletkul't's independent position, the Central Committee's decision claimed that this independence had been granted in relation to Kerensky's government

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[167] ibid., 36–39.
[168] Foundation document for Governmental commission of Arts and Education (later re-named as Peoples' Commissariat) in Lenin 1967, 567–569.
[169] Mally 1990, 44.
[170] In 1920, Proletkul't announced its membership to have reached 400 000 in 300 different branches (ibid., xiv).
[171] Lenin 1967, 439.
[172] Vserossiyskiy c"ezd proletkul'tov. *Izvestiya* 8 October 1920, 3. Lunacharsky did not have any personal reasons to hinder Proletkul't's activities – quite the contrary. As mentioned, he did join Bogdanov's "left fraction" after 1905 and Lunacharsky and Bogdanov were also brothers-in-law.
[173] Lenin 1967, 454–455.
[174] ibid., 594.

before the October Revolution and that the situation had changed since then.[175] While this was true, the founding document of Narkompros cited above nevertheless assured institutional autonomy for cultural-educational organizations. Many reasons have been given for the decision to practically disband Proletkul't, including personal animosity between Lenin and Bogdanov, conflict between the state and Proletkul't, which the quick expansion of Proletkul't had created on the cultural front, as well as inner conflicts within Proletkul't.[176] While there was not necessarily one defining reason behind Proletkul't's disbandment, it did symbolize a change of tone in managing cultural questions – the breaking of the promise to small, grass-root initiatives and more pronounced governmental control instead. It is also worth mentioning that the new cultural political lines in relation to disbanding Proletkul't were presented by Narkompros together with *Vserabis* – a large, newly formed trade union of artists.[177] The Vserabis journal which re-published the Central Committee's letter about Proletkul't included a statement called "Theses of political foundations in the sphere of arts" signed by Lunacharsky and the chairman of Vserabis, Yuvenal Slavinsky.[178] While Narkompros' relationship with trade unions might not have been at first unproblematic at least in the sphere of music, as we can recall from Lourié's blunt appearance in the meeting of the musicians' trade union, going against Proletkul't with Narkompros wasa boost for the reputation of the new trade union.

After disbandment of Proletkul't, the managing of cultural questions seemed to be centralized more to Narkompros, but then again, Narkompros was not one single, unified organ, which would have led one consistent cultural political line. Besides organizing the cultural front, the political leadership attempted to steer cultural policy discursively and conceptually. While going against Proletkul't was a matter of political authority and power, it came with a particular discursive framing. Two conceptual frames were important here: the idea of 'proletarian culture,' which was now (for the time being) discarded, and 'futurism,' which Proletkul't was claimed to represent against 'tradition.' The question of proletarian culture will be discussed as part of the concept *bït* in Chapter 5, but the opposition between futurism and tradition is important to note already at this point.

The letter of the Party's central committee "On proletkul'ts" identified the "petty-bourgeois elements," which had taken control in Proletkul'ts, and these included "[f]uturists, decadents, supporters of idealistic philosophy hostile to

[175] O proletkul'takh. Pis'mo Ts.K.R.K.P. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 67.
[176] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 42–44; Mally 1990.
[177] Vserabis was an acronym of *Vserossiyskiy professional'nïy soyuz rabotnikov iskusstva* – All-Russian trade union of art workers. The journals published by the trade union were widely distributed and include important discussion on the role of art in the revolutionary society. The journals published by Vserabis were: *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* (1920–21, 1924–26), *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstv* (1921–22) and *Rabis* (1927–33).
[178] Tezisï ob osnovakh politiki v oblasti iskusstva. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 65–66.

Marxism."[179] Instead of 'decadence' and 'futurism' in art, the proletariat should be guided with the Leninist principle of "logical development of those collections of knowledge, which humankind produced under the oppression of capitalistic society, under the society of landowners and bureaucracy,"[180] thus disengaging from the most radical avant-garde projects threatening to wipe out any 'cultural remnants' of the past. But, as Boris Groys for instance has pointed out, Bogdanov's own ideas of cultural development were not so different from this principle of Lenin's, and while Lunacharsky for instance supported avant-garde artists as well, he was particularly interested in preserving the cultural heritage of the past.[181] Proletkul't had attracted experimental artists, including the composers Arseny Avraamov and the director Sergei Eisenstein, but overall the organization was not as radical as the Party decision implied. The point, however, for the current discussion is not how correct or incorrect the Party account of Proletkul't was, but rather the cultural political line which the decision signalled. While it was not possible for the state to 'take over' the cultural life of the country – and nor it was necessarily a priority or even on the agenda of the Party at that point – the authority of framing the principles of cultural policy was now given more directly to the political leadership.

This change of tone guided the music political discussion throughout the 1920s, which saw the emergence of multiple different art organizations instead of one overarching art and education group as Proletkul't had attempted to be. Besides different art organizations, the pre-revolutionary institutions such as conservatories and opera theatres continued to operate and define the musical landscape of the country. In addition to them, moving from war communism to a restricted market economy of NEP opened up possibilities for private concert initiatives. These phenomena and the cultural life of NEP more broadly from 1921 onwards will now be discussed.

2.2.2 New Economic Policy: Privatization of Theatres and Disputes around Operetta and Other 'Light' Genres

After the devastating First World War and revolutions, the Soviet state was in need of swift economic recovery and growth. This was precluded however by the prevailing war communism, which had been adopted in the circumstances of

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[179] O proletkul'takh. Pis'mo Ts.K.R.K.P. *Pravda* 1 December 1920, 1. Published also in *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 66–68. The letter speaks of Proletkul'ts in plural, which refers to rather separated branches of similar kinds of activities. For the sake of simplicity, I have mainly written Proletkul't in singular in order to talk about the phenomenon as such, but here I follow the formulation of the primary data.

[180] Lenin's speech at the Third All-Russian Congress of Russian Young Communist Soviet [Komsomol] on 2 October 1920. See Lenin 1967, 440–454.

[181] Groys 2011, 38. Lunacharsky's position was completely paradoxical: while Lenin was disappointed in him with handling the question of Proletkul't and accused him of siding with the futurists (Lenin 1967, 670–671), in 1917 Lunacharsky had resigned from his post in response to rumours of destructing cultural heritage (he withdrew his resignation few days later, see Fitzpatrick 1970, 13–15). Criticism against Lunacharsky was visible in the Party letter against Proletkul't, which noted that the "same [negative] intellectual tendencies" affecting Proletkul't are present in art sphere of the Narkompros itself (O proletkul'takh. Pis'mo Ts.K.R.K.P. *Pravda* 1 December 1920, 1).

the Civil War. The forced redemption of any surplus grain did not motivate peasants to produce any extra yield, which kept shortages endemic, and the Soviet leaders were forced to change the direction of economic policy. Their answer was a restricted market economy, which allowed the peasants to sell their surplus yield after taxation at a market price, permitted the establishment of small businesses and opened exchange of goods more broadly in society.[182] The new line, which was adopted in early 1921, was called the *New economic policy* (*Novaya ėkonomicheskaya politika*, henceforth NEP) and it came to define much of the economic as well as cultural changes of the 1920s.

Lenin admitted to the new policy being a concession towards capitalism and defended the measure as vital in order to develop Soviet Russia and to keep up with Western Europe.[183] In his answer to the challenge which the re-introduction of a limited market economy would bring he resorted to militant rhetoric. Lenin compared the emerging battle to the struggles in the Civil War, but whereas direct war is a "familiar" thing since people have waged war for hundreds and thousands of years, the battle will be now much more difficult since it is much harder to point to where the enemy is. As the people still suffer from "great obscurity and illiteracy," it is hard for them to recognize the enemy within.[184] This was picked up in the cultural discussion by highlighting for instance how the NEP will "arouse class antagonism"[185] – demonstrating the entrenchment of militant rhetoric against class enemies in all spheres of life.

Sheila Fitzpatrick noted already in 1970 that NEP can been seen as an overall policy only in retrospect – at the time, it was rather a series of more or less logical measures which followed from the liberation of trade of grain surpluses.[186] NEP was first and foremost an economic reform and as such did not directly steer cultural policy. It was new policy's effects, which influenced the artistic institutions – namely that in the short run NEP decreased rather than increased the state's income, because now the surplus value in agriculture remained within the peasantry and was not taken over by the state (or taken only partly and indirectly through taxation).[187] Consequently, the state's expenses had to be curtailed, and Narkompros and support given to cultural institutions were part of the expenditure which now had to be reconsidered.

Therefore, NEP came first to cultural sphere with a demand to cut down government support for cultural activities, so the state-sponsored theatres for instance had to meet new demands. A special committee to reorganize Narkompros and examine its expenses was set up, and it was headed by an

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[182] See for instance Rosenberg 1991.
[183] See Lenin's speeches: N. Lenin: K chetïrekhletney godovshchine Oktyabr'skoy revolyutsii. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstva* 1921, No. 1, 6–9 & N. Lenin: Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika i prosveshcheniye [Speech on the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Political Education Departments]. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstva* 1921, No. 1, 42–50.
[184] N. Lenin: Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika i prosveshcheniye [Presentation on the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Political Education Departments]. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstva* 1921, No. 1, 44–45.
[185] Ėm. Beskin: Dva fronta. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstv* 1922, No. 1, 29.
[186] Fitzpatrcik 1970, 259.
[187] ibid.

economist, Yuri Larin. He was ready even to abolish the Bolshoi theatre if need be, and the struggle for Bolshoi's fate became the most prominent cultural political question of the early NEP era. I will return to this particular question of the Bolshoi in Section 3.2, but this polemic was only the most visible part of the reorganizing of theatre life. In other respects NEP seems to have been implemented in cultural life in a rather ad hoc way, with Larin's commission providing the framework for Narkompros for a number of theatres which it could support, while the theatres outside the frame would be left to their own devices. A detailed commentary from 1922 illustrates this well.

V. Vladimirov [188] called the arrival of NEP in the theatre sphere as "spontaneous privatization," as no decree on privatization of theatres was made as such. Instead, Larin's commission with the Central Committee's approval had made a list of state-sponsored theatres, which included seven academic theatres and 19 theatres managed by Glavpolitprosvet.[189] It was not clear what should be done with numerous other theatres left outside the list, and Vladimirov described how local authorities were giving away theatres to different kinds of groups: to local soviets, military organizations, trade unions, artists' own co-operatives and private persons. According to Vladimirov these could in principle complement "the cultural-educational" task of the state, but their resources were limited. For the most part the theatres were transforming their repertoires to more popular genres in order to lure the audience and sustain their activities, but even more unsettling for Vladimirov was that some of the theatres were used simply to make profit. Their repertoires were complete "khaltura" (hackwork), which created "anti-cultural and anti-artistic danger."[190]

This increase of more popular genres in repertoires was quickly identified as the substantial effect of NEP in culture. While 'light' music genres such as operetta and foxtrot had not disappeared completely, NEP was seen to legitimize their position as well as to give the floor to newly emerging jazz. To the dismay of many revolutionary enthusiasts, the society seemed to approve that culture can be used for entertainment and pleasure and not purely for self-development and education. The antagonism between politically aware revolutionaries and the newly emerging class of 'NEPmen'[191] widened to all spheres of life – all the way down to ideals of behaviour and clothing, in which the stereotype of

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[188] Probably the theatre director Vladimir Konstantinovich Vladimirov (1886–1953), who later became the director of Moscow's Malyi theatre and who at that time was a member the central committee of artists' trade union, Rabis. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstv*, in which Vladimirov's text appeared, was published by this trade union. See biographical info on Vladimirov: https://www.maly.ru/people?name=VladimirovV (accessed 21 February 2022).

[189] V. Vladimirov. Teatral'noye "segodnya." *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstv* 1922, No. 1, 33.

[190] ibid., 36.

[191] NEPman was a catch-all category for the newly emerged 'bourgeoisie' in the NEP era. Not unlike many other "new rich" stereotypes then and now, NEPman was only interested in money and did not understand culture or higher values. Cultural events were places to meet with the peers and to demonstrate one's sophistication and not to civilize and educate oneself. See for instance: E. G.: Sovremennaya operetta. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 5(1032), 11–12.

"NEPman and his wife" in tailcoat and fur came to represent the opposite of the revolutionary going around in (often intentionally) neglected outfit.[192] The NEP was considered to be slowing down revolutionary development in concert life, as the NEPman wanted to hear familiar tunes, "related to pleasant memories of 'the good old' times."[193]

Out of the music genres identified with NEP era, operetta was one of the most intriguing ones. While definitely seen as part of 'light' and 'popular' genres, it was also an art form which was not as directly condemned as foxtrot and jazz, for instance. Instead, several commentators did argue for operetta's legitimate position in the Soviet Union.

The basis for operetta's acceptability was founded on its satirical aspects: some of the 19th century operetta, especially works by Jacques Offenbach, had carried veiled criticism against rulers and music, so theatre critics found legitimation there to preserve operatic tradition.[194] It was equally true for these critics that the history of operetta contained plenty of completely non-political and questionable works which were not needed, and one commentator lamented that it was especially these works which had become standards of Russian operetta theatres: operetta in Russia had not experienced the October Revolution, "not even the February [Revolution]."[195] Nevertheless, these commentators were convinced that it was possible to create a new kind of revolutionary, political and agitational operetta.[196]

Besides agitational and political possibilities, enjoyment and laughter as positive elements were also highlighted by some critics. They argued that besides NEPmen, workers needed places to relax as well, and there was nothing wrong with people going to operetta for pleasure.[197] The strength of operetta was its *dostupnost'*, 'accessibility': its popularity among the workers testified to its "healthy core" and operetta's easily approachable music and dance scenes were "in complete harmony with the needs of a healthy psychological nature."[198] One critic in a regional newspaper welcomed even the "sexual philosophy" of operetta: operetta as a "theatrical [and] musical organization of erotic sensuality" meets the "primal needs of a democratic viewer, strengthening him in his work"

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[192] The revolutionary youth for instance created a dress code of its own, which imitated that of factory workers – whether or not they belonged to the proletariat themselves. For women long hair for instance could be interpreted as "undemocratic." (See Gorsuch 1997.)
[193] Nik. Roslavets: Nash muzïkal'nïy front. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1925, No. 9(31), 2.
[194] Ėm. Beskin: U operetochnoy afishi. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 26(1053), 7–8; Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operettï. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 36(1063), 10–11; V. Melik-Khaspabov: Plain talk (Ob operette). *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1925, No. 3(25), 9.
[195] Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operettï. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 36(1063), 10.
[196] ibid.; see also Sadko: Operetta Mardzhanova. *Izvestiya* 23 March 1922, 4; I. D.: "Maskotta" v ėksperimental'nom teatre. *Pravda* 2 October 1924, 7; Vadim Shershenevich: Pora podumat'. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1924, No. 25(999), 9–10; Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operettï (I. Turkel'taub). *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 40(1067), 5–6.
[197] Vadim Shershenevich: Pora podumat'. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1924, No. 25(999), 9–10; Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operettï (N. Smirnov). *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 38(1065), 8.
[198] Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operettï (I. Turkel'taub). *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 40(1067), 5–6.

and it could thus be considered even as a sanatorium of its kind.[199] This interpretation received however a scathing response from a writer in the nationwide journal *Zhizn' iskusstva*.[200]

Remarks on openly sexual themes of operetta but even more so in relation to foxtrot – and particularly condemnation of these on the pages of journals[201] – remind of the discussion of freedom under the Provisional Government, where removal of censorship brought erotic-coloured stories to the market (see Section 2.1.1). Indeed, the 'liberation' which NEP brought was received by some as a step backwards, which merely liberated the newly emerging class of NEPmen to earn money with *khaltura* and the proponents of "free" or "pure" art to continue their work unhindered by political demands.[202] Through NEP the frictions around the concept of freedom – between its liberal, revolutionary and socialist interpretations – continued beyond the revolutionary years.

Not all were convinced however that even a new kind of operetta would save the genre. The pseudonym Ye. G. deemed operetta to be a calculated attempt to serve those viewers who wanted to stay on track with the latest fashion in Europe, but operetta did not even serve this purpose well for the NEPmen, because the Viennese waltzes, "which your parents listened to and which [Emmerich] Kálmán now whispers to you" were not anymore on European stages.[203] Some saw that the satirical aspect of operetta was overemphasized, and even more troubling was laughter and more broadly its target. The critic V. Bebutov stated that only the "ingrained way of life (*bït*)" could be allowed to be laughed at, whereas ridiculing the young foundations of Soviet life would be counter-revolutionary.[204] Similar kinds of social problems were seen by V. Rut, who, after seeing Rudolf Nelson's operetta, predicted that after a few similar kinds of shows hooliganism could not be avoided.[205]

Nevertheless, operetta did establish itself in a recognized position in the Soviet Union. Operettas by Nikolay Strel'nikov from the late 1920s and by Isaak Dunayevsky and Boris Aleksandrov from the mid-1930s onwards gained lasting popularity and created a basis for a new Soviet operetta tradition.[206] The genre merged with the film industry with the appearance of sound films in the 1930s as the composers who wrote music for operettas often wrote music scenes for films as well. These tunes became immensely popular across the Soviet Union.

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[199] The theatre critic M. Romanovsky in the newspaper *Kharkovskiy proletariy,* cited in Maska: Seksual'naya "filosofiya" operettï. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 32(1059), 16.
[200] ibid.
[201] E.g. Gayk Adonts: Novïy vid pornografii, Tanets fokstrot [New form of pornography, the dance foxtrot]. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 37(910), 1–2.
[202] See Khrisanf Khersonskiy: Pis'ma iz Moskvï. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 5(880), 7–8; Voprosï khudozhestvennogo obrazovaniya. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 21(896), 1; Oktyabr' v iskusstve. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1925, No. 1(23), 5.
[203] Ye. G.: Sovremennaya operetta. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 5(1032), 12.
[204] V. Babutov: O putyakh sovremennoy operettï. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1926, No. 5(37), 5. The point is rather accurate, at least if we consider the sensitivity at which authoritarian rulers tend to react on satire directed at them.
[205] V. Rut: "Korol' veselitsja"—V operette Mardzhanova. *Pravda* 25 March 1922, 4.
[206] Tomoff 2018, 36.

In 1939, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* had an article on operetta which well reflects the development of discussion on operetta since the 1920s. The article notes the "light satire" of 19th-century operetta but does not evaluate its significance from this political perspective.[207] It condemned, however, the attempts to rewrite revolutionary librettos to pre-revolutionary operettas in the early years of the Soviet Union due to the mismatch between text and music – a criticism which was often raised in the 1920s as well.[208] Discourse of 1930s Soviet cultural policy can be seen in the article's criticism of the "formalistic" productions by Alexander Tairov in the 1920s and the approval of Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko's direction, which "returned to the genre of operetta its musical origins, [its] realism [/truthfulness, *realistichnost'*]."[209] With these conceptualizations, and realism in particular, operetta was discursively incorporated as a natural part of Soviet cultural history.[210]

Within the broader political and economic changes of the NEP era, the Soviet music life organized itself around different organizations, which on their part reflected the (music) political tensions of the time. The militancy and warnings of the "enemy within", which Lenin had spelled out on launching the NEP became part of the discourse on music as well. Different music organizations, which for instance took care of the publishing of different journals devoted to music, considerably influenced the music political discussion of the 1920s, and it is these organizations to which I now turn.

2.2.3 The Music Organizations ASM, RAPM and ORKiMD

While the trade unions and Proletkul't discussed above aimed for clear organizational structures and more direct influence on the Soviet cultural policy, it was the more loosely organized programmatic organizations which came to define the ideological discussions on music in the 1920s.

The most distinguishable groupings of 1920s Soviet musical life were the *Association for contemporary music* (ASM), the *Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians* (RAPM), the *Association of Revolutionary Composers and Musical Activists* (ORKiMD) and *Prokoll*.[211] These groups were distinguishable because they had a formal organization, they published their own journals at least periodically, they published manifesto(s) and attempted to distinguish themselves from their

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[207] I. Kleyner 1939.
[208] See Vadim Shershenevich: Pora podumat'. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1924, No. 25(999), 9–10; Diskussiya: Sovyetizatsiya operetti (I. Turkel'taub). *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1925, No. 40(1067), 5–6
[209] I. Kleyner 1939.
[210] The concept of realism, which became one of the key concepts of the Soviet cultural policy in the 1930s will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
[211] The Russian names, from which the acronyms are derived were *Assotsiatsiya sovremennoy muziki* (ASM), *Rossiyskaya assotsiatsiya proletarskikh muzikantov* (RAPM), *Ob"edineniye revolyutsionnikh kompozitorov i muzikal'nikh deyateley* (ORKiMD) and *Produktsionnyi kollektiv* (Prokoll). RAPM was upon founding in 1923 simply APM and it became known in the end as VAPM (All-Russian APM, or *Vserossiyskaya* APM), but I use only the abbreviation RAPM, analogically to the proletarian writers' association RAPP, for the sake of consistency. The translation 'musical activists' in the name of ORKiMD might be a bit misleading, because the Russian word *deyatel'* does not bear the meaning of political activism as the English word. Besides 'activist', *deyatel'* could be translated as 'worker.'

neighbouring and/or rival organizations. In practice, their activities were not as separate as the occasionally fierce debates might suggest, because all the participants depended on the same funding, employment and educational structures of the state, namely the conservatories, the publishing and research institutes, and Narkompros. Composers and musicians from different groups could perform in joint concerts and research institutes employed music specialists regardless of them being members of different organizations. On the other hand, because of sparse funding for instance for publications, different groups had to assert their own importance in relation to others in order to secure their position, resulting in the condemnation of opposing opinions and the consequent sharpening of divisions.[212] This organizational background was crucial for the formation of Soviet music political discourse.

The dynamic between these organizations is commonly depicted as ASM representing modern music and contacts with the newest European art music, and others being so-called proletarian organizations of different ideological sharpness. While RAPM criticized ASM heavily, in their journal ORKiMD published writings with a broader range. Prokoll on the other hand was the proletarian student organization of the Moscow Conservatory, which focused especially on demanding stronger ideological orientation in higher music education.[213] The division between ASM and proletarian organizations is a useful starting point, but on the other hand, differences within different proletarian organizations as well as within ASM make this division inadequate.

To start with ASM, it was mainly a Moscow-based organization around a few key persons: the composer Nikolay Myaskovsky, and musicologists Pavel Lamm, Viktor Belyayev and Vladimir Derzhanovsky. In Leningrad, Boris Asafiev was an important contact and proponent of ASM's aims, though the advocates of modern music in the two cities did not always see eye to eye.[214] ASM was officially formed in 1923 and with Pavel Lamm heading the music section of the state publishing house Gosizdat, it could start publishing its own journals.[215] The critic Leonid Sabaneyev and the composer Nikolay Roslavets began collaboration with ASM as well, and when Roslavets was also appointed to a high position in Gosizdat, he could further the publication of writings of his ASM colleagues as well as his own music.[216] Soon after the founding of ASM it became the Soviet branch of the newly-founded International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), which opened up possibilities for international

[212] Cf. Frolova-Walker & Walker (2012, xiv-xv), who suggest that if the resources would not have been so meagre, the rival organizations ASM and RAPM could have perhaps lived side by side, because their aims and interests were in the end quite different.
[213] There was also a faction of "red professors" in the Moscow conservatory.
[214] On the formation of ASM, see Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 85–86 and on the formation and quick dissolution of the Leningrad ASM or LASM, ibid., 159; Viljanen 2017, 506–511.
[215] ASM journals included *K novïm beregam* (*Towards new shores,* April-August 1923), *Sovremennaya muzïka* (*Contemporary music,* 1924–1929), *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* (*Musical culture,* 1924) and the Leningrad-based *Novaya muzïka* (*New music,* 1926–1928).
[216] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 101–102.

travel as well as the exchange of sheet music between the Soviet Union and Western Europe.

The most active writers of ASM were Belyayev, Derzhanovsky, Asafiev, Roslavets and Sabaneyev, and their texts will be discussed throughout the following chapters. What came to define the ASM music ideological position at least for its critics were the counterattacks by Roslavets and Sabaneyev against a 'proletarian' understanding of music in the short-lived ASM journal *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* in 1924. Roslavets, defending against accusations by the proletarian journal *Muzïkal'naya nov',* deemed the proletarian musicians' demands to turn to folk songs and classical symphonic forms as "reactionary." He defended the position of professional composers in order to avoid the damaging influence of pre-revolutionary art and create truly new art for the new society.[217] But what became an even easier target for ideologically conscious musicians was when Leonid Sabaneyev wrote that:

> [- -] music IS NOT IDEOLOGY [- -] but is purely organizations of s o u n d s. [- -] Music in itself does not contain any ideology and it cannot do this, because it is a clear fact, that music DOES NOT EXPRESS IDEAS, does not express "logical" structures, but has its own sounding world of its own musical ideas and its own musical logic.[218]

Although this excerpt is far from representative of Sabaneyev's complex and changing thinking on the relationship between music and ideology, as will become clear in the following chapters, it made Sabaneyev and through him ASM a clear target for criticism on ideological grounds.[219]

In terms of music, ASM performed and wrote about several leading composers from Western Europe such as Alban Berg, Paul Hindemith, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Franz Schreker and Alfredo Casella, and many of them visited the Soviet Union as ASM's guests. The personal triumph for Boris Asafiev was the Soviet premiere of Berg's expressionist opera *Wozzeck* in Leningrad in 1927 attended by the composer.[220] Out of the composers associated with ASM, Myaskovsky continued to pursue the symphonic tradition of Russia altering between experimental and traditional styles, and Roslavets continued his already pre-revolutionary theoretical experimentation away from traditional diatonic music. ASM also attracted many talented composers of the younger generation, such as Aleksandr Mosolov, Vissarion Shebalin and Dmitri Shostakovich. Experimental music as well as theoretical emphasis made ASM a suitable target for accusations of *formalism* – a concept which the proletarian musicians adopted in order to criticize ASM in the same way as the proletarian literature organization RAPP had criticized the formalistic school of literature. In

[217] Dialektik [N. Roslavets]: O reaktsionnom i progressivnom v muzïke. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 45–51; Dialektik [N. Roslavets]: Po povodu… (Proletariat i utonchennost'). *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 2, 147–148.
[218] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 9. Emphases original.
[219] For instance L. Lebedinskiy: Beglïm ognem. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 8, 13–18; Nekotorïe voprosï muzïkal'noy revolyutsii. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 4, 3–13.
[220] Discussed for instance in Taruskin 1997, 89–90; Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 181–182.

the 1930s, formalism became the counter-concept for ideologically appropriate socialist realism.[221]

The proletarian organizations on the other hand had less willingness or, in many cases, less expertise to discuss merely "formal" questions of music or compose music, which would show new ways for revolutionary art. Instead they mainly focused on criticizing ideologically suspicious music and institutional structures, which seemed to cling to the pre-revolutionary past. As a result, proletarian musicians more often defined what was not ideologically suitable but did not have much to say about what new music was suitable for revolutionary society, except to demands to "approach the people" or seeking inspiration from revolutionary events. An illustrative example of this was the tenth-year anniversary of the October Revolution, when major works were published to honour the jubilee. These included Roslavets's cantata *October,* Mosolov's suite from the ballet *Steel* (one movement being the famous *Iron foundry*), Leonid Polovinkin's *Prologue* and Shostakovich's 2nd symphony "*To October*" – all by composers more or less associated with ASM. The proletarian version of the anniversary composition was an unfinished collage for October by the Moscow conservatory's organization Prokoll plus lists of suitable repertoires for local choirs and orchestras for marking the anniversary.[222] The situation in music was thus different with the proletarian organizations in relation to literature and visual art, where artworks comparable in scale were produced to counter modernist influences. While the proletarian organizations in music pictured revolutionary music as large in scale and monumental, their own output focused mainly on agitation songs and they could not match the symphonies, operas and ballets composed by leading ASM composers of the time.

RAPM was formed officially in March 1923, and in October 1923 it began to publish its journal *Muzïkal'naya nov'* (*Musical virgin soil*).[223] Already in the first announcement by the group, RAPM's leaders emphasized connection with the proletarian literary organizations such as *Molodaya gvadriya* (*The young guard*) and *Kuznitsa* (*Forge*), and the choice of name for its journal following the literary journal *Krasnaya nov'* (*Red virgin soil*) further emphasized this connection.[224] Communist musicians saw the need for the new organization, because for them music was lagging behind in ideological development in comparison to other arts, there was a lack of Marxist methods in analysing and teaching music, the material for amateur music organization was inadequate and the NEP culture attracted ideologically wavering youth.[225] What became the main target of RAPM's

[221] The concept of formalism will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.
[222] K 10-letiyu Oktyabrya. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 5, 6. On the collage *Put' Oktyabrya* ('The path of October') see Edmunds 2000, 214–216. A contemporary account of the work was given by Nikolay Vïgodsky (*Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1928, 11, 48–50), and this text has been translated into English in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 210–213.
[223] *Muzïkal'naya nov'* was published in 1923–24. Other RAPM journals included *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* (1926), *Proletarskiy muzïkant* (1929–32) and *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* (1930–32), and another proletarian music group ORKiMD's published the journal *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* (1926–29).
[224] See *Pravda* 26 August 1923, 6. The association was at that point called APM – Association of proletarian musicians.
[225] ibid.; Nashi zadachi. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 5–6.

criticism was the old-fashioned musical elite protected by outdated institutional structures and bourgeois ideology and, as noted above, "formalists," who wrote music inaccessible to people. Yet, throughout the 1920s RAPM was not able to capitalize on its political potential in the same extent as RAPP in literature because of its lack of production of new music, its internal strife and the lack of support from political leaders.[226] As a result of inner dividing lines, a group of musicians, including a few founding members, left RAPM already in 1924 and in 1926 formed ORKiMD with its own, less polemic, journal.[227] RAPM constantly struggled to publish its own journals, and it was not until the turn of the 1920s and 1930s when, in the slipstream of RAPP's domination, that the proletarian organization of music gained more influence, and domination, in music discussion.[228] This did not last long because in April 1932 the party dissolved all artistic organizations, instructing that centralized artistic unions needed to be formed and criticizing the proletarian art organizations for "leftish deviation."[229]

To complicate the picture of clearly distinguishable proletarian organizations and ASM as their counterpart, a few composers who do not fit the dichotomy need to be mentioned – namely Aleksandr Kastalsky and Arseny Avraamov. Kastalsky (1856–1926) was the leader of the pre-revolutionary Moscow Synodal Choir and he studied extensively both the religious and secular vocal tradition of Russia. While the Synodal Choir had to be disbanded following the October Revolution, Kastalsky could continue working with choirs in the choral faculty of the Moscow conservatory, and as RAPM emphasized low-threshold communal music making and therefore also choir singing as well as the folk tradition, their common interests were easy to combine.[230] On the other hand, Kastalsky had inspired several modern Russian composers by reviving old Russian chant and choir techniques, and the music historians acknowledged Kastalsky's central role in his work collecting and publishing this material.[231] Thus in Kastalsky there was a widely renowned specialist of religious music who worked closely with RAPM, which at the same time spoke against all kinds of

[226] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012; Nelson 2004.
[227] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 135–138.
[228] The period 1928–32 has been depicted as "cultural revolution" (Fitzpatrick 1974a) or "the great break" (David-Fox 2015, 11), when the communist party with Stalin as its established leader took a clearer position in relation to the arts and granted the proletarian organization its political and material support. 1928 saw an end to NEP and the beginning of the first five-year-plan and collectivization of farms. Before that, the party had restrained from taking sides in aesthetic battles and claimed for instance a "tactful" attitude towards so-called fellow travellers (*poputchiki* – meaning non-communist artists willing to cooperate with the Soviet state, see Section 4.1.1). Frolova-Walker & Walker (2012, xvii, 261–262) question how much even this phase granted power to RAPM. The party support remained weak and RAPM could not extend its influence too deep to institutional structures for instance in conservatories and theaters. The most concrete advantage for RAPM was the absence of ASM (practically dissolved in 1929), the re-joining of other proletarian organization to RAPM and dominance in the publication of music journals in 1930–31.
[229] This so-called April 1932 resolution will be discussed in Section 4.1.1.
[230] See Edmunds 2000.
[231] See for instance: Igor' Glebov: Kastal'skiy (vmesto nekrologa). *Sovremennaya muzika* 1927, No. 19, 234–235.

remnants of the past in the new revolutionary era – and against religion in particular.

Arseny Avraamov (1886–1944) on the other hand represented completely different style from Kastalsky. Avraamov had been one of the central figures of Proletkul't, but after its practical dissolution his 'proletarian' views about music did not gather much sympathy from the RAPM or other proletarian music organizations. Out of the composers of the Soviet 1920s, it is probably Avraamov who could be most easily called an 'avant-gardist,' if we understand the concept in its typical meaning as a sharp and even violent breakaway from tradition and creation of completely new soundscapes. Avraamov demanded for instance "breaking the neck" of pre-revolutionary aesthetic theory[232] and the destruction of every piano in the country, because they are confined by equal temperament.[233] He studied microtonality not only as a way to broaden the musical space, but to use it to create completely new structures for conceiving music. But the most famous of Avraamov's undertakings was the *Symphony of Sirens* (*Simfoniya gudkov*) – a work to be performed in cities and including for instance factory sirens, artillery, ships' cannons, and machine guns with the composer himself conducting the work from the top of a mast with flags and a telephone. This work was performed in Baku in 1922 and in Moscow in 1923 – the latter being a failure and the first one's "success" being also perhaps more a myth than reality.[234]

Polemicizing the understanding of Russian musical avant-gardism in western scholarship, at the end of the 1990s Richard Taruskin already questioned the view of ASM being Russian music's avant-garde movement of the 1920s and the proletarian hegemony of the late 1920s being an end of the avant-garde.[235] He instead called the members of ASM "traditional maximalists" and "elite modernists," who got so much sympathy in western scholarship because it was a movement which openly went shoulder to shoulder with European modernism. For Taruskin, it was RAPM which in its countercultural and militant attitude

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[232] A. Avraamov: Chto delat'? *Muzikal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 9, 21. The RAPM editors of the journal, although publishing the article, saw it better to add to the footnote that it is for provoking discussion, thereby dissociating the journal from Avraamov's opinions.
[233] Nelson 2004, 27.
[234] See the excellent article by Daniel Schwartz (2020), where the author demonstrates that the image of the successful Baku performance lies on depictions of Avraamov himself and are not supported by the few remaining contemporary comments. Avraamov's published plans of the work have been taken as a depiction of an actual performance in the research literature. In reality the substantial lack of ear-witnesses forces us to consider how much of the work was actually performed, and if different parts operate so that some-kind of themes (for instance, *Marseilles* as was planned) could be heard, or did the "audience" actually hear anything other a than few isolated cannon salvoes. (Schwartz 2020.) The reconstructed version of the work using recordings and audio sampling can also create an image of an actually occurred event (available in YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kq_7w9RHvpQ&t=1s accessed 12 January 2021).
[235] This view was epitomized in Larry Sitsky's (1994) *Music of the repressed Russian avant-garde, 1900–1929*.

represented the avant-garde.[236] Although we might disagree about labelling RAPM as avant-gardist because so many of its members showed affinity with pre-revolutionary aesthetics, Taruskin's depiction is quite fitting if we include Avraamov in a broader understanding of 'proletarian music.' In comparison with moderate experimentations of ASM composers, Avraamov's views seemed considerably more radical.

As with Kastalsky, there was one dimension in Avraamov's work which did appeal to the broad range of music professionals, that is practical work around the folk music tradition. Avraamov might have had slightly different views on the purpose and theoretical value of this work, because he saw it for instance as a way forward from the "suffocating" 12-tone system.[237] But the practical value of his work on collecting folk music as well as his sharp views against any kind of "falsification" of the folk music material by first cutting the material and then adding decorative "primitive" elements, resonated with the discourses of the time which denounced national romantic misrepresentation of 'authentic' people's culture.[238] Therefore even if Avraamov's views on the proletarian revolution of music might have been too extreme for both RAPM as well as ASM, he was not an 'outsider' in Soviet music discussions either. What is more, Avraamov worked in the 1920s in the same Narkompros central organs as Myaskovsky, the respected theoretician Boleslav Yavorsky, the central figure of the Moscow Conservatory's "red professors" Nadezhda Bryusova and the old guard piano professor Aleksandr Goldenveizer[239] – again highlighting how musicians from apparently different factions worked together.

Although we need to be careful when representing Soviet musical life of the 1920s through quarrelsome organizations and acknowledg links and co-operation between different groups, ideological differences between musicians were real as well. We can chart these differences by returning to the conceptual focus of this chapter and see how different kinds of understanding of *democracy* continued to mark disagreement on revolution, music and politics in the musical sphere.

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[236] Taruskin 1997, 84–93. This view echoes Groys's understanding of Soviet avant-gardism as an assimilation of the cultural and the political (Groys 2011[1988]). Taruskin's point was important in its time not so much because of its (perhaps inaccurate) depiction of RAPM, but more because of the depiction of ASM as an elite organization. Seeing the members of ASM as 'victims of proletarian repression' is even more questionable, when considering the 1930s as this elite re-emerged quickly after the proletarian organizations were criticized by the party in April 1932. The Composers' Union became practically an interest group of this elite. See Tomoff (2006) and Mikkonen (2009).
[237] Arseniy Avraamov: Fol'klor i sovremennost'. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 22, 286.
[238] See for instance Arseniy Avraamov: Muzïkal'nïy "urozhay." *Rabis* 1927, No. 9, 6–7.
[239] Nelson 2004, 128.

2.3 Negotiating Democracy in Music

This section looks more closely at the use of the concept of democracy in discussions about music and it does so in two separate cases. The first is an open polemic rejecting the value of 'democracy' in art and music by ASM writer Leonid Sabaneyev. Sabaneyev's position with his emphasis on music professionals was here less surprising, but the reply he received from the proletarian side sheds light on peculiarities related to Soviet discussion of democracy and art. The second case is the orchestra without a conductor, *Persimfans,* whose contemporary and later 'democratic' reputation both look less than straightforward when put into the context of the contemporary discussion around the concept of democracy.

Before moving to these cases, however, it is useful to contextualise the following discussion with an authoritative interpretation of Soviet democracy, namely an encyclopaedia entry from the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* (*Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, henceforth *BSE*). The volume with the entry 'democracy' in the first edition of the encyclopaedia appeared in 1931, and it begins with a few sentences on the concept's origins in ancient Greece. From there it moves quickly to more contemporary definitions of the concept and cites Lenin, who emphasized that there is not at the moment "pure democracy" or "democracy in general," but only democracy as a result of the bourgeois revolutions, i.e. "bourgeois democracy."[240] The text takes Lenin's work *State and revolution* (1917) and its readings of Engels as its main authority, arguing how only the proletarian revolution will lead bourgeois rev-olution to its end goals, including to the highest form of democracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Earlier bourgeois revolutions were on the right track, but as the bourgeoisie gained what it needed from the revolutions, especially the separation of politics from the economy, it focused on preserving its own interests. At the critical moment, if the workers by employing "freedoms of [bourgeois] democracy" become a real threat to the bourgeoisie, it will not hesitate to rely on dictatorial means. The example chosen at the time of the entry was appropriately enough from fascism. As socialism is strengthened to communism and the state dies out, there will be a "leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom" as Engels depicted it, and the concept of 'democracy' becomes an unnecessary relic and disappears.[241]

What made the concept 'democracy' ambivalent in the Soviet context were the many transition periods the society was supposed to go through. First from pre-revolutionary Russia to bourgeois democracy, then to a "higher form of democracy" in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat before reaching a "bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie,"[242] and, eventually, the withering away of the state and the concept 'democracy' with it. In the end, the Soviet Union remained in a transition period towards communism throughout its

[240] P. Stuchka: Demokratiya. *BSE* 1931, Tom 21, 250.
[241] ibid., 250–253.
[242] ibid., 253.

existence. The role and form of art and music in these different phases of 'democracy' were one critical point, and another one was the question of whether 'democracy' was a positive or negative concept itself. The following examples demonstrate this complexity in terms of music discussion.

2.3.1 Charting the Relationship between 'Democracy' and 'Revolution' in Music

David Priestland recognized four elements of Soviet democracy, which derived partly from writings of Marx and Engels and partly from Russian populist socialist thinking. These were: 1) direct democracy in opposition to liberal democracy; 2) surviving at least until the death of Stalin, a moralistic view of politics, where the working-class is seen as more 'democratic' than others; 3) inseparability of politics and economics, resulting in the people's control of the economy; and 4) local, workplace democracy, meaning the possibility for workers to intervene in management of workplaces.[243] The second point about the moralistic view of politics, where 'democracy' is equated with the proletariat, was especially important in relation to the discussions about music. This was the point where ideological borderlines were drawn between those emphasizing the role of music professionals and those convinced of the superiority of the proletariat to guide musical revolution as well.

Several members of the music intelligentsia saw that expertise should not be ignored when the music and art of the future society will be built. This view affected the understanding of 'democracy' in music, and the influential critic and writer from ASM, Leonid Sabaneyev, tackled the concept in his own polemical style. His takes and particularly the answers he received open up the difficulty of incorporating the concept of democracy into music.

In 1924, Sabaneyev warned how principles of democracy and "broad accessibility" (*obshchedostupnost'*) are being confused with Marxist aesthetics. Just like in industrial production, the proletariat, according to Sabaneyev, does not need from music any kind of primitivism or amateurism, but high technical quality.[244] Sabaneyev developed this argument further in his book *Music after the October* (*Muzïka posle Oktyabrya*) published in 1926, where he separated the "democratic" and "demagogic" approaches to politics and music. Democratic criteria, according to Sabaneyev, are not at all compatible with Marxist methods, because a consistent Marxist can never content himself with what is "suitable and pleasing" to the majority in a given historical moment:

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[243] Priestland 2002, 112–113. I should note that while Priestland's observation of these elements of Soviet democracy is useful, they do not give the possibility to speak about Soviet democracy as something separate or opposite to Western liberal democracy. For instance, it can be questioned if liberal democracy has been, is it at the moment or can it be free of "moralistic view of politics," although the elevated moral status is not given to working-class but for example more vaguely to 'the people.' From a conceptual historical perspective, there is not even need to strictly separate "different" democracies, but rather highlight meanings attached to the concept in different contexts, and for this, Priestland offers a good starting point and a working definition.

[244] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 13.

> If it were so, then there would not be any kind of revolution. The entire tactics of communism is not based on what is "pleasing" for the broadest masses, but solely on what corresponds to that *which is recognized as expedient by that leading strike group, which embodies the ideology of the proletariat*. [- -] [it] needs to be accepted that desirable music, which genuinely is in accordance with the idea of the revolution is not music which democratically "pleases" the majority of peasants and red army soldiers, but that, of which we can say that *it should please*.[245]

This view Sabaneyev recognizes as being "demagogic," and it shows to him the ignorance of "democracy." Musical aesthetics coinciding with the revolution should not be expected to derive from the masses but from dialectical Marxist methods, and when this music is recognized, it needs to be propagated, "even, if you prefer, *foisted* a bit" on the masses.[246] This "demagogy" has not been without problems, however, as for example the artists of the "extreme leftish" orientation acted according to it: from the sphere of music, Sabaneyev raised the former leader of Narkompros' MUZO Arthur Lourié as an example of this harmful artistic tendency.[247] What Sabaneyev was expecting was no less than a "genius," who could combine "the greatest achievements of professional proficiency with the broadest comprehensibility (*udoboponyatnost'*)."[248] Thus, even if Sabaneyev was strict about the complete autonomy of music professionals to figure out the question of music most suitable for the ideas of revolution, the result should, in the end, be relatively easily adopted by a broader group than music professionals – after propagation or a bit of "foisting," at least.

It is interesting how after such polemical takes on the concept of democracy Sabaneyev came to a relatively ordinary conclusion about what music is preferable. What is needed is a combination of professional skill and accessibility – a definition, which many would have agreed upon and which lies on the basis of later socialist realism as well. What Sabaneyev seemed to fear the most was that if the proletarian aesthetic views and their 'democracy' (as Sabaneyev understood it) were taken seriously, professional skills of the trained musicians and composers would simply be ignored.

