

Music Expectations in Soviet Russia: Tradition, Avant-Garde, and Legitimacy in the Soviet Public Press

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A whole debate started in Western Europe from the moment, in 1923, when Boris de Schloezer defined Stravinsky's *Symphonies pour instruments à vents* as 'neo-classical'.¹ Despite the initial connection of this term with the poetics of a Russian composer and the fact that Stravinsky represented the Russian area of music production in the European community of musicians and commentators, Stravinsky's neoclassical turn had no relation to the environment he belonged to *before* the exile. For sure, it did not depend on the discussion that was being led in Russia in those very years and had, on the contrary, a clearly Western-European matrix.

In the newly born Soviet Union Stravinsky was well known and discussed, and his artistic innovations exerted a strong influence in this context; however, in order to offer a tool for reading the panorama that developed in Soviet Russia in the years in which the debate on neoclassicism was presented to international musical audiences, it is necessary to turn to other voices: composers, musicologists, and music critics working within the country. Their standpoints can be observed in the numerous journals that proliferated after 1917, which offer the modern historian snapshots of great value. While still being under-researched, these sources have

nowadays the value of archival documents and are progressively becoming available in digitized form. Among the headers that will be mentioned in the present writing, *Sovetskaya muzika* (Soviet Music, SovMu in footnotes) is available open-access on the website of its successor *Muzikal'naya akademiya* (Music academy);² other magazines can be found on the website of the St. Petersburg Theatrical Library³ and of the St Petersburg Institute of Art History.⁴ As for *Contemporary Music* and *Musical Culture* (see below), they are both available on the *Répertoire international de la presse musicale* (RIPM) and, on microfilm, in some public libraries such as the New York Public Library and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek of Munich. Much Soviet political press – notably *Pravda* (The Truth) – is now available in digitized form.⁵

This paper looks at Soviet journalism of the 1920s with the aim of highlighting ideas (rather than facts) related to the concept of neoclassicism, notably in its relationships with the expectations of coeval music consumers. To follow this specific line, digitization of primary sources is a good starting point, granting access to materials that, until a few years ago, were difficult to reach for international scholars, and now would be even less accessible due to the political situation. Allowing for extensive reading of individual headers, though, is not enough for in-depth analysis, since texts on these platforms are not always OCR-processed, so they are not numerically researchable. Moreover, individual journals of this period often contain only part of the dialogue that was being led by exponents of various factions on their press organs and that extended over several headers. Archival expertise must still combine with historical research investigating a specific discourse in order to connect individual arguments to the context in which they were expressed, which included discussion in public gatherings. The first section of this paper is dedicated to a closer investigation of this context.

MODERNISM AND RUSSIAN MUSIC IN THE 1920s

In the early twentieth century, pre-revolutionary aesthetic models offered by the ‘The Five’ in the previous decades were temporarily overcome. A period of experimentation and innovation, fueled by a cultural climate of rapid social and technological transformations of the period, came up beside the academically established trends. The call for renovation arose in response to a growing dissatisfaction with the Romantic language, which was perceived as excessively sentimental and run out. Experimentations were provoked or, at least, catalyzed by the contact between the New Russian School and the European avant-garde that had taken place in Paris starting from Dyagilev’s *saisons russes*. A new musical

avant-garde proposed, on an aesthetic level, to break with the past by exploring dissonance, fragmentation, and harmonic instability as central elements of expressive language. Innovation in aesthetics seemed to coincide, for a while, and for some artists at least, with the revolution on a political level, which exploded in 1917 and led the Bolsheviks to rule the country.

In the 1920s, their need to consolidate power and the considerable damages inflicted by the civil war on the economy and society of the new State pushed the Soviet Government to grant relative liberalism, on an economic level (where the NEP – New Economic Policy granted some margin for free market), but also on the cultural one. In the role of head of Narkompros (the People's Commissariat for Education) Anatoly Lunacharsky encouraged experimentation in all artistic fields, since culture was seen as a powerful tool for promoting the values of socialism and mobilizing the masses. Avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Constructivism, and Suprematism found ample room for development, while many intellectuals and artists sought to contribute with their art to the construction of a socialist society.⁶ This resulted in the push for renewal on the aesthetic level being bound to the political discourse in a knot that would be hard to untie. As the decade progressed, the intervention of the State in culture became increasingly frequent until 23 April 1932, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party liquidated all groupings via the notorious decree 'On the restructuring of literary and artistic organizations,' and had them replaced by the creative unions. While the cultural conflicts involved all the artistic areas in similar ways, musicians, critics, and musicologists flew into the Composers' Union. Two years later, the aesthetic canon of Socialist Realism was officially established at the 1st Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers (1934). This was soon to combine with the involvement of artists in the dynamics of terror of the late 1930s.⁷

In this perspective, this decade shows a double personality. On the one hand, it was a period of creative prosperity and, compared to the 1930s, the intense debate sheds a positive light on this phase as an 'earthly paradise' preceding the 'fall' of freedom previously granted by Lunacharsky. Though, it was also a violent battlefield, where aggressive factions and often irreconcilable points of view opposed each other on the topic of the 'correct path' that art should undertake in order to legitimately represent modern times, adequately responding to the needs of the State that had been established on the ashes of the Empire and of the new society that emerged after the annihilation of the old hierarchies. These confrontations suggest the need to re-consider the thematic focuses of the debates and the balance among relevant factors in the development of individual artists' language, style, genres, theoretical positions, etc.⁸

Revisionism – it is important to note – is not to be intended as a re-evaluation of the cultural policy of the USSR: we know that the Party’s intervention went too far, to the point of becoming criminal, and certainly in the 1930s the aesthetic choices of anyone who attempted any artistic discipline were not free; but it is also true that if this ‘balance’ was reached, it is also because, during the NEP, the ties that bonded aesthetics and State reason became increasingly tight. Clarifying some focal points of this phase is particularly necessary considering that in today’s Russia some themes and ways of that debate – flattened and distorted, or just resurrected – return to the fore to nourish historiographical narratives aiming at legitimizing political actions with dangerous and oppressive implications.

SOVIET PERIODICAL PRESS

The Soviet cultural environment saw many pre-revolutionary tools of criticism decay, and instead witnessed the foundation of new journals and magazines.⁹ Readers and listeners, who until before consisted mainly of a selected elite, were replaced by the popular classes who, having been for too long excluded, even from literacy, now urged to appropriate culture or were encouraged by the Bolsheviks to receive an education with great deployment of propaganda. Intellectuals were looking for an aesthetic that could mirror the changed climate, and a multitude of groups and associations of writers and artists started competing for recognition as representatives of modern, legitimate, valuable art.

Entering the tradition of militant journalism that had arisen in Russia since the eighteenth century, these groupings and individuals expressed their credo and programs on the pages of numerous, often ephemeral, headers. Among the earliest publications that followed the October Revolution, one finds *Artist-muzikant* (The artist-musician), issued in Moscow in the two-year period 1918–19, and *Muzika* – released in Moscow in 1922 in four releases. In chronological terms, they were followed by *K novīm beregam muzikal’nogo iskusstva* (Towards new shores of art music, Moscow, 1923) edited by Viktor Belyayev and Vladimir Derzhanovsky, well-known musicologists and music critics. Their purpose was the promotion of new trends in art music, the analysis of works by modern composers, and a constant updating on performances of modern music in Russia and abroad. The journal had the audience familiarized with New Music, informing about recent compositions, festivals and activities of musical societies and educational institutions. Among its collaborators there were musicians – Leonid Sabaneyev, Anatoly Aleksandrov, Semyon Bogatiryov, Nadezhda Bryusova, Aleksandr Gol’denveyzer, Nikolay Zhilyayev, Mikhail Ivanov-Boretsky, Georgy Konyus, Konstantin Kuznetsov –,

and the musicologists Pavel Lamm, Boris Asaf'yev (who wrote under the name of Igor' Glebov), and Nikolay Findeyzen, – scholars who granted the review a high scholarly standard. This initiative resulted in only three releases.¹⁰

In 1924, the composer Nikolay Roslavets, together with Belyayev, Asaf'yev, Derzhanovsky, and Boleslav Yavorsky, inaugurated *Muzikal'naya kul'tura* (Musical culture), under the direction of Sabaneyev. This as well had only three issues, but the same interlocutors soon shifted to another publication, *Sovremennaya muzika* (Contemporary music – SovrM in footnotes), which editorial board, based at the Moscow State Academy of Art History, was guided by Belyayev, Derzhanovsky, and Sabaneyev. *Sovremennaya muzika* was the bulletin of the Association for Contemporary Music (Assotsiatsiya sovremennoy muziki, henceforth ASM), an official group of musicians and music writers initially gathered around Lamm. Members of ASM included Vladimir Dranishnikov, Mikhail Druskin, Yulian Vaynkop, Vladimir Shcherbachyov, Aleksandrov, Aleksandr Zhitomirsky, and Vladimir Deshevov.¹¹ Among external collaborators there figured the composers Zhilyayev and Vissarion Shebalin, conductor Konstantin Saradzhev, as well as foreign musicians, such as Alfredo Casella and Darius Milhaud.¹² As stated in the frontmatter of the first issue, ASM pursued 'the dissemination of new music, Russian and foreign'.¹³ It had a strongly cosmopolitan character, and programmatically nurtured contacts with the International Society of Contemporary Music, but also with the League of Composers and the Associations of Modern Music.¹⁴

ASM was active from 1923 up to the year 1929. The bulletin was published in a total of thirty-two issues (1924 to 1929): these included articles, biographies, reviews, and analyses of new works, while scores by Soviet composers were offered as supplements. Together with the other magazines published in the first fifteen years following October (notably, *De musica* – see further), ASM's bulletin showed a high interest in the avant-garde by discussing and analyzing its trends, and acted as a tool for continuous updating on the currents of national and foreign music.

On its pages, one can find the discussion of works by emerging Soviet composers such as Roslavets, Sergey V. Evseyev, Vasily Shirinsky, Aleksandr Shenshin, Myaskovsky, Aleksandrov, Sabaneyev, Aleksandr Gedike (Symphony No. 3), Vladimir Kryukov, Lev Knipper, Aleksandr Borkhman, Evgeny Pavlov, Aleksandr Cherepnin, Samuil Feynberg, Anatoly Drozdov, Aleksandr Mosolov, Lev Oborin, Aleksandr Abramsky, Mikhail Kvadri, Shcherbachyov.

The issues contain reviews of music by Paul Hindemith, Béla Bartók, Ravel, Karol Szymanowski, Arnold Schönberg, Alban Berg, Ernst Křenek e Franz Schreker, Arthur Honegger, Albert Roussel, Alfredo Casella, and Ottorino Respighi. Stravinsky and Prokof'yev at this stage were known almost as 'foreigners'.¹⁵

In line with the same cosmopolitan spirit, the bulletin also accepted texts by foreign contributors (translated from other publications or commissioned by the editorial board), such as those of Paul Pisk, Roland Manuel, Guido M. Gatti, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Alfred J. Swan, Adolf Weissman, Béla Bartók, Egon Wellesz, Hans Eisler, Max Butting, Ernst Křenek, Hermann Rudolf Gail, Erich Steinhard. Local contributors were, instead, Yavorsky, Asaf'yev, Semyon Ginzburg, Shirinsky, Ekaterina Kuposova-Derzhanovskaya, Vasily Yakovlev, Deshevov, Yuliya Veysberg and many others.

A similar publication was founded in Leningrad at the Institute of Art History: *De Musica* was published between 1925 and 1928; it was among the journals with the highest standard, tackling topics like those of the previous publications, ranging between contemporary music and historical research.

Among the most openly politicized publications were those belonging to the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), a group that advocated the development of a mass musical culture with revolutionary content based on Marxist ideology. During its existence, RAPM advertised its ideas in four periodicals: *Muzikal'naya nov'* (Musical virgin soil), inaugurated in 1923,¹⁶ *Muzika i Oktyabr'* (Music and October, edited by S. A. Krilov in Moscow in 1926), *Proletarsky muzikant* (The proletarian musician, issued between 1929 and 1932), and *Za proletarskuyu muziku* (For a proletarian music, Moscow, 1930–32).

Muzika i revolyutsiya (Music and revolution), which title refers to the essay by Lev Trotsky *Literatura i revolyutsiya* (Literature and revolution, 1924), was the bulletin of the Association of Revolutionary Composers and Music Workers (Ob'yedineniye revolyutsionnikh kompozitorov i muzikal'nikh deyateley – ORKiMD), an official group founded in 1924 by former RAPM members guided by Lev Shul'gin. It was published in Moscow from 1926 to 1928 on a monthly basis, and on a bi-monthly basis starting from 1929. This bulletin was clearly not aligned with RAPM and was, on the contrary, the subject of many attacks on the part of that organization. This resulted in the suspension of the magazine in 1929.

In the second half of the decade, the publications belonging to RAPM show growing hostility towards Western 'New Music' and the Russian avant-garde. Notably, between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, a vexatious attitude towards modernism was observed, which would later be inherited by *Sovetskaya muzika* – the official replacement for all prior independent journals and the official organ of the Composers' Union. On the contrary, on the pages of *Sovremennaya muzika* one can read the opposite part of the competition between these two factions, articles of public defense of modernism (and the modernists, since attack often had personal nature) becoming more and more frequent.

In this article we will concentrate on this magazine from one single perspective, i. e. seeking connections with the Western debate on neoclassicism – a concept that still needs investigation by scholars in this precise context. As we shall see, it is not possible to clearly separate the terms of this debate from the political issues that were urgent in the young USSR, which were supported mostly (but not exclusively) by RAPM.

NEOCLASSICISM AND MODERN MUSIC

Neoclassicism – even in its wider acceptance, – cannot easily be positioned within the discussion of the Russian music community because during the 1920s – when this discussion took place in the international milieus – every discourse concerning the aesthetic of music had assumed a double connotation, with ideas being drawn from the artistic and political spheres.

The cultural line set by Lunacharsky did not mean that *full* freedom of expression was granted in the public press: it limited retrograde instances of returning to the past and references to any classical model, even in ‘neo-’ declinations. This probably explains why open references to neoclassicism of the type that can be observed in Western debate cannot be traced in Soviet journalism, at least to the extent I have analyzed it. The only occurrence of the term ‘neoklassitsizm’ clearly refers to stylistic retrospect, being defined as ‘rickety’.¹⁷

The term ‘Russian neoclassicism’ (‘русский неоклассицизм’) is rather connected with visual and literary culture. It was first used, in 1917, by Aleksandr Benois in an eponymous article, and identifies an artistic movement of the first third of the century, which *opposed* the avant-garde, modernism, and emerging mass culture that had started to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century. It manifested itself most fully in literature (Acmeism) and architecture, while in painting and sculpture defining the circle of its witnesses causes problems. In the article ‘The paths of classicism in art’ Leon Bakst wrote that neoclassicism in Russian painting began with the artists of Mir iskusstva (The world of art), their ‘art-of-the-beautiful line’ (‘искусства прекрасной линии’) and ‘the school of modernism in the classical sense’ (‘школы модернизма в классическом смысле’).¹⁸ Indeed, the emergence of neoclassicism in Russia was largely associated with the activities of this group, their homonymous journal, and the literary and artistic publication *Apollon*, around which a circle of intellectuals, who adhered to the principles of unity of traditions and innovations, formed. Representatives of this trend focused on broadly understood classical references: the art of Ancient Greece, the Renaissance, Russian and Western European art of the eighteenth

and first half of the nineteenth centuries, and icon painting before the nineteenth century. Neoclassicism is often considered as a nostalgic movement: due to this association with a past configuration of Russia, its development was interrupted by the Revolution, although some of its elements could be traced in art until the early 1930s.¹⁹

In the Soviet Union, the term ‘neoclassicism’ does not belong to the traditional narrative of music history. In his research on the *klassizistische Moderne* in Russian music, aside from other ‘classics’ such as Glinka and Chaykovsky, Andreas Wehrmeyer mentions Sergey Taneyev and Stravinsky, and, among the Russians who were active in the USSR in the 1920s, Roslavets. Possibly the best-positioned is Prokof’yev, whose *Symphonie classique* Wehrmeyer calls into question, even though the composer had left Russia and worked in the West during the second decade of the century.²⁰

In the years immediately following the Revolution, neoclassicism in music seems not to be openly discussed as such in Soviet journalism. However, in the debate that was carried out in the Soviet Union, one can trace terms that are typically connected with this discussion in the West, which Scott Messing has identified and listed in his study: ‘clarity, simplicity, objectivity, purity, refinement, constructive logic, concision, sobriety’.²¹ Concepts close to such terms can be observed on the pages of *Sovremennaya muzika*, the most active advocate of modernism in Soviet music.

In the next section, we will take a look at these elements by tracking them in different writings of this journal. It will not be possible to follow the complete theoretical thought of individual critics or artistic profiles of the musicians involved in relation to these concepts: we will, therefore, summarize the main ideas of the debate, which appear in relation to such composers as Stravinsky, Hindemith, Casella, Prokof’yev, Roslavets, Cherepnin, and Aleksandrov.