In a response to Sabaneyev from the proletarian side, the editorial of the journal *Music and revolution* referred, as expected, to the ideological and class-based nature of music, thus rejecting Sabaneyev's claims for the non-ideological character of music.[249] Further, the journal questioned Sabaneyev's presumption that the intelligentsia would have higher taste than the masses: even though this might be so with the music specialists, in the "broad masses of intelligentsia's petty bourgeoisie" there is "inertia, routine, musically ingrained tradition."[250] But the most interesting response by the journal concerns the role and nature of the proletarian masses in relation to revolution. Sabaneyev claimed both in the 1924 article as well as in the 1926 book that in order to carry out a (political or

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[245] Sabaneyev 1926, 23. Emphases original.
[246] ibid., 24. Emphasis in the original.
[247] ibid., 26.
[248] ibid., 28.
[249] Nekotorïe voprosï muzïkalnoy revolyutsii. *Muzïka i revolyutsiua* 1926, No. 4, 3. The editorial refers in the text both to Sabaneyev's article in *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 8–20 (see discussion above) and the 1926 book.
[250] ibid., 6.

aesthetic) revolution, one should not depend on the ideas or tastes of the masses, because in that historical moment they are reactionary. The journal *Music and revolution* responded to this in a following way:

> In that citation there is a little truth and very much that is completely incorrect.[251] It is true that certain representatives and even whole groups of "masses," as expressed by Mr. Sabaneyev, were reactionary in their inclination. But on the other hand, it is not any less clear that communists won and the proletarian dictatorship has remained not because the Bolsheviks have for nine years held against these reactionary inclined masses with Chinese bayonets,[252] but because in the moment of revolution and during the whole period of the proletarian dictatorship the communist party has relied on the *organized majority* of the working class and peasantry. This does not mean that in the moment of revolution the Bolsheviks had an arithmetic majority. But on the decisive moment in the decisive place they had with them a *decisive* majority, which after that rose all the time and [which] now even Mr. Sabaneyev would hardly suspect.[253]

Whereas Sabaneyev denied the value of the concept of 'democracy' because according to his argument a true Marxist cannot rely on the reactionary views of the majority of the people, this *Music and revolution* editorial reinterpreted the meaning of 'democracy' through another definition of 'majority.' The point is not the "arithmetical majority," but the "organized majority" (*organizovannoye bol'shinstvo*), echoing the problem in the Bolsheviks' rise to power as it depended upon gaining a majority in the Petrograd Soviet and ousting the provisional government with a coup. It is notable that whereas Sabaneyev did not of course question the legitimacy of the October Revolution but instead used it as an example to discredit the whole concept of 'democracy,' this editorial tried to rescue the concept by reinterpreting it. Sabaneyev's stance did not gain popularity, and in 1926 when the book *Music after the October* was published and this whole discussion took place, Sabaneyev had already left for a business trip to Paris from which he did not return.[254]

The discussion above demonstrates the importance of incorporating the prevailing political discourse on music. The broader political discourse also helps us to understand why Sabaneyev's 'anti-democratic' argument did not gain popularity. This talk did not only go against the views of proletarian artists, but increasingly also against the views of the party. Such central figures of the party as Leon Trotsky and Anatoly Lunacharsky had questioned the position of the proletariat as the source of cultural revolution because of their wretched situation after the oppression of the Russian Empire and argued for the role of professional artists, but Trotsky's political position had by 1926 changed considerably.[255] In

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[251] The texts refers here to Sabaneyev's article in *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 14.
[252] Referring to support, which the Bolsheviks received in the Civil War from China. The Whites used this in their propaganda in order to demonstrate the foreign support of the Reds.
[253] Nekotorïe voprosï muzïkalnoy revolyutsii. *Muzïka i revolyutsiua* 1926, No. 4, 7.
[254] More on Sabaneyev's emigration in Section 3.3.
[255] This side of Trotsky's and Lunacharsky's thinking was visible especially in the discussions around the concept of *bït* (life/everyday life/way of life) in 1923, which will be discussed in the chapter 5. Since the late 1925, the intraparty struggle intensified as Stalin gained more power in defining the party line and left Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev into opposition. In October 1926, Trotsky lost his position in the Politburo. (Kornienko 2011, 21–22.)

summer 1925, the party published a resolution concerning literature, where it was stated that the party should help the proletarian writers "to earn the historical right to [literary] hegemony."[256] The question of "fellow travellers" (*poputchiki,* meaning professional writers not committed to the communist ideology) the party insisted to resolve with "tactics and an attentive attitude," by acknowledging both their special skills as well as their ideological hesitation. Although the resolution concerned literature, it was taken as a broader cultural political formulation for all arts.[257]

In comparison to later party resolutions on arts especially in the 1930s, the resolution from the summer of 1925 was still somewhat moderate. Although the proletarian writers claimed to have the historical right to literary hegemony, the resolution also stated that the party should not favour any literary grouping over another and allow "free competition."[258] A restrained attitude towards non-communist writers was promoted as well. In spite of this, the resolution testifies to the gradual change from ideas of "free competition" or, as Sheila Fitzpatrick dubbed it, the Party's "soft line" in the arts, towards more open support for proletarian artists.[259] One consequence of this in the field of music was that the stance held by Sabaneyev and Nikolay Roslavets, according to which the task of bringing the revolution to music is granted to music professionals and others will follow when their 'cultural level' is high enough, lost the rest of its political validity. It can be questioned how much political value the stance had in the first place – perhaps some, because it was to an extent shared by some of the leading Bolsheviks in the first half of the 1920s, by Trotsky and Lunacharsky for instance, as mentioned above.

Sabaneyev's rejection of the concept democracy cannot be said to have been typical even among his ASM colleagues, though ASM's opponents used Sabaneyev's writings to discredit the whole organization. Members of the ASM did without a doubt value musical expertise but leaving the professional composers to handle the musical revolution in their own narrow circles was not necessary or even desirable. Instead, the musical elite more often regarded it as necessary to promote both old and new music by explaining its meaning to non-musicians, "educating" or "cultivating" the people – echoing the 19th century tradition of musical enlightenment.[260] In relation to this, modern compositions

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[256] The resolution was published 1 July 1925 both in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. An earlier draft of the resolution close to the final version in Artizov & Naumov 1999, 53–57. Discussions on the resolution e.g. Fitzpatrick 1992, 109; Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 132.
[257] For instance the first issue of the ORKiMD journal *Muzika i revolyutsiya* (1926, No. 1) discussed the meaning of the resolution from the point of view of music.
[258] *Pravda* 1 July 1925. In the commission drawing up the resolution there were Lunacharsky, Nikolay Bukharin, Juozas Vareikis and Fyodor Raskol'nikov from the party leadership and G. Lelevich [Labori Kalmanson] from VAPP (the All-Union Association of Proletarian Writers, of which the Russian Association, RAPP, was formally part of). Final version was formulated by Bukharin, Lelevich and Lunacharsky and there is a mention to ask from Trotsky possible amendments. (Artizov & Naumov 1999, 53.) Artizov & Naumov judge on the basis of the draft and the final version that either Trotsky did not comment the on draft or his comments were ignored (ibid., 738). It is easy to think that these more moderate statements were Lunacharsky's contribution.
[259] Fitzpatrick 1974b.
[260] See Sargeant 2011.

like Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231* (1923) depicting a steam locomotive were of great value for ASM.[261]

Honegger's work created concrete new soundscapes in a way which was easy to comprehend even for non-professionals, and additional political value could be extracted from the positive reception of the piece in Russia. The ASM critic Viktor Belyayev for instance noted "that 'democracy' is a more progressive environment in relation to music than bourgeoisie with its established taste and tendencies towards a 'peaceful' life." This was shown when the Russian audience, which consisted partly of workers, "for whom the rhythm of the movement of the contemporary factory with its monstrous machines is dear, customary and valuable" received this new work with its complicated harmonies and completely new approach in interpreting musical material "easily."[262] Here Belyayev talks about 'democracy' in opposition to 'bourgeoisie,' and unlike in Sabaneyev's interpretation, this 'democracy' shows great understanding of even complex modern music which stems from the novelty, freshness and political awareness of the new ruling class in opposition to the "established taste" of the bourgeoisie. 'Democracy' even in the narrow sense of the 'proletariat' is an opportunity, not a hindrance for new music.

It was this discourse on democracy in music which the members of the ASM needed to refer to because of the changes in the broader cultural political discussions, and the comments questioning the concept of democracy did not surface after Sabaneyev had emigrated in 1926. The "moralistic" definition of democracy, where the proletariat is the superior class and equivalent to 'democracy' itself, became prevalent in the music discussion perhaps surprisingly early. It was only a few years later, in 1928–29, that the cultural policy hardened and began to demand more open "proletarianization" of the cultural sphere. As can be seen from the examples above, the conceptual change had begun to insinuate itself into the discourse on music in the form of 'proletarian democracy' already in the mid-1920s, so the musical intelligentsia had already learned the required definitions by the end of the 1920s.

2.3.2 Persimfans: Democratic Orchestra without a Conductor

The conductorless orchestra known as the Persimfans was and continues to be without a doubt one of the most positively evaluated artistic experiments of the early Soviet Union.[263] The initiative got mainly sympathetic attention from remarkably different kinds of commentators: both modernist and proletarian critics in the Soviet Union spoke warmly about it, and besides being noticed by foreign musician visitors, Persimfans inspired direct emulators

[261] See the laudatory commentaries on the work by Viktor Belyayev and Boris Asafiev in the ASM journal *Sovremennaya muzika* 1926, No. 13–14, 69–78.
[262] Viktor Belyayev: "Pacific (231)" Artura Oneggera. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1926, No. 13–14, 77.
[263] The name Persimfans is an acronym of *Pervïy simfonicheskiy ansambl' bez dirizhyora – First symphonic ensemble without conductor.*

internationally.[264] The aura of a 'truly democratic' musical institution has remained to this day both through positive interpretations of historians[265] and relaunching the original Persimfans project in Moscow in 2008.[266] As has become clear, however, there was more than one interpretation of 'democracy' in the Soviet 1920s, and therefore the democratic nature of Persimfans was a matter of dispute as well.

Persimfans was launched by the professor of the Moscow Conservatory, violinist of the Bolshoi theatre and the former concertmaster of Serge Koussevitzky's orchestra Lev Tseitlin in 1922. The success of the orchestra – which was hard to reproduce in other cities – is often attributed to Tseitlin's talent, contacts with Moscow's leading musicians and significant personal effort.[267] Although Persimfans was poorly funded throughout its existence, Tseitlin succeeded in recruiting his leading colleagues to the orchestra, who were ready to play in Persimfans while maintaining their other posts in orchestras and conservatories. Talented musicians guaranteed the quality of the concerts, and in the turbulent music scene of Moscow, Persimfans was a welcome addition to concert life.

Persimfans was quickly embraced as the symbol of the new, revolutionary and democratic ways of creating art.[268] The political image of the project remained and even strengthened in the upcoming years: in Leipzig, for example, when an imitation of Persimfans was tried out, comments on "advancing communism" were frequently expressed.[269] Against this later reputation, the first manifesto of the orchestra is rather surprising to read. There is not a single mention on the possible ideological or political significance of the ensemble.[270] Instead, the approximately 10 pages are devoted to criticizing the conductor-centred way to understand the work of the orchestra, which removes the independence of professional musicians and mechanizes their playing. The manifesto also claims that conductors often disturb rather than help the musicians to perform.[271] The emphasis is strongly in the artistic and musical achievements, which the new way of working pursued and not in the need to bring ideological and political revolution to the orchestral environment. It seems that it was not the October Revolution which inspired the formation of such an

[264] Similar experiments were made for instance in Leipzig and New York (Eckhard 2020, 272–273), and within the Soviet Union, parallel orchestras without conductors were set up for instance in Leningrad, Kyiv, Odessa and Baku (Stites 1989, 138). None of these were long-lived, however.
[265] See especially Stites 1989, 135–140.
[266] https://www.persimfans.com
[267] Schwarz 1983; Stites 1989, 136–137.
[268] Anton Uglov: Eshchyo o Persimfanse. *Izvestiya* 24 October 1923, 7; O. D. Kameneva: O-vo druzey simfonicheskogo ansamblya. *Izvestiya* 26 April 1924, 5; L. Sosnovskiy: Vzbunto-vavshiesya protiv dirizherskoy palochki (K yubileyu 1-go simfonicheskogo ansamblya). *Pravda* 22 February 1925, 7.
[269] Eckhard 2020, 270.
[270] Persimfans' first output *Orkestr bez dirizhyora* was dated on 19 June 1922 and is available in: https://www.persimfans.com/history/archive/manifest (retrieved 26 September 2020).
[271] ibid.

orchestra – an interpretation backed by later claims that Tseitlin had thought about such an orchestra already before the revolutionary years.[272]

Even when Persimfans was evaluated as a positive phenomenon, the commentators often projected their own views and wishes on to the orchestra. Thus, when one of the founding members of RAPM, Sergei Chemodanov, wrote a complimentary text in *Pravda* celebrating the four years of Persimfans' existence, he praised the orchestra's "conquest" of both a wide musical literature and a permanent audience. The way forward lay, however, in approaching the worker-audience, both in terms of programmes and concert locations. Chemodanov acknowledged that this demands sacrifices from the orchestra, but was certain that these "sacrifices for proletarian society (*proletarskoy obshchestvennosti*)" Persimfans was more than ready to make.[273] One of the most visible members of ASM, Vladimir Derzhanovsky, on the other hand, had noted the challenging position of Persimfans a few years earlier. In 1924, Derzhanovsky stated that the orchestra – a great phenomenon of enthusiasm for art – was now withering.[274] Quite aptly for an ASM commentator, the main problem in Persimfans for Derzhanovsky was the inability or unwillingness to seize contemporary music, without which any orchestra could not be "artistically meaningful." According to Derzhanovsky, Persimfans should give in to its principles of playing without a conductor so that it would be able to broaden its repertoire to contemporary music as well.[275]

Thirdly, the politicians saw Persimfans as an ideological project and an expression of new revolutionary ways to organize labour. Upon announcing the new "Society of Friends of the Symphonic Ensemble," which was aimed at supporting the activities of Persimfans, Olga Kameneva highlighted how the working methods of the orchestra were "highly resonant with [our] time."[276] More support for the initiative in the form of the new society was needed, although Kameneva noted that the orchestra's initiators were ready for all kinds of "sacrifices and hardship in the name of idea."[277] This "in the name of idea" is interesting because it rules out possible artistic motivations behind the experiment. For Kameneva, the musicians took upon this laborious task because of ideological reasons, i.e. in order to democratize the authoritarian orchestral institution. The motivation to enhance musical performance and interpretation

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[272] In an interview to New York Times in 1922 , Tseitslin commented that he had dreamed of such an ensemble already for a long time (Tsukker 1927, 131).
[273] S. Chemodanov: Yedinstvennïy v svoyom rode. (K chetvyortoy godovshchine Persimfansa). *Pravda* 25 February 1926, 8.
[274] Vl. Derzhanovskiy: Operno-kontsertnïy front. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 3, 238.
[275] ibid., 238–239. Derzhanovsky admitted that he himself was against the idea of conductorless orchestra, but was a strong supporter of Persimfans, which set up a high-quality orchestra at the time when it seemed impossible for even a first-class conductor with first-class orchestral musicians.
[276] O. D. Kameneva: O-vo druzey simfonicheskogo ansamblya. *Izvestiya* 26 April 1924, 5. According to Persimfans' own evaluation three years later, the friendship society had a vivid start with wide publicity, but its activities quickly cooled down as the board members could not devote time for it because of other obligations or passivity (Tsukker 1927, 89–92).
[277] Kameneva: O-vo druzey simfonicheskogo ansamblya.

in orchestras by adopting working methods from chamber ensembles, where all the members know the score, are able to negotiate about different interpretations and are more responsive to the playing of others, is substituted by ideological motivation.

There was also some outright criticism of Persimfans, though significantly less than expressions of support. There were a few who rejected on principle the idea of an orchestra without a conductor, though this stance suffered from the apparent success of Persimfans' concert.[278] The orchestra was able to recruit the best musicians of the time, especially from the orchestra of the Bolshoi theatre, and the quality of performances seems to have been in accordance with the skills of the orchestra's members. Moreover, at least according to Prokofiev, the notable difference to orchestras with conductors was that Persimfans' musicians took the responsibility to rehearse their parts thoroughly and follow the notes carefully, whereas in typical orchestras there were many who simply played along.[279] Much more common was to claim that the quality of concerts came from the large amount of rehearsal hours, which did not bring any added value to performances: the same could have been achieved with a conductor with significantly fewer practice hours.[280] It was also claimed, as Derzhanovsky did above, that the orchestra had to settle for a more conventional repertoire, because it was not possible to adopt newer works without a conductor.[281] This criticism was mainly raised only at the very beginning of the orchestra project, because Persimfans did include modern pieces in its repertoire early on.[282]

What is of most interest, however, is the discussion about the 'democratic' nature of Persimfans. In November 1922, there were two concerts in Moscow with an identical programme, Beethoven's 3rd and 5th symphonies, performed by the Bolshoi and Persimfans. An interesting addition to the Bolshoi concert was that it was conducted by Oskar Fried – the first foreign conductor to visit the Soviet Union. For what purpose there were two identical concerts with different orchestras in the same week is an interesting question, but there is no need to

[278] For instance the pseudonym Islamey (the critic Nikolay Malkov) stated that in Persimfans conductor is simply replaced by the concertmaster Tseitlin, and the whole phenomenon of "simfans," which was now spreading to Petrograd as well, testified only of poverty of good conductors in Russia. (Islamey: O revolyutsionnom simfansizme i dirizherskom samoderzhavii. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 16(891), 11.)
[279] Prokofiev 2012, 419. Myaskovsky, although sceptical at first, was also pleasantly surprised by Persimfans' performance of his Fifth Symphony in 1922 (Zuk 2021, 196).
[280] L. Sabaneyev: Itogi muzïkal'nogo sezona. *Izvèstiya* 10 May 1925, 6; Sabaneyev 1926, 80–89. Schwarz (1983, 46–47), who adopts this rather critical stance as well, quotes Darius Milhaud giving such comments upon his visit to the Soviet Union. Tsukker replied to Sabaneyev that the stories about huge rehearsal hours of Persimfans were greatly exaggerated (Tsukker 1927, 169–170).
[281] N. Mal'ko: O "Muzïke" i o muzïke, kotoruyu sochinyayut, no ne ispolnyayut. *Muzïka* 1922, No. 1, 11.
[282] These included music by Scriabin, Debussy and Myaskovsky (Tsukker 1927, 41). Persimfans performed Prokofiev's music when the composer visited the Soviet Union, and Prokofiev spoke very positively about orchestra's interpretation of his music (Schwarz 1983, 46–47).

discuss it here.[283] The two concerts provided the possibility for the critic Anton Uglov to compare the performances, and while Uglov claimed that these two approaches were not comparable, he clearly valued Persimfans more on ideological grounds.[284] While Uglov thought that Fried was no doubt "a mage of baton," he was also a "symphonist-analyst," for whom beautiful details dominated everything else. In the performance of Persimfans, on the other hand, the absence of the individual will of the conductor was compensated for by "a collective will, a feeling of artistic solidarity." There were few details, but "the monumentality of the whole rose in its full cyclonic growth. Beethoven was more genuine, was more of himself [- -]."[285] The achievement of sounding genuinely Beethovenian was the greatest compliment a Soviet orchestra could have, as the figure and music of Beethoven was the embodiment of democracy and equality in Soviet discourse.[286] The democracy of Beethoven was in this case achieved collectively, and the great understanding of beautiful details, which Fried represented by his indisputable talent, yielded to higher ideals.

A different kind of democracy was promoted in a criticism by the RAPM journal *Muzïkal'naya nov'* few years later. Pianist and critic Anatoly Solovtsov commented on Olga Kameneva's declaration of support for the activities of Persimfans mentioned above and seized in particular on Kameneva's claim that Persimfans' idea was "highly resonant" with the times. First of all, Solovtsov denied the "revolutionary originality" of the conductorless orchestra: Mendelssohn had already directed some of his Gewandhaus concerts from the concertmaster's seat. [287] For Solovtsov a more crucial point about the "revolutionary nature" of Persimfans was however the idea of a group without a leader. He claimed that the whole division between the individual and collective echoed the outlived individualistic worldview, and contemporary science supported the idea of creating art of masses through an individual (*lichnost'*), resulting in a merged "mass-individual" (*massovo-individual'noye*) artwork. For Solovtsov the evident point of comparison of masses uniting under a single leader was the October Revolution and Lenin. He also noted, in contrast with Uglov's comparison of the two Beethoven concerts above, that the great talent and brilliance of a conductor like Oskar Fried could not be substituted by the talent of all the members of the orchestra, because they cannot merge without a "uniting basis." [288] The following question and answer from Solovtsov summarizes his position:

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[283] Apparently, there was also a Persimfans concert on the *same* evening as Fried's concert, but with different programme. Events resulted in bitter comments on music journals, where the organizers of Fried's visit and the representative of Gosfil blamed each other for overlapping concerts. See Alberich: Takt ili… taktika? *Muzïka* 1922, No. 3, 55–56; Boris Krasin: Moy otvet Alberich'u. *Muzïka* 1922, No. 4.
[284] Anton Uglov: Oskar Frid i "Persimfans." *Izvestiya* 25 November 1922, 4. Anton Uglov was a pseudonym, real name of the critic was Dmitry Kashnitsev (see Raku 2014, 169).
[285] ibid.
[286] See the next section.
[287] Groman: S dirizherom ili bez dirizhera. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 6–7, 30–31. Solovtsov wrote under the pseudonym Groman (Raku 2014, 17–18).
[288] Groman: S dirizherom ili bez dirizhera.

> Why is Persimfan's denial of the significance of work of a talented and brilliant artist, denial of the uniting role of the leader (*vozhd'*), resonant with our times? On the contrary, it seems to me that this peculiar kind of perhaps anarchism, perhaps parliamentarism in music, is not at all close to our times. And Persimfans as a social phenomenon is neither foremost nor revolutionary.[289]

Thus for Solovtsov this phenomenon is not democratic, but closer to parliamentarism and/or anarchism. This statement echoes strongly the Bolshevik understanding of democracy as something fundamentally different from 'bourgeois parliamentarism,' which in its trivial babble is capable only of maintaining the capitalist status quo, as well as anarchism, which does not lead anywhere. In fact, it is through Persimfans that we can see more clearly why parliamentarism and anarchism could be so easily equated in Soviet discourse: it was because of their way of handling polyphony or Bakhtinian heteroglossia in decision-making. While neither parliamentarists nor anarchists would have seen anything in common in their way of acting and thinking, they both emphasized an open way (from their own perspective) for handling different points of view. The way to "represent" in a parliamentary democracy was false for the Bolsheviks because it left the broad masses of people outside decision-making – a point, which by the way was true in the unequal voting system of the Duma of the Russian Empire.[290] Instead of representatives of different population groups, only a representative of an ideology was needed. Just as the orchestra needed only one conductor, who represented the musical idea (interpretation) and through which the whole collective will was embodied, society needed only one leading party and one leading person who embodied the political idea and objectives of the masses.

Research literature agrees that there were no direct ideological or political reasons for Persimfans' dissolution in 1932, but rather it was the constant economic problems which made it impossible for Persimfans to continue.[291] Persimfans was not able to get hold of stable governmental funding so its musicians had to hang on to their more stable positions in other orchestras and/or teaching. Despite this, Stites and Nelson do see strong symbolism in Persimfans' dissolution in the midst of the ascending Stalinism, claiming that even if Persimfans was not direct victim of the new cultural policy, it most likely would have been had it not been already disbanded because of economic reasons.[292] Be that as it may, we also need to take into account conflicting evaluations of Persimfans in the 1920s: though widely recognized as an interesting and even successful experiment, throughout its history the orchestra received a considerable amount of criticism on both artistic and ideological grounds, as has been seen. Instead of being regarded as a widely appreciated

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[289] Почему-же отрицание Персимфансом значения творчества талантливого и гениального художника, отрицание им объединяющей роли вождя – созвучие нашему времени? Наоборот, мне кажется, что этот своеобразный не то анархизм, не то парламентаризм в музыке, ни в какой мере не близок нашему времени. И Персимфанс, как общественное явление, не является ни передовым, ни революционным. (ibid.)
[290] Between 1906 and 1917 the State Duma of the Russian Empire had four different assemblies, and after the Tsar had dissolved the first two Dumas, the electoral law was changed to favour landowners even more than before.
[291] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 270; Stites 1989, 138–139.
[292] Stites 1989, 139; Nelson 2004, 209.

gem of revolutionary culture, Persimfans' working methods, artistic results and even its 'democratic nature' were contested.

It is true that Persimfans as a phenomenon initiated from below stands in contrast to the more clearly institutionalized and state-controlled structures of the Stalinist period, and the fact that orchestra's place was disputed can be taken as an example of the more open cultural political space of the 1920s. On the other hand, it is questionable how widely the musical world was ready to abolish traditional orchestral structures in the first place. While most of the commentators appreciated Persimfans' effort, its 'democracy' was not necessarily shared by all those who enjoyed the orchestra's concerts simply because of their high artistic quality. Therefore, while the symbolic value of Persimfans is strong, we should be careful not to draw too strong analogies between abolishing Persimfans and 'the return of the conductors' on the one hand, and the hierarchical and leader-centred system of Stalinism on the other. Furthermore, if we like to see Persimfans as an experiment in 'democracy' in the early Soviet period, it is important to distinguish between our own uses and understandings of 'democracy,' and those by contemporaries

2.4 Music of Freedom and Democracy from the Pre-Revolutionary Era

Concepts of freedom and democracy were central in legitimizing music by composers of the pre-revolutionary era. As earlier research has demonstrated,[293] these concepts were widely and consistently attached to the music and personality of Beethoven, who will be returned to later in the section. Beethoven was not, however, the only one, whose music was seen somehow to represent freedom or democracy, and the other examples included the composers Johann Sebastian Bach, Franzt Liszt and Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Besides directly using these concepts – especially when concepts like 'democracy' would have probably seemed too far-fetched – similar kinds of values were expressed by using concepts like *social relevance/consciousness* (*obshchestvennost'*) and *citizenship* (*grazhdanstvo*) as well as through connection with the *people* (*narod*) and more general *human quality* (*chelovechnost'*).[294]

There were two ways to argue for the significance of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) to the Soviet state, another one being a somewhat metaphysical notion of the 'truthfulness' (*istina*) of his music, which will be discussed in Section 3.1.2. Another one was a social justification, in which Bach was attached to progressive and socially significant ideas, although not directly with concepts like 'democracy' and 'freedom.'

[293] See e.g. Fairclough 2016; Raku 2014.
[294] The concept of *narod* is discussed in detail in the Chapter 4, and we will return to the broader notion of *common humanity* (*obshchechelovecheskiy*) in Chapter 3.

The key point in justifying Bach's works was that although he and his works were of course deeply religious, he represented protestant reaction against Catholicism, which needed to be interpreted as a progressive phenomenon in its historical context.[295] A quality of 'protest' against dogmas and rules was attached to both his personality and music: Anton Uglov for instance questioned how deeply religious could a man be who was married twice and had nineteen children.[296] In terms of music, Bach's polyphony was "freer in its forms" than the polyphony of the preceding era,[297] he reformed the "musical material itself (tuning),"[298] and his use of folk music "saturated" his musical language with "intonations of German peasantry and the petty bourgeois."[299] His music therefore did not represent the established rule, but he was "the musical ideologue of the Third Estate"[300] and therefore 'revolutionary.' In the end, there was no difference between the social significance of Bach and for instance Beethoven: "They were in the literal sense of the word people of their times, deeply thinking, conscious participants of the social process."[301] By analogy with these "great masters," the contemporary composer should be part of the contemporary social process, to "systematically learn and follow tendencies of development of proletarian ideology, proletarian community (*obshchestvennost'*), and he should feel and live by the interests of the proletarian revolution."[302]

For some composers the connection with post-revolutionary time was easier to create. One key composer of the romantic era, Franz Liszt (1811–1886) had had a notable influence on Russian music as he had visited Russia, had direct contacts with the leading musicians and cultural figures of the time (Mili Balakirev, Anton Rubinstein, Vladimir Stasov) and his compositional style was a direct influence for the 'new Russian school' or the so-called Mighty Five.[303] As Liszt's music remained in the repertoire after the revolutions and composers continued to draw inspiration from his music, Viktor Belyayev from ASM had already become frustrated with Russian music being stuck "under the spell of

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[295] This interpretation was widely shared in otherwise often quarrelsome groups, such as RAPM and ASM. See for instance N. Zhilyaev: Sergey Prokof'ev. *K novïm beregam* 1923, No. 1, 18–19; S. Chemodanov: Muzïka i teoriya istoricheskogo materializma. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 16; E. M.: Paralleli. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 3, 3–5.

[296] Quoted in Fairclough 2016, 29.

[297] S. Chemodanov: Muzïka i teoriya istoricheskogo materializma. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 15.

[298] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Prichinï krizisa "sovremennoy" muzïki. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 9, 4.

[299] Ye. Braudo: Iogann Sebast'yan Bakh. K 250-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya. *Pravda* 21 March 1935, No. 4. One should note that the 'petty bourgeois' (or 'minor urbanite' *melki gorozhanin*) here is is not a derogatory term since this segment of population was considered in the Marxist historical understanding a rising class in Bach's times.

[300] S. Chemodanov: Muzïka i teoriya istoricheskogo materializma. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 15. Other composers who were seen to represent the Third Estate (besides Beethoven) were for instance Mozart and Haydn (see Fairclough 2016, 27).

[301] Proletarskaya revolyutsiya i sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 2, 10.

[302] ibid.

[303] Fairclough 2016, 33. For instance in a concert review from 1922: "he inspired our "mighty five," he guided Wagner, and he needs to considered as the father of program music,—father of Scriabin." (Juriy Sakhnovskiy: Kontsertï pamyati Frantsa Lista. *Izvestiya* 14 May 1922, 4.)

Lisztian romanticism, into which it was once driven by the former "new" Russian national school."[304] But if some saw that it was already high time to move on from Liszt musically, in ideological terms there was not such a hurry. Indeed, a whole list of Liszt's 'revolutionary' views and activities was recounted in the Soviet context, the highlight being the *Revolutionary symphony,* which Liszt began sketching right after the July Revolution of France in 1830.[305] But the temporal context was important to notice here as well: while being no doubt on the side of revolution, he reacted to these events "spontaneously and romantically."[306] Nevertheless, Liszt removed music from the frames of "purely formal art," made it a projection of the "deepest spirits and ideas of humanity," and both his music and his personality were remote from "the patriarchal one-sidedness of Haydn and Mozart and [- -] close to the present, which seeks in the artist not only the artistic, but [also] a human and civic (*chelovecheskogo i grazhdanskogo*) being."[307]

The creation of the 'Soviet Tchaikovsky' is a much researched phenomenon, and the 1930s with its emphasis on national romantic ideals in art have been identified as the turning-point in the unconditional recognition for Tchaikovsky's music in the Soviet context.[308] In the 1920s, the reputation of the composer was hampered both by his close ties to aristocratic circles (most notably the Order of St. Vladimir granted to him by the Tsar Alexander III) and more generally the 'pessimistic' and 'moody' tone of his music. Indeed, critics saw Tchaikovsky and his music as the embodiment of the "historically doomed aristocratic landlord-gentry estate" and the politically and socially reactionary atmosphere of late 19th century Russia.[309] Tchaikovsky was far from forgotten, however, as his music remained constantly in the repertoire of orchestras, and Pauline Fairclough even questions if we can speak of Tchaikovsky's "revival" in the 1930s because he did not disappear at any point from the musical scene.[310]

While it is true that the position of Tchaikovsky's music was not seriously questioned, the ideological controversies of the 1920s came forth not only in the (arguably minor in amount) criticism, but also in the comments defending its place in the Soviet repertoires. Therefore, when Tchaikovsky's music was promoted as suitable for the proletariat because of its "closeness," "comprehensibility" or "beauty," these positive traits needed to be hedged for instance by acknowledging at the same time the "gloomy reaction" of his

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[304] Viktor Belyayev: Fortepiannïy kontsert Mosolova. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1928, No. 30, 143. For Belyayev, Mosolov's piano concerto under review showed boldness in going against this strong current.
[305] An. Drozdov: Fr. List. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 7–8, 37. Liszt finished this work 20 years later, and it became in the end a symphonic poem called *Héroïde funèbre*.
[306] ibid.
[307] ibid., 36–37. Accusation against Haydn and Mozart on "patriarchal one-sidedness" is an interestingly conflicting depiction to their image of "composers of the Third Estate," mentioned above.
[308] See Taruskin 1997; Raku 2014; Fairclough 2016.
[309] M Pekelis: P. I. Chaykovskiy. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 11, 35; L. Sabaneyev: V kontsertakh. *Izvestiya* 24 July 1918, 7.
[310] Fairclough 2016, 19–21.

historical context or the "lacks" in his music.[311] But there was no lack of effort either in making Tchaikovsky not only musically but also socially relevant in the 1920s. Turning the ideological and social meaning of Tchaikovsky's 'gloominess' completely upside down, Yefim Vilkovir argued that this feature of his music characterized the intelligentsia of his time, "separated from the broad social interests." Tchaikovsky's works which reflect depression are a "sheer scream of spirit and have undoubtedly positive social significance [- -] as a reminder and warning of a mortal spiritual disease."[312]

In contrast to other pre-revolutionary composers through whose music democracy and freedom were approached often indirectly, there was one name to which these concepts could be attributed directly. From early on the Soviet society adopted Ludwig van Beethoven and in particular his symphonies as the basis for building Soviet understanding of ideal revolutionary music.[313] The roots for this project were firmly established in European and Russian discussion on the significance of Beethoven's music from the 19th century onwards, which had focused on the development of symphony and sonata form, Beethoven's tragic life history, the broader historical and political turning points of Europe (the French Revolution, Napoleonic wars) and – not insignificantly – the famous hot-tempered personal traits of the composer. All these could be used to portray a Soviet version of freedom and democracy, which did not strive for lukewarm compromise but a fearless fight against the conventional and the traditional – against established orders - with a clear idea which one genial figure holds and personifies.

Beethoven's music was interpreted as representing democracy because the broad masses could approach it relatively easily. Even though the workers would not have had a broad knowledge of history of art music, they might recognize or at least would easily learn to recognize the most famous excerpts from Beethoven's major works – symphonies in particular. Consequently, Beethoven was an ideal composer to begin education (*prosvecheniye*) in the history of European high art.[314] In addition to this, the life history of Beethoven backed the educational purposes, as the tragic stories of a harsh father, who used young Beethoven's talents for personal interests, the gradual deafness and his death in poverty offered (and still offer) a stimulating narrative of a genius confronting insurmountable obstacles yet able to compose astonishing music.[315] And, in contrast to many other composers of his time, for instance Mozart, there was enough documentation to prove that Beethoven was more than once unhappy with the patrons he needed to please in order to make himself a living. While

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311 Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Pyotr Il'ich Chaykovskiy. *Rabis* 1928, No. 42, 4; Al'fred: Muzïka i proletariat. *Izvestiya* 29 December 1923, 4 (the reporter is quoting here Lunacharsky's opening words for concert of music by Tchaikovsky and Mozart).
312 Ye. Vilkovir: M. P. Musorgskiy. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 5, 8.
313 The most extensive discussion on adaptation of Beethoven to the Soviet society is offered by Marina Raku, 2014, 199–314.
314 G.P.: Persimfans v klube im. Kukhmisterova. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 12, 29; V. Kipriyanov: Ot "Yablochka" k Bekhovenu. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 7, 3; L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 3, 9–16.
315 L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 3, 9–16.

Beethoven as any other composer in the 18th- and 19th-century Europe had close ties with and was dependent on the aristocracy who funded composers' work, he poured his anger against some of them in his letters. This of course suited the Soviet context well, with Beethoven seen as bitterly dependent on the class which he had actually "despised."[316] Thanks to this, *Izvestiya* acclaimed already in 1919 the "revolutionary spirit" of Beethoven's music, and named Beethoven himself as "a revolutionary and a great democrat."[317]

There were also events in Beethoven's life, which were particularly well-suited to the Russian context. As is commonly known, Beethoven devoted his third symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte but, after Napoleon had declared himself as emperor, Beethoven withdrew his dedication and named the symphony *Eroica* instead. This story fitted the Soviet and the Russian context particularly well. First, it was an open statement against a ruler who had accumulated all the power to himself ('Beethoven-the-democrat') and secondly, it targeted Russia's historical enemy, Napoleon. Russian history knew in the early 20th century only one "Patriotic War" (*Otechestvennaya voyna*) – the attack of the French Empire on the Russian Empire in 1812.[318] Russia's victory over Napoleon gained immense proportions in Russian historical self-understanding, not least because of Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*, and while it was tsarist Russia, which had beaten Napoleon, Napoleon nevertheless personified the "imperialistic absolutism" of the old world.[319] Moreover, the consequences of the 1812 war led to turbulence in Russia. Following Napoleon's retreating army to Europe and Paris, and seeing alternative forms of governance, it was the educated officers in particular who began to demand alterations to the imperialistic absolutism in their homeland as well. These demands broke out in 1825 in the so-called Decembrist uprising, which in the Soviet discourse was the first major turning point in the 19th-century revolutionary history of Russia (see Section 4.1.2). Beethoven was not in any way linked to these events, of course, but when viewed through Russian history, the value of Beethoven as an anti-Napoleonic figure in the Russian historical context is easy to understand.

Among the works of Beethoven, it was the large-scale works which were most often highlighted. The symphonies as well as the mass *Missa solemnis,* and from the symphonies especially the ninth with the soloists and the choir, answered the revolutionary desire for monumentalism and presenting the

[316] ibid.; S. Chemodanov: O Betkhovene i sovremennosti. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 2, 14–16.; A. Al'shvang: Lyudvig van-Betkhoven. *Pravda* 25 March 1937, 4.
[317] B.: Simfonicheskiy kontsert. *Izvestija* 3 July 1919.
[318] After the Second World War the term Great Patriotic War (*Velikaya otechestvennaya voyna*) was adopted to denote the period of 1941–1945, from the attack of Nazi Germany until the end of war. Still today Great Patriotic War is much more common term than the more 'academic' Second World War (1939–1945), which causes sometimes (perhaps purposeful) misunderstandings on what kind of war(s) the Soviet Union actually waged in WWII. With the term Great Patriotic War, the Winter War against Finland (1939–1940) becomes excluded, for instance.
[319] Ėm. Beskin: Metafizika ili sotsiologiya? *Muzïka* 1922, No. 1, 12.

strength of the masses.[320] Beethoven's symphonies rang in the background when Soviet musicological discourse widened the concept *simfonizm* ('symphonic-ness') to describe qualities of music outside the genre of the symphony.[321] Such qualities as "movement", "dialecticality" and "ideas" instead of formality, and, in the more philosophical language of Boris Asafiev, "unbroken consciousness" and "sounding energy", were associated with the concept *simfonizm*, and Beethoven with his symphonic tradition had established this tradition, which extended farther than simply the genre.[322] It revealed something fundamental in music itself. Beethoven was easily adapted to Soviet music political discourse because he was also the indisputable monument of European art music, and the music professionals gladly promoted him and his music for the new society.

Despite wide glorification, there were voices of criticism as well. Practically no one denied Beethoven's achievements, but some saw that his music nevertheless belonged to the past and that the society at large takes the value of Beethoven as too self-evident and without criticism.[323] Viktor Belyayev boldly questioned the artistic and musical legacy of the French Revolution: to him, there were no French symphonies from the era which would have caught the revolutionary spirit, and pointing to Beethoven in this regard was false because "he was not French and, of course, not such a revolutionary as [people] try to make him in our days."[324] While this was easy to dismiss by critics from the proletarian organizations, who were the most ardent advocates of Beethoven's music, they too faced a problem with the dialectical nature of Beethoven's work. The problem was that due to the philosophy of his times, Beethoven was interpreted as influenced by Hegelian idealistic dialectics – not the later dialectical materialism of Marx.[325] This represented itself for instance in the "naivety" and "utopianism"[326] of his message as well as in the focus of the battle within oneself and not *against* something external.[327] These critical points were not however long-lived – they surfaced in the latter part of the 1920s, but already

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[320] Performances of the Ninth Symphony were organized since the very early years of Soviet Russia, despite the Civil War and miserable economic situation (see M. Miklashevskiy: Zadachi i dostizheniya MUZO N.K.P. *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1919, No. 1, 6). On the Beethoven's monumentalism and relation to masses see N. Strel'nikov: Gosudarstvennaya filarmoniya. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 11(886), 12; Adolf Weissman: Betkhoven dlya mass. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1927, No. 22, 283–285; L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muziku* 1930, No. 3, 9–16.

[321] *Simfonizm* was a central concept for Boris Asafiev, from whom it became part of 'official' socialist realist musicological discourse later on (see Viljanen 2017).

[322] Viktor Belyayev: Ot Betkhovena k russkoy sonate. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1927, No. 21, 260–273; Ėm. Beskin: Betkhoven: K stoletiyu co dnya smerti. *Rabis* 1927, No. 11, 3; L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muziku* 1930, No. 3, 9–16; on Asafiev and *simfonizm*, see Viljanen 2017, 120– & 527–528.

[323] Arseniy Avraamov: Betkhoven. Posle yubileya. *Rabis* 1927, No. 14, 2; Nik. Roslavets: "Nazad k Betkhovenu." *Rabis* 1927, No. 49, 3–4.

[324] Viktor Belyayev: Desyat' let russkoy simfonicheskoy muziki. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1927, No. 24, 27.

[325] See Raku 2014, 255–265.

[326] Ėm. Beskin: Betkhoven: K stoletiyu co dnya smerti. *Rabis* 1927, No. 11, 3.

[327] Raku 2014, 256.

by the 1930s Beethoven's role as representative of 'freedom' and 'democracy' was cleansed from even minor criticism.[328]

Besides claiming that Beethoven strove for and reflected freedom in his music as well as in his personal life, the concept of freedom was directly discussed in relation to his 9th Symphony. It was – and to an extent, still is – a common myth that Friedrich Schiller's *Ode to Joy* (*Ode an die Freude)*, which Beethoven used in the symphony's final movement, was originally *Ode to Freedom* (*Ode an die Freiheit*) and that the poet needed to change it because of censorship.[329] This story was common knowledge already in the 19th century Russia, and in the Soviet Union it was also repeated as historical fact.[330] This served in the Soviet discourse as further evidence of Beethoven dreaming of future freedom and equality of the people, and the logical interpretation was that Beethoven 'sang of freedom' from his particular social position – i.e. from the rising Third Estate against the aristocracy.[331] From there it was easy to see that Beethoven in fact meant revolutionary change, which would eliminate inequality of social classes, and as the particular lines of Schiller's poem coincided with the discourse of internationalism (in particular *Alle Menschen werden brüder* and *Seid umschlungen, Millionen!*)[332], it seemed most logical that it was this particular *socialist* and *communist* revolution of which Beethoven was dreaming.[333] The beginning of the revolutionary change which Beethoven had witnessed, had been suppressed by the originally revolutionary bourgeoisie, which had become a reactionary class after Beethoven's times, and it was the Soviet Union's task to continue the all-European revolutionary path for which Beethoven had written his works. Only a revolutionary society could truly understand Beethoven's music, and thus Beethoven "belonged" to the Soviet Union.[334]

While everyone "knew" that Schiller had meant 'freedom' instead of 'joy', and it was freedom, which inspired Beethoven in particular, everyone knew also that joy was a code word for freedom – the "new words" meant the joy of achieving freedom. This joy-freedom paradigm did however gain a more profound meaning in Soviet discourse. As Marina Raku points out, joy was not in this paradigm simply an emotion, but a *political category*.[335] The upcoming

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328 ibid., 314.
329 Alexander Rehding (2018, 33–34) notes that while it is a myth, since there is not any kind of documentation of such, it seems to preserve due to "long-lived cultural desire for this story to be true." Leonard Bernstein changed the original text by replacing *Freude* with *Freiheit* in the concerts and recording in 1989 to celebrate the fall of the Berlin wall while conscious that no historical evidence supported the theory of "original" *Freiheit* (ibid.) This is a good example of a story, which is too good to be left unused when the situation seems fit.
330 For instance Viktor Belyayev: Desyat' let russkoy simfonicheskoy muzïki. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 24, 30–31. In pre-revolutionary Russia, Vladimir Stasov and Anton Rubinstein popularized this myth (Raku 2014, 276–278).
331 Ėm. Beskin: Metafizika ili sotsiologiya? *Muzïka* 1922, No. 1, 12–14; S. Chemodanov: O Betkhovene i sovremennosti. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 2, 14–16; Ėm. Beskin: Betkhoven: K stoletiyu co dnya smerti. *Rabis* 1927, No. 11, 3; A. Al'shvang: Lyudvig van-Betkhoven, *Pravda* 25 March 1937, 4.
332 *All people become brothers* and *Be embraced, Millions!*
333 L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 3, 9–16.
334 V. Gorodinskiy: Lyudvig van Betkhoven, *Pravda* 12 Dec 1936, 4.
335 Raku 2014, 279–280.

communist society, which would bring complete freedom, would be a society of happiness, and work towards this future would be joyful and inspiring. Joy as a political category gained ground especially from the 1930s onwards during Stalinism (although revolutionary enthusiasm had been emphasized already since the February 1917, as we have seen), and it became an integral element of the official cultural policy of socialist realism in the mid-1930s.[336] Beethoven was part of these changes very concretely, when the 9th Symphony was appropriated to celebrate the new constitution of the Soviet Union in 1936.

Claiming Beethoven as a composer, whose music the proletariat apparently understands as it should be understood, seems today peculiar, and Marina Raku also points out the contradiction between the "universal" value of Beethoven's music and its simultaneous appropriation for the proletariat.[337] There is not, however, contradiction of any kind. The proletariat in Soviet discourse *was* a universal class – the class, which disposes of all class differences. Beethoven belongs to the whole of humankind, but before the universal culture of all humans will be achieved, the proletariat needs to win the class struggle. In the meantime, the proletariat as the vanguard class represents and precedes the all-human culture of the future – and it is this universal culture to which Beethoven belongs.[338]

The Soviet Union was not the first to portray Beethoven as revolutionary or a champion of freedom – nor was it the last. Indeed, it is common to depict Beethoven's role in the history of western art music as revolutionary due to his radical and lasting influence in symphonic structure and sonata form and, I need to emphasize, I have no reason to question this interpretation *per se*. But it is useful to think about what one might mean by 'revolution' and 'freedom' when encountering Beethoven's music in political contexts. A noteworthy example is the anthem of the European Union, which is no other than Beethoven's "Ode to joy" from his 9th Symphony – this time without Schiller's text. On the web page describing the anthem, it is stated for instance that: "**There are no words to the anthem; it consists of music only.** In the universal language of music, **this anthem expresses the European ideals of freedom, peace and solidarity."**[339] And here we have it again: Beethoven singing for freedom – this time only in the context of 'European ideals.'

But was Beethoven not European himself, so what is the problem in taking his music as a symbol of the European Union? He was, of course, European, but overlooking the problem of talking about 'Europe' at the time of Beethoven and when 'Europe' was formulated through the political symbolism of the 20th century European Union, we could ask, was the Soviet Union not part of Europe as well? According to its self-definition, the Soviet Union was not merely part of Europe but the true heir of its glorious revolutionary history – more European

[336] Socialist realism and the articulation of positive emotions in relation to this will be discussed in Section 5.2.3
[337] Raku 2014, 249.
[338] See Section 3.1.2 for universalist discourse in the Soviet cultural politics.
[339] https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/anthem_en (Accessed 1 February 2021, emphases original).

than the 'old Europe' itself. In order to understand this position, in the next chapter we will survey the complex conceptualizations of 'Europe,' 'Russia,' 'West' and 'East' in the Soviet Union as well as in 19th century Russia, and here again discussion about music played its own particular role.