NEOCLASSICISM ON THE PAGES OF *SOVREMENNAYA MUZIKA*

Overall scrutiny of the mentioned source does not allow for a precise definition of ‘Soviet neoclassicism’. Once its understanding as a nostalgic tendency to bring back the past has been excluded, we can follow the idea of recovering elements of ancient traditions as a way to renovate the musical language. In their writings, contributors appear conscious of this attitude of innovative composers in the West: Viktor Belyayev noted that ‘The modern revolution of music in Western Europe [was] taking place mainly under the sign of a revolution in the field of technical means of expression and under the slogan of abandoning romanticism in favor

of classical trends, revived in a new aspect'.²² Asaf'yev underlined his effort in establishing a link between classicism and innovation ('More than once I have had to point out the undoubted connection between the new musical worldview and Mozart's music').²³

Asaf'yev suggested that renovation should, first of all, move away from the emotional emphasis of nineteenth-century music, and notably from late-romantic epigonism. Belyayev saw exactly this intention in the poetics of Cherepnin, who was able to create his own style and refuse 'the psychologism that was so typical of the Russian composers'²⁴ thanks to his stay in Western Europe, the innovations brought about by Stravinsky, and the positive influence of Prokof'yev. Belyayev defines Cherepnin's style as simple ('prostoy') and ingenuous ('naivny') – words that appear quite frequently on the pages of the journal: according to him, the composer

uses only the simplest forms, elaborating them with great mastery, and is original in his larger works, such as chamber concertos, approaching the practice of the earliest German classics, when the form was not yet crystallized as it would become later, and was more flexible thanks to this circumstance. Cherepnin's turn to the classics, just like the turn to it of all modern music, marks the return of it to a new starting point for achieving those goals of music progress that otherwise cannot be achieved.²⁵

Belyayev explicitly refers to escaping Wagnerian tendencies, and finds a way in the recovery of forms of the past:

In fact, where can the systematic development of the principles of the Wagnerian and Straussian orchestra lead us, if not to the complication to *nec plus ultra* of the colossal orchestral apparatus that we now have? But does music progress need to turn from qualitative, which it has been until now, into quantitative? Will this progress, after passing beyond a certain point, not be progress, but regression, a reduction of music contents in favor of the physiology of sound? Primitivism, which is a new direction in music, definitely declares its refusal to participate in the quantitative progress of music, and declares as the slogan of today and the near future its struggle for a qualitative progress of music. Its starting point is not a luxurious sonority, but an interesting musical idea, valuable in itself, regardless of its musical outfit.²⁶

The term 'primitivism' is surprisingly used as equivalent for what elsewhere would be defined as 'classical' or 'neoclassical': moving yet in the sphere of tonal harmony, Cherepnin is 'not scared by "primitive", "Haydn-like" and "pre-Haydn-like" forms'.²⁷ In his music, these are associated with a new scale system based on a nine-note scale of his invention; while recurring to technical tools different from those of his Western colleagues (Cherepnin keeps away from atonality or

polytonality), the composer appears more sympathetic with Stravinsky than Schönberg: 'where Schönberg lacks sound combinations composed of all the twelve semitones of the octave, Stravinsky achieves new effects with *simple* [my emphasis] two-voice sound combinations'.²⁸

Similar anti-emotional instances are pinpointed by Asaf'yev in Křenek's music, appreciated for being 'deprived of aerial perspectives, of shadows of light, of impressionistic coloring':²⁹ 'There is no place, – Asaf'yev continues – for sentimentalism, contemplative lyrics, or any retrospection'.³⁰ Regarding Prokof'yev's music, the critic distinguishes between sincere emotion and its degeneration: 'I beg you not to confuse the true voice of feeling with sensitivity and sensuality, in general with any nervousness, which are usually understood as emotionalism'.³¹ In Prokof'yev's music (Third Concerto), measure is a highlighted value in the eyes of the musicologist: 'everything is moderated, everything is in its due place, nothing is exaggerated, nothing is self-sufficient: this means that everything has naturally grown from intuitive premises and creative impulses, and will develop and mature just as naturally'.³²

Transparency was searched for in clear shapes, balanced proportions, and a simple (read: not chromatic) harmony, which were typical of such classics as Mozart, Haydn, or Schubert. We have already seen how Belyayev associated Cherepnin's 'primitive' harmony with Haydn's. In the article *Mozart and Contemporaneity*, Asaf'yev finds it in Mozart's 'harmonic clarity and the congruence of his music' ('гармонической ясностью и стройностью его музыки'),³³ and in the 'difficult and always desired simplicity as the highest artistic goal, as a result of complete mastery of skill'.³⁴ In reference to Schubert, he speaks about 'an emotionally objective diary' ('эмоционально объективный дневник'),³⁵ establishing a connection between these features and modern interests toward formal issues: 'the point is not in the details, but in the fact that all the listed features bring his music closer to modern ideas of reviving melos. For music, interest is now put not on themes, from which one could build [...] music skyscrapers, but on melodies, which are simple and direct as judgments, as a self-sufficient thought'.³⁶ Later on, we will come back to this point (see below *In the Perspective of Socialist Realism*). By now, it is important to note that for Asaf'yev objectivism was opposed to Romantic subjectivism in the perspective of better communication; on the contrary, solipsism was associated with Western individualism, which clearly was negatively understood: 'After all, our local attempts at a simple, sober and businesslike reality are not at all similar to Americanism, with its separation from people and nature in the name of 'business' *an und für sich*'.³⁷

In their search for a new simplicity, neoclassical composers paid great attention to formal issues. Asaf'yev observed this in Křenek's works, their construction being defined as 'reinforced concrete' ('Конструкция в произведениях Кшенека железо-бетонная'): ³⁸ according to the critic, 'he finds in his language both clarity and simplicity of feeling expression, strength and persuasiveness' ('он находит в своем языке и ясность и простоту выражения чувства, и силу, и убедительность'). ³⁹

Of course, attention to the form required high technical skills in music writing – something that Asaf'yev credited to Myaskovsky ⁴⁰ and Prokof'yev. He celebrated the technical perfection that makes clarity of expression, classical composition, and simplicity of elements possible:

Acquaintance with the score of [Prokof'yev's] Concerto definitely confirms its significance, and the fact that what in advance seemed only possible or foreseen is actually realized in clear, neat contours, in classical proportions of composition, with the highest tension of creative imagination, which combines the simplest elements into a tenacious fabric of unexpected harmonies. ⁴¹

From the perspective of the listener, technical mastery was an essential condition for judging music production:

Only those who pay much attention to all the phenomena of modern Russian art music, who are technically familiar with the laws of musical creativity, can trace the threads that connect modern music creativity with modernity. For before one can understand the relation of modern music to modernity, one must understand modern music itself. When this is done, when everything that needs to be understood is understood, then it will be clear what is valuable and what is not among what is being written now. ⁴²

On the part of the composer, though, mastery and perfection should be oriented to communication, and never be nurtured arbitrarily or unjustifiably: Aleksandrov, for instance, celebrated the fact that the courage of Feynberg's musical speech was 'devoid of any rationality and deliberateness'. ⁴³ Roslavets, too, declared his extraneity to an arbitrary desire to 'épater le bourgeois': 'A powerful inner urge – and not at all a desire to be "original", as it still seems to some insensitive people – forced me to break with school traditions and school technology and rush along the path of an independent search for new forms'. ⁴⁴ Asaf'yev highlighted the risk of pursuing originality at the expense of communicability:

For some reason an odd prejudice has arisen: if an appeal rings out for our composers to converge with modernity, it is thought that this necessarily means that we must write

music that is base and trivial, music that comes from the street, with the implication that large-scale forms are pointless. There are several misunderstandings here, and we must settle these for good, one way or another.⁴⁵

This reminds us of the critic's above-quoted denounce of "business" *an und für sich*, and anticipates the last point of our reasoning (see below *In the Perspective of Socialist Realism*): when the regimentation of arts began with the decrees of the 1930s, denunciation became a frequent practice among artists, as well as on the part of other professional towards artists, and the accuse of solipsism, arrogance, and originality at all costs was a major contention.⁴⁶

The interest in form inherited from the classics of the past was intended to re-focus on a work's text, rather than its interpretation, with the aim of overcoming the solipsistic tendencies of the late-romantic trend. This position was clarified by Stravinsky in his very first article, dedicated to the newly composed *Octet for wind instruments*. In his reasoning, objectivism was clearly associated with the formal aspect of music composition: not only because the composer defined his work as an 'object' provided with a 'form' and 'influenced by the musical matter with which it is composed'; also because this, and his works in general, were conceived as 'emotive in themselves': emotions were expected to spring (without nuances) from the 'musical architecture', and therefore excluded 'elements of "interpretation"'.⁴⁷ Stravinsky wanted performer and listener to pay attention to the work itself, deprived of any extra-textual element: 'This sort of music has no other aim than to be sufficient in itself. In general, I consider that music is only able to solve musical problems, and nothing else, neither the literary nor the picturesque, can be in music of any real interest. The play of musical elements is the thing'.⁴⁸ In Russian music, on the contrary, he remarked excessive attention devoted to extra-textual elements: 'Today, then, just as in the past, in the times of Stasov and Moussorgsky (a musician of genius, assuredly, but always confused in his ideas) the reasoning "intelligentsia" seeks to assign a role to music and to attribute to it a meaning from which music is in truth very far removed'.⁴⁹

Stravinsky's point of view – expressed from a dislocated context – was shared by some colleagues in the USSR on the pages of *Contemporary Music*: for instance, Drozdov declared his own music to be based on similar theoretical grounds, having its distinctive feature in the 'tendency toward the inner significance of music, to its constructive integrity and persuasiveness';⁵⁰ this combined with the 'tendency toward a retrospective style (a number of plays on ancient plots with an old-modal structure), with the interest in plastically expressive tasks (dances and plastic scenes)',⁵¹ and with the use of tonality.

The predominance of formal over psychological issues appears in Belyayev's conception as an element distinguishing European from Russian musical language. From the text, it is not clear whether he meant Stravinsky as a main reference, but in reference to Aleksandrov he argues:

just as the European traditionalist develops in his art mainly technical and formal problems inherent in the very essence of European traditionalism, the Russian traditionalist develops rather psychological and emotional problems. He does not complicate or break traditional classical forms and styles up to the possible limit of their development and refinement, as Western traditional composers do: he fills these classical forms, expanded and complicated by composers of the romantic period, with new emotional content, a content that is determined by the Russian composer's belonging to the Slavic race, and which cannot be put into these forms by an individual of German or Latin race.⁵²

Consistently with the common sensibility of that time, Belyayev's arguments are deprived of any political (ethical) correctness, but if the references to 'race' rather than to cultural traditions are possibly only rhetoric, his argumentations recall those conveyed by Asaf'yev. He in turn puts Prokof'yev's Third Piano Concerto in connection with the Russian tradition, and more conspicuously with Chaykovsky's Concerto, on the ground of formal issues:

The similarities lie deeper: in the organic fusion with the greatest aspirations and achievements of the Russian musical worldview, in the beauty of combining novelty of invention with the power of expression, and in the typically Russian tendency to combine simplicity of expression with emotional sincerity and spontaneity. In the music of the Concerto there is no room for false pathos, or exaggerated originality, or dominance of sophisticated taste over common sense, or boasting of techniques at the expense of organic development.⁵³

Simple forms and harmonic clarity were, in turn, based on the renunciation of chromaticism. Many passages, in the reviews and analysis published on *Sovremennaya muzika*, maintain the efficacy of diatonic harmony:

The shape and structure of the fabric, the functional significance of each element organizing the 'sounding action', even the character of the piano passages – everything is subordinated to the idea of the absolute dominance of the tonic, the fundamental tone, as the centre of the movement in all directions, as the point of arrival and departure, as the only one stable moment. The tonic, in this case, is not only a closing element, stopping the movement. No. Its role is impulsive: it excites and moves, no matter how paradoxical this may be and how much this does not contradict the 'Tristanian' precepts and the idea that only the avoidance of the tonic gives an endlessly lasting melodic tension: it is from the dominance of the tonic that a healthy,

natural feeling of dynamics and mobility is born, without the shadow of any staticity and frozenness.⁵⁴

Tonality, of course, is separated from retrospect: 'in it, there is nothing similar to the scholastic or tonal structures' ('в нем нет ничего подобного с схоластическим тональным планом'),⁵⁵ 'the principle of subvocality almost completely permeates the entire composition, not allowing for the strict implementation of majestically abstract polyphony'.⁵⁶

In an autobiographical essay, Roslavets touches similar point in his attempt at self-definition:

Forward from modern impressionist-expressionist sound anarchy, which has led musical art to a dead end, forward to creative search and awareness of new laws of musical thinking, new sound logic, a new clear and precise system of sound organization. This is not *rickety* 'neoclassicism' [my emphasis], peacefully suckling two mothers – 'yesterday' and 'today' and thus trying to find a 'synthesis of the past with the present.' This is also not the 'barbarism' of European music, which describes the fatal circle from Debussy to the Negro. This is a strong and stable system of new sound contemplation and sound perception, growing on the basis of a new sensation and perception of the world, born of a new era. For anarchy nourished by idealistic aesthetics, all these words – 'system', 'precision', 'organization' – are, of course, 'bogeymen.' In its blind wanderings through the dark jungle of 'intuition' and other 'transcendentalism', this aesthetics completely forgot that simple and clear truth for all sighted people, that only on the basis of some system, plan, or principle can anything organic develop at all, and especially real, strong, healthy art. All classical musical art could and did grow only on a clear and precise system (major-minor tonal system of sound organization) and is unthinkable without it. [...] The art of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, who received a ready-made system from their ancestors and further developed it, is brilliant proof of the idleness of such talk. Art is not anarchy, but the highest, effectively expressed organizational principle, characteristic only of man, which really confirms his power over nature and his final victory over its dark elements (which, by the way, should include the 'element of creativity' of the enemies of all organizational action – our modern musical anarchists).⁵⁷

A wide allowance for misunderstanding is included in these contentions. Although it is highly possible that Roslavets wrote with Stravinsky in mind, his need for a combination of clear shapes in a tonal context was still distant from what Stravinsky and his European followers were doing in those very years in the West.

It is useful to investigate this misunderstanding because the theoretical positions that separate Western discourse from the debate led in the Soviet Union lie in this grey zone, likely due to the fact that they developed in two different

political contexts. As it was said, in the USSR in the 1920s, the government had not yet gained complete control over the arts: the debate carried on in the musical milieu offered the Party's bureaucrats the substance to create that cocktail of ideas that was to become the 'musical version' of Socialist Realism, once the canon was installed in all branches of art in 1934. In the next section, we will follow the projection of these ideas on the formulation of Socialist Realism.

IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIALIST REALISM: NEOCLASSICISM BECOMES FORMALISM

The elaboration of Socialist Realism was articulated in venues other than *Sovremennaya muzika*, but some of the ideas expressed in this journal, notably by Asaf'yev, would lend some arguments to its conception.

The doctrine of Socialist Realism was composed of a mixture of heterogeneous elements, both musical and extra-musical. On the one hand, it had nationalistic grounds, which ended up in the background at the beginning of the twentieth century but never really disappeared, as we have seen in the above-mentioned quotations from Belyayev and Asaf'yev. Russianness is strongly related to tonality, intended at least as an antidote to chromaticism. According to the evergreen myth of the Russian soul, it is also related to simplicity, which happened to be one of the most frequent remarks from among the commentators in the debate on neoclassicism. This concept was brought about by RAPM members in completely different terms – asking authors to draw from popular (though urban, Soviet, rather than rural) songs in building the new Soviet music system.⁵⁸ In order to avoid the fall of music composition in terms of quality and professionalism, Asaf'yev invited professional composers to come down from the 'ivory tower', to follow simplicity and communication as guiding principles, and to take possession of great forms before others (probably the nonprofessional musicians connected to RAPM) could definitely distort them.⁵⁹

On the other hand, mastery of composition was shown to be at its best in the realm of instrumental music, which was highly developed in the trend of neoclassicism, also because vocal music – and opera on the forefront – had always been bonded with the tradition and with the institution of Monarchy in the Russian context.

Instrumental music, though, was seen with suspicion by the commentators close to the socialist ideology, because it lacked the necessary level of accessibility, notably to nonprofessional audiences. The opposition Stravinsky-Prokof'yev is symptomatic of this problem: presented alternatively as a Russian or Western

composer in the music press of the 1920s, starting from the 1930s, Stravinsky was banned due to both his negative attitude towards the Soviet Union as a political entity, and his modernist (read: abstruse) musical language.⁶⁰ On the contrary, in Asaf'yev's views, 'no matter how perfect a *European* [my emphasis] Prokof'yev felt himself' ('Сколь совершенный европейцем ни чувствовал бы себя Прокофьев'),⁶¹ he was 'alien to the West' ('Прокофьев чужд Западу').⁶² As we shall see, this depended on his inclination to melody.

Stravinsky's objectivism – which in turn went back to the ancient debate on form and content, embracing the positions expressed by Eduard Hanslick in the treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (On the beautiful in music, 1854) – did not suit the global cultural interests of the comrade-musicians, because it created trouble in establishing what Socialist Realism meant in music.

In the 1920s, those who wanted to keep their distance from proletarian positions espoused neoclassicist, or rather objectivist views of Stravinskian ancestry. This was the case, to take another example, of Sabaneyev, whose opinions are clearly stated on the pages of *Musical Culture*, the predecessor of *Contemporary Music*, in the defense of the modernist cause:

first of all, we must state that music is just that: music. It is an organization of sounds; it is – more broadly – an organization of an EMOTIONAL entity by means of sounds; it is an organization of the psyche by means of the sound. Each historical era has its own methods of organizing the psyche with sounds. The method of organization varies depending on WHAT PARTICULAR PSYCHOLOGICAL STATUS WE WANT TO ORGANIZE, in what direction and moment.⁶³

As a consequence, music happened to be not always universally communicative:

precisely because in the matter of music perception we are dealing with very variegated groups, we can never establish with accuracy, we cannot even find such methods common to EVERYONE that would give the same results for everyone in the matter of organizing the psyche by sound. We are forced here to consider the fact that different groups react differently to sound organization: sound organization of a more complex type often turns out to be COMPLETELY INACCESSIBLE to those people who are somehow lagging behind or belated in their sound development.⁶⁴

Due to its nature, music was unable to convey any ideological message:

music is music. This tautology means precisely that music IS NOT AN IDEOLOGY attached to it in one way or another, it is a purely sound organization. When talking about modern music, we must firmly remember this. Music in itself does not and cannot contain any ideology insofar as it seems clear that music DOES NOT EXPRESS

IDEAS, does not express 'logical' constructions, but has its own musical sound world of its own musical ideas and its own musical logic. It is a closed world.⁶⁵

This idea was particularly relevant in the context of the Soviet Union: it frustrated the expectations of proletarians to create music that could act as the equivalent of Soviet visual arts and literature, because modernity in form failed to combine with ideological content, while it was Stalin's will to promote artworks that were to be realist in form and socialist in content.