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To summarize, the rather open definitions of 'freedom' and 'democracy' of the early revolutionary years gradually made way for the particular Soviet understanding of these concepts, and the music political discourse approached these conceptualizations from the perspective of its own interests. Situations which demanded positioning the music field in relation to freedom and democracy arose for instance in the case of different institutions and organizations who negotiated their position in relation to the newly formed Soviet state. While the principles behind organizing different (cultural) organizations emphasized freedom of grass-root-level activity, the state did not shy away from putting down different organizations (such as Proletkul't) if they were seen as competing with the state, or if it deemed demands for autonomy (as in the case of main opera theatres) as 'liberal' (i.e. hostile) interpretations of freedom. Democracy in the context of music was even harder to grasp than freedom, and this stemmed from the problematic legitimation of Soviet power itself as it did not rest on majority opinion but on the successful coup of a 'revolutionary vanguard.' This created a question of who represents democracy in music and leads the musical revolution: the majority, 'politically conscious' segment of the population (i.e. the proletariat) or the professional musicians? Similarly, the particular Bolshevik understanding of democracy created space to criticize even such seemingly non-problematic phenomena as the conductorless orchestra, Persimfans, for its "parlamentarism" and "anarchism" – both deemed contrary to Soviet democracy.

The concepts of freedom and democracy did maintain their position as important nexuses of political discussion, and in music, when the fate of the pre-revolutionary musical heritage was disputed, these concepts were used as arguments for preserving practices, institutions and repertoires from the past. Consequently new discourses emerged, as the pre-revolutionary tradition had to be recontextualized as more or less a natural part of the new understanding of these concepts, and besides Beethoven, whose "democratic" quality was fairly undisputed, music from such composers as Bach, Liszt or Tchaikovsky was also adduced as part of the 'freedom' and 'democracy' of the revolutionary society. This necessitated reformulations of the historical position and significance of these composers, but not everything could be re-narrated: religion remained part of Bach's musical legacy and Tchaikovsky did live in a time which, in the Bolshevik understanding of history, was filled with the "gloominess" of the decaying aristocracy. As Soviet music life wanted to maintain its dialogic relationship with pre-revolutionary history, these instances inevitably lessened the radicalness of change in the Soviet Union.

3 RUSSIA AND EUROPE, EAST AND WEST

This chapter looks at how the position of the Soviet Union as next to or part of Europe was conceptualized and how this discussion continued the pre-revolutionary discourses of Russia's place as inside or next to Europe. First, the chapter presents *progress* or *development* (*razvitiye*) as a central concept in these discourses and discusses how in the Soviet context the idea of 'backward' Russia was seen as positive as well, because it enabled more profound revolutionary change. In terms of music, 'backwardness' could also be interpreted from a nationalist point of view, as capitalist 'progress' was seen to have damaged European cultures more extensively while there was still 'purity' left in Russian culture. In contrast to historical development, a discourse about art works of 'universal value' or 'common to humankind' was also promoted in order to promote music from the pre-revolutionary era.

After this, the chapter presents two case studies which shed further light on conceptualizing Russia and Europe in Soviet music discussions. The first one is the fate of cultural institution, which were considered to be on a 'European' cultural level – namely the opera houses. Here we will focus especially on demands to shut down the Bolshoi opera theatre in 1921–22, which were raised to curb the State's expenses. The second case are the reports by Leonid Sabaneyev from his business trip/emigration in Paris, in which he described the cultural decline of the West. Rather than mere political rhetoric directed to a home audience, Sabaneyev participated in a broader and transnational discourse on declining European culture, and while doing so implied that the future of European music lies in the Soviet Union. In reality, Sabaneyev was not any less critical of the musical life of the Soviet Union, and his writings represent a much deeper disappointment with the culture of modernity in general.

3.1 Constructing East and West

3.1.1 Applauding the "Slow Development" of Russia

The concept of *progress* or *development* (*razvitiye*) has been and continues to be one the most central concepts in structuring the relationship between Russia and Europe, West and East, or more generally 'the West' and everyone else. Throughout history the question about Russia's position has been central. Often the position has been that it is different form any other nation in Europe or the West (especially so during the Cold War), but on the other hand there have also been discourses where Russia could be located in Europe or become part of it, as can be perceived at certain historical turning-points (e.g. after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when there was toying with ideas of Russia joining western organizations such as NATO or EU). Nevertheless, the element of otherness is strong here as well, as becoming a member of something (a 'European' or 'Western' group) is different from being there in the first place. France has never had to become a member of Europe or the West – it belongs there by definition.[340]

These boundaries of Europe or the West have often been drawn with the concept and idea of *development*, be that development cultural, political, economic or social. It has been a strong discourse, as it has been used not only by those 'in the West' to describe others but has been adopted as part of self-definition in many parts of the world. The measurement of development and through that relating itself to 'the West' (whether positively or negatively) has been an overt part of the political and cultural self-definition of Russia for centuries, at least since the times of Peter the Great (1672–1725) and the intense intellectual debates of the 19th century. The early years of the Soviet Union offer an interesting modification of this line of thought, and music played a part in these discussions as well. The concept of development and the relationship between Russia and Europe is also one of the most visible examples of historical trajectories which continued into Soviet times and is necessary for understanding the formation of Soviet music and cultural political discourse.

One of the most intriguing ideas from pre-revolutionary discourse about Russia's 'underdevelopment' was the possibility for more radical and thorough political and social change in Russia. This was first formulated by a Russian socialist living in emigration, Alexander Herzen (1812–1870), who suggested in the 1860s that socialism could be realized more successfully in Russia because the specific Russian village communities (*obshcina*) would offer a basis for collective living without drastic change in lifestyle.[341] At the time socialists generally both in Russia and abroad saw the Russian Empire mainly as a stronghold of reaction due to the underdevelopment of the economic system and tsarist autocracy, and therefore not the place for advancing socialist revolution. Marx himself

[340] Perhaps even more than Russia, countries of Eastern Europe have historically been portrayed as an 'in-between' area: both as "less developed" than Western Europe, but on the other hand having "potential for development." (See Schenk 2017).
[341] Oittinen 2007, 35–36.

contributed to the discussion, at first criticizing Herzen's opinion strongly. He stated that there is nothing exceptional in *obshchina* – this form of living has merely disappeared from Western Europe.[342] Later on in his life, after learning Russian and being acquainted with Nikolay Chernyshevsky's (1828–1889) work, however, Marx started to see the Russian context in a more positive light from his point of view. Although denying the specialty of Russia's case, Marx began to accept the revolutionary potential of the society and saw that revolution in Russia and a proletarian revolution in the West could complement each other. In this case, Marx even saw the potential for *obshchina* to serve as communism's point of departure.[343]

The tradition of Herzen, Chernyshevsky and later *narodniks* was continued in the 20th century by the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), whereas the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) criticized their agrarian emphasis. What was common for different socialist groups in Russia was their conviction about Europe's decay – what should be done in Russia was the question where the groups diverged. SR wanted to redistribute the land to peasants, whereas RSDLP aspired to nationalization and industrialization. In 1902 after Lenin had published his *What is to be done?* pamphlet, and 1903 when the RSDLP split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions, Trotsky heavily criticized the Bolshevik side for "Asiaticism" and claimed that the Menshevik faction represented the "European" version of Russian socialism. To its critics what was particularly "non-European" in Bolshevism was the idea of centralizing power to the vanguard revolutionary group, which appeared highly un-democratic and therefore un-European.[344] The Bolsheviks did not oppose the idea of Russia's backwardness, but on the other hand they had a particularly critical view of Europe as well: in 1913, Lenin stated that Europe had become backward and Asia progressive. In Europe the bourgeoisie supported everything "backward, moribund, medieval" and only the proletariat remained a progressive class, whereas in Asia "the bourgeoisie is still alongside the people [*narod*] against reaction."[345] Thus, the Bolsheviks did not have much hope for the revolution to begin in Europe, and after the outbreak of First World War, when large numbers of socialists everywhere aligned themselves with the war, even less remained from this hope. Instead, the Bolsheviks strove to ignite the revolution with a small group of professional revolutionaries and the revolution would then spread elsewhere.

It was a common concern for the Russian intelligentsia that the obstacle to the success of the revolution and the implementation of major social and economic reforms would be a lack of culture and education among the people. After the February Revolution the writer Maxim Gorky, a revolutionary and a

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342 Wada 1983, 43–44.
343 See Marx's and Engels's Preface to the second Russian edition of the *Manifesto of the communist party* in Shanin 1983, 138–139. The preface is dated to 21 Jan 1882, i.e. less than a year after the assassination of Alexander II, which no doubt stimulated the revolutionary hopes for Russia. Wada (1983) deals with the relationship of Marx and Russia in the same volume more broadly.
344 Neumann 1996, 79.
345 *Pravda* 18 May 1913, 1.

socialist but with well-known friction with different revolutionary groups, including the Bolsheviks, joined in to celebrate the revolution with a new newspaper, *Novaya zhizn'* (*New life*).[346] But in comparison with other writings praising the overthrow of the tsar, Gorky's text in the first issue of the paper was filled with reservations about the future. While getting rid of the monarchy was a wonderful thing, Gorky warned that the "disease" living in it was driven "inside the organism," meaning that the devastating cultural legacy of tsarist oppression was still alive in the lives and minds of the people. To "heal" from this cultural backwardness would be very slow.[347]

That concern did not disappear with Bolshevik rule, though certain positivity à la Herzen towards the unique circumstances of Russia remained. In 1923 Trotsky argued in the text *Not by politics alone does man thrive* that due to the underdevelopment of the Russian proletariat – "poor in history and traditions" – there was less factionalism, which had made it easier to unite the working class for the revolutionary cause.[348] Further, there had been no time in Russia for the proletariat to grow into the bourgeois system with its "democracy, freedom of capitalist press and other blessings" as had happened in Western Europe. Therefore, the proletariat had had no personal interests to look after or anything to lose when overthrowing the old regime.[349] Trotsky claimed that Russia had ground that was more fertile for to taking the revolutionary step and doing it properly – a step which western socialists were too afraid or too divided to take. On the other hand, Trotsky pointed to the challenge for the regime of the "underdevelopment" that hindered the building of socialism after the revolution. "History gives nothing free of cost: if it makes a reduction on one point – in politics – it makes us pay back with interest in another – in culture." The main point of Trotsky's article was therefore that now as the political battle had been won, it was time to turn to the development of culture, the citizens: "We need to learn to work well: accurately, exactly (*chisto*), economically. We need culture in work, culture in life, culture in everyday (*bït*)."[350]

While Trotsky saw that Russia's "underdevelopment" was a positive thing in terms of economic, social and political revolutions but negative in terms of culture, in music discussion there were attempts to also renegotiate the 'cultural backwardness' in positive terms. Next, I will present three different but strongly overlapping discourses from music discussion which somehow tried to frame the old discourse of 'backward Russia' positively. First, there was a strikingly Herzenian and nationalist idea of the preservation of some kind 'original' or 'pure' cultural elements, which had been lost in the 'more developed' cultures. Second, the proletarian criticism emphasized the degeneration of values in capitalistic societies, thus questioning the positive connotation of the concept of

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[346] M. Gor'kiy: Revolyutsiya i kul'tura. *Novaya zhizn'* 1 May 1917 (18 April of the Julian calendar), 1.
[347] ibid., see also Steinberg 2017, 36–37.
[348] L. Trotskiy: Ne o "politike" yedinoy zhiv chelovek. *Pravda* 10 July 1923, 2–3. English translation can be found for instance in: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1923/11/politics-ni.html (accessed 2 June 2020).
[349] ibid.
[350] ibid.

development. Thirdly, because Russian music was considered as less 'developed' than its European counterparts, it was claimed to be able to answer to the needs of the new ideas more readily and to advance revolution in the *essence* of music without getting stuck with superficial and formal innovations.

Purity of Russian Musical Culture

A common interpretation concerning the cultural political changes in Soviet history is that the 1920s was marked by a strong internationalist tendency, whereas the 1930s under the guidance of Stalin meant a turn towards a nationalist narrative where the great figures of Russian cultural history became celebrated again. The elevation of Alexander Pushkin as the most important writer and cultural figure of Russian history was the most visible example of the new cultural political line.[351] This is true regarding the unification of the political line, i.e. emphasizing Russian culture and language at a high political level in a straightforward manner without fears of potential 'great power chauvinism' – the avoidance of which had been an important part of the Leninist discourse. But this interpretation may hide the fact that in the 1920s music discussions there was a clear nationalist line, so that the events of the 1930s can be seen more as a continuation of these views than a complete volte-face and the creation of a new line in high political circles. In music discussions Boris Asafiev, a visible member of the modernist circles, was eager to propagate Russian art music and was one of the central figures to re-negotiate nationalism in the context of Soviet musicology and music political discourse.

The most comprehensive study on Asafiev has been provided by Elina Viljanen, who argues that Asafiev was an *autonomist* in the sense that his work was strongly motivated by the will to carve an independent academic position for musicology.[352] The Revolution and the new government provided an opportunity for Asafiev, because restructuring the academic and cultural field meant also the possibility for scholars to define new areas of study. On the other hand this created tension, because Asafiev no doubt would have liked to see musicology as separate not only from other fields of study, but also separate from politics, yet he had had to emphasize the importance of music also from the social and political perspectives in order to gain autonomy and resources for his field of research. As a result, Asafiev's writings on music combine very eclectically Russian Silver Age cultural views (he was active in discussions already before the revolutions), new currents of Austro-German musicology, new European philosophy (especially Henri Bergson) and Bolshevistic rhetoric of the 1920s.[353] Asafiev is an example of a scholar, who in order to secure his own field of research co-operated actively with the new government and whose position later on cannot be separated from the contours of Soviet music history, including its

[351] See Brandenberger 2002; Platt & Brandenberger 2006.
[352] Viljanen 2017.
[353] ibid.

grimmer events. For this reason, Asafiev's reputation remains a complex issue for scholars.[354]

Asafiev's many and various intellectual sources combined with his 'intuitive philosophy' produced texts which did not condense into one ideological message. Perhaps this is one reason why he became such a celebrated writer from the 1930s onwards. Before that he had been often a target for criticism by proletarian groups, but this did not matter after these groups were regarded as "leftish deviations" in 1932. Asafiev became known as 'the father of Soviet musicology' and was the only musicologist to be awarded the Stalin prize in 1948. A more important reason for all this, however, must have been the consistency with which he had propagated Russian art music and emphasized its uniqueness and importance in the music history. Within the context of socialist realism from the 1930s onwards, this was more than acceptable.

Perhaps the most striking feature in Asafiev's formulations on Russian music was the idea of some kind of 'purity' or 'primordial' character, which in his view remained in Russian musical culture. This idea is most visible in Asafiev's texts from 1918, and what is interesting for this current discussion is the way in which Asafiev took up ideas directly from the intellectual debates of the 19th century. First of all, in his article *Pathways into the future* from 1918, he criticized how the intelligentsia in Russia had taken the European tradition uncritically, which in music had resulted in a "dilettante" Russian style.[355] What should have been done instead was to listen to the "archaic" song tradition of Russia – a tradition, whose equivalent in Europe had long gone.[356]

Taking the European tradition uncritically into Russian culture was one of the main arguments of the Slavophilian movement of the 19th century. According to this, Russia had a unique national character, the development of which had been disturbed first by reforms of Peter the Great and then by the elite's adoration of everything European. Consequently, the upper strata of society had been separated from the people, where the true character of Russian culture lay. Slavophiles argued that true European cultures do not shun their national cultures, and Russia mimicking Europe is simply forming a kind of pseudo-culture. To counter this, Russia should reunite with its original character, still alive among the people (*narod*) and stop imitating European customs. Only then Russia could stand as an equal to its European counterparts.[357] Asafiev's claim of a"dilettante" Russian style echoes this idea of the unauthenticity of Russian culture owing to its uncritical following of "European" culture.

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354 The most notorious event including Asafiev's name was the anti-cosmopolitan campaign in 1948, in which Asafiev as the head of the Composers' Union signed the statement denouncing group of composers, including Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian and Asafiev's long-time friend Prokofiev. Asafiev's worsening health is often brought up in this context, and he passed away in early 1949.

355 See discussion on the article in Viljanen 2017, 204–222.

356 ibid. 208–209.

357 There were slight differences among different Slavophiles in different times, for instance on the role and task of the Orthodox Church in Russian culture. The description here is based on two texts by a central slavophilian thinker Konstantin Aksakov: *O russkom vozzrenii* (1856) and *Yeshchyo neskol'ko slov o russkom vozzrenii* (1857).

Another interesting recycling of ideas was Asafiev's claim that the primordial cultural trait survived in the form of Russian peasant songs. In fact, Asafiev claimed in his article that although the Russian classical music tradition had been infected by dilettantism, the archaic song tradition was able to penetrate Russian art music in the form *songfulness* (*pesennost'*). The 'collective nature' was a common justification for preserving and studying the folk song tradition, and more proletarian-minded writers for instance employed this in their arguments for the value of the folk tradition.[358] Asafiev however brought this point further and claimed that through the phenomenon of *songfulness,* the ancient Russian folk tradition (and its collectivist nature) had penetrated Russian art music as well. This he claimed to be a distinguishing feature between the Russian and Western art music traditions.

Asafiev named Tchaikovsky and Musorgsky as composers whose music convey together with "vertical" (European) musical thinking a "horizontal" quality in its songfulness.[359] Tchaikovsky because of this feature was for Asafiev one of the "universal" composers.[360] The claim that Russian culture still held some kind 'original source' of authentic and pure culture which Europe had lost is not unlike the claims discussed above made by Herzen in the 19th century. Similarly to Herzen, who wanted to "applaud the slow development of history in our country,"[361] Asafiev praised some kind of authenticity of Russian music, which was able to preserve itself due to the slower cultural development.

Asafiev's unrestrained nationalism appeared later in the Soviet period as well, and one opportunity for it was offered by the works of Sergey Prokofiev. Asafiev and Prokofiev had studied together in the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the beginning of the 20th century and Prokofiev dedicated his First Symphony – the "Classical" – to Asafiev. They maintained contact during Prokofiev's period abroad (1918–early 1930s) as well.[362]

Asafiev promoted Prokofiev's music consistently in the Soviet period, and already in 1918 he described Prokofiev as Scriabin's heir who can show the way forward from the dead end to which Scriabin had brought music.[363] Later, he could support his friend's music with the Russocentric discourse he had

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[358] e.g. Georgiy Pozdnyakov: K voprosu o narodnom pesennom tvorchestve. *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* 1926, no. 7-8, 12-13. Discourses on folk music tradition are discussed more in chapter 4.

[359] Viljanen 2017, 209. Asafiev had a clear hierarchical order for Russian composers, where the "subjective" composers, such as Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky ranked higher than the more "objective" composers, such as Rimsky-Korsakov. On the bottom lay "academism," which had no subjectivity, and which for Asafiev was manifested in the music of Glazunov (ibid., 214–215).

[360] ibid., 209. This reminds of Dostoyevsky's characterization of Pushkin as a unique writer, who unlike any other writer in history could transcend his own national point of view and be able to embody foreign people and its spirit in all its depth. Pushkin's significance was thus in his universalism, and universalism Dostoyevsky claimed to be also the character of the Russian people, making it possible for Russia to unite the world. (See Dostoyevsky's speech on Pushkin celebration in 1880, in Russian Dostoyevskiy 1880; and in English Dostotevsky 1880).

[361] Oittinen 2007, 204.

[362] See Prokofiev's diaries (Prokofiev 2008; 2012, passim.).

[363] Viljanen 2017, 216–220.

developed after the revolutions. For instance, Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto (composed and premiered in 1921, performed in the Soviet Union for the first time in 1925) was, according to Asafiev, a "deeply Russian work" and at the same time revolutionary. For Asafiev "Russian Revolutionary" culture was rooted in Russian folk polyphony, which, like the revolution, consisted of independent voices but expressed a collective idea.[364] Echoing slavophilia, he proclaimed that the work's Russianness could not be perceived through "Western European musical scholastics" and nor did it contain "stylization" of folk themes. Rather it appeared in the "traction" felt towards the melos of Russian musical culture and therefore Prokofiev was "alien to the West."[365] Asafiev wanted both to keep on writing the canon of Russian art music by including Prokofiev into it, and to include Russocentric ideas in understanding 'revolutionary' music and culture.

Besides Asafiev, another modernist music figure, Nikolai Roslavets, referred to the positive aspect of Russia's 'slow development.' He made a rather reductive conclusion, according to which the art of Russia could not be bourgeois, because Russia itself had not developed into a society controlled by the bourgeoisie. Russia had abandoned feudalism just a short while ago, and so any analogies to European music which had been developing under the rule of the bourgeoisie would be misleading.[366] It is not without interest that figures like Roslavets and Asafiev presented such ideas about the past of Russian culture and music being valuable. Both of them are better known for their promotion of modern music, but these examples demonstrate that they viewed Russian culture as a special case. The Russia-centred view of (art) history was not an invention of Stalin against the interests of internationally-oriented modernists but rather prepared by these same modernists – Asafiev in particular.

Proletarian Criticism: Corrupting Influence of Capitalistic Society

Contrary to the nationalist argument proposed by Asafiev, the proponents of so-called proletarian musicians did not view folk tradition necessarily as a positive phenomenon. Perhaps more often than others, the proletarian-minded critics highlighted the lower cultural level of the proletariat and peasants, which

[364] Igor' Glebov: Tretiy kontsert Sergeya Prokof'ieva. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1925, No. 10, 57–63, translated into English in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 150-153. Also Nikolay Myaskovsky – another fellow student from the St. Petersburg Conservatory – appreciated Prokofiev's music highly. In 1924, Myaskovsky wrote in a letter to Asafiev that he saw Prokofiev "following the truest path," whereas almost all the other composers in Europe "have got stuck in a dead-end, and are trying to extricate themselves from the mire of chaos by walking on stilts." (quoted in Zuk 2021, 206).

[365] Igor' Glebov: Tretiy kontsert Sergeya Prokof'ieva. Here Asafiev's argumentation – as well as his 'intuitive philosophy' more broadly – strongly echoes the 19th century national romantic idea of Russia and Russianness, which cannot be understood rationally, and is epitomized in the short poem by Fyodor Tyutchev "*Umom Rossiyu ne ponyat'*" – "Russia cannot be understood with reason."

[366] Nik. Roslavets: Sem' let Oktyabrya v muzïke. *Muzikal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 3, 179–189.

stemmed from their oppressed position during the tsarist autocracy.[367] Instead of accepting the cultural products of the proletariat and peasants as they were represented at the moment, the proletarian musicians saw it as their task to guide the former oppressed class away from the harmful cultural remnants towards 'healthier' forms of art. This can be seen to be analogous with the political view of the Bolsheviks, in which the majority of the people were not seen as able to comprehend their own dispossessed position, therefore making it necessary for the politically conscious avant-garde to seize power directly. There is a hint of irony in this, as the musicians, who most of all proclaimed to represent the proletariat seemed to trust the least that their contribution in cultural matters would be of any value before further developments of revolution and the creation of a true 'proletarian culture.'

One of the most influential and long-lasting ideas of Marxist analysis has been the corrupting effect of capitalistic society on aesthetic values. According to this analysis, cultural production in capitalistic societies is organized according to economic relationships subjugating artists in the service of capital. As a result art becomes a commodity, and aesthetic values are directed by the values and taste of those with capital and not those who produce art. It could be said that this particular aspect of Marxist analysis did strike a chord among the Russian intelligentsia, because a large part of the elite could share the concerns about the degeneration of aesthetic values (see Chapter 2). There was therefore a wide group of intelligentsia, which Katerina Clark has termed "romantic anticapitalists," who could attach themselves to the Marxist critique of cultural degeneration and the corrupting effects of the commodification of art – whether or not they subscribed to communist ideals.[368]

Russia's position from this perspective could be interpreted positively by relying on the widely shared interpretation of Russia's economic underdevelopment. Since capitalism had reached Russia relatively late, it had had no time to exert its influence so deeply in the society. In Western Europe, where capitalism had reached further stages, degeneration was much more profound.[369] The power relationship between Soviet Russia and Europe in terms of culture could be thus turned around so that Soviet Russia should shield itself from Europe and not learn from it. Interpretations of negative and positive influences varied, and, especially in the early years of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, cultural connections with "progressive" forces in Europe were

[367] Although folk tradition was seen among proletarian musicians as a positive and healthy cultural tradition as well, making it possible for instance the widely recognized folk songs and orthodox chant specialist Aleksandr Kastalsky to work closely with RAPM, some forms of folk tradition were frowned upon by the proletarian musicians. See also Nelson 2004, 71.

[368] Clark 1995, 16–20.

[369] "What came out of technological progress of the bourgeoisie? [- -] now, when chemistry, aviation work only for destruction, when doctors in laboratories specially cultivate the culture of contagious microbes [- -] This process (produced by economy) [- -] defines the "ideological advances" of the bourgeoisie, which in its turn reflects them in art." (L. Lebedinskiy: Beglïm ognyom. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 8, 16.)

emphasized, particularly by Lunacharsky.[370] In music discussion, however, the proletarian musicians targeted especially ASM and older conservatory professors with their ideologically conscious criticism. Such criticism focused mostly on the European-mindedness and/or conservative attitude towards music which were seen as ideologically harmful.[371]

In terms of development, the proletarian musicians considered that music and cultural history followed the social and economic changes in history, highlighting especially the French Revolution as a heroic event of the then-revolutionary bourgeois class but which then declined into an oppressive historical force. It is interesting how music was considered from within this framework, and especially how the interpretations changed during the 1920s, because it was not clear at all which composers represented the 'heroic' features of historical class struggle and which not. As has been noted, the status of Beethoven and Musorgsky – the former as the composer representing the ideas of the French Revolution and the latter as representing 'the people' with his music – was in this regard stable throughout the history of the Soviet Union. But with other composers one can perceive a clear hardening of line as the 1920s proceeded.

For instance, in the first issue of the RAPM journal *Muzïkal'naya nov'* A. Sergeev complained about the paralysis of musical life on account of the ascending NEP concert culture, and he criticized (as expected) modern experimentations in music such as polytonality and quarter-tones.[372] Nevertheless, along with Glinka's and Borodin's works, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite* were brought up as examples still connected to the "healthy folk roots from which Russian music grew." What is more, Russian musical art is claimed to have reached its zenith (besides in Stravinsky and Prokofiev) in the "creative emotional and individualistic dream of Scriabin."[373]

The evaluation of Scriabin's significance to Russian music is here a bit ambivalent, as it could be interpreted both positively and negatively ("emotionality" and "individualism" were not positive features of art to the proletarian musicians), but the evaluation of Stravinsky and Prokofiev is unquestionably positive. This is interesting considering the other proletarian-minded writings about these composers. In 1926 when the performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* was received rather positively in the Soviet Union, Sarra Krïlova wrote a piece in the journal *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* criticising the work and also the slack criticism which other papers gave to the ballet.[374] While

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[370] E.g. A. Lunacharskiy: Peredovoy otryad kul'turï na zapade. *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1920, No. 4–5, 1–3.
[371] See for instance the ideological manifestation of VAPM (later RAPM) in *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 12, 24–25. English translation in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 128–131.
[372] A. Sergeyev: Muzïkal'nïy tupik. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 6–8. English translation of the text in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 97–99.
[373] ibid.
[374] *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* 1926, No. 3, 18–19. This journal continued as the mouthpiece of RAPM after *Muzïkal'naya nov'* had been disbanded in 1924. Publication of *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* lasted less than a year.

Krïlova did see it as important to perform such major works in order to study the development of musical culture, *Rite of Spring* was not a work on which the future paths of Soviet music could be built. The work was written between 1910–13 – a period when, according to Krïlova, "the Russian intelligentsia was going through the disappointment of the failed 1905 Revolution, withdrew from social interests and plunged into mysticism, aesthetism [- - and] aspiration towards decadence and then futurism in art." While the writer gave credit to Stravinsky's mastery ("perfection of individual parts of form, amazing knowledge of orchestra"), there was "eclecticism, contradiction, brevity of musical thoughts." Stravinsky was characteristic of a talented musician of the past, "a musician of the epoch of decay, the epoch, which for us was brought to an end by revolution, and which still continues in the West."[375]

Recognizing the achievements in form and technique in the newest art music while deeming the worldview or content of these works 'alien' or 'hostile' for the new society were standard features of proletarian criticism. Scriabin was a great talent, who became a victim of the individualistic and mystical worldview of late capitalism;[376] Stravinsky and Prokofiev worked with the folk tradition with great sophistication but the outcome was unnecessary for the Soviet audience. [377] "Uselessness" was the characteristic of all music of modern composers.[378] Klimentiy Korchmaryov even questioned the "contemporariness" of modern composers, whose music was ideologically and socially "backward," whereas new agitation music, notwithstanding its technical weaknesses, was truly "contemporary music."[379]

Thus the major part if not all of the latest 'developments' in art music was in the end deemed to be infiltrated by capitalistic, degenerated values. In terms of the music of the 19th century, it became harder to define when the decline had begun. M. Pekelis gave unreserved acceptance only to Beethoven, while in Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) for instance, one could sense a decline: a lingering Russian melancholy and a dry, pedantic and scholastic attitude towards folk music.[380] A hardening of the line which I mentioned meant that pre-revolutionary composers who had had a relatively unproblematic reputation were increasingly interpreted by the proletarian critics from the 'decaying capitalism' framework – including composers like Rimsky-Korsakov, who even had a modest revolutionary flair.[381]

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[375] ibid.
[376] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Skryabin v nashi dni. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 6–7, 15–16.
[377] M. Pekelis: Nashe muzïkal'noye nasledstvo. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 10, 13.
[378] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 8, 18–19.
[379] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Prichinï krizisa "sovremennoy" muzïki. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 9, 4.
[380] M. Pekelis: Nashe muzïkal'noye nasledstvo. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 10, 13.
[381] The revolutionary reputation of Rimsky-Korsakov rested upon his final opera *The Golden Cockerel*, which criticized the autocracy, and the events of 1905, when he publicly supported students who went on strike to support the revolution. Due to this, Rimsky-Korsakov was removed from his professorship at the St. Petersburg conservatory, but resumed the post after several of his colleagues had resigned as a protest (see Nelson 2004, 6–7).

As has been noted in the research literature, RAPM's and other proletarian groups's alternative to reform the music field remained modest.[382] There were no high-profile professional composers in RAPM's ranks who could produce ideologically conscious but at the same time innovative music, so RAPM focused more on criticising existing pieces than producing new ones. RAPM had nevertheless the power to influence discussion of music and especially towards the end of the decade when the cultural political line started to favour proletarian organizations.[383] In these discussions, RAPM focused on rooting up everything bourgeois so that as society would move forward towards socialism and communism the art which the new society would automatically produce could grow from fresh ground. The societal revolution was the primary goal, and culture as part of the superstructure would naturally follow economic laws. The task of music was, then, to keep up the revolutionary spirit and to keep the proletariat away from corrupting influences. The discourse on the detrimental 'development' of capitalistic societies demanded a response from those who wanted to preserve the newest musical products and techniques.[384] The need to deal with the criticism of proletarian musicians is visible in the following interpretation of *development* by one of the supporters of new music, Viktor Belyayev.

Positive Primitivism and Revolution "in Essence"

While members of RAPM such as Sarra Krïlova regarded Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* as a product of the past era, there were attempts to frame the 'primitive' quality of the work as a positive phenomenon. Though there was a hint of sarcasm when Yevgeni Braudo for instance noted the "hypnotic" effect of the music of Prokofiev and Stravinsky on the Muscovite audience, he nevertheless valued the fact that the *Rite of Spring* – a work "complex and rigid in its artistic content" – filled the great hall of the Conservatory twice. That fact testified, according to Braudo, that these images of pagan Rus' had a "great supply of musical freshness and the persuasiveness of the musical primitiveness."[385]

It was, however, one of the central names of ASM who made a more systematic effort to frame the new primitiveness as a positive phenomenon. Viktor Belyayev promoted new European music for the Soviet audience (or rather to the musical elite, as the ASM journal *Sovremennaya muzïka* for which he wrote was a journal for specialists) by claiming primitiveness as a positive development in music and also claiming a special place for Russia in this new style. With this he echoed the idea of some kind of positive 'primordial' character

[382] Taruskin 1997; Nelson 2004.
[383] See Section 4.1.1.
[384] An important finding by Pauline Fairclough (2016) was that while RAPM gained more power in music discussions towards the end of the 1920s, this did not affect the repertoire choices of orchestras as strongly as could be imagined by following the discussions in journals.
[385] Yevg. Braudo: Moskovskiy kontsertnïy sezon. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1926, No. 8(40), 22.

which Europe had lost with 'backwardness' again seen as a positive thing in Russian culture. Belyayev attempted in his writing to delineate good and bad primitiveness. While primitiveness was without a doubt "the style of our epoch," he writes, Western Europe has faced a kind of "brutalization of musical taste and ideals" with the loss of true depth in contemporary Europe.[386] This Belyayev explained as an attempt to have a creative respite after the tensions of preceding epochs on the one hand, and as an aspiration to "forget" the politically and economically unstable post-war conditions on the other. Primitiveness in Europe had a "hedonistic" character, which Belyayev separated from the "serious primitiveness" of Stravinsky. While the jazz band was of course part of this new epoch as an American form of primitivism, Belyayev intriguingly saw this phenomenon to have both naivety and "vital full-bloodedness," which the old Europe could not anymore attain. Instead, Europe merely exploited the jazz band for its hedonistic ("often in the most vulgar meaning of the word") needs.[387] So Belyayev did not consider the whole phenomenon of the jazz band to becorrupt, but rather how it had been taken up in Europe.[388]

Stravinsky was not however the only positive example of primitivism in new art music, as Belyayev also noted "Italian primitivism" in the works of Alfredo Casella.[389] In a slightly earlier text on Paul Hindemith (then a 29-year-old young talent), Belyayev discussed his music in a similar manner. Taking again Stravinsky as an example, he pondered that current questions of rhythm are perhaps "the most important problems of musical creation" and that in this domain the influence of Stravinsky on Hindemith was clearly perceptible.[390] He continued:

> It is without a doubt that the rhythmic creation of "barbarian" races, as it has been done until now by folk songs, has to exert its powerful influence on art music. Because of that the ability to feel "barbarism" is extremely important for contemporary composers, the ability to find in one's nature contact points with primitive musical psychology [- -] which is primitive, as if standing at the very sources of music [- -] whose life creating influence is never and can never be unnecessary for an artist.[391]

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386 Viktor Belyayev: Sovremennaya muzïka i Aleksandr Cherepnin. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1925, No. 11, 3.
387 ibid., 3–4.
388 Also Leonid Sabaneyev saw some positive opportunities in the jazz band, as it represented a genuine new way of thinking about music: "And the "Jazz-band"—an absolutely striking phenomenon, good phenomenon in music. Only the compositions are very poor, [they are] no good for anything." (L. Sabaneyev: Na muzïkal'nom fronte. *Teatr i muzïka* 1923, No. 1–2(14–15), 421).
389 Viktor Belyayev: Sovremennaya muzïka i Aleksandr Cherepnin. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1925, No. 11, 3–4.
390 V. Belyayev: Paul' Khindemit. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 1, 5.
391 ibid., 5–6. Несомненно, что ритмическое творчество «варварских» рас, так как это делала до сих пор народная песня, должно оказать свое могучее влияние на художественную музыку. Поэтому в современных композиторах чрезвычайно важна способность чувствовать «варваризмы», способность находить в своей натуре точки соприкосновения с примитивной музыкальной психологией, уже тем самым, что она примитивна, стоящей как будто бы у самих истоков музыки, коснуться которых и ощутить их животворное влияние некогда не бывает и не может быть для художника излишним.

This primitiveness – "striving for original musical homeland" – was present in Hindemith, and, almost in passing, Belyayev asks whether Hindemith's tendency towards exoticism is (because of Stravinsky) happening through Russian culture.[392]

According to Belayev what was happening in Russia was, however, completely different from the primitivism of Europe, and here Belyayev attempted a reconciliation with the intensifying proletarian criticism. The main subject of the text in which Belyayev discussed good and bad primitivism was in fact the Russian composer Alexander Tcherepnin, who was an example of the other road of musical development. Belyayev defined the work of contemporary Russian composers first and foremost as "psychological" and claimed that for them the "hedonistic musical worldview" was alien.[393] Another evident example of a deeply psychological composer was Nikolay Myaskovsky.[394] That Russians composers still inclined to write in this way Belyayev explained by the youth of Russian musical culture.[395] Its youth meant that Russian music was not a relic of the old culture, but a "persistent constructor, its young vanguard." Because of this and because of its "situation in the historical process of the development of the world's musical culture, it is capable of fruitful and healthy development in the future and of propagation of new ideas, which inspire our turbulent and bold present-day."[396] When summing up the first ten years of Russian symphony music in the Soviet context in 1927, he noted that there had been a great break in music everywhere, which was nothing but an "artistic revolution of great range and meaning."[397] But this revolution had been different in different parts of the world: whereas the revolution in music in Western Europe took place in form, in the Soviet Union the revolution took place in content. The music of the Soviet Union:

> still remains in "belated" romanticism. But in its adherence to romanticism it finds a basis for changes in essence [of music], for changes in the inner self-awareness of the creating composer. Remaining romantic, the music of the USSR finds in its

[392] ibid., 6.
[393] Viktor Belyayev: Sovremennaya muzïka i Aleksandr Cherepnin. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1925, No. 11, 4.
[394] Viktor Belyayev: Myaskovskiy, Gedike, Aleksandrov. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1925, No. 8, 22–23.
[395] ibid.; In 1928 Belyayev was less happy with this "youth" of Russian music, which manifested often in "monumental" concerto style – in a kind of "belated Liszt-style." Belyayev was happy that the new piano concerto by avant-garde composer Aleksandr Mosolov did not fall into this trap. See Viktor Belyayev: Fortepiannyi kontsert Mosolova. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1928, No. 30, 142–145.
[396] Viktor Belyayev: Myaskovskiy, Gedike, Aleksandrov. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1925, No. 8, 19.
[397] Viktor Belyayev: Desyat' let russkoy simfonicheskoy muzïki. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 24, 25.

> romanticism points of contact with the romanticism of great revolution, with its deep spirit, with its craving for the great and monumental.[398]

Summing up the revolutionary development of new music in the Soviet Union and Europe, Belyayev wrote that "contemporary Russian music, [while] not revolutionary in its form, [it is] revolutionary in essence, at the same the music of the European West, [while] not revolutionary in essence, [it is] revolutionary in its form." Both were needed to further musical art in the world, and musical development without participation of the USSR was for Belyayev "unthinkable."[399]

The ASM was increasingly targeted in 1927 by proletarian musicians for its advancement of 'formalism' in music, and Belyayev as one of the most visible members of the ASM had his share of criticism. The text was also meant to counter the criticism ASM was receiving, and for this Belyayev had a solid counterargument: practically all the new compositions celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the October Revolution were written by composers more or less associated with the ASM, which to Belyayev testified to the ideological commitment of modern(ist) composers. Belyayev mentioned *October cantata* by Roslavets, the Second Symphony ("*To October*") by Shostakovich, *Funeral ode to Lenin* by Krein, the symphonic rhapsody *October* by Schillinger and *The twelve* by Veysberg.[400] Belyayev's talk of "revolutionary in essence" was an attempt to accommodate RAPM's discourse into the promotion of new music, as the division between the form and content of music had been RAPM's main point of criticism since the formation of the proletarian organization.[401] By 1927 music discussion had already adopted form-content division so strongly that promoters of new music could not escape it. Belyayev still attempted to emphasize the importance of experimentation in musical form together with "revolutionary content" and thus not turn back to what was going on in Europe. This wish did not survive, as in the 1930s 'formalism' – focus on the technical and formal side of art – became the most prominent and also dangerous tool of criticism in art discourse.

Belyayev's disctinction between "revolutionary essence" and "traditional form" reminds us of another Stalinist formulation of socialist realism: that of "national in form, socialist in content."[402] Belyayev's text is not a precursor of

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[398] ibid. Она еще держится за «запоздалый» романтизм. Но в этой своей приверженности к романтизму она находит почву для сдвигов по существу, для сдвигов в области внутреннего самосознания творческого композитора. Оставаясь романтичной, музыка СССР находит в своем романтизме точки касания с романтизмом великой революции, с ее глубоким пафосом, с ее жаждой к великому и монументальному.
[399] ibid.
[400] ibid., 28; see also Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 183–185.
[401] See RAPM's manifesto (at the moment still called as VAPM) in *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 12, 24–25. English translation of the manifesto in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 128–131.
[402] Stalin spoke of developing national cultures, national in form but socialist in content, already in 1929 in his unpublished speech to Ukrainian writers. Here he used the slogan to defend the literature of non-party writers ('fellow travellers') and said that not every writer has to be socialist, as the development of literary forms is important as well (see Artizov & Naumov 1999, 102–107; English translation in Clark & Dobrenko 2007, 61–67). Later, this slogan became one of the key formulations of socialist realism (see Frolova-Walker 1998).

socialist realism, but it is an example of how towards the late 1920s music political discourse had adopted the rather vague idea of "inner revolutionary development" without corrupt formal and formalistic experimentation. In Belyayev's examples we see how it actually incorporated – or perhaps even rose from – the conflict between the discourses of 'backward Russia' and 'the most progressive country in the world.' With the vague talk of "revolution in essence," one could praise the young/underdeveloped musical culture of Russia which had shielded itself from the degenerate influence of capitalistic 'progress' and helped it to maintain its 'purity.' Now this purity helped it to move forward in progress in the domain where it truly mattered: not in superficial techniques and tricks, but in the 'content' of musical works. Perhaps it is needless to say that it was far from clear how this healthy and revolutionary content actually manifested itself in music.

3.1.2 Universalism and Truth – *Istina/Pravda*

While the discussion of the levels of development of different societies rooted cultural products in their historical and social context, discussion of the pre-revolutionary tradition also employed the idea of certain *universal* or *common to humankind* (*obshchechelovecheskiy*) values, which some pre-revolutionary cultural products reflected or were filled with. The reason behind the need to speak about the universalism of certain high achievements of art was simple and often brought up: if Marxism was interpreted strictly from the perspective of the relationships of production and cultural products seen simply as reflecting these relationships (so-called "vulgar Marxism"), then there would not have been much to preserve from pre-revolutionary times. As we saw earlier, to some only Beethoven passed the test of 'truly revolutionary composers.' Among past composers there were not many who would have openly challenged the established system, as their livelihood depended on the support of the ruling classes of the feudal and bourgeois societies.

The prevailing line of the Bolshevik party towards the pre-revolutionary tradition was that the proletariat would not build socialism from scratch but by exploiting knowledge and art from the preceding epochs.[403] In music this meant therefore that the highest achievements of the pre-revolutionary era were acceptable, but nevertheless these "best achievements" had to be delineated and conceptualized. One possibility was to make a claim for their universal value.

In the broader political debate, this had to do with the universal value of the proletarian cause. In 1920 when Lunacharsky defended the monopoly of the state for cultural and educational work in the form of Narkompros, he did this with the need to ensure ideological consistency of the work: "In a socialist republic there can be no other enlightenment (*prosveshcheniya*) but socialist."[404]

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[403] As defined by Lenin in his speech at the Third All-Russian Congress of Russian Young Communist Soviet [Komsomol] on 2 October 1920. See Lenin 1967, 440–454; see also Section 2.2.1.

[404] A. Lunacharskiy: Politika i prosveshcheniye (Rech' na Vserossiyskom soveshchanii Politprosvetov). *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya* 1920, No. 1, 5.

The intelligentsia, because of its ideological volatility, was not trustworthy in this sense. It is noteworthy in Lunacharsky's writing that he did not settle for the self-evident supremacy of proletarian ideology in comparison to the bourgeois, but claimed that:

> After all only the ideology of the proletariat can be common to all humankind (/ universal, *obshchechelovecheskiy*), only in the society where there will be no place for the exploitation of work can everyone breathe and work freely. [- -] "You can speak in all the languages, but if you do not have love in you, you are only a clashing cymbal," said the apostle Paul. All education has to be constructed only in the spirit of a certain doctrine of the working class, in the spirit of the communist programme. The working class's firmness of will is born from the steadfast conviction, that it is doing absolute good for all humankind, [and] is pursuing universal (*obshchechelovecheskiye*) ideals.[405]

So in spite of the interpretation that ideology and culture are class-specific, there are also universal values which transcend class-based borders. Or rather: although the current ideology is class-based, i.e. proletarian, the proletariat as the most progressive class somehow reflects or is a precursor of the universal ideas of the future. In relation to the 'backwardness' discussed earlier, the mere fact of ideological consciousness made the Soviet Russia the most progressive country in the world, as Lunacharsky stated also in the speech stated.[406]

It seems surprising that the proletarian ideology being universal was highlighted in Lunacharsky's speech in a biblical quotation from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13). This is not, however, the only analogy ofLunacharsky's between religion and the proletarian cause from a metaphysical stance, as it surfaced also in Lunacharsky's language-specific use concerning the concept of "truth," which in Russian can be conceptualized both with the concepts of *pravda* and *istina*. As for the role of the educator (or "enlightener"), Lunacharsky stated the following:

> An educator-propagandist (*prosvetitel'-propagandist*) disseminates truth (*istinu*). Every piece of scientific knowledge which is a part of truth (*istini*), leads to the construction of a common worldview and back—the whole worldview from its very foundations has without fail to be scientific.[407]

Lunacharsky echoed here the formulation made by Lenin in *Materialism and empirio-criticism* from 1909. In the book Lenin attacked the "Russian Machists" (naming Lunacharsky, together with Bogdanov, as its representatives), who had, according to Lenin, gone wrong by following Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach. In several places Lenin argued that unlike empirio-critics who have claimed that truth is always relative, materialists do not fall into relativism and subjectivism, but different (relative) truths dialectically approach "absolute truth" (*absolutnaya istina*). For instance, quite similarly to Lunacharsky above:

> That absolute truth (*absolutnaya istina*) results from the sum-total of relative truths (*otnositenl'nïkh istin*) in the course of their development; that relative truths represent relatively faithful reflections of an object existing independently of man; that these

[405] ibid.
[406] "Having the courage to count ourselves as the highest stage of universal (*obshchechelovecheskoy*) culture, we cannot refuse any of its parts." ibid.
[407] ibid.