This problem was discussed in the early 1930s, when the aesthetic canon of Socialist Realism was being elaborated. In 1933, *Soviet Music* published the articles 'On the Issue of Socialist Realism in Music' and 'The Problem of Content and Imagines in Music' by Viktor Markovich Gorodinsky.⁶⁶ In the first one, the musicologist pinpointed the problem raised by Sabaneyev exactly, though reversing the assumption in a typical syllogistic process:

Indeed, in essence, scientific discussions about the immanence of the development of musical art return us to the old Hegelian aesthetics, according to the views of which music is a manifestation of the spirit in an immaterial and illusory form, that is, in the purest form (not counting poetry).⁶⁷

According to Gorodinsky, the problem of realism arose in music because, differently from other forms of art, no one could establish with certainty the exact referent of a 'sound image' ('звуковой образ'):

Neither Comrade Keldish nor anyone else told curious humanity what a sound image is and how it is created. And since it is unclear what a sound image is, Comrade Keldish's entire structure begins to waver. The trouble is that, no matter how you turn it, the image must depict something quite specific, outlined. In other words, a sound image, if it is truly an image, must depict exactly 'this' and not 'that'. Is it possible to express something like this through purely musical means? Musical characteristics, the leitmotifs of Wagner's musical drama, do not in themselves create a specific image without combination with the text, the actor's performance, etc. They are not musical images, but only musical characteristics of the scenic image.⁶⁸

Eventually, Gorodinsky will find a solution in Asaf'yev's theory of melodic invention (*melos*) – an idea that would serve as a theoretical ground for the restoration of nineteenth-century music nationalism, and which Asaf'yev would further develop in his treaty on intonation in 1947.⁶⁹ Melos was exactly what distinguished Prokof'yev from Stravinsky: the quality of music able to lead music out from the 'dead end of sophisticated emotionalism' ('тупик изощренного эмоционализма'),⁷⁰ but also the antidote to arid objectivism:

Conclusions: the theory of musical image in its modern form cannot form the basis of Socialist Realism in music. It cannot lead us to anything other than a confusion of endless grumblings between the three pines of impressionism, naive realism, and crude empiricism. We will not be able to correctly pose the problem of Socialist Realism in music if we do not develop the problem of musical language and come closer to solving it. In music, as in no other art, the question of methods of expression is decisive in the development of the problem of Socialist Realism. First of all, it must be agreed that Socialist Realism is not a ready-made standard form of musical creativity. The standard in art is the end of art, the beginning of a cliché, of naked calculation. The desire for an artistic standard is typical of the classes in decline, and, notably, of the decadent music of the bourgeoisie. We do not need standards in art at all. On the contrary, we are talking about the implementation of those rich musical reserves that exist in our country and are contained in the inexhaustible riches of melodies and rhythms of the 180 nationalities of our Union.⁷¹

While we will not follow the path of music nationalism in Stalin's 1930s further, one might be curious about the destiny of Stravinsky's objectivism in the Soviet context. As one can easily foresee, it will soon be provided with the label of 'formalism' in the public press. As well as Socialist Realism, the concept of formalism is far from being clearly determined. However, the theoretician Lev Kulakovsky searched for its roots in the article 'Notes about the origins of formalism'.⁷²

He draws its origins exactly in the "creative platform" of the ideologists of the "Association for Contemporary Music", of which – Kulakovsky writes – Glebov (Asaf'yev) was the 'greatest ideologue' among the 'supporters of the "newest Western music"'.⁷³ According to him, they consciously based their ideas on the theories of Hanslick – 'the most explicit formalist of the nineteenth century' ('наиболее откровенного формалиста XIX в.')⁷⁴ –, first of all his 'reduction' of music to the level of a 'picture of sounds' ('звуковая фреска').⁷⁵ The most dangerous outcome of this theory was that listener and musician became omnivorous, indifferent to the ideological contents of a music composition,⁷⁶ dangerous in that it opened up the possibility of propagating *any* type of music, including modernistic: 'sovremennichesky'; not merely 'modern' – 'sovremenny'.⁷⁷ Considering music as an intellectual game gave the listener the possibility to challenge his/her own perception, but this activity is clearly seen as negative: 'After all, it is in new, elaborately complex works that the listener will find maximum opportunities to apply his "activity", his gymnastics of comparison and memorization'.⁷⁸

This opened the door to avant-garde: of Hindemith, Schönberg, Křenek, and Shostakovich. Kulakovsky discusses the expectations of this intellectual, difficult music, in relation to the audience, but the conclusions he draws are in a way surprising: unlike Sabaneyev, he does not worry about the 'unprepared

listener'; rather he concentrates on the cultivated composers in order to blame them: 'Shostakovich's work has clearly shown that even high musical culture and enormous talent do not help one navigate music if the musician's perception is poisoned by such an external, formal attitude towards musical speech'.⁷⁹ Both composers and theoreticians were going *de facto* in the wrong direction, replacing emotion with reason:

There is also no need to prove that the emotional attitude towards music, which clearly 'resonates' with its content, is normal and natural. Formalists tried to discredit both such perceptions. It is clear that one cannot agree with such an attitude in the slightest degree. Only a deeply emotional attitude towards music can give rise to the passionate art to which Soviet reality calls us.⁸⁰

The author recognizes 'deep emotion' in one single work: Beethoven's Sonata 'Appassionata', which, according to Gor'ky, was Lenin's favorite piece. Following the syllogistic line that happened to lead to the formulation of Socialist Realism (and we have been following only part of the elements that were involved in this 'mixture'), we end up facing a strange company: Socialist Realism rejected any modernist experience by labeling it as 'formalist' with the complicity of Boris Asaf'yev, who had been among the most active supporters of the now condemned music.⁸¹ At the same time, some of the aspects he appreciated in Western and non-Western 'neoclassical' experiences passed on to the Soviet official aesthetic even if they had common premises with what in this phase happened to be called 'formalism'.

To complete the picture, one should add that Stravinsky is never mentioned in Kulakovsky's article, while the author merges together composers whose experiences had different aesthetic premises (Hindemith and Schönberg, for instance). He mentions Drozdov (who nowadays remains a footnote in music history), yet he is also silent about Prokof'yev and Myaskovsky, who – praised for some 'neoclassical', objective, formal qualities on the pages of *Contemporary Music* (seemingly the origin of all errors) – would become the champions of Soviet music.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, elements of abuse and personal survival are at the basis of the dynamics described here. It is probably not by chance that Glebov's name progressively disappeared from the pages of *Contemporary Music*.⁸² If Kulakovsky seems to have gained no institutional role in the Soviet bureaucracy, Gorodinsky would

rise through the administrative ranks to become head of the arts section of the Communist Party Central Committee from 1935–37.⁸³ As well, Asaf'yev played an outstanding role in the Composers' Union in the 1940s. His ideas were well-established at this stage, and he is still highly recognized as an example of scientific speculation.

In the public sphere, the new artistic directives were aimed at aligning art with the political needs of the Party, transforming culture into an instrument of propaganda and social control. What emerges from this analysis is (part of) the tortuous path that led to the formulation of this likewise tortuous 'philosophy of music'. What is clear in this process is that there was not a complete, radical change after the NEP period, and that the political culture inaugurated in the 1930s was not totally extraneous to specific moments of the 1920s that pre-dated it.

In this view, Socialist Realism in music can be seen as a response, coming from political and music institutions, to problems that remained unresolved at the end of the 1920s: intolerance towards abused techniques, disagreement among the proponents of innovation, troubles in communication between author and audiences, and a renovated need for order. The response, which belonged to the proletarian faction identified with RAPM, but not exclusively, drew elements from both proletarian and (some) modernist instances.⁸⁴

I will restate here that this is not intended to positively reassess the Party's cultural policy, nor to justify the exasperate pressure that they exerted on artists and the population. Rather, these observations might remind us of the potential effects of one specific position prevailing over a plurality of others, notably when the proponents of one idea present themselves as the only ones capable of responding to public needs. The response committed by the Party was a monolithic one, as dangerous as it was vague and undetermined, and therefore it could be understood arbitrarily according to single occasions; it sought to become pervasive and competed for the position of the unique legitimate representative of Soviet music, modern and classic at the same time. The tragedy itself with which it was associated (two waves of terror speak clearly enough) witnesses that the response was inadequate. The task remains, to focus on enduring questions.