> reflections become more and more faithful; that every scientific truth, notwithstanding its relative nature, contains an element of absolute truth—all these propositions, which are obvious to anyone who has thought over Engels' *Anti-Dühring,* are for the "modern" theory of knowledge a book with seven seals.[408]

There is no need to go further into discussion of Lenin's work, but for the purpose of this discussion it is relevant to note the philosophical discussion on "the truth" of the time. It is important to notice, that in Lenin's thinking there was "an absolute truth" (*absolutnaya istina*), which revealed itself through a dialectical process of "relative truths" (*otnositel'niye istini*). Although science is in relation to its context and can be thus considered as relative, it nevertheless moves towards the absolute truth. The relevance of this stance to Soviet cultural and music discourse was that it left the way open to find the "elements of absolute truth" from the art works of the preceding epochs. The social position of an aristocratic composer could thus be overlooked *if* the music reflected or reached for absolute truth (*istina*).

Now in comparison to the other "truth" of the Russian language, *pravda* carries with itself an element of 'justice' or 'rightness,' which the *istina* does not have. Russian words related to justice or moral righteousness stem from the same source as the *pravda*-truth: for instance *pravo* (law / right, entitlement) or *pravïy, pravil'nïy* (right, correct).[409] *Istina*-truth is in this sense more neutral than *pravda* although *pravda* is more commonly used, and perhaps due to its prevalence, does not automatically carry the element of 'rightness' with it. Nevertheless, in philosophical discussions this distinction has been significant. For instance, Nikolay Berdyaev framed the position of Russian philosophy in 1909 with these concepts in his text "*Filosofskaya istina i intelligentskaya pradva*." The main argument of the text was that the Russian intelligentsia had been interested only in *pravda* ('truth with justice') and had used philosophy simply in a utilitarian way, for doing the 'right' or the 'moral' thing. As a result there had been no development of an authentic Russian philosophical tradition, because the love for truth (*istina*) had always been replaced with love for something else: love for peasants, as with the *narodniks*, or with love for the proletariat, as with the Social Democrats. Because philosophy was being used simply in attempts to correct societal injustice and to fight absolutism, different philosophical traditions were not examined critically but only to serve political causes – very often, Berdyaev claimed, with various misrepresentations, among which Berdyaev mentioned for instance the reception of Avenarius and Nietzsche in Russia.[410] Later, as Bolsheviks came to power, the distinction between *pravda* and *istina* blended even more, as the proletarian *pravda* became the best way to observe how things 'really' were – the *istina* of things. In Marxism-Leninism, the division made by Berdyaev was impossible, because 'truth' was always related to class and to its morality and justifications: although class-based 'truth' was a relative truth (*otnositel'naya istina*), it coincided with the righteousness of the proletarian cause and so with the proletarian *pravda*. Nevertheless, there was in the end 'absolute truth'

[408] Lenin 1984.
[409] cf. Chernikov 1999.
[410] Berdyaev 1909.

(*absolutnaya istina*), but the only way to get there was through proletarian *istina/pravda*, which now merged inseparably.

The 'absolute truth' of the future (communism) was in some cases emphasized in cultural discussion of the Soviet Russia with the need to make way for 'true' or 'equal' art of the future even by destroying pre-revolutionary pieces of art or at least classifying them as outdated. Ėmmanuil Beskin wrote that:

> [the proletariat] will place it [old art] on the shelves of libraries, in showcases of museums, and when [it] ends the tremendous fight with its enemy and has a rest, then it will take these books, these paintings and teach its children to despise the great social lie which they reflected and pharisaically considered as "truth" (*pravdoy*) and "freedom" (*svobodoy*).[411]

Beskin's text can be considered as departing from the prevailing discourse in its radicalism, as he denied even the significance of Shakespeare, whom he considered "hostile" to the proletariat. For Beskin there were however Goethe and Schiller whom he could accept because of the effect of the French Revolution. Beskin emphasized how both of them transcended their national frame and wrote as citizens of the world. "If you like, here [in Goethe and Schiller] are tinges of the international, the worldwide, the communistic."[412]

As can be seen here, even the more radical demands often made exceptions with some writers or artists from the previous era, because they could transcend their own (bourgeois or feudal) context and somehow resonate with the art and ideology of the future. Although producing art in their own historical context, they were reaching towards the absolute – *absolutnaya istina*. In music, the search for *istina* made it possible to argue for relevance of such composers as Mozart, Bach, Schubert and Wagner, because their art was closer to the absolute.

Surprising or not considering the previous discussion on the extolling of Russian musical tradition, it was again Boris Asafiev who consistently argued for the absolute value of Western European canonical composers. For instance Asafiev saw how the music of Bach– whose suitability many justified with societal arguments[413] – was "common to all humankind"[414] and how his music permeates tradition: "Verdi can be heard in Wagner, Mozart in Beethoven and Bach in all of them."[415] The religiosity for him was secondary: Bach's cantatas, like Mozart's *Requiem* and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, represented more profound musical and cultural values.[416]

Religious works did indeed catch the attention of the main organ for monitoring the repertoires, the Glavrepertkom under the Narkompros. Yuri Larin brought up indignantly in *Pravda* how Glavrepertkom had for instance

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411 Ėm. Beskin: "Svoboda" i "pravda" iskusstva. *Vestnik rabotnik iskusstv* 1921, No. 4–5, 13.
412 ibid., 10, 13–14.
413 For instance, it was brought up that Bach was protestant and thus represented progress in relation to reactionary Catholicism (E. M.: Paralleli. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 3, 5) or that he represented the ideology of the Third Estate (S. Chemodanov: Muzïka i teoriya istoricheskogo materializma. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 15). See Section 2.4.
414 Viljanen 2017, 167.
415 Igor' Glebov: Motsart i sovremennost'. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 25, 57.
416 Igor' Glebov: Kastal'skiy (vmesto nekrologa). *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 19, 234–235.

demanded replacing Wagner's "mystical" Lohengrin with the ideologically more suitable Siegfried and had banned performances of Schiller's Mary Stuart due to the play's "religiosity and monarchism."[417] Anatoly Solovtsov added to this that one could not find sheet music any more to some of Bach's, Mozart's or Beethoven's religious works in the the music shops.[418] Both Larin and Solovtsov highlighted how important it is to understand the historical development of art and music, including the role of religious music, but as with Asafiev, Solovtsov added a more metaphysical note to Bach's importance: Bach's cantatas for instance in their "astonishing fullness, completeness and monumentality, express much more (despite their religious text) to the listener, *than scattered, weak-willed or truly mystical works of many so-called contemporary composers, who no one prohibits but on the contrary diligently and widely advertise!*"[419] Here again it is the sheer perfection of Bach's music and almost transcendent musical values, which speak to the contemporary audience – not the superficial religious setting.

The conceptual basis of *pravda/istina* is visible for instance in Asafiev's comparison of Beethoven and Mozart. Asafiev stated that Beethoven "shakes his fist" and knowing the "truth" (*istina*) forces the listener to be happy and to follow him, whereas Mozart "strives to communicate as clearly and simply everything which fills the emotional life of people."[420] Beethoven and Mozart were equally 'truthful' for Asafiev, but whereas Beethoven proclaims this truth with a powerful will, Mozart is simply and naturally already there and expresses the truth with remarkable lightness and ease.[421] This truth (*istina*) is life itself as experienced by all the people of his time: every social stratum experiences the life in its own way, but nevertheless the music of Mozart covers it all.[422] Thus, while Beethoven's music was revolutionary in the sense that it reflected the revolutionary phase of the bourgeoisie, Mozart's music did not represent or belong to any class of his time. In its truthfulness, it covered the whole spectrum of life.

For Asafiev, another composer whose music was marked by simplicity, ease, and even naivety was Schubert.[423] Asafiev made a direct comparison between Mozart and Schubert on the basis that neither of them was a strong personality "standing above the masses" [as Beethoven was] but they gathered the phenomena surrounding them. Consequently Schubert's music was singing "about everything, and not personally about himself," and like Mozart, Schubert belonged to everyone.[424] Already earlier in a concert review, the reviewer behind

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[417] Yu. Larin: Kto pobedil na konkurse sovdurakov. *Pravda* 26 September 1925, 1. Head of Glavrepertkom, Robert Pel'she replied to Larin, that they had not demanded replacement of Lohengrin but admitted the removal of Schiller's play. This he explained with Marxist criticism against "aesthetic-philosophical idealism" of Schiller, whereas Larin clearly depicted Schiller's meaning within the tradition of "liberalism" – thus, ideologically incorrectly. See Pel'she: Ot Glavrepertkoma (Otvet tov. Yu. Larinu). *Pravda* 15 October 1925, 5.
[418] Anat. Solovtsov: Ob usvoyenii staroy kul'turï. *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* 1926, No. 1, 17.
[419] ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[420] Igor' Glebov: Motsart i sovremennost'. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 25, 58.
[421] Igor' Glebov: Motsart. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 35(908), 7–8.
[422] Igor' Glebov: Motsart i sovremennost'. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 25, 56.
[423] Igor' Glebov: Shubert i sovremennost'. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 26, 76–78.
[424] ibid., 77.

the initials A. K. had also recognized that some composers transcended their temporal context, and even became increasingly "newer" over time. "[S]uch are Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart, [and] such is Schubert."[425]

What was left unsaid in these evaluations of Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and Schubert transcending both their temporal and class-based context was that this kind of art transcended also its national and cultural context. The idea was that the highest achievements of art did not represent any nationality or cultural area, but in terms of Soviet music discussions, the centrality of composers from German-speaking areas is striking. Of course, this is not a surprise, considering that the canon of western art music history at the time was based on exactly these composers (and, to an extent, still is), but in comparison with discourses on Russian composers in the Soviet discussion, the difference is interesting. No Russian composers of the 19th century were considered 'universal' in the sense of Bach, Mozart or Schubert, and their value was strongly tied to the national context of Russia, as becomes clear in the following chapter.

Rather than dismantling the centrality of 'Europe' in the Soviet music discussions, the Marxist historical interpretation with its idea of historical progress probably strengthened it. Transcending the local and national point of view was only possible after societies had reached communism, and for that task it was the European countries, with the Soviet Union now in the front line, who were ahead of everyone else. Looking back at the "best cultural achievements of humankind" directed the view to the tradition of the 'most progressive' cultures, i.e. Europe, while Russia's position in this narrative remained disputable. The road to 'universal' culture seemed to go through Central Europe in the Soviet music discussions of the 1920s, but this was to change along with the changes in the nationality policy in the 1930s, when Russia's history became the focal point for interpreting revolutionary history. Chapter 4 returns to this theme.

3.2 Bolshoi Theatre in 1921–1922: "A Significant European Institution"

Discourses on Europe and Russia were prominent when the fate of 'European' cultural institutions in the Soviet Union was debated. As opera was seen as a thoroughly European tradition as well as a highly elitist form of art, its status and position in revolutionary society was a frequent matter of debate. In this section I consider these debates and demonstrate how even in discussions about the practical and economic questions relating to opera the ideas of 'Europeanness' and 'Russianness' again surfaced quickly. I concentrate on the demands particularly in 1921–1922 to shut down the Bolshoi opera theatre.

[425] A. K.: Iskazhennïy Shubert. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 29(902), 13. The review was titled "Distorted Schubert," which referred to the poor performance of the singer and the pianist and not to ideological distortion of the composer.

3.2.1 Opera after the Revolutions

The major opera houses, the Bolshoi in Moscow and the Mariinsky in Petrograd, continued to operate after the October Revolution, as did the for example the Imperial Orchestra and the Petrograd Capella. Philharmonics in both capitals became umbrella organizations for orchestral, folk and chamber music activities.[426] Later during the NEP era, the pre-revolutionary opera house of Zimin, which during the years of the Civil War had been "the Opera of the Moscow Soviet of workers and red army deputies" reopened in 1922 as a private opera and with its original name.[427] Initially, the major opera houses were wary of the Bolsheviks and did not want to give up their autonomous position that had been granted to them during the summer of 1917 by the Provisional Government. The Bolshoi published a statement where it renounced the new regime, but by January 1918 both the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky had come to terms with the government, and in the subsequent years, more centralized control in managing the theatres began to be regarded more favourably by the artists.[428] Although the old imperial theatres were nationalized, their leadership remained independent from the government, and the head of the Narkompros, Anatoly Lunacharsky, worked as a sympathetic link between the theatres and the government with his understanding of the preservationist work of the theatres.[429]

Although the performances continued, opera and ballet took place in an economically deteriorating situation. In the wintertime after the Civil War had broken out, a lack of fuel caused heating problems for the theatres, salaries were paid in food and cigarettes, and, due to food shortages, exhausted dancers fainted during performances.[430] Famous artists performed to military troops and workers partly continuing the pre-revolutionary tradition of 'enlightening the people,' partly out of political necessity, and partly because of the possibility of getting extra food.[431] For instance, the Mariinsky Theatre made an agreement with the Red Army, according to which theatre's artists would provide cultural program for soldiers heading to the front and in exchange would be granted army food rations.[432]

After the capital moved from Petrograd to Moscow in March 1918, the theatre building of the Bolshoi became a central meeting place. Most importantly, the biannual meetings of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, formally the highest political body of the RSFSR, were held there. The theatre was used to host international guests as well: for instance in the spring of 1920 a delegation of representatives of British workers and the Independent Labour Party from

[426] Fairclough 2016, 57.
[427] *Izvestiya* 10 Oct 1922, 4.
[428] Ezrahi 2012, 13–14; Morrison 2016, 209–210; Thorpe 1992, 393–394. See Chapter 2 for discussion on the conflict between Lunacharsky and Petrograd's Alexandrinsky and Mariinsky theatres.
[429] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 4.
[430] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 23; Morrison 2016, 219–220.
[431] Fairclough 2016, 13.
[432] Ezrahi 2012, 21.

Britain were taken to opera performances both in Petrograd and Moscow.[433] The artists of the Bolshoi Theatre had asked permission to end the season early, but Lunacharsky refused, because he wanted the visitors to see Aleksandr Borodin's opera Prince Igor.[434] Thus, in addition to hosting opera and ballet, the theatre had other functions as well, and this played a part when the discussion about preserving the Bolshoi became politically charged in 1921–1922.

3.2.2 Discussion about the Bolshoi in 1921–1922

The economic problems after the devastating war, revolution and Civil War forced the government to initiate the NEP, which in the first phase of its implementation cut government income sharply and forced the government to find ways to rationalize its functions (see Section 2.2.2). In 1921 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) appointed two commissions, the first in May and the second in October, to inspect the work of the commissariats and to look for potential ways to reduce expenditure.[435] The commissions suggested major cuts to Narkompros in both inspections, but it was the second inspection, when the fate of theatres emerged. The Bolshoi Theatre in particular became a centre of heated debate, as it symbolized an unnecessary luxury for the privileged and dishonest new elite.

The first signs of the potential problems were seen at the end of October 1921, when the head of the commission Yuri Larin marvelled in an interview at the high share (5 %) of the Narkompros budget given to the academic theatres. If these numbers were correct, Larin stated that he would not defend preservation of even the Bolshoi Theatre when set against "simple people's schools."[436] In November, Larin wrote a text to *Pravda* reporting on how things had proceeded.[437] The commission had asked Narkompros to inform it of the expenses of the Bolshoi, and it turned out that running the opera theatre cost approximately two billion roubles every month. That sum, it was argued, would be enough to hire 4 000 teachers and pay them a monthly salary of half a million roubles – more than they make at the moment. With such a sum given to the Moscow Soviet, Larin argued, education could be made completely free without "voluntary payment" which the schools were now apparently collecting from the parents. Now with the Bolshoi the money was being used for the entertainment of "speculators and other rich people," and the working class did not need or make use of such services. The preservation of the Bolshoi could perhaps be justified if the artistic value of the institution was notable, but even that was not the case at the moment: Larin cited Lunacharsky, who had reported to the commission that the overall artistic level of the Bolshoi was not great, and only

[433] During their visit in Moscow, representatives of Finnish and Swedish workers were also present. See *Izvestiya* 16 & 18 May 1920; *Pravda* 18 May 1920.
[434] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 39.
[435] Fitzpatrick 1970, 205–206, 259.
[436] *Izvestiya* 29 Oct 1921, 1.
[437] *Pravda* 11 Nov 1921. The text is dated on 9 Nov 1921.

the orchestra was good.[438] Apart from the issue of education, Larin also brought up the development of factories, railroads, and the mining industry, which demanded that the government should dispose of all that was "unnecessary."

The reason why Larin made the question public was his frustration with how things had proceeded. He wrote how decisions suggested by the commission that other institutions should close close down had been made quite smoothly, but when it came to the Bolshoi there had been attempts to convince the Presidium of the VTsIK not to enforce the commission's suggestion. Therefore, Larin saw it necessary "to appeal to the Moscow workers for socio-political support."[439] This kind of procedure irritated Lunacharsky, who asked in *Izvestiya* a week later whether it is appropriate to discuss governmental questions by appealing to the masses and not "according to normal Soviet, Party, or professional order." Further, he had started to feel that the whole thing had outgrown the question of the Bolshoi.[440]

Larin's text was not the first time that the Bolshoi was referred to as an unnecessary expense for the government, but his article considerably intensified the question. During the following months, his text was referred to directly or similar topics were discussed without direct reference to Larin's text. These included setting the Bolshoi against education and/or industry, noting the "low artistic level of the Bolshoi," the audience which consist mainly of "speculators," and the Bolshoi as being unnecessary for the workers.[441] *Pravda* published comments from its readers, which were, perhaps a bit surprisingly, both for and against closing of the Bolshoi. Those who supported preserving the opera theatre thought that it is not the theatre that should be blamed, if the workers could not attend the performances, but those who distributed the tickets. Closing down the theatre was also seen as an exaggerated measure: if there were problems, perhaps a reformation would be enough.[442] More authoritative texts, i.e. not short comments from the readership, unanimously supported the closing down of the Bolshoi.

The fate of the Bolshoi became a matter of dispute in the political leadership in the following year. Vigorously opposing Larin's commission, Lunacharsky got the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) to accept his proposal to preserve the Bolshoi opera and ballet. When Lenin heard about this, however, he wrote an indignant letter to Molotov on 12 January 1922, in which he named Lunacharsky's proposal as "utterly indecent." Lenin demanded the Politburo should entrust the Presidium of the VTsIK to overturn the decision of Sovnarkom, leave a few dozens artists in Moscow and Petrograd (Mariinsky Theatre) to run the performances and use at least half of the money thus saved for fighting illiteracy and establishing libraries. The Politburo acted accordingly on the same

[438] Had Lunacharsky said so, he definitely was not hinting that the whole Bolshoi should be shut down, but probably that the circumstances for doing art were at the moment difficult causing a drop in artistic standards.
[439] *Pravda* 11 Nov 1921.
[440] *Izvestiya* 18 Nov 1921.
[441] *Pravda* 15, 22, 24 & 25 Nov 1921.
[442] *Prada* 15 Nov 1921; *Izvestiya* 18 Nov 1921.

day.[443] This is the point when the question surfaced at a high political level, and by following only the party documents, one quickly forms the impression that Lenin was its initiator.[444] When we take into account the preceding public discussion and especially Larin's reasoning why the Bolshoi should be closed down, Lenin's actions can be read in the context of the broader public dispute.

Nevertheless it is true that Lenin's attitude towards opera was not particularly warm. Lunacharsky recalled later that the Bolshoi was more than once a matter of discussion between him and Lenin, and in the end Lunacharsky did not manage to persuade Lenin take a stand for its preservation. According to Lunacharsky, Lenin's opinion was based above all on the desire to allocate the money for education instead, and when he stated ideological reasons such as opera being the culture of landlords, he did this "with a twinkle in his eye."[445] Lunacharsky's interpretation seems plausible, because Lenin did indeed have a humorous tone when speaking on the subject. Apart from indignation, the letter to Molotov on 12 January 1922 expressed humour when Lenin ordered "To summon Lunacharsky for five minutes for the hearing of the last words of the accused"[446]. Moreover, in August 1921 he had sent a letter to Mikhail Pokrovsky:

> For comrade M. N. Pokrovsky
>
> Comrade Lunacharsky arrived.
> Finally!
> Harness him, for christ's sake [khrista radi], with all strength to work on professional education, on unified vocational school and so forth.
> Do not allow [to work on/to go to] the theatre![447]

All this indicates that although Lenin was personally more for than against closing the Bolshoi, the question was for him after all of secondary importance. This is good to keep in mind, when we follow the discussion on the Bolshoi that continued throughout 1922.

An interesting detail in the public discussion after Larin had published his text in November 1921 was that the upper hand in the matter was with those demanding the closure of the Bolshoi by setting it against the development of education and industry. The few voices for preserving the opera theatre came from the readership – non-specialists, whose short opinions on the matter were published in newspapers on a few occasions.[448] Lunacharsky did not throw

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[443] Artizov & Naumov 1999, 30–31; for the English translation of the document see Clark et al. 2007, 24. To clarify the political structures relevant for this question: the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) was nominated by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets and held the highest legislative power of the Soviet Russia outside the assembly of Congress. It was above the Sovnarkom, which was more of an administrative body. Lunacharsky, as the People's Commissar of Arts and Education, worked through the Sovnarkom and was not at that time part of the Presidium of the VTsIK or the Politburo. By appealing to the Presidium of the VTsIK, the Politburo could overrule the decisions made by the Sovnarkom.
[444] E.g. Douds 2018, 138.
[445] Lenin 1967, 670.
[446] Artizov & Naumov 1999, 31.
[447] Lenin 1967, 509.
[448] *Pravda* 15 Nov 1921; *Izvestiya* 18 Nov 1921.

himself into the debate with Larin, and indeed complained that Larin was appealing to the masses and not working according to the normal political procedures.

When the future of the Bolshoi was truly threatened after Lenin's intervention, however, Lunacharsky brought up several reasons why there was no point closing down the Bolshoi – although not in public. On 13 January 1922, a day after Lenin's letter to Molotov in which he demanded the closure of the Bolshoi, Lunacharsky wrote to Lenin.[449] First of all, the procedure irritated him: he claimed that Larin's commission, the Small and Large Council of People's Commissars[450] and the Presidium of the VTsIK had carefully dealt with the question after hearing the arguments both for and against, and in the end Sovnarkom and the Presidium decided to keep the Bolshoi going.[451] After this, the Central Committee (of the Party), without informing Lunacharsky or hearing any competent specialists, decided otherwise, making the procedure look completely absurd to Lunacharsky. Then he brought in the numbers: how after the tsarist times the tickets could now be purchased at a fraction of the price and how, even though paid only a small part in comparison to pre-revolutionary times, the artists continued to work. As for the costs, Lunacharsky did not see the need to terminate the opera performances, because the building itself was used by the Party and the soviets and besides that the valuable interior would need to be preserved. The cost of the opera performances, in comparison to the total cost including of the building itself, was not so high, and ending the performances would end the incomes as well.

Apparently Lunacharsky did managed to have some influence, since the Politburo discussed the question again on 17 January 1922. From 6 February there was a decision by the Presidium of the Central Committee that the Bolshoi would not be closed, but its expenses would be reduced.[452]

The next time the question surfaced at the political level was at the end of 1922. On 26 October the Politburo mandated a commission consisting of Kamenev, Lunacharsky and Svidersky to formulate measures for "the maximal reduction of governmental subsidies for theatres" along with closing the Mariinsky and the Bolshoi, if they could not be sufficiently self-reliant to survive after 6 months of minimal state-support.[453] The commission had to produce its results in a week, and indeed, on 2 November 1922, the Politburo came to the conclusion that the Mariinsky and the Bolshoi could not become sufficently self-sufficient, and the target of 395 million roubles, which the government was pursuing to save and transfer to educational needs, had to be achieved by closing down the theatres. Only the necessary funds for preserving the buildings and their possessions would be granted. However, the Politburo decided to form yet

[449] Published in Artizov & Naumov 1999, 31–33.
[450] The 'small' Council of People's Commissars (*Malyi Sovnarkom*) was a permanent commission of the Sovnarkom between 1918 and 1930.
[451] In comparison to Larin's version, this seems rather straightforward, as Larin had complained how there had been attempts to persuade the Presidium to preserve the Bolshoi against his commission's suggestions. See *Pravda* 11 Nov 1921, cited above.
[452] Artizov & Naumov 1999, 34, 735.
[453] ibid., 43.

another commission, which had the right to negotiate about other possibilities for saving the 395 million roubles and thus leave the Mariinsky and Bolshoi running. Andrei Kolegayev was appointed to this commission, and he was to negotiate with Stalin and Kamenev on other possible commission members.[454]

Lunacharsky became irritated again. He wrote to Stalin on 17 November that the task could have been given to Narkompros, and he took it as a sign of distrust, when the Politburo ordered Kolegayev to run the commission. He was also sceptical about Kolegayev's ability to handle such a task because he had no experience of theatres or the tasks of cultural construction in general. The task required "expertise and the ability to appreciate cultural heritage."[455] Whether he he had these characteristics or not, it seems that Kolegayev was quite efficient at his task. On 18 November *Izvestiya* published a small article according to which Kolegayev had announced that the Bolshoi and Mariinsky would be closed on 1 December. The directorate of the Bolshoi was working on the budget in order to find enough funds to keep the theatre running, but Kolegayev had decided to publish this information already now, because he saw it necessary to inform about the closing at least two weeks beforehand.[456] Only three days later Kolegayev yet again appeared much more conciliatory and Kalinin gave the assurance that such extreme measures would not be necessary.[457] On 3 December *Izvestiya* reported that the case was closed, and that the Bolshoi as well as the other academic theatres would keep running. The Bolshoi would cut its costs, try to increase incomes and be ready to realize its property in case of financial loss.[458]

After that there were no more demands to close the Bolshoi, though a restructuring of the Bolshoi administration was carried out in the following years. As a result in March 1924 the close collaborator of Lunacharsky, Elena Malinovskaya resigned from her post as director of the Bolshoi[459] and Lunacharsky himself started to lose his autocratic position overseeing theatre issues. When a deputy to his post, Varvara Yakovleva, was officially assigned, contacts between the theatre administration and the government increasingly started to go through her, and Lunachrasky was increasingly sidelined from managing these questions.[460]

Although there were several announcements of the closing down the Bolshoi, in every announcement an alternative way forward was introduced. There was no political consensus on how to deal with the opera theatres, and every time a decision was made a way was found to circumvent its implementation. Maksimenkov has speculated that Lenin's deteriorating health

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[454] ibid., 43–44.
[455] Maksimenkov 2013, 43.
[456] *Izvestiya* 18 Nov 1922,
[457] Kalinin: "in the governmental circles there is most benevolent attitude towards academic theatres. […] the decision was made on the ground of necessity to regulate budget of state theatres […] such extreme measures, for which comrade Kolegayev has an authority, will not by any means be applied." *Izvestiya* 21 Nov 1922, 5.
[458] *Izvestiya* 3 Dec 1922. Realizing Bolshoi's property included for example selling two hundred jars of perfume and cosmetics (Morrison 2016, 224).
[459] She returned to the post in 1930, see Morrison 2016, 232.
[460] Thorpe 1992, 403–404.

may have had an impact on this question as well. Lenin was stepping aside from the Politburo at the end of 1922 and possibly strengthening the position of those who supported the preservation of the Bolshoi.[461] This may have had an effect, but again if we consider Lenin's attitude to the question, which was only slightly in favour of closing down the theatres and most likely only for financial reasons, he might have settled with the budget cuts negotiated by Kolegayev's commission.

3.2.3 Bolshoi as a 'European' Institution

Even though the discussions described above were or should have been about the possibilities to find savings from the expenses of the academic theatres more generally, it was the Bolshoi Theatre which came to symbolize the broader debate. The expenses of the lavish building (no matter that it was used for other purposes than opera as well) and opera and ballet, art forms quite distant for many, was an inflammable combination in a country striving to satisfy even the most basic nutritional and educational needs.[462] Lunacharsky was not at all wrong when already in the winter of 1921 he wondered if the question had outgrown the Bolshoi Theatre.[463] It certainly had: the discussion was about culture, what it includes, what its role is in the Soviet state, and who defines all that.

As noted above, the outline for the discussion was already formulated by Yuri Larin, and all the subsequent comments circulated his arguments. These included setting up the Bolshoi against education (opera versus hiring 4000 teachers) and industry, but notably not against other forms of art. Larin did not question the value of opera *per se* but questioned the priority which was given to the Bolshoi in the dire situation. In fact, he could to some extent understand the demands to preserve the Bolshoi if these were made "in the name of preserving high artistic value—but there is no such thing."[464] Quite interestingly, on the pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* comments which questioned the importance of opera as an art form were rather sporadic, signalling a fairly unified and traditional view in the public discussion about what is considered as (meaningful) art. Commentators would be happy to preserve the Bolshoi (or at least they would be indifferent to the question) *if* the economic situation were better.[465] The defenders of the Bolshoi did not have to tackle the unpleasant question of there being any need at all in a revolutionary society for the art form, but could

[461] Maksimenkov 2013, 46. Apart from that, Lenin was absent also between May and October 1922 after his first stroke, and there is a roughly corresponding gap in the appearance of the theatre question in the documents as well. Bolshoi is discussed in the Politburo in February, and the next time the question seems to surface exactly in October (see Artizov & Naumov 1999; Maksimenkov 2013). It is hard to think that the question would have been so significant, however, and this is possibly only a coincidence.
[462] Hunger was a constant theme in the press. Both *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* reported on the situation for the first half of the year practically daily, and *Izvestiya* had even a permanent section called "Battle with hunger".
[463] *Izvestiya* 18 Nov 1921.
[464] *Pravda* 11 Nov 1921.
[465] *Pravda* 15 Nov 1921; 24 Nov 1921; 25 Nov 1921.

concentrate on how the theatres could be kept running regardless of the difficult economic situation.

This explains why Lunacharsky in his letter to Lenin focused especially on the expenses of the opera and how they had already been curtailed.[466] In addition to economical questions, Lunacharsky interestingly highlighted the orchestra of the Bolshoi, which indeed had been less criticized in the public discussion. Lunacharsky claimed that even Larin's commission suggested preserving the orchestra.[467] The orchestra was, according to Lunacharsky, "the leading [orchestra] in Russia and from the European perspective a significant European entity." In another passage, he continued:

> Therefore do not give a singe rouble to Narkompros, unless you want all this demagogy to steal from you the property of the theatre or the Bolshoi Theatre itself to collapse as a European demonstration of our un-culturedness (*nekul'turnosti*).[468]

Notable in Lunacharsky's thinking about the importance of the Bolshoi orchestra and opera was his reference to them as significant from the *European* perspective. The fall of Bolshoi would be a demonstration of "un-culturedness" (*nekul'turnosti*) for the Europeans, revealing Lunacharsky's understanding of 'culture' as dependent on European cultural history. Losing the Bolshoi would mean losing the connection to the European cultural line.

Being part of European 'development' was an important discourse, because the October Revolution was seen not as deviation from European history, but as its logical continuation. From the Marxist point of view, Europe had developed through revolutions, the last significant step being the French Revolution, the revolution of the bourgeoisie. Following historical dialectics, the situation had created yet another contrast when the bourgeoisie, the former revolutionary power, became the dominant and anti-revolutionary class subordinating the proletariat. The historical development of Europe demanded another revolution, and since the revolution had occurred in Russia, it was Russia's duty to further the historical task. In a sense, Russia had become more European than 'old Europeans' themselves.

The discussion of the role of the Bolshoi theatre is a concrete example of the tension between discourses on Russia, Europe, and cultural 'development.' While old European culture might have been depicted as 'moribund,' waiting for revolution to wipe it off, the discourse on 'culturally backward' Russia showed itself in comments on the necessity to hold on to institutions which were on a 'European' level.[469] It was a declared policy of the Party that the 'best cultural achievements' of the past would be seized by the proletariat through critical

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[466] Artizov & Naumov 1999, 31–33, see above.
[467] In his interview in *Pravda* 11 Nov 1921, Larin did suggest that the orchestra could be preserved, but as a separate symphony orchestra.
[468] "Так что Вы своей мерой ни одного рубля Наркомпросу не дадите, если только не хотите, чтобы вся эта демагогия раскрала у Вас имущество театра или обвалился сам Большой театр в виде европейской демонстрации нашей некультурности." (Artizov & Naumov 1999, 32).
[469] Besides Lunacharsky, Mikhail Kalinin questioned the destruction of "cultural value of whole generations personified in the artists of opera and ballet" (Artizov & Naumov 1999, 734–735).

adoption, but this left Russia still catching up with 'more developed' cultures. New Soviet Russia was the 'most progressive' country in the world, while at the same time still considered to be learning from others.

3.3 Danse Macabre of European Music and Its New Beginning in the Soviet Union: Leonid Sabaneyev's Letters from Paris in the 1920s

Leonid Sabaneyev (1881–1968) was a visible and influential writer on music in the late Russian Empire and early Soviet Union. He was a prolific critic, music historian and theoretician as well as composer, with the possibility to contribute to the formation of Soviet music political discussion through his position as music editor for the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* and several artistic journals. In addition he was a founding member of and/or held seats in several central artistic organizations of the time, such as the Association for Contemporary Music (ASM), the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (GAKhN) and the State Institute for Musical Research (GIMN).[470]

Sabaneyev has been viewed as one of the 'oppressed modernists' who chose emigration instead of staying in the Soviet Union, and consequently his image outside the Soviet Union was positive whereas in the Soviet Union he went quickly into oblivion after 1927.[471] This image is epitomized in Larry Sitsky's *Music of the repressed Russian avant-garde, 1900–1929* (1994), where Sabaneyev gets sympathetic treatment along with the other composers of the era. To be sure, Sabaneyev himself contributed to this image of a victim silenced under the oppressing society when soon after emigration he claimed that in Soviet Russia his thoughts on music "were left hanging in silence" after the Revolution.[472]

But, as Rebecca Mitchell rightly wonders, the role which Sabaneyev gave to himself in the West is rather questionable, since how can a music editor of the main newspapers as well as such a visible organizational figure claim to have been silenced? There was, of course, political calculation in the statements given in different contexts, and no doubt Sabaneyev felt disappointed about how things had proceeded in the Soviet Union. He was equally disappointed with the West however, retreating into a kind of half life of Russian emigrants.[473]

This section focuses on Sabaneyev's letters from his business trip / emigration, reporting on the musical life in Paris between 1926 and 1927. The letters were published first in *Izvestiya* (in 1926) and then in the more specialized

[470] See Mitchell 2018, 232.
[471] Boris Schwarz states that together with Arthur Lourié, Sabaneyev received the harshest criticism for his emigration, and the two were labelled as "traitors" (Schwarz 1983, 20).
[472] Quoted in Mitchell 2018, 231.
[473] Mitchell 2018.

journal *Rabis* (in 1927).[474] These reports are interesting to read against Sabaneyev's earlier Soviet writings as well as his texts published in English after his emigration, because they were written in very different contexts and directed to different audiences. Consequently there are inevitable contradictions, but also some unifying themes which reflect Sabaneyev's own thinking as well as more broadly art discourses in Europe and in the Soviet Union. Sabaneyev's reports point to the transnational aspects of these discourses, the most central of which was the pessimistic vision of the contemporary musical life of Europe. This discourse – described by Sabaneyev as a "danse macabre" of European music – fulfilled a political function in the Soviet Union since the culture of capitalist societies was supposed to wither away. Neverthelss, Sabaneyev continued to hold on to this vision in his later texts as well, suggesting a deep personal disappointment with modern musical life. He acknowledged the concepts of Soviet music political discussion (he was, after all, one of its central figures) and continued to feed into music political discourse from abroad, and though Sabaneyev after his emigration soon disappeared from the discussion in the Soviet Union, conceptualizations he had formulated both before and after his emigration remained part of the discourse.

3.3.1 Sabaneyev in the Soviet Union

Better known as a critic and musicologists, Sabaneyev saw himself as a composer first and a critic second – not the other way around.[475] A close friend of and assistant to Scriabin, later contributing to the study of his music, Sabaneyev was – and still is – seen through the enormous influence of Scriabin, to the extent that when Sabaneyev provided a retrospect of his own career in 1924 in the ASM journal *Contemporary music* (*Sovremennaya muzïka*), he mainly concentrated on delineating differences between his music and Scriabin's.[476] As Scriabin is mentioned on every page, the result emphasizes rather than diminishes the portrayal of Sabaneyev's musical contribution from the perspective of Scriabinism.

Sabaneyev's need to distance himself from Scriabin was no doubt motivated by his will to be taken seriously as an independent composer and not simply a sidekick of his late friend, but there was a political component to this as well. Scriabin's legacy was problematic for the Soviet Union especially because of 'mysticism' and 'esotericism' in his music, which contradicted the materialist worldview of Marxism, and Sabaneyev distanced himself from those aspects early on. In his retrospect to his own career, he claimed not to have any of those decadent features in his work that had been typical in Scriabin's era – features

[474] I have found 8 reports in *Izvestiya* and 5 reports in *Rabis*. *Izvestiya* was the second largest newspaper in the Soviet Union and *Rabis* (1927–1933) the organ of the art workers' trade union (*All-Soviet professional union of the workers of arts*, or *VSERABIS*). In 1920–1926, the journal was published under the name *Vestink rabotnikov iskusstv* (*Bulletin for workers of arts*).
[475] Leonid Sabaneyev: Pro domo sua. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 6, 152.
[476] ibid., 152–159.

which he called "poisoning." He contradicted "modernism" with his own way of composing, which was always in relation to tonal centres (although these centres do not have to stable) and emphasized the influence of the German tradition on his work, both in form (there is "some bulkiness") and in spirit ("sorrow and heroic doom"). In this connection, Sabaneyev mentioned three composers important to him: Bach, Beethoven and Wagner.[477]

In reflecting on his own music, Sabaneyev was bringing up his own aesthetic views, but at the same time he was in dialogue with the political context in which he was writing. This is most visibly seen in the attempts to distance himself from Scriabinism and to associate himself with politically less problematic German composers of the pre-revolutionary era.[478] In addition, Sabaneyev employed a few important concepts, more often related to the later cultural political discourse of the Soviet Union. These were *monumentality* (*monumental'nost'*) and *simplicity* (*prostota*).

Monumentality was a central concept for Sabaneyev in his writings more generally, but in this text one can read a more specific use of the term. Monumentality for Sabaneyev was not simply grand scale – if it was, then Scriabin's achievements in this sense would be unquestionable. Scriabin and almost all contemporary composers, according to Sabaneyev, were paying tribute to the cult of "unified harmonic colouring," which banishes and obliterates everything in its way, and Sabaneyev, after composing his sonata commemorating Scriabin (Op 15, composed in 1915), was in his own words looking for a way out from here. The "self-restriction" of modern composers to express themselves only in refined ways "deprives from them diversity of resources and the power of contrast, and by that obliterates the possibility of true monumentality and grandeur, which always manifests itself *simply*."[479]

Elsewhere, Sabaneyev had addressed similar issues by questioning a straightforward understanding of the concept *contemporariness* (*sovremennost'*). He stated for instance that not all music, which was written by contemporaries, was automatically "contemporary."[480] In a review of a concert of old music, Sabaneyev argued that the music heard in the concert was closer to the Soviet people than "yesterday's" contemporary music: "[In the old music there is] 'contemporariness' in a deeper sense – great monumentality of thought and emotions, which is innate to us – us, living in the heroic epoch."[481] He looked to

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[477] ibid., 155–156.
[478] Beethoven's and Bach's position in Soviet music political discussion have already been discussed. Wagner's position was the most wavering of the three, and Lunacharsky for instance delineated the "good Wagner" of the early period and the "bad Wagner" of the late period in a text from 1928 (Raku 2014, 102–104). On position of different pre-revolutionary composers in the Soviet music politics, see Fairclough 2016 and Raku 2014.
[479] Leonid Sabaneyev: Pro domo sua. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 6, 156–157. Emphasis in original.
[480] Leonid Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1. *Sovremennïy* as a word is formed in a similar way as the Latin-based English word *contemporary*: *so-* ("with, together") + *vremya* ("time"). Thus, it is possible to interpret the word *sovremennïy* to mean not only "appearing at the same time" but also "to be in sync with the spirit/ideas/ideology of the time."
[481] L. Sabaneyev: Na kontsertakh. *Izvestiya* 23 April 1924, 6.

the past towards Bach and Wagner, whose sounds were now absolutely unattainable.[482] There was all in all very little to applaud in the "contemporary" music of the time, but still at the beginning of the 1920s Sabaneyev had hope for the future:

> The life-creating force of music has flown somewhere, let us hope [that] not once and for all. That not once and for all—[of this] demonstrates a strong, powerful traction towards the return of the past, towards monumentality, peacefulness, towards simplicity (*prostota*), towards contrasts, towards mastery (*masterstvo*). This traction is felt even in the musical sphere, among the youth [- -], as well as among the masses.[483]

Emphasizing *monumentality, simplicity* and *masses* was rather populist talk from Sabaneyev, who nevertheless held modern trends in music in high esteem. It was in fact part of the fluctuating discourse in the music political discussions more broadly, as in 1924 another advocate of modern music, Boris Asafiev, wrote in a more populist vein, emphasizing the social task of composers.[484] These kind of "concessions" towards the ideological interpretation of music from the so-called modernist camp, who had earlier emphasized autonomy of art in relation to politics, raised much controversy.[485] More importantly, however, it shows how overlapping the discourses were and that concepts like *monumentality* or *simplicity* were not solely the language of proletarian musicians or later socialist realism.

Sabaneyev held the outright 'proletarian' interpretations on music at arm's length and tried to incorporate the role of professional musicians into this populist discourse.[486] Although formulations of monumentality and/or simplicity cohered well with Sabaneyev's insistence on the importance of the tradition of classical music, especially Bach, Beethoven and Wagner, in other cases he ended up in contradiction with some of his texts published elsewhere. In the text published in the first issue of the journal *Sovremennaya muzïka*, Sabaneyev hailed the diverse field of contemporary music with all its experimentation and the need to welcome all its forms equally[487] – whereas at the end of the same year he denounced these experimentations as "self-restriction" of modern composers.[488] He wrote warmly of the "traction," which the masses were feeling towards monumentality, peacefulness and simplicity in music[489] – elsewhere he related democracy in art to petty bourgeois ideas, denounced the idea of "music for the people" and demanded quality from music, although this

[482] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennost' tvorchestva. *Teatr i muzïka* 1923, No. 10(23), 789.
[483] ibid.
[484] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 102–107; See also Viljanen 2017, 439–441.
[485] On the mixed reactions towards Asafiev's texts, see Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 102–107; Zuk 2021, 225–226.
[486] The most categorical proponents of proletarian music denounced the role of the 'musical intelligentsia,' who were too remote from the workers and the people.
[487] L. Sabeneev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 1, 1–3.
[488] Leonid Sabaneyev: Pro domo sua. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 6, 156–157. cf. above.
[489] See above.

music might yet be "inaccessible" (*nedostupno*) to the masses because of their "backwardness" (*nerazviti*).[490]

Sabaneyev's writings from the first half of the 1920s reflect the fluid nature of Soviet music political discourse. In terms of organization, the so-called modernists were in their heyday in 1924–25, publishing two journals, having their fellow modernist Roslavets heading the music section of Narkompros, with their loudest critic RAPM splitting up in quarrels and having their publication put down, while more and more interesting composers and other musicians began to visit the Soviet Union.[491] Yet, as some of Sabaneyev's and Asafiev's texts demonstrate, the pressure to respond to the ideological demands was there as well, and proponents of new music increasingly strove to incorporate elements of the more populist discourse in their formulations. These elements should not be taken as a volte-face in these writers' views, but as an attempt to negotiate necessary political demands in the sphere of music, and perhaps even steer musical life into a direction suitable for them. In some cases, these writers ended up contradicting themselves, but even more flexibility was needed later on, when the possibilities for outright modernist views became harder to promote. Some adjusted more, like Asafiev, who became "the father of Soviet musicology," others stepped back from public discussion and some, like Sabaneyev, chose emigration instead.

3.3.2 Sabaneyev's Letters from Paris

As with many others, Sabaneyev's emigration began ostensibly with a business trip, the main purpose of which was probably from the outset to leave the country. The leave of absence from his position at the State Academy of Artistic Sciences was granted for approximately five months in January 1926,[492] and his reports on musical life in Paris started to appear in *Izvestiya* in March 1926. His initial leave of absence was extended at least once, but it is not clear for how long.[493] In any case his reports continued to be published for a year and a half: in *Izvestiya* they appeared until June 1926 and after that in *Rabis* between January and April/May 1927.

One of the first things Sabaneyev reported from Paris was the position of Igor Stravinsky in Parisian music circles. Stravinsky's fame, according to Sabaneyev, had already surpassed not only other Russian composers but French

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[490] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 13. After emigration, Sabaneyev wrote again very negatively on democracy and masses in relation to art: democracy, perhaps important for the states and the welfare of individuals, inevitably "paralyses the development of taste," and when the circle of music expand, "its cultural tone is inevitably lowered" (Sabaneyev 1932, 77).

[491] Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012.

[492] Mitchell 2018, 238.

[493] The information from the archives (RGALI, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art) states that the business trip was extended already on 1 April 1926, but curiously at the same time he was also removed from the payroll of his employer, the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (GAKhN). On 3 February 1927 he was removed from the list of "active members" of the Academy, and completely from its ranks on 1 December 1929, with the status "emigrant." (RGALI, f. 941, op. 10, d. 541.) I thank Rebecca Mitchell for this information.

ones as well.[494] During the next year and a half, Stravinsky became the main theme for Sabaneyev's reports and through him Sabaneyev painted a picture of a calculating and inauthentic musical life in Europe.