Notes

- 1 Boris de Schloezer, 'La musique', *La revue contemporaine*, 1 February 1923, pp. 245–248.
- 2 <https://mus.academy/en/archive/1933> [last accessed 26 May 2025].
- 3 <http://lib.sptl.spb.ru/ru/nodes/660-periodicheskie-izdaniya> [last accessed 26 May 2025].
- 4 <http://www.bibl.artcenter.ru> [last accessed 26 May 2025].
- 5 <https://marxism-leninism.info/paper/pravda-1> [last accessed 26 May 2025].
- 6 See, among many others, *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations in Soviet Society and Culture*, edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch and Richard Stites, Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- 7 See, for instance, *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenti TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VChK-OGPU-NKVD o kul'turnoy politike, 1917–1953 gg.*, edited by Andrey Artizov and Oleg Naumov, Moskva: Mezhdunarodny Fond Demokratiya, 1999, 2007 [partially translated in *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917–1953*, edited by Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, Compiled by Andrey Artizov and Oleg V. Naumov, Translated by Marian Schwartz, New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007], and *Sotsrealistichesky kanon*, edited by Hans Günter and Yevgeny A. Dobrenko, Sankt-Peterburg: Gumanitarnoye Agenstvo "Akademicheskyy Proyekt", 2000.
- 8 See Marina Frolova-Walker - Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917–1932*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012; Patrick Zuk, 'Nikolay Myaskovsky and the "Regimentation" of Soviet Composition: A Reassessment', *The Journal of Musicology*, XXXI/3, 2014, pp. 354–393; Akikhisa Yamamoto, 'Proletarskaya muzika i modernizm v kontekste porevolutsionnoy deyatel'nosti N. A. Roslavtsa' [Proletarian music and modernism in the context of N. A. Roslavets's post-revolutionary activities], *Nauchnyy vestnik Moskovskoy Konservatorii* [Journal of Moscow Conservatory], XIV/2, 2023, pp. 284–305. As for the aspects of musicology and music history, see my 'Tradizione e sperimentazione nell'orizzonte musicale russo: il caso di Boris Asaf'ev', in: *20/Venti, Nuovi studi sulla cultura russa e sovietica degli anni '20 del XX secolo*, ed. by Agnese Accattoli and Laura Piccolo, Roma: RomaTre-Press, 2024, pp. 35–63.
- 9 For a quick review of these publications, see Gerald R. Seaman, 'Soviet Musical Life in the 1920s as Seen in Contemporary Music Periodicals', *Fontes Artis Musicae*, LIII/3, 2006, pp. 233–238.
- 10 No. 1: April 1923, No. 2, May 1923, and No. 3, June-August, 1923. Available at <https://www.ripm.org/?page=JournalInfo&ABB=KNB> [last accessed 26 May 2025].
- 11 See Mikhail Druskin, 'Iz khroniki muzikal'noy zhizni Leningrada 20-kh godov', *SovMu*, 9, 1974, pp. 113–122. In 1926 ASM was imitated by an analogous association in Leningrad (Leningradskaya assotsiatsiya sovremennoy muziki – LASM), which, nonetheless, had no filial relationship with ASM. In 1926 at Leningrad State Music Technicum (Gosudarstvennyy muzikal'nyy tekhnikum) also the *Kruzhok novoy muziki* (Circle of New Music) was born, which was a salon promoting New Music, sometimes in private, others in public concerts. This circle merged with LASM in 1927 but stopped its activities in 1928.
- 12 The collaboration between Casella and ASM is partially reconstructed in my 'The Ways to Russia of Alfredo Casella', *Archival Notes*, 5, 2020, pp. 23–46.
- 13 'распространение новой музыки, русской и иностранной' ('Assotsiatsiya sovremennoy muziki' [The Association for contemporary music], *SovrM*, 1, 1924, p. 19).
- 14 The international scope was clearly declared in the bulletin: 'Ассоциация предполагает возможно шире развить свою деятельность, для чего вступает в связь с русскими

- и иностранными организациями, имеющими целиком или частично одинаковые с ней задачи. В частности, она вступает в связь с Интернациональным Обществом Современной Музыки как с целью получения нотного материала для своих исполнений из за границы, так и с целью наиболее широкого ознакомления зарубежных стран с чувством современных композиторов Советской России.’ (Assotsiatsiya Sovremennoy muziki’ [The Association for contemporary music], *SovrM*, 1, 1924, p. 19).
- 15 The former emigrated during the First World War, and the latter after the Bolsheviks came to power, in 1918, but in the early 1930s he would come back to USSR, to stay for good.
 - 16 *Muzikal’naya nov’* was issued monthly for two years between 1923 and 1924, for a total of twelve numbers. It was edited by A. Sergeyev, S. Chemodanov, D. Chernomordikov and S. A. Krilov.
 - 17 L., ‘N. A. Roslavets’, *SovrM*, 1, 1924, pp. 33–36. The passage where the term is used is fully quoted further in the text. Other occurrences of the term in the polemics between architectural neoclassicism and constructivism, for instance, will not be considered here, due to the different technical grounds of the arguments.
 - 18 See Lev Bakst, ‘Puti klassitsizma v iskusstve’ [The paths of Classicism in art], *Apollon*, 2, 1909, pp. 63–78, 3, 1909, pp. 46–61.
 - 19 See Gul’naz Amirova, ‘Russky neoklassitsizm v izobrazitel’nom iskusstve nachala XX veka: k voprosu opredeleniya stilya (neostil’ kak printsip khudozhestvennogo soznaniya)’ [Russian neoclassicism in the fine arts of the beginning of the twentieth century: the issue of defining a style (neo style as a principle of art consciousness)], *Nauchniye trudi* [Scientific works], 11, 2009, pp. 100–108.
 - 20 See Wehrmeyer, ‘Aspekte klassizistischen Komponierens in der russischen Musik’, in: *Die klassizistische Moderne in der Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts, Internationales Symposium der Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel 1996*, herausgegeben von Hermann Danuser, Winterthur: Amadeus, 1997, pp. 187–200.
 - 21 Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music, From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*, Ann Arbor-London: UMI Research Press, 1988, p. xiv.
 - 22 ‘Современная музыкальная революция в Западной Европе проходит, главным образом, под знаком переворота в области технических средств выражения и под лозунгом отказа от романтизма в пользу классических тенденций, возрождаемых в новом аспекте’ (Viktor Belyayev, ‘Desyat’ let russkoy simfonicheskoy muziki’ [Ten years of Russian symphonic music], *SovrM*, 24, 1927, pp. 24–31: 25).
 - 23 ‘не раз уже мне приходилось указывать на несомненную связь между новым музыкальным мировоззрением и музыкой Моцарта’ (Igor’ Glebov, ‘Motsart i sovremennost’ [Mozart and contemporaneity], *SovrM*, 25, 1927, pp. 55–59: 55).
 - 24 Viktor Belyayev, ‘Sovremennaya muzika i Aleksandr Cherepnin’ [Contemporary music and Aleksandr Cherepnin], *SovrM*, 11, 1925, pp. 2–10: 5.
 - 25 ‘пользуется только наиболее простыми формами, трактуя их с большим мастерством и свое образен и в своих более крупных произведениях, как камерные концерты, приближаясь к практике первых немецких классиков, когда форма была еще не в том выкристаллизованном виде, который она приобрела в последствии, и когда она была, благодаря этому обстоятельству, более гибкой. Поворот Черепнина к классике, так же как и поворот к ней всей современной музыки, знаменует возвращение последней к некоторой новой отправной точке для достижения тех целей музыкального прогресса, которые иначе не могут быть достигнуты’ (Belyayev, ‘Sovremennaya muzika i Aleksandr Cherepnin’, p. 7).

- 26 'В самом деле, куда нас может привести планомерное развитие принципов вагнеровского и штраусовского оркестра, как не к усложнению до *pes plus ultra* того колоссального оркестрового аппарата, который мы сейчас имеем? Но нужно ли музыкальному прогрессу превращаться из качественного, которым он до сих пор был, в количественный? Не явится ли этот прогресс после перевала за известную точку уезжая ней прогрессом, а регрессом, редукцией музыкального содержания в пользу физиологии звучания? Примитивизм, являющийся новым направлением в музыке, определенно заявляет о своем отказе от участия в количественном прогрессе музыки и объявляет лозунгом сегодняшнего дня и ближайшего будущего борьбу за качественный прогресс музыки, исходной точкой которого считает не роскошь звучности, а интерес музыкальной мысли, ценной самой по себе, безотносительно к её музыкальному наряду' (Belyayev, 'Sovremennaya muzika i Aleksandr Cherepnin', pp. 7–8).
- 27 'не боясь "примитивных" "гайдновских" и "до-гайдновских форм."' (Belyayev, 'Sovremennaya muzika i Aleksandr Cherepnin', p. 8).
- 28 'там, где Шенбергу уже недостает звуко сочетаний, составленных из всех 12 полутонов октавы, там Стравинский достигает новых эффектов простыми двухголосным звуко сочетаниями' (Belyayev, 'Sovremennaya muzika i Aleksandr Cherepnin', p. 9).
- 29 'без воздушная перспективы, без свето-теней, без импрессионизма скова колорита' (Igor' Glebov, 'Kshenek i Berg, kak operniye kompozitori' [Křenek and Berg as operatic composers], *SovrM*, 17–18, 1926, pp. 182–188: 183).
- 30 'Сентиментализму, созерцательной лирике, всякой интроспекции – нет места' (Glebov, 'Kshenek i Berg, kak operniye kompozitori', p. 183).
- 31 'прошу не смешивать истинный голос чувства с чувствительностью и чувственностью, вообще со всякой нервозностью, что обычно разумеют под понятием эмоционализм' (Igor' Glebov, 'Za vosem' let' [In eight years], *SovrM*, 19, 1927, pp. 223–229: 223).
- 32 'все в меру, все на месте, ничто не преувеличено, ничто не самодоволяет, – значит все естественно выросло из интуитивных предпосылок и творческих импульсов, значит все столь же естественно будет развиваться и созревать' (Igor' Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva' [The Third Concerto by Sergey Prokof'yev], *SovrM*, 10, 1925, pp. 57–63: 58).
- 33 Glebov, 'Motsart i sovremennost', p. 55.
- 34 'Я говорю о трудной и всегда желанной простоте как высшей художественной цели, как результате полного овладения мастерством' (Glebov, 'Motsart i sovremennost', pp. 58–59).
- 35 Glebov, 'Šubert i sovremennost' [Schubert and contemporaneity], *SovrM*, 26, 1927, pp. 76–78: 78.
- 36 'дело не в подробностях, а в том, что все перечисленные черты приближают музыку его к современным идеям возрождения мелоса. Для музыки важны сейчас не темы, из которых можно было бы выстраивать [...] музыкальные небоскребы, а простые и непосредственные, как суждения, как себедовлеющая мысль, мелодии' (Glebov, 'Šubert i sovremennost', p. 77). By the way, Belyayev, too expresses his view of tradition as something alive: 'Having such a rich heritage [Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Reger, Schönberg], able to educate a composer [...], Hindemith does not live in his art only at his expense, does not remain faithful to the followers of the old ones, although and high traditions. No, he manages this heritage like a real talent, using it for the creation of new values, and not [...] for museum storage as a gnawing relic, nor for keeping it in a bank as it