Sabaneyev no less than despised the role Stravinsky had assumed in Paris, which, according to him, was above criticism: "Stravinsky went there, came her, sneezed, spat – all this has significance."[495] The task of Stravinsky was to provide irritation for "the tired and anaemic nerves" of the bourgeois world.[496] His works were "deep down very cold," as Stravinsky himself understood, but, more than that, "he gives himself credit for this."[497] Meanwhile, the whole musical intelligentsia of Paris bows to the genius and no one dares to shout that the king has no clothes.[498] Through Stravinsky, Sabaneyev reproduced the discourse of a cold, calculating and inauthentic west, where music is part of a social game and business. Stravinsky because of his wit and talent exploited this shamelessly. His every composition was a "trick" and when Sabaneyev met the composer, he was not sure if he was looking at a great musician writing music from which Sabaneyev personally did not get any pleasure, or whether Stravinsky was a "clever salesman of a musical product, who does not shun any even crude forms of advertising." What Sabaneyev knew for sure was that Stravinsky personified the dead end of music and that a decisive renewal of music was needed.[499]

This kind of evaluation naturally struck the chord in Soviet cultural political discourse, as it brought together cold, calculating and inauthentic Europe (/West), emigrants, and the shallow business world of art in capitalist societies. The dead end of cultural life corresponded to the dead end of the capitalist world, which gasped for air before its historically inevitable disappearance in the world revolution. Crucially, however, Sabaneyev did not continue this argumentation further: he did not claim at any point that the future of music and art lies in the socialist world and its sole representative of the time, the Soviet Union. This omission was not critical for the political message, because the Soviet readers could no doubt continue the argumentation by themselves on the basis of the learned discourse, but it is significant when considering the later texts by Sabaneyev. The texts published after his emigration in English do continue the same discourse about the dead end of music and art in the West, but also that this dead end had been reached in the Soviet Union as well.[500] Putting these sources together, it seems that Sabaneyev did think that music had no future in Europe, but also that it does not have future anywhere: the world of art, music and beauty was gone forever.

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[494] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïkal'nïy Parizh. (Pis'mo I). *Izvestiya* 10 March 1926; 24 March 1926.
[495] L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Pis'mo iz Parizha). *Rabis* 1927, No. 6, 4.
[496] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïka v Parizhe (Pis'mo iz Parizha). *Rabis* 1927, No. 3, 14.
[497] L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Vpechatleniya vstrechi). *Rabis* 1927, No. 22, 5.
[498] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïkal'nïy Parizh (Pis'mo II). *Izvestiya* 24 March 1926, 5.
[499] L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Vpechatleniya vstrechi). *Rabis* 1927, No. 22, 5. Few years earlier, Sabaneyev had been pleased by some of the few performances of modern music in the concert period 1924–25, including Stravinsky's Suite (not clear which Suite), which gave "some idea of this virtuosic author's current skills." (L. Sabaneyev: Itogi muzïkal'nogo sezona. *Izvestiya* 10 May 1925, 6).
[500] See Sabaneyev 1930; 1932.

When Sabaneyev and Stravinsky met in 1927, the two discussed Scriabin as well, and Sabaneyev wrote how hard it was to describe the deep antipathy Stravinsky felt towards the music of Scriabin. Criticism, or indifference, towards Scriabin Sabaneyev noted to be common in Europe, and he explained this as a new era of our own relationship towards music in general.[501] By this, Sabaneyev meant the disappearance of grand world-changing visions, which Scriabin and his contemporaries (including Sabaneyev) attached to music.[502] Whether this new vision and relationship to music was a bad or a good thing is another question, Sabaneyev stated.[503]

The question which Sabaneyev does not answer in this text, was an important one for him. The bitterness he felt for the lost world comes forth in his comments on the Russian emigrants, and especially those who had been influential in the musical world of the Russian Empire or the early Soviet Russia.[504] Two names got especially harsh treatment form Sabaneyev: the musicologist and brother of Scriabin's lover Boris Schlözer and the former head of Music Section (MUZO) of the Narkompros, Arthur Lourié. Schlözer had emigrated soon after the October Revolution and Lourié in 1921.[505] To be sure, any kind of positive comment on the emigrants would not have been acceptable in the Soviet press, but Sabaneyev contempt towards these two went beyond the necessary-for-political-purposes. Schlözer – "now boastfully de Schlözer" – after "shaking off the ashes of Scriabinism" turned towards Stravinsky, whose leftovers Lourié, as Stravinsky's "satellite and apostle", was already enjoying.[506] It seemed that Schlözer's "betrayal" of the legacy of Scriabin hit Sabaneyev especially hard, and although Sabaneyev seems rather defeated by the change of times and loss of extravagant musical visions, he does not forgive Schlözer, Scriabin's former advocate and close friend. Sabaneyev's attitude seems to suggest that although the world might have irreversibly changed, the believers in the old world should not have given up their faith in it so easily and jumped into the musical life of (capitalist) modernity. Ironically, while writing these reports, Sabaneyev knew very well he would be joining this group of Russian emigrants.

It is noteworthy how effortlessly Paris and Europe appear as synonyms in Sabaneyev's texts. Paris is in itself representative of Europe, and in fact more than

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501 L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Vpechatleniya vstrechi). *Rabis* 1927, No. 22, 5. Sabaneyev noted the absence of Scriabin's music in Paris already a year earlier. He put the blame partly on Russian pianists, who did not perform Scriabin's music in their recitals. (See *Izvestiya* 10 March 1926.)

502 Rebecca Mitchell's book *Nietzsche's orphans* (2015) studies this worldview – "musical metaphysics," as she termed it – of the late Imperial Russia in detail.

503 L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Vpechatleniya vstrechi). *Rabis* 1927, No. 22, 5.

504 When describing the position of Russian music in Paris, Sabaneyev stated that it is still an "uncharted Central Africa for a French musician," but also that "Russians" in Paris are neither interested about it – adding quotation marks on emigrant Russians and questioning thus their national identity. Leonid Sabaneyev: Muzïkal'nïy Parizh (Pis'mo I). *Izvestiya* 10 March 1926, 5.

505 On Lourié see Section 2.2.1.

506 L. Sabaneyev: Igor' Stravinskiy (Pis'mo iz Parizha). *Rabis* 1927, No. 6, 4; L. Sabaneyev: Muzïka v Parizhe (Pis'mo iz Parizha). *Rabis* 1927, No. 3, 14.

that, "the capital of the world."[507] This is not the whole image of Europe, however, but only its decadent, degenerate and modern side. It was not hard for Sabaneyev to maintain his own 'Europeanness,' but this did not refer to Paris or to Russia, but to the musical tradition of Germany – that of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner. It is the division between French *civilisation* and the German *Kultur*, the degenerate and the healthy, the material and the spiritual[508] – perhaps even the feminine and the masculine. This division between 'good' and 'bad' Europe was prominent in Soviet music and cultural political discourse as well, as the music suitable for Soviet construction had to be filtered from the unsuitable. The healthy tradition was named as revolutionary or progressive in its time, and the unhealthy as reactionary. The transnational origin of this discourse is revealed by the fact that those representatives of the 'progressive' tradition were found especially from the German-speaking *Kultur* tradition: the names of Bach and Beethoven kept on coming up in Soviet discussions, as was seen earlier.

Sabaneyev's texts continued to be published in the Soviet Union in the journal *Rabis* in 1927, which happened to be the year of Beethoven's centenary jubilee (he died in 1827) as well as the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution. Consequently, Beethoven's music was performed and art journals in the Soviet Union and Western Europe published articles on the composer.[509] Beethoven's presence was visible also in Paris, and Sabaneyev gladly reported on this for his homeland.

"Paris is embraced currently by a Beethovenian spirit,'' Sabaneyev wrote, "and taken up by inclination towards 'monumentality' [*monumental'nost'*]."[510] This monumentality Sabaneyev saw as a problem for the "lively" Parisians, who got bored if a concert lasted more than 1,5 hours, and the aesthetes of the city were generally not happy with Beethoven. This was because his music did not represent "absolute beauty" or it was not abstract, and Sabaneyev gladly agreed with this argument:

> This is true, the masses bow before Beethoven [- -] because for them Beethoven is not a musician, but something else – a prophet, a father [*vozhd'*], a heroic figure… The pages of music journals are filled with these clumsy reasonings. In these there is a portion of truth, that in any "true" music the main thing is the masses – "not the music," but "this something else." [- -] Exactly this "something else," above music, what Beethoven had and what makes his music alive today [is] to a large extent unnatural to the bourgeois aesthetes of the current musical sphere.[511]

Here, Sabaneyev was enforcing the discourse according to which Europe (or its elite) did not understand Beethoven any more because they did not understand his significance to the masses. The masses do not "understand" the music as the "aesthetes" do, but it is the bourgeois aesthetes and not the masses who are

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[507] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïkal'nïy Parizh. *Izvestiya* 18 July 1926, 6. Sabaneyev quickly adds though, that this world capital has "some kind of elusive characteristics of provincialism."
[508] cf. Harrington 2016, 3–4.
[509] On the Beethoven jubilee year 1927 in the Soviet Union, see Raku 2014, 242–251. The People's commissariat of arts and education assigned for instance a special Beethoven committee in 1926 in order to organize events for the following year (ibid., 242).
[510] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïka v Parizhe. *Rabis* 1927, No. 18, 14.
[511] ibid.

wrong. The point of Beethoven – or the point of music, for that matter – is not the music itself, but its social function: how it reflects the unity between people and, in the case of Beethoven, how it reflected the new society after the Revolution.[512]

The antithesis of 'revolutionary Beethoven' in Sabaneyev's text was the current commercialized musical life, which was more reminiscent of sports than art. Although the contemporary composers claimed to write "pure" music, never had music been so filthy: "and not only in a literal sense of sound filth, but also in a moral sense." [513] At the same time, degenerate old Europe was doing everything it could to look fresh: "Old and degenerate European music dresses up and wants to cover its centuries-old wrinkles and ruins with rouge and make-up to create a happy Mozartian worldview. But its jumps and gallops sound gloomy and rather bring to mind a 'danse macabre,' its naivety seeming unbelievable." [514]

The report cited above was one of the last published in the Soviet Union and appeared in April-May 1927. This was more than a year after Sabaneyev had left the Soviet Union and almost a year after the initial end of his leave of absence from his position in the State Academy of Artistic Sciences. It was clear to Sabaneyev from the outset that he had in fact emigrated and it became clear too for his Soviet connections somewhere in 1927 – if not earlier. Yet he continued to feed the Soviet music political discourse with his writings about the degenerate music of Paris and the doom of European cultural life. Why?

The short answer is: because this view represented his own conviction. Far from being the 'repressed and silenced modernist' of the Soviet regime and a 'westernizer,' which this label often explicitly or implicitly carries with it, Sabaneyev was hugely disappointed with musical life in the 1920s – both in Paris and in the Soviet Union. He did not tone down his criticism of the evolution of music in his later writings that were translated into English[515] and there is no sign that his contempt for Russian emigrant circles and its musical life circulating around Stravinsky was not true. Yet he saw no other choice but to join this group of emigrants. Like many others, Sabaneyev was not a direct 'ideological enemy' for the Soviet system or a former communist 'coming to his senses,' but an influential cultural figure, whose possibilities to act were increasingly diminishing and who saw it better to leave without any promise of material, ideological or musical fulfilment in the West. The musical grass was no greener on the other side: from Sabaneyev's pessimistic outlook, the area of a similarly scorched land was perhaps only a little wider. Sabaneyev saw himself as completely dislocated, earlier believing in the mystery and world-changing

[512] In 1927, if not earlier, the interpretation of Beethoven's direct connection to the revolutionary cause and hence the cause of the proletariat was said aloud (see Raku 2014, 245–246). Beethoven in fact *belonged* to the Soviet Union and not the Western European, which had lost its revolutionary tradition. See Section 2.4.
[513] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïka v Parizhe. *Rabis* 1927, No. 18, 14.
[514] ibid. Старая и разваливающаяся европейская музыка милашничает и свои вековые морщины и руины хочет прикрыть румянами и белилами веселенького моцартовского мировоззрения. Но ее прыжки и скачки звучат невесело и напоминают «пляску смерти», ее невинность представляется невероятной.
[515] See Sabaneyev 1930; 1932.

influence of music and now thrown into a grey and dull world, too hygienic for any sensations music could elicit.[516]

> But [it is] a strange thing that in general one gets the impression [- -] that on the whole already for a long time no kind of music has been needed by anyone. Some kind of strange people, called composers, cook up persistently different kind of meals out of sounds and stubbornly serve them to a public who do not need them. Some of these meals are edible, as they are made out of papier-mâché… But it happens that the fashionable and chic need some kind of decorative food on the table. For this situation [there is] Stravinsky.[517]

Sabaneyev's reports show how tightly Soviet music political discourse – often viewed as separate from the 'West' – was related to the transnational ideas of the material and the spiritual, the good and the degenerate in Europe as well as to Russia's own historical conceptualizations of the West and the East, Europe and Russia. Seeing the culture of Western Europe as the culture of decline was not a Soviet invention but can be seen as a central idea in the discourse of modernity.[518] Although Sabaneyev in fact criticized the current musical culture both in the West and in the Soviet Union, only criticism of the former remained in the letters. Whether he meant it or not, whether he cared or not, Sabaneyev did offer continuity if not reinforcement for a narrative where the 'old Europe' and its culture is degenerate and weak, and where it is the task of Soviet culture to bring Europe back on track – to become the Europe of tomorrow.

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The relationship between Russia and Europe offers us one of the clearest examples of discursive continuations from pre-revolutionary Russia to the Soviet Union. The positioning of Russia in relation to Europe was no less important for the Soviet Union than it was for the Russian Empire in the 19th century – nor has this positioning been any less important for 'Europe's' self-understanding. This historically and culturally constructed border between 'East' and 'West' acquired further ideological delineation as the socialist revolutions in Western Europe, which the Soviet leaders at first genuinely expected, did not occur, and the Soviet Union was left alone to represent the 'next phase' of human development. Consequently the ideological borderline between capitalism and communism became one of the defining features of 20th century European modernity.

In music the most striking feature from the 1920s onwards was the dualistic attitude in relation to 'more developed' Western culture on the one hand and on the other the national romantic view of the particular importance of the Russian (folk) tradition. Russocentrism has been recognized as one of the cultural features

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[516] cf. Mitchell 2018.
[517] L. Sabaneyev: Muzïkal'nïy Parizh. *Izvestiya* 5 June 1926, 5. Later, Sabaneyev returned to this theme, noting that in Russia the materialist ideology of Marxism renders music unnecessary, but also that everywhere, the "general mood of modern life" leads to a situation, where music merely disturbs the comfortable and "hygienic" life of people (Sabaneyev 1930, 481; see also Sabaneyev 1932).
[518] The most well-known representative of this idea was Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, published in two parts in 1918 and 1922 (see Spengler 2002).

of Stalinism and contrasted with the 'internationalism' of the Soviet 1920s, but in music discussions, Russianness and the folk tradition more generally were openly embraced from early on. The nationality policy of the Soviet Union will be one of the main questions in the next chapter, which approaches the Soviet Union and its music political discourse through the concept of *people* (*narod*).

4 PEOPLE (*NAROD*)

This chapter looks at particularities of the concept *people* (*narod*) in the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire and how these particularities were translated in the Soviet context. A widely noted difference between the Russian concept *narod* and the concept of people in many other languages is its narrower limitation to a particular segment of the population in political discourse, namely the lower classes. While this narrower meaning is definitely part of the concept in other languages as well (in the meaning of 'the common people' in English, for instance), especially in the late 19th century and early 20th *narod* meant primarily the 'toiling masses' in Russian political discourse.[519] In many other parts of Europe, the semantic field of the concept 'people' could already at that point denote several socio-economic layers of society because of the rise of the middle class. Indeed the narrowness of the concept *narod* has been connected to the absence of the middle class in Russian history – an absence which according to Mikhail Velizhev has worried rulers and society from the days of Catherine the Great to the present moment.[520]

The chapter begins with pre-revolutionary interpretations of the people and does so from two angles. First, by looking at the division between *narod* and *intelligentsia* and how this division was maintained in the Soviet context, and second by looking at the 19th century *narodnik* tradition and how this was discussed after the revolutions. After this, the chapter presents discussions on the folk music tradition, which reflected differing understandings of *narod* in music discussion, and then moves to changes in nationality policy in the 1920s and 30s. As a result of these changes, the role of the Russian people and its culture against all the other nationalities of the Soviet Union was highlighted. The third part of the chapter looks at the concept of *narodnost'* – a concept going back to the early 19th century and the conservative rule of Nicholas I. The concept was not widely used in the late 19th century and early 20th, but it became one of the central concepts of the official art policy of socialist realism in the 1930s.

[519] E.g. Beurle 2018. See also chapter 2.
[520] Velizhev 2011, 249.

4.1 Bringing the People (*Narod*) to the Revolutionary Context

4.1.1 Maintaining the Border between *Narod* and *Intelligentsia*

Of particular interest in the conceptual history of *narod* for the current discussion is the rather strong division between the people and the educated/cultural elite, the *intelligentsia,* from the 19th century onwards. This phenomenon was far from unique in the European context of the time, as in several other countries a social group differing from the non-propertied class not in terms of (solely) property but in terms of education and 'cultural capital' was born as well.[521] What is interesting from the perspective of the development of Soviet (music) politics, however, was the preservation of the intelligentsia after the October Revolution and its significant role in maintaining and establishing the cultural and political structures of the new society.[522] Moreover, the legacy of the 19th century intelligentsia was controversial in Soviet discourse, because it not only denoted the elements of the rising bourgeoisie in the Russian history and 'separation' from the *narod,* but also the adoption of socialist ideas in the Russian context, inspiring the Bolshevik leadership and paving the way for the revolutions of the 20th century.

Perceiving the society of the Russian Empire through three distinguishable parts, *autocratic rule* (the tsar), *educated society* (*obshchestvo*/intelligentsia) and the *people* (*narod*) gained strength from the mid-19th century onwards.[523] Central in this process was the oppositional movement – in many cases inspired by socialism – against tsarist autocracy, which emerged from the educated segment of the population and adopted the term 'intelligentsia.'[524] For instance, Alexander Herzen and the later *narodnik* movement saw it as their task to retrieve the connection with the *narod* after the tsarist autocracy had failed to bring civilization or culture to the vast lower classes.[525] Tsarist rule in contrast to educational and cultural task of the socialists defined its connection to *narod* through a spiritual connection – it was a connection imposed by God.[526] In the

[521] Sdvizhkov 2011.
[522] For Michael David-Fox the significance of the intelligentsia for both the Russian and Soviet history is so substantial, that he has termed the 'modern alternative' of Russia/Soviet Union as "intelligentsia-statist modernity." (David-Fox 2015, 49).
[523] Knight 2000; Miller 2008.
[524] Hamburg (2010, 46) notes that the concept of 'intelligentsia' can be delineated in different ways. With the concept it is possible to refer broadly to the educated part of the population, which extends the history of intelligentsia to the 18th century. More narrow definitions can refer to the politicization of this group, concentrating especially on the 1860s, or include in intelligentsia only active revolutionary groups. This would closely follow the Soviet version of history of the revolutionary movements of the late 19th century (see Section 4.1.2).
[525] Knight 2000, 56–57.
[526] One can speculate how much it affected to the later revolutionary developments that two of the last tsars, Alexander III and Nicholas II were conservative rulers who were not ready to re-negotiate the position of the tsarist autocracy in the face of social challenges but rather enforced the spiritual justification for it (e.g. Saunders 2010, 29). The Russian monarchy in its last years was not able to renew itself in order to answer to the changing historical conditions, leading people to seek alternative political solutions.

triad tsar-intelligentsia-*narod* the people were at the centre of political legitimation, and the other two elements saw each other as superfluous obstacles, as Alexei Miller has aptly pointed out.[527]

It is a valid question whether it is accurate to speak about a clearly defined social group of intelligentsia in the Soviet context, and strictly speaking the answer would be no, because the talk is more vaguely about an 'educated elite,' who did not form one uniform social class after the re-structuring of the society after the revolutions.[528] But, as Sheila Fitzpatrick points out, the concept of 'intelligentsia' was not forgotten after the revolutions but instead was constantly used in political discourse, which is why the concept is not useless.[529] When using the concept, however, one needs to keep in mind that it was a political and discursive construction with usually negative connotations attached to it.

The intrinsic friction in adopting intelligentsia in the Soviet context rose from the society's need for educated professionals and artists on the one hand and the discursive denunciation of 'bourgeois specialists' on the other. This basic tension was visible already during the governance of the Provisional Government in 1917, when the first proletarian-minded cultural activities were established. When the manifesto of the First Workers' Socialist Theatre of Petrograd in August 1917 declared the "decaying bourgeois culture full of inequality" had to be destroyed while hoping that everything "still alive [worth of preserving] within the intelligentsia" would join the movement,[530] it received a mocking answer from the non-proletarian side. The theatre critic B. Nikonov for instance wondered how the manifesto first claims to take theatre and art from the bourgeoisie and right after that goes to the intelligentsia with "heads bowed." "With one hand they attract the intelligentsia to them, with another… beat the back of the head."[531] In a sense this contradiction survived long into Soviet times.

One particularly interesting feature of the concept of the intelligentsia in Soviet political discourse was that it was not simply an educated segment of the population, but more precisely that educated group who did not align themselves directly with the Bolshevik party. This is visible for instance in how the party leaders spoke of the intelligentsia: the party leaders spoke of them as 'others,' i.e. they did not consider themselves to be a part of this intelligentsia, although from their social background many of them would have fitted into this

[527] Miller 2008, 388–389.
[528] The social stratification in the 19th century was of course much more diverse than rulers-intelligentsia-*narod* as well, and this group of three was very much a political construction. From the point of view of the categorisation of social groups of the Russian Empire, the intelligentsia rose from the so-called *raznochintsï* estate ('people of miscellaneous ranks'), and often the 19th century intelligentsia was therefore referred in the Soviet discourse as *raznochintsï-intelligentsia*.
[529] Fitzpatrick 1992, 3–4.
[530] Pervïy Petrogradskiy rabochiy sotsialisticheskiy teatr. *Novaya zhizn'* 1917, 6 (19) August 1917, 2.
[531] B. Nikonov: Ob odnom "manifeste." *Obozreniye teatrov* 1917, No. 3509, 7–8.

group perfectly.[532] The intelligentsia was either the 'bourgeois intelligentsia,' who maintained pre-revolutionary values, or 'fellow travellers' (*poputchiki*), who would work together with the Bolsheviks out of mutual benefit but did not politically ally themselves to the party. In distinction from the pre-revolutionary times, the intelligentsia was not anymore only a way to distinguish the educated group from the uneducated *narod,* but the term had a political and ideological definition as well: the intelligentsia was something other than communists.

Indeed, the 'petty bourgeois intelligentsia' was regularly identified as a central social problem in Soviet society. While the intelligentsia was needed to create new culture, "every minute" they were looking back, "to shadows of the past,"[533] or under the auspices of NEP were creating literature with "the ceaseless propaganda of liberalism."[534] The intelligentsia was not only guilty of nursing the pre-revolutionary values within their own sphere, but of actively propagating them among the *narod*. This shows an idealized image of the people, not in the national romantic sense in which *narod* is portrayed as more 'authentic' than other segments of the population, but that *narod* is essentially communistic. For sure, *narod* was uneducated and therefore easily influenced by petty bourgeois ideology, but it was the fault of those spreading the ideology, not the *narod.* If given proper, ideologically informed education, the people would no doubt align themselves with the communistic goals. This was the discourse which the proletarian artists maintained, but examples can be found from a broader spectrum as well. Thus, while Nikolay Roslavets did admit that "hackwork" (*khaltura*¸ i.e. poor quality popular music) responded to the needs of the working masses, the "anti-cultural character" of these popular songs was the fault of the "artistic-musical intelligentsia" who did not direct any kind of conscious ideological work to song culture.[535] The idea of the 'purity' of *narod* remained strong in the Soviet Union as well, and this purity could now be an 'ideological purity' in addition to the national romantic 'authenticity.'

The relationship between the intelligentsia and *narod* in the Soviet context remained similar to pre-revolutionary Russia in the sense that the intelligentsia was framed as distinct to 'people' and that intelligentsia should 'enlighten' *narod*.[536] For the political leadership, however, it was important to emphasize the difference between 'enlightenment' in the pre- and post-revolutionary times. The pedagogical attitude of pre-revolutionary Russia looked down at people from above, as the "*kul'turtreger*" [from the German *Kulturträger*] from the ruling class "had tried to foist on to the peasantry and the proletariat that which was

[532] E.g. N. Bukharin: Intelligentsiya na Zapade. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya* 1920, No. 4–5, 14–15; Rech' t. Radeka [Speech of Karl Radek on the 4th all-Russian congress of art and educational workers]. *Izvestiya* 23 November 1922, 3. Trotsky for instance defined the "Soviet republic" as the "union of workers, peasants and by origin petty bourgeois intelligentsia—under the leadership of the communist party" (L. Trotskiy: Partiynaya politika v iskusstve. *Pravda* 16 September 1923, 2).
[533] N. Bukharin: Intelligentsiya na Zapade. *Rabotnik prosveshcheniya* 1920, No. 4–5, 14.
[534] Rech' t. Radeka [Speech of Karl Radek on the 4th all-Russian congress of art and educational workers]. *Izvestiya* 23 November 1922, 3.
[535] Nik. Roslavets: Sem' let Oktyabrya v muzïke. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 3, 179–189.
[536] Within the context of music, see Sargeant 2011, especially pp. 220–221.

considered to be educational for them."[537] This kind of attitude should be fought against, because while the intelligentsia could be an ally in socialist construction, it could not lead this work.[538] If in the pre-revolutionary times the intelligentsia saw it as its task to lift the *narod* from 'backwardness,' in the Soviet context the assimilation should go other way around, so that the intelligentsia, which "more or less is attracted to [the proletariat] or wants to warm itself on its side" will join the common effort.[539] The proletariat "tolerates" one part of this intelligentsia, "another part it supports, a third it half adopts, and a fourth it completely assimilates. By this complexity of process, by its inner plurality the politics of the communist party in the field of art is formed" – as Trotsky defined it.[540]

The 'tolerating' attitude towards the intelligentsia (or the "soft line," as Fitzpatrick dubbed it[541]), which Trotsky supported and which was clearly visible for instance in the party resolution on literature in 1925 came to a halt in 1928.[542] With the end of the NEP and the beginning of collectivization and the first five-year-plan, Stalin now turned from fighting the 'Trotskyite-Zinovievite' opposition to attacking Nikolay Bukharin and the so-called rightist deviation. This involved accusing the 'bourgeois specialists' of several industrial accidents, which were in reality caused by the demands to increase production in condition which were poor and linking these 'saboteurs' with international counter-revolutionary conspiracies. [543] Bukharin and others were accused of not supporting the class struggle against the enemies of the proletariat. This political struggle in the leadership of the party had an influence on the whole society, since the 'bourgeois intelligentsia' was now openly targeted as the class enemy of the proletariat, which meant that the proletarian art organizations seemed to have got an official blessing for their militant attitude against the artistic intelligentsia.

The years of 1928–1932 are commonly referred to as a period of "cultural revolution"[544] or "the great break"(*velikiy perelom*)[545] and they were marked by the elevated status of proletarian organizations in art political discourse. While the extent of the proletarian art organizations' power in that period has been put into question,[546] in terms of artistic discussion the ardent rhetoric of proletarian organizations was predominant. In music the only journals published during the

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[537] A. Lunacharskiy: Khudozhestvennaya zadacha sovetskoy vlasti. *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1919, No. 1, 3.
[538] Cf. "Only the masses can be the true creators of socialist life, but the working class considers artists, poets, musicians and actors to be capable of giving expression to its will towards socialist beauty." (R.: Iskusstvo i proletariat. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1918, No. 50. Article translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 21–22).
[539] L. Trotskiy: Partiynaya politika v iskusstve. *Pravda* 16 September 1923, 3.
[540] ibid.
[541] Fitzpatrick 1974b.
[542] In the 1925 resolution the party endorsed for instance a "tactical and careful attitude" towards fellow travellers (O politike partii v oblasti khudozhestvennoy literaturï. *Pravda* 1 July 1925, 3).
[543] This was the case for instance in the major show trials of Shakhtï in 1928 (see Fitzpatrick 1974a).
[544] Fitzpatrick 1974a.
[545] David-Fox 2015, 11.
[546] In music especially by Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012; Nelson 2004, 210.

period were the two RAPM journals *Proletarskiy muzïkant* (*Proletarian musician,* 1929–1932) and *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* (*For proletarian music*, 1930–1932), as both ORKiMD and ASM as well as their journals had ceased to exist.[547] On the pages of the RAPM journals rapprochement with the proletariat was demanded, and lapses in the concert programmes were highlighted, as the music of the 'old intelligentsia' still dominated in orchestral concerts. Even more severe consequences for concert organizers if the concerts were deemed bourgeois were implied by referring to the recent show trials, but those hints did not lead to such extreme results.[548]

When the intelligentsia during this period came to be regarded as a clear enemy and a threat to Soviet culture, understanding of *narod* from the proletarian perspective gained ground. This meant that while *narod* was of course an important concept for proletarian music organizations, the proletariat as the more politically conscious segment of the population was the prime focus of music activities. In addition, new music for the masses should be created by composers with proletarian backgrounds, because the songs now heard in clubs and demonstrations represented only bourgeois influence.[549] The proletarian hegemony which these proletarian artistic organizations demanded conveyed the message that it was particularly the proletariat, not the broader *narod*, who should be given the power to steer Soviet cultural life.

Proletarian organizations dominating the cultural sphere proved to be untenable, however, and in April 1932 all artistic organizations were disbanded. The Party resolution targeted especially the literary organization RAPP for its "leftish misrepresentation" and ordered new, broader and centralized artistic organizations to be established in order to bring clarity and order to the antagonistic cultural sphere.[550] While the decision was significant, most likely it did not come as a complete surprise. The harsh treatment of the intelligentsia had got out of hand, and almost a year earlier Stalin had demanded a more moderate line towards the old industrial and technical intelligentsia on the basis that the trials and breaking of "capitalist elements" in the cities and countryside had

[547] The non-existence of ASM did not prevent proletarian critics from continuing the fight against the false ideology of ASM still in 1930, for instance by claiming that its "modernists" (*sovremenniki*) supposedly denied the value of Beethoven (L. L.: Betkhoven. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 3, 9).

[548] See the discussion as well as the translated article from *Proletarskiy muzïkant,* where referring to the Menshevik trial as well as Shahty were made (Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 298–301). The concerts under discussion included Sergey Rachmaninov's *The Bells* and Gustav Holst's *The Planets* with the emigrant Albert Coates as the conductor. Understandably there were several points for the proletarian critic to seize on ("White emigrants" Rachmaninov and Coates, "heavenly" themes of these works, text by "decadent" intelligent Balmont in Rachmaninov's work etc.) It is more interesting however, that such concerts could be held in the first place, testifying to the relative freedom in the choice of repertoire during this so-called proletarian hegemony.

[549] See the editorials Za proletarskuyu muzïku & Trinadtsatïy Oktyabr' vstretit' proletarskimi pesnyami! in *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 1 & 8.

[550] The resolution has been published for instance in Artizov & Naumov 1999, 172–173; for the English translation see Clark & Dobrenko 2007, 151–152.

ended the claimed "wrecking" (*vreditel'stvo*). [551] Stalin demanded "**more attention to them** [the old technical intelligentsia], **more openly invite them to work**."[552] While the speech was about technical intelligentsia, this signalled a new policy towards the intelligentsia in other spheres as well. The task was not anymore to identify the 'counter-revolutionary' old intelligentsia and their detrimental influence (which seemed to have been one of the proletarian artistic organizations' main tasks), but to bring them on board with socialist construction. This accelerated criticism especially against the proletarian literary organization RAPP, and as literature was the lens through which the political decision-makers viewed the cultural field, any decision made about RAPP and the literary field would mean changes both to RAPM and the whole music field.

The proletarian artistic organizations did begin to address the needs for *perestroika* in their organizations,[553] but whether or not a new definition of their policy was even an option for the Party, at some point between June 1931 and early 1932 it had made the decision that the organizations needed to be disbanded in order to give the artistic field a new start. It should be mentioned that as the research carried out after the Cold War has widely demonstrated, this decision was well received among the artists, who had complained about proletarian organizations' excessive power already before April 1932 and thus it is hard to interpret is as a major blow against the artists' own interests.[554]

Even though Stalin had called for more moderate line towards the intelligentsia in 1931 and the proletarian orientation in the artistic field had been condemned in April 1932, the intelligentsia could not of course replace the proletariat as a cultural political concept. The bourgeoisie remained a class enemy, and as the events in 1931–1932 did not make the intelligentsia any less bourgeois, the intelligentsia remained under suspicion. On the other hand, the proletarian art organizations had tainted the political concept of the proletariat in the arts. Partly due to these changes, the concept *narod* gained even more prominent ground in music and art political discussion of the 1930s, and the choice of *narodnost'* as one central defining concept of socialist realism exemplifies this. Section 4.3 will return to *narodnost'*.

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[551] I. Stalin: Novaya obstanovka—Novïye zadachi khozyaistvennogo stroitel'stva (Rech' na soveshchanii khozyaistvennikov 23 iyunya 1931 goda). *Pravda* 5 July 1931, 1.
[552] ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[553] In RAPM this was proposed by one of its leaders Lev Lebedinsky, who wrote about *perestroika* of RAPM at the end of 1931 (see Edmunds 2000, 289–294). While admitting some mistakes, Lebedinsky had an explanation for all of these (for instance complaining about the influence of Voronsky – the much criticized and superseded editor of the RAPP journal *Krasnaya nov'*), leaving it questionable, how far in self-criticism and restructuring of RAPM policy the organization was ready to go.
[554] See Mikkonen 2009. The composer Alexander Mosolov had written directly to Stalin complaining about the hegemony of proletarian artistic organizations, and several writers, including Maxim Gorky (who was abroad at the moment), had appealed to Stalin to alter the situation (Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 319–321).

4.1.2 Positioning *Narod* against the *Narodnik* Tradition

Another element which affected understanding of *narod* in the Soviet period was the *narodnichestvo* movement of the second half of the 19th century. In Soviet historiography, the revolutionary history of the 19th century was portrayed through three different phases. First came the "aristocratic" period 1825–1861, which included the Decembrist uprising in 1825 and works of socialist thinker Alexander Herzen. This gave rise to the "bourgeois-democratic" phase 1861–1895, in which the so-called *raznochintsï* (a 'miscellaneous' social class) adopted socialist ideas to oppose the tsarist autocracy. After this began the "proletarian" phase of Russian revolutionary history.[555] The second phase in particular with its 'radical democrats' and *narodnik* (*narodnichestvo*) movement was a direct reference point for the Bolsheviks – both in positive and negative terms, as the *narodniks* were not only the Bolsheviks' predecessors but also ideological adversaries, whom especially Plekhanov and Lenin strongly criticized. In any case, understanding the concept *narod* in Soviet discourse included a great deal of reflection of the *narodnik* tradition. This in its turn affected the understanding of the 19th century musical tradition, which was partly reorganized in line with this new revolutionary periodization of 19th century history. It seemed clear that music, which was close to the 'people,' answered the demands of revolutionary music, but on the other hand the difference of the concept *narod* in the 19th century from its meaning in Soviet times was promoted in the political discourse as well.

The *narodnik* phase of Russian revolutionary history coincided with the period of the 'Mighty Five' or the 'New Russian School' in Russian music. Supported by the influential critic Vladimir Stasov (1824–1906), five composers grouped together in order to create a distinct Russian style and, as they perceived it, to continue the work of the 'father' of Russian music, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857). The composers included Mily Balakirev (1837–1910), who was considered as the leader of the group, as well as Alexander Borodin (1833–1887), César Cui (1835–1918), Modest Musorgsky (1839–1881) and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908).[556] As has already become apparent, Musorgsky's revolutionary image was constantly emphasized in Soviet discourse, and frequently this happened with the help of the *narodnik* tradition. Although all the members of the Mighty Five were considered to get their inspiration from the radical thinking of the time,[557] it was Musorgsky who was explicitly called *narodnik*.[558]

Russian music of the second half of the 19th century included more than the Mighty Five, of course – the composers Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), Alexander Serov (1820–1871), and the Rubinstein brothers Anton (1829–1894) and Nikolay (1835–1881), who founded the St. Petersburg and Moscow

[555] Lenin 1969, 93–94.
[556] On the role of the Mighty Five in Russian music history, see Frolova-Walker 2007.
[557] S. Chemodanov: Muzïka i teoriya istoricheskogo materializma. *Muzikal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 13–17; M. Ivanov-Boretskiy: Moguchaya kuchka. *Muzikal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 11, 38–39; A. Lunacharskiy: Romantika. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1928, No. 10, 6.
[558] V. Karatïgin: Po kontsertam. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 22(897), 9–11; Ye. Vilkovir: M. P. Musorgskiy. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 5, 3–9.

conservatories – to name but the most renowned ones. However in the music criticism of the second half of the 19th century dominated by Stasov and Cui, who were devoted to their own way of creating a 'Russian style' in music, the music of Tchaikovsky and Serov was consider as European and containing only at best some "pseudo-Russian" elements.[559] This division between the 'authentically Russian' Mighty Five and the 'European' Tchaikovsky and Serov in the Soviet context was a division analogous to that between the *narodnik* (i.e. 'revolutionary') Mighty Five and everyone else. This everyone else could be "aristocratic" Tchaikovsky,[560] "Wagnerian" Serov and "academism" represented by the Rubinstein brothers.[561] Rather than dismantling the nationalist narrative of Russian music, established through the music of the Mighty Five and criticism of Stasov, it received further ideological confirmation through its representation as the revolutionary *narodnik* movement in music.

Considering some tradition of Russian music as representing the *narodnik* movement of the time was not unproblematic, however, because *narodniks* did not have a positive status in Soviet political discourse that was unqualified. Lenin had criticized *narodism* since the 1890s for instance for its agrarian emphasis and blindness to the intelligentsia's own connection to the material interests of the ruling classes.[562] Trotsky brought this criticism into discussion of art and culture, as on several occasions he compared the artistic intelligentsia of the 19th century to the naive *narodniks* whose anti-Marxist legacy was still visible in Soviet society. For Trotsky, just as the *narodniks* suppressed by the autocracy looked for support from the lower classes and wanted to demonstrate their love for the people by going around without clean clothes and a toothbrush, so too was the artistic intelligentsia ready to sacrifice "tricks" in artistic forms in order to express more directly the sufferings and hopes of the people.[563] Now the same was visible according to Trotsky in demands of proletarian culture, which was ready to abolish more refined forms of art in order to be closer to workers.[564] Trotsky condemned these attempts by stating that "[c]lumsy art is not art and, therefore, it is unnecessary for the workers."[565]

To Trotsky the 19th century intelligentsia was wrong when it wanted to 'go to the people' – within the peasantry, there was no revolution but only a step backward. The difference in the concept of *narod* in the early Soviet context in relation to the *narodnik* tradition was that the people do not need patronizing and admiration from above, but they need to be taken seriously by offering them the best that humankind has created so far. Rather than going down to the level of the people, they need to 'pulled up' from backwardness. This was also the point which the polemicists of ASM, namely Sabaneyev and Roslavets, used against the proletarian musicians. Rather than settling for writing songs easily adoptable

[559] Frolova-Walker 2007, 45–46.
[560] On the aristocratic reputation of Tchaikovsky and ways to consider it, see Chapter 2.4.1.
[561] Ye. Vilkovir: M. P. Musorgskiy. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 5, 8–9.
[562] Zverev 2009, 5–6.
[563] L. Trotskiy: Formal'naya shkola poėzii i marksizm. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 30(903), 3.
[564] L. Trotskiy: Proletarskaya kul'tura i proletarskoye iskusstvo. *Pravda* 15 September 1923, 2–3.
[565] ibid.

to the working masses, the composers should focus on writing high quality music which the people might not yet understand but which they will once their cultural level rises.[566]

On the proletarian side, the writers were no less critical of the *narodnik* tradition and did not embrace any kind of *narodnik* identity which Trotsky, Sabaneyev and Roslavets ascribed to them. While the proletarian musicians demanded the artistic intelligentsia 'get closer' to the working masses, the 19th century way of approaching the *narod* was not acceptable. RAPM recognized the value of the music of the time (as this was a repertoire which the proletarian audiences accepted more easily than modern music), but the "social characteristics," from which this music rose, were "directly contrary to our social structure."[567] In *narodism,* the "[a]tmosphere of the 'repentant nobles' and the recognition of 'historical guilt' in front of the people served as the basis for implanting and developing a distinctive kind of worship of these people as the bearers of moral ideas and keepers of the characteristic economic forms [- -]."[568] Thus, the attitude towards *narodism* in music discussions reflected very well the more general, rather ambivalent discourse about this tradition in the Soviet 1920s. While it was possible to point out the 'revolutionary' character of the Might Five with references to *narodism*, the criticism of *narodism* by central theoreticians (Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky) was weighted so that one could not align with this tradition without reservations.

Music's problematic relationship with the *narodnik* tradition came forth most concretely in the attitudes towards folk music as an art form in itself, but especially in opinions about how much the folk tradition should inform and inspire the creation of new revolutionary music. There were multiple contradictory discourses related to this. On the one hand, the 'revolutionary spirit' of *narod* throughout its history should inspire the professional artist, but on the other, the people who need education and to become enlightened were considered 'backward,'. On the one hand, the old communal *obshchina* tradition was still alive within *narod*, and on the other the people (especially the city proletariat) carried their petty bourgeois characteristics to which they were exposed in their dispossessed position under capitalism. Before going into a more detailed description of the discourses related to folk music, however, it is worth considering what happened in the 1930s to the ambivalence in the Bolshevik Party about the value of *narodism*.

The later portrayal of the *narodnik* tradition in an article in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* from 1939 is very revealing. Citing extensively both Lenin and the recently published *History of the communist party* (1938),[569] the article created a

[566] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 8–20; Nik. Roslavets: Sem' let Oktyabrya v muzïke. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 3, 179–189.
[567] M. Pekelis: Nashe muzïkal'noye nasledstvo. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 10, 13.
[568] M. Ivanov-Boretskiy: Moguchaya kuchka. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 11, 38.
[569] Also known as the *Short course* (*Kratkiy kurs*), it was initiated by Stalin in order to standardize the historical narrative of the party history.

clearly negative image of the movement overall.[570] We learn from the article for instance that even though the movement was a step forward in relation to its predecessors (Nikolay Chernyshevsky and Nikolay Dobrolyubov were named here) in that it raised the question of capitalism's role in Russia, in its philosophy it was much less sophisticated. The problems with *narodniks* included for instance the inability/unwillingness to see the central role of the proletariat and the emphasis on the peasantry in igniting revolution, belief in exceptionality of Russia's economic system, seeing Russia as able to skip the capitalistic phase, and emphasizing the role of revolutionary individuals instead of the mass movement. [571] Interestingly, although Chernyshevsky was mentioned as an important inspirer of *narodniks*, the common assessment of him as one of the fathers of the movement was rejected because of the ideological differences in Chernyshevsky's work and later *narodniks*.[572] This move was necessary in order to protect Chernyshevsky's reputation, as he had been a major influence for Lenin and for the Bolshevik Party more generally. The encyclopaedia article illustrates well the streamlined, negative version of the history of *narodniks* in order to confine the history of the concept *narod* to the Stalinist historical narrative. In this narrative, the 'good' and the 'bad' of Russian revolutionary history were pronounced, and any influence on the Bolshevik party from other than canonized theoreticians (Marx, Engels, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Lenin) was rejected.

This change in the portrayal of the *narodnik* tradition to an exclusively negative one had presented itself in music discussion with the '*narodnik*' Musorgsky already earlier. In a fairly small conceptual move, after the 1920s Musorgsky the *narodnik* became simply *narodnïy* (*national*).[573] In one of the first attempts to define socialist realism in music in 1933, Musorgsky's "realistic" legacy was discussed the most as he was at that point the safest choice (if not the only safe choice) when looking back at the tradition of Russian music.[574] It is noteworthy that there is not a single general mention of the *narodnik* tradition of Musorgsky's own time, but instead the writer accepts Boris Asafiev's interpretation of Musorgsky being in line with the atmosphere of the time "expressed by Chernyshevsky." [575] The critic Gorodinsky noted that this portrays the realism of Musorgsky in a literary light, and this is correct because "music on all those occasions when it rose to realize its societal function, always turned into literature as the source of the guiding, leading idea. [- -] Indeed, the

[570] The article divides the *narodnik* movement into several phases. In the beginning after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 there were three different currents represented by Bakunin, Pyotr Lavrov and Pyotr Tkachov. From here rose the phases of 'Going to the people' of the early 1870s, *Land and liberty* (*Zemlya i volya*) at the second half of the 1870s, *Black repartition* (*Chornaya peredel*) and *Will of the people* (*Narodnaya volya*) based on terrorism from 1879 onwards, *Liberal narodniks* of the 1890s and *Neonarodniks* (*Neonarodnichestvo*) of the early 20th century. (Menitskiy 1939.)
[571] Menitskiy 1939. This criticism was originally presented by Lenin (see Zverev 2009).
[572] Menitskiy 1939, 170.
[573] Raku 2014, 61–62.
[574] V. M. Gorodinskiy: K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzïke. *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1933, No. 1, 6–18.
[575] ibid., 8.

work of Musorgsky is the musical expression of the philosophical-aesthetic views of Chernyshevsky."[576] Musorgsky is already here distanced from the general *narodnik* tradition and instead connected directly to Chernyshevsky, who contributed to the birth of *narodism* but was not *narodnik* himself – a view that became the official line later in the *Short course* in 1938 and the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. This well illustrates how closely the discussion of musical tradition followed the changes in the portrayal of history in broader political discourse.

4.2 Music from the People and for the People

4.2.1 Folk Tradition: No More Stealing

The *narodnik* tradition of 'going to the people' and more broadly the whole pre-revolutionary view on *narod* was seen to be reflected in the relationship between folk music and the art music tradition. National romanticism of the 19th century made use of folk music material, and while this was seen as enriching art music, the benefit did not go both ways. The use of folk music could instead be seen as one-sided exploitation.