- was capital' ('имея столь богатое наследие, уже само по себе почти достаточное для образования композитора [...], Хиндемит не живет в своем творчестве только за его счет, не остается верным последователем старых, хотя бы и высоких, традиций. Нет, он распоряжается этим наследием как настоящий талант, обращая его на создание новых ценностей, а не [...] на музейное хранение как драгоценную реликвию или на сохранение в банке как капитал') (Viktor Belyayev, 'Paul Khindemit', *SovrM*, 1, 1924, pp. 3–8: 4).
- 37 'Ведь и наши здешние стремления к простой, трезвой и деловой действительности что то не похожи на американизм с его отрывом от людей и природы во имя "дельчества" an und für sich' (Glebov, 'Šubert i sovremennost', p. 77).
- 38 Glebov, 'Kshenek i Berg, kak operniye kompozitori', p. 184.
- 39 Glebov, 'Kshenek i Berg, kak operniye kompozitori', p. 185.
- 40 See Igor' Glebov, 'Myaskovsky kak simfonist' [Myaskovsky as a symphonic composer], *SovrM*, 2, 1924, pp. 66–77.
- 41 'Знакомство с партитурой концерта окончательно утверждает его значительность, и то, что в предчувствии казалось только возможным или предугадываемым – на самом деле реализовано в четких ясных контурах, в классической стройности композиции, при высшем напряжении творческого воображения, сочетающего простейшие элементы в цепкую ткань неожиданных созвучий' (Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', pp. 57–63: 57).
- 42 'Только те, кто внимательно относится ко всем явлениям современного русского музыкального искусства, кто технически знаком с законами музыкального творчества, могут проследить те нити, которые связывают современное музыкальное творчество с современностью. Ибо прежде, чем понять отношение современной музыки к современности, нужно понять сам[ую] современную музыку. Когда это будет сделано, когда все, что нужно понять, будет понятно, тогда будет видно, что из того, что пишется сейчас ценно и что не ценно' (Viktor Belyayev, 'Myaskovsky, Gedike, Aleksandrov', *SovrM*, 8, 1925, pp. 17–29: 20).
- 43 'смелость и необычайность музыкальной речи в Фейнберг, будучи лишенными всякой рассудочности и нарочитости, органический возникают в силу этого именно стремления "выйти за пределы", выразить что-то, еще не нашедшее выражение и жаждущее его' (An[atoly] Aleksandrov, 'Samuil Feynberg', *SovrM*, 5, 1924, pp. 129–132: 131–132).
- 44 'Могучее внутреннее побуждение, – а отнюдь не желание "оригинальничать", как это еще и по сие время кажется некоторым не чутким людям, – заставило меня порвать со школьными традициями и школьной техникой и устремиться по пути самостоятельного искания новых форм' (Nik[olay] Roslavets, 'Nik. A. Roslavets o sebe i svoym tvorchestve'. [Nik. A. Roslavets on himself and his art], *SovrM*, 5, 1924, pp. 132–138: 133).
- 45 'Почему-то сложилось странное предубеждение, что если раздается призыв к слиянию с нашей современностью, направленный по адресу композиторов, то он непременно означает приглашение к описанию чего-то низменного, тривиального и уличного – с одной стороны, а с другой подразумевает ненужность крупных форм. Здесь имеется рад недоразумений, с которыми следует так или иначе покончить' (Igor' Glebov, 'Kompozitori, pospeshite!' [Composers, keep up!], *SovrM*, 6, 1924, pp. 145–149: 145. English translation quoted from: Frolova-Walker-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power*, p. 124).

- 46 See *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya*; for a symptomatic case, see the anonymous article 'Sumbur vmesto muziki' [Chaos instead of music] published against Dmitry Shostakovich on *Pravda* [The Truth], 28 January 1936.
- 47 Igor Stravinsky [*sic*], 'Some ideas about my *Octuor*', *The Arts*, 5, 1924, pp. 5–6: 5.
- 48 Stravinsky, 'Some ideas about my *Octuor*', p. 6.
- 49 Igor Stravinsky, 'The Avatars of Russian Music', in: *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, translated by Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947, pp. 91–118: 107.
- 50 'тяготении к внутренней значимости музыки, к ее конструктивной целостности и убедительности' (Anatoly Drozdov, 'A. N. Drozdov o svoym tvorchestve' [Anatoly N. Drozdov on his art], *SovrM*, 11, 1925, pp. 21–22: 21).
- 51 'тяготение к ретроспективному стилю (ряд пьес на античные сюжете с староладовым построением) и интерес к пластично выразительным заданиям (танцы и пластические сцены)' (Drozdov, 'A. N. Drozdov o svoym tvorchestve', p. 21).
- 52 'как европейский традиционалист разрабатывает в своем творчестве, главным образом, технические и формальные проблемы, заложенные в самой сущности европейского традиционализма, в то же самое время русский традиционалист разрабатывает скорее психологические и эмоциональные проблемы. Он не усложняет и не разбивает традиционных классических форм и стилей до возможного предела их развития и утончения, как это делают западные традиционные композиторы, он наполняет эти классические формы, расширенные и усложненные композиторами романтического периода, новым эмоциональным содержанием, таким содержанием, которое обусловлено принадлежностью русского композитора к славянской расе и которого не сможет вложить в эти формы представитель германской или же латинской расы' (Viktor Belyayev, 'Anatoly Aleksandrov', *SovrM*, 12, 1926, pp. 47–51: 51).
- 53 'Сходство лежит глубже: в органической спайке с величайшими стремлениями и достижениями русского музыкального мировоззрения, в красоте сочетания новизны изобретения с силой выражения и в типично русском уклоне к соединению простоты изложения с эмоциональной искренностью и непосредственностью. В музыке концерта нет места ни ложному пафосу, ни преувеличенному оригинальничанию, ни доминированию изощренного вкуса над здравым смыслом, не хвастовству приемами за счет органического развития' (Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 58).
- 54 'Форма и строение ткани, функциональное значение каждого элемента, организующего "звучащее действо", даже характер фортепианных пассажей – все подчинено идее безраздельного господства тоники, основного тона, как центра движения во всех направлениях, как точки прибытия и отправления, как единого устойчивого момента. Тоника в данном случае не является элементом только замыкающим, только прекращающим движение. Нет. Ее роль – импульсивная: она возбуждает и движет. Как это не парадоксально и как это не противоречит "тристановским" заветам и идее о том, что только избегание тоники дает бесконечно длящееся мелодическое напряжение – именно от господства тоники рождается здоровое, естественное ощущение динамики и подвижности, без тени какой бы то ни было статичности и застылости' (Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', pp. 59–60).
- 55 Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 60.
- 56 'принцип подголосочности почти сплошь пронизывает всю композицию, не допуская строгого проведения величественно абстрактной полифонии' (Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 61).