Already a few months after the October Revolution, the composer Mikhail Gnesin compiled what he saw as the "political tasks" of musicians after the revolutions.[577] Gnesin saw that, as creative artists, composers should not be controlled, but they needed to be constantly reminded of their social task to "build a bridge from art to the people." The new people's masses would give much to art, and the situation was different from preceding times in that the "injustice" in respect of the people, "who gave its brilliant song to art and so far has got nothing in return," would end.[578] The theme of 'stealing' the people's artistic tradition during capitalism was visible later on as well, and the proletarian critics in particular sharpened this criticism. At the Proletkul't meeting, Boris Krasin spoke of folk songs as "wealth, which capitalism tried to take away from the people" and which should be returned to the people.[579] RAPM with its more militant rhetoric spoke of a "bourgeois culture" which not only took the most valuable part of folk creativity, but "systematically poisoned the folk song through its debauching influence."[580] Although some alternative discourses were presented, again by Sabaneyev and Roslavets, who noted that not everything that came from the people was valuable as the people's culture

[576] ibid., 8–9.
[577] Mikhail Gnesin: Politicheskiya zadachi dlya sovremennïkh muzïkal'nïkh deyateley v Rossii. *Novaya zhizn'* 24 December 1917. (Corresponds 6 January 1918 in the Gregorian calendar, which Soviet Russia adopted in February 1918).
[578] ibid.
[579] B. Krasin: Zadachi muzïkal'nogo otdela. *Gorn* 1918, No. 1, 58–61. (Article translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 15–17).
[580] VAPM: Ideologicheskaya platforma Vserossiyskoy Assotsiatsii Proletarskikh Muzïkantov. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 12, 24–25. (Translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 128–131).

represented many kind of forms of backwardness and anti-socialist attitudes,[581] they did not gain ground. Instead the view that prevailed saw folk culture and music as 'pure' and exploited and contaminated by capitalism.

There was a further political debate about how much of this 'purity' was left in the music which the masses preferred. There were genres, which were almost completely out of the question, and Proletkul't had identified music which reflected bourgeois society already in 1918. This "surrogate" music included "restaurant music, so-called "gypsy romances;" vulgar songs, dances, marches."[582] Later RAPM in particular fought against these genres. There were not many who disagreed about the bourgeois nature of these "city songs,"[583] and furthermore the musical elite saw traditional folk music as much more valuable and worth studying[584] – though for instance "gypsy music" could be interpreted as a valuable tradition in itself, if the "true tradition" could be uncovered under the bourgeois "exoticism."[585]

Compared to the 'light genres' (*lyogkiye zhanri*) of the city, the ideological value of the folk tradition of the countryside was more problematic. In the early Soviet years the twofold nature of folk music had already been brought up: while folk art was born under different kind of social consciousness, it nevertheless showed signs of striving for freedom.[586] Lev Shul'gin, who had been a founder of RAPM but departed from it and founded a more moderate proletarian music organization, ORKiMD, made the effort to define more clearly what kinds of ideological positions different song traditions represented.[587] He viewed songs and music from both "objective circumstances" of social conditions of life as well as from the "character" of the song itself. The "revolutionary life-form (*bït*)" was visible in songs creating "comradely cohesion," such as work songs and military marches.[588] Now, when the social conditions were changing and the new life-form was unfolding, there was not yet a sufficiently firm basis for a new song culture to flourish. But he identified some characteristics that defined "mass songs," such as the unambiguous atmosphere of the text, a short form, a simple melody and harmonic progression the masses had already been used to. Applying these criteria, Shul'gin gave examples of folk songs which could serve as a basis for the creation of new songs in the new social circumstances, while he

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581 L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennaya muzïka. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 8–20; Dialektik [Roslavets]: O reaktsionnom i progressivnom v muzïke. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 45–51;

582 B. Krasin: Zadachi muzïkal'nogo otdela. *Gorn* 1918, No. 1, 58. (Article translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 15–17)

583 L. Shul'gin: Massovaya pesnya. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 2, 19.

584 Dialektik [Roslavets]: O reaktsionnom i progressivnom v muzïke. *Muzïkal'naya kul'tura* 1924, No. 1, 45–51; Igor' Glebov [Asafiev]: Sovremennoye russkoye muzïkoznaniye i yego istoricheskiye zadachi. *De Musica* 1925, vïpusk 1, 11–12; Prof. Ippolitov-Ivanov: Muzïkal'noye obrazovaniye mass. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 1, 4.

585 "Tsïganshchina" i tsïganskaya pesnya. *Rabis* 1927, No. 14.

586 A. Kartsev: Muzïkal'nïye voprosï v pechati. *Artist-muzïkant* 1918–1919, No. 3, 22.

587 L. Shul'gin: Massovaya pesnya. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 2, 18–20.

588 ibid., 18. Of the work songs Shul'gin mentioned *Dubinushka* and *Ey, ukhnyom* ("*The song of the Volga boatmen*").

rejected the value of "city songs."[589] Proletarian critics who saw that the new art would rise from the proletarian life-form, balanced constantly with different genres, which 'the masses' embraced. The listing of folk tradition suitable for ideology while excluding 'harmful' music of the cities (to which the workers without a doubt were attracted to) was an attempt to delineate the revolutionary folk tradition from reactionary influences and to control the creation of new music with the help of narrating music history anew.

What was seen as ideologically most suitable folk music tradition was the choir and other community singing traditions. Choir singing was considered to represent in the best way the communal spirit of the villages and with its inclusive nature to serve the social task of music.[590]

One difficulty with the choir singing tradition was that besides secular community songs, choir singing was an important part of the Orthodox Church as well, with the line between secular and religious songs being hard to draw.[591] Moreover, at least in the provinces, the people who were able to set up and lead choirs were often former servants of the church.[592] Those with a scholarly interest in Russian music history, such as Boris Asafiev, did not view the religious song tradition negatively, as they emphasized its musical value behind the religious surface.[593] Rather, Asafiev was concerned that this tradition would be lost before it could be saved.[594] For those approaching the question from the point of view of ideology, the connection with religion posed a problem of course. For instance in the RAPM manifesto from 1924 the 'authentic' folk song was seen on the one hand as contaminated by urban romances, and "ecclesiastical-bourgeois aestheticism" on the other.[595] But the attempts to draw a line between the secular and religious song traditions resulted in identifying only the most obvious characteristics of church songs to be avoided, namely the "restrictive" use of voice and "organ-like" sonority.[596]

Considering the Bolshevik vision of revolution as firmly based on the city proletariat, it is striking how prevalent the discourse about the 'corrupted' city

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589 ibid., 19. The songs Shul'gin mentioned were folk songs *Vniz po matushke, po Volge* ("*Down to mother Volga*"); *Beryoza* ("*The birch tree*"); *Akh vï, seni; Slavnoye more, svyashchennïy Baykal; Akh tï, dolya,* some *chastushkas* as well as revolutionary songs like *Smelo, tovarishchi* and *Zamuchen tyazheloy nevoley.*

590 A. Lunacharskiy: Peredovoy otryad kul'turï na zapade. *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'* 1920, No. 4–5, 1–3; Iv. Lipayev: Khorovoye peniye, kak iskusstvo proletariata. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 8, 6; D. Nadol'skiy: O Goskapelle. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1926, No. 5(37), 10; Georiy Pozdnyakov: K voprosu o narodnom pesennom tvorchestve. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 7–8, 12–13.

591 On the role of Orthodox chant tradition in understanding and formulating 'Russianness' in music, see Frolova-Walker 2007; on the role of religious music (both Orthodox and non-Orthodox) in the Soviet Union, see Fairclough 2012.

592 S. Korev: O massovoy muzïkal'noy rabote. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 2, 20–23.

593 Igor' Glebov: Kastal'skiy (vmesto nekrologa). *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 19, 233–235.

594 Viljanen 2017, 327.

595 VAPM: Ideologicheskaya platforma Vserossiyskoy Assotsiatsii Proletarskikh Muzïkantov. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 12, 24–25. (Translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 128–131).

596 A. Nikol'skiy: O stilyakh khorovogo peniya: "tserkovnom" i "svetskom." *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 9, 11–14.

culture and the 'authentic' or 'pure' peasant culture of the villages was in Soviet music discussion.[597] It was not typical even for proletarian critics to see the folk tradition as exclusively 'backward' – except for in the brief phase of proletarian predominance in cultural discussions in 1930–31. This phase saw for instance a listing by the critic Lev Lebedinsky of different forms of mass song types and their ideological background in which the old folk songs were seen to reflect "the consciousness of a peasantry that is fully tied to patriarchal and primitive forms of agriculture."[598] But as the different kinds of 'city songs' were ruled out as well, out of the seven categories formulated by Lebedinsky only one or perhaps two reflected acceptable ideology: "the contemporary proletarian mass song" and "old revolutionary songs" (songs "reflecting the consciousness of workers who are being revolutionized").[599] In other words there would not be much to sing, which is probably why before the hegemonic position of proletarian critics not many espoused such a radical position.

When looking at the discussions on music in the 1920s, the emphasis on the folk tradition in Soviet culture often associated with socialist realism and Stalinist cultural politics appears in a bit different light. Attitudes towards the folk music tradition had been in general positive, and only in the late 1920s – early 1930s did such unyielding interpretations on folk songs as Lebedinsky's above gain ground. The later denunciation of such interpretations as "leftish deviation" did not go against the music discussions of the whole period of 1917–1932, but against only the rather brief proletarian period of 1928–1932 or even 1930–1932, whereas the emphasis on the folk music tradition (both Russian and non-Russian) suited the interests of the musical elite very well. They had, after all, all the while been promoting the value of this tradition.

4.2.2 Changes in the Nationality Policy

Besides the discussion on folk tradition more generally discussed above, there was a more particular question about the nationality policy of the Soviet Union, which influenced the discussion on the folk tradition of both Russian and non-Russian populations of the former Russian Empire. Lenin's criticism of Russian "great power chauvinism" and depiction of the Russian Empire as "a prison of the peoples," which will be broken down by the revolution, set the tone for a nationality policy and also for political attitudes towards cultures of smaller nationalities in the early Soviet years. Promoting the cultures of non-Russian nationalities went through changes during the 1920s, and in the 1930s the culture of Stalinism with an emphasis on the role of Russian history and suspicion of

[597] While the power was transferred in the October Revolution to the Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, the Bolshevik alignment with the peasants was only tactical. The Bolshevik leaders did not conceal their focus on the 'politically conscious' proletariat and only temporarily on union between other groups. Instead, the politically less conscious peasants were often seen as a threat for counterrevolution and political education was needed in order to bring them to the level of politically conscious workers.
[598] L. Lebedinskiy: Nash massovïy muzïkal'nïy bït. *Proletarskiy muzïkant* 1930, No. 9–10, 7–30. (Article translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 277–283).
[599] ibid.

minority nationalities further directed music political discussion.[600] The Russocentrism of Stalinism did not come as a complete change of direction for the music political discussion, however, but rather legitimized a view of the importance of Russian art and the folk music tradition which several musicologist had maintained throughout the 1920s.

The early Soviet years were marked by a strong support for non-Russian nationalities of Soviet Russia and the later Soviet Union. The principles of 'self-determination' and 'equality of nations' together with a broader, internationalist agenda of socialist movements meant that the Russian culture associated with the 'imperialism' of the Russian Empire should make way for new political ideals.[601] But while it was clear that Russian nationalism should be eradicated, it was a matter of debate how nationalist aspirations of smaller nations should be approached. Marx had been critical of any kind of nationalism, as it merely obscured the class-based problems of capitalism, which does not know national boundaries, but in the October Revolution and the following Civil War the Bolsheviks had received support from national movements by committing to the principle of nations' rights to self-determination.[602] This right to 'self-determination' was not however the "right to form a national bourgeois state," as Stalin, the first People's Commissar for Nationalities, underlined in 1918.[603] The forces of the "national bourgeoisie" had gone against tsarism by gathering around national "parliaments," national "constituent assemblies," but that has resulted only in naked imperialism. Only the October Revolution placed the nationality question on a "necessary, **revolutionary** basis" – implying that while the self-determination of nationalities is granted, it is subordinate to the revolutionary cause.[604]

What followed was the alignment of (alleged) independent republics forming the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), where the national aspirations of non-Russian peoples would not be suppressed but supported. The theoretical basis for this was that unlike in the more developed Russian nation, in which nationalism meant imperialistic domination of smaller nations, nationalistic movements of smaller nationalities had been directed against imperialistic oppression and were thus revolutionary.[605] Moreover, in the historical development nationalism was seen as a necessary by-product in society's development towards capitalism and socialism, and rather than

[600] Studies focusing on Soviet nationality policy include for instance Brandenberger 2002; Martin 2001; Slezkine 1999; Smith 2013 and Suny & Martin 2001.
[601] Martin 2001; Slezkine 1999.
[602] Slezkine 1999, 315; Smith 2013.
[603] I. Stalin: Oktyabr'skiy perevorot i natsional'nïy vopros. *Pravda* 6 November 1918, 3.
[604] ibid., emphasis in the original. Stalin took up the Finnish Civil War as an example of this 'bourgeois nationalism,' as there the Finnish bourgeoisie "invited to its country foreign imperialists" in order to fight against the Finnish workers' "struggle for the independence of their socialist homeland from imperialism" (ibid.). This refers to the help that Germany had given to the Whites both by sending troops and by training Finnish Jaegers.
[605] Smith 2013, 58.

extinguishing the national culture of the less developed nations, it needed to be fostered before it would "exhaust itself," as Stalin formulated.[606]

In the early Soviet years, the Party indeed wanted to demonstrate its role as a friend of minority nationalities. The "affirmative actions," [607] which were advocated in the early 1920s included the favouring of the local population as the workforce and local decision-makers, using local languages in teaching (even if they would be different from the students' home language) and publishing books and newspapers in local languages (though it was questionable how wide a readership they actually reached).[608] Cultures of different nationalities were also recognized as subjects of scholarly interest, and research institutes on the arts, GIII in Leningrad and GAKhN in Moscow, got music sections partly devoted to ethnomusicology.[609] In addition, the music research institute in Moscow, GIMN, studied and taught courses on "musical ethnography."[610] While the practice of collecting folk songs of different nationalities was not new but continuing work which for instance composers had done already in the 19th century, it now became institutionalized as part of the new Soviet research institutions. The collecting and studying of folk songs of different nationalities fitted in well with the broader emphasis on minority nationalities.

The nationality policy of the early Soviet years meant that while the culture of minor nationalities was promoted, by the same token 'Russianness' could be a target of criticism. Many Bolsheviks saw Russia not only economically 'backward,' as became clear in Chapter 3, but also culturally and spiritually feeble – "a nation of Oblomovs," as Lenin stated.[611] This changed in the late 1920s and early 1930s when Russians began to be promoted as the ones who had realized the revolutions and Russia as the most advanced nation within the USSR.

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606 Stalin stated this in a speech to Ukrainian writers in February 1929 (see translated document in Clark & Dobrenko 2007, 61–67). This paradoxical fostering of national cultures in order to get rid of them Stalin compared with other paradoxes: "Marxists, who think too simply [- -] don't understand that we want to arrive at the destruction of classes by strengthening the class struggle, or that we want to arrive at a withering away of the state through an unprecedented expansion of the functions of this state, or that we want to unify the nations of various countries by dividing them, by freeing them from any yoke, by offering them the right to form a nation-state." (ibid., 62).

607 Martin 2001.

608 Payne 2001; Slezkine 1999. According to Yuri Slezkine, books were published in 66 and newspapers in 47 languages by 1928 (Slezkine 1999, 323). In 1926, the literacy rate for the population over the age of 10 was 51 % (Grenoble 2003, 56), and presumably literacy rate within non-Russian population was lower. Indeed, after the revolutions not all the languages within the territory of the Soviet Union had even been examined and classified – nor they necessarily had a standardised written language (see Smith 1998, 43).

609 E.g. Muzïkal'naya Sektsiya Gosyd. Akademii Khydozhestvennïkhs Nayk (GAKhN). *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 11, 26–27; L. Semenov: 10 let russkoy muzïkal'noy nauki. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 8, 3–4. Boris Asafiev was the first professor of folk music in GIII. GIII was an acronym for *State Institute for the History of Arts* (*Gosudarstvennïy Institut Istorii Iskusstv*) and GAKhN for *State Academy of Artistic Sciences* (*Gosudarsvennaya Akademiya Khudozhestvennïkh nauk*).

610 A. Nikol'skiy: Teoriya narodnoy pesni, kak shkol'no-uchebnaya distsiplina i muzïkal'no-etnograficheskiye kursï Gimn'a. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 7–8, 44–45. GIMN was an acronym for *State Institute for Musical Science* (*Gosudarstvennïy institut muzïkal'noy nauki*).

611 Dubrovsky 2006, 77. Oblomov was the anti-hero of Ivan Goncharov's novel, typifying an inactive and indecisive landowner.

The change was visible for instance when Bukharin targeted the poetry of Sergey Yesenin and "*yeseninshcina*" in literature as harmful for the Soviet state. In his text *Angry notes* (*Zlïye zametki*) Bukharin accused Yesenin, who had committed suicide few years earlier, of idealizing the most negative aspects of the Russian village.[612] Bukharin reminded the readers of Lenin's text "On the national pride of the Great Russians" (1914), in which Lenin had celebrated the Russian people for giving rise to the revolutionary class. Instead of this pride, Bukharin noted that there was another kind of "pride" in literature, which "extols our servile past." This servile past was still alive in drunkenness, fighting, foul language, etc. which some writers, such as Yesenin, made use of and celebrated.[613]

A similar kind of case was the personal criticism by Stalin of the poet Demyan Bedny (1883–1945) for his satirical poems on the Russian national character.[614] Bedny was an old guard Bolshevik and the only poet to have a residence within the Kremlin, but his old-style way of perceiving laziness as an inherited Russian cultural trait prompted a critical answer from Stalin. In September-December 1930, three poems by Bedny were published in *Pravda*, in which he for instance tried to agitate Russians to fight against "Our servile, inherited flabby nature."[615] Stalin was annoyed by this "slander" against the Russian people, including the Russian proletariat, who by carrying out the October Revolution had become the centre of interest for the revolutionary leaders of the world. Stalin wrote to Bedny: "No, highly esteemed comrade Bedny, this is not Bolshevistic critique, but a slander against our people, a *desecration* of the USSR, a *desecration* of the proletariat [of the] USSR, a *desecration* of the Russian proletariat."[616]

While Bedny could continue working after this, a similar kind of critique arose on the revival of Aleksandr Borodin's opera *Bogatïri* (*Epic heroes*), for which Bedny wrote a new libretto. What caught attention in this new version was the ridiculing of the baptism of Vladimir the Great in 988 and the portrayal of the main heroes as drunks and cowards – both of which Bedny thought to be safe areas for criticism.[617] The historical interpretation had changed however since the early Soviet years, when Bedny had enjoyed the position of the most loyal Bolshevik agitator poet, and the opera was quickly taken off the repertoire after its premiere in December 1936. Now the criticism was public, and Bedny was accused of "blackening" the heroes, who are "according to national understanding bearers of the heroic characteristic of the Russian people."[618] Moreover, the Politburo saw that the opera gave an "anti-historical and mocking representation of baptism in Rus', which in reality was a positive phase in the history of the Russian people, because it enabled the rapprochement of the Slavic

[612] N. Bukharin: Zlïye zametki. *Pravda* 12 January 1927, 2.
[613] ibid.
[614] See Dubrovsky 2006.
[615] Dem'yan Bednïy: Slezay s pechki! *Pravda* 7 September 1930.
[616] Letter from Stalin to Bednïy, 12 December 1930 (Artizov & Naumov 1999, 136).
[617] Dubrovsky 2006; Maksimenkov 1997, 212–222.
[618] Resolution of the Politburo of the TsK VKP(b) on prohibition of D. Bednïy's play "*Bogatïri.*" (Artizov & Naumov 1999, 333).

peoples with peoples of higher culture."[619] This suggested that even criticism of religion, which had been earlier fair game for obvious reasons, had to be proportioned. Another point here is the intermingling of Slavic and Russian history. While the resolution spoke of "rapprochement" between Slavic people and "peoples of higher culture" after converting to Christianity more generally, it also spoke of "the history of the Russian people." The history of the Slavic peoples and later revolutionary history was first and foremost Russian history, and this reinterpretation happened during the leadership of the ethnically Georgian Iosif Stalin.[620]

The Russocentrism of Stalinist nationality policy stood in contrast to the nationality policy of the early Soviet years, which had criticized Imperial Russia for its great power chauvinism and emphasized socialist internationalism. Russocentrism was not, however, unfamiliar to the music discussions of the 1920s. As was seen in Chapter 3, the position of the *Russian* music tradition was emphasized by several writers on music and most notably by those who supported staying connected to the musical development of Western Europe, such as Boris Asafiev or Viktor Belyayev. They argued against the 'backwardness' of Russian culture and called for open interaction between music cultures of different countries. Part of this argumentation might have been extra caution, so that the writers would not seem too submissive to the culture of 'the capitalistic West,' but Asafiev especially, with his writing about particular Russian *melos* and the "pure spring" of the Russian folk tradition, came to portray a tradition which was not only equal but perhaps superior to 'old' Western cultures.

While Asafiev was a somewhat controversial figure who had his share of proletarian criticism, this did not matter after 1932 and the disbanding of proletarian (and all the other) art organizations. Instead, against the backdrop of the new nationality policy, Asafiev's rise to his position as the leading musicologist of the Soviet Union is less surprising, because Asafiev had promoted the Russian cultural tradition throughout the 1920s and even before the revolutions.[621] While Stalinism cut off the possibility to promote new music from Western Europe in the Soviet Union, the new line in the nationality policy did support studying and performing Russian pre-revolutionary music, which coincided with the agenda of many scholars and performers.[622] This illustrates

[619] ibid.
[620] When Stalin's letter to Bednïy were published in Stalin's collected works, the phrase "our people" from the section "slander against our people, *desecration* of the USSR" etc. was removed. One can only speculate, whether this was because of possible confusion with Stalin speaking of "our people" (*nash narod*) and meaning the Russians. See the original letter with notes to later publications in Artizov & Naumov 1999, 134–137.
[621] Viljanen 2020. Another good example is Nikolay Myaskovsky, who – although composing and promoting modern music himself – lamented already before the revolutions that the Russian music life seemed to be accepting everything foreign without criticism and rejecting everything Russian (Zuk 2021, 76).
[622] The pre-revolutionary art music tradition did not disappear from the repertoires of orchestras at any point, no matter what the potential ideological controversies were. The 1930s did not turn the orchestra repertoires upside down but put a further emphasis on Russian music while cutting out the newest music of Western Europe, as demonstrated by Pauline Fairclough (2016).

how the effects of Stalinist politics on the arts were not straightforward as parts of it coincided well with the aims of the cultural elite.

4.3 Closer to the People: *Narodnost'*

A clear and peculiar conceptual innovation – or rather revival – in the Soviet cultural political discussion of the 1930s was the emergence of the concept of *narodnost'*. Not directly translatable into English but also ambiguous in its meaning even in Russian context, *narodnost'* quickly became one of the defining terms of socialist realism in the mid-1930s. It maintained this role throughout the Soviet period as part of official cultural policy and, due to this heritage, it is often used to exemplify ritualistic and hollow cultural political jargon which took over the political discourse of the Soviet Union from the 1930s onwards. The history of the concept dates to the beginning of the 19th century and it is worth discussing how the concept rather suddenly re-emerged as one of the central cultural political concepts of the Soviet 1930s. The appearance of the concept summarizes several themes in relation to the concept of the people (*narod*) discussed above, and it also denotes a rhetorical innovation to synthesize the contradictory histories of the concept of *narod* by concealing them under the ambiguity of *narodnost'*.

4.3.1 *Narodnost'* in the 19th Century

Narodnost' is a concept whose appearance in the Russian language is particularly well-known. The term was coined by the poet Pyotr Andreyevich Vyazemsky, who in a letter to the statesman and historian Aleksandr Ivanovich Turgenev frowned upon the foreign word *natsional'nïy*. He suggested instead a new derivative based on the concept of *narod* to find a translation for the French word *nationalité* and so he came up with *narodnost'*, pointing out also that in Polish there was already a similar construction *narodowosc*.[623] This seemed to Vyazemsky the most natural solution, but with political concepts (and here the politics was in the explicit nationalistic emphasis on promoting Russian-based concepts), their future uses and meanings cannot be controlled.

Vyazemsky's innovation was successful in the sense that the concept indeed became an object of discussion in future years. From the onset, the multisemantic nature of the concept was noted, and the fact that *narodnost'* meant several things did not become a surprise to Vyazemsky either. Already in his original letter, he acknowledged that the common adjective *narodnïy* corresponding to the newly coined noun *narodnost'* could in fact be translated differently in different contexts. *Narodnïy* meant both *national* and *popular*: in Vyazemsky's example the French *chansons populaires* and *espirit national* would be translated with the same

[623] Miller 2008, 380–381.

adjective – *narodnïye pesni* and *dukh narodnïy* respectively.[624] This ambiguity naturally followed the concept of *narodnost'*, which could be understood as something with national qualities (i.e. reflecting national characteristics, ideas etc.) or something which is popular (i.e. close to many people, especially popular among the 'masses'). Discussions in the 1820s had focused primarily on the usefulness of the concept in literature, and central figures including Alexander Pushkin contributed to the discussion.[625]

The history of *narodnost'* is more widely remembered, however, from its attachment to political discussion in the 1830s. This happened when Count Sergey Uvarov, then the Minister of Education, in 1833 formulated three principles on which the Russian Empire was based (or should be). These were Orthodox religion (*pravoslaviye*), autocratic rule (*samoderzhaviye*) and *narodnost'*.[626] This new doctrine is widely considered as a reaction to the possible infiltration of radical ideas challenging the monarchy which Russia had experienced in the Decembrist uprising of 1825,[627] but whether Uvarov's formulation can be seen as a reactionary or reformist answer to the radical demands is a more open question.[628] Nevertheless, as the rule of Nicholas I adopted these principles as its guiding line, *narodnost'* consequently became firmly attached to the tsarist rule.

In the 1850s *narodnost'* was utilized by the Slavophiles in their attempts to find and promote the 'true' Russian spirit. Konstantin Aksakov in his two texts "On the Russian perspective (*O russkom vozzrenii*)"[629] argues that in order for literature, people and ideas to be universal, they need to national. Aksakov considered that for other nations it is not a problem at all to be national and through their nationality find universality, but for some reason, the Russians shy away from their national qualities:

> Homer's "Iliad" is a universal achievement and at the same time a purely Greek phenomenon [- -] And exactly this *narodnost',* this distinctive view (*vozzreniye*) is lacking in our intellectual activities; and because there is not *narodnost'*, also there is no universality. Already for a century and a half our *narodnost'* has been sacrificed for an exclusively European nationality (*natsional'nost'*).[630]

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[624] ibid., 381.
[625] ibid.
[626] In its shortest translation, this doctrine of "official nationality" is translated typically as Orthodoxy-Autocracy-Nationality. Due to the problematic definition of *narodnost',* however, translating it simply as 'nationality' is somewhat misleading.
[627] Perrie 1998.
[628] Alexei Miller (2008, 383–384) emphasizes for instance "reformist conservatism" of Uvarov, who strove for reformation of Russia within Europe, despite his opposition to the radical challenge against monarchies sparked by the French Revolution.
[629] Aksakov 1856 & 1857. The word *vozzreniye* is not anymore commonly used in Russian and it does not translate directly into English. Other possible translations for *vozzreniye* could be 'outlook,' 'understanding' or '(world)view' (as in more common *mirovozzreniye*).
[630] Aksakov 1856. "Илиада" Гомера есть достояние всемирное и в то же время есть явление чисто греческое… А именно этой-то народности, этого-то самобытного воззрения и недостает нашей умственной деятельности; а оттого, что в ней нет народности, нет в ней и общечеловеческого. Мы уже полтораста лет стоим на почве исключительной национальности европейской, в жертву которой приносится наша народность

The century and a half which Aksakov mentioned referred to the reforms of Peter the Great at the turn of the 17th and 18th century, which the Slavophiles more generally saw as Russia's voluntary abandoning of its national distinctiveness in exchange for European reforms. Russian *narodnost'* was exchanged for the attainment of European *natsional'nost'*, but this resulted only in artificiality. In a response to his critics, Aksakov wrote once again that the whole discussion would be incomprehensible to the French or the Germans, for whom there is no contradiction between nationality and universality. For Aksakov nationality was not anything supplementary, but simply something through which all the people look for truth in the world:

> How odd would it be if the people said: I want to see things nationally (*po-narodnomu*)! [- -] It is itself the people; *narodnost'* is in it; it does not need to look for it; it only needs to accept it [- -] everyone has their share of independent national (*narodnoy*) activities, understands the truth (*istinu*) from its own perspective or displays it only with the strength of its *narodnost'* and independence, without which it is weak and colourless; the truth found by the people from its characteristic (*svoistvennyi*) perspective becomes the common property of the humankind.[631]

Narodnost' was for Aksakov something which lived naturally in the thought of the people (*narod*), and which could live naturally in the literature and art of Russia, if the "intellectual activity" since Petrine reforms had not artificially denied and hindered it. This 'naturalness' of *narodnost'* in Slavophile thought, or the use of the concept more generally, marked in itself a commitment to Uvarov's definition of other 'natural' elements of the Russian Empire – the Orthodox religion and tsarist rule.[632] This was not a problem to Aksakov, of course, but this is why the concept was not used by liberals and socialists, who strove for limiting or abolishing monarchical rule and who criticized the Orthodox Church.

Russian music history was entangled with the development of this autocratic definition of nationality along with the premiere of Mikhail Glinka's opera in 1836 *A Life for the Tsar* (*Zhizn za tsarya*). As described by Marina Frolova-Walker, several elements came together in this work, which created an event of national significance. An opera written by a Russian-born composer, widely adopting idioms from Russian folk songs, a libretto of a peasant sacrificing his life in order to secure the dynasty of the Romanovs and premiered in a rebuilt Grand Theatre of St. Petersburg with the Tsar Nicholas I in the audience[633] – the work indeed serviced the idea of Russian culture standing on its own as an equal

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631 Aksakov 1857. Странно было бы, если б народ говорил: я хочу смотреть по-народному! Давай мне народное воззрение! Он сам - народ; народность - в нем; ему искать ее нечего; нужно только, чтоб он от нее не отказывался… [- -] каждый имеет свою долю самостоятельной народной деятельности, постигает истину с известной стороны или являет ее в себе, в силу и только в силу своей народности и самостоятельности, без которой он немощен и бесцветен; истина, постигнутая народом с известной ему свойственной стороны, делается общим достоянием человечества.

632 In 1855 Aksakov formulated also a memorandum for the tsar Alexander II on the sentiments of the people, and he noted the peacefulness, apoliticality and indifference to revolution, constitutional government and other western political ideas (see Offord 2010, 245). From Aksakov's perspective the people were behaving no doubt as they should be, and *narodnost'* found within the people went hand in hand with submission to existing rule.

633 Frolova-Walker 2007, 59.

to the cultures of the West. Moreover, the work corresponded with the tsarist idea of the people and nation as its subject matter completely supporting the autocracy, and Glinka's opera gained the elevated status of being the opening work of every theatre season for years to come. Glinka's significance to Russian music as it was promoted and carried on by the Might Five in particular (though they preferred Glinka's second, more 'Russian' opera, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*) ensured that the question of *narodnost'* was entwined in the discourse of 'Russianness' and nationality in music.

Besides the openly political and national romantic meaning of the characteristics or 'spirit' of a particular group, *narodnost'* also acquired a more technical definition at the end of the 19th century.[634] It began to denote a phase in the evolution of human communities, a stage between the tribe (*plemya*) and the nation (*natsiya*). Accordingly, *narod* could mean nationality within the state or some other, 'elevated' status (e.g. Russians, Germans etc.), while *narodnost'* would refer to 'small nationalities' (minority nationalities without officially accredited distinct rights/autonomy etc.).[635] While *narodnost'* in relation to politics was problematic due to its association with tsarist rule, this more technical definition survived well into the Soviet era and is still in use – perhaps even as the main definition for *narodnost'*.[636] It is the use of *narodnost'* in relation to arts in the Soviet Union, however, which is the main interest at this point.

4.3.2 Revival of *Narodnost'* in the Soviet Union

As described above, *narodnost'* before the revolution was closely associated with monarchical rule and, furthermore, primarily with its conservative interpretations, where the tsar holds indivisible power. This association had strengthened further in the beginning of the 20th century, when the slogan *orthodoxy-autocracy-narodnost'* was revived by far-right groups such as the Union of the Russian People (*Sojuz russkogo naroda*) in their fight against parliamentary reforms.[637] It was therefore expected that *narodnost'* would not become a widely used term after the proletarian revolution.

At the same time, because the people's rule had now allegedly been established, the new regime leaned widely on the concept of *people* (*narod*) and named its central institutions accordingly. The new state and its institutions would need to serve the people, and accordingly ministries became people's

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634 Miller 2008, 389.
635 The border between *narod* and *narodnost'* was and still is by this definition extremely vague, and the hierarchy between a bigger *narod* and smaller *narodnost'* is very much a political question.
636 When speaking of *narodnost'* in art, it is common to specify this with an epithet *narodnost' iskusstva* (*narodnost' in art*), while the primary meaning of *narodnost'* usually refers to this definition of 'small peoples' without state status. In the second edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia from 1954 (Vvedenskiy 1954), there are separate articles for *narodnost'* and *narodnost' iskusstva* – of the modern use of the term, cf. for instance Wikipedia entry on *narodnost'* https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9D%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C (accessed 7 January 2022).
637 Perrie 1998, 34–35.

commissariats (*narodnïy komissariat*), new educational institutions people's schools (*narodnaya shkola*) and so on. Serving the people was also the outspoken demand for art, but nevertheless the use of the concept of *narodnost'* in the Soviet discussion of the 1920s was extremely sporadic – no doubt because of the concept's historical burden.

The composer Mikhail Gnesin in his demand to "build a bridge from art to the people" (see also Section 4.2.1) not long after the October Revolution used the concept *narodnost'* to describe Russian classical music. He claimed that *narodnost'* and "graphicness" (*izobrazitel'nost'*) in Russian music together with the absence of bad musical taste within the working people helped the people to understand the peculiarities of the music of Musorgsky or Rimsky-Korsakov even before the intelligentsia of the capital.[638] The songfulness of melodies, symmetrical structures, and clear programmes might be considered by some as "insufficient processing of musical material," Gnesin wrote, but for him this was being close to the folk tradition, and as can be interpreted from the tone, a positive feature.[639] Gnesin discussed already in this very early example key features of *narodnost'* that became known later as part of socialist realism.

It is important to note, however, that Gnesin's texts dealt primarily with bringing education and 'enlightenment' (*prosveshcheniye*) to the masses – they did not propose new aesthetic guidelines for music. In other words, Gnesin looked back to the 19th century tradition of Russian classical music and argued that on account of its *narodnost'* it offered a good way to introduce this higher art form to the people but, as with the discussion of the concept more generally in the 1920s, did not claim that *narodnost'* would be the principle on which the music of the future would be built.[640] On those few occasions when *narodnost'* was used, it described art of the past and in particular the music of Modest Musorgsky and other members of the Mighty Five.[641] Use of the concept often went hand in hand with description of the ideological context of the era of these composers and, not surprisingly, *narodnost'* was linked on such occasions to the broader *narodnichestvo* movement.[642]

There were isolated attempts to describe newer music in terms of its *narodnost',* for instance by the scholar and critic Nikolay Zhilyayev. In the ASM journal *K novïm beregam* (*Towards the new shores*) Zhilyayev stated that Prokofiev had demonstrated an "enormous sense of *narodnost'*" in his ballet *Chout*

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[638] Mikhail Gnesin: Politicheskiya zadachi dlya sovremennïkh muzïkal'nïkh deyateley v Rossii. *Novaya zhizn'* 24 December 1917, 6. (Corresponding 6 January 1918 in the Gregorian calendar).
[639] ibid.
[640] In fact, Gnesin asked rather sarcastically in the article whether the classics of Russian music should now be adapted to meet the changed political situation, so that Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* would for instance be rewritten as "*A Life for the Motherland and Revolution*." "[P]robably it is clear to everyone how absurd all these new versions would be." (ibid.) Ironically, Glinka's opera was indeed restaged with the name *Ivan Susanin* in 1939, but the modified libretto did not even concentrate on hailing the revolution but, following the Stalinist cultural policy, the Russian people. See Frolova-Walker 2007, 61–70.
[641] M. Ivanov-Boretskiy: Moguchaya kuchka. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 11, 38–39; Ye. Vilkovir: M. P. Musorgskiy. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 5, 3–9; Sabaneyev 1924, 43, 58.
[642] Ye. Vilkovir: M. P. Musorgskiy. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 5, 3–9; Sabaneyev 1924.

(1915/1921) and this was something which had not been seen in Russian composers since Musorgsky, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov.[643] Attempts to link a composer like Prokofiev to the 19th century Russian tradition and to consider him as 'close to people' (*narod'niy*) in the same way as the composers of the Mighty Five was however unequivocally condemned by the critics of the proletarian organizations, who considered the music of the early 20th century to be mainly degenerate.[644] It remained thus unclear how new music could achieve *narodnost'*, but on the other hand it did not seem to have been the main concern of 1920s music criticism. While approaching the people (*narod*) was promoted especially by the proletarian organizations, *narodnost'* as an art theoretical concept seemed mainly to belong to the past.

When proletarian art organizations and especially the literary organization RAPP gained a dominant place in art political discussion by the end of the 1920s, several themes and concepts, which in retrospect can be identified as anticipating the discourse of socialist realism, were already in use. Evgeny Dobrenko points out concepts such as *klassovost'* (orientation towards class) and *partiynost'* ('party-mindedness'),[645] and one can add concepts like *dostupnost'* (accessibility) and *ponyatnost'* (understandability), which had been used since the early revolutionary years. *Dostupnost'* for instance was one of the first aims for the new revolutionary rule in the sphere of the arts, and it denoted broader accessibility of the working classes to places and activities which had been out of their reach before the revolutions.[646] Only later did the proletarian critics begin to use *dostupnost'* in a similar vein to *ponyatnost'*, meaning creating art which the workers could understand.[647]

While the themes close to *narodnost'* had been discussed, the concept appeared in music discussion surprisingly late, only after 1936. It is fairly safe to say that adopting the concept directly followed the first antiformalist campaign against Dmitry Shostakovich.[648] The campaign condemned the "formalistic tricks" which according to *Pravda* Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and ballet *The Limpid Stream* demonstrated. The articles and the discussion which followed demanded from Soviet composers more "realistic"

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643 N. Zhilyayev: Sergey Prokof'ev. *K novïm beregam* 1923, No. 1, 19.

644 Cf. L. Shul'gin: Sovremennoye muzïkal'noye tvorchestvo i predposïlki nashey tvorcheskoy rabotï. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 4, 15–17. Later, the RAPM critic Yuri Keldysh portrayed Prokofiev's approach to music by using *Chout* as an example, and stated for instance that: "Dance, in combination with drama and music, represents the fines means for releasing organic energy, but in Prokofiev, it has degenerated. [- -] Dull, stereo-typical Prokofievian rhythms kill off the dynamism of natural movements with a fateful in-evitability, giving them a lifeless, automatic character." (Yuriy Keldïsh: Balet "Stal'noy skok" i yego avtor – Prokof'yev'. *Proletarskiy muzïkant* 1929, No. 6, 12–19. Translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 242–252.)

645 Dobrenko 2011, 49–50.

646 See for instance the demand to establish chamber ensembles with broad accessibility, so that people can participate in making orchestral music: Pervyï vserossiyskiy delegatskiy c"ezd orkestrantov. *Artist-muzïkant* 1918–1919, No. 1, 7.

647 M. Paushkin: O printsipakh marksistskoy kritiki v iskusstve. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1925, No 3(25), 10–12.

648 The use of *narodnost'* in relation to arts rose significantly for instance in *Pravda* right after the campaign (see Parkkinen 2018).

music language for instance, leaning more directly on the 19th century Russian musical tradition and all in all approaching the Soviet people.[649] *Narodnost'* came to denote these demands, and after that the concept was an inseparable part of the boastful and ritualistic Soviet discourse on music.

But what changed when *narodnost'* became part of socialist realism? In music, the most important change was that the concept, which had occasionally been used to describe music of the past century and was thus clearly a historical phenomenon, came to denote a guideline for new Soviet music. While practically none of the influential composers, critics or scholars denied the value of the 19th century Russian art music tradition (quite the opposite) and found there much inspiration, the introduction of socialist realism, especially with its demand of *narodnost'*, communicated the idea that the 19th century art tradition and its forms should not serve only as a source of inspiration, but of imitation. Though possibly purely coincidental, it is nevertheless more than fitting that the acclaimed fifth symphony of Shostakovich from 1937, which 'redeemed' the composer's reputation after the attacks in *Pravda* in 1936, failed according to one critic in one crucial aspect, in its *narodnost'*:

> Unfolding in front of the listener a realistic image of his subjective, deeply lyrical feelings and experiences, Shostakovich nevertheless underlined in the symphony a theme of tragic "loneliness," some kind of isolated narrowness of the creative battle of an artist. Shostakovich, obviously, has not yet completely realized that only with constant and deep *unity with the people* (*narod*), with the life of the people, with its great art, [it is] possible to find the excellent and complete solution to all his troubling "tragic" questions. [- -] the problem of *narodnost'* he has not yet solved.[650]

The theme of "tragic loneliness" was against the principle of *narodnost'*, and for sure, communicating happy emotions was one the marked features of socialist realist art. It is however possible to interpret the critic's comment as a criticism against failing to follow strictly the ideals of a 19th century symphony. While Shostakovich did begin to use more conventional harmonical, melodical and structural language from the Fifth Symphony onwards, he did this in his own terms and was able to create much more than mere imitations of 19th century symphonies. That Shostakovich after all created distinctively new music – even modern music – did not go unnoticed, and for Khubov this was "failure", which he described as not solving the problem of *narodnost'*.[651] Whether Khubov genuinely considered this as a failure or whether he chose to add this criticism in order to cover his back (criticism against Shostakovich in 1936 included also rebuking of critics who had not 'noticed' Shostakovich's mistakes) is not important here. It is relevant that it was particularly *narodnost'* which Khubov

[649] This episode will be discussed in Section 5.2.2.
[650] G. Khubov: 5-aya simfoniya D. Shostakovitsha. *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1938, No. 3, 15. Emphasis in the original.
[651] The 'inability' of Shostakovich to reach *narodnost'* in his music became after this a standard way to criticize the composer. See Frolova-Walker 2007, 346–347.

chose as his main tool for criticizing the work which he in many other respects approved of, as it demonstrated the usefulness of the concept.[652]

Narodnost' was useful precisely because it was a fairly safe form of criticism. While one of the core meanings of *narodnost'* was that it was somehow 'close to people', this was not the same as popularity. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony was from its premiere onwards very popular – it still is one his most often performed symphonies – but it was still possible to accuse it of not reaching *narodnost'*. In Khubov's criticism this referred to the "tragic loneliness" of Shostakovich's work, but a similar failure in *narodnost'* could result for instance from the absence of clear melodies (preferably from folk songs) or too *direct* a use of folk songs, as that resulting in bourgeois exoticism, naturalism or primitive *narodnost'* (*prostonarodnost'*).[653] It became extremely difficult to pinpoint what exactly would be needed in order to achieve *narodnost'* in music, but on the other hand this same vagueness became the concept's strength. With *narodnost',* critics could fulfil their role of being critical and the composers did not need to worry too much if their works were being criticised for the absence of *narodnost'*, as its meaning fragmented so that it did not necessarily mean very much in the end.

As *narodnost'* became a standard concept of music and art political language, examples of the concept's use are numerous.[654] It is worth quoting one example at length, since it demonstrates both the ritualistic discourse of socialist realism as well as the connection of *narodnost'* with other political changes of Stalinism:

> In the profound phrases of Musorgsky's "Boris Godunov," in the dreamy melodies of Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin," in the titanic sounds of Borodin's "Prince Igor", in the elegant and refined twining of music by Rimsky-Korsakov, in the fantastic splendour and dramatism of music by Glinka – behind every great work of Russian musical art there is folk song (*narodnaya pesnya*). The greatness of Russian music [is] in its *narodnost'*. *Narodnost'* of art was and remains as the watchword of Russian musical art, as well as in literature or drama. "The people create music, and we, musicians, only arrange it," – spoke Glinka, and this declamation by a brilliant artist contains truth (*istina*), which was proclaimed by enlighteners, revolutionary democrats Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. [- -] The Russian people created its musical culture against the aspirations and wishes of the ruling classes. Lackeys of the court in gold embroidered uniforms loathed Russian music as they loathed the Russian language. Benckendorffs[655] persecuted Glinka and Dargomyzhsky with similar fervour as Pushkin and Lermontov. In the grandiose sounds of Russian music the spirit of a great people (*narod*) appeared to them, the people of freedom-loving bogatyrs, of fearless heroes of Russian tales and legends. These gentlemen oppressed the Russian musical

[652] Khubov for instance saw that in the fifth symphony, Shostakovich presented himself as an "*artist-realist*" and addressed wider audiences with his attempt to "speak in *expressive*[,] *simple and clear* language." (G. Khubov: 5-aya simfoniya D. Shostakovitsha. *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1938, No. 3, 14. Emphases original.)

[653] A. Fadeyev: Rabotniki ėstradï v Dal'nevostochnoy. *Pravda* 31 March 1935, 4; V. Kirpotin: Narodnosť i prostota. *Pravda* 3 April 1936, 4; Narodnosť i masterstvo (Muzïka gruzinskogo naroda). *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1937, No. 1, 9–16; A. Al'shvang: Dva ėtyuda o Debyussi. *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1937, No. 8, 21.

[654] For instance: Iogann Alt'man: Sotsialisticheskoye iskusstvo i narodnosť. *Izvestiya* 11 March 1936; V. Gorodinskyi: Sovetskaya muzïkal'naya kul'tura. *Pravda* 27 October 1937, 4; M. A. Grinberg: Dekada sovetskoy muzïki. *Pravda* 12 November 1938, 4. See also Parkkinen 2018.

[655] Benckendorffs refers to the Baltic German aristocratic family, whose several members became statesmen and generals of the tsarist court.

> thought, in every possible way hindered the development of national musical culture. They affixed a seal of conservatism and routine to the old operatic art.[656]

In this passage, several themes discussed so far circle and concentrate around *narodnost'*. While the older revolutionary discourse of the oppression and amorality of the ruling classes is still there, the main emphasis is on the history of Russian culture. It seems that the great composers did nothing wrong, as now even the "dreamy melodies" of Tchaikovsky are an object of praise. Earlier, 'dreaminess' was used to criticize Tchaikovsky's music, as it demonstrated the 'feeble' aristocracy of the late 19th century (see Chapter 2.4). Glinka is depicted as a persecuted artist (hardly a correct interpretation of Glinka's social position), and the intellectual tradition from which it was claimed that all these Russian masterpieces had been born, extends from the "revolutionary democrats" of the 19th century hundreds of years back, to the time of the "freedom-loving bogatyrs" depicted in folk tales. The greatest threat to Russian culture came from the outside, from non-native "Benckendorffs," and all these elements were interwoven together with extremely zealous rhetoric. Since *narodnost'* became part of cultural political discourse when this rhetoric and rewriting of history took place, it is no wonder that the concept has not been viewed positively afterwards, even gaining the epithet "totalitarian *narodnost'*."[657]

While the style of discussion might have changed after the 1936, *narodnost'* did not in itself bring new themes to Soviet music political discourse. As demonstrated already in the previous chapters, the idea of *narod* was discussed in relation to music constantly after the revolutions, and naturally already during the Russian Empire. However the boundaries of the meaning(s) of *narod* and *narodnost'* were in flux, but in the 1930s the meaning of *narodnost'* solidified. As it happened in relation to the introduction of new artistic doctrine, it signalled a change in the music political discourse. When *narodnost'* was introduced, speaking about *narod* in relation to music received more clearly formulated boundaries, which followed the broader political changes of Stalinism. These included understanding *narod* as separate from the tradition of *narodism*, and delineating the use of the concept, so that it would be impossible to speak of *narodnost'* in relation to Prokofiev's music for instance. With *narodnost'*, Soviet art political discourse looked for *narod* as it was understood by the 19th century

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[656] Iskusstvo velikogo russkogo naroda. *Pravda* 3 June 1937, 1.

[657] Gyunter 2000. Günther's referring to *narodnost'* as a totalitarian concept covers its use both in the 19th century as well as in the Soviet Union from Stalinism onwards. *Narodnost'* did not remain unchanged after the 1930s, and an example of the concept's use from the period of stagnation is offered by Rukavitsïn (1978). While some elements have remained, the scope of *narodnost'* has widened considerably so that any artist or artistic product, if it strove for "truthful depiction of people (*narod*) as the subject of creation in art" fulfilled the idea of *narodnost'*. Consequently, these artists included besides the obvious Pushkin and Musorgsky for instance Rimsky-Korsakov, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Schiller, Michelangelo, da Vinci as well as the "heroic characters" of Robin Hood and Stepan Razin (Rukavitsïn 1978, 18, 74). On the other hand, the writer needed to oppose novel phenomena, in this case the Soviet village prose, which deviated from the official Soviet art political line: "The principles of *narodnost'* were interpreted by them unilaterally, without dialectical connection with the time and those social-economic changes, which have taken place in the Soviet Union in recent years." (ibid., 31).

artists, and no doubt because of this the whole concept of *narodnost'* lost any other possible value than for propaganda and rhetoric. Indeed, *narodnost'* is probably one of the strongest candidates, if one is looking for an example of the hollow and ritualistic Soviet rhetoric of high Stalinism.[658]

Despite this, some contemporary researchers have called for the restoration of *narodnost'* as a music analytical tool, in order to better understand the music of Glinka, for instance.[659] When looking at the history of *narodnost',* these calls seem far-fetched. Even if one could somehow skip the concept's history as one of the most central ones in Stalinist cultural policy (which I doubt would be meaningful), there is no apolitical moment in the concept's history, from which its meaning could be restored. From its onset, the concept was entwined with a particular political mission, which was to separate or create particular national features for certain pieces of art, and if we employ the concept, we are analysing art within this same discourse and within politically constructed and imagined entities. Employing *narodnost'* as a tool for music analysis would result in fixed national boundaries and efface pluralities and musical transfers, resulting thus in a simplified view of music history. This could be done, of course, but the politics behind this approach should be recognized.

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The concept of the people in the legitimation of political power was as significant in the Soviet Union as it was in other 20th century societies. The October Revolution was carried out in the name of the people, and the new society and its culture, music included, should have 'reconnected' with the people after the alienating process of capitalism. The concept of *narod* had been a central pre-revolutionary political concept as well, and in the Soviet Union's dialogue with the past, connections to Russia's revolutionary groupings such as *narodniks* were first emphasized but then disentangled. In cultural political discourse, the centrality of the concept of *narod* at the expense of the concept of the proletariat further increased as the proletarian art organizations were dismantled in 1932. Political discourse streamlined the narration of Russia's revolutionary history, and open emphasis on the particular historical role of the *Russian* people replaced the internationalist tendency inherited from Marxism. In this turn of events, music did not have to follow general political change but was already set for the Russocentric narration of music history, as was seen both in this chapter and the previous one.

Narodnost' is an example of a concept from pre-revolutionary Russia which was directly and quite suddenly taken as part of socialist realism. There were, however, much more subtle discourses behind the idea of socialist realism which were discussed around concepts not directly linked to the terminology of socialist realism. It is these discourses and concepts which will be turned to next.

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[658] For later use of *narodnost'*, especially in relation to the so-called second antiformalist campaign from 1948 onwards, see Frolova-Walker 2007, 347–354.
[659] See Hvoina 2006.

5 PORTRAYING THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE IN MUSIC: *BÏT* AND REALISM

The concepts discussed so far have been more or less explicitly reflected against the later conceptualizations of art policy in the 1930s and against the official art policy of the Soviet Union, *socialist realism,* in particular. Socialist realism as a term appeared at first on the pages of *Literaturnaya gazeta* in May 1932 in a post-mortem of the Party's decision to disband all artistic organization in April 1932. In a meeting of Moscow's literary groups, Ivan Gronsky hailed the new "method" of socialist realism to combat the mistakes of RAPP.[660] It became a more widely discussed topic and the practical official line of Soviet cultural policy in the First Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934, and Andrey Zhdanov and Maxim Gorky as well as Stalin had a central role in formulating the new doctrine. Yet this doctrine itself was itself closely connected to the conceptualizations of art in the 1920s, and rather than turning art political discourse upside down, socialist realism was in dialogical relationship with the previous discussions. The characteristics of socialist realism were not thus 'invented' by politicians in the early 1930s – rather, they rested upon conceptualizations discussed so far.

This chapter looks more directly at the evolving of a particular Soviet conceptualization of 'realism,' and it begins with a concept central in the cultural political discourse in the early 1920s, namely *bït* or 'everyday life.' In the heart of 'realistic' art was the question how the life of the people should be depicted, and discussions around *bït* brought together several themes which later became part of socialist realism. After discussions on *bït,* the chapter explores the uses of the concept *realizm* in music political discussions and reflects these discussions to later understandings of music's role in the socialist realist discourse.

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[660] Obespechim vse usloviya tvorcheskoy rabotï literaturnïkh kruzhkov. Na sobranii aktiva litkruzhkov Moskvï. *Literaturnaya gazeta* 23 May 1932, 1. Gronsky was the chief editor of *Izvestiya* at the time but was imprisoned during the purges. He survived the Gulag and later recalled that it was Stalin who came up with the precise formulation of the term in their private conversation in spring 1932 – Gronsky himself had spoken about proletarian socialist realism or communist realism. (Clark & Dobrenko 2007, 162–164.)

5.1 Everyday Life: *Bït*

Bït, defined for example as the "general way of life inherent to a social group"[661] was one of the targets for revolutionary change in the Soviet Union. The concept was widely used in the early period of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, and demands to "revolutionize *bït*" denoted a pervasive and all-encompassing influence of the revolution: not only would political and economic life change, but the whole of life down to the most everyday details would be transformed.

There are two reasons why the concept of *bït* is central to this examination of the revolutionizing the music political discourse. First, *bït* brought up the target of revolutionary actions, which related not only to political life but to culture in the broadest sense of the word: from institutionalized art to informal playing together and all the way to everyday life, clothing, behaviour, manners, speaking etc. Secondly, quite early on, it became a matter of dispute how the life of the people should be depicted in art: if art portrays the life of the people, how should it do this? If the people were after the revolution still at the 'lower level' of historical development, in the 'transitional period' on their journey towards communism, was it suitable to portray the situation as it was at the moment or should art strive already towards the future, towards the revolutionary ideals? Although the heyday for the concept of *bït* was rather brief, especially because its association with Trotsky from 1923 onwards, and later on the concept was supplanted by alternatives like *kul'turnost'*,[662] the discussion around *bït* is connected to the Soviet understanding of *realizm* (realism). As will be argued in this chapter, some views on the relationship of *bït* and art already anticipated one of the most crucial points of socialist realism encapsulated in the definition "the true depiction of reality in its revolutionary development."[663] That is, not reality, not life, not *bït* in itself and directly, but from the perspective of revolutionary ideals.

5.1.1 Trotsky's "Questions of *Bït*" and its Reflections in the Music Discussions

It was in 1923 when the question of *bït* became prominent, and this was as a consequence of the writings of Leon Trotsky. In July 1923, Trotsky forwarded his manuscript of the book "Questions of *bït*" (*Voprosï bïta*), and during the summer and autumn of 1923 a considerable part of the book was published as separate articles in *Pravda*.[664] In the same year Trotsky published both in book form and in separate articles writings on literature and art as well, and these writings

[661] Ushakov's dictionary. The explanatory dictionary of Ushakov in four volumes was published between 1935–40 and is available online in: http://feb-web.ru/feb/ushakov/ush-abc/default.asp (accessed 3 February 2020).
[662] David-Fox 2015, 115–117.
[663] As formulated by Zhdanov in the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 (quoted in Revyakina 2002, 104).
[664] Reznik 2017, 82. Full list of the articles related to the book published in *Pravda* in Reznik 2017, 297.

connect quite explicitly to his formulation on the question of *bït.*[665] The end of 1923 was the time when Trotsky was already being increasingly sidelined from party politics, and Aleksandr Reznik connects his active publication concerning *bït* as a way to voice his opinion through a topic which itself was not particularly dividing the party nor was even directly 'political.' Rather, the discussion only gradually progressed to becoming openly political as well.[666] Although increasingly sidelined from decision-making, Trotsky still held considerable authority among many party members, and his writings on *bït* had a considerable impact on understanding and conceptualizing the cultural political line of the party.

Trotsky's texts published in *Pravda* ranged from questions related to family, the church, alcohol policy, cinema, and proletarian culture and art. He justified the party's need to turn to cultural questions in the first article of the series in July 1923, where he depicted the earlier political actions as necessary to secure power. Now the time had come to broaden the spectrum. Trotsky cited Lenin, who in the article "On cooperation" few months earlier had written that after the political struggle, the emphasis would move to cultural work. Trotsky stated, how "all our preceding battle, with all its efforts and sacrifices, will be justified only in so far as we learn to appropriately address and solve our individual (*chastichnïye*), everyday 'cultural' tasks."[667] The aim of the revolution was no more to seize political power, which had been accomplished, but to focus on more "prosaic" tasks, bringing revolution and culture down to everyday life.

The need to 'cultivate' or 'bring culture' to all spheres of human life was widely shared among the revolutionary intelligentsia before and after the October Revolution: it was a common view that Russia was lagging behind 'more cultured' Europe and that the Revolution should bring change to all kinds of reactionary remnants of life, as discussed in Chapter 3. The view was encapsulated in Trotsky's declaration: "We need to learn to work well: accurately, clearly, economically. We need culture in work, culture in life, culture in *bït*."[668] What was needed was a "long process of self-education of the working class, and together with it and following it, of the peasantry." The first aim was to raise culture among all the citizens to match the European level, but the ultimate goal was much higher:

> Communist *bït* will not be formed blindly, like coral reefs, but built consciously, verified with thought, directed and improved. [- -] The human will start at last to seriously harmonize his very self. He will set himself the task to bring to his movement—in work and in play—great distinctiveness, suitability, economy and thereby beauty. He wishes to master the half-conscious, and then also unconscious processes in his organism: breathing, blood circulation, digestion, fertilization—and, in necessary limits, to subordinate them to the control of reason and the will. Life, even the purely

[665] The book published in 1923 was called *Literature and revolution.*
[666] Reznik 2017, 81–82, 101.
[667] L. Trotskiy: Ne o "politike" yedinoy zhiv chelovek. *Pravda* 10 July 1923, 2. "вся наша предшествующая борьба, со всеми ее усилиями и жертвами, будет оправдана лишь в той мере, в какой мы научимся правильно ставить и разрешать наши частичные, повседневные, «культурнические» задачи."
[668] ibid., 2. "Нам нужно научиться хорошо работать: точно, чисто, экономно. Нам нужна культура в работе, культура в жизни, культура в быту."

> physiological, will be collective-experimental. The human race, stagnant homo sapiens, will again enter into a radical reforming and will become—under the guidance of his own hand—an object of the most complicated methods of artificial selection and psychophysical training.[669]

In this new situation, art and culture will not be serving the same role as before of merely depicting life, but rather of merging with life. The human being will harmonize his-/herself so that his/her physical movements and even life processes correspond perfectly to their purpose, being beautiful and 'artful' in themselves. This 'harmonizing' will extend also to production and to nature:

> But not only between art and production—at the same time the wall between art and nature will fall. Not according to Jean-Jacques's [Rousseau's] meaning, [according to which] art will approach a state of nature, but that nature, in contrast, becomes "more artistic (*iskustvenneye*)." The current arrangement of mountains and rivers, fields and meadows, forests and coasts should not at all be regarded as conclusive. [- -] The human will engage in reconsidering mountains and rivers and overall, more than once, improve nature. In the end, he will reconstruct the land if not in his own image and semblance, [at least according] to his own taste. We do not have any reason to fear that this taste will be bad.[670]

The merging of art and nature not in Rousseau's sense of art moving closer to nature but nature becoming more 'artistic' is emphasized by the Russian adjective *iskustvenniy*, which can be translated both as 'artistic' and 'artificial' (i.e. not deriving from nature). Art and culture are products of humans, not found in nature and are therefore 'artificial.' Nature can become "more artistic" only through powerful the moulding hand of the human who with the help of technological advancement has completely broken ties with the limitations of natural laws.

The utopian vision presented by Trotsky, in which rationality and technology and their unlimited possibilities were raised above everything else, is one of the clearest examples of the Soviet political discussion's convergence with the broader discourse of modernity.[671] The belief in the ability of humans to organize an ideal society and through that to overturn the old binaries such as 'art' and 'nature' had its roots in belief in the progress of humankind dating back

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[669] L. Trotskiy: Iskusstvo revolyutsii i sotsialisticheskoye iskusstvo. *Pravda* 30 September 1923, 2. Коммунистический быт будет слагаться не слепо, как коралловые рифы, а строиться сознательно, проверяться мыслью, направляться и исправляться. [- -] Человек примется наконец всерьез гармонизировать себя самого. Он поставит себе задачей ввести в движение своих собственных органов—при труде, при ходьбе, при игре—высшую отчетливость, целесообразность, экономию и тем самым красоту. Он захочет овладеть полубессознательными, а затем и бессознательными процессами в собственном организме: дыханием, кровообращением, пищеварением, оплодотворением—и, в необходимых пределах, подчинит их контролю разума и воли. Жизнь, даже чисто физиологическая, станет коллективно-экспериментальной. Человеческий род, застывший homo sapiens, снова поступит в радикальную переработку и станет—под собственными пальцами—объектом сложнейших методов искусственного отбора и психофизической тренировки. Translation by the author, an English translation of the whole text is available in: https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit_revo/ch08.htm (accessed 22 October 2022).

[670] L. Trotskiy: Iskusstvo revolyutsii i sotsialisticheskoye iskusstvo. *Pravda* 30 September 1923, 2.

[671] Yanni Kotsonis has argued that Russians have participated into debates on enlightenment and universalism as much as Western Europeans, and these debates have taken place as much in discourses about the West as in discourses about Russia. (Kotsonis 2000, 3.)

to Age of Enlightenment.[672] A continuum from the large-scale to the mundane level exemplified the thoroughness of change which the new society would bring. It would affect even permanent objects of nature, such as mountains and rivers, but also the behaviour of people in their everyday life – all this belongs to the new life form, the new communist *bït*.

In discussions on music, the idea of the human rising above nature came forth as demands for composers to take control over its sounding material and not passively admire the beauty. For instance, when applauding Arthur Honegger's work *Pacific 231,* which depicts a steam locomotive, Boris Asafiev denounced any Rousseau-like admiration of nature:

> I do not mean that music should not meddle with [themes of] nature. [- -] Let it meddle, but in a new way. Not decoratively and not dreamily. And for this different kind of music needs to be learned. Music, in which the breath of powerful iron and steel foundry culture, the fire element of melting pot and the rhythmical pounding of working machines could truly be sensed.[673]

Musical elements – like nature for Trotsky – are nothing in themselves, but become meaningful only through work and being processed by the composer. Music and art should not be approached as something 'mystical' in front of which one gets astonished and stunned, but as a raw material which needs to be molded and forged. Thus, the pseudonym L. cites Nikolai Roslavets's view of art as "the highest efficacious (*deystvenno-vïrazhennïy*) organizational principle, specific only for the human, truly conforming to his power over nature and his final victory over its dark elements."[674] It is noteworthy that these views were not presented in the proletarian journals, as might have been expected, but in the ASM journal *Sovremennaya muzika* by Asafiev and other modernist critics and composers. Their closest counterparts in other forms of art in this regard were actually Vladimir Mayakovsky and other representatives of the "left front" of art (*Levïy front iskusstv,* or *LEF*).[675]

Then again, it is not so surprising that the modernist journal and musical spheres which were most open to discussing the development of music in parallel with the musical life of Europe were ready to adopt exactly this ideological view of music. The musical trend of the time, highlighted in expressionism and compositions with 12-tone technique by Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern and Alban Berg, had an intrinsic 'rational' view of music. The point was to abandon the earlier tonal system by basing music on strict rules for the succession of individual notes, and here indeed individual notes are simply raw material which is then subjugated to a rigid system. For composers like Roslavets (sometimes referred to as "Russia's Schönberg") denouncing the old tonal system made it possible to find ideological backing for the need to break ties with any kind of 'naturalizing' ways to look at music and sounds and

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[672] On the concept of 'progress' and its roots in Enlightenment, see for instance Koselleck 2002.
[673] Igor' Glebov: Pacific 231. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1926, No. 13–14, 71.
[674] L.: N. A. Roslavets. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1924, No. 2, 35.
[675] On the pre- and post-revolutionary critique of avant-garde artists against *bït*, see Gutkin 1999, 81–97.

subjugate them under human control – just like humans will do to nature after technological progress.

While writers of ASM presented these 'Trotskyist' points of views on *bït* and its future changes, the proletarian side of music emphasized a "living connection with the proletarian masses."[676] One way to achieve this was to study "the workers' way of life (*bït*)."[677] As art reflected the life forms of the ruling class of its epoch, the musicians needed to learn from the proletarians' way of life, rather than teach them how to live. A suitable negative example for proletarian musicians about music which was penetrated by the life and *bït* of its time was the music of Scriabin. Although Scriabin (1872–1915) lived in the epoch when "great ideas" were born and the proletariat was already showing its will for power, Scriabin missed this societal change and because of his "weak-mindedness, which subsumed his purview under the views of people surrounding him," he could not escape the individualism of the already degenerating bourgeoisie and the remaining aristocrats.[678] Klimenty Korchmaryov's assessment of Scriabin is actually in the end pitying: he was a tremendous talent, "who became a victim of the narrowmindedness of his class."[679] For the proletarian musicians this demonstrated the power of class background in relation to life and ways of life, and in order to avoid the fate of Scriabin, it was necessary to find 'organic' connection with the proletariat and its *bït*.

The utopianism of the early 1920s and in relation to that the question of *bït* personified in Trotsky, was more restrained towards the end of the decade. In May 1930 the Party denounced any kind "half fantastic" attempts to jump with "one leap" to the socialist restructuring of *bït* and insisted on developing industry and the material basis after which the remaking of *bït* would happen.[680] Already earlier, however, the publishing of the journal *Muzïka i bït* (Music and *bït*) demonstrated a considerably more restrained understanding of restructuring *bït* in terms of music.

Muzïka i bït was published in 1927 by the publishing house of Leningrad's *Pravda,* and as it was modest both in ideological sharpness and in theoretical depth, it represented well the prevailing political discourse around *bït* at the time. Aimed for non-specialists, the journal highlighted its task as guiding the musical activities of the masses, and in the journal itself it printed pedagogical material on music theory, for instance, as well as the sheet music of songs.[681]

By examining the journal it is easy to see that there was no denunciation of the pre-revolutionary *bït* in the spirit of Trotsky in 1923 or by some representatives of ASM. Instead, the pre-revolutionary folk music tradition was embraced whole-heartedly. The Professor of the Moscow Conservatory, the

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[676] L. Shul'gin: Sovremennoye muzïkal'noye tvorchestvo i predposïlki nashey tvorcheskoy raboti. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 4, 15–17.
[677] ibid.
[678] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Skryabin v nashi dni. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 6–7, 15.
[679] ibid., 16.
[680] O rabote po perestroyke bïta (Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b) ot 16 maya 1930 goda). *Pravda* 29 May 1930, 5. See also Gutkin 1999, 97.
[681] Nashi zadachi. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 1, 1–2.

composer Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (1859–1935) stated how the masses should study the history of folk song, "both from the perspective of sounds as well as history and *bït*. In its sounds and words the whole history of the people is reflected, [and it] is the best indicator of spiritual culture (*dukhovnoy kul'turnosti*) and the spiritual character of the great creative collective, [which] sensitively reacts to all events of its historical being (*bïtiya*)."[682] Besides education, the best way to study this tradition was choir-singing, according to Ippolitov-Ivanov.[683] The journal recognized the persistent problem in relation to other arts that music was lagging behind in ideological terms.[684] It is noteworthy, however, that the journal did not put the blame only on the 'ideologically volatile' musical elite, as might have been expected, but saw the task of creating the new *bït* as cooperation between "three living forces of Soviet musical culture:" the music professionals, the cultural elite of the peasantry and the proletarian cultural centres. All needed to step up – the professionals needed to "get out from their small circles," the peasantry needed to deny their role as passive preservers of folk songs of the ancient village, and proletarian cultural activists needed to understand the meaning of technical skills and the importance of seizing the historical experience.[685] Although a minor publication, *Muzïka i bït* demonstrated an interesting middle-of-the-road attitude, where all kind of 'excessiveness' was frowned upon – including excessive criticism aimed at the cultural intelligentsia, that was a trade mark of militant proletarian art organizations.

5.1.2 From Proletarian *Bït* and Proletarian Culture to Revolutionary *Bït* and Revolutionary Culture

To return to the broader political level in the discussions around *bït,* one noteworthy distinction was created between proletarian *bït* and revolutionary *bït* through which Trotsky but also Lunacharsky rejected the idea of 'proletarian culture.' In his article "Proletarian culture and proletarian art" Trotsky attacked the idea of proletarian culture by stating that although the ruling class always creates its own culture, the situation with the proletariat is different from the bourgeoisie. While the culture and art of the bourgeoisie formed during hundreds of years, there would not be so much time for the proletariat to create its own culture. This was because of Trotsky's conviction that it would take decades for the world to move to socialism, but not hundreds of years. Besides, Trotsky stated, the years of class war will contain more destruction than building anew. In fact, if there was to be a more peaceful time, a paradox emerged:

> the more secure from political and military shocks the new regime will be [and] the more favourable the circumstances will be for cultural construction, the more the proletariat will dissolve into socialist life form (*obshchezhitiye*) [and] free itself from its class traits, i.e. ceases to be proletariat. [- -] From here we must make the general conclusion, that not only is there not a proletarian culture, but there will not be one either; and

[682] Prof. Ippolitov-Ivanov: Muzïkal'noye obrazovaniye mass. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 1, 4.
[683] ibid.
[684] Nashi zadachi. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 1, 1–2; Georgiy Orlov: Muzïka i Oktyabr'. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 6, 1–2.
[685] Zhivïye silï sovetskoy muzïkal'noy kul'turï. *Muzïka i bït* 1927, No. 9, 1.

> actually there is no reason to regret this: the proletariat took power precisely to end class culture and pave the way for human culture.[686]

Trotsky did not deny the possibility that already before socialism leading scholars, inventors, dramaturges or poets would rise from the ranks of the proletariat. He did reject, however, calling these potential individual accomplishments "proletarian culture." For Trotsky, these individuals from the working class were no doubt talented, but because of the inherited social structure, they were forced to work with means created by the bourgeois intelligentsia. "Without a doubt," Trotsky wrote, "the creative work of factory poets is much more organic in respect to its relation to life, *bït* and the interests of the working masses. But nevertheless it is not proletarian **literature**, but only a written expression of the molecular process of the cultural development of the proletariat."[687] The points made by Trotsky are very revealing regarding the nature of *culture* and *literature*: there is 'real' culture, which has lasting value and which is not in contradiction with the social and economic basis from which it stems. Everything else will be considered outside the categories of 'culture' and 'literature' – at best as indicators of the right direction. In music Leonid Sabaneyev adopted this view in his argument against proletarian musicians. Proletarian music was a "homemade phenomenon," created by groups who "not [being] able to contribute anything properly qualified, gave only pale copies of the music of the past."[688]

In Trotsky's definition, it is not enough if art is in organic relation with life (*zhizn'*) or the everyday (*bït*). At the time of Trotsky's texts, the relationship between art and *bït* was central in literary theory as well, when formalists contrasted literature with everyday life. Formalists regarded the autonomous word central in literature and contrasted the words of literature and especially poetry to the speech of everyday life. Whereas the language of *bït* has a practical function and it always waits for a response, the language of poetry is self-contained and needs no reference points outside itself. The language and words of everyday are not capable of disentangling themselves from the dullness of the everyday, and it is the task of art and literature, through making the everyday phenomena "strange" (Shklovsky's *ostraneniye*), to break the greyness of *bït* and to make us see their artistic value.[689]

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[686] L. Trotsky: Proletarskaya kul'tura i proletarskoye iskusstvo. *Pravda* 14 September 1923, 2–3. чем полнее будет новый режим обеспечен от политических и военных потрясений, чем благоприятнее будут условия для культурного творчества, тем более пролетариат будет растворяться в социалистическом общежитии, освобождаясь от своих классовых черт, т. е. переставая быть пролетариатом. [- -] Отсюда надлежит сделать тот общий вывод, что пролетарской культуры не только нет, но и не будет; и жалеть об этом поистине нет основания: пролетариат взял власть именно для того, чтобы навсегда покончить с классовой культурой и проложить пути для культуры человеческой.

[687] ibid. " Несомненно, творчество заводских поэтов много органичнее, в смысле своей связи с жизнью, бытом и интересами рабочей массы. Но все же это не пролетарская **литература**, а лишь письменное выражение молекулярного процесса культурного подъема пролетариата." Emphasis in the original.

[688] Sabaneyev 1926, 21.

[689] Emerson 2011, 67–68.

From the point of view of Marxism, the idea of a "self-contained word" without reference to the outside world was of course intolerable, although formalism was not necessarily denying the relationship between art and life or claiming "art for art's sake."[690] Trotsky too, although giving value to analytical techniques of formalists, criticized them for detaching literature from life.[691] The relationship between life and art was conceptualized in an opposite way in formalist theories and Trotsky's Marxist views: for formalists, art points to the artistic qualities of the everyday, unseen by the dull gaze of the *bït* and thus creates new visions. For Trotsky, art followed reality and life: "poetry is reportage, only of a special and great style."[692] This relates to Trotsky's criticism of proletarian culture mentioned before: the Bogdanovian idea of culture directing revolutionary changes was not possible, because culture and art followed economic and political changes. It is the material conditions which leads the changes, while art as part of the superstructure merely reports what is going on.

Anatoly Lunacharsky, although not directly commenting on Trotsky's views, discussed the relationship between art and *bït* at the same time. Although taking a slightly different angle to the question than Trotsky (by not for instance emphasizing dialectical materialism so strongly), his formulations coincided with Trotsky's interestingly in terms of the *realistic* representation of the workers' lives in art. In summer 1923 Lunacharsky came to deny the value of proletarian *bït* as material for art, insisting instead the need to represent *revolutionary bït*. This was because although different life forms (peasant *bït*, merchant *bït*, landowners' *bït*) have their own joys, own characters precious to the class in question, capital, as already noted by Marx, degrades *bït*. "[Capital] undresses national costumes from all, tears original homes and lives, takes of everything, turns everything prosaic and most of all, of course, the *bït* of the proletariat. It sets up working barracks, it drives the worker into a dirty and repulsive kennel, it makes the worker's family-life hopeless and drives the worker into the bar."[693] Nothing good is left in the *bït* of the proletariat, except the revolutionary protest against that very mode of life itself. But that is not part of the proletarian *bït* any more, it is denial of it. What is valuable for art, according to Lunacharsky, is not the

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[690] Emerson (ibid.) points out the "estrangement" function of art on reality, which presupposes some kind of relation between art and the real world. Formalists faced criticism of being elitist, and when formalism became an all-encompassing word of abuse to non-doctrinal art, it signaled most often the artist's alleged diverging from the "people" and "life."
[691] See L. Trotskiy: Formal'naya shkola poėzii i marksizm. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, no. 30(903) & 31 (904). Trotsky gave recognition to one of the leaders of the formalist school, Viktor Shklovsky, by stating for instance that "formalist school is the first scientific school of art. Through the work of Shklovsky—not a minor service!—the theory of art, and partly art itself were transformed, finally, from the status of alchemy to the status of chemistry." (L. Trotskiy: Formal'naya shkola poėzii i marksizm. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, no. 30(903), 1.)
[692] ibid., 3.
[693] A. Lunacharskiy: O proletarskom bïte i proletarskoy kul'ture. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, no. 29(902), 1–3. совлекает со всех национальные костюмы, разрывает оригинальные формы жилья и житья, все оголяет, все превращает в прозу и больше всего, конечно, быт пролетариата. Он создает рабочую казарму, он загоняет рабочего в грязную и отвратительную конуру, он делает беспросветной рабочую семейную жизнь и гонит рабочего в кабак

proletarian *bït* itself, but the revolutionary protest hidden in that way of life which made the proletariat in the revolution "burst its banks:"

> I am talking about the communistic proletariat, inasmuch as it establishes an army, builds a state, endures new conflicts, sees new horizons ahead, as it creates new history, as it sacrifices itself, finds itself in this sacrifice,—and here I see the basis for *proletarian, communistic theatre.*[694]

It is from here we can enter the peculiar understanding of *realism*. The material for revolutionary art is not the life of the proletariat in its totality, but only its revolutionary aspects. Following the logic, it does not renounce the "realistic" depiction of life, but the things that are depicted are simply chosen. The eye of the artist should focus itself on this part of the life of the communist proletariat, not the whole life: "Our drama cannot only be connected to *bït* (*bïtovoy*), it has to be revolutionary, but it needs to be realistic, needs to maintain actual manifestations of the revolutionary battle against *bït* for the new, free communistic life."[695]

This was not the first time Lunacharsky had criticized the depiction of *bït* in art as he had touched upon the same theme already in 1920.[696] In a long speech titled "On musical drama," Lunacharsky stated how important Richard Wagner's text *Art and revolution* (1849, republished in the Soviet Russia at the time of the speech) was in its reaching towards the ideals of classical Greek tragedy. In contrast to dramas of the ancient world, history had seen a continuous decline from the portrayal of gods to portrayals of ordinary men, of "true *bït*." The bourgeoisie had started to order from art "pictures of himself, of his wife and his pug." Theatre went to "strict realism," in which the grey, stuttering and clumsy philistine demanded to see a similarly grey, stuttering and clumsy actor on the stage. If the actor wanted to convey pathos and ecstasy, it was deemed too theatrical: "theatricality was not permitted in the theatre itself."[697]

This was thought to be the "democratization" of art, but, for Lunacharsky it was merely the principle of "individualism." A true democracy is represented by a worker who does not want to appear as "I," but because of his interest in class struggle, always as "we." A contrasting example to bourgeois "strict realism" was for instance the folk tradition, which never sought "realistic" depiction, but "tales, typical characters and phenomena, for symbols." True democracy can find its expression only in "heroes and exceptional people who would be exponents

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[694] ibid., 2. Emphasis in original. я говорю о коммунистическом пролетариате, поскольку он создает армию, строит государство, переживает новые конфликты, видит перед собой новые горизонты, поскольку он творит новую историю, поскольку он приносит себя в жертву, находит себя в этой жертве,—и тут я вижу базу для *пролетарского, коммунистического театра*."

[695] ibid., 3. Драма наша не может быть просто бытовой, она должна быть революционной, но она должна быть реалистической, должна держаться фактических проявлений революционной борьбы против быта за новую, вольную коммунистическую жизнь.

[696] Lunacharsky gave a speech at the opening of the Institute of musical drama, which was reproduced in three issues of the journal *Vestnik teatra* (1920, No. 58, 59 & 60). The text is available in http://lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib/v-mire-muzyki/o-muzykalnoj-drame/ (accessed 11 February 2021).

[697] ibid.

of the ideas and strivings of the masses."[698] This is a definition of 'democracy' which is similar to one in Section 2.3 in criticism of the "parliamentary" nature of *Persimfans,* or when Sabaneyev made the distinction between "demagogy" and "democracy" in music. In all these instances, 'true democracy' lay in the exceptional persons who embodied the will and strength of the collective they represented. This idea of democracy influenced Lunacharsky's formulation of 'realistic art,' which in its traditional pre-revolutionary form stemmed from the same ideology of individualism as 'bourgeois' forms of democracy. The new society striving for 'higher' forms of democracy needed a new kind of 'realism' in art as well.

The discussion around *bït,* as has been seen, already anticipated later discussion of *realism* and especially *socialist realism,* which in its depiction of 'revolutionary reality' renounced the mere depiction of reality as such – *bït* or the everyday reality without ideological viewpoint and its added value. Conceptually this discussion took different forms, and next the other conceptualizations will be considered which were later used to define a particular realism of the new revolutionary art. The closest equivalent to the discussions on *bït* was the distinction between *realism* and *naturalism*, which, however, took place rather late.

5.2 Realism

While the concept of realism was used throughout the 1920s in Soviet cultural political discussion, it eventually became codified as the official line of Soviet cultural policy in the 1930s as part of socialist realism. In music, the meaning of (socialist) realism was hard to grasp, but besides approaching the question by referring to the pre-history of the concept as discussed above, we can also analyse the counterconcepts to 'realistic' music.[699] By delineating what realism was not in music, we can approach what it was expected to be. In addition, historical examples were used to present examples for socialist realist art. Lastly, I will analyse one particular component of socialist realism which music could answer – i.e. the emotional response which art was supposed to elicit in the audience.

5.2.1 Historical Enemies of Realistic Music: Romanticism, Impressionism, Mysticism

Although much of the pre-revolutionary culture and music was criticized heavily especially by the proletarian musicians, there was also an interesting 'victimization' discourse for composers of the preceding epochs. It connected for instance to notions about Bach's religiosity discussed in Section 3.1.2, according to which religion was seen as all-embracing element of that historical period and

[698] ibid.
[699] On counterconcepts in conceptual history, see Koselleck 2004, 155–191.

thus it had not been possible for Bach to be anything else but religious. But in contrast to Bach, for whom the religious context of his time was merely a coating, which his strong spirit and art penetrated through, the 'victims' of the bourgeoisie era were completely saturated by the ideology of their time. Even though they were unquestionably talented individuals, they could not break free from the detrimental ideology surrounding them. In music, these individuals were for instance Robert Schumann (1810–1856) and Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915).

Schumann's problem for Soviet society was his comprehensive romanticism. Romanticism did not automatically make music incompatible with revolutionary ideals, and especially the early phases of Romanticism in music, launched and guided by the 'revolutionary spirit' of Beethoven, were seen as capturing revolutionary pathos. The problem was the later developments of the 19th century when the revolutionary bourgeoisie became the reactionary ruling class. Lunacharsky gave the most detailed analysis of different phases of Romanticism in art and music by approaching the question through four positions which a class can occupy in different phases of history.[700] There can be a ruling class, a declining class, a rising class or one in completed decline. These phases define whether the art produced by the class in question is classical or romantic. The first was defined by Lunacharsky as art where the form embraces the content, and the second as art where the form and content do not coincide, leaving the form hollow. Classical art can appear only when the class in question is somewhat "motionless" and at the height of its social significance. In all the different cases art is more or less romantic.[701]

Romanticism of the rising class is militant: it "tears up artistic frames."[702] For Lunacharsky, the only composer in music history representing purely this kind of romanticism was, of course, Beethoven, and the art of the ascending proletariat represented this romanticism as well. Other forms of it represented different phases of decline of the class in question, and sometimes these phases became recorded in the oeuvre of a single artist. Thus Victor Hugo moved from being "a typical romantic of the aristocratic decline" into the position of "stormy, fighting romanticism," whereas for Richard Wagner the route went other way around, from an advancing revolutionary romanticism to pessimism, "reflecting the disappointment of the different strata of the bourgeoisie."[703]

Romantic music after Beethoven – "Schubert's, even more so Schumann's and Chopin's" – denoted to Lunacharsky a transition to "romanticism of depression and pessimism."[704] The status of Schubert and Chopin in Soviet discourse was not always negative, and Chopin's revolutionary image even improved in the 1930s, when he was increasingly linked to the Polish national

[700] A. Lunacharskiy: Romantika. *Muzika i revolyutsiya* 1928, No. 10, 3–6. See also Raku 2014, 102–104.
[701] A. Lunacharskiy: Romantika. *Muzika i revolyutsiya* 1928, No. 10, 3–4.
[702] ibid., 4.
[703] ibid.
[704] ibid., 5.

movement and the November uprising of 1830.[705] Schumann, however, was hopelessly saturated by the romanticism of the declining bourgeoisie. His music was important for Russian music history in that it was a source of inspiration for the Mighty Five, and even the "narodnik-realist Musorgsky" inherited melodic and harmonic formulas from Schumann.[706] Whereas some composers were able to rise above their immediate historical context and create timeless art – Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, as discussed earlier, and in some cases also Wagner and Schubert were included to this group[707] – Schumann could not break free from the ideology of his time. This was not, however, the choice made by Schumann himself but rather a fate he could not escape. Thus he was more a victim than guilty for the negative ideological content of his music: "If the splendid "romanticism" of Schumann would not at times slide a little bit towards the platitudes of Mendelssohnian sentimentalism, if his deep and strong feeling would not degenerate here and there to sugary sensitiveness [- -] Schumann would be one of the *greatest* musical geniuses. But given the circumstances, [which] diminish the value of the musical language of Schumann, he of course maintains every right to be called a *great* composer [- -]."[708]

The legacy of another 'victim' of music history, Alexander Scriabin, was more complex than the legacy of Schumann. This was because Scriabin's significant role in the Russian (and European) music of the early 20th century and his recent death only a few years before the revolutions of 1917. The ideological context of Scriabin became harder to interpret than the romanticism represented by Schumann. After all, romanticism could be seen to have had different phases and occasionally some revolutionary elements, as described by Lunacharsky above, or it could approach the 'healthy' folk tradition in national romanticism. Scriabin on the other hand came to denote the last phase of the bourgeoisie with its complete separation from reality and turning to mysticism. Consequently his music was interpreted as moving away from 'the people.'

This was not the case in the early revolutionary years, however. The most concrete proof of Scriabin's positive revolutionary image right after the revolution was the announcement of a competition for designing 50 new statues for Moscow – "portraits of great people of revolution, public figures, philosophers, writers, artists, musicians, scholars." The eight composers chosen to list included Scriabin.[709] His revolutionary status came from his new way of structuring music around sound colours and especially his vision of art transforming the world – people uniting in an ecstatic event of music, movement, smells and colours in the work spanning over several days, which Scriabin called *Mysterium* (*Misteriya*).[710] It was not a huge intellectual leap to interpret Scriabin's vision as the vision of a utopian communist society.

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[705] Raku 2014, 121.
[706] V. Karatïgin: Po kontsertam. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 22(897), 10.
[707] A. K.: Iskazhennïy Shubert. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 28(902), 13.
[708] V. Karatïgin: Po kontsertam. *Zhizn' iskusstva* 1923, No. 22(897), 9.
[709] Spisok lits koim predpolozheno postavit' monumentï. *Izvestiya* 24 July 1918, 4–5.
[710] See especially Mitchell 2015, 78–85.

Interpretations of Scriabin's ideological context began to change in 1922–23, and it was especially the proletarian musicians who attacked his legacy. The first issue of the RAPM journal *Muzïkal'naya nov'* denoted a turning point in this regard, because it had articles which both paid tribute to and denounced Scriabin's music. While Alexey Sergeyev followed the proletarian discourse on music writing about the "cul-de-sac" of music, the loss of the "healthy folk roots" of Russian music and the demand for the study of "the rhythm of labour songs and of labour processes," he stated in the beginning of the article how "[o]ur musical art" had "reached its zenith in Scriabin's emotional and individualist dream."[711] Later in the same issue, however, Mikhail Ivanov-Boretsky already looked back to the very first years of revolution and saw the conviction of Scriabin's closeness to the new worldview as an "echo of a somewhat a priori perceived juxtaposition in the first moments of revolution."[712] Scriabin, it seemed to Ivanov-Boretsky now, was a revolutionary in music like Debussy, creating new forms, but doing this within the limits of the bourgeoisie culture. Thus Scriabin was "fundamentally not only inadequate to revolutionary psychology, but infinitely distant from it."[713]

The pairing of Scriabin (1872–1915) and Debussy (1862–1918) served here and also later as a tool to mark both of the composers as proponents of the temporally recent yet ideologically distant past. An extreme individualism, "alienation from the masses,"[714] degeneration,[715] "disease" of the epoch[716] – all in all the striking contrast to 'healthy' realism came to mark their music. It was easy also for the composers and critics not directly associated with proletarian musicians, such as Sabaneyev and Roslavets, to advance this discourse when it suited their purposes – especially for the latter, who emphasized the 'rational' revolutionizing of music in contrast to 'irrational' impressionism and mysticism.[717] There were individual attempts to emphasize Scriabin's role in music history, seeing him for instance as a "pan-European" composer,[718] a composer who moved the centre of European music from Germany to Russia after Wagner[719] or, as Lunacharsky saw it, behind the "mystical fog" Scriabin nevertheless aimed at transforming the world.[720] It did become, however, the more common interpretation to see Scriabin as the "autumnal twilight" of the

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[711] A. Sergeyev: Muzïkal'nïy tupik. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 6–8. Translated in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 97–99. After Scriabin, the Russian music had received "further light from Stravinsky's creative will and Prokofiev's strength and health" – adding two names, who also were very controversial in later RAPM discourse (ibid.).
[712] M. Ivanov-Boretskiy: Puti muzïki i revolyutsii. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1923, No. 1, 17.
[713] ibid.
[714] L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennost' tvorchestva. *Teatr i muzïka* 1923, No. 10(23), 789.
[715] Nik. Roslavets: Sovetskaya muzïka. *Rabis* 1927, No. 43, 6–8.
[716] Vyach. Ignatovich: Muzïka i revolyutsiya. *Teatr i muzïka* 1923, No. 1–2(14–15), 423.
[717] Sabaneyev's position in relation to Scriabin was more complicated, as discussed in Section 3.3.
[718] V. Belyayev: Russkaya simfoniya i simfonicheskoye tvorchestvo N. Ya. Myaskovskogo. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1924, No. 3, 78–86
[719] Viktor Belyayev: Ot Betkhovena k russkoy sonate. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1927, No. 21, 260–273.
[720] A. Lunacharskiy: Romantika. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1928, No. 10, 6.

development which had begun from the "revolutionary dawn" of Beethoven.[721] But, similar to Schumann, Scriabin deserved more pity than vehement denunciation, as he was in the end "a victim of the narrowmindedness of his class."[722]

5.2.2 Realism in Opera

In the sphere of music, the increasing demand for realism in art was especially reflected in discussions on opera. In relation to rather abstract symphonic forms realism as such was harder to discuss, but the operatic tradition, especially Musorgsky's works, were taken up as examples of realism in music. A great deal of expectation was laid also on new Soviet opera, and for a few years it seemed that Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934) would be the breakthrough piece for the new realist Soviet opera tradition. Its position as the main target of the antiformalist campaign in 1936 proved this believe wrong, however, and as a consequence the limits of socialist realism in music were defined more narrowly than before. Conceptually, the campaign made *formalism* and *naturalism* not only artistically undesirable phenomena but also tools of political denunciation.