- 57 'Вперед от современной импрессионистско-экспрессионистской звуковой анархии, заведший музыкальное искусство в тупик, вперед к творческому исканию и осознанию новых законов музыкального мышления, новой звуковой логики, новой ясной и точной системы организации звука. Это не рахитичный "неоклассицизм", мирно сосущий двух маток – "вчера" и "сегодня" и пытающиеся таким образом найти "синтез прошлого с настоящим". Это также не "варваризм" европейской музыки, описывающий роковой круг от Дебюсси к негру. Это – крепкая и устойчивая система нового звукосозерцания и звуковосприятия, вырастающая на почве нового ощущения и восприятия мира, рожденная новая эпохи. Для вскормленной идеалистической эстетикой анархии все эти слова: "система", "точность", "организация" – конечно "жупели". В своем слепом блужданий по темным дебрям "интуиции" и прочего "трансцендентализма" эта эстетика совсем забыла ту простую и ясную для всех зрячих истину, что только на почве какой-либо системы, плана, принципа и может развиваться вообще что-либо органичное, а тем более настоящее, крепкое, здоровое искусство. Все классическое музыкальное искусство могло вырасти и выросло только на почве ясной и точной системы (мажорно-минорной тональной системы организации звука) и без неё – не мыслима. [...] Искусство Баха, Моцарта и Бетховена, получивших от своих предков готовую систему и ее далее развивших – блестящее доказательство праздности подобных разговоров. Искусство не анархия, а высший действенно-выраженный организационный принцип, свойственный лишь человеку, реально подтверждающий власть его над природой и его конечную победу над ее темными стихиями (к которым, между прочим, должна быть отнесена и "стихия творчества" врагов всяческого организационного действия – наших современных музыкальных анархистов)' (L., 'N. A. Roslavets', *SovrM*, 1, 1924, pp. 33–36: 33–34).
- 58 At this regard, see, among many others: Vitor Bely, 'Printsipial'nye voprosi razvitiya natsional'nikh kul'tur' [Fundamental issues of development of national cultures], *Proletarsky muzikant* [The proletarian musician], 6, 1931, pp. 1–13, but also the paper read by 'comrade Bely' at the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, in which only RAPM members took part as representants of the musical community. See *Pervy vsesoyuzny s'yezd sovetskikh pisateley, 1934, Stenografichesky otchyot* [The first all-union congress of the soviet writers, 1934, Verbatim report], Moskva: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo 'Khudozhestvennaya literatura', 1934, pp. 659–661.
- 59 These positions are expressed by Asaf'yev in two articles: see Igor' Glebov, 'Krizis lichnogo tvorchestva' [The crisis of individual art], *SovrM*, 4, 1924, pp. 78–85 and Id., 'Kompozitorī, pospešite!'.
- 60 In the early 1960s, his visit to the USSR had to be prepared by a series of shrewd negotiations. On his reception in the USSR up to that moment, see Boris Schwarz, 'Stravinsky in Soviet Russian Criticism', *The Musical Quarterly*, XLVIII/3, 1962, pp. 340–361; Philip Ewell, 'Stravinsky Reception in the USSR', in: *Stravinsky in Context*, edited by Graham Griffiths, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, pp. 270–278.
- 61 Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 61.
- 62 Glebov, 'Trety kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 62.
- 63 'мы должны, прежде всего, констатировать, что музыка есть именно музыка. – она есть организация звуков, она – более широко, есть организация эмоционального существа путем звуков, это организация психики звуковым методом. Каждая историческая эпоха имеет свои методы организации психики звуками. Метод организации меняется от того, какую именно психику надо организовать, в каком направлении и когда' (Leonid Sabaneyev, 'Sovremennaya muzika' [The contemporary music], *Muzikal'naya kultura* [Music culture], 1, 1924, pp. 8–20: 8–9).

- 64 'именно оттого, что в деле восприятия музыки мы имеем дело с очень пестро составленными группами – мы не можем установить никогда с точностью, мы не можем даже отыскать таких методов общих для всех, которые бы в деле этой организации психики звуковым путем давали бы для всех одинаковые результаты. Мы вынуждены тут считаться с тем, что разные группы разное реагируют на звуковую организованность, что звуковая организованность более сложного типа оказывается часто вовсе недоступной тем людям, которые в своем звуковом развитии так или иначе отстали или запоздали' (Sabaneyev, 'Sovremennaya muzika', p. 9).
- 65 'музыка есть музыка. Эта тавтология означает именно то, что музыка не есть идеология, к ней привязанная так или иначе, а есть чисто звуковая организации. Мы должны, говоря о современной музыке, это твердо помнить. Музыка в самой себе никакой идеологии не включает и включать не может постольку, поскольку представляется ясным факт, что музыка идей не выражает, не выражает "логических" построений, а имеет свой музыкальный звуковой мир своих музыкальных идей и своей собственной музыкальной логики. Это – замкнутый мир' (Sabaneyev, 'Sovremennaya muzika', pp. 8–9).
- 66 Viktor Markovich Gorodinsky, 'K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzike' [On the issue of Socialist Realism in music], *SovMu*, 1, 1933, pp. 6–13; Id., 'Problema soderzhaniya i obraznosti v muzike' [The problem of content and images in music], *SovMu*, 5, 1933, pp. 2–22.
- 67 'Ведь в сущности ученые рассуждения об имманентности развития музыкального искусства возвращают нас к старогегелевской эстетике, согласно воззрениям которой музыка есть проявление духа в нематериальной и прозрачной форме, т. е. в наиболее (не считая поэзии) чистой форме' (Gorodinsky, 'K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzike', p. 7).
- 68 'Ни т. Келдыш и никто другой так и не сообщил любопытному человечеству, что такое звуковой образ и каким путем он создается. А поскольку неясно, что такое звуковой образ, постольку начинает колебаться и вся конструкция т. Келдыша. Вся беда в том, что, как ни поверни, образ должен изображать нечто вполне конкретное, очерченное. Иначе говоря, звуковой образ, ежели он действительно образ, должен изображать именно вот "это", а не "то". Доступно ли нечто подобное выразить чисто музыкальными средствами? Музыкальные характеристики, лейтмотивы вагнеровской музыкальной драмы, сами по себе не создают конкретного образа без сочетания с текстом, игрой актера и т. д. Они являются не музыкальными образами, но лишь музыкальными характеристиками сценического образа' (Gorodinsky, 'K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzike', p. 12).
- 69 See Boris Asaf'yev, *Muzikal'naya forma kak protsess, Kniga 2-ya, Intonatsiya* [Musical form as a process, Second book, Intonation], Moskva-Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1947.
- 70 Glebov, 'Tretiy kontsert Sergeya Prokof'yeva', p. 61.
- 71 'Выводы: теория музыкального образа в ее современном виде не может лечь в основу социалистического музыкального реализма. Она не может привести нас ни к чему, кроме путаницы бесконечных брызжаний между трех сосен импрессионизма, наивного реализма и грубой эмпирии. Мы не сумеем правильно поставить проблему социалистического реализма в музыке, если не разработаем проблему музыкального языка, не приблизимся к ее решению. В музыке, как ни в каком в другом искусстве, вопрос о способах выражения является решающим в развитии проблемы социалистического реализма. Прежде всего, надо условиться, что социалистический реализм не есть готовая стандартная форма музыкального творчества. Стандарт

- в искусстве — конец искусству, начало штампа, голого расчета. Стремление к художественному стандарту типично для нисходящих классов, и в частности сейчас оно типично для декадентской музыки буржуазии. Мы несколько не нуждаемся в стандартах в искусстве. Напротив, речь идет о реализации тех богатейших музыкальных запасов, что имеются в нашей стране и содержатся в неисчерпаемых богатствах мелоса и ритмики 180 национальностей Союза' (Gorodinsky, 'K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme v muzike', p. 14).
- 72 Lev Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma' [Notes on the roots of formalism], *SovMu*, 5, 1936, pp. 3–15.
- 73 Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 3.
- 74 Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 5.
- 75 Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 7.
- 76 'принципиальная всеядность "образованного человека", безразличие к идейному содержанию музыкального творчества' (Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 7).
- 77 Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 7.
- 78 'Ведь именно в новых, вычурно сложных произведениях слушатель найдет максимум возможностей приложить свою "активность", свою гимнастику сравнения и запоминания' (Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 9).
- 79 'Творчество Шостаковича наглядно показала, что даже высокая музыкальная культурность, огромная талантливость не помогают ориентироваться в музыке, если восприятие музыканта отравлено таким внешним, формальным отношением к музыкальной речи' (Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 11).
- 80 'Не приходится также доказывать, что эмоциональное отношение к музыке, ярко "резонирующее" на её содержание, является нормальным, естественным. Формалисты пытались скомпрометируй как такое восприятие. Понятно, что с подобной установкой нельзя согласиться ни в малейшей степени. Только глубоко эмоциональное отношение к музыке способно породить то страстное искусство, к которому зовет нас советская действительность' (Kulakovsky, 'Zametki ob istokakh formalizma', p. 11).
- 81 In 1929 he still openly praised its champion Stravinsky in a monographic essay, which in the 1930s was to disappear from his bibliography. See Igor' Glebov, *Kniga o Stravinskom* [A book about Stravinsky], Leningrad: Triton, 1929; Schwarz, 'Stravinsky in Soviet Russian Criticism'.
- 82 Leafing through the issues of the journal, we observe that starting from 1928 the musicologist's participation became less intense, or at least masked: in nos. 27 e 28 fragments of a sarcastic nature appear accompanied by the gloss 'Soobshil Igor' Glebov' [Igor' Glebov reported] (See *Pisma glukhikh lyudey* [Letters from deaf people], *SovrM*, 27, 1928, pp. 101–103), or simply by his initials 'I. G.' (*Pisma glukhikh lyudey* [Letters from deaf people], *SovrM*, 28, 1928, pp. 114–116); after that, the collaboration seems to stop: in the remaining issues up to 1929 there is no trace of his other writings.
- 83 Frolova-Walker-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power*, p. 355.
- 84 Even on the pages of *Sovremennaya muzika* contributors identified themselves as 'Marxists'. This was the case, for instance, of Roslavets: see Roslavets, 'Nik. A. Roslavets o sebe i svoym tvorchestve'.