Out of the 'realistic' opera tradition, there were not too many works which would have been taken into Soviet discourse on music without criticism. Already in 1918, a critic in *Izvestiya* demanded the pruning of the operatic repertoire and bringing into more prominence the "national (*narodnïya*) operas of Musorgsky, the musical fairy tales of Rimsky-Korsakov, the dramas of Wagner."[723] The problem in several works was for instance the depiction of *bït* or as Lunacharsky called it, "strict realism," discussed above.[724] In line with criticism of the theatre, which the "petty bourgeoisie" had turned into a mirror of its own dull life, the verismo tradition in opera could not serve as the model for new, revolutionary musical drama, because it was merely "drama with music."[725] For instance the staging of Bizet's *Carmen* – although a standard piece of Soviet opera theatres from the very early years onwards and even considered as a 'revolutionary' work[726] – was seldom accepted without criticism.[727]

From the Russian operatic tradition, the fairy tales mentioned in the 1918 *Izvestiya* article in the early years of the Soviet Union were in a way politically easier choices for the opera houses. While it was practically and economically

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[721] Ėm. Beskin. Betkhoven: K stoletiyu co dnya smerti. *Rabis* 1927, No. 11, 3.
[722] Klimentiy Korchmaryov: Skryabin v nashi dni. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 6–7, 15.
[723] S. A. B.—v.: Zadachi gosudarstvennoy operï. *Izvestiya* 26 July 1918. Leonid Sabaneyev is the probable writer behind the pseudonym.
[724] A. Lunacharskiy: O muzïkal'noy drame. *Vestnik teatra* 1920, Nos. 58–60. (Available in http://lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib/v-mire-muzyki/o-muzykalnoj-drame/ Accessed 11 February 2021).
[725] ibid.
[726] Fairclough 2016, 212–213.
[727] Criticism focused often on poor staging of the work, but also the point of maintaining the opera in the repertoire was questioned. See L. Sabaneyev: "Karmen" v Bol'shom teatre. *Izvestiya* 21 May 1922, 5; V. Blyum: Karmen. *Izvestiya* 21 May 1922, 5; L. Sabaneyev: O muzïke "Karmen" v Khudozhestvennom teatre. *Izvestiya* 8 July 1924, 4.

sensible in the dire situation of the theatres to continue performing standard pieces, such as Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila,* Aleksandr Borodin's *Prince Igor* or operas by Rimsky-Korsakov instead of putting up new ones, their performance could also be justified through their national significance. Out of the realistic operas, the most problematic was the one with the greatest national historical significance: Glinka's *A life for the tsar,* which was seen as the beginning of genuine Russian opera art.[728] Obviously the libretto, centring around a peasant willing to sacrifice his own life in order to rescue the newly chosen tsar, was unacceptable in the Soviet Union, and it was only in 1939 that Glinka's work was restaged with the newly written libretto and the title *Ivan Susanin*.[729] min

Luckily for the Soviet critics, there was Musorgsky and his *Boris Godunov*. Musorgsky more generally and this work in particular represented the "revolutionary pages of the past"[730] and depicted the people as an active force with its own will.[731] The concept *narod* (people) connected the depiction of Musorgsky to realism: as he was interested in and felt sympathy with the people, he did not depict the people as a passive viewer but an actor with its own aspirations. This depiction was correct/truthful (*pravdivïy*) and consequently he was "a realist."[732] Recalling the discussion on the concept of truth (*pravda/istina*) in Section 3.1.2, we can see that the realism which Musorgsky represented was not simply creating operas, which were closer to everyday sensations and individuals (as in verismi) but having a particular and ideologically correct view on the people. The marxist view of history highlighted the significance of social forces and the power of the masses, and Musorgsky's Godunov offered such an image.[733]

The criticism of Musorgsky's operas mainly focused on the perceived failures of particular productions. Musorgsky's music and ideology were not criticized as such, but according to the critics the productions did not reach for instance the "musical essence" of Godunov,[734] the "grotesque" side (and consequently the element of protest) in Musorgsky's *Sorochinskaya yarmarka*,[735] or the performances overall were ruined because of several errors and oversights in production.[736] The debate on producing the most loyal or even 'authentic' version of Musorgsky went furthest in consideration of the different versions of

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[728] See Section 4.3.1.
[729] See Frolova-Walker 2007, 61–69.
[730] Ėm. Beskin: "Sluzhba opernoy tyagi." *Muzïka* 1922, No. 2, 33–35;
[731] Yevgeniy Braudo: "Boris Godunov" v Bol'shom teatre. *Rabis* 1927, No. 1, 10; Puti operï. *Rabis* 1927, No. 24, 6.
[732] M. Ivanov-Boretskiy: Moguchaya kuchka. *Muzïkal'naya nov'* 1924, No. 11, 38; Yuriy Keldïsh: Tvorchestvo Musorgskogo. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 2, 8.
[733] But not without problems: for instance, Nadezha Bryusova held that Musorgsky got closest in his depiction of the people's will, implying that he did not, however, reach it (Puti operï. *Rabis* 1927, No. 24, 6). Yuri Keldïsh on the other hand stated that Musorgsky was in the end left out of newly emerging Marxism in Russia and thus did not break free from hopelessness towards the position of the people in tsarist Russia (Yuriy Keldïsh: Tvorchestvo Musorgskogo. *Za proletarskuyu muzïku* 1930, No. 2, 8–11).
[734] Yevgeniy Braudo: "Boris Godunov" v Bol'shom teatre. *Rabis* 1927, No. 1, 10.
[735] L. Sabaneyev: "Sorochinskaya yarmarka" v Bol'shom teatre. *Izvestiya* 31 January 1925, 7.
[736] See the critical text on the performance of *Khovanshchina* in the Bolshtoi Theatre: Pavel Lamm: Khovanshchina v GABT'E. *Sovremennaya muzïka* 1928, No. 31, 170–177.

Boris Godunov. The most often performed version of the opera was the one edited by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, and in the 1920s musicologists studied Musorsgky's own manuscripts in order to 'restore' the original version or idea of Musorgsky.[737] This resulted in a new version of Godunov in 1928, which however divided the musical scene. Boris Asafiev, who was close to ASM, criticized Rimsky-Korsakov's revisions and hailed the original revolutionary spirit of Musorgsky's Godunov, whereas the central figure of ASM Pavel Lamm deemed Asafiev's attitude opportunistic. The proletarian side naturally made use of Asafiev's comments, while Aleksandr Glazunov, a former student of Rimsky-Korsakov, claimed that the edited version was an improvement on Musorgsky's original.[738] This demonstrates how the unity in highlighting Musorgsky's significance and realism was only an illusion in the music political discussion of the Soviet 1920s. While the discussion repeated the concepts, the actual productions hardly ever reached the expected (and, in the end, constructed) realism or 'truthfulness' of Musorgsky.

Out of the operas composed in the Soviet era, it was the famous *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934) by Dmitry Shostakovich, which was at first considered a Soviet masterpiece and pacesetter for new, realist opera art. The story of a woman suffering from an unfulfilling marriage in the backwater of pre-revolutionary Russia was framed as the depiction of the social role of women before the revolutions. Consequently the murders the heroine Katerina Izmailova commits in order to flee with his new lover are portrayed as desperate and understandable reactions to the suffocating social forces. But it was especially Shostakovich's music which thrilled both professionals and the audience: the opera became an instant hit and was performed dozens of times during the next two years, and even composers who were often indifferent to Shostakovich's work praised the achievement.[739]

The opera came out when Soviet music life was in flux. It took a while for music life to reorganize itself after the Party decision to disbanding all the artistic organizations in April 1932,[740] and *Lady Macbeth*'s almost simultaneous premiere in Moscow and Leningrad in January 1934 was taken as a new opening for Soviet music in general. For instance the dismissed director of the Moscow Conservatory and former RAPMist Boleslav Przybyszewski in October 1933 thanked the Party for its April Resolution and stated that the significance of Shostakovich's opera was not only in its "great craftmanship (*masterstvo*), its exceptional power as a true reflection of reality, but above all in [the fact that this] realism [is] of new, Soviet quality."[741] It should be noted that these kinds of statements did not go against what Shostakovich himself wanted to convey with

[737] See Viktor Belyayev: Novaya redaktsiya "Borisa Godunova" M. P. Musorgskogo. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1926, No. 3, 15–18 & Yevgeniy Braudo: "Boris Godunov" v Bol'shom teatre. *Rabis* 1927, No. 1, 10.
[738] See the discussion in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 200–202.
[739] One of these impressed composers was Myaskovsky. On reception of Shostakovich's opera, see Fay 2000, 75–76.
[740] On the Party resolution see Section 4.1.1. On the formation of Composers' Union, see especially Tomoff 2006.
[741] B. Pshibïshevskiy: Muzïka stranï Sovetov. *Pravda* 24 October 1933, 4.

his opera. The composer had commented on the work-in-progress in October 1932 and said that Nikolay Leskov's original work, on which the opera is based, is "the most truthful and tragic portrait of the fate of a talented, clever, and exceptional woman perishing in the nightmarish conditions of pre-revolutionary Russia." In addition, he openly contrasted the music of the upcoming opera with his previous, more experimental opera *The Nose*: "It is my deep conviction that in opera there should be singing. And all the vocal parts in *Lady Macbeth* are melodious, lyrical."[742]

It is not these interpretations of "realism" or "melodious, lyrical" singing for which *Lady Macbeth* is remembered, however. In contrast, it was the very opposite interpretation of the work, its claimed "naturalism" and "formalism," which ensured opera's exceptional position in music history. Being in the centre of the infamous *Pravda* article "Muddle instead of music" (1936) the opera, which had during the past two years enjoyed unbroken popularity, several different productions and more than a hundred performances, began what historiography has later termed the first anti-formalist campaign.[743] Shostakovich's music was claimed to be repeating leftish art's denial of "simplicity (*prostota*), realism, comprehensibility (*ponyatnost'*) of characters, natural sounding of words." Everything was "ugly, primitive, vulgar," and especially the love scenes, which were portrayed "as naturalistically as possible." The composer had not listened to the expectations of the Soviet audience but wanted to make impression on "aesthete-formalists, who have lost healthy taste," and the critics had meanwhile "given great credit to the work." At the same time when Soviet criticism "swears in the name of socialist realism, we are presented with the most coarsest kind of naturalism in the work of Shostakovich."[744]

5.2.3 Reality with Positive Sentiments: Socialist Realism without Coarse Naturalism and Cold Formalism

While principles of socialist realism had been trumpeted already a few years before the *Pravda* article on *Lady Macbeth*, it is fair to say that this was the moment when the question of socialist realism – its central concepts and their meaning in terms of music – was truly opened up in Soviet music discussion. Thus, the first anti-formalistic campaign was unquestionably a major turning point in Soviet music politics, but on the other hand socialist realism in music was in close

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[742] D. Shostakovich: "Tragediya—satira." *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* 16 October 1932. Quoted in Fay 2000, 69.

[743] The *Pravda* article and its consequences for Shostakovich and Soviet music more generally have been the most thoroughly researched topics of Soviet music history. See for instance Maksimenkov 1997; Mikkonen 2009 & 2010; Herrala 2012. The so-called second anti-formalist campaign (or '*Zhdanovshchina*' after Andrey Zhdanov) took place in the late Stalinist period, beginning in 1948. Shostakovich was yet again one of the accused composers, but the starting point for this second campaign was Vino Muradeli''s opera *The Great Friendship* (Vlasova 2010; Herrala 2012). This was part of the broader "anticosmopolitan" campaign, where all kind of 'cosmopolitan' (i.e. Jewish) influence and conspiracies in the Soviet society were identified and condemned (see also Tomoff 2006).

[744] Sumbur vmesto muzïki: Ob opere "Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uyezda". *Pravda* 28 January 1936, 4.

dialogue with music discussions of the 1920s and the concepts that were used then, such as *narod, Europe-Russia* and *bït,* as discussed in previous chapters.

When interpreting socialist realism in music, it is common to note the literary origins of the term. Socialist realism became the political doctrine of Soviet art with the first all-Union congress of Soviet writers in 1934, and in literature, there was already a frame of reference for socialist realist novels, namely the works of Maxim Gorky. Consequently, while certain formal elements have been discerned for the socialist realist novel, music researchers are often forced to conclude that there were no clear elements of socialist realist music and the whole concept had to be mechanically adopted from literature without a clear idea of what socialist realism in music would actually mean.[745] There was, however, one particular element in the 'reality' of socialist realism to which music could respond quite directly, namely describing reality with positive emotional colouring.

While socialist realism was definitely a concept of the 1930s, an idea of 'positive realism' had been developed already during the 1920s. This happened by disentangling realism from 'cold' and 'inauthentic' formalism on the one hand and from 'coarse' naturalism on the other. Unlike formalism, naturalism came to play its role as realism's 'ideological other' rather late – and more consistently only in the late 1920s. Maria Silina argues that the whole division between realism and naturalism was not very clearly established in Russian art critical discourse, although the terms had been separated with the translation of Emile Zola's article *Le Roman experimental* in 1879. Vladimir Stasov preferred the term realism instead of naturalism, and overall the latter concept was not used as often.[746] During the 1920s, naturalism began to gain a more clearly pronounced antagonistic position in relation to realism.

Viktor Belyayev, one of the most prolific writers of ASM journals, divided the development of Russian symphonic music into two currents in 1924: "national" and "organic."[747] The national current, represented especially by the "new Russian school" (the Mighty Five), Belyayev called also as "naturalistic," as its composers saw the graphic function of music as primary. They have a "purely programmatic interpretation of the idea of symphony [- -] symphonic music of this kind loses a great deal in tension of the inner idea organizing the work, replacing this inner tension with perhaps very vivid but in essence external picturesque."[748] Currently, Glazunov was bringing its principles to a conclusion. The other approach, which Belyayev called "organic," was inclined less towards a specifically Russian and more generally to a pan-European current, and in this development Belyayev named Tchaikovsky as its central name, Rakhmaninov as the one who continued it and Scriabin as its substantial reformer.[749]

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[745] Mikkonen 2009; Herrala 2012.
[746] Silina 2016, 91–92.
[747] V. Belyayev: Russkaya simfoniya i simfonicheskoye tvorchestvo N. Ya. Myaskovskogo. *Sovremennaya muzika* 1924, No. 3, 78–86.
[748] ibid., 79.
[749] ibid., 80–81.

When estimating the role of Myaskovsky in the current phase of Russian symphonic music, Belyayev considered him to be taking some elements from Glazunov (i.e. from the national or 'naturalistic' current) and from Scriabin (i.e. from the 'organic' current) in terms of harmonic colour range, but "psychologically" Myaskovsky was most directly related to Musorgsky. For both of them, musical works have an "almost *human* life, a life of living beings," and their music opens up "secrets of human psychology" comparable to the works of Dostoyevsky.[750]

Belyayev's way of structuring the history of Russian symphonic music is interesting in how uncontroversial it ultimately was – even when considering the stricter proletarian views on music. For sure, Belyayev did not denounce Scriabin as the proletarian critics did, but he had already made many important steps in how to place Myaskovsky's music in the continuation of Russian tradition. Although Scriabin's role was important in that it reformed the 'organic' current of Russian symphonic music, Myaskovsky was "psychologically" distant to Scriabin – meaning that even if Scriabin's influence could be heard in some of harmonic choices of Myaskovsky, this was only superficial and technical. Inwardly, Myaskovsky was related to Musorgsky, who is curiously not treated as part of the new Russian school, but as separate from its other members.[751] Musorgsky is neither part of the 'national' (i.e. 'naturalistic') nor the 'organic' current, but somehow external (or above) to this division. Relating Myaskovsky psychologically to Musorgsky, Belyayev posits Myaskovsky as well above this division and neatly separates him from all kind of possible ideological criticism. This criticism might have included the 'naturalism' of the national current of Russian symphonic music. Instead of 'naturalistic,' Myaskovsky with his relation to Musorgsky is considered 'realistic.' "Striving for the ideal and striving for awareness of himself, i.e. for awareness of the creative nature of the human [- -] compel him [Myaskovsky] to observe all phenomena of the surrounding world, to seek to creatively understand and interpret life in all its manifestations"[752]

It is noteworthy that although Belyayev clearly did not value the national/naturalistic tradition of Russian music as high as the 'organic' tradition (as he called it), he left this criticism more to be read between the lines and did not directly discredit the 'naturalistic' approach to symphony music. Calling art naturalistic was not ideological criticism at the time of the article (1924), but on the other hand, the division between naturalism and realism was already prominent here. While Belyayev did not use the concept 'realism,' his interpretation of Myaskovsky as psychologically related to Musorgsky, who, unlike the other members of Mighty Five, is not discussed as part of the national/naturalistic school, certainly implies the understanding of Musorgsky as a 'realistic' composer. Myaskovsky, who was for Belyayev also distant to other antitheses of realism, like Scriabin (implying his 'mysticism') was showing the

[750] ibid., 83.
[751] Out of the new Russian school (i.e. the Mighty Five), Belyayev mentioned Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin, not discussing Cui and, as mentioned, Musorgsky as a kind of phenomenon of its own.
[752] ibid., 84–85.

path forward for Russian symphonic music which continued (or should continue) the realistic tradition of Musorgsky.

Nevertheless in 1927 the separation between realism and naturalism was still not always clearly marked. When looking back at the development of revolutionary literature, the critic Abram Lezhnev equated realism with naturalism (and *bïtovism*) when he discussed the threat to new art of the early revolutionary era – namely futurism.[753] But 1927 also saw more clearly pronounced comments on the ideological threat of a 'naturalistic' depiction of life. The composer Aleksandr Mosolov was accused of "the coarsest kind of naturalism," as he had composed so-called *Children songs*, including parts which depicted a child's interest in sticking a needle in a cat or an urgent 'call of nature.'[754] The anonymous writer linked this to the poet Sergey Yesenin and the so-called "*yeseninshchina*" which Nikolay Bukharin had denounced just before in *Pravda* on the grounds that Yesenin's poetry had depicted "the most negative traits of the Russian village," as discussed in Section 4.2.2.[755] Although the concepts realism and naturalism can be seen here to be getting more and more detached, so that realism in art should not include 'naturalistic vulgarities,' it was in essence a continuation of the discussion around *bït* in the early 1920s. Whereas Trotsky and Lunacharsky had denounced the depiction of mere (proletarian) *bït* in art and Lunacharsky demanded the depiction of 'revolutionary' *bït*, now the delineation was made between coarse 'naturalism' and healthy 'realism.'

While separating naturalism from realism did give some clue about how the realistic art of the new society should be understood, the art historical roots of the concept realism made it difficult to use. The problem was, as with other pre-revolutionary phenomena, the different kinds of or even "dangerous" social relationships on which the old realistic art was based.[756] This is why the editorial for the journal *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* stated how the realism of "yesterday" could not be the realism of "today."[757] Also Trotsky had spoken of future communistic art as 'realistic' with reservations. He did accept the idea that the art of the future is realistic in a "broad philosophical" sense, meaning a "thirst for life as it is" and not distancing oneself from it, but he rejected talk about the issue in terms of different "schools."[758] As the forms of new art would be based on new kinds of social relationships, one could not say much beyond the assertion that it would not 'escape' reality.

In 1926 a minor polemic emerged around a close conceptual equivalent of later socialist realism, namely *social realism,* which highlighted the problematic position of music in the demands of 'realistic' art. It began when Lunacharsky

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[753] "Fight against realism ("naturalism," "bïtovism," "picturesque") becomes its [futurism's] symbol of faith." (A. Lezhnev: Khudozhestvennaya literature revolyutsionnogo desyatiletiya. *Izvestiya* 6 November 1927, 12).
[754] "Levïy" flang sovremennoy muzïki. *Muzïka i revolyutsiya* 1927, No. 1, 3–7. See the translated article of in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 188–192.
[755] N. Bukharin: Zlïye zametki. *Pravda* 12 January 1927.
[756] Oktyabr' v iskusstve. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1925, No. 1(23), 5.
[757] ibid.
[758] L. Trotskiy: Iskusstvo revolyutsii i sotsialisticheskoye iskusstvo. *Pravda* 29 September 1923, 2–3.

echoed Valerian Pereverzev's definition that the art of the current epoch is "oriented towards a social realism looking back to the classics" and named the achievements Soviet art had made so far.[759] From visual arts Lunacharsky highlighted the upcoming exhibition of the AKhRR and from music the high level of the Bolshoi orchestra, Persimfans and the composers Myaskovsky, Aleksandrov, Shebalin and Alexander Krein.[760] This sparked a critical comment from a group of conservatory students who noted that the "formalist" composers Lunacharsky chose to mention did not reflect the definition of social realism. According to these proletarian-minded students, this kind of music was represented by Kastalsky, Lebedinsky and Lazarev from RAPM and Davidenko and Shekhter from Prokoll.[761] In his response to the students, Lunacharsky first of all noted that it was not possible to approach different forms of art with similar concepts, and realism as understood in literature and visual arts was not directly applicable to music. While literature and visual arts look back to tradition for renewal and the perfection of "monumental realism," music looks back to a "strict and masculine style" which culminated in the music of Beethoven and has "nothing in common with any kind of realism."[762] Thus, unlike in other forms of art, there is no "struggle between 'moribund formalism' and 'revolutionary realism' in music," Lunacharsky stated.[763]

This exchange underlines well the difficulties of employing the concept of realism in relation to art and music. Even if some delineating attributes of the concept were given in order to make it work in literature and visual arts (such as 'social realism,' 'monumental realism,' or 'revolutionary realism'), it was hard to grasp what this concept could mean in music. Besides the opera tradition, where realism could be employed (even though this might refer more to the libretto than to actual music), the ideals for new Soviet music seems to have been involved other characteristics than 'realism.' It was not expected from music that it should somehow remind the people of the harsh realities of real life, but quite the contrary, to create revolutionary pathos and to lift the spirit of the hearers as the "great, monumental works of the past" did.[764]

Viewed from this perspective, the coining of socialist realism answered to this need to combine realism with revolutionary fantasy. It has been argued that socialist realism was a conceptualization made solely for literature and making it official art policy forced the other forms of art to artificially adopt its aesthetic principles.[765] Whereas in literature some formal elements could be discerned as

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[759] A. Lunacharskiy: Dostizheniya nashego iskusstva. *Pravda* 1 May 1926, 6.
[760] ibid.
[761] Loyter, Siver & Kamionskaya, V. M.: Pis'mo komsomol'tsev Konservatorii tov. A. V. Lunacharskomu. *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* 1926, No. 4–5, 17.
[762] A. V. Lunacharskiy: Otvet tov. A. V. Lunacharskogo. *Muzïka i Oktyabr'* 1926, No. 4–5, 17–18.
[763] ibid. Both the letter and Lunacharsky's reply are translated into English in Frolova-Walker & Walker 2012, 175–178.
[764] E.g. B. Martov: Iskusstvo i proizvodstvennaya propaganda. *Vestnik rabotnikov iskusstv* 1920, No. 2–3, 28–33; A. Lunacharskiy: O muzïkal'noy drame. *Vestnik teatra* 1920, Nos. 58–60; L. Sabaneyev: Sovremennost' tvorchestva. *Teatr i muzïka* 1923, No. 10(23), 788–789; Nik. Roslavets: Sovetskaya muzïka. *Rabis* 1927, No. 43, 6–8.
[765] Mikkonen 2009; Herrala 2012.

socialist realist style, such as the positive hero and a narrative line with a strong moral lesson, for music in particular demanding realism and following the principles of *narodnost', ideynost'* and *partiynost'* was nearly impossible to embody in practice. Looking back to the discussions on realism in the Soviet 1920s, however, music could fulfil one aspect of socialist realism – that is the revolutionary pathos and lifting of the spirit of the listeners. Lunacharsky's point that the concept of realism does not belong to music was overcome when 'realism' itself referred less and less to reality-here-and-now and more and more to reality as it will be in the perfect communist society. While Lunacharsky had himself promoted a related understanding when defining 'revolutionary *bït*' instead of 'proletarian *bït*' as a suitable material for art, the 'realism' of socialist realism was still of a different and higher order. Revolutionary *bït* was a matter of sifting the revolutionary elements of present and past reality but socialist realism was portraying the reality of the future. Of course, no one could imagine what kind of this reality would be, but everyone knew the *emotions,* which this future conveyed. Joy, harmony, a soaring spirit – all these emotions music could describe, and they would thus be demanded from socialist realist music.

This was well reflected in the first issue of the journal *Sovetskaya muzïka* in 1933. The founding of the journal followed the April 1932 Resolution abolishing the art organizations and founding new, all-Union central organizations. The Composers' Union was established as the central organization for music and *Sovetskaya muzïka* was founded as its mouthpiece – becoming the most important publication on music for the entire Soviet period. Its first issue included a lengthy and a rather muddled attempt to define the parameters of socialist realism in the context of music by musicologist Viktor Gorodinsky.[766] At the end of the text, Gorodinsky discussed the relationship between romanticism and socialist realism. First of all, he warned not to confuse two different kinds of romanticism – in Russian *romantizm* and *romantika,* the first Marx himself hating for its creation of "reactionary phantoms."[767] Elements of the latter on the other hand could easily be found in the works of "the most obvious realists in art," and, in fact, noting romantic elements was *necessary* for realists:

> Revolutionary romanticism (*romantika*) as a way of artistically reflecting the creative enthusiasm of the masses, all-embracing pathos of struggle and construction, of course, has to be an element of revolutionary artwork. We would not be genuine realists, if we did not sense that enormous enthusiasm, which is characteristic of the working class in its approach towards the tasks of struggle and construction.[768]

Socialist realism, while separated from *romantizm* (i.e. from excess sentimentality and detachment from reality), can and needs to include revolutionary *romantika* in order to *realistically* depict the high emotions related to the construction of

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[766] V. M. Gorodinskiy: K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzïke. *Sovetskaya muzïka* 1933, No. 1, 6–18. An example of difficulties in adopting the demands of socialist realism in music came forth for instance, when Gorodinsky wanted to make sure that socialist realism should not be a question between programmatic and non-programmatic music, but a question of *content* in music. Thus, such obscure statements as: "Realistic music can be non-programmatic, but it should not be devoid of content." (ibid., 17).
[767] ibid., 17.
[768] ibid., 18.

communistic society. This understanding of realism became defined in the statutes of the Writers' Union as "an accurate, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. [- -] artistic representation of reality should be combined with the task of ideologically transforming and educating the workers in the spirit of socialism."[769] Importantly, if the concept of realism was earlier hard to apply to music because music's abstract quality, through this definition it became possible. The point of realism in socialist realism was not to observe any reality out there and perhaps critically comment upon it, as in 19th-century realistic art, but the ability to seize 'realistically' the revolutionary enthusiasm and romantic spirit. It seemed clear that in order to be realistic, the musical work should evoke positive emotions in the hearer.

And this indeed was the case in the many compositions which came to be either denounced or praised for their socialist realist quality. The much discussed works by Shostakovich came to be evaluated from this perspective: while the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* served as the starting-point for a campaign against "formalism and naturalism," his Fifth Symphony, which restored his reputation was hailed for the positive emotions it contained. The iconic Seventh Symphony, titled the "Leningrad," which Shostakovich wrote for the most part under the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War, conveyed the positive and heroic emotions of resistance against the invading enemy, but his other war symphony, the Eight, was criticized for its lack of triumph and for its pessimism.[770] While the principles of socialist realism were hard to apply to music in the sense that the concept did not give any formal guidance for suitable music, the demand for positive emotional content was the most lasting effect of socialist realism in music.

[769] Quoted in Günther 2011, 91. Hans Günther (ibid., 103) claims that the synthesis of romanticism and realism or of fact and myth is in fact a rather precise definition for socialist realism.
[770] See Fay 2000, 138–139.

6 DIALOGUES WITH THE PAST

This dissertation has sought to demonstrate how Soviet music political discussion was formed after the revolutions of 1917 by re-conceptualizing music and negotiating its role in the new political and historical context emphasizing revolution. Concepts used in this discussion were an important part of the broader political discourse of the Soviet Union, creating a shared conceptual and linguistic space between music and politics. Moreover, the concepts themselves had histories of their own, which is why both explicit and implicit references to the pre-revolutionary understandings of *people, freedom, democracy* etc. were constantly present in the (music) political discussion. Music of the Soviet Union was in constant dialogue with the political and material conditions of the present, but also with the past, framing the creation of the Soviet Union and its 'revolutionary' society and culture. Besides the institutional, social and political background, we need to take into account linguistic and conceptual histories of revolutions in order to understand the particular revolution in question, but also in order to pose the question what we ourselves might mean by the concept 'revolution.'

The web of concepts and meanings is boundless and constantly changing, and it is always somewhat artificial to try to freeze this web of meanings for analysis. Nevertheless, concepts are nexuses and good entry points for wider political discourse, and as they are recognized as an important part of political discussion also by contemporaries in modern societies, their analytical value is significant. The concepts analysed in the thesis represent both wider political discussion (*people, democracy, freedom, Russia, Europe*) and more particular cultural political discussion (*bït, realism*). As such, they represent well the junction between the political and cultural, which have not been treated in the work as clearly separate but rather as intertwined entities. It would have been possible to analyse a different set of concepts or even to approach the whole discursive space through one concept, such as *people* (*narod*), which naturally is in close connection to and becomes defined through all the above-mentioned concepts. While the picture might have looked a bit different with other choices, the results would have arguably looked more or less the same. The web of meanings which

concepts create can be entered from one or from several nexuses, but the discursive space illuminated through these conceptual nexuses does not fundamentally change depending on the point of entrance.

It is common to say that the language of Soviet art politics was vague and empty – very understandable when we look at Stalinist art political discourse from the anti-formalist campaign of 1936 onwards. After that, as the artistic field became among others a target of systematic political criticism and repression, it was not possible (or at least wise) to step too far aside from such platitudes as "art belongs to the people" (Lenin). But even though the later use of such concepts like *people* (*narod*), *democracy* and *realism* in relation to music did belong to the necessary political vocabulary which the composers and critics needed to master in order to participate in public discussion, they did have a more substantial history than merely empty political jargon. As this thesis has sought to demonstrate, the music discussions in the 1920s involved serious efforts to conceptualize music historical tradition as part of the new revolutionary discourse in order to preserve this tradition and to create visions of new directions for music. For sure, music professionals had every reason to institutionalize their practices (or as in the case of already existing institutions, to preserve them) to secure their livelihoods, but to do that they needed political argumentation as well. This was not, however, necessarily in conflict with the genuine belief of (at least some of) the professionals in the importance of re-understanding and re-conceptualizing music and doing so in tandem with and not in opposition to the re-structuring of politics and economy.

The abrupt changes in cultural politics in the 1930s do not look so abrupt when looked at via the history of the conceptualizations, and we can conclude that the process of re-conceptualization was gradual. For instance we can see socialist realism as a logical continuation for discourse on music and art and their social roles in Russia after capitalism. But of course it was only *one* logical outcome – there are no reasons to draw teleological conclusions that the art of the Soviet Union needed to be realized in the form it did because of historical inevitability. Stalinist art policy or Stalinism more generally was not a necessary trajectory of the October Revolution, but, as has been seen, its conceptualizations were founded on earlier understandings of art and society and developed also by the artists themselves.

One such conceptualization of Stalinist cultural politics was the well-recognized highlighting of Russian culture instead of communist internationalism in the 1930s. While this "Russocentric form of etatism," as David Brandenberger has termed it,[771] was a turn in cultural politics, we have seen that at least in the music discussion the idea of a valuable and unique heritage of particularly *Russian* art and folk music was maintained on the pages of music journals throughout the 1920s. We do not need to overemphasize music's role in the formation of cultural politics of the Soviet Union by claiming that this would have steered Stalinist cultural politics into a more nationalist direction. But we can say that the nationalist turn of the 1930s was easier because this discourse

[771] Brandenberger 2002.

was already in place and the central music institutions such as conservatories and opera houses had retained their valued positions after the revolutions. And at the very least it was relatively unproblematic for many music professionals to join the Russocentric discourse because the majority of them had not demanded the removal of pre-revolutionary Russian music from the programmes but instead argued for its cultural importance and in some cases also for its 'revolutionary' quality.

The central analytical concept of the thesis, dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense, allowed the analysis to focus on the emerging process of Soviet music politics and avoid the common continuity-change-dichotomy. While claiming continuities too strongly in Russian/Soviet history downplays the role of historical turning points by claiming that the fundamental principles (such as the 'autocratic nature' of Russian society) do not change, the emphasis on changes (such as the revolution of 1905 and 1917, beginning of NEP in 1921 etc.) might overemphasize them. Dialogicality in contrast proposes that political changes do indisputably alter the lives of people, but the changes which they bring become realized only through the negotiation of meanings. Thus revolutionary change was not and is not an abrupt change, but a turning point in a dialogue, after which the social positions, practices and meanings are being re-negotiated. Central political concepts which cannot be redefined overnight by a governmental decision are valuable objects of analysis because they make this dialogical nature of change visible.

Dialogicality is also in a way an answer to another ostensible dichotomy, that of language and reality. The claim of language/discourse creating reality, which lies at the basis of discourse studies and stems from the so-called linguistic turn, has drawn criticism in historiography, as it might be interpreted as downplaying the role of historical events as well as historical actors. To the critics, historical events thus succumb to the interpretations or narrations about these events, and historical change becomes guided by abstract discourses and not individuals. Instead of this, we should see language and reality in an inseparable dialogical relationship: events become meaningful only through language, but on the other hand we cannot discursively create reality as we wish. Reality is not free narration but demands interpretation in relation to what we see and what kind of linguistic and conceptual resources we can employ.

From a dialogical perspective, the meaning of 'revolutions' cannot be reduced to particular historical moments, even less to a single historical event. While historical moments are crucial turning points which alter the political reality, their effects and meanings unfold only with a longer perspective. The formation of Soviet music politics is a case in point since the demand to preserve the pre-revolutionary music tradition placed demands on the idea of a 'revolution in music.' Rather than evaluating how 'revolutionary' Soviet music in the end turned out to be, we can approach the question by analysing revolutions, and their various manifestations in different spheres, historically, without any predetermined understanding of how revolutions should look and sound. Conceptual history is a way to approach political concepts as they were

used in different historical contexts, but also a way to approach historical, political and also analytical concepts in a critical way. 'Revolution' is such a concept, which consequently calls for critical examination.

The results of the thesis comment on and suggest new perspectives on another historical, political and analytical concept – that of 'modernity.' The question of modernity in relation to the Soviet Union (and also post-Soviet Russia) has included debates on whether the Soviet Union should be viewed as a modern society at all, whether it represented an 'alternative' (non-liberal) modernity, or whether it began a modernization which in the end "failed."[772] While the question itself is not a new one, it has attracted renewed scholarly attention.[773] Answers naturally depend on how we approach the concept of 'modernity' – do we define it through particular institutions (e.g. political institutions or the ones providing health care and education for citizens), social practices (e.g. personal networks vs. public administration), or for instance through cultural products. The latter has sparked the interest of music scholars who have questioned the exclusion of Soviet music and particularly socialist realism from the standard narrative of 'modern music.'[774] While specifying formal features for modern music is nearly impossible, from the point of view of this thesis viewing Soviet music as somehow external to 'modernity' does not seem productive. As Yanni Kotsonis has pointed out, the debate about Russia's or the Soviet Union's position happened within the framework of modernity, as "Russians participated in debates on enlightenment, universalism, and integration through a discourse on the West – much as Western Europeans could address the same issues through an ongoing discourse on Russia."[775] This applied to music as well, and here again we should see Russia/the Soviet Union and 'the West' – and their cultures – as dialogically defining each other. And through each other, also themselves.

Evgeny Dobrenko has described the differences between the 1920s literary organizations LEF and RAPP in the following way: while the agenda of both was similarly radical in their attempts to create a new literary history, LEF proposed a "leap over" fiction and RAPP envisioned literature "*as if literature had not passed through the age of modernism*, as if there had been neither a Silver Age nor an avant-garde."[776] It was of course the latter agenda which marked socialist realism, as it rejected the 'degenerated' modernism and called for creating a direct connection with the achievements of the 19th-century tradition. In music, this meant the 'revolutionary' episodes of the bourgeois, beginning from Beethoven and gaining its representatives in Russian music history with Glinka and the Mighty Five. While the stated aim of socialist realism was thus against modernity, the art which it produced nevertheless commented on and was in dialogical relationship with the art of the late 19th and the early 20th century. This relationship might

[772] See David Fox 2015, 21–47.
[773] Bullock & Fairlcough 2019; on Russian modernization (including discussion on Soviet Union's modernity) see the volume edited by Kivinen & Humphreys 2021.
[774] See Frolova-Walker 2018; Fairclough 2018. Exclusion of Soviet, officially approved music, from the canon of modern music is as old as this music itself: the clearest example of this is Stravinsky's famous rebuke of Shostakovich for his Fifth Symphony.
[775] Kotsonis 2000, 3.
[776] Dobrenko 2011, 50.

have been a relationship of negation but nevertheless socialist realism, in acknowledging modernity through denying it, operated *within* the paradigm of modernity. The result was thus not art 'outside' the boundaries of modernity but works which need to be and can be listened to, read and experienced only if we understand the modern frame with which it was in dialogue.

The modernity of the Soviet Union has also been put into question through the strong influence which politics had on the arts. While we should not downplay the exceptionality of the Soviet Union's coercive measures on artists, the obvious lack of 'freedom' for Soviet artists (and the consequent definition of the Soviet Union as a 'non-modern' society) should not lead us to a simplified contrast with supposedly 'free' and 'modern' societies. We can instead pose a more specific question of *how* exactly, besides in the most blatant and violent ways of totalitarian contexts, the artistic and the political intervene in modern societies. By looking at the language and concepts of Soviet music politics, a more nuanced picture has emerged of the artistic and the political in this context, and I argue that by looking at other contexts we would see both differences and similarities. In the Soviet context the artistic, the musical and the political were interwoven in a unique way but a comparison with other unique contexts would no doubt produce a clearer picture of what exactly the uniqueness of art and politics of the Soviet Union was. Besides comparisons between totalitarian states, as has been done with the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany for instance, we would benefit from comparisons between the Soviet Union and non-totalitarian states of the 20th century. As the latter are often considered as part of 'normal' modern development and the former as its 'other,' such kinds of comparisons could posit the questions of 'normality' in a different light. Consequently we would have to reconsider what we might mean by 'modernity' more generally and what kind of relationships the artistic, the musical and the political have formed and continue to form in modern societies.

While the extent of change in today's Russia after the country's attack on Ukraine in February 2022 is yet to be seen, it seems clear that this moment of history will be seen in the future as a major turning point. We will see only later whether it will lead to changes in Russia which would be defined as 'revolutionary.' In any case Russia is renegotiating its position with history and with Europe, and at same time, other countries are forced to readjust themselves correspondingly. The use of political and historical concepts plays its part in this process, as does art, when both artists and cultural products are not seen as separate from but intertwined with politics. Whatever the outcomes of the current crisis will be, Russia and Europe will need to define themselves anew in dialogue with the past as well as with those decisions which allowed a new war to emerge in Europe.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Vaikka vallankumouksille ja muille merkittäville poliittisille käännekohdille voidaan osoittaa jälkikäteen tietyt ajankohdat jopa yksittäisten päivien tarkkuudella, muutokset, joita ne tuovat mukanaan, tapahtuvat aina prosessina pitkänkin ajan kuluessa. Siten, vaikka Venäjän tsaarinvallan purkamiselle ja bolševikkien valtaantulolle – eli nk. helmikuun ja lokakuun vallankumouksille – voidaan osoittaa tarkat päivät, niiden merkitys Venäjän ja Neuvostoliiton historialle avautuvat vasta kun tarkastellaan näiden yksittäisten päivämäärien jälkeen tapahtuneita, eri vauhdilla tapahtuneita muutoksia. Väitöskirjassani tutkin näiden vallankumouksellisten tapahtumien käynnistämää merkitysneuvottelua varhaisen Neuvosto-Venäjän ja Neuvostoliiton musiikkikeskustelussa, jossa uusi yhteiskuntajärjestys pakotti niin poliittiset kuin taiteelliset toimijat neuvottelemaan, minkälainen musiikki on vallankumouksellista, mitkä vallankumousta edeltävät teokset ja käytänteet ovat hyväksyttäviä, eli toisin sanoen, mitä ”vallankumous” musiikissa itse asiassa tarkoittaa. Päätutkimuskysymykseni on: *Miten musiikki uudelleenkäsitteellistettiin osana vallankumouksen diskurssia Neuvostoliitossa vuoden 1917 ja 1930-luvun välillä?*

Tarkastelun kohteena oleva musiikkikeskustelu ei väitöskirjassa näyttäydy pelkkänä taiteen sisäisenä keskusteluna, vaan tiiviinä osana laajempaa poliittista keskustelua. Analyysi on keskittynyt taiteellisen ja poliittisen keskustelun risteymäkohtiin, jotka näkyvät ennen kaikkea yhteisen kielen ja käsitteiden käyttönä ja niiden merkityksestä käytävinä neuvotteluina. Näkökulmani musiikkikeskusteluun ammentaa käsitehistoriasta (*Begriffsgeschichte / conceptual history*), jossa huomio kiinnittyy tiettyihin, poliittisen keskustelun kannalta keskeisiin avainkäsitteisiin. Näitä käsitteitä tutkimuksessani ovat olleet *vapaus* (*svoboda*), *demokratia* (*demokratija*), *Venäjä* (*Rossija*), *Eurooppa* (*Jevropa*), *itä* (*vostok*), *länsi* (*zapad*), *kansa* (*narod*), (*arki*)*elämä* (*byt*) ja *realismi* (*realizm*). Tarkastelemalla näiden käsitteiden käyttöä Neuvostoliiton musiikkikeskustelussa, olen tuonut esille eri toimijoiden niille antamia eriäviä merkityksiä ja merkitysten sidosteisuutta vallankumousta edeltävään aikaan. Tutkimuksen pääasiallinen aineisto koostui aikakauden musiikkiin ja taiteeseen keskittyvistä aikakaus- ja sanomalehdistä, minkä lisäksi analysoin yleisempää sanomalehtiaineistoa ja poliittisia päätöksiä.

Koska poliittiset käsitteet ovat tiivisti sidoksissa niiden omaan historiaansa, merkittävätkään poliittiset mullistukset eivät ole kokonaisvaltaisia. Sen sijaan ne käynnistävät uudenlaisen merkitysneuvottelun, jossa uusia merkityksiä ja toimintamalleja luodaan suhteessa menneisyyteen. Nimesin tämän ilmiön tutkimuksessa Mihail Bahtinin dialogisuuden teoriaa hyödyntäen *dialogiksi menneisyyden kanssa*, jossa kielenkäyttö ja merkitysten muodostaminen nähdään aina suhteessa edeltävään aikaan. Tämä tulee poikkeuksellisen vahvasti ilmi Neuvostoliiton musiikkikeskusteluissa ja käytänteissä, joissa loppujen lopuksi vain harvoin vaadittiin kaiken tradition purkamista ja pikemminkin korostettiin jatkuvuutta 1800-luvun taidemusiikin traditioon sekä kansanperinteeseen. Tällaiselle melko konservatiiviselle tulkinnalle vallankumouksesta käsitteellistä tukea antoi esimerkiksi puhe *kansasta* (*narod*). Kuten muutkin 1900-luvun hallinnot,

neuvostovalta toimi 'kansan' nimissä. Siksi sellainen musiikkiperinne, jonka voitiin tulkita olevan lähellä kansaa, kuten kansanmusiikki tai 1800-luvun taidemusiikin kansallisromantiikka, voitiin tulkita vallankumoukselliseen yhteiskuntaan sopivaksi. Tämä argumentti oli itse asiassa niin vahva, että se mahdollisti nimenomaan venäläisen kansan- ja taidemusiikin perinteen korostamisen sosialistisesta kansainvälisyyden eetoksesta huolimatta.

Tämä on yksi esimerkki väitöskirjan useista havainnoista, jotka kyseenalaistavat neuvostotaiteen historian liian yksioikoisen jaon ”vapaaseen” tai ”avantgardistiseen” 1920-lukuun yhtäältä ja sosialistisen realismin ja stalinismin 1930-lukuun toisaalta. On tunnettu tosiasia, että stalinismin vakiintuessa taiteentekijöiden toimintamahdollisuudet kapenivat ja he joutuivat myös repression kohteeksi. Samaan aikaan on kuitenkin kiistatonta, että 1920-luvun vapaampi toimintakenttä ei tarkoittanut musiikin saralla yksiselitteistä avantgardismin ylivoimaa. Venäläiskansallista musiikin traditiota sovitettiin aktiivisesti vallankumoukselliseen diskurssiin ja erityisen kiinnostavaa on, että venäläisen tradition merkitystä korostivat myös ne, jotka samaan aikaan pyrkivät edistämään uuden länsimaisen ja venäläisen taidemusiikin esiintuloa Neuvostoliiton konserttielämässä. Poliittisesti voimakkaiden, mutta abstraktien käsitteiden avulla voitiin perustella niinkin erilaisten säveltäjien kuin Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Mihail Glinka, Pjotr Tšaikovski, Nikolai Roslavets tai Alban Berg sopivuus ”vallankumoukselliseen” musiikkielämään. Näiden kaikkien musiikkia tulkittiin esimerkiksi *kansan, vapauden* tai *demokratian* käsitteiden avulla ja sovitettiin sitä kautta osaksi vallankumouksen diskurssia.

1930-luvun kulttuuripolitiikan muutokset, sosialistisen realismin vaatimus tärkeimpänä, eivät siten näyttäydy tämän väitöskirjan näkökulmasta äkillisenä muutoksena, vaan pikemminkin monien taiteilijoiden itsensä pohjustamien käsitteellisten kehitysten kulminaationa. Monet sosialistisen realismin vaatimukset esimerkiksi taiteen ymmärrettävyydestä, sisällöstä tai juuri venäläisen kansallisen tradition korostamisesta, olivat tiivis osa Neuvostoliiton 1920-luvun musiikkikeskusteluja. Tämä ei kuitenkaan oikeuta tulkintaa, että keskeiset musiikkivaikuttajat olisivat toivoneet stalinistista kulttuuripolitiikkaa siinä muodossa kuin se toteutui. Sen sijaan on mahdollista todeta, että stalinistinen kulttuuripolitiikka ja sosialistinen realismi eivät luoneet uutta taidekäsitystä poliittisen johdon toimesta, vaan sen keskeiset elementit olivat olleet osa Neuvostoliiton musiikkikeskusteluja koko neuvostoajan ja useita näistä keskeiset musiikkivaikuttajat olivat edistäneet aktiivisesti. Stalinistisen (kulttuuri)politiikan traagisuutta ei vähennä se, että musiikki- ja muiden kulttuuritoimijoiden rooli nähdään myös Neuvostoliiton kulttuuripolitiikan muodostajina eikä ainoastaan sen uhreina. Sen sijaan, että tarkastelisimme Neuvostoliiton taiteellista ja poliittista keskustelua erillisinä, tai taiteen ja poliittisten toimijoiden kulttuuripoliittisia pyrkimyksiä vastakohtaisina, meidän on syytä nähdä näiden yhteenkietoutuneisuus.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Newspapers and journals

Artist-muzïkant
De Musica
Izvestiya
K novïm beregam
Khudozhestvennaya zhizn'
Lad
Literaturnaya gazeta
Muzïka
Muzïka i bït
Muzïka i Oktyabr'
Muzïka i revolyutsiya
Muzïkal'naya kul'tura
Muzïkal'naya nov'
Muzïkal'noye obrazovaniye
Novaya muzïka
Novaya zhizn'
Obozreniye teatrov
Pravda
Proletarskiy muzïkant
Rabis
Rabotnik prosveshcheniya
Rabotnik prosveshcheniya i iskusstv
Russkaya muzïkal'naya gazeta
Sovetskaya muzïka
Sovremennaya muzïka
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